Interdisciplinary Approaches to Culture Theory

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Approaches to Culture Theory
Volume 8

Aims & scope

The Approaches to Culture Theory book series focuses on various aspects of the analysing, modelling, and theoretical understanding of culture. Culture theory as a set of complementary theories is seen to include and combine the approaches of different branches of science, among them the semiotics of culture, archaeology, environmental history, ethnology, cultural ecology, cultural and social anthropology, human geography, sociology and the psychology of culture, folklore, media and communication studies.

Interdisciplinary Approaches to Culture Theory

Edited by

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Acknowledgements

The making of this volume has been an arduous although interesting journey. As the final chapter to the collaboration within the Centre of Excellence in Cultural Theory (CECT) it is rooted in the preparatory stages of this extensive project and the strengthening ties over seven years between the eight research groups and some 200 people. However, it was specifically planned as the summary of the project's research at the annual meeting in Põhjaka manor on November 20, 2013. It is only now, in 2020, a number of years after the project ended, that we can finally present our work.

Considering the history of this volume it is impossible to name all to whom we owe our gratitude. This volume presents not only the research of the authors, but also other research group members who open-mindedly and curiously participated in the experimental nature of CECT collaboration in the 2008–2015 period. We owe particularly heartfelt thanks to our tireless leaders Valter Lang, Hannes Palang, Kalevi Kull, Ülo Valk, Art Leete, Halliki Harro-Loit, Riho Altnurme and Raili Nugin (& Aili Aarelaid-Tart).

The authors of the chapters in this volume deserve much appreciation for their venturous writing, which was tested time and time again. We are grateful for their trust and patience. We would like to thank all who contributed at the different stages of preparing, writing, discussing, reviewing and editing the chapters. Our final thanks go to the team responsible for producing the series of which this book is part.

Introduction. Expediency of interdisciplinary cooperation and experimentation

Anu Kannike, Katre Pärn, Monika Tasa

Dedicated to the loving memory of CECT (2008–2015).

The present volume was set in motion during an annual meeting of the Centre of Excellence in Cultural Theory (CECT) in November 2013. While discussing the plans for the final publication of the CECT (2008–2015), an idea was proposed: in order to highlight the collaborative and interdisciplinary spirit of CECT, the articles ought to be written in cooperation between the members of the centre's research groups.

At the aforementioned meeting the board members reflected on the outcomes of the activities of CECT, noting that over the years the awareness of each other's research as well as the dialogue between research groups had grown extensively. However, collaborative articles were still rare, pertaining to individual researchers with overlapping research topics. The previous experiences within the CECT had shown ample cooperation among research groups, members of the groups were successfully co-organizing conferences and seminars, coediting publications, etc. This indicated that CECT had become a seminal and inspirational environment for interdisciplinary collaboration. Now it was proposed to take a step further by initiating an experimental collaborative writing project that would lead to cross-disciplinary research and joint writing among the members of the research teams.

The initiative aligned with the aims of CECT as well as the book series *Approaches to Culture Theory* which was launched by the centre in 2011: both aimed to bring together the various disciplines that study culture and develop culture theory across disciplines by providing a cordial space for bold thinking and experimentation. As the editors of the series announced in their foreword to the first volume:

> We strive towards significant improvement in both the self-understanding of disciplinary fields and in the comprehension of general theoretical models by juxtaposing and comparing data, theories, and the methods of research in an interdisciplinary environment through crossdisciplinary cooperation. (Lang et al 2011, 5)

Although the crossdisciplinary cooperation between research groups was rather intense, research articles were nevertheless mostly written within the bounds of one's own research group and, as a rule, individually. The latter is, of course, characteristic to humanities in general, where collaborative writing is far from usual practice. To a lesser extent this applies to social sciences, included in the centre, as well. Yet the exceptionally dialogical space between researchers within CECT offered a favorable environment for changing this habitual practice.

The proposed experimental project was open to all members of the eight research groups of the centre. The aim was to gather, accordingly, at least eight collaborative papers that would develop further the topics that had been, over the years, central for CECT, but would also be venturous with theoretical ideas and forms of interdisciplinary collaboration. The ambition was to create additional possibilities for polyvocal discussion by including discussants and commentators from within as well as outside of CECT.

The process concluded with ten collaborative papers published in this volume and the authors of the chapters, indeed, represent all eight of the CECT's research groups:

- **Archaeology:** Valter Lang, Pikne Kama, Maarja Olli, Maria Smirnova, Kristiina Johanson
- **Cultural Communication Studies:** Halliki Harro-Loit, Triin Vihalemm
- **Contemporary Cultural Studies:** Raili Nugin, Maaris Raudsepp, Franz Krause, Kadri Kasemets, Tarmo Pikner, Anu Kannike
- **Ethnology:** Art Leete, Kristin Kuutma, Toomas Gross, Ester Bardone, Kirsti Jõesalu, Kristel Rattus, Kristi Grünberg
- **Folkloristics:** Tiiu Jaago, Elo-Hanna Seljamaa, Helen Kästik, Pihla Maria Siim
- **Landscape Studies:** Hannes Palang, Tõnu Viik, Marju Kõivupuu, Helen Sooväli-Sepping, Marek Tamm, Anu Printsmann
- **Religious Studies:** Anne Kull, Lea Altnurme, Roland Karo, Atko Remmel
- **Semiotics:** Kalevi Kull, Peeter Torop, Kati Lindström, Tiit Remm, Andreas Ventsel, Ott Puumeister, Timo Maran, Katre Pärn

The experimental project was integrated into the traditional event cycle of CECT. Thus, before the next incubator of theory, an annual event that took place in the

beginning of the year, all research groups of CECT received an invitation to prepare a list of topics their group would propose for the collaborative project.

During the first day of the incubator that was held in February 14–15, 2014 all research groups made a short presentation on their proposed topics. The presentations were followed by a joint discussion during which compatible propositions were converged into themes serving as an initial basis for potential articles. Subsequently, provisional collaborative teams were formed of the researchers interested in a particular theme. During the remainder of the incubator, the teams developed the themes further, arriving at a working title and keywords of the proposed collaborative paper.

By the end of the incubator of theory, further benchmarks of the project were set in place, all of which, in hindsight, were realised more or less as planned during the first meeting. However, no restrictions or guidelines were set for the format of the collaboration, so that each of the teams could find the approach most fitting for them.

Although the makeup of the teams changed slightly over the course of the collaboration, and the topics were developed further, the core conceptions of the finalised papers remained close to the initial outlines. It should be noted that not all of the collaborative teams were put together during the incubator – some joined the project later, which itself is an evidence of the enthusiasm towards the opportunity for interdisciplinary collaboration and openness for experimentation within CECT.

The next benchmark for the project was the 7th autumn conference of CECT (October 29–31, 2014), the topic of which was "Deep Mechanisms of Estonian Culture". The title refers to Juri Lotman's and Boris Uspenskij's conceptions of mechanisms underlying cultural dynamics, such as (self-)organisation, boundedness, cultural polyglotism, cultural memory, autocommunication, etc., but also to the central role of Estonian culture as distinctive research material for CECT. The conference, held in Estonian, was dedicated to the work in progress. The aim of the conference was to provide constructive feedback to the research papers of the collaborative teams, to support them in moving towards the final articles as well as to contribute to the overall aim of polyvocality via discussion. For this purpose, each team chose one to three discussants for their papers, to whom the draft version of the paper was provided before the event. During the conference, each team's presentation was followed by an extensive one-hour discussion with their discussants as well as questions from the audience. Preliminary synopses of the collaborative articles were published in the book of abstracts of the conference.

The format of the conference was fairly innovative for the centre as in this field of research such extensive discussions, particularly at the stage of writing in progress are not common for conferences. For the authors, the situation was adventurous, since instead of the final, clean version of their paper, they had to present their draft versions. This itself resulted in interesting observations about and debates on the differences in metalanguages of different disciplines as these came to the fore in the unpolished drafts. These, at times heated discussions were fruitful for the final developments of the papers.

The shift in language posed additional difficulty for the process. It was decided from the start that although the final papers will be published in English, the presentations and discussions during the autumn conference were to be held in Estonian, to take full advantage of thinking, expressing and debating over the work in progress in researchers' native language (mostly so, with some exceptions). However, in the end, the shift in language, or working on their topic in two languages in parallel, proved to be rather arduous.

In order to share the project and its outcomes with colleagues and general public in Estonia, the topics of the conference and contents of the collaborative research articles were communicated via various local cultural newspapers and magazines. After the conference, two discussion panels were organised and the discussions were published in *Sirp*, a weekly cultural newspaper. First panel, organised among members of CECT, was published in October 24, 2014, discussing the notion of deep mechanisms of Estonian culture (see Kull et al, 2014). Second panel, discussing the value and specificity of Estonian culture as research material for culture theory, was published in the same newspaper on January 23, 2015 (see Kull & Lang 2015). Later that year, versions of some of the collaborative papers were published in Estonian in a special number of *Akadeemia*, journal of Estonian academic culture, no 4/2015 dedicated to the outcomes of research within CECT. In addition, synopses of the collaborative projects were published in *Horisont* (no 4/2015), a magazine devoted to the dissemination of scientific knowledge (see Tasa et al 2015).

Looking back at the experiences gained through the large-scale interdisciplinary project of CECT, number of our colleagues saw the main value of the centre in offering an opportunity to enhance contacts with representatives of other disciplines. It took a few years for centre's research community to genuinely overcome the sense of estrangement and preconceived notions about other disciplines, a wonted side effect of a lack of day-to-day interaction between research groups. However, by the end of the seven-year period the centre had achieved to establish a lively and congenial environment for academic dialogue and an exceptionally active interdisciplinary network. The papers presented in the

volume attest the willingness of the researchers to step outside their habitual boundaries and into unexpected dialogues, to look for new viewpoints and to experiment with novel approaches.

The approaches to interdisciplinary collaboration taken by the authors of the chapters are diverse. Some of them juxtapose or combine several disciplinary perspectives on common issue in order to bring forth its multifaceted nature that escapes the purview of any one discipline. In some instances, these juxtapositions reveal similarities or complementarities between the disciplines despite the apparent differences in their metalanguage and theoretical apparatus. Others take a more integrative approach and aim to present a more holistic interdisciplinary theoretical or methodological framework.

Several of the chapters re-evaluate or re-interpret existing data or case studies from new theoretical or conceptual vantage points afforded by other fields, prompting to ask questions that are not usually asked within their own field. This further allowed to discover new patterns or even gaps within existing data/ studies, habitual limits of disciplinary modes of data description or analysis. But the experimental collaboration offered also a space for exploring issues located in the borderlands, in-between disciplines, issues whose relevance or even reoccurring presence becomes evident precisely when diverse disciplines and studies are brought in dialogue.

As such, the process provided context for disciplinary self-reflection as well as for emergence of novel research objects for culture theory; it prompted discussions over epistemological underpinnings of humanities and social sciences as well as questions about the ontological statuses of their objects of study. In many cases, the collaboration revealed, once more, the ambiguous and dynamic nature of the cultural field.

In the end of the collaborative venture we can wholeheartedly agree with Art Leete's and Peeter Torop's assertion (Leete & Torop in this volume, p 121): "the diversity of the object-level must be countered by a diversity of theories or disciplines." Complexity and heterogeneity of culture necessitates from scholars the degree of diversity that can, perhaps, be properly achieved through interdisciplinary collaboration and juxtaposition.

In order to extend the dialogue between researchers and fields even further and add to the polyvocality on the topics, each chapter in this volume is accompanied by a short comment. The authors for the commentaries were suggested by the authors of the chapters and/or chosen by the editors, on the account that their research area intersects with the topic of the chapter, thereby their comments and notes would add a valuable complementary dimension to the discussion. The format of the comments was free, the guiding idea was to reflect on the

approach that was taken in the article or on its outcomes, to provide additional context and/or propose alternative perspectives or possible further trajectories for the research.

Furthermore, adding short comments to the chapters was intended to emphasise that there are no final answers or ultimate truths on the issues and, more importantly, the articles do not represent the end of collaboration. Instead, the process continues in the discussions had in between the covers of the current volume as well as outside them.

Contributing chapters

The variety of contributions in this volume gives evidence of the diverse approaches to cultural theory tackled across disciplinary boundaries within the CECT. The phenomena under scrutiny range from broader conceptual issues concerning the history and philosophy of cultural theory in Estonia to methodological problems and more specific analyses of local cultural heritage or days of celebration, for example.

The first chapter by **Marek Tamm** and **Kalevi Kull** examines the philosophical foundations of Estonian theory as well as its main epistemic facets, testing the hypothesis according to which a certain coherence and continuity can be identified in the tradition of theoretical thought in Estonia. The authors focus on the older layers of Estonian theory, mainly from the beginning of the 19th to the middle of the 20th centuries. They argue for conceiving of it as a separate local episteme – "a territorialised web of epistemological associations and rules" and underline a coherence and continuity in the Estonian cultural-theoretical tradition, based on common sources of influence and similar basic attitudes.

In their comment **Jaanus Sooväli** and **Margus Ott** challenge some aspects of the territorialisation of culture theory presented in the chapter, while agreeing with the claim that culture theory is in need of greater historicisation and its territorialisation could bring about interesting discoveries.

The complex issues of culture-dependent meaning formation are dealt with by **Tõnu Viik**, **Peeter Torop** and **Maaris Raudsepp**. Building on hermeneutics, semiotics, phenomenology and cultural psychology, they compare the theoretical models of meaning formation developed in these four sciences and highlight their common features, also exposing their culture-dependent character. They ask how the collective mechanisms of meaning formation operate within individual consciousness, how are the contents of individual experience communalised between subjects, and how are these contents socially validated. The authors argue that all the theories examined postulate the existence of a particular

collective or intersubjective meaning structure, by virtue of which subjective states can become meaningful and intersubjectively understandable.

In her comment to the chapter, **Katre Pärn** elaborates on the epistemological underpinnings put forward by the authors who extend, via Cassirer, the Uexküllian idea of plurality of species-specific umwelts to culture-specific realities. She emphasises the role of dialogue and translation as means for overcoming the monadic tendencies of human, cultural as well as disciplinary umwelts, leading towards dialogical epistemology.

In their contribution "Cultural theory and the ethnographic field: methodological views" **Art Leete** and **Peeter Torop** discuss the relationship between theory and empirical data in semiotics and ethnology. They suggest a hybrid methodology for combining broader analysis of cultural semiotics and interpretative ethnography in order to reach a joint metadisciplinary conceptual framework for cultural theory. Examining classical approaches to the relationship between the ethnographic field and cultural theory, especially Geertz's concept of the thick description, they tackle the changing understandings of this association. They claim that recent developments in cultural theory require a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the ethnographic field and hybrid methodology.

In his comment, **Toomas Gross** contextualises the issues tackled in the chapter within the broader trends in anthropology, among them the perils of anthropological methods and changes in ethnographic fields that have led to increased self-awareness within the discipline and affirm the continuing relevance of theory in anthropology.

Franz Krause, **Tarmo Pikner**, **Maaris Raudsepp**, **Kadri Kasemets** and **Anne Kull** dedicate their chapter to the concept of the unnatural. They proceed from the idea that cultural theory must transcend its traditional limitation to the 'unnatural' and grapple with reframing its analyses to include the total world, including the 'natural'. The authors approach the unnatural from six different angles, each of which is illustrated through an excursion. Consequently, the unnatural emerges out of specific, materially and semiotically situated practices and discourses and can be approached as a rich source for empirical studies into its production, negotiation, and the assumptions and projects articulated through it. The chapter suggests that 'natural' and 'unnatural' are in dynamic tension as categories that emerge from people's situated experiences and strategic uses.

Timo Maran offers in his comment additional perspective on the 'unnatural' that goes beyond viewing it as an ambiguous concept or an issue of framing. Instead, he proposes to view it as having its own ontological status and particular role in the cultural dynamics that culture theory should take into account.

As a starting point for further discussion, he provides a rough sketch of the ontology of the Unnatural.

In the next chapter, **Maaris Raudsepp** and **Andreas Ventsel** turn to the problem of systemic power and autonomy from the social, semiotic and psychological perspectives. They discuss the different approaches to interrelations between habitus, social representation and semiotic autonomy, conceptualizing them in the context of power relations. Building on these discussions, they demonstrate the most significant preconditions for the realisation of specific power relations. Their study allows describing specific power relations as dynamic and context-dependent, constantly recreated or transformed in the process of collective and individual meaning-making.

In his comment, **Peeter Selg** locates Raudsepp's and Ventsel's approach within the relational sociology, seeing it as radical or 'deep' relational perspective to power. He perceives the value of their approach in establishing a dialogue between semiotics and various approaches to power in social sciences, the lack of which has been one of the reasons for the marginal position of semiotic power analysis.

Power relations in vernacular and institutional discourses on religion are the subject of analysis in the chapter by **Andreas Ventsel**, **Atko Remmel**, **Lea Altnurme**, **Kristiina Johanson**, **Roland Karo** and **Maaris Raudsepp**. The authors tackle the interdependent meaning-making of different institutional and vernacular discourses, drawing on examples from the Estonian cultural context, mainly associated with religion. As a result of their study, they suggest a typology of power relations based on Norbert Elias' conception of functions that allows to conceptualise meaning making in religious phenomena.

Ott Puumeister observes in his comment how religious discourses operate within the complex of knowledge–power–identity. While every discourse has its "will to truth", to be recognized as legitimate knowledge, its epistemic status depends on power relations between discourses. However, the will to truth is stronger when the discourse is related to issues of identity, and the latter becomes additional dimension of power relations.

The contribution by **Ester Bardone**, **Kristi Grünberg**, **Helen Sooväli-Sepping**, **Marju Kõivupuu** and **Helen Kästik** considers three Estonian cases of heritage management looking at them from the community perspective. They outline the different roles given to communities in the process of heritage management, as well as the impact of heritage politics in shaping communities. This allows them to highlight the problem that alongside with democratization, community is understood quite differently in varied policy discourses and practices. Thus,

the question arises who represents the community and how to preserve the multivocality in heritage processes.

In the comment to the chapter, **Kristel Rattus** brings out the problematics of understanding 'community' in the context of democratization of heritage management that advocates the inclusion of communities into the management process. While the real-life situations discussed in the chapter are revealing, she calls for further theoretical reflection on the use of the concept of community.

Halliki Harro-Loit, **Triin Vihalemm**, **Kirsti Jõesalu** and **Elo-Hanna Seljamaa** address celebration practices in Estonia and their influence on societal rhythms. They are applying an actor approach to the understanding of holidays, anniversaries and festivals, combining a sociological approach with ethnological and folkloristic studies. The authors focus on various catalyst actors that have the power to create days of importance as well as introduce and disseminate celebration practices. They pay particular attention to the bodily and sensory aspects of celebrations as well as to the multi-ethnic context in Estonia, revealing the variety and controversial nature of these practices.

Pirjo Korkiakangas commends the innovative and experimental analysis of celebrations of anniversaries and holidays presented in the abovementioned chapter. The national and socio-political changes and disruptions in Estonia turn holidays and forms of their celebration into an interesting material for approaching cultural, national, ethnic, generational, gender, etc. relations to days of celebration.

In the chapter "A plurality of pasts and boundaries: evidence from Estonia's last one hundred years" **Raili Nugin**, **Tiiu Jaago**, **Anu Kannike**, **Kalevi Kull**, **Hannes Palang**, **Anu Printsmann**, **Pihla Maria Siim** and **Kati Lindström** investigate how temporal boundaries are experienced and how everyday lives have been shaped in Estonia over the last century. Aiming to raise awareness of the complexity of cultural boundaries, they use multidisciplinary examples to illustrate how borders are perceived, constructed, negotiated and contested, as well as how everyday practices maintain the borders vanished in other spheres. The authors argue that people make sense of space by creating boundaries that are tightly tied with boundaries of time. Thus, a change of regime does not necessarily create sharp boundaries, but rather provides an environment for change in which a crucial role is also played by continuities based on memory, disposition and practice.

Tuulikki Kurki observes in her comment that the conceptualised understandings of border that arise from multidisciplinary approaches enable to account for different aspects of borders (e.g. social, cultural, territorial) on various levels (e.g. micro and macro level). She sees the chapter by Nugin et al as valuable

contribution to the theorisation of border, its dimensions and its ontological nature.

The final chapter by **Pikne Kama**, **Valter Lang**, **Maarja Olli**, **Katre Pärn**, **Tiit Remm** and **Maria Smirnova** analyses the problematic notion of archaeological culture and discuss the boundaries in cultures of the past. They present an innovative exploration of the potential of semiotic model of culture for reconstructing past cultures, particularly their boundaries, based on archaeological material. The authors use the archaeological cultures of *tarand* graves and long barrows to enquire into the prospects of re-evaluating the internal and external boundaries of these cultures from the semiotic point of view. This enables them to interpret archaeological artefacts as signs of the self-model of past culture and provide a theoretical and methodological framework with which to re-evaluate existing archaeological data and interpretations.

In his comment, **Daniele Monticelli** notes that the semiotic analysis presented in the chapter shows how various functions of boundary – e.g. differentiation, integration and indifferentiation – may have been activated in parallel in burial sites, demonstrating that boundary offers a valuable theoretical tool for interdisciplinary experimentation.

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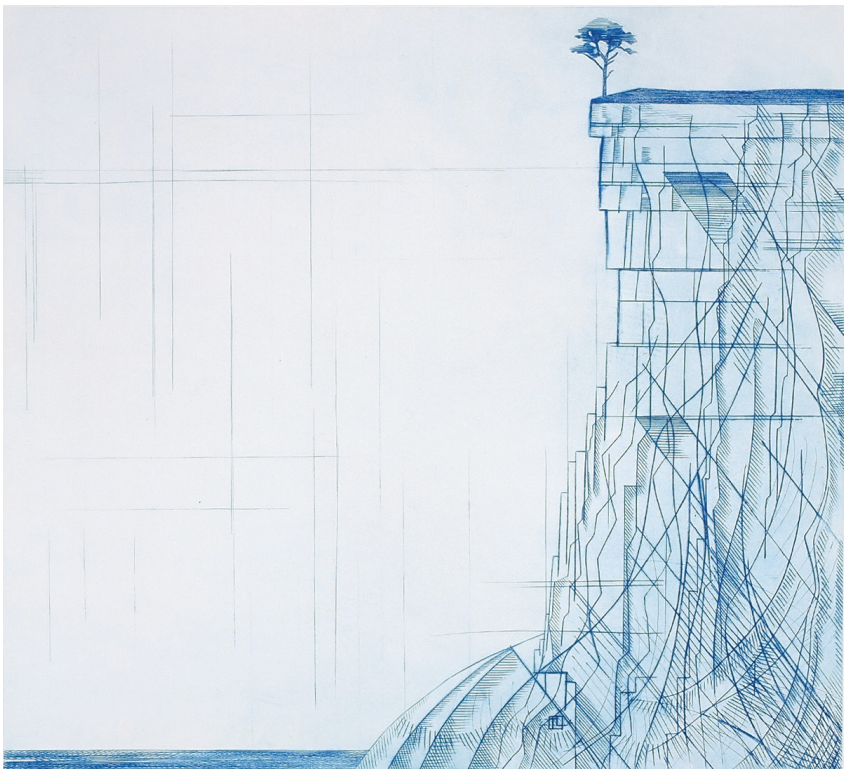
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Estonian theory

Marek Tamm, Kalevi Kull

Abstract. By Estonian theory we mean a local episteme – a territorialised web of epistemological associations and rules for making sense of the world that favours some premises while discouraging others. This article argues that from a territorial perspective a certain coherence and continuity can be identified in the Estonian cultural-theoretical tradition – a discursive body based on common sources of influence and similar fundamental attitudes. The analysis focuses on the older layers of Estonian theory, discussing the work of Karl Ernst von Baer, Victor Hehn, Gustav Teichmüller, Jakob von Uexküll, Hermann Keyserling, Johannes Gabriel Granö, Juri Lotman among others. We examine the philosophical foundations of Estonian theory as well as its main epistemic facets. The article concludes that the conceptualisation of Estonian theory could contribute to a general transformation of contemporary (cultural) theory and a redefining of the relations between the centre and the peripheries.

Keywords: cultural geography, cultural theory, episteme, semiosphere, semiotics of culture, umwelt, University of Tartu

In memoriam Madis Kõiv

Theory as local episteme

Estonia is a place. This article undertakes to test the hypothesis according to which a certain coherence and continuity can be identified in the tradition of theoretical thought in Estonia – a discursive body based on common sources of influence and similar fundamental attitudes, the closer study of which might contribute to the further development of cultural theory both in Estonia and abroad. This hypothetical and relative, continually transforming and evolving

body we shall call *Estonian theory*, with full awareness of the tentative nature of such a designation but also of its compliance with contemporary theoretical discourse.[1] A conceptual parallel and example is provided by the recognition, first in America in the 1970s and 1980s, of a certain generic similarity shared by recent French theoretical and philosophical research that came to be called *French theory* (see Cusset 2003). More recently, the term *Russian theory* (*Русская теория*) has occasionally been used to refer to the Russian literary and cultural theoretical studies of the first half of the 20th century (see Zenkin 2004, Dmitriev 2010); and attempts have also been made to conceptualise the philosophical tradition of cultural and social theory that evolved in the German cultural space as *German theory* (see Steinmetz 2006). *Czech theory* has been described recently by Vít Gvoždiak (2016). Likewise, *Italian theory* was formulated by Roberto Esposito and others (Gentili 2012; Esposito 2015a, 2015b; Claverini 2016).

This kind of approach is underpinned by the notion of a condensation of theories within the heterogeneous network of cultural communication, and of the evolution of certain local peculiarities which then lend support to the thinkers' pursuits and form a mental atmosphere, powerfully shaping the ideas and questions raised by those participating in it. This atmosphere may comprise intellectually highly charged fields affecting several generations, as well as transdisciplinary sets of concepts, thinking styles, and judgements that will keep diversity and peculiarities alive. An obvious part is played in this mechanism by the attractiveness of essential concepts, which in itself rallies thinkers around it. Fundamental understandings and productive theories can, of course, spring up anywhere in the world. But an idea proposed in the framework of contextually more familiar basic attitudes and distinctions is more easily accepted by colleagues. Therefore a certain localness is inevitable and, due to its autocatalytic and cumulative nature, relatively persistent even in science. Differences of language and origins need not seriously hinder a meeting of ideas; such difficulties are generally outweighed by mutually compliant basic attitudes and intelligibility.

Although the discussions have so far failed to propose a clear definition of theory in this context, or to reach agreement on all details, they do take note of the main characteristics. In the context of French theory, Jonathan Culler writes: "what counts as theory are works that succeed in exercising influence outside their original discipline because their analyses of language, mind, identity, or social and political structure prove productive for rethinking other domains of signification" (Culler 2014, 4). In his description of Russian theory, Sergei Zenkin stipulates that theory must be historical–geographical, interdisciplinary and "international – at least potentially" (Zenkin 2004, 8–9)[2]. These important aspects highlighted by him fully coincide with our approach. Speaking about

German theory, George Steinmetz emphasises that "the focus here is on theorists whose ideas are still (or once again) attractive" (Steinmetz 2006, 5). This is not a researcher's accidental position but addresses a significant feature of the theory – because the figures whom we regard as belonging to the core of the theory are precisely those whose share in building up the enduring part of local intellectual memory is the greatest. Steinmetz makes room in the local theory even for *émigrés*, refugees, and other intercultural migrants. This is an important aspect, since scientific-cultural experiences play a huge role in introducing vigorous (and therefore also better recognisable within the given academic culture) concepts, meaning that a great contribution is often made to the local episteme[3] by those who have spent only a part of their life working in the given *locus*. It is also linked to the fact that such theories do not evolve through opposition to others; for instance, those of the neighbours. Therefore, different theories, including Estonian theory and Russian theory, can easily have some parts in common, and many scholars may well belong to both, or several, at once.

Estonian theory as we see it is thus a comparatively coherent aggregate of outstanding notions that originate with scholars linked to Estonia, which may have significant intellectual value and interest for the whole intellectual world. In the first approximation, it is made up of a certain corpus of proposals (archive of statements[4]) projecting from a sufficiently voluminous set of scholarly texts. In fact, it is only as such that it is identifiable. But in the second approximation, and keeping in mind the theory's mechanism of formation and evolvement, we must concede that it nevertheless is to a certain extent variable in time. On the one hand, this gives more weight and permanent usability to such a theory if recognised; on the other hand it calls for specification of the particular period in time to which we refer. Yet, regardless of its variability, it is no short-term popular view but a slowly evolving and far from easily definable or noticeable body of thought. Nor does Estonian theory have to be dominant at any point in time, or involve the majority of local scholars. Therefore, it is difficult to discover it with the help of statistical or scientometric methods.

Methodologically, we shall be guided by two main points of view. On the one hand, we shall be engaged in archaeological analysis in the Foucauldian sense of the term, that is, our aim is to analyse the archive of Estonian theory – the cultural-theoretical statements accumulated over the last centuries, their interconnections and groupings into various conceptual communities. In so doing, we are well aware that "the archive cannot be described in its totality; and in its presence it is unavoidable" (Foucault 2002 [1969], 147). Thus we offer only a few extracts and bold generalisations based on them, in the hope that they may encourage further research. From another vantage point, the analysis moves

into the sphere of genealogical analysis (this time, however, only weakly related to the sense that Foucault gave to this term); yet it is not the origins of Estonian theory that are highlighted, but we aim at (re)constructing the continuities inherent in the local theoretical tradition. We are interested in Estonian theory not merely in its historical evolution, but also as it relates to the present; we are happy to adopt the 'retrospective look' and try to construct a genealogical network for Estonian theory. Unlike traditional historians who try "to erase the elements in their work which reveal their grounding in a particular time and place" (Foucault 1984 [1971], 90), we consider it necessary to point out our own perspective and vantage point; it is our aim "to create [our] own genealogy in the act of cognition" (op cit). Our attitude is summarised aptly (and in terms surprisingly similar to our own) by an important author in Estonian theory, Adolf von Harnack, in the preface to his book of lectures, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (What Is Christianity?): "The task has been set up and dealt with in a purely historical manner. This entails the obligation of finding, highlighting and making intelligible what is essential and enduring in various phenomena, even if it be partly concealed. In such a work, mistakes will be inevitable; but as mere 'archaeology', all history is mute" (Harnack 1902 [1900], iii).

In addition, the present article also includes two more general epistemological attitudes that are at the same time also appeals. First, we find that cultural theory is in need of greater *historicisation* than it has so far received, since productive theoretical reflexion must be aware of the origins of the concepts, ideas and attitudes it uses. Theoretical investigation must be able to see simultaneously the past and the future; indeed it is often from a close dialogue with the old that the new is born.[5] Second, we call for a *territorialisation* of theory. Whereas generally such historically bent discussions as the present one prefer a certain unity of time – *Zeitgeist* or *air du temps* – as their points of departure, we believe that the unity of space – *genius loci* or *air du lieu* – is even more important than temporal unity. The theoretical thought related to Estonia is born primarily from the spirit of place, not of time. Or, as another important author of Estonian theory, the philosopher Madis Kõiv, has put it: "The spirit of time is, in the final analysis, reducible to that of place, it erupts from some hidden depth of a place and is then dissipated over places in the course of time" (Kõiv 2005 [1993], 344). And elsewhere: "Because this is the way it is – he who changes a place, changes the spirit of the place by doing so; because place is sensitive to spirit, it receives spirits and cultivates them, itself" (Kõiv 2005 [2001], 334). The principle of territorialisation also allows us to delimit the subject matter of our research: we include in the archive of Estonian theory all the scholarly texts whose authors have been closely linked to Estonia, either through origin, study, or teaching.[6] Thus, by choosing

the territorial principle as our point of departure in outlining Estonian theory, we are not constrained by ethnic or linguistic criteria.[7] Nor is it insignificant that any territorialisation (of theory), as pointed out by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, inspired in their turn by Jakob von Uexküll, "presupposes a prior deterritorialization" (Deleuze, Guattari 1994 [1991], 68). Neither does it presuppose any reshuffling of previous relations, something that is also important for the present undertaking: the conceptualisation of Estonian theory could, in such a way, contribute to a general transformation of contemporary (cultural) theory, a redefining of the relations between the centre and the periphery.

The article focuses on the older layers of Estonian theory, mainly from the beginning of the 19th to the middle of the 20th centuries. Therefore, the authors discussed here will, for the main part, be German (both Baltic and *Reichsdeutsch*, or Imperial German), and later also Finnish and Russian scholars linked to Estonia, as well as native Estonian scholars. We will not explicate here the associations that unite the scholars of yore with those of the present, but implicitly we keep in mind that the continuity of ideas may occasionally be very strong and significant. At the same time we are aware that any theoretical self-description of a culture, as well as a description of culture theory's own local history, in turn influence the further identity and evolution of the described culture.

The archive of Estonian theory

Before going on to analyse the archive of Estonian theory, we should take a look at its constituters and organising principles. First, we must answer two questions: (a) what is the institutional environment of this sphere, and under the influence of which Estonian theory did it take shape and was it given a legitimate point of application; and (b) who are the individuals who speak in Estonian theory, what is their status and to what fields do they belong (cf. Foucault 2002 [1969], 26–28).

Presumably the most important institutional generator of the archive of Estonian theory is Tartu University[8]. Although it might be possible, with meticulous research, to detect fragments of an evolving Estonian theory from the end of the medieval period onwards – keeping in mind, for instance, the Baltic Enlightenment movement – it is only after the reopening of Tartu University in 1802 that we can speak about it with an important degree of particularity and comprehensiveness. Since this is not the right place to go into a lengthy discussion of the history of Tartu University, we shall outline only a few characteristics and development features that are important for our present purposes.

The main peculiarity of Tartu University in the 19th century was certainly the fact that it was a university simultaneously both Russian and German. It was

established in order to meet the intellectual needs of the Russian Empire, and financed mainly from the funds of Russia's central government, yet up to the last quarter of the 19th century Tartu University clearly enjoyed special status and autonomy, as compared with the other higher education establishments of the Russian Empire. The structure of the university was modelled on German examples, and professors were invited mainly from Germany. In the years 1802–1886, a total of 209 professors worked in Tartu, of whom more than half (118) came from Germany, 64 from the Baltic provinces, and 22 from Russia (Meyer 1887, 6). Whereas at first the professoriate consisted mainly of the alumni of the universities of Halle, Jena, Göttingen, and Leipzig, these ties weakened in the 1820s when the relative importance of Berlin began to grow rapidly. In the second half of the century the German connection (except for Jena) grew stronger again until the 1890s, when the policy of russification hit the university, significantly curtailing the previous German orientation and bringing to the fore the influence of the universities of Moscow and St. Petersburg (Tamul 2007).

The development of the reopened Tartu University up to World War II can, with some simplification, be divided into three stages: the German University of Dorpat (1802 through to the 1880s), the Russian University of Yuryev (the 1880s through to 1918)[9], and the Estonian University of Tartu (1920–1940). Each of these periods was characterised by clear changes in academic (and political) orientation, the choice of professors, and language policies. These turns of fate have left a significant mark on the shaping of the archive of Estonian theory. The years 1820–1865 and 1920–1940 can be regarded as key periods. In the 1820s, the university began to develop rapidly, opening a number of new professorships, while the number of students multiplied (from 262 in 1820 to 712 in 1853) (Siilivask 1985, 75). The university ranked among the foremost intellectual centres of the Russian Empire (a number of its professors were elected to the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences), and belonged at the same time among the top German-language universities in Europe. In the 1920s, after Estonia had gained independence, work began building up an Estonian-language national university, a process initially involving the recruitment of new academic cadres from neighbouring countries, mainly Finland and Sweden, but also from among Germans. The contribution of this new professoriate to the furthering of Estonian theory is remarkable, as is their role in shaping Estonia's new generation of scholars.

Tartu has also been the centre for schools of thought that became known under the name of this place. These include the Dorpat School of religious psychology, established by Karl Girgensohn (1875–1925), and the Tartu–Moscow School of semiotics, established by Juri Lotman. Both of these schools have been active over several generations of scholars[10]. That these schools owe something

fundamentally to Tartu as a place has been claimed repeatedly (see, for example, Espagne 2010; Beecher 2014).

The vantage point of the present article does not, to any considerable extent, cover the developments that took place in Estonian theory after the Second World War; yet it should be mentioned that institutionally the new constraints in Tartu University's academic orientation and freedom of activity, as well as the recruiting of new professors from Russia and new contacts made with Russian scholars in Moscow, Leningrad and elsewhere, had an impact.

Although the University of Tartu has been the undisputed institutional centre of Estonian theory, as a force of both attraction and repulsion, other institutional environments should not be neglected. The most important of these appears to be the Baltic manor. It is certainly no accident that several central authors of Estonian theory have come from a manorial background and frequently also worked in manors. Suffice it to name Karl Ernst von Baer, who was born on Piibe (German: Piep) manor; or Alexander and Hermann Keyserling, the squires of Raikküla (German: Rayküll); or Jakob von Uexküll, who spent his summers on Puhtu (German: Pucht) manor; with the intellectual environment of the manors of Vana-Vigala (German: Fickel), Sangaste (German: Sagnitz) and others also being noteworthy. Theoretical thinking remained the privilege of the upper class in Estonia for a long time, and manors were the nobility's most important living environment. Literary historian Jaan Undusk has ingenuously linked a central part of Estonian theory – the idea of a subjective umwelt or "self-centered world" – to the specific nature of Baltic manorial life where the appreciation of culture effortlessly combined with an appreciation of nature. "In a certain sense the *Umweltlehre*, the doctrine of umwelten, is a theoretical generalisation springing from the Baltic manorial life," Undusk observes, reducing Uexküll's teaching to the simple maxim: "My world is my manor!" (Undusk 2008, 100).

The step from institutions to individuals is the riskiest and most arbitrary part of the present venture. Whose statements constitute Estonian theory? Whose speech qualifies? Whose position is adequate? How should one determine adequacy? Clearly these questions can, as yet, be answered only in a groping and haphazard manner. It is easier, however, to talk about social status: in the 19th century these people mainly belonged to the hereditary nobility or the literate class (*Literatenstand*). This class began to evolve in Estonia and Livonia in the 18th century, and counted among its numbers bourgeois intellectuals who had attended university (Lenz 1953, 1997). This earlier hierarchical order was upset only by the advent of independent Estonian statehood in 1918 and the emergence of a national class of intellectuals.
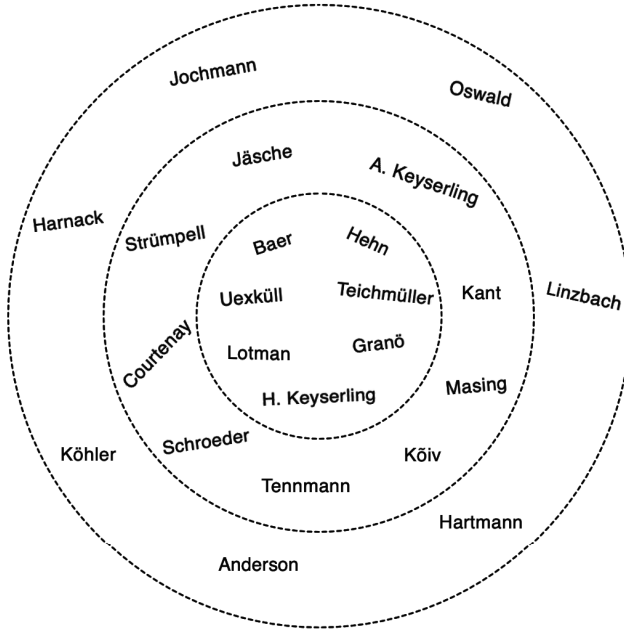
Figure 1. Three rings of authors of Estonian theory.

The archive of Estonian theory has taken shape through the participation of numerous scholars. Their numbers include those responsible for a cluster of mutually attractive and productive ideas. At the present state of research, it seems best to represent the archive as a kind of web of statements that is densest (most coherent, as to the fundamental positions, and most compact, as to the authors involved) at its centre and more dispersed at the margins (Figure 1). Here we venture to highlight seven scholars from the dense centre (on whom the following analysis will hinge, for the most part) whose ideas have had a major influence within, but also outside, their original discipline and still (or once again) attract increasing international interest. However, needless to say, the list is not and cannot be closed (besides, both here and in the following we shall limit ourselves to deceased authors). Although a natural scientist (biologist and anthropologist) by profession, a very significant shaper of Estonian theory was **Karl Ernst von Baer** (1792–1896); several of the ideas first proposed by him can be encountered in the works of later theorists, variously worded and built upon. A somewhat exceptional yet extremely intriguing figure in Estonian theory is the philologist

and cultural historian **Victor Hehn** (1813–1890), a native of Tartu. Another German holding a central position in Estonian theory is long-term professor of philosophy at Tartu University, **Gustav Teichmüller** (1832–1888). A biologist who exercised a very multifaceted influence on Estonian theory is **Jakob von Uexküll** (1864–1944), who grew up on the manor of Haimre (German: Heimar). Side by side with him stands the representative of another well-known Baltic German family, "the philosopher of Raikküla" **Hermann Keyserling** (1880–1946). **Johannes Gabriel Granö** (1882–1956), invited from Finland in 1919 to become the first professor of geography at Tartu University, engaged effortlessly in the already distinct tradition of Estonian theory. An even greater creative contribution to the furthering of the local theoretical tradition was made by **Juri Lotman** (1922–1993), founder of the Tartu–Moscow school of semiotics, who began work at Tartu University in the early 1950s.

In the second ring of the archive web, the community of statements is less homogeneous and more dispersed, in addition to which the number of source texts is greater. Among the authors, mention could be made of the first professor of philosophy at Tartu University, **Gottlob Benjamin Jäsche** (1762–1842); **Ludwig Strümpell** (1812–1899), the long-term professor of theoretical and practical philosophy and pedagogics at Tartu; the curator of the university, geologist and paleontologist **Alexander Keyserling** (1815–1891), born on Kabile (German: Kabillen) manor, Courland; **Jan Baudouin de Courtenay** (1845–1929), who worked in Tartu between 1883 and 1893 as professor of the comparative grammar of Slavonic languages; Estonia's first indologist, long-term professor of Tartu University **Leopold von Schroeder** (1851–1920); theologian and church historian **Adolf von Harnack** (1851–1930), who was born and studied in Tartu; the first Estonian philosopher of religion, Teichmüller's pupil **Eduard Tennmann** (1878–1936); the Austrian **Walther Schmied-Kowarzik** (1885–1958), who worked at Tartu University as professor of philosophy and psychology; Granö's pupil **Edgar Kant** (1902–1978), who continued his teacher's work in Tartu; and also theologian **Uku Masing** (1909–1985) and physicist and philosopher **Madis Kõiv** (1929–2014). More names could naturally be added to this list, especially from among the pupils of those mentioned above.

Thus, the archive of Estonian theory is not clearly delimited and a number of statements easily connectible to the core of the web can be found in its margins. These statements originate with a comparatively large and diverse group of scholars, not all of them necessarily very closely connected to Estonia. Some of the more outstanding would be the founder and long-term director of the University Library as well as professor of classical philology, rhetoric, aesthetics, and the history of both literature and art, Johann Karl Simon Morgenstern (1770–1852);

publicist and philosopher of politics and language Carl Gustav Jochmann (1789–1830), native of Pärnu; professor of systematic theology at Tartu University Alexander von Oettingen (1827–1905), born on Visusti (German: Wissust) manor; physiological chemist and a pioneer of neovitalism Gustav Bunge (1844–1920); Nobel prize winner for chemistry Wilhelm Ostwald (1853–1932), who studied and for a short period and also taught at the University of Tartu; the linguist Jakob Linzbach (1874–1953), born in Kõmmaste village, Risti, and known for his research into artificial languages; the philosopher Nicolai Hartmann (1882–1950), native of Riga, who studied medicine in Tartu for two terms; the first professor of Tartu University's chair of Estonian and comparative folklore, Walter Anderson (1885–1962); and one of the founders of Gestalt psychology, Wolfgang Köhler (1887–1967), who was born in Tallinn.[11]

Looking at this list it is clear that a remarkable number of scholars, mainly – but not exclusively – in the humanities, who have been linked with Estonia over the last couple of centuries, have contributed to Estonian theory. What is more interesting and more complicated than just listing the names, however, is to try to organise this vast theoretical archive, to identify common sources of influence, spot similar epistemic positions and construct thematic communities of statements.

Estonian theory's sources of influence

One of the most important factors contributing to the internal unity of Estonian theory is its common sources of influence. The philosophical foundations of Estonian theory are surprisingly distinct without excluding, however, several exceptions and deviations. Unrivalled has been the influence of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) and the later elaborators of his philosophy. Kant's impact is complemented, on the one hand, by the views of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716), and on the other by the works of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832); a lesser role also being played by the other German romanticists. What is unexpected is the relative scarcity, although not complete absence (especially in a mediated form), of the influence of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831) in Estonian theory of the relevant period. It is, however, likely that further research may lead to a reconsideration of this view.[12]

The important role of Leibniz in the evolution of Estonian theory is relatively unexpected and merits closer attention in the future. Although Leibniz's influence is multifaceted, his pluralist doctrine of substance in general, and his monadology in particular, seem to have had a major role in shaping local reception. Leibniz saw the world as divided into the substantial and the phenomenal,

and claimed that the phenomenal sprang from simple substances, or monads. Monads were innumerable, and no two resembled each other. They were all self-sufficient, autonomously operating, and not subject to external influence. "The monads have no windows through which something can enter or leave", as Leibniz puts it in paragraph 7 of his *Monadology* (Leibniz 1989 [1714], 214).

Leibniz's ideas seeped into Estonian theory in the last decades of the 19th century, primarily via the works of Gustav Teichmüller and Jakob von Uexküll. Teichmüller became acquainted with Leibniz's views in 1860, while working in Göttingen, and later repeatedly acknowledged Leibniz's significant impact on the evolution of his own positions – which does not, of course, exclude several alterations (Teichmüller 1874, 67–69, 1882, 138–140, 1889, 58–60). The metaphysical position of Teichmüller's later years can be considered an elaboration of Leibniz's monadology (cf. Vaska 1995 [1964], 99, n. 2), with the greatest difference being the provision of monads with 'windows' – that is, allowing for their interaction. This aspect has been summarised by Otmar Pello (1989 [1964], 1153–1154) (accounting for both Teichmüller and his pupil Tennmann): "To a certain extent, Teichmüller's philosophy relies on the monadology of Leibniz. Yet, having said that, we must immediately call attention to the difference of the two philosophies, too. Leibniz's monads were 'windowless', thus precluding the idea of mutual interaction between them. Each correspondence was supposed to be based only on some prestabilised harmony, as he called it. Teichmüller and Tennmann, however, speak about the soul's function of movement, and it is through this function that the interaction of the monads or, as they preferred to call them, the substances, becomes possible."

Jakob von Uexküll liked to point to Immanuel Kant as his philosophical model, but his umwelten-doctrine also owes a lot to Leibniz. Among the first to notice this was his pupil Friedrich Brock (1939), followed later by Harald Lassen (1939) and others (e.g., Buchanan 2008, 23; Guidetti 2013; Brentari 2015, 167). Yet traces of Leibniz's monadology can also be found elsewhere in the archive of Estonian theory. The question of the monads' interaction interested not only Teichmüller, but also Hermann Keyserling who, however, remained unable to decide whether the monads should be conceived of as having or not having 'windows' (H. von Keyserling 1922, 3; 1936, 48).[13] Even more interesting is the fact that in his late period, Juri Lotman turned to Leibniz "whose ideas seem to gain new intellectual interest once again" (Lotman 1997 [1989], 9; see also Restaneo 2018). Lotman represents the semiotic universe or semiosphere as consisting of separate structures of meaning production called 'semiotic monads': "The monads of this kind are both the culture as a whole and any sufficiently complicated text incorporated in it, including separate human personalities, regarded

as texts" (op cit). It is worth noting that unlike Leibniz, Lotman, too, prefers to regard the semiotic monads as having 'windows' – that is, as open structures: "The above-mentioned separateness of such a monad (within certain limits) not only presumes the presence of borders and an immanent structure but, at the same time, the existence of 'input' and 'output'. Since the monad does not possess a material but rather a semiotic-informational existence, the 'consumption' of any entering text by the monad results not only in its physical, but also in its informational destruction: being transformed during the process of the 'consumption', in the course of which a new text appears at the exit, the initial text is retained in its original form and is able to enter into new relations with its own transformation" (op cit).

While Leibniz's influence on Estonian theory remains intermittent, that of Kant is all-encompassing. By way of a broad generalisation it might be said that Estonian theory is based on Kantian foundations, especially as concerns epistemological questions – without, nevertheless, implying any blind mimicking of Kant, but rather a creative elaboration of his teaching. Most of the important participants in Estonian theory listed above, particularly those in the first two rings, can be said to have had a closer or more distant connection with the Kantian world outlook. A tell-tale exception is Victor Hehn, one of the few Hegelians in Estonian theory.

Kant's influence reached Estonian theory through several channels, of which four might be highlighted where different target groups valued different aspects of Kant's doctrine. Initially Kant's ideas arrived in Estonia directly with the Keyserlings. Kant established close ties with this Courland family who resided in Rautenburg, near Königsberg, at a very early date and socialised with them for nearly thirty years. The beginning of this acquaintance remains obscure, but it seems probable that in the mid-1770s Kant spent some years with the family as tutor (Kuehn 2002, 96, Zammito 2002, 122). Kant educated the two sons of the Keyserling (or Keyserlingk) family; and later the younger son, Albrecht Johann Otto Keyserlingk (1747–1809), attended Kant's lectures at the University of Königsberg. Albrecht Johann's son Heinrich Dietrich Wilhelm von Keyserling (1775–1850) entered the university in 1794, just in time to benefit from Kant's last lectures. Heinrich's son Alexander Keyserling, who went on to become curator of Tartu University, can also be called a Kantian (Rappe 2007). In his posthumously published diaries he frequently addresses Kant, giving a fairly good idea of how the philosopher's influence was passed on in the male line of the family: "My father had attained a Kantian way of life, albeit with certain concessions that a man of the world [*Lebemann*] must necessarily make. True enough, he only met Kant at a very tender age, reciting to him some verses he had learned

by heart. My grandfather was probably more deeply influenced by Kant, having been tutored by him – although for a short time, only up to the age eight –, and later benefiting from his lectures in Königsberg. A certain Kantian quality has been perceptible in my family's way of life ever since" (A. Keyserling 1894, 61–62). Kant's influence is also clearly discernible in the views of Alexander's grandson Hermann Keyserling, a telling testimony of how the philosopher's first-person influence endured in the family across five generations.[14]

However, the dissemination of Kant's ideas was not limited to the family circle; his philosophical positions, particularly his moral doctrine, won early support from the Baltic German pastors, as testified among other sources by the influential sermon collections of Livonia's Superintendent General, Karl Gottlob Sonntag (1765–1827). A good example of an early interest in Kant is provided by the professor of rhetoric at Tallinn Grammar School (*Kaiserliches Stadt-Gymnasium Reval*), Ernst August Wilhelm Hörschelmann (1743–1795), who began to teach Kant's philosophy to his students as early as 1789, stating in the course programme: "I wish that this philosophy may spread and be accepted ever more broadly. The study of this philosophy sharpens the mind, undermines superciliously dogmatic attitudes and enables us to reject several arguments that have so far been put forth, especially against religion; it also teaches exemplary morals, excellently edifying the human mind" (Hörschelmann 1789, 6).

It was, however, the reopened (in 1802) Tartu University that became the main stronghold of Kantianism, with one of its first foreign professors, Gottlob Benjamin Jäsche, a close disciple of Kant's. Jäsche, the first publisher of Kant's lectures on logic, held the professorship of philosophy in Tartu for nearly forty years (1802–1839), and although his views underwent certain alterations, Kant, "that new Socrates, my immortal teacher and guide on the paths of science" (Jäsche 2002 [1808], 2535), remained his main source of inspiration until the end of his days.[15] It is also telling that even after his retirement in 1833, Jäsche was still offered the professorship over the young Hegelian, former student of Tartu University, Johann Eduard Erdmann (1805–1892). But the resonance of Kant's ideas was broader than a professorship in philosophy; many of the progressive professors of the reopened university – members of the so-called Society of the Church of Ephesus – can be considered Kantians, starting with the first Rector, professor of physics Georg Friedrich Parrot (1767–1852). Several of them, including Parrot, may have come to Kantianism only in Tartu (Ruutsoo 1979: 17).

A separate line of influence that helped Kantian principles to take root in Estonian theory proceeds from the natural scientists associated with Tartu. This is not exactly surprising, since Kant's ideas can be regarded as one of the foremost influences on German biology in the first half of the 19th century, with

his *Critique of Judgement* making a particularly significant impact (Lenoir 1982, Ginsborg 2006, 2015). Karl Ernst von Baer could, as he has reminisced, partake of Kant's philosophy while studying in Würzburg under Ignaz Döllinger (1770–1841) (Baer 1886 [1866], 184–187), and to the end of his days he insisted that, fundamentally, his views harmonised with those of Kant (Baer 1876, 231, see also Lenoir 1988). The biological teaching of Jakob von Uexküll, who became acquainted with the works of the Königsberg philosopher in his student years but immersed himself in them while working in Heidelberg, likewise rests on Kantian foundations (Mildenberger 2007a, 72). Uexküll did in fact see the expansion of Kant's teaching to living nature as the main aim of his own scientific work. In the introduction to one of his major works *Theoretical Biology*, originally published in 1920, he summarises the aims of biology in two points: "The task of biology consists in expanding in two directions the results of Kant's investigations: – (1) by considering the part played by our body, and especially by our sense-organs and central nervous system, and (2) by studying the relations of other subjects (animals) to objects" (Uexküll 1926 [1920], xv).[16] In *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans*, he observed in the same spirit: "With this observation, biology has once and for all connected with Kant's philosophy, which biology will now utilize through the natural sciences by emphasizing the decisive role of the subject" (Uexküll 2010 [1934], 52).

Johannes Gabriel Granö, elected professor of geography at Tartu University in 1919, had decided to base his geographical teaching on a Kantian foundation about a decade before that, thus proving a smooth fit in the Kantian framework of Estonian theory (Tiitta 2011, 101, 212). Another scholar to match the tradition effortlessly was Juri Lotman, who arrived in Tartu after World War II and who can also be considered a Kantian, as convincingly demonstrated by Mihhail Lotman: "Although he does not often refer to Kant's ideas and writings (the most significant references appear in his final works), Kant was his habitual interlocutor over many years, and in his lectures the name of the Königsberg thinker appeared much more frequently than in written texts." And he adds, generalising: "However, even that is not the point. The most fundamental constructs of the Tartu school of semiotics reveal a clearly Kantian foundation" (M. Lotman 2000, 26).

German rationalism as represented by Leibniz and Kant did not, however, remain the only forces to shape Estonian theory. They were supplemented, from the opposite direction, by German (and to a degree also Russian) romanticism, especially Goethe and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775–1854). The underpinning notions of Estonian theory reflect the clear and long-term influence of the holistic and organicist natural philosophy of the German romanticists, which acquired great resonance in the German cultural space of the first half

of the 19th century (Richards 2002). In Tartu, the first to teach the views of the natural philosophers, and Schelling in particular, was Karl Friedrich Burdach (1776–1847), professor of anatomy, physiology, and forensics at the university in 1811–1814. He recalls in his memoirs: "In Tartu, neither philosophy nor natural sciences were as yet in the least influenced by Schelling nor his school; and therefore my attempts at giving a deeper meaning to empiricism met with great resonance among the young men capable of a higher education" (Burdach 1848, 226). He also notes the hostility of his colleagues to the new teaching; thus, for instance, the professor of physics, Parrot, apparently did not wish to befriend him, considering him a natural philosopher beyond recall (Burdach 1848, 259). Elsewhere, Morgenstern (1843, 43) notes that Jäsche also took a negative view of Schelling. Baer, too, has recorded a telling recollection of his student years in Tartu: "We were warned off natural philosophy as anxiously as if it were a ghost, without anybody ever giving a closer explanation of its harmfulness – because nobody really knew what it was" (Baer 1886 [1866], 94). It is quite likely that Baer may have first heard about natural philosophers from Burdach, although according to his own testimony he became acquainted with their views thanks to Döllinger's lectures, in Würzburg (op cit, 187, 289). And it was not only on Baer that the German natural philosophers, and Goethe in particular, left their mark; the same goes for Jakob von Uexküll, as pointed out already in the early 1940s by his kindred thinker, philosopher Ernst Cassirer (1950, 205).[17]

However, the attitudes of Goethe and Schelling shaped Estonian theory not only through natural scientists, but also humanists, especially Victor Hehn, who can be considered one of the most important and original interpreters of Goethe in the last decades of the 19th century. For Hehn, Goethe was not just a subject matter, rather he was the point of departure for his own original theory of culture. Thomas Taterka is justified in saying that "Hehn's studies of Goethe stand at the heart of his cultural research, only in relation to Goethe do they find their place and acquire a significance: they indeed constitute a cornerstone of Hehn's conception of culture" (Taterka 2000, 152, cf. Schwidtal 2002). Having been elected lecturer of German at Tartu University, in 1846, Hehn eagerly set out to introduce Goethe and his contemporaries to his students, thus definitely contributing to the popularisation of Goethe's ideas in the university town even though he was not the first to do so, since his predecessor Carl Eduard Raupach (1793–1882) had given lectures on Goethe fifteen years earlier (Rutiku 2003, 27; Undusk 2006, 566–567). There were, of course, many others in Tartu at that time who took an interest in Goethe, among them one of the most devoted promoters of the 'Weimar spirit', Karl Morgenstern (Rand 2000), to say nothing of later

firm admirers of Goethe such as Leopold von Schroeder or Adolf von Harnack (see Barner 2003).

Briefly, the above sketch allows us to conclude that Estonian theory took shape primarily in the field of tensions between rationalism and romanticism[18], and it is precisely this double influence from which Estonian theory's main epistemic positions or facets have sprung.

The epistemic facets of Estonian theory

The most productive way to discuss Estonian theory seems to be by conceiving of it as a separate local episteme – a territorialised web of epistemological associations and rules for making sense of the world that favours some premises while discouraging others. We shall make a tentative attempt to describe this epistemic entanglement from five different perspectives, without claiming that the five facets make up an exhaustive or homogeneous model; rather, we conceive of Estonian theory as a dynamic whole, with discords and contradictions constituting an integral part of the system and now one, now another facet being given precedence according to the various constellations.

Holisticity

Estonian theory is holistic in nature, presuming that the whole precedes the parts, the general precedes the particular: in order to study elementary parts, one must first study complex systems. As pointed out above, the holistic roots of Estonian theory should be looked for first and foremost in German romanticism, particularly the work of Goethe and Schelling where holism was first developed into an independent world view and scientific method (Bortoft 1996, Richards 2002). In view of an important distinction made by Patrick Sériot (2014 [1999], 251), it is best to discuss the holistic nature of Estonian theory in an ontological rather than epistemological key; the associations between the elements are not mere constructs devised by the investigator but exist in reality – the world itself constitutes an integral system. It is probably due to the central holistic attitude of Estonian theory, as well as to a favourable environment, that the quest for a common denominator shared by living nature and culture, as well as for transitions from the one to the other, began so early in Estonia, and why students both of nature and culture have contributed equally to the local theory.[19]

The holistic nature of Estonian theory lends itself well to expression by musical metaphors, which indeed have cropped up frequently in the texts of various scholars. An early example is offered by Baer in his famous speech at the

foundation ceremony of the Russian Entomological Society, in October 1860. Deliberating over the internally purposeful nature of life forms, he concludes: "Therefore I believe it is justified to call various life processes, by drawing a parallel with musical thoughts or themes, creation-thoughts that build up their bodies, on their own. What in music is called harmony or melody, is here type (togetherness of parts) and rhythm (sequence of forms)" (Baer 1864, 281). Eighty years later, Uexküll takes up the same line as he looks for a way to escape the limited confines of umwelten in one of his last books, *Theory of Meaning*: "Only when we recognize that everything in nature is created by its meaning, and that all the umwelten are but voices that take part in a universal score, will the way be open to lead us out of the narrow confines of our own umwelt" (Uexküll 1982 [1940], 72). But there are more holistic allegories to be found in Estonian theory. Perhaps one of the best known among them was authored by Juri Lotman: "Just as, by sticking together individual steaks, we don't obtain a calf, but by cutting up a calf, we may obtain steaks, – in summing separate semiotic acts, we don't obtain a semiotic universe. On the contrary, only the existence of such a universe – the semiosphere – makes the specific sign act real" (Lotman 2005 [1984], 208, translation is slightly corrected).[20] Indeed, Lotman's conception of the semiosphere (in which he generalised the concept of text) can be said to take the holistic line of Estonian theory to its ultimate logical conclusion. It is interesting to note how beautifully Lotman's use of metaphors matches the musical metaphors used by Uexküll in his reference to an experiment by Hans Driesch (1867–1941): "Only with the demonstration provided by Driesch that a sea urchin germ cell cut in half became not two half, but two whole sea urchins of half the size, opened the way for a deeper understanding of the technology of Nature. Everything physical can be cut with a knife – but not a melody" (Uexküll 2010 [1934], 194).

The holistic attitude has given rise to several original approaches in Estonian theory. Thus, Johannes Gabriel Granö's innovative understanding of geography, for example, developed in its broad outlines during his Tartu period (1919–1923) and fully recognised for its originality only decades later (O. Granö & Paasi 1997; O. Granö 2003), is clearly the product of a holistic way of thinking. In the opening paragraph of his *Pure Geography* he defines his point of departure: "The aim of this work is to demonstrate that the topic of geographical research is the human environment, understood as the whole complex of phenomena and objects that can be perceived by the senses" (Granö 1997 [1929], 1). Granö was the first geographer to encompass in his vision the natural environment – milieu – as a whole, in the way it manifested itself to the scholar's perception and senses in its full diversity.[21]

Organicisticity

The holistic attitude of Estonian theory is fundamentally organic: the whole is not formed mechanically, but constitutes a living, harmonious and dynamic system informed by some deeper intentionality. Again, the roots of this epistemic attitude mainly go back to Kant and Goethe. Yet whereas for Kant, the organicist approach was an epistemological device (Zumbach 1984, 129; Cohen 2009, 16), the Romanticists added a metaphysical touch – the world itself became organic (Richards 2002, 114). Examples of both lines of thought can be found in Estonian theory, although ontological organicism tends to prevail. This approach manifests the above mentioned tendency to entwine the cultural and the natural: in Estonian theory, the distinction is made not so much along the lines between nature and culture, as along those between the living (organic) and the lifeless (mechanical).

The organicist perspective of Estonian theory has perhaps been best formulated by Hermann Keyserling: "The actual, decisive problem is that spiritual life, forming part of the natural sphere, must everywhere be taken back to its meaning [*Sinn*]. Then that which heretofore had appeared to the world as two mutually exclusive types, will prove to be *one* organism. Is this aim practically attainable? – Yes, it is, since the world of thought forms as organic a whole as the world of bodily life. Each cell has its meaningful place in an organ, each organ in the organism, while the latter has a place in a broader spatial and temporal context. Thus, each meaningful act in turn points back to a deeper meaning" (H. von Keyserling 1922, 29). Keyserling's way of posing the problem owes a lot to the works of both Baer and Uexküll, who never tired of emphasising the organic unity and purposefulness of all life. Baer is the author of the famous observation, tellingly based on Immanuel Kant: "Nearly a century ago Kant taught that in an organism all the parts must be viewed as both ends and means (*Zweck und Mittel*) at the same time. We would rather say: goals and means (*Ziele und Mittel*). Now it is announced loudly and confidently: Ends do not exist in nature, there are in it only necessities; and it is not even recognised that precisely these necessities are the means for reaching certain goals. Becoming without a goal is simply unintelligible" (Baer 1876, 231). Uexküll represents much the same way of thinking when proposing his idea of the 'plan-accordance' (*Planmässigkeit*) of organic life (see Hoffmeyer 2004; Buchanan 2008, 8–12; Magnus 2011). In 1935, he writes: "The only thing we can identify is a preposterously rich network of overlapping and fittable-in-one-another subjective umwelten. This *network of umwelten* is beyond all doubt governed by *accordance to a plan* that will meet

our eye on every step as soon as we have learned to pay attention to biological relations" (Uexküll 1980 [1935], 377).

Again, a good example of the fruitfulness of the organicist approach is provided by the human geography of Granö's school of thought, whose crowning achievement was the formulation of the fundamental principles of human ecology (Granö 1997 [1929], 175). In his 1923 valedictory lecture at Tartu University, Granö succinctly summarised the starting point of his scientific work (paraphrased here by Edgar Kant): "The surface of the whole world is often composed of complexly structured landscapes. These landscapes are, in a way, *organisms* that can be studied as entities. They are not similar to animal organisms, but like the latter they can be studied both from a general and a particular point of view" (Kant 1999 [1923], 218, original emphasis). In his innovative study of Tartu, tellingly entitled *Tartu: the Town as Milieu and Organism* (Tartu: linn kui ümbrus ja organism), Edgar Kant himself also discussed the university town as a kind of organism with its own particular rhythms and structure (Kant 1926). This, in turn, can be compared with Uexküll's politically loaded comparison of state with organism in his *Staatsbiologie* (Biology of State) (1920; cf. Dreschler 2009, 89–91).

It is intriguing to note that organicist thinking is also deeply characteristic of Juri Lotman's late period, as Amy Mandelker has amply demonstrated (1994, 1995). Lotman's theory of the semiosphere is greatly indebted to biological thinking and metaphors. In the article "On Semiosphere" he writes that "all semiotic space may be regarded as a unified mechanism (if not organism)", and adds: "In this case, primacy does not lie in one or another sign, but in the "greater system", namely the semiosphere" (Lotman 2005 [1984], 208).

Subjectivity

The world, treated as holistic and organicistic in Estonian theory, also manifests itself to each observer only in a subjective reality – that is, instead of objective time and space, the subjective spacetimes (umwelten or chronotopes) are treated as primary ones. In Estonian theory it is not the environment that shapes the subject, but vice versa – each subject shapes his or her own environment. This basically Kantian notion has been happily formulated by Hermann Keyserling: "The subject, as recognised already by Kant, is the insuperable precondition of objective cognition, it is only through him that cognition becomes meaningful; from the vantage point of the Spirit, all nature is underpinned by a communion of meaning" (H. von Keyserling 1922, 27–28). Uexküll formulates the same principle

even more laconically: "The secret of the world is to be sought not behind objects, but behind subjects" (Uexküll 1926 [1920], 29).

An understanding of a subjective perception of space and time took shape early on in Estonian theory, and was extended successfully to making sense of all life. Baer was one of the first to demonstrate each organism's individual and unique, one might even say, monadic way of being. "The natural and true scope of our life is our perception and the speed of the response following perception", he noted in his 1860 talk entitled "Welche Auffassung der lebenden Natur ist die richtige? Und wie ist diese Auffassung auf die Entomologie anzuwenden?" ("Which view of living nature is the correct one? And how to apply this view in entomology?"), adding "that the inner life of a human or an animal may pass more quickly or more slowly in terms of the same external time, and that this inner life is the basic scale we use to measure time in the observation of nature" (Baer 1864, 257–258). It is on this original insight that Uexküll, a few decades later, based his famous doctrine of umwelten, an early and important conclusion of which states: "In this way, we then conclude that each and every subject lives in a world in which there are only subjective realities and that umwelten themselves represent only subjective realities" (Uexküll 2010 [1934], 125–126, translation is slightly corrected). Everything the subject perceives forms its perception-world, and everything it exercises influence on becomes its influence-world. The perception-world and influence-world together, Uexküll teaches, form an integral entity – the umwelt. The absolute, objective world is a mere abstract construct, "the objective realities of the surroundings never appear as such in the umwelten" (Uexküll 2010 [1934], 125, translation is slightly corrected). Every subjective umwelt is qualitatively different from the others, and the number of such umwelten is infinite.

This idea of a subjective perception of space and time, originating with Baer, was further elaborated not only in the biological parts of Estonian theory, but also in the humanistic ones. Gustav Teichmüller centred his philosophical system on the autonomous subject and his unique perception of the world.[22] In one of his major works, *Die wirkliche und die scheinbare Welt* (The Real and the Apparent World), he states: "We define the 'I' as a relation-basis, given in numerical unity and aware of itself, to all ideal and real being given in consciousness" (Teichmüller 1882, 68). From this point of departure, Teichmüller developed a new philosophical approach which he called "perspectivism": we always perceive the world from one particular perspective, and this is what creates the illusion that space and time exist. Only a perspectival order of space and time, owing its existence to our sense data and not corresponding to the actual order of the world, is given to each subject; space and time are merely "perspectival images from a particular

vantage point" (Teichmüller 1877, 47). It is worth noting that this idea of Teichmüller's was picked up and developed into his own philosophical platform by Friedrich Nietzsche, Teichmüller's former colleague at the University of Basel, which is why perspectivism is today associated with Nietzsche rather than with Teichmüller. The research of the last few years has, however, convincingly demonstrated that although in his published works, Nietzsche never directly refers to the Tartu philosopher, his notebooks offer clear testimony (through a dozen direct or indirect references) that he picked up the idea of perspectivism from Teichmüller, whose works he read with great interest in the 1880s (Vaska 1995 [1964], 144–162; Dickopp 1970; D'Iorio 1993, 283–294; Orsucci 1997; Holub 2002, 127–126; Riccardi 2009; Small 2010, 89, 115–116; Small 2001, 43–56; Bailey 2013, 143; Foley 2015).

The subject's unique perception of the world also forms the basis for Granö's human geography, where research focuses on peoples' perceived environments, that is, the natural environment is studied in the form that it assumes in each particular person's field of perception (Granö 1997 [1929], 9). And finally, we may include Juri Lotman's works in the same tradition of thought, which also emphasise the primacy and sovereignty of the subject. This aspect has been excellently exposed by Mihhail Lotman through comparison with Uexküll's views: "In the function of organism he had text, the analogy of umwelt was context. Unlike earlier linguistic and semiotic ideas (e.g. Saussure's and Jakobson's) the context for Lotman does not precede text, being its preliminary condition, but, vice versa, text produces its context in the widest sense, including all the participants in the communicative act" (M. Lotman 2002, 34).

Substantiality

The subject-based nature of Estonian theory closely borders on another important fundamental attitude that could be called substantiality or, perhaps, ontological pluralism. According to this attitude, clearly associable with the influence of Leibniz, the world is divided into elementary parts, mutually connected substantial entities that generate meanings. These substantial elements can vary from one promoter of Estonian theory to another ('I', 'consciousness', 'text', etc.). As a rule, the substances are not isolated but form organic wholes: substances can influence and establish contact with each other, but are not completely closed.

The way in which substantiality is born of subjectivity is most clearly discernible in Teichmüller's work. Having placed 'I' at the centre of his epistemology, he takes the next step: "If we were now required to find a name for the unity of "I", we could call it *substantial unity*" (Teichmüller 1882, 71, original

emphasis; cf. Teichmüller 1889, 218). From this basis, Teichmüller develops his second original philosophical teaching besides perspectivism – namely, personalism. According to this teaching, we have immediate access only to our inner worlds; it is only through ourselves, our self-consciousnesses that we perceive the external world, i.e. being manifests itself only through the 'I'.[23] Teichmüller's substantialist philosophy was further developed by Eduard Tennmann, who followed his teacher in emphasising the substantial character of human subjectivity (Tennmann 1999 [1932], 342) and formulated the thesis of consciousness as a substance: "Even in the strongest friendship or enmity, interpersonal relations can never overcome the limits of ideality, because substance is impenetrable (whether we think materialistically or idealistically) or irreplaceable, just like qualities or personal consciousness. God as the greatest unity, however, also constitutes the whole unity of substances and really inhabits all substances (not spatio-projectively, but metaphysically). Thus it might perhaps be more adequate to speak about reality of substances, rather than substance of substances. Yet the term is not appropriate, since it is only the acts of substances and the revelations of consciousness that we can count as real. *Consciousness itself is a substance*" (Tennmann 1999 [1930], 357, original emphasis).

Cognitive subjectivism is also characteristic of Alexander Keyserling's thought, who in his diary frequently deliberates on "self-contemplating substance" (*die selbstempfindende Substanz*) (A. Keyserling 1894, 30, 45, etc.). And, as Jaan Undusk points out, "from here, the familial tradition of thought might in turn lead to his grandson Hermann, who in his later philosophy fixated on the concept of 'substantial mind' ('that which is and creates, rather than interprets')" (Undusk 2004, 144). At the beginning of *Schöpferische Erkenntnis* (Creative Cognition), Keyserling writes in the best Leibnizian tradition that "every individual is profoundly unique, a true windowless monad in the sense that as concerns understanding [*Verstehen*], there is no independent external mediation between itself and others" (H. von Keyserling 1922, 3). Years later, however, he appears to modify his views to a certain extent: "It has become clear that man is not the isolated individual that the white man of the 20th century has involuntarily imagined himself to be; he is not a monad, and most certainly not a windowless monad; rather, he embodies the 'relation' between himself and the world in the broadest sense of the term" (H. von Keyserling 1936, 48).

We noted above that influences of a Leibnizian substantial thinking can also be recognised in the work of Juri Lotman. There, also, the somewhat paradoxical nature of Estonian theory emerges clearly – the same tension between rationalist and romanticist ways of thinking that upholds both the part and the whole, both substantiality and holisticity. In his article "Culture as a Subject and an Object in

Itself", in which Lotman introduces the concept of the semiotic monad, he writes: "The monad, defined in this way, acts as a unity, permanently extending itself within the limits of a certain individual semiotic space and, at the same time, like a decimal numeral obsessed by the idea of becoming a whole, endlessly enters into new combinations. By and large, each monad, irrespective of its relation to any level, is a part and a whole at the same time" (Lotman 1997 [1989], 12).

Spatiality

The final facet of the main epistemic attitudes of Estonian theory that we wish to highlight is the preference of the spatial over the temporal. Estonian theory seems to think predominantly in spatial categories, resulting in an emphasis on the relationship between centre and periphery, internal and external, familiar and foreign, as well as in enhanced attention to environment and landscapes. This attitude may well be informed by Estonia's geographical position, its location on the crossroads of various ecological, political, cultural and linguistic influences.

One of the earliest great theoreticians of space in Estonian theory is Victor Hehn, who can, in more than one sense, be considered a forefather of modern cultural geography and one of the first to interpret culture in spatial terms (Wuthenow 1992, 2002; See 1992; Undusk 2006; Schwidtal 2011). Hehn studied classical philology at Tartu University, under Morgenstern, improved his knowledge of Hegel's philosophy in Berlin, and in 1839 started out on the long-dreamt-of trip to Italy, where he accumulated experiences and observations that later became the basis of his culture–theoretical views and offered material for several books. One of the earliest of these, the little book *Über die Physiognomie der italienischen Landschaft* (On the Physiognomy of the Italian Landscape), published in Pärnu in 1844, presents Hehn's culture–geographical views in a nutshell. Hehn uses the comparative method: he distinguishes the northern (situated north of the Alps) and the southern lands (mainly Italy). He characterises the northern landscape as lyrical and musical, the southern as plastic and architectonic (Hehn 1844, 11). While the former is romantic by nature, the latter is classical and antique. (It is not surprising that in order to understand the latter, he mainly resorts to Goethe.) The transition of nature to culture, best exemplified by Italy in his view, remains a staple motif in Hehn's work. In his travel diary we can read: "In this country [Italy], nature itself is a plastic and architectonic form, shaped according to the classical principle; the obscure intuitiveness of romanticism is alien to it. Their cypresses are columns, their pine-trees domes; each pattern, each house, each mountain a crystal" (Hehn 1906 [1839–1840], 190). His *opus*

magnum, alongside the books devoted to Goethe and Italy, is the 700 page study *Kulturpflanzen und Hausthiere in ihrem übergang aus Asien nach Griechenland und Italien sowie in das übrige Europa* (Cultivated Plants and Domesticated Animals in their Migration from Asia to Greece and Italy and the Rest of Europe, 1883 [1870]), in which he analyses the evolution from natural objects to cultural forms of almost fifty plants and fifteen animals of European importance, based on very rich material from classical antiquity. In this long process, Hehn sees the birth of culture in Europe: the cultivation of land (agriculture and husbandry) creates the preconditions for the cultivation of mind. Jaan Undusk has aptly summarised Hehn's position: "The main motifs of Hehn's work are cultivation, domestication, acculturation – the production of artificial nature, or culture, out of a raw material consisting of minerals, plants and animals, the new level of organisation that arises as human mind intervenes in nature" (Undusk 2006, 469).

Hehn's space-centred theory of culture is later developed by Hermann Keyserling, a leitmotif of whose work is that of culture as a kind of place-consciousness, born from the joint influence of mental initiative and a certain natural environment (Undusk 2008, 101). In his posthumously published three-volume autobiography, *Reise durch die Zeit* (Travel Through the Times, 1948–1963) Keyserling observes that "where a human type is soulless and cannot therefore be wed to a specific soil, there no culture can arise" (H. von Keyserling 1958, 342). The spatial orientation of Estonian theory seems to have favoured the early and original development of human and cultural geography in Estonia, including the conception of landscape as a cultural category and an emphasis on the mutual influence of men and environment of a kind that has elsewhere won broader acceptance only in recent decades. This is very obvious in the works of Granö and his Estonian pupils, the topicality and originality of which have not diminished over decades (see O. Granö 2003; Buttimer 2005, 2011; Jauhiainen 2005).

As in many other aspects, so also, it would seem, concerning the spatiality of Estonian theory an important complement is made by Juri Lotman, whose teaching of cultural semiotics is straightforwardly space-centred, even if in its latest phases the questions of time acquire ever more weight (see Randviir 2007). Lotman conceptualises culture primarily in terms of spatial categories, regarding the relations between the internal and external as most important in the dynamics of culture. Semiosphere is for him a separate semiotic space, internally heterogeneous and with enhanced semiotic activity going on in its border areas. "The border of semiotic space is the most important functional and structural position, giving substance to its semiotic mechanism. The border is a bilingual mechanism, translating external communications into the internal language of the semiosphere and vice versa. Thus, only with the help of the boundary is

the semiosphere able to establish contact with non-semiotic and extra-semiotic spaces" (Lotman 2005 [1984], 210).

Conclusion

Estonian theory belongs among the phenomena that come to life only when they are studied. The present article was an attempt to conjure up something that as yet does not really exist, but may come into being given the communal will to carry it through. Of course, the picture painted here remained sketchy and fragmentary, with several important aspects glossed over, and many scholars failing to get due attention. But then, it was meant only as an appeal for further research.

We described Estonian theory through the degree of affinity of certain fundamental ideas in the works of scholars linked to Estonia. The entanglement thus formed is like an invisible school of thought, the members of which need not even be aware of their mutual connections. After its most eminent representatives, this school might perhaps be called the Baer–Lotman line in Estonian intellectual history.

In our view, every culture creates some kind of a "local theory" – now clearer, more permanent and distinct in form, now vaguer or more short-lived. Its acknowledgement as a peculiarity of a given culture could be associated with a non-essentialist conception of culture, that is, with a view that cultures differ from each other not by virtue of their permanent features, but of their more fruitful entanglements of changing networks of ideas.

Although the linking of Estonian theory to a "local episteme" may appear mysterious, in fact it constitutes a rather traditional phenomenon consisting of common sources of influence, immediate personal relations and academic prototypes.[24] All the authors discussed above were interrelated in one way or another, mainly through texts and models, but often also directly. A very good idea of the formation of the local episteme is given by the young professor of geography, Granö, in his letter to a friend, J. K. V. Tuominen, of December 20, 1919, soon after his arrival in Tartu: "Walking along the embankments of the River Emajõgi or in the beautiful park on Dome Hill, I vividly envision the faces of the great scientists who have walked in Tartu before me – such as Baer, Ledebour, Helmersen, etc. – scientists whose shoelaces the present generation of professors is not fit to touch." And, referring to his own usage of theoretical concepts, he adds: "'Milieu' thus offers certain advantages to work on, and memories compel" (Tiitta 2011, 203–204). Not a single school originating in Estonia is exempt from contacts with Estonian theory. Those who have achieved much in a given culture or *locus*

are more tightly bound to each other than they might, perhaps, notice.[25] Taken together, Estonian theory or its core authors has or have already had something significant to say, perhaps to others rather than to particular scholars in Estonia.

To make one final attempt at formulating our vision of Estonian theory during the last two centuries (including both the themes discussed and undiscussed in the article), we might try to compress it into the following eight theses: (1) Estonian theory embodies in itself both the influence of and tension between rationalism and Romanticism; (2) Estonian theory searches for and proffers explanations of diversity; (3) Estonian theory approaches the particular from the general, and conceives of the whole as the basis for distinguishing the parts; (4) Estonian theory presumes that the subject is the creator of its environment; (5) Estonian theory is characterised by a pluralistic conception of substantiality; (6) Estonian theory prefers spatiality over temporality; (7) Estonian theory is predominantly given to theorising based on actual subject matter; (8) Estonian theory involves much more than that, both in its centre and at the periphery.

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Sources of illustrations

Figure 1 – Authors' own creation.

Notes

1 Our approach in a way follows up, more extensively and ambitiously, on what was said in the article "Semiotica Tartuensis" a couple of decades ago (see Kull & M. Lotman 1995, cf. Kull & M. Lotman 2012). There is a more general affinity between this essay and Jaan Undusk's numerous articles on the various manifestations of the "Baltic spirit" in the 18th to 20th centuries (see, for example, Undusk 1995, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2013). Additional details on the topic can be found in recent reviews on Estonian psychology (Allik 2007), philosophy of science (Vihalemm & Müürsepp 2007) and philosophy (Sutrop 2016). We deliberately refrained from discussing here the ethnic and linguistic aspects highlighted in the searches for a local component of valuable ideas, as well as those related to landscape peculiarities and environment shaping. They both certainly play a role as cultural memory and scaffolding, thus also stabilising or channelling Estonian theory. It should be noted that most of the authors we shall discuss were not ethnic Estonians and did not write in Estonian.

2 Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Russian, German, Finnish and Estonian are our own.

3 Michel Foucault, who launched the concept of 'episteme' (French *épistème*) in the 1960s (Foucault 1966), conceived of it as a temporal category, a system of knowledge-making characteristic of a given age; in this article, however, we attempt to "spatialise" the term, since the episteme of Estonian theory is defined by unity of space rather than of time.

4 Or enouncements; in French *énoncé*, as used by Foucault.

5 An important example of this is provided by Friedrich Kittler's book of lectures, *Eine Kulturgeschichte der Kulturwissenschaft* (A Cultural History of Cultural Science), the

more significant for containing fragments of Estonian theory (the views of Victor Hehn, to be precise); see Kittler 2001, 142–152.

6 It is worth noting that territorial treatment has, indeed, been relatively widely used to describe the history of both Estonian institutions and intellectual domains. But attempts to discern something like Estonian theory have, in these contexts, been rare; the only things highlighted have been a relatively marked interdisciplinarity and association with nature (e.g. Vihalemm & Müürsepp 2007). The task is, indeed, complicated by the somewhat transdisciplinary nature of Estonian theory – with similar processes and views simultaneously cropping up in different wordings, different languages and different disciplines.

7 For a better understanding of the territorial perspective, it is important to add that Estonia's intellectual boundaries are not identical to the country's political borders. This is particularly important to keep in mind when speaking about the 19th century, when the Estonia–Latvia border was non-existent (it came into being only in 1917 when North Livonia was included in the Governorate of Estonia). Tartu University, however, situated in what had formerly been Livonia, made its influence felt both in the Governorate of Estonia and in the city of Riga, neither of which had a university of their own. Saint Petersburg University was (re)established in 1819.

8 Initially, Tartu University was established in 1632 as a Swedish university. Its current official name is the University of Tartu.

9 It must nevertheless be emphasised that German influences were very strong up to the end of the First World War, since many German lecturers stayed on at the university even after the onset of Russian-language tuition.

10 Wulff (1985, 131) mentions: "Virtually halted by World War II, the work of the Dorpat school represents today a still viable ideal". See also Tammiksaar & Kull 2001.

11 Let us also note that since we consider Estonian theory mainly an academic phenomenon, we have not mentioned texts written in other genres, even if they are related or influential. Thus we do not analyse journalism, fiction, or the arts.

12 As for Hegel, see, for instance, Mildenberger (2007a, 38), Winthrop-Young (2010, 230), as well as Avtonomova (2009, 244) in the context of J. Lotman's views. Concerning Herder, we can presume that his influence found expression via the later German romanticists, while he of course also played a very important role in the Baltic Enlightenment, Baltic German political ideology, and early Estonian national history of thought (see, for example, Undusk 1995; Piirimäe 2012).

13 It may be worth noting that in his search for the principles of philosophical language, Jakob Linzbach also relied on Leibniz's works, see Dulichenko 2000. From the more recent past, Madis Kõiv's great interest in Leibniz is well known (see, most recently, Kõiv 2014).

14 In fact the most important influence to shape Hermann Keyserling's interest in Kant was that of Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855–1927), introduced to Keyserling in 1901 in Vienna by the Tartu indologist Leopold von Schroeder (Schroeder 1921, 164). (Naturally Schroeder, too, considered Kant a major influence on his own work, see op cit, 235.) The closeness of the two thinkers is also proven by the fact that Chamberlain dedicated his major study of Kant (Chamberlain 1905) to "the friend" Keyserling. A good

survey of Keyserling's life and philosophical views, including his philosophy of culture, is given by Ute Gahlings (1992, 1996, 2000, 2007).

15 This is also confirmed by Jäsche's close friend and colleague, Karl Morgenstern (1843, 42), in his obituary to his deceased friend.

16 Kant's influence on Uexküll has drawn the attention of numerous scholars; see most recently, Buchanan (2008, 9–14), Stjernfelt (2001, 81–82; 2011, 171), Pollmann (2013, 778, 785, 798). Winthrop-Young (2010, 231) thinks Kant's importance has been somewhat overestimated. It is not without interest that Uexküll also wrote two short articles on Kant's impact on natural sciences (Uexküll 1924, 1939). By way of digression, it is worth noting that Uexküll dedicated his *Theoretical Biology* to former compatriot Adolf von Harnack, grateful for his friendly interest in umwelt studies. Harnack's attitude to Uexküll's works, as inferred from his memoirs, was positive (Harnack 1923, 395–399; see Mildenberger 2007b, 74–75).

17 The fruitful dialogue between Uexküll and Cassirer has attracted closer attention in this century, bringing to light Uexküll's important role in shaping the neo-Kantian theory of culture, launched by Cassirer and influential to the present day. See Heusden 2001, Krois 2004, Weber 2004, Chien 2006, Stjernfelt 2011, Verene 2013.

18 In doing so, one must of course refrain from directly opposing rationalism and Romanticism; rather, the two movements clearly had certain features in common (see, for instance, Skidelsky 2008, 72–73); in addition, the significant influence of Leibniz on Kant (Cicovacki 2006) and of Kant on Goethe and Schelling must be kept in mind (Richards 2002, 427–430; 2007).

19 Partly it may also be due to the fact that Estonia has belonged within the bounds of both Russian and German language areas, both of which have bestowed the title of science on the humanities (*гуманитарные науки, Geisteswissenschaften*); that is, the gap between the two large categories is not as great as in many other cultures which reserve the term *science* only for natural sciences.

20 In his introduction to the English translation of one of Lotman's works, Umberto Eco suggests another comparison for those "squeamish readers unwilling to consider art and culture in terms of calves and raw meat": "If we put together many branches and great quantity of leaves, we still cannot understand the forest. But if we know how to walk through the forest of culture with our eyes open, confidently following the numerous paths which criss-cross it, not only shall we be able to understand better the vastness and complexity of the forest, but we shall also be able to discover the nature of the leaves and branches of every single tree" (Eco 1990, xiii).

21 *Obiter dictum,* epistemological holism largely provides the starting points for Gestalt psychology, the theoretical foundations of which were defined by native Tallinnite, Wolfgang Köhler (see Lõo 2007, more generally Ash 1995), among whose predecessors, however, there is also the structural psychologist Oswald Külpe (1862–1915), who studied for a short period in Tartu (see Allik 2007).

22 Teichmüller knew Baer from his time in St. Petersburg (1856–1860), and it was on Baer's proposal that he later wrote his book *Darwinismus und Philosophie* (Darwinism and Philosophy, 1877), in which he on the one hand criticised Darwinism in a Baerian spirit, while on the other hand defining, in Baer's footsteps, the philosophical principles

of perspectivism, which he went on to develop in greater detail in a subsequent study, *Die wirkliche und die scheinbare Welt*, published five years later (see Schwenke 2006, 31, 81; Schwenke 2015, 109).

23 For a recent survey of the influence of Teichmüller's personalism in Russia (and the problems related to its promotion there), see Ryzshkova 2013 and 2014.

24 In a recent article, the prominent French comparative historian of culture, Michel Espagne (2010), has ably demonstrated the fruitfulness of a place-centred and retrospective history of ideas, based on material from Tartu.

25 Thus, in some cases it is not impossible that the scholars concerned are not even consciously aware of their association with the local episteme but rather emphasise their dissatisfaction with the place. A good example is provided by Teichmüller, who in his letters never seems to tire of complaining of his scientific isolation and "Siberian solitude" in Tartu (Schwenke 2006, 57); but as Madis Kõiv has pointed out, "And yet his major works are written here, and perhaps, regardless of all, this here is the right place for him, and the *genii loci*, even the deepest of them, accept him; and perhaps only here, in solitude, without any 'we' yet together with the *genii loci*, can the philosophy we call Teichmüller's personalism, centred on an 'I' conscious of itself as a person, be born" (Kõiv 2005 [2001], 338). Another example could be Jan Baudouin de Courtenay, who on November 22, 1883, soon after arriving in Tartu, writes to a colleague: "Whoever thinks that this here is Europe in any positive sense of the word, is grievously mistaken [...]. First and foremost, this is a place of very little civilisation, mainly as concerns lodgings, industry, etc. Everything is still very primitive here, almost comparable to the level of Far Russia. The students' manners are exceedingly savage. They are perfect medieval barbarians" (Pullat 1974, 254). Yet scientifically, he was very productive over his Tartu period: in ten years, he wrote almost 25 works on very diverse topics in linguistics (Smirnov 1958, 751, more generally see Mugdan 1984). And his work did not fail to influence the local scholars, as evidenced by Uku Masing (1998 [1963], 278), "J. Baudouin de Courtenay's book *Der Einfluss der Sprache auf Weltanschauung und Stimmung* [...] first gave me the encouragement of there being others who thought along similar lines".

On territorialisation of theory

Jaanus Sooväli, Margus Ott

The idea that a certain 'localness' plays a role in a theoretical tradition is no doubt plausible. Thus, investigating the peculiarities of various local theoretical traditions seems to be an interesting research field. We are to a large extent in agreement with the authors' methodological point of views – Foucault's archaeology and genealogy (the latter's relation to Foucault being looser) – as well as their two more general epistemological attitudes. We believe that cultural theory is indeed in need of greater historicisation, and the territorialised approach to theoretical traditions might bring about some interesting discoveries. No scientist or theorist is a freely floating Cartesian subject outside of space and time. Theorists are rooted in some place and time, more generally, in a certain context, and it would be naïve to think that the latter has no influence on their theories. The authors give a rather expressive example of this rootedness by referring to Jaan Undusk's observation that Uexküll's discourse on "subjective Umwelt" or a "self-centered" world goes back "to the specific nature of Baltic manorial life where the appreciation of culture effortlessly combined with an appreciation of nature" (p. 36). It is a somewhat speculative interpretation of the matter, but an interesting one nonetheless.

However, some questions do arise about how far one can push this idea of territorialisation and what it actually designates in the article. The authors speak of the spirit and unity of the place that they regard to be more important than the unity of time: "The theoretical thought related to Estonia is born primarily from the spirit of place, not of time." (p. 33) What is this spirit of a place, *genius loci*, *air du lieu*? Is it the lifestyle of a place as Undusk's observation would suggest? Are these the natural conditions of a place, the geographic location, the climate? Or the soil as Keyserling's quote would suggest (p. 53)? The idea that a place could function as a *unifying* principle for various *theories* would be rather speculative. A theory is indeed born in a certain place, but it is hardly a matter of simple cause and effect. There is a potentially infinite number of ways, some of which might be fundamentally incompatible, in which a place can have an effect on a theory. The place probably matters, but the spirit of the place can speak rather differently depending on the author. Does it not speak "in tongues"?

However, the authors do recognise that the "linking of Estonian theory to a 'local episteme' may appear mysterious", and explain that, in fact, "it constitutes

a rather traditional phenomenon consisting of common sources of influence, immediate personal relations and academic prototypes" (p. 54). Common context could indeed, to some degree, function as a unifying basis for various theories and would give some support to the idea of the "unity of space", but to what extent is the context ever common (except for some very closed spaces and societies)? Even more seriously, to what extent is the common context "relatively persistent" in time (see p. 31)? Supposing that there is a great multiplicity of sources of influence at a place, can one not say, metaphorically perhaps, that there are a "thousand places in one place"?

When we look at the Estonian theory in particular, as laid down by the authors, some of the very same difficulties arise. For example, Estonian theory is described as Kantian in so many ways. However, one of the central figures of Estonian theory, Gustav Teichmüller (located in the very innermost circle, see p. 37), was one of the sharpest critics of Kant and regarded his thinking as a regression in philosophy. Teichmüller's own main sources of influence were Plato and Aristotle.

A still more problematic example is Uku Masing. Kull and Tamm situate Masing in the second sphere of Estonian theory, so quite centrally as well, but it seems that he would have a hard time sharing any of the epistemic principles underlying Estonian theory as outlined by Kull and Tamm. Masing sketches a Finno-Ugric way of thinking, which seems to be fundamentally heterogenous to the most basic assumptions of Estonian theory[1]. But if there are these fundamental heterogeneities in the various theoretical traditions in Estonia, what justifies their homogenisation and unification under the general heading and label of Estonian theory? It could be imagined that someone would rather prefer to call Masing's Finno-Ugric way of thinking Estonian theory, as it is based on the native language of Estonia. In one instance (p. 54) the authors indeed call Estonian theory the Baer–Lotman line in Estonian intellectual history, and that seems to be fair. The article does exceptionally well to clarify and illuminate this line of thought. But can and should one generalise it into the "Estonian theory"? Such naming homogenises and marginalises in the same breath, in one single move.

To be fair, the authors define Estonian theory a little bit more specifically as "a comparatively coherent aggregate of outstanding notions that originate with scholars linked to Estonia, which may have significant intellectual value and interest for the whole intellectual world" (p. 32), and also explain that the majority of Estonian scholars do not need to be part of it. But who is to define what the "outstanding notions" with "intellectual value for the whole intellectual world" are? To us it seems that there are several, *incompatible* lines of thought in Estonia which may have significant "intellectual value" for the world.

We suggest that another way of bringing in a specific context would be to focus on heterogeneities, discrepancies and incongruities. No tradition is uniform: it always has dissenting voices, it is always dialogic (as says Lotman[2]). Together with the thinker there are always also that heterogeneity, those with whom s/he is in contact, including those with whom s/he does not agree and against whom s/he has disputes. An Estonian thinker may relate to people and places in Germany, or in China, or to the Kachins in South East Asia, or the Rapa Nui on Easter Island. As the authors themselves acknowledge: "different theories, including Estonian theory and Russian theory, can easily have some parts in common, and many scholars may well belong to both, or several, at once."

By creating these lines of flight, a different topology would be created: not one of concentric circles of more or less 'core' personalities, but a rhizome that is connected to different other places and no-places (utopia). If we would observe this rhizome in a certain place, we would discover a specific 'ecosystem' of connections, and it would have different nodes (concepts, thinkers, groups), some of which are more important than others in the sense of having more connections to other nodes, but they would not obey a single axiomatic that would bring them into concentric circles. From the standpoint of different interests, it will be organised differently: not just *the* Estonian theory, but a plurality of Estonian theori*es*. Together with the Baer–Lotman line there would be numerous other lines (and perhaps also different Baers and different Lotmans who appear in other stories). In this way we may perhaps come closer to a 'tailor-made' notion of a place; we could take all the singularities of society, economy, history, institutions, etc., that make up the peculiarity of a place into account more precisely.

Notes

1 Cf. Masing, U. (2004) *Keelest ja meelest*. Ilmamaa, Tartu.

2 See, for instance: Lotman, J. (2009) *Culture and explosion*. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin, New York.
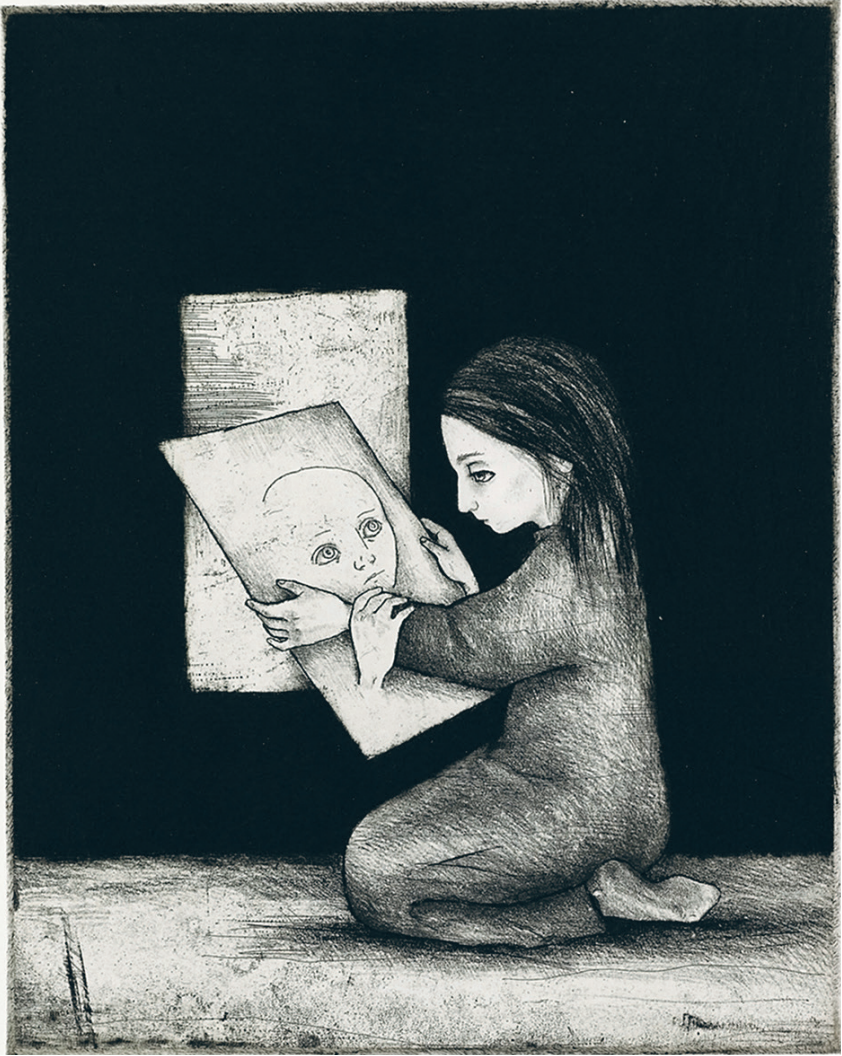
Reti Saks "Pildiga" ("With the Picture") 1989.
Soft ground, mezzotint, paper. 30 x 23.8 cm.

Culture-dependent meaning formation in hermeneutics, phenomenology, cultural semiotics and cultural psychology

Tõnu Viik, Peeter Torop, Maaris Raudsepp

Abstract. This paper describes the conceptualisation of culture-dependent meaning formation (or meaning making) in hermeneutics, semiotics, phenomenology and cultural psychology. The authors define 'culture-dependent meaning formation' as all such situations of meaning making, the outcome of which depends on one or another cultural context. Meaning making itself is understood as a semiotic process by means of which human world is organised into identifiable, familiar and customary things, units and processes. We will compare the theoretical models of culture-dependent meaning formation developed in these four sciences and highlight their common features. We argue that these models postulate the structure of collective meanings, which functions as a cultural symbol system from the perspective of individual meaning making and differentiates the outcome of meaning formation in one cultural community from those of other cultural communities.

Keywords: culture, meaning making, meaning formation, culture-dependent meaning formation, umwelt, cultural symbol system, hermeneutic rule, cultural Lebenswelt, language, sign system, secondary modelling system, social representations

We live in the world where each and every thing we encounter bears a meaning for us. Knowing the meaning of a thing allows us to recognise it, distinguish it from others, and use or ignore it. Similarly, we experience all circumstances and situations as meaningful. When we attend school, a meeting, take a tram ride, have dinner and so forth, we understand where we are, what we are doing at this point, why we are doing it, and what the attitude and relation of other people to this situation is. Obviously this knowledge is not final or conclusive – sometimes we are confused about things and situations –, but for the majority

of everyday life we deal with things and situations the meanings of which are familiar and evident to us.

Space and time are likewise meaningfully structured for humans. People live and move in places which they know through the meanings that they have assigned to them (one's home, place of employment, urban neighborhood, city, country, homeland, etc.), and they differentiate and organise their lives according to shorter or longer time periods, intervals and durations that are structured through meaning ascribed to them (day, night, work hours, time for the meeting, the time spent watching a movie, the period of growing into adulthood, one's whole life span, the period of national independence, etc.). Our own self is also meaningful for us, as are our significant others, as well as our own and other peoples' activities and attitudes. Social groups, too, have a meaningful identity beginning with family and extending to nation.

Thus we can say that the entire reality perceived by humans consists of different meaningful units. The visual field is divided into meaningful objects and differences between them. The auditory field is divided into sequences of different types of sound among which we can distinguish linguistic messages, melodies and miscellaneous sound backgrounds. The latter generally come across as noise. However, we should bear in mind that the sounds constituting the background gain their status by virtue of the meanings we assign to other sounds. Once a background sound moves into focus, its meaning will change. For instance, a conversational hum in the distance becomes an articulated text once we attend to it.

While traditional scientific and metaphysical thinking presupposes that there is one and only one reality that must be described from its own point of view, in several disciplines devoted to the study of culture it has become clear that reality is different in the experience of different subjects and different inter-subjective communities. The theory of surrounding worlds (*Umwelten*) of organisms advanced by Jakob von Uexküll at the beginning of the previous century shows that this difference of realities is dependent upon meaning formation processes that living creatures apply to their surroundings. If in 'objective' reality perceived by a 'neutral' observer every creature is situated in its surroundings as if a thing among other things, then the relationship of the creature itself to the reality around it is always mediated through its processes of meaning making. For most organisms, there are only the things and distinctions which their senses can perceive. Uexküll calls this world, to which an organism is able to relate itself according to its capacity for perceptual discrimination a surrounding-world, umwelt. An umwelt differs from the 'objectively' mapped environment precisely

because it consists of only that which is experienced as meaningful by the living organism itself:

> Each Umwelt forms a closed unit in itself, which is governed, in all its parts, by the meaning it has for the subject. According to its meaning for the animal, the stage on which it plays its life-roles (*Lebensbühne*) embraces a wider or narrower space. This space is built up by the animal's sense organs, upon whose powers of resolution will depend the size and number of its localities (*Orte*). The girl's field of vision resembles ours, the cow's field of vision extends away over its grazing-area, while the diameter of the ant's field of vision does not exceed 50 centimeters and the cicada's only a few centimeters. The localities are distributed differently in each space: The fine pavement the ant feels while crawling up the flower stem does not exist for the girl's hands and certainly not for the cow's mouth. (Uexküll 1982, 30)

In order to ascertain the contents of a meaningful reality we must study the perceptual discrimination capacity and its operations by means of which the organism makes the world meaningful for itself. We will call these the processes of 'meaning formation'. These are processes through which a subject's umwelt is structured, and through which the discernible units of that world are formed, as well as distinctions between the units. This occurs on the spatial and temporal as well as material and ideational planes of the subject's world.

Elaborating upon Uexküll's theory of umwelts, the philosopher of culture Ernst Cassirer notes that although the umwelt of humans also depends on species-specific mechanisms of meaning making, its relationship with the reality is additionally mediated by means of cultural symbol systems which make the human umwelt dependent on a culture. Due to this symbol system, humans are no longer inhabitants of the physical world alone, but also of a symbolic world. Cassirer explains:

> Language, myth, art, and religion are parts of this universe. They are the varied threads, which weave the symbolic net, the tangled web of human experience. […] No longer can man confront reality immediately; he cannot see it, as it were, face to face. […] He has so enveloped himself in linguistic forms, in artistic images, in mythical symbols or religious rites that he cannot see or know anything except by the imposition of this artificial medium. His situation is the same in the theoretical as in the practical sphere. Even here man does not live in a world of hard facts, or according to his immediate needs and desires. He lives rather in the midst of imaginary emotions,

in hopes and fears, in illusions and disillusions, in his fantasies and dreams. (Cassirer 1954, 43)

Thus humans live in a world (of differentiations) created by cultural means, of which the natural lifeworld that is formed by virtue of the meaning making capacity characteristic of the species is only one facet. The other facet is created by the symbolic means of culture, or more precisely, as Cassirer puts it, through "the symbolic imagination and intelligence" (op cit, 52). Therefore, Cassirer finds that man should be defined as *animal symbolicum* instead of the traditional *animal rationale* (op cit, 44).

Now, if it is true that in addition to species-specific processes of meaning making, the relationship of human beings with the world is also mediated through a cultural symbol system, then we must postulate a cultural plurality of human worlds. Culture, in this context, may be termed a means of symbolic meaning making. Since there are many cultures, we must acknowledge that there are many human umwelts. In other words, human umwelts are not species-specifically uniform but differ according to the number of cultural communities. Temporally and spatially separated cultural communities, as well as various professional and other sub-communities, may have their peculiar umwelts created by means of "the symbolic imagination and intelligence".

Such a notion of culture-dependent meaning formation was already developed in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German philosophy, in which the concept of spirit (*Geist*) and its derivatives (*Volksgeist*, *objektiver Geist*, *National-Geist*, *Gemein-Geist*) were used to denote a cultural umwelt of a particular society. However, these theories lost their popularity in the second half of the 19th century. The idea of culturally dependent meaning making was rediscovered in the 20th century under new terminology. As its sole legacy, the concept of 'objective spirit' was retained in the early 20th century, as taken over from Hegel by Dilthey. The concept of spirit (*Geist*) is also employed by Max Weber in a similar sense. However, from the second half of the 20th century onwards, culture-dependent meaning formation is described using concepts such as sign and symbol, stereotypes, social representations, cognitive models, cultural languages (i.e. secondary modelling systems), the collective conscious, collective memory, the semiosphere and common sense.

In this paper we will focus on the idea of culture-dependent meaning formation within only a few of the many academic disciplines that deal with this problem. But before we proceed, we will make an attempt to formulate briefly three theoretical postulates on which the idea relies.

First, an organism perceives in the surrounding environment only that which has some meaning for it. It can be said that an organism experiences things through the medium of meanings, or by means of meaning. From the phenomenological and social-constructionist perspective, it could be argued that humans 'invest' meanings in things, and as a result perceive the world and specific things around them as full of meaningful distinctions.

Second, the mass of meaningful things, (literary/art) works, places, times, personal and collective identities, messages as well as collective ideas comprise the umwelt of the subject – the subject's surrounding world, which must be distinguished from the environment around the subject as it could be observed by an external spectator. The latter is a part of the observer's umwelt and the distinctions in it are conditioned by the meaning making possibilities of the observing subject. But no subject can make any distinctions that are not possible within that subject's own umwelt. The position of the researcher in the universalism–relativism debate often depends on whether the possibility of attaining the position of 'neutral observer' or achieving the 'divine gaze' is considered possible or not.

And third, as shown by Uexküll, the means of meaning making vary between species, although, as follows from Cassirer's hypothesis about the symbolic imagination and intelligence, the means of meaning making within the species *homo sapiens* also vary between cultures. This suggests that people have at their disposal means of collective meaning making which may belong to one cultural community only. In reality they are more often borrowed from other cultures, but nonetheless our means of meaning making are characterised by a remarkable historical and geographical variation, the most vivid example of which are natural languages and the secondary modelling systems that are based upon them.

Hence meanings, which people have collectively assigned to things, mediate the realities of their worlds for them. Thus, for example, we may perceive light dots in the clear night sky as remote sun-like celestial bodies, or we may perceive them as the eyes of spirits or gods watching us. We can also see in these light dots rips in the fabric of the celestial sphere, or our ancestors' souls. The choice of a specific meaning depends on the collective beliefs and attitudes prevalent in the person's cultural community. These are most often regarded as self-evident and self-explanatory. This principle applies in even stronger measure to items created by humans, or cultural objects. Even if a pipe is simply a pipe, it still has the meaning of a pipe, which defines the way we classify this object, the category or mental reference model we employ to recognise it, as well as the way we deal with it, what we use it for and how we relate to it. The pipe has its own function, manner of use and cultural history the knowledge of which is what enables

us to regard this object as a pipe, and to relate to it accordingly. Therefore, the assignation of meanings to things is always a historically, socially and culturally conditioned process, and the same applies to the perception of places, circumstances, situations and various temporal durations.

The culture-dependency of meaning making is even more obvious in the case of such objects where the work's material embodiment is of no particular consequence from the viewpoint of its contents, for example literary works of art. The contents of a novel do not in any considerable degree depend on the kind of paper it is printed on or what has been used to bind the tome together. And to continue this line of thought, the culture-dependency of meaning making is most clearly evident in the case of ideal objects such as gods, cultural heroes, ethical values, political images, etc. Ideal objects exist in fact only in the collective consciousness and memory of a cultural community and only as such (i.e. as being intersubjectively valid immaterial objects) do they exert real influence on the power relations, institutional practices and behavioural patterns of a society.

In various fields of research, the idea of culture-dependent meaning formation has been explicitly expressed and theoretically and systematically expounded. Many attempts have been made to construct epistemological models of culture-dependent meaning making that would be applicable to particular objects and the acts of meaning formation related to these objects. In what follows, we will examine the concepts that have been used to discuss culture-dependent meaning formation in hermeneutics, phenomenology, cultural semiotics and cultural psychology. As mentioned above, by "acts of meaning-making" we mean the situations in which someone experiences things, circumstances, people, groups of people, places and times as meaningful phenomena, and reacts and acts according to the meaning ascribed to them.

A hermeneutic approach to culture-dependent meaning formation

Hermeneutics, as a methodological theory, does not look at the processes of meaning making in the context of everyday life. However, the epistemological platform of the hermeneutic position does accord with the above three postulates upon which the idea of culture-dependent meaning-making is grounded. According to Dilthey, understanding (*Verstehen*) is an everyday process "by which we intuit, behind the signs given to our senses, that psychic reality of which it is an expression" (Dilthey 1972, 232). This occurs either when we interpret the intentions of a person standing before us, or understand the trouble of a crying child. In principle a similar empathic process unfolds in a situation when we comprehend the content of a text or the meaning of a work of art. At any rate, the object

of understanding is a certain subjective "inner reality" (op cit, 231) or "something spiritual" (Dilthey 1977, 123) which may only be reached from "the outside", or more precisely, by means of "external sensory signs" (Dilthey 1972, 231–2). But if our everyday understanding deals with such sensorially perceived expressions that are impermanent and have significance only within specific practical situations (for example I understand that the child is crying from hunger and will feed it), the hermeneutic art of interpretation concerns itself with the "orderly and systematic understanding of fixed and relatively permanent life expressions" (op cit, 232). In Dilthey's view, this primarily concerns those expressions of spiritual content that are fixed in writing, although the art of interpretation can also be applied when construing the expressions of 'human spirit' as found in stones, marble, musical tones, gestures, activities, economic arrangements and constitutions. The core essence of the art of understanding, however, resides in the "interpretation of those residues of human reality preserved in written form" (op cit, 233), since it is only in language that the "inner life of man finds its exhaustive, most objectively comprehensible expression" (op cit). Hermeneutics, according to Dilthey, is consequently the science of interpretational procedures by virtue of which something 'inner' and 'spiritual' becomes comprehensible.

We need not concur with Dilthey in his preference for linguistic means of expressions over other possible means of expressing the 'inner', 'mental' or 'spiritual' reality of human life, but the idea that the goal of our analysis of a work of art is to ascertain the author's idea, for the expression of which that work was created in the first place, is one of the most widespread assumptions made when analysing works of art. Thus, according to Dilthey, the meanings of artworks derive from the author's personality, and are captured in a sensorially perceptible form (a written text) by virtue of which others can apprehend what was meant by the author. Interpretation is the opposite process of original meaning making: it discloses the ideational original form from its materialised embodiment. But let us have a closer look at the way this works. As said above, Dilthey views the hermeneutic art of interpretation as one of the highest forms of understanding. In contrast to the processes of understanding that we use spontaneously in daily life, and the purpose of which is also to disclose the mental states of other people on the basis of their external gestures, in the hermeneutic art of interpretation, understanding is attained by directing the interpreter's attention to the nexus of the external relationships of a given text. Dilthey explains:

> A drama is played. Not only the non-literary spectator lives entirely within the action, without thinking about the author of the piece; the person knowledgeable in literature can also fall completely under the spell of what happens here.

Then this understanding is directed to the nexus of the plot, the characters of the persons, and the interplay of forces [*Momente*], which determine the turn of fate. Indeed, only then will he enjoy the full reality of the slice of life which is presented. Only then will the process of understanding and re–experiencing [*Nacherleben*] be completed in him, as the poet intends to produce it. […] The understanding which was governed by the relationship between an aggregate of expressions of life and that which was expressed in them is transmuted into an understanding governed by the relationship between a creation and the creator only when the spectator notices how that which he took as a piece of reality arose artistically and according to a plan in the head of the poet. (Dilthey 1977, 130)

The main question of hermeneutic methodology concerns precisely that: which "aggregate" of relationships a given text or work of art is placed within. Already Schleiermacher made a distinction between "the totality of language" and "the whole thought of its originator" with regard to this question (Schleiermacher 1998, 8), and the totality of the author's life here is subsumed by yet other intersubjective totalities of the next order:

In the same way every utterance is to be understood only via the whole life to which it belongs, i.e. because every utterance can only be recognized as a moment of the life of the language-user in the determinedness of all the moments of their life, and this only from the totality of their environments, via which their development and continued existence are determined, every language-user can only be understood via their nationality and their era. (op cit, 9).

Drawing upon Hegel, Dilthey terms intersubjective cultural forms such as nation or era the "objective spirit", which he defines as "the medium of common context" (*Gemeinsamkeit*) through which the understanding of other persons and their life manifestations may be reached (Dilthey 1977, 126–7). The objective spirit includes all the spheres of culture from everyday life to high art: "Its domain extends from the style of life and forms of economic interaction to the system [or nexus – *Zusammenhang*] of ends which society has formed: the morality, law, the state, religion, art, science and philosophy" (op cit, 126). Andrus Tool comments that "the commonality which Dilthey refers to could be interpreted as a sphere of commonly shared meanings that binds members of one human association" (Tool 2014, 219). Tool adds that these commonly shared meanings are intersubjectively valid in the following sense: "General validity in this case

means a validity recognized by members of a specific human association and indeed not something that is valid for "all peoples and all times"; thus it is not a universal validity" (op cit). In more contemporary terms, Dilthey's 'objective spirit' could thus be defined as a field of intersubjectively valid meanings characteristic of a particular cultural community.

The epistemological principle of hermeneutics lies in the idea that the meaning of each work can be found with the help of the following contextual wholes: the whole of the ideas and literary figures presented in the work, the whole of the author's psychic life, and the whole of the specific era and culture. A knowledge of the objective spirit is also a precondition for our understanding of everyday occurrences, as individual states of mind can be understood by others only when they are expressed by symbolic means that are commonly used in a given cultural context, and which make them intersubjectively recognisable and interpretable. Everybody acquires these means of expression in the course of socialisation, and since all people belong to a particular era and a particular nation, the means of the objective spirit are uniform for members of a given cultural community. The most common example of such a means is natural language.

Obviously, for an interpreter, "fixed and relatively permanent life expressions" could belong to the context of a foreign and historically remote objective spirit, in which case the interpreter must first become a historian in order to understand the culture of a epoch in question so that this contextual knowledge could be employed in order to interpret a specific work or its author. On the one hand, the content of each work reflects the era of its creation because the era's social and cultural context affects the creator's thought processes without her acknowledging that. On the other hand, authors purposefully select their means of expression – the rules of the genre and technique – from the reservoir of possible choices, valid in their historical setting. A renewal of, or a revolt against, the rules of the genre, too, is possible only from a certain historical position which has been defined by the spirit of the era. (Dilthey 1985a, 160–173). However, in Dilthey's hermeneutics, the goal of understanding of the objective spirit is subjugated to the goal of understanding of what he calls "the mystery of the creator's personality" (op cit). The personality of an author and the author's idea for creating his work is the most important context for interpreting the meaning of a work. Twentieth-century structuralist theories are by far more sceptical about the importance of the author's personality in understanding her work. Foucault (1977), for example, understands the author as being a figure who has not been discovered but rather is generated in the course of interpretation and who has very little in common with the real historical person who was actually creating that work.

However, to this day the hermeneutic methodology is valid in the sense that one of the most important means of understanding a work is the construction of whole and understanding its parts through this whole, and vice versa; but also, the construction (or detection) of the wholes external to the work which are then used to make sense of it or its elements. The contextual whole external to the work can be a collection of works (which can be composed on the basis of the idea of authorship, genre, discipline or some other characteristic), the life of the author, culture or era. Dilthey summarises this methodological principle by emphasising, again, the whole of the author's life:

> Just as we distinguish the chemical composition, weight, and temperature of natural objects, and study them for themselves, so we can take a narrative poetic work, whether it be an epic, romance or ballad, drama or novel, and distinguish within it subject matter, poetic mood, motif, plot, characters, and means of representation. […] These particular moments which can be distinguished in the poem [*Dichtung*] develop out of [the author's] life-experience as if by organic growth; each of them performs a function relative to the work as a whole. Thus every poem is a living creation [*lebendiges Geschöph*] of a special kind. A full appreciation of a poet would require us to define all the conditions, both within him and external to him, which influence the modifications of lived experience and understanding characteristic of his creativity, and to comprehend the productive nexus [*Zusammenhang*] in which the motif, plot, characters, and means of representation are then formed (Dilthey 1985b, 252–3).

External and internal conditions that effect the formation of "the productive nexus" are directly connected to Dilthey's concept of the objective spirit or the author's contemporary culture. The reason Dilthey stresses the necessity of understanding the meaning of a poetic work in the context of the author's whole life and contemporary culture is that for him, the most essential task is to disclose "the mystery of the creator's personality"; however, subsequent developers of hermeneutic methodology find this goal less appealing. As a consequence, they emphasise more historical and cultural contexts and less the biographical and psychological ones. However, what remains valid allowing us to understand the meaning of things is "the hermeneutic rule that we must understand the whole in terms of the detail, and the detail in terms of the whole" on account of which "the movement of understanding is constantly from the whole to the part and back to the whole" (Gadamer 1988, 68). According to Gadamer, it is even impossible not to use a hermeneutic approach with regard to certain cultural

objects because "the concept of text [...] presents itself only in connection with interpretation and from the point of view of interpretation, as the authentic given that is to be understood" (Gadamer 1989, 30). The researcher him/herself, his or her life situation, interests and power relationships, his or her cultural context, language, and so forth, are already among those pre-given contextual wholes that make it possible for objects to have any meaning which could be discovered.

In conclusion we may say that in hermeneutics, a meaningful object is viewed as a 'work' (in Dilthey's words, "fixed and relatively permanent life expression") – something that expresses someone's individual and particular psychic–mental content through means of the objective spirit that is given to the creator of the work in her historical life situation. Understanding the meaning of the work becomes possible by virtue of the processes of contextualisation with the help of which we can view it in terms of a whole consisting of parts and explain one through the other. This is why the movement of understanding goes from the whole to the parts and back to the whole. In addition, the work and its parts are situated in the context of some broader whole through which its meaning is uncovered using the same movement of understanding.

Thus in hermeneutics one proceeds from the assumption that a human life is fundamentally situated within the objective spirit, or what is the same: within a certain historically, socially and culturally conditioned situation that gives the creator intersubjectively valid means of meaning making and forms a starting point for his or her creative activity. In order to understand the meaning of the works it is consequently necessary to reconstruct these historical, social and cultural contexts, and include them in the explanation of the meaning of the works. Several hermeneutical thinkers, especially such as Heidegger and Gadamer, emphasise the necessity of including the context of the historical situation of the interpreters themselves into the hermeneutic procedure, because the institutional dynamic and the power relations that are applied to the interpreters impact the focus of their attention and the formation of the research questions.

Therefore it is important to note that upon closer examination the meaning of an object turns out to be at least a dialogic process in which more parties are involved and in which the object under study, such as a text, constitutes only one of the sides of the process. As Robert Brandom observes, "meaning is a product of the words on the page and other features of the context in which it is situated – for instance, a tradition in which it features, or the concerns and questions a reader brings to the text." (Brandom 2002, 93). But in this case a plurality of meanings arises, as it is possible to furnish every text with an infinite number of various contexts, each of which discloses the meaning of the text differently. And since the number of contexts is not limited or pre-determined, the possibility of

creating new meanings will remain open. Therefore, it is necessary to re-interpret classic texts continually, for a bulk of new relevant contexts can emerge that provide additional elucidations of the meaning of the object (op cit, 93–94). The author's own life and intentions, his or her inner world, or cultural context and historical circumstances need not necessarily be privileged or focused on as the only possible background even though for a biographical reading the first set of contexts remains indispensable, just as the latter contexts are crucial for a historical understanding of the work.

We just need to take notice that in principle the hermeneutic paradigm presupposes a processuality and plurality of meanings, as well as continual openness to new perspectives that all arise from the possibilities of contextualisation of a work. Therefore we may regard hermeneutics first of all as an art or a technique of contextualisation. It remains to be widely used inside and outside of academia. The main divide between the users of the hermeneutic method lies in the answer to the question whether contexts are disclosed or created, i.e. whether certain contexts are pre-given and naturally belonging to a text, or constructed on purpose.

A phenomenological approach to culture-dependent meaning formation

Any phenomenological approach to the meanings of things proceeds from the study of the activity of consciousness that is intentionally related to things and events outside it. Phenomenological authors have primarily proceeded from an analysis of empirical perception and raised epistemological questions as to why a perception of one or another object is formed the way it is. The object is understood here in very broad terms. Anything in the real world could be defined as an intentional object of consciousness (such as an empirically perceptible table, chair, book, artwork, etc.), but also something abstract and ideational (numbers, words, signs, scientific propositions, theories, works of art), as well as things imaginary and phantasmagoric (objects of an individual's private dreams, fantasies, daydreams and imaginings). The only criterion that an object must satisfy is its capacity to come to the fore in an individual consciousness through seeing, hearing, touch, reflection, recollection, projections of the future, daydreaming, desiring, fearing or some other act of consciousness. In other words, all that which an individual could be aware of can become an intentional object of our mind – in the sense that the object is consciously experienced by the individual. As stated above, an object need not be empirically real; according to Husserl it could also be non-existing in reality, or something fictional, and might also be

a logically impossible ideational object such as a "square circle" (Husserl 1984, 59–60).

Human consciousness is always consciousness *of something*, as already claimed by Franz Brentano, from whom Husserl borrowed the idea of the intentionality of consciousness. That which consciousness is directed toward, or what it is conscious of, is the intentional object of experience. But how does consciousness establish its directedness toward the object? It modifies unconscious sensory data (such as light impulses on the eye's retina) into units of our mindful awareness that have a recognisable shape, identity, and differentiations between such units. As a result, the visual field of consciousness, as it is experienced, is divided into objects external to the subject and their backgrounds (while sensory data remains unconscious, unexperienced, and internal to the body). Similarly, the auditory field that we are conscious of is divided into recognisable sound units (units of speech, melody) and noise, etc.

Objects constituted in this way form a subject's field of experience which is very similar to Uexküll's concept of umwelt. What brings Husserl's phenomenological theory even closer to that of Uexküll is the role of meaning in the constitution of objects of experience. Already in *Logical Investigations*, Husserl notes that an intentional object is constituted through the medium of its meaning. This clashes with most of the epistemological theories, since it is usually claimed that the existence or essence of a thing does not depend on a subject, and that the meaning of an object results from its objective characteristics. Husserl, however, maintains that intentionality is established by virtue of meaning: "a [verbal] expression is related to the signified or named object [*Gegenstand*] only *through* its meaning" (Husserl 1984, 54, emphasis in original; see also p. 59). Likewise, in the first volume of *Ideas* Husserl repeats this idea in the context of noematic analysis: "Each noema has a 'content', that is to say, its 'meaning' [*Sinn*], and is related through it to 'its' object [*Gegenstand*]" (Husserl 1931, 361).

Thus consciousness establishes its intentionality by means of a meaning that it ascribes to an object it experiences. In other words, consciousness is consciousness *of* something by virtue of the fact that this 'something' which is the object of consciousness has a meaning. Or the way Husserl himself phrases it, we are always conscious of something *as* something – *als etwas*. This "*als etwas*", the *as something* of an intentional act, is precisely the meaning of this thing. For instance, when I perceive, on the table in front of me, a small cubic object on the sides of which there are symmetrically placed black dots of different number, *as* a die, this 'something' is presented in my consciousness as being a die, because I applied the meaning of the die to it. If I did not know the meaning of the die, I would not see the object in front of me *as* a die, but *as* a mere white

cube covered with black dots (which presupposes, in turn, that I know what the meaning of a cube is, etc.)

Just as the concept of the object of consciousness, so the concept of meaning is very broad in phenomenology. Meaning can be all that through which some intentional relation is established. It can be something highly concrete, but also something indeterminate and unformulable, such as the meaning of a poem read or some other work of art through the medium of which a reader or an observer experiences what has been presented in that work. Such an approach to the intentionality of consciousness opens up the possibility of interpreting perceptual processes in culture-dependent terms, although this is not the path Husserl himself follows since his intent was to develop phenomenology into a rigorous science that would serve as the foundation for other disciplines. Some later authors, such as Jürgen Habermas and Karl-Otto Apel, have reproached Husserl for not noticing the culture-dependent and intersubjective aspects of meaning formation and for attempting to reduce all achievements of consciousness to a life of an individual ego.

However, when reading Husserl's manuscripts, unpublished during his lifetime, we can learn that he did concern himself intensively with intersubjective, historical and cultural aspects of meaning making. These developments are primarily related to his endeavours to re-conceptualise the transcendental field of experience. If before Husserl had talked about transcendental ego (or transcendental subject) as the residue of phenomenological reduction and as a new research field discovered by phenomenology, then in his manuscripts, he introduces the concept of transcendental intersubjectivity that plays a role in constituting the world and objects that are valid and existing for a certain community of subjects. Of course, the constitution of intersubjective reality pertains primarily to the existence of ideal objects and their collective validity. Thus for example Husserl states in his Vienna lecture:

> [T]he historical surrounding-world [*historiche Umwelt*] of the Greeks is not the objective world in our sense but rather their "world-representation", i.e., their own subjective validity with all the actualities which are valid for them within it, including, for example, gods, demons, etc. (Husserl 1970, 272.)

Elsewhere Husserl claims that transcendental intersubjectivity is a structure of meaning-making that helps to establish what can be called "the world common to us all" ("*Welt für alle*") (op cit, 186, original emphasis). It includes a process called "communalisation" (*Vergemeinschaftung*) of individual experiences – it is when we perceive both real and ideal things as "also perceived by others" (op cit,

251ff). In our everyday life we indeed make a distinction between "things" that are valid for everybody, such as empirical objects, gods, cultural values, national identities, etc., and "things" that exist for me only, as for example the objects of my dreams. Objectivity is in this sense intersubjectively constituted. We regard as being objective these things, processes and ideations that are "also perceived" so by others. What is more, certain things are perceived as existing, or as objectively valid, only because they are perceived as existing by others. Gods and demons from the citation above are a good example of the objects of this type.

The intersubjective constitution of objectivity primarily comes to the fore in the context of the concept of lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*), because it is always a particular lifeworld, and not the world as such, that is communalised and forms "the world common to us all". The lifeword may be seen as an environment that unfolds for us in our 'natural attitude' (*natürliche Einstellung*). However, it is not simply a sum of all things, it is also the broadest possible horizon of any 'thing-experience' (*Dingerfarung*):

> Things, objects (always understood purely in the sense of the life-world) are "given" as being valid for us in each case, but in principle only in such a way that we are conscious of them as things or objects *within the world-horizon* (*Welthorizont*). Each one is something, "something of" the world which we are constantly conscious of as a horizon [of this thing]. (op cit, 143; original emphasis)

The most important feature of the lifeworld, as Husserl keeps emphasising, is its pre-givenness, a fact that it is *immer schon da*, "always already there". If objects are given to us in our experience, the world is always already "pre-given" (*vorgegeben*) as the horizon of the objects of experience. As he writes,

> [T]he lifeworld, for us who wakingly live in it, is always already there, existing in advance for us, the "ground" of all praxis whether theoretical or extra-theoretical. The world is pregiven to us, the waking, always somehow practically interested subjects, not occasionally but always and necessarily as the universal field of all actual and possible praxis, as horizon. To live is always to live-in-certainty-of-the-world. (op cit, 142).

But how is this pre-given world-horizon related to transcendental intersubjectivity, and hence to culture-dependent meaning-formation? Husserl explains this by stating that the lifeworld and its contents are always "communalised". This means that the reciprocal correction of the meaning that is applied to the

individual contents of consciousness among different subjects leads to "intersubjective harmony of validity" of these contents. As a result, one and the same lifeworld is valid for the subjects that belong the community of people who have been involved in the reciprocal correction of the meaning of their contents of consciousness. They form a society of people between whom we can witness what he calls "the intersubjective harmony of validity" of the contents of experience.

> Thus in general the world exists not only for isolated men but for the community of men; and this is due to the fact that even what is straightforwardly perceptual is communalized (*Vergemeinschaftung*). In this communalization, too, there constantly occurs an alteration of validity through reciprocal correction. In reciprocal understanding, my experiences and experiential acquisitions enter into contact with those of others, similar to the contact between individual series of experiences within my (one's own) experiential life; and here again, for the most part, intersubjective harmony of validity occurs, [establishing what is] normal in respect to particular details, and thus an intersubjective unity [*intersubjektive Einheit*] also comes about in the multiplicity of validities and of what is valid through them; here again, furthermore, intersubjective discrepancies show themselves often enough; but then, whether it is unspoken and even unnoticed, or is expressed through discussion and criticism, a unification is brought about or at least is certain in advance as possibly attainable by everyone. All this takes place in such a way that in the consciousness of each individual, and in the overarching community consciousness which has grown up through [social] contact, one and the same world achieves and continuously maintains constant validity as the world which is in part already experienced and in part the open horizon of possible experiences for all; it is the world as the universal horizon, common to all men, of actually existing things. (Husserl 1970, 163–4)

By establishing common validities a cultural umwelt, or a lifeworld which is valid for a particular cultural community, is formed. According to Husserl, this lifeworld includes universal structures of meaning common to humankind as well as structures which are specific to this culture only. Normally we do think of the lifeworld in thematic terms as an object in the natural attitude. Rather it remains the widest possible horizon of all things, and consequently a means of meaning making, and not its outcome.

Thus we may conclude that in order to understand the processes of culture-dependent meaning making from the phenomenological point of view we must take into account the role of transcendental intersubjectivity in meaning

formation processes. This will lead us to the understanding of how the collective, and hence historical and cultural, mechanisms of meaning formation operate within individual consciousness; how are the contents of individual experience communalised between the subjects that form communities, and how are these contents socially validated. This would extend the means of phenomenological analysis beyond the form they were given in Husserl's works that he published during his lifetime, while involving his own ideas of cultural lifeworld and transcendental intersubjectivity that he started to develop in his later manuscripts.

Cultural semiotics and models of culture-dependent meaning formation

When talking about semiotic models of culture-dependent meaning formation, we should begin with a semiotic discussion of natural language and examine the sign in terms of semiosis. The first example to refer to comes from one of the founders of the Tartu–Moscow semiotic school, Isaak Revzin. In his posthumously published book *The Structure of Language as a Modeling System* (1978) Revzin termed semiotics a science that studies the *general properties of sign systems* and which in addition to natural languages, is also concerned with artificial languages, and where one of the most important issues is the relationship of natural languages to other sign systems. In his book, Revzin lists the properties of natural language:

> Human language addresses a series of human needs. This determines its following characteristics:
> 1. universality: language addresses any human activity;
> 2. non-closedness: language can continually incorporate new elements;
> 3. creativity: language can express new content by old means, i.e. continually new sentences can emerge in a language;
> 4. mutability: language can change;
> 5. stability: for a language carrier, language seems unchangeable.
>   Language fulfils three major functions:
> 1. The function of social interaction or the communicative function; thereby meaning the establishment of contact between the speaker and the listener and creation of conditions for forwarding messages […];
> 2. The function of forwarding the contents of mental activity or cognitive function: thereby meaning the registration and objectivisation of a thought that corresponds to some extra-lingual reality. […]

3. The function of self-organisation [*функция самоорганизации*]: thereby meaning the fact that language is not only intended to meet communicative needs, but also to strengthen its organisational level both paradigmatically (in terms of the internal organisation of word classes) and syntagmatically (in terms of forming the message). (Revzin 1978, 133–134).

The distinctive feature of another book by Revzin, *Modern Structural Linguistics* (1977) is the combining of structural linguistics and mathematical linguistics. Linguistics have been combined with mathematics for the purpose of solving questions regarding language modelling. The fundamental concept of any language model is that of a text in an alphabet. Models are divided into synthesising models, where text is an output object, i.e. the result of the model's effect, and analytical models, where text is an input object, i.e. the model's source material. Synthesising models are in turn divided into directly synthesising models or synthesis models and generative models. What forms the context for the creation of models is a recognition that statistical and structural methods solve the same types of problem. If Revzin typically refers to the separation of the unique from the commonplace as a statistical problem, then all claims regarding the structure of language likewise apply to the commonplace and not the unique phenomenon (Revzin 1977, 33).

In trying to make sense of the general theoretical development of structural linguistics, Revzin claims: "An abstract approach to natural languages related to the idea of modelling has led to the situation that natural languages have come to be regarded as a special case of sign systems, and linguistics gradually turns into a component of semiotics" (Revzin 1977, 35). In this work Revzin defines semiotics as follows: "Semiotics is a science of the general properties of sign systems and regularities of their functioning, regardless of the specific embodiment of the respective signs and the area of their use" (op cit, 35).

Among Saussure's principles, Revzin highlights two as the most essential: the principle of manifestation, or the registering of such components of meaning for which there is expression in the language, and the principle of differentiality. The latter may be expressed through two postulates: 1) the postulate of identification, 2) the postulate of differentiation. According to Revzin, it is these two postulates that discussion of structure in semiotics relies on:

semiotics looks for identifiable, recurrent, commonplace elements which are similar on the basis of some characteristics and examines which relations are not dependent on the concrete essence of these elements. […] The identity of elements which is the precondition of structurality may be easily detectable,

but it may also be manifested in a rather covert form so that a whole series of layers would have to be removed in order to detect a structure.

It must be that irregularity in the making of structures is characteristic of semiotics as a science, which is necessarily connected to the description of humans and their social existence, for here we always encounter both: quite frequently recurring configurations of elements, which allow us to detect a structure immediately, as well as rare, but rather important, configurations in which only a few components turn out to be recurrent. (Revzin 1977: 44)

What poses a problem, in Revzin's view, is the describing of structures independently of the structures of the same or of a lower lever:

The major achievement of the entire post-Saussurian linguistics was a conception of language as not just a multilevel system, but as such a system in which everything is interrelated, in which every element acquires meaning only by contrast to other elements. Thus the clash between system and structure lies in the clash between integral linguistic concepts and the locality of modes intended for their description (op cit, 59).

In order to ascribe characteristics of systematicness to a structure Revzin considers it important to add two more postulates to those of Saussure. So, coming after the two postulates above by Saussure, the third and fourth postulates suggested by Revzin would go as follows: 3) Each element of the original quantity has more than one functionally meaningful relation. 4) If the elements of the level i have been assigned some meanings, then the meanings of the elements of the level (i+1) are not derived from these meanings only, but there are also such meanings of the elements of the level (i+1) which are not at all derived from the meanings of the lower level elements (op cit, 59–60). To put it into simpler terms, Revzin's intention was to emphasise that it is characteristic of language, and most likely, of other complex systems, that 1) the meaning of each element is conditioned by its location in the system of the whole and 2) the whole is not a straightforward sum of its elements because the meaning of the whole cannot be reduced to the sum of the meanings of the components (op cit, 60).

On the one hand, it would be pertinent here to add a discussion of the parameters of the meaning of the sign in semiosis. If the general standpoint in semiotics is that semiosis is a condition in which something functions as a sign, we should talk about the meaning of the sign in complementary terms by proceeding from three parameters proposed by Charles Morris (1955): semantics registers the original or immanent meaning of a sign; syntactics monitors changes in the

meaning of the sign depending on the sign system and the meaning of other signs; and pragmatics highlights the functional meaning of the sign, the relation between the sign and the receiver. What follows from this is that there is a need for a functional classification of signs outside the common classification of sign types. On the basis of recognisability, it is expedient to distinguish *a priori,* or generally known signs, from processual or authorial signs, which carry a concept and are often *ad hoc* signs, and *a posteriori* signs, or signs making sense of a situation or a text as a whole. The functional aspect enables us to monitor cultural autocommunicative sign processes and transformations; for example, the translation of processual or authorial signs into *a priori* or conventional signs. This applies both to the translation of a verbal sign into another verbal sign and its translation into a visual or audiovisual one.

On the other hand, we should touch upon the concept of *structure*. In 1963 Juri Lotman published an article entitled "On the Delimitation of the Concept of Structure in Linguistics and Literary Scholarship", which also became his first paper translated into another language[1]. In this article, Lotman makes a clear differentiation:

> In language, structure emerges spontaneously through history and acts as a means for the communication of information. In literature, structure is born as the result of a creative act and is itself the content of information, and its aim. Structure, in this case, becomes a model of life phenomena presented by the author, and assumes all the cognitive features of a model. […] Linguistic structure is a precondition for the communication of information, it is a means for it; literary structure is its purpose and content. The purely linguistic means of analysis will not reveal to the researcher the structure of an artistic text. (Lotman 1977, 172)

From the perspective of the analysis of the whole it is again important to add: "…in verbal art, the structure of content is realized through the structure of language and forms an intricate, composite whole" (op cit, 172).

Lotman's first semiotic book *Lectures on Structural Poetics*, which was published in 1964, establishes the cultural–semiotic concept of structure: "A genuine knowledge of an artistic work is possible only by approaching the work as an integrated, multi-level, functioning structure" (Lotman 1994, 26).

The gist of Lotman's *Lectures on Structural Poetics* is that each type of art has its own language, and that, for instance, a literary text recorded in a natural language acquires meaning by virtue of the author's special relationship to the language in question, wherefore an interpretation of the text on the level of the

dictionary meaning of the words might turn out to be a distortion of the text. This means that in a fictional text, natural language is turned into a language of a higher order – it becomes a secondary modelling system.

What follows from this is Lotman's idea that words which have different denotations on the level of natural language can assume a common denotation in a text. This in turn leads to the conclusion that "the problem of content is always the problem of recoding" (Lotman 1994, 31). Dutch cheese and a Varangian shield have different denotations, but in Lermontov's poem, "Sashka", they both denote the Moon (op cit, 32). A common interpretation of them, in addition to Lermontov's text, is offered by yet another modelling system on the level of romantic word usage and literary creation, which in turn, enables us to perceive a parodic relationship of the two word pairs.

In the preface to his collection, *Papers on Typology of Culture 2* (1973), Lotman suggests an important concept of the universal that a typologisation of culture can be based on. This is the need of each culture for a *self-description*: "This need is realized on the meta-cultural level in the creation of self-descriptive texts, which may be regarded as grammars created by a culture in order to describe itself" (Lotman 1973, 5). Self-descriptive languages and texts recorded in them will become part of cultural diversity and meaning-making and start affecting the cultural equilibrium:

> The dynamism and resilience of a culture as a whole presupposes an increase of the diversity of subsystems and their relative independence in parallel with an increase of the capacity of the metasystem. "The triumph" of the subsystems over the metasystems is the cause of a disintegration of culture as an integral person (a culture's "schizophrenia"), while "the triumph" of the metasystem over the relative disorganization – individuality – of the diversity of the single subsystems signals the ossification of the system, its death. (Egorov, Ignatyev & Lotman 1995, 281)

This is what Lotman's typology is based on. Its foundation is the distinction between the static and dynamic aspects of cultural languages. In their static aspect, cultural languages divide into discrete and continual (iconic-spatial) languages, and for Lotman, this forms the semiotic primordial dualism. In discrete languages signs are primary and meanings are created through the meanings of the signs, whereas in continual languages text comes first with meaning emerging through an integral text that incorporates even the most heterogeneous elements. It is difficult to create translatability between these two languages. Difficulties of translatability and the impossibility of reverse translation make any mediating

activity between these languages creative and thus build the foundation for *creativity*. In their dynamic aspect, cultural languages divide into object languages and metalanguages, or descriptive languages and languages of description respectively, and meaning formation in a culture occurs in their tension field.

The key concept in cultural semiotics is *text*, which also carries the meaning of a model. Lotman's article, "Culture as a Subject and Object for Itself", includes the following lines: "The main question of semiotics of culture is the problem of the generation of meaning. What we term the generation of meaning is the capacity of both culture as a whole and its parts to issue new, nontrivial texts 'from the output'. We call new texts those texts that emerge as the result of irreversible processes (in Ilya Prigogine's terms), i.e. these texts are unpredictable to a certain degree" (Lotman 2000, 640). First of all, text is a space in which some language manifests itself as the material of the text and the material of the structure turns into the structure of the text. With regard to verbal texts it is natural that levels of language from phonemes to sentences also become levels of the text. The logic of language structuring, however, does not lend itself to discussion of films and paintings as texts. Although there was a time in the history of cultural semiotics when linguistic units from phonemes to words and sentences were traced in a wide variety of art forms, the universalisation of linguistic approach did not prove productive. In this connection it must be pointed out that a text with a continual dominant creates its meaning through the whole, or deductively, and a text with a discrete dominant does so through the elements, or inductively. The general principle is that continuality and discreteness are co-existing parameters.

The linguistic approach (text as speech fixed in writing) initiates a change in the concept of text. This means that text is a manifestation of language. As the next step, semioticians began to see texts as multilingual systems in which the co-existence of discreteness and continuality was an elementary thing. The third development that could be highlighted is the treatment of text as a creative mechanism or a dialogic whole. Lotman consciously substituted the concept of reception with that of communication and underlined thus the dialogical activeness of text. When text and addressee come into contact, several different levels of communication can simultaneously or separately be involved: text as a message denotes communication between the addresser and addressee; text as a carrier of cultural memory denotes communication between the audience and cultural tradition; text as a medium influencing the development of personality denotes communication of the reader with him- or herself; text as an autonomous intellectual formation and independent partner in dialogue denotes communication of the reader with the text; text as a full-fledged participant in a communication act denotes communication between the text and cultural context (Lotman 1988,

55–6). By interpreting a text from the perspective of communication, it becomes possible to talk about subtextual or general linguistic meanings, textual meanings and various functions of the texts (meanings deriving from the text's function) within the cultural system. Culture in turn may be described in terms of three levels: the level of subtextual messages, the level of culture as the system of texts and the level of culture as the mass of functions addressing the texts (Lotman 1970, 73–77).

The expansion of the concept of text resulted in the appearance of a new concept, that of *semiosphere* (cf Lotman 2005). A semiosphere is the conditional space without which semiosis would not be possible; at the same time, however, the concept of semiosphere presupposes that we rather include the notion of intersemiosis. This means that the seemingly chaotic mishmash of sign systems becomes organised on the different levels of their delimitation. Limit or boundary, thus, is the most important notion of semiosphere. At one time Lotman felt it was necessary to use the notion of framedness in order to delimit a text. Now it is boundary that frames the semiosphere, but the entanglement of boundaries within the semiosphere is just as significant:

> The border of semiotic space is the most important functional and structural position, giving substance to its semiotic mechanism. The border is a bilingual mechanism, translating external communications into the internal language of the semiosphere and vice versa. Thus, only with the help of the boundary is the semiosphere able to establish contact with non-semiotic and extra-semiotic spaces. (Lotman 2005, 210)

The same mechanism also operates inside the semiosphere:

> In this way, the semiosphere repeatedly traverses the internal borders, assigning a specialized role to its parts in a semiotic sense. The translation of information though these borders, a game between different structures and substructures; the continuous semiotic "invasions" to one or other structure in the "other territory" gives birth to meaning, generating new information. (op sit, 215)

If text is first and foremost a model of synchronic delimitation, the semiosphere also incorporates a diachronic dimension and becomes a dynamic model compared with the text. Likewise the concept of semiosphere conceptualises cultural meaning formation as a multistep mechanism where one meaning is used to create new meanings on its foundation and meaning becomes relative, plural

and dynamic. At the same time, semiosphere is also a model of cultural meaning making, which enables us to understand the mechanism for preservation of meaning in a culture through multiple descriptions in specialised languages as well as the complementariness of the partial meaning and the meaning of the whole. Thus it can be said that the dynamics of the terminological field of cultural semiotics with regard to the concepts of sign, structure and language as a sign system and sign systems as cultural languages, text and semiosphere enables us to approach these concepts as theoretical models of culture-dependent meaning formation since they expose the peculiarities of cultural thinking and communication and carry, at the same time, a differentiating meaning on the object level and the metalevel.

Culture-dependent meaning formation in cultural psychology

In this section, we examine a family of psychological theories which approach meaning formation as a process by means of which people relate to their environment. In cultural-historical psychology (Vygotsky, Rubinstein, Leontyev, Zinchenko, etc.), semiotic cultural psychology (Valsiner, Wagoner, Zittoun, etc.) as well as social representations theory (Moscovici, Wagner, Marková, etc.), human meaning formation is viewed as a dynamic, essentially social and cultural process. The dynamic aspect of meaning primarily encompasses the life course of meaning – its formation, retention and extinction – as well as the functional operation of meaning, or its use in human activities and society. *Meaning carriers* are social-cultural subjects – individuals and groups. The *object* of meaning is any real or imaginary phenomenon in the subject's inner or outer environment (including other subjects) and the subject itself. In the broadest sense, meaning expresses the subject's intention regarding a given object in some context. Meaning formation takes place at the interaction between an active subject and the environment (through action), where meanings express and regulate the interrelationship between the subject and the environment.

In cultural psychology, *culture* is defined as a system of signs and meanings that mediates the relationships between humans and the environment and which acts as a regulator of social and psychic processes (for example Valsiner 2000, 49). Culture semiotically directs and circumscribes interindividual and intraindividual processes in both intersubjective (collective) and intrasubjective (individual) reality. *Meanings* have multiple aspects and belong to the meaning systems of different levels. Collective meanings are public, relatively stable and shared by a certain community. They constitute external limits (a framework) within which individuals can relatively freely construct their subjective meanings

which form individualised versions of collective meanings. Subjective meanings are expressive of the subject's individuality: his or her intentions, individual experience and unique link with the world. The field of collective meanings is viewed as being primary in cultural psychology, and the individual meaning making is derivative of it, at the same time, however, it is an activity that in turn reshapes collective meanings.

First we will have a closer look at individual meaning formation and the role of culture in this process. In this case, meaning must be understood as a basic unit of consciousness by which social and individual experiences are linked. Thus meaning is a bridge between the material and the ideal. Intraconscious processes of meaning formation (internal activities) correspond to the processes of external interaction between the subject and the environment (Leontyev, 2003). Individual meaning formation is thus directed and circumscribed by social and cultural conditions.

Valsiner (2007) attempts to describe processes by which humans continually create (and destroy) semiotic regulators (meanings) to plan their activities and make sense of a situation. The irreversibility of time and indeterminacy of the future necessitates that meanings must continually be (re)created. Meanings are hierarchically organised, they enable us to relate to the existing situation in different ways, alter an experience at a given time and plan our activities for the future. The dynamic of meaning making lies in the continual transformation of the meanings' hierarchy, or in keeping it unchanged. Valsiner describes meaning as a complex of united opposites (meaning 'A' is connected to some oppositional meaning 'non-A'). Each concept is related to the field of potential opposites which is the developmental potential of the concept, and through which a differentiation of meaning takes place. The foundation for the change of meaning is tension between the meaning and its opposite meanings. As a result of this tension, meaning is altered, drawing upon the reservoir of existing opposite meanings (for example love versus hate–love versus indifference).

On the level of human interactions, we can observe the individual's entrance into the realm of collective meanings in the course of socialisation. For instance, in Vygotsky's theory of social development, the development of a child's psyche is described as a process in which interpersonal relationships with adults and collective meanings/language expressed therein are internalised in the psyche of the child. The subjectivity that arises through this is intersubjective in its essence. Similar processes unfold when a newcomer enters the group. Marková (2003) suggests that an intersubjective relationship, the positioning of the ego in relation to both the object and other subjects, is always involved in the shaping of the object's meaning. Meanings are generated (retained, transformed) together

with other people through a common activity regarding the object of the meaning. Meaning making as a dialogical process presupposes a specific or imaginary 'other'. The specific 'other' occurs in the context of immediate interaction, while the imaginary generalised 'Other' represents an abstract cultural field or group.

Gillespie (2009) conceptualises interpersonal meaning formation through an individual's performative positioning in various complementary roles, such as child–mother, dominator–domineered, actor–observer, and a synthesis of these different perspectives. Moving in the social field, people experience different roles, situations, perspectives and ways of thinking. In this manner, diverse perspectives become represented in an individual's consciousness. In the context of common action, common intersubjective meanings are created which interweave meanings originating in diverse social positions. Here assumptions and constraints which are connected to the individual's affiliation with a certain group as well as intergroup relationships in the society are added to the meaning making. An individual's positioning in the socio-cultural field determines which collective meanings are available to him or her and make sense, and which version of the meaning is adequate from the given position.

Thus meaning formation has multiple levels and aspects: cultural and institutional, contextual (orientation towards a specific other), positional, situational and personal. In addition to these, Marková (1996) also distinguishes those meaning levels which emerge in various activities, in various relationships to the object: 1) a non-reflective, automatic, surface level represents the conventional, consensual and uncontested aspect; 2) a reflective level is activated when people must think about a concept, for example to define it; 3) a yet deeper level emerges when tackling more difficult tasks and when one is confronted with antithetical meanings.

If the umwelt of animals consists of fixed meanings, the multilevel meaning making practices of humans allow a multiplicity of meanings and changeability. Uexküll's theory of meaning examines the emergence of functional meanings in the feedbacked cycles of an organism's life activity. In the umwelts of living organisms, there are only functional meanings of objects in the form of the elements of an organism's functional cycle, but human beings are able to produce meanings that are distanced from the immediate situation, and perceive the object from different vantage points and reveal its essence.[2]

Let us now also examine more carefully collective meaning formation as well as collective meanings in cultural psychology theories. The field of collective meanings is structured and multi-layered, consisting of partially overlapping mental spaces of different subjects and shared intersubjective meaning complexes. Meaning systems peculiar to a group's subjects are examined in *social*

representations theory which explains the formation of collective meaning systems and their functioning by drawing upon intergroup relationships and practices as well as intragroup interactions. The research program initiated by Serge Moscovici (1984; 1998; 2001) belongs to sociological social psychology: on the one hand, it has affinities with Durkheim's and Weber's sociology; on the other, it is close to Wundt's cultural psychology and the socio-cultural strand in psychology (Valsiner & Van der Veer, 2000, 409; Marková, 1996). Moscovici's theory of social representations grew out of an interest in how an idea (for example psychoanalysis) is transformed in various groups and interacts with the "self-evident things" peculiar to the group.

According to one widespread definition, social representations are concepts, values and systems of activity that are characteristic of some group. They are *representations* due to the fact that they consist of different representational constructs (beliefs, conceptions, ideas, values, action plans, models, meanings, fantasies, explanations, interpretations, etc.). At the same time, social representations are not an amorphous mass of such representational constructs, but a *system* which has a definite structure and mode of functioning. Social representations are not the result of aggregation of individual attitudes, but a systematic product of coordinated group processes (Wagner et al 1999, 96). In addition to the so-called mental elements, social representations also include the group's behavioural patterns and social practices regarding the object of representation.

Social representations are social in three ways:

a) they are shared by at least two people, but generally by entire groups, institutions or communities;

b) they arise and change through communication and interaction. Social representations emerge in intragroup and intergroup intercourse and interaction. Communication is the means by which a community preserves and alters its social representations. In contrast to Durkheim's collective images (which are uniform in the entire culture and as such are obligatory for all members of the group), social representations are understood as "unity amidst diversity";

c) social representations are related to socially important objects, its object must be in some way important for the group, and the "naïve" theory expressed in social representations is necessary in daily life. In this sense, social representations embody a theory (a model) used in everyday life to explain a socially significant phenomenon.

Thus social representations can be approached as *meaning systems* which circulate within a human association and upon which single individuals construct their subjective meaning complexes (and thereby the content of their identity as well). With regard to individuals, these meaning systems constitute a support

(a reference point, resource and constraint) offered by the culture for interacting with other people and for organising their thoughts and activities. In this sense, social representations form a certain system of meanings or a commonsensical "theory".

From the dynamic point of view, *social representing* is an activity in which *the social object* is created in the course of social interaction and coactivity; this coactivity involves both discursive and externally observable behaviour (Wagner et al 1999, 313). In coactivity, people create a semiotic environment for themselves (shared structures) which in turn fosters and allows certain activities and ways of thinking while barring others. The objects of social representations are social constructs which emerge and are stored in a specific cultural and historical context. Social representations are inherently predicated on public debates and the exchange of ideas. In other words, an intra-systemic heterogeneity, or the existence of different positions in the social field, is a precondition of social representations.

Social representations theory views representations as being simultaneously both *social and cognitive* phenomena. Two regulatory systems are examined: the social metasystem, and the individual cognitive system. In terms of the phenomena realised on the cultural (group) level, social representations represent a certain knowledge, a version of reality shared by the group. This knowledge is practical and its purpose is to understand and control reality on the one hand, and interact and coordinate coactivity, on the other. Doise et al (1993, 157) define social representations theory as a general theory about how the metasystem of social regulations controls the functioning of the cognitive system. Such a macrosystematic influence acts through self-regulation as well as the goal-directed action of institutions – the latter consciously use social representations to achieve their goals. On an individual level, social representations express the influence of the social macrosystem that regulates, controls and directs individual practices. According to Doise et al (op cit) social representations theory has in fact three main concerns: 1) which social regulators influence 2) which cognitive functions 3) in which context.

In a single cultural field, social representations can have a different status. Thus, for example, hegemonic representations are widespread in the entire society; they are stable, obligatory, homogeneous, and they are perceived as self-evident (similarly to Durkheim's 'collective representations'). Polemical representations are contestable, they may be found among certain groups (subgroups) and are connected to narrower group interests or alternative ideas.

Social representations manifest themselves in people's speech, ways of thinking and behaviour (Wagner 2015) as well as in cultural products such as images,

discourses, texts, etc. Thinking by virtue of social representations differs from thinking in scientific concepts: with regard to the first, the primary regulative principle is not formal logic, but some social criteria (for example attempts to reach a consensus in the group, to set apart one group from others and so on).

In discussions of the structure and content of social representations, two traditions can be distinguished: First, a conception of social representations as attitudes, beliefs, stereotypes, knowledge, explanations, etc., that are shared by some association. This is the consensual and explicit content of social representations. In this approach, social representations are viewed as "surface" phenomena available to all members of the group, and the emphasis is laid on the concrete and consciously perceived aspects of social representations. Second, social representations are discussed in terms of implicit organising principles. Such abstract base principles (dimensions, meaningful oppositional categories) reflect the regulative operation of the social metasystem on cognitive functioning (Doise et al 1993; Moscovici 1984). On the basis of these base principles, individuals and groups define their place within the system of social relations and differentiate themselves from others, and choose their relative position in relation to these base principles in the common representational field of the group. Individual beliefs and attitudes express the adoption of a certain position in the general system of meanings. This approach is inspired by Bourdieu's sociology and borrows from it notions such as the representational field, organising principles (antithetical forces that organise the social field), and the subject's position in the social field.

Doise et al (1993) define social representations as organising principles of interindividual and intergroup symbolic relationships. Shared structural principles can organise a different content. Different organising principles are activated under different conditions (with regard to different tasks), for example constraints arising from social relationships (everyday thinking) or formal logic (scientific thinking). These organising principles are not immediately observable, but rather must be derived by analysis from some pattern of responses – they can be defined as the dimensions of a semantic space or implicit rules. Such common coordinates form a network of normative meanings in a given social space.

Such a structuralist interpretation of social representations theory emphasises the importance of (invisible) structures that underlie signification when regulating social and cognitive systems. In this approach, the degree of consensuality is of little consequence, what matters is the general configuration of meanings and dimensions which generate different positionings (Doise et at 1993). Here common social representations denote access to the same system of meanings, which is in constant development, and not so much the similar beliefs characteristic of the majority. In this form, social representations are implicit, unconscious

structures (transparent and self-evident "like water for fish") which nevertheless have a profound effect on people's social functioning (Moscovici 1984).

Another approach in analysing these structures (Marková 2000) proceeds from the hierarchical model of the structures according to which there are certain core ideas (*themata, core beliefs*) which form the basis of social representations and which generate different meaning systems around themselves. These core ideas may be viewed as pairs of mutually dependent opposites that are stable and self-explanatory in a particular culture.

Thus social representations are a means by which social reality is created, sustained and altered, and by which shared social objects are produced for the group. Hence social representations have both a *constitutive* (creating a certain version of reality) and *regulative* function. The function of social representations is to keep together groups and coordinate activity with others. On the other hand, they serve as a means of making sense of reality (*sense making*) and of symbolic adaptation to new things. The regulative aspect of social representations is manifested in the (often implicit) control of psychic processes and behaviour (Moscovici, 1984, 9). The content of social representations is always prescriptive, i.e. it always contains some instruction for action (cf Harré's (1998, 135) definition: "social representations are systems of signs, with the rules or conventions for their proper use"). They include information about some object that must be used in just this (and not another) manner corresponding to a socially preferred tendency (Valsiner & Van der Veer 2000, 409). Consequently, social representations are a mechanism for organising and stabilising meanings in both culture and psyche. It can be said that in their totality, they create a commonly understandable social reality or "interobjectivity" for a cultural community (Moghaddam 2003, 221).

It will be interesting to study why and how some social representations are selected while others are ignored. Why are some more full of vitality than others? Why and how are new ideas and norms resisted (for example green thinking)? One cluster of reasons might emanate from the difficulty of associating new ideas with existing meaning systems (their so-called 'anchoring' in some context). The second cluster of reasons is connected with identity. According to social representations theory, the principal mechanism for organising and stabilising meanings is *social identity*. Identity is a mechanism that holds together certain attitudes, beliefs and values – it is the creative component of representations (Duveen 2001). It is precisely with the support of identity that one makes choices between the different social representations, retains and modifies them. Similarly to Thomas Kuhn's model of paradigms, the choice of theory (itself a social representation) is made not as much on the basis of the logic of arguments as on the basis of the intersubjective relationships behind the theory. People's position

in the social structure (and the subjective system of identities) influences which social representations are adopted. Stable connections between social representations and identity enable them to act as a sign of identity, or a designation of a certain social position: in addition to some object, social representations also point to a certain subject (group). And vice versa: an assigned or selected identity signifies a certain system of social representations. It follows from this that subjectively significant social identities may facilitate or inhibit the adoption of certain regulative ideas. If an idea endangers someone's essential identity, it will be resisted or transformed into one which is suitable for the particular identity. According to Bauer (1995), social representations act as a kind of cultural immune system in the intergroup context.

It can be concluded that collective meanings are, on the one hand, essential preconditions for individual consciousness, while on the other are a source of inescapable pressure and constraint. A non-reflexive functioning in some collective meaning field encloses a person in a comfortable collective umwelt. Reflection and the ability to distance oneself and change subject positions offer an individual relative autonomy with regard to consensual collective meanings. The degree of autonomy depends on the capacity of the individual to choose consciously between different symbolic resources, and realise alternative possibilities of meaning making as compared to the collectively imposed self-evident things. Thus, as active participants in the life field, people are indeed influenced by the structure of the fields as well as by the events taking place in it and its power relations. On the other hand, however, they are relatively free to choose themselves from the available cultural forms those that would give meaning to and regulate their actions – a phenomenon which Jaan Valsiner (1998, 386) describes as "bounded indeterminacy" or being "dependently independent".

The creation of personal meanings is one of the means of semiotic self-regulation. Collective cultural forms are used, to be sure, as a resource to draw upon, but individuality is attained by combining them in a unique way, through locating them in new contexts and constructing one's unique purpose in life (see Leontyev 2003). At the same time, collective culture is manifested and acts through living people who reconstruct social recommendations and cultural forms in their individual contexts. A person may counteract and alter certain collective meanings if he or she thereby relies on some other cultural meaning systems, but it is impossible in principle to act and think outside of the culture. In this sense, culture is part of the individual's psychological system.

Conclusion

Although many of the paradigmatic assumptions of the theories examined here vary, they make similar differentiations regarding culture-dependent meaning formation. The concept of meaning plays an important role in all the theories examined in this paper, however, the meaning of the meaning, the way this term is conceptualised in these disciplines, is obviously not the same. If phenomenology and cultural psychology view meaning as being primarily connected to the functioning of consciousness or the psyche (meaning is viewed as a moment of the psychic life of an individual), then semiotics of culture and hermeneutics approach meaning, above all, in terms it being a property of a text or a work (meaning is related to the existence of texts, emergence of new texts, and interpreting the existing ones). Nonetheless, the theories outlined here do not oppose each other's viewpoints: in semiotics and hermeneutics it is assumed that a text or a work can become meaningful only within a communicative situation, or within an act of semiosis – that is, when it is read or interpreted. And likewise, in phenomenology and cultural psychology, the study of conscious activity of a subject includes the cases of reading and interpreting texts and works.

The aim of the present article, however, was not to show and juxtapose meaning formation in all its complexity, but rather to expose its culture-dependent character. In this regard, despite the terminological distinctions, we can see a very important conceptual commonality between the theories we discussed. All the theories examined here postulate the existence of a particular collective or intersubjective meaning structure by virtue of which subjective states can become meaningful and intersubjectively understandable. This feature is expressed most strongly in cultural psychology, and perhaps most weakly in phenomenology. In cultural psychology it is shown most explicitly how the intersubjective meaning structures shape, influence and delimit individual meaning making processes. However, according to all four disciplines a collectively valid nexus of meaning (a cultural symbol system) is needed to assign a meaning to something "inner" of the subject in order to make it meaningful for the individual herself and the others.

It is important to note that this collective framework of meanings is not reducible to individual psychic events, but it exists as if "before" the particular acts of expression – much in the same way as language precedes particular speech acts. In other words, the collective component of meaning formation has a certain independent status and can be described independently of all specific acts of meaning formation. Secondly, things and events in the surrounding world of the subject are meaningful by means of the same collectively valid framework of

meaning. And third, some kind of a historically and culturally specific umwelt or lifeworld appears for the community of subjects using the same set of collectively valid framework of meanings. In Dilthey's hermeneutics, the totality of all intersubjectively valid structures of meaning making found in a society at a given time is called objective spirit; in phenomenology it is termed cultural umwelt or lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*); in Lotman's cultural semiotics, semiosphere; in cultural psychology, culture as system of meanings. Cassirer, in his cultural philosophical approach, calls it cultural symbol system.

Without this structure individual acts of meaning making were not possible. Thus we can view it as being one of the necessary preconditions of meaning formation. It is not an *a priori* structure, nor one without a history, but comes about during the course of reciprocal acts of meaning making within one or another cultural community. It is a historically and culturally particular, and yet universally necessary condition of meaning formation. It is also the feature that makes any act of meaning making dependent on culture. Due to this structure all acts of meaning formation are characterised, on the one hand, by embeddedness in an objective spirit, semiosphere, or a cultural lifeworld, and on the other, by remarkable variability which arises from the plurality of cultural symbol systems employed in these worlds.

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Notes

1 Published as "Sur la délimitation linguistique et littéraire de la notion de structure" in the French journal *Linguistics* 6 (2), 59-72 in 1964.

2 Gadamer (2006, 441-2), for example, states that animals have an umwelt, whereas people have a *Welt*. Leontyev (2003: 119), similarly, states: "Thus, human being is the only living creature to whom the world is given as a single coherent whole which extends in space and time beyond the limits of the immediately experienced situation as well as what the subject possesses or what befalls him; it is more than just that which surrounds the subject."

Towards dialogical umwelts

Katre Pärn

The growing plurality of approaches within human sciences calls for comparative and integrative perspectives that can map the similarities, complementarities and possible incompatibilities of approaches, bring to the fore their common epistemological assumptions as well as points of divergence, and establish informed relations between the variety of theoretical and methodological means available in the human sciences. The comparative and integrative approaches have important roles in helping to avoid the traps of disciplinary self-absorption, disintegration of knowledge or multiplication of superficially novel insights. They are also a springboard for advancing new insights. From this stance, the comparative approach to the four disciplines – hermeneutics, phenomenology, semiotics and cultural psychology – undertaken by Tõnu Viik, Peeter Torop and Maaris Raudsepp is an invaluable endeavour.

Instead of tracing the diverse historio-genetic interconnections and entanglements between these disciplines, an approach that might offer itself as an obvious and attractive strategy for interdisciplinary juxtaposition, the article takes the topic of culture-dependent meaning formation as the grounds for comparison. This choice might seem self-evident, since, after all, the context- or culture-dependence of meaning making can be seen as a cornerstone of, or common assumption held by, all human sciences or cultural sciences, implicitly grounding or explicitly present in all theoretical approaches that deal with the human condition. However, and perhaps even because of its centrality, this assumption or thesis itself is surprisingly rarely used as grounds for comparison of disciplines or theoretical frameworks. Yet the culture-dependence of meaning formation is the problematics from where the core epistemological and methodological challenges of human sciences arise, as well as the difficulties with interdisciplinary dialogues.

The paper by Viik, Torop and Raudsepp sets these disciplines side by side in a way that allows for emergence of a space of unforced dialogue between the different perspectives. The overview of discussions on culture-dependent meaning formation by the selected authors in hermeneutics, phenomenology, semiotics and cultural psychology provides an good foundation that is waiting to be extended by adding other authors from the aforementioned disciplines as well as others who deal with the issue. Even while reading the article, various possibilities suggest themselves for such expansion.

However, the authors propose a threefold system of theoretical underpinnings informing the epistemological problematics. The starting point is in Jakob von Uexküll's (1992 [1934]) conception of species-specific umwelt, upon which rests the idea that as soon as we posit living beings as our central concern, the notion of an absolute, universal reality becomes obsolete. Instead, we have a plurality of realities as experienced by organisms. In this conception, 'reality' is not simply organism-dependent but ultimately dependent upon the (species-specific) meaning making processes mediating the organism's interaction with the world, since umwelt is constituted by objects that are meaningful for the organism.

This is elaborated further through Ernst Cassirer (1953 [1944]), who extended the Uexküllian idea of meaning-based umwelts to human beings as symbolic creatures, for whom the meaning making mechanisms constituting their reality are not biologically but culturally given. For humans, things in the world become meaningful through the mediation of specifically human means of meaning making which Cassirer designates 'symbolic forms'. A variety of concepts has been used in different approaches to these human-specific means, as discussed in the article, but regardless of the particular concepts used, the mechanisms and formations are fundamentally culture-dependent and intersubjective.

This dependence of human world upon cultural means of meaning making, in turn, provides the basis for extending the idea of plurality of species-specific realities to plurality of realities 'within' the human species due to cultural diversity. This extends the epistemological problematics of gaining access to the umwelts of other species into the human realm. While this epistemological quandary is not central to the article, its relevance as undercurrent of the discussion is highlighted. The implicit solution to the problem is somewhat similar to the one proposed by Uexküll in the context of the study of animal umwelts: by defining the research object – umwelt – as species-specific, or in this case a culture-specific realm, the mechanisms constituting it are seen as communally shared, 'objective' aspects – anatomical, perceptual, etc., characteristics of species observable by the researcher in Uexküll's approach, or collectively shared means of meaning-making intersubjectively available to members of the collective and to the researcher in the case of cultural umwelts. Although in both cases what is still required to access the alien umwelts is "the symbolic imagination and intelligence" (Cassirer 1953, 52) of researcher.

However, to avoid repeating the contents of the article any further, I will rather point out some of the promising topics for discussion emerging from the paper.

As the notions of 'umwelt', 'human umwelt' or 'cultural umwelt' gain traction in the humanities, it would be timely to make similar enquiry into the uses and

senses of the concept of umwelt in various disciplinary contexts from phenomenology and biology to semiotics, cultural psychology, and beyond. It would be particularly interesting to revisit earlier debates and views on the application of the Uexküllian conception of umwelt in the context of the human realm.[1]

In the article, these compound notions are used without further critical discussion, although the surrounding debates are referred to in a footnote. Thus while the idea of human umwelt as distinct from umwelts of other species, or cultural umwelt as specific semiotic realm enclosing particular human collectivity might seem quite self-evident and on par with the general conceptions of culture and cultural diversity, these debates, particularly those emerging in the context of philosophical anthropology in the middle of the 20th century (in the works of Max Scheler, Arnold Gehlen, Helmuth Plessner and others) underline another crucial aspect. In their view, humans do not have an umwelt, but a world, since they are not confined by their species-specific surrounding-world which is determined dominantly by their biology. And although culture becomes a 'second nature' for humans that can be seen as approximating structurally or functionally to umwelt (see Gutmann 2002, 216, 225), the analogy does not capture the qualitative difference between the human world and the umwelt of other animals. As was also recognised by Cassirer, this difference makes Uexküllian concepts insufficient for description of the human world (Brentari 2011, 192). This is not about depriving humans of umwelt, since umwelt, as Gadamer (2005 [1975], 441) reaffirms, is something all living beings possess, but about acknowledging the unparallel world-openness (to use Sheler's/Gehlen's concept) of humans. This world-openness is a result of increasing semiotic freedom resulting from the existence as well as creative use of the multiplicity of symbolic forms, languages or meaning systems that allows a person to "rise above the particular environment in which he happens to find himself" (Gadamer 2005, 442).

Thus while the concept of umwelt in useful and often used to highlight the crucial difference between the world-in-itself and the world-as-perceived, as well as the existence of a plurality of subjective, species-specific or cultural realities, it also creates a risk of over-emphasising the "monadic", self-enclosed aspect of these worlds-as-perceived, resulting in a kind of "prison-house of culture" perspective at the expense of appreciating the ways these realities can be extended to encompass others and in turn be encompassed by them. Or, perhaps the concept of umwelt as applied to the human realm becomes useful precisely by bringing to the fore the potential of humans and cultures to be world-open and rise above themselves due to translatability and "dialogical activeness" (to borrow a phrase from the paper) of the symbolic systems and 'cultural umwelten'.

Moreover, the content as well as the form of investigation of the article by Viik et al provides a self-reflexive perspective for the human sciences themselves as self-enclosed in their disciplinary umwelts, yet having the means and incentives for dialogue and extension. Next to the epistemology of manifold self-enclosed (disciplinary) universes, the disciplines juxtaposed in the article also offer an alternative trajectory – as highlighted by Ivana Marková (2000) – in the form of *dialogical epistemology*. Indeed, perhaps dialogue and translation will provide the next step beyond understanding the formation of human/cultural umwelts towards understanding the mechanisms that make it possible to rise above the self-enclosed human or cultural umwelt towards a more open world.

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Notes

1 Currently probably the most comprehensive overview of Uexküll's influence on 20th century philosophy can be found in Brentari (2011, 175–231).

Silvi Liiva "Lahutamatud" ("Inseparables") 1988.
Etching, soft ground, paper. 49 x 63.8 cm.

Cultural theory and the ethnographic field: methodological views

Art Leete, Peeter Torop

Abstract. Our aim is to discuss the relationship between theory and empirical data in semiotics and ethnology. We depart from the notion that in the methodology of studying cultural processes and phenomena, the ontological delimitation of the object of study and the epistemological aspect of the justification of the means of research complete each other. We start our discussion with an analysis of classical approaches to the relationship between the ethnographic field and cultural theory, proposed by Bronisław Malinowski, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Clifford Geertz. We then concentrate on closer examination of Geertz's concept of the thick description and its application, as well as re–conceptualisation by various scholars representing different disciplines. We also explore the changing understanding of the ethnographic field and affects of this process on cultural theory. As a result of our discussion, we propose an outline for a hybrid methodology for combining broader analysis of cultural semiotics and the situational hermeneutics of interpretative ethnography in order to reach a joint metadisciplinary conceptual framework for cultural theory. We suppose that such an approach enables one to combine abstract cultural reconstructions with an understanding of the fragmentariness of real life cultural phenomena.

Keywords: thick description, ethnographic field, cultural theory, interpretation, methodology

The heterogeneity of methodological principles of a scientific study of culture correlates strongly with the need to understand the processes and phenomena of a culture or cultures in an integrated manner. Culture is an environment in which individual and collective identities are shaped and in which cohesion between various parts of society is established. At the same time there is no systematic science of culture, nor is there a general theory that would yield methods to analyse

a cultural environment and to obtain an everyday understanding of it. Therefore the urgent scientific problem remains making culture analysable, as does the task of synthesising different parts of culture into a holistic approach.

One of the most significant methodological problems in cultural studies is how to merge two poles. At one pole there is the creation of typologies and ascertaining the complementariness between them, which would enable us to talk about the developmental features of general cultural theory. At the other pole there is the ethnographic field, and its dynamism in particular. Thus methodologically it becomes a question of how the meta-level and the object-level interrelate. Different solutions have been suggested for this universal problem.

Our aim is to discuss the relationship between theory and empirical data in semiotics and ethnology (the terms 'ethnology' and 'anthropology' are addressed as synonyms in our study). Methodologically, the ontological aspect focusing on the demarcation of the object of study and the epistemological aspect of the rationalisation of the means of research are complementary. However, this complementariness takes on a variety of forms, which then compels us to consider the best or optimal relationship between theory and data: 1) a theory can be derived from the specificity of the empirical evidence either in its entirety or in part; 2) a theory can precede empirical research and serve as a basis for fieldwork, or for the compilation of databases; 3) a theory can have been validated in some other field and then applied to new empirical evidence for a variety of reasons, such as its popularity, universality and so forth; 4) a theory is estranged from the empirical evidence and distorts the research object; 5) interdisciplinary theories are applied to the same empirical evidence, resulting in complementariness, hybridity and eclecticism. The interpretative power of scientific research into culture largely depends on the ways in which the connection between theory and empirical data is expressed in methodology, terminological fields and the creation of explanatory models. The purpose of this article is not to explain all qualitative methods in ethnology from working theory to grounded and *ad hoc* theories. We aim to explore links between ethnology and cultural semiotics in order to sketch a few methodological guidelines for connecting cultural theory and ethnographic field data.

The connection between theory and research material depends to a great extent upon interpretation. What, for instance, supports the possible conclusion that one theory is compatible with a particular ethnographic research object, and allows for an adequate interpretation of it, while another one would distort it? On the one hand, this decision might be intuitive, while on the other, it might also be founded upon a detailed analysis of the research process itself. However, even a detailed analysis need not reveal every single logical connection, and in

order to make conceptual conclusions, theoretical intuition is ultimately used. Often, one of the distinctive features of ethnographic documentation is subjective uniqueness. Researchers usually do fieldwork on their own, they observe non-recurring situations that they cannot actually elicit or entirely control, and they can never be certain that they understand everything adequately (Errington 2011, 37). Difference, alienation and estrangement are encoded in fieldwork situations (Brooks 2011, 10). At the same time, it can also happen that for practical reasons, an ethnographer must quickly decide what the adequate interpretation of a situation will be. It is hoped that field notes could be of use to make subsequent perceptible and intimate conclusions (Errington 2011, 37). Such a provisional situational interpretation can have a decisive impact on subsequent explanatory sequences. Innovative ethnological and anthropological ideas are often justified in light of meaningful field episodes.

At the same time, it is also difficult to critique the conclusions reached in this way, as other scholars cannot undergo such situations, and often, there are no alternative descriptions of sufficiently similar situations. In such cases, the presented arguments are analysed on the basis of analogously constructed but independent, or strictly speaking, unrelated examples, drawing upon the reflective remarks of the author. The analysis to test the conclusions could also be performed in reverse order, by proceeding from available theories. A theory is accessible to all scholars, but the cultural reality discussed by other researchers will remain foreign and different from the experience of each, which is precisely what makes criticism of a work that originates from a theory such a complicated matter. Theoretical diversity in some disciplinary fields is an important reason for more systematic thinking on the methodological level.

The starting point of this paper is the recognition of such an ambivalent relationship between theory and empirical evidence. On the one hand, it would be methodologically simplistic to maintain that ethnographic fieldwork material is basically subjective and by its nature imperceptible to a bystander. On the other hand, for ethnographic studies, the problem of sketching an adequate methodological base does not have an obvious, unified and uniform solution.

Fieldwork: deriving a theoretical interpretation from a Khanty example

Let us consider the first possible relationship between theory and research practice presented by us. We suggested above that theory can be derived from the specificity of empirical evidence. Thus, in this case it may be argued as a hypothesis that empirical practice engenders in the researcher a theoretical motivation

which the scholar was not cognizant of before the empirical experience and rethinking. In order to test this argument we present an illustrative episode from Art Leete's field trip to the Western Siberia, to the Khanty in 1991.

This incident took place during Leete's first trip to the Khanty, when he had just begun his fieldwork and, together with his companions, met two Khanty families. These two families were departing for their summer camps from the local town. It was thus an experience that the students taking part in fieldwork gained for the first time while on a classical ethnographic expedition (to a traditional forest camp of a Khanty hunter).

All of them were riding to the forest in one of the oil company's vehicles: a group of Estonian students, two Khanty families and a worker's foreman. The foreman asked a Khanty man, Aiser, how many kilometres it was from the spot at which he would be dropped off to the camp. Aiser responded, "for the Khanty, it is two kilometers, but I can't say how much it would be for Russians, maybe ten kilometers".

In the days that followed such a response evoked a lively discussion among the Estonian students, and led to the formulation of an *ad hoc* hypothesis about the Khanty's peculiar perception of time and space. That the observation concerning the vagueness of explaining distances proved to be adequate was also confirmed by subsequent fieldwork impressions. In the following years the Khanty have repeatedly estimated whatever distance was traversed during the daytime to be two kilometers. At the same time, the knowledge that Khanty references to road distances must be taken figuratively was also necessary in order to be able to exercise caution when someone assured you that "two kilometers" is all you needed to walk. In fact (as it turned out in practice) Aiser meant that it takes two hours to get to the campsite. Hence Khanty "kilometers" may denote both a spatial and a temporal remark, which points to the disparities of cultural perception. On the other hand, this incident also shows that an intercultural conceptual translation can be unclear, for it was also clearly a joke. Aiser's remark did not hide any deep cultural philosophy, but was a clarification given during a conversation, at the same time remaining within the framework of a culture-specific narrative strategy.

It seemed to Leete and his friends that it was at this moment when a breakthrough in cultural perception occurred, and the Khanty worldview and life was perceived in an adequate way even though their acquaintance with Aiser had begun just a few days earlier. This expected grasp of cultural perception did not take place by virtue of any action or dialogue initiated by the students. The students were more a passive party in this act of understanding, and presumably

also of acceptance (they had just started to perform their first shared cultural practice with the Khanty – the crossing of "two kilometers").

It must be admitted that the group of Estonian students who travelled to Siberia in 1991 cannot consider themselves to be the discoverers of the boreal kilometre. For instance, in his 1837 expedition journal, the polar explorer Alexander Schrenk describes his travels among the Komi and Nenets. He notes that the tundra method of measuring distances by the lengths of diurnal journeys is not reliable ("is completely useless"). Schrenk highlights that distances referred to identically in terms of time may actually differ in their lengths by up to two times depending on whether it was winter or summer (Schrenk 1855, 20). The Russian scholar Ivan G. Ostroumov (1904, 20) likewise observed the vagueness of calculations of space and time among the Mansi in Western Siberia. Even earlier, in 1830, Komi traveller Vassili Latkin noticed, when he was travelling among the Pechora river Komi, that "versts here are somehow very long". Travellers were unable to traverse in a day the distance that was supposed to be ten versts, according to the locals. The next day they still had "four versts" to travel in a boat, and Latkin had no clue as to what this should actually involve (Latkin 1853, 17–18).

The question of the vagueness of animistic world perception, the formulation of which was spurred by the encounter with Aiser, has also been examined in Art Leete's subsequent studies (for example Leete & Lipin 2012). Arguments concerning the indeterminacy and ambivalence of a religious worldview have also been furthered by Stewart Guthrie, for example (1980, 187–188; 1993). However, it has also been claimed that animistic knowledge is concrete and specific and that in hunter cultures uncertainty is rather avoided (Willerslev 2007, 16; 2013, 44). Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown (1940) discussed joking as a way of establishing culturally formalised relationships. By the same token, it could be argued that the functions of humour, irony and truth are interlaced in the narrative rules of several northern peoples. Leete's more recent research has shown that northern hunters tell their stories by following an ambivalent narrative strategy peppered with irony, but all the while keeping in mind a clear idea of something that they refer to as "the state of affairs". In the communication practice of hunters, the same joking and irony has a culture-specific regular presence (Leete & Lipin 2015).

The theoretical outcome of this first experience of Khanty culture for Art Leete and his friends naturally cannot compare to the effect that ultimately accompanied Clifford Geertz's first ethnographically justified misdemeanour in connection with a cockfight which he later interpreted as the key element of Balinese culture. According to Geertz, he reached a perceptual breakthrough when he was fleeing the cockpit along with the villagers after a police raid in Bali

in 1958 (Geertz 1993, 412–417; see also Clifford 1988, 40; Marcus 1998, 105–106). But what connects these incidents is the feeling of achieving a trusting relationship with people through complicity in a common culture-specific misdeed.

George Marcus (1998, 107) has noted that many stories about how field rapport is established between the ethnographer and research subjects involve, to some extent, complicity in some misdemeanour. According to Marcus, the research process is guided here by Geertz's analytical magic, which allows a misdemeanour to become the determining component of a reflexive testimony. In Marcus's view (op cit, 109), Geertz purposefully presents himself as naïve and vulnerable when describing the Balinese cockfight episode. Through his analysis, Geertz associates a common misdemeanour with a subsequent deep cultural interpretation to which petty crime is the key. It is a play on the boundary of cultural and formal rules that creates a human bond and opens the door for the ethnographer to enter a culture.

To some respect, such access to cultural meanings also serves subsequently as an algorithm for the interpretation of the deep structures of an ethnographic field (in the Geertzian sense) on the part of the ethnographer. Ethnographers must be able to let themselves (either rationally or intuitively) be seized by significant chances, which would enable them to discover cultural symbols in a natural way. Such unintentional entries will also enable the researcher to endow the subsequent theoretical and methodological arguments with an aura of cultural naturalness and authenticity. Readers are informed that conceptions have been obtained from informants through the ethnographer's gradual submergence into the ethnographic field. And it is precisely in this manner that an episode occurring in the ethnographic field can gain a cognitive authority to bolster theoretical conceptions. James Clifford (1988, 25) challenges such a methodological induction according to which "ethnography produces cultural interpretation through intense research experience". He urges one to pay attention to the manner in which ungovernable experiences are turned into indisputable theoretical postulates (cf Marcus & Fischer 1999, 23).

Interdependence of theory and empirical data in classical ethnologies

One of the first attempts to unite cultural theory and the ethnographic field, or the meta-level and the object-level, is Bronisław Malinowski's (1969 [1944]) scientific theory of culture. The first step towards the scientificity of a study of culture is to delineate the field of study. In studies of culture from that time it was precisely this capacity of identifying research phenomena during their observation or juxtaposition that seemed to be missing. Malinowski emphasised

that culture cannot be studied without a theoretical preparation, and that even the most elementary description inevitably means that one makes some kind of selection; however, in science, the act of making a selection supposedly involves the isolation of particular things or phenomena from others on the basis of some theory. At the same time, theory itself is grounded upon past experience. Hence the primary objective of any discipline is to recognise an object of study and establish a method to describe it. In his functional cultural analysis, Malinowski differentiated between three dimensions of cultural process: artefacts; organised groups or human social relations; and symbolism or symbolic acts. Based on these premises, Malinowski conceded that in culture, everything must be studied within a context and through an understanding of the function of the objects of study.

Malinowski underlined that ethnographers must not pin their hopes solely on the cultural inspiration they receive from fieldwork. The scientific interpretation of culture should not be only inductive, but it must already be theoretically pre-framed to an extent and systematised in light of the social contexts of the phenomena examined. However, with Malinowski's approach the question of to what extent ethnographic research must be theoretically rationalised before undergoing the experience, or to what extent fieldwork could offer inspiration to the ethnographer for working out new theories or theoretical innovations, remains unanswered. Likewise, with this approach it remains unclear how to relate the approach that has emerged on the basis of displaced dialogues (which are affected by the inevitable gap between the ethnographers' and their partners' unclearly adapted conceptual worlds) to such a rigorous and clear way of defining the research problem or providing a theoretical contextualisation for it, or how to model the theory even before the fieldwork has begun.

The respective methodological "guide" should include quite direct clues, but at the same time it should be sufficiently broad and flexible so as not to restrict or block the researcher from unexpected, non-standard experiences with its theoretical presuppositions. The ironic aspect of Malinowski (which consisted of the fact that after the publication of his fieldwork diaries, see Malinowski 1989, it turned out that Malinowski had never attempted to immerse himself in the indigenous culture as immediately and as fully as his writings would suggest) as a paradigmatic example of the ambivalent relationship between the conceptual perception of an indigenous culture being documented during fieldwork, and the theoretical generalisation of it was brought into ethnographic focus by Geertz (1974). Clifford argues that although Malinowski's diary revealed the ambivalence of his conception of culture, it is also a polyphonic text as well as a fragmentary document of an aggregate of complex and intersubjective situations. Malinowski's
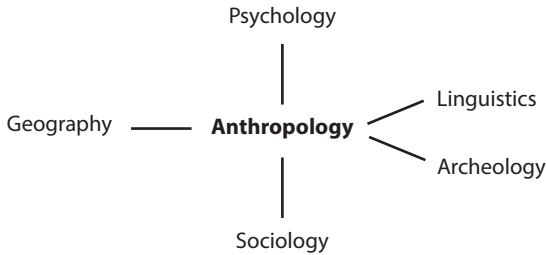
Figure 1. Location of anthropology in interdisciplinary field according to Lévi-Strauss (1963 [1958]: 359).

diary also exemplifies the fact that all texts based on fieldwork are in part constructions (Clifford 1988, 97; Marcus & Fischer 1999, 34).

The second type of approach is represented by Claude Lévi-Strauss, who perceives the object-level, i.e. the ethnographic field, as something that can in part be immediately described and in part be reconstructed on the basis of indirect data, such as the reconstruction an ancient worldview on the basis of archaic linguistic forms. But this means that the diversity of the object-level must be countered by a diversity of theories or disciplines. By their nature his methodological principles are interdisciplinary, but the disciplines are hierarchically structured. The number of disciplines is parametric, i.e. sufficient for a holistic analysis of culture. To illustrate his point, he provided a diagram (Fig 1).

"In the above diagram, the horizontals mainly represent the view of cultural anthropology, the verticals that of social anthropology, and the obliques both" (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 359; see also Johnson 2003). In his juxtaposition of geography, anthropology, psychology, sociology, linguistics and archaeology as culture-studying disciplines, Lévi-Strauss emphasised that the differences primarily lie not in the objects of study themselves, but in their perspectives, and therefore he also considered the attempt to unify their terminologies as futile. Lévi-Strauss characterised the special status of anthropology in terms of three qualities: objectivity, totality and meaningfulness. Whereas 'totality' denotes the observation of social life as systematic, and this systematicness in turn, the identification of a universal structure, the manifestations of which indeed constitute social life, aspirations toward meaningfulness are primarily associated with the study of social life in oral tradition cultures (those lacking written language). Aspirations towards objectivity differ from those of economics or demography, as social sciences employ the methods of natural sciences, while anthropology has closer ties with the humanities. A systematic and humanist interest in hidden

structures and meanings in culture is the reason why Lévi-Strauss predicted the transformation of anthropology into a semiotic discipline: "Anthropology aims to be a *semeiological* science, and takes as a guiding principle that of 'meaning'" (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 364)

In Lévi-Strauss's approach, it is a meta-language that unites the meta-level and the object level. While each discipline included in his model has its own terminological apparatus, linguistics is the most prominent of all, mainly due to the fact that the use of linguistic methods brings about the approximation of the object-level to the language:

> New perspectives then open up. We are no longer dealing with an occasional collaboration where the linguist and the anthropologist, each working by himself, occasionally communicate those findings which each thinks may interest the other. In the study of kinship problems (and, no doubt, the study of other problems as well), the anthropologist finds himself in a situation which formally resembles that of the structural linguist. Like phonemes, kinship terms are elements of meaning; like phonemes, they acquire meaning only if they are integrated into systems. 'Kinship systems', like 'phonemic systems', are built by the mind on the level of unconscious thought. Finally, the recurrence of kinship patterns, marriage rules, similar prescribed attitudes between certain types of relatives, and so forth, in scattered regions of the globe and in fundamentally different societies, leads us to believe that, in the case of kinship as well as linguistics, the observable phenomena result from the action of laws which are general but implicit. The problem can therefore be formulated as follows: Although they belong to another order of reality, kinship phenomena are of the same type as linguistic phenomena (Lévi-Strauss 1963, 34).

In spite of the distinctiveness of linguistics, in Lévi-Strauss's view, semiology or semiotics is the best way of helping us to understand the interdisciplinary nature of anthropology. Around the same time, Roland Barthes (1967 [1964]) was also envisioning a new semiological discipline. Instead of interdisciplinarity, Barthes emphasised metadisciplinarity. In his opinion, the extension of linguistics from the study of language to include other cultural codes, such as a dress code, would enable us to create a systematic cultural analysis within the frames of a new semiological discipline, translinguistics. The theoretical explorations of Lévi-Strauss and Barthes as well as Geertz reflect the significance of cultural semiotics for the methodology of cultural studies (see also Torop 2015).

We consider Malinowski and Lévi-Strauss especially valuable in the methodological sense. Malinowski conceptualised fieldwork as needing preliminary theory that can be corrected during fieldwork. Similarly, Lévi-Strauss considers thorough preparations necessary in order to produce an interdisciplinary whole and initiate disciplinary dialogue, or to adapt one's approach to a certain interpretative strategy. Lévi-Strauss carries on interpretative movement by using dynamic interdisciplinary connections.

At the same time, Geertz creates the approach of complementary databases. He connects traditional ethnography with dynamic description, adding to it data concerning situations of usage and overview of functions. These three authors are the most meaningful for an interdisciplinary methodological field of culture research, although Geertz has inspired later scholars more than Malinowski and Lévi-Strauss, having thus the biggest methodological potential.

Interpretative approach

Geertz represents the third type of approach. The first edition of his collection *The Interpretation of Culture*, which caused a stir in cultural theory, came out in New York in 1973. In this work, the concepts 'interpretational' and 'semiotic' are used as synonyms. Thus Geertz's interpretational anthropology bears a parallel of sorts to cultural semiotics. In order to acquaint themselves with the essence of a science Geertz advises researchers not to turn to theories but to examine what the practitioners of that science do. Social anthropologists, in Geertz's view, "do" ethnography: "In anthropology, or anyway social anthropology, what the practitioners do is ethnography" (Geertz 1993 [1973], 5). Regarding ethnography, however, Geertz entertains two conceptions. According to the first, textbook approach, ethnography is about the compiling of reports on expeditions, transcribing texts, selecting informants, mapping research, etc. Geertz espouses the second approach, according to which ethnography is a thick description, i.e. in actuality an ethnographer encounters a mass of different, often intertwined, conceptual structures that have no visible regularity and which do not exist in a plainly perceptible, explicit form. Fieldwork involves interviews, observations, and note-taking. But the "doing" of ethnography must involve an attempt to construe an alien, figurative, and incoherent manuscript in which the graphic signs of ordinary language are substituted with behavioural examples. And within the frames of this conception, the culture that is being described turns into "an acted document" that can be interpreted by communicating with it (op cit, 10). There are surprisingly many points of convergence between Geertz

and the writings of Lotman and the Tartu-Moscow school although these two conceptions probably did not have any direct contact with each other.

The singularity, thick description, consists of recording and interpreting ephemeral situations and phenomena (Geertz 1993, 20; see also Lichterman 2011, 78). The precondition for the implementation of the thick description is the detection of cultural categories that enable one to interpret the meaningfulness of human activities. A scholar must know how people conceptually structure the world and in which manner and how intensively they apply this general understanding in everyday situations. The conceptual fragments connected with culturally specific details combine to form peculiar behavioural and cognitive models, and it becomes the task of the ethnographer to map them (see also Lichterman 2011, 79). Interpretative anthropology focuses on ethnographic observations and narratives and on the ethnographic invention of "cultural" objects (Clifford 1988, 38) as well as on segments of less structured social behaviour (Marcus & Fischer 1999, 26) that the earlier methodologies had overlooked.

Thus a thick description functions heuristically when documenting and deciphering the most detailed level of cultural practices. Such a methodology makes it possible to foreground ways in which culture shapes human activities daily, at every moment. At the same time, Geertz's approach also offers a method for interpreting culture on a more general level (see Marcus & Fischer 1999, 25–26), and this is where the methodology of interpretative anthropology, among other things, has a recognisable connection with semiotics. We recognise that the theoretical and methodological potential of Geertz's approach can be fruitfully expanded beyond its disciplinary cradle. At the same time we also claim that ethnology or cultural anthropology remain the main environment of development for culture theory.

The new conception of the ethnographic field

The three aforementioned methodological trends of thought may be termed classical, as they proceed from the so-called traditional ethnographic field, i.e. they are immediate and mediated. The concept of such a socially static ethnographic field gradually began to lose its theoretically fertile disciplinary potential. At the same time, these approaches have given theoretical impetus to the interdisciplinary field of theory. However, the developments in cultural theory that occurred in the last quarter of the 20th century, and in the first decades of the 21st century, point to a need to view the ethnographic field itself as dynamic.

A new conceptualisation of the ethnographic field has developed within the context of globalisation, meaning that an ethnographic field under study is not

an isolated and exotic place of research (Marcus 1998, 79). New ethnographic fields waiting to be studied are rather "islands" within larger cultures that have emerged as a result of global and/or historical migration processes, and it is not easy to demarcate them clearly. Hence the boundary between the scientific 'us' and the cultural 'other' is much more complex and the clarity of the methodological principles is much more essential. Ethnography has abandoned the intensive analysis of single sites and local conditions in order to discuss the circulation of cultural meanings and identities in diffuse time-space. A new, multi-sited ethnography observes the production of cultural forms simultaneously in different localities, thereby itself becoming fragmentary in a manner similar to its object of study (op cit, 79–83). The dynamics of the ethnographic field has two tendencies. Firstly, these changes depend on modification of immediate cultural (geographic, economic or socio-political) environment (see Wall 2015; Crabtree et al 2012). Secondly, the mediated cultural environment itself becomes an object of immediate scholarly exploration (see, for example Steinmetz 2012; Jemielniak 2014; Boellstorff 2006).

Anthropology, which has so far studied alien or other cultures, now studies its own culture or universal global culture. Such a situation raises several questions: How is a scientific discipline, which was originally designed as a cognitive instrument for the understanding of 'others' (who, in the case of living societies, were always others with no chance of answering back), transforming itself as a project wherein groups within societies that were the traditional object of anthropological study start to use this cognitive instrument in order to gain anthropological knowledge of both their own socio-cultural reality (in the immediate sense) and of global socio-cultural reality as seen from their specific, local perspective? What are the distinctive characteristics of these Other Anthropologies when compared to the originals? How do their emergence and presence modify the whole of anthropology, that is, world anthropology? What would have to change within both dominant and emergent anthropologies to allow us to develop better than we currently do their cognitive potential as single yet plural? How can we speed the renewal of a discipline distanced once and for all from monocentrism and unitarism? (Krotz 2006, 234) In order to answer these questions one needs to engage in significant metatheoretical activity within anthropology, i.e. the anthropology of anthropology (op cit, 236, cf Torop 2006).

This leads to a more problematic differentiation between the analyses carried out on the classical micro and macro levels. In addition to a local analysis, one must also undertake "an exercise in mapping terrain", but the goal is not a holistic representation. An intimate perception of a community is not replaced by statistics, the global is not opposed to the local, but their relationship is redefined in

the course of the emergence of a new ethnographic field. "The global is an emergent dimension of arguing about the connection among sites in a multi-sited ethnography" (Marcus 1998, 83). Multi-sited ethnography is constructed from various inter-disciplinary discourses (op cit, 86–89), which in turn opens the new ethnographic field to the diversity of cultural theory.

The synthesis of cultural semiotics with ethnology

Cultural semiotics and ethnology have developed alongside each other in a semi-spontaneous way. Lévi-Strauss influenced the initial appearance of cultural semiotics, while Geertz has admitted that his approach was a parallel phenomenon to semiotics. Ashok R. Kelkar proposed a classification in which cultural semiotics correlates with the semiosis of culture, and cultural semiosis correlates with ethnology (Kelkar 1984, 132). This reminds one of Geertz's two conceptions of ethnography and the Tartu–Moscow school's dynamic examination of the relationship between the sign and the sign system, as well as the attempt of Irene Portis Winner to describe ethnic texts with recourse to Lotman's cultural semiotics (Portis Winner 1989).

Cultural semiotics is a culture-studying discipline that investigates sign systems that function within a culture as cultural languages, and the relationships and mediations between these systems (Lotman 1990). The premium it puts on descriptive languages has made cultural semiotics a discipline that is also utilised by other culture-studying disciplines in the formulation of their methodological foundations. In addition, through its interest in various cultural languages, cultural semiotics is intimately connected to disciplines that research these cultural languages, such as theatre, literary and film semiotics, etc. The basis of cultural semiotics is a conception of the universality of each culture, like that of any human, in terms of its need to understand its own nature and to work out various descriptive languages in order to arrive at an understanding of itself. Self-description gives rise to the unique feature of a semiotic understanding of culture – each communication process within a culture can be interpreted, at a level of higher generalisation, as autocommunication. The function of autocommunication is the formation of a culture's mnemonic technique, and hence the preservation of information and experience. At the same time, autocommunication has another function, that of creativity, which is to generate new associations in a culture, to reinvigorate perception and to understand a culture in a deeper way. Autocommunication results in the emergence of self-models, whereas these self-models can arise as generalisations of a current situation, or as a search for the preconditions for change in the situation, or as theoretical

constructs. The process of creating self-models is also the process of internal re-structuring of a culture.

Cultural semiotics is concerned with the study of various texts and communication processes within a culture. Its research is carried out on a level where engagement with various arts occurs naturally, and a cultural semiotician produces a more general picture of a culture than an expert studying only one type or field of art. One of the essential features of the value of cultural semiotics is its *ad hoc* attitude towards culture – cultural semiotics does not attempt to enforce on cultures a single universal scheme of analysis, instead it searches for an appropriate measure of analysis for each cultural specificity. This is done at the level of particular texts as well as events. Modern ethnography aspires towards the same kind of flexibility:

> Contemporary ethnography does connect to a long tradition of systematic and empirical methods based in experience (as generated by fieldwork, for example), which in turn have stemmed from scientific assumptions about the acquisition of knowledge (that all is, in theory, knowable, for example), and the problem-solving potential of applying that knowledge to larger human issues (as in comparative sociology, for example). Ethnography as art, in our view, is not necessarily opposed to science, but it is different from science. And it seems to us that when ethnography is positioned as a kind of "objective," scientific research method that can be acquired and applied independent of its humanistic, textual, and intellectual histories and traditions, its promise is limited (in the same way that, say, the history, function, and meaning of Shakespeare and the theatrical arts are limited when reduced to method). (Campbell & Lassiter 2015, 9)

In discussions of ethnographic methods, likewise, what comes to the fore is a dialogue between ethnography and semiotics, which is expressed in both the exposition of the structure of ethnographic texts and their interpretation using semiotic methods (O'Reilly 2005, 173). Ethnography and semiotics can be compared in their paradoxality: both initially generate their object of study (collect, describe, delineate) so that it can then be researched, and in some respect, ethnography studies ethnography (an ethnographic description or dataset) and semiotics, semiotics (a semiotically demarcated object of study, such as sign system, text or semiosphere).

Aspects of the analysability of culture are inexorably linked to a consideration of methodological problems. From the ontological perspective of the methodology of cultural semiotics, staticism and dynamism can be specified on three

levels. On the level of language, it is essential to differentiate between discrete (the natural language) and continual or iconic-spatial languages (the pictorial, film or theatre language), and on the textual level, between textuality and processuality, and on the level of the semiosphere, between narrative (linearity) and performance (simultaneity). Each specification thus also involves a specification of the object of study as well as the ontologisation of analysability, i.e. a conception of the study object as being analysable. The ontology of the objects of study is divided in two: natural objects, which are clearly demarcated (a book, a film, a biography, etc.), and so-called ontologised objects, which are reflectively or theoretically demarcated (an event, a historical period, phenomena such as art life or cultural life, etc.). The concept of text is still central in cultural semiotics, and methodologically indispensable in order to secure an understanding of the demarcation of the objects of study. There is no doubt about the boundaries of a novel's text. However, a novel is a portion of an author's work and a semiotician, when analysing an author's work, might use the concept of the text of the author's work as a basis for discussion. Here the text is already an abstraction. At the same time, the text of an author's work could be a portion of biographical texts (a text of a life's story), literary texts (a text of realism or romanticism) or national literary texts (a text of Estonian literature). Thus the demarcation line is movable and the demarcation process itself, a way of creating analysability.

From the epistemological perspective of the methodology of cultural semiotics, staticism and dynamicism are specifying strategies of analysis. At the level of language, there is a differentiation between a (disciplinary and terminological) delineation of the object of study and dialogisation (the finding or creation of an empathetic language of description). At the textual level, we can differentiate between strategies of analysis that proceed from the features of the material (structural) and those which are based on its organisation (compositional). On the other hand, we can also talk about spatiotemporal (chronotopic) or medium-centred (multimedial, etc.) strategies of analysis which are not directly dependent upon the structure or material of the text. At the level of the semiosphere, a differentiation between the levels of narrative and performance serves as a basis for linear and simultaneous strategies of analysis. From the epistemological perspective, analysability is determined by the choice of research strategies. If a text in cultural semiotics is rather an ontological concept, then the semiosphere rather belongs to the realm of epistemology. This means that while probing the limits of analysability, a synchronic approach is supplemented by a diachronic one. Each phenomenon has its historical place in a culture and is part of a diachronic sequence. The implementation of the concept of semiosphere is what adds a diachronic dimension, and semiosphere credits the relationship

between part and whole in a culture – if it is difficult to delineate a cultural phenomenon in terms of synchronousness, it is always possible to interpret it as part of the historical process. This can be compared to ethnographic research in the course of which fieldwork material is interpreted with the help of both historical sources and a consideration of contemporary theories and research experiences regarding comparable materials (Fife 2005).

Thick description as a methodological concept

The methodological topicality of the thick description is highlighted in the study of mediated cultural situations, where the ethnographic field extends to the Web (Hickey & Austin 2008; Jemielniak 2014), and instead of a structured analysis of the emic and etic levels, it is important to see these as symbiotic (Berry 1999). John W. Berry analyses ethnology from the perspective of cross-cultural psychology. For instance, the "Khanty kilometre" could be considered in juxtaposition with Berry's three-step interpretation:

> First is to *transport and test* our current psychological knowledge and perspectives by using them in other cultures in order to learn if they are valid; second is to *explore and discover* new aspects of the phenomenon being studied in local cultural terms; and third is to *integrate* what has been learned from these first two approaches in order to generate a more nearly universal psychology, one that has pan-human validity (Berry 1999, 165–166).

For the sake of these three steps, Barry also obliterates the classical binary between the emic and etic, and organises the interpretative process respectively into the following stages: the imposed etic, emic and derived etic (op cit, 166).

Following Geertz, Isaac Reed presents the idea of "maximal interpretation" which is an interpretation "aimed at social life, which is theoretically driven and epistemologically risky, and which claims to know more about human research subjects than they know about themselves" (Reed 2008, 188–189). In contrast to the thick description, a maximal interpretation enables one to involve a larger number of 'scientific' explanations, and in this case one's approach does not remain exclusively within the frames of the meaning categories examined. Reed maintains that such a manner of interpretation can be acquired at the intersection of the cognitive backgrounds of the researcher and the research subjects, by implementing a sequence of interpretations that reaches beyond the existing cultural theory and collected data (op cit, 188–191).

The interpretative process in the course of which a 'thick description' is produced penetrates beyond facts and their superficial recognition (both on the part of the researcher and the researched). Such a secondary, concentrated description contains a concealed cognitive argument of the ethnographer that she or he has obtained a better knowledge of the researched than they had about themselves. This, however, does not mean that the researcher's knowledge is postulated as paramount, but rather that a displacement of the meaning universes is acknowledged. While doing research, this displacement makes it possible to arrive "at a comprehension of meaning in which the actions of others made some sort of sense" (op cit, 190). A maximal interpretation does not take into account only cultural meanings, but also considers a wider social context (op cit, 190–191). Via interpretation, culture is associated with the multiplicity of social factors. Such a maximal translation, centring on meaning, makes it possible to reach a contextually more sensitive and theoretically sounder approach (op cit, 198).

Jeffrey Alexander's high estimation of Geertz derives from his initial premises: "Proposition 1: Social structures do not exist objectively" (Alexander 2008, 162). He ends his article with a recognition that a thick description is not so much a description as a reconstruction:

> In this brief piece, I have interpreted 'Clifford Geertz' as having crystallized, in his massively influential work, core methodological and theoretical elements of strong program cultural sociology. If meaning is central, then the theoretical tools that the humanities have developed to investigate art and language must become central to the human sciences more generally. Thick descriptions are powerful reconstructions, not simply detailed observations. Local knowledge is inevitably rooted in more encompassing, global meaning-structures, even while every global theme becomes not enriched but different as it emerges locally (Alexander 2008, 166).

Such a methodological movement towards a disclosure of the conceptual deep structures of a culture and a more sensitive consideration of the broader social context corrodes the possible dictates of theory over the ethnographic practice. With the help of an existing theory, however, it is easier to make thin ethnographic matter cohere. However, if the description is thick and the social context is made comprehensively coherent (while also being detailed), the probability that there will be a logical need for a theoretically novel interpretation will also arise. A search for novelty may then arise from both an impetus received from thick or total empirical data, and the need to implement a theory validated in an interdisciplinary or another field.

A thick description has been understood to be an interpretation, which exhibits an analytical awareness and a consideration of the context. By presenting thick descriptions, scholars hermeneutically reconstruct the interrelations between part and whole in an attempt to uncover both human motives and sensibilities and the cultural structures and systems of symbolic relations affecting these (Alexander 2008, 159–160; Lichterman 2011, 78). The methodological challenge of the thick description is largely dependent upon the fact that the systemic complexes of cultural symbols are in part interpreted from the perspective of human moods and motivations, while certain kinds of action are associated with respective feelings. Geertz explains motivations as a recurrent tendency or proclivity to associate certain feelings with the respective situations. Motivations are thus directed feelings, whereas moods are static but vary in intensity (or as Geertz metaphorically puts it: "like a fog that rises and dissipates"). (Geertz 1993, 96–98; see also Trondman 2011, 149)

The question to consider is: how should one establish a methodology on the basis of human motivation, moods and feelings, even in part? How will an ethnographer document adequately such constantly shifting cultural facts that are grounded on emotions? A scholar must offer a thorough description of the circumstances that have led him/her to a conclusion and demonstrate why feelings are to be trusted. As indicated above, a transitory phenomenon can have a temporary, unique meaning and symbolism. The key to an understanding of such phenomena may lie precisely in an adequate interpretation of non-verbalised emotions founded upon cultural conceptions. Even if an interpretation is built on feelings at the outset, in an ethnographic description, attempts must be made to prove it conclusively. For an ethnographer, the explanations of field partners would serve as indubitable evidence in this context, as otherwise readers and critics would say that "the accounts of the informants do not support the researcher's conclusions". At the same time, it is impossible to obtain explanations about everything while doing fieldwork because some situations and feelings may have passed for people before the ethnographer can pose any questions.

Conclusion: towards a hybrid methodology

The general methodological challenge of ethnology lies in overcoming the cognitive contradiction between a potential multifurcation of the induction, which arises from the detailedness of empirical data and an initial lack of system, and one's aspiration to establish a theoretical cohesion. Approaches analogous to the thick description enable an ethnographer to penetrate to the culture-specific conceptual connections. However, such an analytic strategy does not necessarily

support broader theoretical conclusions. In Geertz's treatment, culture is local, flexible and manifested in nuances. This allows for an interpretation of culture as a mass of practices and ideas without a uniform form and principles, which makes it impossible to create a more general picture of a culture (Smith 2011, 28). Cultural semiotics seems to offer ethnology a potential to work out elaborated theoretical models. When we apply thick description simultaneously with a cultural-semiotic analysis, there is a danger that the intuitive leap from earlier stages of ethnographic description to the utilisation of theories validated in cultural semiotics would be too vast. If, however, we approach cultural semiotics as part of the "social context" of ethnology (and inversely), then an interdisciplinary, consistent and total theoretical interpretation may offer novel solutions.

A broader, more abstract analysis of cultural semiotics and the flexible and situational hermeneutics of interpretative ethnography might be united in a hybrid methodology that is less ambitious in terms of providing a specific explanation of cultural details. At the same time, while creating a theory, such an approach makes it possible to combine abstract cultural reconstructions with an understanding of the occasional fluidity of cultural phenomena (as exemplified above by the relativity of the concept of the Khanty kilometre) as well as fragmentariness. A generalising theoretical orientation could in this way engage in a dialogue with a temporary and situational interpretation (cf Smith 2011, 19–22). It is natural that in their search for methods, cultural-analytical disciplines rely on ethnography, which assumes a general qualitative foundation (for instance, within the context of cultural studies, see Gray 2003, 15).

Geertz argues that concepts that are close to experience and those removed from it can be tactfully connected through an effort of mental identification. This identification does not mean that ethnographers should spiritually merge with the informants. It is important to understand motivation driving people's action and thought (Geertz 1974, 29). Ethnographic interpretation is central to the penetration of other people's ways of thinking, day-to-day experience and everyday wisdom (op cit, 43–43). The scholars' immediate comprehension of their informants' experiences can be partially correct and such a hermeneutics of everyday wisdom could lead to an adequate understanding, even from a cognitive distance (op cit, 45). Such an approach can function as a very general methodological frame for the interweaving of thick description and cultural theory.

Hence culture analysts are scholars with a double responsibility. Their professionalism relies on both the ability to analyse and create (imagine and delineate) the object of study. These abilities also determine the parameters of analysability. Often, the culture itself dictates its analysability, which is why *ad-hoc* theories based on the object of study are used in culture-analysing disciplines. An analysis

of culture and thereby the analysability of a culture thus begin with an understanding of the object of study and initiation of a dialogue with it, as well as the finding of an appropriate language of communication for this dialogue (scientific or simply analytical). And the best language for communication could emerge from a dialogue, including one between semiotics and ethnology.

The diversity of the contemporary ethnographic field serves as a catalyst for intensifying dialogue between disciplines and research objects. In addition to which creative negotiations between different disciplines should be another shared scholarly adventure, departing from diversification of the ethnographic field. Hybrid methodology serves as toolbox for conceptualising the analysability of culture. At the same time, this hybrid methodology supports a holistic approach towards diversity of analytical experiences and movement in the direction of complexity of cultural theory.

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Sources of illustrations

Figure 1 – Lévi-Strauss (1963 [1958]: 359)

Notes

On methodology and theory in anthropology

Toomas Gross

Anthropology has long circumvented the conventional methodological standards that frame research in most other social sciences, and therein lies the paradox. The openness and flexibility of participant observation, the discipline's only 'proper' and 'authentic' data-collection method – interviews are obviously not anthropology's monopoly – has rendered anthropology an easy target for those who advocate a more rigorous, transparent, and less subjective modes of data collection and analysis. And yet, despite these caveats, there is really no other method that produces data as grounded in social and cultural reality as participant observation.

Anthropologists have always been keenly aware of the perils and possibilities of their methods and the implications that the subjectivity of their endeavours might have for the theoretical claims that they are able to make. The triangle of method-theory-data has been at the core of most 'anthropology wars' – for example, between Oscar Lewis and Robert Redfield on Tepoztlán, Gananath Obeyesekere and Marshall Sahlins on Hawaii, Derek Freeman and Margaret Mead on Samoa, and Patrick Tierney (backed by many others) and Napoleon Chagnon on the Yanomamö. Apart from these well-known confrontations, allegations from within and beyond the discipline accusing anthropologists of anecdotalism or even fraud have been multiple. The recent case of Dutch anthropologist Mart Bax is just an extreme example at one end of this continuum of criticism.

The trend to polish the research results into a publishable form and ignore the negative cases is, of course, characteristic not only of anthropology but the publish or perish reality in most of contemporary academia. In a certain sense it might even be argued that anthropologists, these days at least, tend to be relatively more self-critical than scholars in many other disciplines when it comes to the generalisability of their claims, or the reliability and validity of their arguments. The road to such self-awareness has been a long and often painful one. Perhaps more than any other discipline, anthropology has had to deal with its colonial, modernist, Western-centric, and masculine past. A motley crew of actors, such as feminist anthropology, Edward Said, Laura Nader with her call to "study up", post-colonial theorists, the Writing Culture school of the 1980s, and many others have endeavoured to transform anthropology from within with a more or less common aim – to give stage to the hitherto silenced voices and

to undermine the traditional authority in anthropological texts. Consequently, and for a few decades already, anthropology of anthropology is part and parcel of critical anthropological research.

Those who preached the death of theory in the 1980s, on the wave of postmodern eclecticism which deeply affected how anthropologists collected data and wrote books, and how those books were read, have been wrong. Anthropological theory is far from dead, and the recent so-called ontological turn in anthropology and other social sciences is but one proof of this. The ethnographic fields on which contemporary anthropologists work have also become more multifarious, i.e. the 'traditional' fields are now coupled with delocalised, transnational, and even virtual fields. This has direct implications for the data that anthropologists collect and the methods that they use for analysis.

Art Leete's and Peeter Torop's co-authored paper builds on these broad trends, but focuses more specifically on the contested interplay between ethnographic data and cultural theory. This is a joint venture by an ethnologist/anthropologist and a semiotician, and as such contributes to both disciplines, which, despite their proximity, have in recent decades collaborated less that they potentially could.

Maie Helm "Kiirustaja" ("Haste") 1987.
Etching, paper. 25 x 24.1 cm.

The unnatural:
six excursions towards a situated concept

Franz Krause, Tarmo Pikner, Maaris Raudsepp, Kadri Kasemets, Anne Kull

Abstract. What does it mean to call something unnatural? And what does it do? This chapter illustrates how the unnatural is an immensely powerful, if inherently ambiguous, concept with critical implications for the formation of social categories, the morality of classifications, the terms of urban governance and the directions of environmental conflicts. What people consider unnatural is a question of framing, strategising, and the significance of the respective categorical boundaries; its meaning emerges through on-going and often conflicting ecologies of practice. Thinking about the unnatural can be seen as an opportunity to explicitly expand cultural theory beyond a focus on describing and explaining unnatural (human, constructed, imagined, symbolic) phenomena, and towards an exploration of the material-semiotic processes that produce the unnatural and the powerful efficacy of the concept. The chapter lays out various dimensions of the unnatural in six excursions that take the reader through (1) its implications in the academic division of labour; (2) the making and maintaining of categorical boundaries; (3) theories of hybrids and monsters; (4) articulations of the unnatural in urban ruins; (5) the unnatural in urban planning for former summer house cooperatives in Estonia; and (6) the role of the unnatural in assigning or foregoing responsibility for environmental change. The chapter concludes that the unnatural should be approached as a label that functions as a means for policing boundaries, articulating claims and positioning humans vis-à-vis each other and in relation to the wider world.

Keywords: categorisation, cyborg, environmental conflict, morality, responsibility, urban governance

Introduction

What is unnatural? Why do people refer to certain things as unnatural? And how does this reference configure their relationships to other humans and the wider world? This chapter explores how the concept of the 'unnatural' emerges and is used in different contexts, and what consequences the 'unnatural' has politically, socially and culturally. It does so through six excursions that illustrate different dimensions of the unnatural, their emergence, utilisation and consequences.

Much has been written about the concept of 'nature', while its polar opposite has largely remained in the shadows of academic attention. However, in an age when the natural has been declared obsolete as a substantive category (e.g. McKibben 1989; Sayre 2012), it may be high time to inspect its antonym more closely. In this chapter, we illustrate how the unnatural is an immensely powerful, if inherently ambiguous, concept with critical implications for the formation of social categories, the morality of classifications, the terms of urban governance and the directions of environmental conflicts. What is considered unnatural is a question of framing, strategizing, and of the significance of the respective categorial boundaries; its meaning emerges through on-going and often conflicting 'ecologies of practice' (Stengers 2005). This applies both to so-called 'emic', or folk conceptualisations, and to the world of the 'etic' categories in which our own scholarly practice is couched. We argue that the construction of the unnatural is so deeply entwined with wider social, political and cultural dynamics that it must not be taken for granted as a foundational circumscription of the subject matter of cultural theory. In a world where natural and unnatural emerge as shifting configurations of matter and meaning, cultural theory is faced with the opportunity to explicitly expand its own frame of reference beyond what the 'natural sciences' have left over, to embrace the total spectrum of phenomena in which culture is cultivated.

In what follows, we approach the unnatural from six different angles, in order to elucidate complementary aspects of the concept's efficacy. Each angle is illustrated through an excursion, which may to some extent link to other excursions, but may also be read as a stand-alone section. The sheer multiplicity of the ways in which the different sections tackle this issue is illustrative of the multiple ways in which the 'unnatural' is produced. In the first excursion, we shall trace how the 'unnatural' has come to be synonymous with the 'cultural' in the academic division of labour between the natural sciences and the humanities. We argue that cultural theory must not limit itself to the 'unnatural' leftovers of the natural sciences, but should dare to approach the world as a whole.

The analogy of the unnatural and the cultural is only one of the many dimensions that make up the term. The second excursion will outline another important aspect of the unnatural, namely as a label to verbalise and sanction categorial and social boundaries. Whereas essentialising behaviour creates and maintains strict delineations of what belongs inside a certain category or group, the outside of this is usually less strictly defined. Therefore, the unnatural – as a label indicating a negation of an essential quality, without specifying its otherness – becomes a powerful concept, invoking abjection, fear or disgust.

This is developed further in the third excursion, which brings the unnatural into a conversation with the cyborg concept. We note two dimensions of this juxtaposition: on the one hand, the unnaturalness of the cyborg rests in its categorial transgression, and therefore its threat to the classificatory order; on the other hand, the tension between the omnipresence of cyborgs and the maintenance of categorial boundaries also points toward the ceaseless and complicated work of 'purification' that is needed to uphold a classificatory order in the face of a much messier reality. This builds on Donna Haraway's work on the cyborg (e.g. 1991), in which she problematises the limitation of categories for new ways of thinking, and celebrates the potential of the cyborg as a figure beyond these limitations. The section also engages Bruno Latour's (1993) observations concerning the processes of purification that are necessary, for instance, for distinguishing and keeping apart the domains of nature and culture.

The fourth excursion considers such processes of amalgamation and purification in the context of urban ruins in Estonia. It illustrates how the unnatural is never a given entity, but emerges out of complex ecologies of practice, in which materiality and non-human entities are participating alongside human beings. In Estonian urban ruins, 'natural' processes of decay and growth intersperse with and complicate the 'unnatural' forms and materials of urban structures. Conversely, these forms and materials also complicate naive assumptions about a re-naturalisation of the ruins: an urban gardening initiative enthusiastic to advance the post-industrial use of the ruins, for instance, was faced with the problem of potentially contaminated ground, turning their home-grown produce into a health hazard.

In the fifth excursion, the unnatural is traced as a discursive strategy by which a new urban planning philosophy is distancing itself from the planning mainstream. Here, the unnatural addresses the question of to what extent it is 'natural' to extend urban lifestyles into 'nature', or whether the logic of cities itself can be transformed so as to re-develop ecological relationships and consciousness in urban contexts that have classically been considered 'unnatural' par excellence.

In this light, urban sprawl around Tallinn is analysed as a development facing conflicting understandings of the unnatural in urban planning.

Finally, the sixth excursion traces how the unnatural functions as an attributor of responsibility. Based on two accounts of hydroengineering, we illustrate how calling a flood 'unnatural' brings it into the human sphere of causation, where the respective actions are subject to moral evaluation. Conversely, we show that labelling a reservoir 'natural' downplays the responsibility of its builders for the violence and destruction it caused. If something is called unnatural, it is presented as somebody's fault. This insight is used to develop Latour's (2004a) proposition that an appeal to the natural – as a given realm of reality known through the sciences – forecloses political debate: the unnatural pries this open, and explicitly reintroduces situated human beings and ways of knowing, thereby facilitating, if not outright demanding, debate.

In these explorations of the unnatural, the concept always emerges out of specific, materially and semiotically situated practices and discourses. The resulting understanding of unnatural must therefore not be mistaken for a claim to the universality of the concept or its particular set of meanings presented here. Furthermore, in arguing for an attention to the situatedness of the unnatural, we must be cautious that this arguing is done in a specific language – i.e. the English of early 21st century academic writing – which itself implies certain webs of meanings in relation to the term 'unnatural'. In other languages, this term may be bound up in significantly different webs of meaning, or may not exist as a direct translation at all. For example, we forcefully encountered this tension when writing and discussing earlier drafts of this text in Estonian, a language which distinguishes between *ebaloomulik* (unnatural concerning a deviance from an essence, expectation or habit) and *mittelooduslik* (unnatural concerning a phenomenon that is not considered part of the realm of nature). In discussions, we learned that our analysis not only veered between these two concepts, but that in some sections our focus might be best translated as *loodusetu* (literally: without nature), even though this word is not actually used in Estonian. Studying lists of synonyms and antonyms to these Estonian words, we found that what in English is called 'unnatural' may describe the unfamiliar, out of place, non-normal or unpredictable; the immoral, wrong or perverse; a divergence from an inner essence or inherent logic; the fake, sham or insincere; or the artificial, cultivated and cultured.

This multisemantic field caused not only some confusion among us authors and Estonian-speaking audiences, but also an increased alertness to the specificity and potential incommensurability of the concept across linguistic, historical and socio-cultural settings. Most of all, it underlined the fact that the 'unnatural'

is inevitably a constructed phenomenon, where both the content – that which is referred to as unnatural – and the meaning – that which is implied by calling something unnatural, *ebaloomulik*, *mittelooduslik* or *loodusetu* – depends on the social, political and material context. All claims about the 'unnatural' are hence situated in specific sets of relationships and ideologies, including those made by scientists.

The unnatural and cultural theory

At its core, the question of what is unnatural is a question of framing, and of reinforcing its opposite, the 'natural'. This has also become a central problem for cultural theory, since its subject matter, 'culture', has traditionally been considered an opposite to 'nature': 'culture' was seen as 'unnatural' par excellence. If, however, the unnatural emerges from practices of framing, it is itself a socioculturally contingent phenomenon and not to be mistaken for an analytical concept in cultural theory, and even less for a domain defining the subject matter of cultural theory. Rather than using the unnatural – as that which is 'not natural' – to explain cultural processes, we need to explore cultural processes to explain how the unnatural comes about in specific contexts and for particular people, both materially and categorially. Furthermore, instead of confining the scope of these cultural processes to the unnatural, i.e. to phenomena that are left out of the theories and methods of the natural sciences, cultural theory must embrace the entire world in which culture unfolds, no matter whether this happens to be labelled 'natural' or 'unnatural'.

Considering the historical roots of studies of culture and society, it is evident that this field has its origins in the 19th century, shortly after the establishment of biology as a distinct field of study. To some extent, the 'unnatural' can thus be considered the foundational claim of cultural theory in general. When biology grew as the authoritative method of studying and explaining 'nature', some scholars were at pains to emphasise that human life is not reducible to the natural laws formulated by biology (Carrithers 2010). They argued above all that human diversity is not due to a variety of biologically determined races, but rather to a set of learned characteristics that became known as 'culture'. Cultural research and theory came to work on this aspect of humanity, which was considered not instinctive or inborn, not governed by the biologically defined laws of nature, in a word: unnatural.

This heritage still haunts social and cultural theory today. As Nigel Clark (2011) observes, when 'critical theory' attempted to grapple with environmental issues in the second half of the 20th century, it encountered severe conceptual

impasses as it found itself limited to treating the natural as conflicting sets of social and cultural constructions because it lacked direct access to the natural. Its more successful attempts to reframe these issues and overcome the divide came in the guise of emphasising the reworking and negotiating of material realities through social and cultural processes. Focusing on urbanisation, pollution, genetic engineering, and other human-induced processes, the natural was declared obsolete and replaced by hybrids or cyborgs, i.e. manifestations of the social and cultural in material forms and spheres that were formerly considered natural.

Clark considers this approach as an inadequate concealment of cultural theory in its established realm, extending its accustomed logic of the 'unnatural' (i.e. about technologies, mental constructions, symbols, etc.) to the natural, and thereby failing to take into account the full potential of the natural: "It at once treats the environmental predicament with deadly seriousness, and shrewdly turns this predicament around so that it bolsters rather than undermines the resistance of social and cultural thought to the natural referent" (Clark 2011, 8). Some accounts of the Anthropocene, for instance, may therefore be severely limited, as they are based on integrating the natural world into cultural frames of analysis and theorising – i.e. unnaturalising – it, based on the established division of labour.

A crucial implication of analysing the unnatural is therefore that cultural theory must transcend its traditional limitation to the 'unnatural' and grapple with reframing its analyses to include the total world, including the 'natural'. It is in this total world – which includes not only symbols and urban planning, but also concrete, plants, animals and rivers – that humans form, experience and reinvent their collective lives. Realising that what is considered unnatural and what is not fundamentally depends on social, cultural and material processes of transformation and negotiation, cultural theory cannot restrict its frame of reference to the unnatural, to those things not covered by the natural sciences. A broadening of cultural theory has the potential to come to terms with the current ecological crisis and its deep connections to various other crises, including those in cultures of energy use, production and consumption, urbanity, and environmental conservation.

In order to overcome the limitations of cultural theory to the 'unnatural', we might be well advised to follow recent theoretical developments in the social sciences and humanities. For example, within semiotics, an approach that is often termed ecosemiotics analyses communication and meaning-making across species, to present human culture as part of a larger continuum of semiotic processes (Maran & K. Kull 2014; Kohn 2013). "Ecosemiotics does not build a barrier

between human semiotic activities and those of other habitants and thus allows research questions to be raised about the whole communicative structure of the geographical space" (Maran & K. Kull 2014, 48). Focusing more on agency than on communication, the approach that has become famous as Actor–Network-Theory emphasises that 'social' or 'cultural' phenomena like institutions, markets and knowledge critically depend on the material, non-human elements within their make-up (Latour 2005b). The social or the cultural, in this view, do not exist in opposition to the natural or the material, even if this opposition is the hallmark of modernity. Rather, social and cultural forms are assembled out of heterogeneous elements, many of which have non-human origins. In addition, in political theory scholars like Bennett (2010) have noted how non-humans – and even inorganic matter – play a critical and active role in political processes and power struggles, not just as 'objects' of struggles, but as 'vibrant' participants in the assemblages that shape and enable polities and politics.

In sociology, the continuity of human and non-human relations has been conceptualised through a social practice approach (Shove et al 2012; Shove & Spurling 2013), which analyses practices as enduring social entities, consisting of interdependent elements – bodily activities, mental activities (knowledge, belief, motivation, etc.) and the physical environment. By recurrently enacting certain practices, human beings both reproduce and innovate social rules and meanings, and shape their environments. Since these practices are not set against a passive 'natural world', but are conceptualised as arising in close relationships with non-humans, they cannot be easily assigned to an 'unnatural' domain of human life. Furthermore, there are on-going discussions in human geography about turbulent, interrogative and excessive materiality, which is perpetually beyond the grasp of humans (e.g. Anderson & Harrison 2010). Hence, recent theoretical and methodological developments in geography have aimed at "reimagining relations between the material, perceptual, affectual, and discursive" (Anderson & Wylie 2009, 332). All these trends suggest that the unnatural – and its relation to culture and cultural theory – must not be taken for granted. Rather, once we recognise forms and meanings as enactments in a context of turbulent materiality, it becomes clear that no phenomenon is inherently natural or unnatural. Instead, the 'unnatural' emerges from materially and socially situated processes of dynamic meaning-making. If the natural and the unnatural are not pre-given categories, then no particular disciplinary tradition – neither the natural sciences nor cultural theory – has exclusive access to any specific part of the world.

Within anthropology, research has long pointed to the problems of attempting to limit the study of culture to the 'unnatural' aspects of people's lives, not only in ecological anthropology (Steward 1955; Ingold 2000), which emphasises

the integration of social and ecological relations, but also in the studies of cosmologies (Strathern 1980; Bird-David 1990; Kohn 2013) that problematise the validity of the natural–unnatural conceptual pair as an analytical frame altogether. Recently, anthropologists have begun to write 'multispecies ethnographies' (Kirksey & Helmreich 2010) and argued for making 'more-than-human sociality' (Tsing 2013) more explicit in description and analysis. Developing cultural theory beyond the 'unnatural' also implies radically rethinking the concepts of person and organism, classically the principal units of cultural and biological studies respectively. Ingold (2013, 10), for instance, argues that "we can no longer think of the organism, human or otherwise, as a discrete, bounded entity, set over against an environment. It is rather a locus of growth within a field of relations traced out in flows of materials." And Kohn observes:

> An anthropology that focuses on the relations we humans have with non-human beings forces us to step beyond the human. In the process it makes what we've taken to be the human condition – namely, the paradoxical, and 'provincialized', fact that our nature is to live immersed in the 'unnatural' worlds we construct – appear a little strange. Learning how to appreciate this is an important goal of an anthropology beyond the human. (Kohn 2013, 42)

Thinking about the unnatural can therefore be seen as an opportunity to explicitly expand cultural theory, beyond a focus on describing and explaining unnatural (human, constructed, imagined, symbolic) phenomena, and towards an exploration of the material-semiotic processes that produce the unnatural and the powerful efficacy of the concept.

Moral boundaries and the uncanny beyond

Thus, the unnatural arises out of oppositions to what is considered natural, and thereby crucially depends on the framing of the natural. In the previous section, we have shown how this opposition has traditionally played out in the academic division of labour. In what follows, we shall spell out some of the other dimensions of the unnatural, which are all oppositions to particular aspects of an assumed 'natural' other. If the essence of this natural other is perceived to be adulterated, the outcome is an 'unnatural' phenomenon, which is often evaluated negatively as a deviation from the morally correct state of affairs. As will become clear, the idea of unnatural that defines the academic division of labour is not fundamentally different from that which has been invoked to justify racism or assign responsibility for disasters. The natural–unnatural dichotomy can indeed

be considered one of the basic cultural antinomies (Markova 2003) that comprise the underlying structure of various meaning complexes and can take different forms in specific historical and cultural contexts. The natural–unnatural conceptual pair is not, however, a one-dimensional opposition, as we have hinted at in the introduction in relation to the varied Estonian meanings of unnatural. Often, these meanings mix and overlap in use, and this multiplicity and ambivalence of meanings provides some of the concept's power. In the European cultural tradition, the opposition to natural may also be the supernatural, associated with a transcendental dimension, implying an order beyond the earthly world. However, for various reasons including brevity we will not be able to explore this dimension further within the scope of this chapter.

The morality of the unnatural manifests itself in manifold social encounters, for instance in intergroup relations, when ingroup bias is enhanced by the perceived naturalness (normality, habituality) of ingroup characteristics and norms, and attributes of outgroups are perceived through some degree of unnaturalness (deviance from one's own norm). According to sociocultural theories, basic antinomies (Marková 2003), or complementary dualities (Valsiner 2007) – for example good–bad, us–them, human–nonhuman, edible–inedible, natural–unnatural – are core components of meaning-making for both individuals and societies. On the most basic level, they hold a dialogical tension between the opposites that embodies a potential for the dynamic generation of various meanings in particular socio-cultural contexts.

In semiotic cultural psychology, it is posited that meaning arises in the form of complexes of united opposites (Josephs et al 1999; Valsiner 2007, 2014). The meaning is a complex sign given by its manifest part (A) and its hidden counterpart (non-A) – an indeterminate field of all possible opposites, which participate in the dialogical transformation of A. It is through the opposition between the meaning and its opposites that new meanings are formed.

> New meanings grow in the A < > non-A field through oppositions between the known (A) and the 'hidden other' (non-A). Such oppositions take the form of striving towards 'the other': the unknown, the disallowed-yet-desired, or to 'away from' the already established (A) (Valsiner 2007, 162).

Beyond this semantic opposition there is the vast context of not-A, which does not participate in the particular meaning-making process of the A versus non-A opposition, but may become a resource for new meanings in other circumstances.

We propose to approach the unnatural as a non-A, a negative, yet distinctly undefined field that arises out of what A – a meaning, an order, a

distinction – is not. This elusiveness and uncanniness of the unnatural, with an identity defined by what it is not, rather than by what it is, accounts for part of the power of the concept. It can be alluded to, it can be used to label outsiders and infractions, it can lurk at the margins, and it can be implied to redistribute blame; but it cannot be grasped, dissected and made harmless.

Of course, meanings are never singular, and never fixed in time. Processes of meaning transformation are catalysed by socio-cultural change: a rupture in societal routine, a situation of social controversy or conflict, may activate discussions, disputes and debate, in the process of which unreflective levels of meaning (implicit antinomies) become the focus of attention. In the process of social dialogues, these basic oppositions are problematised and re-ordered (anchored to an existing system of meanings) and tied to certain communication genres. Symbolic meanings are ascribed to them, and they are elaborated into full-scale social representations (Marková 2003). The antinomy of natural–unnatural thus embodies a meaning potential that can generate various individual and collective meaning complexes, expressed through narratives, discourses and systems of practice. The natural–unnatural opposition belongs to their deep underlying structure.

The socio-cultural mechanisms of collective meaning-making include the processes of anchoring and objectification (Moscovici 1984). Anchoring means relating the represented object to a network of conventionalised meanings and socio-cultural subject positions, and objectification refers to the elaboration of a figurative form (iconic, metaphorical) that is comfortable for representing and communication. These processes may be multi-layered and multi-staged. For instance, anchoring may start by establishing the general valence and emotional tone of the object (Rochira 2014). Depending on that initial stage, natural (as opposed to unnatural) may acquire either positive or negative valence in the subsequent anchoring to a certain semantic context. An example of positive valence would be the meaning of natural nature as harmonious being, as opposed to non-natural human culture as disharmonious being (Lotman 1992, 44–51). Negative valence of natural being can be found in Sloterdijk's (2013) opposition of a natural, unreflective and non-authentic 'swamp of habit' to a hyper-natural authentic self-conscious self-mastery.

Collective meaning complexes are multi-dimensional, embracing multiple thematic oppositions where the 'unnatural' may stand for the non-natural, the non-civilised or the non-us; in each case it denotes a claim that something or someone is not part of a particular, 'correct' order. The basic natural–unnatural antinomy may participate in generating social representations of AIDS, certain outgroups (Perez et al 2007), genetically modified food (Wagner et al 2002),

global warming (Smith & Joffe 2013), etc. For example, Perez et al (2007) illustrate how mainstream representations of Roma are based on the dichotomies of nature versus culture and human versus animal, thus justifying the superiority of cultured European majorities over natural (uncultivated) Roma minorities. Thinking through the antinomy of natural–unnatural may thus occur in various spheres of activity and reflect cultural socialisation in particular contexts. The natural–unnatural dichotomy may also be used strategically, for example to stigmatise and exclude certain social groups or phenomena as 'unnatural'. So the 'naturalness' of the Roma becomes 'unnaturalness' from the point of view of the 'civilised' ingroup, as 'natural' Roma do not fit into the cultured world of 'us'.

Douglas (1966) suggests that conventions are legitimated and reified through an analogy with what counts locally as natural. Consider, for example, how, in western society, the theme of competition from the biological theory of natural selection is used to support the 'naturalness' of individualism. The idea of the natural is thus a strategic resource mobilised to support truth claims, with categories in nature mirroring and reinforcing conventions relating to social practice (Tansey 2004, 21).

Psychological transformations in the process of dialogical meaning-making may include boundary transformation (Marková 2003, 185; for example, the content of what is natural and unnatural may change), transition between opposites, modulation of the tension between the opposites, or synthesis of a new tension between new opposites (Josephs et al 1999). However, it is not only the changing of these meanings that requires work, special activity is also required to maintain oppositions and ensure they continue to relate to certain entities.

Hybridity, cyborgs and monsters

In this third section, we focus on the unnatural as it emerges through perceived confusion or infraction of categorial essences and boundaries. Such structural models are usually based on Mary Douglas's (1966) seminal work *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, which defines pollution and dirt as 'matter out of place', i.e. phenomena that disturb a particular conceptual order. According to this view, things or practices are not dirty in themselves, but become dirty when they transgress the order they are meant to be part of. Shoes, therefore, are not dirty when they are on the floor, but become pollution when placed on the kitchen table. Perhaps, the unnatural should be considered a 'residual category' in Douglas's (1966) sense, as an attempt to describe phenomena that do not fit our general classification system. According to Douglas, this is not merely a cognitive issue, but equally an emotional one. She argues

that disgust is a response to a threat to the known and predictable order, the "cherished classifications" (op cit, 45). For example, there may be psychological and cultural barriers against accepting biological hybrids or genetically modified organisms as unproblematic sources of food – these products are perceived as unnatural, weird and provoking public resistance. Support or resistance to new biotechnologies is closely related to perceived naturalness or unnaturalness of the technology (Raudsepp & Rämmer 2013).

In the Western cultural context, the monster is originally related to something anomalous outside the natural order, something that could not be categorised, described, named or explained. In pre-modern times, monsters were treated as a message, for example a warning against human hubris and future catastrophes, or a reminder of the divine order. Monsters of modernity tend to reflect the hidden and dark sides of the human mind. An analysis of media representation of modern biotechnology, which is felt to transgress the boundary between natural and artefactual, reveals the features of monstrosity: hybridity (blurring the boundaries between natural types), turning the moral order upside down, and exposing an invisible threat under the guise of normality (Wagner et al 2006). The opposition of natural (as normal) and unnatural (as abnormal) is clearly demonstrated here. These images resonate with public representations of hybrids.

Several experimental studies (e.g. Wagner et al 2010) have revealed that people in different cultures perceive genetic hybrids more negatively and with emergent qualities of monstrosity compared to 'natural' animals. Similarly, if a group is conceptualised in terms of unalterable essences, then ethnically mixed mating tends to be perceived as producing hybrid offspring that are met with disgust by extreme right-wing individuals or other people who essentialise (Holtz & Wagner 2012; Wagner et al 2010). This disgust is related to a perceived category confusion and blurring of natural boundaries that undermines order in society.

In both cases the unnatural monstrosity is constructed as a result of a perceived destruction of a natural categorial order:

We argue that the mechanism is based on a way of thinking that tends to essentialize natural and social categories, making their members mutually exclusive entities, where 'essence' is widely understood as being equivalent to an exemplar's genetic endowment (Wagner et al 2010, 232–233).

Clearly, for racists, culture and nature form an inseparable whole that defines the essence of ethnic groups. As a result, the offspring of mixed marriages are perceived as lacking a clearly defined identity (op cit, 244).

[…] besides being unfamiliar, an essentializer will perceive the hybrid as highly unnatural, unpleasant, negative, as a threat to the received 'natural

order' and as lacking a category identity. Hybrids transcend the categorical grid of the local world, as seen by the essentializer, and imply category confusion (op cit, 235).

Thus, by transcending the perceived boundaries of naturalness and normality, hybrids, biological and cultural mixtures may be understood as monsters representing an unnatural order of being. In contemporary Western society, the barely secularised salvation story still depends on the transcendental origins of order, laws and essences (if not God, then Nature or Culture); popular discourse sees the search for our own true nature in deciphering the code structures of DNA (Haraway 1997).

A natural phenomenon is perceived as unnatural if its 'essence' has been transformed (for example, when by certain genetic modifications it is mixed with other 'essences'). Thinking in terms of essence, that is, attributing organisms a species-specific essence, implies that genetic hybrids (genetically modified organisms) are perceived as lacking identity and a clear belonging to a 'natural kind' category. The hybrid's lack of belonging makes people judge them as unnatural and threatening, close to being monsters – cultural phenomena that mark the transcendence of hitherto known categories that structure the familiar world of natural beings (Wagner et al 2006, 2010).

"While cultures may differ in the ways in which they name and classify natural kinds, societies across the globe mobilize moral feelings to defend their culture's classification system against deviant cases" (Leach 1972 in Kronberger et al 2014, 109). This theoretical line suggests that abnormalities – such as hybrids – should be abhorred and met with moral repugnance (Douglas 1966), no matter whether they have come into existence naturally or by genetic modification (Kronberger et al 2014, 109). However, part of the context in which repugnance and prohibitions appear consists of permissions and prescriptions. Typically, negative judgments are the reverse side of affirmative valuations and cannot be understood without keeping these in mind. If harmonious social and cosmic order is an ultimate value, then monsters in their perverse way underline this value. Understanding the cultural basis of such 'monsterising' transformation of meaning should enable us to reflect critically on attempts to naturalise social categories in group-specific (political) interests, and to see the possibilities for their representational and discursive denaturalisation (see Holtz & Wagner 2012).

Something or somebody is a monster, an abomination, with respect to some system of concepts. An abomination must be anomalous or at least marginal. It must combine characteristics uniquely identified with separate kinds of thing, or at least fail to fall unambiguously into any recognised class (Stout 1988, 148).

For example, if the line between masculine and feminine roles is strict and forms the basis of the division of labour or the rules of inheritance, we may expect to see bearded women and hermaphrodites turning up in freak shows, or observe strong condemnation of homosexual behaviour. The degree of repugnance depends on such factors as the presence, sharpness, and social significance of conceptual distinctions. However, the inversion of the norms may also be playful, allowing a momentary release from their sway, as is evident, for instance, in carnivals. The transgressor, the monster, the trickster may then act as a mediator between different realms, or as a demonstrator of the proper laws of cosmic and social order by the very act of transgressing them in a controlled (for example, ritual or staged) situation.

Not all categorial transgressions are policed in the same manner. This seems to depend on the situation in which the transgression occurs, and on the significance of the categorial distinction that is being upset. Only some transgressions are labelled as unnatural and are subject to severe moral judgement. Jeffrey Stout (1988) notes that his young daughter confused cats with rabbits, calling animals from both species "cabbits". Evidently, the girl had not yet learned to distinguish them as different categorial kinds, and therefore was unlikely not only to notice anything anomalous in the cabbit, but also to be disgusted by it. A "moral abomination", in Stout's analysis, thus only arises if it is "anomalous or ambiguous with respect to some system of concepts" (Stout 1988, 148). Stout further notes that the intensity of moral disgust generated by abominations (he discusses homosexuality!) depends upon the presence, social significance, and sharpness of conceptual distinctions. This is an important observation, for it explains why the cabbit, articulated by a young girl, remains merely a repugnant curiosity, whereas bestiality or cannibalism arouse deep feelings of horror and disgust. The conceptual line between cats and rabbits may be less significant than the conceptual line between humans and other animals. This also explains why the image of the cyborg often arouses intense fear and disgust, for it visually and conceptually transgresses the same ontological boundary as cannibalism or bestiality: it threatens the distinction between human and nonhuman.

Categorial transgressions thus come under different guises – some are playful, some might just signal ignorance or lack of style, but some produce phenomena that are labelled unnatural and met with outrage or disgust. Discussions surrounding the cyborg suggest that it may be particularly when basic ontological boundaries – for example between different natural kinds, such as species, or between human and non-human – are breached, that the unnatural emerges. For example, Leon Kass (1997), an American physician and conservative public intellectual and educator, controversial chairman of the President's Council on

Bioethics from 2001 to 2005, and sharp critic of euthanasia, human cloning and embryo research, categorises cloning alongside incest, bestiality, and cannibalism, suggesting that like these acts – which arouse horror and disgust by violating the ontological boundary of human and nonhuman – cloning, too, violates this boundary at the expense of valuing human dignity and identity by making human children into 'artefacts'. For this reason, cyborgs and other posthuman hybrids are often seen as figures of the monstrous, moral abominations resulting from the transgression of ontological boundaries. Elaine Graham writes: "Just as monsters of the past marked out the moral and topographical limits of their day, so today other similar[ly] strange and alien creatures enable us to gauge the implications of the crossing of technological boundaries" (Graham 2002, 39). If the monsters' monstrosity is thus a product of a particular representational framing that cannot take account of them, then we can "reorient and regulate the proliferation of monsters by representing their existence officially", as Latour (1993, 12) writes. Monsters and cyborgs are unnatural as long as the phenomena they embody cannot be easily accommodated in our conceptual framing.

A cyborg is a hybrid figure: neither wholly organic nor solely mechanical, the cyborg is both simultaneously, straddling these taken-for-granted ontological and social categories. Haraway (1991, 151-153) identifies three "breached boundaries" represented by the cyborg: human/animal, organism/machine, and (as a subset of the second) physical/nonphysical. The human/nonhuman animal boundary is as actively defended as it is breached. That we often feel a need to police the boundary is the direct result and a symptom of the fragility of boundaries. Yet, the cyborg can be seen as a symbol and description of a contemporary mode of existence. The hybridity of the cyborg, as well as its manufactured, technological origin, defy the expectation of a single, given, biologically inherited 'nature'. In addition, in a wider sense, cyborg hybridity calls into question the concept of 'Nature' as the determining origin of all biological natures. Again, this has tangible moral implications. Haraway (op cit) argues against appeals to ahistoric Nature not only because concepts of nature are culturally constructed and historical rather than timeless and essential, but also because these historical, cultural concepts have not been morally neutral. Rather, they have been damaging and oppressive, employed to reinforce sexism, racism, homophobia, and other forms of infectious fear of the other. At the same time, Haraway resists modern technoscience's opposite extreme of a 'nature of no nature'. This perspective reads nature as a blank slate, infinitely malleable and available as raw material for the meaning-giving activities of human beings. As Haraway points out, this is simply a reiteration of the old dualism of nature–culture, only without the

transcendental – nature without the capital N but nonetheless equally available for human exploitation as infinite resource.

Looking for "another relationship to nature besides reification and possession," Haraway (1992b, 296) insists that nature is a socially constructed category, posing as an absolute with the power to dictate permissible social, moral, political, and technoscientific norms and practices. The illusion of naturally given norms appears in many contexts. However, nature is not constructed solely by humans: the construction of nature is a project, a kind of relationship and an achievement undertaken by human and nonhuman agents. Whatever nature is, it is not a simple given, and Haraway's plea is that we recognise our responsibility in its construction, and our complicity in its destruction. Haraway attempts to dispel the illusion of self-evident necessity surrounding natural discourse wherever it appears: "Queering what counts as nature is my categorical imperative […] not for the easy frisson of transgression, but for the hope of livable worlds" (Haraway 1992a, 60).

Different kinds of cyborg are all around us. There are those humans who have artificial organs or prostheses, there are those whose creativity is expressed predominantly via technologies, and those who dream of enhancement, military or otherwise. Even to have a concept of cyborg, without literally cyborgic embodiment, makes us different from people who lived perhaps only a few decades ago. Haraway has pointed out that all claims of identity based on a natural or organic standpoint are suspect. Her talk of cyborgs deliberately breaks down the dichotomy between nature and technology, natural and unnatural. The cyborg has no recourse to an imagined organic unity: it requires both the biological and the technological. Our nature is technonature and our culture is technoculture. If we look for nature outside of ourselves and our practices, we may lose both ourselves and nature (K. Kull 2000).

As Latour (1993) has pointed out, the cyborg represents one side of a coin of twin movements in modern Western society. Latour focuses on the relationship between the concepts of nature and culture, and how the context, which he calls "the modern constitution" (op cit, e.g. 13), simultaneously connects and distinguishes them. In order to produce and to deal with hybrid mixtures, the inverse movement of keeping nature and culture separate, which Latour terms 'purification', is equally important. "If we consider hybrids, we are dealing only with mixtures of nature and culture; if we consider the work of purification, we confront a total separation between nature and culture" (op cit 1993, 30). This relationship is also at play in the production of the unnatural. The on-going work in producing and maintaining a conceptual framework that makes particular phenomena (sexual practices, hybrid life forms, urban structures, etc.) appear

unnatural must be concealed when presenting the framing as factual. As much as an acknowledgement of the 'proliferation of the unnatural' (to paraphrase Latour) is contributing to a re-evaluation of the cyborg, the parallel process of purification keeps enacting categorial distinction and boundaries, producing new or reproducing old conceptual spaces of the unnatural.

The cyborg, the embodiment of this problematic interrelationship between mixture and separation, between naturalising and unnaturalising, draws attention not only to the multi-directional dynamics involved in producing the unnatural, but also to the direct implication of human bodies and identities in questions of the unnatural and its negotiation. Framing the unnatural is thus not only a statement about the order of a world external from us, but includes at its heart a positioning of the human within this world, and of human relationships with organic and technological forms and processes.

The unnatural as a tension in abandoned urban areas

Discursive enactments and categorisations do not exist on their own, but thrive and change within an 'ecology of practices' (Stengers 2005) where such categories are used strategically and emotionally by agents immersed in particular social and material relationships. This section considers the 'unnatural' as the flickering and often salient flip-side co-present in various enactments of 'nature'. This flickering category or emotional articulation appears often in practice, unfolding and enrolling people and their multiple attachments. Thus, there is a challenge to read the 'unnatural' in the dance of on-goings, which pushes particular environmental realties.

An ecology of practices generates a perspective to understand the becoming of practices without grounding definitions or ideals, but according to middle and surroundings (Stengers 2005). In an urbanised world, for example, three general and often intermingled judgements about nature can be distinguished (Hinchliffe 2007, 7): nature as an independent state 'out there' (but threatened by invasion); nature as a dependent colony, a holiday home; and nature as enacted (a co-production). This third approach demands imagination and sensibilities to describe how urban nature evolves through the myriad relations between humans and non-humans, which create and shift essential properties of matter. In this framing, natural and unnatural are two flickering extremes, which usually interweave in transformations of environments and places.

Wylie (2007) argues that landscape can be approached as a set of tensions including the dimensions of inside–outside, presence–absence and near–far. In addition, the tension between natural and unnatural can be seen as part of

landscape formations, a device enabling people to perceive and understand worlds. These tensions may appear along with disturbing things and situations in everyday life, where different realities and enacted boundaries generate frictions. Bodies and spaces can incorporate a number of realities, becoming actual through partial (not fully exhaustive) social connections (Hinchliffe 2010). This means that things are never simply of their current set of relations, but there is always something in reserve, something that withdraws. This reserve generates the possibility for (unexpected) excess of matter, affecting discourses and category boundaries (Anderson & Harrison 2010).

The tensions between enactments of natural and unnatural can be analysed, for example, in the context of wastelands, ruins or other kinds of abandoned urban areas. Abandonment is a label or situational quality usually defined in relation to human usage. However, abandonment by humans as partial rupture of care also enables us to reframe the modern vision of linear development and decay. Ruins are often taken over by various plants generating suitable habitats for birds. Decaying buildings can be squatted or used by artists enacting particular qualities and atmospheres. Thus, ruins are interesting because they constitute undefined change and void, which dissolve and create some properties/qualities of matter by bringing together things, emotions and discourses.

In many city centres of Europe and beyond, former industrial complexes are integrated into a dynamic urban fabric by generating a wide spectrum of values. The design and reuse of industrial remains enable us to problematise and understand the relations between urbanity and nature (Whatmore & Hinchliffe 2010). Here, engagements with nature evolve from abstract visions of the revitalisation of ruins to the tactile encounters of experimental city gardening. Some of these visions incorporate entities and processes of nature as exemplary trajectories of social (non)ordering. The rationalities behind the experimental garden as a shared space can be refocused over time since the garden is made up of a number of realities such as a community for growing edible plants, a meeting place for leisure, a stage for creative collaborations, and a node of urban renewal (Pikner 2014). The experience of gardening creates knowledge about the surrounding industrial ruins, and taken-for-granted rationalities of growing edible plants may generate doubts when practiced in formerly polluted environments. The possibility of pollution, which may be actualised in the form of edible plants, triggers an articulation of unnatural entities. These tendencies reveal some tensions and co-constituted relations framing the (un)natural in process.

Various appearances of pollution and waste influence the framings of the unnatural. As an illustrative example, this can be exhaust from petrol engines or traffic noise from the streets that become categorised as disturbing matter. But

graffiti on neighbourhood walls, the stench of compost piles or thrash metal music can evoke different emotions depending on the situations in which they appear. This means that particular people, at different times, consider certain places more proper for certain things than others. Society and matter grow dynamically together by identifying and locating matter (Moore 2012). Waste is a transitory relational matter, which reveals some tensions between natural and unnatural. These tensions indicate a struggle in generating (local) categories for disturbing matter. The disposal of waste involves the managing of social relations and their representations around themes of movement, incompleteness, transformation, and return (Hetherington 2004). The return of divested materials may take several forms, both negative and positive, such as from dangerous pollution and disease to an art installation or progressive calls for the clean-up of surrounding environments. Enacted categories of waste include multiple negotiations about what is disturbing (and unnatural). The unnatural appears as an emotional attitude and boundary-making practice in association with illegally divested trash loads that have extensively been made public. Here, technologically mediated spaces of visualisation, of embodiment and of circulation empower particular situations and bodies in generating vibrant matter of concern (Pikner & Jauhiainen 2014). Thus, tensions bound to conceptual frames of the (un)natural can be approached as emergent singularities, which become translated into on-going socialisation.

Unnatural urban sprawl?

This section analyses how different urban planning paradigms use understandings of the unnatural to reconstruct the meanings of 'good urbanity'. It illustrates the differences in how modernist and environmental sustainability-oriented planning paradigms contextualise the meaning of nature in the urban condition. The meaning of unnatural is constantly redefined according to other meaning transformations and social transformations in society. This applies, for instance, to meanings ascribed to urban landscapes, which in turn influence their further developments and appearances (Dakin 2003). Re-valuing choices and solving various problems may be initiated on both a local and an institutional level (municipal planning politics, education, media), but new meaning-making has special strength when it is supported by local everyday agency. The meaning of unnatural in urban contexts emerges through the city inhabitants' reflexive practices and reasoning. This development could be understood as the innate logic of the city (*Eigenlogik der Städte*), a term widely used in contemporary urban sociology. It claims that particular city environments have specific innate

characteristics, which can be used for 'city branding' or in other meaning-making projects by picking up a city's coherent self-expressions. Such 'branding' only works, however, if the selected expressions are also livable in everyday practice. The self-representation of cities can only be effective when it is based on their specific, everyday innate pattern (Löw 2008).

The innate logic of some cities is currently influenced by urban planning epistemologies oriented at alternative human-environment relationships. One of their strategic aims is to transform the meaning of ecology, nature and greenness in people's minds. The social aspects of ecological issues are emphasised in order to deal with different interpretations of ecological contexts in planning processes. Understandings of what is natural and unnatural depend on the politics of the different interest groups that shape potentially conflicting meanings of ecology (Hinchliffe 2007). The meaning of urbanity itself is questioned by asking to what extent urbanity is actually opposed to nature. Rather than further emphasising an assumed urban-rural opposition, this new planning approach highlights the potentialities that the unnatural in urban settings offers. These discourses understand the unnatural as including ruins, wasteland, unmaintained buildings, undervalued built environments like prefabricated housing areas, industrialised environments, motorways, empty lands, dirt, or slums. Different sustainable planning theories are provided to engage ecologists, landscape architects, urban planners, politicians and local people with each other (Ignatieva et al 2011). In planning jargon, this new urban paradigm has been termed "new urbanism", "smart growth", or "compact city" (Atkinson-Palombo 2010; Hankins & Powers 2009; Miles & Song 2009; Bell & Lyall 2000; Moore 2010; Talen 2010). The paradigm may include attempts at 'ecological design' by which people's way of thinking about the environment is meant to be influenced (Rogers & Sukolratanametee 2009). It may also include technologies for renewable energy production such as solar panels or wind turbines, or simple techniques like organic gardening or compost making (Bang 2005), not to mention ecologically oriented urban communities. The ethics of this socio-ecological approach fosters an awareness of how people influence their surroundings with their everyday activities (Steiner 2011).

This environmentally oriented urban planning paradigm questions urban sprawl, which is seen as a problematic outcome of urbanisation. Through criticising road widening projects (Young et al 2005) or opposing housing developments on urban fringes to preserve green space (Cadieux 2008), the usefulness of re-arranging already urbanised environments is foregrounded (Atkinson-Palombo 2010). To exemplify the ambivalence of the unnatural–natural opposition in the context of changing urban paradigms in Estonia, it is thought-provoking to study

the landscapes of former Soviet summerhouse cooperatives around the bigger Estonian cities and their transformation into permanent residential areas. Summerhouse cooperatives (known also as *dacha* areas) were built by different enterprises for their employees from the 1960s to the 1980s, during the Soviet period. People used their plots to grow vegetables and erect small non-heated houses for summer residence. *Dachas* were inhabited only seasonally. After Estonian re-independence in 1991, in the process of large-scale privatisation of formerly state-owned assets, these summerhouse cooperatives became entangled in the dynamics of urban sprawl, which was often the outcome of unregulated urbanisation processes. The land was distributed to the individual members of the cooperatives, who fenced off their pieces of land and often sold them. Urban sprawl was especially intensive during the housing boom at the end of the 1990s and during the 2000s, when new housing developments extended into the forests, rural landscapes and former *dacha* areas (Samarüütel et al 2010).

The main impulses to move from the city to former cooperatives were similar to the general causes of suburbanisation, such as desiring one's own house outside the city and the attraction of greenness. Even though the *dacha* building standards and aesthetic appearance did not correspond to popular housing ideals, former summerhouse settlements were preferred for permanent living over new suburban settlements because in a summerhouse area the price of the plot was cheaper (Leetmaa et al 2012). These cooperatives were often built in vernacular style, which initially followed construction plans but changed appearance over time according to necessity, resulting in an improvised or untidy appearance. Such architecture is still in place where initial summerhouse owners have not rebuilt or sold their plots. This somewhat messy and wild aesthetic is partly changing because for new suburban owners it is more economical to build a completely new house than to renovate or rebuild an existing former summerhouse. Permanent residents' gardening practices differ from those of former summer residents in that permanent residents prefer lawns to a vegetable garden. Some summerhouse cooperatives are located on peat soil, and because of spring and autumn floods the houses need to be built on raised platforms, the roads need continuous maintenance and the gardens need more care. With the transformation from summer colonies to suburban neighbourhoods, municipal infrastructure like roads, water and sewerage systems are provided, which raise the prices of the plots.

This transformation from summerhouse cooperatives to permanent residential areas follows modern strategies of urban planning and approaches to greenness and nature, where urban sprawl is considered a natural outcome of urbanisation processes. People's decisions about their preferred places of residence are

based on traditional understandings of a culture–nature opposition and sustainable ways of living. This transformation points to the lack of environmentally friendly residential urban areas, but in this process, paradoxically, more and more rural areas are domesticated by urban lifestyles (see Cadieux 2008). According to the socio-ecological planning system, where an ecologically oriented urban paradigm would dominate, city centres – rather than urban fringes – should be developed through 'nature-oriented' strategies; urban sprawl would be considered unnatural and reversed. In the nature-oriented strategy context, these former summerhouse cooperatives in their previous condition would already create examples of a new urbanity that should be promoted and planned in the city centres.

In urban planning discourse, the unnatural is a generally implicit, but nevertheless significant idea underlying some of the differences between established and new paradigms. Processes and discourses concerning urban sprawl show how different versions of the unnatural (for example relating to accessibility, see Qviström 2015) are used strategically in environmentally oriented planning approaches to criticise established paradigms. Based on the planning ideals of this 'new urbanism', these approaches re-define modernist urban landscapes as unnatural and enlist the term for new meaning-making and the naturalisation of their own models for urban life.

Claiming responsibility

As has become clear, a core claim that people make by calling something unnatural is that it has been altered from its original or essential state, most probably by human action. By pointing to this human manipulation of the phenomenon, people also bring this alteration into the social realm of exchange, ethics and responsibility. Most often, an unnatural phenomenon has an author, producer or transgressor behind it, someone who can be held responsible for an unnatural phenomenon with negative consequences, or can claim credit for one with consequences that are considered beneficial. For instance, if a seed variety can be proven to be sufficiently different from its natural occurrence, its producer can claim ownership of the 'unnatural' variety, and may even register a patent and seek compensation for the subsequent use of the variety (e.g. Fowler 1994; van Dooren 2008). Conversely, events like hurricane Katrina have been called 'unnatural disasters' (e.g. Levitt & Whitaker 2009) to highlight the fact that floods, earthquakes and other hazards would be much less harmful had they happened in a 'natural' rather than 'unnatural' manner, i.e. if vulnerabilities had not been increased through specifically human acts. We shall illustrate this use

of the unnatural by referring to two water engineering projects, on the Murray River in Australia and on the Zambezi River between Zambia and Zimbabwe. Both cases illustrate that declaring something 'unnatural' amounts to assigning (or looking for) a human actor responsible for it; declaring it 'natural' respectively equals denying (or at least playing down) human agency and responsibility in relation to the phenomenon.

David Hughes (2006) documents the process of redefining the hydropower reservoir on the Zambezi known as Lake Kariba from an environmental catastrophe to a conservation site between the 1950s and 1980s. Focusing on representations of the water body in literature by white authors, Hughes traces the stylistic and metaphoric means that were used to highlight the naturalness of the reservoir and sideline its engineered artificiality. They include allusions to the 'water heritage' of the British-origin settlers in a predominantly dry country, the establishment of various parks, safari areas and nature reserves along the affected river stretches, references to the biblical flood and an 'Operation Noah' designed to save some of the area's animals threatened with drowning, and the likening of the present reservoir to an alleged ancient geography of Africa (turning an engineering intervention into an act of ecological restoration). By the late 1970s, the reservoir and its environs were described as a "wilderness", where "man [...] has come to terms with Nature and Nature, perhaps, with him" as a contemporary writer put it (Rayner 1980, 164-165 in Hughes 2006, 836). In this colonial context, the reservoir, which "displaced 57,000 Tonga-speaking inhabitants of the Zambezi Valley, killed all but a fraction of the animals and drowned all plant life" (Hughes 2006, 823), was "redeemed" as a feature of natural beauty by white settlers with British language and landscape imaginary, rendering Tonga inhabitants, their language, landscapes and interests invisible. The naturalising of the reservoir thus rid the colonial power of its responsibility for destroying tens of thousands of livelihoods, killing animals and plants and radically changing the hydrological regime of the Zambezi River.

Emilie O'Gorman's (2010) account from the Australian Murray River in the 1950s speaks of the flip side of the same relationship. An increasing number of affected people attributed recurrent floods to the expanding irrigation schemes in the catchment, claiming that these floods were 'unnatural'. Dairy farmers particularly, whose land and animals were threatened by changing hydrological dynamics, blamed these changes on the problematic operation of dams, including a scheme that was to divert water from a neighbouring catchment into the Murray. The dams, they argued, not only brought more water into the river in general, but were also managed specifically for the benefit of irrigated agriculture rather than for the overall population in the catchment. Interested in full reservoir

capacity whenever possible, this management priority was accused of increasing flood risks instead of using the dams in flood defence. While later research concluded that the dams did not directly increase flooding on the Murray, rather these floods were the result of higher precipitation years, the argument of a river turned 'unnatural' by hydro-engineering and causing 'unnatural' floods was very powerful at the time.

> Greater government involvement in river flow through these centralised organisations [River Murray Commission and Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority] and dam construction and operation had made them responsible for the river in many people's eyes. Dam construction had altered the river and changed what were previously seen as natural systems. As a result floods were no longer natural disasters in the way they had been and were instead seen to come from a river controlled by officials. (O'Gorman 2010, 102)

The relationship between the unnatural and the political is key in these contexts. As Latour (2004a, 2004b, 2005a) has argued, assuming the existence of a sphere of nature defined and judged by scientific experts precludes most of democratic debate, as it reduces decision processes to mere technical calculations based on known and clear facts. He asserts that "nature is the chief obstacle that has always hampered the development of public discourse" (Latour 2004a, 9). The problem, Latour explains, lies in taking the factuality of nature, as an essential realm of existence inaccessible to ordinary human beings, for granted, and opposing it to a politics conceived as a second-order phenomenon that can only debate opinions and representations, rather than proper facts. Conceptualising nature as 'matters of fact' only allow for an undemocratic 'Realpolitik' (Latour 2005a); speaking about the unnatural, however, means acknowledging and taking to heart the human involvement with these things, turning them into 'matters of concern' that open up a 'Dingpolitik' where the continuity of facts and values is acknowledged, and fundamental political debate possible. On the Murray, the inaccessible, factual sphere of expert-defined nature was pried open by the claim that the river and its floods were unnatural, thus simultaneously making space for political debate about responsibilities, different discharge regulation regimes, and state priorities for economic development. On the Zambezi, conversely, initial debates about the violence of the reservoir (and its champions) were closed down by redeeming it as a scene of natural beauty.

Shifting the attention from classificatory systems to the practices of their performance and dispute, the question of what is unnatural becomes one of

people's agency and their successful navigation of social and material relationships. Philosopher Georgiana Kirkham (2006) has argued that common assertions of particular biotechnological practices as being 'unnatural' – in Australia, Europe and North America – are based on a virtue ethics and are thus about the respective actors' motivations and conduct, rather than on deontological ethics or a concern about rules. In her reasoning, the repulsion people feel about certain biotechnological advances, including those in xenotransplantation, genetic engineering and artificial reproduction, is not so much about the products of these practices, or about possible conceptual boundaries between the human and the non-human; it is more about the behaviour and motives of the people pursuing the practices. She argues "that these objections arise from, and only make sense within, the long-running debate over the place of humanity, and the purpose of art and technology, within the natural world" (op cit, 175).

Focusing on virtues rather than on rules, Kirkham illustrates how the unnatural can be an accusation of some humans against others "for mistaking a considerable amount of power, knowledge and foresight for omnipotence and omniscience, and as a metaphor for humans letting their power and knowledge exceed their caution" (2006, 176). It is their 'unnatural' *behaviour* – acting unlike a human should – that is criticised by calling the consequences 'unnatural'. Juxtaposing current biotechnology debates with 17th-century criticism of 'unnatural' gardening practices, Kirkham demonstrates the long history of these debates in Western thought, including their relation to virtue ethics, where "the suggested limits to human manipulation of nature based on the concept of the unnaturalness of the activity may best be understood as objections to the 'unnaturalness' of the agent's motivations" (op cit, 189), "making a point about the use of art and artifice for the wrong purposes" (op cit, 190). Invoking the unnatural thus becomes not only an act to police conceptual boundaries (Douglas 1966) and an instrument to change matters of fact into matters of concern (Latour 2005a), but also a way to negotiate the proper position of human beings in the wider world.

To sum up, the concept of the unnatural implies a series of claims, not only about what is (un)characteristic, (not) according to laws of nature, and (outside of) a realm of real, material phenomena, but also about authorship, adequate behaviour and responsibility. Designating something as unnatural is tantamount to looking for or identifying a human actor responsible for it, and to opening up a political debate about the distribution of its costs and benefits, as well as the place of human agency in the world. Furthermore, these examples indicate that human meaning-making must not be considered a unilinear development, where 'new' phenomena are first considered 'unnatural', and are gradually, through processes of domestication and integration, re-signified as 'natural'. Rather, the

examples mentioned here suggest that re-signification processes are socially and politically situated, and may proceed both ways, including labelling a formerly 'natural' phenomenon 'unnatural'. What is called unnatural therefore does not simply describe things or practices that are foreign to a given arrangement of meanings or cross crucial categorial boundaries; the unnatural also emerges creatively out of strategic uses by particular political actors who foreground or downplay certain categories and meanings to make a statement forcefully.

Conclusion

In exploring how the unnatural emerges and is used, this chapter has presented six excursions into different aspects of the concept and its efficacy in social and cultural life. Structurally, the unnatural exists as a derogatory or dangerous 'non-category' beyond or between more clearly defined categories. It is precisely through this beyond-ness and between-ness, and the concomitant impossibility to pin it down semiotically or domesticate it, that the unnatural gains its power as a label. In order for people to recognise 'monsters' or 'cyborgs' as unnatural, their perception needs to conform to a particular framing that excludes or divides just those phenomena. At the same time, the moral implications of the unnatural – as something wrong, abnormal or inferior – work to police and maintain this particular framing.

It has also become clear, however, that these categories and their framing are not over and above social life, but are constantly enacted, interpreted, challenged, defended – and changed. Furthermore, this performance of categories is not a purely 'cultural' matter, it happens in correspondence with various non-human processes, including those of different materials, plant growth, animal movement, and the weather. Finally, this chapter has indicated that the performance of the unnatural embodies a claim that assigns responsibility for the unnaturalness of a phenomenon, and for its consequences. The unnatural thereby becomes a way of extolling 'matters of concern' out of a factual, un-cultural, pre-social nature, focusing on the relationships of its co-production and opening it up for debate. In the light of social practice, the unnatural emerges as a relatively flexible container with a powerful message, which different groups of people employ creatively to make sense of their position within a multifaceted and polysemantic world.

What are the implications of these considerations of the unnatural for cultural theory? Out of the many possible avenues along which to develop this further, we would like to sketch three interconnected trajectories. First, we hope to have shown that the unnatural is a concept highly contingent on framings,

materialities and practices. Therefore, it must not be taken for granted as an analytical concept, for instance for studying cultural changes in the context of increasingly 'unnatural' habitats, but rather be approached as a rich source for empirical studies into its production, negotiation, and the assumptions and projects articulated through it.

Second, cultural theory needs to explore the relationship between the cultural and the unnatural more closely. Both of them are set in a contrasting relationship with an idea of nature; but to what extent do they overlap, and in what ways are they vectors with different trajectories? For instance, what are the relationships between 'cultural landscapes' and 'unnatural landscapes'? Or, to what extent can we speak of a continuity between natural, cultural and unnatural, where the unnatural is a perverted or overly exaggerated form of cultivated nature? If the cultural, in similar ways to the unnatural, has been diagnosed as a highly contingent concept, subject and tool of various framings and enactments (e.g. Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983), then what analytical purchase remains with the term 'culture'?

This leads us to the third interconnected avenue of implications of an analysis of the unnatural for cultural theory, which we spelled out in the first excursion above: that cultural theory must not limit itself to its historically specific focus on the 'unnatural' in the sense of those aspects of our world that are not covered by the natural sciences. As we have demonstrated above, steps towards such a broadening of cultural theory have already been made in various disciplines. Following these leads, and reflexively investigating the unnatural, cultural theory can be taken beyond its confines to the 'unnatural', and can be developed to account for human lives in a total world. In this world, 'natural' and 'unnatural' are in dynamic tension, not as essential attributes of things, but as categories that emerge from people's situated experiences and strategic uses. The 'unnatural' is a product of ways of classifying, of perception and action, of assigning responsibilities, and of positioning human beings in their sociocultural and material environments. But it must not be a limiting principle for the advance of cultural theory.

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Notes

Monster's gaze: an ontology of the Unnatural

Timo Maran

Unnatural. The distinction between Natural and Unnatural appears to be a powerful tool in the workings of culture, society and supposedly also in cultural theory. But the self-evidence of this distinction is deceptive. Let us make the following thought experiment. In the opposition between nature and culture phenomena that cross the divide can be considered Unnatural. This position would establish a dichotomy between Natural (including nature and culture as separate categories) and Unnatural (including phenomena like suburbs, cyborgs, monsters that fall between these categories). If this dichotomy becomes a state of new discursive normality and will thus be considered Natural (including nature and culture as separate categories and phenomena that situate in between), the Unnatural needs to retreat one step further and become for instance the virtual reality between the cyborg and man, to develop into summ-urb between urban environment and summer dachas or to hide itself in some other form of the 'uncanny valley'. Although real and living culture is usually not eager to play this logic-based game very long, the principle what we have here is an infinite regression. Bridging gaps produces more gaps. Monsters multiply. And this is not due to the properties of the Unnatural, but rather because of the nature of our thinking.

Gaps. Culture cannot exist without gaps. Our thinking, our language and even our perception system operate by recognising, combining and applying discrete units. Discrete entities presume distinctions. Gregory Bateson (1979) argued that there is an inevitable need for a gap between the perceiver and perceived. This idea is based on the understanding that to be autonomous and aware, the system (for example organism, human, culture) should not have access to its own boundary conditions. Michael Polanyi (1966) proposed another source of gaps with his concept of 'tacit knowledge'. In Polanyi's view, every learned skill, every general thought is based on the effect of numerous entities – single experiences, unrecognised bodily feelings and movements – that in themselves are not cognised (that is, they remain below the semiotic threshold). From this perspective, the articulate culture appears to be just a thin surface film covering the rich fabric of the Unnatural. Thus, monsters are everywhere.

Monster's gaze. Bruno Latour (1993) has famously declared that "we have never been modern" or in other words, we have not succeeded establishing the

civilisation that would be wholly logically arranged. Logical organisation of the world or "modern constitution" in Latour's words has always been counterbalanced by the rich practices of hybridisation and "translation". From this viewpoint, being what is considered Natural or being a monster are both possible ways of existence. It becomes legitimate to ask what would be the monster's own Umwelt and ontology, or what could culture look like when seen through the monster's eyes? Although the discursive normality of academic language is not a reliable companion here, let me try to roughly sketch the ontology of the Unnatural: 1. The Unnatural is a boundary phenomenon, it exists at inner and outer boundaries of culture. 2. The Unnatural is local and situated, it relates and bridges. 3. The Unnatural uses bits and pieces of cultural discourse, but alters, composts or rearranges them. 4. The Unnatural is a dynamic force – meanings in becoming or meanings in change. 5. The Unnatural acts, it has effects and consequence but not a centre or articulate identity. Consequently a monster's gaze can probably be depicted as a glancing gaze without clear aim or fixed focus. Its eyes reflect culture in its particulars and in forming, and when looking into the monster's eyes, we may find a distorted image of ourselves.

Cultural theory. Where does this leave cultural theory in its attempt to work with the Unnatural? The main aim of this small commentary is to point out that the Unnatural is not just an issue of conceptualisation, framing and moral mistake, but that the Unnatural has its own ontological status and the right to exist as substantially different. The cultural perception of the Unnatural surely has its problematic aspects. Considered as Unnatural, some things, beings, or social groups can become stigmatised or alternatively silenced and cast out from cultural discourses. The Unnatural can also be used to justify wrongdoings and lack of responsibility. These issues are legitimate objects of cultural theory to be scrutinised and criticised. But at the same time cultural theory should also be aware of the ontological status of the Unnatural and its existence in its own rights. The Unnatural is like the dark matter of culture, a counterforce that keeps the structures of cultural discourses in shape and is therefore inevitable for the normal dynamics of the culture. Understanding a monster is a challenge, but domesticating it is usually not a good idea.

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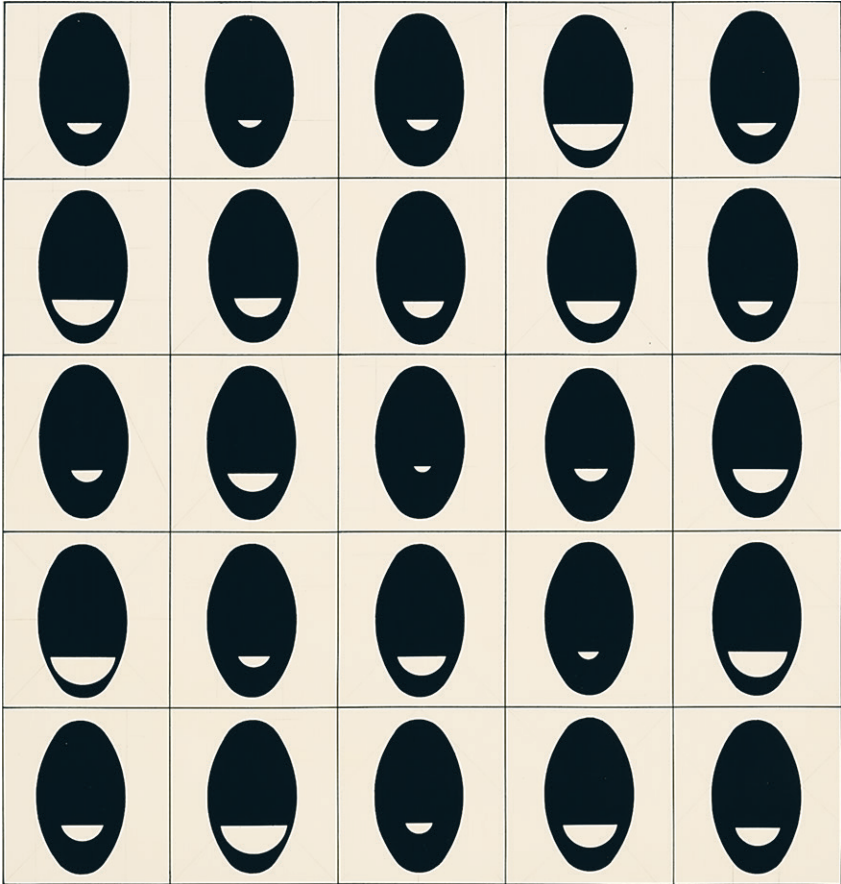
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Systemic power and autonomy
from the perspective of semiotic cultural psychology

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Abstract. This paper focuses on the interrelations between habitus, social representation, and semiotic autonomy. Such interrelations are conceptualised within the framework of power relations. The goal of the study is to show how the concept of autocommunication found in the semiotics of culture can be applied to the semiotic subject in order to present a theoretical account of the emancipation of the subject from social systems and, conversely, of the involvement of the subject in the transformation of social systems. Based on this framework, the authors outline different approaches to interrelations with social systems. The theoretical framework is principally based on Bourdieu's concept of habitus, Moscovici's conception of social representations, Valsiner's notion of dependent independence, and the ideas of the semiotics of culture.

Keywords: autocommunication, social representations, power relation, habitus.

The general topic of this paper is the power of social systems and the limits of this power. More specifically, the objective of the paper can be summed up in the form of the following question: how can the subject transform existing power relations, and what could be the role of semiotics in explaining these processes of transformation? Several clusters of definitions of power can be distinguished in the theoretical analysis of power:

1) Power as domination and control (power over someone/something), where the person in power can make the subordinate person do something they would otherwise not do (Dahl 1957).

2) Power as agenda-setting, i.e. we gain power if we can influence decision-making processes thanks to the ability to permit certain subjects to be included in the agenda, or to exclude them (Bachrach & Baratz 1962).

3) Power as a preference-shaping process, with power functioning through the ability to shape the preferences of subordinates in the direction desired by the power, in such a manner that the subordinates perceive their own preferences to be authentic (Lukes 1974; Bauman & Haugaard 2008).

4) Power as the ability or capacity to influence, with emphasis on the idea that in addition to the prohibitory function of power we must also account for its productive, meaning-making function (Foucault 1982; Digeser 1992).

Importantly, however, in all these cases, we can speak of the power of words and sentences, or in a broader sense, the power of discourses or ideas, both metaphorically and literally. The power of ideas is materialised through human activity inspired and guided by these ideas – ideas have power inasmuch as they create social reality. The question of how the transfer from one level of system to another takes place, how 'theory seizes the masses' and transforms into a certain kind of activity, continues to attract the interest of a variety of scientific disciplines.

Several authors have discussed the reproduction of the social system and the system of meanings as prerequisites to, and means of, power (see Haugaard 2003 for an overview). For the purpose of this article a power relationship between the power holder, A, and the power receiver, B, can be described (in a general sense) in terms of two dimensions: 1) *structural hierarchy* (status inequality between A and B) and 2) *dynamic asymmetry* (the directionality and strength of the influence from A to B is stronger than vice-versa; the ability of A to possess influence, to use a resource, is stronger than that of B). In this abstract sense, as a structural and dynamic asymmetry, usage of the term 'power' is also justified in when the power holder is diffuse, such as with the relationship of a systemic whole to its elements. From the point of view of an individual, the societal whole (social groups and the relations occurring therein) as well as semiotic wholes (semiospheres, fields of social representation) can be seen as such systemic wholes. In both cases, the whole serves to enable interrelations between individuals while, on the other hand, also serving to constrain them. Haugaard describes this process as the reproduction of the system, occurring as a process of interplay between two parties: the reproduction of the system is successful if structuration (attribution/realisation of meaning) meets confirming structuration (affirmation given by B that the present behaviour is appropriate) and is unsuccessful if structuration is unconfirmed (Haugaard 2003, 90).

By walking down this path, we will attempt to present a theoretical framework in this article that demonstrates the most significant preconditions for the realisation of specific power relations. In the first part of the study, we will discuss two holistic and dynamic models that complement each other in describing the mechanisms through which societal and semiotic wholes exercise power over

their objects. The structural model of power is presented through the example of Bourdieu's theory, with the (coercing) effect of potentially conscious collective representations discussed based on Moscovici's theory of social representation. These models allow us to describe the transformation of a system of social relations into 1) an interiorised (mainly unconscious) habitus, and 2) social representations mediating the power of systemic wholes over an individual as a part of the whole. The model of social representation also enables us to link the semiotic level – systems of meaning – with socio-psychological phenomena (intergroup relations, social identities), acting as a connection between Bourdieu's theory of fields and the semiotic approach.

This paper attempts to address the question of the relationship of the subject with such institutionalised social systems and power relations established through social representations, and how the subject could achieve a certain freedom, emancipation from these relations, using the semiotic approach to cultural psychology. We presume that the individual as the object of power is, at the same time, an active semiotic subject interpreting messages and constructing their own autonomous responses. The second part of the study focuses on a theoretical model created in the framework of cultural psychology, explaining the 'dependent independence' of the subject in relation to external structural and semiotic power, and attempts to expand this model using the concept of autocommunication as well as other terms of cultural semiotics. Numerous references to semiotics of culture, especially the works of Juri Lotman, can be found in the works of Jaan Valsiner, one of the leading figures of semiotic cultural psychology (e.g. Valsiner 2007, 2009). The present article will further expand on their interdisciplinary relations. Whereas traditional theories of power tend to focus only on the subject's obedience or resistance to power, the approach used here allows us to conceptualise a broad spectrum of responses, including the creative transformation of or distancing from social prescriptions. Thus, the third part of the study attempts to map the spectrum of responses of the semiotic subject in the framework of power relations, while the fourth part illustrates the framework created through the analysis of reactive identity. The goal of the paper is to show that the description of the interrelations between different systemic levels (social, semiotic, and psychological) is necessary in order to understand power.

Social structure and ideas in the framework of power relations

Field and habitus

In his description of the societal whole, Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992) takes as his starting point specific social (power) relations forming a certain dynamic 'field', a space of structured positions in their totality. Based on the structure of the field and the actor's position therein, a certain internal structure (habitus) – a collection of durable dispositions and activity tendencies is formed inside the actor. The field (the whole) guides the actions of the actors as its parts through the habitus, which generates intentions and actions reproducing the same field. The field and the habitus are isomorphic; external and internalised structures (habitus) are dialectically related to each other. Both are objective, although located on different ontological levels (Lizardo 2004, 394). The individual as a part of the system 'falls' within the respective habitus (Bourdieu 1990) and acquires system specific patterns of perception, feeling, thought and behaviour, patterns of habit and disposition without any conscious effort in the course of socialisation. Unreflexive structures developed in this manner, such as *homo nationis* (see Pickel 2005) or *homo sovieticus*, are relatively durable. If the habitus and the social world are aligned (isomorphic), the individual is like a "'fish in the water': it does not feel the weight of the water, and it takes the world around itself for granted" (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992, 127). Symbolic power relations established in the field and the habitus (for example oppositions articulated in language, accustomed classifications) are extremely durable exactly because they are unconscious (Bourdieu 1989).

The habitus is characterised by relative durability and stability. In case of rapid social transformations, a temporary dissonance is created between the new structure and the old inert habitus (*hysteresis*). At the same time, the habitus is a generative structure capable of change: from a small set of underlying rules, it can generate endlessly diverse forms of thought and action, which are, however, constrained by the historical and social conditions of their creation (Bourdieu 1990, 55).

Bourdieu's theory enables us to describe the structural influence, external possibilities and limits of the field(s): i.e. how the political, social, and cultural fields determine the possible positions the individual can adopt; and how the structure of the field transforms into the individual's habitus – durable dispositions guiding perception and activity, thereby reproducing the conditions that have given them shape. The concept of habitus also enables analysis of the unreflexive aspects of power relations, for instance the way in which people tend to

naturalise the hierarchy of positions in their 'familiar field' and consider these natural and take them for granted; the way they do not notice routine instances of symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1991); and how the habitus makes people receptive and susceptible towards certain techniques of power. At the unreflexive level (of habitus), the individual is relatively helpless in front of structural power. Like a fish in water or a human breathing air, they do not even sense it, despite being in constant contact with it. The power of habitus can be compared to "power created by tacit knowledge", as described by Haugaard (2003, 109).

Social representations

The semiotic aspect of the society, made up of the totality of meaningful practices and resources of the particular social system, has similar guiding and coercive power over the individual. In terms of dynamics, it could be described as the field of social representations (usually) implicitly or (in the cases of conflict, discussion, contact with the unfamiliar) explicitly guiding individuals (Marková 2003, 143). According to Moscovici (2001, 24), social representations as integrated complexes of ideas (and practices) act as a socio-cultural reality, guiding the thoughts, feelings and actions of individuals. In the broader sense, social representations create a common background of meaning for any interpersonal relations (shared understanding of reality, shared space of potential meanings) and in the narrower sense, serve as the basis for group identity and group worldview. As social representations, commonly shared ideas, opinions and emotions form systemic wholes that are semiotically mediated and communicated, and expressed in discursive, symbolic, or behavioural forms (Harré 1998). The individual relates to social representations as a member of a certain group or community, a participant in certain social relations. Thus, thinking in terms of social representations is primarily guided by social logic. The guiding principle is not the truthful reflection of reality, but communicability, being a part of a group, cooperation with one set of people and opposition to another.

Social representations are the means for creating, maintaining and transforming social reality (Moscovici 1984); they are used to construct common social objects for the group. Through their common actions, people create a meaningful environment (common structures) enabling certain activities and mind-sets and limiting others. Representations express certain classifications, generalisations and explanations – in their totality, they function as everyday 'theories' (Moscovici 1988, 243). Social representations thus serve both a constitutive (creating a certain version of reality) as well as a regulative function. The constitutive function of social representations is expressed, on the one hand by creating and

maintaining groups and coordinating common activity, and on the other hand by understanding reality and symbolic adaptation to the new. The regulative role of social representations, however, is manifest in the (often implicit) direction of psychic processes and behaviour (Moscovici 1984, 9). "The crucial point in understanding social representations is to view them as molar-level meaning complexes that do not simply exist in some "as is" form, but regulate human conduct as personal guides. They exist for that function. Social representations include encoded information about something that is to be utilized in some (rather than another) socially prioritized direction" (Valsiner & van der Veer 2000, 409). Below, we will try to clarify the dynamics of these transformations in the framework of power relations. This will take us, in the second part of the study, to the autonomy of the semiotic subject and its function in explaining the dynamics of systems.

Social representations and power relations

Public discussion and an exchange of ideas are a necessary precondition for the existence of social representations; indeed, social representations can also be consciously shaped, for example for political purposes. Historically related groups often rely on opposing representations of the same events (for example different conceptions of history), in which the victory of one group is the other's loss. This creates symbolic interdependence between the groups (Sen & Wagner 2009), which can come to light in the situation of conflictive re-definition of power relations. Social representations are produced and reproduced through dialogical processes in society; they become fully visible only in situations of dispute, in cases of activation of social conflict, in relation to a phenomenon of public interest.

The strong influence of the immanent and implicit representations forming the basis of the coactivity of structured groups (Harré 1998) comes precisely from the fact that they appear as the self-explanatory and natural reality. Their influence can be circumvented only through recognition (reflexivity). To break free from the power of hidden knowledge, this knowledge must become discursive (Haugaard 2003, 101).

The transmission to reflexivity is facilitated by the disruption of the established balance, which can take place through different mechanisms: contact with contradictory messages, a location on the boundary of different representative fields, upheavals disrupting the course of life, the perceived judgemental look of the Other, etc. (see Gillespie & Zittoun 2009, 15–16). The disruption of norms, which is a form of deviation from the socially self-evident, activates the process

of social representing as a mechanism of collective adaptation. Only after being successfully anchored can social representations become customary and form non-conscious tacit knowledge, unreflective common sense background.

Customary social representations not subject to dispute can be characterised as hegemonic social representations. Inside a particular socium, these are ubiquitous, stable and compulsory, creating a shared interpretative horizon (Haugaard 2003). The regulatory coercion of dominant representations is effected, on one hand, through their self-evidence (the unconscious operation of habitual forms of thought), and on the other hand through meta-representational processes (see Elcheroth et al 2011). These meta-representational processes are guided by expectations of how other people think, the group's imagined consensus on something, and so on. Social guidance through shared representation can be both explicit (through discourses shaped by institutions) as well as implicit, for example by keeping individuals under the influence of a shared representational field.

Polemical representations, on the other hand, can be disputed and are only spread in certain groups (subcultures) and related to narrow group interests or alternative ideas (Moscovici 1988; Liu 2004). Polemical representations are also more conscious, competing with each other on the representational field for the creation or consolidation of specific power relations.

The regulatory effect of social representations (varying in the intensity of their influence) can be manifested in different ways: 1) in their guiding function (establishing a certain line of action, goals), 2) in their constraining function (excluding certain meanings or lines of thought, delineating semiotised ('familiarised') worlds), 3) in their connecting function (enabling communication and certain kinds of relation, offering a certain collective identity), 4) in their differentiating function (separation from other groups). This is also the level where we can speak of the power of ideas in the literal, rather than metaphorical sense (Moscovici 1991): ideas gain power through their extensive spread and consensual adoption. The power of ideas is manifest through guiding feelings, thoughts and actions, and through transforming these into practice. Collective ideas (ideology, worldview, myth, collective illusion) as hegemonic representations have the power to guide and inspire their agents of influence – this is achieved through the imperceptibility of alternatives, and through perceived consensus. The power of consensus is supported by the social motivation to belong to a group, to be related to other people. Intra-group consensus can act as a 'collective tyranny' towards the individual (Alexander & Smith 2005, 399).

It must be noted, however, that since meanings are not rigid, the construction and reproduction of social representations are not automatic or inevitable but includes a *choice*. Those who have gained the right to exercise power inside

a certain system of meaning can also consciously contribute to the maintenance and reproduction of this system. Those, on the other hand, in the dominated position, can develop a counter-discourse as a certain form of resistance, to challenge the dominant system of meaning. Thus, in principle, it is possible to turn polemic representations into dominant ideas. The (re)production of dominant systems of meaning can take the form of both exercising power and of fighting against it.

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In their comparison of the concepts of habitus and social representation, Wagner and Hayes (2005, 272–274) emphasise their fundamental difference: habitus is a pre-reflexive, non-discursive and non-articulated system of dispositions, whereas social representations are discursive, always potentially articulable and actively used in communication. It is difficult to speak of the habitus, to dispute it or argue against it, while social representations are essentially communicative; they are created and developed only through discourses and arguments. To put it more broadly, the habitus first and foremost represents the pre-reflexive level of customary tendencies; social representations, however, mainly function on the reflexive, semiotic level. The other main difference lies in their durability: whereas the habitus is a relatively inert and slowly changing structure, social representations are dynamic and contextual, constantly changing through intergroup relations and communication. However, as the concepts show, these distinctions are mainly analytical and the borders between them are neither rigid nor constant. The social world, unlike the physical world, lacks determinism in the strict sense. Thus, habituality as the pre-reflexive and non-discursive level mainly characterises the inner perspective of the particular social system.

From the summary above, we can distinguish between two levels of systemic power: the societal field guides the agents through the inert and unreflexive habitus, while the more dynamic field of social representations guides social subjects through collective meanings. In both cases, subjects are guided and bounded: they define and organise the possible field of semiosis, guiding the interpretation of reality and sensitivity towards certain aspects of reality, accompanied with the direction of activity towards attaining specific goals. In the unreflexive form, habitus and social representations function as irresistible and coercive power. Both the habitus (the interpretive horizon of the practical consciousness) and social representations (systems of thought supporting a certain social order) create the background and possibility for the realisation of specific power relations and practices of power (Haugaard 2003), defining legitimate hierarchies and the

directions and means of influence. Together, they create an interobjective reality (Sammut et al 2010, 458) reproduced as a routine and predictable social order (Haugaard 2003, 90, 93).

On the other hand the discussed models do not cover the processes taking place at the level of the *subjects* of power relations. Semiotic cultural psychology (Valsiner 1998; 2007) focuses on processes initiated through the interaction of the external semiotic stimulus with an active subject interpreting and creating meanings. The unit of analysis here is the individual in their relations with the socio-cultural environment, and the sign processes mediating these relations. The imperative effect of collective forms of thought is only realised through their perception and interpretation of the subject. Systemic power in relation to the subject is manifested as various *social suggestions*, which try to guide and constrain the subject's activity. The results of the influences of different systems depends on the interaction of social suggestion and the subject's semiotic activity (see also Valsiner 1998, 139–45 and 156–57 for the origin of this term in psychiatry, sociology and psychology). In other words, the operation of external regulators in the individual's psychological system, where the external stimulus is interpreted and the individual response generated. A new phenomenon becomes apparent at this level, the *semiotic autonomy* of the subject and his or her freedom to generate new meanings, enabling us to pose the question: what are the sign processes making this autonomy possible? We adopted the term semiotic autonomy in order to distinguish this from Jesper Hoffmeyer's (2010) semiotic freedom, which means the organism's ability to interpret or express the depth or complexity of meaning.

In the following, we will attempt to map the borders of the autonomy of the semiotic subject.

Semiotic autonomy

The relationship between the external influence and the subject is mediated by a variety of semiotic mediators (inter- and intra-personal semiotic instruments used for relating to the world). Humans use signs in meaning-making for individual and collective self-regulation (Valsiner 2004), which also means that individual and collective meaning-making serve as the basis for semiotic autonomy. The status of individuals as semiotic subjects means that in all life situations, humans will remain intentional meaning-makers (see Lamiell 2003, 266–267). Social suggestions from outside (and carrying collective meanings) will be reconstructed by the subject and included in the system of individual semiotic regulators. In the following, we will attempt to expand the subject's meaning-making potential with the concept of autocommunication found in semiotics

of culture. This concept should help us shed light on this distinctive type of communication between the semiotic subject and the external environment that could serve as the basis for the transformation of power relations.

Autocommunicative meaning-making

Two inherently different types of communication are distinguished in semiotics of culture: 'I'–'he' and 'I'–'I' communication (Lotman 1990). In real communication situations, these two types are intertwined, although at the analytical level either type can be found to be dominant. The first type, 'I'–'he' communication, is characteristic of classical interaction between different communication partners; both 'I' and 'he' can be taken here as more abstract categories, for example intercultural communication. In this kind of communication, the sender transmits only a certain constant amount of information to the receiver. In the global sense, the message itself remains unchanged; what changes is the number of receivers of the message. In terms of power, Louis Althusser's conception of the *interpellation* of the ideological field can be described through this model of communication: the function of ideology is the 'constitution' of individuals as subjects (Althusser 1971, 171). This means that a specific ideology (liberal democratic, communist, neoconservative, etc.) socialises the interpellated individuals in a manner characteristic to this specific ideology. The definition of the relationship can be relatively one-sided, as according to Althusser, ideology interpellates individuals as subjects both before and after death (for example inheritance rights).

We are, however, at present interested in 'I'–'I' communication. According to Lotman, the message remains the same in the 'I'–'I' system or autocommunication, but it is re-formulated in the communication process and acquires a new meaning. Such transformation in the communication process is based on the addition of a new – *other* – code. In this case, information is formulated into new categories, although what is introduced is not new messages but new codes; the sender and the receiver are fused into one individual (Lotman 1990, 22). The semiotic subject can be defined in this context as an individual selection of socially meaningful codes used to attribute meanings to the surrounding environment. Thus, if the subject transmits him/herself a message that he or she already knows (for example an earlier message from the system in a position of power), he or she can give a new sense to the message by re-encoding it using a new code. In this process, he/she will internally restructure his/her nature, as re-encoding the original message with a new code in 'I'–'I' communication causes qualitative transformation of information, which "leads to a restructuring of the actual 'I' itself" (op cit, 22). This restructuring of the 'I' is seen here as the

source of the autonomy of the subject. This process allows the subject to escape the one-sided pressure of established social systems.

Through the transformation of semiotic processes (for example re-interpreting the situation), the person can transcend any context, creating a different social situation in the subjective sphere (Smolka et al 1997, 161). Thus, changing subjective distance to the present situation using semiotic means – from maximally distancing oneself to complete identification with the situation – is a flexible instrument of adaptation for the individual. Internally distancing oneself from the situation and autocommunicativity allow new ways of reflexion over oneself and the situation, maintaining personal autonomy; at the same time, one is able to create intra-subject dynamics in meaning creation. However, semiotic mediation can also give rise to inflexible positioning, so-called semiotic self-imprisonment (subjecting oneself to a fundamentalist thought system or rigid connection to a complex of ideas). Indeed, Lotman emphasises that systems oriented towards autocommunication do not refrain from clichés but tend to turn texts into clichés and equate 'high', 'good' and 'real' with 'stable' and 'eternal' – i.e. a cliché (Lotman 1990, 32). In other words, cultures oriented towards autocommunication are able to demonstrate great mental activity while often being less dynamic than the requirements of humanity (Lotman 1990, 34–35). The latter is mainly a result of the limited nature of constitutive codes and the invariability of messages received from the outside environment.

The relationship of the individuals to the collective field of meaning is two-sided: on the one hand they are subject to the visible and invisible pressure of collective structures of meaning; on the other hand, they are relatively autonomous to use meaning-making resources for their own purposes, including the neutralisation of or resistance to social suggestions.

Semiotic self-regulation takes place through a variety of mechanisms: selective attention to social suggestions (ignoring directions that are contradictory or impractical from the subject's perspective); using cultural forms as personal resources of meaning, for example following the example of literary characters in making sense of and planning one's life (Zittoun 2007); dialogical positioning, the choice of I-positions or perspectives in symbolic fields – e.g. 'I' as an observer or as an actor (Hermans 2010; Raggatt 2007); the creation of self-models shaping identification that the subjects (for example cultures) use to interpret the situation (Lotman & Uspenskij 1984). Any cultural object can become a symbolic resource for an individual or a group if it is used for a certain purpose, once it is included in a system of social representation or a discourse important to the group.

This is the context in which Valsiner (1994, 1998, 2000) describes the phenomenon of dependent independence: an individual facing the limitations and regulations established by a social or cultural system is still relatively free to create their personal system of meanings and behavioural strategies inside the boundaries established by collective culture. Each individual is unique, even though this uniqueness arises from the shared background of collective culture (Valsiner 2008). Lotman has expressed a similar idea, describing the individual's dual nature: they are isomorphic to the semiotic whole they are a part of, while being individualised parts of this whole (Lotman 1999, 46).

Instances of semiotic autonomy

In order for a subject to exercise their semiotic autonomy, at least partial awareness, reflection on habitual patterns of thought and behaviour is required. The habitus and self-evident representations form the invisible basis that the conscious structure is built upon. The heterogeneity and contradictory nature of the semiotic environment on one hand and the semiotic autonomy of the subject on the other give rise to essential indeterminacy: each new moment opens up a spectrum of further actions (responses). Social suggestions try to guide this choice and constrain the variability born from the co-construction of meanings. The subject can choose which external stimulus to pay attention to and how to respond.

When encountering a semiotic challenge (a new idea, norm or rule; contradictory social suggestions) the individual will find him/herself in a field of tension, facing the choice of whether to comply with the innovation or reject it, which social suggestions to follow, which type of response to choose, how to construct personal meanings. This situation is characterised by a determinate indeterminacy, the unity of stability and flexibility: the social suggestion creates a framework, within which at least two responses are possible, follow the suggestion or transcend it (Valsiner 2007).

To describe the transformations converting the external semiotic stimulus into a response by the subject, we will characterise social suggestions and their corresponding internal actions as vectors (Valsiner 2007, 383). This permits us to define the types of potential internal actions as the modulation of the direction and strength of the corresponding social suggestions. The relationship of the external coercive influence can potentially give rise to a diverse spectrum of responses, starting from unconditional approval to complete negation. Several types of relatively stable response can be distinguished based on the two principal

(and interrelated) psychological actions in relation to external influence, the semiotic regulation of distance and direction:

1) obedience – compliance only occurs if the internal and external regulation/vector of power are identical in direction;

2) resistance – occurs if the internal direction is opposite to the external regulation;

3) ignoring and/or leaving the field – increasing physical or psychological distance from the external influence;

4) creation of new regulators, creative synthesis – integration of regulators with different directions.

These options can be based on both unreflexive (habitus level) and reflexive, semiotically mediated processes. At the reflexive level, further modulations of meaning-making are possible, for example minimising or maximising the stimulus, naïve vs gamester-like, opportunistic, cynical compliance, public or covert resistance, etc.

This typology has much in common with empirical classifications of adaptation to coercive external influence (e.g. Riesman 1950; Sztompka 2004; Todd 2005; Hirschman 1970; Castells 1997; Maruyama 1991; Aveling et al 2010). It is also similar in structure and content to classifications of psychological coping strategies (Skinner et al 2003) and tactics of secondary control (Morling & Evered 2006).

In the following, we will describe these four, relatively stable types of response in more detail in terms of the position of the response on the distance and direction scale.

Modulation of distance

Distancing is the central operation in the semiotic modulation of meaning-making; it is the basis of reflexivity and semiotic autonomy. "The person creates a distance – by way of semiotic mediation – in relation to the here-and-now context… This… allows the psychological system to consider contexts of the past, imagine contexts of the future, and take perspectives of other persons…" (Valsiner 2007, 33). Reflexive distancing can take place relative to both social suggestions and the personal habitus (see Hilgers 2009; Adams 2006, 515), enabling the individual to ignore systemic power. It is, thus, the creation of a primary semiotic situation, manifested as 1) separating oneself from the context and 2) recognising the situation of primary choice. From the subject's internal point of view, we can speak of a semiotic situation if they are facing the recognition of the possibility of choice,

which distances them from the unreflective response to the external environment. Awareness of the habitus is one of the preconditions of the person's freedom:

> … agents fully become Subjects when, through the mediation of a reflexive effort, they identify and begin the work of gaining (relative) control over their own disposition. This reflexivity allows one, depending on the context, to give free rein, to temper, to inhibit, or even to oppose dispositions to each other (Hilgers 2009, 738).

Thus, from the subject's point of view, unreflective behaviour guided by the habitus is non-semiotic; the semiotic or conventional nature of this behaviour is only visible to the external observer. Distancing oneself from a particular system is at the same time self-positioning under the influence of another system.

Maximum distancing can be expressed as *physical withdrawal*, for example leaving the field, non-participation in the game through death, emigration from the state, etc., or *mental withdrawal* by either a) completely ignoring or disregarding the innovation (indifference), or b) consciously taking the position of a (critical or estranged) bystander. The latter can be characterised as a) internal emigration or "creating de-territorialized reality" (Yurchak 2005, 125), or b) 'privatisation', withdrawal to the private sphere, manifested as maximally ignoring the public sphere (Todd 2005, 442). Mental withdrawal was characteristic of both the early (for example the closed circles of the aristocracy maintaining the old habitus (see Chuikina 2006)) and late Soviet periods. This was expressed as the individual's critical distancing and estrangement from society (Yurchak 2005). Distancing permits old habitus to be maintained in a changed field. Reflexive distancing allows one symbolically 'not to see and not to hear' certain social suggestions.

Partial distancing takes place if withdrawal from the immediate situation is achieved with the help of certain cultural forms, for example by observing from a particular perspective, i.e. the dramatisation of everyday life, its romantic and poetic depiction, can occur through semiotic double play where a new layer of significance is added to everyday behaviour. From the perspective people are conscious of the chosen role, while at the same time practicing the role in everyday situations habitually (Lotman 1999). Nonreflexive distancing can be a response to excessive semiotic stimulation in the environment: for instance, it can take the form of ignoring ubiquitous advertising or the rejection of monotonously repeated social suggestions (e.g. Valsiner 2008).

Modulation of direction

In the context of modulation of direction we differentiate the following possibilities:

1. Resistance, negation – choosing an opposite direction to the suggestion is realised in diverse resistance-responses: expression of discontent, protest, breaking norms, disobedience, counteracting social suggestions. The greatest resistance is the clearest indication of the effect of the power. Thus, different forms of resistance to the Soviet regime have been described by Viola (2002), Hellbeck (2006), Kozlov, Fitzpatrick & Mironenko (2011), and others. Resistance could take the form of public (collective) struggle (dissidents, partisans) or passive everyday resistance (discontent, private criticism, disobedience).

At the reflexive level, the individual can, in turn, consciously resist his or her habitus-level reactions (for example consciously overcoming fear during war). Creating an environment of fear and uncertainty is one of the preconditions of power based on structuration (predictable organisation) (see Bauman & Haugaard 2008, but also the second page of this article). Resisting this requires the expansion of one's 'comfort zone', disregarding the motive of ontological safety and the awareness of one's habitus. Reflexive resistance presumes a conscious decision on the part of the individual not to accept the manipulation attempt (Duveen 2001), as well as semiotic support enabling such resistance, such as arguments, examples of resistance, supporting discourse or tradition (civil disobedience, dissidence, maintaining counter-memory, etc.). Resistance may require catalytic conditions (Cabell 2010), for example metarepresentative support – the knowledge that someone else is resisting (for example discrimination, intimidation). An example of this is Bulgaria's unique non-compliance with the request to deport Jews during World War II (Todorov 2003). A specific type of resistance can be culturally supported, such as with the Russian intelligentsia's traditional conscious resistance to power. Reflexive resistance creates a dialogical relationship between the power holder and the receiver.

At the nonreflexive level, we can speak of resistance-habitus, the unconscious tendency to resist external coercion, manifestations of power, or any kind of change ('Estonian stubbornness'). This kind of resistance may be caused by the nonconformity ('non-resonance') of the new social suggestions with the existing habitus. The main mechanisms at work at this level are the inertness of the habitus (Bourdieu 1990), psychological reactance or counter-reaction to the perceived reduction in behavioural freedom (Brehm 1996). According to Kurt Lewin's (1948) psychological field theory, resistance is created as a response to forces abruptly trying to change the dynamic balance of the field.

2. Compliance, obedience, acknowledgement. When the vectors of external social suggestion and internal response are identical in direction, this can be characterised as the accepting (obedient, compliant) group of responses. The modulation of distance can take the form of the reinforcement or reduction of the social suggestion. Maximum acceptance occurs in the case of the combination of minimal distance and identical direction; the reproduction of the existing (power relations) structure and acknowledgement of the power relation is motivated by the search for ontological safety, which is achieved through the predictability of the social environment, its correspondence to the habitus (see Bauman & Haugaard 2008, 118).

This acceptance can take a variety of forms. In the case of broad social changes, obedience takes the form of the adoption of new dominant ideas, compliance with these ideas, changing the organising principles of social representation (such as accepting the new structuring of the social field on ethnic or non-ethnic principles) (see for example Elcheroth et al 2011, 751–752). Such compliance may be *complete*, i.e. conversion both in the literal and metaphorical sense leading to re-evaluation and replacement of governing ideas. An example of this is the complete adoption of communist ideology and conscious moulding of oneself to conform with the changed guiding ideas with full commitment, attempting to adapt oneself to the ideals of the Soviet 'new man' (see Hellbeck 2006), or vice-versa, the adoption of liberal democratic ideas that accompanied the collapse of the Soviet Union in some post-Soviet countries. In semiotic terms, this could be characterised as a typical process of translation between different semiotic wholes (cultures/semiospheres).

Compliance can be *superficial* and *hypocritical*. An example of such compliance is a strategy of adaptation expressed, on the surface, in the (formal) acceptance of the new norms, while simultaneously remaining sceptical to them internally (Todd 2005, 442). Superficial compliance could be expressed in the simultaneous maintenance of the old and adoption of the new while isolating both from each other to enable the co-existence of mutually exclusive ideas/versions of reality. Accounts of Soviet everyday thought often contain descriptions of so-called doublethink, which allowed a person to use different forms of thought and language in the public and private spheres (e.g. Fitzpatrick 2009, 25; Aarelaid 2000). The doublethinking strategy can lead to a situation in which the preserved old forms can reappear in favourable conditions, as happened in Estonia after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

At the nonreflexive level, the obedient response is used if the habitus conforms to the external structure. The world seems 'normal', self-evident, the subject is 'riding the wave', emotionally resonating with the context (cf. the induction of

collective emotions with identical direction at mass events). Some social systems (for example Taoism and Confucianism) greatly value obedience to authority and the acceptance of reality. Religious socialisation in general is directed to shape an accepting habitus, cultivating humility towards reality (submission to God's will).

A different kind of mechanism leading to obedience is also possible. If the changes are gradual and slow, they will not cause nonreflexive resistance. This is how the gradual changes towards anti-semitism in Nazi Germany have been described (Grunberger 2005). One strategy for avoiding resistance is the gradual adoption of innovations and creating the illusion of consensus. The "soft despotism" described by A. de Tocqueville (2004, 816–821) is an example of a strategy of power creating the preconditions for voluntary obedience.

At the reflexive level, however, obedience can serve to hide calculated opportunism. Goffman (1974) describes conversion as apparent acceptance of the norms while repelling them in secret. Obedience can, however, be a conscious choice. "[T]he person can, actively, take the role of 'passive recipient' of cultural messages. This entails direct acceptance of [cultural inputs] as givens, without modifications… By active construction of the role of 'passive recipient' the person temporarily aligns oneself with the 'powerful others'" (Valsiner 1994, 255). An example of such obedience is the late Soviet phenomenon of 'performative conformism'. People performed "social norms, positions and institutions" through the repetition of rituals and speech acts, thus recreating themselves as 'normal' Soviet people (Yurchak 2005, 25).

In the above examples, the power of A over B is realised in the model of semiotic autonomy only if B 'allows' A to direct them (more specifically: B regulates their own actions based on directing influence from A). Semiotic catalysts for this can vary (perceived consensus, charisma, etc.). Social suggestions only have power over people who have placed themselves under the influence of these suggestions. Both resistance and obedience take the form of unidirectional establishment/non-establishment of power relations. Meanwhile both the system and the subjugated subject remain stable in these cases (for example they completely adopt a political ideology). In the following, we will, however, focus on the mutually constitutive relationship between systems and the subject.

The modulation of direction and distance

Integration i.e. *creative synthesis*, realises the generative and creative potential of the habitus and the semiotic autonomy of the subject by modulating both distance and direction, and creating innovations in regulative symbolic tools. It resolves the tension between regulators with different directions through the

generation of a new semiotic structure, reorganising meanings and integrating semiotic vectors. Creative synthesis includes internal transformation – the combination of different stimuli (old and new social suggestions, different interests, etc.) – through mutual dialogical changes. Mikhail Bakhtin, who, in turn, has influenced Lotman's ideas of semiotics of culture, emphasises the special kind of relationship serving as the basis of the formal positions in dialogue. It could be said that in dialogue, primacy belongs to the potential response, the activating principle that prepares the ground for an active response. The primary precondition for dialogue is the existence of a communication partner who is simultaneously similar and different: dissimilarity of the systems enables them to produce different texts, while similarity ensures mutual translatability. Thus, interaction between different points of view, conceptual horizons, different social languages and emphases is created in dialogue. The speaker penetrates the listener's unfamiliar conceptual horizon and constructs their utterance in alien territory (Bakhtin 2001, 282). The possibility of dialogue simultaneously combines both the heterogeneity and homogeneity of the communicated elements (Lotman 1999, 26). The receiver (in this case, another system) is never just a passive receiver but actively constructs the sender's (in this case, the sender's own system) utterance, i.e. they are mutually constitutive. Similar dialogic relations also appear on the autocommunicative level – the 'I' must consciously distance itself from a familiar message by encoding it using a different code. In both cases, reflexion is based on the perception of the distance to an earlier, habitual situation.

In dialogical communication understood in these terms, the regulation of contradictions (reconciliation, compromise, consensus), the creation of a new meaning and placement in a meta-position takes place. Creative synthesis can take the form of modification of old meanings and stereotypes, reaching a new understanding, transformation of norms, paradoxical responses (turning the other cheek), and abandoning a normative framework and establishing an alternative interpretation. It is the path to generating innovation and diversity. The tactics of creative synthesis permits the power holding structure to neutralise specific acts of power by transforming them in some manner. It is, however, important to emphasise that a synthesis between two or more systems always contains a so-called untranslatable residue arising from the principally different structures and functions of the systems. The minimal structure of meaning thus must also contain a metaphorogenic tool, a module of conventional equivalents that enables the process of translation between the systems in a situation of untranslatability. Due to these translations, the original text is transformed irreversibly and a new text is generated (Lotman 1997, 10).

To conceptualise dialogicality in the context of socio-political changes, we can distinguish, after Todd (2005, 443), a so-called assimilative strategy according to which identity is reshaped to combine the old and the new into a continuous whole. This strategy is characteristic to people who were already internally ready for change (for example the dialogical co-existence of the old Estonian-mindedness and the new Soviet consciousness during the Soviet regime – see Aarelaid 2000). Another type of synthesis is "ritual appropriation" (Todd 2005, 443), i.e. accepting new forms of behaviour by filling them with old content so that, in spite of a change in external form, continuity of meaning is maintained. Unlike in the case of 'superficial acceptance', old and new are not kept separate here but are in contradictory interaction with each other. Creative synthesis in the context of late Socialism has been described by Alexei Yurchak as the 'domestication' of the official ideology as practices of everyday life: by reproducing the ideological system at the informal level, many Soviet people "creatively reinterpreted the meanings of the ideological symbols, de-ideologizing static dogmas and rendering communist values meaningful on their own terms" (Yurchak 2003, 504).

Lotman (2002, 39–40) has described two possibilities for the integration of divergent systems: 1) creolisation (mixing), and 2) creating a third, metasystem. In the first case, the principles of one language deeply influence another despite the completely different nature of their structures. In its functioning, this is imperceptible to the subject's internal point of view and the hybrid system is perceived as a single whole. The creation of hybrid identities, multicultural orientation and dialogue between different perspectives (Kasulis 2002), as well as the increasing diversity of representational fields (Zittoun et al 2003), are some examples of strategies based on creolisation.

It may be stated that the creation of a metasystem, i.e. metalinguistic descriptions, is a necessary element of a variety of social systems. According to Lotman, any meaning-making structure has the ability to serve as its own input and transform itself; in other words, it has an innate capacity for self-description and self-translation to a metalevel. From its own perspective, it is just one system among others and as such is suitable for transformation (Lotman 1997). Metasystemic descriptions approach two different systems as *one*, forcing the system to take it as a certain whole from the internal point of view. As a result:

> The system undergoes self-organization, orienting on the present meta-description, casting aside those of its elements that should not exist from the point of view of the metadescription and emphasizing what is highlighted in this description. At the moment of the creation of the metadescription, it is generally present as a future, recommended description, but in course of the

following evolutionary development, it becomes the reality, serving as a norm for this semiotic complex (Lotman 2002, 2652).

Creating a metaperspective provides a dialectical resolution to the tension between different (and opposed) social suggestions – for instance, by ascending to a dialogical and metalogical point of view (Sammut & Gaskell 2010) or creating a metaidentity (the cosmopolitan identity of a global citizen, transculturalism). Creative transformation through the conscious establishment of a metalevel is implemented in meditation practices, existential therapy, etc. Humour and irony, changing speech and behavioural styles are universal meta-strategies rendering stressful situations more bearable and permitting the maintenance of internal freedom. Imaginary metalevel representations (art, religion) allow us to transform the meaning of coercive situations into positive ones, for example turn routine work into a poetic experience (Zittoun et al 2003) or give existential significance to suffering (Frankl 1985).

This response, too, involves both nonreflexive processes at the level of the habitus in addition to the subject's conscious meaning-making; indeed, the habitus may be used as a resource for the creative re-interpretation of the changed situation.

* * *

The same practice of power may encounter different counter-reactions and different strategies can be used in different areas and situations. A person may resist manifestations of power in one area (for example by opposing labelling) and obey them in another (for example by following fashions). The same person may have both a conformist self and a rebellious self. Similar external behaviour may hide different subjective and contextual meanings. Thus, the veil worn by Muslim women in the West may signify obedience to traditional norms, resistance to assimilative pressure, or it may be worn for other reasons depending on the context and reflexivity. External obedience to power may hide internal distancing, disguised resistance, latent generation of new meanings, etc.

Context here means both the habitus and the system of social suggestions that a specific response is related to, be it either implicitly or reflexively. The diversity of the ways of adaptation is partly caused by the logic of the trajectory of life and the position in socio-cultural fields, but also to the strength of outside pressure and the abundance of personal resources (for example education, health, social connections, personal characteristics, reservoirs of symbolic resources) (Todd 2005, 453). The main strategy of adaptation may undergo changes throughout

the life in connection with changes in outside pressure or personal resources (for example resignation, giving up resistance and accepting what you have in old age).

The choice of response is based on the interaction between nonreflexive processes and conscious choices, structural constraints, and free will. Different internal mechanisms can lead to externally similar responses – nonreflexive processes based on the habitus or conscious processes based on semiotic resources. Each individual response influences both the semiotic subject and the socio-cultural whole, facilitating its maintenance or transformation (Lotman 1988). The "dependent independence" of the subject (Valsiner 1998, 386) is expressed in that their semiotic autonomy is constrained by the boundaries of the habitus and the field of meaning-making. The manner of expression of semiotic autonomy, the subject's response to the system's communication, depends on a variety of aspects. Below, we will attempt to provide three different explanations to the probability of different responses.

Explanations for the spectrum of responses

To what extent can the probability of different types of response be predicted? Which meaning-making mechanisms lead to specific responses? We should not forget that external behaviour may be caused by different states of the subject, and an identical response may arise from different basic mechanisms and trajectories of internal action. We will now attempt to use some explanatory models on two different levels: in the context of the interaction of the individual and the environment, and in the context of the individual's internal semiotically mediated action.

Explanation in terms of the relationship between control and resources

If we define power as dominance based on positional asymmetry and the uneven distribution of resources and capacity, then the probability of different response types depends on the level of structural and dynamic asymmetry. Structural asymmetry is related to the relative distribution of resources. Dynamic asymmetry expresses the strength of (potential) influence.

Different combinations of external control and internal resources in relation to response types have been discussed in Rosengren's typology of the conditions of socialisation (1997). Thus, the relationship between the strength of external control (power holder) and the internal resources of the object of power can be characterised as conditions facilitating certain kinds of response. Rosengren's

typology of the conditions of socialisation (1997, 18) describes the different types of response distinguished by Hirschman (1970) in different combinations of control and resources. In this model, distancing (exit) is related to the combination of strong structural control and the subject's high levels of resources. This type of response presumes strong external pressure and an abundance of internal resources. A loyal response (obedience) is based on the combination of strong external control and scarce internal resources. High level of control may be expressed in authoritarian discourse (see Selg 2010), monological communication, and also in charisma. This kind of relationship between resources describes a so-called pure power relationship. Weak external pressure in combination with an abundance of internal resources facilitates active resistance-responses.

This model characterises resources from an external point of view, as the amount of different types of capital (social capital, skills and education, health, personality). At the same time, this model can also be applied in a subjective framework. Thus, the strength of control may be interpreted as perceived control, a habitual sensitivity towards external coercion. Control may be perceived as being stronger in a sensitive area than it is in a less sensitive area. Thus, resistance to learning new things or therapeutic changes can be caused by a sense of threat to personal identity. The form of external influence (communication) may also become important at the subjective level – a harsh and blunt style of communication may thus provoke resistance.

This scheme only indicates the probable direction of the response. The actual response depends on the structural possibilities and constraints arising from the specific position, as well as the individual's autonomous decisions in the context of their available meaning-making resources, making it impossible to predict with complete accuracy. Cultural resources may support any strategy starting from obedience (for example in a religious context) to resistance (for example heroic resistance to oppression).

Explanation in terms of communication strategies

In addition to traditional political analysis, which primarily explains power relations through the distribution of resources, we can also connect the power holder and receiver to communicative forms of exercising power. Messages transmitted using signs can take the form of different genres, styles, and modalities (Marková 2003, 197–199), and can change in time. Thus, in the modern consumer society, 'coercive' power is replaced by "seductive" power (see Bauman & Haugaard 2008). Moscovici (1988, 243), emphasises the essential relationship of collective forms of thought to communication. He postulates that the modality of public

communication is related to the structure of social representations, the relationship between different ideas. Two general tendencies can be distinguished here. The strategy of *diffusion* (unbiased and unregulated dissemination of ideas and opinions) leads to the diffuse coexistence of different ideas in social representations. The strategy of *propaganda* (preferring certain ideas to others) leads to a binary and hierarchical worldview where some ideas are subjected to others and representations promote action (Moscovici 2008, 311–342). From the perspective of behaviour, the response to these two types of communication would probably be expressed in different strategies of obedience and resistance.

Different functions can be distinguished in the semiotic means used in the communication process. Cabell (2010) distinguishes between semiotic *regulators* (that directly influence the course of subjective processes) and semiotic *catalysts* (that provide the necessary conditions for semiotic regulators, functioning as the contextual basis, the initial push). The manner of presenting social suggestions probably acts as such a catalyst, initiating the internal processes that lead to certain kinds of reflexive or nonreflexive response. The external catalyst activates certain representative fields where the power relation is (re)constructed in a certain manner. At the most general level, this can potentially mean either accepting the power relations and recreating the existing structure in terms of these relations, "confirming structuration" (Haugaard 2003), or the refusal to accept the existing structure and the creation of a new structure. The recreation of the existing structure is a balanced homeostatic process, while the refusal of the existing structure and the creation of a new structure take place through the disturbance of balance and the establishment of a new balance.

The form and function of public communication can be said to be tied to the probability of certain kinds of response. Peeter Selg (2012) has attempted to present a typology of different forms of public communication based on Roman Jakobson's functions of language (1960).[1] We suppose that authoritarian phatic/totalitarian emotive communication creates the best preconditions for passive obedience, i.e. nonreflexive submission (cf. Selg & Ventsel 2010 on resonating with the image of the singing revolution) or nonreflexive resistance and distancing (if the used images are 'alien'). This form of communication recreates the existing balance and blocks reflexivity, supporting the established (habitual) affective and cognitive structures. Other forms of communication (for example metalinguistic, referential) destroy the balance of established habitual structures, encouraging reflexivity. The metalinguistic communication of radical democracy creates the best conditions for constructive resistance, while the rational communication of deliberative democracy creates the basis for a dialogical relationship and the creation of new meanings. In the last two cases, we can speak of the

prevalence of autocommunicative meaning-making in the relationship between the subject and the external environment.

Likewise, the monological and dialogical manner of communication can be associated with significant differences in the results of the regulation (responses): the responses to monologue probably include conformism, resistance, or escaping, while in case of dialogical interaction, a creative synthesis is also activated. The influence of the choice and direction of the forms of public communication on reflective and unreflective representational processes and, thus, on power relations requires separate analysis.

Explanation in terms of semiotic transformations: interaction of systems of meaning

Another explanation closely related to the communicative explanation is the one based on semiotics, focussing primarily on the different ways of modelling meaning. According to Lotman, meaning is created at all structural levels, from minimum semiotic units to the global; thus, in spite of their different material character, they are structurally isomorphic. The process of creating new meanings presumes that 'external' texts enter the system and that these undergo unpredictable changes on the way from the system's input to its output (Lotman 2005). In reality, functionally unambiguous and definite systems do not exist in an isolated form and no system is functional in isolation; they only work as a part of larger semiotic system, the semiosphere (Lotman 2005). Systems in this continuum can greatly vary in their type and level of organisation (Lotman 1997, 10). A continuous process of translation takes place between the systems in this continuum. The translation/filter function of the boundary is materialised in different ways on different levels; however, its main purpose is to separate the 'own' from the alien, to filter external messages and transform them into the language of the system (Lotman 1997, 15). Thus, the concept of boundary is closely related to the concept of individuality. The definition of personality as a historical and cultural phenomenon depends on the method of encoding used when distinguishing oneself from one's opposite (Lotman 1997, 13).

The types of relationship between the different systems existing in the continuum are of vital importance here. According to semiotics of culture, each type of culture (each system) is associated with a certain system of 'chaos', which is not always primary, uniform and equal to itself but is just as much a result of active individual creation as the sphere of cultural organisation. "Each historically given type of culture has its own type of nonculture peculiar to it alone" (Ivanov et al 1998, 34).

Based on the above, opposites can be analytically construed as 1) isolated, unchanged contrasts, related with each other through strict opposition (the A vs (anti)-A dualism). This antinomy is structurally similar to the culture–anti-culture opposition, which presumes a self-contained system biased against outside influence. According to Lotman and Uspenskij, the modelling of meaning in this system is based on depicting the opposition, the other culture, using the minus sign (Lotman & Uspenskij 1984). From the perspective of one's own culture, the anti-culture is considered a sign system, a structure dangerous to culture. It is isomorphic to culture and a part of culture, i.e. one's own culture is unthinkable without its antipode (Lepik 2000, 742–744). From the point of view of one's own system, it is natural to try to interpret all systems (cultures) opposed to the pre-existing right system as a common wrong system. The polarised elements of anti-culture and culture are both subjected to a symmetrical principle of reduction at both ends of the axis: the elements of anti-culture are synonymous with each other, just as are the elements of culture (Lepik 2007, 69–71, 74–76). If opposites are seen as mutually exclusive and isolated from each other, then in their interaction (mutual negation) they reproduce (and amplify) each other, meaning that no qualitative change takes place as a result of their interaction. The attempt of mutual elimination gives rise to a reactive response. Thus, promoted ideas tend to gather momentum through the censure's attempts to silence them (Moscovici 1991).

Another possibility is to see them as mutually induced and dynamically linked opposites that create an antinomy through a mutual tension (A–non-A duality). When opposites are seen as mutually constitutive and complementing each other, as elements of a common system in dialogue with each other, the tension and interaction between them may serve to preserve an existing dynamic balance (where the opposites reproduce and amplify each other within a common system), or give rise to innovation (the tension, i.e. antinomy, between opposites is resolved through the 'leap' to a new qualitative level). Such dialectical opposites include the basic structure or core ideas (*themata*) of social representations that are used to generate particular representations in a specific social context (Moscovici 2001; Marková 2003; Liu 2004). These core ideas are organised as mutually induced pairs that are relatively stable and by default self-explanatory in that particular cultural context. In times of social change when the generation of new meanings is initiated, these core ideas become visible and are included in inter-group dialogue (for example the rise of the opposition *natural–unnatural* in connection with the Civil Partnership Law). The inflexibility or flexibility of the boundaries between A and non-A is determined by the nature of their communication i.e. whether it is dualistic or dual. Majority and minority groups,

tradition and innovation, memory and counter-memory, men and women, identity and counter-identity – these oppositions can be taken as strict antagonisms of isolated opposites, or as the mutually complementing elements of a common system.

* * *

In any power relationship, the relations between A and B can be construed as either a dualism or a duality. Weberian approaches to dominant power relations construct a dualistic opposition, postulating that the interests of A and B are in contradiction (Haugaard 2010, 1051). In such systems, both obedience and resistance reproduce the existing power relations. Systems with isolated and fixed oppositions produce strict oppositions. Possible responses to manifestations of power include passive submission or inflexible resistance (for example in the conditions of repressive autocratic power). Such opposites can repeatedly transform into each other (by reversing the balance of forces and the pattern of obedience and resistance), thus creating a closed and non-evolving system. Resistance supports the system just as obedience does; breaking the norm supports the norm.

Above, we conceived of the object of power as the indefinite opposite of the holder of power that had the potential for any type of response. As soon as a response is materialised, the power holder becomes the indefinite opposite that, in turn, can potentially give a different interpretation to the response and react in a different manner. The power relationship develops through such mutual influence. We may say that relationality is key to power relations conceptualised in this manner, as the subjects involved in power relations are not 'complete entities' prior to the communicative event but are only constituted thanks to this relationship. This means we do not presume that subjects already have a defined position in the social structure. If we presumed this, we might, at best, speak of the recognition of identities, not their construction. Social identities are constructed, not 'recognised'. Power is thus characteristic of the structure of *all* human relations (Elias 1978, 71–103; original emphasis). This concept is "best used in conjunction with a reminder about more or less fluctuating *changes in power*" (op cit, 116; original emphasis). This means it makes no sense to speak of the identities of the subjects in power relations; we can only talk about their identification to emphasise their processual and dynamic nature. Since the functions of individuals and systems in relation to each other are ultimately based on the pressure they can exert on one another on the basis of their mutual dependence (op cit, 118–119), social identities can only be reached through constant acts of identification that express this mutually constitutive power relationship.

This interaction, or power relationship, involves two types of tension. Structural asymmetry is an expression of the tension between different statuses (positions) that is based on the difference in the quantity and quality of certain resources. Dynamic asymmetry is an expression of the tension in the possibility (ability) of exercising power in the relationships between the power holder and receiver. The mechanism of autocommunication complements the conception of semiotic autonomy and also enables the explanation of the solution for the tension between the power holder and receiver.

Returning to the mechanisms of semiotic autonomy described above, we see now at what level the significant oppositions are constructed. The first step – distancing – permits the central choice to be made – the choice of a representational field to subject oneself to and to rely on. The nature (dualism or duality) of the oppositions shaping this field influences the inflexibility or flexibility of the subsequent processes. Positioning in a representational field in relation to specific social suggestions and other positions takes the form of different types of responses – obedience, resistance, ignoring, creative synthesis. Variation is increased by 1) individual preferences in using semiotic resources to support and justify personal choices, 2) the tendency of systems (cultures) towards multilingualism (multisystemicity), and 3) the fact that culture does not encompass all texts, as it functions in the background of non-culture and is involved in complicated relations therewith. These factors determine the working mechanism of culture as an information reservoir for both human collectives and humanity as a whole (Lotman 2010, 32). This means that in the framework of power relations, we can speak of different cultural models of organising information. From a methodological perspective, this basically means that we can study power relations in any social context without being able to or having to *reduce our analysis to this* (i.e. to power relations). To presume that all social relations possess the dimension of power means opening up the possibility to study power relations intertwined in all social institutions. This does not, however, mean the negation of the economic, cultural, social, psychological, etc., relations that are used to articulate these power relations.

An example of reactive identity

The regulative entities of the different levels described above – the societal field (functioning through habitus), the common field of meaning (functioning through social representations and systems of meaning), and the individual field of meaning, functionally make up a hierarchical regulative system that allows

power relations to be realised. We will now examine the applicability of this model in describing the mechanism of reactive identity (Vetik et al 2006, 1085).

Reactive identity is developed in the context of the power relations of groups. A power relationship established in the social field (for example ethnic domination) is expressed in various symbolic and discursive forms that convey assimilative pressure. The majority group exerts pressure using a variety of semiotic means (language policy, symbols, etc.) with the goal of changing the identity of a minority group. In theory, the members of the minority group can take up different positions in relation to the pressure of the majority group: 1) submission (assimilation) or hypocritical submission (external assimilation combined with internal protest), 2) resistance, 3) distancing, 4) creative solution (see section 2). Reactive identity is described as a situational response in which, instead of following the social suggestion to change identity, the group reinforces its existing identity and increases the inflexibility of the boundaries of identity in 'us versus them' relationships (Vetik et al 2006, 1085). Based on the classification of responses presented above, reactive identity may be classified as both resistance and distancing responses.

Based on the balance of resources and control (strong control and abundant resources), this response is classified as a distancing response in our typology. If the distancing is strong enough to leave the boundaries of the power relationship, all further attempts at influence are ignored. As a reflexive response, reactive identity means self-determination through opposition to something and is a form of protest.

What kinds of social suggestion act as catalysts for reactive opposition? What semiotic and communicative conditions are necessary for such developments? What kind of subjective interpretation initiates and maintains reactive opposition? What are the conditions that facilitate the consolidation and dissemination of reactive opposition? The answers to these questions are context-dependent. If a dichotomous reality is created discursively that does not recognise compromises but uses the method of blaming and opposing and constructs inter-group relations as the kind of strict dualism described above, then a reactive response is highly probable. Strong, inflexible (monological, non-compromising), unexpected, negative, violent external pressure perceived as a threat may also serve to initiate a reactive response. Reactive responses are facilitated by a type of public communication that is monological in nature (Vetik et al 2006, 1085) and that has been characterised in the context of certain critical events as phatic, homogenising, and constructing antagonistic oppositions (Selg 2012).

In specific contexts, reactive identity may take a variety of forms. If the perceived social suggestion in the Estonian context is not only to obtain Estonian

citizenship and identify yourself with the Estonian state, but also to become an Estonian through the negation of your previous identity, then the reactive response of minorities to this suggestion is non-obedience. In the Estonian context, reactive identity may take the form of a negative attitude towards the Estonian language, reinforcing Russian ethnic identity, choosing Russian citizenship. But it can also take the form of a variety of extra-state identities (identifying yourself with the local place of residence or transnational entities – the Baltic region, Europe, the world), de-emphasising ethnic self-determination (see Vihalemm & Kalmus 2008), new forms of collective identity (Baltic Russian) (see Vihalemm & Masso 2007), or psychological or physical distancing from Estonia (physical emigration or symbolic 'internal emigration', encapsulation), negative construction of the emotional significance of Estonia ("uninteresting, dull, passive, superficial" – see Priimägi 2012). Semiotic autonomy is expressed in the fact that the power relationship and representations conveying it (for example defining the minority group as immigrants or occupants) are not accepted and alternative systems of meaning are created for collective self-determination (for example Baltic Russian). The policy of assimilation by force is seldom successful precisely because it initiates reactive counter-mobilisation to the assimilative pressure, which is more likely to result in an increase in the difference between the groups (Brubaker 2004). According to the logic of bipolar systems, reactive identity supports that which it opposes through rigid opposition.

The response can become free and flexible only if the pressure is not perceived as a threat and a significantly broad space of subjective choice is maintained. In his analysis of re-education as a means to democratise the German collective identity in post-war Germany, Kurt Lewin (1948) stressed involvement and the creation of a social atmosphere free of intimidation and coercion as necessary preconditions. The desired comprehensive change in identity must be reached through the individual's cooperation and the voluntary adoption of the new hierarchy of values. In this process, the person must feel free to criticise and express different opinions. New and old regulators, new sources of power and objects of regulation enter a dialogical relationship; only through this relationship is it possible to synthesise innovations and realise lasting changes. The perceived lack of such conditions has been highlighted as a significant obstacle in the integration of Estonian minorities (e.g. Roosalu et al 2013).

Conclusion

In this article, we analysed systemic power as the relationship of socio-cultural and semiotic wholes as they relate to the individual and his or her part. On the non-reflective level systemic power operates through the habitus, on the reflective level, through semiotic regulators. We relied on theoretical models dialectically analysing the relationship between the part and the whole, structure and agency, micro and macro levels, and objectivity and subjectivity (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992; Marková 2003). A person is subjugated to social and semiotic systems, and at the same time, relatively autonomous in relation to them. A person's relative autonomy is based on his or her meaning-making ability (semiosis).

This approach enables us to describe the spectrum of diverse responses to impersonal social suggestions or the manipulative activity of a personified power holder. Unlike traditional analysis of power, which only focus on obedience or opposition to power, we also discussed responses that involved distancing and creative transformation.

The function of semiotic systems in relation to the subject is twofold: on the one hand, they have a guiding and constraining influence through collective forms of thought; on the other hand, they are a resource supporting the subject's autonomy. Thanks to the autocommunicative ability, the subject has the freedom to take different positions in relation to external semiotic regulators. Each of these positions creates a new internal whole, a certain system of ideas and practices to which a person subjects themselves. The subjective (potentially infinite) field of interpretations interacts with the external guiding and constraining influence coming from other subjects and the socio-cultural whole. Individual meaning-making allows the individual to create personal semiotic regulators of their own behaviour, turning from the power receiver into the power holder in relation to themselves. It is an infinite circular process where people create new meaningful situations (new ideas, semiotic means) and "enter into those, to let themselves be guided by those, and distance [themselves] from those" (Valsiner 1998, 388).

The heterogeneity of semiotic systems on one hand and the semiotic autonomy of the subject on the other hand allow for a broad range of responses that can be classified relationally – through the relationship to the external (or internalised) guide representing a general or specific Other. The four classes of response – distancing, resistance, submission, and synthesis – express different relationships with social suggestions. Both the unreflective (habitual) level and conscious semiotic transformations participate in generating a response. The individual possesses a certain autonomy on both levels: "The freest individuals are those

who, aware of their determinations, end up either choosing them or transforming them" (Hilgers 2009, 745).

In the article, we described the general semiotic mechanism of generating different types of response – the modulation of distance, direction and intensity, and the interaction between exclusive or inclusive opposites (A and non-A). We discussed the applicability of this basic mechanism in the context of intergroup power relations. The described framework highlights important meta-level processes that form the background and serve as preconditions for any specific power relationship: habitus and collective forms of culture (including social representations) allow us to define the context as well as the participants of the power relationship, the legitimate means of exercising power, the interests of the participants, and other components of the power relationship in common terms. The individual reconstructs collective meanings in their subjective field of meaning. Semiotic autonomy enables the subject's capacity for power in the situation of any dominant power relationship, through the transformation of meanings and the indeterminacy of responses. The social, semiotic, and psychological levels are all necessary for the comprehensive description and explanation of the power relationship. Standing in complementary relationship to each other, they form a hierarchical system that serves to enable power relations.

The presented framework enables us to analyse how (systemic) power functions through the interaction with a subject conscious of, and interpreting it, how the autonomous subjects emancipate (or do not emancipate) themselves from the pressure of the 'hidden power' of collective forms of thought. Obedience to social suggestions is only one possible response. The approach presented here allows describing specific power relations as dynamic and context-dependent, constantly recreated or transformed in the process of collective and individual meaning-making.

The two aspects of power – domination and capacity – are manifested here as dialectical opposites mutually inducing each other: the dominating influence of A (who employs both semiotically mediated and non-semiotic means) meets the semiotic autonomy, or capacity, of B. The result of this interaction can only be predicted with limited certainty. According to the non-linear explanatory model, the response of B, in turn, influences A. Thus, for example, if B empowers themselves through a new meaning and a consensus created on its basis, this enables B to establish a new relationship with A. The description of the power relationship as a dialogical process, the dynamic trajectory of power relations, was not a part of the scope of this article. Further analysis should focus on the relationships between specific power relations, response types and meaning-making in specific contexts.

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Notes

1 According to Selg, in public communication, 1) authoritarian discourse is associated with the phatic function; 2) the discourse of radical democracy is the metalinguistic function; 3) populist-democratic discourse is associated with the poetic function; 4) deliberative discourse with the referential function; 5) totalitarian discourse with the emotive function; and 6) clientelist discourse with the conative function (Selg 2012, 83–85).

Reassembling the political:
from mechanical to deep relational thinking about power

Peeter Selg

More than two decades ago Mustafa Emirbayer wrote "A Manifesto for a Relational Sociology", which was published in one of the 'holy grail' journals of the social sciences, the *American Journal of Sociology* (Emirbayer 1997). This is the most influential meta-theoretical paper on relational social science to this day. What is meant by 'relational' varies, especially when it comes to power analysis. Andreas Ventsel and Maaris Raudsepp's intervention in this volume could be seen as furthering the discussion within the confines of radical or deep 'relational' approaches to power. But what are the less, or non-, radical approaches? And what is the specificity of this radical approach?

Paraphrasing the opening lines of Emirbayer's paper one could say that power analysis faces a crucial dilemma: whether to conceive power as an unfolding dynamic *relation* or as a static *thing*, a *substance* or a *process* (cf. Emirbayer 1997, 281). Most of the approaches in political science, governance and international relations – the disciplines of power analysis par excellence – that have self-described themselves as 'relational' have what could be called *mechanical* understanding of power. Either intentionally or unintentionally they see power as a substance or a thing that somehow 'circulates' or is 'distributed' between various actors (equally or unequally). But since the actors are presumed to have relations (interactions) with each other, and power is an important thing for shaping these relations, then that thing itself is characterised as 'relational'. The logic of the argument goes roughly like this. The substance or the thing in question is conceived to be either a capacity to do something or a resource for doing something. Usually the doing in question, in turn, is presumed to be some form of subordination or domination of someone or something.

This is a very traditional understanding of power that goes back to at least Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), who defined power as one's current means for obtaining some future goods. Actually power conceived in this manner does not need relations to exist; one can 'have' power even if one never exercises it. So it is somewhat peculiar to refer to this kind of power as 'relational'. However, this is being done more often than might be expected. Let me just point to a couple of examples from recent decades. One of the contemporary giants in international relations, Stephen Krasner, dubs his typically Hobbesian understanding

of power as "the ability to change outcomes or affect the behavior of others within a given regime" 'relational power' (Krasner 1985, 14). Similarly, in a more recent debate about political networks, one of the most influential authors of the younger generation of network analysts, David Lazer, argues that "power is intrinsically relational: it flows from the capacity to affect other actors" (Lazer 2011, 66). One of the crucial aspects of this 'relational' perspective on power is that one can basically focus on the power holder alone to assess the latter's power. For example having this or that many bullets left in your gun is an indicator of having power even if there is nobody to shoot, and no reason to shoot anybody; having eloquence is an indication of having power even if there is nobody to persuade; having this many friends, that much money…; etc. One can consult Hobbes' *Leviathan*'s chapter X for a classical list of things that are (almost literally) presumed to be power.

300 years after Hobbes' *Leviathan* these things are still considered pertinent to power, and sometimes also equated with power, especially among the elitists of the 1950s (Floyd Hunter [1953], C. W. Mills [1956]). However, elitists were criticised by the later pluralist/behaviouralist school for equating power with the *potential* for control. The items listed in, for instance, Hobbes *Leviathan* as being power, are considered part of what the most eminent pluralist, Robert Dahl (1957), called the *base* of power. Dahl was also an important figure in taking the discussion towards another, far less mechanic understanding of 'relational' and its link to power: in addition to the base, which is merely an idle potential if not utilised, he also distinguished the *means*, the *scope* and the *amount* of power. The last two particularly make it impossible to draw inferences about the existence of an entity's/person's power without considering its/her/his action or more generally relations to other entities/persons. In other words, we cannot assess A's power over B without considering B's reactions to A's action. Bachrach and Baratz, the most renowned critics of the pluralists from the elitist perspective (see Bachrach & Baratz 1962) make it clear "that power is relational, as opposed to possessive or substantive" (Bachrach & Baratz 1963, 633) and propose three 'relational characteristics' for power:

> A power relationship exists when (a) there is a conflict over values or course of action between A and B; (b) B complies with A's wishes; and (c) he does so because he is fearful that A will deprive him of a value or values which he, B, regards more highly than those which would have been achieved by noncompliance. (Bachrach & Baratz 1963, 635)

Characteristics (b) and (c) make it clear that considering A's power without considering B's reaction is nonsensical. At first reading Ventsel and Raudsepp's contribution seems to further this kind of 'relational' approach to power. Take, for instance, their discussion of the 'semiotic autonomy' of B, its/her/his possibilities to react in the face of A's attempts at subordination and to do that in a manner not determined by A (through distancing from, resisting, creatively synthesising A's subordinating action, etc.). The case seems to be even clearer given that Bachrach and Baratz are very explicit that freedom/autonomy is the precondition of the functioning of power relations. And it is exactly B's lack of freedom that makes 'force' a non-relational phenomenon:

> A person's scope of decision-making is radically curtailed under the duress of force; once the fist, the bullet, or the missile is in flight, the intended victim is stripped of choice between compliance and noncompliance. But where power is being exercised, the individual retains this choice. (Bachrach & Baratz 1963, 636)

But in fact, Ventsel and Raudsepp's contribution could be located among the third family of 'relational' approaches that are, so to speak, "relational all the way down" (Emirbayer & Mische 1998, 974). Specifically, Bachrach and Baratz clearly highlight that A's power is related to B's reaction (and vice versa) and that there cannot be power (which is essentially a 'relational' phenomenon) if B has no freedom whatsoever. Still the identities of the As and Bs are presumed to be given outside their mutual relations. In fact, seeing power relations as being constitutive of the very elements of those relations is the "relational approach" that has been adopted by various poststructuralist and process-oriented sociological perspectives on power, such as those of Michel Foucault (1978), Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992) and Norbert Elias (1978). This is the perspective that sees power relations "[…] as dynamic in nature, as unfolding, ongoing processes […] in which it makes no sense to envision constituent elements apart from the flows within which they are involved (and vice versa)" (Emirbayer 1997, 89).

It is no coincidence that in his "Manifesto" Emirbayer saw the semiotic tradition (both Saussurean and Peircean) as an important source of 'relational' approaches in the social sciences (among many others, of course) (Emirbayer 1997, 300–302). Semiotics has been a 'relational' approach from its very inception and "a manifesto for a relational semiotics" would sound peculiar. However, in reality no enthusiasm was created for semiotic approaches in the social sciences. Arguably semiotics is far more marginalised for the social-scientific audience than it used to be a generation ago, and this even despite the fact that

'relational turn' has become the new buzzword in the social sciences (see Dépelteau 2013; Selg 2016; 2018). Some other approaches have colonised this new promising territory of 'relational approaches', most notably the huge industry of 'social network analysis'. Probably one of the reasons for the marginalised status of semiotic power analyses is their lack of dialogue with the respective traditions found in the social sciences. It is for this reason that the contribution of Ventsel and Raudsepp in this volume is an extremely important addition, even if it remains a purely theoretical reflection. To use, or misuse, Latour's (2005) figure creatively: their contribution takes a step to further the discussion of reassembling the political rather than treating it as a variable or an attribute of either society or the individual.

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Notes

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Power relations
in vernacular and institutional discourses on religion

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Abstract. Using the Foucauldian understanding of discourse and power relations, the article analyses the interaction of these two elements of meaning-making that serve to create social reality. Our data is based on the cultural context of Estonia and the examples include the relations between native religion, Taaraism, and Christianity, variations of (institutional) atheism, and the relations between magic practices, alternative and scientific medicine. As a result, we present an initial typology of power relations based on Norbert Elias' conception of *function*.

Keywords: institutional and vernacular discourse, Robert G. Howard's vernacular authority, Michel Foucault's concept of power, Norbert Elias' concept of function, religious phenomena

Introduction

This article analyses the interaction of institutional and vernacular discourses as meaning-making elements that serve to create social reality. For the purpose of this study, discourse can be defined as an organising principle governing meaning-making that enables us to speak about certain things and subjects (norms, language, etc.). Discourse always appears from a specific, often anonymous, point of view that allows us to conceptualise the different relationships between discourses in terms of the (re)production of (potential) power relations. Although there are a multitude of different possible ways to distinguish between the types of discourse, in this article we divide discourses into institutional (in terms of power position) and vernacular. Just like American folklorist Robert Glenn Howard (2011, 7), we understand *vernacular* in its broadest sense, equating it to the non-institutional, unofficial, every-day, popular, or folk. Thus, vernacular discourse in our study can be defined as distinct from the institutional, i.e. as something

based on tradition and institutionally uncontrollable, therefore not having to directly oppose institutional discourse. Both vernacular and institutional discourses are intertwined with mutual and internal power relations. Considering this, our study was guided by the following question: how do different discourses emerge in religious phenomena, and how do they constitute these phenomena in the religion-related field, especially in the context of power relations?

The theoretical framework of the article is based on the conception of *vernacularity* and *vernacular authority* elaborated by Howard, which focuses on the distinction between institutional and vernacular in power relations. Howard's conception is expanded using the Foucauldian concept of *subjugated knowledge*, which enables us to introduce the distinction between dominant knowledge and popular (common) knowledge within the discourses.

The power relations in the religion-related field in Estonia have generally been viewed in the context of church history (R. Altnurme 2001; Sõtšov 2008; Remmel 2011; L. Altnurme 2013); but concerning religion, no analysis of the power relations between dominant and vernacular discourses in the Estonian context has so far been performed. Thus, the article relies on prior studies of Estonian culture, which we interpret from the perspective of power relations. Our examples include the relations between native religion, Taaraism, and Christianity, variations of (institutional) atheism, and the relations between magical practices, alternative medicine and scientific medicine.

The analysis can be characterised as abductive logic: the actual work began from a comparison of illustrative cases and the mapping of tendencies present in these examples, which, in turn, posed a number of questions for the research group, along with the hypothetical answers to these questions. Formulating these hypotheses directed us toward creating a theoretical framework that could explain and summarise our data.

This primarily theoretical article aims to aid in the conceptualisation of further case studies within the framework of power relations. As a result of our analysis, we present an initial typology of power relations based on Norbert Elias' conception of *function:* "[w]e can only speak of social functions when referring to interdependencies which constrain people to a greater or lesser extent" (Elias 1978, 78). A typology based on a relational approach should facilitate the understanding of the dynamics (dialogue, opposition, etc.) of the mutual power relations between institutional and vernacular discourses, and help us better understand discursive meaning-making.

Theoretical framework

Discourse and power

The discourse theoretical tradition founded by Michel Foucault approaches power not only as subjugative but also as constitutive. "What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse […]" (Foucault 1992, 37). In other words, power relations serve both to create meanings and suppress other meaning-making discourses.

Meaning-making in this case could be considered *soft power*, contrasting with direct physical coercion by influencing the activity of people and their understanding of the surrounding world (Foucault 1982, 220). In principle, all aspects of meaning-making can be conceptualised in terms of power relations. "Power […] is a structural characteristic of human relationships – of *all* human relationships" (Elias 1978, 74; original emphasis). Power relations between discourses determine the understanding of things, a process through which identities also emerge. Therefore, identities are not something pre-given, but rather are temporary fixations of the processes of identification. The functions people have in relation to each other are, thus, based on "the compelling forces [they] exert upon each other by reason of their interdependence […]" (Elias 1978, 77).

Similarly, religious phenomena are not entities existing before the communicative event but are only constituted as a result of the interaction of discourses. Thus, the relationship between the 'established' discourses dominant in the communicative space and vernacular discourses can be characterised only as mutually constitutive. Below, we will present a short description of these discursive relations.

Institutional, dominant, and vernacular discourse

Discourses, as discussed above, are the conditions of the possibility of speaking/thinking about things. Certain discourses are institutionalised and these institutions serve to (re)produce discourses. Institutional can be understood as official, for instance the education system as an institution distributes and controls the official discourse of knowledge.

Institutionalised discourses are often in a dominant position and determine how things are understood. The position they represent is generally considered unquestionable: they determine what we consider normal, acceptable,

self-evident, right and good (Raik 2003, 25). A dominant discourse, being biased by nature, tries to *naturalise* a certain manner of speaking about things; the power of these more strictly institutionalised discourses is based on tacit authority. However, this does not mean that institutionalised discourses are dominant *per se* – the institutional field also includes other discourses that have been forced to the periphery; for example, the psychoanalytic approach could be considered institutional (by psychoanalysts), but from the perspective of the dominant trends in psychology, it is forced to the periphery as it does not hold up to the criteria of validity of the dominant scientific discourse.

Nevertheless, the institutional aspect is not the only path to domination as it excludes power relations from the diverse spheres of human communication that are not strictly institutionalised. "This assumption bars the way to asking and observing how and in what circumstances contests which are played out without rules transform themselves into relationships *with* set rules" (Elias 1978, 75; original emphasis). One possibility for approaching non-institutional discourses is to discuss them in terms of tradition. Howard introduces the concept of *vernacular authority* in his treatment of tradition. "The concept of vernacular authority is based on the idea that any claim to being supported by tradition asserts power because it seeks to garner trust from an audience by appealing to the aggregate volition of other individuals across space and through time" (Howard 2013, 80). Thus, non-institutional discourses possess a specific resource – vernacular authority – for the (re)production of power relations. Unlike institutional authority, however, vernacular authority is generally present when the individual trusts a statement precisely because it has *not* been brought into focus by an institutional authority, be it any formal institution such as the church, media corporations, etc. (Howard 2013, 81).[1]

Institutional knowledge and subjugated knowledge as special cases of popular knowledge

Each society has discourses that it considers acceptable and enacts as valid, devising control mechanisms for them – in short, society defines what is considered knowledge, what is true, what is false, what is heresy, etc. In relation to this Foucault uses the term *subjugated knowledge*. According to Foucault, subjugated knowledge refers to knowledge that is formally unsystematised, non-conceptual, insufficiently elaborated, naive, located low down in the hierarchy beneath the required level of specialist knowledge or scientificity (Foucault 1980, 82). It differs from common sense or popular knowledge, which does not pretend to explain something. For example, according to common sense, some herbs cure, a claim

that does not include any kind of explanation. This could be explained by (different) subjugated knowledge(s) that these herbs have some kind of potency, or that a shaman is needed as a mediator, in which sense we can talk about different levels of awareness. It could be also explained by institutional knowledge (for example science) using complex understandings of chemistry, biology, medicine, etc.

Thus, subjugated knowledge is part of a vernacular discourse. Vernacular discourse itself does not have to be essentially opposed to institutional knowledge (hierarchically structured and formally systematised knowledge), but subjugated knowledge always is. Subjugated knowledge also differs from everyday or popular or common knowledge (generally characterised by a lack of distinct hierarchies, taxonomies, etc.).

Therefore, unlike vernacularity, which aspires towards differentiation from the institutional, subjugated knowledge involves an active relationship of domination. The subjugated position of knowledge may be determined either by the dominant discourse or by the self-description of the subjugated knowledge (for example, at the level of self-identification, the discourse defines itself as the object of the aggressive onslaught of other discourses).

Analysis

In the analysis below, we will take a closer look at the interdependent meaning-making of different institutional (both dominant and peripheral) and vernacular (both common sense and subjugated) discourses. The examples derive from the Estonian cultural context, being more or less associated with religion. The first group of examples deals with the question of how institutional religious discourse relates to the vernacular religious discourse that has been forced to the periphery, and the complementary relationship between scientific medical discourse and folk medicine, especially in the context of booming New Age spirituality in contemporary Estonia. The second group of examples is related to the discourses that use aspects of Estonian nationalism in the struggle over dominance – native religion Taaraism to institutional Christianity and atheism.

Magic and folk/alternative medicine –
vernacular discourses making use of the institutional discourses, and vice versa

One of the most intriguing and fruitful approaches to characterising the interplay of institutional and vernacular discourses is to look at the 'grey areas' between the two. Within the Estonian context, these are nowhere more at the forefront than in how institutional and folk/alternative medicine relate to and conflict with

each other. This is true both historically and within the currently attested boom of New Age ideas. We shall start from a brief look at the premodern practices of magic and healing, showing how magic thinking actually combines vernacular authority with that of dominant discourse. We then move on to the 21st century context of New Spirituality showing that the previously discussed interdependence is still very much alive today.

Magical practices as popular knowledge. Oral tradition recorded in the late 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century[2] contains numerous references to 'magical' vernacular practices. The best known of these are perhaps various spells, but also other activities, through which the practicing person tries to bring something about with the help of supernatural forces (good luck, fortune, health, physical attributes, etc.). From the perspective of the dynamics of power, the problem of institutional and popular knowledge is crucial to the discussion of magic. Theoreticians of religious history and anthropology have often conceptualised magic as an inferior and overlooked phenomenon in comparison to official religion. Thus, religious historians and anthropologists (for example, James George Frazer, Marcel Mauss, Bronislaw Malinowski) have historically described magic and religion as deeply conflicting phenomena (for example manipulative vs supplicative; practical vs symbolic, private/secret vs public, or individual vs collective), presenting magic as an assortment of amorphously and loosely connected naive, secret folk beliefs. Indeed, from the point of view of institutional religion, magical knowledge is always depreciated or subjugated knowledge, outside the discourse of institutional religion, which does not fulfil the criteria established for this discourse.

Adopting an emic viewpoint and considering magical practices from the perspective of their followers and examining these practices as common-sense or everyday knowledge allows us to better understand their function in late 19th century folklore recordings. In other words, from the practitioners' perspective they rely on common sense to ensure success in different spheres of life.[3]

A great example here are the official church attributes being used in non-official (magic) rituals, illustrated lucidly by a folklore account from 1896 of gaining good hunting luck, which involves secretly taking the sacramental bread from church and shooting one's gun at the bread (Johanson & Jonuks 2015). The meaning of the sacramental bread in folklore is identical to its liturgical meaning – it is the Body of the Christ. In both cases, it is taken to be a potentially powerful object. But whereas the liturgy only foresees a single activity related to the host – a clear indication of the strictly regulated rules of the dominant discourse – magic allows for a greater number of possibilities. At the same time,

the participants in magical rituals accept the meaning of the host and no sharp opposition to the institutional – something characteristic of subjugated knowledge – takes place. What we see here is dialogue or hybridisation of institutional and vernacular knowledge, which emphasises the potency of the elements used for the ritual, without any concern for their discursive origin. One might suppose that institutionality itself is the reason why a supernatural effect is also ascribed to these elements in practices outside the institutional Christian discourse. However, the elements used remain attributes of the institutional discourse; they are used in the magical discourse, but no fusion or adoption takes place, as this would mean the loss of an effect important to the magic ritual. In addition to the sacramental bread, a number of other elements of institutional religion are also used in magical practices. Thus, according to records from the Estonian Folklore Archives soil from the churchyard or a piece of the bell rope have been used to calm children; and the Book of Psalms for fortune telling; a piece of an altar candle cut off in secret was thought to be good for treating jinxed animals or a child's ear ache; a snakebite was to be dressed with a shawl or apron that had been worn to the church; and toothache could be cured by blowing through the hole of a church key. From the perspective of the institutional religion, these are manifestations of naive and inferior, irrational superstition. From the practitioners' perspective, however, one is simply exploiting all the available resources by following magical logic, with no actual conflict with or opposition to institutional knowledge.

While the number of archival accounts of the practices discussed above is rather limited, a similar, but much more common example is the Pater Noster, which was used both as a spell and as a prayer, depending on the context. The classification of a specific utterance either as a spell or a prayer is primarily related to linguistic aspects (poetics, intention, syntax, etc.); for the practitioner, though, such distinction was meaningless. Thus, Pihelgas has proposed that attempts to favourably influence circumstances through the use of a spell or the Pater Noster may have carried both a magical and a religious meaning for the lay person (Pihelgas 2013, 31). Again, the power afforded to the prayer by the Christian liturgical background definitely plays an important role in the use of the Pater Noster. The Pater Noster may have also been used in an emergency situation as the only universal prayer one was likely to remember (op cit, 33). Even though being a good Christian was important to the country folk, magical devices were still used in parallel. Pihelgas suggests that the difference between a spell and a prayer may have been recognised at the level of poetics and tradition; on the other hand, both were acceptable methods for communication with the supernatural world (op cit, 34).

These magical practices, as well as the majority of the rest of the practices recorded in heritage texts, are 'soft practices' – enhancing a personal quality (for example precision in shooting, strength, etc.), protective, defensive or healing magic. Such magical practices do not involve subjugated knowledge (black magic, jinxing or cursing, etc.), they are much more aptly characterised as universal associative devices, popular interpretations of official practices, adapting these for one's own purposes and using them on one's own terms.

As far as individual practices are concerned, there are, without a doubt, those that were suppressed or subject to ridicule, or those that were not used at all for a variety of reasons, or were only seldom used. However, the attitude toward magic as a whole, as an amorphous collection of practices from various sources, is different. It would be more correct to consider magical rituals part of the sphere of everyday knowledge, which makes use of different, more or less widely spread and adopted, magical elements. In this sense, the practice of magic is 'democratic' – everyone can decide for him or herself the extent to which they use the elements of the dominant discourse, common or subjugated knowledge. People often move between the elements of alternative and official religion, using more of the former in some practices and more of the latter in others.

Folk and alternative medicine. If magic involves vernacular discourse in relation to the Christian church as the dominant institutional discourse, the examples of folk and alternative medicine distinguish themselves from institutional medicine. However, they use elements of institutional discourses for their own legitimation.

Good examples of a 'consensus' between institutional and magical knowledge can be found in folk medicine practices recorded in the late 19th and early 20th century. Magic and the methods of folk medicine (which are closely related to magic) increasingly started to take the form of an alternative (or pseudo-) rationality (this tendency is well represented in the works of early cultural anthropologists, for example Malinowski 1948, 116), although the Christian church retained its dominant position.

Similarly, 19th and 20th century Estonian folklore accounts also contain numerous examples of practices involving elements that are clearly unscientific in terms of institutional medicine, even though the former does not contrast itself to the latter. This is illustrated by the example of the 'ear stones'. These stones are the fossils of moss animals (Bryozoa) or coral (Tabulata). According to tradition, these fossils, sharp at one end and full of minuscule pores, fit into the ear and help alleviate ear ache. Examples (such as ERM k/r 101:211) that describe heating up the stone, pouring water into the pores and releasing vapour into the afflicted ear, are quite numerous. Ear stone treatment methods, as well as other means of folk

medicine comprise a certain system with a fitting place reserved for each element, including prayer, the cross, a piece of the host or any other Christian element used to achieve the best possible result. This includes giving an important role to methods accepted and even promoted by institutional medicine – in the case of ear stones, heating the ear. Indeed, popular protective and healing practices are characterised by the multiplicity of elements that are expected to work best when used together. At the same time, these elements can be swapped, added and removed, depending on the situation or the task at hand. It is clear that this system lacks the rules of the dominant institutional knowledge, but the use of elements is still regulated to a certain extent. Such formal institutionalisation of folk practices and 'subjecting them to discipline' is also considered important for increasing the potency of the ritual.

Considering the current Estonian New Age friendly context (see Uibu 2016), the logic of the previous example is still there in 21st century practices. Examples include reports of cases in which the doctor advises the patient to go and see a witch, i.e. a folk healer, after experiencing poor treatment results (placebo effect) or hospital-based acupuncture (Vainküla 2011). In the latter case the practitioners are doctors with a Western medical education (the dominant discourse) who combine their knowledge with Chinese traditional medicine. The core idea is the same as the one behind the folk healing practices of the previous centuries, i.e. to achieve the best result, the discursive gap is crossed on entirely pragmatic grounds.

Closer ties between the dominant discourses of medicine and vernacular, spiritual discourses are found in psychiatry and clinical psychology, for example certain forms of meditation are used in psychotherapy (especially the mindfulness-based cognitive behavioural therapy influenced by Buddhism – see, for example Crane et al 2014). The same applies to breathing exercises adopted from yoga. The use of different breathing exercises can be rationalised on the basis of Western medicine. This also applies to the use of meditation in psychotherapy (Kraemer et al 2016), which utilises meditation to the extent that it corroborates the established practices prescribed by psychology. In this sense, certain forms of meditation validate therapeutic techniques, and vice-versa. At the same time, therapy does not take much interest in the deeply spiritual systems underlying meditation practices. Thus, the dominant discourse can adapt and integrate elements from vernacular discourses that fit into the dominant framework, while ignoring the rest. Again, the decisive criterion is entirely practical.

The inherent tension between dominant and vernacular discourses is also clearly highlighted in so-called *transpersonal psychology*[4]. This is a quasi-institutional phenomenon structured similarly to institutional psychology (with

schools, specialised publications, associations). Advocates of this school define themselves explicitly as scholars (and often have relevant academic training). The non-acceptance and disdain in academic circles towards such discourses stems from the fact that the products of scientific thought are used in a manner that is found to be 'unfitting', often ideologically charged, appearing to be vernacular from the perspective of the dominant discourse.

* * *

The examples presented within this group imply that there are different types of dynamic between vernacular and dominant discourses, i.e. the opposition-based model clearly appears to be too narrow.

In the case of the forms of meditation that are used in psychotherapy, it is clear that there is no conflict between the vernacular and dominant discourses, rather they should be considered dialogue partners, whereas in the cases of transpersonal psychology competence in institutional knowledge is used to give weight to a variety of statements and beliefs that are practically independent from their original context both in their content and their purpose. Thus the authority of the dominant discourse is used to give weight to a vernacular discourse, something that is not accepted by institutional psychology.

When it comes to magic and folk medicine techniques, vernacular and institutional discourses are also not in conflict. Neither can be considered subjugated knowledge in the Foucauldian sense. Elements adopted from institutional discourse add legitimacy to magical and folk medical practices. Rather than viewing vernacular and dominant discourses as in direct confrontation one might think of the above examples as elucidating something of our common everyday knowledge. Unlike subjugated knowledge, which is disqualified consciously, common knowledge does not oppose the dominant discourse because it does not actualise the opposition. This means that the boundaries between discourses are more diffuse than one might expect.

Between dominant and vernacular: the discourses of Taaraism, native religion, and atheism

In the next sub-chapter we are going to discuss the power relations between nationalism, Christianity and atheism that emerged in the wake of the changes in the political background.

The birth and spread of nationalist ideas in the second half of the 19th century slowly started to undermine the dominant ideological position of Christianity in

Estonia. Other secular currents also started to take hold in parallel with nationalism – for example liberal, democratic, natural scientific, etc. Christianity, which had dominated after the Northern Crusades of the 13th century, came to be seen as alien or malevolent, in opposition to Estonian indigenous beliefs, which were claimed to have been kept alive for many centuries. The early 20th century in the Estonian cultural sphere also saw the introduction of the atheist tradition that later became state policy during the Soviet occupation.

Taaraism and native religion as idiosyncratic nationalist discourses. Taaraism (Estonian: *taarausk*), a purposefully created religion relying on ancient Estonian indigenous beliefs, was founded in 1928. The foundation for its development was a position where Christian ideology had already lost its position in society as a hegemonic discourse and had been replaced with a nationalist ideology, which, under the influence of liberal and socialist ideas of progress and values, no longer considered religion important for the development of a modern people and culture. Nationalist ideologists with leftist and liberal inclinations started to force religion to the periphery of the socio-cultural world, although the dominant position of Christianity in the religious sphere remained strong – as a religion, it was considered self-evident by the people.

To solve the problem of the propagation of internationalist ideas, which the nationalists considered were spreading at the expense of nationalist ones, as well as a dependence on 'alien' German culture, and especially Christianity, a religion the Germans had introduced, the founders of the Taaraism proposed a 'return to the roots', understood as following a national religion based on folklore. Its everyday practice was understood as simple quotidian life in the spirit of a natural sense of life, will of life and development of life (Vakker 2007, 17–19, 59), as an individually experienced and lived faith.

Taaraism saw itself as the necessary religious complement to secular national ideology. Its credibility was constructed by using the dominant nationalist discourse, based on the idea that Christianity was forced upon Estonians by the German conquerors in the 13th century and was to be replaced by Taaraism, the status and authority of which were to be supported by its position as a religion based on local tradition. This tradition, in turn, was modelled on modern culture, which was supposed to make it more acceptable in light of the other nationalist goal of the time, the development of Estonian identity as a modern culture. Thus, whereas the founders of Taaraism saw it as an indigenous religion, in a Foucauldian sense this is a clear case of subjugated knowledge.

Even though Taaraism had many supporters, it never gained mass popularity. It met heavy resistance from dominant institutional discourses. Christians

accused Taara believers of the promotion of a pseudo-religion. The attitude at the level of state power was similar and Taara adherents had significant difficulties registering their religious organisation (Vakker 2007, 47–49). Meanwhile, nationalists influenced by liberal and socialist ideas saw no need for religion as such, while nationalists with Christian inclinations only saw a need for Christianity. Taaraists also failed to convince modernists, who perceived them as a sign of cultural backwardness (op cit, 82). Even though Taaraism was recognised as an attempt to restore the ancient religion of the ancestors as 'our own' religion, something genuine, it maintained only a marginal position in society.

After the collapse of the Soviet regime at the end of the 20th century, nationalism once again became the dominant discourse in the Estonian socio-cultural environment. This had started in the late sixties when ideas of Pan-Finno-Ugric unity were developed in art, literature and music as an expression of national identity in opposition to Russian-centric Soviet culture (Kuutma 2005, 55–58). The focus on Finno-Ugric heritage, and especially Estonian folklore, led to the birth of Estonian native religion (Estonian: *maausk*), which started to take shape in the late 1980s (Västrik 2015).

Whereas the Taaraists had relied on nationalism, talking about Estonians and Estonian identity, the followers of native religion, despite also adhering to the main thread of the nationalist narrative, emphasise more specific locality and ethnicity. They use the term, *maarahvas* (country folk, native folk), evoking a way people discuss local ethnic cultural and language groups that requires assistance in preserving their unique culture. Today, institutional support is provided for the preservation of local customs, practices and cultures by the European Union in terms of a discourse on the protection of minorities and cultural diversity. Thus, native religion also relies on institutional discourses in the construction of its credibility and authority, while putting particular emphasis on locality (indigenous origin) as its principal value, in opposition to the alien, which also includes (institutional) Christianity.

Unlike Taaraists, the followers of native religion oppose modernism and defend indigenous identity and values. In this respect, global mass culture is seen as the main threat (although cosmopolitanism was also considered a problem by the Taaraists). This attitude indicates fundamentalism and defining oneself in terms of subjugated knowledge. Its followers rally to defend traditions, although not all tradition is acceptable, as the past generally also contains things fought against. Thus, fundamentalism should not be understood as simply old truths, but as the re-affirmance of old truths in an unstable situation that threatens identity. One of the features of fundamentalism is socio-political assertiveness in promoting one's views, which is certainly also characteristic to the followers

of Estonian native religion (L. Altnurme 2012a, 211), as well as the attempt to ideologically involve as large a part of the population as possible, something that could also be construed as aspiration for power.

Due to their ambition to represent authentic tradition, followers of native religion have found themselves in conflict with academic institutions that preserve and study folklore and ethnology. Despite the emphasis on indigenous origin, the academic sphere treats native religions like Taaraism as a new phenomenon, and its followers construct their faith based on modern conceptions of indigeneity and authenticity. Thus, dominant institutional scientific discourse reduces the credibility of native religion. At the same time, by providing access to the data gathered about folk religion by the Estonian National Museum and the Estonian Folklore Archives that followers of native religion frequently use, academic discourse provides native religion with authentic content.

Even though Estonian native religion is somewhat institutionalised – organised into houses (*koda*, a regional organisation) and its ideology published on the Internet – the number of followers is hard to establish, because in addition to locality, ethnicity and authenticity, native religion also emphasises individuality. Individual religious experience born from contact with living tradition is considered extremely important (L. Altnurme 2012b, 55). Thus, the boundaries of native religion are extremely diffuse: in a survey conducted in 2014, 4% of Estonians considered themselves followers of native religion. 20% claimed to have friends or relatives who could be considered to follow native religion (RTE 2014).

Similar to Taaraism, a certain tension is present in the relationship between native religion and dominant institutional discourses of power; however, due to the greater value placed on tolerance and pluralism these tensions are much weaker today. On one hand, native religion is tied to nationalist discourse in the Estonian cultural sphere. In 2014, 61% of Estonians agreed with the statement, "Native religion is the true religion of the Estonian people" (RTE 2014). On the other hand, native religion is not an undeniable part of the dominant nationalist discourse, as the conception of Estonians as the world's most secular people occupies an extremely prominent position in the Estonian self-image (see below, the section on atheism). Even though Christianity could still be considered the largest and most influential faith, it occupies a much more marginal position in the overall socio-cultural context than it did in the days of Taaraism, which means that it has less power to define what takes place in the religious sphere. Demands made by followers of native religion that undermine the position of Christianity have been accounted for. They have actively expressed their opposition to introducing either denominational religious instruction or non-denominational

religious studies as an independent subject in school, on the pretext that Christianity is too dominant in these curricula.

In 2001, the Round Table of Religious Organisations was founded at initiative of followers of native religion, with the goal of promoting the equal treatment of confessions and dialogue with the state (L. Altnurme 2012b, 54). They demanded changes to the law on religious organisations that was adopted in 2002, according to which only terms with Christian origin could be used for religious organisations, such as *kirik* ('church'), *kogudus* ('congregation'), *koguduste liit* ('association of congregations') and *klooster* ('monastery') (op cit). The law was amended in 2004 to permit religious organisations to use self-designation – in the case of the followers of native religion, *koda* ('house') (op cit), copying thus the structure of the 'dominant' institution.

A change in the attitude of the press is also noteworthy here. Whereas the activities of the Taaraists were often presented in an ironic mode, those of the followers of native religion are generally presented sympathetically. We can thus conclude that dominant institutional discourses were much more defiant towards Taaraism in the early 20th century than they are towards native religion today.

Atheism in Estonia in the 20th and 21st centuries. The early 20th century saw the introduction of the atheist tradition in the Estonian cultural sphere. As part of the agenda of the Social Democrats it was not a goal in itself, but was used as a means to attract people to their ideas (Remmel 2004). Since it was associated with a political ideology challenging two dominant institutions – the state and the church – it was under constant pressure from both (Raid 1978). Meanwhile, the criticism of the 'high church' accompanying the Estonian national awakening was also perceived as (or at least, labelled) 'atheism' from the perspective of the Baltic-Germans who formed the majority of the Lutheran clergy and saw the Estonian nationalist awakening as some sort of socialist undermining of the status quo. However, for Estonians, despite the development of a national narrative, church and religion were still important, which meant fighting on a new front to prove this accusation unsound. Nevertheless, according to contemporaries, some Estonians really started to believe the inherent associations between atheism and Estonian nationality (Remmel 2016). Thus, from the beginning, atheism in Estonia has been in the middle of intermingled political, national and religious power struggles. From the perspective of the state and church it was a struggle for power between dominant and rising vernacular discourse that aimed to undermine their very essence. For Estonian nationalists, atheism was just a smearing word – their criticism of the dominant discourse (church) was interpreted in a way that had negative connotations for both parties.

Disorder after the Russian Revolution in 1917 proved suitable for the birth of independent Estonia in 1918, soon attacked by Soviet Russia. To simulate civil war, a puppet government Commune of the Working People of Estonia was set up. Their violent religious policy copied the Bolshevik policy in Russia, later characterised as one of the most important reasons for the failure of the Commune (Liebman & Mattisen 1978, 105), which discredited atheism as a political programme. Thus, violent overthrow of the dominant discourse doesn't give good results when it has no support from vernacular discourse.

During the Era of Independence, despite the fact that most of the intellectuals in general were regarded as rather critical towards religion, the visibility of atheism was low. In most cases it appeared in public in association with religious education at schools, fighting for its right to be acknowledged. Nevertheless, even in the final years of independence, according to analysis of newspaper articles (Remmel 2016), atheism was still associated with communism and Russia, and there is no reason to claim that it was a part of the Estonian identity in any way. Still, one has to mention the tradition of criticising Christianity within the Estonian national narrative.

After the Soviet occupation in 1940, in the religious field, atheism became a dominant discourse, but there were many inner discourses that were in mutual tension. For example, atheism as a facet of the party's ideological upbringing of the populace often contrasted with the (personal) interests of lower level propaganda units, who saw this as an accessory obligation; the same happened with the local authorities, who were given the task of looking after the lawfulness of local churches (Remmel 2011). This indifference toward the sphere of religion and atheism even reached the higher state and party officials (Smolkin-Rothrock 2010), and, at least in Estonia, the reason boiled down to a lack of a problematic religious situation. Thus, the dominant discourse of atheism, founded in party program and state policy, was perceived necessary by nobody except the atheism activists, because in the popular understanding the low visibility of religion was equal to atheism. This aside, the reputation of (official) atheism was not too high due to its direct connection with official Soviet ideology, which had a very negative reception, although this was not openly shown.

The popular interpretation of the essence of atheism proved to be one of the most problematic for the atheism activists, since it undermined the basis of their fight against religion and the militant atheist attitude, i.e. 'conscious' atheism. Thus, it created a new power struggle between officially promoted "scientific atheism" and "spontaneous atheism that emerges as a result of life experience" ('ateism' – ENE 1, 1968, 227-8), which has all the characteristics of subjugated knowledge as a 'lower' form of atheism that needs to be rooted out (just like

religion) through ideological upbringing.[5] Nevertheless, since the topic of atheist upbringing was secondary, this goal was never achieved.

Meanwhile, in many ways, institutional atheism tried to make use of the vernacular authority of the national narrative. The anti-religion campaign (1958–64) initiated under Khrushchev gave rise to the establishment of secular Soviet rituals, which became the main tool in the war on religion in Soviet Estonia. In the development of new rites (weddings, funerals, initiation rituals, etc.), atheism activists and developers of rituals cooperated with scholars (for example folklorists). Following the principle of 'national in form, socialist in content', the development of these rites was based on Estonian folk traditions, with attempts made to inject them with a new content. Thus, substitution rather than direct opposition was used, which proved to be very successful – new rituals in Estonia are considered to be one of the main means by which religion was repulsed to the periphery of culture by the late sixties.

The same tactics were used in the change in content of the national narrative. Past accusations of 'atheism' from the Baltic-German perspective, and criticism of the 'high church' from the Estonian perspective, were interpreted as an Estonian national 'predilection for atheism' (or atheism as a characteristic of the Estonian mentality) and widely used in atheist propaganda.[6] Ancient Estonian religion as an important element in the national narrative was also placed in an anti-Christian context and thus should have carried positive value. Nevertheless, from the point of view of institutional atheism, it was considered an unscientific frame of mind, like any other religion, which in practice meant that the complicated situation was solved by taking a generally neutral stance while trying to avoid the subject. Thus, in the Soviet context, atheism used vernacular authority, actually representing the dominant institutional discourse, i.e. the ideology of the Communist Party.

After the restoration of Estonian independence in 1991, atheism lost its dominant position and was shunned in subsequent years because of its connection to Soviet ideology. However, presenting itself in the nationalist context has enabled atheism to significantly improve its position at the beginning of the 21st century. One such opportunity was provided by the 2005 Eurobarometer survey, which showed that only 16% of Estonians believe in a personified God (the lowest in Europe). According to the popular interpretation that soon took hold, Estonians are 'the most atheist nation in the world', i.e. atheism has become a part of national identity, a clear indicator of the successful insertion of atheism into the Estonian national narrative during the Soviet era.[7] This is apparent in cases where still peripheral religiousness finds itself in the public sphere and atheism actualises, i.e. the implied atheist national character is used as an argument:

"Who the hell needs a Christian school?… Estonians are the least religious people in the world" (Remmel 2013, 101).

Even though there is ample reason to do so,[8] connection between nationalism and atheism has not been challenged too much – probably because atheism also appeals to 'scientificity', which has high social standing in Estonia. Thus, atheism uses both dominant discourse (science) and vernacular authority (appeal to national character) to improve its position, to construct its elitist reputation, claiming to be both 'rational' and associated with 'erudition', the same elements are also present in the Estonian national narrative. This kind of atheism, of course, is very vaguely associated with atheism as a philosophical position – in a survey conducted in 2010, 23% of the respondents self-identified as atheists, while only 4.5% of these (less than 2% in total) held strictly materialist positions (LFRL 2010).

* * *

In conclusion: Taaraism, native religion and atheism have all staked claims to be something real, true and indigenous, etc., contrasting themselves to something imposed, false, alien, inauthentic, first and foremost referring to Christianity. All of them have utilised both vernacular authority and institutional discourse in the establishment of authority and reliability (for example science). The goal of all three has been to move towards the status of dominant institutional discourse, as they have seen themselves closely related to the Estonians' faith or mentality. To improve its position, atheism as a dominant discourse during the Soviet period also relied on the vernacular authority of nationalist narrative.

As a result of the dominant nationalist discourse that it was intended to complement, Taaraism was subject to a greater tension than native religion. Native religion, however, has met much greater recognition as a religion, as the sociocultural situation itself has changed. Even though in the years after the restoration of independence, atheism suffered from negative associations with Soviet ideology, these connections seem to be weakening and atheism has become a legitimate element of the renewed national identity.

A typology of power relations in religion

In the following, we will attempt to typologise the above examples in more general terms. For the cultural semiotic approach, the main goal of creating typologies is comparing the functions of divergent phenomena in the contexts in which they appear (Lotman 2010, 121). The same phenomenon can have different functions in different contexts. Thus, it is important to distinguish between the viewpoints

of different institutions, social groups, etc., i.e. from where, for what, in relation to whom and with whom these discourses are articulated. Because of this, functions can't be reduced to the tasks of one component of the system, which are 'good' for the system, i.e. help to preserve and integrate it (for example Durkheim's functionalism or Freud's sexuality). We can talk of social functions only in the regard of a more or less coercive mutual relationship (Elias 1978, 77–78).

This relational approach allows us to conceptualise religious phenomena in mutual relation to the centre and the periphery as hierarchical and asymmetrical, and to show how this dynamic of meaning-making can be explained in terms of power relations. The central elements of religion-related discourses can be described as more institutional and structured, stable and normative; while the peripheral discourses can be described as vernacular discourses that are less clearly organised, more changeable and ambivalent. The normative pressure of the centre and the resistance of the periphery form the basis for the dynamics of meaning-making – innovation is more likely to appear in the periphery, away from the influence of normative pressure. Both dominant and vernacular, structured and non-structured are involved in general meaning-making through their mutual relations. Considering vernacular religious discourses as peripheral in relation to official religious discourse, then an initial typological classification could be made based on their formation:

1) *Actively forcing a previously dominant discourse to the periphery*. This is illustrated by the opposition of the Taaraists to the institutional church in the 1920s, or the antireligious policy of Soviet Union *vs* Christianity, or the sudden rise of religious movements at the end of the 1980s and the decline of Soviet atheism. Both Christianity and atheism were seen as continuations of a previous dominant discourse, which not only functioned inside their own discursive boundaries but hindered the emergence of a new, politically motivated (national) discourse. Thus, the two opposing discourses – atheism and Christianity – are connected by a dual relationship. In the 1920s and 1950s, Christianity as a dominant discourse was being forced to the periphery, while in the 1980s Christianity forced Soviet ideology to the periphery.

Although we cannot regard magic as ever being a part of a dominant discourse (at least in the context of Western Christianity), its explicit humiliation to a primitive, inferior stage in human religious development started with the Enlightenment and continued especially with the works of the religious historians published since the 18th and 19th centuries. The idea of the stages of religious development is no longer on the agenda, but magical practices of modern-era Europe as well as of present-day indigenous peoples around the world are

commonly viewed as naive and primitive examples of subjugated knowledge, with the Western European scientific worldview being the dominant discourse.

2) *A previously dominant discourse falling out of active use as (temporarily) unnecessary*. These developments can be observed in situations where the moment of social upheaval has passed and the society is characterised by greater stability. From the perspective of the new dominant discourse, active efforts are not required for certain discourses to be abandoned. Their abandonment is mainly considered to result from other social processes. The 1980s saw a religious boom in Estonia, although starting from the mid-90s Christian discourse became marginalised again. This was not due to an anti-Christian attitude, but could rather be associated with the churches' inability to hold its social capital and the emergence of a neoliberal governance policy (Ringvee 2013).

In the case of this function, we can distinguish between two possibilities: the dominant 'falls' 1) to the status of a *peripheral* institution, as is the case of the churches in the 90s, or 2) falls to the vernacular level, thereby losing its institutional status, as is the case of atheist discourse after the fall of the Soviet Union.

3) *Attempts to improve the position by using (another) dominant discourse.* In both cases described in the previous function, the discourse is retained in cultural memory and under the right circumstances has the potential to re-establish itself as an active counter-discourse to the new dominant discourse. For instance, in the 1980s, in the wake of the rise of national consciousness, the churches presented themselves as a vehicle of this newly found consciousness. Or, as with the case of atheism after the Eurobarometer survey in 2005, which revealed the very low percentage of belief in God among Estonians, by relying both on dominant scientific and dominant national discourses to establish itself strongly in the Estonian national consciousness.

Vernacular discourse using the elements from the dominant discourse is exemplified by the magical practices of folk medicine, which clearly try to legitimise or enhance the effect and credibility of practices by exploiting single elements deriving from dominant discourse, for example the Pater Noster in magic spells or church attributes in folk medicine remedies.

4) *Attempts to institutionalise vernacular discourses and to increase vernacular authority.* Vernacular discourses may unite against dominant institutional discourse(s). Thus, the rise in the popularity in esoteric forms of knowledge, striving towards the status of institutional discourses to a smaller or greater degree, can be observed in Estonia starting from the late 1980s. Therapeutic

methods falling outside the dominant medical discourse try to achieve permanent recognition (for example forms of meditation that are used in psychotherapy, 'healing waters', etc., seeking marketing permits from the Estonian State Agency of Medicines). The same can be said about Taaraism and Estonian native religion (*maausk*).

5) *Conscious transformation of the dominant discourse to a vernacular one*. The important thing to note here is the goal this conscious activity serves. For example, due to the low quality of propaganda, atheism was perceived only as the negation of religion, which seemed even more peculiar due to the fact that the visibility of religion in society was minimal. Realising by the end of the 1960s that this does not lead to the initial goal, a conscious atheist worldview, Soviet ideologists started to change the paradigm. In the hope that it would have positive effect on reputation, direct opposition to religion was discarded and an attempt was made to associate atheism with everyday life and to emphasise its life-affirming, positive nature. Although proven to be useless, this tactical move did not imply the end of the fight against religion but rather its restructuring. The transformation still functioned within the framework of the reproduction of power relations while attempting to find mechanisms to make it more effective. Another example that falls into this category was the (quite successful) attempt to insert atheism into the Estonian national narrative, associating thus vernacular authority with official ideology.

6) *Creation of a meta-discourse.* Meta-systemic descriptions are used by the system for "self-organization, orienting itself on this meta-description, casting aside those of its elements that should not exist from the perspective of the meta-description and emphasizing what is highlighted in the description" (Lotman 2002, 2652). Initially existing as something desirable and yet to come, this description may evolve to become "the reality, becoming the norm for this semiotic complex" (op cit). The development of a meta-perspective dialectically resolves the tension between different (and opposing) discourses, by rising to the meta-level – for instance, through the creation of a common meta-identity. Thus the increase in the status of vernacular religion relies on the values of the protection of minorities and cultural diversity, both elements of the EU meta-discourse, such as the case of protecting holy groves (*hiis*) in the rhetoric of representatives of native religion. The important aspect of meta-identities is that initially the divergent identities are not fused together: the political discourse of minority protection does not add a political dimension to native religious identification

(at least from the perspective of the followers of native religion); on the contrary, it allows them to distance it from the political as something authentic.

7) *Dialogue and hybridisation.* In this type of relationship, the independence and self-determination of the dialogue partner, of the *other*, is taken into consideration, allowing the inclusion of the alien into the cultural space of the self as something meaningful and capable of dialogue. In this case, the perspective of the *self* is, in principle, open to the changes it manifests as it enters into dialogue with the external. This model could be dubbed the *model of dialogical self-description* (Madisson & Ventsel 2012). Thus, dialogue facilitates the creation of interaction between different points of view, conceptual horizons, social languages and emphases (Bakhtin 2001, 282). The central aspect here is the mutually constitutive relationship between the discourses. Creative synthesis manifests itself in the transformation of old meanings and stereotypes, the development of a new understanding, the transformation of norms[9]. Different contexts, activities and relations support different rationalities and people are able to utilise them complementarily (Wagner & Hayes 2005; see also Raudsepp & Ventsel 2020 in this volume).

Thus, everyday knowledge uses different magical techniques that seem suitable at the moment, although their institutionality or vernacularity may not be important to their user at all. In the same manner, vernacular discourses adopt techniques from institutional discourses, combining these with their own practices (for example the usage of the Pater Noster in magical practices mentioned above, or a doctor advising a patient to see a folk healer, etc.). A new discourse is created, certain aspects of which may resemble institutional knowledge while others resemble vernacular. In both cases, dialogues can be observed between different thought systems of institutional, magical, and everyday knowledge; hybridisation takes place, often unconsciously. At the same time, it is important to note that the more dominant a discourse is, the less open it is to dialogue, as this might result in a change in the dominant paradigm. Using Foucault's concept of power, this can be seen as an instance of the strong delimiting effect of discursive discipline.

The typology presented above is not conclusive. The analysis of different kinds of example is sure to yield even more types of relationship; however, this study only aimed to present an initial approach to the understanding of religious phenomena in the context of power relations.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to conceptualise meaning-making in religious phenomena on the basis of Michel Foucault's discourse theory and Robert G. Howard's conception of vernacular authority. This allowed us to analyse the relationships between discourses as a mechanism that guides meaning-making in terms of power relations. We must note, however, that even though power relations are potentially omnipresent, reducing all social processes to nothing but power mechanisms is not rational. This means that in the cases studied here, the analysis of power relations is only one of numerous possible approaches; for a better interpretation of the material, the study should be based on interdisciplinary principles, i.e. also cover other aspects (for example economic, legal, etc.) of the establishment of social relations.

As a result of the study undertaken here, we presented a typology of power relations based on Norbert Elias' conception of functions. Based on the above, we may conceptualise meaning-making in religious phenomena in the following terms: 1) *Actively forcing a previously dominant discourse to the periphery*; 2) *A previously dominant discourse falling out of active use as (temporarily) unnecessary*; 3) *Attempts to improve the position by using (another) dominant discourse;* 4) *Attempts to institutionalise vernacular discourses and the increase in vernacular authority;* 5) *Conscious transformation of the dominant discourse to a vernacular one*; 6) *Creation of a meta-discourse;* and 7) *Dialogue and hybridisation.*

These functions of power relations should be viewed as relational and mutually dependent; hence, an instance of meaning-making is never determined by a single function. It is much more accurate to speak of the domination of a certain function in a certain stage of meaning-making. This classification of functions based on interactions should also allow us to see similar relations in the analysis of other fields.

The important thing to note in the above is that the dynamics between the vernacular and the dominant are always complex and involve many levels. An opposition in one aspect does not rule out hybridisation in another and conformity in third. In this sense, the 'grey areas' between the dominant and the vernacular in the Estonian religious landscape are perhaps the most interesting and informative. For one, they definitely deserve significantly more intensive interdisciplinary research than they have enjoyed in the past. Hopefully, the present article has contributed towards this goal.

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Notes

1 Leonard Primiano has also adopted the term *vernacular religion*, which refers to a "religion as it is lived: as human beings encounter, understand, interpret, and practice it" (Primiano 1995, 42), but unlike Primiano, who focuses on individual religion, our focus is on the *mutual* relations between religious discourses at a more abstract level.

2 The collection of Estonian oral tradition and folklore began in the second half of the 19th century, creating a number of collections that are today gathered into the Estonian Folklore Archives.

3 In their descriptions of the rituals of indigenous peoples, several anthropologists and religious historians have concluded that in pre-literary cultures, experiences tend to

overlap and intertwine, forming a symbolically complete and systemic universe for the practitioners (see, for example Douglas 1970; Wax & Wax 1962). Indeed, folk belief systems are flexible and open and the addition of new 'operable' elements is context-dependent (ad hoc); however, the system is still made up of elements structured to follow a system-specific logic.

4 see http://www.transpersonaalne.ee/.

5 As an example, see the 1981 book by Kuulo Vimmsaare, *Ükskõiksus – on see hea või halb?* (Indifference: Is it Good or Bad?).

6 As examples of such ambitions, see, for example *Hajutatud müüdid: eesti kirjamehed religioonist* (Dissolved Myths: Estonian Authors on Religion), eds Vaime Kabur, Helmut Tarand (Tallinn, 1961) and *Kelle peale sa loodad? Valimik usu ja kiriku vastaseid rahvaluuletekste* (Who do you Count on? A Selection of Antireligious and Anticlerical Folklore Texts), eds Selma Lätt, Ingrid Rüütel (Tallinn, 1963).

7 Considering this, Tamm (2003, 60) is mistaken by stating that after the final polish of national narrative at the end of the era of independence it has remained relatively intact.

8 The same 2005 survey showed that Estonians were also the most willing (54%) to believe in some kind of a 'spirit or life force'.

9 The distinction between the monologic and dialogic is mainly analytical. Applying the relational view to the ontological level, monologue is the tendency in interrelations to preserve an earlier identity and 'not listen to the other'.

Knowledge/power in belief

Ott Puumeister

The truth is not out there.[1] It is produced in discourse. And this means that we should understand truth as socially accepted and legitimised knowledge. The classic definition of knowledge as justified belief puts us on the track to turn our attention to the mechanisms according to which beliefs are justified and made justifiable. Conversely, what types of knowledge are constituted as non-justifiable; that is, what knowledge is doomed to the level of 'mere' belief.

This is not at all a question of the properties of sentences and statements and of how they conform to the objects they describe. When speaking of social knowledge, justifiability or legitimacy is not produced in the correlation between language and the object it refers to. Instead, we are dealing with different discourses, contesting each other, in their attempts to speak the truth, that is, form a body of knowledge rather than belief. Which manner of speaking becomes dominant – accepted as knowledge – is the result of power relations and not of appropriate description. This becomes especially evident when dealing with discourses that very apparently create their own objects.[2]

The paper "Power relations in vernacular and institutional discourses on religion" presents to us an opportunity to get a glimpse of the agonistic field of discourses all loosely classifiable under the term 'religious'. In analysing the interplay of dominant and subjugated knowledges, the authors have opted for a path that does not correlate dominant with institutional[3] or subjugated with vernacular. This opens up a richer field of possibility to analyse the relationality of discursive formations.

One of Michel Foucault's primary methodological principles was, in fact, to not presuppose the existence of that which is put under analysis. Whether it was madness, the clinic, the prison, or sexuality, he sought to analyse how certain definitions of those institutions became dominant. This sort of constitution of a position of power always entails that some forms of knowledge are declared to be non-knowledge, or mere belief. For example, the understanding that madness is first and foremost a mental illness is not an ahistorical fact but a contingent result of interplay between different discourses and social actors all striving to speak the truth about madness (Foucault 1972b).

There is thus no truth of religion outside discursive practices defining this very truth and claiming to represent the true knowledge of religious beliefs. Every

particular discourse has its "will to truth", to use a term of Foucault's (1972a, 218). That is, every discourse strives toward its manner of speaking being recognised as the one through which knowledge of religion and religious practice is achieved, and thus not merely 'beliefs about beliefs', but 'true beliefs'.

To understand this will to truth, it is not enough to juxtapose institutional (church) practices with those that lie outside, that are external to it. Taking this perspective would already presuppose entities that can be defined as dominant and subjugated independent of the actual relations constituting them as such. We could then take the church as that which is disseminating the dominant beliefs and religious meanings and state that popular beliefs are always those that are subjugated. To take a Foucauldian relational approach to the power of discourse

> is not to analyze rule-governed and legitimate forms of power which have a single center, or to look at what their general mechanisms or its overall effects might be. Our object is, on the contrary, to understand power by looking at its extremities, at its outer limits at the point where it becomes capillary […]. (Foucault 2003, 27)

Popular beliefs that are not ordered according to an institutional set of rules can become dominant exactly because they contest the beliefs set out by institutions. Thus it would not only be too simplifying to concentrate on the institutional centres, but also quite erroneous. Here we come to an understanding that conceptualising power as institutional domination, that is, as a property of institutions, misses very significant points about what it entails to speak the truth.

To speak the truth always entails being constrained by the rules of a particular discourse, rules that are constituted not only from within this discourse but also in relation to other discourses that are relegated to the status of pseudo-knowledge. To take two rather radical examples, we can see efforts, in the United States, to constitute the theory of evolution as an untruth; or to delegitimise the scientific understanding of climate change as if it were just a political ideology. The notion of belief, then, is not simply a question of religious thinking but of all knowledge(s), including scientific.

Scientific knowledge, the supposed cornerstone of Western modernity, can – and indeed, has – been (more or less) successfully contested in disciplines that exhibit the constructivist aspect of knowledge more clearly. If we think of medicine, the knowledge based on biological evidence is constantly put under question by manners of speaking that simply *refuse to believe* in this evidence. Think

of the anti-vaccination campaign (Kata 2012), for example, which has as long a history as the practice of vaccination itself (Durbach 2005).[4]

In addition, any type of knowledge's will to truth is stronger and more pervasive if it manages to tie knowledge directly to the questions of (social, national, etc.) identity. It is not simply the case that when we follow the rules of certain discourses, we know the world through them, but also that our identity is formed through this knowledge. Any type of knowledge – whether scientific or religious – structures the possibilities for identification since it incites the subject to speak in a certain manner and accept certain shared viewpoints. Thus, the operations of power relations are not detectable only in the communication and conflict of discourses but also in how the discourses in their will to truth function as the producers of social identities.

It is in this complex of knowledge–power–identity that the paper "Power relations …" operates and it is the recognition of the complexity of these relations that render it useful and, in the Estonian context, novel in approaching religious discourses.

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Notes

1 Richard Rorty (1989, 5): "Truth cannot be out there – cannot exist independently of the human mind – because sentences cannot so exist, or be out there. The world is out there, but descriptions of the world are not. Only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world on its own – unaided by the describing activities of human beings – cannot."

2 It is not, of course, so simple to divide discourses into those that deal with "real objects" and those that create their own. In a certain sense we must understand all discourses as producing their own objects. But this is not the place to discuss this further, to get a better overview of discursive objects, see Foucault 1972a, 40–49.

3 Institutions are to be understood here in a narrow sense as in the official structures for spreading certain knowledge and practices (schools, universities, the church, the government, etc.).

4 It should perhaps be noted that one element of the modern anti-vaccination campaign was published in what is regarded as one of the most prestigious medical journals in the world, *The Lancet* (Wakefield et al. 1998).

Anu Kalm "Emaarm" ("Maternal Love") 1988.
Lithography, paper. 53.8 x 68.5 cm.

The role of communities in the politics of cultural heritage: examples from Estonia

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Abstract. The chapter uses the community perspective in order to analyse heritage management and politics in contemporary Estonia. The authors are interested in how community and cultural heritage, both as concepts and practices, are understood in varied social contexts and what roles community/ies may be given in varied heritage politics. The empirical examples are composed of three case studies that refer to two major issues relevant also in international heritage management – the democratisation of heritage politics on the one hand and the problems related to community engagement on the other hand. Firstly, the problematic issues related to heritage management in the Rebala heritage protection area, in a community that lives the heritage against their own will. The disengagement of local community in the process of heritage management has resulted in the misrecognition of and resistance to institutionally defined heritage. The second case highlights the problems related to the adaption of the UNESCO heritage regime and traces the challenges related to the democratisation of intangible heritage when creating a national inventory. There is a danger that the multivocality inherent in every community may be lost if too clear a voice is found for the inventory inscriptions in cooperation with administrators and experts. The third example questions issues of sustainability and ruptures in the community stewardship of an old tradition – cross trees in southeast Estonia. The process of their heritagisation shows the need for external heritage experts who would have social capital as well as a competency to be intermediaries between multiple authorities and local people.

Keywords: community, cultural heritage, intangible heritage, heritage policy

'Community' and 'heritage' are words as well as concepts that can be seen in policy documents, academic texts, media as well as everyday contexts. "For many people '*community*' and '*heritage*' are comfortably self-evident, defined by place and shared histories and often ethnicity and nationality, and redolent of shared values and their celebration" (Smith & Waterton 2009, 12; emphasis added). The two notions are often used together, especially in the policy discourse that relates to community participation in heritage management or attributes heritage a crucial role in the making of cultural communities. However, it is difficult to say who constitute a community for a particular heritage as well as what is understood as heritage by a community. Both 'community' and 'heritage' can be interpreted quite diversely by different people and in different contexts.

In our article we consider three Estonian cases of heritage management looking at them from the community perspective. We are seeking to know how community and cultural heritage are understood in varied social contexts and in particular heritage processes, and how corresponding understandings affect cultural practices, including political decisions related to heritage management and maintenance. How community can become an instrument and a device in heritage politics and what roles community/ies might be either explicitly or implicitly given in varied heritage processes?

Entanglements with community in heritage discourses

In national as well as international heritage discourses 'community' often remains undefined, being open to various interpretations and ideological manipulations (De Cesari 2013; Kuutma 2013). The tacit assumptions in such discourses propose an idealised image of community as something related to belonging, togetherness, closeness, shared values, civil initiative and socio-cultural sustainability; whereas heritage is often seen as something communities value and want to preserve, often confirming and expressing their identity, and sometimes also as a developmental and economic resource. But the relationship between community and heritage is not always unproblematic, especially if it comes to issues of heritage politics and management.

Policy documents often use community synonymously with any social group, and especially in neoliberal ideology "community appears simultaneously as the site of governing (where it takes place), the object of governing (to produce communities), and the mode of governing (through which it takes place)" (Clarke 2014, 55). However, community is not an unequivocally definable referent – communities are often weakly bounded and may stretch over locality or common interests – two main criteria by which communities are often defined.

Community leaders are not often easy to be "discovered, enrolled and sustained in the 'business of governing'" (op cit, 58–59).

Cultural heritage does not exist "out there", it is produced and re-created by various local as well as international "heritage regimes" through policy documents, legislations, nominations, lists, etc. (Bendix et al 2013). 'Heritagisation' can be considered a process that honours and dignifies a cultural phenomenon (and excludes others) as something that should be preserved; historically heritage status has been given by expert organisations and institutions (Bendix 2009). In approaches that see heritage as something material, related to the conservation and preservation of architectural and archaeological monuments and objects, the term 'community' is seldom used. This authorised heritage discourse privileges "expert knowledge and values over that of non-expert communities and other groups" (Smith 2013, 390). Such understanding originates in the modernist idea of heritage as something that needs to be preserved by professional experts. Furthermore, authorised heritage discourse "not only closes down notions of personal, local and community heritage in an attempt to mitigate conflict and dissent, but also attempts to focus on heritage at a distance, out there or 'back there' in the past" (Urry 1996, 148 in Smith & Waterton 2009, 30). Such heritage discourse is evident in the heritage management agendas of many European countries and has often led to hegemonic heritage interpretations (Smith 2006, 4–11).

Since the 1990s a paradigm shift in heritage politics and discourses has taken place. Instead of rigid standards of authenticity and monumentality that dominated in the public administration of cultural heritage, during the recent decades heritage has become interpreted as a process of identity production, as something communities and groups constantly re-create and re-use (Harrison 2010; Smith 2006; Bendix 2009; Harvey 2008).

The new conception of heritage gives importance to the role of community based heritage management in sustainable development of local cultures (Van der Auwera et al 2015, 7–10). Participatory heritage culture has also been supported by the growing impact of digital technologies and social media. The role of heritage curators and conservators is currently seen as "facilitators rather than authoritative scripters and arbiters of authenticity and significance" (Silbermann & Purser 2012, 13–14). This people-centred understanding of heritage is expressed most powerfully in the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003, hereafter, ICHC)[1], which defines intangible cultural heritage as:

> the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated

therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity (UNESCO 2003, article 2.1).

Expressing the constructivist understanding of heritage, the Convention affects heritage politics and authorities, their understanding of heritage, its stakeholders and maintenance.

The definition and interpretation of intangible heritage proceeding from the community and its needs, and compiling inventories also constitutes part of a wider democratisation process concerned with history and cultural heritage, in which the key role is played by the Internet and digital technology and the broader development of civil society (Giaccardi 2012). Although the new "heritage regime" gives communities a key role in heritage management and safeguarding, the compilers of the document explicitly do not provide the definition of 'community'. Such open use of the term has become a subject for varied and sometimes conflicting interpretations at national levels. Furthermore, it leaves unclear who, in the practice of heritage politics, has the right to represent the cultural community with whom the state actors are supposed to consult and communicate[2] (Blake 2009; Hafstein 2014).

Community remains "a warmly persuasive word" (Williams 1983, 76) not just in policy discourse but also in academic research. Social and cultural anthropologists have been especially concerned about the problems and paradoxes related to the use of the term 'community' (see discussions in Amit & Rapport 2002; Amit 2002). Gerald W. Creed suggests using "*community as the focus of analysis* rather than simply an empty category of heuristic of descriptive convenience" (Creed 2006, 6; emphasis added). Communities are constituted by and constitutive of different regimes of knowledge (op cit, 11). Thus, it is necessary to look beyond the "seductions of community" (op cit) and to ask in each specific case – *who defines the community?* and *who speaks for the community*? Choosing the community focus for our case study materials we want to regard the roles that are given to the community in Estonian heritage politics.

Laurajane Smith and Emma Waterton call for a more critical community agenda. Reflexive and critical use of 'community' in academic inquiry has not yet become accepted in heritage policy and in spite of increasing "pressure for community involvement [in preservation and conservation discourse, there is

still] "a distinct one-sidedness to how this is carried out in practice" (Smith & Waterton 2009, 36). Communities are not comfortable homogenous unities – "the diversity and social difference, both between and within communities, must be recognized not just by policymakers and professionals, but also by communities themselves" (op cit, 12).

Cultural heritage, whether material or intangible, is always related to the issue of property both in a direct and more symbolic sense. Transforming a cultural phenomenon into heritage gives it an additional value, both in the symbolic and economic senses. The heritage status becomes a political or economic means for those who 'own' it creating confrontations and conflicts between different stakeholders (Bendix & Hafstein 2009; Kuutma 2009a; Kuutma 2009b). Who profits and who loses from the heritage ownership? What kind of management duties heritage as property brings along to the community, especially if it is defined by the authorised heritage discourse?

Heritage as a property involves varied groups of stakeholders with different interests and intentions. Community/ies may be considered stakeholders as well as custodians whose participation is considered essential in effective heritage management, especially if it involves commercial interests (Millar 2006). Especially in case of intangible cultural heritage traditional local communities are expected to be the ones who recognise as well as take care of their heritage. It is hard, however, to say what is traditional and who is the local community in today's world of mobile lives and multiple interactions. What does it mean to be a custodian if in everyday practice a heritage phenomenon cannot be separated into tangible and intangible realms?

The professionalisation and bureaucratisation of heritage in the 20th century has given power to professional heritage experts (Harrison 2013; Smith & Waterton 2009). However, the democratisation of heritage in recent decades has expanded the notion of expert to individuals and communities who have knowledge about and interest in local heritage. Yet, how can communities as ambiguous entities act as experts? Who are the experts who represent the community in the process of heritage governance?

The following empirical examples from Estonia focus on particular heritage practices and communities in their specific socio-cultural contexts. Firstly, Helen Sooväli-Sepping examines the problematic issues related to heritage in a community that lives the heritage against their own will, in other words, inhabitants whose property is in a cultural heritage protection area. The second example, by Kristi Grünberg, highlights the problems related to the adaption of the UNESCO heritage regime to the Estonian context and traces the challenges related to the democratisation of intangible heritage using the local inventory

as a case in point. The third example, examined by Marju Kõivupuu, questions the issues of sustainability and rupture as it relates to the tradition of cross trees and examines the process of heritagisation.

Community as a heritage custodian:
the case of Rebala heritage conservation area

Landscape geographer Gunhild Setten (2012) describes what happened when on the southwestern coast of Norway a traditional 150-year-old *jaerhus*, a relatively small wooden residential house, was demolished. This particular house was highly valued by the local cultural heritage authorities, as it was quite authentic and well kept and set in a historical landscape. The house was of low value to the farmers who owned it and they decided to demolish it, claiming that it was in poor condition. For the authorities and some private owners of cultural heritage the demolition of the house was a shattering experience (Thu 1996 in Setten 2012). They wrote several reports in local newspaper articles, portraying the farmers as vandals. At the same time the farmers received support from their farming colleagues, who commended their courage in exercising their private property rights.

The conflict between heritage stakeholders described by Setten is universal in the sense that a similar house could also be situated somewhere else. The author demonstrates that as a heritage object a historical farmhouse may have "double ownership": it is private as well as public property, i.e., it belongs to the nation (Setten 2012, 148–154). Although it belongs virtually to everyone, the legislation exerts moral pressure on the private owner who is expected to be a good custodian, although at his/her own expense. Such conflicting understanding of what cultural heritage is and how it should be maintained leads to the question: what is the role of communities as stewards of local heritage if the value of heritage and the rules for its preservation are defined by external authorities and experts?

In Estonia the protection of cultural heritage is regulated by the Heritage Conservation Act, which became effective in 2002 and was drawn up in the context of the great changes, especially the property reform, which took place in the 1990s.[3] The National Heritage Board[4] was established in 1993 with the aim of preserving heritage of national importance and value. That decade has been described as ten years of rapid changes in which "society was characterised by materiality, pragmatism, cynicism and jungle rules"; it was a period that endangered the "viable sustenance of traditions and customs" (Trummal 2007, 17–18). Thus, as in the period of modernisation in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which

established an important connection between heritage and nation building and nostalgia for the past (cf Olwig 2001), post-socialist conservation ethics in Estonia aimed to preserve valued patrimony in the context of rapid socio-economic transformations (cf Murzyn 2008). The current role of the Board is to safeguard cultural memory and national identity in the globalising world (Alatalu 2012). As of 2014 there are 26,578 registered monuments in Estonia.[5]

The Act represents a centralised conservation discourse setting normative rules for owners of cultural *monuments* and for those who have a property in *heritage conservation areas*. Without a written permit from the National Heritage Board restoration, construction and changes are prohibited.[6] The concept of 'community' is not used in the Heritage Conservation Act and community is not involved in negotiating the decisions made by professional heritage management experts. Therefore the private owners of heritage objects in Estonia often regard the National Heritage Board as an authority that limits their rights to maintain property.

The processes that take place in the Rebala heritage conservation area in northern Estonia[7] clearly demonstrate how national heritage politics has been shaped. The heritage conservation area was established in 1987 to impede the expansion of a phosphorite mine, essential to the economy of the Soviet Union (i.e., of all-Union importance). The statutes of the Rebala heritage conservation area stipulate the cultural heritage values of the region and the necessity to coordinate any building activity with the municipal administration and the National Heritage Board. But how do local people perceive cultural heritage and the values mentioned in the statutes of the reserve? This is a problem to be addressed from the viewpoint of sustainable maintenance of cultural heritage objects.

In the case of Rebala the usage of heritage in the village community is related to the issues of everyday life: as the community members live in a heritage conservation area, their private property is subject to certain restrictions. Because of the unique architecture and landscapes, several constraints and requirements have been imposed which insist that the restoration and repair of the buildings can be carried out only on the basis of an engineering plan and under the supervision of a heritage specialist; this also applies to the demolition and erection of buildings. The use of building materials and colours has to be coordinated with experts as well. Real estate plot boundaries can be changed only with the permission of the local authorities and the National Heritage Board, which is a long and bureaucratic process. In addition, the costs of the engineering plan and expert supervision service have to be covered by the owner.

In in-depth interviews, the village people residing in the heritage conservation area were asked how they perceived cultural heritage and the values mentioned

in the statutes of the heritage reserve.[8] One of the villagers summarised local people's ideas of heritage protection, pointing to the practical, so-called down-to-earth peasant understanding of the value of the buildings and emphasising that historically the most significant factor had been the purpose of the building rather than any aesthetic pleasure derived from it:

> It is typical of the countryside that dwellings and outbuildings keep moving around in the yard. And if one of them collapses or gets too old, a new one is built next to it and the old one is demolished. And this is again replaced by a new one. But as one day the barn dwelling type of house, which even had rooms, became too small for the whole family, father built this house here. And then we didn't have a sauna anymore, and that's why I rebuilt the sauna after some time, but this is a second one already; the first one collapsed. (A man in his seventies)

Thus, generation after generation, members of the village community have worked hard to expand their holdings, apply new methods of agriculture and, by erecting new buildings, improve their living conditions.

The villagers were asked what they thought about old buildings, barn dwellings unique to Estonian vernacular architecture, as symbols of family farms from the mid-19th to early 20th centuries, which still exist in the village scenery. The interviewees explained that the land they own, the dwelling house and the nearby area were the most meaningful for them. Ancestral heritage carries a personal and emotional meaning as a home for the current inhabitants rather than a value in need of state protection (cf Grubbström & Sooväli-Sepping 2012). Although the emotional bonds to a place may positively affect its maintenance (cf Jörgensen & Stjernström 2008) the unanimous opinion was that house owners faced problems particularly due to the statutes of the heritage conservation area. One of the interviewees said that during the Soviet period stone fences were knocked down to build roads, and quite a few barn dwellings were demolished as the law stipulated only one house per plot. Therefore, local people cannot understand why today they are expected to preserve what decades back was worth nothing. Several villagers pointed to difficulties in the renovation process and costs that were higher than expected because of restrictions in the use of building materials. They believe this has had an adverse effect on the villagers' general quality of life.

The heritage values established in Rebala by the authorities do not address the community as the community fails to perceive the heritage under protection as their 'own' heritage. So we face a situation in which the values of the landscape defined by heritage experts, scholars, and planners, and thereby rendering

meaning to heritage, have been formalised by the authorities. The top-down approach in defining heritage excludes private owners' stances on cultural heritage. Local people are of the opinion that the authorities take it for granted that heritage must be maintained by the owners themselves, as stipulated by law. Furthermore, if we speak about heritage in the case of buildings and landscapes in rural areas, we encounter the normative understanding of the relationship between the landed property and family succession. It is thought that long-term land ownership automatically means obligations and taking responsibility to protect some past traditions. However, traditional farm architecture in Estonia has been a problematic heritage since the beginning of the 20th century as the processes of modernisation, political rupture and socioeconomic change have considerably influenced the meanings and values related to it.

The Estonian Heritage Conservation Act is currently being revised and the new draft Act initiated in 2014 is supposed to replace the centralised heritage politics with more decentralised heritage maintenance. Not all the restrictions introduced in the cultural situation of 1990 fulfil the expected aims and the entire sphere of cultural heritage requires reorganisation and revision. The revised version of the Act requires several changes, the most significant of which, in the context of this empiric example, are two moments: monuments shall be viewed as parts of the cultural environment and the process of social change, and owners shall be provided with considerably more feedback and advice in collaboration with heritage protection specialists. These changes are related to the international democratisation of heritage politics and the emergence of dialogic approaches to heritage interpretations that give increasing importance to the social aspects of heritage, especially those that concern engaging local people in the process of heritage definition and management (cf Harrison 2013).

The community as heritage expert:
the case of the Estonian intangible heritage inventory

The heritage regime based on the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage focuses on communities and their role in defining, preserving and conveying cultural phenomena as intangible heritage (for example Labadi 2013, 132–133; Bortolotto 2013, 269). Communities as heritage stakeholders and experts have a central position in drawing up inventories that support the continuity of intangible heritage. Specifically, each state party shall, "with the participation of communities, groups and relevant non-governmental organisations" (UNESCO 2003, Article 11, b) ensure "the identification with a view to safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory"

(UNESCO 2003, Article 12, 1). The inventories can be drawn up by each state "in a manner geared to its own situation" (UNESCO 2003, Article 12, 1) yet, it is necessary to ensure "the widest possible participation" (UNESCO 2003, Article 15) of the communities and to involve them actively in the heritage management, which is deemed important by the UNESCO, who sets standards and provides that they are observed (UNESCO 2009; Torggler & Sediakina-Rivière 2013, 33–34).

Thus, a heritage regime based on the ICHC praises the audibility of the community's voice, and its participation (UNESCO 2003, Article 11, b; Article 15) in the process of safeguarding intangible heritage; on the basis thereof the applications submitted for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity as well as national inventories of intangible heritage are assessed. Community involvement in defining and safeguarding intangible heritage and the wider democratisation of heritage politics bring about new role expectations: communities should be interested in and willing to construe their heritage and people engaged in the sphere of heritage management are expected to provide support and counselling (see Bortolotto 2013: 269).

How community participation is understood varies by states: the interpretations of the ICHC are culture-specific, depending on the socio-political background and the existing institutions and practices of heritage protection (see Bendix et al 2013). A state may delegate the task of identifying the elements of intangible heritage to experts and/or officials or organise it as a campaign, leaving the relevant communities the task of providing information about heritage and/or the role of the authoriser and/or implementer of the regulations concerned with its protection. On the other hand, the state may also appeal to communities to define their intangible heritage, to argue about its interpretation and the ways to support its vitality, and integrate these ideas into planning cultural politics.

When, in 2006, Estonia acceded to the ICHC, a decision was made in favour of compiling a national inventory based on community initiative and interpretation. When drawing up an inventory, what problems are encountered in this seemingly ideal democratic solution? How can a balance be found between institutional expectation and the requirements of imaginary communities?

The task of coordinating the implementation of the ICHC, as well as respective notifications about and compilation of the inventory of intangible heritage, were delegated to the Folk Culture Centre[9] under the administration of the Ministry of Culture. As a specialist in the field of intangible heritage at the Folk Culture Centre, I participated in this process of heritage creation.[10] The round table meetings initiated by the Ministry of Culture, with the participation of scholars, specialists and officials, as well as community representatives, agreed on

the basis for compiling the inventory. Founded on the community-based definition of intangible heritage (UNESCO 2003, Article 2, 1), the inventory was seen as a means to enthuse communities to notice, appreciate, maintain and transmit their living heritage (knowledge, skills, customs and practices) (Porila 2012, 10). The decision was made to compile "a completely new inventory, which would feature bottom-up approach and interest in the current knowledge and skills" (op cit). The elaboration of the structure of a web-based inventory of intangible heritage started in 2008[11]. The technical solution was completed in 2009, and in 2010 a corresponding home page[12] became accessible to the general public.

By means of this inventory, all the communities in Estonia – people who are united by a common intangible heritage (Porila 2012, 8–9) – can introduce and evaluate their knowledge, customs, skills, and practices along with the people, establishments and locations associated with them. "Inscriptions on the inventory could be born in collaboration between community members, the same way as the entire intangible heritage should be maintained and protected" (op cit, 12). An inscription should include the descriptions and analyses of the current situation of the cultural phenomenon, its historical background and future perspectives, bibliography, sources used; if possible, also photographic, sound and video materials and other supplementary information.

This institutional attempt to democratise cultural heritage inspired by the ICHC, involves quite a few paradoxes. The compilation of the inventory, based on community initiative and heritage interpretations, certainly implies relevant information, including introducing the concept of intangible heritage and generating interest in the inventory, i.e., state intervention in the heritage production process[13].

The inventory focuses on the idea of a strong and active community that makes decisions about their intangible heritage and the ways to maintain and protect it, thereafter starting the compilation of the inscription. During training courses and information days participants are encouraged to use the concept of intangible heritage in a broad sense[14] to express subjective interpretations and to regard themselves as experts in their own heritage. These training courses emphasise that the scholars or officials do not prescribe what the community could introduce as intangible heritage (Porila 2012, 10). However, the compiler of the inscription is aware that the text is checked before publication and, if necessary, it has to be revised. Inscriptions are edited by specialists from the Folk Culture Centre, who in this context could be regarded as mediators of authorised heritage discourse from the administrative (the Ministry of Culture) to the local level. The author of an inscription is also aware of the fact that the text is published on the inventory home page only after the Estonian Council for the

Intangible Cultural Heritage has approved it.[15] Therefore, the inscription has to follow a certain procedure, the rules of representability and authoritativeness, as well as the expectations for the structure of the text. Such restrictions, along with other factors, have influenced some people who started compiling inscriptions to eventually discontinue them. Hence the question of whether the inventory is a project for (academically trained) heritage experts rather than for communities at grassroots level, as has been publicly announced (see UNESCO 2014, 7).

An aggravating factor for community participation in heritage politics and for being an expert in one's own culture is the fact that the compilation of an inscription presumes enquiry, dedication, time, and also financial means.[16] A community that wishes to draw attention to their intangible heritage by means of the inventory would need experts both from the inside (for example advocates of a phenomenon and compilers of the inscription) and from the outside (for example counselling museum workers and specialists in folk culture). However, the main factor is the interest in the (public) interpretation of intangible heritage and an inner urge to write separately to/instead of other forms of expression (contribution to museums and archives, publications, websites, etc.) an inscription for the inventory. Despite the notification work to spread the idea of the usefulness of the latter (as a supportive means for evaluating, maintaining and transmitting the traditional skills and knowledge, sustainable development and creative industry) and the offered training courses, new inscriptions have not been added as quickly and smoothly as was expected by the Ministry of Culture.[17] The same tendency can also be observed in the case of websites for sharing memories, irrespective of whether they are official or created on private initiative (websites created spontaneously by people with similar experience or interests attract more active collaboration) (see Arthur 2009, 72; Affleck & Kvan 2008, 275).

The Estonian intangible heritage inventory is still trying to find its place among other databases, websites, and lists of local traditions as part of a wider process of evaluating cultural heritage and cultural diversity. Institutional and popular ideas of the need for an inventory are not compatible: people are not eager to contribute to its compilation, as they might not need such a channel to be heritage experts and maintain their heritage (Labadi 2013, 137). More often than not, they have different outlets for that. Yet, the idea of building the inventory on community initiative does not oblige its compilation from top to bottom – people should realise themselves that they have a heritage phenomenon to safeguard and feel the need to inscribe it.

It is difficult to assess the immediate role of the inventory as UNESCO sees it – as raising cultural awareness and supporting the sustainable development of

intangible heritage – as there are several other socio-cultural factors that influence the preservation of heritage. Counting inscriptions and the number of visits on the inventory homepage might prompt intervention at the institutional level. A local heritage expert contributing to the inventory explained: "perhaps the inscription should not be an aim in itself, but rather that we speak about these issues locally. To raise interest, to look for one's own, to remember, to value – this is what should be deemed important." (e-mail, November 5, 2013)

From community stewardship to complex heritage management: cross trees in southeast Estonia

Cross trees in southeast Estonia are related to tangible as well as intangible heritage maintenance. For various reasons cross trees, as an object and as related to a practice, are a case of liminal, "hybrid", and in some respect also "dissonant heritage" (cf Kõivupuu 2014; Kuutma 2013). A 'cross tree' is a tree (pine, spruce, birch, etc.) beside the road into which the closest male relatives of a dead person has cut a cross on the way to the cemetery – even today, in the 21st century. It is a commemorative practice and a way to signify a conscious or unconscious line that the deceased has crossed when being excluded from the living world. Cross trees are an expression of "vernacular religion" (Primiano 1995), probably a combination of pre-Christian and Christian beliefs (Kõivupuu 2009; Kõivupuu 2014). Cutting a cross into a tree has been part of the funeral tradition, especially in historical Võromaa[18], which according to earliest records dates back to the 17th century and has survived, although only in southeast Estonia (op cit). Cutting a cross into a tree is still part of local funeral custom. Cross trees and cross tree groves are considered sacred by locals, although only a few of them are protected by the Estonian Nature Conservation Act.

Internationally, cross trees belong to sacred natural sites and objects; there are many native groups in the world for whom certain trees and groves and related customs may have strong spiritual or religious meanings. Sacred natural sites connect people and nature, personal and collective memory; they may confirm cultural identity for a family, community, or the whole nation. Religious landscapes and places related to cultural memory often emerge as a result of a practice or with the help of oral traditions, folklore and narratives that support collective remembering (Fox 1997, 8–9; Siikala 1998; Rønnow 2011, 225).

Edmund G. C. Barrow points out that traditionally sacred trees have been under *community stewardship,* which has saved them from being cut down or damaged. Today, local communities as well as their ways of life have changed considerably and modern socio-economic values tend to dominate over traditional

spiritual values (Barrow 2010). Therefore a question arises: why should sacred trees be safeguarded for the future, and by whom if they are no longer part of all community members' everyday lives. What happens if community stewardship does not function the same way as in the past?

Cutting crosses in trees was still a living tradition in Soviet Estonia and although officially the forests belonged to the state, they were managed by local people who respected this custom. Cutting a funeral cross was also considered a compensatory act relating to a Christian funeral; local clergymen accepted the ritual, and sometimes even participated in it. After Estonia became re-independent in the 1990s, forest management was centralised and local community stewardship practice was disrupted. During the transition period in post-socialist Estonia several cross trees and cross forests, still related to the lived practice, were chopped down – partly because of forest managers' ignorance, partly because of disregard. Over the last decades policies like privatisation and state forests and roads management policies and practices have resulted in extensive cutting of cross trees, especially next to highways. Forestry companies and sometimes also forest owners (especially those to whom land had been restituted) have not acknowledged breaking of any official laws, as the majority of cross trees were not under heritage or nature protection. For instance, the State Forest Management Centre has cut down cross trees in production forests or expanded roads through cross tree groves, which in several cases has caused deep disappointment among locals (see Kõivupuu 2009). These developments have led local communities who wanted to preserve cross trees to seek support from external authorities (including heritage officials and academic scholars) who would legitimise the importance of the tradition by giving it the value of cultural heritage.

Natural heritage, including sacred natural sites, is regulated by several international and national "heritage regimes" (Bendix et al 2013): for example, Man and the Biosphere (1970), the UNESCO World Heritage Convention (1972), and the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention (2003). The guidelines for protecting natural sacred sites were formulated in collaboration between the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and UNESCO in 2003–2008[19]. According to the IUCN definition, "sacred natural sites are areas having special spiritual significance for peoples and communities", and they are often "community conserved areas"[20]. However, the meaning of 'community' in the document is somewhat problematic, because it is related to the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (1989). As in the case of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention, community involvement in conservation and community participation in the development of national heritage politics is given a crucial importance. Stakeholders of sacred natural sites are defined as natural resource users and

managers; yet, stakeholder identification and analysis based on understanding different interests, characteristics and circumstances is stressed in order to better manage sacred natural sites (Wild & McLeod 2008, 46–47).

The definition of sacred natural sites in Estonia is based on the IUCN document. Today about 500 historical sacred sites and objects (sacred groves, trees and springs; sacrificial stones, etc.) have been located, mapped and designated as monuments under natural or cultural heritage protection[21]. Among these two categories the following can be distinguished: sites that relate to cultural memory and not to lived practices, and sites or cult objects that are currently related to certain groups' cultural heritage and lived practices (Kõivupuu 2009, 224). Cross trees belong to the latter. Furthermore, they belong to natural and cultural, tangible as well as intangible heritage. Despite the IUCN guidelines for protection, there is a lack of legal regulation in Estonia that would define sacred natural sites as unique objects of both natural and cultural heritage, reflecting diverse values for varied groups (see Kultuuriministeerium 2008). Seven hundred cross trees are currently included in an inventory, although only a few of them are under protection as natural monuments. In the Estonian introduction to the IUCN guidelines cross trees are defined as part of "community heritage", whereas the 'community' remains undefined in the local context. A stakeholder group related to the maintenance of sacred natural sites, such as neo-pagan organisation *Maavalla Koda* (Estonian House of Taara and Native Religions), relies on and exploits a romantic ideal of the native Estonian community that has its roots in the national movement of the late 19th century and does not correspond to actual communities and their practices in 21st century Estonia.

Although traditional community stewardship of sacred sites has changed, there are various communities of interest or heritage stakeholders who have become involved in the issues related to their protection and preservation. For example, during roundtable meetings discussing the protection of cross trees along with other sacred natural sites, participants have been NGOs as well as state institutions[22]. Throughout the past few years the collaboration between different stakeholder groups (for example local administration, scholars, officials, and forest managers) has increased with the aim of better protecting the cross trees. However, the current practice of forest management in Estonia clearly shows that the state forest management bodies should show more respect towards the religious relationship that locals have with nature and heritage practices.

The implementation and intervention of international heritage regimes (for example UNESCO; IUCN) exerts a noticeable influence on local heritage politics and management as well as on people's everyday lives. Like several other local traditions, cross trees as a funeral custom in historical Võrumaa have been

included in the Estonian inventory of intangible cultural heritage analysed in the previous example.[23] Being in the inventory certainly dignifies a cultural tradition nominated as (intangible) heritage (cf Bendix 2009). Participation in defining cultural heritage, may in turn, increase the community's self-awareness and self-consciousness, and through this also visibility and social, economic and political capital, thereby marshalling the community (cf Silbermann & Purser 2012: 20–21). For instance, in 2014 a traditional bathing practice – smoke sauna customs in Võrumaa – was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity as a result of community initiative. This may also indirectly influence the status of cross trees as valuable regional cultural heritage. External recognition may change how the local people value their customs, and draws state and international attention to a particular custom, although the negative impact of this attention to the viability of cultural heritage cannot be overlooked either (see Labadi 2013: 141–142). Heritagisation is inevitably a process of cultural intervention – if traditions that have formerly been part of everyday life become seen as heritage it may force people to see them as something separate from the mundane, which in turn may change the meaning of the traditional practice (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004; Kockel 2007).

Concluding discussion

Our study brought out the different roles given to communities in the process of heritage management, as well as the impact of heritage politics in shaping communities. Different cases showed explicitly that community is understood quite differently in varied policy discourses and practices. Furthermore, our research demonstrated that it is difficult to speak of a particular community; rather, there are either different communities or multiple dimensions of a community involved in heritage processes. At the institutional level of heritage management, the notion of community is neither conceptualised nor problematised, although governing requires certainty. Communities as heritage authority partners should be "visualised, surveyed and mobilised" (Hafstein 2014, 49). The Estonian cases highlighted two major issues that are currently also relevant in international heritage management – the democratisation of heritage politics on the one hand, and the problems related to community engagement on the other hand.

Heritage regimes generated by nation states have traditionally given the power to authorities (such as heritage experts) who either consider or disregard local community members as subjects in the heritage process (Kuutma 2013). Here Estonia is no exception. The Estonian Heritage Conservation Act represents the modernist understanding of heritage management in which objects

are emphasised over the people who live the heritage. Such an understanding of heritage management is caused by the rapid changes that took place in the post-socialist society, where economic values became dominant over cultural, social and historical values (cf Ochman 2013). As the case of Rebala heritage conservation area demonstrated, the local community is not engaged in the process of heritage management and this has resulted in the misrecognition of and resistance to institutionally defined heritage (cf Waterton & Smith 2010). The case likewise pointed out the complexities involved when certain communities interpret their heritage, memory and identity, and how these communities communicate and engage with each other (see Lowenthal 1998; Krauss 2008). The attitude of the inhabitants of Rebala towards institutionally defined heritage cannot be generalised to other heritage processes in Estonia, where we can find several examples of the communities that are interested in the interpretation, evaluation and preservation of their heritage and are efficient in doing so[24].

The democratisation of heritage politics and dialogic approaches to heritage is related to the shift from an essentialist and elitist conceptualisation towards a constructivist understanding of heritage – i.e. towards the importance of people (as active agents) and meaning makers of the past in the present (cf Smith 2006; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004). This includes a transition from authorised heritage discourse towards a more varied local and personal interpretation of heritage and celebrations of "small heritages" (Harvey 2008, 33). The cultural heritage valued by the community constitutes one of the pillars of regional identity, which is also cultivated by the community members of the Rebala heritage conservation area, depending on the necessity and situation. However, these are cases of community-defined heritage. According to local understanding, cultural heritage is often a social and cultural process rather than a physical object to be preserved (cf Mydland & Grahn 2012).

When creating the national inventory of intangible cultural heritage Estonia choose a very democratic method, relying on the UNESCO ICHC guidelines. However, this attempt to institutionally coordinate community heritage introduced several problems. People contribute to the inventory only if they feel the necessity. Currently they get encouragement, and education about the need for the contribution and thereafter consultations, motivation and support. This heritage production process, even though indicated to be a community project, is inevitably also a governing project – a state funded institution (Folk Culture Centre) is simultaneously in the double position of being an authorised heritage expert as well as a supportive body for community-based heritage experts. Thus, authorised heritage experts likewise have to adapt to a new role that is less

related to identifying the authenticity of heritage and more to helping people to articulate their heritage (cf Silbermann & Purser 2012, 13–14).

The democratisation of heritage politics relates to the broader developments of participatory culture facilitated by digital media as well as by the development of civil society: heritage may be expressed and discussed at many levels and vernacular manifestations of it may find forms other than a state funded website platform (cf Giaccardi 2012; Edensor et al 2009). If the community is regarded as an expert of intangible heritage, the institutional level has to come to terms with the fact that people make their own decisions about whether and how they want to take care of their intangible heritage. It is a fact beyond denial that one should also respect their right to regard the inventory as part of officialdom (Tauschek 2013).

As concerns communities as experts in their own heritage, we would like to reiterate that there have always been some community members more concerned and aware of the sustainability of traditions than others, however, they have transmitted their knowledge orally to the new generation. Creating the national inventory of intangible heritage means making this knowledge public and, before it is made public, getting the approval of trained heritage experts. Not all communities have heritage enthusiasts who would have the resources to conduct the inquiry needed to describe a heritage phenomenon according to the rules set for inscription. Community empowerment in increasingly democratised heritage politics may lead to the danger that the multivocality inherent in every community may be lost if too clear a voice is found in cooperation with administrators and experts (Hafstein 2014, 55–57). This, in turn, can create hegemonic interpretations of community heritage (cf Annist 2013).

Likewise heritagisation process can influence the emergence and essence of communities. The case of cross trees in southeast Estonia sheds light on problems related to community heritage and community stewardship in contemporary society. A common goal such as fighting for the survival of a perishing tradition can make people with otherwise different interests and origins feel and act like a community that has shared values. Thus, heritagisation – the process of naming, possessing and regulating something as heritage – could drive people to act as a community or give rise to community activists (cf Harrison 2010). However, as this case showed, shared locality may not automatically mean that people feel and act like a community. The discontinuities and ruptures in the tradition related to the cross trees showed the need for intervention by state authorities. If there is no community stewardship for cross trees in everyday life it must be created from the outside in the forms of legislation, supervision and sanctions. External

heritage experts are needed who would have the social capital as well as the competency to be intermediaries between multiple authorities and local people.

While cross trees may be officially recognised as cultural heritage objects in need of protection, the continuity of the tradition depends on people who are familiar with and respect it, even if they do not see themselves as part of the (heritage) community.

Prioritising and making meaning of cultural heritage is a contextual and situation specific process. Likewise, communities are not fixed entities, but change according to a social configuration. "A community is often constructed, produced and maintained *through its heritage work* and incorporates the very active concerns, tensions and anxieties that drive community projects in the first place" (Dicks 2000, 97 in Smith & Waterton 2009, 37; emphasis added). Some institutions may have high expectations of communities as experts in their own heritage, whereas the results of heritage projects initiated by communities might not lead to expressions or interpretations acceptable to authorities and external heritage experts. Engaging the community in the process of heritagisation as well as heritage management might turn to be a complicated and inconvenient task because people might not wish to participate in it for various reasons.

In conclusion we want to ask a question that stems from the point recently raised by Valdimar Hafstein in regard of the communalisation and vernacularisation of heritage governing – if communities should safeguard their heritage, *who will safeguard the communities, and how?* (Hafstein 2014).

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Notes

1 Along with the Convention for the International Protection of the Cultural and Natural Heritage, the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage is one of the most popular UNESCO cultural conventions: 177 states have acceded to the latter (as of 22 February 2018), and 193 states to the former (as of 31 January 2017). UNESCO has 195 member states and 11 associate members.

2 During the preparation of the experts' draft of the ICHC, a Glossary of relevant terms was produced by an expert meeting held at UNESCO which defines a 'community' as: People who share a self-ascribed sense of connectedness. This may be manifested, for example, in a feeling of identity or common behaviour, as well as in activities and territory. Individuals can belong to more than one community. Further definitions are also given for 'cultural community' and 'local community'. It was on the basis of these understandings that the term is employed in the Convention text.

3 The property reform (1991) has restituted or compensated to the former owners the nationalised private property that during the Soviet occupation was moved into the ownership of the state.

4 In Estonia the predecessor of the National Heritage Board was the Estonian Heritage Protection Society, a movement launched on civic initiative in 1987 and which played an important role in the national movement in Estonia, then still part of the Soviet Union, and which was aimed to preserve national heritage and historical objects as well as increase

awareness of heritage protection issues. Thus, cultural heritage acquired national-political value and its protection constituted part of the national resistance movement.

5 Source: http://www.kul.ee/et/tegevused/muinsuskaitse.

6 The Heritage Conservation Act. Source: https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/520012015008/consolide [accessed 31 October 2017]

7 The purpose of the Rebala heritage conservation area is "to maintain and protect the uniqueness of northern Estonian agricultural landscape with its elements (villages, farms, land plots, arable land and their historical borders, archaeological, technical, art and natural monuments) that have high scientific and cultural value". The idea of the reserve is to preserve the present environment as genuinely as possible, to protect the numerous historical remains against tampering and destruction as well as to provide information for visitors. (Source: http://www.joelahtme.ee)

8 This fieldwork investigation was carried out mainly among the core village population in the Rebala heritage conservation area in the years 2010–2012, and is based on 21 in-depth interviews as well as personal observation. The fieldwork has focused on the Rebala heritage conservation area since 2006. Since 2008 I (Helen Sooväli-Sepping) have been involved with the reserve: apart from being an expert (compiler of special conditions for the 2005 statutes of the heritage conservation area) I have also become a heritage custodian. Our family owns a barn dwelling complex under renovation, with 40 ha of land; according to records, the ownership of this farmstead by the same family dates back to at least the 17th or 18th century. So I am an active user of heritage, a creator, and, depending on the circumstances (whether I am accepted as such or not), also a member of the local community, as well as an interpreter of heritage (compiler of the book *Parasmäe talude lood* (*Tales of Parasmäe farms* 2012)) and a heritage expert (both as a researcher at the academy and in day-to-day heritage protection activities).

9 The Folk Culture Centre with its regional network of folk culture specialists participates in the process of developing and implementing cultural policy in Estonia. The Centre organises various training courses, arranges state support programmes for the cultural regions of Estonia, and other cultural activities.

10 In the years 2008–2009 I (Kristi Grünberg) participated in the elaboration of the structure and operating principles of the inventory. From 2012 to 2016 I was responsible for the editing of inscriptions thereof. The present analysis was written in 2014 while I was working as a specialist of intangible cultural heritage at the Folk Culture Centre. Thus, it reflects the daily hesitations and observations triggered by the "ethnographic present" of that time. As a mediator of heritage discourse based on the ICHC, I was obliged to direct people to draw up these inscriptions. It could be said that, as an official administrating heritage, I urged them to enter a borderline area: they would have to start to interpret their way of life (and everything self-evident therein), identify their heritage, consciously mediate it to others by way of the inventory, and perhaps even acquire a different writing style to compile the inscription. As a researcher, I was not comfortable in this role: I would have preferred to observe cultural processes rather than interfere in them. On the other hand, as a participant in cultural policy, I involuntarily influenced the idea of what heritage is. While editing the inscriptions, I also affected the style of writing. Could I interfere, and to what extent; for instance, should I propose altered wording or direct the writer

to more critical or complementary sources if the inventory "puts in the foreground the community's knowledge and vision of its own culture" (Porila 2012, 10)?

11 It was compiled in cooperation between experts from the Estonian Literary Museum, the Estonian National Museum, and the University of Tartu, as well as specialists from the Folk Culture Centre.

12 The Estonian intangible heritage inventory: www.rahvakultuur.ee/vkpnimistu. The structure of the inventory is based on the example of the Québec intangible heritage inventory, created on the initiative of ethnologists from Laval University (www.irepi.ulaval.ca).

13 In order to find contributors, as well as inspire and support them, the Folk Culture Centre has organised training courses and information days; in order to compile inscriptions, financial support can be applied for in the cultural programmes administered by the centre.

14 In addition to the unique and conspicuous (e.g. folk music and folk dance, wearing of folk costumes) people are encouraged to pay attention to everyday knowledge and customs, which could be valued as heritage as well (e.g. rocking in a rocking chair, extracting birch sap, mowing with a scythe, etc.).

15 This body of experts established at the Ministry of Culture in 2009 is not responsible for the inscriptions relating to establishments, associations, people or locations.

16 The compilation of inscriptions has been supported by the UNESCO participation programme, the Ministry of Culture, and the Folk Culture Centre. This support is essential, as inscription requires voluminous research that cannot be based merely on voluntary work.

17 While in 2010 the inventory included inscriptions of 25 items relating to knowledge, skills, customs or practices, 5 relating to establishments or associations, 19 to people and 3 to locations, then as of December 2016 these figures have grown to 87, 17, 44, and 5, respectively. In December 2016 the number of authors of inscriptions amounted to 46.

18 Historical Võromaa is a separate cultural region in southeast Estonia, which, according to the contemporary administrative division, covers areas in Võru, Põlva, Valga and Tartu Counties. The region features several enduring traditions and a dialect used in everyday life. The Võru Institute, which was established on the basis of the so-called Võru Movement, originating in the 1980s, actively investigates, maintains and advocates the cultural heritage of historical Võrumaa.

19 Source: https://portals.iucn.org/library/node/9201.

20 Source: http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/pa_guidelines_016_sacred_natural_sites.pdf.

21 According to historical sources there are about 2,800 historical sacred sites known to researchers.

22 The organisations and institutions that have taken part in roundtables are the *Hiite Maja* (House of Sacred Groves) Foundation, *Maavalla Koda* (Estonian House of Taara and Native Religions), representatives of different disciplines from the University of Tartu and Tallinn University, including the Centre of Sacred Natural Sites at the University of Tartu, and representatives from the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Interior, the Environmental Board, Estonian Fund for Nature, etc.

23 See http://www.rahvakultuur.ee/vkpnimistu/.

24 Furthermore, a local community may use institutional heritage policies for its own advantage and take an active role in defining its heritage. For example, the community initiative to safeguard the smoke sauna as a valuable part of local heritage in Võrumaa, southeast Estonia, lead to its inscription into the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2014.

Communities, politics and cultural heritage

Kristel Rattus

The article, authored by Ester Bardone, Kristi Grünberg, Helen Sooväli-Sepping, Marju Kõivupuu and Helen Kästik, deals with heritage politics and management in contemporary Estonia and the role of communities in these processes. The authors direct attention to currently relevant issues such as what the character of the ruling heritage paradigm is and how this affects both cultural practice as well as political discussion. Their aim is to elucidate the characteristic processes of heritagisation in contemporary Estonia, for example the democratisation of heritage politics and problems related to community engagement. The topics are addressed via three empirical cases focusing on the action-taking and decision-making capacities of (local) communities in varied heritage processes.

What counts as a case for analysis is not self-evident. Cases are not natural phenomena, they are constructed as such by the analysers. The five authors come from different fields of study: ethnology, human geography, and folkloristics and the research underlying the analysed examples was conducted by them independently. Yet, in the article, the cases manage to create a stimulating dialogue.

The authors are specifically interested in the social processes of heritage creation by which meanings and values of heritage are negotiated and established. These processes are treated as situated practices that take place between specific actors in a particular time, space and social context. In each case, each component (time, space, actors, social context) is an active participant in the case and what it can become. Focusing on a social process, they manage to shed light on different practices emergent under a variety of constantly altering circumstances that are integral to any social relationship.

The first example focuses on the controversy between Rebala heritage protection area and local inhabitants. Local people feel that they are forced to live "heritage against their own will" (p. 256), since the rules and restrictions of the conservation area have been imposed on them without their consent. Although the content of local heritage has been defined by professional experts outside the community, the community is regarded as (co-)stewards of the heritage, which means that they are obliged to bear the costs of its maintenance. The policy of heritage experts is considered rigid and authoritarian by local people. In addition to this, it seems that the values given to local heritage by experts do not coincide with the values of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. Thus communication

between the parties is characterised by misconceptions and distrust. The local community feel that their voice is not heard enough, and in heritage discussions they are not considered to be in a legitimate position to make decisions.

Secondly, the inventorying of Estonian intangible cultural heritage is observed. A former heritage expert reflects on how various (local) communities have been encouraged and educated to be able to compile inscriptions that would meet the aims of the UNESCO heritage regime. In this case, in contrast to the first, heritage experts act as advocates for democratic heritage politics that involves the community. The UNESCO way of thinking is people-centred, seeing the communities both as stakeholders and experts in their own cultural heritage. This has introduced the expectation that communities should be willing to construe their heritage. Yet, in reality, local communities have appeared to be rather passive in inventorying. The reason, as the authors imply, may be that today there are many other forms of expressing one's heritage (than writing an intangible cultural heritage inscription).

Similarly to the first case, the third example deals with the question of which group or institution has the legitimate power to define heritage. The preservation of cross trees – an element of an old tradition – has become problematic since many of the trees are under threat of being cut down (because of the economic interests of both private forest owners and the state). Unlike the Rebala case, this one demonstrates a situation in which a national heritage preservation regime is considered desirable by the community of stakeholders. Although cross trees have been inventoried as intangible cultural heritage, not all of them have been listed as objects of national heritage preservation. To legitimise cross trees as cultural heritage, the local community has sought help from various heritage experts and authorities. In this way, the stakeholder community has expanded into a much larger and more varied group of interests (including, for example, local administration, scholars, officials, different NGOs, etc.) than merely local inhabitants.

The authors of the analysed examples relate to their cases personally, either belonging to the community of stakeholders or being involved in the described situations as heritage experts (or simultaneously occupying both positions).

Communities

Communities and their roles in the politics and management of heritage is the topic that interests the authors most. Yet, as they point out, it is also a complicated topic because of the diverse usage of the notion 'community' in heritage discussions. The crucial question here is who makes up a 'community'. Current

approaches tend not to explain the term well enough. In heritage policy documents, everyday speech and academic texts, 'community' is often treated as something "comfortably self-evident" (p. 253), defined by locality, shared histories and interests, and often ethnicity. Communities are taken tacitly as homogenous units and idealized as something inherently coherent and positive. Even within the framework of UNESCO's people-centred heritage paradigm, which attributes communities the key role in heritage management and safeguarding, the notion of 'community' is explained rather vaguely and open-endedly as "people who share a self-ascribed sense of connectedness" (p. 274). The multiple interpretations of the notion in different contexts makes it difficult to understand who constitutes a community in a specific situation, and who, in the practice of heritage management, has the right to represent a cultural community.

Such open use of the term has made it complicated to use as an analytical tool. In the article, community has been chosen as the main focus of analysis. The risk of indistinctness has been avoided by a careful outlining of who makes up the community. Slightly disappointingly, the authors stick only to describing and do not provide a more theoretical reflection of their own use of the concept.

The need to notice and address the diversity and social difference both between and within communities has also been recognised by the authors. The inherent multivocality of a local community is best manifested in the case of cross trees. Generally, however, different voices and opinions become visible more in the communication between the stakeholder groups and heritage experts than inside the communities of stakeholders.

Rival heritage paradigms

On the basis of empirical cases, two kinds of heritage paradigm are juxtaposed. On the one hand, there is the tradition of heritage preservation that focuses primarily on material culture in which, in defining what should and should not be regarded as heritage, non-expert groups and communities have had little to say. This "authorised heritage discourse", as Laurajane Smith (Smith 2006) has put it, sees heritage as something that belongs to the past and should be preserved by professional experts. On the other hand, today this modernist idea of heritage is increasingly contradicted and complemented by a more democratic understanding, mainly promoted by the heritage policies of UNESCO as well as by participatory culture facilitated by digital media. This sees heritage as something that is actively used and (re-)created by groups of people as part of their identity formation. This paradigm prefers to speak rather of "heritage curators" as

mediators between communities and heritage institutions than "heritage experts" as the only evaluators of heritage (p. 254).

The authors maintain that within heritage politics and heritage definition in contemporary Estonia, one can observe a gradual replacement of the 'top-down' approach with a more democratic one. However, as the examples also show, in the heritage management and politics of current Estonia, the role of heritage expert is still noteworthy. The Rebala and the cross tree cases demonstrate explicitly that stakeholder communities lack the power to participate in heritage discussion on an equal basis with heritage experts. The case of inventorying intangible cultural heritage also demonstrates the decisive role of heritage experts both in spreading ideas about the policy of involving communities in heritage policy via regular consultations, and in accepting the inscriptions. By structuring and editing the inscriptions to make them meet the demands of UNESCO's Convention for the International Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage, heritage experts affect heritage policy immediately. According to the situations described, we can witness an on-going process of rivalling heritage paradigms, in which at one moment the modernist, and at another the democratic, paradigm acquires the stronger position. The preference of the authors clearly belongs to the democratic community-engaging understanding of heritage.

The examples analysed provide thought-provoking insights into real-life situations and current problems of heritage management in Estonia. The central question that becomes evident in all three cases is: who owns heritage and who has the right to make decisions about it? In essence there is a problem with the dual ownership of heritage in that it is simultaneously private as well as public property – it belongs to the nation, and therefore to everyone. This ambiguous situation leads to problems of ownership both in the material as well as the symbolic sense and raises questions about who decides what can and what can't be done with heritage, and how it should or shouldn't be interpreted. The research cases show controversies surrounding heritage protection and living heritage perspectives. Moreover, they refer to inconsistencies in different state policies.

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Mapping celebration practices in Estonia: which days of importance actually influence societal rhythms?

Halliki Harro-Loit, Triin Vihalemm, Kirsti Jõesalu, Elo-Hanna Seljamaa

Abstract. The aim of article is to provide an analytical model with which to analyse how celebration practices relating to different days of importance in the Estonian calendar – among different societal groups – influence social rhythms. For this reason this study applies an actor approach to the understanding of various celebration practices as 'rhythms machines'. The authors distinguish active and passive celebration-actors, days of importance that are celebrated by most people, and anniversaries that initiate a break in daily routine for only a particular small group in Estonian society. The article combines a sociological approach to ethnological and folkloristic studies and is therefore based both on qualitative and quantitative analyses of empirical evidence.

Keywords: days of importance, anniversary, holiday, celebration practices, calendar, rhythm

Introduction

To access the layered temporalities embodied in the cultural practices of Western societies, one can focus on rhythms derived from the clock, calendar, and various schedules and timetables (for example Durkheim 1965 [1915], 23; Sorokin & Merton 1937, 620; Birth 2012, 99). Annual cycles are calendrically regulated, containing both seasonal and weekly rhythms that are interrupted by various days of importance: secular and religious holidays, anniversaries and festivals. The Gregorian calendar – as an empty container to be filled (Birth 2012, 73; 2013) – is particularly good at incorporating different calendric layers: the folk calendar, the calendars of different churches, the academic calendar, the fiscal calendar, etc. Most of these calendars include specific days of importance aimed

Figure 1. Theoretical schema for actor approach and size of celebration/involvement

Large population
involved

Recognition, noticing,
not actual interruption
of daily routines,
recognition takes little time

Actual, physical celebration,
interruption
of private everyday routines

Few individuals,
specific groups involved
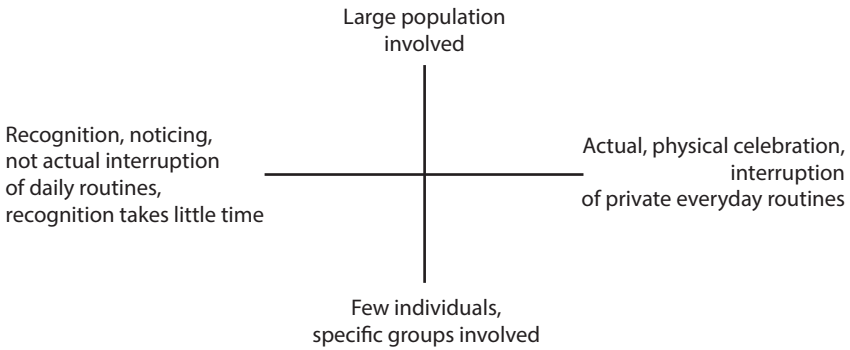
at commemoration or celebration, or at extolling (identity-bound) values. While some holidays are celebrated widely, with public holidays a particular example meant to interrupt the daily routine of the masses, others carry a more symbolic meaning or are significant only to members of particular groups (while being ignored or even disapproved of by other groups).

The first aim of this study is to provide one possible analytical model with which to analyse how celebration practices of different days of importance in the Estonian calendar – among different societal groups – influence social rhythms. For this reason this study applies an actor approach to the understanding of various celebration practices as 'rhythm machines'.

By asking *who* has been, or is, creating, transforming and giving meaning to holidays, anniversaries, days of importance and festivals, the actor approach enables us to focus on various catalyst actors (state, church, school, various interest and identity groups; the media and news journalism) that have the power or the means to create days of importance as well as introduce and disseminate celebration practices. Concurrently, celebration practices that demand different amounts of time and attention, either lighting a candle or participating in a day-long parade, depend on the meaning of this particular day participants.

For this analytical purpose a two dimensional schema is proposed.

The vertical scale is related to the individual–crowd dimension. On the one hand, the schema aims to identify the days of importance that are celebrated by many people who belong to various social groups, and, on the other hand, enables us to identify the days of importance that many people might recognise

(for example because these days are mentioned in the media) but which few take the time to celebrate.

The horizontal scale focuses on selected days of importance in the Estonian calendar and on the 'intensity' of celebration by asking how much the celebration interrupts daily life[1]. The intensity and/or magnitude of celebration is linked to physical celebration, i.e. to rituals that take place in specific places.

Hence, the upper right sector describes the days of importance that greatly interrupt daily rhythms; the lower right sector describes anniversaries and holidays that are celebrated via rituals that take time, but in which few people or small societal groups are involved. The lower left sector covers days that are mentioned in the calendar but which neither get attention nor include celebration practices. The upper left sector is reserved for days that get wide attention, for example in the mass media, but are not celebrated with specific activities – people recognise them by watching the TV news or through other media.

Meanings and significance attached to these different layers and cycles vary across time and societies, as does their relationship to power and the intensity with which they are used in the construction of identity and collective memory. One of the main functions of the calendar, according to Eviatar Zerubavel, is to solidify "an annual cycle of commemorative holidays" (Zerubavel 2003, 46). States rely on the calendar to engender national integrity; various societal groups use it in a similar way to "mnemonically socialize" (op cit) their members into a particular understanding of their past and present. While changes in government or regime tend to be accompanied by a reorganisation of the annual cycle of holidays, previous practices and the significance attached to particular dates or times of year are not easily erased. Moreover, once-suppressed holidays can be rehabilitated and disregarded practices undergo a renaissance through initiative from below.

The focus of this study is on selected days of importance: 1) days that are given the meaning of anniversary in the current Estonian official calendar 2) Soviet anniversaries that are still celebrated by certain people 3) some folk calendar anniversaries.

The Estonian calendar underwent radical transformation after the 1944 Soviet takeover, and again after the 1991 restoration of independence. In selecting past moments to be fused with the present, post-Soviet policy-makers have favoured the interwar era and World War II, dates and moments that support and strengthen the idea of legal as well as cultural continuity between pre- and post-Soviet statehood (on Estonian restorative politics see more Pettai 2007, Pettai & Pettai 2015; on memory politics Tamm 2013). The current official holiday calendar, however, contains fewer religious holidays, which dominated the

interwar calendar (for example Kreegipuu 2011). The celebration of some days of importance (for example Mother's Day, Independence Day (24th February)), interrupted during the Soviet period, began again as early as the late 1980s, with the restoration of the Estonian Republic bringing them back to the official calendar. At the same time, the gradual removal of Soviet anniversaries from the list of official holidays and celebrations began in 1990 and could be regarded as a means of educating people about the values of the Estonian state and the behaviour expected of its citizens. For example, in addition to political anniversaries, numerous days dedicated to distinct professions lost the institutional status and attention they had received since the 1950s (Kreegipuu 2011). However, a small number of holidays initiated by the Soviet regime are still observed informally, some of which have the capacity to mobilise large crowds. These holidays constitute a particular and complex phenomenon in contemporary Estonia, not least due to their ethnic and national identity connotations and continued official status in the Russian Federation and some other former Soviet republics. Furthermore, there are calendar traditions deriving from Estonian peasant society as well as the feasts and celebrations of other ethnicities living in Estonia[2]. Many of these folk festivities have lost their initial economic, social and religious meanings and fulfil instead educational and entertainment purposes, serving also as markers of ethnic identity in a multicultural consumer society.

In order to take a closer look at celebration practices inside particular social groups, we will draw on ethnographic data on two days of importance – 9th May and 23rd April. Both are multi-layered holidays, loaded with different meanings. The 9th May marks the end of World War II and, depending on the point of view, is celebrated as Victory Day in the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War, or as Europe Day dedicated to European unity. In this article, we focus on Victory Day celebrations associated with Russians and Russian-speakers in Tallinn. In the case of 23rd April we will look at how a new holiday, Veterans' Day, is in the making. We will investigate what kinds of memory actor are active here, and how earlier layers of this day, St George's day, are used or not used.

Anniversary celebration itself shows that community members share a certain time. Usually it is accompanied by some kind of direct, physical experience (Noyes & Abrahams 1999; Noyes 2003). Considering a particular day important indicates respect for and recognition of certain values and symbols that may vary from warm support to rigid tolerance. Anniversaries that create resistance and negative feelings point to conflicts between political or cultural layers or regimes in society.

Collective memory researchers have emphasised the importance of controversial interpretations in the process of legitimation of social relationships

Januar.   **31**

Kristuse ümberleikamisest.   Luk. 2, 21.

1 Esmasp.	Neäri=pääw. Aita Jummal!	
2 Teisip.	Abel	Selge
3 Kesknädd.	Sett	ja
4 Neljap.	Enok	külm.
5 Rede	Simeon	☽ 6, 19' õ.
6 Laup.	3 Kunn. pääw	Tulene.

Jesus 12 aastat wanna.   Luk. 2, 41.

7 Pühhap.	1. P. p. 3 K. P.	Annab
8 Esmasp.	Erart	rohkeste
9 Teisip.	Kasper	
10 Kesknädd.	Paawli pääw	lund.
11 Neljap.	Hugo	
12 Rede	Rein	☾ 9, 53' h.
13 Laup.	Aatso	Range

Pulmad Kana=linnas.   Joann. 2, 1.

14 Pühhap.	2. P. p. 3 K. P.	külm.
15 Esmasp.	Weliks	Tulene ja
16 Teisip.	Madli	lund.
17 Kesknädd.	Tönnise pääw	

Tabelkalender 1951

Nädalapäevad	JAANUAR	VEEBRUAR	MARTS
Esmaspäev	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26	5 12 19 26
Teisipäev	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27	6 13 20 27
Kolmapäev	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28	7 14 21 28
Neljapäev	4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22	1 8 15 22 29
Reede	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23	2 9 16 23 30
Laupäev	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24	3 10 17 24 31
Pühapäev	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25	4 11 18 25

Nädalapäevad	APRILL	MAI	JUUNI
Esmaspäev	2 9 16 23 30	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25
Teisipäev	3 10 17 24	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26
Kolmapäev	4 11 18 25	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27
Neljapäev	5 12 19 26	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28
Reede	6 13 20 27	4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22 29
Laupäev	7 14 21 28	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30
Pühapäev	1 8 15 22 29	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24

Nädalapäevad	JUULI	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
Esmaspäev	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24
Teisipäev	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25
Kolmapäev	4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26
Neljapäev	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27
Reede	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28
Laupäev	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22 29
Pühapäev	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30

Nädalapäevad	OKTOOBER	NOVEMBER	DETSEMBER
Esmaspäev	1 8 15 22 29	5 12 19 26	3 10 17 24 31
Teisipäev	2 9 16 23 30	6 13 20 27	4 11 18 25
Kolmapäev	3 10 17 24 31	7 14 21 28	5 12 19 26
Neljapäev	4 11 18 25	1 8 15 22 29	6 13 20 27
Reede	5 12 19 26	2 9 16 23 30	7 14 21 28
Laupäev	6 13 20 27	3 10 17 24	1 8 15 22 29
Pühapäev	7 14 21 28	4 11 18 25	2 9 16 23 30

Figure 2 Calendars with 'red days' from different periods: 1851 (under Czarist Russia), 1951 and 1989 (Soviet period), and 2015 (contemporary calendar).

(Tileaga 2009, 339). As mentioned above, in Estonia the most contradictory of these are the interpretations and celebrations of World War II events (see Appendix 1). Halloween represents a smaller-scale controversy (see Appendix 1) because it is often interpreted as an 'imported' day, therefore resisting it can signify evaluation of ethno-cultural authenticity.

In combining quantitative data and qualitative case studies, we aim to give a more complex picture of the workings and uses of the calendar as a means of societal synchronisation. Of particular interest to us are the bodily and sensory aspects of celebration practices and their capacity to build a sense of community or an impression thereof.

Sociological and cultural studies of time combined with ethnological and folkloristic studies

Because the calendar and related practices are embedded in society and participate in the construction of social realities they are of interest to scholars from

different fields. Much has been written in sociology and cultural studies about time as an element of social organisation and about calendars as means of managing time and establishing as well as performing power (for example Zerubavel 1981; Katovich 1987; Spurk 2004; Cicchelli, Pugeault-Cicchelli & Merico 2006; Syring 2009; Macnamara & Crawford 2013; Mughal 2014).

More specifically the current study has introduced ideas from rhythm analysis introduced by Lefebvre (2004). Rhythm analysis has been widely used in time-geography and can contribute to the development of the temporal understanding of place and space (for example Kärrholm 2009; Edensor 2010a; 2010b) and the temporal analysis of seasons (Krause 2012). One can find quite specific analysis, for example by asking how the life of children is influenced by shifting environmental, social, and technological rhythms (Kullman & Palludan 2011). Rhythm analysis has also been applied in media studies, for example Sorensen & Pica (2005) used the concept of rhythm for the analysis of interaction through and with mobile technologies in the virtual contexts of work. Obert (2008) elaborated on rhythm analysis of television in order to highlight its relationship with

embodied eurhythmy. Media programmes that organise viewing, reading and listening schedules have been regarded as creators of certain simultaneity and synchronisation (Edensor 2006, 535). Hence, rhythm analysis has been used in various disciplines, although the dominant disciplinary approach had been more of space and everyday life.

Numerous ethnological and folkloristic studies zoom in on a specific holiday or anniversary and the practices and meanings related to it a particular society or community (for example Selberg 2006; Scully 2012; Macnamara & Crawford 2013; Mughal 2014; Kõiva 2013; Fox 2006). There are folkloristic and ethnological studies that seek to reconstruct the bygone notions of time and annual festive calendars of pre-industrial societies (for example Hiiemäe 1998; Vilkuna 1950; Vahtre 2000 [1991]). Yet more recently, folklorists' attention has shifted to bodily aspects of calendar customs (Noyes & Abrahams 1999) as well as to their social and political effects in societies ridden with ethnic, political and sectarian divides (Hiiemäe 2003, Seljamaa 2010, Šaknys 2015). The study of holidays overlaps with the study of festivals and other periodic events as well as with the study of commemoration (Anepaio 2003; 2009) and memory politics.

In addition to ethnology and folkloristics, media and communication studies have paid attention to anniversary journalism and its role in the construction and articulation of collective memory (Hoskins 2001a; 2001b; Winfield et al 2002; Kitch 2003a; 2003b; 2007; 2008; Edy & Daradanova, 2006; Le 2006; Carlson 2007; Ebbrecht 2007; Winfield & Hume 2007; West 2008; Harro-Loit & Kõresaar 2010) and how anniversaries are constructed over time via the mass media (Kõresaar, Müür, Kreegipuu 2013; Miil 2013; Vihalemm & Jakobson 2011). Methodologically this approach brings in the text and discourse analysis used by various disciplines. As Katriel (2005, 721) writes in an introduction to the special issue of the journal *Text*: "Representing a range of sub-disciplines and research traditions in communication and discourse studies, […] all attest to the complexity, richness, and dynamic nature of human communication as well as to the potential value of studying anniversary celebrations as intriguing social sites."

Active and passive actors

When discussing the idea of how different actors (institutions, organisations and individuals) influence celebration practices relating to days of importance, four different roles (or actions) can be outlined:
• the initiator of an anniversary (state/parliament; church; specific lobby groups)
• the active institutional communicator and interpreter of an anniversary (the media and news journalism; state, church, school and organisations)

- the active celebrator of an anniversary (those who carry out and transmit the rituals physically, take time and/or carry out a ritual or special action)
- the passive celebrator of an anniversary (people who recognise the day of importance via news, calendar or just by acknowledging any physical commemoration symbols or ceremonies)

This distribution of roles is best suited to well-known holidays and anniversaries observed at the national level or by larger groups. From the point of view of folklore studies and ethnology, fields of research dealing with on-the-ground processes, active celebrators are also active interpreters and communicators and ordinary people engaged in a particular holiday can assume these roles alongside institutions and activists.

The differentiation between active and passive celebrators, on the other hand, is comparable to the classic distinction between active and passive tradition bearers first made by the Swedish folklorist Carl Wilhelm von Sydow (Sydow 1948). While active tradition bearers keep a particular tradition alive and pass it on in performance, passive tradition bearers are aware of its existence and can recall it partially, but do not practice or spread it intentionally. Every person is active in relation to certain traditions but passive in relation to others, whereas the selection of traditions to be performed actively is open to change and dependent on social conditions, among other things. Similarly, traditions themselves can be in an active or passive state or become active or passive: living traditions can lose their significance and dormant traditions can be brought back into active use in order to serve particular functions (Sydow 1948; Pentikäinen 1998, 802).

In our study we use the survey data to explore the repertoire of active and passive celebration practices, and how widely and in what configurations these celebrations are performed among social groups. In addition, the connections between the frequency of interruption to everyday rhythms, and the repertoires of celebration practice are explored. Data collected by means of ethnographic methods is used to zoom in on particular holidays and practices that cause a rupture in the celebrators' daily routines.

When applying the actor approach to celebration practices from the point of view of rhythm analysis, various institutions (school, church, government and news media) play important roles as catalyst agents. Institutions can be therefore considered not only active but also powerful actors that can cultivate universal simultaneity (Anderson 1998).

The most powerful actor concerning synchronisation of social time generally is the state, which governs the organisation of weekly, calendric and also ceremonial time. While "[…] the state synchronizes much nation-wide practices, regulating the times spent at school, work […], governing drinking hours, and

so on […]" (Edensor 2006, 534), parliament holds the more specific power to *introduce or re-define anniversaries*, marking some historical turning points that enable society to reclaim its national history.

The media is the second powerful institution that synchronises many social activities. Specifically news journalism has a special interest in promoting anniversaries (Harro-Loit & Kõresaar 2010). As Schudson says:

> The newspaper not only uses time but keeps time for its readers […] journalists take their cues about rhythm from social institutions beyond the newsroom and from cultural calendars widely shared. There is always a New Year's story, a Halloween story, a set of Christmas season stories … the special character of the Sunday paper comes in part because readers have more time to read on Sundays, in part because Sunday is a day in our culture for reflection […] Anniversaries, beginnings (debuts, openings) and closings (deaths of people or institutions) provide an opportunity to exercise some kind of self-conscious sense of history. (Schudson 1986, 101–102.)

In the Estonian case there are in addition memorial days, which are always commemorated (activated) through the media, such as the deportation story, on 14th June and 25th March, or the story of the resistance, on 22nd September (on the creation of 22nd September as Resistance Day, see Miil 2013).

Schools and other education establishments have historically been quite powerful interpreters and disseminators of ideologically important days. English (2006, 248) provides a case study of how the Empire Day festival, introduced into the British state education system, was aimed at nurturing a sense of collective identity and imperial responsibility among young empire citizens. According to Cote and Deutsch Thanksgiving became a ritual in the early 20th century, encouraging and helping immigrant families become Americanised, as parents acceded to their children's requests for the turkey dinner that they had learned about in school (Cote & Deutsch 2008, 217; see also Noyes & Abrahams 1999).

The proportion of anniversaries linked to different institutions differs in various countries and is linked to the division of a country's secular and religious culture in particular. For example in Poland there are 12 state anniversaries, eight of which are related to the church (Kaftan 2007, 302). In Estonia, of 11 national and public holidays three are directly connected to the Church and/or the Christian calendar, and in addition to that three Christmas Days are public holidays[3].

The ecclesiastical calendar usually defines the specific order and number of working days and holy days. In Estonia the state co-exists peacefully with different churches, although occasionally discussions arise as to whether Russian

Orthodox Christmas should be included in the list of public holidays (for example Leas 2015).

The multi-ethnic context of celebration practice in Estonia

The multi-ethnic context of Estonia is one important factor to be considered in the analysis and interpretation of empirical data. Out of the country's total population of 1,312,300 (Statistics Estonia 2015), ethnic Estonians form 69.7%, ethnic Russians 25.2%, Ukrainians 1.7%, Belarusians 1% and Finns 0.6% (Tiit, 2014). The current ethnic composition of the Estonian population has a rather complicated historical background. In the past, Estonia was a colony of both Germany and Sweden and later a part of the Russian Empire (1721–1917). The creation of the Republic of Estonia in 1918 brought ethnic Estonians into power for twenty years, until World War II. Many of today's national holidays derive from that period. The period of Soviet control (1944–1991) also meant the 'cleansing' of the culture (for example celebration of religious holydays was prohibited) and the re-writing of history, including the introduction of Soviet days of importance and the prohibition of celebration of anniversaries related to independent Estonian statehood[4].

Most Russians and Russian-speakers who settled in Estonia did so during the Soviet period, coming in different waves and for different reasons (Kulu 2005). Their customs, identities and values were formed during socialisation under Soviet rule. The social structure was greatly separated: there were schools with Estonian and Russian as the language of instruction, Estonian- and Russian-language mass media, and separated residential regions. All of which has shaped interethnic relations to the present day. The political and economic involvement and identity development of contemporary local Russians is complex and multi-directional (see for example Integration Monitoring 2011; Vihalemm & Leppik 2015), although the wish to (re)discover, maintain or negotiate collective cultural identity is apparent among Russians and many other Russian-speaking Slavs[5]. Among the features that are regarded as important connections with one's ethnic group Russians mentioned language, common history and holidays most often (respectively 70%, 33% and 32%) by Russians (Integration Monitoring 2011, 136–137). Holidays thus play a crucial part in their identity (re)construction. The role of church and religion in shaping the identity, values and social relations is considerably more significant among the Russian-speaking community compared to ethnic Estonians. While among ethnic Estonians only 21.5% regard themselves as religious, among Russian-speakers the percentage of religious people is much

greater – 47.5% are Orthodox and 6.8% follow another religious confession (Tiit 2014, 61).

One factor that probably also shapes awareness and celebration is the information relating to holidays, anniversaries and days of importance that circulates in Estonian- and Russian-language media and language spaces. Although knowledge of Estonian is gradually improving among Russian-speakers there is still a considerable number of people who cannot participate in the Estonian-language public sphere. Only 28% of Russian-speakers are reported to understand everything when following the Estonian language mass media, 51% understand partially and 21% understand nothing (Integration Monitoring 2011, 161). An overwhelming proportion of the Russian-speaking Estonian population follow Russian-language media, especially audio-visual media production from the Russian Federation (see for example Vihalemm & Hogan-Brun 2013), and this shapes their everyday rhythms and celebration practices.

'Days of importance', note on terminology

In this article, we are concerned with public holidays, holidays, anniversaries, commemorations and days of importance, all of which are covered by the Estonian term *tähtpäev*. The distinction between public holidays and days of importance comes from Estonian legislation. While public holidays are days of rest, days of importance are working days dedicated to a particular concept, event, institution or group of people. However, holiday – in Estonian *püha*, or holy time – can be understood in a broader sense as a period of time invested with significance and exceptionality. Holidays in this broader and informal sense can be defined and created by actors other than the state. The distinction between public holidays and holidays is useful in the Estonian context where the public holidays of the previous regime continue to be observed informally under the new government.

The following definition by Nicole Gilbert Cote and Francine M. Deutsch (referring to Katz 1998) captures different aspects of holiday:

> A holiday is: (1) a consensual *interruption* of the everyday round-of-life in which people divest themselves of everyday roles and assume a festive stance, (2) a way to *commune* with some value or concern which is central to the society or culture, (3) a means of *ritual* and symbolic activity, and (4) an occasion when participants are aware that *everybody else* is doing the same thing at the same time. Holiday rituals may extol patriotic values (e.g., July 4th, Memorial Day), express religious beliefs (e.g., Christmas), or reflect

political agendas (e.g., May Day, Earth Day). Holiday celebrations can also be occasions for claiming valued identities (Cote and Deutsch 2008, 215– 216).

Anniversaries, according to Katriel,

> […] ritually acknowledge the passage of time and insist on the continued relevance of past events. […] Anniversaries are themselves cultural texts performed by and for social groups, real and imagined. […] Anniversaries – as well as mass-mediated reports about them – can also be part of cultural projects of group formation and identity negotiation (Katriel 2005, 719, 720).

Hence, holidays and anniversaries partly overlap, but anniversaries tend to be more linked to past events, to commemoration and therefore could interrupt less the everyday 'round-of-life'. The physical meaning of commemoration of various anniversaries (for example fiftieth, hundredth, etc., anniversary) can be found in various forms. Zerubavel points out, on a more general level, that for example postage stamps and street names are specifically designed to commemorate major historical figures and events (Zerubavel 2003, 29). Commemorations include public ceremonies, parades, exhibitions, special church services and public entertainment events. Posters and mementos, as well as media publicity, are also used to promote an anniversary.

Methodology

This study is based both on the qualitative and quantitative analysis of empirical evidence. The quantitative empirical evidence comes from the sociological survey *Me. The World. Media* carried out in 2014 on a nationally representative sample (n=1500), partly as a self-administered questionnaire and partly as an interview. This is a survey of media use, values, political attitudes, consumption, personal social space, etc., and is carried out regularly by a research group (Halliki Harro-Loit and Triin Vihalemm were members of group) from the Institute of Social Studies, part of Tartu University. The celebration of holidays and anniversaries was first included in the 2011 survey and a somewhat shortened version was used again in 2014. The days of importance used in the Estonian- and Russian-language questionnaires were not identical – the Russian version contained some days that are celebrated in the Russian Federation, such as Defender of the Fatherland Day, and some Russian folk calendar days like Troitsa. In addition, a question block about ways of celebration was used in 2014. This analysis

mainly draws on the latest data, i.e. that from the 2014 survey, to maintain focus and avoid scattering.

For the purposes of this article, the annual cycle of holidays and anniversaries in Estonia can be said to comprise, first, public holidays and anniversaries fixed in legislation, as well as, second, days dedicated to institutions, concepts and groups of people deemed valuable to society and the state. The evolution of the official holiday calendar in particular reflects the efforts of various actors to synchronise societal rhythms as well as fix the meaning of particular historical events and dates.

In making a selection the authors used combined criteria: historical origin, the main actors who (re)established the celebration tradition and rhythms, belonging to the different historical, cultural and political 'layers' of social time and the social resonance and spread of celebration practice among the population (see also Appendix 1). The selected days on the list appear in the order of the Gregorian calendar.

1. **New Year's Day** was included on the list because of its universality – its celebration has not been interrupted by historical ruptures, it is a free day and most widely celebrated among all population groups (see Appendix 1).

2. **The Anniversary of the Tartu Peace Treaty**, on 2nd February, represents a commemoration event important to Estonian independent statehood. Except for some special meetings this day is generally echoed in the mass media without widespread personal and family celebration practices (see Appendix 2).

3. **Valentine's Day** ('Friend's Day' in Estonian) is selected as a representative of an international day of importance that reached to Estonia after the fall of the Soviet Union. Following folk traditions is analysed via the celebration of Shrovetide.

4. **Defender of the Fatherland Day** in Russia is included on the list because 23rd February was the Anniversary of Soviet Army. It is still a national holiday in Russia under the new name and is echoed in television broadcasts of the Russian Federation that are followed intensively also in Estonia.

5. The next day, 24th February, is **Estonian Independence Day**, the anniversary of the first public declaration of the Estonian Republic in 1918, which was included in the selection as the main national holiday.

6. **Women's Day**, on the 8th March, was widely celebrated during the Soviet period, and less publicly celebrated during the first decade of Estonian re-independence, although it is currently back on the public agenda.

7. In asking about celebrations of **Easter** no reference was given to Orthodox or Lutheran traditions, so interviewees where free to interpret this day as they wished.

8. The **two anniversaries of mass deportations in Estonia, 25th March and 14th June** (the latter is in the official calendar as the Day of Mourning), reflect an Estonian commemoration tradition that was introduced into the official calendar after the restoration of the Estonian Republic. Although Russians, too, suffered from deportations during the Stalinist period, today's Russia does not support the relevant commemoration traditions (Khazanov 2008).

9. **Mother's Day** (and also **Father's Day**) both represent days of importance dedicated to ethno-culturally and politically neutral social roles and relations. Education and media institutions, as well as business organisations, help to disseminate the relevant information and presents (especially flowers on Mother's Day) and arrange special events (celebrations in kindergartens and schools, public concerts, etc.).

10. As mentioned above, the **9th May** carries a double meaning. In the Soviet Union it was celebrated as Victory Day in the Great Patriotic War, and it continues to carry this meaning in contemporary Russia. In the European Union, the 9th May is celebrated as Europe Day or Schuman Day, and is dedicated to European unity. In the Estonian and locally produced Russian-language media this anniversary has opposing interpretations (Vihalemm & Jakobson 2011).

11. **Midsummer's Day** can be found in one or another form in many folk calendars. In Estonia this is celebrated on St John's day, the 24th June, with the 23rd, Estonia's own Victory Day a national holiday that celebrates victory in the Landeswehr war in 1919 (Brüggemann 2015; Tamm 2008). Parades are arranged in different counties, covered by the media. As both the 23rd and 24th are days off, the celebration often includes both days: in responding to the mass survey people do not much differentiate between them.

12. The 20 August, **Day of Restoration of Independence** after Soviet rule is also a national holiday and its celebrations are initiated mainly by the state or local institutions. In 2008 and 2014 large song festival-like open-air concerts were held, and were transmitted on TV, turning them into media events.

13. **St Martin's and St Catherine's days** represent a folk tradition that has been rather vital and has adapted to modern urban lifestyles. Together with Shrovetide, these days were tolerated or even encouraged by the authorities during the Soviet period, thus their celebration practices have not undergone interruptions for political reasons but rather gradual transformation due to urbanisation.

14. **Halloween** represents an 'imported' day that arrived in Estonia after re-independence and is celebrated mainly by the young people by means of special clothing, food, parties and door-to-door visits.

15. In the Estonian folk tradition, the 2nd November was celebrated as **All Souls' Day**. Unlike Shrovetide, St Martin's and St Catherine's days, which are

celebrated collectively and publicly (often in schools and kindergartens), the activities of All Souls' Day – lighting candles, going to the cemetery – are done alone or with family members.

In reporting their relationship to these selected holidays, anniversaries and days of importance people could choose one of the following variables: I consider this day important, and always celebrate it; I consider this day important, but usually do not celebrate it myself; I know this day but I am indifferent; I am negative about this day; I do not know this day.

The answers to this question block were analysed using descriptive statistics (distribution of answers on the variable scale) in order to show how widely certain days are known and linked with special rituals and contrast with everyday time-use patterns and activities. Mass surveys by their nature inform researchers about what informants think to be usual, or what they think to occur (in-)frequently, and how they construct – via answers to the questions – are their individual and collective normalities. A survey study can highlight evidence first of all about the cohesion and spread of norms in a given society. By comparing different social groups our analysis aims to point out moments when social cohesion is more or less tight and which actors and historical–cultural meanings contribute to these moments.

In addition to the descriptive analysis the variations in social groups' relationships to different days of importance was analysed with the help of regression analysis. The personal celebration of a certain day was taken as a dependent variable and socio-demographic variables – age, gender, ethnicity, education and having under 18-year-old children in the family – as independent variables. Regression analysis makes it possible to establish a direct connection between two variables, such as the celebration of Mother's Day and ethnicity, controlling the possible mediating impact of other factors, such as age, education and gender. The statistically relevant connection between the celebration of a certain day and a socio-demographic variable was calculated on three levels of statistical significance: strong connection ($p \leq .001$), medium connection ($p \leq .01$) and weak connection ($p \leq .05$). The connections between the celebration of a certain day and social group belonging can indicate how universally the establishment of symbols and actors focused on the particular day to 'recruit' celebrators.

The other block of questions in the survey specified the practices of celebration. After informants had reported whether they know, and do or do not celebrate, particular holidays and anniversaries, they were asked, "What do you usually do on holidays and days of importance?" Informants were able to indicate twelve activities either done frequently, sometimes, rarely or not at all. The variables were developed to reflect the interruption (for example going to church)

or continuation of everyday practices (working during the holidays); the private (having a family party) or public (participating in public events) nature of the celebration; the active (going to the cemetery) or passing interest in celebration (following topical news or special mediated broadcasts). Apart from the descriptive analysis that provides the frequency of performance of various celebration practices, authors also aimed to find patterns of practices and how they are potentially related to the time organising structures of social groups. For that reason factor analysis was utilised in order to interpret more latent, social structural variables, not just single indicators. Factors bind together indicators according to the logic of answering and thereby represent more general sets of social practices that intertwine with ways of signifying particular moments in the calendar. The factor scores were saved as new variables in order to correlate them with socio-demographic indicators. The factor analysis was run by using the principal components method with Varimax rotation and the criterion of eigenvalues over one, rather than a fixed number of factors, in extraction. The analysis resulted in four factors that were compared to the conceptual frame of the analysis.

In addition to the sociological survey we are relying on empirical fieldwork. While the survey provides information about celebration practices in general, ethnographic fieldwork makes it possible to focus on particular holidays, on concrete instances, places and practices carried out by specific actors. Starting in 2009, Elo-Hanna Seljamaa has been conducting ethnographic fieldwork in Tallinn, focusing on ethnic interactions and the implementation of Estonian integration policy. In addition to communicating with Russian-speaking residents in Tallinn, Seljamaa has taken part in various events that were organised by or featured national minority cultural associations as well as in the celebration of various official and vernacular holidays. The main method for gathering data was participant observation, although she also conducted interviews with representatives of national minority cultural associations, officials, activists and ordinary residents of the capital. The present article draws on observations of Victory Day or the 9th May celebrations in Tallinn between 2010 and 2013. The aim is to describe specific practices people engage in on this occasion and to analyse how these practices bring about a rupture in spatial, visual, behavioural, sonic and other routines, on the one hand, and a synchronisation of the actions and movements of celebrators, on the other.

For the analyses of the creation of Veterans' Day on 23rd April Kirsti Jõesalu participated in the events, which took place around that date in 2013, 2014 and 2015. She took part in various events, including the opening of exhibitions and informal gatherings at the Estonian War museum (in Viimsi). She participated at the main event in the evening of 23rd April, a rock concert in Freedom Square

(Tallinn) where popular rock groups performed in all three years. In 2014 and 2015 she visited the memorial service at St George's Church in a village close to Pärnu, in western Estonia. Hence, the main data of gathering information was participant observation, although she also spoke several times with actors involved in the political side of veterans and Veterans' Day. Furthermore she analysed documents connected with policy relating to veterans. In September 2014 she interviewed a person who worked for the We Salute! campaign (*Anname au!*, see http://annameau.ee). She also followed social media events and comments relating to Veterans' Day events.

This article is a kind of methodological challenge in which we combine quantitative surveys with two small qualitative case studies in order to provide a more complex picture of celebrations.

The celebration of holidays and anniversaries in the main social groups

Using regression analysis we first examined socio-demographic variables that best differentiate the celebration of the selected days of importance. Figure 3 gives a schematic overview of the number of statistically significant connections between the celebration of a particular day and socio-demographic variables. Ethnicity appeared to be the feature that most frequently explained the diverging celebration of the selected days of importance and anniversaries. The anniversaries that relate to the (restored) independent statehood of the Estonian Republic (Independence Day, the Day of Restoration of Independence, the Anniversary of the Tartu Peace Treaty) and commemoration days (the anniversaries of mass deportations) are unknown to 50–75% of Russians and other ethnic minorities living in Estonia. There is no resistance to these days – people who claimed to know these days also recognised them or celebrated themselves.

Anniversaries of mass deportations raised some resistance (13% said that they are negative about those days). The old Soviet days of importance that have now acquired new significance in today's Russia, such as Defender of the Fatherland Day, are celebrated widely and recognised among Russian-speakers in Estonia. Likewise Estonians were negative about the celebration of 9th May as the Soviet Union's Victory Day in the Great Patriotic War.

Anniversaries relating to Estonian statehood are celebrated more widely by ethnic Estonians than by Russian-speakers. The anniversaries that are public holidays are more widely celebrated compared to those that are working days.

The folk calendar is not supported by holidays from work, with the exception of Midsummer, although the selected days of importance are celebrated among

Figure 3. Connection between celebration of selected anniversaries/holidays and socio-demographic variables in 2011 and 2014
The table summarises the results of regression analysis. The pluses mark statistically relevant connections (+++ p≤.001; ++ p≤.01; + p≤.05) and the empty cells show no statistically relevant connection between the two variables.

	Ethnic-ity*	Age	Gender	Educa-tion	Children in the family
New Years' Day	+	+			
Anniversary of the Tartu Peace Treaty (2nd February)	+++	+++			
Valentine's Day		+++	+++	++	
Shrovetide			+++		+++
Women's Day	+++				
Commemoration of deportations (25th March), day of mourning (14th July)	+++	+++			
Easter	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++
Victory Day of Great Patriotic War (9th May)	+++	++			
Mother's Day	+++		+++		+++
Midsummer's Day	+++				
Day of Restoration of Independence (20th August)	+++				
Halloween		+++		+++	
All Souls' Day (2nd November)	+++	++	+++		
Father's Day	+++		+++		++
St Martin's, St Catherine's Days	+++		+++	++	++
Christmas	++				

* The cross-ethnic analysis across compares two groups: ethnic Estonians and ethnic Russians. The remaining group of other ethnicities was too small in number to analyse separately.

one part of the ethnic Estonian population and to some extent also taken into the celebration practices of the ethnic minorities. Shrovetide, which belongs both to the Estonian and Russian folk calendar, is the most popular.

The affect of the religious calendar (Christmas and Easter) on everyday rhythms is significant among both ethnic groups. Religiosity was also included in one regression model. As expected, this feature was connected with the more frequent celebration of Easter, notably in the Russian-speaking population.

Days of importance relating to social roles and relations are celebrated or recognised widely among all ethnicities in Estonia, regardless of which historical–cultural layer these days belong to. Ethnic Estonians, Russians and others celebrate or at least consider important the Mother's and Father's days, which were (re)introduced by the Estonian Republic, as well as Women's Day, which was celebrated during the Soviet period, and Valentine's Day, which came with Western cultural influence at the beginning of the 1990s. Ethnic differences in the celebration and recognition of holidays and anniversaries are shown in more detail in Appendix 1 and below in Figure 5.

Gender differentiates celebration practices, for example women celebrate more frequently than men. Age too can be used to mark a population group's active or passive relationship with the holiday calendar. The younger generation celebrates Valentine's Day, Shrovetide, Halloween, Midsummer's Night, and Mother's and Father's Days more often than the older generation, which in turn is more likely to observe All Souls' Day as well as the anniversaries related to deportations and World War II. Among Russian-speakers older people celebrate religious holidays more often. Kindergartens and schools are influential actors in creating and maintaining celebration practices. Following folk traditions (Shrovetide, St Martin's and St Catherine's Days) and holidays dedicated to family relations (Mother's and Father's Days) is connected with the presence of children in the family.

Figure 4 displays these selected anniversaries, holidays and days of importance using the two-dimensional schema that was introduced above.

The upper right sector marks anniversaries or holidays that are recognised and celebrated by many participants and which thereby have the most power to shape people's everyday routines. In doing so they also generate, maintain or transform certain cultural and political values and identities. Speaking about the whole population of Estonia, only religious holidays and days of importance related to the social (family) roles that unite the different ethnicities have enough symbolic power to shape social rhythms (see Figure 4).

The upper left sector on the graph in Figure 4 marks days of importance that acquire wide public attention through the mass media as well as institutionalised events or representations. Apart from media and education institutions this part of the graph represents use by various shops and businesses that sell relevant special items. However these days lack most people's personal involvement in the form of private celebration practices. These days can be noticed in passing through the media, when walking in the street, in shopping centres, etc., without interruption of daily routine. The very modest involvement of the

**Figure 4. Public recognition and celebration of
holidays, anniversaries and days of importance in Estonia in 2014**
Total population

Vertical axis: Public attention to the particular holiday –
share of people who consider (generally) important ta celebrate it

Christmas (88/97)

Mothers Day (71/94)

New Years' Day (92/98)

Midsummer Day (80/96)

Womens Day (55/85)

National Independ-ence Day (43/79)

Easter (61/84)

Fathers Day (55/82)

Anniv. of restoration of independence (27/73)

Shrovetide (32/73)

Valentine's Day (31/65)

Days of mourning of mass deportations (8/57)

Souls' Visiting Day (34/63)

St Martin's & St Katherine's days (19/57)

Tartu Peace Treaty Anniv. (5/44)

9th of May, Victory Day in Russia/SU (23/37)

Halloween (5/24)

Horizontal axis: Share of people who report to celebrate particular holiday

Russian-speaking population in the celebrations explains why national holidays do not touch collective daily rhythms to a great extent (see also Figure 5).

In the lower left sector are anniversaries celebrated in certain spaces with specific rituals, but which are meaningful for a few communities and individuals only. For example, the anniversary of the Tartu Peace Treaty is celebrated almost

Figure 5. The recognition and actual celebration of selected holidays, anniversaries and days of importance among ethnic Estonians and Russians in 2014

Vertical axis: Public attention to the particular holiday –
share of people who consider (generally) important ta celebrate it

Horizontal axis: Share of people who report to celebrate particular holiday
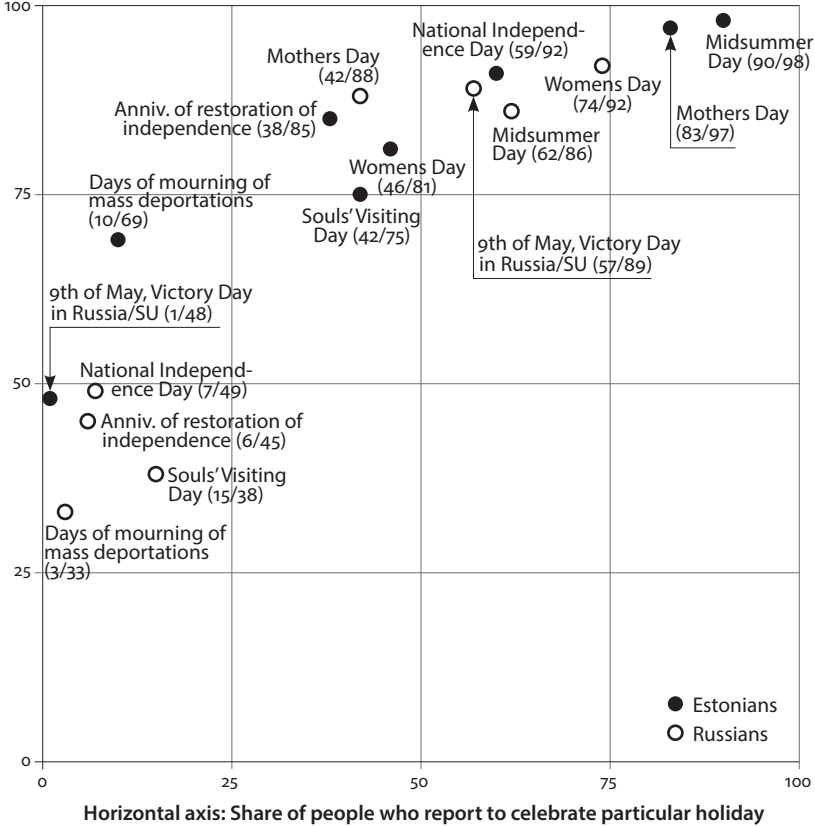
exclusively among ethnic Estonians and Victory Day among ethnic Russian. Halloween is celebrated mainly only by youngsters.

When Figure 4 is compiled on the basis of shares in the total population, Figure 5 gives comparative positioning of selected days among ethnic Estonians and ethnic Russians. Some days, such as Independence Day and Victory Day, as well as Women's Day and Mother's Day, are in mirror positions with each other

enjoying a large number of celebrants among one ethnic group and only casual attention or passive recognition among the other. Among Russian-speakers a great many more days of importance belong to the category of marginal public attention and sympathy among ethnic Estonians.

Celebration practices

What do people do when they celebrate? The survey sought to answer this question by asking people what they do on holidays, anniversaries and days of importance. The question addressed days in general and did not specify a particular holiday or anniversary. Thus, the answers reflect what people regard as normal and habitual ways to celebrate special moments when they take time out from their daily routines, and do not describe the celebration customs of particular days. The results are shown in Figure 6 in the breakdowns of total population as well as ethnic groups. In general celebration practices are related to the time family members spend together. Food-related rituals, meeting family members who are usually separated spatially and travelling together somewhere are important markers of interruptions in daily routine. "Coming together" gains more and more meaning in today's transnational context, taking into account the fact that Estonians have a high percentage of commuters (Scientific report 2009, there are 15.8 cross-border commuters per thousand inhabitants in Estonia). So a large festive family meal, especially those at Christmas and Midsummer's Day, are occasions when family and friends come together.

Holidays are widely used simply to take a rest from normal duties. However, some people do not break the everyday routines but continue to working during these days off. The holidays are also used pragmatically for housework and gardening. These activities can be combined with specific celebration activities during the holidays. In general, the survey confirms the thesis that holidays interrupt (to some extent) daily routines and are related to specific activities, and that holidays are used to strengthen social relations (meeting family members, sending greeting cards, etc.).

News journalism plays an important role in framing and constructing the meaning of the days of importance. The anniversary of the founding of the Estonian Republic is the high holiday of television and is a media event (Dayan & Katz 1994): usual television programming is interrupted and many people watch either the military parade (which takes place regularly in Tallinn and in other cities like Tartu, Pärnu and Narva) and/or the President's reception. In addition, the Victory Day parade can be followed on television. Commemorative anniversaries such as the anniversary of the Tartu Peace Treaty (Uusen 2010; Harro-Loit

Figure 6. Practices of celebration of holidays among the population of Estonia in 2014

Legend: ■ Frequently ■ Sometimes ▢ Very rarely or never

Practice	Frequently	Sometimes	Very rarely or never
Family come together, and we serve dinner	63	28	9
Just relax	48	41	11
Watch media, read news concerning the day of importance	41	38	21
Buy something to celebrate the day (decorations, candles, presents, cards etc.)	31	35	34
Go to the cemetery*	24	38	38
Do domestic work or gardening	23	37	40
Travel somewhere (to visit somebody, to a summer cottage or abroad)	16	43	41
Communicate with friends via (social) media	20	34	46
Participate in public ceremonies at schools or kindergartens	21	19	60
Participate in public ceremonies	7	32	61
Go to church, participate in religious rituals	7	17	75
Do my usual job or work	12	20	68

* The "go to the cemetery" variable means in the local context going to the graves of family members, leaving flowers and lighting candles. This is especially customary at Christmas and on All Souls' Day.

& Kõresaar 2010) and the anniversary of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact (Kõresaar, Müür & Kreegipuu 2013) are mainly mediated as commemorative events with the news usually showing and talks about them as such (quite often news value comes from VIPs participating in these events, for example the president visiting the grave of Jaan Poska, the man considered most important at the signing of the Tartu Peace Treaty) (Boikov 2010). Hence, every year via daily news such days of importance are constructed for the national news media audience, even if sometimes coverage lasts no longer than three minutes.

One way to approach the question of to what extent different days of importance interrupt daily routine is to look for celebration activities that would take time and need special attention. When people visit certain places and/or participate in certain ceremonies this is clearly an interruption of rhythm.

Only occasionally are celebration practices linked to an interruption to in being in their normal location, in other words leaving home and travelling somewhere (summer homes or cottages, a visit to other family members, watching or participating in a ritual that takes place in other town, county or country, etc.). Usually this movement in space is linked to public celebration events like parades, meetings, concerts, etc.

Of the socio-demographic variables age and ethnicity again appeared to be the most differentiating, as the correlation analysis revealed. Figure 7 presents the results of the correlation analysis.

Ethnic Estonians' celebration is more frequently shaped by institutionalised practices and anniversary journalism – they celebrate anniversaries and days of importance by following the related verbal and visual representations from the mass media, or by participating in public events and meetings. Visiting family graves at a cemetery is also more widespread among ethnic Estonians. This can also partly be explained by the disrupted family ties among Russian-speaers – the ancestors of the older generation of ethnic Russians are buried outside Estonia. The church-related rituals of celebration are more widespread among this group too.

If very many people from different societal groups interrupt their daily rhythm on a particular day, this day (whether anniversary or holiday) has the power of synchronisation, as with other, state-imposed, rhythms (working hours, resulting traffic patterns, etc.). But there are also many celebration-connected activities that take little time and are carried out by very many people individually: sending cards and holiday wishes, shopping (for special gifts), lighting candles and decorating homes, cooking particular dishes, and also just not working as usual. We would say that from the point of view of synchronisation of daily rhythms these activities are ambivalent. On the one hand, any symbolic ritual, even if it takes less than a minute, is a celebration, giving this day it's meaning through this minute. On the other hand, if many people just take time off and rest regardless of the meaning of the free day, this is also a sort of synchronisation because social rhythm is slowed down.

In order to find the patterns of celebration practices and their connection with other sets of social practices factor analysis was used (the results are given in Appendix 2). Empirical grouping showed the 'active' celebration practices connected with family gatherings, travelling, participation in public events, with

Figure 7. The connections between celebration practices, ethnicity and age
The table displays the existence and statistical significance of correlations on two levels, ++ (p≤.001) and + (p≤.01) with verbal characterisation of the connection. An empty cell shows no statistically significant difference between ethnicity or age groups.

	Ethnicity	Age
Family comes together, we have a festive meal		
Just have a rest, relax		
Follow related broadcasts, etc., in the media	+ Estonians more frequently	++ Older people more frequently
Buy something topical		
Go to the cemetery	++ Estonians more frequently	++ Older people more frequently
Participate in celebrations at school, kindergarten	++ Estonians more frequently	++ Younger people more frequently
Do housework, gardening	++ Estonians more frequently, 23% of ethnic Russians not at all	++ Older people more frequently
Send greetings to friends		
Travel somewhere		++ Younger people more frequently
Participate in public events	++ Estonians more frequently, 40% of ethnic Russians not at all	
Go to church	++ Russians more frequently	++ Older people more frequently
Do paid work		+ Youngest group less frequently

church and cemetery visits belonging to different factors. If shopping and buying special goods belong to one factor along with other 'secular' celebration practices, consumption of topical mass media forms a separate factor. The fourth factor represents a situation in which the celebrations are used to prepare for the next period (housework, paid work) and no special celebration activities are undertaken.

Family and institutionalised celebration practices, for example a family party, sending cards, or participation in public collective rituals, are more practiced among the younger and middle age groups (see Figure 8). The oldest age group

Figure 8. Age differences in celebration patterns
The vertical scale shows the relative difference of the factor scores of certain age groups compared to the average of the total population
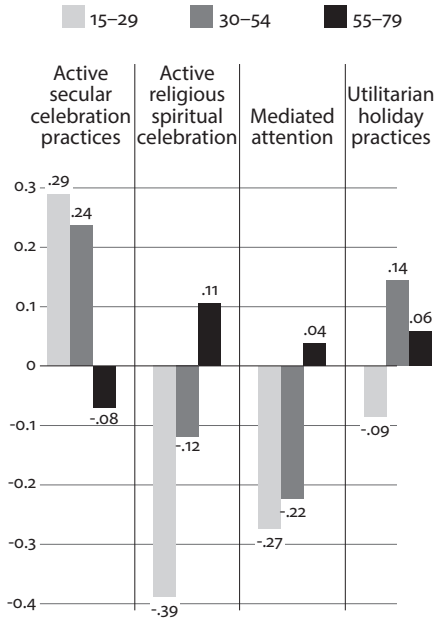
attends church and the cemetery and is thereby more involved in religious and spiritual celebration practices. In addition, following media coverage of the anniversary is more widespread among the older generation.

Celebrations as a withdrawal from daily routine is related to the life cycle – active working people aged 30 to 54 deal frequently with paid work or housework during a holiday, or just relax without any doing any special activity (see Figure 8).

Celebration practice also shows which actors are re-inventing and maintaining the days of importance and thereby shaping social time rhythms. The secularisation of celebration practices and the diminishing importance of the church in shaping social time goes with the generation replacement. Somewhat surprisingly the mediatised ways of (passive) celebration are spread less among the younger generations, and therefore we can ask whether the role of the mass media as a 'rhythm machine' – at least when considering days of importance – is diminishing with the transformations that are going on in media markets and the development of ICT. The usage of free days for paid work rather than

for celebration is also a certain form of (unconscious) resistance to the institutional 'rhythm machines'.

Qualitative take on celebration practices:
Victory Day on the 9th May and Veterans' Day on 23rd April

In this section we shift focus from quantitative to qualitative discussion of celebration practices in Estonia by looking at two days of importance dedicated to veterans and the remembrance of war: Victory Day on the 9th May and Veterans' Day on the 23rd April. The former comes from the previous regime, where it marked the Soviet victory in the Great Patriotic War. As such, Victory Day lost the status of official holiday soon after Estonia regained independence, although its observation continues informally. Veterans' Day, on the contrary, is a new day of importance created only very recently to show appreciation for Estonian citizens who have taken part in military missions on behalf of the Republic of Estonia. Although the two days share thematic features and, as we seek to show in the following discussion, celebration practices, they are mutually exclusive at the ideological level.

The 9th May

According to survey results, the Soviet-era Victory Day celebration on 9th May constitutes the most controversial and polarising anniversary in contemporary Estonia: observed actively by Russians and Russian-speakers, it is ignored and disapproved of by most ethnic Estonians. Together with Women's Day, the 9th May is a Soviet anniversary that has experienced a vernacular renaissance in post-Soviet Estonia and has the capacity to move masses.

Tens of thousands of Tallinn's residents celebrate the 9th May by visiting the Defence Forces Cemetery and laying flowers at a World War II memorial known as the Bronze Soldier. The centrepiece of this monument is the bronze statue of a soldier standing with his head bowed in grief. Until the end of April 2007 this memorial was located in the centre of Tallinn. It was one of the very few Soviet war monuments in the capital that had not been removed upon the restoration of independence, although it had played a central role in Soviet Victory Day celebrations. The monument was initially dedicated to Red Army soldiers who, according to the Soviet historical narrative, liberated Tallinn from fascists, in addition to which the memorial served as the last resting place of 14 unknown soldiers. It was unveiled on the 22 September 1947, the third anniversary of the 'liberation' of Tallinn.

Informal small-scale gatherings at the memorial and the custom of bringing flowers to the bronze soldier lived on through the 1990s, especially among Tallinn's elderly Russian-speaking population. By the mid-2000s, the popularity of commemorating the liberation of Tallinn and celebrating the 9th May appeared to be on the rise again with gatherings at the bronze solder growing bigger, noisier, more spectacular and attracting ever younger participants. The small triangular square squeezed between a bus stop and busy downtown streets could no longer contain all the celebrators, their flowers, flags and other accessories and practices. With most other Soviet monuments removed from the public sphere, people observing Victory Day and the Day of Liberation of Tallinn had few other places to go but the bronze soldier.

These developments coincided with the renewed significance attached to World War II in the Russian Federation. The 60th anniversary of the 'Great Victory', in 2005 in particular, was celebrated with much pomp in Moscow. However, the increased visibility of periodic gatherings in Tallinn spoke of a new situation in comparison to the 1990s when the position of Russians and Russian-speakers was too precarious to allow for public commemoration of Soviet-era anniversaries. The fact that these people could now meet in public could be regarded as a sign of stability and a growing sense of trust towards the Estonian state. Sociologists have found that Estonia's rapid economic growth at the beginning of the 2000s contributed to a mutual accommodation between ethnic Estonians and Russian-speakers and led to a joint shift towards consumerist values (Kruusvall 2005; Kalmus & Vihalemm 2004). Furthermore it has been argued that the consequent fear of the weakening of ethnic identity prompted radical nationalists on both sides to mobilise people on the grounds of ethnicity (Ehala 2008).

A detailed account of what happened next is beyond the scope of this article. It is important to note that between 2005 and 2007, gatherings at the bronze soldier memorial came to be framed as an issue of ethnic group rights and as a question about the right to use and define public space. Debates grew particularly heated in the run-up to parliamentary elections in March 2007, with several political parties promising to remove the monument from the city centre. This statue emerged under these circumstances as *the* symbol of Soviet occupation and what looked like its continuation in the independent Republic of Estonia. Towards the end of April 2007, in anticipation of yet another massive 9 May gathering, the Estonian government prevented people from accessing the memorial by having it surrounded by a fence and erecting a tent that blocked the view of the statue. These steps were taken shortly after parliamentary elections. The officially stated aim, however, was to exhume the remains buried on the site of the memorial. Russian-speaking residents of Tallinn responded by gathering around

the fenced-off memorial[6]. In the course of the evening, this protest spilled over first into a confrontation between demonstrators and the police and later into acts of vandalism and looting in downtown Tallinn. One young man was stabbed to death and the police made several hundred arrests. The monument was dismantled the same night and erected anew a couple of days later in the Defence Forces Cemetery, the last resting place of over 5,000 soldiers of different nationalities.

Mass visits to the memorial on the 9th May have grown so large since these events that it is not uncommon for people to have to queue to reach the monument. Many bow in front of the statue and cross themselves; some address the statue directly by uttering a loud expression of gratitude. Moreover, the 9th May provides parents with a setting in which to socialise children into culturally specific bodily practices of showing respect. Children observe and rehearse how to move and stand, what to do with flowers and how to pose for the camera in this particular situation.

Flowers play a key role in several 9th May practices that are carried out by individuals, but need to be repeated over and over again by very many people in order to achieve their full force. First, almost everybody coming to the cemetery lays flowers at the statue. On the 9th May, as on Women's Day and the 1st September (the day when schools traditionally start in Estonia) temporary flower stalls pop up on the streets of Tallinn. Thus, Tallinn looks different around the 9th May, if only for a day or two. Vendors stock up with carnations, although other flowers are deemed suitable as well. Many make sure to bring an even number of flowers, which defines the gesture of laying flowers at the monument as an act of commemoration rather than celebration. However, what really matters is the fact and act of visiting the memorial in person. Some prefer to do so on the 8th or 10th May, or whenever they can; some go to the cemetery repeatedly around this time of the month.

Flowers are laid not only at the feet of the statue, but distributed across the graves of Red Army servicemen buried in the cemetery. Flowers are also stuck into the ground, into little holes made with the help of special sticks brought along for this purpose. This is slow and laborious work because the holes need to be made and the flowers 'planted' one by one. The area cowered by the flowers grows gradually through the input of many individual celebrators. The sea of flowers created in this way does not carry an explicit political or other message, but is a token of a joint effort and the coordinated actions of countless people. Flower blossoms are used to 'write' and 'draw' slogans and symbols that refer to Soviet victory in World War II on the grass (for example in 2010 a red star made of red carnations with the number 65 in the middle).

Arranging flowers in front of and around the monument is similarly a continuous self-regulating process that goes on for several days. Many people return to the cemetery on the 10th or even 11th May to admire the flowers as well as take photos; strangers strike up conversations or comment on the amount of flowers, the way they have been arranged and how they looked the day before or last year. All in all, the conventional commemorative gesture of laying flowers at a memorial has given rise to new practices that are as much as about creating beauty as about remembrance and veneration of those who fought and fell in World War II.

However, the 9th May at Tallinn Military Cemetery is not only a visual, but also an auditory experience. Loudspeakers blast out Soviet and Russian patriotic songs over and over again, while small groups of middle-aged and elderly celebrators gathered around the memorial break into song spontaneously. Some bring accordions and stand or sit playing it in the middle of the other activities surrounding the monument. Orthodox memorial services held in the cemetery add another layer of sound, image and possibilities for participation (as well as interpretation).

There are also many flags, small and large: Russian tricolours, red flags and the flags of various Soviet military units and institutions. While veterans are wearing their uniforms, some children and teenagers come dressed as Red Army soldiers or wear military hats or other accessories referring to World War II. The orange and black St George's ribbons can be seen everywhere and are distributed by volunteers, sometimes together with ribbons in the colours of the Russian flag. As a military symbol uniting Imperial Russia, the Soviet Union and contemporary Russia, the St George's ribbon stands for Russia's military history and for victory in World War II in particular. Campaigns distributing these ribbons have been carried out every spring since the 60th anniversary of the 'Great Victory' in May 2005. It was estimated in 2014 that some 100 million ribbons had been given out worldwide since the first campaign in 2005 (Okolo 100 mln…).

Although people of Tallinn can and do wear St George's ribbons as an act of commemoration and remembrance, these items tend to have strong pro-Moscow and anti-Estonian connotations in the Estonian context. By wearing a ribbon in Estonia, one is often seen, from an Estonian point of view, as making a statement about one's loyalties in today's Estonia. The situation is similar in Latvia and in post-Maidan Ukraine, where proposals to ban the St George's ribbon were recently discussed (Taylor 2014). In Belarus, the ribbon was banned in 2014 in support of Ukraine's territorial integrity (Smok 2014).

For the period of the 9th May celebrations, the Bronze Soldier monument is decorated with Soviet symbols and also with dried autumn leaves evoking 22nd September. Solemn teenagers in retro military uniforms take turns throughout

the day standing as a guard of honour on either side of the statue. The periodic changing of guards makes a striking spectacle that onlookers like to capture with their cameras. At the same time, guard mounting interrupts the free flow of other activities in front of the monument and creates a hierarchy of actors and practices. While sticking flowers into the ground and spreading them around the cemetery come across as practices accessible to anybody, the guard of honour is a performance put on by an institution or organisation. It requires planning, training and resources of various kinds. Setting up loudspeakers costs money, as do ribbons and costumes.

Celebrations in the Military Cemetery on the 9th May have been associated with several organisations. The Estonian Security Police have described some of these groups as tools of Russian foreign policy and soft power (Security Police of the Republic of Estonia 2011). For the purposes of the current article, it is important to take note of how various actors seek to fix the meaning of the 9th May and how this meaning is constantly undone, redone and multiplied through vernacular practices of celebration and commemoration.

April 2007 was still fresh in peoples' mind when Elo-Hanna Seljamaa began fieldwork among Russians and Russian-speakers in Tallinn. A few of the people she met had been on the streets to protest; some were arrested and many more knew somebody who had been. Others had stayed at home but felt insulted and hurt nevertheless. Interviewees would bring up this topic, and in less formal settings people would use the bronze soldier and April 2007 as a point of reference to reflect upon life in Estonia. The sudden rise in the number of people visiting the monument on the 9th May was seen as a response to the government's actions. It was a statement in the form of an act of commemoration. In addition to commemorating World War II and honouring veterans, visiting the monument was a way to recall what had happened in April 2007. Many commented that after 2007, more families with young children started to visit the memorial. People were relying on whatever cultural resources and tools were already available to them, putting old traditions to new uses. In reference to the distinctions presented above, it could be argued that many passive celebrators and tradition bearers became active, bringing dormant traditions to life while also creating new ones. A violent rupture in social life was dealt with by means of calendar customs intended to bring about an interruption in daily routine.

The cemetery is located close to the city centre but in a secluded area one would not otherwise go to, which means that the process of going there in itself forces a diversion from daily personal trajectories. In addition, waving Russian and Soviet flags, singing in public, playing loud Russian music, dressing up as a Red Army soldier – these are all activities most Tallinn residents would and

do refrain from under normal circumstances and in other settings. The large territory of the cemetery accommodates more people and, moreover, provides opportunities for different kinds of activity to be carried out simultaneously. The custom of sticking flowers into the ground, for example, came from the monument's previous location but has been adopted in the cemetery. Laying flowers, walking around the cemetery, observing and listening to others, not to mention the time-consuming practices surrounding flowers are all physical activities and sensory experiences that occur in a particular place and can be repeated on an annual basis. These practices can also be carried out alone, while at the same time seeing and feeling that other people are doing the same things. However, it would be erroneous to conclude from this that these tens of thousands of people also think the same way and constitute a homogenous mass or 'Russian-speaking community' (see also Kuutma, Seljamaa & Västrik 2012; Kaprāns & Seljamaa 2017).

Veterans' Day

While the 9th May celebrations in Tallinn illustrate how a celebrations of a date that is marginal in official calendar can be brought back to active use, the recently established Veterans' Day serves as an example of a celebration that is still in the making, and which is initiated by state structures. In discussing such emergent practices, we can only follow the practices that memory agents offer[7]. Since 2013, on 23rd April, St George's Day, veterans are celebrated in Estonia. Among veterans are Estonian citizens who "[…] have participated as part of the Defence Forces in either an international or collective self-defence operation on the basis of the International Military Cooperation Act" (Estonian Ministry of Defence 2012, 5). The day is mainly meant to celebrate soldiers who fought in Iraq and Afghanistan and were active as peacekeepers in the Balkans, Lebanon and the Central African Republic. It also includes the men and women who will participate in forthcoming missions. Celebrating Veterans' Day is just one part of Policy regarding veterans of the Defence Force and the Defence League. Close to 2,500 people have participated in international military missions since the 1990s, meaning that this remembrance day touches many more people when families are taken into consideration. (In these military operations, 130 people have been wounded and injured, 34 of them severely; there have been 11 fatalities).

The idea of celebrating military veterans was raised in public during Estonian military mission to Afghanistan by members of the Defence Forces and Defence Ministry in December 2012. One reason to create such a new day of importance was to bind Estonian soldiers more tightly with the international

military community (i.e. the Western allies), who also celebrate their veterans – at least so the memory agents argue. Another aim is to make Estonian soldiers more visible in their home society, to draw attention to the young men and women who have fought in wars that are alien to a significant part of society. For Estonian society the term 'veteran' is still associated with World War II and with people celebrating the 9th of May, as described above. According to new veterans' policy the men who fought on either side in World War II – in the 8th Estonian Rifle Corps (Red Army), or in Estonian Legion or other regiments within Nazi German armies – are left out of official policy documents and are also almost excluded from official celebrations of that day.

The selection of St George's Day, the 23 April, as a new day of importance was very intriguing. St George's Day is an old date in the folk calendar and the important of the spring feasts (see Berta: Eesti rahvakalendri tähtpäevade andmebaas, Hiiemäe 1996). It is still celebrated today, mainly in schools and kindergartens. In contrast we can barely make a connection with previous events in independent Estonian (military) history, except with a 14th-century uprising that is commemorated on that day. Until recently this uprising was interpreted in Estonian and especially in Soviet historiography as an uprising of Estonians (i.e. peasants) against the ruling Germans/Livonian Order, which, with its failure, ushered in centuries of German domination. Both meanings are still alive among specific memory communities: St George's Night is celebrated more in schools, although some families making a bonfire. The uprising is particularly commemorated in Jüriöö park (St George's Night Park) in Tallinn, and also in some other places in Estonia with commemorative runs on St George's Night. Adding new meaning to previous days of importance is quite common in various calendars (Zerubavel 2003: 48), for example commemoration of Veterans' Day has had a new layer added.

St George is an internationally known Saint of soldiers, although he is less widely known in secular Estonian society, which had followed the Lutheran tradition for centuries, wherein saints have lower prominence than in the Catholic or Orthodox traditions. According to fieldwork done in 2013 and 2014, during celebration practices barely any notice is taken of St George, with the exception in 2013 of the Chief of the Defence Forces mentioning him in the connection with the commemoration service at St George's Church in Tori village. This church is an interesting place from the commemoration perspective because while policy documents draw a strict line between the new veterans and World War II veterans, this distinction becomes blurred in practice. This is especially visible at commemoration service, which is dedicated to all fallen soldiers of World War II.

As in the case of 9th of May, flowers and colour symbolism play an important role in celebrating Veterans' Day. The visibility of veterans in society is created and increased through the distribution of lapel pins in the shape of hepatica, a spring flower native to Estonia. The new symbol uses the blue-black-white colour combination of the Estonian national flag and is handmade by disabled people in Estonia. Already a couple of weeks before the 23rd April one can buy this symbol from members of the Women's Voluntary Defence Organisation (*Naiskodukaitse*), from the Defence League (*Kaitseliit*) and from different branches of the supermarket Selver (see Anname au 2014; since 2015 there are more outlets). The hepatica is indeed visible at events connected with Veterans' Day, as well in social and traditional media. A clear model for the introduction of the new symbol was the British poppy, a widely known symbol in Britain, used in commemoration ceremonies and of veterans. The practice of wearing the hepatica in Estonia is still developing. For example, there was no consensus in 2014 and 2015 as to when the campaign should start, close to St George's Day or at some other point in the year[8]. In any case, using a flower as a symbol is an attempt to increase people's awareness of veterans. The hepatica campaign takes place just a couple of weeks before St George's ribbons become a frequent sight and although unrelated, the two symbols could be looked at together. Both serve a commemorative purpose and both are intended to be worn and shared by as many people as possible. St George's ribbons in particular serve as tokens of membership of a group that appears united and homogeneous by virtue of those very symbols.

Another bodily activity connected to Veterans' Day celebration is the Hepatica Run, which was first held in 2014[9]. The distance is 3.2 km and the run can be taken into account as part of the general fitness test for military personnel. The run is a public event so whole families run the distance, which can be seen as another possible way for this new day or importance to gain visibility.

As with the case of 9th May, taking control of a space and turning it into a place filled with people engaged in celebratory practices is also an important part of celebration in the case of Veterans' Day. The main event of that day, a concert titled Veterans' Rock, takes place in Tallinn's main square, Freedom Square, were official parades are held and where a Freedom Cross dedicated to the Estonian War of Independence (1918–1920) was erected in 2009. Veterans' Rock is a popular event, and so the musicians who perform are popular, mainly performing Estonian folk metal, hard rock or punk. The music is generally noisy and the musicians encourage active participation from the audience. Among those who attend are veterans, their family members (including children) and friends, serving soldiers, and townspeople and other random visitors. There are

usually also several speeches, although the main focus is on the music, so we could say that participation is a bodily and auditory experience. Veterans' Day is also a media event with the role of media transmission becoming quite remarkable, for example the concert in Freedom Square has been transmitted by public TV (10). Veterans' Day has also been widely promoted through Facebook, where a special event page was created allowing participants to share their emotions.

Despite the celebration practices surrounding Veterans' Day being very new (we cannot yet say which will establish themselves), we could suggest that this day of importance has established itself as a kind of break in routine for serving, retired and veteran military personnel.

In this section we have used ethnographic data to describe celebration practices related to two distinct days of importance dedicated to veterans. We found some similarities in practice, which tends to stress visibility, audibility and bodily activity. In terms of ideology, these days of importance are mutually exclusive with one of them enjoying support from the state and the other having a rather problematic relationship with it. However, the 9th May and Veterans' Day can both be said to constitute a break for people actively involved in celebrating these days and what they stand for.

Conclusions

The aim of the current article was to explore the influence of celebration practices on social rhythms. So far most academic studies have deconstructed the cultural and temporal influence of various calendrical anniversaries and holidays on the whole of society. This empirical sociological survey shows the scale or magnitude of celebrations throughout the year in a contemporary multi-ethnic society. By taking into consideration various days of importance one can see the complexity of the celebration practices that different layers of the Gregorian calendar bring to contemporary life. The survey also explains how individuals actually perform celebration practices and reveals the variety of these practices among social groups in contemporary Estonia. Some celebration practices take more time and require special actions (for example sending a postcard, etc.), while some celebration rituals interrupt daily rhythms. Asking who is celebrating various days of importance, and how, enables us to ask how celebration-oriented Estonian culture is, while the sociological view enables us to go further and identify how age and gender, and the existence of material and time resources, contribute to participation in celebration activities.

The two-dimensional approach – days-of-importance and celebrators as actors – enables us firstly to distinguish the days that create greater consonance

(or eurhythmia if we use the expression created by Lefebvre) of the social rhythms associated with breaking of daily working routines. Secondly, the two-dimensional approach enables us to reveal how different social groups celebrate or acknowledge slightly different days of importance, and therefore one can find in addition to eurhythmia days of importance that create polyrhythmia, a form of which is evident between Estonian- and Russian-speaking communities in Estonia.

The survey enables us to show empirically how a variety of celebration practices carried out either passively or actively, partly generate massive eurhythmic waves and therefore also cohesion in society. For example, many holidays are recognised or/and celebrated by the majority of inhabitants. Concurrently, other days of importance create polyrhythmia and in some cases even arhythmic temporality in society.

The survey identified celebration practices that have strong controversial symbolic meaning and therefore differentiate parts of the population (some celebrate while others continues everyday actions without pausing). By taking the actor approach, this survey also enabled us to get some ideas about the influence of various institutions (media, church, school, state) on the commemorative and/or celebration activities of certain social groups in Estonia. It is important to keep in mind that institutions have the power to create and interpret various days of importance – in the first instance the state provides 'free days', but also, as this study revealed, the media as well as school/kindergarten and church also influence the way people celebrate days of importance. The news media and the church play more important roles for older people, and the church is also more important to the Russian-speaking community. Younger Estonians more often celebrate days of importance in connection with school or kindergarten, while the older generation more actively participates in public celebrations of anniversaries.

This survey binds the macro (sociological) with micro (ethnographic) levels of analysis. The limitation of the sociological macro approach is that the repertoire of celebration practices is far wider than this sociological study was able to cover. Ethnographic case studies enabled us to demonstrate the complexity of celebration as a spatially and temporally specific practice and cast light on how people as celebrators actively use both the old and new resources available to them. Ethnography helps to take a closer look at bodily rituals that are related to commemoration anniversaries. These rituals are different from rituals associated with the holidays of the traditional folk calendar or rituals that are linked to religious days of importance. Ethnographic data on the celebration of 9th May and Veterans' Day, two days of importance dedicated to members of

the armed forces, suggest that practices carried out to mark these occasions tend to be bound to a particular space and call on people to move in unison. Bodily practices of celebration can result in a visual or auditory display or appearance of unity, which may or may not translate into a sense of community and shared views. Furthermore, ethnographic case studies illustrate how passively recognised, even seemingly forgotten days of importance can be filled with new contents and used for purposes that speak to contemporary society, prompting passive celebrators or tradition-bearers to take an active role.

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Sources of illustrations

Figure 1 – Drawing: Triin Vihalemm

Figure 2 – Ma=rahwa kalender Täht-ramat 1851 aasta peale. F. W. Borm, Pernu (Estonian Literary Museum [KMAR] – The pamphlet collection); Kalender-teatmik 1951. Eesti Riiklik Kirjastus, Tallinn (KMAR – B 15.450); Kalender 1989. Eesti raamat, Tallinn (KMAR – B 31.436); Eesti Ekspress: kalender 2015 (KMAR – The periodical collection).

Figure 3 – Drawing: Triin Vihalemm

Figure 4 – Drawing: Triin Vihalemm

Figure 5 – Drawing: Triin Vihalemm

Figure 6 – Drawing: Triin Vihalemm

Figure 7 – Drawing: Triin Vihalemm

Figure 8 – Drawing: Triin Vihalemm

Notes

1 The explanation what days of importance were selected is provided below.

2 The days from the folk calendar were also celebrated during the Soviet period, except religious holidays like Easter and Christmas.

3 See: https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/ee/Riigikogu/act/513112013017/consolide. In Estonia Christmas is, apart from a religious holiday, also important in the folk calendar.

4 Although the activities of churches were not banned totally under the Soviet Union, attending church at Christmas and Easter was checked and sanctioned at schools and workplaces. Participation in celebrations of Soviet anniversaries – such as the parades on the 1st May and 7th November (the anniversary of the October Revolution) was also checked and sanctioned. The practice of control varied in different parts of the Soviet Union, as did the intensity of control, although it shaped the celebration practices of people in general. Holidays not tolerated by the Soviet state were celebrated at home within the circle of family members, while Soviet anniversaries were celebrated publicly and collectively either in strictly institutionalised, or in freer, forms.

5 The active protests of the Russian-speaking population towards Estonian state outburst on the removal of the Bronze Soldier, a Soviet war monument, in April 2007, which will be discussed further on in the article (see also Brüggemann 2008; Brüggemann & Kasekamp 2008).

6 Also the activities of external agents, like support for the *Nochnoi Dozor*, contributed to the accumulation of tensions and protests.

7 In this case under relevant memory agents we understand officials from the Defence Ministry, from the Office of the Estonian President, and military personnel from the Defence Forces, who are behind resources made available for commemoration and celebration of veterans. In addition, under memory activists here are understood to be people who are working voluntarily or on a regular basis for the We salute! campaign.

8 At 2018 the campaign started with 5th of April.

9 The initial run was just in Tallinn, other runs In Tartu and Tapa followed during next years. Tapa is a home for Estonian central military base, and also NATO troops are stationed there.

10 In 2014 the concert was broadcasted by ETV2, the second channel of national public service broadcaster ERR. According to ERR the concert gained an audience of 24,000 (with a rating of 1.9%) and was the second most popular programme of the week. The number of spectators in the square was as many as 15,000.

Appendix 1. Celebration of days of importance, holidays and anniversaries in Estonia in 2014 and 2011 among ethnic Estonians and ethnic Russians, and other ethnic groups

	Considers it important, celebrates		Considers it important, but usually does not celebrate		Has negative opinion about that day		Indifferent; does not know this day; NA	
	EST	RUS	EST	RUS	EST	RUS	EST	RUS
New Year's Day	91	95	7	4	0.5	0	1.5	1
Anniversary of Tartu Peace Treaty (2nd Febraury)*	7	2	56	19	1.5	10	35.5	69
Valentine's Day	34	23	35	33	3	5	28	39
Shrovetide	32	31	42	38	1	1	25	30
Defender of the Fatherland Day in Russia (23rd Febraury)	–	33	–	40	–	2	–	25
Independence Day of Estonia (24th Febaury)	59	7	33	42	0.5	3	7.5	48
Women's day (8th March)	46	73	35	18.5	2.5	1	16.5	7.5
Easter	55	58	25	30	2	1	18	11
Anniversaries of mass deportations in Estonia (25th March; 14th June)*	10	3	59	30	2	13	29	54
Mother's Day	82.5	39.5	14	47	0	0.5	3.5	13
Victory Day of Soviet Union (09th May)	1*	57*	10*	32*	38	2.5	51	8.5
Midsummer's Day	90	59	9	25	0	1	1	15
Day of Restoration of Independence (20th August)	39	6	46.5	39	0.5*	8*	14*	47*
St Martin's & St Catherine's days	19	4.5	47	17	4.5*	6*	29.5*	72.5*
Halloween	5	2	18.5	12	21	27	55.5	59
All Souls' Day (02nd November)	42	15	32	23	3	9	23	53
Father's Day*	62	41	25	32	1	1.5	12	25.5
Christmas**	94	74	4	18	0	1	2	0

* 2011. 2011 data is given where there is no data for 2014.
** In the Russian version of the survey the variable category 'Christmas' was located on the list of variables after New Year's Day, while in the Estonian version it was at the end of the list of days.

Appendix 2. Four factors formed in the factor analysis of celebration practices
Method: Principal Axis Factoring, Varimax rotation, eigenvalue over 1

	Factors			
	Active secular celebration practices	Active religious spiritual celebration	Mediated attention to days of importance	Utilitarian holiday practices
Buy something to celebrate the day (decorations, candles, presents, cards, etc.)	.596			
Participate in public ceremonies in schools or kindergartens	.522			
Travel somewhere (to visit somebody, to a summer cottage or abroad)	.512			
Family come together and we serve dinner	.496			
Participate in public ceremonies	.480			
Communicate with friends via (social) media	.452			
Go to church, participate in religious rituals		.652		
Go to the cemetery		.580		
Watch media, read news concerning the day of importance			.784	
Do domestic work or gardening				.677
Do my usual job or work				.381
Just relax				.258

Days of importance in Estonia: traditions and transformations

Pirjo Korkiakangas

The article "Mapping celebration practices in Estonia: Which days of importance actually influence societal rhythms?" explores the annual rhythm of days of importance, holidays, and anniversaries in the Estonian calendar. In Estonia the history of holidays, and especially the history of anniversaries, has witnessed many ruptures, transformations, and changes in celebration practice. The study problematises and analyses connections between particular periods in Estonia's national history and the meanings of holidays and anniversaries. Questions of celebration practice among different ethnic and social groups, and questions of 'catalyst actors', are essential.

Celebration of anniversaries and holidays is multifaceted and influenced by cultural, national as well as ideological factors. Many holidays are characterised by long-standing national and cultural traditions. The more static a culture and society is, the more firmly traditional holidays are rooted and their celebrations established and enculturated. In peasant societies, the annual cycle of holidays and special days was determined by the working year and its tasks. In addition to work celebrations, everyday life was interrupted by celebrations rooted partly in folk religious tradition, partly in Christian tradition, such as Soul's Visiting Time, St. Martin's and St. Catherine's Days, as well as Christmas, New Year and Midsummer. Changes were slow and celebration was characterised by the permanence of customary traditions.

National and socio-political changes and disruptions have also affected the celebration of holidays and anniversaries and their increasing significance. The dichotomy between private and public celebration that prevailed in Soviet Estonia (1940–1991) would be a noteworthy question for a cultural researcher. On the other hand, this period helped in the preservation of holidays and anniversaries that were important to Estonians. After the collapse of the socialist system and with the restored independence (1991), the celebration of holidays and anniversaries was yet again constructed in new circumstances. The re-definition of what used to be privately commemorated meant it could now be publicly displayed. For example, the deportations of Estonians in 1941 and 1949 were silent family memories during the Soviet period; however, along with restored independence deported people were rehabilitated and deportation remembrance

anniversaries could be publicly celebrated. However, according to the results of the study it seems that deportation anniversaries are important only for older Estonians. The changes have meant different things to Estonia's different ethnic groups: making the past visible has both strengthened and changed the subjects of recollection and memory culture. With restored independence, Estonia's development into part of Western Europe and the European Union has been relatively fast, which is also connected to the culture of remembering.

Celebrating the anniversaries of the Second World War in today's Estonia is associated with political-ethnic tension. Some anniversaries have ever-increasing significance among certain groups (for example Victory Day, commemorated from the Great Patriotic War, for the Russian-speaking population). On the other hand, a new anniversary has been created: Veteran's Day, celebrated in honour of Estonian veterans of international acts of war and military efforts. In this way, increasing internationality and multiculturalism have their own effects on the celebration practices of anniversaries that are thought of as traditional, and influence the formation of new holidays.

The article "Mapping celebration practices in Estonia: Which days of importance actually influence societal rhythms?" is divided into two parts. There is a combination of quantitative and qualitative research material, and the analysis produced is an innovative experiment, although at the same time methodologically and analytically problematic. The first part of the article is a descriptive quantitative analysis of the anniversaries and holidays of contemporary Estonia. The analysis clearly conveys the different emphases of anniversaries celebrated by Estonians and Russians in Estonia. These differences are especially clear in celebrations of (Russian-speaking Estonians') Victory Day and (Estonians') Veteran's Day.

From the viewpoint of cultural memory, it seems to be far more complicated to compare for example the celebration of Mothers' Day and Women's Day: it would have been worth considering how significant Mothers' Day is to Russian speakers, and how Women's Day, which originates in and has spread from Russian culture, affects Estonians. In the article these kinds of similarities and differences are not considered in relation to cultural memory and its changes or permanence.

The second part of the article consists of examples of commemoration and celebration of Victory Day (9 May), important to the Russian population, and Veteran's Day (23 April), which in the folk calendar is St George Day and is still celebrated in schools and kindergartens, and in turn is important to Estonians. This part of the article is a justified description of how Victory Day, celebrated among the Russian population since 1945, and its political–ideological tensions

have come to prominence, as well as being connected to the Bronze Soldier memorial in Tallinn and interpretations of its significance in the history of Estonia. The celebration focuses on past events, while at the same time being used to strengthen the Russian population's ethnic identity. New Estonia, on the other hand, constructs and develops its subject of cultural memory (Veteran's Day) as a new West European nation, orienting itself towards internationality. The day has been celebrated since 2013 as an expression of Estonia's commitment to the international military community (of Western allies) and as a thank you to the Estonian men and women who have taken part in international military operations. The holiday is still developing a solid form.

Even though deep cultural structures are rather permanent and change slowly, increasing internationality helps with the adoption of new holidays and anniversaries (for example Mothers' Day, Fathers' Day, Valentine's Day, Halloween) as well as strengthening traditional holidays in order to emphasise national identity and ethnicity. Throughout the article, holidays and anniversaries also generate new research approaches and questions on cultural, national, ethnic, generational, age, and gender connections to the significance of holidays and anniversaries and their celebration.

Urmo Raus "Nimeta III" ("Untitled III") 1997.
Monotype, drypoint, artist's technique, paper. 56 x 39.5 cm.

A plurality of pasts and boundaries: evidence from Estonia's last one hundred years

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Abstract. The focus of this study is on how temporal boundaries are experienced and how everyday lives are shaped in a particular space with reference to shifting boundaries and perceptions of centres and peripheries, continuities and discontinuities. Drawing mainly on the theories of semiosphere and boundaries devised by Juri Lotman, and social space by Henri Lefebvre and other theorists, our research makes an interdisciplinary contribution to the existing theories of borders and boundaries. Based on various case studies from different disciplines, it exemplifies how borders are perceived, constructed, negotiated and contested in everyday practices, as well as how everyday practices maintain the borders vanished in other spheres. We argue that abrupt political changes are sensed and experienced as boundaries in time, yet mechanisms of coping and adapting seem to be preserving day-to-day continuities. Even if ruptures in lives are sharp and definitive, people try to create coherent narratives and use linguistic means as cultural tools to negotiate the ruptures. In some cases, the rupture emerges when trying to create continuity. People use conceptions of continuity as cultural tools, creating thus a perceived space, which symbolises continuity for them but causes rupture in their lives and/or in space. Thus, people make sense of space by creating their own boundaries (and sharing them to various extents), which are tightly tied with the boundaries of time. In the case of both urban and rural landscapes, different layers of landscape can develop at different speeds and can display different boundaries, or no divisions at all. Our examples have shown that even when the political borders in space stay the same, their meaning can shift when the overall political atmosphere and international relations have transformed. Change of regime does not create sharp boundaries, but rather, creates an environment for change in which a crucial role is also played by continuities based on memory, dispositions and practices.

Keywords: borders, boundaries, rupture, continuity, Estonian history

Introduction

The current article aims to contribute to theoretical discussion on the phenomenon of boundaries in culture and the processes related to establishing, maintaining and perceiving divisions in space and time. Being interdisciplinary in nature, the article wants to raise awareness of the complexity of cultural boundaries. Rather than analysing empirical data sets about specific boundaries or political borders, it uses multidisciplinary examples to illustrate its main theoretical points. We will argue that people draw boundaries in space and time that seem to be rather rigid and clear cut at a first glance. However, analysing these cultural boundaries through a variety of research methods, it appears that the mechanisms of adjusting or creatively reworking these divisions in everyday practice are much more complicated; in fact, as our research shows, boundaries are constantly being shifted, redefined and renegotiated.

To illustrate our theoretical starting point, we begin with an example.

On the 5th of September 2014, at 9 in the morning, unknown armed men kidnapped Estonian Internal Security Service officer Eston Kohver at Estonia's southeastern border with Russia. The Russian side argued that Kohver was on Russian territory, whereas Estonia claimed that he was taken from the Estonian side of the border.[1] All this happened just half a year after Russia and Estonia had finally signed a border treaty and only two days after the visit of the president of the United States of America (USA), Barack Obama, to Estonia, to confirm the support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and to assert NATO's presence at its eastern borders in the increasing atmosphere of tension between Russia and the West after the Ukrainian conflict.

What at first seemed clearly an act of violating Estonian, the European Union's (EU) and NATO's border, presumably with the symbolic purpose of creating insecurity, led journalists' attention to the border and spurred wider public debate. It appeared that Estonia, EU and NATO did not actually have an eastern land border in the sense of a fence or a wide earth strip – the most important border for the semiotic subject called the West was more a symbolic than a physical entity. Subsequent days brought visual images of what was considered Estonia's de facto border, a dense bush without visible manned surveillance.

The history of the border between the Russian Federation and Republic of Estonia has been diverse. Estonian independence was restored in August 1991 on the basis of its legal continuity with the pre-WWII Republic of Estonia (1918–1940), which

would have given independent Estonia rights to somewhat larger territories than were under the jurisdiction of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic (ESSR). Estonia's legal commitment to the border drawn by the Tartu Peace Treaty on 2nd February 1920 and Russia's reluctance to recognise its continuous validity were reasons that led to the situation in which several attempts to sign and ratify the border treaty failed. From 1991 the Russian–Estonian border was defined by a temporary control line, generally following the borders of the former Estonian SSR. This de facto border, however, had had a strong symbolic importance for the country as well as a decisive practical effect on the livelihoods of the local communities in the border zones. The impenetrability of this most decisive border was further underlined by media coverage of queues to cross the border or footage of smugglers or people caught illegally crossing. Yet, a combination of the symbolic power of the imagined absolute divide between Russia and Estonia, and the intricacies surrounding a legal but non-existent border and de facto control line, resulted in the physical control line becoming more and more overgrown.

The Estonian government insisted that Kohver was abducted within Estonia's borders, however, this did not deter Russia from convicting him of espionage. As illustrated by this story, borders and boundaries are not just lines of division in a spatial world; they are equally discursive practices used in the political sphere and having dramatic consequences in everyday lives. Moulding and shifting boundaries happens in continuous dialogue with past divisions, constantly building on previous change – even turbulent socio-economic and political changes such as the occupation of Estonia by the Soviet Union do not wipe the previous boundaries out completely. Every shift in political and spatial borders leaves a trace in the discourses, landscapes and daily practices of the local people. Sometimes, these experiences last subconsciously through generations.

Boundaries are not just mechanisms of creating separation and difference, they are also tools for creating continuity and cohesion. They both restrict and enhance communication. They are mechanisms of conflict avoidance, and the reasons for conflict. Every boundary both separates and unites depending on the perspective one chooses. The same boundary can function differently in different spheres of society. In addition, the boundaries have different meanings and are shared only to a certain extent. For one, there are different political angles: in Russian, Estonian, EU and NATO policies the issue of the Russian–Estonian border has been addressed radically differently depending on the aims of the political body. Yet, at the level of private lives, these political tensions translate into different practices that mould the political meanings. For people living in the frontier areas, the border has specific meanings, and, as in the case of the Estonian minority living on the Russian side of the border, this separation may

have influenced them to act together as a community, thus, actually uniting them. In narrated stories and lives the boundaries and division lines appear to be at different places at different times.

The aim of our article is to show how the boundaries in space and time created by some political turns in Estonia over the last century manifested and were translated into (boundary) discourses and (everyday) practice. In doing so, we do not concentrate further on the state border, but rather on the divisions causing (dis)continuities in perceived space and time. By presenting the version of hegemonic history on the one hand, we illustrate how political changes that are conceptualised as ruptures in history text books can translate into negotiations of continuity in everyday lives, and vice versa on how discursive continuities can turn into ruptures in practices. Drawing on the theories of semiosphere and boundaries devised by Juri Lotman (1990; 2009 [1992]), Henri Lefebvre's social space (1991 [1974]), and work by other theorists, the article will show through various case studies how political, administrative, and discursive borders are perceived, constructed, negotiated and contested in everyday practice, as well as illustrating the opposite, i.e. how everyday practices maintain borders that have been wiped out politically, administratively or discursively. To fulfil these purposes, we found it useful to focus particularly on the concepts of continuities and discontinuities and decided to scrutinise how they have influenced Estonian landscapes and the perception of time. Commonly, boundaries in landscape and time are considered fixed and stable, yet, as we aim to show, they are influenced by discursive practices and political turns. In doing so we use examples from the Estonian-speaking part of the Estonian population, recognising the fact that for people coming from other ethnic groups, the boundaries may appear in completely different locations. In addition, by using empirical examples from different fields of research, and different analytical methods, we hope to contribute to the cultural theories that analyse borders and boundaries, spaces and their interrelations.

Theoretical background

The present article is an interdisciplinary endeavour, uniting theoretical perspectives and research methodology from semiotics, sociology, ethnology, human geography and folkloristics. The underlying theoretical concept that binds these approaches is Juri Lotman's concept of semiosphere, the basic premises of which have then been further developed through Henri Lefebvre's theories of social space, as well as theories from landscape studies, contemporary boundary and memory studies. While we are aware that the concepts relating to, and debates

about, borders in each discipline differ, we aim to create an interdisciplinary dialogue about cultural border concepts (cf. Kurki 2014, 1067) relying on these theorists.

Semiosphere and its contingent notion of boundary are one of Lotman's most important contributions to the theory of culture for describing the functioning of a cultural space (developed extensively in Lotman 2005 [1984]; 1990; 2009 [1992]). While on one hand semiosphere is the whole space and web of semiotic activity that makes meaning-making and sign activity possible (in the same way that biosphere is the sum total of ecosystemic relations), each culture (and sub-culture, for that matter) can also be approached as a semiosphere. Semiosphere has several important characteristics. While it is a semiotic unity perceived as a culturally uniform space, it is dynamic, principally uneven and heterogeneous, consisting of various subsystems. Yet, it is also a bounded space, which is defined through constant self-reflection: memory and constant negotiation of past and present cultural structures are an important function of culture as a semiosphere. We will come back to each of these moments in relation to other theorists.

While Lotman illustrates his theories abundantly with examples from Russian culture, literature and history, he does not really theorise how everyday lives in fact become a semiotic unity. For that end, we turn to Lefebvre's notion of social space, and landscape studies.

In Lefebvre's (1991 [1974], 74) approach, space always embraces the imaginary, the symbolic, but also the practical and material. According to him, each human practice and production takes place in space, it occupies space and circulates in it, engendering and fashioning the space (op cit, 77). Social space is constantly produced, reproduced and 'laboured on'; however, this happens not in a void but in an environment influenced by physical processes (like climate) and imaginative processes (such as representation of that space in discourses) and social structures (such as the labour system). Social change can transform these social spaces but never erase them; rather, space is always defined via networks, pathways, interrelations with other social spaces (op cit). However, it is not enough to acknowledge the interrelatedness of different aspects of what constitutes social space, one must also analyse how different spaces and their boundaries interact, form networks and negotiate borders. Each object we encounter is a product of such relations and negotiation processes.

Landscape studies[2] has approached this production of social space in even more concrete terms through the analysis of the way people shape their surroundings, focusing on the interplay of customs, everyday life, belonging, kinship, corporeality and territory (Haber 1995; Olwig 1996; 2002; Widgren 2004). Landscape is a holistic phenomenon the natural and cultural components of which

are taken together, yet, like semiosphere, it is essentially a heterogenic, contested and inter-acted notion, with a territorial and physical aspect.

According to Mats Widgren (2004), when analysing landscape it is important to distinguish the following aspects: (1) form, that is, landforms, built environment, etc.; (2) function; (3) processes that maintain form and function; and (4) the socio-cultural context in which the landscape is set. While every socio-economic formation creates its own landscape with its own symbols and values (Cosgrove 1984), the semiosphere and culture are internally heterogeneous. At moments of change, different layers and structures can change at different speed. What is important for the following analysis is that during gradual development the new outcome is normally the result of a constant negotiation and intertwining of these four components. During times of rapid development they may change at different speeds: the form can stay the same, but the function change (for example old manor houses turned into schools); or the form changes while function is preserved (for example dwellings), etc.

As stated repeatedly by Lotman (1990, 131), semiosphere is an essentially heterogeneous phenomenon, which means that its internal space is unified but uneven, uniform but asymmetrical. The closer to the semiotic core of a culture – the centre, which decides dominant, hegemonic meanings – the less diverse and more stable the structure of that culture is; whereas further towards the cultural periphery the greater is the variety of different meanings and the greater the intensity and rate of change. By far the most important element of each semiosphere is its boundary, which unites semiotic space, "one of the primary mechanisms of semiotic individuation" (Lotman 1990, 131). According to Lotman, "every culture begins by dividing the world into 'its own' internal space and 'their' external space" (op cit) by a boundary. Its negotiation and the creation of a unity called 'us' are the foremost tools, as well as products, of cultural self-reflection. At the same time the boundary is the place where alien, that is, external, semiotic structures are introduced into the system, and reinterpreted and translated into the internal 'language'. Thus, boundaries are sources of new meaning, innovation and change; it is at the boundary where culture's semiotic activity is the most active (Lotman 1990, 136). The boundary simultaneously unites and separates different semiotic spaces and is constantly reinterpreted. The boundary is also the mechanism through which unnecessary semiotic structures are excluded from a culture (Lotman 2009, 115). On the other hand, semiotic space includes lacunae: passive traces of previous semiotic structures that can regain meaning in some later constellation (Lindström et al 2011).

Contemporary border studies in the social sciences and humanities coincide with Lotman's model in that boundaries are processes rather than fixed entities.

Boundaries are phenomena on multiple levels, as administrative and social borders are always influenced by historical development (see Paasi 1996, 15–16; Newman 2003, 13–14; Custred 2011). Coinciding with the work of Lefebvre, David Newman (2003, 13) emphasises the importance of studying both territories and people in those territories, focussing on the role of "networks of groups, affiliations and identities". According to Newman's approach, for a satisfactory analysis of borders one has to be attentive to spatial borders, as well as acknowledging the different characters that borders have: socio-cultural, environmental, economic, subjective, imagined, etc. Positioning human lived experiences and narratives in the focus of research, it is possible to analyse the interrelations of the administrative and geographical–political borders on one hand and subjective perception and narratives on the other. In other words, it is important to ask how the borders are experienced and expressed (in narratives and visual representations) as well as how these borders are used in constructing meaningful others.

When concentrating on how boundaries are constructed and interpreted in everyday life, one of the most obvious research objects is the home. Spatial meanings arise from moving, practicing and inhabiting built space (Certeau et al 1994; Rose et al 2010). Always stretching beyond the physical boundaries of the dwelling, home is constructed "out of movement, communication and social relations" (Massey 1992, 13). Home extends from the private space to the neighbourhood, country, or even abroad (in the case of transnational practices or migration). Likewise, home-making involves negotiating borders on the temporal dimension: through objects serving as 'anchors of memory', historical (or 'historical') interior design or just memories associated with the lived space, the home can ignore or highlight ruptures in the public sphere. Thus, the notion of home as a fixed and stable structure demarcated by walls is increasingly challenged and home is instead explored as a permeable spatial and temporal intersection (Johansson & Saarikangas 2009, 10). The boundaries of the home are continuously negotiated through the encounter of private and communal and their multiple layers of meaning. On the one hand, parts of home are being transferred to shared public spaces, and on the other hand, rules from the public world extend to the home. At the same time, diverse identities (gender, status, etc.) are manifested and contradictory meanings can emerge within the domestic space.

Boundaries in time are points of remarkable unpredictability and multiple possibilities. Lotman, undoubtedly influenced by the events leading to the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, developed a theory about the role of explosive change in history in his last work, *Culture and Explosion* (initially published in 1992, English translation 2009). Historical development occurs through two types of change: gradual and explosive. In gradual change, central semiotic structures

undergo change through processes of constant but gradual negotiation, wherein the core transforms to a new state without losing its identity. What interests Lotman more is explosive change that ruptures the whole system, removing the existing constructions and opening countless opportunities for future developmental paths. In the subsequent consolidation process, when developmental choices are made, these multiple developmental possibilities (potential paths) are excluded one after another. Any new element can become the new core, and having been singled out it starts to create its own developmental path. Thus, when moments of explosive change are examined in hindsight, they are constructed as turning points from which the clear path to the present day emerged. As pointed out by the famous metaphor 'the past is a foreign country' (cf Hartley 1953; Lowenthal 1988), moments of explosion function as boundaries in time, beyond which lies a different semiotic space. We need to keep in mind, though, that culture (as semiosphere or landscape) consists of multiple layers that can have different speeds of development (Antrop 2000), and that not all explosions cause a complete rupture in all semiotic structures: it can easily be that only parts of the semiotic space are affected whereas other structures continue on the gradual development path giving rise to zones of transition.

After each explosion, a consolidation process follows, where remembered facts are retransformed into a continuous line of development and acceptable meanings are attributed to the events (Lotman 1990, 16–18, 114–132). Creating retrospective continuity is the role of memory. That the construction of the past – attributing meaning to what has happened and establishing a moral agenda for the present and the future with the help of the past (Poole 2008) – is a complex and multilevel process is well documented in contemporary memory studies. Collective memory is constructed in political, academic, public and private circles; these treatments interact and are interdependent. Interpreting the past depends on generational as well on social dynamics (Misztal 2003). Thus, research about memory tends to be multidisciplinary with memory treated as a process (Denzin 2012; Thomson 2012; Pickering & Keightley 2013). These processes are studied both in cultural memory studies and oral history, and despite methodological differences, both emphasise the social aspect and the representative nature of memory and remembering (Erll 2008, 4; 2011, 120–126; Abrams 2010, 78–82). However, the mediums studied with either of the methodologies differ: while cultural memory studies focus on the general schemes and processes of remembering, the oral history tradition concentrates on individuals and small groups (Pickering & Keightley 2013, 4). Therefore, as past events are bound into a continuity through an individual life in oral history, her life story might position the boundaries differently from the written history of the same

culture. Dialogue between these two visions enables us to see the diversities and interconnectedness of images of history.

An important part of our article is dedicated specifically to these temporal boundaries in the last century of Estonian history and their combinations with other existing semiotic boundaries, both spatial and non-spatial, with the negotiation of boundaries analysed both at the individual and social level.

Estonian explosions: historical background

In the following, we are trying to sketch the main points of Estonian history while remaining aware that this treatment is closely connected to and derived from the hegemonic and political history of Estonia, reflecting the version of the 'centre' in Lotman's treatment of semiosphere, i.e. the version where there is little or no variety. By presenting this past, we aim to give a hegemonic framework against which we position the examples that provide heterogeneous interpretations of that past.

Estonia is situated on the shores of the Baltic Sea. On the north and west it has sea borders with Finland and Sweden, on the east and south, land borders with Russia and Latvia. Its attractive geopolitical location has been one of the reasons why, throughout history, the Estonian territories have been governed by numerous other reigns and regimes (sometimes partly simultaneously). Each of these has left its marks in Estonian culture and landscapes through different administrative, political and proprietary boundaries. Differences created through administration between northern versus southern, and eastern versus western Estonia are very much alive in many contemporary practices. Each new regime has been preceded and sometimes followed by conflict (direct physical as well as discursive), including the large 20th century wars. These conflicts left numerous boundaries on the national as well as the private level, since forceful relocation and recruitment by fighting powers divided communities so that political borders have often run through individual families. This perception of Estonia as a borderland has had an impact on the way its national identity has been culturally constructed: being not only on the crossroads of East and West[3], but at many boundaries of different kind.

One of the important boundaries (landmarks) in 20th century Estonian history is the Russian Revolution, in 1917, the aftermath of which led to the withdrawal of Russia from the First World War. In 1918, in the hectic post-war atmosphere, Estonia used the political situation to fulfil its political ambitions as an independent state. Statehood was not achieved, however, without human losses during the War of Independence which quickly followed between 1918 and

1920, ending with the Tartu Peace Treaty which brought Setomaa in the southeast and Narva, together with extensive areas behind the Narva River, in the northeast, into Estonian jurisdiction. Land reform shook proprietary relations and existing social hierarchies to the core: most of the land that had belonged to Baltic German manors and other big land owners (58% of arable land before the reform) was nationalised and 55,000 new individual farmsteads were given to Estonians, relating the idea of Estonian statehood tightly to individual farmsteads.

The next important landmark was the 1940s, when Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union as an outcome of the secret Molotov–Ribbentrop pact between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany in 1939. After the Soviet Union entered the Second World War against Germany, Estonia was occupied by Nazi Germany between 1941 and 1944. Fifty thousand people perished in the war while about 80,000 people fled to the West in fear of the returning Soviet regime. Later, these people formed strong national communities abroad, thus creating some sort of continuity with the homeland and with the independent Estonian Republic; a government in exile was even formed.

In 1944, Estonia was once more incorporated into the Soviet Union. Harsh post-war economic conditions were worsened by Stalinist political repressions and deportations. 1947 brought the beginning of collectivisation which once again redrew land ownership borders. The mass deportations of 1941 and 1949 sent about 30,000 people to Siberia. After Stalin's death in 1953, the political and economic conditions improved somewhat. Although many deportees did not survive, most of those who did returned to Estonia, but were often not allowed to live in their former homes or in major cities. In addition, a special border restriction zone was established on the islands and within 20 km of most of the northern Estonian coast, limiting access to the sea and abolishing private seafaring. Closed towns like uranium enrichment town Sillamäe became off-limits to the remaining local population.

Throughout most of the Soviet period political freedom was suppressed until Mikhail Gorbachev launched *perestroika* at the end of the 1980s, which ultimately led to Estonia regaining independence in 1991. This is a landmark of sudden change in the narrative of Estonian history. The Republic of Estonia was restored on the basis of legal continuity, creating a grey area between imagined (i.e. pre-war) and factual borders. Land ownership reform returned confiscated farmsteads to their pre-war owners or their legal heirs in an attempt to re-establish the mosaic farming landscapes of the imagined past. On the other hand, local administrative borders did not undergo rapid change. Since regaining independence, Estonia's political agenda has been to (re)integrate into Europe.

The institutional aims were thus joining the EU and NATO, both of which were achieved in 2004.

Discursive constructions concerning the Soviet past

Since re-establishing independence the official public discourse in Estonia has chosen to emphasise the country's political continuity with the pre-war republic, which, according to the changed hegemonic discourse, was disrupted by Soviet occupation for 50 years.[4] In the narrated life stories told in the 1990s and 2000s, a lot of attention is paid to the events of the 1940s (forceful incorporation, deportations). In public discourse, the first period of independence gained prominence in mnemonic culture, interpreted as "giving the nation its history back" and "filling in the white gaps with memories"[5] (Hinrikus & Kõresaar 2004, 209; Kõresaar 2005, 17–26). Discourse on "criminal communism" appeared on the official memory policy level immediately after regaining independence (see also Tileaga 2012, 265). The political repressions – stories that had been available only in private conversations at the family level during the Soviet period – surfaced in the hegemonic treatment of the past. The 1990s public memory culture in the Baltic states can be characterised by extensive condemnation of the Soviet era, or the "unconditional denial of the socialist past" (Jõesalu & Kõresaar 2013, 177). In these accounts, the past is presented via the discourse of rupture (op cit, 183): the pre-war independence era is perceived as a period of harmonious development that was cut through by harsh Stalinist policies in the aftermath of World War II. Such narrative constructions were also prevalent in private stories at the time (see EKLA f 350). Often, the treatment of the Stalinist period as criminal and full of repression was generalised to the entire Soviet era (Jõesalu & Kõresaar 2013, 183).

However, since the turn of the 21st century, a more heterogeneous treatment of the Soviet era has emerged, even in public discourse (Jõesalu 2012). The reasons for this are probably (as always) complex, but along with a change in the political environment the change of generations that shape the discursive field plays a role (Jõesalu & Kõresaar 2013, 178). Together with a shift towards heterogeneity, mature socialism (as defined in Yurchak 2003) has surfaced on the discursive field, favouring stress on the everyday level of the system (Jõesalu 2005). This does not mean, however, that the overall hegemonic treatment of the communist past has been changed towards a positive evaluation of the regime. Rather, dealing with that period has become multi-layered. This development has not happened overnight and the heterogenisation of Soviet narratives that started at the beginning of the 2000s is on-going (Jõesalu 2012). Nor has this

trend happened without battles on the field of discourse. In addition, for different ethno-cultural, social, and age groups different perceived ruptures gain prevalence: what could be continuity for one might be discontinuity for another.

The analysis of memory through oral history has demonstrated that political context influences the way in which events are conceptualised. In addition, subsequent historical events tend to influence the (re)conceptualisation of previous events. Generational aspects too play a role, i.e. whether the experience is immediate or mediated, or in which life stage these events were experienced. Furthermore, a person's life stage also influences how social events are addressed – with increasing age, time perspectives also change and accumulated experience of events makes people re-evaluate previous events and contextualise later ones.

Lived continuities and broken lives: the rupture of the 1940s

Becoming Soviet: from private farmsteads to collective farms

Political upheavals create the conditions for landscape change. After the explosion, in its attempt to stabilise its new central position, the new political power creates its own representations of the new, desired landscape, using different media, planning, economic instruments such as taxes, and other tools. Subsequently, the desired change – land ownership, borders, land use patterns, monuments, etc. – are carried out, and patterns and practices change in 'real' landscapes. Only gradually does the new landscape become accustomed to the new power constellation; at the same time people adapt to the changes and the patterns also adapt. However, there is a stabilisation period (or lag time) involved – no change can be enforced instantly; old patterns and practices "glow" through the new ones – people still remember "how it was before" and not all screens are removed (Palang 2010), at least not from memory (see also Maandi 2009). This diversity reduces the readability of landscapes, creating miscommunication and a transformation of meanings (Palang et al 2006). Finally, as part of retroactive history writing, former innovations become heritage and features that were once fought against as the unwanted new are taken under protection after a sufficient period. One such explosion that rearranged the everyday practices and landscapes in Estonia was the political change of the 1940s (World War II and its aftermath). The following section will explore the ruptures and continuities during the 1940s in rural areas in the light of the post-war policies of collectivisation and political repression.

Soviet propaganda glorified the collectivisation of agriculture and collective farm life in many ways. Placards called on people to join collective farms.

Scientists were mobilised to carry out research that described how a collectivised landscape would function so much better than a privately managed one. Newspaper articles described the advances of collective farming in other parts of the USSR. However, in real life, the desired change of collective land use was far more complicated than expected and for the majority of people the decision to join the kolkhozes was taken out of fear or plain economic necessity in a changed socio-economical context.

Land use data from state registers (Mander & Palang 1994)[6] indicates that there was a decrease in the share of agricultural land use during the 1940s. In the western part of the country the share of agricultural land fell from more than 65% to less than 15%, although in other parts of the country the decrease was less dramatic. The main reasons for rapid change in the west were, first, population loss due to war casualties (including fleeing overseas) and deportations, and second, establishment of a border zone with restricted access and limited range of permissible activities, which in turn lead to a decline in population. The parallel process of urbanisation had an additional impact. The decrease in the share of agricultural land happened mostly at the expense of grassland (pastures and hay meadows) while the share of arable land remained about the same. In addition, most of the agricultural activities in the western part of the country were more extensive in character because the land used included wooded pastures and hay meadows on less fertile soil, marginal areas that are usually the first to be abandoned during hard times. In other words, policies of change were imposed on particular socio-economic conditions shaped by local specifics (the nature of arable land) and previous political developments (war casualties, emigration).

Ideally, collective farms were supposed to be about collective spirit, common ownership and socialist ideology; they were large-scale, mechanised and oriented towards the future. In reality the processes of collectivisation gave rise to practices that were not seen as such by those living in those kolkhozes. Often, in everyday life people tried to preserve the private agricultural practices that were there before these substantial changes, although perhaps not everyone succeeded. This was often the only means to guarantee some food security. One example is keeping one's own (private) cow at the collective farm, and making hay on the verges and in semi-abandoned meadows that the collective farms did not use. Although the land used for haymaking belonged to the collective farm, people could use these for a longer period and thereby retained a feeling of ownership. These landscapes were subsistence-minded, past-oriented, private, hand-worked, and personal. They contained the remnants of a past lifestyle, they took place covertly, and they kept up traditions. Possibly, for many Estonians, maintaining the old traditions had, apart from necessity, the symbolic meaning of opposing

the ideology of the prevailing socialist order. In the late Soviet period when food security was less of a problem, private cow ownership became a matter of lifestyle rather than necessity, especially among the elderly people. Quite often, the hay fields used coincided with the family's pre-war property, creating an additional sense of continuity (Palang & Sooväli-Sepping 2012).

At the beginning of the kolkhoz period having more than one private cow per family was officially not allowed, or at least not encouraged. Later, when industrial agriculture proved unable to feed the population, this activity was seen as an auxiliary branch of production and became semi-legal – it was not forbidden, but it was given a low priority. Private farming (milk production and other forms of private farming, i.e. garden plots) was intertwined with Soviet political and moral ideology. Thus, local practices of continuity were not only preserved, but also shaped the imposed policies of collective farming. Even if these private farming practices were initially preserved as a method of opposition, they were gradually integrated into the system and probably lost their counter-cultural meaning for those taking them over in later periods (i.e. the 1970s and 1980s). Even though the political context, functions and processes (Widgren 2004) had largely changed, some of them very abruptly, new forms of landscape came along very slowly, carrying in themselves many traces of the earlier political systems which rather than disappearing moulded the system that followed them.

Despite the continuity indicated by land use statistics at a macro level, continuities with previous practices are rarely highlighted at an individual narrative level. In family stories, the events of the 1940s are often depicted as traumatic, a period of rupture or a sort of decisive temporal boundary. One example is the story of the Küpress[7] family (first published in Palang & Paal 2002).

The family had fled to Kazakhstan to escape mobilisation for World War I, then returned to Estonia in 1921 and had built up their farm by the time World War II started. Linda and Andres had three sons and a daughter. The daughter Lea's family also lived in their house with their three lively children. In the turmoil of the war, the fates of the family members were scattered: one of the sons went to fight with the Finnish army against the Russians, while the other two fled to Sweden in 1944. The family lost all their land and shops, and most of their property was nationalised. In 1948, during the harsh post-war years, when threats of political repression were accompanied by economic scarcity, Andres shot himself. His death was followed by the deportations of his son Lennart (who had returned from the Finnish army) and son-in-law Henrik in 1950. In a place that had once been so crowded and full of life, only Linda, then 66 years old, remained with her daughter Lea with her three small

children (who later moved to a township called Kadrina). Finally, in 1951, Linda joined the collective farm, which cultivated the surrounding land until the end of 1950s. However, as the place was remote and not too fertile, the fields were gradually turned into grasslands and in the early 1960s other people's calves destroyed Linda's small garden. In 1964, Linda finally gave in, took her goat and moved to Lea's place in Kadrina. The house stood empty until 1973, when Linda's son dismantled it and transported it to Rakvere.

This story represents a narrative of rupture – in this tale, even the house, which could have represented some sort of continuity, was removed and the family was scattered in different countries. However, as shown by this story, this rupture did not appear in the same abrupt way that it is depicted in hegemonic discourse. While the development of a happy family story was cut through by political developments, in actual lives, the boundaries were not drawn overnight but were a process; neither does the perceived division coincide with documented land use dynamics. Thus, in private lives the boundaries of rupture are not as clear, and are definitely not simultaneous with the boundaries depicted in the hegemonic discourse.

When the socio-political system changes, the "right historical context" might get lost, in which case people might no longer be able to understand how the previous landscape worked (Lowenthal 1988). On one hand, the 'objective numbers' suggest that the physical pattern of lands use for the whole country did not change much in the 1940s. On the other hand, the memories, representations and life stories speak of a drastic change. It appears that the explosion occurs first in social/cultural/political/economic processes, only then does the physical/material layer react, dragging along a number of remnants from the older system that should not really be there.

"Fate" and the "white ship": the portrayal of the 1940s in hindsight[8]

As mentioned, the context of regaining independence in the 1990s brought the description of the events in the 1940s to the forefront of the narratives. Stories like that of the Küpress family, which concentrate on collectivisation and repression and the overall changes in society, were recurrent among the life stories written and told in the 1990s. The time when these stories were told – the collapse of the Soviet system and the quest to re-establish the pre-Soviet environment – directs the storytellers to treat the 1940s as a rupture in the natural developmental path of Estonian society.

At the same time, the other possible ruptures within the frame of the Soviet period are presented in an inconsistent way. For example, the boundary between war and peace is not clearly marked in life stories, as can be seen in the Finnish or Estonian Russian-language stories (Jaago 2007). The Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact and the establishment of Red Army bases in Estonian villages in 1939 introduce the topic of World War II to the life stories, differing obviously considerably from how the war starts on the global arena. Similarly, the events that demarcate the end of the war are percieved differently by Estonians and the rest of the world. For example, a man, born in 1925, explains it in the following way:

> The war ended. The world breathed a sigh of relief. People were hoping that now they could continue working and building their homes from where they had left off in 1940. Unfortunately, the winter of 1944–1945 brought something else. (EKLA f 350, 1728 [2005])

The breaks and boundaries that are taken up in the stories are not only drawn on the scale of global, local, physical and symbolic, but are also reflected in figurative speech. In a cumulative reading, repetitive phrases like "fate" and "white ship" acquire additional meaning that captures the perceived symbolic ruptures and continuities.

The meaning of the concept 'fate' in Estonian life stories has been studied by the Finnish researcher Leena Huima, who has noted that Estonians, unlike Finns, tend to describe their stories through the prism of 'fate' rather than their own choices. "One of the most important stereotypes seems to be that the *Estonian nation has a fate*, i.e. a life path determined by some foreign, external force, that can be contested to some degree with bravery" (Huima 2002, 73). Judging from the language used in the life stories, she concludes that people use the word 'fate' when things don't go the way they "should have". According to Huima, such a difference between Estonian and Finnish life stories stems from the experience of occupation with the term 'fate' used to structure the collective memory of the past (op cit, 93). One could suggest that fate in life stories refers to the phenomenon where people have surrendered to an outside force called fate and see no role for themselves in what has happened.

However, in the life stories from the 1990s, the concept of fate is rather used to tie historical and personal life events. Consider the history of the Tamm family, as recounted by a woman born in 1947:

> Coming from a big family, my grandfather could not go to school much, but he was very eager to learn. He was employed at the Port Works, where he

> started from the simplest work and ended up being a director. He had good technical insight and the qualities of a leader. Unfortunately that decided his fate, as the Port Work factories became military objects during the German time. In 1944, the factory was evacuated to Germany and grandpa went too … He didn't have an option to stay in Estonia anyway, people with far more modest positions were deported to Siberia. (EKLA f 350, 1343 [2001])

The grandfather's background (from a big family) and his personal qualities tie him with his job at the Port Works. The Port Works is placed in a certain political and military situation: the factory had a specific position in respect of military action from the Nazi (evacuation), as well as from the Soviet (potential imprisonment), side. The narrator tells us that her grandfather started a new family abroad, emigrating further to the US. Thus, the story juxtaposes geographical–political (US versus Soviet Estonian) and family borders (families both in Estonia and the USA). However, more important than the divisions and borders is the function of the word fate: with this concept, singular events (ruptures in time) are tied into a coherent story in the individual's life.

Fate, thus, is not a single intervention; it is rather something that ties events and situations together. This is further suggested by the tendency that the more specific the story (describing the events and situations very thoroughly), the less fate as a figure is used in the story. Fate is also not always used in a negative sense (when not everything turned out as expected). Often people conclude their life stories by thanking fate.[9] Fate as a word has neither negative nor positive connotations in Estonian; the meaning depends on how it is used in a specific context and attached to certain phrases. Therefore, fate in the Estonian life stories written and told in the 1990s is not tied to specific time periods such as occupation. Rather, it is a linguistic–cultural concept that enables a person to tie single elements together into a big picture and pull together pieces left behind after an explosion.

Another, more specific, concept to describe the post-war years and the Soviet period is "waiting for the white ship". The white ship is a culture-specific metaphor (cf Hinrikus 2008, Tammela 2009) linked to the 1860s emigration from Estonia to Russia with the hope of receiving land for cultivation. Members of a religious sect had gathered at the seashore in a place in today's Tallinn and were waiting for a white ship that was supposed to come and take them to a better land. The symbol has been used in several literary works and through them has passed into common use.

In post-war rumour, the white ship metaphor symbolised the expectation of local people that Western countries would soon forcefully intervene and put an end to the Soviet occupation.[10]

In hindsight, when looking back to the 1940s from the end of the century, the metaphor is used in everyday as well as academic language: "The long-awaited White Ship did not arrive and it was evident that the Soviet rule would remain stable for a long time" (Tannberg 2009, 5). In the life stories narrated in the 1990s, the motif of waiting for the white ship serves as a definition of a time period. After World War II people were hoping for political changes in the course of which Estonia could regain independence:

> We were all convinced [after the war] that this 'new period' was a temporary one; that the 'White Ship' could be seen already, there were conversations and discussions, anxiety and fear, that it all was just a matter of time (EKLA f 350, 1333 [2001], woman, born in 1929).

When narrations state that "people no longer waited for the 'white ship'", it denotes a time when wartime attitudes and everyday behavioural strategies had changed – people had understood that one had to adapt to the Soviet system and wait to regain freedom at some point in an indeterminate future.[11]

The third way of presenting waiting for the white ship as a temporal adverb appears in the context of waiting for the dissolution of the Soviet Union at the end of the 1980s:

> In 1988 it was felt that something was about to change in the political land-scape of Estonia. People started to believe that the White Ship really was approaching the Estonian coast (EKLA f 350, 1365 [2001], woman, born in 1955).

Fate and the white ship do not seem to be directly connected to one of the most central traits of border narrative: the otherness or the separation of one's own cultural space from that of the other. Instead, these metaphors draw boundaries in time and represent the retroactive transformation processes of the moment of explosion, symbolically drawing lines of separation and continuity on the past by attributing value to the previous period. On the one hand, metaphors describe a socio-politically, territorially and behaviourally limited time–space. On the other hand, these phrases bind the presented period with other similar periods, thus forming a continuity of cultural space.

The continuities and discontinuities of the 1990s

Rural space: negotiating the shifted boundaries in everyday practices

As pointed out in the theoretical section, after sudden change (explosions, as defined by Lotman) different spheres of society recover (or develop) at different rates. The collapse of the Soviet Union meant abrupt change which, among other things, brought about economic downfall in Estonia, with its GDP dropping 22% and consumer price inflation reaching 1069% (Saar & Unt 2008, 327). Yet, there were spheres of the economy that recovered from this sharp decline relatively quickly and some of the new economic branches developed quite rapidly (i.e. those that were almost non-existent before, such as banking, marketing, etc.). While there were areas that took off immediately, there were others that developed more gradually, and yet others that lagged behind or continued their downfall. This uneven progress also meant that the physical space and its perception changed at different rates. While urban space (especially the centre of the capital city Tallinn, see Gentile & Sjöberg 2006) quickly changed its appearance with new modern buildings emerging, the development of rural space had quite a different character. Restructuring the rural economy and dissolving the collective farms brought with it an out-migration from the countryside and abandoned buildings in many places (often connected with the cessation of agricultural production in former collective farms). This, for its part, changed the meanings of rural areas and their perceptions and representations. Some of the former kolkhoz facilities changed their functions (Widgren 2004), others were left abandoned; the blossoming of modern building witnessed in cities didn't emerge in countryside until after joining the EU.

The way the rural is represented in the hegemonic political arena usually frames the process of (re)structuring the rural economy (Halfacree 2006, 51). In many societies, rurality is constructed in connection with national identity (Juska 2007, 239), depicting it as rooted in traditional ways of living and a kind of "haven of primitive innocence" (Krange & Skogen 2005, 215; Matthews & Tucker 2007, 95). This romantic construction can, and actually has, affected the development of many post-communist rural areas under reconstruction in the 1990s. As land ownership has been at the centre of Estonian national consciousness since the National Awakening in the second half of the 19th century, it is no wonder that the mosaic landscape of private farmsteads functioned as a symbol of independence.

In Estonia, the ideological ideal for rearranging the rural economy in the 1990s was the interwar republic period. Grounded largely on the ideological

principles of this mnemonic discourse, the large collective farms (kolkhozes) were dissolved and small-scale single farm production was promoted again during the reconstruction of the rural economy.[12] At the grass-roots level this dissolution in reality meant massive decline in agricultural production and unemployment causing economic difficulties that lasted throughout the 1990s. Because this structural development did not turn out to be effective or competitive in the market economy, agriculture was gradually reconstructed, refocusing mainly on gross production (for example, in 2011, 20% of the farms produced 85% of the milk; Ministry of Agriculture 2012, 8). This development, driven by the ideological discourse of rupture, is a good example of how discontinuity and continuity are in fact different sides of the same coin: in order to establish continuity, discontinuity appears.

A characteristic example of such paradoxical attempts to produce continuity at the everyday practice level is seen in the story of Tiina Lepp (b. 1960), who lived in a town all her life until her husband got back a farm house that had belonged to his grandparents. Ownership reform[13] returning private properties to the descendants of the pre-World War II owners, from whom the properties had been taken during the period of Stalinist collectivisation and repression, was one way to establish legal, economic and moral continuity with the 1920s and 1930s in the 1990s.[14] These political decisions had a real affect on many individuals' everyday lives, causing new ruptures. Tiina tells (2010):

> Yes, I am a total city girl and when we came here … then all the legal procedures were taken care of and we got the land back and then we decided … and we started to run a farm house. And a city girl as I was… When we bought our first cow, then I went to choose a cow like a fool… dressed up in a way that I normally did in our city apartment. I was strolling with my child… wearing a hat and high heels and then my husband and brother-in-law came… they had heard that there was a cow somewhere to be sold, and they invited me to go with them and see… and then we brought this cow home and … and then I milked it, a mug in my hand, and I approached the cow before milking, saying: can we get this over with, friendly… I was so scared, but had to start milking… then we had four cows and then eight and then we got ourselves a milker. (000729_ERM_Fn_302)

This is a good example of how social change and romantic construction of the past created an urge for the persistence of some previous period which, in reality, for these people meant a sudden change. Tiina went on with her story:

> … luckily, this time has become the past. It lasted for ten years and I am convinced that we actually built here a prison for ourselves… we got ourselves everything… we sold everything: our city apartment, garage, car… and bought agricultural equipment for this money… so it was a pretty crazy job that we all did.

In short, Tiina admits that the enthusiasm that was caused by the political atmosphere of restoration of justice (returning private property to owners) made her and her family's lives into a prison. After ten years of small scale farming, Tiina and her husband decided to go "back to work" – that is, back to office jobs in the town. As she put it, they now try to keep the home for their family, not for the cattle. "That makes more sense," she concluded.

Putting together the everyday practices and the discourses that construct the future via a romanticised version of the past in restructuring policies, we can see that continuities and discontinuities are intermingled: by trying to establish continuity with the pre-war way of life and with one's forefathers (for example through grandmother's farmhouse) actually created a rupture. For Tiina and her family, the 1990s were no longer retrospectively the time in which they built up a 'new' republic from a rural haven, to them it now signifies an era of imprisonment that does not make sense.

The treatment of the 1990s as a rupture is also common in other interviews in rural areas. The stable development of the rural economy did not begin until the 2000s, which was also the time when the Lepp family decided to quit their farming. Their example shows that the boundaries created by ruptures are lived and negotiated at the level of everyday lives and the meanings given to changes depend on the practices established during times of change. While in some discursive fields the 1990s is still seen as the start of the (re-)building of Estonia as an independent state, in private lives the meaning can retrospectively be re-evaluated. Land reforms and privatisation created many kinds of development trajectory: some farms were privatized and succeeded in the agro business, some collective farms continued as cooperatives, some people got their land back and cultivated it, some people became large land owners by buying up the land from the rightful heirs (who had escaped back to the city from their returned land), some established rural tourism farms, and some private farms were sold to become housing development plots on city fringes[15].

These policies did not only change everyday lives but also the rural space and its perception. In addition, the perceptions of boundaries might have changed in many rural areas, as the now abandoned collective farm centres changed the perceived relations between the hubs and the peripheries. In Lefebvre's terms

(1991, 74), the imaginary, the symbolic and the practical have merged: imagining the continuity of interwar agricultural policies, people started to reorganise space and practices, giving them symbolic meaning. The boundaries of the private and collective farming were shifted, reconceptualised, and consequently the networks and identities changed (Newman 2003). However, these boundaries were experienced and expressed in narratives in various ways, depending on the point in the everyday practices of the people: what was considered returning home in the 1990s could have resulted in some cases in building a prison.

Domestic space: negotiating 'going to' and 'returning to' Europe

A number of studies on contemporary home-making practices (Cieraad 2006; Miller 2001; Johansson & Saarikangas 2009) emphasise that home is not just a physical space with clear-cut boundaries shaped by successive social upheavals, but rather a flexible setting in which mobility and change are negotiated. In Estonia, all the periods of transition in the 20th century have been characterised by intensified attention and attempts to shape lifestyles and the domestic sphere according to new ideals. In the following, some aspects of interior home design after re-independence, will be explored.

As a result of the ownership reform launched in 1991, by the year 2000 94% of the housing stock in Estonia was in private ownership and more than 75% of Estonian residents had become homeowners (Paadam 2003, 11). During the Soviet period, all building materials as well as furniture were in short supply. When they became available in a wide variety in the 1990s, a home-decoration boom broke out that was largely associated with wider processes of de-Sovietisation and Westernisation in both public and private discourse. Importantly, the new everyday life was supposed to be a means of simultaneously 'going to' and 'returning to' Europe. The home decoration campaigns and competitions initiated by opinion leaders, for example by president Meri in 1998 (reviving a similar campaign launched by president Päts in 1936), not only encouraged a new type of personal creativity, but also served as a ritual way of confirming cultural continuity with both Western and national ideals. The reprinting of housewives' manuals from the 1930s and a nostalgic wave of reproducing 'Estonian-period' (i.e. the 1920s and 1930s) domestic interiors in Soviet-period houses that might have seemed anachronistic in the modern world were similarly used as cultural capital to help people cope with new challenges.

In uniform Soviet period apartments in blocks of flats walls were often pulled down and new living standards were established both in the physical and metaphorical sense. In new homes open plan interiors also dominated, incorporating

ideas of openness, mobility and change. Often priority was given to the renovation of bathrooms and toilets since hygiene requirements acquired symbolic significance as ritual cleansing for (an imagined) European way of life and as a way to differentiate one's private space from the still largely Soviet-style, i.e. uncultured and dirty, public spaces. Thus purity in everyday space was perceived not only as an aesthetic, but also as a moral category through which cultural change was discussed and experienced (cf Runnel 2003).

These socio-economic changes were accompanied by increasingly diverse mentalities, lifestyles and quality of everyday space. The restrained Nordic modernism promoted by arbiters of taste in the 1930s as well as in the period of relative political liberty in the 1960s, re-surfaced as aesthetic and national ideals in the public discourse of the 1990s. In the first home decoration journals of the mid-1990s generally the homes of the new elite were displayed with the keywords such as stylish, expensive and international. Here everything was usually designed by professionals and the modern minimalist interior reflected the owners' wish to change their image quickly and totally. Family histories together with their ruptures were 'forgotten' as they were not 'noble' enough to be displayed; signs of the Soviet period were also eliminated as quickly as possible. So, for example a prominent interior designer describes the process of furnishing the new house of a bank manager:

> In the living room a painting of greenish-bluish colours was the starting point before any furniture. Only the old black piano had the honour of being taken to the new home (Kadalipp 1996, 37).

However, despite the dominant discourse of 'modern' and 'European' ways of life, home-making practices remained heterogeneous and elements of the new trends were usually merged with traditional habits and understandings of homeliness. Only a small segment of the population wished and/or could afford a totally minimalist and exclusive home without any reference to the past, while most domestic spaces displayed an eclectic mixture of different layers: 'euro renovation', inherited antiquities, Soviet-period mass-produced or homemade furniture, and craft items. The following account of the home-making process in a private house in Tallinn is quite typical of the mindset of the 1990s:

> Our home consists of objects that are close to the heart and connected with memories; things that are associated with our hobbies, pieces of furniture that have travelled with us from one place to another… The wicker furniture comes from the pre-marital period of the lady of the house. The old buffet

set was saved from the dump. The chest that serves as a table was bought at a craft fair… The renovation started gradually and in a way that the previous atmosphere of the house would be preserved. There will still be work to do for years (Kodukiri 1998, 10–12).

Style experts interpreted such 'incompetence' as a relic of the Soviet mentality and cultural disorientation caused by a sudden abundance of goods. Yet, a similar critique of tasteless homes relying on modernist principles had been articulated in previous periods of socio-cultural rupture. The same visions of the ideal homogeneous (and timeless) design have thus been used by different ideologies (national-modernist, Soviet-modernist, Euro-modernist) to reinforce their legitimacy. On the other hand, since these principles were articulated by local intellectuals they provided a framework of cultural continuity as modernism was gradually nationalised.

In private life Estonians met the everyday challenges of the post-socialist transition period by reviving traditional practices and experiences: shortages could be overcome by repairing, recycling, economising, and handicraft skills that had been kept alive from peasant culture through the deficit economy of the Soviet times. Gradually these skills and do-it-yourself practices started to merge into new trends of ecological lifestyles, anti-globalisation and novel interpretations of cultural heritage. While the 1990s are mainly referred to as a decade of rupture, it also witnessed the emergence of new home-making practices inspired by the search for 'roots': for example, moving to a farmhouse or a manor in the countryside to live in a natural environment, not farming but working, either by retaining jobs in town and commuting, or by introducing urban forms of entrepreneurship to the countryside. Towards the end of the nineties the revival of village or urban district societies started and thereby the boundaries of home gradually re-extended to the neighbourhood (Kannike 2009; 2013). With the explosion of consumption culture and new technology both real and virtual spaces became expandable and the boundaries between public and private spaces increasingly blurred. While people experience the permanent pressure of ever-changing and fragmentary time, renovating a historical building to become a home or spending time in a country house is often perceived as a way of keeping memory alive and maintaining cultural continuity at the personal level.

Contemporary negotiations
concerning (dis)continuities and borders

Transnational space: home and away[16]

Estonia was a country of immigration during the Soviet period: significant numbers of Russian and other ethnic groups from different parts of the Soviet Union settled in Estonia, especially during the large-scale industrialisation of the 1960s and 1970s. After re-establishing independence, Estonia became instead a country of emigration. In the 1990s emigration from Estonia was mainly return migration to the original homelands of the different Soviet nations, in addition to which, Western countries once again became accessible to Estonian migrants (Lagerspetz 2007, 87). Emigration from Estonia to the older EU member states has increased significantly in the 2000s as compared to the 1990s, with the relative proportion of labour migration increasing substantially. Furthermore, it has been pointed out that Estonia is one of the major countries of origin for travelling workers in Europe – there are 15.8 cross-border commuters per thousand inhabitants in Estonia (MKW Wirtschaftsforschung GmbH 2009). In 2013, 14% of Estonian population aged over 15 had worked or were currently working abroad, the EU average being 9% in the same year (European Commission 2013). The most popular destination for Estonian migrants since 1991 has been the neighbouring country Finland. Finland is also the most popular destination among people wishing to work abroad and among those already working abroad (68% in 2013). The cross-border working and migration of Estonian residents has been strongly influenced by two events – EU accession in 2004 and the global economic crisis, which started in 2008[17]. In the 1st quarter of 2010 the unemployment rate reached an all-time high (17.4%) in Estonia. (Tarum 2014, 3, 9)

Migration and commuting across borders could be regarded as one of the main reasons for perceived discontinuities in contemporary Estonia. It not only changes the lives of the people who relocate, but also affects the people who stay behind, and might also introduce a fear of discontinuity in the nation. Family life is often extensively modified in light of transnational practices (see Vertovec 2009, 61). Interestingly, the *mobility* of the (transnational) 'elites' (for example scholars moving for financial or status reasons or in order to gain symbolic capital) is often regarded as something desirable, even as something indispensable, while at the same time *migration* is seen as something blameworthy (Bryceson & Vuorela 2002, 7–8). In the Estonian media, emigrants are often seen as traitors, or, as put by an ex-minister: "emigrants for convenience" who just look for higher incomes and a better life.

When some family members relocate and families thus live spatially separated some or most of the time, the importance of discourses in creating and maintaining a feeling of unity, "familyhood" across national borders is emphasised (see Bryceson & Vuorela 2002, 3; Huttunen 2010, 240). Family stories can create continuity through space (with relatives staying in other locations) and time (family history), and establish connections to certain people and places, allowing a location to be transformed into a place that is meaningful for them (Tuan 2011, 6). People are not only shaped by places in their lives, they also work on this relationship to make a place feel 'their own' or 'home', to narrate and also to justify the importance of certain place(s) in their lives (see Siim 2013). Studies on transnational and multi-local lives show that people can have meaningful relationships with several places at the same time (Rolshoven 2007; Huttunen 2010).

According to this line of research, stories are produced situationally, in a certain societal context. Negotiating family, relationships and their relation with places is an on-going process. Stories are thus not so much depictions of facts as they are construals of happenings (Ochs 1997, 193). People also have to take into consideration the discourses of surrounding societies as they negotiate the political landscape with publicly recognised and repeatedly validated versions of who they are and what it means to be them (Knowles 2003, 168).

It is also important to remark that people do not only create and strengthen continuity and ties, but stories can also be used to break the bonds that seem meaningless. In a new situation in life, people might put more emphasis on the homely qualities of their current place of residence. This attitude also makes coping in the new environment easier, as one woman (b, 1974, interviewed in 2013) said:

> I think, that the place you live in is nevertheless always your home. At times I also feel my home is here [in Finland]… I think it is really sad that some of the Estonians live here, a hundred people together, not even wanting to create some kind of home here. They come here only to work, I couldn't imagine living like that, ever.

For the relocated family members, the need to distance oneself from the former homeland can be a part of the emotional distancing necessary when building bonds with a new homeland. The landscape and everyday practices of the past can become foreign; one might have to break loose from one place, at least to some extent, to be able to build a relationship with another.

Descriptions of transnational family life given by people who have relocated are quite different when compared to those of the relatives who stay behind.

Family members who stay in Estonia might have the strong feeling of being left alone, which also reflects the importance of the emotional and social side of people's place-related experiences: in the absence of the right people, things and places are quickly drained of meaning (Tuan 2011, 140). In addition the feeling of lost connections and of silenced or untold stories can create or reinforce the idea of discontinuity. As an interview with Heli Mänd, an older woman (b. 1933, interviewed in 2004) shows, the loneliness followed by the relocation of her only son and his family is reinforced by the idea that no-one is interested in her stories. Heli says:

> No one has asked anything. I have even made a comment several times. It happened to me also, when I was young and my mother was still alive… I could have asked her so many things but I didn't. But now there are so many things, my mother died long ago, all the things I could ask, but there is no one to ask. I told them that you also waste all this time, my 'tree of life', all my kin have gone like that, no one knows anyone anymore. Everyone remains strange. And my, about my youth, nobody knows anything, they are not interested at all, they don't ask. This is very painful for me, of course… But now people have started to change, and they ask, show interest. Well, as a matter of fact, during the Soviet time absolutely no one was interested in anything. Everyone was just busy with, working around, wherever they could find work or something and, had their own lives and that's all. But now you start to think… Who was the father, who was the great great grandfather, like that, following the generations. Now people start to be interested. And then begin to fight for their rights for the premises. Earlier there was no need for that.

Heli thus traces the tradition of untold stories to the Soviet period, when people, according to her interpretation, were not keen to listen to family stories. Also she regrets not asking her mother to tell her about the family history. On the other hand, Heli currently feels that silenced stories strengthen the perceived boundary (Newman 2003) between her and her family members in Finland: on top of being far away, no one is interested in hearing her narratives. Heli is also worried about the family graves in Estonia. Who will take care of them, when she dies? Some aspects of family life – for example care-giving – call for the immediate presence of family members and thus bind people to places in a very concrete fashion (see Zechner 2008).

On the other hand, as the following citation from Juhan (b. 1974, interviewed in 2014) shows, from the perspective of a relocated family member the distance between Estonia and Finland does not seem so overwhelming.

Well, what can I say. My mother-in-law surely didn't like [the fact that we moved]… She thought about her grandchildren going so far away; she doesn't travel by ferry and, I don't know, has problems with her health… But after all, we haven't disappeared anywhere; we are not that far away really… I would understand had we moved somewhere like Australia. But here it's not a huge endeavour [to travel], I just have to go to the harbour, buy a ticket and take the ferry across and I'm in Estonia, right.

When family members who remain in Estonia discuss questions of belonging and (dis)continuities experienced, the emphasis is often on different aspects as compared to their relocated family members. However, being grounded does not necessarily mean being fixed; and being mobile is not necessarily about being detached. The work of negotiating borders and belonging is an on-going process and all the family members have their own stories to tell. Movement does not always take place "away from home", and staying behind also includes movement (see Ahmed et al 2003, 1, 10). It should also be kept in mind that crossing borders in the physical world might be secondary as compared to other perceived and imagined boundaries (Newman 2003).

Home but away: boundaries embodied in the Estonian northeast

As mentioned in the theoretical introduction, the semiosphere is heterogeneous and semiotic activity greater towards peripheries and boundaries. In the Estonian case, the cultural periphery coincides with the region near the Russian border in the northeast, where the otherness and boundaries between present and the past, us and them, are politically much contested. Currently, this is the area with the highest percentage of Russian-speakers in Estonia, the country's main industrial region, hegemonically often treated as an embodiment of the Soviet period, yet historically also Estonia's industrial and natural pride and a pillar of today's economy – all of which makes shifts between what we have called socio-economic formations, after Cosgrove (1984), even more dynamic and contested. Analysing the development of Kohtla-Järve's urban landscapes according to Widgren's (2004) differentiation between the forms, functions, processes and contexts, we can see how different aspects react with different speed and intensity to overall socio-economic and discursive change.

One of the reasons Kohtla-Järve has been witness to sudden turns in its symbolic appreciation from outside is, apart from its geographical location, the fact that its forms and functions are shaped principally by its natural resources: the region has been home to oil shale mining since 1916. As more than 90% of

Estonian electricity comes from oil shale, its symbolic position for non-residents depends on the position of this industry in their discursive and political fields. Depending on the socio-cultural context, oil shale mining, electricity production and chemical works have been praised as progressive or damned for its impact on the natural and social environments.

Although landscape is in a constant state of becoming, the forms and functions in Kohtla-Järve have remained motivated by mining activities. The processes behind them have differed, depending on the socio-economic formations that produced their socio-cultural context. Even the administrative borders are highly contested, being redrawn according to ideological settings rather than for practical reasons. At present, Kohtla-Järve consists of six administrative units in seven separate areas that are scattered up to 30 km apart. Between them lies the town of Jõhvi, the historical regional administrative capital of Ida-Viru county, which was subordinated to Kohtla-Järve *rayon* during the Soviet period (for details and a map, see Printsmann 2010; 2015). With the changes that have occurred since the Soviet period, each of the parts of these towns has been re-evaluated and new mental boundaries drawn, even if the forms of the landscape have remained by and large the same.

This can be clearly seen in a comparative analysis of two iconic residential districts, Kohtla-Nõmme and Järve.

In 1931, the UK company New Consolidated Gold fields Ltd founded a garden town, a completely new type of settlement in Estonia, for workers at what is today Kohtla-Nõmme. The Soviet period officially favoured communal housing and Kohtla-Nõmme's status changed when it was included in the rapidly growing new urban conglomerate of Kohtla-Järve. For ethnic Estonians, the garden town represented an ideal home as it consisted of individual households with gardens – an urban equivalent of the single household farmstead that symbolised Estonianness and the pre-war republic. In 1990, Kohtla-Nõmme settlement was separated from Kohtla-Järve and became one of Estonia's smallest municipalities (around 1,000 inhabitants in 4.65 km²). Even today, the municipality asserts its principal difference from the rest of the industrial mining area, claiming to be a green oasis.

Kohtla-Järve as a mining town was established in 1946, shortly after World War II, and industrial urban space was seen as embodying the symbolic values of the new political regime. According to life stories told by ethnic Estonians, Kohtla-Järve was initially "quite a neat little Estonian town" (as opposed to the notion of 'the Soviet town'). Soon, the land in Järve village, previously inhabited mainly by locally born residents, was nationalised and filled with classical Stalinist houses. It had a clear and modernist town layout with parks and streets

running radially from small squares (on the development principles of Soviet cities, see Gentile & Sjöberg 2006). Squares were foreseen as accommodating communist parades, not spontaneous gatherings. Streets were hemmed with non-native species of poplars that grew quickly; assemblages of blue spruce show now where obligatory statues of Lenin once stood. Today, although Järve urban district still forms the central part of Kohtla-Järve, it has lost much of this momentum. According to architectural heritage specialists, the authentic Soviet milieu was ruined by so-called cowboy-capitalism of the 1990s when ground floor apartments were made into shops with separate entrances and new owners only painted their own parts of the building. In a way, a development in an urban space can never stop but the holistic feel (see Rose et al 2010) is replaced with eclectic engineering.

For the Estonian inhabitants of the town, however, the Soviet urban development contains several internal temporal boundaries. Many life stories reflect how there was a specific turning point at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, well after the first Stalinist Kohtla-Järve was born, when the atmosphere was ruined by the growth of oil shale production and an influx of Russian-speaking immigrants who were accommodated in pre-fabricated mass-housing projects (see Gentile & Sjöberg 2010). The symbolic meaning of industrial urban space was high in Soviet discourse, as it served to symbolise the progress of the communist state. For example, a retired person from Kohtla-Järve wrote the following:

> There is no old Kohtla-Järve anymore. Most of it was destroyed by the nitrogen fertiliser factory (the houses fell into a sanitary buffer zone); some of it was destroyed by expansion of the oil shale plant, and part was just abandoned when a chance appeared to get an apartment in *Sotslinn* ['Socialist Town'] with central heating, running water and a bathroom (MK: L3 2003).[18]

During periods when there was a shortage of goods, these modern block-house neighbourhoods, or micro-*rayon*s ('micro districts'), where highly credited in the official system and considered to be self-contained; whereas now public opinion of these "dormitory districts" is lower. Ideological boundaries drawn between different ethnic groups and time periods have been applied to landscape forms (*sensu* Widgren 2004) in hindsight, even if the processes in the history of the landscape were much more varied. For example people made shopping trips to Kohtla-Järve because the shops were better stocked with every kind of product, although today domestic tourists see no point in stopping there. Needless to say, the non-Estonian immigrants saw these Soviet urban industrial landscapes as

very familiar and in many cases probably lacked the capacity to read these (time) boundaries at all (see Jaago et al 2008; Printsmann 2010).

Re-independence is another boundary encountered in Kohtla-Järve-Estonians' life stories, although according to them the downward spiral started after the establishment of the town. After re-independence the 'good life' of Kohtla-Järve ended. Oil shale production volumes were cut by half as export to Russia was obstructed for political reasons and the opening of Sosnovy Bor nuclear power plant in Leningrad/St. Petersburg. The oil shale industry lost the privileges it had enjoyed before leaving Kohtla-Järve to suffer from all the effects of former mining and industrial towns, called rust-belt zones, i.e. economic, social, ecological and cultural problems. The population shrank by half compared with the 1980s, many buildings are now empty and the town's non-Estonian-speaking population has found itself on the margins of society. All the normal adaptive and renewal processes of an urban landscape have come almost to a halt in Kohtla-Järve and it is now a shrinking town in a slow demise. No new houses have been built in the last quarter of a century and the town has received funding only to demolish some of the pre-fabricated houses that stood empty, attracting drunkards and drug addicts. Yet, since the area produces electricity for all of Estonia, it has not become a total ghost town. Recently there have been signs of new awakenings as four new shopping centres have been erected. The Estonian government in its turn has made efforts, due to EU-regulations, to 'rehabilitate' the 'Soviet' mining landscape by recultivating the ash hills formed of mining waste products. For local residents who do not see their landscapes as the 'other', this can be quite a problematic, alienating experience, since for them recultivation destroys the hills' identity and heritage value.

The hundred-year-old mining and urban landscape of Kohtla-Järve represents all the ups and downs of Estonian socio-economic formations over the past century. The prioritised development of natural resources during the Soviet period earmarked this mined-out landscape and also its community to be perceived today as an embodiment of that detested time in Estonian public discourse (Printsmann 2010). The golden times of Estonia's pre-war oil shale industry, and the earlier tsarist times, are conveniently forgotten in the othering process. The re-evaluation of Kohtla-Nõmme exemplifies how people see previous ideals when the historical symbolic order loses its appeal. It is often the last-but-one formation that is idealised, while the previous is frowned upon, as the perception of Järve urban district shows. These 'Soviet landscapes' do not fit hegemonic ideas of Estonian rural culture according to the symbolic structure of the outsiders, and thus they are today often neglected and left to develop at their own speed in their own space. On the other hand, from the insider's perspective, Kohtla-Järve has

always been a home to many people with very differentiated evaluations showing that inhabitants draw boundaries in space and time according to the continuities of their own lives.

Conclusion

Boundaries are created in space and time. People share, negotiate, contest and make sense of these boundaries in their everyday practices. The case of Eston Kohver is a vivid example of how the borders that have been changed in time can cause conflict in particular physical space, yet are negotiated and represented differently by different parties.

The focus of this article has been on how temporal boundaries are experienced and how everyday lives are shaped in a particular space, shifting the boundaries and perceptions of centres and peripheries, continuities and discontinuities. Abrupt political changes are sensed and experienced as boundaries in time, yet the mechanisms of coping and adapting seem to come as part of preserving day-to-day continuities. Such practices are often symbolic and have a rather small socio-economic weight from the hegemonic point of view: they are tiny conceptual islands of the past that people preserve to foster continuity and to contest change. Such examples were the single-cow farming practices that continued throughout the Soviet period in Estonian agriculture. In several cases, these practices became integral parts of the new system so that what once served the purpose of creating continuity and symbolising resistance, lost its initial meaning and became part of the existing stability.

However, at times the ruptures that the political changes brought were so overwhelming that people trying to negotiate continuities had to give up and the political rupture became a sharp break with the past with little or no chance to create continuities in the long run. Such an example is the Küpress family, whose members were scattered across the boundaries of East and West and whose attempts to create continuity were futile: in fact, even the physical house was removed from one location to another. Yet, even if the ruptures in lives are sharp and conclusive, people try to create coherent narratives and use linguistic means as cultural tools to negotiate the ruptures. The metaphors, such as fate or the white ship, are used to cope with storylines that are not linear and have been traumatic, as shown by the example of the Tamm family.

In some cases, though, the rupture emerges when trying to create continuity. People use conceptions of continuity as cultural tools, creating thus a perceived space that symbolises continuity for them, causing actual rupture in their lives and/or in space. This is illustrated by the case of the Lepp family, who moved

from the town to the countryside to establish continuity with their forefathers and create a single-farm agricultural unit as part of building an ideal from the interwar period. In a similar vein, the home-making practices of the 1990s reflected the aim of re-discovering local and personal roots as well as a 'return to Europe', although in reality these practices reveal increasing diversity as people negotiated ideas of rupture with the Soviet everyday in their own way. Estonia's political choice to be part of Europe (returning to Europe) and creating continuity across its borders with the European labour market, created bitter separation and new living and care arrangements for many families in Estonia. As is the case with many historical explosions in Estonian history, this too has left families and local communities divided.

Thus, people make sense of space by creating boundaries (and sharing them to various extents) that are tightly tied with boundaries of time. According to Lefebvre, spaces are as much physical as they are ideational and social. Our examples have shown that even when political borders in space stay the same their meanings can shift when the overall political atmosphere and international relations (Widgren's context) transform, an example of which could be the phenomenon of transnational commuting and migration. While during the Soviet period Western countries were behind the Iron Curtain, now people work in Finland and often migrate or commute across borders. The perceptions of these borders have changed, but as moving across them is easy, the modes of belonging are also changing. In addition, those who stay might feel more disconnected from the place than those who have moved away or who commute.

In urban and rural landscapes, the form of the landscape (fields, buildings, etc.) might change at a very different speed to its functions, the processes that maintain it and the political context in which it resides. Looking back at the 1940s we can see that a change in the political system did not cause an immediate change in land use, even if we know that in family stories – like that of the Küpress family – it represents a major perceived boundary, and that the political context and processes through which these landscapes were sustained, had already changed. The same holds true for Kohtla-Järve's once celebrated urban development, which fell out of love with the new cultural context. Even if the urban forms remained the same for some time, their negative appreciation and the disappearance of processes and functions that sustained them (that is, people who lived there) have resulted in their degradation. Different layers of landscape develop at different speeds and may display different boundaries, or no division at all.

Rupture as a metaphor is commonly used when the political and social situation surrounding the storyteller is tense, for instance during the rebuilding of

re-independent Estonia. However, rupture and continuity tend to be different sides of the same coin: the same story may be told using either the notion of rupture or continuity, as politics is not usually in the forefront in personal narratives. In Juri Lotman's terms, this is a retrospective transformation that tries to review the moment of explosion from the point of view of a new established order and interpret the events so that they make sense. Politics can change landscape and environment, everyday lives and relations between people, but stories always focus on an individual and his or her activities against the background of these powerful events. The change of regimes can alter situations in a wide-ranging way, although this does not necessarily affect people and their dispositions and traditions. In other words, a change of regime does not necessarily create sharp boundaries, but rather creates an environment for change in which a crucial role is also played by continuities based on memory, disposition and practice. In addition, landscapes exhibit a time lag in their response to change at the political level. Even if the political context, macro-economic land use processes and function have been forcefully changed, landforms remain the same, changing only comparatively slowly, acting as a mechanism of cohesion. Nevertheless, this continuity may not be perceived as such by the community, as is the case with the post-war landscapes.

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Notes

1 Kohver was prosecuted and convicted in a Russian court. On 26 September 2015, he was given amnesty by the Russian president and consequently exchanged for a former Security Police officer convicted in Estonia of transferring secret data to Russia.

2 Landscape is a term used very differently even within geography. Landscape studies here refers to the tradition of Scandinavian, Germanic, and some Anglo-American authors whose works speak of landscape as a simultaneously physical and social phenomenon, as also specified in the European Landscape Convention.

3 It is not always clear, though, which of the two is more desirable, the urge to be European alternates with a strong emphasis of the profound non-Europeanness of the Estonian nation (being Finno-Ugric and not Indo-European).

4 Parts of Russian speaking minority might consider it the due course of history wherein the present state of independence is an unnecessary interruption (see for example Paklar 2009).

5 It is also good to remember that private life stories did not form a part of official history during the Soviet period. Only after re-independence were private citizens entitled to their own histories (see also Lotman 1984).

6 Due to turbulent times and possibly differing data collection methods there might be differences in interpretation of land use categories. In addition, data was available at county level, which might cause further problems because the number of counties had risen from 11 in 1939 to 39 in 1955.

7 All family and first names in this article are pseudonyms. Where the researcher who carried out the field work received informed consent to use real names, these might be used in other articles.

8 This section is based on the collection of Estonian Life Histories, housed in the Cultural History Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum (EKLA f 350). The collection was started in 1989 and continues to grow, mainly through annual collection campaigns. Today there are roughly 3,000 life histories in this collection.

9 For example in EKLA f 350, 741 where the narrator states that she has been lucky and that fate has been kind to her.

10 Soviet propaganda was conscious of the metaphor: for example, in 1970 the KGB commissioned a movie from director Kalju Komissarov depicting a young couple who are fooled into escaping to Sweden, hoping to have a better life. The movie was called *White Ship* and in this instance it also alludes to the naivety of the people who wait for the arrival of something better, while they already have everything at home.

11 For examples, stories like EKLA f 350, 540 (1997, man, born in 1926) or 1120 (2001, woman, born in 1934).

12 There are some exceptions. Some collective farms, such as Aravete or 9th of May, did not dissolve into private farmsteads and were reorganised into modern cooperatives. Today these modernised farms are some of the biggest and most successful agro businesses in Estonia. Here continuity is constructed simultaneously with the agricultural cooperatives of the interwar period, as well as with the collective farms.

13 It is interesting to note that the decision "to restore ownership continuity" was taken on 19 December 1990, by the Supreme Council of the Estonian Republic – that is to say, about nine months before re-independence was officially declared and sovereignty recognised by other states. Later hegemonic narrations of history prefer to draw a much harder separation line, using re-independence day, 21 August 1991, and thus underplaying all earlier moves.

14 Obviously, taking property away from people who lived there during the Soviet period and who knew how to tend the land was traumatic for them.

15 Development of new suburban areas in Estonia frequently follows the cadastral borders of pre-World War II farms (see Palang & Peil 2010).

16 This section is based on fieldwork material collected among transnational families in Finnish, Estonian and northwest Russian contexts during the 2001–2004 period, and in the Estonian–Finnish context in 2013–2014. The material consists of field diaries and 66 interviews.

17 Estonia joined the EU in 2004, however not all countries opened their borders to the new work force immediately. The UK, Ireland and Sweden were the first countries to open up to Estonian workers; Finland accepted Estonians unconditionally from 2006. Since 2011 no EU country has had the right to place any restrictions on workers from countries that joined the EU in 2004 (the so-called EU-8).

18 The collection of life stories at the Chair of Estonian and Comparative Folklore, University of Tartu, are referred to hereafter as MK, followed by the ID of the text and year it was written.

Multiperspectival approaches to boundaries

Tuulikki Kurki

Borders are not only territorially bounded entities but increasingly immaterial, invisible, and ubiquitous (Brunet-Jailly 2011; Balibar 1998). As the notions of borders has changed, demand for new ways of conceptualising and understanding borders has increased in multidisciplinary border studies (Rumford 2012; Brunet-Jailly 2005; 2011; Johnson et al 2011; Parker & Vaughan-Williams et al 2009). According to this demand, research must go beyond the obvious and established concepts and move towards 'different' and multi-perspective understandings of borders (Rumford 2012). Conceptualised understandings of borders are increasingly based on multidisciplinary approaches in research. One of the recent new concepts that are created for greater understanding of borders is the borderscape, which "allows for the study of the border as mobile, perspectival, and relational, thus pointing in the direction of multiperspectival border studies" (op cit, 894).

"Plurality of Pasts and Boundaries…" provides a multidisciplinary and multi-perspective conceptualisation of borders that combines the cultural, social and territorial aspects of borders. It thus creates an interesting dialogue with the concept of the borderscape. The article highlights the border as a boundary of a semiotic space, although the border emerges in social action and is connected with territories, landscapes and places (such as home). The conceptualisation of borders that the article presents is based on three theoretical elements: Juri Lotman's 'semiosphere', Henri Lefebvre's 'social space' and the frame of landscape studies. In this way, the article inspiringly combines the imaginary, semiotic, practical, material and territorial aspects of a space and its delimiting borders.

In the article, the borders are approached from various viewpoints ranging from the micro level to the macro level. On the micro level, borders are individual and social as they become tangible in everyday life, in life experience, and in personal history narratives. On the other hand, borders are administrative and political and emerge, for example, in the so-called grand history narratives of Estonia. The essential border, which connects various viewpoints and examples, is the border of the semiosphere, which is understood as a cultural space and a web of semiotic activities. On one hand, the border demarcates the inside and outside of the semiosphere from each other. This becomes apparent, for example, when the otherness of a foreign culture is highlighted. On the other hand, the border enables a dialogue across it when the systems of meanings are, for example,

translated from one semiosphere to another. The border of the semiosphere does not exist only in relation to a foreign culture but also in relation to the past, which also appears as a foreign semiosphere. This also stresses the temporal sedimentation of borders: already vanished borders and historical significances of borders still influence contemporary people and their ways of understanding their surroundings and the social, spatial and temporal dimensions of those surroundings. This theoretical formulation is the key element in the analysis of the various border narratives and border related experiences in the article.

"Plurality of pasts and boundaries…" is a very good example of a multidisciplinary and multiperspectival approach to borders. It provides an inspiring conceptualisation of borders which stresses the human experience, intellectual activity, and emotional reactions connected with borders; however, at the same time it shows the territorial, political, and administrative realities that influence the bordering processes. Due to its multi-perspective approach, the article provides an important contribution to the theorisation of borders, to the discussion of the ontological nature of borders and to the discussion of the spatial and temporal dimensions of borders.

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Constructing and deconstructing boundaries in cultures of the past

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Abstract. The aim of this article is to study the internal and external boundaries of cultures of the past. Boundaries here include spatial and temporal, as well as functional boundaries. The exemplary cases analysed here include the archaeological cultures of *tarand* cemetery and long barrows.

We will discuss the concept of archaeological culture and describe the features and boundaries that have frequently been used to distinguish the cultures of *tarand* cemetery and long barrows. In order to move closer to the lived culture that existed in the past along with its external and internal borders, we supplement the notion of archaeological culture with the semiotic model of culture and its notion of boundary. We test the applicability of semiotic theories to archaeological empirical material and develop a micro-, meso-, and macro-level system of description. The proposed theoretical and methodological scheme should highlight the cultural boundaries expressed within an individual grave, between graves, and between larger areas and eras. Having a sufficient amount of empirical material together with the system of description would enable tentative reconstruction of the self-model of cultural entities on different levels. Burial places are one of the possible semiotic systems that can be analysed in this manner.

In this article, we did a micro-level description of a single burial in a *tarand* cemetery and in a barrow cemetery and mapped the analysed cases on the meso- and macro-levels. In the macro-level analysis, distinct boundaries can be observed in the burial rites and grave goods, but the greatest internal boundary is probably the one between the elite and the common people: the former buried their dead in monumental structures, while the majority of the people treated their dead in manners that have not left any archaeological traces. The macro-level analysis of graves also displays intentional transgressions of boundaries, such as mixing bones or the re-use

of older burial sites, which appear to be features shared widely among the discussed cultures.

Keywords: archaeological culture, *tarand* cemetery, long borrows, spatial boundaries, temporal boundaries, cultural boundaries, modality of cultural boundaries, semiotic analysis

Introduction

Archaeologists construct their object of study on the bases on the fragmentary remains of the past. Due to the inevitable limitations of archaeological finds as the dataset, reconstructing 'culture' as an object of study of the highest order is always problematic. There are numerous ways to (re)construct such an object. Moreover, it raises the question of the meaning we assign to the reconstructed 'culture'.

The aim of this article is to explore the potential of the semiotic model of culture in reconstructing past cultures, particularly their boundaries, on the basis of archaeological material. We will use the archaeological cultures of *tarand* cemetery and long barrows to enquire into the prospects of re-evaluating the internal and external boundaries of these cultures from the semiotic point of view.

What are traditionally understood as 'archaeological cultures' are temporally and geographically distinct clusters of archaeological finds. Whether these boundaries of distribution area are cultural boundaries in the semiotic sense – that is, whether they functioned as such from the perspective of the historically given past culture – is a different matter. With this problematic in mind, it is useful to ask, what is culture as a semiotic system as well as what purpose does the boundary serve for the culture and how are cultural boundaries expressed in different sites and artefacts?

The traditional concept of archaeological culture also entails an ethnic dimension, as it connects the 'culture' delimited through clusters of artefacts with particular ethnic groups/peoples. While this has been an important as well as problematic aspect of the meaning attributed to archaeological cultures, the semiotic approach is different, since it defines culture neither through particular artefacts nor ethnos. Instead, it views culture as "a mechanism for organizing and preserving information in the consciousness of community" (Lotman & Uspensky 1978, 214), a mechanism that establishes cultural identities and boundaries on multiple levels through a system of relevant differences and similarities expressed in material culture. Ethnicity might be one of the aspects that establishes boundary, but does not have to be, nor is it the only one or necessarily the most relevant one.

We propose a framework for progressing from the comparative analysis of boundaries found on the micro-level to those found on the macro-level, so it becomes possible to reconstruct cultural boundaries within or beyond the distribution areas outlined by the archaeologist. Moreover, the semiotic perspective allows us to move closer to the reconstruction of actual past cultures, since the semiotic boundaries of culture are connected to a community's self-model. Thereby it becomes possible to interpret archaeological artefacts as signs of the self-model of past culture. Needless to say, the reconstruction will always be conjectural.

One of the aims of the current study is to provide a theoretical and methodological framework with which to re-evaluate existing archaeological data and interpretations. Since data, as well as interpretations, are always constructed from a particular theoretical perspective, an alternative approach can offer a fresh look at existing data and the relationships established between them, and perhaps reveal disciplinary habits of interpretation and suggest new ways of relating and interpreting existing data. For example: what kinds of difference between finds could be considered manifestations of cultural boundaries, of cultural distinctions? Would such an approach enable us to interpret the diversity and variety of sites as manifestations of cultural boundaries? Could these cultural differences provide a way to reconstruct past cultural communities and their worldviews on a smaller scale than those which the traditional conception of archaeological culture allows for?

The first section of the article will focus on the presentation and the historical background of the concept of archaeological culture. Next, we will give an overview of the archaeological cultures of *tarand* cemetery and long barrows. We will examine how they have been (re)constructed and spatially and temporally delimited. The third section will present the semiotic model of culture, focussing on the core semiotic mechanisms of culture that could be used in the interpretation of archaeological sites. Central is the semiotic conception of boundary as not merely a spatiotemporal cultural parameter but also an aspect of a culture's self-model. After that, we will propose a micro-, meso-, and macro-level scheme of analysis to facilitate the description and outlining of the relevant cultural unities and distinctions in archaeological finds. The scheme is tested by case studies from both above-mentioned archaeological cultures. For practical reasons, we will delimit our test cases with re-evaluation of data pertaining to one burial site site from each archaeological culture, although the analytical scheme is also designed to include comparison between sites within the same archaeological culture. However, in the last section we will try to overcome the limitation and

discuss the issues and new questions emerging from the theoretical perspective in broader context.

Archaeological culture

The concept of *archaeological culture* began to develop in the second half of the 19th century, in parallel to the idea of culture developed in ethnography, more particularly the concept of *Kulturkreise*. The ethnography of that period, especially in Germany, promoted the idea of cultures and cultural circles that could be connected to the way of life of specific ethnic groups (Brather 2004, 59). In addition to living cultures, this theory was also applied to 'dead cultures' which were believed to be distinguishable on the basis of archaeological finds. Thus, the development of the archaeological approach to culture largely relied on the increasing number of observations made in Scandinavian and central European archaeology regarding the fact that certain types of item and site tend to be more widely spread in certain specific areas and in certain specific combinations, and that analogies to this phenomenon are found in ethnographic cultures (Trigger 1989, 161ff).

This gradually developed into the tradition of calling temporally and geographically distinct clusters of archaeological finds 'cultures'. Even though the seeds of this tradition can be found simultaneously in many places all over Europe, it first became the most widely spread and prevalent in Germany, especially in the works of Gustaf Kossinna (see Eggers 1959, 199ff). In Kossinna's works, 'cultural area' or 'cultural province' stood for a geographical region where similar types of item, similar types of grave and similar types of settlements were common in a certain period of time. Kossinna used a rather strong wording of the understanding of the relationship between ethnos and culture that had begun to form before him: "archaeological cultures (cultural provinces) have always overlapped certain peoples or tribes" (Kossinna 1911, 3). This definition gave the scholars of that time the chance to observe the development of modern peoples through prehistoric periods using a retrospective method. Owing to the parallel developments in comparative linguistics and comparative anthropology (especially craniometrics), the spread of cultural manifestations was connected and equated to the spread of languages and anthropological types (Adams et al 1978). This concept quickly took hold all over Europe, especially after the publishing of Vere Gordon Childe's *The Dawn of European Civilization* in 1925.

Analogously to ethnographic cultures, archaeological cultures were thought to be internally uniform and compact, and externally clearly distinguishable from other cultures. Establishing the boundaries between different cultures and the

observation of the subsequent changes in these cultures through different periods became an important goal. Evolutionist ideas led scholars to believe that regional differences arise from different stages of development; in other words, it led to the concept of superseding cultural periods (Brather 2004, 60): in addition to functional and geographic boundaries, culture was also attributed chronological limits. Cultural continuity also meant ethnic continuity.

One of the first to oppose this approach was Aarne M. Tallgren (1937), who emphasised, on one hand the heterogeneity, variability and internal incoherence of any culture or nation, while, on the other hand, also considering it a grave error to associate different forms of 'cultural phenomena' or material culture with uniform nations. At the time, his argument went unheeded; positions critical of Kossinna's approach, however, rapidly gained in popularity after World War II (see Eggers 1959).

The "discovery", that is, the construction, of archaeological cultures was easy and fruitful when archaeology was still in its infancy, the amount of archaeological evidence was small and easily manageable, and its variability relatively limited. It is certainly easy to define an archaeological culture based on a single category of finds – such as pottery (any potential difficulties are limited to whether the classification of pottery should be based on morphology or decoration, the ingredients of the clay or surface finishing; the maps of the spread of 'cultures' based on these features can be rather different). If, however, one was to add a second category of finds (for example, tools), a third (weapons), a fourth (jewellery), a fifth (for example everyday items), then a sixth or a seventh and so on, the map on the archaeologist's table will be quickly covered in a large number of disparate borders. Similarly, one has to draw completely divergent lines when mapping the spread of different types of grave and burial custom, settlement and building type, and mode of livelihood. Distinguishing any archaeological cultures in this clutter of lines is, mildly put, extremely difficult, and completely impossible if one was to remain objective. Thus, where the concept of archaeological culture is still upheld, it is usually defined in terms of the spread of a principal site or settlement type; in the case of Stone Age finds, it is generally a pottery making and/or lithic technique, while in the case of Metal Age finds, it is based on burial places and customs, as these have generally been the most thoroughly studied by archaeologists. With some generalisation and exaggeration, we might thus state that archaeological cultures do not reflect individual peoples in their homogeneity and historical development but only certain aspects of the world of either the pottery makers or the dead.

The two archaeological cultures discussed below represent problems related to the latter, the world of the dead. Both are distinguished based on the type of

burials, but it should be kept in mind that both are so-called princely burial types, meaning that another burial custom (or burial customs) had to exist simultaneously. The boundaries between these two burial traditions within their respective archaeological cultures seem extremely clear today – one of these materialised in the form of monumental burial sites, the other did not. Back in the day, however, this boundary was not necessarily as sharp and as insurmountable. We know extremely little of the other manifestations or materialisations of both cultures, such as building type, traditional mode of livelihood, etc. However, based on available evidence, it is quite likely that in these spheres, the boundaries were rather different than those marked by dominant burial type.

The culture of *tarand* cemeteries

The Roman Iron Age in Estonia (50–450 AD) has been characterised as the period of the spread and use of typical *tarand* cemeteries. These cemeteries are monumental and collective rectangular stone burial sites consisting of joint stone enclosures or *tarands* (see Figure 1 for an example) where fragmentary, burnt and unburnt bones and items are commingled (Lang 2007a, 192, 203, 206). These cemeteries, along with local ornaments similar to provincial Roman ones, are the principal elements characterising this period. The question of why such burial places were adopted and why people began to wear such ornaments and place these in cemeteries, has not been analysed as thoroughly. They have been considered to be burial sites for the elite; in addition to their monumental nature and the abundance of items, this is also based on the fact that not all members of society were buried there, since according to demographic calculations the population of the area of modern day Estonia should have been larger in the Roman Iron Age (Lang & Ligi 1991, 225; Lang 1996, 469–473; Ligi 1995, 222–223).

Spatial boundaries. The area of distribution of *tarand* cemeteries is generally considered to be a zone that is 'culturally' rather uniform and is distinguished from the neighbouring areas by burial rites and grave construction. This type of burial is common in the main part of the territory of modern-day Estonia, northern Latvia, the Izhorian plateau, and the south-west coast of Finland (Lang 2007b, 126; Jushkova 2011, 102) (Figure 2). Different spatial boundaries of the Roman Iron Age and their uncertainness, as well as areas of communication and transportation routes within and outside the area of distribution of *tarand* cemeteries, have been discussed by numerous scholars, both past and present (see for example Moora 1938; Schmiedehelm 1955; Vassar 1956; Jaanits et al 1982;

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Figure 1. Reconstruction of the Uusküla II *tarand* cemetery.

Laul 2001; Lang 2005; 2007a; Banyté-Rowell & Bitner-Wróblewska 2005; Olli 2013, etc.).

Spatial boundaries, smaller and larger sub-areas have been defined based on different item types, grave structures, burial customs and modes of livelihood. This allows us to outline rather different areas, the larger of which have been interpreted as consisting different ethnic and/or cultural areas, while the smaller are interpreted as different tribal areas (for example Jaanits et al 1982, 243ff). For instance, in south-east Estonia, the most common type of fibula is the cross-ribbed fibula, while in north-west Estonia, crossbow fibulae are most common; in central Estonia, burials are more likely to contain finger rings, in south-east Estonia, fibulae (Olli 2013, 32, 43, 67; Olli 2010, 42ff). These differences may have resulted from a number of factors, starting from what the merchant may have had on offer at the moment up to strict choices on what to adopt (i.e. what people wanted to/were able to naturalise semiotically) and what not to adopt.

Temporal boundaries. The temporal boundaries of *tarand* cemeteries have not been subject to as much discussion as spatial boundaries. These boundaries are mainly defined by the beginning of the construction of typical *tarand* cemeteries
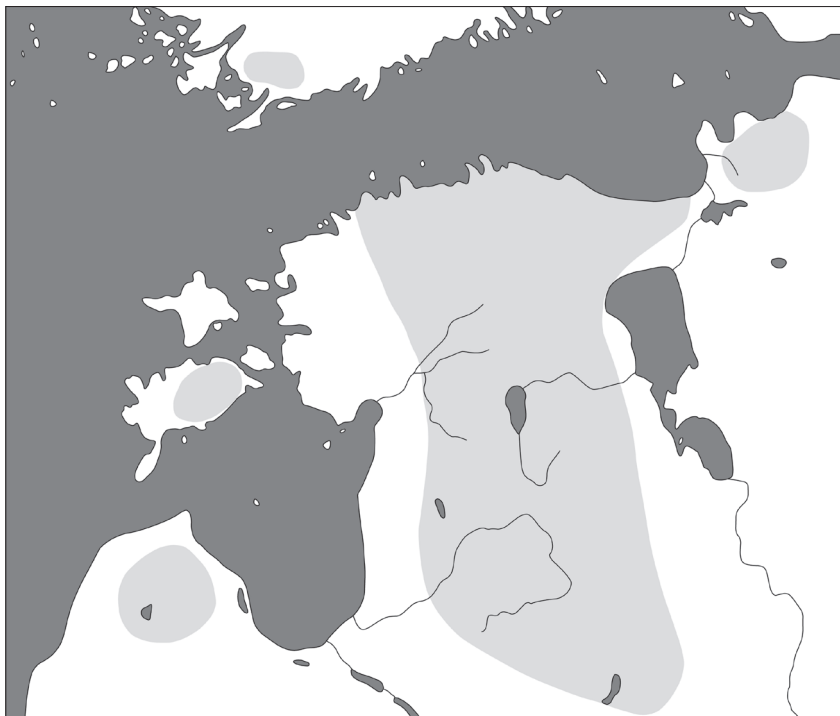
Figure 2. Distribution area of the culture of *tarand* cemeteries.

(Laul 2001, 9). The exact dating of the burials is debatable, as most of the dates are based on partially obsolete typologies of items with a level of accuracy of a few centuries (for example, Moora 1938; Laul 2001), as a result, it is difficult to draw any conclusions about the rate of spread and period of usage of typical *tarand* cemeteries.

The development and spread of typical *tarand* cemeteries took place in parallel with other types of grave. In coastal Estonia, Finland and central Sweden and in some parts of Latvia, these were preceded by early *tarand* cemeteries (Lang 2007a, fig. 169); hence, the transition from one grave type to another may not have been too drastic. No earlier monumental stone structures have been found in south-east Estonia (except on the eastern shore of Lake Võrtsjärv) (Laul 2001, 27). At the same time, we are not exactly sure when such typical *tarand* cemeteries were adopted. In some areas, the development may have been gradual, while in others, on the contrary, it may have been more rapid (Lang 2007a,

203, 219). *Tarand* cemeteries were also in use for different periods in different areas. In some regions, the tradition of burying in *tarand* cemeteries lingered on for some time, even though new forms of burials were also adopted (Tvauri 2014, 226–258, 291). Clear regional differences in burial forms appear at the end of the Roman Iron Age (around AD 300–400) and collective burials become more individual (op cit, 273ff).

The culture of long barrows

The culture of long barrows spread extensively in the forested areas of Eastern Europe in the 5th to 10th centuries. Even though some contemporaneous settlement sites and forts are also known, the culture is still primarily defined based on cemeteries.

The barrows are round or rampart-shaped burial mounds made of sand and surrounded with a trench (Figure 3). The height and diameter of the mounds can vary. The length of the long barrows is generally less than 20 metres, but can in some cases be up to 50 metres. The number of mounds in a cemetery can vary from a few to several dozens. The ratio of long to round barrows can also vary, even though the long mounds that gave the culture its name are generally many fewer in number. Not all barrows were built at once, some were reconstructed and reshaped multiple times during the use of the barrow cemetery. The barrows contain cremation burials with few or no items. The placement of the burials inside the mounds can be different: the remains of the dead could be buried in the ground underneath the barrow, inside or on top of the barrow. Clay urns have also been used for burial. Stone and wood structures can be found inside some barrows. Even though the area between the barrows has not been studied everywhere, it seems that flat pit cremation burials (not marked with a mound above ground) were used in the cemeteries in parallel with the barrows.

In 1903, the Russian archaeologist Alexander Spitsyn suggested that the barrows were built by a Slavic tribe, the Krivichi, because the barrows were found in approximately the same areas where the Krivichi were supposed to have lived, according to the Novgorod Chronicles (Mikhailova 2014b, 6; Tvauri 2007, 248; Sedov 1974, 7). This became a dominant discourse that can still be encountered in modern Russian archaeological literature (Popov 2009, 120), even though numerous counterarguments to this theory have been published. Meanwhile, these barrows have also been associated with local Finnic peoples, especially after discoveries of earlier monuments became more common (Lebedev 1982, 33–34; Konetsky 1997), or areas of mixed Slavic and Finnic settlements (Schmiedehelm 1965, 49).

Figure 3. Archaeological excavations at the Suure-Rõsna long barrow.

Spatial boundaries. It is an archaeological culture defined on the basis of a site type that can be found in extensive area (see Figure 4). However, barrow cemeteries are not uniformly distributed in this area but are generally concentrated in certain regions that are separated by regions with no such cemeteries.

Until 1968, the terms, 'long barrows' or 'Krivitchi long barrows', were used for all barrow cemeteries with cremation burials of the first millennium. After a thorough revision of the materials from the Smolensk barrow cemeteries, which differed from those of the Pskov region both chronologically and in terms of items, by Evgeny Schmidt, he suggested using cultural names based on territories and chronology in place of the generic term (Schmidt 1968, 225). As a result, the concepts of Pskov, Smolensk, and Polotsk (or, occasionally, Smolensk-Polotsk) cultures of long barrows appeared in literature and are still used today. Over time, regional differences have become increasingly clearer and articles published in the past few decades have generally focussed on specific micro-regions or individual cemeteries (Islanova 2006; Mikhailova 2009a, 40-41). Studies of the micro-regions of the Pskov area have raised doubts whether these regions can
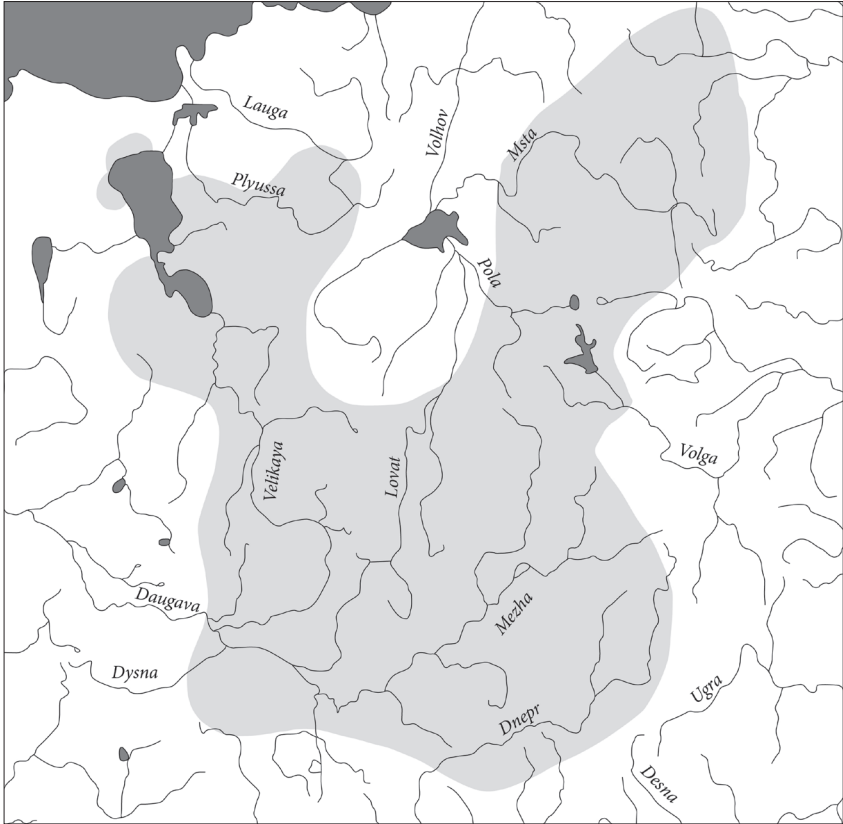
Figure 4. The distribution area of the culture of long barrows.

be called a single archaeological culture at all if they are sufficiently distinctive and independent (see Mikhailova 2009a, 41).

Temporal boundaries. The temporal boundaries of the culture are rather broad as well (5th–10th centuries) and the chronology is not too detailed, as the numbers of datable finds and radiocarbon dates are relatively small. Even though datable finds are few, the excavation of more barrows and a comparison of the materials discovered has shown that the cemeteries around Lake Peipus and lower River Velikaya are older than those found in Smolensk and Polotsk (Schmidt 1968). The spread of barrows has often been characterised as an 'explosion', as the

distribution maps can create the false impression that they all appeared pretty much out of nowhere at the same time (Kuzmin 2001, 66). However, the period preceding the barrows has generally been poorly studied, as unlike the barrows, which are clearly distinguishable on the landscape, other possible sites (for example, underground cremation burials) are difficult to find. The barrows in south-east Estonia have been associated with an earlier tradition of flat pit cremation burials (Aun 1992, 134–136), stone graves (Aun 2002; 2006), and an earlier tradition of burials in *tarand* cemeteries (Aun 2006, 122).

The review of a large number of finds and excavation plans has allowed Elena Mikhailova to distinguish three stages in Pskovian long barrows. It seems that the first barrows were built at the end of the 5th century at the periphery of the later distribution area (south-east Estonia and the lower Velikaya river, the Mologa and Msta basins, and the zone between the Lovat and Daugava rivers), and that they contained a relatively large number of items imported from neighbouring areas (with different imported items found in different regions, depending on the neighbours). Between the 6th and 9th centuries the barrows spread to the north and the material culture became more uniform (Mikhailova 2014b, 221–230). At the same time, certain items related to women's clothing that are prevalent in all other parts of the area of distribution of the barrows, have not been found in Estonia (Mikhailova 2014a, 221). Between the 9th and 11th centuries, barrow cemeteries fell out of use in the periphery of their distribution area; in other places, items of the so-called Old Russian type started to appear among grave goods (Mikhailova 2014b, 228). Apart from a small number of cemeteries (for example, Mikhailova 2009b, Aun 2005, Allmäe 2014), it is uncertain after what kind of period and for what reason the barrows were reconstructed and how long a particular cemetery was in use. Just as with many other types of site, it is unclear what motivated their adoption and abandonment.

Culture as a semiotic system and its boundaries

As stated above, connecting archaeological cultures to actual past communities is difficult not only due to the fragmented nature of the data, but also due to the complex semantics of the concept of culture itself. To bypass these difficulties, the concept of archaeological culture came to be treated as an "artificial term created by archaeologists merely for the organization of archaeological material, and it refers to spatial coexistence of certain type of artefacts and/or antiquities" (Lang 2005, 13). Our aim is to enquire how the semiotic approach to culture could help in (re)constructing the cultural logic behind archaeological artefacts and gain at least hypothetical access to past cultural communities.

The abovementioned difficulties in mind, it is useful to proceed from the 'minimal model' of culture explicated by the Tartu–Moscow school of semiotics, which is based on the most fundamental features specific to culture as such. The most significant aspect of the conception of culture of the Tartu–Moscow school is that it does not define culture substantially (through artefacts, practices, ethnicity, etc.), but functionally, as a mechanism generating these artefacts, etc., a mechanism whose

> fundamental 'task' [..] is in structurally organizing the world around man. Culture is the generator of structuredness, and in this way it creates a social sphere around man which, like the biosphere, makes life possible; that is, not organic life, but social life. (Lotman & Uspensky 1978, 213)

More precisely, Lotman and Uspenskij (1978, 211, 213) highlight three universal and co-dependent features specific to culture:
- *semioticity*: culture is a system of signs or codes, a set of 'diecasting mechanisms' that generate its own internal structuredness or organisation;
- *boundedness*: culture is a marked-off sphere, structurally organised against the background of (unorganised) non-culture (nature) or (differently organised) alien (other) culture;
- *collectivity*: culture is a social phenomenon.

In other words, culture is a *bounded collective semiotic entity*. However, from a functional perspective, it is a mechanism that generates these entities. The semiotic means through which people interact with each other and with the surrounding world come to function as mechanisms through which community bounds and organises itself. Thus, culture is at the same time an entity and the mechanism generating the entity, in other words, a self-organising system. This organisation and delimitation as the inner logic of the culture is expressed in the material forms created by the culture.

Even though culture is communal, the meaning of this term does not correspond to that of 'nation' or 'ethnos', as these features of culture manifest themselves isomorphically on different levels, i.e., depending on the point of view, "culture may be treated as common to all mankind or as the culture of a particular area, or of a particular time, or of a particular social group". (Lotman & Uspenskij 1978, 214). On each level, culture manifests itself as a bounded collective semiotic entity that organises its life-world in specific ways and differentiates itself from relevant cultural other(s) in specific ways. This isomorphic nature of cultural mechanism allows us to analyse the external as well as internal boundaries of

the cultural sphere, as the external boundaries of a cultural sub-entity become internal boundaries of the larger cultural entity, etc.

By viewing archaeological finds as texts whose materiality preserves and expresses the inner logic of the culture, a past culture as a whole can be viewed, to paraphrase Lotman, as a collection of "texts with lost codes" (Lotman 2005, 215). The goal of semiotic analysis is to attempt to recover these codes and by doing so the internal organisation of the cultural system.

Zaliznjak et al (1977, 50) have stated that in order to reconstruct a semiotic system, to identify its code, it is important that the studied text, i.e., the amount of available data, is large enough to enable separation of *distinctive* elements from those insignificant in a given system. Since archaeological sites form a 'thin text', i.e., the available data are fragmentary and purely material, the reconstruction of a number of codes specific to this culture is impossible. Therefore a modest attempt to (re)construct past culture in terms of its inner codes should inevitably proceed from these fundamental features of culture – semioticity, boundedness, and collectivity. In the following, we will describe how these features enable us to interpret archaeological finds as expressions of the self-model of a culture and how they can be used in archaeological analysis.

Semioticity

On the most fundamental level, culture can be viewed as a mechanism used by people to render the surrounding world understandable, i.e., to attribute certain organisation and form to certain material or activity, making them thereby understandable, meaningful parts of the cultural reality. In this sense, culture is distinguished from the extra-cultural as "'being man-made' (as opposed to 'being natural'), 'being conventional' (as opposed to 'being spontaneous' and 'being nonconventional'), or as the ability to condense human experience (in opposition to the primordial quality of nature)" (Lotman & Uspensky 1978, 211). From this perspective, the variety of such manifestations of culture is rather large – even a tilled plot of land is organised by culture according to certain principles, in comparison to the 'natural' environment.

The central mechanisms that transform extra-cultural into intra-cultural, thereby producing the cultural sphere that has specific organisation, are sign systems as "diecasting mechanisms", also termed *codes* since they function as "system[s] of constraints and prescriptions" (op cit, 213) – regulated (or structured, systemic) ways of doing, making, naming, etc., that turn "open" world into "closed-off" culture. Needless to say, this regulation is necessarily incomplete (see op cit, 222).

Although the semantic dimension of various sign systems can be rather complex, in the most elemental form, semioticity manifests itself in 'coded', i.e., regulated, relationships between phenomena that are established through matrices of differences and similarities. At the most basic level, it is a difference between 'natural' and 'cultural' forms, on a more complex level, semioticity manifests itself in differences and similarities between cultural forms themselves. Thus semiotic analysis starts with an understanding that everything can be done or made in different ways:

> Walking could be an example. We may think of it as non-semiotic behaviour, basic locomotion, something we have in common with other species. But there are many different ways of walking. Men and women walk differently. People from different parts of the world walk differently. Social institutions – the army, the church, the fashion industry – have developed their own special, ceremonial ways of walking. Through the way we walk, we express who we are, what we are doing, how we want others to relate to us, and so on. Different ways of walking can seduce, threaten, impress and much more. (van Leeuwen 2005, 4)

From the perspective of the current study, for example, people can be buried in different ways. When this difference becomes regulated, it turns burial practices into the semiotic resources of a culture (see op cit, 3–6), i.e. a coded means of meaning making. For example, different burial practices come to mark social or kinship structures. In other words, these externally observable *regulated differences* manifested in some substance are meaningful as expressions of the corresponding internal organisation of some socio-cultural domain, be it gender, social or religious order, mood, etc. Yet this also implies that not all differences are regulated and more than often the variations might be random or unregulated, thus meaningless or ambivalent.

Cultural codes also establish relationships between phenomena by regulating their use in particular contexts. The cultural sphere can be viewed as a collection of semiotic resources that are used selectively (brought together) in specific contexts whereby the particular selections made in particular contexts become themselves meaningful as differential features. This, in turn, implies that the nexus of meaning cannot be reduced to relationships between co-present phenomena, since the absence of a particular element or feature is an equally important aspect of the nexus.

All products and means of human activity can thus be viewed as signs, as manifestations and expression of certain principles, or codes. These codes,

in turn, can be viewed as matrices that establish meaningful relations between various features or units in culture through which a cultural subject organises and perceives the surrounding world and positions itself within it. Thus from the perspective of the community, these codes are *cognitive models*, 'know-how' and 'know-that' shared by its members (see also Goodenough 1957, 167).

The primary goal of semiotic analysis is to identify the underlying logic of use of the semiotic resources (for example, mythological or religious code, culinary code, ritual code of burial rites, etc.) through the comparative analysis of similarities and differences between particular semiotic resources in particular contexts. However, it is important to emphasise that this underlying logic is not expressed simply by the co-presence or distribution of artefacts but by the co-presence and patterning of the meaningful differences manifest in the artefacts. While conjecturing about the particular socio-cultural domain corresponding to the differences is often problematic, the distinctions themselves become a possible starting point for further analysis when conceived as cultural boundaries.

Boundedness

The boundary is a fundamental feature of the semiotic model of culture, a mechanism that delimits and organises the world. Boundary in semiotic sense is a meaningful distinction, a 'line drawn' between co-existing phenomena that simultaneously organises and constitutes cultural domains by dividing the homogeneous world into distinct and identifiable cultural units and entities. Although cultural boundaries are fundamentally distinctions made in abstract semiotic space, since people ultimately operate in a physical space and use physical objects, the latter are used to mark the distinctions.

The cultural codes as 'regulated differences' can be viewed as boundary mechanisms, since they delineate cultural sphere into distinct cultural units (signs, texts, etc.) and organise them into more complex distinct cultural entities (i.e. genders differentiated by social roles, burial sites differentiated from surrounding environment or settlement sites).

From the point of view of the constitution of culture as a collective semiotic entity, the fundamental cultural boundary is the distinction between what is culturally '*own*' (us) in relation to the culturally '*alien*' (other) (see Lotman & Uspensky 1978). It is a social distinction, a boundary drawn between individuals, groups, communities and membership based on various features, behaviours, and ideas. It is primarily a boundary created in the social space, but these boundaries may also be expressed or manifest in the geographical space (see Lotman 2005, 211ff). As such, the own/alien distinction is one of the core cognitive models

of a community, defining at once the conditions of the culture's internal unity, sense of belonging, and boundary in relation to the 'cultural other'. However, since this is a reflexive distinction made by the culture, it does not require the actual or tangible existence of the 'alien' (i.e. a mythical enemy is good enough).

When viewed as boundaries, these distinctions themselves, the particular resources used to make them and the mode of marking them become meaningful as indicators of the relevance or meaning of the particular boundary for the culture. These resources and modalities are also indicators of the nature of relations between cultural entities. The boundaries are, as Lotman points out, semiotically more active points that can be conceived as units of translation, filtering and adapting the extra-semiotic information (Lotman 2005), therefore differences in artefacts used for marking boundaries carry information about the nature of contact between the cultural entities.

These boundaries are manifested either as a difference in the semiotic resources themselves, including existence/lack of some resource (for example, difference in languages or types of artefacts differentiating two cultural communities) or a structural difference (for example, the difference between a tilled field and an uncultivated landscape as a manifestation of the boundary between 'cultured' and 'non-cultured' land, or between artefacts of the same type marking boundaries between certain socio-cultural domains).

The 'regulated differences' can be created intentionally or develop unintentionally. Both can be found in archaeological sites, although identification of the particular mechanism can be problematic. Moreover, the 'own' and the 'alien' distinction may not be conscious or explicit in the culture, and only become apparent to the researcher as an implicit mechanism (for example, customs or habits of the culture that are not necessarily recognised internally as distinctive to the culture). In this case, the boundaries can become apparent on the level of cultural entities reconstructed by the researcher. An example of this is an archaeological culture as cultural area which is more extensive than the potential area of interaction of particular cultural subjects, i.e., presumably the cultural subjects themselves were unaware of the extent of this unity and might constitute a part of this greater cultural whole only through implicit mechanisms. While this greater cultural whole might appear homogeneous from the perspective of particular parameter chosen by researcher (i.e. common type of artefact), smaller communities within it might use some other artefact or feature (i.e. particular ornamentation) to express themselves as entities distinct from the neighbouring community. Thus while implicitly they are part of the greater whole, explicitly they might nevertheless perceive themselves as a distinct community. Therefore from the point of view of reconstructing the internal boundaries of the cultural

area it becomes necessary to understand the cultural logics that constitute the boundaries of smaller scale cultural entities.

Collectivity and the cultural self-model

The internal logics of culture could be reconstructed as the set of cognitive models necessary to be a member of the cultural community. However, from the perspective of reconstructing cultural boundaries, the most relevant element of the internal logic of culture is its *self-model*, a culture's cognitive model of itself as a bounded collective semiotic entity – its sense of itself as a socio-cultural unity among others. Since the boundaries of a culture as well as its unity as a cultural community are defined by its self-model, reconstruction of the self-model is prerequisite for reconstructing or evaluating cultural boundaries.

For the community all codes as cognitive models always have a self-modelling and self-descriptive aspect, they not only describe the way it organises the world but also indicates the way it positions itself in relation to the world, and perceives itself as a part of this world:

> The model models the world; or if not the world, then society; […] However, […] it is always at the same time a representation of the knowing subject as well: every model proposes a certain relation to the world, or to its object, and implicates the maker or user of the model in this relationship. We can therefore always read back or reconstruct the modeller from the model itself. It is someone who stands to the world, or to others, in the relation which the model proposes. In this sense, all modes of representation can become themselves modes of self-knowledge as well. […] The model therefore also contains the peculiar physiognomy, the character and belief system of the cognitive subject, precisely in that it presents a world which is the world (or a putative world) for that subject. (Wartofsky 1979, xxiv–xxv)

Since all cultural codes enforce communal unity by being mechanisms behind community's common forms of expression, practices, worldview, etc., they also implicitly entail the own-alien distinction by distinguishing those who have the codes from those who do not. Yet they can also constitute explicit social distinctions within the community. Moreover, the scope of the communal unity constituted by various codes can differ, resulting in a plurality of co-present boundaries. In one way or another, culture is never internally homogeneous. Rather, it is a complex matrix of various social unities and distinctions. However, from the point of view of group identity – its self-model – these unities and

distinctions have a different modality that reflects their respective relevance for the community.

Accordingly, we can distinguish between own-alien codes that have *implicit*, *explicit*, and *symbolic modality*. The *implicit* components of the self-model are the codes that are not consciously used to manifest communal unity, but which still function as such because we act as members of this culture by default when acquiring and using such models. These implicit components are not consciously used to distinguish oneself from other communities, however the distinction, i.e. the boundary, is implied by the unity. The *explicit* components are those semiotic expressions that demonstrate conscious differentiation from the cultural other. These are differences that emerge as a 'reaction' to some adjacent, co-present community perceived as the cultural other. The *symbolic* components, however, are the signs or sign systems that are used to signify a distinct entity of a more or less abstract order, for example, a national flag, a coat of arms or a maker's mark signifying a 'nation', a 'family' or a 'master' respectively as distinct semiotic entities. Symbolic components are elements that have no purpose other than to mark the boundary or unity of an entity. From the semiotic point of view, it would be interesting to enquire whether and at what point past cultures develop the self-consciousness of explicit or of symbolic order, and whether this can be identified in archaeological material. However, this issue remains outside of the scope of the current study.

These modalities can also manifest as a lack of a certain kind of distinction. For example, in the case of commingled bones the natural (taken-for-granted) unity and boundedness of the individual is lacking. The absent boundary becomes a distinctive feature of the domain of the dead.

It may be presumed that the modality of the boundary in the self-model is tightly connected to the own-alien dynamics in the culture. Rendering the expression of the 'own' more coherent, explicit and symbolic modalities go hand in hand with the more significant or more problematic perception of the presence of the 'other', which brings about the necessity for self-determination and self-establishment by marking a boundary, or by marking the distinction between the spheres (but also geographical spaces) of the 'own' and the 'alien'. The 'own' appears only against the background of an (imaginary or real) 'other', resulting in the desire or necessity to be different or mark the transition from one to the other in some manner. Equally, the lack of explicit or symbolic distinctions informs us about inter-group relations as well as the type of collective self-consciousness of those people and thus can inform us about the development of collective self-awareness in culture over time.

A culture's self-model builds upon the overall complex system of co-present cultural codes and has implicit, as well as explicit and symbolic components. As a collectively shared cognitive model each code creates a 'sphere of unity' within certain bounds and is, thus, at least implicitly a manifestation of a cultural boundary, of an own-alien distinction. Yet a more complex understanding of the self-model emerges from a comparative analysis of co-present distinctions, and by taking into account their modalities. Although the explicit or symbolic components are of a higher order of organisation or structuredness, capable of recoding the more implicit or less symbolic components of a self-model, or even appear as distinct code(s) of cultural self-description, ultimately every code functions to some extent as a means of self-modelling. Our conception of cultural self-model differs from the Tartu–Moscow school's approach, as the latter conceived the cultural self-model to be a particular code that emerges at a certain stage in the development of a culture when it becomes self-aware or self-conscious (Lotman & Uspensky 1978, 227), and is therefore an explicit, or even symbolic construct. However, modality is not a static or permanent feature of a code. Explicit or symbolic components might lose their relevance and become habitual and implicit over time, while previously implicit components can become relevant or explicit in particular circumstances, and boundaries themselves can shift or become obsolete.

Cultural self-models and archaeological culture

The semiotic approach enables us to "solve" the above-mentioned problem, i.e. delimiting archaeological culture on the basis of particular finds that lead to an inconsistent map with divergent borders drawn on the basis of different categories of find (see also Lang 2005). Firstly, this plurality and divergence poses a problem only when one presumes that 'culture' must necessarily be internally homogeneous. Yet the boundaries of the distribution areas of particular artefacts could be boundaries of particular sub-entities. Neither are the artefacts of a particular type themselves necessarily homogeneous across their distribution areas. By enquiring whether 'regulated differences' are manifest within the distribution area of a particular artefact, by studying the matrix of co-present codes in particular sites together with evaluating the modality of particular boundary mechanisms one can move closer to reconstructing the cultural entities on a more local scale.

The own-alien distinctions are a fundamental part of cultural identity (or self-model) and form the basis of cultural self-determination because they are expressions of the boundary and also of the cultural mechanism of translation, i.e., they

are the locus where extra-cultural information is translated into the "language of 'own' culture" (see Lotman 2005). Thus, the changes within a particular category of artefact could indicate something about the local context of the 'translation', for example why it was adopted in that particular form, or why in some instances some artefacts were not adopted by some communities. These changes or discontinuities might have resulted, of course, for a variety of reasons other than the own-alien dynamics, yet they nevertheless became an integral part of the local cultural matrix and could be studies as such.

Culture as a system of the shared knowledge of a community can be analysed through its self-model isomorphically at all levels, i.e. the micro-, meso-, and macro-level. Thus, while *tarand* cemeteries might be the shared burial type of a larger area, the local differences in particular cemeteries might reveal more specific details about the self-model of that particular community. Certain kinds of difference identifiable upon the comparison of finds can be viewed as instances of a boundary, pointing to a transition from one cultural entity to another. By searching for and interpreting such identifiable differences, we can reconstruct the relationship of the remnants of 'material culture' with the semiotic workings of culture.

To the extent that codes of past culture are always (re)constructed on the basis of archaeological material, these codes can be delimited in geographical space. The central question for the semiotic approach, however, is not where we can draw the tentative geographic border of culture in terms of such distinctions apparent in archaeological finds; what is important here is what the boundary mechanism, expressed in this type of find and in this manner, its implicitness or explicitness, say about the world and self-perception of this community and its sense of belonging and position in the world. In other words, what is important is the possibility to reconstruct the self-model and world-view of the community of the basis of these codes.

Cemeteries are, thus, semiotic units, they function in culture as meaningful entities, the elements of which are functional (have purpose). Due to the presumed specific role of the cemeteries, they may be seen as expressions of a worldview and analysed as that (for instance, in the light of the central problems of mentality: what is the nature of reality; what are the needs that must be met; to what extent and by what methods are these needs met (see also Sorokin 2006)). Functionally they can be viewed as means for dealing with 'problems' in social life. At the same time, there are practically no signs (everyday items, other types of cemeteries) of this social life (as the functional context of the text/ system). In other words, cemeteries were built and used, and items and people placed in them in a manner that seemed normal and natural (the specific goals,

the expressed message or the aspect of the needs that were dealt with, as well as their specificity or generality are more difficult to establish). Nevertheless, own-alien distinctions can be considered one way of moving from the study of the cemeteries as cemeteries to the study of socio-cultural goals, messages and needs, as these distinctions can be viewed exactly as a manner of dealing with a certain 'problem' of social life – specifically, who are we and how are we related to the world and others around us?

Semiotic analysis of sites

Approaching culture as a multi-level semiotic system, the fundamental mechanism of which consists of self-models creating unity and a sense of boundedness on every level offers a theoretical model through which to analyse and interpret archaeological finds and (re)construct relations between them. This theoretical model can be adapted into method for the hypothetical (re)construction of cultural subjects as self-modelling and self-delimiting entities.

The aim of the semiotic analysis of archaeological material is to reconstruct these cultural entities by mapping relations and discovering patterns in the variety of information about the finds and sites. For this it is necessary to approach the finds as semiotic artefacts (networks of signs and expressions of codes) and interpret the distinctions (relations of difference) that emerge in comparative analysis as *boundary signs*, expressions of the own-alien code, i.e., expressions of the culture's mental *unity* and its relationship with the cultural *other*. An understanding of what finds or features function as boundary signs and what the modalities are would take us closer to the reconstruction of a culture's self-model.

In relation to the three modalities of the own-alien code, three *semiotic modalities of boundary signs* should be distinguished. First, on the *implicit* level, any cultural phenomenon different from something else can form a basis for distinction – function as a difference that creates differences. At the same time, implicit mechanisms appear as boundary signs first and foremost to an outsider, such as a researcher. Second, on the *explicit* level, certain items begin to be used consciously as means to manifest and generate difference. For this, one can 'repurpose' various artefacts available in culture by presenting them in a way that would distinguish them from the relevant other. Third, at the *symbolic* level, certain artefacts are created specifically as boundary signs, as physical manifestations of a boundary often with a strong communicative motive (a fence or an enclosure for example). The different modalities of boundary signs indicate the different values that the distinction between the own and the other has for this culture. At the same time, the different modalities of boundary signs also

indicate differences in the specificity and relevance of the boundary itself. The more explicit and symbolic the boundary, the more precisely it can be localised; the more implicit it is, the more reasonable it is to speak of a boundary area or a zone of gradual transition.

Method of analysis

The investigation of cultural boundaries in archaeological sites is a three-step process:
(I) Thick description of the site, i.e., describing the finds as semiotic resources, as having a certain meaning potential for someone;
(II) Comparison with other finds of a similar type, spatially or temporally co-present, to identify the differences between finds and thus determine the elements that might function as boundary signs;
(III) An attempt to reconstruct the own–alien code as a fundamental component of the self-model through the interpretation of these boundary signs.

These steps are carried out at the micro, meso- and macro-level. These levels refer to social units of various scales. The scope of each level is to be defined by the researcher – this is a question of how the researcher delimits his or her material of analysis, not a question of the dimensions of the studied culture itself.

For the present discussion, the micro-level entity is defined as an individual person, the meso-level as a cemetery, and the macro-level as a region, all viewed as socio-cultural complexes. Our approach treats, on the one hand, entities on different levels as isomorphic semiotic systems operating on the basis of the same fundamental mechanisms; on the other hand, it treats a complete system on one level as a part of a higher level and the context of the lower level. Thus, a comparative analysis of one level forms the basis for the thick description of the next one; in other words, the goal of the analysis is to move, step by step, to the analysis of more complex semiotic systems.

Figure 5. Stages and levels of micro-, meso-, and macro-level analysis

What?	How?	Micro-level	Meso-level	Macro-level
Sign	Description			
Boundary	Comparison			
Model	Reconstruction			

In the following we will sketch the goals of these stages of analysis and their basic questions in the context of the material examined in this study.

(I) Thick description of archaeological finds: finds as a sign or a system of signs. In the first stage of analysis, the most important features of the finds, as well as the relationships between finds, are described. The goal of this description is to identify the finds or their features that could have been perceived as significant by the cultural subject, as well as to determine which finds could have been perceived as belonging together in a 'cluster of finds' making up a single socio-cultural unit from the perspective of the cultural system, in order to demonstrate what kind of conclusion can be drawn from the researcher's point of view about the socio-cultural context of the appearance of the finds. Naturally, such descriptions and interpretations related to the point of view of a member of the culture are tentative; it is the task of the researcher to explicate the premises of these interpretations.

The aim of the thick description is to acquire an overview of the possible collection of features that express how the find functions within the cultural system – its semioticity and sociality. This means questioning: whether it is a systemic or an accidental feature; its artificiality and technicality; its practicality or impracticality; whether its creation or use is social and presumes learning; for whom and what might have been its semiotic functions; what kinds of social relation or distinction are expressed in it, etc.

Thus, a cemetery is an expression of certain social relations, processes, and techniques (for example, someone buries someone else in a particular manner); a complex of graves as repeated burial in the same place is an expression of communality, the relations between the members of the community, traditions, continuity, passage and transformation of knowledge; the complexity and certain impracticality of the burial rites point to rituals and beliefs that are used to reinterpret and reassess simpler needs and possibilities of acting (for example, relatively work-intensive cremation burials, reburials and monumental structures).

The analysis of the entities appearing on different levels focusses on whether and how the individuals, social units within the community, and the community as a whole are distinguished in terms of how someone was buried (found complete or dismembered skeletons, individuals buried separately or in groups, partly or completely cremated, or not, with and without grave goods, etc.). On the other hand, the analysis also examines whether it is possible to determine to which cultural entity the goods belong (for example, whether the jewellery can be associated with a specific individual) or distinguish elements that are more likely to be associated with the burial rites, not the persons buried (for example

burial in everyday clothing vs burial with specific additions). Another important question is what levels of unity the artefacts related to burial allow us to distinguish (for example is the gravestone/monument erected for a specific person or a family or larger community).

Yet the principal goal on this level is not only the interpretation of the finds (which is difficult at best and often impossible), but to use thick description first and foremost to establish the cluster of related artefacts or features accessible to the researcher that could, in one way or another, appear as cultural and social expressions and be used to identify units of the cultural system. Yet it is worth noting that the pre-existing model of cultural system could enable us to evaluate the data requirements for its identification and pose questions about the missing data as well. In other words, the goal is to define the cluster of related features that enable us to describe finds from a semiotic perspective as belonging to a particular cultural system.

(II) Comparative analysis of finds: similarities and differences. The next step after establishing an interrelated cluster of finds that can be identified as signs of a cultural unit is the comparison of the units, forming a paradigm. This comparative analysis identifies their significant or relevant similarities and differences (common and distinguishing features, marked and unmarked features) and attempts to interpret the identified similarities and differences (possible causalities, motivations, traditions). The goal is to discover the system of 'regulated differences', that is, to find out which kinds of difference can be interpreted as expressions of a cultural distinction. These will allow us to categorise the comparable units into types (types of individuals, families, communities). For example, are individuals buried in different ways? What differences can be found? Are these differences in burial practices regulated or systematic in some way? Thus, can we distinguish types of individual based on types of burial practice (treatment of bones, artefacts).

Thus, if the goal of the first stage of analysis was to establish the organisation of finds/features into common clusters forming and defining a unit of the cultural system, then the aim of the comparative analysis is to establish the second order organisation of these finds/features, which would allow us to differentiate the types of the unit (i.e. types of individual, social unit, etc.). The goal is to reconstruct the variant units of socio-cultural system(s) through the discovered units/entities, thus the question becomes more or less about the interpretation of features as manifestations of socio-cultural organisation.

'Regulated differences', as discussed above, are artefacts or features that function as means to draw distinctions and identify a unit on the basis of that

distinction. In other words, they function as boundary signs. Thus, the goal is to study the distribution of units and their invariant basic structures (types). It must be kept in mind, however, that types are expressed not only in existing features but that the lack of some element can also function as a distinguishing feature; furthermore, from the perspective of the reconstruction of a cognitive model, another important question is when does the lack of some element have a self-descriptive value, i.e., when is identity expressed in negative terms ('we' are those who lack something or who do not act in a certain manner).

This is supplemented by the geographic interpretation of features to determine whether they are also related to a territorial organisation and whether a certain feature marks geographic limits or boundaries or is related to a geographic element that can thus be interpreted as a geographic boundary (river, sea, etc.).

(III) Reconstructing the self-model: the own-alien code. The goal of the last stage of analysis is the reconstruction of the own-alien code in terms of these boundary signs and their modality. In this stage, the focus is on the function of the identified boundary sign and the possibilities of the interpretation of the cultural 'own' and 'alien' it provides.

This is a question of what function a particular boundary sign serves in the internal organisation of a culture and of its relations to its context. For instance, boundary signs can be used to investigate the possibilities to interpret the relations between units of the same level (community and community), relations between units of different levels (individual and community), and in more global terms, the relations between the culture and its context or environment. For instance, we can ask which relations are marked (perceived as a boundary) and how in a culture, if and how a boundary sign expresses opposition, separation, connection transformations in information and meaning, etc.

Another important question here is the relationship between the modality of the boundary sign and the unit defined by a find or its feature; what the modality of the boundary says about the relevance of a unit of this level or about the way other types of unit or anything outside the unit is perceived as the cultural Other; and how it is positioned in the matrix of the own-alien code. For example, what does the modality of the boundary of a burial site say about its cultural functioning and the relationship between everyday culture and burial culture. In the longer term, this enables investigation into how the modality of the boundary sign is related to the modality of the self-model.

The stages of this analysis can be summarised as follows: (I) Thick description of the finds, systematise the finds into a cluster pertaining to a certain unit

of the cultural system; (II) comparison of the units, systematise the features of the finds pertaining to particular units into features allowing to typify the units; (III) reconstruct the own-alien code through interpretation of the distinctive features as boundary signs, i.e. signs bounding the community for itself.

Thus, the goal of the analysis is to determine, step by step, the function of the artefacts or the features of the artefacts in organising culture and thus move from the levels of more immediate organisation (relations between finds in the context of an archaeological site) to more abstract levels of organisation (sociocultural space and the culture's self-model).

Next, we will present a brief micro-level analysis of one grave complex from both archaeological cultures, as well as a cursory account of the same in the context of the meso- and macro-levels. A template for a more systematic description of the finds was provided that would afford to expound the relevant similarities and differences within the dataset (see Appendix). However, as the current study was limited to re-evaluation of previous studies, the existing dataset proved to be rather fragmentary from the point of view of proposed template of data description.

Micro-, meso-, and macro-levels
based on the example of *tarand* cemeteries

The culture of *tarand* cemeteries will be represented by the Viimsi I and II *tarand* cemeteries. Two *tarand* cemeteries, both suffering damage before they were studied, were found at the edge of the klint at Viimsi Peninsula and studied during rescue excavations in 1990 (Lang 1993, 5–6). Cemetery I was larger, consisting of four joined enclosures; the total number of bones was also larger, and the items found quite elaborate. Cemetery II consisted of two joined enclosures, the burial site was smaller than the first one, and the number of finds and bones was also smaller (op cit, 8, 16, 18). Both cremated and uncremated bones had been buried in the graves and bones had fractured to a large extent and were commingled (Kalling 1993, 67). More thorough analyses showed, however, that the placement of the bones from the Viimsi I cemetery (bones from Viimsi II are lost) demonstrated a certain level of individuality (Kivirüüt 2014, 30–36, 44). Both cemeteries have been dated to the 4th–5th century, although a certain temporal break can be identified in cemetery II based on the finds (Lang 1993, 54–55).

It is difficult to analyse the micro-level, that of the individual person, in *tarand* cemeteries due to the commingled, fragmentary, and collective nature of the burials. Bones are usually commingled with items in the grave, making it difficult to distinguish individual burials; the bones are often fragmented; pieces

of both cremated and uncremated bones can be found (Lang 2007a, 192, 203). A total of 29 cremated and 14 uncremated individuals were buried in the Viimsi I cemetery (Kivirüüt 2014, 18, 21). The sex and approximate age (adult, child) of several individuals could be determined, but only based on individual bones, as the material is fragmentary and commingled (op cit, 17, 18, 21, 22). The main feature here is the commingled nature of both the bones and the items, but there are a few exceptions (Olli & Kivirüüt 2017).

One clearly distinguished individual was the inhumation burial of a 20–30 years old male outside the wall of the enclosure (op cit). The burial was distinguished from the others by grave goods, location of the burial, and the partial survival of the skeleton (all other burials had been commingled, but in this case, the skull had survived, along with some leg bones probably also belonging to the same person). Unfortunately, the cemetery had suffered extensive damage before the archaeological investigation, making it difficult to interpret the finds (Lang 1993, 7). A necklace was found by the man's bones, however that could not have been worn by the dead man due to its small size; other items found by the skeleton included a crossbow fibula, bracelets, a finger ring, a decorative mount, and pottery fragments (Olli & Kivirüüt 2017). The social status of the buried person was definitely high, as he was buried in a *tarand* cemetery; another special feature is the necklace found by his bones (op cit). These are not too common in *tarand* cemeteries, and only two necklaces were found in the Viimsi I *tarand* cemetery. The connection of the necklace to the man is not clear: he may have acquired it as a child, as a present or an item marking an important event in his life (op cit). The item may have also played a role in the burial rite, as one end of the necklace was broken (op cit). Another interesting aspect is the fact that the skull was not cremated – it was customary in Viimsi to remove the skull from the dead body and burn it, and then place the bone fragments back inside the enclosure (Kivirüüt 2014, 42–43). There may have been no chance to do this in his case, or an exception may have been made for him. The distinction between him and the other people buried there was clear, the differences including the grave goods, their number and selection, as well as being buried outside the enclosure and not burning the head. We may presume that he had a special status in the community, either due to standing higher than the others and/or having a specific position. It is possible that there was a line between the man and the community in his lifetime that precluded his bones being mixed with those of other people. Another possibility is that the burial rite was not completed for him (his skull was not burned) and he remained buried outside the enclosure's walls. If it would have been completed we may not be able to distinguish him from the others buried in the cemetery and he would not stand out from the other

dead. Nevertheless, his half intact burial outside of the enclosure does stand out, intentionally or unintentionally.

At the meso-level, the level of the single cemetery, we can speak of communal unity with some variations that could be interpreted as individual preference. The Viimsi cemeteries were typical *tarand* cemeteries where people were buried both cremated and uncremated. The bones from the Viimsi II cemetery have gone missing, but judging by the drawings, they were placed in clusters along with items (Olli & Kivirüüt 2017). The Viimsi I cemetery contained a few clusters with finds and bones in addition to the inhumation burial outside the enclosure, probably indicating specific burials (op cit). At the same time, no cemeteries contained complete skeletons and finds were mainly uncremated. All the dead were buried along with a different set of items; these could be interpreted as grave goods offered by the living, or the personal items of the buried person, which could have been either their own belongings or socially accepted markers of group membership (op cit). The latter could include the crossbow fibulae found close to male bones (op cit). It is difficult to say what group was represented by wearing these fibulae, but wearing them may have displayed certain affinity (op cit). Even though the sets of items in the cemeteries were different, the general appearance of the items was still similar, giving unity to the cemetery. Also indicative of uniformity are the similarities in burial customs and rituals carried out at the cemetery. Individuals are visible at the meso-level, but the emphasis is more on groups and general uniformity, which is more indicative of norms shared by the community. The two Viimsi cemeteries were similar in burial customs and grave goods, but cemetery II was far smaller than cemetery I. Based on demographic calculations, it has been proposed that an individual cemetery was used by a single family group (Lang 1993, 56).

A separate problem is the status of a cemetery as a semiotic unit and the interpretation of the relations between cemeteries in a cemetery complex. Valter Lang has proposed that a new enclosure was built for a new generation (1999, 76), Silvia Laul has also suggested that a *tarand* cemetery was used by the main line of a family and each enclosure was meant for an individual branched family (1965, 349ff), the construction of new enclosures has also been associated with an increase in the wealth of the farmstead (Ligi 1995, 223), but no direct proof has been found for any of these hypotheses. In the case of the Viimsi I *tarand* cemetery, we may speculate that the enclosure wall separated different stages of the burial rite: the body was initially buried outside the enclosure wall; after a while the skull was removed, cremated, and placed inside the enclosure (Kivirüüt 2014, 43). The enclosure wall as a boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead might not be the only interpretation, as in several cemeteries,

bones and items have also been found outside the enclosure wall in the ruin; the latter could have functioned as a separate area where people were buried and/or rituals carried out (see, for example, Laul 2001, 74; Jonuks 2009, 219). The wall probably functioned as a separator in a (long-lasting) burial ritual or was used to distinguish people of different groups (for example, by generation). In some cemeteries, where the ruin probably appeared accidentally (see Lõugas 1975), the wall is definitely also the separator of the worlds of the living and the dead, and the physical boundary of the cemetery.

The Viimsi cemeteries are a part of the north-west Estonian subgroup of the culture of *tarand* cemeteries that show some differences from other subgroups, for example, the spread of single *tarand* cemeteries, as well as their later date of erection and end of use compared to, for example, Virumaa, as well as different preferences in types of ornaments compared to other subgroups (Lang 2007b, 134; Olli 2013, 107). The single most common type of fibulae are crossbow; several necklaces found show clear Scandinavian influence and many bracelets show local traits (simple design and decoration) (Olli 2013, 34; Lang 1996, 153, 158). In the case of north-west Estonia, we can speak of several different groups that had similar burial customs, construction traditions, and to a large extent also similar items; however, the era may have seen inter-group competition (rich vs poor cemeteries), different outside contacts (for example with Scandinavia, Finland, or other regions in Estonia) and so on, all of which had an influence on different small regions and made these uniform to some extent. At the macro-level, different regional boundaries are clearer. At the same time, however, they share a number of common denominators, all of which speak of similar practices, beliefs, and burial customs.

Micro-, meso-, and macro-levels based on the example of long barrows

The culture of long barrows is represented by the Rõsna-Saare I barrow cemetery, located on the shore of Värska Bay in northern Setomaa. The cemetery comprised eight long and two round barrows, thoroughly studied by Mare Aun in 1976–78. Along with the barrows of the Rõsna-Saare II and Suure-Rõsna cemeteries located nearby, these are one of the best-studied barrows in Estonia, with anthropological and zooarchaeological results available (see Aun 1992, 98–100; Allmäe & Maldre 2005; Aun 2006; Aun et al 2008; Allmäe 2014 for details).

It is easier to carry out micro-level analysis in barrows with cremation burials compared to *tarand* cemeteries because the burials are not as mixed but are located inside the barrow in more or less compact sets of bones. However, since the sets usually contain only some of the person's bones and the bones of several

individuals can be mixed together (see, for example, Aun et al. 2008, table I–III), a micro-level analysis can be carried out only on cemeteries for which the bones have been osteologically analysed. Under the longest barrow in the Rõsna-Saare I cemetery (60 x 7–8 m), a burial of a female was found in the middle of the burial platform beneath the barrow heap (burial VIII) (Aun 1979, 370). The cremated bones of the individual had in part been buried in a pit dug in the ground, in part scattered around the pit (op cit). The deceased was a 20–35 year old female; her grave goods probably included a whole horse, it`s cremated bones placed underneath the human bones in the bottom of the pit (Allmäe et al. 2007, 304–305). In addition, the burial included many fragments of different items, mainly the parts of a belt: the buckle and a lot of decorative round cover plates, as well as potsherds (Aun 1992, table 5). Compared to others buried in the same barrow, this individual is distinguished by the abundance of items. Another exception is the burial of a 20-year old male (IX), which is similar in both burial custom and items found, as well as a sacrificed horse (op cit; Aun et al 2008, table I). Due to the presence of the sacrificed animals and multitude of item fragments, these two burials (VIII and IX) have tentatively been termed as central for this barrow (Allmäe et al 2007, 273). Central burials were those that the long barrow is thought to have been erected for, probably for the burial of an individual of high social status (op cit; Aun 2005, 99). Of the rest of the bone clusters in the barrow, six others were buried in burial platforms under the barrow (with a total of four burial platforms, separated by trenches), but no items had been buried along with them. Five burials were found inside the barrow mound; tweezers and a bracelet fragment could probably be associated with these (Aun 1979, 369–370). Animal bones, including horse bones, have also been found in other burials in the same barrow (see Aun et al 2008, table 4).

Even though the number of belt parts found in these burials of a female and male is disproportionally large compared to the burials in all other studied barrows (see Mikhailova 2014b, 176), it is difficult to determine from this material whether a social boundary existed between these two 'central' burials and the other eleven. The thin bronze details, probably used for decorating a headdress, belts and riding equipment, are considered an ethnographic trait of this culture (Mikhailova 2012, 261). Since these items are found in burials, it is possible that they were mainly part of the burial clothing, although material from contemporaneous settlements has not yet been sufficiently studied to conclude this for sure (op cit). Even though it makes intuitive sense that people with a special status in society were distinguished by more decorated clothes (either during their lifetime or on the funeral pyre, or both), it is possible that not all details of the clothing

were generally found among the ashes after cremation (see Jonuks & Konsa 2007, 105), or picking them out was not always considered important.

Using a demographic model based on analysis of human bones from the Rõsna-Saare I barrow cemetery, it has been suggested that burials in barrows were made by a group of 10–15 people over 120 years (Allmäe 2014, 41–42). Group unity is manifested in the fact that all the dead were buried cremated, following the traditions apparent in barrows, and no gender or age-based lines were drawn between the dead members of the community: those buried in the barrows included women as well as men, and children of all ages, including babies (op cit, 43; Allmäe & Maldre 2005). At the same time, not all the dead were buried in the barrows in the same manner. Differences appear in how and where the cremated bones were placed in the barrow (see Aun 1992, table 2), what (if any) items are found along with the bones (op cit, table 5), and in the presence or lack of animal (horse) bones (Aun et al 2008, table IV). It is possible that these differences mark the different status of the members of the society. Thus, in the Rõsna-Saare I and II barrow cemeteries, animal bones were found in only 18% of all burials, most of which were located on burial platforms that where constructed before the erection of the barrow (Allmäe et al 2008, 308). It might also be noteworthy that most of the horse bones have been found in the longest barrows in the cemetery (op cit, 310). But it is probably impossible for us to determine which differences were actually essential and which were simply possible variations, as there is a lack of comparative material, since the number of thoroughly studied barrows and barrow cemeteries (with published materials) is small.

Even though the archaeological culture of long barrows seems homogenous throughout its distribution area (including the diversity in ways of burying bones), this could be a result of unevenness in how thoroughly different regions have been studied. Upon more comprehensive investigation, differences in the peculiarities of burial practices may be identified in closely situated cemeteries used concurrently (Aun 2005; Aun et al 2008). Thus, the Rõsna-Saare I barrow cemetery included more elements of burial rites that could be associated with stages of this culture that are older than can be found in the Rõsna-Saare II cemetery. For instance, the greater proportion of long barrow mounds and rectangular burial platforms compared to round barrows and round burial platforms, and clay pottery probably broken during the burial rituals (Aun 2005, 101).

Internal boundaries of this culture might be manifested in the differences in the external shape of the barrow complexes; for instance, a remarkable concentration of long barrow cemeteries and barrow mounds with a long general shape are located on the western shore of Lake Pskov compared to the other sub-regions of the culture (Aun et al 2008, 272). As another example, these

boundaries can also appear in grave goods: in south-east Estonia many types of women's jewellery, common in the rest of the cultural area, are practically absent, including bracelets, glass beads, etc. (Mikhailova 2014a, 194).

Discussion

Burial place as a boundary sign and the basis for defining a culture

One could claim that cultural areas outlined on the basis of burial places are better reflections of communal semiotic unity than, for instance, cultural boundaries drawn from the spread of some everyday artefact. Cultural areas defined by burial sites fulfil the requirement that phenomena marking a common culture must be collectively used. Cemeteries were built by a community and even if we focus on individual burials or the differences in the ways individuals were buried, we must still keep in mind that the dead were always buried by other people with significant awareness of customs and social regulations.

The traditions of *tarand* cemeteries and long barrows demonstrate a uniform complex behaviour in a domain that is not directly dependent on natural factors or survival strategies. These burial sites contain artefacts, man-made structures, and also indications of traditions and beliefs. In addition to the artefacts, the cemeteries also contain the relationships of the individuals with these items in the form of human bones found with grave goods and reconstructed social situations. Thus, burial sites are complex semiotic systems that allow us to draw conclusions about other cultural domains in addition to burial traditions, such as for example religion, clothing, and social relations.

From the point of view of cultural boundaries, burial customs present an interesting and multifaceted case. The external, structural differences between flat pit graves and barrows also raises the question of the semiotic function of the monumental earthwork of the latter – should the monumental structure be interpreted as a mnemonic structure, an expression of religious belief or display of power? Whichever meaning they had, the monumentality of both *tarand* cemeteries and barrows seems to indicate a shift in the code from an explicit, to a symbolic more ritualistic, modality.

The burial site itself is a boundary between the sphere of the living and the sphere of the dead. Death or the sphere of the dead is the cultural *other* present in the lives of every community, therefore the extent of the spatial area of a particular type of burial is a reflection of the 'commonness' of the cultural other demarcated by them. Thus, although the burial site is a boundary sign between the spheres of the living and the dead, the particular burial custom itself did not

differentiate the geographically adjacent communities, but rather, unified the communities of the cultural area. They can be interpreted as boundary signs between cultural areas by a researcher aware of the scope of the overall area of spread of the particular custom, but to the cultural subjects themselves they were from this perspective implicit signs. Burial customs might have functioned as explicit boundary signs between geographically adjacent communities in the periphery of the cultural area where difference between 'our' burial custom and 'alien' burial customs was manifest and could have enabled the functioning of burial custom as a distinctive aspect of the cultural community.

On the other hand, the monumental nature of these sites indicates their explicit or symbolic modality for the community using them. This could be taken as an indication of the importance of the boundary between living and dead, and of dealing with death as cultural other in a specific way. The symbolic form of this boundary could be interpreted as an expression of more conceptual aspects of worldview, since these burial customs are not simply practical or useful communal habits. Therefore, if the elements appearing in cemeteries are similar in a single area, this allows us to be more confident about the semiotic unity of the area. Unlike some other types of archaeological material or sites, such as the occupation layer of a settlement site, which has accumulated as a result of non-intentional human activity and contains remnants of practical or mundane artefacts that have, on the level of self-modelling, dominantly implicit modality, burial sites have clearly been significant and important to the bearers of the culture. Even though a naturally accumulated occupation layer can also be viewed as a semiotically meaningful unit, a text, it is in this case a 'text for us', transformed into a text by a system of codes developed by the archaeologists themselves over the development of archaeology as science. Burials, in this sense, would be a 'text for them', made meaningful by the notions and codes lived in and used by the builders of the specific grave types (Antonova & Raevsky 2002). At the same time, we should not forget the question of to what extent interpretations inspired by the ideal and imaginary world of the dead can be projected to the world of the living. In other words, we may ask if the self-model reconstructed on the basis of burial places does not already possess a symbolic modality due to the cultural function of the cemetery, being therefore an idealised image whose relations with everyday practice is problematic, since symbolic self-models are realised on the everyday level only partially (see Lotman 2010). To what extent, then, do unity and boundaries reflect symbolic social and cultural order of the sphere of the living or symbolic religious order associated with the sphere of the dead?

Yet in the case of both *tarand* cemeteries and barrows, only a part of the society was buried there while the majority of people were buried in another

fashion, one that we have no archaeological traces of (Lang 2011). The fact that only a fraction of the population was buried in this symbolic way prompts additional questions. It highlights a distinction between those who were buried in the monumental, symbolic structures and the supposed majority of the population who were not. In this case, their monumentality would indicate the relevance of the distinction between co-present social groups within the culture. Should this be interpreted as a sign of social stratification, whereby only individuals with a specific social status were buried in this ritualised way, or is it a sign of cultural stratification, the co-presence of (at least) two communities, only one of which had a belief system that entailed this type of burial custom? The fact that the burial customs of the majority are unknown to archaeologists means, however, that for archaeology, the culture of the majority of the population does not exist, at least until it is confined to the study of the monumental graves.

As a socio-cultural phenomenon (using Pitirim Sorokin's classification of types of unity – see Sorokin 2006, 4), graves as entities are spatial congeries, found as clusters initially collocated by the buriers as an external agent and not by a force or relationship internal to the grave. Particular individuals and artefacts across time were gathered and united in the graves in specific ways by the social group. While burial rituals as boundary rituals had a specific function for the dead (perceived, of course, as necessary by the living), this kind of spatial accumulation and preservation in the monumental form indicates that among the significant functions of the cemeteries was the mnemonic function for the community. They served as sites of remembrance and continuity for the social group, indicating overall stability within the region. The diversity in burial practices evident in particular burial sites can be a sign of dynamics, i.e. change within the social group over time. However, it could also point to more severe socio-cultural ruptures, as gravesites or sacred places have often been repurposed by new social groups who might have different belief systems or self-models resulting in different burial practices at the same site.

This also means that the monumental nature of the cemeteries might not be an indication of a complex religious system created to deal with the afterlife, but a complex mnemonic system within the culture. They could be a means to establish continual relations between those who have died and those who live, a means to ensure that death would not be the end of their relationship. Thus, cemeteries are also the continual manifestation of those who have died. The fact that people are buried there selectively (and thus selectively remembered or united with those in mourning) indicates the possible existence of a rather symbolic distinction between members of the community. As a selective mnemonic

structure, it could also indicate a social system of heritage within the community that requires the 'presence' of the dead.

The same applies to the distinctions and unities evident in the cemeteries. The distinctions like that of the distinctive status of certain individuals as well as lack of otherwise natural distinctions (for example that of the physical-organic integrity of a human body) between those who are buried there can be interpreted as manifestations of symbolic unity expressed through commingled bones, thereby of boundaries of symbolic modality marking the existence of cultural entities with different status within the community. Whether to interpret them as a reflection of the religious-mythological order, that is, of the model of the sphere of the dead or that of social order, of the model of socio-cultural structure, like kinship, social status etc., or how to interpret the relationship perceived between these two orders would require a more extensive reconstruction of self-models with an implicit or explicit modality, that is, studying more mundane, non-ritual material.

When defining 'archaeological cultures', we can safely confine ourselves to graves (or fibulae, pottery, etc.), although this is insufficient to analyse the semiotic dimension of a past culture. The semiotic boundaries of the culture are not the result of the classification of archaeological items/sites, but arise from the internal unity of the culture established by the combination of codes expressed in these materials. This unity manifests itself in different finds in different manners and to a different extent. Approaching culture as something that can be 'grouped' after some material or other kind of criterion – as is common when defining archaeological cultures – is not enough. Culture is a system of systems, a unique combination of codes and a network of numerous intersecting internal and external boundaries.

Cemeteries only allow us to categorise some of the archaeological material, as there are also extensive periods from which almost no graves have been found. At the same time, we have numerous archaeological cultures mainly based on the classification of pottery (the attempts to marry them to other item or site types have often been unsuccessful). A similar detailed comparison of two archaeological cultures could be repeated on an archaeological culture defined in terms of a certain artefact as a code, such as a type of pottery. This would allow us to present a more comprehensive picture of the society than that resulting from focussing on cemeteries. At the same time, pottery was certainly considered much less important than graves and might not have functioned as a basis for symbolic unity for the people themselves. The distinctions embodied in pottery are also more likely to be connected to individual choices

However, the issue is not only in analysing what kinds of artefact or activity were more relevant for the community, functioning as means to mark boundaries that have a more explicit and symbolic modality for the self-identifying community. The question is also in the scope and awareness of the unity uncovered through the analysis of the culture in terms of this kind of material. While broader similarities between areas indicate mutual identification between neighbouring communities as well as rather complex patterns of distant interaction and influences, locally different artefacts, however trivial they might seem in comparison to more symbolic customs, can be more revealing about the subtle distinctions made between neighbouring communities that interacted with each other directly. For example, taking fibulae as the basis for detecting the boundaries would result in a different area of unity than, for example, some other item type or burial custom. Or in using the case of ornaments made following the Roman example, the sphere of cultural unity would appear far more extensive, but consciousness of this unity would probably be much lower. However, their particular features and decorations could have been explicit or even symbolic boundary signs marking locally relevant distinctions within or between co-present communities. Since the self-model of one particular cultural community is a combination of codes with different modalities, the reconstruction of the self-model of past culture should, ideally, take into account the various artefacts as possible signs of boundary that might have different modalities.

From the perspective of the Tartu–Moscow school of semiotics, burial traditions are not necessarily more relevant due to the cultural status of religion. Rather because the cultural area outlined using burial traditions is smaller, more restricted, and has much clearer boundaries, they could be considered as a marked feature of a culture. As an illustration, we can imagine that another area could be found within the area of *tarand* enclosures where members of the community wear footwear of the same colour. The cultural status of this footwear as everyday items would be trivial in comparison to religion, but their status as the basis of communal unity and signs of cultural boundaries would be significantly higher. In this sense, cemeteries are just one means to demarcate a culture, but in our scope of interest they have a marked status as a basis of communal unity and signs of boundaries; however, it is possible to outline other, both more and less extensive cultural systems in this scope, none of which appear less important, just less clearly marked (i.e. implicit, explicit or symbolic).

Self-models of the users of *tarand* cemeteries and long barrows

It is generally very difficult to reach the micro-level or to distinguish individuals when studying *tarand* cemeteries because many individuals are represented by single bones. This fragmentation and disarrangement was probably intentional. It seems that the physical boundaries that existed between human bodies in their lifetime were overcome after death. In death, a person's bones were mixed with the bones of his (her) relatives and ancestors, losing the boundaries between the human remains, thus at the same time reinforcing the symbolic unity of those buried in the cemetery and the boundary between them and the other members of society who remained outside.

The boundaries of the living body may have also been overcome after death at the spatial level. Only some of a person's bones found their way into *tarand* cemeteries; the fate of the rest of the bones is unknown to date, but obviously they must have been treated in some other manner. Thus, after death, the person could have been partially buried in the grave while many parts were located in other places, something that was impossible in his or her lifetime. In barrows, we also see examples of such disarrangement of human bones and the division of a complete body between the grave and some other space unknown to archaeologists.

However, not all bones are mixed in barrows; this is limited to two to four individuals, separated from other burials by the pit, cluster, or urn they were buried in. More systematic study of the unities thusly created could reveal more about the relevant types and kinds of social unit. This kind of fragmentation of body and commingling of bones could be interpreted as indication that belonging to and unity with certain phenomena (social group, geographic place, other living beings) was more important than individuality and individual (organic) integrity. The fragmentation and commingling of individuals in grave as a symbolic space is a manifestation of a symbolic order established by self-model. There is also evidence of the special status of horses. Similar treatment of human and animal bones may have meant their co-existence after death; possibly the boundary between this world and the netherworld was crossed together. Thus, these unities and divisions might have been seen as relevant for the netherworld because of their relevance in the world of the living.

One result of the micro-level analysis is that an individual does not form a clearly distinguished cultural entity (with the exception of a few individuals who probably possessed a special status). This applies in the case of both *tarand* cemeteries and long barrows. We may speculate that this relative lack of relevance of the individual as social unit indicates a certain common feature in beliefs concerning the relationship of the individual and the world in this era, in the light

of which both *tarand* cemeteries and long barrows are surface variations of the worldview of a relatively extensive region, characteristic of this era or area. Thus, even though the two cultural areas are clearly distinctive at the level of burial type, these spatial and temporal borders can take other forms in the deep structure of burial traditions, at the level of belief and world order. Individual graves gradually become more common in later times, and become ubiquitous only in relation to the spread of Christianity (in part, slightly before the introduction of Christianity, but still most likely under its influence).

The meso-level analysis of the cemeteries raises a number of questions. Should the meso-level unit be the individual barrow, or the barrow complex? This is more a question of the definition of the material by the researcher. This decision must be made based on whether the variation in burial traditions is greater between different barrows or different barrow complexes. In other words, which boundary may have been more important for the users of these burial sites, since the meso-level is not defined by the individual burial places but by the cultural entity expressed at this level.

In the case of *tarand* cemeteries, we may ask the same: should the meso-level analysis concern a single enclosure, all conjoined enclosures, or should we also include other *tarand* cemeteries located in the vicinity? However, single enclosures are clearly bounded, indicating the importance of the distinction between people buried in separate enclosures as well. In our cases, this cultural entity could be a family, potentially an elite family, something akin to an extended family, 10–15 people. In the Viimsi case, it can indeed be presumed that the second grave reflects the branching (and the unhappy end) of the initial extended family.

In both cases, we should also not forget the temporal dimension: neither *tarand* cemeteries nor long barrows are the remnants of a single moment in time but the end results of a long burial process. One long *tarand* cemetery with its numerous enclosures, as well as a group of barrows, reflects several hundred years in the life of a family or a family line, where each generation used only one part of the *tarand* cemetery or barrow complex. What made people decide to build a new barrow or *tarand* is an interesting question, since it establishes a boundary between two cultural entities as well. Of course, the emphasis was on the connection with the ancestors, as the same burial site remained in use, yet they still distanced and distinguished themselves from others by creating a new bounded area. The micro-, meso-, and macro-level analyses should also definitely keep in mind the dates of the compared cultural phenomena. It is possible that the differences between individuals, sites and regions could actually be related to temporal, not spatial or purely semiotic boundaries.

The common features of the north-west Estonian *tarand* cemeteries, as well as the distribution area of *tarand* cemeteries in general, includes a similar form of cemetery, collective burial, and frequent custom of placing ornaments in the graves. The finds in the *tarand* cemeteries are somewhat different, while still having a similar general design. In north-west Estonia, however, groups might also have been distinguished by whether they used a single *tarand* or typical *tarand* cemeteries. The common denominator for them is collectivity and the commingled nature, but people may have retained a certain amount of individuality even in death, as some burial clusters were discovered in the Viimsi I cemetery in which, even though no complete skeletons were found, the bones and items had been placed in the grave in sets (Olli & Kivirüüt 2017), allowing individuals to be distinguished. Since two rather similar cemeteries were located close to each other in Viimsi, they could have defined the boundary between two close families or communities. Their material culture and burial customs were similar, although they did bury their dead in different sites, marking the existing differentiation between these communities.

Analysis of the cemeteries allows us to draw conclusions about cultural systems of different levels, although the reconstruction of their mechanisms of semiotic self-determination and self-models would require a more detailed analysis (see the example in the appendix for more). Reusing existing descriptions of archaeological material turned out to be difficult, as the shift in research questions toward semiotic analysis directs the focus onto aspects that have been less relevant in existing practices of description in archaeology.

Temporal boundaries of cultures

In earlier archaeological discussions of long barrows, the culture of long barrows seemingly appears out of nowhere and stands against nothingness. Without a doubt, the areas surrounding the long barrows were not empty, but these ways of living and burial practices are archaeologically difficult to identify. Was the non-use of barrows in these areas in the second half of the first millennium a manifestation of conscious cultural opposition? Today, we know that barrow cemeteries were preceded in south-east Estonia as well as to the east of this region by flat pit cremation burials (Aun 2006, 15 and references cited there). We can also ask whether the erection of barrows was motivated by conscious cultural opposition to the preceding culture that did not utilise barrows.

The end of the active use of *tarand* cemeteries marks a change in both cemetery type and used burial customs. An area distinguished by similar burial forms disintegrated for some reason, but was this also accompanied by changes in other

spheres of life, and why was it replaced with different forms of burial in different regions? Some common ideas related to burial in *tarand* cemeteries is that this method exhausted itself and necessitated change, whether as a result of internal or external factors.

Tarand cemeteries and barrows retained their importance and significance in the cultural landscape for hundreds or even thousands of years and were often repurposed. In 19th and 20th century traditional peasant society, *tarand* cemeteries were often taken for church foundations (Lõugas & Selirand 1989, 71). Barrows, however, have mainly been associated with the Swedish War (the Great Northern War), at the time of which different nations buried their dead in different kinds of barrow (round barrows were supposed to be the burial sites of Russians, long barrows were used by the Swedish, and vice versa) (Aun 2009, 83). These sites are no longer considered part of the 'own' culture but rather are signs of a preceding culture displaying continuity with the present culture. Thus, it is easier to identify the beginning of a culture using burial sites (for example, the time of construction of *tarand* cemeteries or long barrows), but once erected, they remain a part of the cultural reality. At some point new long barrows or *tarand* cemeteries were no longer erected, and the dead were buried in existing sites. It is thus important to analyse in depth when the period of the active use of *tarand* cemeteries and barrows ended. Was the established cultural area still uniform in the subsequent period? Did the changes affect all elements and regions of the culture in the same manner? Answers to these questions would allow us to be more confident that this entity was a single culture in the semiotic sense of a collective self-bounding entity that reacted to changes in a similar manner.

At the same time, the different development of different regions could also show that the established system, ideology or social order changed, resulting in the disintegration of a cultural area and the end of the existing culture. The examples analysed seem to indicate that different areas developed in different ways after the end of the culture. For instance, the culture of long barrows started to fall apart before the end of the period of active use of the barrows, as barrow cemeteries were no longer used in the outer regions of their distribution area in the 9th to 11th centuries. Elsewhere, however, the barrows remained in use and often demonstrate continuity with the cemeteries of the Old Russian culture and medieval village cemeteries, these already being Christian burial sites (Mikhailova 2014b, 219). It appears that differences existed inside the cultural area already at the time of the culture, and the end of the culture only serves to emphasise them. Internal asymmetry of culture in terms of a more stable centre and a more dynamic and changing periphery is also indicated in Lotman's model of the semiosphere (Lotman 2005). It is important to take this asymmetry into

account in spatiotemporal modelling of culture, since the duration of the culture within the cultural area is uneven and the spatial and temporal boundaries of the culture cannot be equated by force.

Internal and external cultural boundaries, their markedness

Because in both cases the majority of people were buried in another fashion unknown to archaeologists, the question is, how central were burial rites in *tarand* cemeteries and long barrows to these cultures of the past, and were all the people living in these areas part of these cultures, sharing the same cultural self-model? Were these the burial sites of a cultural elite or distinct cultural community? In the first case, the different strata of the society form a singular entity and we could presume that the non-elites also participated in the rituals taking place there, making them part of the same burial culture, despite practicing it in a different manner (they probably could not bury their dead in these sites). Considering the explicit or symbolic nature of burials as a boundary between the living and the dead, could there have been, and under what conditions, different burial practices within one cultural community? What would that possibility tell us about the self-model of the culture and the role of burial customs within it? In one way or another, these cemeteries as the burial sites of a selected few determined one of the most central internal boundary of the cultural areas of *tarand* cemeteries and barrows.

In the case of barrow cemeteries of the second half of the first millennium, where, likewise, only part of society was buried (Lang & Ligi 1991, 28), an additional question arises: did people burying their dead in barrows of different shape also have a different status in the society? According to Mare Aun, the different barrow shapes also symbolise different ideologies and different concepts of the world (Aun 2006, 116). Even though the exact nature of these differences is unclear, analysis of the pottery found in the barrows shows that the population burying in long barrows was more conservative compared to those using round barrows, the latter adopting new customs in the later stages of the culture (Aun 2002, 88). This also indicates internal boundaries within the cultural area. The position of the people cremated and buried in pits in the same cemeteries near the barrows but whose burial places were not marked with a mound, remains unclear.

The internal asymmetry of cultural space can also be observed spatially in the distribution area of *tarand* cemeteries. At the periphery of the area of spread, especially on the Izhorian plateau, but also in south-west Finland and northern Latvia, the difference from the centre is clearly visible. While the grave and burial

form, as well as the ornaments, are typical to the wider area of *tarand* cemeteries, the placement of weapons in the grave pose the problem of interpreting the distinction manifest in this difference. The difference could have been created simply by the tradition one group of people had of placing weapons in graves, which could have been related to something other than differences in tribal background. This might have been a regional belief or even a specialisation and the expression thereof. The Izhorian plateau can be considered a 'border zone' of the area of spread of *tarand* cemeteries; hence, weapons found in graves could indicate status as a border zone, as an area opposing those lying to the east. It is possible that life in a border zone was more characterised by conflict and more dangerous than life in the inner zones of the culture, resulting in greater emphasis on weapons (in connection to social status) in this region. If weapons would indicate the status of the region as a border zone, the dominant code for self-model would be that of burial type. In contrast, if weapons with their relation to everyday life and social organisation are prioritised in interpretations, an entity with a remarkably different self-model would appear – for example attributing symbolic value to weapons not in relationships with sharply different people considered non-cultural (people outside the *tarand* cemetery cultural area) but in relation to similarly cultural people using the same kinds of burial sites but valued somehow negatively.

If we proceed with a view that people feel the need to express and define themselves for the purpose of identification (see Jenkins 2008) and use for that purpose various items available to them, smaller regional subgroups can be distinguished based on items placed in graves or cemetery types in the central parts of the distribution area. For example, the difference in cemetery types between the regions north and south of the Daugava in the Roman Iron Age, i.e. rectangular stone enclosure vs round mound of earth with a stone circle at its base; or the difference in whether the dead were provided with weapons and large tools for the afterlife. Similarly, ornament sets were different in different regions, which may have created boundaries between the 'self' and the 'others', be it explicitly or implicitly. These differences could be interpreted as manifestation of internal boundaries within the burial culture, that is, the people of the past might have perceived these differences as boundaries.

The semiotic approach to culture would thus enable us to conceptualise how any site could be analysed as the manifestation of boundary mechanisms on different levels of culture. In the broader perspective, this allows us to assess the functions of boundaries manifested in different types of find and identify their mutual relations in order to reach a more adaptable and flexible understanding of the relationships and dynamics of cultural systems of different levels.

Conclusion

In this interdisciplinary study we investigated archaeological material and conceptualisations from a semiotic perspective with the aim of evaluating how semiotic theories could be used for the analysis of archaeological material. This work resulted in a theoretical framework that was adapted to analyse archaeological material on micro-, meso- and macro-levels through a three-step process of thick description, comparison and (re)construction of self-model. The main question for the semiotic analysis proposed here is whether the similarities and differences within the archaeological finds could be interpreted as a manifestation of cultural distinction and what their modality or relevance could be in the self-model of the culture. In other words, could these differences be interpreted as an expression of cultural boundary recognised as relevant by the community?

The micro-level analysis of burial sites highlights differences between individuals, the meso-level analysis shows differences between burials related to larger socio-cultural units, and macro-level analysis focuses on regional differences. This thick description indicates the variability of boundaries within a single cemetery, as well as between individual cemeteries and between regions. Subjecting archaeological cultures to a macro-level comparison would highlight major differences and allow the outlining of a culture's external boundaries. This kind of analysis could show which differences resulted from the culture's natural internal heterogeneity and which mark the boundaries of the cultural area.

The initial strategy of reusing existing descriptions of archaeological material turned out to be difficult, as the research questions based on the semiotic framework directed the focus to aspects that have been less relevant in existing practices of archaeological description, therefore the required data was not as readily available. However, this itself indicates that interdisciplinary approaches afford new questions and re-evaluation of existing data and ways of describing it. Therefore the discussion concentrated on the re-evaluation of received views and on posing questions informed by the semiotic perspective presented in the theoretical framework.

At the same time, when utilising archaeological material, we should not forget that the material is extremely fragmentary, and the analysis of the whole system may as well require something we have no archaeological evidence of. To wit, demographic calculations show that only a small part of the society, probably the elite, were buried in *tarand* cemeteries and barrows. The methods used for treating their dead by the rest of the members of the community have left no archaeological traces. Perhaps the most significant internal boundary found upon the analysis of the burial places is, thus, the one between the users and non-users of

the burial site. Unfortunately, it is difficult to judge how significant this boundary may have been in the past, or whether this marks a social boundary within one community or a cultural boundary between co-present communities.

The cemeteries themselves are complex semiotic phenomena, therefore as boundary signs they afford different interpretations: was the semiotic function of these monumental structures mnemonic (expressing relations with the ancestors), religious (expressing the relationship with death and the afterlife) or a display of power (expressing relations between social elite and laypeople)?

One of the more interesting outcomes of the analysis concerned the fragmentary nature of the buried individuals. More specifically, (selected) bones from different individuals were mixed together in both *tarand* cemeteries and barrows. Thus, the corporeal boundaries between the living members of the society as well as between the living and the dead are overcome in death. The analysis of the absent boundary of individual within the cemetery brought to the fore the relative lack of relevance of individuals as a distinct social unit in both types of burial site. Thus, while the two cultural areas are clearly distinctive at the level of cemetery type, they seem to share a deeper structure of burial traditions at the level of belief and world order in relation to individuality and collectivity.

Cemeteries are, without a doubt, a rich empirical basis for the analysis of boundaries in cultures of the past, as they form a complex semiotic system resulting from conscious human activity. At the same time, cemeteries are not the only nor a sufficient, source for defining the semiotic dimensions of a past culture. The erection and use of monumental structures might have established certain boundaries in the past society; however, even these boundaries could have been ignored or deconstructed by different rituals, everyday practices and social relations. Studying some other type of archaeological source material would enable us to distinguish different kinds of boundary. The question here is rather one of the kinds of boundary to be studied. In the case of cemeteries, however, we can at least be sure that these boundary mechanisms were recognised by and important for the people of the past themselves.

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Sources of illustrations

Figure 1 – Valter Lang, 1999.
Figure 2 – Drawings: Maarja Olli after Lang 2007b, 127, Jushkova 2011, 244, figure 102, Jantunen 2014, kuva 2.1.
Figure 3 – Ain Mäesalu, 1983–1984.
Figure 4 – Drawing: Maria Smirnova, after Mihhailova 2014a, fig 1.
Figure 5 – Drawing: Katre Pärn.

Notes

Appendix.
Examples of micro-, meso-, and macro-level systems of description

Micro-level					
Features	**Example of descriptors**	**Indi-vidual_1**	**Indi-vidual_2**	**Indi-vidual_3**	**etc.**
Gender	male / female				
Age	child / teenager / adult / elder				
Condition of bones	whole / partial				
Missing bones					
Way of interring	disjointed / burnt / partially burnt (which part) / etc.				
Position	positioned / ran-dom / wrapped, etc.				
Clothing	articles / style, etc. / condition of articles (ex. burnt)				
Ornamental artefacts					
Utilitarian artefacts					
etc.					
Result: type of individual (discovered patterns)					

Meso-level					
Features	**Example of descriptors**	**Burial_1**	**Burial_2**	**Burial_3**	**etc.**
External features of individual grave	shape / size / monumentality, etc.				
Construction	materials used / structural details, etc.				
Grave composition	individual / collective				
Number of individuals					
'Type' of individuals	(outcome of microanalysis)				
Spatial position of individuals	spatial position of individuals / spatial position of types of individuals / etc.				
Temporal structure	'chronology'				
Artefacts	relatable unrelatable to individual / particular of burial ritual or part of daily life / spatial or temporal relation with individuals				
etc.					
Result: grave type (discovered patterns)					

Macro-level					
Features	**Example of descriptors**	**Burial site_1**	**Burial site_2**	**Burial site_3**	**etc.**
Number of graves					
Grave type	(as a result of meso-level analysis)				
Spatial position of graves	relations between graves and relations between grave types				
Temporal structure of graves	`chronology`				
Artefacts	artefacts not belonging to a single grave				
External features of grave site	features that do not belong to single graves but to the complex; general characteristics				
etc.					
Result: type of grave site (discovered patterns)					

On drawing boundaries in culture and theory

Daniele Monticelli

Given my ignorance in the field of tarand graves and long barrows, I will rather focus in this response on the interesting theoretical articulation that the authors establish between the four fundamental concepts highlighted in the title of the paper: 'culture', 'boundary', '(de)costruction' and 'past'. We have a series of disparate phenomena –archaeological finds and their interpretations – which come into being as a knowable and recognisable totality, i.e. a *culture*, through a procedure of separation and individuation, i.e. drawing a *boundary*. The active and constitutive character of this procedure has to be stressed: the boundary and, consequently, culture are not out there as something that we could simply take notice of and ascertain as an incontrovertible fact. They rather emerge (or get lost) both epistemologically and ontologically only as a result of the retrospective boundary drawing procedure itself. It is not a matter of presence (or absence), but a matter of *(de)construction*, meaning, fundamentally, a matter of choices and decisions. Thus, the boundaries of 'archaeological cultures' change depending on the object(s) or practice(s) we decide to fore- and background, a decision that fundamentally transforms the culture in question and our image of it.

Things become even more complicated when we add to "cultural (de)construction" its temporal dimension as an issue of distance and, at the same time, hereditary linkage. The *past* and its relationship with the present and the future are far from simple and unproblematic, particularly due to a fundamental, distinctive feature of culture, i.e. self-awareness, self-reflection and self-description, which the paper defines as the 'symbolic' level of cultural behaviour. This means that the (de)construction of culture is always an on-going and interested process. It takes place in time, creating or interrupting hereditary linkages and historiographies, constituting and dissolving identitarian belongings and communities. Drawing (and erasing) boundaries appears, from this point of view, the political act *par excellence*, an act that creates cultures and their communities as experienceable and knowable objects.

It is quite tempting to place in opposition two kinds of relationship between temporal distance and the drawing of cultural boundaries. The first, which we could define as 'immanent (de)construction' would characterise the contemporaries of a given cultural practice, for example our burial costumes, practices that occupy fundamental positions in everyday life and the processes of

communitarian identification; and the second, which we could define as 'transcendent (de)costruction', would characterise future researchers as external observers able to reconstruct both the given practice and the cultural whole to which it belonged, including what the authors of the paper call the "inner logics" and "self-model" of the culture in question. Now, as we know from historiography, the opposition between the immanent and the transcendent position is overly reductive and highly problematic. This opposition presupposes in fact the fixation of stable topological and temporal boundaries, while, as mentioned above, it is rather a matter of an on-going process in which boundaries and cultures are constantly constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed. This provokes interferences and short-circuits between different times – the past comes to inhabit the present or is projected into the future, becoming invested with renewed symbolic and community making capacity; or, the other way around, the present (and the future) colonise the past modelling it in their (real or ideal) image and resemblance. Our position in respect to a given cultural totality of the past is therefore, once again, not given but constructed, shifted or lost together with the boundaries we draw, the boundaries we decide to leave undrawn, and the boundaries we erase. This does not mean that any 'historico-semiotic' research that takes as its aim the reconstruction of some cultural whole is doomed to failure, but that the researcher should always be aware not only of the constructiveness of the object of study, but also of the constructiveness of his or her own position in respect to that object. In the case of culture, scientific transcendence (the myth of objectivity) is impossible quite simply because, as Tartu–Moscow semioticians never ceased to repeat, any attempt to cognise culture is already, and automatically, also a fact in the life of culture itself (Ivanov et al 1998 [1973], 60).

Another fundamental issue raised in the paper concerns the topological and symbolic function of the boundary itself. The boundary imagined as a line between two spaces may be understood both as an instrument of delimitation and separation, and, alternatively, as an instrument of connection and place of transition (see Monticelli 2009; 2012). However, the boundary can also be imagined as the multidimensional border space that Lotman calls 'periphery' and which functions as an instrument of internal differentiation within a given semiotic space (center VS periphery) or an instrument of indifferentiation between different semiotic spaces – something in between that does not belong to either of the two spaces, or belongs to both of them at the same time. This is why boundaries can be both constructing and deconstructing devices, which does not always have to be an alternative. The semiotic analysis in the paper shows how the different functions of the boundary may have been activated together in the burial sites. The boundary separates there the world of the living from that

of the dead, but also marks the place of crossing and transition between the two; it reproduces social differences between members of the community (different kinds of burial separated by clear markers), but also undoes their corporeal separation (the mingled bones that makes the burial site into a place of indistinction). Shifting the level of analysis and construction of the studied object from the micro- to the meso- and the macrolevel described in the paper provokes changes in the relevance of the different functions of the boundary for the researcher.

Spatial modelling is certainly a central feature of human cognition and culture as illustrated by the burial sites studied in the paper. Cultural semiotics and its complex understanding of the multivarious functions of the boundary offer us precious theoretical tools for the investigation of spatial thinking and its symbolical values. It is no more a question, as it used to be in the 'golden age' of semiotics, of elaborating a new overarching metalanguage for the humanities, but of opening a borderspace between and across different disciplines for experimentation with concepts and objects of different disciplinary origins. An experimentation that does not take ready concepts to be applied to ready objects, but establishes between the conceptual and the empirical side of the research a dialogical tension by which an original theoretico-methodologico-empirical assemblage may emerge, as the paper fascinatingly and convincingly demonstrates.

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