

# Editorial

In the 1990s the borders of Estonian ethnology as a field of study widened. Ethnologists were striving for interdisciplinarity both with the characteristic topics and their methods. In many respects culture was studied as the communication of meanings and values, whereas questions about changes occupied a significant position.

The 14<sup>th</sup> issue of *Pro Ethnologia, Whose Culture?* deals with describing and analysing the socio-cultural changes in Estonia beginning from the early 1990s until the present time, by that giving quite a good survey of the characteristic tendencies of the period, when modernity became the main axis around which the work of several Estonian ethnologists was concentrated. One of the connecting links between the treatments published in this collection is the observation of changes through cultural contacts. The Estonia outlined here is multi-cultural. The articles view opinions about what Estonia is, where it belongs, and who in culture is “us” and who is “them”. As the bearers of changes different groups are treated, which are determined proceeding from ethnos, age or geographical location.

Cultures are determined proceeding from “us”, so some groups have to participate in it as “others”. This is described, for instance, by the language use: while discussing ethnic groups, the general public of Estonia (for example, the Estonian-language Estonian media of the 1990s) spoke about ‘Estonians’ and ‘non-Estonians’ or ‘aliens’, and Estonian sociologists took into use the metaphors “the first” and “the second” Estonia, which turned out to be surprisingly powerful, were fixed in the public debate and produced stereotypes. This kind of definitions, however disputable by their contents, still point to the fragmentation existing in Estonian society.

The common issue under study in the case of all the authors represented in this collection could be the following: Whose culture are we talking about when we say “Estonian culture”? What kind of cultures participates in its creation? Under what circumstances are they “us” and in what context do they turn out to be “others”? Whose is the audible voice in the reception process and, last but not least, who controls representation? In a hidden way, we are talking about power issues here.

At the same time the question “Whose culture?” also refers to the ethnological research itself. If we ask “Whose culture?” we also point to the relation between the researcher and the informant, which has already been much talked about, but which still remains topical in each new research.

Ethnological research is, first and foremost, expressed in texts. Cultural studies “involve, concern and rely upon the textualization of the research object; that is, the culture being studied and its various representations and manifestations” (Kupiainen 2002: 7). The question about what happens to the material when it becomes a text, is an old-time debate in anthropology, ethnology and other cultural sciences, which are focussed on the fact that researchers write their own stories of the person/people that they study, seemingly involving the latter, for instance, through ethnographic quotations. Methodologically it was possible to find the starting points for this issue in modern anthropological research, where the anthropologist left home to live for months and sometimes even for years with “the others”, finally writing a summarising overview of the culture. The informants’ (natives’) voices “were subjected to the researcher’s own voice” (ibid.). Whose culture and whose narrative strategies are expressed in the following articles? Whose stories and whose understanding of culture do these quotations integrated in the texts describe and support?

So, the reader’s task is to think that “knowledge is an inter-subjective product” (Pekkala, Vasenkari 2000: 245). Both the researcher and the informants initially participated in its creation, but further on the cognition springs from the level of the researcher and the reader of the text. It can be observed that the researchers represented in the collection have interpreted their roles in the process differently: some of them regard themselves as “ordinary newspaper readers”, some hide themselves behind the laconic figures of quantitative data, some assume the role of the voice/representative of a smaller or bigger study group.

The researches of Maris Leponiemi and Anu Kannike are linked by their focus on urban space. Both research projects were carried out in the town of Tartu. The article by Anu Kannike “Home – Mosaic of Meanings” belongs under one of the major trends in ethnological research, which started already in the early 1990s and concentrates on everyday life and the private sphere in it. The research project “Home as a Cultural Factor in the 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Estonia” set as an objective in the analysis of everyday culture the concentration on the culture

creation process. An attempt was made to record life style as a whole from the human-centred perspective. Instead of classical research fields, in this context the study of the consumption culture emerges especially markedly. The focus of consumption culture successfully enables to treat of the global and local currents of culture and their mutual relations, the openness of local culture to changes, as well as its conservatism.

Maris Leponiemi's research topic grew out of her assumption as an urban resident that in the town centres that have recently been converted into business centres, retired people can easily become "the other", as due to shortage of money, they have nothing to do in many places. The article "“You Forget about Tartu if you don't Go There”. About the Use of City Space of the Retired People in Tartu” tries to find out if and how aged citizens of Tartu convert the town into "their space". This is a case-study concentrating on a narrow circle of people under study. Although the article mainly speaks about social space, it emphasises the fact how in everyday sphere social space is shaped in accordance with people's consumption behaviour, and is connected to other factors only in the second order. According to the researcher, the most determinative factor in the use made of urban space and choice of spatial practices can be said to be economic aspects and financial possibilities, followed by health factors and the existence of social networks.

Terje Anepaio's article "Reception of the Repression Topic in Estonian Society" also deals with the issues of which groups' voices are noticed in the culture of the public sphere. The article is focussed on the encounter of Estonian transition society with the past: the position of the topics of deportation and repressions of the 1940s in society from the beginning of the 1990s until the present time. The author is interested in how permanent the public interest in the experience of repressions is.

The reception of repressions in society is related to the changing values. When in the early 1990s the issue of repressions, which had been neglected by the public, was revived again, it was focussed on the personal experience of the deportees. This was followed by the institutionalising of the public memory. Ten years later the modelling of collective memory has reached a new stage: the contemporary younger generation considers remembering the events of the near past rather as an obligation; for them these events are included in the general series of historic events, in the same row with other, more

distant ones.

The article “Articulating Ethnic Identity in the Setu Media” by Pille Runnel deals with the issue of regionalism. In the beginning of the 1990s, Setumaa as a concept was missing in the public debate within Estonia. But as local problems of a peripheral rural area were intertwined with the processes of an international scale, the difficulties of the border area become a consistent issue in the Estonian media channels. Even although Setumaa as a region is strongly constructed for achieving socio-political and economical aims, it is done through mobilising culture. The question is, whether it can be seen as a short-time policy, or is it similar to nation-formation processes?

In ethnology, media studies are developing independently from other media studies, being not tightly related to the earlier ones. Neither are they related to the so-called anthropological tradition of media research, emerging in the Western world, which is faithful to the audience and reception studies. Therefore we can maintain that in Estonian ethnology the media is rather used as a source, as a part of a more extensive research issue. Riina Reinvelt’s article “Integration, Multinational Estonia and Estonian-Language Press” is also focussed on the role of the media in creating cultural conceptions, viewing the topic that has already earlier attracted much attention from Estonian sociologists: the representation of the Russian-speaking population of Estonia in the media. The article describes the changes that have occurred beginning from the phase of self-identification and establishment of independent statehood in the early 1990s until nowadays. The treatment of the Estonian Russian-speaking population in the media carried many of the emotions, which were actually directed against the former central authority of the Soviet Union. At present the prevailing trend in the treatment of the Russian-speaking population views them as concrete individuals. Here the Estonians’ language-based identity is rendered prominent – the issue of non-Estonians is intertwined with the topic of learning the official state language.

The most voluminous research in the collection is Jaanus Plaat’s sociological treatment of religion “Christian and Non-Christian Religiosity in Estonia in the 1990s: Comparison of Estonians and Other Ethnic Groups”, which, in addition to giving a survey of religious movements and congregations in Estonia and their membership in the 1990s, also describes changes that have occurred in the values of the residents of Estonia. The author has observed the “church boom” of the 1990s, which now, a few years later, is interpreted as a temporary

fashion of church rituals, which occurred as a counter-reaction to the atheist campaigns carried on in the Soviet period. The author maintains that the growing number of Russian congregations as well as their membership is connected with the increasing ethnic self-consciousness of the Estonian Russian-speaking population. The number of Orthodox congregations comprising mainly Russians grew quickly in Estonia, while the increase in the membership of Lutheran congregations was rather temporary. The non-Christian religious movements springing up side by side with the former confessions, as well as the different trends of Christianity, refer rather to the emerging of post-materialist values.

## References

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Pille Runnel

# Home – Mosaic of Meanings

## Anu Kannike

The research project “Home as a Cultural Factor in the 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Estonia” (1996–1999)<sup>1</sup> set as an objective in the analysis of everyday culture the concentration on the culture creation process. Instead of the former single sphere or object-centred approach, an attempt was made to record lifestyle as a whole from the human-centred perspective (Järs, Kannike, Pärdis 1995). Proceeding from the aforementioned, the author has analysed modern Estonian home decoration, also keeping in mind its longer temporal-historical context (Kannike 1999; 2001; 2002).

In the interviews conducted during the fieldwork of the project in Tartu in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1990s, the informants described the meaning and importance of their homes mainly through the same key notions – privacy, security, peace and quiet, cosiness. Social belonging did not influence the priorities of these permeating values to a great extent. Yet, at a closer look it turned out that the individual and group-specific meaning of these general notions is still quite different. The essence and background of these differences can only be understood if you delve into the problem of how the usage of notions is concretely connected with objects and behaviour.

If we analyse home decoration as a process of creating meanings, it is possible to view the values related to home through domestic hierarchies, while one of the aspects is the different semiotic status of different spaces and parts of spaces, and the other one – the meaning of individual objects and their importance in expressing and fixing people’s value hierarchies. Proceeding from the definition of the interior as a semiotic entity, these aspects are inseparably connected in home as a social space (in more detail see Kannike 1999; 2002).

In its essence home is as an “interior” space, being opposed to the “exterior” one. Home is the place that generates “order”. Differentiation inside the space, in its turn, means the marking of the relations between the lower and higher status, the hidden and the visible, the intimate and the public. This, in its turn, requires, in addition to the outside-home border, the marking and observation of the inner sub-borders.

Lotman emphasises that if we are interested in the language of the space as a culture-modelling code, we will have to understand that in reality we have to deal with the hierarchy of spatial languages (Lotman 1986: 6).

The interpretation of domestic world of objects reflects quite vividly the different historic experience and different strategies of everyday life. Also, the different evaluation of domestic objects reflects the gender-specific peculiarities of culture creation.

In the era of globalisation people construct their identities to a greater and greater extent through mass consumption. As consumer manufacturing inevitably creates uniformity, it is essential to deal with the strategies by which people create and preserve individuality in the home of modern society. Douglas and Isherwood view consumption as a process of “cognitive construction”, and emphasise that its main function is interpreting (1978: 62–65). Miller sees the historic shift from manufacturing to consumption in the fact that the construction of social relations may be carried out increasingly through the practice of consumption, with goods replacing persons as the key medium of objectification for projects of value (Miller 1995: 154). Consumers use the meaning of commodities in order to express cultural categories and principles, cultivate ideas, create and foster lifestyles, construct self-images, instigate social changes and adapt themselves to them (McCracken 1988: XI).

So the issue of the hierarchy of objects and places is also essential from the consumer-anthropological aspect, making it easier to explain the context of using modern mass-produced goods and their importance in regulating human relationships and spatial behaviour.<sup>2</sup>

The best known anthropological research treating of the symbolic function of domestic objects is Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton’s classical work “The Meaning of Things. Domestic Symbols and the Self” (1981). The analysis of ethnographic interviews conducted with 315 respondents in Chicago families in the 1980s (half of them representatives of lower and the other half – of upper middle class) resulted in the conclusion that “special things” in American homes fulfil two main symbolic functions, which organise the relations

<sup>2</sup> Here the author refers to the new interdisciplinary approach to the research of material culture, which was advanced both in European ethnology and Anglo-American anthropology in the 1980s (in more detail see: Kannike 2000).

between people and things: first, differentiation, which helps the owner distance themselves from social context and emphasise their individuality and, second, identification, when the thing symbolically expresses its owner's integration in social context (ibid.: 39). This kind of dynamics is universal; yet, the concrete relation between these two functions varies by individuals and groups. The most obvious difference was that, in the case of men and younger people, in their relations with things the differentiation of personality was in the foreground, whereas women and older people tended more towards identification or orientation to others (ibid.: 94–114).

Besides the synchronic level, the temporal dimension is also very important in the interpretation of the semantics of space and things. Cultural forms draw their meaning from the role they play in an ongoing pattern of life, not from any intrinsic relationships they bear to one another (Geertz 1973: 17). In order to better educe the multidimensionality of the home, the hierarchy of domestic things will below be treated in connection with individual and collective memory, as in this research this aspect turned out to be vital for the informants.

In order to elicit the hierarchy of things, the interviewees were first asked to generally state if they had any “special” things in their homes. They were also asked to say what these things were and how they had acquired their meaning, as well as to describe the function of those things both at present and at former life stages. They were also asked to specify the meaning of these things for their users, and the family members' similar or different relations with these things.

The underlying idea was the assumption that the individual's experience is not equal to that of the group where they belong. The interview laid the main emphasis on unique personal culture at a unique moment. Even the significance of a photograph at a certain stage in the family's life cycle can become totally different when years pass. At the same time it was presumed that uniqueness could be understood only against the background of the general and common (cf. Wengraf 1990: 129).

### **Special objects: the generations' common property and its variations**

Within the framework of the project “Home as a Cultural Factor in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Estonia” 177 in-depth interviews were conducted in the homes of the citizens of Tartu in the years 1996–1999. The informants were initially found at a random choice, later on also the so-called



snowball method was additionally used, i.e., the informants directed the interviewer on to somebody they knew. From the sociological point of view, this cannot be called a representative sample, as the aim of the research was not to give an exhaustive cross-section of the homes of different social groups. The main emphasis was laid on the analysis of the underlying current of modern Estonian everyday culture. So, by their income, dwelling and life style, the typical informant is a representative of the most numerous average social stratum which can provisionally be called middle class. 54% of the respondents were 18–35 years old, 20% – 36–55 years old and 26% – over 55 years old. The percentage of men was 35 and that of the women – 65. 51% of the informants had a higher education, 40% had a secondary education and 9% were with an elementary or basic education.

The material elicited from the interviews is presented below, systematised by age groups as well as in the form of a conclusion. As the number of younger informants was much higher, it enabled the comparison between the attitudes of the people with different educational level inside this group.

Among the objects the **young informants** (up to the age of 35) **with a higher education** considered special in their homes, things related to the family and (family) history prevailed. Furniture, commodities, jewellery and other oddments inherited from parents or other relatives were mentioned the most frequently (by 43% of the respondents).

*(Special is) Grandmother's table; she told me that she had always had a candle burning on it. Once it fell down and the table caught fire, but the familiar spirit had prevented the accident and only a horseshoe-shaped mark was left on it. Grandma claimed the table brought luck. We have been carrying it along all the time. If we have some problems, we will sit at it and discuss things. It has a special meaning in every respect (Marge, aged 29, lecturer).*

Works of art have a special meaning for 16% of the informants. Hereby it is remarkable that in all cases they have acquired a special meaning for their owners due to the fact that they have been given by or inherited from close relatives. There were only two informants who, besides that, mentioned the artistic value of the works of art as essential, and only one person gave the names of the artists who had created the works displayed in her home. Also, all the respondents who had attached special importance to art objects, were women. This

relation to the works of art displayed at home seems to be universal, as from among the informants of the aforementioned Chicago research, only 16% related the special meaning of the works of art to their artistic quality. Houseplants, for example, seemed to provide more aesthetic experiences that art objects for a number of respondents (Csikszentmihalyi, Rochberg-Halton 1981: 178, 183).

Photographs, first and foremost those taken of family members, rank third in the hierarchy of special things (mentioned by 15% of the informants). More frequently people display the photographs of their grandparents (evaluated by their old-fashioned tinge) and portraits of children. However, in this informant group displaying family photographs in domestic interior is not wide-spread.

So it can be said that in the case of both art objects and photographs their main importance lies in their two functions: activating memory and symbolically emphasising the importance of family connections.

13% of the informants considered as special all kinds of things given to them as presents, the same was the percentage of those who regarded as special souvenirs brought home from tours of other countries. Things given as presents, in their turn, were again connected with family history, as they had been received on the occasion of personal or family celebrations.

*Clocks and glasses given as presents are special. They have a nostalgic meaning, yet they are in everyday use. They are not compatible with the others, but you do not want to throw them away, either. The two first mugs that date back to the beginning of our life together – they have a special meaning* (Marek, aged 25, project manager).

In the order of importance the next items mentioned as special were books (by 11% of the respondents) and things and materials connected with hobbies (10% of the respondents). While books were evaluated equally by both men and women, things or collections connected with hobbies as well as job-related materials were considered as special exclusively by men (7%); 5% of the women, however, ranked house plants as the most important in their homes. 7% of the respondents also regarded as especially dear objects connected with their childhood (toys, furniture, etc.), which again is classified under the realm of “memory”, being related to personal or family remembrances. In conclusion we can say that in the homes of young people with a higher education 78% of “special” things operate, either directly or indirectly,

as retainers or revivers of memory.

Both American and Estonian younger townsmen prefer to a somewhat greater extent objects related to activity, whereas women tend to prefer things connected with contemplations and recollections. According to Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, men's preference pattern is more similar to the children's choices and that of women's – to the ones of the more aged people. Also, women more often tend to substantiate their preferences referring to remembrances, connections and family ties than men (Csikszentmihalyi, Rochberg-Halton 1981: 106).

The hierarchy of objects changes in time both for a single person and a member of a family. So the former important objects can fall into oblivion or become trivial in the course of time, while some others can become prominent. On a wider scale, it reflects the great flexibility of the significance attributed to objects, the fact that the process of creating signification is not entirely determined by prior cultural convention (Csikszentmihalyi, Rochberg-Halton 1981: 87; Appadurai 1986 et al.).

*Evaluations change in time; once it was a stamp collection and sports diplomas, but now they have been stashed away somewhere. There are no such special things that I would grudge using* (Olev, aged 32, entrepreneur).

It is a sign of the era that the computer has become an important influencing factor in family life, at the same time being a habitual part of everyday life, a commodity (it is remarkable that no respondent attached special meaning to it at home). Household appliances are also an inevitable component of the everyday life of young intellectuals. It is regarded as necessary and the corresponding purchases are planned well ahead and considered thoroughly, although no special significance is attached to them. Yet, the interviews revealed a somewhat different relation to household appliances among men and women: while for women they were important, first and foremost, as they made their lives simpler and more convenient, then men emphasised the technical quality of the things, i.e., the thing in itself, not so much its influence in social domestic space. Analogously, Lunt and Livingstone in their research into the significance of household appliances came to the conclusion that for women it is more important that technical goods would facilitate social contacts (telephone and car rank the highest),

whereas for men they are essential rather than replacement for social contacts (key objects being the radio, TV-set and mini-tape recorder) (Lunt, Livingstone 1994: 121).

The car also has a great influence on the family's life style and rhythm. Its role as a "family member", including its "decoration" or "domestication" would definitely deserve a separate research, as the car can be regarded as the "elongation" of the home as a social space.

*Very special is the car that was bought in spring, as it increased the family's activity and provided new opportunities. It has a name, and we keep patting it. It is like a pet. Before we bought it, we had been saving money for a long time, and within the bounds of possibility, we got what we wanted. We have a new family member. What is important is the emotion, the feeling that from now on we will be more active, the level of freedom is higher now and we do not depend on others any more (Andre, aged 30, doctor).*

The attitude of the representatives of the comparison group – **young people** of the same age **with a secondary education** – towards the so-called special things was essentially different from that of the young people with a higher education. A full 24% denied the existence of such things in their homes. The supporters of this viewpoint found that all the things were similar, and the family members did not tend to worship any of them. At the same time, the reasons given for the absence of special things were lack of space and poverty.

*We don't seem to have things like that. We are not so rich as to buy such things (female, aged 34, lab assistant).*

*But the apartment in town is so small; there are no storerooms for keeping things. It is not possible to collect things like that. Remembrances remain somewhere else (female, aged 29, engineer).*

*I don't have anything special as to display (Toomas, aged 23, security guard).*

*I haven't been thinking about this kind of things. To be honest, we don't have anything like that in our family to talk about (Kristi, aged 22, student).*

Several informants also gave vague answers; they admitted that probably there were things with a special meaning at home, but they were not able to specify what they were or which function they fulfilled.

*I think some of the things have preserved such a meaning. But I cannot say where they are – somewhere in my room, maybe in a cupboard (male, aged 26, student).*

*These might be keepsakes, and they have mostly been stashed away. I wouldn't evaluate any things so highly as to put them in a place of honour and treat them somehow differently, with respect. There are no such things (Kristiine, aged 21, housewife).*

*Special? – There certainly are a few. There is nothing so important among them as to need a special altar. Maybe absolutely individual things. Moneywise – the audio-video equipment (Kristjan, aged 20, student).*

A few informants attached special significance to household appliances: the things most frequently mentioned were the TV-set and audio-video equipment in general, but also the refrigerator and the coffee-maker.

At the same time by their types and significance, the special objects mentioned by the informants were divided in a similar way inside these two groups. Both the informants with a higher education and those with a secondary education mentioned as special things mostly the objects connected with family ties and events (50%). Both photographs and things inherited from relatives as well as those connected with the latter were mentioned equally often.

*At home it (a special thing – AK) is Grandma's Singer sewing machine that stands on the cupboard. I haven't brought things like that to my lodgings (female, aged 21, student).*

*Runners made by Grandma. If a person has made something for you, you can feel their presence in these things. Or, you think of this person, and it kind of ties you to them (Gabriela, aged 23, student).*

*Things that are dearer than the others – I can't say, probably there aren't any. Yet, photographs have a special meaning; you imagine yourself back to this time. It is a remembrance – there are memories in photos. For example, in connection with this photo (a family picture – AK) I recall all kinds of feelings and things. So pictures are very important for me (female, aged 27, secretary at a police department).*

*I have one thing – it's a watch, a golden watch that my Grandpa gave me when I was born; it is a real relic for me – I haven't got a more sacred thing than this watch. I think that if my life went completely downhill,*

*absolutely below contempt, if I became totally homeless, this watch would still be a real relic for me, and I wouldn't sell it at any price. I keep it in a safe place, in a safe. I hope that my children will have this watch, and after them their children; that it will be an absolute family relic. If I look at it or touch it, I feel as if I were able to talk to my Grandpa; for me the watch is a real... direct connection with him* (Renno, aged 24, businessman).

Paintings and books were also more frequently mentioned among important objects. Like in the previous group, in the case of paintings, their nostalgic and emotional value was considered more important than their artistic value.

*I feel this painting to be close to me, it isn't anything special, but it is comforting, especially these shades of green – so pleasantly peaceful. So are books* (Maili, aged 23, student).

*There is nothing special in our home, I mean, something valuable. There are two pictures on the wall, which are connected with memories* (female, aged 33, unemployed).

In the group of **middle-aged** informants (from the age of 35 to retirement age) the aforementioned tendency to attach a special status to the objects symbolising family ties and remembrances repeats itself. 40% of the members of this group regards as the most important the things inherited from next of kin, made or given by them as presents. If we add the ones who, above all, evaluate photographs, the percentage amounts to 60.

Family recollections also turn out to be of cardinal importance in the evaluation of domestic art objects. They are regarded as special either because they recall a former home or because they are gifts from close family members on a certain family occasion.

In comparison to younger people, the informants of this group evaluated self-made objects more highly. 18% of the respondents attributed a higher status to them. The value of these objects is versatile – the enjoyment that the doer derives from the work, pride in their skills, as well as the value of individual creation and the joy over giving or receiving a present. In the case of things made by family members their value as a keepsake stands in the foreground again. A few informants also put forward books, TV-sets, Estonian flag, and some men also mentioned collections and objects connected with hobbies.

*Pictures painted by Father and given by friends are special. Grandpa's clock from the turn of the century, Grandma's and Grandpa's photos in oval frames. Sometimes when I am doing well I still feel as if my Grandma were protecting me (Ireen, aged 43, teacher).*

*Special are the things I took with me from my childhood home. Each thing reminds me of somebody or something, or a certain occasion. For my husband photos of his favourite animals are important. And as he used to go horse-riding, we have a lot of pictures of horses and also all kinds of pictures and portraits of dogs. My husband has been attracted to dogs and horses from his very childhood, either in pictures or in porcelain or painted on glass. And then, of course, children's handicraft, the things they have made at school. Whenever possible, they have been taken into use here, all these dustpans and candlesticks. They are just cute, that's why. I don't think they should be hidden as they don't match with this colour or that shelf... (female, aged 40, restorer).*

*Self-made things are very important at home, in shops they are very expensive and you cannot get a thing that is original. If you make it yourself, it has a soul. Things made by daughters, paintings, drawings from their childhood are also special. I have also kept my Grandma's dress and some of my own favourite clothes (Jelena, aged 48, psychologist).*

*Clothes, albums and photos from my youth are special. And the things I have made myself – it's a terribly good way to calm down your nerves. If I feel like a bundle of nerves, I usually knit a pair of socks for my child, or make a runner, or hem a handkerchief, then I feel calm again. But I also know that afterwards other people will be happy to get these things, so this work has a double meaning – do good not only to yourself, but also to others (female, aged 50, unemployed).*

At the same time approximately one fifth of the middle-aged group absolutely denies the existence of special things in their homes. It was not their inability to name such things or regret expressed by young people with a secondary education when commenting on the absence of special things in their homes. This group denied the existence of special things in a rather categorical manner. People with this kind of attitude mainly stressed that human relationships were of primary importance for them and therefore they were not especially attracted to the material world. In this group the percentage of those who denied possessing special things was 18.

*I have no special things, people are those who count. Nothing takes a place of honour, we haven't preserved any traditions and this means we have no objects that would date back to olden times and serve as family relics (Eva, aged 44, accountant-general).*

*Special things? I am not the one to struggle for things, I am not attracted to things, none of us are; it is not that if somebody breaks the ceramic chest for keeping onions, it will be the end of the world. That it is was a gift from a very distant relative. I don't care a bit and God forbid! (Aivar, aged 37, policeman).*

Similar to other age groups, **retired people** mentioned among the special things found in their homes keepsakes related to family ties. Here we can also include the informants who mentioned photographs or videos as the most intimate things, as they depict immediate family, so that in conclusion we can say that in this group as well things related to family remembrances were regarded as the most important ones among those special (54% of the informants regarded them as being of primary importance). In comparison with other groups, retired people attributed a higher status to self-made handicraft articles; 34% of the respondents attached special value to the things made by themselves or close relatives. Books were attributed special significance by 16% of the pensioners and only two respondents mentioned paintings and one – icons.

*Books probably have a special meaning. Maybe these – they are somehow necessary for me and if I go to them, I have kind of warm feeling in my heart. Self-made things, particularly the ones made by Father – they have special meaning; as well as those given to me by some wonderful people. These are some trinkets, some tableware, a few pictures... There is also a blanket from my babyhood kept by my Mother, and Mother's wedding veil (female, aged 68).*

*Special are things embroidered by Mother, as well as my own handicraft. Things bought at shops are mass production, the master is unknown, but the things people do with their own hands are full of warmth (Helju, aged 64).*

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion it can be said that in the homes of the interviewed citizens of Tartu, the higher than usual status is attributed to things by



their “own story”, which is connected with the informants or their families. More often than not, the things with special semantics symbolise family relations. The feeling of belonging together, which these things denote, connects the past with the present. So we can say that they simultaneously activate both the historic and moral dimensions of the home. Special things are characterised by the fact that they are rare, irreplaceable and original.

*Special are the things whose origin you know* (Karin, aged 28, doctor).

*I don't think things that come in multiple copies can be special. For example, a book can be terribly good, very special for me, but I cannot feel very sorry if I happen to lose it as I know that it can be found in a library. All originals possess a special meaning, and I have been keeping them jealously. The slide collection, especially the ones that haven't been published in magazines. Also, for example, my late Grandma's song recordings; there are real original songs among them* (Arne, aged 34, biologist).

Also an opinion was repeatedly voiced of the special meaning of the home as an entity, the unique symbiosis of all its elements, which makes it impossible to prefer one thing to another.

*Special importance has the home with all its component parts, the home in its entirety. Things don't make home, home as such is special, it has to be harmonious. The most important thing is that it is my and my family's free choice, a certain subjective amenity, the feeling that it is the right place for us* (Indrek, aged 26, marketing manager).

*Special is the home in its entirety with its aura. Yet there isn't anything so dear to me I couldn't give it up* (Toivo, aged 31, musician).

The application of a comparative perspective enables us to find an answer to the question of how cultural-specific the hierarchy of things in Estonian homes is. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton observed the great relative importance of things with a personal meaning in the homes of urban Americans – 87% of the respondents evaluated special things for the reasons related to their own person or personal enjoyment. “We get a sense of a life in which immediate experience, a search for enjoyment is important. American culture seems to be based largely on goals of novelty for its own sake, pure individuality, and the passion to possess people and things briefly” (Csikszentmihalyi, Rochberg-

Halton 1981: 87, 240). The things symbolising family connections were of a bit smaller, yet also of essential importance.

On the other hand, the group of Estonian townspeople clearly preferred things activating the continuity of the family and ties between generations to those connected with personal enjoyment. So the symbolic attempts to create unity clearly outweighed those emphasising individual distinction.

Surprisingly, the status of things related to memory was the highest in the homes of young people with a higher education. It can probably be explained by their more than average interest in (and knowledge of) history as well as their attempt to strengthen the family's developing identity through connections with the "roots". In those homes old things were, as a rule, preferred to new ones, one of the reasons for that being also the conscious opposition to consumer mentality and the preference of mental values to the cult of things. In this target group older things are attached special value also by the fact that they are usually made of more natural and healthier materials than modern commodities of a temporary character. For the retired people, on the other hand, this type of things symbolise the possibility to compensate for the lack of present positive experiences and communication deficiency by past nostalgia.

As all social groups consider "peculiarity" as an essential and desirable quality of the home (Kannike 2002), this might also be a reason why it is the keepsakes that play such an important role in creating home as an entity. The older things inherited from relatives are attached additional value by their individuality and warmth compared to the uniform and anonymous mass production. Estonian transition society relates the emphasizing of the memory-dimension in evaluating domestic things also to the popularity of the traditional-romantic interior style (Kannike 2001). It is projected against the background of the wish to draw from the past heritage the security lacking in the unstable public life as well as the persistence of the world view of the nostalgically minded citizen.

At the same time in both American, Estonian and also, for example, Norwegian (Gullestad 1999) homes there are almost no things referring to their inhabitants' ethnic, political or religious belonging. Even cultural preferences and evaluations are relatively negligibly expressed in the material milieu of the home. The cultural attitude most explicitly manifesting itself in the home is love for nature and the general ecological world view. On the level of things, this was expressed by

numerous home plants, the popularity of pictures depicting nature and the preference for interior design materials of natural origin. The evaluation of closeness to nature also has a national-ideological meaning, yet it is manifested rather on the level of public discourse.

In addition to the different design priorities and different perception of space as a whole by men and women, which have been highlighted in the previous analyses of home creation (Kannike 2002), differences between genders manifest themselves quite clearly also in the concrete usage and semantics of domestic things. Also the members of the same family can consider the same things “special” for different reasons. While for men special things are often directed to the sphere outside home and connected with the different roles of their own personality (a specialist, family man, amateur sportsman), then women have a more limited orientation to human relationships guaranteeing continuity. So for women memory-dimension in home creation is somewhat more essential than for men.

In all the social groups under study the criteria of style and compatibility in displaying significant family memorabilia are of secondary importance. Most of the special things are either in everyday use or visible. If a thing had been stashed away, it was mainly for practical reasons (jewellery in boxes, photographs in albums), and there were no absolutely sacred and untouchable things.

Modern family sociology often emphasises the slackening of the ties between family members and generations in comparison to the past decades, referring even to the crisis of the family as an institution. However, the fieldwork carried out in the homes of the inhabitants of Tartu, proves that the feeling of belonging together is essential for all social strata and strongly influences home creation. Different generations might not live under the same roof and be connected by joint economic activity, but the symbolic bonds preserving family memory still remain strong.

An analogous conclusion has also been reached by Martine Segalen, an ethnologist who has conducted a research into the relations between different generations in Paris. Her research gives us ground to claim that family spirit is not simply a relic from the past, but, vice versa, a phenomenon in harmony with modernity. The family is not connected by the sharing of material values or passing on an occupation from one generation to another. Also most modern parents have given up the idea of forcing their values, political attitudes or religion on their children. What connects generations is rather the continuously refreshed family

memory (Attias-Donfut, Segalen 1998; 2000; Segalen 2002).

So in modern society common memories are one of the most essential factors connecting generations. The cultural contacts between generations manifest themselves in more obscure forms than formerly – memory, life style, home decoration, as well as common jokes, stories, the manner of speaking. Among the things passed on from one generation to another, the more valuable are those whose strength lies in their symbolic meaning.

In conclusion it must be emphasised that this article is concerned only with one aspect among the semantic layers of the home as a specific cultural space. Any semiotic scheme is too limited for the dynamics of everyday life; however, the author maintains that it is the analysis striving for ethnographic accuracy and cultural context-sensitivity that enables to highlight the semantic aspects of the home which up to now have been concealed.

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Translated by Tiina Mällo

# **“You Forget about Tartu, if You Don’t Go there.”**

## **About the Use of City Space by Retired People in Tartu**

Maris Leponiemi

This article is a part of my Bachelor Thesis<sup>1</sup> “A City within the City: retired people’s mental image of Tartu”. The paper belongs to the field of urban ethnology, with primary attention paid to issues of individual urban experience against the background of social-political and economic processes. Furthermore, there is an analysis of the cultural meaning attached by the aforementioned retired people to the urban environment. Altogether 14 pensioners were interviewed, with an age rank of 54–83 years, 13 women and one man.

Estonia, as with other developed European countries, faces the problem of an ageing population. In 2000, about 1/5 of the inhabitants were older than 65 years. Often the status of retired people means a remarkable decline in income. The 2001 average pension was about 1/4 of the average salary (Sotsiaalministeerium, online). Therefore, the elderly people are one of the social groups who have suffered economically throughout the last ten years of the transition period and the sociologists have noted them to be authentic members of the so-called “Second Estonia”<sup>2</sup> (Lauristin, Vihalemm 1998). This paper does not automatically intend the categorisation of the social class ‘pensioners’ but it is clear that the economic situation, the habits of spending and consuming culture affect the individual’s perception of his/her environment and (mental) borders. In this particular article, I analyse how city

<sup>1</sup> Defended in June 2002 in the Chair of Ethnology of Tartu University.

<sup>2</sup> In 2001, Estonian sociologists brought forth a theory of two Estonias, “the First and the Second Estonia” on the grounds of their incomes and social status obtained within last ten years of independence.

Look also [www.postimees.ee/index.html?op=lugu&id=17837&number=1788&rubriik=3](http://www.postimees.ee/index.html?op=lugu&id=17837&number=1788&rubriik=3)

space is used in their everyday life. Four research methods are used for collecting the material: theme interviews, participant observation, mental mapping and 'flaneuring' in the city space. I have used half-structured theme interviews, that is, the questions were prepared beforehand but the order and forms of presenting these were not strictly defined.

On the grounds of the collected material, I have divided the purposes that determine the use of city space and time of the interviewees generally into three: 1) obtaining essential goods, mostly shopping for food stuff, 2) entertainment, or leisure time, and 3) taking care of health. Also visiting of official offices, paying bills and spending time with their closest ones – ('the role of grandparents') can be added to the aforementioned division. The latter activity is often carried out in connection with the first or third activity. A few interviewees emphasise the decreasing use of public city space in their senior status due to the laziness or lack of interest that has occurred in their later years. Citizens older than 65 years are free to use public transport easing their movement in the city environs. Those who use this kind of transport are very pleased with it, probably because of free transportation, and it is also one of the most important factors that limits staying in the public city space in a temporal aspect. For example, the last bus to Annelinn leaves about midnight and it finishes the entertainment time or visit to the city centre as the use of taxi cars is impossible due to economic reasons.

## **1. City space as a place for shopping**

### **1.1. Markets and wholesale firms**

One of the most important question areas in the framework of the study was designed to find out about the places where shopping was done, and how often these were visited. Here it turned out that no matter how old the interviewee was, hardly ever their shopping was carried out in shops but instead in wholesale firms and in markets. 'Shopping' means mostly buying foodstuff, other things such as clothes and home equipment etc. are bought rarely. This is caused both by the lack of sufficient financial resources as well as by already having the necessary items. The only informant who chooses the shopping place on the grounds of its pleasant situation is funded by the Nordic countries and thus the buying routine of this person is formed by other factors than those economic. So the main factors in the choice of shopping places are financial possibilities. Almost all of the interviewees emphasise that

they have to judge *where it is more useful to buy for a retired person, as he/she counts the cents and crowns, he/she has to be careful how to manage. All those medicines and bills...* (Riina, 54). Even if there are shops close to their homes or the market-square is very far away from it, they prefer to visit the market areas or wholesales outlets 2–3 times per week ... once per month. The market-square was never characterised as unpleasant or a too distant place, which would be difficult to visit. At most, the whole buying process as such can be unpleasant. The local shop could serve as a place for buying some bread but they are mostly not visited either due to the high prices or, in one case, the former saleswoman was just informed about the low quality of the goods in such shops.

*Now I visit the market square, since it is the cheapest place, and all so fresh. Because regarding shops here, for example that one on the corner, I have never bought anything from there, I know the whole business, and everything is always so old there. I buy bread and white bread from a little shop next to it* (Elli, 68).

*There is this Muuli shop just across the street, but we hardly ever visit it, because the supplies are much more expensive in there than in the market place. Bread is even as much as one crown (kroon) more expensive than in the Market House* (Helle, 73).

The market square in Annelinn, the open market by the river Emajõgi, the central Market House and wholesale firms Tirsi (Turu 37a and Ringtee 78), and to a lesser extent, the Sepa market (in Ropka district) are the favourite shopping places. This is precisely due to the lower prices and bigger choice of goods. Also *Säästumarket* (literally 'Saving Market' in Võru 140, and in Turu street) and less-specialised markets in the further districts of Tartu are important shopping places. In order to buy goods with cheaper prices, the interviewees do not mind taking a bus from one side of town to another. *Sometimes I take a bus from Annelinn to Ringtee, if I have to buy socks, a pair of socks is 12.50 there, otherwise it is 17. I guess it is a wholesale firm. I have a monthly season ticket, I undertake this extra trip, and I look up the foodstuff at the same go. There are those cheap underwear and socks, 13 and 15 crowns, one can always find use for them* (Paul, 63).

Of course, those benefits can be minimal sometimes: *Shops are very close here, but rather expensive ones. I mostly visit the market-square. Look, old people ride for free, just sit on the bus and go there. And there, in the market place, you can choose. You can choose what is better and what is cheaper, I do not know if everything is better but you think this*



way (Salli, 83).

The fact that the market-square and wholesale companies are the most popular shopping places can be explained not only by the lack of financial resources but also by the habits and established way of living. Several interviews reveal paradoxically that, even if the bad financial situation is almost always emphasised, it is not the only factor in buying: *I visit wholesales, once or more per week, and the market-squares, I buy for my dog and for myself, I buy what I like to, though whatever I can get cheaper, I have to count the cents, sort of* (Sille, 71).

My visit to the Market House with one of the informants revealed that she had an established shopping route (or path, comp. Lynch 1960) with certain shopping points (nodes) by certain sellers. The choice of the sellers was determined by personal experience about their honesty, not so much by the price or appearance of the goods. As the visit was quite short (about 30 minutes) it was difficult to decide about the service directed towards senior people. There is no reason to think that impolite answers or adding some stale buns among the fresh ones were caused by the age of the client.

## 1.2. Shops and other places

Besides my interest regarding shopping for food, I tried to find out about the places in the city areas where the interviewees are used to buying other supplies and clothes. The clothing stores in the city centre are hardly ever visited by the seniors. The interviews reveal their general attitude that everything is very expensive in the shops, and the need for clothes, shoes etc. is reduced in that age grouping.

[If you need new clothes, shoes etc., where do you go? ML] *The market square in Annelinn and in Ropka. How much does a senior need them? Young ones have to buy them, the elderly manage somehow, and we are never barefoot anyway.* [Do you visit those markets for cheaper stuff? – ML] Yes (Ene, 70).

The interviewee is not always satisfied with those items that she/he can afford to buy from the market-square. *Actually I have not bought those clothes lately, on the grounds that you have to have money for that. In the beginning, then yes, we bought cheaply from the market-square, for example Italian shoes but they did not last during the rainy days. We have noticed that if you want decent stuff, then you actually cannot get it for less than 1000 crowns* (Paul, 63).

Almost all of the interviewees claimed that they do not need any new clothes at their age. However, a visit to the clothing stores of Tartu

with a 60 year old female interviewee revealed that even if they would like to buy clothes and had money for that, suitable ones are very difficult to find. The offered clothes were too small, too “trendy” and colourful or of too low quality. Finally, the interviewee decided to use the service of a tailoring company. Here we can probably see a vicious circle where the shops and other clothing firms do not take retired people as a possible solvent target group and thus do not provide suitable items.

The most important places to shop for clothes are second-hand shops both next to home and further away areas. Items of clothing are looked for (garden) working and for re-making. Such visits are undertaken in connection with other activities in the city areas as well as separately. *We visit this second-hand shop further away; we have not visited the closer one. It is in Võru Street; we get off the bus, buy and remake them at home. Very many people do it this way. Many of them who often visit such places and say that one can get really beautiful things from there, that one can dress up greatly. But we cannot go there often; it is a big and difficult undertaking* (Ene, 70; Heldi, 73).

Three of the interviewees have their clothes made by dressmakers about once in three years. However, in such case the tailors are familiar ones, not the official professionals in sewing firms. Shoes are bought hardly ever, and if so, then again from different markets and bargain sales. The favourite shops are shoe centre ‘Walking’ in a new building – Emajõe Business Centre, *Plasku* (‘Flask’) in vernacular language, next to the main bus station in the city centre, a big shopping centre *Lõunakeskus* in the suburbs and *Pereking* (mostly domestic footwear) in Riia Street. As the aforementioned *Lõunakeskus* is not a part of informants’ weekly (shopping) route, advertisements in the media or information from acquaintances affect the route change. As it came out in choosing or not choosing some place for buying clothes, the economic reasons are not always the most important ones – there are just not suitable forms of footwear to acquire. *There are no good boots in shops. An older person has a wider foot. I went to this Lõunakeskus and Plasku in the centre but haven’t found suitable ones* (Eve, 63).

It could be presumed that if people do not go to work daily any more, enjoying visiting shopping places is a chance to get out of the home. However, this can not be concluded from the interviews. The material resources are low and also most of the interviewees lived an active life shopping being an inevitable duty not a variety.

Finnish researcher Timo Kopomaa brings out the dual social move-

ment in the open public city space: horizontal and vertical. Vertical moving marks the movement between roles of the user of the space. Horizontal moving marks movement between spaces or places (Kopomaa 1997: 30). If the interviewee passes from market place to Kaubamaja or the small shops in the centre, we can observe, with some concessions, those two movements taking place simultaneously. His or her role as an actual shopper will be alternated with the role of window-shopper. *Well, after all the official affairs I walk in the city, watch the shop windows* (Ella, 70).

*When I go to town, then I go to Kaubamaja and Kaubahall, and to bookshops. There I watch and wonder and if there are sales, I buy children books* (Ebe, 56).

According to Baudrillard, big shopping centres and large consumption are evidences of consuming becoming one of the main parts of life. In such big malls, people buy on the principle *pars pro toto* as it is not possible to acquire all the goods (Åström 1993: 321). In the lives of the interviewees, big shopping centres (for example Kaubamaja and Kaubahall) have importance as prestigious consuming places. They do not visit those places as nodes of an everyday shopping route but only when so-called luxury goods are needed, mostly gifts for close ones. *I have nothing to do in the big shops, only when I need to buy a present* (Sille, 71).

As the supplies are comparatively expensive, big shops cause both mental and physical rejection for the interviewees. The informant may remember and have liked the big shops in her childhood during the First Estonian Republic but nowadays these shops mean unpleasant experiences due to the noise, size and level of prices. Also, a certain place may be less favoured because of the lack of companions with whom to visit it (the same can be observed in the case of cafes and theatres).

[But buying clothes from those “real shops”, doesn’t it happen sometimes?] *I never go there, not even to have a look! It is so expensive there and the price says everything and eyes get so tired there. We went to this Zeppelin; there are many firms and things like this, very colourful and noisy... But what concerns shoes and clothes – we do not even go to such departments* (Ella, 70).

It is very complicated to mark the changes of shopping places and habits of senior age compared to those of working age. In some cases, the retirement came along with the new Republic of Estonia, and thus the solvent period and deficiency in goods were alternated with low

pensions and full shops. Also some of the former shops and other familiar firms are lost and new ones (e.g. second-hand shops) have taken their places and therefore the continuous shopping habit has been hindered.

*I visit shops less than I did at my working age. Then I started my life and needed everything* (Elli, 68).

One reason which reduces the interviewees' use of city spaces for shopping is the appearance of mail-order catalogues within the last ten years; and the services which have also become available close to one's home. So the shopping place has partly moved over to the private sphere of home. Two of the informants mentioned buying things every now and then from the sale agents who go from door to door; and four of them buy milk products twice a week from the milkman who comes to neighbourhood. Those factors are also narrowing elements in the use of city spaces for shopping.

## **2. City space as a venue for spending free time**

### **2.1. Day Centres**

12 of the 14 interviewees are reached via Pensioners' day centres. Therefore, such organisations have an important role to play for them in the daily use of city space and time. They spend their free time either in the centre or engaged in activities connected to the centre. There are three such institutions in Tartu. The main tasks of those are to help senior and handicapped citizens in their everyday activities. Besides day centres, there are non-governmental organisations like *Kodukotus* with a specialised elderly people's institute (Ahland 2001; Sotsiaalabi osakonna allasutused, online). All the senior unions in Tartu offer free time activities involving libraries, computers, health and culture lectures, handicraft associations, senior dance and gymnastics clubs, choirs, meetings with interesting people etc. Last but not least – in Tähtvere Day Centre the elderly people may have a cheaper lunch. The interviewees' attitude regarding the centres is unexceptionally positive; they bring forth the good sides and all the reductions that come through them.

Being a member of such a centre or union affects directly the use of city time: for example, a cheaper senior theatre ticket that can be obtainable via the union is valid for certain day-time plays. It is characterised as a positive phenomena because walking in the city in dark nights is considered an unsafe thing to do. One respondent participates in the senior dance group in the centre three times per

week but with the dance group he visits different parts of Tartu at least once per month. When the group is invited to give a show outside of Tartu, the social city space (*i.e.*, dancing with his group) is expanded outside the physical borders of Tartu. Every now and then, the space not meant for senior citizens becomes changed into older people space. The NGO *Kodukotus* arranges twice per month dance events for the elderly at the night-club *Terminal*, which is situated on the ground floor of a student dormitory in Narva Road 27, and in the university Building of Physics in Tähe Street. There is a library bus once per month at the day centre in Tähtvere, which reduces the seniors' need to visit the different libraries in Tartu.

The active participation in the day centres is varied from five days (all possible activities of the centre) to once per week (only the religious meeting). During summer seasons and weekends the centres are open for a limited period. Most of the informants take part in club work in several day centres. The important task of the centres is to offer gymnastics and health lessons. Through the senior unions, it becomes possible to visit places where one could not go on self-initiative:

[Through the union, I went to] a *computer course*, and the course in sexual education, and this swimming centre *Aura*, 'Europe' paid it all (Riina, 54).

## 2.2. Theatre, exhibition, concert, museum

My question, how do the respondents entertain themselves, was often answered negatively: it is not necessary to have entertainment at such an (high) age, they never have such wishes, and that they do not have enough money for entertainment. However, in the course of interviews it turned out that it is not so. Almost all of the seniors like to visit the theatre. Often the Vanemuine Concert Hall is also mentioned as a loved place. The favoured places are the Large and Small Vanemuine, only a few have visited the new *Sadamateater*.<sup>3</sup> No one mentioned visiting the smaller, so-called alternative theatres. A certain border is experienced in connection with *Sadamateater*. Coming over of this border is difficult for a senior citizen, the theatre is seen as a *theatre for young people, we retired people have nothing to watch there*.

[Do you visit only the Vanemuine or other theatres, too?] *With this Kodukotus I went everywhere, but in Tartu, here I visit theatre Vanemuine. I have not reached Sadamateater; my son says that there is*

<sup>3</sup> Large and Small Vanemuine, *Sadamateater* are the theatres of Tartu.

*nothing for elderly people, only one play where the actor is alone on the stage...* (Eve, 63).

*There will be this Tarmo Pihlap memorial concert in the Concert Hall soon, ticket price is 120.- /—/ Next door woman, she is a working retired person and money is not a problem for her, if you are a pensioner and want to go, then go, but the financial resources are so low* (Anni, 75).

The frequency of theatre visits is various. Some of the informants go there as much as possible with the cheaper retired people's season ticket. Some of them do not go there at all, either they dislike theatre art or they simply do not have companions. Also, the same phenomena as in participating in dance group can be observed here – sometimes routes connected to theatre expand outside of the physical borders of Tartu. The members of the union, *Kodukotus*, go together to see plays in Viljandi, Tallinn etc. Two of the informants have joined the Vanemuine Society, in order to see dress rehearsals cheaply or for free.

*We joined this society because of the dress rehearsals, then we can see them for free. It is very useful to our thin purses. This society takes us to museums, and we can watch the singing competitions. There are not so many dress rehearsals per year, but it is still a good deal. We cannot go there every time, sometimes this rehearsal is closed* (Ene, 70; Helle, 73).

A cheaper ticket may include a consciously smaller theatre impression as the atmosphere and the audience of the dress rehearsal are not the same as during “the real play”, also the time of the play is “not the right one”.

*Generally, I have visited the theatre quite a lot, and one can visit the dress rehearsal, even if the impression is not that “real”* (Eve, 63).

One of the respondents brought forth the interdependency between the possibilities to visit the places of entertainment and seasons of the year. During winter months, it is impossible to save money for theatres etc. due to the high rents and heating bills and the main entertainment comes via the TV-set and home library. During summer months, it is easier to pay for such expenses, too.

*This year [in March – ML] we haven't been anywhere yet – you cannot go anywhere during wintertime, the rents are high* (Paul, 63).

Seasonal interchange of the use of city space may also be observed in other cases. Theatre is a free-time place to be in winter, whereas in summer (theatres are closed then), the respondents are fond of visiting the Song Festival Arena and other areas where the open-air concerts are held, either with a purchased ticket or for free. Perhaps, it is possible for the informants to spend more money on entertainment during summer

seasons, or they want to definitely visit habitual and known events, like Song Festivals.

*I go to the Song Square in summer, because there is this Midsummer Day Festival. [Are those by ticket? – ML] Yes but I can afford that. Yes there are concerts and I've been there (Hilli, 83).*

*I go to male choir concerts. In summertime, I go to the Song Square happenings. If there is something more difficult but interesting, we've been there, too. Mostly in this Concert Hall. Not lately as there are so many things to do, there's no time to go... (Eve, 63).*

In regard to my question, if and how often they visit churches, it came out that the churches are used less on religious purposes but for (free) concerts. The informants look up the advertisements from the newspapers and they consider such church concerts especially good chances for retired people to enjoy mostly quite expensive music events. No one said they were regular visitors of ceremonies and four of the respondents go to church in Tartu hardly ever no matter what the reasons were. The informants who were obtained through the Tähtvere Day Centre have a weekly one- hour religious meeting in the Centre.

*I haven't been to church for a long time. I used to visit those concerts there. I like singing not so much the sermons (Salli, 83).*

*But this Salem church has really this living god there, and there are those very good concerts, they have the whole programme in a week. Last Sunday I went there 2 times, it was very good (Riina, 54).*

One of other reasons to visit city churches is the invitation of the voluntary evangelists who stop people on the streets and in graveyards and knock on doors, and also people go there for curiosity. One of the informants has agreed with their spouse to go through all temples of different sects; one of them admits to be a Bahá'í who do not have a temple of their own.

*We go to churches quite rarely. We went there, whose members come to our door once per month, those Jehovah's Witnesses. It is beautiful there, worth a visit, they do not force anything. It is over there, close to the new bridge. They study the Bible, like a course and lecture, it was interesting and nice. Not like in our church, singing and praying. No juveniles. They are quite intrusive, though (Ella, 70).*

Visiting exhibition halls is not as favoured as visits to theatre and concerts. Here the ticket price or free ticket is a less important factor, it is more a matter of individual habits. For example, respondent Anni has a cold attitude towards the exhibitions in Tartu, even if she would like to visit them somewhere else, outside of the town. Riina, on the

contrary, considers exhibition visits one essential part of her life in city.

*I like concerts a lot, but the exhibitions... I have not visited any in Tartu, I even don't know where they are... sometimes I read about it from the newspaper. If it were Versailles or the Louvre... (Anni, 75).*

*And if there are some exhibitions, I always go if possible, at least in order to have a walk, I take this purpose, either to an exhibition or opening one. There was this very interesting exhibition on Women's Day there in Vanemuise Monumentaalgalerii. I take a decision and begin to go. How were they called, something like women... feminists, there were all kind of themes, very interesting, could be more (Riina, 54).*

In seven cases, the informants mentioned, in passing, the role of a grandparent affecting their use of the city space. Depending on the age of the grandchild, the grandparent's city space is expanded to churches, different museums (including the Estonian Agricultural Museum, which lies about 2 km from the city border), McDonald's and fun parks during summer time. When I asked to point out important places in Tartu for her, Riina was guided by the role of nanny and/or relative.

*Ropka and Rahu, I live here somewhere... It is important... What else – sister's place in Annelinn, I go there to baby-sit, then this day centre in Mõisavahe; and Ristiku Street at my son's place, grandchildren. Also this Killustiku Street, there live my parents in law, and in the graveyard and in the church in Narva Road (Riina, 54).*

All the interviewees mentioned graveyards Rahumäe, Maarja, Raadi, Pauluse as places to visit more or less regularly (more in summer season). Such visits carry several functions. Besides remembering the passed ones on their relevant days, they go there to have a healthy walk and to look at the graves.

*I go to churchyard quite often, as I like to, even daily, it is nice to walk there (Hilli, 83).*

*A couple of years ago I took part in a walkers' group. We went to churchyards and other places where one does not go usually (Ene, 70).*

### **2.3. Cafés and other eating places**

Finnish researcher Jaana Ojala notes in her book about the history of the cafeterias of Jyväskylä, that whether the visit to a café belongs to everyday or a holiday alternates accordingly to the attitude of the visitor, place and the visiting situation. Daily routine visits to a cafe will be a festive undertaking if the visitor wants, for example, to reward her/himself for something with a cake (Ojala 1999: 119). For my interviewees, eating out is rather a rare holiday entertainment, as almost all



of them emphasised the extremely high prices in such places. If the respondent has never been very fond of it, he/she has kept it this way. Some of them admit trying hard to continue it as often as they used to do it while still working and several say that they go for it less than they would like to, once per month or less. Sometimes, the shopping in the market-square is continued with a following reward – a visit to a café.

*If you go to take care of something to centre or to market-square, then you go there, quickly, when you have free time. I go to this Teatrikohvik terrace, a nice view and. But I think, yes, this purse, I am not used this way, perhaps someone has to have counted cents throughout the life, but not me. Nowadays I just cannot afford to visit cafés, if you go there once, then you have this "hole in the purse". A cup of coffee and a cake, they are so expensive now (Anni, 75).*

Mostly this visit takes place about once per month, with the members of senior's social network – friends and relatives. More favourable places are *Teatrikohvik*<sup>4</sup> as there are other people of the same age and the visit can be a part of the theatre visit, also the cafes Werner and Wilde are popular. Interviews reveal some places that have stronger emotional background, probably thanks to the long experience of the respondents. *Teatrikohvik* is visited most often, in connection with theatre visits. In a few cases, the interview gives an expression that a visit to *Teatrikohvik* is difficult to recall since the place is not taken as a "real café". Such a statement can be illustrated with an interview situation where a spouse comments on the given answers.

[When did you last go to a café? – ML] *I do not remember at all. Haven't been for a very long time.* [Spouse: What are you talking about, you just were to this *Teatrikohvik*...] *Yes, of course, we were there recently. In the cafeteria, if I don't count the cafés of theatre and sport buildings, I have not been [during the last year] (Paul, 63).*

*So, I have always visited cafés and continue to do so. I like to. Always have. In old times, then Werner all the time. But now I do not like it any more, there is no such atmosphere any more. There were those good buns. Now the place lacks the right attitude, there is no such culture any more, and the café culture is different (Sille, 71).*

Visits to restaurants and other eating-places have remained with the period of active working (pro Soviet) time. Eating out is extremely exceptional and mostly a part of some family memorable day, or

<sup>4</sup> Theatre Café, situated in the building of Large Vanemuine having a beautiful view over Tartu.

connected to a former workplace.

*Wilde, McDonald's, we just sat with our family. Also in the restaurant Neljas Aste, and in the Korean restaurant. Children invite me. The sponsors support my former workplace a lot. And it does not matter that I am retired now, they still invite me!* (Sille, 71).

Only one of the respondents mentioned having lunch outside of home or day centre every now and then. It allows her to combine entertainment and looking for information (TV, newspapers) which she lacks at home. Also, as it was observable in the process of making church mostly a concert place, the restaurant is transferred primarily to place of enjoying rather dance than food.

[In restaurant *Nostalgia*, at Pikk Street] *there was this dancing floor from 22.00; we did not go to see this entertainment as you had to buy a separate ticket for it. We danced by ourselves, and spent 100 crowns on average. A little wine and beer and bric-a-brac. Teatrikohvik, restaurants Nostalgia, Entri, Aleksandri. We did not want to eat and drink, but to dance. Two crazy ones. At least once per month* (Anni, 75).

Cafes, theatres, exhibition halls and day centres are the public space of the city. However, the respondents also mentioned their home as a place, which fulfils several functions at the same time, often being the most pleasant place to be. Here, having entertainment at home, not inevitably outside of it, could serve as an example. The older people get more of their everyday events and festive events inside of the home walls (Pohjolainen 1983).

*My entertainment is TV. I like to read good books at home* (Paul, 63).

*My hobby is to do handicraft at home* (Elli, 68).

*TV is a cheap and good friend for me* (Salli, 83).

### **3. City space as a place for taking care of health**

There were no common ways to take care of one's health, as the health condition, time spent for taking care for it and places to do it were various. Three out of 14 respondents had retired due to bad health and thus they had to deal with health care a lot. Another three claimed that they never visit doctors and others visited such places irregularly.

Besides the family doctors close to interviewees' homes (Maarjamõisa, Mõisavahe, and Gildi Streets) and the Dental Clinic at Raekoja Square, help is sought from private/alternative doctors. There are gymnastic groups at the day centres, which are poly-functional: they help to keep people in good shape as well as partly satisfy the need for communication. Retired people meet each other there and also the

group trips are organised outside of the city space.

A pensioner's moving route can be expanded due to the obtaining of cheaper health goods. For example, one interviewee used to fetch certain reduced-price health goods from the clinic, Maarjamõisa, close to her home. After the reduction was abandoned, she also changed the purchase place, and after finding an even cheaper one, she did it once again.

*But now those Rohupood shops have emerged, also in this Karete shop. And I went there. In ITAK [in Ringtee] one package was 67.50, but in Rohupood 62.20. Five crowns is money too, and now I go to this Rohupood, and in Maarjamõisa I said I will not come here again, since I get it cheaply from another place (Ella, 70).*

Also, the interviewees mention fetching health care brochures from different town libraries, although it is difficult to be there in time (the brochures are very popular). In choosing chemists and places of health care services the comfortable physical position or accessibility are not as important as the cheaper or free service. The sums, which tip the scales in favour to one or another place, often seem very small to a bystander. Nice and suitable company for an older person may sometimes overcome the financial side.

*I used to go to gymnastics in Kodukotus. But it was not free and the fee got bigger. Then I went to this Kalda Street centre, it was for free, and now it is 4 crowns per hour. Then a familiar person in that Kodukotus asked me to come back there, that it is 25 crowns per month while we pay 32 crowns per month here. We said that it is really much. But as two friends of mine went to Kalda Street, I went there too. There were all strange for me in there at Tähtvere, I did not like it. Now I do not want to give up this Kalda Street, even if it is financially more difficult for me (Ene, 70).*

Walking daily routes is a peaceful and suitable alternative for bus transport in taking care of one's health. Walking in town is a not stressful way of moving because it is one of the sports that a pensioner goes in for, besides gymnastic groups (Laidmäe 2001). The interviewees walk gladly to shopping places but not when returning from there. In some cases, walking is preferred when the city transport is unfamiliar and when it would take too much time to reach the goal by bus. Disliking walking is substantiated with increased laziness in retirement age and with weakened health. Having a pet affects the use of the city space directly: with a dog, the senior citizen walks long distances and happens upon places where she/he would have not gone otherwise (for example, the further areas of the banks of river Emajõgi; or in one case

the dogs' school).

*You forget about Tartu, if you don't go there. You have to keep the laziness away!* (Ella, 70).

#### **4. Pleasant and unpleasant areas**

If there is space, there are borders. The borders of areas can be mental, physical, they can be social, material, symbolic, continuous or temporary and they are in continuous change. The task of borders is to control the relations between inside and out. The mental borders are harder to come up to than the physical ones being at the same time more flexible (Junkala 1999: 21). There are several factors that cause the feelings of borders and the areas behind boundaries may be experienced directly either as unsuitable or dangerous, or on the contrary, pleasant and cosy. In my paper, I have been interested in the mental borders of the informants – if and how, do they perceive the open and closed areas/borders in Tartu. The informants' emotions concerning mental borders often depend on unpleasant or pleasant memories, on social prejudices or on their high age. Also temporal aspects may have an affect if a place is accepted or not accepted – during the day time *Toomemägi*, the Dome Hill, is a charming and loved place but the interviewees would not go there at night due to criminal behaviour.

*Someone like me wouldn't go to Atlantis<sup>5</sup> and to the restaurant. Of course, if there would be my own company, then, but just me alone, no...* (Elli, 68).

*I think the graveyard is an especially pleasant place. There are no places for a person as old as me* (Salli, 83).

The subjective images of Tartu were studied in the last section of the interview. The most contradictory question was about the pleasant (where it is comfortable and nice to be and where would he/she like to go again) and unpleasant places in Tartu. When talking about pleasant and unpleasant areas, there were particular symbols picked up by the informants. It came out that the informants do have very different attitudes against the (new) symbols of Tartu. A place that awakens nice feelings in one of the respondents has a negative aura in the mind of another.

For example, *Emajõe Ärikeskus* (Business Centre) was a good sign of the renewing city and successful life for interviewee Sille (71), but

<sup>5</sup> A popular night-club.

several others wish it to never have been built. Also *Kivisild* (Stone Bridge) which was blown up in 1941 and its successor *Kaarsild* (Bow Bridge), built in the 1950s are often remembered as contradictory symbols of Tartu.

*It is so nice that there are those new buildings in city centre. And this Emajõe Plasku, I like it, town looks totally different nowadays* (Sille, 71).

*There are so many large stone buildings, and now this Plasku in city centre, it should not have been built!* (Ene, 70).

*To restore Kivisild – I am totally against it, what’s gone that’s gone. Just like making an old person young again, it is not the same any more* (Paul, 63).

*I want to build Kivisild again! Of course, building the tower of this Jaani Church was important, but how many of Tartu inhabitants actually visit it? But Kivisild must be built instead of this awful Kaarsild, to restore the entity: The Town Hall, the Square and the Kivisild* (Heli, 74).

With one exception, all the interviewees were deeply satisfied with their present home district and environment, even if the house environment or city district area seems to be unpleasant to a bystander. The reasons of satisfaction are a nearby bus stop, greenery, silence, but quite often, those reasons are not finally formulated. The satisfaction could be a result of a humane wish to think and feel good in one’s own area. It is a person’s home, which is familiar and to which the smaller and bigger deficiencies are forgiven.

*Those sleeping-areas<sup>6</sup> they are not so very favourable... But on the other hand, the older you get the easier it is, all those comforts and central heating, as long as you can afford to pay for them, it is good, no matter how nice or bad the appearance of the houses are. Nothing makes this area especially good, here is no real park, but you know, one gets used to everything* (Anni, 75).

From different town districts, Tähtvere with its two-floor garden houses is brought out as an area with a clear image, which has been formed through the years. Besides big houses, nice gardens and eye catching architecture, it has always been “a bit better place”, the area where professors and other educated people live.

[What would you say about this Haava Street? – ML] *Here live the more educated people! Like my husband’s father. /—/ A district of*

<sup>6</sup> Big blocks of flats, Annelinn, built in the 1980’s and known as a ‘sleeping-room’ in people’s language.

educated people. In Kooli Street, there are usual ones, but here live such educated ones (Elli, 68).

*This district Tähtvere is generally a different district. It has always been considered a better one. It was called the district of professors; there are all two-floor houses, a bit bigger ones. Nowadays, all those garden cities look the same, but this Tähtvere is still the most pleasant one (Anni, 75).*

The city centre is also an area, which for no special reason awakens negative or, on the contrary, rather positive emotions as one can be there “in the middle of life”. The pleasantness of certain areas of Tartu is often substantiated with a general emotional background connected to it: places often visited in working age and those places with which the respondent associates his/her Tartu-identity that can not always be clearly articulated. *Tartu is my town, and mine is always sweeter than strange ones (Salli, 83).*

The places are not only geographical but also historical. The experiences, impressions and feelings are fixed to the places and thus the past memories have an important role in making a place unpleasant in Tartu. Although the Soviet Army has left Tartu years ago, the town district where it was mainly located has still a negative form – even if the interviewee’s own home is far away from it, for example in Ropka district.

[Are there any districts in Tartu, where you would not like to go? – ML] *To this army district in Annelinn, I don’t like this Russian Army division. It is so dirty and nasty and awful. It is situated over there, behind everything. I have never liked it (Sille, 71).*

*There were those Stakhanov and Sovetskaya Streets, when I came here [1971 – ML], that is such district where I do not go practically. I do not go to the airport either<sup>7</sup> (Paul, 63).*

Another informant who had experienced fear in a particular place about 20 years ago immediately recalled it and presented the place as still existing nowadays Tartu. [Are there any districts in Tartu, where you would not like to go? – ML] *I would not like to go to those men who drive around in a barrel. It was unpleasant, I was scared. Crazy Germans, fortunately all of them are alive. [?] 20–30 years ago (Riina, 54).*<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The airport close to Tartu used by Soviet Army, not in active use any more.

<sup>8</sup> I failed to get a more detailed description of this event.

I also asked if the interviewee considers Tartu a safe or unsafe town. Hardly ever the respondents had experienced the direct personal maltreatment in town, therefore it can be said that the imagination and opinion about the non-safe areas is formed on the grounds of media and the stories of acquainted people. Tartu is considered a safe town; it comes out in the often-stated opposition regarding Tallinn. Tartu is peaceful, small, silent and pleasant while Tallinn is unpleasant and dangerous.

[Is Tartu safe? – ML] *I don't know, not lately, I don't dare to go out during nights, and I see that the younger ones don't dare either. But compared to Tallinn and Kohtla-Järve, of course it is much safer* (Eve, 63).

A rarely active informant, who seldom reads newspapers and whose moving routes are limited to a day centre, Market House once per week and walking her dog along the river banks, has no clearly negative experiences regarding any of the town districts and she is not afraid to walk her dog even in dark hours. Here I assume that her brave attitude has been formed through a narrower social circle and irregular media observation, because of which news causing fears reach her less than other respondents.

## 5. Conclusion

The most determinative factor in the use made of urban space and choice of spatial practices can be said to be economic aspects and financial possibilities, followed by health factors and the existence of social networks (for example whether the senior citizen in question has a companion for their different undertakings). The main purpose for using urban space is shopping for foodstuffs. The route and places frequented for this task are mostly determined by cost considerations and habit. That makes the open food markets, wholesale food firms and second-hand shops valuable and often visited places in urban spaces, whilst large shopping centres are considered expensive, inaccessible and raucous places, lacking comfortable conditions for senior citizens. In addition to expense, it might also be proffered that senior citizens have a tendency not to select modern shopping centres as locations for buying clothes as they generally do not contain outlets which stock suitable attire.

The pensioners' second main purpose in using urban space, spending free time, is largely dependent on their low financial income. Senior citizens' look continuously for cheap, yet still high-quality possible

ways in which to enjoy cultural life, either in the day-care centres or by using special discount tickets made available to senior citizens. In the case that they are unable for some reason to use public urban spaces, the private space of their home will also be utilised as a place of entertainment. In this case, the television, radio and home library replace visits to the theatre and cinema. When visiting the theatre, the time of day attended depends on when discounted tickets are available. Eating out, going to public restaurants and cafes is disproportionately expensive compared to senior citizens income and they can afford less of such entertainment than was possible during their employed lives.

The third purpose of pensioners' urban space use is related to taking care of their health. There is no clear model of health behaviour in city spaces as health conditions vary a lot inside the studied group. One activity may have several functions, for example, senior citizens use walking to the exhibition hall or to the shop, instead of taking a bus, in order to have some physical exercise. They also participate in the low-price or free exercise groups conducted at the day centres and listen to health care lectures in the same place.

Whether a certain area in Tartu is particularly liked or disliked in senior citizens' minds depends on their personal experience, as well as the image gleaned from media coverage. Crime does occur in Tartu, yet it still represents a relatively peaceful and safe town if contrasted with other areas and towns in Estonia.

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# Reception of the Topic of Repressions in the Estonian Society

## Terje Anepaio

### Introduction

The present article has been prepared in the framework of the research project “Memory as a Cultural Factor in the Biographical Narratives of Estonians” (1998–2001)<sup>1</sup>. The aim of the project was to investigate the role of memory in the Estonian culture of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century through individual biographical narratives. The problem setting proceeded from the rapidly developing and changing socio-cultural situation in Estonia in the 1990s. This situation was characterised by conflicts and increasing controversy between different social strata, generations, Estonians living in Estonia and in exile (Vunder, Anepaio, Kõresaar 1998). We presumed that the roots of many phenomena and attitudes were to be found in the recent past of Estonians – in people’s experience and in the background for the formation of their attitudes and behaviour in contemporary society. Another significant aspect was the present perspective, i.e. how social discourses and the present situation of an individual influence the interpretation of his experience of time.

My paper is about the *encounter* of the Estonian society of the transition time with its past and concentrates on the tragic part of this encounter, namely the Soviet repressions. I will regard the deportations of the 1940s as a set of events in the social memory of Estonians and follow the dynamics of reception of the topic of repressions in the Estonian society. The emphasis is on the processes that characterise the social memory of Estonians.

In my analysis I proceed from the model of social memory developed by the German social scientist Peter Alheit (1989), which reflects the shaping of biographical experience and its development from the level of autobiographical memories to the higher forms of social knowledge. Peter Alheit distinguishes two levels in the social memory expressed by a recollection scheme (*Erinnerungsschemata*) and an

<sup>1</sup>Grant No. 3272 from the Estonian Science Foundation.

interpretation scheme (*Deutungsschemata*). A level of experiences and events, based on experiences/events and their verbal relaying (first) in a personal and/or (later) a traditional form, emerges around the recollection scheme. Thus an individual ties his/her experiences with common ones. The interpretation scheme comprises various organised and institutionalised forms of processing the social experience. The interpretation scheme starts with the creation of interpretations at the everyday level (e.g. shaping of value attitudes of a certain group or social stratum) and continues with the more developed levels of interpretation (mass media, associations or law and sciences). We may also say that the experience level belongs to the private sphere of an individual, whereas the interpretation level is a part of the public sphere.

There may be several such social memories in a society. The position of one or another memory in a specific society depends on how the two levels of the specific memory are interlinked, i.e. the memory with a stronger/wider interpretation level becomes dominant in the society.

Leaving the problem of multitude of memories aside, I will concentrate on the memory where the repressions hold an important position. Within the framework of this memory I will emphasise the distinction between the experience (or private) level and the organised (or public) interpretation level, analysing their mutual relationships and their dynamics in the Estonian society in the 1990s.

### **The topic of repressions in the Soviet society**

When a large power wants to deprive a small country of its national consciousness, it uses the method of organised forgetting (Connerton 1991: 14). It is well-known that the Soviet regime pushed the tragic memories of Stalinist repressions into public oblivion for decades. The society experienced a collective amnesia serving political purposes. Throughout the Soviet time people kept such memories to themselves or limited to an intimate and narrow domain – usually family or relatives. The wish/unwillingness to forward this traumatic experience and the thoroughness of what was shared depended on the internal coping of the specific individual with his/her experience, which also determined the strategy selected (e.g. circle of reliable friends, attention to the impact of the information on them, see Anepaio 2001: 202–206). The general silence was primarily caused by the fear of (possible new) repressions and also the desire to conceal the stigmatisation and

overcome it by getting integrated into the society. However, the fear of the authorities or existence of a silent circle of the repressed was not always the reason (see also Anepaio 2001: 205–206). The forwarding of the experiences of the repressed was also determined by (deliberate) indifference and ignorance of the listeners with different experiential backgrounds. The following example originates from an interview with a woman who had been deported:

*... And when you go and tell to a person who has not experienced it – he will never descend to this level. I have a relative like that – he doesn't listen to it ... my nephew ... well, he was not touched by all this ... he won't tell you anything, he avoids all this* (woman, b. 1931, Tartu).

Up to now the Estonian society has not become particularly conscious of its unwillingness to know, which has been manifest at different times at different levels of the society.

Thus social amnesia was being created officially and many facilitated it by preferring to avoid knowledge, even if they had been offered to learn about the repressions. In sum, as elsewhere in Eastern and Central Europe, real past was systematically eliminated from social memory.

## **Institutionalisation of the experience of repressions**

### **Publicising of the past**

The social landslide of the end of the 1980s forcefully introduced the topic of repressions into public debate. The topic of the deportations is considered to be launched by an article published in 1987 in the main cultural newspaper of the country by the historian Evald Laasi (1987). Alongside with the period of Estonia's independence between the World Wars, the topic of repressions was central in creating a new construction of the past to replace the previous model. These were the main past events that the totalitarian system had distorted and not mentioned as they pointedly represented the violence and illegality of the Soviet system.

Presentation and publicising of the tragic repressions in the past flooded all types of (mass) media. Nearly simultaneously with the national newspapers and magazines, materials on the tragic past started to appear in local publications. Beside the generalising surveys of the events primarily presented by professional historians and lawyers and also relayed by public figures, individual experience quickly started to

gain ground in the form of memories of the actual victims in shorter and longer layouts. The radio broadcast both factological surveys and memories of the victims (e.g. the series *Kirjutamata memuaare* (“Unwritten Memoirs”)). The past became actualised and started to feed fiction, the initial mild interpretations of it soon were replaced by much harsher reflections of reality. All kinds of memoirs and documentary books based on recollections abounded. The authors were the repressed themselves and also various mediators who collected reminiscences in order to publish them.<sup>2</sup> Theatre performances reviving the past tragedy filled theatres with emotionally sympathetic audiences.<sup>3</sup>

### Public commemoration

The past started to be remembered and celebrated also through ceremonies and symbols. Mass ceremonies took place on deportation anniversaries and reflected in the press (e.g. Sildam 1988; Jullis 1989; Neilt... 1989). Symbolic commemoration of the repressions gained increasing public attention (e.g. Ruutsoo 1988).

At first the commemoration events were held at locations symbolically or directly connected with the repressions (e.g. railway stations), but soon monuments dedicated to the tragic past started to be erected. It was decided to build a central memorial in the middle of Estonia at Pilstvere (Jeletsky 1989).

The formerly covert past, i.e. the deportations, thus became a conscious and official part of social memory. At this point it is important to mention the recognition extended to the past by the authorities in the speech of the then Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet Arnold Rüütel broadcast by the Estonian Television connected with the 40th anniversary of the March deportation in 1989 (ENSV... 1989) and in *Address to the people of Estonia* published in the same year on the anniversary of the June deportation by three government bodies (the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Estonia, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian Soviet Socialist

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Jaan Ellen, a retired journalist from South Estonia, published several documentary stories based on the memories of the repressed people in 1994–2001 (Ellen 1994; 1995; 1998; 1999; 2001).

<sup>3</sup> E.g. the productions of Jaan Kruusvall's play *Vaikuse vallamaja* (“The Community House of Vaikuse”) at the Tallinn Drama Theatre named after V. Kingissepp and the Theatre “Vanemuine” in Tartu, Rein Saluri's play *Minek* (“The Departure”) at the Tallinn Drama Theatre and the Pärnu Drama Theatre named after L. Koidula and Raimond Kaugver's play *Saturnuse lapsed* (“The Children of Saturn”) at the Theatre “Endla” in Pärnu.

Republic and the Council of Ministers of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic) (Pöördumine... 1989).

In the course of opening up and sharing of the past a horizontal linkage within the generation who had suffered the repressions and a vertical linkage with the next generations are forged (the memories are relayed also by the younger generation of journalists) and personal recollections become collective. The formerly private communication between the repressed people (cf. Anepaio 2001) intensifies and becomes public. Many dare to meet and gather publicly, manifesting their experience. At such meetings, which mostly brought together people from one location of deportation (e.g. a local *kolkhoz*), the past was reconstructed jointly – common memories were regained, shared and exchanged.

### **Organisations**

The repressed manifested themselves also through organisations and the association “Memento” founded on March 25, 1989 becomes the central umbrella organisation for the branches in the counties. These organisations start to restore and create their own version (the view of the repressed) of the past and disseminate it in the society. Proceeding from Peter Alheit’s model of social memory, we are looking at the level of organised interpretation systems. On the one hand, the emphasis is on maximum clarification and publicising of the repressions in order to find information about all the repressed people<sup>4</sup> and to gather recollections. On the other hand, the anniversaries connected with repressions were celebrated and monuments erected. In other words, a social practice of commemoration is born and people recall and celebrate events and persons that are part of their jointly acknowledged generational and cultural identity and common understanding (Middleton, Edwards 1997).

The new situation generated a wider interest in the society; for instance, the repressed people started sharing their past at alumni conventions of schools and classes, which had also become accessible for Estonians living in the West.

In this process of regeneration of covert past professional historians

<sup>4</sup> A separate information and history committee is working at “Memento”, in 1990 the Register Bureau of the Estonian Victims of Repressions was established. A 12-volume series of publications on the repressions has been planned, by now four volumes have been published. See Helk 2002.

and lawyers provided a legal and factual numerical framework for the repressions. In her study of the March deportation of 1949 the historian Aigi Rahi has written that the treatment of the topic of the deportations first underwent a so-called legal period, when the central problem was the provision of a competent legal assessment – only later the number of the deportees was focused on (Rahi 1998: 9–11). The public and legally grounded condemnation of the past violence gave the people the courage to talk about what actually had happened to them and say that it had been wrong. The numerical framework supported this conviction and provided a picture of the scope of the violence. Thereafter people started to fill it in with their memories. As a result of this process, a common metalevel narrative was gradually created.

A symbolically important step was the inclusion of this narrative in school textbooks:

“Mass deportation of June 14, 1941. In June 1941 the repressions of the Soviet regime assumed the character of massive and state-sponsored terror. On the night of June 14 NKVD carried out a criminal mass deportation in Estonia. Similar actions were simultaneously conducted in Latvia and Lithuania.

The deportation in June 1941 was an act of administrative violation, as the victims were not given a chance to say a word in their defence. The houses or apartments were surrounded at night; people were woken up and read decisions on deportation. Some time (from twenty minutes to an hour) was given to pack up and under guard the families were escorted to railway stations where railway cars supplied with bars were waiting. At the stations men were separated from the rest of the family members, as they were considered to be under arrest, whereas others were classified as persons to be deported. The trains stopped at the stations for several days until the journey to Russia began. There the men were taken to prison camps and other family members were settled in villages.

According to existing data **10 157 people were deported from Estonia in June 1941** (*Eesti ajalugu* 1991: 350–351).

“Mass deportation of March 25, 1949. On the night of March 25–26, 1949 the plan of genocide was implemented. This was a time when the spring school vacation had not yet ended and the boarding students were still at home.

The horrors of the night of June 14, 1941 repeated themselves. As in 1941 the action had hit the population totally unexpectedly, then now people were aware of several signs of danger (accumulation of trucks,

gossip, warnings). As a result many succeeded to hide from deportation and were replaced by people drawn from the “reserve”. On the other hand the deportation of 1949 was even more callous than in 1941: people who fled were shot at, property of deported people was openly appropriated.

According to existing data 20 702 people or 2.5% of Estonians living in their homeland were deported. The victims were sent to western Siberia or northern Kazakhstan in freight cars meant for livestock. The farms with all property left there were subsumed into kolkhozes, part of farms remained empty and decayed” (ibid.: 395).

The school textbooks merge the interpretation level (academic study) and the experience level (living memory) and the official interpretation of the repressions is a combination of both levels. Indeed, the inclusion of the experience, i.e. memories, in a school textbook itself is an indicator of institutionalisation.

### **Re-privatisation of experience in the second half of the 1990s**

The Estonian society was predictably quick to accept this narrative. This acceptance also constituted a protest against the former Soviet narrative, which treated the deportations as necessary actions against the enemies of the Soviet system.<sup>5</sup>

While the rapid recognition of the narrative was predictable, it is quite surprising that the meaning of this narrative started to decrease at a similar pace. From the middle of the 1990s the topic of repressions lost its prominent position in public debate, being preserved in official discourse as “a crime against humanity” and leaving two annual commemoration days in the official memory of the nation. June 14 is commemorated as a national mourning day (Pühade...1994), when national mourning flags are to be hoisted, March 25 is a national commemoration day and there is no official requirement to use mourning flags.

At the same time, memories enter the scope of academic attention and in-depth study of the mass repressions begins. However, the number of professional researchers is small and analysis is conducted largely by the repressed people themselves.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> A classic example can be found in Vol. III of *An Overview of the History of the Communist Party of Estonia*, pp. 49, 264–275 (*Ülevaade... 1972*).

<sup>6</sup> A thorough survey of the current state of the research and its results has been made by A. Rahi (2002).



Alongside with research, systematic collection of the past experience for scientific purposes was started. In the second half of the 1990s two central *lieux de mémoires* emerged: the Estonian Literary Museum extended its activities in gathering biographies and the Estonian National Museum started the collection of memoirs connected with the repressions. The Estonian Literary Museum had started the collection in 1989 and among others also biographies from the people who had been repressed were received in the cultural archives. The collection of biographies gathered greater momentum with the creation of the Estonian Biography-Researcher's Society "Estonian Life Stories" in 1996. The results of the biography competition "My fate and the lives of my relatives during the troubled times in history", oriented to the preservation of information about hard times and complex destinies and held by the association, contained particularly numerous descriptions of the repressions.<sup>7</sup> The Estonian National Museum gathered recollections of the repressions (deportations) in the traditional questionnaire form.<sup>8</sup>

Memories and data about the repressions continue to be collected by the organisations of the victims who frequently cooperate with local museums. However, the attention paid by the Estonian society to research, professional and more balanced treatments of the topic is decreasing.

### **Changing values in a changing society**

The rapid socio-economic changes typical of the former socialist camp happened also in Estonia. The attempt to survive economically in the quickly changing times and orientation to the future became a priority at both social and individual levels. In such development the past was left on the background – a tendency characteristic of societies oriented to rapid changes, results and achievements. Albrecht Lehmann has described how the flight and deportation of people from East Germany after World War II and coping in the West-German society quickly lost

<sup>7</sup> The collections of the Estonian Literary Museum hold over two hundred biographies of the deported people (Hinrikus 1999: 6, data about later acquisitions from Rutt Hinrikus).

<sup>8</sup> Questionnaire no. 200 : 1941. *aasta küüditamine, elu asumisel (The deportation of 1941, life in the location of deportation)*, Tartu: ENM 1998 and questionnaire no. 201: 1949. *aasta küüditamine, elu asumisel (The deportation of 1949, life in the location of deportation)*, Tartu: ENM 1998. In the museum the answers to the questionnaires are preserved in the archives of the answers of correspondents (ERM KV 867–883).

its political urgency and communicative meaning in both the family circle and the public sphere. In many families these topics were pushed to the background by political and economic developments (Lehmann 1989: 185; 1991: 7).

In Estonia the process of forgetting was sped up by the increasing openness of the society to the world. Information made available by the traditional media channels (printed press, television, radio) concerned not only the nation's history, but also a wide spectrum of global affairs. This process was catalysed by the information revolution and the advent of new information technologies. As a result, in comparison with the past situation, the general information flow underwent explosive growth. The Internet, the modern provider of infinite possibilities, reached Estonia in 1991 and in April 1992, the first international connections were set up.<sup>9</sup> The proportion of information representing the tragic past in the general information flow decreased rapidly and, particularly for the young, the past started to lose its significance.

At the same time, the Internet has become/is becoming a channel, which helps (or at least provides a possibility) to convey the tragic past experience to the young.

Currently the web contains a homepage on the deportations including a historical survey, photos and recollections of the victims and also references to literature, debates and country study materials on the deportations compiled by young people.<sup>10</sup> However, members of the older generation, whose connections with the information society are not so close, feel that the past so important to them has been neglected by the young. This neglect and disregard is amplified for them because the reception of the past experience, or at least a part of it, occurs in a sphere unknown to this generation and therefore cannot be influenced by them in any significant extent.

An important role in the relevant processes is played by the ideological change in the new social elite. The young (both in terms of age and experience) political and economic elites of Estonia have together embarked on the creation of a new image for Estonia and Estonians. Estonians are no longer presented as suffering, unhappy and helpless, but as a nation able rapidly to integrate with the West (see Lauristin, Vihalemm 1997: 106). The desire of the state to move forward

<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.ioc.ee/eesti/6.html> 14.08.02.

<sup>10</sup> <http://el.kolhoos.ee/~14.08.02>; <http://www.estpak.ee/~vastkk/almanahh/tood.htm>

and create itself an image attractive for the world outside leads to changed attitudes in domestic policies. “National ideology and national history” are deemed necessary only as far as they are pragmatically reasonable.

This means that although the commemoration days are celebrated, ceremonies are carried out and the past is regularly remembered, the history is actually largely ignored. The following excerpt from an interview illustrates the way how a person who has been deported feels about it:

*You know, I have been there on Linda Hill [a monument in Tallinn of the mourning Mother Linda of the main hero of the national epic Kalevipoeg – TA] on the anniversary of deportation /—/ You can see there those unhappy, tired, worn-out – now that’s an interesting picture – those old people. You can see the masses. Now, further away, quite far away, you can see the members of the parliament in fancy coats who feel extremely uneasy /—/ They do not step up to any people, to anybody. No way. They make their speeches. It is necessary, isn’t it. Well, you can make your speech there. They are happy to go to the monument of “Estonia” [monument to the victims of the shipwreck of Tallinn-Stockholm ferry “Estonia” – TA], but here they feel extremely uneasy (woman, b. 1932, Tallinn).*

The schism between the generations is a general result of the development of the society striving to fast reforms, achievement and liberal economy. The Estonian society is divided into young and optimistic “winners” oriented to the future and the older disappointed generation (cf. Lauristin, Vihalemm 1997: 109). This schism is also expressed in the remembering of the repression experience and the wish to remember and commemorate it.

Joint remembrance has ceased to work as it used to. The audience of the commemoration events is mainly the repressed people themselves and the following generations are not present. Other generations have withdrawn and this is true also of a part of the repressed people themselves.

Thus the repressed people may share their memories and relay their experience, but this information is primarily consumed by museums, i.e. institutions which are specifically meant for storage of all types of memories. The memories of repressions are nothing special any more and have become a part of routinely collected memoirs (memory).

The situation which prevailed for decades when the repressed people had to be silent has been quickly replaced with an environment where (they find that) nobody is interested in their past and their recollections any more. Thus the past which for a time was commonly shared is pushed back to the personal level of the repressed people. Formerly and officially these memories belong to everybody, but actually they are turned back into a private affair of the victims.

### **Conflicts in the changed present reality**

In their everyday life the victims of repressions frequently interpret the changed social values as conflicts.

The legislation of the Republic of Estonia has freed the repressed people from the state-imposed stigma. The victims of mass repressions have been legally rehabilitated<sup>11</sup> and the restitution of property is in its final stages. In order to compensate the difficulties of deportation or prison years those are tripled when calculating the pensions.

The theoretically restorable justice is often out of balance with respect to the realities of life. The following example was brought by an activist of the organisation “Memento” in the press. A family of four members who had all come through the repressions and whose total time of stay in Siberia was 66 years received as compensation for their 14-room presentable home a sum which today buys half of a 1-room apartment in the cheapest district of apartment houses in Tallinn (Virkus 2000: 25).

The repressed people perceive the restitution not only as the return of their property, which is politically a part of legal continuity of the state and economically a part of the general privatisation, but also as a stand taken by the state to the injustice suffered by them. However, many people are not satisfied with such a stand or, to be more precise, its extent and the state is expected to show even greater caring and justice.<sup>12</sup>

Part of the victims find the bonus pensions insufficient and the following example represents an argument to this effect by a woman deported in 1941.

<sup>11</sup> *Riigi Teataja* 1988, 52, 754; 1989, 10, 118; 1990, 7, 85; 1992, 7, 103; 1992, 33, 437.

<sup>12</sup> The same is felt, for instance, by Volga German repatriates with respect to the German state (Brake 1993: 73).

*It [Siberia – TA] has deprived us of everything – what does this little of pension give us. I spend 500 crowns a month on medicines – I cannot take my prescription to the social care, as I have such a big pension! But those whose pensions are smaller go to the social care – and they get 300 crowns for medicines. And in the beginning, when they paid this residence compensation – the same thing – small pension, they go there and get compensation. But with this bigger pension you don't win anything – in the end it's the same thing – you see! I have lost everything! I have lost my parents, for my whole life I have lived such a defenceless life. It is very hard to be an orphan. /—/ I recently thought about it and came to this decision /—/ that Laar said – to put it more politely - Prime Minister Laar, that well – they get a higher pension. /—/ But I know that this was near the end of the Russian (time) [i.e. the Soviet period – TA] – I don't know how long you had to be in the party – and then you got free medicines, a free flat, and for a certain sum you also could use free tailor's services – for the party members. I wouldn't have wanted anything else, but the free medicines. For every old person uses them. /—/ Because, well – you see, it wasn't a kind of voluntary thing, after all (woman, b. 1932, Valga).*

People feel themselves as cadres loyal to the Estonian state, hence the parallel in the above example with the party members (members of the CPSU) who constituted cadres loyal to the previous system. People have suffered for the Estonian state because they have been Estonians and therefore they expect a greater understanding, support and recognition from the restored state.

On the other hand, the material advantages of the repressed have caused a certain social opposition to them. The repressed people have experienced reproaches from other people who stayed in Estonia and who emphasise that in Estonia those years were also difficult times of panic fear and economic chaos. These criticisms express protest over preferring one past over another.

Public support for the organisations of the repressed people has diminished. A member of a local West-Estonian chapter of the association “Memento” has put it bitterly: *The lords up there do not want to hear anything about us!* (Fieldwork notes, March 2001). The repressed people expect to receive material support, as it is material difficulties that largely hinder their organised activities. For authorities (also at local level) the organisations of the repressed people are just one of the many categories requesting support. To the repressed people this indicates that their relative social value in the eyes of the state has

fallen.

A crucial controversy is felt by the repressed people in connection with leaving behind the past so important for them. For them the past has opened up to a much greater extent: it is not only the telling about it and announcing about them, but the possibility to learn about the wider context and to listen to or read the stories of others. This has indubitably added value to their pasts. At the same time they perceive that the interest and attention of the surrounding world has weakened in comparison, for instance, with the early 1990s.

For one, although small, part of the repressed people the break with the past has been very abrupt. Those are people who returned from Russia to Estonia not at the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s as most victims, but only at the beginning of the 1990s during the social turning point. Ten years, if not more, have passed from their “homecoming”. For those noticeably Russified people the repressions are the connecting link enabling them to associate with the Estonian society.

The prevalent opinion is that the repressed people are not understood in today’s Estonia. As a primary cause of the lack of understanding, differences of experiences are quoted, but it is also found that by distancing itself from the repressions, the state has created further misunderstanding. The repressed people see the preservation of the past in their memories as an obligation and also a necessity. In their view the time of compensation has been too short and they feel that their social experience – the suffering which was meanwhile esteemed – again threatens to turn worthless. Therefore a part of them finds it extremely important to keep on sharing the experience between the generations. There is an additional apprehension that when they disappear, the experience ceases to be transmitted or is not relayed in a sufficient extent.

### **Real and spurious dialogue**

What will further fate of the past revived be like? Will it be forgotten or will it be kept alive in the social memory of the Estonian society? Maybe even in a shape which the participants themselves may not like?

In March of 2001, I organised a discussion group on the topic of the past and the repressions with some students of a Tartu secondary school. It was the time when (bearing in mind the following campaign) the public was still “quiet” and the tragic past was socially “not refreshed”. Thus the discussion in the group indirectly reflected the

stage of development that this aspect of social memory had reached by the middle of the 1990s.

In the discussion group it became clear that the future consumers of history, high school youngsters aged 17–18, did not evaluate the repressions as violence directed specifically against Estonians, but as another proof of the negative side of the nature of mankind.

*This is just a proof of certain bad traits of character of man /—/ Estonians are not guilty here, neither are Russians /—/ Well, it's just like a thing that happened here and elsewhere. Now it is also actually happening somewhere, I don't know where, where there is war. People are like that, that they do bad things to one another (girl, form 11).*

They do not favour fetishism or instrumentalisation of past suffering and find that it is only human, but unfair of those who have gone through this suffering, to presume that the young should have similar feelings.

*They [the victims of the repressions – TA] cannot force the feeling on us. Only those, who were kind of directly involved in the event, only they know, what it was like. I cannot experience this feeling – no-one has forced me out of my bed (girl, form 11).*

The young handle participation in the commemoration ceremonies as another duty and find that commemoration on their part does not change anything. For young people the repressions are located in the chain of historical events, which in 25 years will still be connected with the ones who remember and commemorate, but to which in 50 years probably no importance will be attached.

*To my mind it is a fact that goes in the history textbooks and when you read it, you feel exactly like – in the future – like reading that Estonians were conquered in 1227 – were subjugated to a foreign power (boy, form 12).*

At the same time they identify themselves as a generation who has contact with the living memory of the repressions through the older generation (grandparents, older relatives). For them a “living bond”, which brings the tragic past nearer, lends a meaning to it and helps to understand its commemoration, is still there.

*Maybe we are the last people who are still so close and, well, are still in touch with these people. Grandfather or granduncle or whoever may talk about it – and he is important for us, then maybe these events are also important for us (girl, form 11).*

In connection with organised or institutional forgetting and remembering, it has been emphasised that collective remembering is essential to the identity and integrity of a community (Middleton, Edwards 1997: 10). The possibility that this “living bond” will not be realised and the speed of the break with the past have caused apprehensions among the Estonian power elite who is conscious of the fragility of the communal social memory necessary to preserve the national identity and the state.

By involving different generations in the process, this realisation was reflected by the campaign of actualisation of the past carried out in the spring of 2001 in which president Lennart Meri had a leading part. The campaign sought to unite the valuation of the past and the orientation to the future.

On April 9, 2001 all larger Estonian newspapers and electronic media published the address of the President of the Republic of Estonia to school students. To commemorate the 60th anniversary of the first deportation of 1941 on June 14 the president announced the campaign of collection of memoirs, calling the students up to write down the recollections of those who had survived through the deportations. This call was an address to the new generation and its aim was to create memories extending across generations and to preserve the linkage at the level of living memory.

The media has suggested that the call of the president came too late both from the historic point of view as well as from the current perspective (cf. Varahiline... 2001). However, it helped and contributes to forging a bond. In the works received the bond is evidenced by the descriptions of the experiences of the young in discovering the past. The tragedy experienced by the old generation had reached them, shattering many of the prejudices. The media covered the “discovery” of the past as well and even valued it. One of the collectors of memories, a 17-year-old high school student wrote: “People with different fates live by our side. They are our neighbours, acquaintances and relatives. We had no idea what the past was like. History books do not include all the details” (Leiman 2001).

Another facet that was emphasised was the mutual (interest) dialogue of different generations: “... 6<sup>th</sup> form pupil Diore Arovald (12)



travelled to her grandmother's living in Rapla County to write a biography of her great-grandfather. "I felt that grandmother talked about her father with great interest and seemed to be eager for me to hear the story," said Arovald. "At the same time, she was a bit sad." Arovald said that she was very interested in hearing about her great-grandfather's life. "I did it absolutely voluntarily and when I listened to the story, I got very interested in all that past"" (Koch 2001).

The works of the students clearly indicate what the currently forming narrative is like – it contains tragic events, but the presentation is adventurous, the authors have presented amusing and strange stories about the past events and there is little complaining. The repressed people interpret their experience in a way that in their opinion might be interesting for the third generation. They do so because they are worried that otherwise their past experience would remain a private affair (of the older generation). Therefore the storytellers (deliberately or intuitively) select the facts that they find suitable for telling.

Thus, we can claim that a new stage of shaping the collective memory has been reached.

The second part of the campaign was "Estonia Remembers", an event that was specifically for the repressed, in the course of which the president visited every county and handed out symbolic mourning tokens of Broken Cornflower with the Estonian national flower to "those whom a foreign power had arrested or deported or to whom it had caused suffering" (Reinsalu 2001). This campaign showed what had become of the relationship with the past and thereby also of perception of the past at the level of an individual. Participating in the events, I felt that this ceremony was important for many repressed people: the president who is a symbol presents them with a token – it is an acknowledgement and symbolic identification in a collective experience.

By presenting the tokens, the president delivered the message: share your memories. Formally, the call was meant for the repressed, but actually it was also directed to the younger generations: listen to the memories. The two addressees indicate that at least a part of the power of the state (the president) had socially (and more importantly at the state level) understood the fragility of this vital thread of memory. Moreover, he dared to admit the fact, even though the Estonian society was unwilling to do it.

The unwillingness of the society to listen was what most hurt the repressed, as they had assumed that their experience would be recog-

nised to a higher degree.

The campaign initiated by the president pointed to a qualitative change. As late as at the beginning of the 1990s, the vertical ties in the Estonian society were being shaped spontaneously, but during the decade the process had died down and the state in the person of the president took the forging of such ties into its own hands. This indicates that the process of shaping the vertical ties of the social memory is becoming increasingly state-controlled. It is a separate question to what degree we are willing to admit it.

### **Summary: The dynamics of social memory in Estonia in the 1990s**

The facets and processes of the social memory connected with remembering the repression experience can be shortly characterised as follows. In the Soviet period the experience of the repressions in Estonia, including the knowledge of the deportations, was dominantly private. It was carefully hidden from the society as a whole and concealed primarily at the experiential level of certain segments of the society. Awareness of the repression experience of Estonians was launched into the public sphere in the second half of the 1980s. The rich assortment of the formerly hidden (deliberately concealed) recollections gains extreme popularity and by the beginning of the last decade of the century knowledge of the repressions acquires a very extensive public scope. Commemoration of the repressions becomes organised at several levels and the repressed individuals join organised associations, whereas such organisations get a weighty say in making decisions with respect to legal assessment of the repressions, rehabilitation of innocent victims and compensation for the injustice. Academic study of the tragic past gathers momentum and a repression narrative with an official status for the society as a whole starts to take shape. Following P. Alheit, it may be said that the private experiential level of social memory is used to construe a public level of interpretation and as a result a so-called “public memory culture” or commemoration emerges.

However, the heightened interest of the society in the repression experience is passing. The reconstruction of the state and economy and the development of the new elite lead to new priorities which are increasingly connected with the future. Not only the topic of the repressions, but the past as such loses its position in the eyes of the society and retreats from the positions won at the beginning of the decade. The organisations representing the victims retain their pres-

ence at the level of interpretation, but they lack their earlier influence, let alone possibilities to participate in decision-making. The state has reserved the pragmatically necessary official recognition for such organisations and the repression experience carried by them and allocated them a certain status in “the public memory”, but no more. Due to the waning interest of the society, this experience is progressively shifted back to the private sphere of the social memory and the social basis for (conscious) reception and relaying of the past is decreasing. The repressions and related events increasingly become “a private affair” of the people affected.

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Translated by Jaan Saar



# Articulating Ethnic Identity in the Setu Media

Pille Runnel

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

In both contemporary public and scholarly debates, meaning and importance of national states is perceived as changing. A general re-arrangement of state power and their boundaries is taking place. The question of borders is seen as a key to Europe's future. It is supported by powerful ideologies of regionalism, the manifestation of which is emerging by way of new trans-national regions. Although the latter is a part of the economic and socio-political framework, strongly supported by European Union policies, it has to be stressed that, at the same time, it has a direct influence on the lives of the groups inhabiting these regions. This means that besides being a socio-economic question, the borders are also important from the aspect of culture and it is strongly involved within the symbolic construction of ethnic identities (Cohen 1985; 2000; Paasi 2000).

While inside Western Europe long established borders between different groups and nation states are rather losing their function and former meaning, in Eastern Europe new and even more fixed boundaries are appearing. Bjørn Thomassen has pointed out that in this process, Europe is confronted with a situation where people inhabiting border areas stand in a central position, for they most directly experience changes in ongoing European and state border policies (Thomassen 1996, online). These divided groups are evolving very differently because of this situation. As a matter of fact, this is a reminder that the location of ethnic groups in a geopolitical and economic framework is indispensable.

The Setus, who are the subject of study in the current article, are a minority in the South-Eastern part of Estonia. In the 1990s the group faced a major change, as the area was broken up by the border line established between Russia and the newly independent Estonia. For the

<sup>1</sup>The article is based on the book *Traditsiooniline kultuur setude enesemääratluses 1990ndatel aastatel* (Runnel 2002).

first time in their entire history, the homeland of the Setus was split into two halves. This is one of the central factors, commencing since the year 2002, involving the currently still unsolved attempt to obtain the status of a national minority.

In the beginning of the 1990s, Setumaa as a concept was missing in public debate within Estonia. But as local problems of a peripheral rural area were intertwined with the processes of an international scale, the difficulties of the border area become a consistent issue in Estonian media channels. As a result of this, Setumaa, originally a name for the county in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and also known as an historical, ethnographic area, became once again a familiar concept for the wider public.

In the following section, the question of how ethnicity, region and the relationship between the Setu politicians and the central government are articulated in the Setu media (2000–2002) and how the formation of the meaning of Setumaa has taken place. This is done by outlining the main discourses, dominant in the monthly newspaper *Setomaa*.

*Setomaa* can be seen as one of the outcomes of these more general processes of the Eastern-European border regions. Being published once a month, it concentrates, first of all, in distributing information to the Setu community on both sides of the Estonian-Russian border. Therefore, the newspaper is a valuable source for approaching different ideologies, power issues and formation of discourses connected to the Setu-question.

The meaningful formation of a contemporary Setumaa, both for its inhabitants and for a wider society, could be approached by various categories. It can be analysed by the relationships between traditional and modern; by concentrating on the confrontation of local community and central state power, or by studying the level of symbolic construction of identities. When trying to see which rhetoric is used and aroused by different interest groups for expressing the idea of Setumaa as a region and the Setus as a ethnic group, it can be said that even although Setumaa, as a region, is strongly constructed for achieving socio-political and economical aims, it is done through mobilising culture. The question is, whether it can be seen as a short-term policy, or is it similar to nation-formation processes? What might prove to be a critical factor is that state power and the local political elite are representing confronting paradigms. The voice of the central power represents, in this relationship, a paradigm of culture as a post-modern

phenomenon – geographically unbounded and non-spatial, whereas the local politicians represent the paradigm where ethnic culture is seen as being inevitably connected to geographical location and dependent on the existence of local groups. Both paradigms are used to fill the concept of Setumaa with different meanings.

### **Dominant topics in the Setu media**

The aim of the current paper is neither measuring the frequency of the distinguished topics in newspapers nor detailed text analysis. The aim has been to outline the dominant discourses and their context. It enables the following up, to some extent, of the social construction of Setu collective identities.

The newspaper *Setomaa* represents, first of all, the voice of the current Setu power elite – politicians and journalists. At the same time, when focusing just on the newspaper text in the analysis, important levels remain hidden: how familiar – close or sympathetic they are to the wider audience – local inhabitants and the Setu people living outside the region. Therefore, the data also collected during the fieldwork in the middle of the 1990's is used as a background, as it partly touched upon the same problems from the point of view of the local people (Runnel 2002). It has to be acknowledged that there are no direct connections drawn between this data and the newspaper text. The reason being that the newspaper reflects a more recent period of time.

The task of *Setomaa* is to mediate local culture and information connected primarily to the area. The news items focus firstly on local culture, for example, traditional celebrations and overviews of the activities held in the Setu Farm Museum in Värskä (Setu Talumuuseum). When compared to other local newspapers (being published more often, from daily to several times a week) in Estonia, the issues of local business and economic activity are missing in the local news. Economic perspectives of the region appear foremost in the speeches of the politicians and also in published policy documents.

### **Indigenous culture**

Folk culture and traditional culture is a common topic in news stories. The concerts by the Setu choirs, including their musical trips and the positive reaction to their performance are the subject of several news stories; also various news items concerning traditional material culture are published. It could be information about the events in the Setu



Farm Museum (for example days dedicated to the Setu coloured lace and women's handicraft), also events connected to, or simply information about, traditional food and special dishes. The latter might be announcements about courses or new databases like a cookbook or a web page dedicated to Setu food.

On the visual level, the newspaper presents different elements representing indigenous culture. Quite often the most important news reports about formal meetings are illustrated with a photo of a group of people or a few persons. The online version of the newspaper has the only picture on its opening page. Especially women and children are in the majority of pictures, presented in folk costumes, usually as members of the singing choirs or participating in some event. Folk costume as a sign has achieved importance not only for the media, but also for the people themselves. It seems that the symbolic value of indigenous culture is generally high in this media channel. The issues of indigenous culture are the only ones presented in a positive vein. The current article concentrates mostly on the other dominant issues in the Setu media.

### **Injustice**

Injustice is an umbrella word for two dominant topics in *Setomaa* around which discussions are built:

- regionalism: changing local rural environment, relationships between centre and periphery, 'us' and 'them';
- the border (referred to as the control line).

The questions of ethnicity are strongly visible through the category of injustice. The Setu politicians and journalists themselves appear here as "holders of the truth". News, editorials and copies of official announcement letters to the Estonian Government, Parliament and state officials are regularly published in *Setomaa*.

The discourses about injustice are largely built on political rhetoric. It also refers to the fact that the publication can not be labeled as "informational" in the publication, although the editors have used this word. 'Information' might be rather subjective and shaped by ideological perspectives.

There are some central agendas, around which these discourses are built. To start from the most recent ones, since summer 2002 the issue of obtaining the status of the national minority within the Estonian state came onto the agenda. According to the law, the status of the national minority can be requested, with an application supported and

signed by at least 3000 persons. The Setu Congress (*Seto Kongress*), which gathered for the 6<sup>th</sup> time in October 2002, is the central body responsible for the application.

Another central issue – regionalism – is also present in the debates regarding the creation of autonomous self-government, which would govern the central areas of the territory of the historical Setumaa. This issue became the main one, through which the region was shaped/discussed.

The question about who is to blame is also mostly connected to the questions of region and particularly to the rights of the population, which had been left on the other side of the control line in the current territory of Russia. First of all, the Estonian government is seen as being responsible for solving the question through negotiations with Russia.<sup>2</sup> The border issue (or the control line) is also strongly present in the everyday life of the inhabitants on the Estonian side and the Setus living elsewhere outside the region.

What makes the publication of documents, extracts from the protocols of parliament sessions and correspondence between local and central politicians so important is the fact that *Setomaa* functions as a public arena, reflecting the relationships between state and its citizens. It is an informational board for those, still living on the current territories of Russia and for those, moved elsewhere in Estonia, but still identifying themselves as Setus. It is also an arena for spreading civic culture.

## **Regionalism**

At the level of region, conscious symbol-creation has a bigger role than on smaller levels (village, local community), as here opinions of the other groups have a stronger influence. At the level of region, powerful stereotypes may be born. These stereotypes and narratives, usually positive, keep the group together. History of a group tends to take a form, which gives more strength to the group. For example, in Setumaa village schools were established decades later than elsewhere in Estonia and there were no opportunities to get primary education. In

<sup>2</sup> Russian discourse itself tends to be more positive in *Setomaa*. One of the examples of that might be a remark in a text that in the last census act in Russia, the Setus were able to choose both Estonians and Setus as their nationality, whereas according to the last census act in Estonia briefly before that they could were not able to choose being the Setus, but Estonians only.

different sources this has been interpreted in a positive way. A local Setu historian could be quoted as an example of that: “as the fields of the mental life had not been used at all, the Setus tried to organise their life by using natural knowledge”. Setus kept the traditions of the forefathers, originating from the ancient independence period, generation by generation. Folk songs, games, fairy-tales, habits, customs and so on, have been the school, literature, science and art, enriching and strengthening the mind. Family and church celebrations (*praasniks*) were replacing here the groupings, folk-universities, theatres and concert halls, existing elsewhere in Estonia” (Reissar 1996: 7–8).

Opinions like this can be also found in Setu media. For example, in one article the lack of education was interpreted as a way to escape the pressure of the enemy (*Setomaa*, No. 58) (without going to school, where education was given in Russian only, uneducated people could keep their own language and “natural wisdom”). This is a good example of the construction of the positive past of a group.

Media is one of the central powers, giving meaning to the region today. It helps to create common symbols and ideologies. The question of Setus and the question of Setumaa appeared in the Estonian and Russian media only in the beginning of the 1990s, as was mentioned before. To outsiders the Setus remained until now an ethnographic group with their own, well-preserved folk-culture and orthodox religion.

We will not find out what would have happened to the Setus if the area of the Setus had not split into two halves by way of the border (also referred to as control line, as there has been no official agreement between two states until now). Estonian independence brought along a breakthrough, bringing also the topic of the Setus to public debate. Arising problems helped to create local politicians, who soon entered Parliament.

The public debate has largely also been built on the concept of Setumaa as a regional entity, being used by both sides – local politicians and State officials. Central arguments have been bound up to the question of the State border, involving also administrative reform. Its aim was to create the new local governments, whose territories would take into account the historical borders of the counties. Both debates used the concept of culture and it could be seen as a manifestation of a cultural regionalism. The latter is a platform, on which all the argumentation is being built. It is significant, that both

sides – the Setu-activists and the representatives of the state, have picked up this key or code.

The cultural construction of a region probably achieved its highest level not in connection with the state border, but in relation to the afore-mentioned administrative reform (which has been temporarily stopped by now).

On February 18<sup>th</sup> 2001, a representative body of the Setus, the Setu Congress, had their annual meeting. The leaders decided to support establishing a single county on the basis of central parishes of the historical Setumaa. It is significant that at the same time, it was found dangerous to also allow neighbouring areas to join the county. In the central territories Setus form a majority, but in the neighbouring areas which used to be a part of the historical Setumaa before the war, the Setus have become the minority. Therefore those villages were in some sense “sacrificed” by this decision. The rhetoric behind this decision communicated the message that the Setus have within thousands of years become an independent people, (the connotation of the word “*rahvas*” does not enable saying whether they mean “people” or “nation” in this commentary), who have their own language, culture and religion. But as a result of the politics of the Republic of Estonia, the old customs and family relations of the Setus are hard to fulfil.

As a result of the meeting of the Setu Congress, politicians appealed to the government for obtaining the status of cultural autonomy for the Setus. The aim of the appeal was to be independent in the decisions concerning the group’s culture and traditions.

Three parishes mentioned in the proposal of the Setu Congress form the centre of the historical Setumaa. At the same time, the Setus also live in some villages in the neighbouring parishes. Therefore it seems that by leaving the bordering parishes out of the county, the politicians aimed to protect the central area from the influence of the Estonians.

In an official answer to the proposal, a high ranking Estonian state official answered that if the protection and development of the Setu culture, belief, habits and the Setu identity in general were to be connected only to the three parishes, mentioned in the proposal, it would be an injustice from the point of view of the Setus living outside the area.

The minister did not agree with the statement that Estonians and the Setus do not suit well together (*Setomaa*, No. 58).

The senior official of the board of the Setu Congress replied to the document (the texts are all published in the newspaper *Setomaa*), and

described a dark future facing the Setus, in case the political strategy of the central power will be fulfilled:

“In this case the Estonians (*eestlus*) have achieved the final victory, but isn't it a victory, which can turn into a loss in time? /—/ Are the Setus really so unfair and bloodthirsty that they can have no self-government? Will the Setus in this county, which they applied for, have all the power and will a dictatorship of the Setus be held and make everybody else sing? Absurd! And in case, it ever happened like this, the minister is willing to form the counties, where Estonians have an assured majority” (ibid.).

The administrative reform got particularly high attention by the Setu-movement, it was even claimed that the whole future of Setumaa is determined by it:

“As a result of this, *hiidlased* (inhabitants of Hiiumaa), also *mulgid* (the inhabitants of the historical region in the Viljandi area), *võrokesed* (the Võro people) and all the others. But the Setus?” (*Setomaa*, No. 52).

The debate here is interesting, first of all, as an instrument of regional identity. The topics in the Setu media assure, once more, that Setumaa as a region has obtained meaning first of all through culture. All the argumentation is built on cultural regionalism. Both representatives of the State and the local politicians use it temporarily. It seems that the centre of the debate, formed during the 1990s, is conflict, formed by the geopolitical situation. On the one hand, the Setu-movement seemed to see the Setus as an ethnic group in the beginning. Later the position has changed and currently it can be seen as the position of a repressed minority nation.

This kind of self-determination is complemented by the issues of impartial treatment of the population, living in the border regions.

Mingling of those two processes has made it particularly simple to construct the question of the Setus as negative on the public level. The Central power, and Estonia as a whole, has been shown as hostile and negative, threatening the whole Setu-movement, whereas everything positive has been shown as achievements by the Setus. The ideology of the Setu-movement, spread in the 1990s, contrasted the Setus to the central power and therefore the conflict has served as a powerful tool for the identity-creation of the Setus. The confrontation has turned out to be a strategic resource.

The representatives of the Setus have claimed in the Setu media that in order to preserve the Setu culture, the only guarantee will be the geographical entity – a region that will have its own administration and

right for cultural self-determination. In the articles and public letters there are constant claims that leaving the region, for economic reasons, will cause also the moving away from Setu culture.

It seems, that contrary to the Setus, in the given debate the State is promoting the concept of culture, as being not directly connected to the geographical area. There are claims in the texts saying that the Setus also live outside the particular area, for example in the biggest towns, Tallinn and Tartu.

In these towns the Setu cultural movement has become much more active during the last decade.

It seems that it is hard to find solutions to the collision of two realities, based on different concepts concerning the geopolitical and cultural comprehensions. This will continue to produce conflicts.

Drawing the borders of Setumaa as a cultural region is an active process on the local level, the aim of which is to recreate an area, known as Setumaa. The local leaders have claimed that right now only a memory, of what Setumaa once was, has survived, and there is a place name without real content.

There are threats, that as a result of State politics the memory will also vanish, as it is not possible to identify, what one means by saying "Setumaa" (*Setomaa*, No. 58).

The administrative reform worked as a trigger, making the leaders of the Setu community draw borders from inside in order to say which areas are "real" Setumaa and which are not. By presenting the plan of allying three former parishes the situation arose that inside the region more valuable area and its surroundings were distinguished. The distinction was based on the concentration of the Setus in the area.

The public dialogue enables the Setu movement to create the confronting ideology, also strongly visible in Setu media. The aim is to achieve real results. At the same time, these powerful narratives of "right" and "wrong" also enable their authors to learn about themselves. Mostly narrated conflict is creating collective and regional identity.

## **The border issues**

Redefining the space is also always a manifestation of the re-structuring of economic, political and administrative entities. Smaller and bigger-scale changes continuously take place on all the levels – local, regional and (trans) national. The life in a local community is defined largely by borders, which are both local and non-local. In the 1990s the Setu-issue started, first of all, to be formed around the border issues. From the

point of view of the local inhabitants the border was not understandable, inconvenient and filled it with new meanings. Setu politicians began their career mostly thanks to the border issues. We don't know what would the region be like in the case where the border would have not broken the bounded entity. The current scenario might be seen even as positive, although it is connected to many smaller and bigger sacrifices in everyday life. At the same time, powerful narratives have been born which create the system of meanings on which the current cultural awakening is also largely leaning on. Would the Day of the Setu Kingdom and various singing events, the Setu Farm Museum and discussions about the Setus as a nation have born without it? Would the Setus have reached both Russian and Estonian public debate? Or would the issues of the Setu ethnicity be still a phenomenon, belonging to the domain for trained scholars only?

Interviews with the people have pointed to the fact that on the level of the world view, the real border, born as a result of the agreement between two states, has mostly influenced those, who have left the region. They would like to see their former "homeland" preserved as it was, as a territorial entity defined from inside. The idea of the lost homeland remains in their memories and the lost world becomes idealised and sacred. The border has become an ideological concept for them, whereas for the local people it has become an issue, part of their everyday lives, as they have also felt the restrictions connected to it.

In the year 2000, an attempt was made to change the method of crossing the border on the Estonian-Russian divide, by giving the visas free of charge to those persons, who were directly connected to the border region or who had close relatives or a former home (real estate) on the other side.

7000 names of persons, who wanted to get visas free of charge, were handed into the embassy of the Russian Federation, altogether 4000 of them were people living in the border areas. This number covers people living both in North-Eastern and South-Eastern areas of Estonia. After that the number has grown even bigger.

The right for the visas free of charge, caused several arguments, some of them were also public. For example, a guest in the radio broadcasting event, quoted an unknown elderly man, who had said that the Petseri (Pechory) graveyard is the one which is in the best overall order in the territories of the former Soviet Union, because when the Setus go for vodka to Petseri, they also go to take care of the graves of their close ones.

A participant in the radio show did not agree:

“Anyone of you, who goes somewhere, also does some shopping. If you live not far from Petseri – it is a town – you make your shopping there, not from Tartu or from Tallinn. I can see running down here – you go there for vodka” (*Setomaa* No. 52).

An unknown participant opposed this remark, by explaining his or her truth about the rights, which complement the visa; a person has got free of charge:

“The right for the people, living in the bordering areas to cross the border has not been arranged in order to elaborate business relationships in the border areas. If you want to do shopping, go to the consular department, apply for an annual visa, pay for it and do some shopping. If you want to get a visa for free, it is meant for going to the graveyard, to take care of the graves, that you visit your relatives, but not that you carry litres and kilos of materials” (ibid.).

From the point of the view of the local rural community the border broke people’s everyday space, bringing a new reality with it, by transforming social spaces. The border issues created for the first time in their life the question of belonging to the nation state.

The special regime of these visas brought the belonging to the nation state on the level of a single individual. The visa regime had been meant to minimise this effect. But from the point of view of the local rural community, both the regime of unpaid visas and the previous order, according to which the persons were able to cross the border on the basis of special lists only, are unnatural. It is obvious that both activities – shopping in the closest town to get primary goods and visiting relatives and graves belonged to the everyday life of the local inhabitants. In fact the visa regime does not compensate for the changes in the former way of life, but it narrows down the possibilities of the individuals, by making legitimate only one part of his/her life. The situation could be interpreted also in this way that the visas established the “town values”, whereas breaking the local way of life was inevitable.

When following the ways that the problem has been presented in the Setu media, it seems to communicate the message that the agreement has been still made by one side only, without listening to the voice of the Setus.

## **Discussion**

Media offers important research material for mapping the agendas and



dominant discourses topical in the public sphere. It also helps describing the timelines of various issues, for example, the development of self-consciousness of the Setus, starting from recognising themselves as a regional group and ending up with their applying for the status of national minority. It is largely through texts, how the relationships between both individuals and groups are defined, identities are created and ideologies are recreated (Fairclough 1995).

The issue of the border region as an arena of the interplay between global and local forces is one of the central focuses of contemporary social research (Cohen 1985; 2000; Paasi 2000). Border areas are important arenas of symbolic and political boundary drawing; therefore studying them is a possible way to approach the interplay between local and global. Also, the question of the Setu ethnic identity is localised into the border zone, where revival of a romanticist conception of the relation between place and identity has taken place as a result of processes on the international scale. Because of the border issues, the big changes, which have taken place in Setumaa, have very vividly reached every single person. Until the 1990s everyday life in the villages was very much centred around the local community, the bigger social structures remained remote. Within last 10 years the situation has critically changed.

The case of the Setumaa illustrates the processes, which characterise the whole Eastern block. Sociologist Piotr Sztompka has written about the shift between the institutional and cultural level, which characterises the East-Central European societies (Sztompka 1996). According to him, the transformations in these countries proceed since 1989 two distinct levels: institutional and cultural. The level of culture (traditions, value systems etc.) which largely organises the everyday life is much more static than the institutional level of the society. Also “the clock of the citizen” (Dahrendorf 1990) runs much slower, and lags behind institutional developments. Even if no longer adequate for the new institutions, they persist and present the most important barrier to a smooth and rapid transition (Sztompka 1996: 125).

The institutional network, created immediately after the collapse of the communist regime, encouraged on the one hand the integration of the Eastern and Western European countries and, at the same time, increased inner social tensions.

In the case of Setumaa first of all the border and the strict visa regime can be seen as a part of this new institutional network. The border was established in the middle of the village groups, which used

to function as a whole economic region before that. The strict visa regime was established a few years later. This new framework, which started to influence the life of the inhabitants of the border villages (and of those, who have moved elsewhere from the region), caused anecdotal situations. A story about one elderly woman might illustrate this. According to the story, an elderly woman asks the border guards on the Estonian-Russian border: “Tell me, my son, which passport of those do you need now?” and passes them three different documents (proving both Russian and Estonian citizenship). This is an example of everyday construction of ethnic identities.

It seems that the confrontation of the Setu politicians and central power – (government), the arising ethnic self-consciousness of the Setus and strong cultural regionalism has, first of all, been built on the solid ground of nostalgia. In order to explain it, this could be compared to the analysis of anthropologist Jon Mitchell, who has written in his book *Ambivalent Europeans: Ritual, Memory and the Public Sphere in Malta* (2002) about fast changing contemporary Malta. He analyses a parish and a community, which was dispersed and families displaced, noting that the area was remembered with nostalgia as a kind of Eden-like paradise (Mitchell 2002: 121). The region was seen as a bounded entity, offering harmonic way of life, but has disappeared by now. As Mitchell claimed, the collective and social memory used this Eden-like past as a kind of strategy, with the help of which the state power could be criticised by claiming it to be responsible for demolishing the past of the area and which was seen as responsible for recreating it (ibid.). The nostalgic construction of the local community took place through narratives.

Cohen has suggested that such stereotyped or symbolic constructions of community can serve as useful vehicles for the critique of state intervention (1985). Asserting unity makes attachment to locality a powerful political resource, perhaps doubly so when the unity is in the past. By saying, “we used to be like this”, people can forge a substantial critique of the present (Mitchell 2002).

Nostalgia seems to be similarly an important notion for Setumaa in two ways. First of all, in the context of border issues. In the Estonian language the word *piir* means first of all *boundary*, but it should be also seen as a mental barrier or as a spatial concept – border *zone*. If the borders (or the borderland) are understood as zones (Prescott 1987: 13), they are characterised by intensified political as well as cultural negotiation and contestation. According to Thomassen, it is at the

periphery that states experience most seriously internal as well as external pressure. State policies and state-supported national ideologies are not just spread from the centre and, in the course of history, received at the peripheries: they can to a high degree *find articulation* in these peripheries (Thomassen 1996, online). So, formation of states and nations should be seen as two-way processes with local border populations playing the role of active agents (ibid.).

Nostalgia also refers more generally to the fact that territoriality is not likely to disappear in the post-modern world. The distinction, outlined previously – the confrontation between the traditional and place-bounded culture and non-localised and flexible (and therefore insecure) cultural forms is in some sense a figure of speech, used in symbolic and political boundary drawing. We can find it in the speeches of the power elite, but it cannot be said, how flexible or non-spatial the contemporary Setu culture really is.

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English editor Gordon Leman

# Integration, Multinational Estonia and Estonian-Language Press. Soviet-Time Immigrants in Newspaper *Edasi/Postimees* in 1988–2000

Riina Reinvelt

In September 2000 my attention was attracted by the headlines on the front page of the newspaper *Eesti Päevaleht* saying “Estonians Want Aliens Leave”.<sup>1</sup> I became interested in how the press has treated the topic of aliens<sup>2</sup> since the Estonians’ national reawakening in the late 1980s. I decided to browse through the odd years’ issues (except for the first (1988) and last (2000) years, which are even) of the newspaper *Edasi/Postimees* beginning from 1988 and ending with the year 2000, viewing the articles with the eyes of the so-called ordinary newspaper reader. I looked through all the newspaper issues published during the aforementioned years. In all these years articles treating of the topic of non-Estonians had been published (in all, I read through 226 articles, although only few of them are quoted below). The material ranged from brief news items to voluminous articles covering a whole page. They had been written by both professional journalists and representatives of many other occupations who, due to their research topic, sphere of

<sup>1</sup> The article introduced the results of the survey conducted to the order of the Integration Foundation in March 2000. 1142 people and 46% of the respondents considered the leaving of immigrants as beneficial for Estonia. Although the estimation level of “usefulness” was, according to the survey data, very different and the survey also revealed that, for instance, 86.3% of Estonians consider it important that non-Estonians would feel as part of the Estonian people and state, the newspaper still picked out this particular (not the most positive) result to be highlighted (*Eesti Päevaleht* 11.9.2000, p. 1; Sikk 2000a: 4; 2000b: 4).

<sup>2</sup> Alien (in Estonian “*muulane*”) “other”, “the person from the other nationality”. Aliens in Estonia are the part of population group that developed as a result of the immigration to Soviet Estonia favoured by the Soviet Union. According to the population census data of 1989, Estonians constituted 61.5% and other ethnic groups – 38.5% of the population of Estonia. According to the population census data of 2000, the proportion of Estonians had increased to 67.8% and the proportion of other ethnic groups had decreased to 32.1%. Major ethnic groups were and still are Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians and Finns ([www.stat.ee](http://www.stat.ee). 23.10.2002).

work or pure interest had thought about these matters and wanted to express their viewpoints

### **“Aliens”, “non-Estonians”, integration and Estonians**

On the following pages, through the newspaper *Edasi/Postimees*, we are going to talk about the people whose “center did not hold”, as David D. Laitin has quite pertinently defined them (1998: IX). It is the people who, due to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, happened to start living in a new state, which was not different from the geographical, but political, social and cultural point of view.

Both in official, journalistic and oral statements of opinions, the terms aliens (including, perhaps, also non-Russian ethnic minorities), Russians, Russian-speaking population, Russian speakers, non-Estonians, Soviets, migrants, Ruses, illegals, occupants and non-citizens are used (see also Laitin 1998: 265–268). Alien is the word that the press seems to like more than anything else. Sometimes the terms Russians and Russian-speaking population, more seldom also non-Estonians are used, and other nations are practically not mentioned at all. Especially marked is the word “*tulnukad*” (in Estonian meaning alien creatures/extra-terrestrials), which is also sometimes found in the articles. In this particular case the proverb “A darling child has many names” does not hold true, as in Estonian public discourse the bearer of the name seems to play the role of a “dangerous, incapable and troublesome” rather than a “good” child.

The social and cultural merger into Estonian society of the immigrants “inherited” from the Soviet occupation period has become one of the most complicated problems in the Estonia with regained independence. In this connection the integration topic is among the most frequently treated ones, although quite often it is viewed as the immigrants’ integration into Estonian society, not as the need of Estonia and Estonians to integrate in their minds an understanding of Estonia as ethnically complex and multicultural state. If we view integration as a two-sided process, it should comprise knowledge of each other’s culture and mentality as well as understanding and tolerance towards some inevitable differences. In addition to personal contacts and experience, the Estonians’ vision and understanding of non-Estonians is also influenced by the media. To what extent does the media bring immigrants nearer to Estonians and try to make them understand the formers’ life and aspirations? In this respect the TV programme *Subboteja*, which is on the air on Saturday mornings, is very successful.

Its main ideology is as follows:

*Russian people are not opposed to the Estonian state and Estonians, ethnic conflicts are avoided, and the situation is not over-dramatised. The programme constantly introduces non-Estonians who live by a positive programme and, in their own way, are patriots of Estonia. The integration issue is prevalent in Subboteja, as, although the programme is in Russian, it is not concerned with Russian affairs. It takes care of common affairs* (Pettai 1999: 7).

What is the contribution of the press to bringing these two big communities<sup>3</sup> residing in Estonia closer to each other? What does the press make look like the people who immigrated to Estonia during the Soviet time and who now constitute about a third of the population of Estonia? Most of us read or at least browse through papers every day, glancing at the headlines. More often than not, we do not think about which different persons, groups or topics have found treatment in this particular paper and which have not. And we are far from contemplating about it throughout a week, month or year; neither do we pay attention to the fact what tonality is used when speaking about different topics in such a long perspective. However, we should do it from time to time, and at closer look our discoveries might be quite surprising.

Beginning from the mid-1990s, mainly sociologists, media researchers, and, to a smaller extent, also psychologists, started researches into the social and psychological processes related to the adaptation of non-Estonians.<sup>4</sup> While analysing both Estonian and Russian-language newspapers, the perspectives of public opinion and integration have been studied (see, e.g., Jakobson 1997; Raudsepp 1997). Maaris Raudsepp says, “in conclusion, the press reflects rather a low readiness for integration in Estonian society” (1997: 169). This conclusion was drawn in 1997 (the press under study dating from the years 1991–

<sup>3</sup> The notion of “community” is rather conventional here, as one community comprises those who at the population census determined themselves as Estonians, and the other – those who regarded themselves as belonging to any other ethnic group. In real life these borders are not so clear at all. A person who is Russian, Ukrainian, Finn, etc. by their nationality, can belong to the Estonian community by their circle of friends and acquaintances. The same way, an Estonian by nationality can belong to the Russian community; for instance, ethnic Estonians who live in Narva and do not speak Estonian, due to this fact, communicate more with other ethnic groups in Narva.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., *Vene noored Eestis: sotsioloogiline mosaik* (Russian Youth in Estonia: Sociological Mosaic), compiled by Priit Järve, [Tallinn] 1997.

1995), but has anything changed in this respect by now?

The aim of this article is to analyse what topics are discussed in connection with immigrants and what the non-Estonian part of population looks like through these articles to the readers of Estonian-language newspapers, or, in other words, how has the press succeeded in integrating Estonians into the ethnically diverse Estonia? While reading the articles published in the selected years' issues of the newspaper *Edasi/Postimees*, the objective was not to divide them into certain groups (e.g., with positive, negative, neutral undertone). This was a qualitative approach, i.e., reading was started with the year 1988 and carried on from this point. In the course of reading the main key words emerged, which also served as the basis for this article. This kind of approach can also be viewed as the researcher's subjectiveness, yet in this case it was the aim to assume the role of an ordinary newspaper reader, who is subjectively rather than objectively minded.

### **Year 1988 – prologue**

In 1987 and even more in 1988 the public discussion in Estonia started to claim that the Estonian nation had changed a lot during the last 50 years and that for the native people the change had occurred in a destructive manner. The Estonians feared becoming a minority in their own land (Reinvelt 2002: 240). The problem of bilingualism was also getting more and more acute – the advance of the Russian language both at everyday level due to the continuous growth of the Russian-speaking population and also due to the official policy, which introduced more and more Russian as an official language used in government offices. The press started to publish more and more articles, which, at first, discussed the issue of language and the continuing immigration rather modestly, but with years passing, became angrier and more heated.

The first articles asked, in a rather friendly way, the Russians and migrants (both terms are taken from the then press) about their thoughts and wanted to know about their opinions and viewpoints.

*If I were a Russian residing in Estonia, I would probably not understand at all the so-called problem of bilingualism, which has caused/is causing such a heated discussion among Estonians. Why should I be able to speak Estonian? Yet, as I am an Estonian and only (in my thoughts) a self-proclaimed Russian and, as we know, we have perestroika now, which mainly means glasnost, I would very much like to*

*know about the real thoughts of a real Russian, my mate in Estonia, who cannot speak Estonian and who will not learn it, either* (Raudver 1988: 3).

The year 1988 differs from the following ones by the fact that also articles written by Russians were published, where they presented their viewpoints, which mainly justified their immigration, living in Estonia and not learning the language. Although these statements were carried by the Soviet rhetoric and mostly conveyed the message “*davaite zhit druzhno*” (let’s live in friendship), they represented the viewpoints and opinions of the “other side” or, at least pointed to the participating existence of “the other side”, i.e., a kind of discussion was going on.

*My parents told me that somewhere there is Estonia, which is not ravaged by war. So I came to live in Tartu, but today some people here call me insultingly and unfairly an immigrant. A person who has settled down in a foreign country forever. I think that I live in my multinational Soviet state side by side with Estonians, Latvians, Ukrainians and Kazakhs. I do not consider nationality as an important factor in evaluation a person. /—/ We, non-Estonians, are accused of eating the Estonians’ pasture bare, being lazier at work, polluting the nature, and so on. Even Stalinism is blamed down to Russians, bashfully ignoring the fact that no other nation lost as many of its sons as Russia. /—/ I keep thinking of who these people are that are so eager to start a quarrel between us. /—/ I really hope that the common sense of the inhabitants of Tartu will gain the upper hand and the group of people who are of a different opinion today will remain without support* (Ivanov 1988: 4).

The idea of an expected remigration<sup>5</sup> was also voiced for the first time, which accompanied the topic of non-Estonians throughout the whole decade and has not really faded until now.

<sup>5</sup>Nearly all political groupings have considered it necessary to diminish the ethnic heterogeneity of Estonian society. Differences have occurred only in the choice of strategy. In Estonia national-conservative viewpoints oriented to the “happy past” have been prevalent in shaping the official national policy. Their basic idea was to decrease national diversities purely physically, mainly by favouring the re-migration of the immigrants, and when this did not yield the expected results, high barriers were set for getting citizenship or some other ways were found to hinder them from entering Estonian official society (Hallik 1997: 102).



*Sociological surveys have shown that 47% of the local non-Estonians do not actually care where they live. Let us then create possibilities for them to live and work where their work and they themselves are actually more needed than here, where they have their inherent cultural and linguistic environment and where no negative emotions arise when they arrive. We have to achieve a negative migration balance by helping to create better work and living conditions for people at the places from where too many of them have emigrated. This kind of remigration would certainly cost us something and our living standard could even fall temporarily, yet I believe that we would be ready for that, if only eventually we could be masters in our own land (Kaplinski 1988: 3).*

The idea of remigration was carried by the initial euphoria of freedom and the attempts to restore the nation state similarly to the one that had existed before 1940.<sup>6</sup> The Estonians' hopes were placed on massive remigration and due to these expectations the matter-of-fact and constructive discussion on alien policy was given up by both the press and the wielders of power (see, e.g., Hallik 1997: 101–111). Unfortunately, the time has shown that the remigration of the Soviet-time immigrants to their former homeland has been carried out with difficulty. The population census data reveal that beginning from the time when the remigration idea was formed and started to be propagated, the proportion of non-Estonians in the population of Estonia has decreased only by 6%.

Side by side with the rise of national awakening and the gradually increasing freedom of speech in the late 1988 and early 1989 writings became less and less tolerant and more and more demanding.

*The majority of them are rootless people without a homeland, who are used to GETTING, DEMANDING, BEING PREFERRED at any cost and at any price. The government of the Estonian SSR should be bold enough to categorically oppose to this coercive migration (Weidebaum 1988: 4).*

*Examples of cultural genocide are not difficult to find. Here we could mention, for example, the fact that Russians are the only nation in the Soviet Union who, by fair means or foul, demand that they should be*

<sup>6</sup> The 1934 census showed that Estonians formed 88.2% of the population. The annexation of Estonia by the USSR – and WW II – had a disastrous effect on the population (*The Baltic...* 1991: 15).

*addressed only in their own language, not acknowledging any other's right to life* (Lõhmus 1989: 4).

In spite of the fact that the size of the population group who do not determine themselves as Estonians, remains almost of the same size in Estonia, the Estonian press is gradually losing deep interest in them and the articles on non-Estonians deal with practically anything but concrete individuals and lives; they are rather dealt with as a mob without individuals with different viewpoints, attitudes or aspirations. Also articles written by non-Estonians themselves disappear from the press, which in its turn brings along the disappearance of public discussion between the two communities. Both sides hold debates on their own and inside their own groups. Maaris Raudsepp has analysed both the Estonians and Russian-language press in the years 1991–1995 and reached the conclusion that “two separate media worlds seem to be existing side by side, who do not share a language, neither in direct nor in indirect meaning. Rejecting withdrawal is more characteristic of the Estonian-language press, which tends to either ignore the non-Estonians’ everyday problems, express paternal attitude towards them (attributing certain belonging or features to them) or find justification for the official policy carried out with regard to non-Estonians. The Russian-language press is rather trying to distance themselves from the authorities, often resorting to irony as a self-defence. Yet, they are more open to the translations and commentaries from the Estonian-language sources. /—/ The predominant position is the distrustful observation of the other community from afar, rather avoiding direct contacts” (Raudsepp 1997: 168–169). So, either of the communities lives on their own in their “own” language space. Only at the very end of the decade, with some profiles published of non-Estonians, their thoughts and opinions appear again in the Estonian-language press.

### **Hostile and dangerous**

During the first half of the decade the press quite often depicted the non-Estonians as a dangerous mob, which were hostilely minded towards Estonia. As the media has quite a strong influence on people’s opinions, in March 1996, for instance, only a third of the questioned Estonians considered Russians as totally trustworthy towards the Republic of Estonia (Kirch, Kirch, Tuisk 1997: 58). When the rally of a few hundred Russian pensioners made the front pages of newspapers, Estonian readers might have developed the feeling that “my Estonia is

in danger and it is caused by Russians”.

*Those making speeches [at the rally] claimed to have been living in Estonia for 15, 30, or 45 years, or were born here and could even speak Estonian. They have neither the wish nor the opportunity to leave Estonia, but they wish to have the same rights as those granted to Estonians. /—/ The Estonian nation is said to have formed only a hundred years ago – Estonians themselves are said to have testified to that as well –, and this does not give them the right to feel superior to the ancient Russian nation, whose representatives live here for the second generation and who therefore cannot be called real Russians any more. As Russians are not granted the same kind of right to self-determination as Estonians, a cold war is going on at present, and, sooner or later, it would turn into a hot war (Sarv 1991: 2).*

The non-Estonians' yearning for the lost Soviet Union was also much emphasised in the press until the mid-1990s. This could also be interpreted as a counter-Estonians' act, as at the same time Estonians were eager to shake off the remnants of the Soviet time from themselves and their state. For instance, the headlines in the newspaper *Postimees* on May 3, 1993, saying “May 1 Celebrated with Rally in Kohtla-Järve and Narva”, immediately brought forth a connection with the Soviet time May and October demonstrations. Actually the article included information about the fact that people protested against the poor social and economic situation in North-East Estonia. Or, another example from the year 1997, that is four years later, when a headline said, “Victory Day Gathers Veterans on Tõnismäe”.

*Yesterday morning a few hundred people gathered at the statue of the Bronze Soldier on Tõnismäe in Tallinn to celebrate the 52<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the end of the Great Patriotic War. Those who participated were mainly elderly people, however, some sturdy young men and several groups of children with red carnations were also moving around among them. /—/ One of the speakers said that the fight was not over yet, as the current situation was also extremely difficult. It was emphasised that on Victory Day those who had died for “our great homeland, the Soviet Union”, were remembered (Paet 1997b: 2).*

A press coverage of the Russian citizens participating in the elections of the Russian State Duma or the President held at the Russian Embassy in

Tallinn was published each time there was a reason for that. This left you with an impression that Estonian readers were reminded of the fact that actually the hearts of local Russians beat more in the rhythm of Russia and they were loyal rather to the latter than their place of residence, Estonia. The press did not care about the issue why people chose the Russian citizenship. The reasons were often connected with the rigid and strict citizenship policy in Estonia or also some practical considerations, as, for instance, people's wish to visit the relatives living in Russia, which was much easier and cheaper if you had Russian citizenship.

A great number of articles reflected life in North-East Estonia and mostly the biggest towns there – Narva, Sillamäe and Kohtla-Järve –, where the majority of the population is constituted by the Soviet-time immigrants or their descendants. Some headlines from the year 1993 say, “Trade Unions in Narva Threaten with General Strike and Civil Disobedience”, “Inhabitants of Narva Demand Special Status Again”, “When Will Visit to Narva Become Festival for Estonians”, “I Do Not Need Narva”, “Narva Still Worships Other Gods”.

Yet, there were also those who, from time to time, restrained Estonians and tried to treat things from the point of view of the so-called “ordinary” Russians. This kind of writings were usually published in the rubric of *Readers' Letters*, where usually no representatives of the press or authorities expressed their opinions.

*We do not know what Russians themselves think about it. We should not take seriously the former red functionaries who are eager to save the little power they still have and are trying to frighten people. Estonians possess the power of thinking and so do Russians (Vassar 1993: 6).*

### **Linguistically handicapped and culturally ignorant**

From the very beginning the most important topic in treating non-Estonians is the language issue, i.e., learning Estonian as the key to Estonian society. The language issue was raised repeatedly each year. In the late 1980s and early 1990s the articles mainly spoke about the necessity to explain to non-Estonians how important it was to learn Estonian.

*All the immigrants should be motivated to learn Estonian, they have to be explained why it is better to live in Estonia if you can speak Estonian, than if you cannot. /—/ The aliens should be explained that the*

*country where they arrived is Estonia, not Russia, that the reason why they came here is mainly their own necessity, not that of Estonians', that the people who live here are not aborigines who must be taught how to read and write. Only when this information has been entirely understood and also other conditions have been created, we can start teaching the language (Valge 1989: 3).*

In the middle of the decade the Estonian general public became aware of the fact, first and foremost through the press, that things were still not so good with the knowledge of Estonian, and articles about officials who did not have command of Estonian started to be published in newspapers. The Russian-speaking immigrant was portrayed as a negative hero who, despite the existing laws, had not been able to master Estonian as the state language. It is quite understandable that East Virumaa and especially its two easternmost towns – Narva and Sillamäe – stood out as the most negatively characterised regions.<sup>7</sup>

*Yesterday three policemen in Narva were fired, as they were not able to speak enough Estonian. All in all, 73 Narva policemen participated in the appraisal procedure, and all of them, except for four men, were appraised only conditionally until the autumn (Soolep 1997: 2).*

*Among others, Yuri Bozhko, Chairman of Sillamäe Municipal Council, and Georgi Bystrov, Mayor of Maardu, were criticised for their poor knowledge of Estonian. /—/ Sirje Kupts, the interpreter-desk officer at Sillamäe Municipal Council, said to the Postimees that in documents Yuri Bozhko did not need translation for each line. “Generally he is able to understand the written language and sometimes even makes efforts to speak. He has attended courses of Estonian and continues doing so.” When the journalist asked him in Estonian to comment on his knowledge of the language, Yuri Bozhko, Chairman of Sillamäe Municipal Council, said in Estonian, “Vene keel palun” (Russian, please) (Paet 1997a: 3).*

As the situation had not improved much by 1997, it was assumed even at the state level that the efforts made so far had been insufficient. So,

<sup>7</sup> According to the data of the population census of 2000, the percentage of those in Narva and Sillamäe who determined themselves as representatives of some other ethnic groups (not Estonians) was 95.15 and 95.82, respectively ([www.stat.ee](http://www.stat.ee), 23.10.2002).

side by side with the integration propaganda launched at the same time, a new language teaching policy was initiated. The bet was made on schoolchildren. In Russian-language schools the position of a state language teacher was established. However, the situation did not improve as quickly as it was expected, and when in 1999 (ten years after the law on the Estonian language had been passed) the language inspection checked the teachers of the Estonian language in the Russian schools of East Virumaa, 59 out of 250 had such a poor knowledge of Estonian that they should not have worked at school. Both the establishment of the position of the state language teacher and the checking of the language teachers' knowledge of their subject were accompanied by the attention from the media, who stated the fact that "they still cannot speak it".

While elsewhere in Estonia non-Estonians had learned Estonian at least to a certain extent, then in Narva and Sillamäe the knowledge of Estonian was and still is almost non-existent. Katri Raik, Director of the Narva College, in an article in *Postimees* told a true story of a language examination that was spread as an anecdote.

*When a person who has passed the examination at the beginners' level is congratulated in Estonian with the words "Palju õnne!" (Congratulations!), then they keep silent as they do not understand what is said. Those who have passed the examination at the intermediate level, happily answer "spassiibo" ("Thank you" in Russian) and only those who are awarded a diploma for the pass at the advanced level, are able to answer "aitäh!" ("Thank you" in Estonian) (Püttsepp 2000b: 24).*

While Estonian journalists consider non-Estonians themselves as the main ones to be blamed as they have not mastered Estonian, either because they take it easy, or are lazy, unwilling or incapable, the "culprits" themselves think that the reasons for that are somewhere much deeper down, among other things also in the inexpedient use of the money meant for language studies. Zukerman, the presenter at the *Subboteja* programme, commented on it:

*I think that if all the integration money pumped in by the foreign organisations and foundations were allocated for the purpose of teaching Estonian in Narva, the people there would not be able to recall a single word in Russian any more (Zukerman 2000: 17).*

## Nice people – quite similar to Estonians

The former Soviet military who stayed in Estonia were one of the first who deserved some positive attention from the press. Part of them were married to Estonian citizens, yet, despite that, they were not granted the residence permit, not to mention the citizenship. The so-called “problem” of the retired servicemen started to be discussed through concrete people in trouble, and a personal touch appeared in the articles. For instance, in the summer of 1997 people sympathised with the sufferings of Zobin and his family, as the Estonian state deported the father of the family. The press was rather on the side of the non-Estonian in trouble than supported the officials and the government offices.

Quite a number of non-Estonians have problems with legalising their life in Estonia, partly through their own fault, but partly also through the inefficient work organisation at the Citizenship- and Migration Board. Generally it can be said that, beginning from the second half of the 1990s, the press has become friendlier towards immigrants and they rather rail against the political decisions made in Estonia and the officials’ ineptitude, which make the situation complicated for non-Estonians due to the complexity of applying for residence permits and citizenship, the poor work organisation at government offices, lack of information or insufficient knowledge of the language, both in solving the problems of everyday life and those of a wider meaning.

At the very end of the decade writings trying to delve more and more into the problems of non-Estonians started to be published. Articles about non-Estonians were written on the basis of concrete people, and the so-called aspect of human understanding became evident.

*Ivan, who was freshening himself with a Coca-Cola his daughter had brought him from a shop, was standing throughout the whole night by the wall of the bureau, on a sandy hill covered with thousands of footprints, in order to get the residence permit sticker for his two-and-a-half-years-old granddaughter Valeria. “The whole family lives with the permits here, but she, the little one, turned out to be illegal,” said the bewildered Ivan, who had started queuing up at 7 o’clock the previous night. By 3 p.m. the next day he was already queuing inside the building and hoped to face the clerk before the closing time (Rooväli 2000: 5).*

People started to look for justifications for the immigrants’ passiveness and evasion of society. To what extent has the public attitude dictated

by Estonians made it possible for them to participate in the social and political life of Estonia? Ivi Proos from the Open Society Institute associates Russians' passiveness with the notion "occupant's complex" and with the attitude of the Estonian state towards Russians as a homogeneous community.

*The political passiveness of the majority of adult Russians is programmed in their lives in Estonia. The occupant's complex inherent to Estonian Russians sets up voluntary barriers for them in many of their undertakings in Estonian state. Being an occupant or being responsible for all the crimes of the former Soviet Union has been instilled in all the Russians living in Estonia since the beginning of the new struggle for independence, even before the independent statehood was re-established in Estonia. The Russians' positive answer to forcing the role of occupants on them was: "Davaite zhit družno" (Let's live in friendship). This passive attitude tinged with a guilt complex is certainly not enough for the Russian youth. This was their parents' slogan for the sake of domestic peace, but the generation of twenty-year-old Russians in Estonia wants something more. So far the Estonian state has not considered it very important to view the Russian community in Estonia in a differentiated way (Proos 1999: 7).*

In real life the people who immigrated to Estonia during the Soviet period can be divided into several different groups, proceeding from their nationality, legal status in Estonia, age, social status, time of immigration, and so on. Klara Hallik has analysed the adaptation of Estonia to new ethnic minorities and she finds that "the vision of the minority group of an integrated society can become influential if they have sufficiently strong collective identity and they possess social instruments in the form of institutions in order to implement their will. Immigrants in Estonia possess neither. On the one hand, it is because in the Soviet period the ethnic determination opposing to Estonian identity was not practically topical, on the other, the immigration policy of the re-established state put the numerous groups of new settlers in a different legal status (citizens of Estonia and Russia, non-defined "foreigners", those possessing or not possessing different kinds of residence permits), which temporarily diminished the formation of collective subjects on the ethnic basis" (1997: 103).

So, until the very last year of the decade, the press still wrote about aliens, non-Estonians, Russians and Russian-speaking population as a



uniform mob, with no people with different lives, wishes, aspirations and hopes for the future. At the same time, quite a few profiles of Estonians were published. The only exception was Anna Levandi<sup>8</sup>, of whom a profile was published in *Postimees Extra* already in 1993.

*But Anna came and won the hearts of even the toughest sceptics with her pleasant simplicity, as already in a few months' time she was able to say some easier things in Estonian. Now, having lived here for four years, Anna Levandi has mastered Estonian and only has a very slight accent. She has become – if we may say so – a model non-Estonian* (Kruus 1993: 1–2).

In 2000 a breakthrough occurred in the press and, as quite a new tendency, non-Estonians' life started to be shown at the level of concrete individuals, and the idea of “a nice and, often, already integrated non-Estonian or at least one willing to integrate” started to be propagated. Suddenly the immigrant became a person who was fond of Estonia and who was learning or at least was eager to learn Estonian.

*Irina Vikentyeva puts a home-made apple cake on the dinner table. “Õun” (an apple), her eight-year-old daughter Masha, pupil of an immersion class, says in such a loud and clear voice that everybody gapes at her in amazement. /—/ [Father] Sergei, however, gets in trouble when he goes shopping with Masha. The daughter demands that Father would voice his wishes in the state language. “Piim, kohupiim,” (milk, curds) Masha prompts her father strictly, and, as it seems to the latter, also a little bit impatiently* (Püttsepp 2000a: 24).

*The thirteen-year-old Maksim Butsenko, who has spent two weeks on Roosi tourist farm in Läänemaa, in the camp for learning Estonian, allows neither incorrect words nor faulty sentence structures slip in his speech. The boy from Sillamäe came to the camp to polish up his Estonian, in order to get rid of the Russian accent. /—/ The children from Sillamäe are not afraid of integration policy or of losing their own national identity. “I am Russian in my heart, but, as I live in Estonia, I*

<sup>8</sup>Anna Levandi (née Kondrashova) is married to Allar Levandi, the former Estonian Nordic skier (bronze medal at Calgary Olympic Games). Anna Kondrashova was one of the best figure skaters in the Soviet Union in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1980s.

want to learn Estonian and know the local culture well,” Maksim said (Randmaa 2000: 13).

## Conclusion

At the beginning of the 1990s, the immigrants who had come to Estonia in the Soviet time and settled down here, were shown as a protest-spirited homogeneous group, which represented a great danger for Estonia, longed for Russia (rather the Soviet Union), and would not understand the Estonian language and culture. This group did not comprise individual people with their lives and destinies, and it did not show any interest in the Estonian language and culture. The breakthrough occurred only at the very end of the decade together with the integration propaganda that had gained a new impetus, and completely different writings started to be published in 2000. So we can say that in the late 1990s a vision was formed of Estonia as a multinational state in the positive meaning of the word, where the representatives of other nations live side by side with Estonians, almost the same way Estonians do, with their everyday sorrows and joys and strivings for becoming part of Estonia.

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Translated by Tiina Mällo

# **Christian and Non-Christian Religiosity in Estonia in the 1990s: Comparison of Estonians and Other Ethnic Groups**

Jaanus Plaat

First, this article<sup>1</sup> gives a survey of religious movements and congregations in Estonia and their membership in the 1990s, starting with the so-called Singing Revolution in 1989–1990 and finishing with the year 2000 when, after 66 years, a census was conducted in Estonia at which people were also asked questions about their religion. The survey also dwells upon the most essential changes in the development of bigger denominations during the past decade. The main emphasis is laid on the comparison between Estonians, Estonian Russians and other national groups. Therefore, the article provides a more lengthy treatment of the situation in Russian Orthodox congregations and a survey of the proportion of non-Estonians in Estonian religious associations in the 1990s. When treating religious associations, the author has made use of the data provided by the Department of Religious Affairs at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which keeps count of the denominations registered in Estonia; also the treatment is based on the archive of the Soviet-time Commissioner of Religious Affairs, the data of the census conducted in 2000, and the statistical materials of different religious denominations themselves.

The second part of the article deals with the issue of faith of Estonians, Russians and other ethnic groups on the basis of sociological surveys all over Estonia and separately in East Virumaa as the county with the greatest number of non-Estonian population. Data on Estonia have also been compared to other European countries, putting to the test the author's hypothesis claiming that in the 1990s Estonia was one

<sup>1</sup> The article was written with the support of grant No. 3706 allocated by the Estonian Science Foundation.

of the most secularized countries in Europe. The main issues dwelt upon are as follows: Is there any difference and how big is it between the Christian and non-Christian religiosity of Estonians and other ethnic groups? What are the main changes that have occurred concerning the above in the 1990s? What are the regional differences between the religiosity of Estonians and non-Estonians? What is the position of Orthodoxy and Lutheranism among Estonians and Russians? What is the relation of Christian and non-Christian beliefs in the world view of Estonians and other ethnic groups? Are non-Christian beliefs more widely spread among Christians or non-Christians?

## **1. Religious associations and their membership in Estonia in the 1990s**

According to the data found in the Archive of the Commissioner of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults<sup>2</sup>, 371 registered congregations operated in Estonia in 1989. These congregations belonged to the eight denominations which had officially operated and were registered in Soviet Estonia since the 1940s (Lutheran, Orthodox, Catholic and Methodist Churches, Jewish, Old Believers' and the Seventh-Day Adventists' congregations, and the Evangelical Christian and Baptist Union, hereinafter the ECBU<sup>3</sup>, which comprised free congregations that acted independently before the Soviet period), as well as four religious associations registered in the 1980s.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the aforementioned, several unregistered congregations operated, as well as some new religious movements that had reached Estonia during the independence movement at the end of the 1980s (the so-called Singing Revolution).

<sup>2</sup> Part of the materials of the Archive of the Estonian Commissioner of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults of the Soviet Union (ACARC) is in the Estonian State Archive and part of the documents is held in the Archive of the Department of Religious Affairs in the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Estonia. In this article, the author has used the following collections of the latter: "Otshety i spravki o sostojanii i dejatel'nosti tserkvei v Estonskoi SSR" (OS); "Perepiska s raznymi sovetskimi organami i obshchestvennymi organizatsiami po voprosam religii" (PSO).

<sup>3</sup> Historically the ECBU was made up of the Baptist and Free Believers' congregations initiated in West Estonia in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the congregations of Evangelical Christians and Pentecostalists, which spread in Estonia in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>4</sup> ACARC, OS, 1989, d. 3, l. 16–17; ACARC, OS, 1990, d. 3, l. 5–6, 21, 26, 60; ACARC, PSO, 1990, d. 344, l. 60; *Me õnnistame...* 1997; see also Plaata 2001: 466–468. In the 1980s the congregations of Pentecostalists, "The Word of Life", the Seventh-Day Baptists and Muslims were officially registered. According to Raigo Liiman, also six Jehovah's Witnesses' and one Reformed Baptist congregation had been registered by 1989 (2001: 32, 85–86).

Beginning from the late 1980s, the number of different religious associations started to grow rapidly. This happened, first and foremost, due to revolutionary events in Estonian society, which resulted in the re-establishment of the independent Republic of Estonia in 1991.

There exists no reliable statistics about all the denominations that operated in Estonia in the 1990s. As concerns the officially registered ones, they have been kept count of by the Department of Religious Affairs founded in 1990. This department co-ordinating relations between the state and religious organizations, was transferred under the subordination of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1993. By January 1, 2000, 518 congregations had been registered at the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Sixty of them were independent congregations, which did not belong to any of the fifteen Estonian churches or unions of congregations. In addition to these, the Pühtitsa Orthodox Nunnery and several orders of the Roman Catholic Church were registered.<sup>5</sup> This group does not include unregistered religious associations<sup>6</sup>, among whom the Orthodox congregations subordinated to the Moscow Patriarchate had the greatest membership. All in all, more than 550 congregations were supposed to be operating in Estonia by the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

So it can be said that most of the different confessions (including independent congregations) operating in the present Republic of Estonia spread here only at the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s, when the borders were reopened. A number of denominations that had operated in Estonia till that time also became more active. On the crest of the national reawakening movement as well as in the 1990s a great many Estonian people (re)discovered for themselves religion, from which most of them had estranged during the Soviet period.

However, a great part of those who joined congregations in late 1980s and early 1990s, have again drifted away from their congregations in the 1990s. This also happened to the **Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church (EELC)**, which was the most numerous and most influential Estonian religious association in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Among the

<sup>5</sup> The list of religious associations registered at the Ministry of Internal Affairs see: Au, Ringvee 2000: 132–138.

<sup>6</sup> Tens of religious organizations or societies, which were registered on the basis of the Law on Non-Profit Associations and their Unions in the years 1994–1996 at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and beginning from 1996 in the registrar's departments of city courts, are not included among these 518 congregations.

old denominations, the influence of the EELC increased the most at the turn of the 1980s–1990s. There occurred an explosive growth in the numbers of religious rites, which by the 1970s–1980s had diminished almost to a zero.<sup>7</sup> Yet, beginning from 1992 the corresponding numbers started to diminish rapidly again. This can be explained by the fact that the “church boom” at the turn of the 1980s–1990s passed quickly and church life set back to normal beginning from the mid-1990s. As compared to the culminating moment of the “church boom”, the number of baptisms in the EELC congregations had fallen from 18,608 in 1990 to 3,869 in 2000, that of the confirmed – from 11,691 to 2,829, and the number of weddings from 1,752 to 423.<sup>8</sup>

One of the best indicators concerning the real connection with Lutheran Church in Estonia is the donating members, whose number has been constantly decreasing since 1994. While in 1990 the 62,455 donating members of the EELC constituted 4% of the total population of Estonia, then in 2000, there were only 47,112 donating members or 3.4% of the total population of Estonia.<sup>9</sup>

The number of the 15-year-old and older inhabitants of Estonia, who admitted being Lutherans at the census of 2000 (152,237 people or 14.8% of those who answered the question about religion), exceeded 3.2 times the number of donating members of the Lutheran Church in 2000. A whole 8.1% of the population of Estonia did not answer the voluntary question about religion (*2000. aasta... 2002: 17*). It can be assumed that most of them did it to express their indifference towards religion and actually did not practise it. The number of people who claimed to be Lutherans at the census constituted 11.1% of the total population of Estonia. The EELC itself quoted 176,040 as the number of its (baptized) members in 2000 (12.8% of the total population of Estonia). Obviously most of the baptized people testified to being Lutherans at the census, although most of them did not have very close connections with the church.

<sup>7</sup> The number of baptisms in EELC, for instance, dropped from 11,437 in 1937 to 617 in 1977, that of confirmations from 10,530 to 543, that of weddings from 6,227 to 205, and that of funeral services from 11,995 to 4,085 (*EELK 1938: 18; Sild, Salo 1995: 225*).

<sup>8</sup> Hereinafter the EELC statistics of the 1990s is taken from the home page of Lutheran Church: [http://www.eelk.ee/tab\\_arvandmoo.html](http://www.eelk.ee/tab_arvandmoo.html).

<sup>9</sup> Percentages of the total number of population have been calculated on the basis of the census data conducted in 1989 and 2000. About the statistics of the membership and religious rites of the EELC in 1987–1999 see: *Plaat 2001: 262*.

By the number of its members, the second confession in Estonia is **Orthodoxy**. The Russian Orthodox Church started to spread more widely in Estonia after the Estonians' extensive change from Lutheranism to Russian Orthodoxy in South Estonia in the 1840s and a corresponding movement in North Estonia in the 1880s (Kruus 1930; Rebane 1933; Plaata 2001: 127–138). Since then the Orthodox Church together with the congregations of Russian Old Believers has also been the biggest confession in Estonia uniting non-Estonians.

The Russian Orthodox Church that operated in Soviet Estonia, had 78 congregations in 1989, with a membership of approximately 16,000–17,000 (according to the data of the Commissioner of Religious Affairs).<sup>10</sup> In 1993 the Ministry of Internal Affairs registered the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church (EAOC), which had been established after the Republic of Estonia became independent in 1918, and which went under the canonical subordination of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1923. During the Soviet occupation the continuity of the church went over to EAOC in exile. In 1996 the prevalingly Estonian-language congregations of the EAOC again went under the subordination of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. Due to that the Orthodox congregations in Estonia were divided into two in the 1990s, as most Russian-language congregations remained faithful to the Moscow Patriarchate. The latter, however, were not registered at the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the 1990s, except for the Alexander Nevsky congregation in Tallinn and the Pühtitsa Nunnery, which were directly under the subordination of the Moscow Patriarchate.

Both unions of Orthodox congregations named themselves EAOC and through the 1990s glaring contradictions between the two churches concerning the issues of the continuity of the EAOC and the church treasures attracted people's attention in both Estonia and Russia. By 2000 the EAOC subordinated to Constantinople and led by Metropolitan Stephanos (Stefanos Charalambidis) had about 18,000 members in 58 congregations. Only three of them were predominantly Russian-speaking congregations. By the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the number of congregations in Estonia subordinated to the Moscow Patriarchate was 32. Most of them were registered at the Ministry of Internal Affairs only in the spring of 2002 as congregations of the

<sup>10</sup> See: Liiman 2001: 32; Plaata 2001: 466.



Estonian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (EOCMP).<sup>11</sup> In the 1990s the membership of mainly Russian congregations obviously exceeded that of mainly Estonian congregations belonging under Constantinople.

At the census of 2000, 143,554 Estonian citizens or 13.9% of those who answered this question determined themselves as Orthodox. From among the total population of Estonia the Orthodox constituted 10.5%, which was scarcely below the proportion of the Lutherans. 72.9% of the Estonian Orthodox were Russians. The number of Estonians determining themselves as Orthodox was 18,517 (12.9%). According to the census data 351,178 Russians lived in Estonia. From among those over 15 years old, who answered the question about religion, 38.5% or 104,698 people determined themselves as Orthodox. In comparison it can be said that from among the Estonians who answered the question about religion, 145,712 people or 21.1% testified to being Lutherans (*2000. aasta... 2001: 78–79; 2000. aasta... 2002: 17–18, 328*).

Russian-language Orthodox congregations can be considered stronger than the Estonian ones not only by the number of members, but also by their substantial work and influence, considering the shrinking of small country congregations of the EAOC and the acute shortage of clergymen in comparison to the EOCMP. In 1999 the EAOC had only 19 priests and 2 deacons for 58 congregations, whereas the EOCMP had more clergymen than congregations: 34 priests and 9 deacons (Liiman 2001: 87).

So by the year 2000 the number of people in Estonia who regarded themselves as Orthodox had become almost equal to that of Lutherans. This happened, above all, due to the great number of orthodox non-Estonians, the fading influence of the EELC in society<sup>12</sup> and the increasing influence of the Orthodox Church subordinated to the

<sup>11</sup> In addition to the earlier registered Alexander Nevsky congregation in Tallinn and the Pühtitsa Nunnery congregation in East Virumaa, 30 congregations under the subordination of the Moscow Patriarchate were registered in April-May 2002. 11 of them operate in East Virumaa and 6 in Tallinn (see: <http://www.infonet.ee/~etnat/Eestikir.html>). In April 1999 the number of EOCMP congregations including the nunnery was 30, only three of them were predominantly Estonian-language (Liiman 2001: 87).

<sup>12</sup> The number of donating members of the EELC has been diminishing also at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. According to the Lutheran Church sources, in 2001, the number of donating members of the EELC amounted to 45,172, which makes up 3.3% of the total population of Estonia and is only slightly more than in 1987 (3.2%) and 6 times less than in 1937 (*Eesti... 1938: 18; Me õnnistame... 1997*).

Moscow Patriarchate among the Russian-language population in the 1990s. The same tendency has also been confirmed by the sociological surveys conducted in the 1990s, part of which revealed even higher percentages of the Russian Orthodox in society than the census of the year 2000 (see tables 2–4).

The proportion of Russians is even greater among Estonian **Old Believers**<sup>13</sup>, who, since the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, have settled mainly the western shore of Lake Peipsi. In 2000 Old Believers had 11 congregations, apart from the Peipsi area also in Tartu and Tallinn. In the Soviet period the number of Old Believers decreased considerably and was not completely restored in the 1990s, either. While at the census of 1934, 5276 people in Estonia testified to being Old Believers<sup>14</sup>, then by 1985, according to the Commissioner of Religious Affairs, the membership of Old Believers' congregations had fallen to 600.<sup>15</sup> At the census of 2000, 2515 inhabitants of Estonia determined themselves as Old Believers (*2000. aasta... 2002: 328*).

The membership of Old Believers' congregations as well as that of all the other registered religious associations that operated in the 1990s, was considerably smaller than that of Lutheran and Orthodox Churches. Yet, the calculations of many smaller denominations about their membership do not correspond to the data of the census of 2000. The following table includes denominations with at least 1000 disciples by the data of the census.

**Table 1. Followers of a particular faith (persons aged 15 years and older) and their proportion among those who answered the corresponding question by the data of the census of 2000<sup>16</sup>**

Lutherans	152 237	14.8%
Orthodoxes	143 554	13.9%
Baptists	6 009	0.6%

<sup>13</sup> According to the census of 2000, the percentage of Russians among Estonian Old Believers was 95 (*2000. aasta... 2002: 328*).

<sup>14</sup> Risch 1937: 122, 133. In the 1930s the number of inhabitants in 14 Old Believers' villages amounted to 7000–8000 (Kurs, Berg 1998: 63–64). However, not all of them were Old Believers.

<sup>15</sup> ACARC, OS, 1986, d. 3, l. 77ff. See also Plaat 2001: 221.

<sup>16</sup> The table is compiled on the basis of: *2000. aasta... 2002: 292–297*. 1890 people admitted that they adhered to a certain religion, but did not specify which one. The voluntary question about religion remained unanswered by 90,297 people or 8.1% of over 15-years-old Estonian citizens. If we take into account the total population of Estonia, the percentage of those testifying to a certain religion would be 23.9.

Roman-Catholics	5 745	0.5%
Jehovah's Witnesses	3 823	0.4%
Pentecostals	2 648	0.3%
Old Believers	2 515	0.2%
Adventists	1 561	0.2%
Methodists	1 455	0.1%
Muslims	1 387	0.1%
Non-specified Christians	1 266	0.1%
Taara- or Earth Believers	1 058	0.1%
Other	2 684	0.3%
Religious affiliation unknown	1 890	0.2%
Total:	327 832	31.8%

The census data (and Table 1) obviously include under the term “Baptists” most of the members of the **ECBU**. The biggest union of free congregations in Estonia comprised 85 congregations by 1999, eight of them predominantly Russian-speaking (*Aastakonverents...* 1999; Liiman 2001: 87). According to the census of 2000, Russians constituted 13.6% of the “Baptists” and other nationalities – 7.9% (*2000. aasta...* 2002: 328). By the statistics of the ECBU they had 5970 members at the beginning of 2000 (*Teekäija*, No. 4, 2002, p. 9).

In the 1990s the congregations of the **Roman Catholic Church** have successfully operated mostly in towns. To the two congregations, which in 1989 had approximately 800 members (Plaat 2001: 466), six more were added by 2000. Also several orders of the Roman Catholic Church started or resumed their activities in Estonia in the 1990s. By the year 2000 two male orders and six sisterhoods were represented. The membership of Estonian Catholic congregations amounted to about 3000 believers in 2000.<sup>17</sup> Yet the census of the same year revealed that the number of people in Estonia regarding themselves as Catholics was almost two times bigger. However, most of them are obviously not very closely connected with the local Catholic congregations. The 5745 Catholics were grouped as follows: 30.2% – Estonians, 15.1% – Poles, 14.5% – Belorussians, 13% – Lithuanians and 12.4% – Russians.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> According to the data from Vello Salo, a Catholic priest. These data differ from those presented by Ilmo Au and Ringo Ringvee, who claim that by 2000 the church registers included seven congregations of the Roman Catholic Church with 3500 members, three orders of nuns and one order of monks (2000: 15–16).

<sup>18</sup> *2000. aasta...* 2002: 328–329. Services in Estonian Catholic congregations are held in Latin, Estonian, Polish, Lithuanian, English and Russian (Liiman 2001: 87).

In the 1990s the **Jehovah's Witnesses**, whose activity had been prohibited throughout most of the Soviet period, proved to be very successful. In 1989 the Commissioner of Religious Affairs had data about at least 150 Jehovah's Witnesses. By 2000 the membership had grown to 3846. This number also coincides with the results of the census. The number of registered congregations amounted to 11 (Au, Ringvee 2000: 73). Together with subsidiary congregations the Jehovah's Witnesses themselves quoted 46 as the number of their congregations, half of them Russian-speaking and the other half – Estonian-speaking.<sup>19</sup> The Jehovah's Witnesses have been one of the most successfully operating confessions spreading among non-Estonians (mainly Russians). According to the data of the census of 2000, the Jehovah's Witnesses comprised 47.7% of Estonians, 34.6% of Russians and 17.4% of other nationalities (2000. aasta... 2002: 328–329).

The rapid spread of the movement and especially their intensive missionary work have been a partial reason for the fact that, in comparison to all other confessions spread in Estonia, people's attitude towards the Jehovah's Witnesses has been the most negative throughout the 1990s. This has also been confirmed by the results of sociological surveys on religion conducted under the leadership of the author in seven Estonian counties in the years 1996–2002 (see also: Plaata 2001: 469).

The next most numerous denomination according to the data of the census of 2000 – Pentecostals – obviously includes only part of the members of the **Estonian Christian Pentecostal Church (ECPC)**. In 1999 this church founded in the early 1990s had approximately 3500 members in 39 congregations (including 5 Russian-speaking ones) (Au, Ringvee 2000: 54–55; Liiman 2001: 87). Most probably census officers included part of them under “non-specified Christians”, “other” or any other subdivision, as they marked as their faith “Christianity”, “Christian free faith”, “Evangelical Christianity”, and so on. Obviously the same happened to several other members of free congregations. For that reason, the results of the census concerning different free congregations cannot be regarded as very reliable, the more so that the answers given at the census were classified under 74 different religions (see the list in: 2000. aasta... 2002: 292–295).

<sup>19</sup> According to the data of the Bureau of the Union of Estonian Jehovah's Witnesses' Congregations.

According to the census data, from among the other bigger unions of Christian free congregations, Methodists and Adventists have more than 1000 disciples. The majority of the latter is constituted by the members of the congregations of the Estonian Union of the **Seventh-Day Adventists** (SDA). If compared to the census data, the SDA statistics shows a bigger membership. According to the latter, the SDA membership grew from 1041 in 1989 to 1868 in 1999. In the same period the number of congregations increased from 13 to 18; three of them are predominantly Russian-speaking. By the census data, 77.6% of the 1,561 Adventists were Estonians and 15.5% were Russians.

The membership of the **Estonian Methodist Church** (EMC) increased from 1,748 in 1989 to 1880 in 1999, and the number of congregations grew from 15 to 24.<sup>20</sup> Yet, according to the census data, there were 1455 Methodists in Estonia, of whom Estonians constituted 68.6%, Russians – 19.9% and other nationalities – 11.3% (Au, Ringvee 2000: 47–48, 133, 139; Plaat 2001: 466; 2000. *aasta...* 2002: 328–329). In many congregations of the EMC, like in several other Estonian free congregations, services are held both in Estonian and in Russian.

From among other religious associations, whose membership according to their own data presented to the Ministry of Internal Affairs exceeded 1000, but by the census data of 2000 was considerably smaller, the **New Apostolic Church** established in Estonia in 1991 is worth mentioning. According to the data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1999 this church had 2,086 members in 10 congregations.<sup>21</sup> By the census of 2000, only 216 people (including 199 Estonians) testified to being the disciples of the New Apostolic Church. By the data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as of January 1, 2000, the membership figures of “**The Word of Life**” (approximately 1000 members), the **Union of Estonian Full Gospel Congregations** (approximately 800) and the **Estonian Charismatic Episcopal Church** (302 members) were considerably bigger than those revealed by the census. According to the census data, in 2000 the membership of denominations was the following: “The Word of Life” – 272 members (194 of them Estonians), the Full Gospel Congregations – 192 (114 of them Estonians), and the

<sup>20</sup> According to their own statistics, the EMC had 27 congregations in 1999, 10 of which were predominantly Russian-speaking (Liiman 2001: 87).

<sup>21</sup> Au, Ringvee 2000: 66. Tallinn and Haapsalu congregations also work in Russian (Liiman 2001: 88).

Charismatic Episcopal Church – 61.<sup>22</sup>

The great difference between the data revealed by the census and those quoted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs could be caused by the fact that people determine themselves under different names (e.g., “Christian”), also because part of the congregations consider children under 15 also as members, or just that they are willing to show the membership figures bigger than they actually are.

Most of the 60 **independent congregations** that were registered at the Ministry of Internal Affairs by the beginning of 2000 and did not belong to any unions, had been founded in the 1990s. From these congregations the Estonian Congregation of the Armenian Apostolic Church of St. Gregory (57 members by the census of 2000) and the Congregation of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church (12 members) with the membership of the respective national minorities could be mentioned (2000. *aasta...* 2002: 292–295).

From among the followers of non-Christian religions **Muslims** and **Judaists** have also existed for centuries in Estonia. In the Soviet period there was one Jewish congregation operating legally in Estonia; by 2000 there were already three registered congregations. The census quoted 257 as the number of Judaists in Estonia. 219 of them considered themselves as Jews by nationality, 18 – Estonians and 20 – as representatives of other nationalities. The Muslim congregation that had acted non-officially in Soviet Estonia, was registered in the 1990s under the name of Estonian Islamic Congregation. The Estonian Congregation of Muslim Sunnites which split from the latter was registered in 1995. According to the census of 2000 there were 1,387 Muslims in Estonia, whereas 94% of them were non-Estonians.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> These denominations were registered in Estonia beginning from the turn of the 1980s–1990s. In 2000 the Union of Full Gospel Congregations was called the Union of Estonian Evangelical and Free Congregations. The Charismatic Episcopal Church is also connected with part of the “New Life” congregations, the disciples of which, according to the census data of 2000, totalled 39 (Au, Ringvee 2000: 139–140; 2000. *aasta...* 2002: 328–329).

<sup>23</sup> The census quoted as Muslims 754 Tatars, 87 Russians, Belorussians and Ukrainians, 83 Estonians, and 455 representatives of other nationalities. If we take into account only clearly differentiated congregations and their unions and not the ones classified under umbrella terms “non-specified Christians” and “Christian free congregations”, Islam occupies the 16<sup>th</sup> position among the religious associations spread among Estonians. It is interesting to mention that, according to this calculation, after Lutherans, Orthodoxes and Baptists, the fourth place was occupied by the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the fifth one – by the Pentecostalists, the eighth place – by Taara- or Earth Believers and the tenth one – by the Buddhists (2000. *aasta...* 2002: 328–329).

From the **religious movements of Eastern origin** that reached Estonia beginning from the end of the 1980s, first and foremost the ones inspired by Hinduism and Buddhism were registered in the 1990s.<sup>24</sup> According to the census of 2000 Buddhists were the most numerous in Estonia (622, of them 528 Estonians). Under the name “Hindu” there were 90 people (including 54 Estonians), under “Hare Krishna” 48 (22) and under “Baha’i”<sup>25</sup> 43 people (21).<sup>26</sup> So about half of the members of the last three religious movements are non-Estonians.

The activity of those of **Taara Faith**, who had already operated in Estonia in the 1920s–1930s, was restored in a modernized form in the 1980s–1990s. The association of Taara and Earth Believers was registered in 1995, and it had about 200 members in 1999 (Au, Ringvee 2000: 110, 140). At the census of 2000, on the other hand, 1,058 people considered themselves as being of Taara or Earth Believers, among them 1,041 Estonians and 6 Russians (2000. *aasta...* 2002: 328–329). The great number of those of Taara and Earth Faith could be explained by the fact that in the surveys conducted by the author in the 1990s, most Estonians considered this particular faith to be the Estonian national religion. For example, from the Estonians in Põlvamaa and East Virumaa, who answered this question in 1999–2000, Taara Faith was considered to be the national religion by 45% and Lutheranism – by 40%.<sup>27</sup> People’s identification with Estonian “national faith” might have caused the considerably larger number of those who at the census marked themselves as being of Taara or Earth Believers, in comparison to the number of members of the officially registered movement.

In addition to the aforementioned denominations, a number of smaller registered or **unregistered religious associations** and move-

<sup>24</sup> For instance, the Estonian Buddhist Congregation “Drikung Kagyu Ratna Shri Buddhist Centre”, Tibet Buddhism Nyingma Estonian Congregation, Tallinn Congregation of Hare Krishna, Sathya Sai Baba Association in Estonia, and some others. Estonian Buddhists are also known from much earlier times and they were also active in the 1980s. About congregations in Estonia connected with the world religions originating from the East see also: Au, Ringvee 2000: 100–107.

<sup>25</sup> Data about the first Estonian Baha’is date already from the Soviet period. The Baha’i Congregation in Tallinn was registered in 1995 and in 1999 it had 85 members (Au, Ringvee 2000: 99).

<sup>26</sup> 2000. *aasta...* 2002: 328–329. The data about the national belonging of the disciples of denominations with less than 100 members have hereinafter been derived from the database on the home page of the Statistical Office of Estonia (<http://www.stat.ee>).

<sup>27</sup> In 2000 East Virumaa Russians regarded as Estonian national faith mainly Lutheranism and Catholicism, and Taara Faith was not mentioned by anybody.

ments operated in Estonian throughout the 1990s.<sup>28</sup> Most of them reached Estonia only beginning from the turn of the 1980s–1990s mainly from Scandinavian countries, West Europe and the USA. At the beginning of the 1990s the transcendental meditation movement became especially popular in Estonia, and according to some estimations, more than 20,000 people participated in it (Plaat 2001: 373–374). The press has also published information about Satanist movements. At the census of 2000, 43 people (of them 38 Estonians) considered themselves as Satanists.

In addition to the denominations and religious movements observing their own doctrine and customs, beginning from the turn of 1980s–1990s tens of Christian organizations and societies have been (re)established in Estonia; their main objective is youth, social and missionary work and they are not always connected with a concrete denomination.<sup>29</sup> In 1989 the Estonian Council of Churches as the most important board for the co-operation between Christian confessions was established.

Undoubtedly the aforementioned does not include all the movements and associations somehow connected with religion that operated in Estonian in the 1990s. In spite of the great number of different congregations, during this decade people in Estonia were not actually connected with different religious associations to a great extent. This is proved by the membership statistics of both the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the denominations themselves<sup>30</sup> as well as the data of the

<sup>28</sup> From among the movements connected with Christianity and not mentioned above, e.g., Quakers, God's Assembly, Hosianna Church, the Church of Real God, Christian Communion Church, Charismatic Biblical Circles and others operated in Estonia in the 1990s. From among other religion-oriented groups we could mention theosophists, anthroposophists, christosophists, Christian Science, Scientology, Urantia Book groups, all kinds of spiritualists and the New Age movement. The latter had also supporters according to the census of 2000 (29 Estonians). From among the numerous movements inspired by Eastern religions and the way of thought, we could mention Zen Buddhism, Sry Chinmoy and "heart yoga", several other movements dealing with yoga and meditation (see: Leppik 1992). According to the census of 2000 there were still only 15 people who connected themselves with yoga as a religion, and all of them were the supporters of Sahaja Yoga (2000. *aasta...* 2002: 292–295). By the present time part of these religious movements have terminated their action or joined the aforementioned registered denominations.

<sup>29</sup> See, e.g., Kurg 1995: 123–125; Ritsbek 1996: 182ff.; Au, Ringvee 2000: 113–116, 137–138. A number of organizations of this kind have been founded by single confessions. In 1999, for example, at least 44 charity organizations operated at different denominations, 20 of them under the subordination of the EELC (Liiman 2001: 38).

<sup>30</sup> In more detail see: Plaat 2001: 257–259, 262–273, 466–468.



census of 2000 about the disciples of smaller religious movements. On the other hand, however, the number of people supporting Lutheranism or Orthodoxy according to the census of 2000 and the sociological surveys of the 1990s proved that the number of people associating themselves with a certain religion or congregation is much greater than revealed by the statistics of congregations. Also the surveys of the 1990s reveal great differences between the religiosity of Estonians and other ethnic groups residing in Estonia. The corresponding research has been treated below.

## **2. The religiosity of Estonians, Russians and other non-Estonians according to the sociological surveys (1990–2000)**

Most of the sociological surveys conducted in the 1990s revealed significant differences in the religiosity of Estonians and other ethnic groups (above all, Estonian Russians). In this article the following all-Estonian surveys comprising both Estonians and Russian-speaking community have been used:<sup>31</sup>

\* **WVS 1990, 1996.** *The World Values Survey* conducted in different countries all over the world in 1990-1993 (43 countries/societies) and 1995-1998 (55 countries) was carried out in Estonia in 1990 (hereinafter WVS 1990)<sup>32</sup> and in 1996 (WVS 1996).<sup>33</sup>

\* **EMOR 1992a, 1992b, 1998, 1999.** Researches conducted by the EMOR (Estonian Marketing and Opinion Research):

– by the order of the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1992 (EMOR 1992a);<sup>34</sup>

– the EMOR survey on paranormal and other non-Christian beliefs in 1992 (EMOR 1992b);<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> The results of the following research are presented in: Kändler 1992; Hansen 1994, 1995, 2001; *Teekäija*, No. 10, 1994, p. 19; Ritsbek 1996: 175–178; *Kui kristlik...* 1997: 37ff.; Inglehart, Basañez, Moreno 1998; Heino 1998c; *Postimees*, No. 284, 1999, p. 3; *Postimees*, 17.5.2000; Plaata 2000, 2001: 255–257, 356–360, 377–381; Liiman 2001; Rimmel 2001; 2000. *aasta...* 2002; <http://www.kehrakogudus.ee/vana/stat/kuikr.htm>; <http://www.kehrakogudus.ee/vana/stat/emor.htm>. As comparative material, several surveys conducted in North European countries and elsewhere have been used: Dogan 1995; Sundback 1995; Heino 1997, 1998a, 1998b; Inglehart, Basañez, Moreno 1998, etc.

<sup>32</sup> Within the framework of the WVS 1990, 1008 people were questioned (N=1008), among them 621 Estonian-speaking and 387 Russian-speaking persons.

<sup>33</sup> N=1021, 602 Estonian and 419 Russian-speaking respondents.

<sup>34</sup> N=1013, including 627 Estonians, 307 Russians, 79 representatives of other nationalities.

<sup>35</sup> N=1000, including 630 Estonians, 280 Russians, 90 representatives of other nationalities.

– by the order of the Finnish Academy in 1998 (EMOR 1998);<sup>36</sup>

– by the order of *Gallup International* in 1999 (EMOR 1999);<sup>37</sup>

\* **ECC 1995, 2000.** Sociological surveys “About Life, Religion and Religious Life” conducted by the Estonian Council of Churches (ECC), the Estonian Evangelical Alliance and the Estonian Biblical Society in the years 1994–1995 (ECC 1995) and 2000 (ECC 2000).<sup>38</sup>

\* **PC 2000.** The results of the 2000 Population Census of Estonia (PC 2000).

Also the results of the sociological survey on religion conducted in 2000 in East Virumaa under the leadership of J. Plaat have been used in the article (**EV 2000**).<sup>39</sup> Data about the attitude towards religion and different denominations revealed by Estonian Russians in East Virumaa and other parts of Estonia in comparison to Estonians are also provided by several other sociological surveys (Kirch, Kirch, Tuisk 1997: 53–54, 65; Ruutsoo 1997: 22–23; *The Integration...* 1997: 35).

The difference between Estonians and other ethnic groups (including Russians) becomes especially obvious if a question is asked about the religiosity of the respondent.

**Table 2. The proportion of Estonians and Russians determining themselves as religious in Estonia in 1990–2000 (%)<sup>40</sup>**

Year	Estonians	Russians	Survey
1990	17	29	WVS 1990
1992	18	30	EMOR 1992a
1996	23	49	WVS 1996
2000	26	42	PC 2000

<sup>36</sup> N= 997, including 687 Estonians, 255 Russians, 55 representatives of other nationalities.

<sup>37</sup> 487 residents of Estonia at the age of 15–74 participated.

<sup>38</sup> Within the framework of ECC 1995, 2500 adult people in Estonia selected by random choice were sent a questionnaire by post. The questionnaire was returned by 1551 people, among them 914 Estonians and 637 non-Estonians. The ECC 2000 questionnaire was sent to 2200 people, of whom 1092 returned it, among them 671 Estonians and 421 representatives of other nationalities.

<sup>39</sup> N=140, incl. 27 Estonians, 95 Russians and 17 representatives of other nationalities, one respondent did not determine the nationality. At the field work of 2000 in Vaivara commune and Narva-Jõesuu town, J. Plaat’s questionnaire “Study on Religion in Contemporary Estonian Life” was used. 18-year-old and older people selected by random choice were questioned. The field work in East Virumaa constituted a part of a sociological survey on religion financed by the Estonian Science Foundation in different Estonian counties in the years 1996–2002. The material concerning East Virumaa was entered into the database and analysed in a seminar paper by Maarja Kaaristo, an ethnology student, whose work (Kaaristo 2002) partly serves as a basis for the data presented in this article concerning the East Virumaa survey.

<sup>40</sup> The table is compiled on the basis of: Liiman 2001: 51–52; 2000. *aasta...* 2002: 18.

From the results of EMOR 1992a and PC 2000 the table includes Estonian Russians, from the WVS surveys – the sample of Estonian Russian-speaking community. According to PC 2000 there were even more people adhering to a certain religion among other non-Estonians than among Russians (47%). From all the respondents 21% considered themselves as religious in 1990, 23% – in 1992 and 36% – in 1996. So it can be said that by the middle of the decade the number of religious people had increased considerably, above all due to the abrupt growth in the number of non-Estonian believers. The low indicator of religiosity in 1990 is quite surprising at first sight, as this was the heyday of the “church boom”. It was in 1990 that the number of those baptized and confirmed at the Lutheran Church was the greatest within the period after World War II (Plaat 2001: 262). Yet actually the result of WVS 1990 supports the statement that at the turn of the 1980s–1990s the reason was not the inner surge of religiosity, but the (temporary) trend prescribing church rites. The latter is also confirmed by the data of WVS 1990, according to which the number of Estonian residents who considered church rites as essential, was quite high.<sup>41</sup>

If we compare Estonia to other countries, then in 1990 the proportion of Estonian residents who determined themselves as religious (21%) among the 43 representatively selected world countries/societies ranked the last but one and in Europe – as the last one. Even the Estonian Russians separately taken lagged behind all European countries.<sup>42</sup> Owing to the great increase in the number of non-Estonian believers in 1995–1996 according to the WVS there were even fewer religious people, in comparison to Estonia, in East Germany (28%) and Sweden (33%); in all the other European countries the percentage was much higher than in Estonia. If we consider Estonians separately, then the percentage of believers was the lowest in Europe also according to

<sup>41</sup> 72%, 66% and 64% of the Estonian sample considered it as important to have a religious service on the occasion of death, birth and wedding, respectively. In Latvia, Lithuania and most other European countries, however, these figures were much higher.

<sup>42</sup> In China the percentage of believers was even lower than in Estonia (5%). The next countries with lower indicators were Japan with 26%, Sweden with 31%, Bulgaria with 36% and East Germany with 38%. The respective indicators for the neighbouring countries of Estonia were the following: Latvia – 54%, Lithuania – 55%, Russia – 56%, and Finland – 59%. From among European countries the number of believers was the highest in Catholic countries, with Poland at the top with 95% (Inglehart, Basañez, Moreno 1998: V151).

WVS 1996.<sup>43</sup>

While examining the figures in Table 2, we have to take into consideration the fact that different questions were asked in different surveys. The WVS 1990, WVS 1996 and EMOR 1992a surveys provided multiple choice questions with four options: Do you consider yourself as 1. a religious person (their proportion in the sample is given in Table 2); 2. not a religious person; 3. a convinced atheist; 4. don't know. The PC 2000 survey asked the question "What is your religious affiliation?" and provided choices divided as follows inside the sample: 1. follower of a particular faith (given in Table 2; in addition to that they had to indicate their faith given in Table 1); 2. has no religious affiliation; 3. atheist; 4. cannot define the affiliation; 5. refuse to answer.

The percentage of religious people according to the PC 2000 survey can be compared to the results of WVS 1990, WVS 1996 and EMOR 1992a, but not to the ones of EMOR 1998 survey. According to the latter, 14% of Estonians and 49% of Russians (in all, 25% of the respondents) regarded themselves as religious, and 25% of both Estonians and Russians determined themselves as "searchers". So, among Estonians 39% considered themselves as religious or searchers for faith, and among Russians the corresponding percentage was even 74. Unfortunately, the term "searcher" provides us with the same kind of vague information as the definition "inclining towards religion", which was used in the surveys of ECC 95 and ECC 2000. Yet the surveys of the ECC also reveal that the proportion of the people who regarded themselves as believers throughout the 1990s was much higher among Estonian Russians and other ethnic groups than among Estonians (approximately three times in 1995 and 2000).

**Table 3. The proportion of religious people and those inclining towards religion in Estonia in 1995 and 2000 (%)<sup>44</sup>**

Regard themselves as...	ECC 1995			ECC 2000		
	Estonians	Non-Estonians	Total	Estonians	Non-Estonians	Total
...a religious person	9	25	16	11	35	20
...inclining towards religion	51	50	51	47	44	46

<sup>43</sup> According to the WVS survey of 1995–1996, in Finland 57% of people considered themselves as religious, in Latvia the corresponding percentage was 64, in Russia – also 64 and in Lithuania – 84 (Liiman 2001: 52).

In the case of ECC 1995 and ECC 2000 surveys, the problem was the relatively small number of respondents in the questionnaire sent out by post. As the questionnaire was returned by 62% of the sample in 1995 and by 49.6% in 2000, it can be assumed that the people who did it were interested in religious affairs to a certain extent.

The most representative comparative information about the proportion of religious people in different Estonian counties and towns was provided by the census of 2000. According to the latter, the greatest proportion of religious people among Estonian counties was in East Virumaa (40.4% of the population at the age of 15 and older). Also the percentage of the Orthodox people was the highest there – 31.8% (2000. *aasta...* 2002: 19, 316–318). It is not surprising, as the proportion of Russian-speaking community which is more religious than Estonians is the highest there, compared to all the other counties in Estonia. In 2000, 69.5% of East Virumaa population was Russian and 9.5% – other non-Estonians. All over Estonia, Russians constituted 25.6% of the population, being the largest group of non-Estonians (2000. *aasta...* 2001: 78–79).

In comparison to the census data, the proportion of people in East Virumaa, who were Orthodox or considered themselves as religious, was even greater according to the EV 2000 survey. The whole sample comprised 61.2% of religious people. From among East Virumaa Russians, 67.4% considered themselves as religious and among the representatives of other non-Estonians the percentage was 70.6. Among East Virumaa Russians the percentage of the Orthodox people was 57.9, among other non-Estonians – 47, and in the whole sample – 45 (there were no Orthodox people among Estonians). The higher percentage of believers and Orthodox people in comparison to the PC 2000 data was not due to the national composition of the sample in this region (Vaivara commune and Narva-Jõesuu town), as it almost coincided with that of the whole county.<sup>45</sup> However, it may have been due to the

<sup>44</sup> The table is compiled on the basis of: Remmel 2001: 43; Hansen 2001: 26. According to the ECC 1995 survey, 32% of Estonians regarded themselves as indifferent towards religion, 6% – as inclining towards atheism and 2% were convinced atheists. The respective percentages among non-Estonian respondents were 22, 2 and 1. According to the ECC 2000 survey, 32% of Estonians and 22% of non-Estonians regarded themselves as indifferent towards religion; 8% and 1.2%, respectively, as inclining towards atheism, and 2.2% of Estonians and 1.4% of non-Estonians – as convinced atheists.

<sup>45</sup> The sample of the EV 2000 survey region comprised 19.4% of Estonians, 68.3% of Russians and 12.2% of representatives of other nationalities, the total percentage of non-Estonians being 80.5.

different wording of the corresponding question. In the EV 2000 survey the questions asked were: “Are you a religious person?” and “What is your faith?” whereas the PC 2000 asked rather about people’s confessional belonging.

The data of PC 2000 prove that the greater is the proportion of Russians in a region, the greater is the percentage of religious people. So from among all Estonian towns, the percentage of religious people in the whole population (15-year-olds and older) was over 50 only in Kallaste (62.5%) and Mustvee (50.5%), which are predominantly Russian-populated. In addition to the Orthodox people, the proportion of believers in these towns was increased by the Old Believers (35.6% in Kallaste and 17.3% in Mustvee). The next ones on the list were – with also predominantly Russian-speaking population – Narva-Jõesuu (48.5% of the respondents were religious), Kohtla-Järve (42.9%), Maardu (42.8%), Jõhvi (42.7%), Narva (40.8%) and also Võru, which is the first town on the list with predominantly Estonian-speaking population (35.8%). Due to the great number of Russians, Tallinn with 35.5% was also above the Estonian average (34%) (2000. *aasta...* 2002: 316–322).

According to some surveys, the proportion of people who consider themselves “rather” Lutherans or Orthodox, is even higher than the percentage of people who regard themselves as religious. At EMOR 1992a and EMOR 1998 the questions asked were as follows: “Are you rather ... 1. a Lutheran, 2. an Orthodox, 3. a member of some other sect, 4. or you do not belong to any sect” (Liiman 2001: 164). This question worded by Harri Heino, a Finnish researcher, and its translation into Estonian (the usage of the word “usulahk” (sect), which has a certain derogatory tinge in Estonian) cannot be regarded as well-turned in the case you want to know about a person’s real connection with a confession. Answers to this question can reveal more the fact whether the respondents connect themselves with rather the Lutheran or Orthodox cultural space.<sup>46</sup> Yet, the percentages in Table 4 indicate the

According to the PC 2000, the percentage of Estonians in East Virumaa was 20, that of Russians – 69.5, other nationalities – 9.5 and of non-defined nationality – 1%.

<sup>46</sup> The same applies to the research project carried out in 1996 “About the Integration of Estonian Russians into Estonian Society”, which, among others, asked a question “Which of the following faiths is particularly close to your heart?” From among the choices (Catholicism, Lutheranism, Orthodoxy, Islam, other) Orthodoxy was chosen by 89% of Russians and Lutheranism by 78% of Estonians (Kirch, Kirch, Tuisk 1997: 65).

proportion between the people relating themselves to either Orthodoxy or Lutheranism. Once again it becomes obvious that Russians identify themselves more with Orthodoxy than Estonians with Lutheranism.

**Table 4.** The proportion of Estonians and Russians who consider themselves rather Lutherans, Orthodox or belonging to any other denomination (%)<sup>47</sup>

	EMOR 1992a		EMOR 1998	
	Estonians	Russians	Estonians	Russians
Lutheran	39	2	45	3
Orthodox	6	62	3	60
Other	2	1	4	15
Do not belong	53	35	48	22
Total	100	100	100	100

While viewing these surprisingly high percentages, we have to bear in mind that, according to the same EMOR 1998 survey, only 14% of Estonians and 49% of Russians regarded themselves as convinced believers. Also we can take into consideration the fact that in 1998 the Lutheran Church had 49,779 donating members, which makes 6.7% of the 15-year-old and older Estonians by the census of 2000 (in all, 745,671). According to the data presented by the EELC in 1998, the number of all (at some time) baptized people was quoted to be 174,349 or 23.4% of all adult Estonians. In the case of the latter, we should bear in mind that the EELC considers also children as members. In any case, the percentage of Estonians regarding themselves as (rather) Lutherans at sociological surveys is considerably higher than the actual membership of the Lutheran Church.

If we consider as reliable the data of the EMOR 1999 survey, which was conducted on the basis of the same methodology as EMOR 1992a and EMOR 1998, 30% of the Estonian population at the age of 15–74 regarded themselves as Lutherans, 28% – as Orthodox, 3% as Catholics, 2% as disciples of another Christian and 2% – as disciples of some non-Christian religious association. So the total percentage of people with religious affiliation was 65, not 31.8 as revealed by the census of the following year. Obviously, we cannot consider this figure as reliable (about the criticism of sociological surveys on religion in the 1990s see in more detail: *Plaat 2000*).

<sup>47</sup> The table is compiled on the basis of: *Liiman 2001: 64*.

The author maintains that, when asking about the real confessional belonging of the respondent, it is more correct to ask about their belonging to some congregation or denomination, as it was also done in the surveys of WVS 1990, ECC 1995 and ECC 2000 as well as by the author himself in EV 2000 and other surveys within the framework of the same project.<sup>48</sup> Otherwise we can only learn which denomination the respondents support or favour, not where they actually belong. Here we have to take into consideration the fact that even if people relate themselves to a certain denomination (are members, support, prefer to others), it does not mean that they consider themselves as religious.

According to the WVS 1990 survey, only 13% of the population of Estonia belonged to a religious denomination. Similarly to the proportion of religious people, this indicator also ranked Estonia as the last in Europe and the last but one in the world.<sup>49</sup> Among both the denomination members and believers in Estonia the majority was constituted by women, elderly people, people with lower educational level and lower income. Female and elderly persons were more religious also according to other surveys in the 1990s.

According to the ECC 1995 survey, 19% of the population of Estonia claimed to be members of a congregation, including 13% of non-Estonians and 24% of Estonians (from among Estonians 20% belonged to the Lutheran, 1.4% to Orthodox or Catholic Church, 0.8% to the ECU and 2.1% to other denominations), from among the rest, 5% had been members of a certain congregation and 70% had never belonged to any congregation. According to the ECC 2000 survey, 24% of the adult Estonian population belonged to a congregation, including 24% of Estonians and 25% of others. So it can be said that by the end of the 1990s other ethnic groups outnumbered Estonians in this sphere.

In the EV 2000 survey, the question “Do you belong to a church/congregation/religious movement at the moment?” was answered in the affirmative only by 13% of the respondents (7.4% of Estonians and

<sup>48</sup> In 1996–1999 the sample comprised 18% of members of a certain congregation in Hiiumaa county, in Läänemaa and Saaremaa the percentage was 19 and in Põlvamaa – 31. The respective percentages of those who considered themselves as religious people in these counties were 33%, 27%, 25% and 43%.

<sup>49</sup> Once again, China had even a lower percentage than Estonia (4%), Estonia was followed by Moscow with 24% (was questioned separately in addition to the sample of whole Russia), Belorussia with 30%, Bulgaria with 34%, East Germany with 35% and Latvia and Russia with 37%. The corresponding indicator for Lithuania was 63% and that of Finland – 89% (Inglehart, Basañez, Moreno 1998: V143).



14.5% of other ethnic groups). This is also below the average percentage of congregation members in the predominantly Estonian-populated counties (Läänemaa, Hiiumaa, Saaremaa and Põlvamaa) in 1996–1999 (22%). On the other hand, the percentage of those considering themselves as religious in the East Virumaa sample (61%) considerably exceeded the average of these four counties (32%). The latter also corresponds to the Estonian average according to the census of 2000. The number of those relating themselves to a certain denomination is usually higher than the actual membership of congregations. In Estonia this tendency was especially obvious in the 1990s in the case of Lutherans and Orthodox people.

The small membership of congregations revealed by the EV 2000 survey was largely due to the fact that (Orthodox) urban congregations remained far from the rural population. While the percentage of congregation members among rural population (Vaivara commune) was only 10, the corresponding percentage among urban population (Narva-Jõesuu) was 22. It also seems that while elsewhere in Estonia (above all, in Tallinn) the growth in the numbers and activity of Russian congregations brought along the increase in their membership (cf. the results of the ECC 1995 and ECC 2000), then in rural areas of East Virumaa this indicator has remained at the level of the first half of the 1990s.

In addition to this, a great number of East Virumaa Orthodox people go to church even if they are not officially members. The tendency is the opposite in the case of Estonian Lutherans: most members of congregations are not regular churchgoers. It is also proved by the fact that, in comparison to Estonians, the Russians' participation in religious services was more active in the 1990s.

**Table 5. Participation of Estonians and Russians in religious services (%)<sup>50</sup>**

	WVS 1995		EMOR 1998	
	Estonians	Russians	Estonians	Russians
At least once a month	7	11	6	12
A few times a year	15	18	22	26

The WVS 1995–1996 survey showed that from among the countries

<sup>50</sup> The table is based on: Liiman 2001: 64. From the EMOR survey results the table includes Estonian Russians, from the WVS survey results – the sample of Estonian Russian-language population.

selected for the survey, the percentage of people who regularly attend religious services (at least once a month) was the lowest in Russia (8%), and East Germany and Estonia (9%). In comparison to the rest of the world, the indicators for Finland and Sweden (11%) as well as for Norway (12%) were extremely low.<sup>51</sup>

According to the surveys of ECC 1995 and EMOR 1998, Estonian Russians also pray much more often than Estonians (Liiman 2001: 67). The fact that Estonian Russians are more closely connected with (Christian) religion is also proved by the answers to other religion-related questions in the surveys of the 1990s, e.g., the percentages of those believing in God and Jesus Christ.

Table 6. The proportion of Estonians and Russians who believe in God and Jesus as his son (%)<sup>52</sup>

Believe...	EMOR 1992a		WVS 1995		EMOR 1998	
	Estonians	Russians	Estonians	Russians	Estonians	Russians
...in God	33	42	40	55	41	68
...in Jesus	24	37			27	55

According to the EMOR 1998 survey, the number of those who believed in God in Estonia was the highest among the East Virumaa and Tallinn Russians (Liiman 2001: 62). While the percentages given in Table 6 apply to whole Estonia, then in East Virumaa the percentage of those believing in Jesus as the God's son is even higher. According to the data of the EV 2000 survey, this was believed by 52% of the whole sample and 68% of Russians.

While believing in Jesus is a clearly Christian belief, then believing in God is not supposed to be an indication of the respondents' connection with traditional Christian beliefs. People's conceptions of God can be extremely varied and negligibly or not at all connected with

<sup>51</sup> According to the EMOR 1998 survey, 42% of the respondents in Estonia did not go to church at all. According to the RAMP survey conducted in 1998, the percentage of those who did not go to church at all was 34 in Denmark, 33 in Norway, 32 in Sweden and 19 in Finland (Heino 1998a; Liiman 2001: 64).

<sup>52</sup> The table is based on: Liiman 2001: 55, 57. The results of the EMOR surveys apply to Estonian Russians, the data of the WVS – to Estonian Russian-speaking population. In comparison it can be said that in the survey of WVS 1990–1991 the percentage of those who thought that they believed in God was the following: in East Germany 36%, in Bulgaria – 40%, in Moscow – 41%, in Belorussia – 43%, in Russia – 44%, in Sweden – 45% and in Latvia – 58%. In all other countries the percentages were higher. Unfortunately, within the framework of the WVS 1990, this question was not asked in Estonia (see: Dogan 1995: 407; Inglehart, Basañez, Moreno 1998: V166).

Christianity. For example, although the EMOR 1992a and EMOR 1998 surveys revealed that respectively 37% and 49% of the population of Estonia believed in God, it does not tell us anything particular. The fact that, according to the same surveys, in 1992, 41% and in 1998, 45% of the population of Estonia believed in astrology, is much more eloquent.

One of the best ways to find out if people regarding themselves as believers or believing in God can also be considered as Christians, is to ask them whether they believe in personal God or not. It is the believers in personal God who can be regarded as followers of the traditional Christian doctrine.

The survey of EV 2000 asked which of the following statements was the closest to the respondents' opinion: 1. There is a personal God, 2. There is some sort of spirit or life force, 3. Cannot say, 4. There is not any sort of spirit, God or life force. It turned out that in East Virumaa 11% of the people in the sample (16% of the religious people) believed in the existence of the personal God, and 55% of the respondents believed in a spirit or life force. From among Russians, 10% believed in personal God and 53% – in a spirit or life force.

The same question was also asked in the surveys of WVS 1990 and EMOR 1999. By EMOR 1999, 22% of the population of Estonia believed in personal God and 50% – in “a certain spirit of a heavenly power”. So it can be said that from among East Virumaa Russians relatively few people believed in personal God, also if compared to the Estonian average. Yet, the results of both EMOR 1999 and EV 2000, if compared to the year 1990, reveal an increase in the percentage of those believing in personal God both among Estonians and Russians.

According to the WVS 1990 survey, only 6% of Estonians and 8% of Russians believed in personal God in Estonia, 56% of Estonians and 48% of Russians believed in a spirit or life force, and neither were believed by 12% of Estonians and 21% of Russians. From the whole Estonian sample, the percentage of those who believed in personal God was 7. From among the countries that participated in the WVS survey in 1990–1991, the percentage was lower only in China (3%), Japan (5%) and Belorussia (6%). Yet the percentage of those believing in a spirit in Estonia was much higher both for the Estonian and Russian-speaking population than the average of all the countries participating in the survey (36%).<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> The percentages of those believing in personal God in Europe were the lowest in East Europe and

This result confirms one of the peculiarities in Estonian religious life in the 1990s. Most comparative surveys showed throughout the 1990s the negligible connection of the residents of Estonia with traditional Christianity and its institutions, owing to the great proportion of Estonians in the sample. According to international surveys, Estonia can be regarded as one of the most secularized countries (according to some surveys, also the most secularized one) in Europe and also all over the world (in more detail see: Plaat 2001: 355–359).<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, most of the surveys reveal the fading of religiosity connected with institutional and traditional Christianity, not the indifference of the residents of Estonia towards different non-Christian beliefs. The beliefs slightly or not at all connected with Christianity, e.g., different folk beliefs, belief in paranormal phenomena, and some other manifestations of non-formal religion spread quite extensively in Estonia in the 1990s, especially if compared to the previous Soviet period and most European countries.

Here a question arises if, in the case of the spread of non-Christian

Scandinavian countries. From the questioned European countries those believing in personal God were in clear majority only in Catholic countries: in Ireland and Italy – 67%, and in Portugal – 62%. In Iceland the percentage was 51 and in Spain – 49, in other European countries it was below 40%. For the neighbouring countries of Estonia, the WVS 1990–1991 survey revealed that in Russia 8% of people believed in personal God, in Lithuania it was 21% and in Finland – 29%. In Latvia the percentage of those who believed in personal God was 10 and of those who believed in a spirit or life force – 56; in Sweden the respective percentages were 16 and 46. *The European Values Study* conducted in Sweden and Finland showed that the percentage of those who believed in personal God was 32 in Finland and 15 in Sweden, and the percentage of those who believed in a spirit or life force was 46 in Finland and 44 in Sweden (Dogan 1995: 410; Sundback 1995: 100; Heino 1998b; Inglehart, Basañez, Moreno 1998: V175; Liiman 2001: 54).

<sup>54</sup> In the 1990s, besides Estonia, East Germany could also be regarded as one of the most secularized regions in Europe. For example, according to the data of the WVS 1995–1996 the number of those people who considered themselves to be believers and believed in God, heaven, afterlife, etc., was the smallest in East Germany and Estonia (Liiman 2001: 52, 56–58). According to WVS 1990, in addition to the proportion of believers and members of congregations, several other indicators were also lower in Estonia than in East Germany or any other European societies: in Estonia religion was considered as very important by 5%, 1% did some voluntary work at a religious organization; 11% agreed to the statement that “Life has a meaning only because God exists”; and 14% agreed to the statement that “Death has a meaning only if you believe in God”. Apart from the number of those who believed in personal God, Estonia was also the last but one in Europe by the proportion of those who had been brought up religiously at home (15%). This percentage was even lower in Moscow (14). In Russia the proportion of those who had been brought up religiously at home was 19, in Latvia – 29% and in Lithuania – 66%. Several other questions related to religion were not asked in Estonia in 1990 (Inglehart, Basañez, Moreno 1998).

beliefs, a significant difference can be detected between Estonians and Estonian Russians or other non-Estonians. The survey of EMOR 1992b with its questions about people's belief in different non-Christian phenomena helps to find an answer here. The question asked was the following: "Do you believe in the existence of these phenomena?" and three choices were provided: 1. I believe in its existence; 2. I am not sure, don't know; 3. I do not believe in it. Also the respondents were asked whether they themselves had experienced the particular phenomena or not. The results were surprising to a certain extent: according to the EMOR 1992b survey approximately 30% of the residents of Estonia believed in different non-Christian and the so-called paranormal phenomena, and about 5% of them claimed that they had experienced some of them themselves. Here we must also mention that, in the case of nearly all the phenomena presented in the survey, the Estonians' readiness to believe in these phenomena exceeded that of the Russians.

For example, 62% of Estonians and 52% of Russians<sup>55</sup> believed in manual healing, in the case of astrology the respective percentages were 53 and 43, in the case of aliens' visits they were 51 and 40, in the case of clairvoyance or ability to know what happened in the past and to predict the future, the respective percentages were 43 and 31, and so on. Only in the case of sorcery there were more believers among Russians (27%) than Estonians (15%). Also Estonians tend to take these things more seriously than, for example, Finns, if we draw a comparison with the public opinion survey conducted in Finland with a slightly different methodology.<sup>56</sup> This also helps to refute the stereotype imagination of a sceptical and deliberate (in religious matters) Estonian.

One of the results of the EMOR 1992b survey that was quite to be expected was the women's considerably greater inclination towards

<sup>55</sup> 58% of all the respondents, whereas 12% of them claimed that they had experienced the particular phenomenon themselves (in more detail see Table 7).

<sup>56</sup> The public opinion survey *Gallup Ecclesiastica 1995/1996* revealed that only 10% of the population of Finland really believed or at least considered it probable that a reliable prediction of a person's future can be made with the help of astrology or horoscopes. The existence of ghosts was considered to be certain or probable by 14% and the visits of the UFOs to Finland – by 20% of the respondents. According to the survey conducted in Russia, 37% of the respondents in 1996 believed in astrology (Heino 1997: 360, 365). In the 1990s, in the former Soviet republics astrology seemed to be held in higher esteem than in western countries (see also: Kääriäinen 1993: 137). Yet, there is sufficient data available for making such a generalization; also it is methodologically extremely complicated to study the actual extent of such form of non-official religiosity.

believing these aforementioned phenomena.<sup>57</sup> For example, 13% of men and 28% of women believed in spirits, 16% of men and 31% of women – in ghosts, 31% and 45%, respectively, in clairvoyance, and 41% and 58% in astrology. It is surprising that among the respondents with a higher education there were 13% more people who believed in astrology and 10% more people who believed in ghosts than among the respondents with a secondary education. The proportion of those who believed in sorcery was almost equal among those with a higher education and those with a secondary education. From among the age groups the most susceptible towards paranormal and other non-Christian phenomena were people at the age of 25–34. 59% of this age group, for example, believed in astrology. So these beliefs were not conditioned by the lack of education or old age. These were rather the respondents with a higher education as well as young people who were inclined towards believing in different paranormal phenomena.

The high percentages of those believing in paranormal phenomena in 1992 were partly caused by the fact that in the Soviet period they were in disfavour and these topics (paranormal phenomena, astrology, occultism, etc.) became popular in the mass media just at the turn of the 1980s–1990s. On the other hand, the other surveys conducted in the 1990s do not reveal a significant decrease in the numbers of those who believed in these phenomena (e.g., ECC 1995). In the case of a few phenomena, the proportion of the believers even increased in the following years, although these changes can greatly be due to the different questions and answer options in different surveys (in more detail see: *Plaat 2000: 40–42*).

Within the framework of the EV 2000 survey it was investigated which changes believing in non-Christian phenomena had gone through by the turn of the century. On the basis of the data obtained from EMOR 1992b it was possible to assume that it was mostly women, Estonians and younger and more educated people who were inclined to take non-Christian beliefs more seriously. Apart from other things, the EV 2000 project tried to find out if and to what extent this held good about East Virumaa in the year 2000. The questions about non-Christian beliefs were the same as in 1992. The main results about the

<sup>57</sup> The same applies to Estonians and Russians as well as to the beliefs connected with Christianity and connection with religious institutions also according to the data of other sociological surveys. Regarding women's greater religiosity in Estonia see also: *Liiman 2001: 52*.

whole East Virumaa sample (both Estonians and non-Estonians) were the following.

**Table 7. Believers in non-Christian phenomena in Estonia in 1992 and in East Virumaa in 2000 (%)**

	EMOR 1992a		EV 2000	
	Believe in the existence	Have experienced themselves	Believe in the existence (% of the respondents)	Have experienced themselves (% of the sample <sup>58</sup> )
Manual healing	58	12	61	15
Astrology	50	6	52	6
Aliens, UFOs	46	2	26	3
Clairvoyance	38	5	52	12
Haunting	24	4	34	9
Telepathy	22	4	35	5
Reincarnation	22	1	21	1
Ghosts	21	2	28	2
Sorcery	20	3	45	9
Average	31		39	

If we take into account the fact that most of the respondents in the EMOR 1992a survey were Estonians and in the EV 2000 survey – Russians, we can assume that the number of the latter who believe in this kind of phenomena increased considerably during the 1990s. Belief in most of the phenomena given in the table grew, in the case of sorcery even by 25% and in the case of clairvoyance – by 14%. The only percentages that decreased were of those who believed in aliens and UFOs (by 20%) and, to a small extent, also of those who believed in reincarnation. The proportion in the sample of those who had predicably experienced these phenomena themselves was also much higher in East Virumaa than in Estonia in 1992. It is quite noteworthy that almost every tenth inhabitant of East Virumaa claimed to have experienced ghosts and sorcery.

In comparison to 1992, the number of Russians and other non-Estonians who believed in such phenomena, grew as follows. While in 1992, 52% of Estonian Russians believed in manual healing, then in

<sup>58</sup> The percentage is calculated of the whole sample, as in the case of this question the proportion of those who did not answer was very high (the number of those respondents who did not answer the question about the existence of the aforementioned phenomena was very small). It can be assumed that most of the respondents who did not answer the question about personal experience, had not experienced the phenomena themselves.

2000 their proportion in East Virumaa was already 59% (74% of Estonians and 57% of other ethnic groups believed in it), the percentage of Russians who believed in astrology was 43 in 1992 and 55 in 2000 (44% of Estonians and 54% of other ethnic groups), the percentage of those who believed in clairvoyance was 52 and 31, respectively (48% and 53%), and the respective percentages for believers in sorcery were 47 and 27 (37% and 48%). In all cases the indicator that diminished considerably was believing in aliens and UFOs: among Russians 40% in 1992 and 24% in 2000 (of Estonians – 37% and of other ethnic groups 23%). So at least in East Virumaa Russians' believing in different non-Christian phenomena increased considerably in the 1990s and in 2000 exceeded the indicators for local Estonians in several cases.<sup>59</sup> On the basis of the EV 2000 survey material we cannot say that in 1992 belief in different paranormal phenomena was caused only by their novelty.

The data of the EV 2000 survey do not confirm any more the hypothesis that Estonians, women, younger people and those with a higher education are more susceptible to different paranormal phenomena. Although as before, the proportion of women is greater among those who believe in paranormal phenomena, men have almost caught up with them. The situation on the “landscape of paranormal phenomena” is rather variegated; some phenomena are more believed by Estonians, others by Russians, the third ones by women, the fourth ones by men, etc. From among age groups (according to the EV 2000 survey) we can still distinguish the one comprising people at the age of 25–44, who constitute the majority of those who believe in such phenomena. The general situation in Estonia at the moment would require additional research, as on the basis of the East Virumaa data alone, we cannot make generalizations about the whole republic, as this particular region considerably differs from the rest of Estonia by its economy, culture and population (see: Kaaristo 2002: 8–11)

The next issue analysed in this article on the basis of the material of the EV 2000 survey is as follows: were the aforementioned non-Christian beliefs (including paranormal phenomena) taken more seriously by Christians or non-Christians? The East Virumaa sample of 140 respondents comprised 85 believers, 9 of them Estonians, 64 Russians

<sup>59</sup> According to the ECC 1995 survey, all over Estonia Russians have caught up with Estonians as regards their belief in non-Christian phenomena, and in some cases, also outgrown them (Liiman 2001: 61).



and 12 other ethnic groups (so non-Estonians constituted 90% of believers). Among the 85 believers there were 63 Orthodoxes, 9 Lutherans, 8 other Christians, from the remaining 5, two were non-Christians and in the case of 3 people religion was vaguely specified. So in the following table the majority of believers is constituted by non-Estonian Christians.

**Table 8. Believers in Christian and non-Christian phenomena in East Virumaa in 2000 (% of the respondents)**

Believe in the existence of the following phenomena	Believers (Christians)	Non-believers	Total sample
<b>Christian:</b>			
Jesus is God's son	66	29	52
Satan (devil)	51	20	39
Heavenly kingdom	48	12	35
Hell	43	10	30
Immortal soul	40	21	33
Resurrection	18	4	13
Personal God	16	4	11
<b>Non-Christian:<sup>60</sup></b>			
Manual healing	61	59	60
Sorcery	53	33	45
Astrology	51	37	52
Haunting	44	18	34
Ghosts	39	12	28
Telepathy	37	32	35
Aliens, UFOs	29	22	26
Transmigration of souls	26	24	25
Reincarnation	25	14	21
<b>Partly connected with Christianity:</b>			
Healing with a prayer	66	27	50
Spirit or life force	61	44	55
Clairvoyance	58	41	52

<sup>60</sup> The question concerning non-Christian phenomena as well as those connected with Christianity to a certain extent, which was asked in the EV 2000 survey, was the following: "Do you believe in the existence of the following phenomena and creatures?" and three options for the answer were provided: 1. Believe, 2. Not sure, cannot say, 3. Do not believe. Part of the phenomena presented in the table was explained in more detail in the questionnaire: astrology (predicting by stars), haunting (ghosts haunt in houses), reincarnation (repeated rebirth on the earth), clairvoyance (ability to know what happened in the past and also predict future), telepathy (exchanging thoughts without using the traditional five senses).

The relationship between non-Christian and Christian convictions of East Virumaa Christians is quite surprising. In 2000 only 16% of believers believed in the existence of personal God, whereas 61% of them believed in a spirit or life force. Only half of the Christians (predominantly Orthodox) believed in the existence of heavenly kingdom and Satan. On the other hand, more than half of the Christians believed in healing by hands or prayer, clairvoyance and astrology. It is especially surprising that a little more than half of the Christians believed in sorcery, and the number of those who believed in the existence of the hell was equal to that of those who believed in ghosts. At first sight it also seems surprising that apart from Christian phenomena, Christians also believe in all non-Christian phenomena more than non-Christians.

Even those Christians who believed in personal God, only partly believed in the other Christian beliefs mentioned in the questionnaire: 73% of them believed that Jesus was God's son, 64% believed in the existence of the hell and Satan, 60% – in healing with the help of a prayer and the existence of the heavenly kingdom, and 47% – in the immortal soul. But what was even more remarkable was the fact that of those who believed in personal God, 73% also believed in manual healing, 64% – in sorcery, 60% – in astrology, 50% – in clairvoyance, 43% – in telepathy, 36% – in reincarnation and ghosts, 33% – in haunting, 29% – in transmigration of souls, and 21% – in UFOs. So it can be said that these people sometimes also believe in more non-Christian than Christian phenomena. In the light of the aforementioned, it is not even surprising that those who can be regarded as traditional Christians on the basis of their belief in personal God, believe rather in reincarnation (35.7%) than resurrection (28.6%). Those who believe in personal God, believe in most non-Christian phenomena even more than the rest of the believers. While 64% of those who believe in the personified God, at the same time believe in sorcery, then among those who believe in a spirit or life force, the believers in sorcery constitute 44%.

The confusion in the Christians' world view in 2000 was inherent not only to the Russian-speaking population of East Virumaa. The same also applied to religious Estonians both in East Virumaa and all over Estonia. The ECC 2000 survey revealed that from among the Estonian believers and those inclining towards religion, 53% believed in healing with the help of a prayer, 26% – in horoscopes, 19% – in aliens and UFOs, 16% in sorcery, and 14% – in different mediums. This survey

also proved that Estonian believers and those inclining towards religion were more willing to believe in non-Christian phenomena than those indifferent towards faith or inclining towards atheism (only the number of those who believed in aliens and UFOs was roughly the same). So it was characteristic all over Estonia that those who believed, were inclined to believe in almost anything.

### **3. Conclusion**

The religious life of the 1990s in Estonia was characterized by the multitude of different congregations and movements, and, at the beginning of the decade, also by the relatively great interest society and the mass media showed towards the issues of religion. The latter could be regarded as a counter-reaction to the preceding atheism campaigns during the Soviet period. The independence movement at the turn of the 1980s–1990s brought along the so-called church boom; yet, the popularity of church rituals was mostly due to a temporary fashion, not an abrupt increase in Estonian people's inner religiosity. The WVS survey of 1990 indicated that, by the proportion of religious people, members of congregations and those considering religion as very important in their lives, Estonia was firmly the last in Europe and the last but one in the sample of world countries.

A great part of those who joined different denominations at the turn of the 1980s–1990s, drifted away from them again in the 1990s. First and foremost, it applied to the Lutheran Church and some other older denominations with mainly Estonian membership.

At the turn of the 1980s–1990s the position of the EELC strengthened the most in society. During the new national awakening movement the idea expressed by the Lutheran clergy and part of creative people that the Lutheran Church is a national church and its rebirth is the symbol of national revival, evoked a wide response. Participation in Lutheran religious services or joining its congregations became one of the possibilities for demonstrating national feelings and expressing anti-sovietism. The discovering of the so far almost forbidden or secret sphere of life brought a great number of young people to church. However, after the re-establishment of the Republic of Estonia, the Lutheran Church and its clergy, in comparison to the turn of the 1980s–1990s, have gradually been losing their importance in social-political life. It is also vividly reflected in the numerical indicators of the EELC, which, beginning from the early 1990s, showed a falling tendency in baptisms, confirmations and weddings. The number of donating mem-

bers of the EELC decreased from 76,132 in 1992 to 47,112 in 2000. The latter number constituted only 6.3% of the population aged 15 years and older in 2000.

Yet, the Lutheran Church played quite an important role in Estonians' identity also in the late 1990s. This is also confirmed by the fact that at the population census of 2000 14.8% of the adults who answered the question about religion, regarded themselves as Lutherans, and Estonians constituted 95.7% of the Lutherans. Also Estonians have developed a stronger trust towards the Lutheran Church than most other public organization, yet this proportion is much lower than in the case of Russians and the Orthodox Church. In all the surveys conducted in the 1990s, Russians picked out the Orthodox Church as the most trustworthy public institution.<sup>61</sup>

While the influence of the EELC in society has rather diminished than grown after the early 1990s, the influence of the Orthodox Church subjected to the Moscow Patriarchate among the Russian-speaking population has increased to a great extent. According to the population census of 2000, the number of the Orthodox people in Estonia is getting equal with that of the Lutherans and this is mainly due to the great number of non-Estonian members of the Orthodox Church.

Orthodoxy and the Orthodox Church under the subordination of Moscow played an important role as bearers and strengtheners of the ethnic identity of Estonian Russians in the 1990s. Due to the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the so-called Singing Revolution and the re-establishment of the Republic of Estonia in 1991, great changes occurred in the ethnic identity of local Russians, which could be viewed as an identity crisis. The representatives of the great nation of the Soviet empire became an ethnic minority in a small country, whose rights concerning the language, citizenship and some other rights, in the opinion of a great number of Estonian Russians, were restricted by the state. During the 1990s a new ethnic identity was formed in the Russian community in Estonia, where a significant role was played by the Orthodox Church suppressed during the Soviet period, as well as Orthodoxy as the Russians' national religion.

So, by the EMOR 1998 survey, local Russians had developed a strong

<sup>61</sup> At the EMOR 1998 survey Estonians placed the Lutheran Church by its credibility third after banks and the army. After the church came, for instance, the police, political parties, the Parliament, judicial power, etc. (Liiman 2001: 85, 165).

connection between religion and ethnic identity. On the basis of this survey Raigo Liiman assumes that for Estonian Russians religion is a factor strengthening their identity, and for more than half of the Russians it is Orthodoxy that is the inseparable part of their identity. In comparison with Russians, religion was not such an essential strengthener of identity for Estonians (2001: 103, 106–108).

Yet, the Orthodox doctrine obviously exerts weaker influence on Russians if compared to the influence of the Orthodox Church as an institution. For instance, the religious world view of East Virumaa Russian Orthodox people is rather a mixture of Orthodoxy and non-Christian beliefs. Generalizing the data of the EV 2000 survey, we can claim that the average Russian Orthodox believes in sorcery, astrology, haunting and ghosts as much as they believe in Christian beliefs (the existence of Satan, heavenly kingdom and hell). Also we can say that Christians believe in all the non-Christian phenomena considerably more than non-believers. A remarkable part of the latter, in their turn, are ready to believe in several Christian beliefs (e.g., 29% of non-believers believe that Jesus is God's son).

Besides Orthodox congregations, Russians in Estonia are in great majority also among Old Believers. For centuries religion has served as the basis for the identity of one of the oldest sub-cultures in Estonia. Other ethnic groups prevailed in the 1990s among Catholics, Muslims, Judaists, and the members of Armenian and Ukrainian national congregations. Among the ethnic minorities connected with these congregations, religion plays a relatively important role as a preserver of group consciousness and ethnic identity.

The proportion of Estonians and other ethnic groups among Jehovah's Witnesses, Hindus, Hare Krishnas and Baha'is is almost equal. So several religious movements of Eastern origin, which have reached Estonia since the turn of the 1980s–1990s, have been quite popular among non-Estonians. From Christian free congregations, the number of non-Estonians is relatively high also among the members of the EMC and SDA. From greater denominations, only the EELC and the Taara Faith movement have an over 95% Estonian membership.

Almost all the sociological surveys conducted in the 1990s indicate that, in comparison to Estonians, Russians and most other ethnic groups residing in Estonia are much more religious, at least as regards the connection with traditional Christianity. For instance, the ECC surveys proved that in 1995 and 2000 among non-Estonians the proportion of people who regarded themselves as religious (not inclin-

ing towards religion) was almost three times bigger than among Estonians, and the percentage had grown from 25 to 35 in five years. The belief in God, Jesus Christ and other Christian phenomena also increased among Russians in the 1990s.

In this light it is quite expected that the higher is the proportion of non-Estonians in an area, the higher is the percentage of religious people. The population census of 2000 revealed that in almost all the Estonian towns with mainly Russian-speaking population the proportion of religious people was much higher than that of the towns with predominantly Estonian population. From among Estonian counties, East Virumaa was the one with the highest proportion of religious and orthodox people. Owing to the fast increase in the number of non-Estonian religious people, the proportion of those regarding themselves as religious grew from 21% in 1990 (WVS 1990) to 31.8% in 2000 (PC 2000).

Yet, the proportion of those regarding themselves as religious as well as those believing in some Christian phenomena, increased in the 1990s, although not to a considerable extent. Due to the high proportion of Estonians in the sample, according to international surveys, Estonia as a whole can be regarded as one of the most secularized countries in Europe and also in the world in the 1990s. At least in the early 1990s Estonia was the most secularized country in Europe by several indicators.

Most surveys still reveal the level of religiosity connected with institutional and traditional Christianity, but not the spread of non-Christian beliefs. However, surveys on the latter were also conducted in Estonia in the 1990s. The beliefs negligibly or not at all connected with (traditional) Christianity spread in Estonia relatively widely in the 1990s, both among Estonians and non-Estonians. The percentage of those who claimed that they believed in a higher spirit or life force and also in different non-Christian beliefs, was relatively high in Estonia. In comparison to the beliefs based on the Bible, people tended to believe more readily in different paranormal phenomena.

According to the EMOR 1992b survey approximately 30% of the residents of Estonia believed in different non-Christian and the so-called paranormal phenomena. According to this survey, the number of those who believed in sorcery (20% of the respondents) was the lowest in comparison to the other non-Christian folk beliefs. Yet their number exceeded at least two times that of those who attended religious services in the 1990s. The EMOR 1992 survey does not give a clear

picture of what people in Estonia believe in, but rather reveals a certain confusion in the respondents' world view and their receptiveness to the beliefs in the most different things and phenomena. Yet the data of the 1992 survey indicated that, unlike the beliefs reflecting connection with Christianity, non-Christian beliefs were more popular among Estonians than among Russians. This might have been caused by the fact that a number of those beliefs spread here on a larger extent beginning from the turn of the 1980s–1990s and, above all, through western countries. As in the years of the so-called Singing Revolution, the western society was sharply opposed to the Soviet one, people willingly accepted also the new and interesting beliefs that originated from there. The Estonian Russians could have been more conservative in this respect, as among them the wish to be similar to the west (at least at that time) was considerably less spread than among Estonians. Also Russians could have been more sceptical about non-Christian beliefs in 1992 due to the more modest role of the Russian-language mass media in disseminating the new beliefs, in comparison to the Estonian-language one at the beginning of the 1990s.

Readiness to believe in the phenomena not (directly) connected with traditional Christianity was relatively great in Estonia both in the early 1990s and throughout the whole decade. The survey of 2000 in East Virumaa indicated that at least in the main centre of Estonian Russians (besides Tallinn) the percentage of non-Estonians who took non-Christian beliefs seriously, had grown considerably, in places also exceeding the indicators of local Estonians, and, regarding nearly all the indicators, exceeded the average results in Estonia in 1992. Hereby Russian Christians (predominantly Orthodox) were inclined to take almost all the beliefs not (directly) related to Christianity more seriously than non-believers. The same also applied to Estonian believers.

The presented research data allow us to assume that there are relatively many people in Estonia who regard themselves as religious, yet, whose beliefs do not belong among the traditional Christian doctrine or are only partly connected with it. The world view of a great part of Estonians and non-Estonians throughout the 1990s was a rather vague mixture of Christian and non-Christian beliefs, which sometimes contradicted each other. However, the process of individualization and diversification in Estonians' and Russians' beliefs and the gradual retreat of traditional Christian beliefs and authorities at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is characteristic not only of Estonia and many other East European transition societies. In many so-called welfare states in

Western Europe, the important shifts in religious orientation (similar to Estonia in the 1990s) have occurred during the period after World War II. According to many social scientists, the decline of traditional religious norms together with the changing political, social, sexual and other norms is considered to be part of a Postmodern shift, which includes the developing of the so-called Postmaterialist values.<sup>62</sup> In order to decide whether we could talk about the same kind of processes in Estonian religious life in the 1990s, we would obviously need a longer time to determine the relevance and durability of the changes that have occurred in Estonian religious life beginning from the late 1980s.

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<sup>62</sup> See, e.g., Inglehart 1997; Inglehart, Basañez, Moreno 1998: 7ff.



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