A Home for 121 Nationalities or Less:
Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Integration in Post-Soviet Estonia

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

When Estonia declared itself independent from the USSR in August 1991, it did so as the legal successor of the Republic of Estonia established in 1918, claiming to be returning to the Western world after a nearly five-decade rupture caused by illegal Soviet rule. Together with international recognition, this principle of legal continuity provided the new-old state with a starting point for vigorous, interlocking citizenship and property reforms that excluded Soviet-era settlers from the emerging body of citizens and naturalized Estonia’s dramatic transition to capitalism. As a precondition for membership in the European Union and NATO, Estonia launched in the late 1990s a national integration policy aimed at teaching mostly Russian-speaking Soviet-era settlers the Estonian language and reducing the number of people with undetermined citizenship.

Twenty years into independence, Estonia is integrated into international organizations and takes pride in strong fiscal discipline, while income gaps continue to grow and nearly 7 per cent of the 1.36 million permanent residents are stateless; equally many have opted for Russian citizenship. Blending nationalist arguments with neoliberal ones, coalition parties are adamant about retaining the restorationist citizenship policy. At the same time, the integration strategy declares Estonia a home for over 100 ethnic nationalities and the
state is committed to the preservation and development of minority cultures, sponsoring associations established for this purpose.

Grounded in 18 months of ethnographic research in Tallinn as well as readings of popular culture, legal texts, and policy documents, this dissertation takes an innovative approach to nationalism, integration and ethnic interactions in post-Soviet Estonia. I look at how actors on all sides draw simultaneously on pre-Soviet, Soviet, and liberal frameworks to consolidate their own positions within a complex democratic situation inflected by European institutions, global capitalist flows, and the neighboring Russian Federation. Whereas previous studies of integration in contemporary Estonia have tended to focus on the issue of citizenship and bypass claims to multiculturalism, this dissertation argues that the two policy areas are intertwined, both informed by the idea of ethnicity as a category of descent that is synonymous with nationality and complete with a national language, culture, character and ethnic homeland. One of the cornerstones of Soviet nationality policy, this concept of ethnicity/nationality continues to hold sway in post-Soviet Estonia, constituting a shared ground between majority and minority actors from which to conceptualize difference and define the conditions or limits of belonging. The dissertation explores how the Estonian integration model combines this notion of ethnicity/nationality with liberal theories of multiculturalism in order to argue for the incommensurability of cultures and reinforce the Estonian-centered nation-state, while resisting pressures from without to Europeanize or de-territorialize national citizenship and integration policies. Though the integration policy envisions a public sphere common to all permanent
residents, the territorialized definition of ethnicity/nationality gives Estonians privileged access to this space, while reducing minority actors to guests who lack the authority to participate in the shaping of the Estonian society as minorities. The state attempts to reestablish and naturalize continuity between pre- and post-Soviet statehood through the creation of national holidays and other objectifications of the “Estonian cultural space.”

At the same time, state measures to develop and preserve non-Estonian ethnic cultures co-opt minority actors by inducing them to define themselves through cultural heritage, narrowly defined, rather than their current political, social or economic interests. Recent controversies over war memorials and the ongoing debate on the future of Russian-medium education in Estonia demonstrate how majority elites delegitimate minority critics by attributing their actions to the Russian Federation's attempts to weaken Estonian sovereignty. The authorities’ habitual securitization of domestic issues reinforces the distinction between the state-bearing majority and culture-bearing minorities, indicating powerholders’ propensity to break free from normal political procedures and suppress the democratic discussion of alternatives.

The argument about the incommensurability of cultures does not hold up in everyday life, where the Soviet, Estonian, and Russian overlap and merge. Both explicit controversies and more intimate responses point to the insufficiency of the official legal-restorationist narrative to accommodate individuals’ complex experiences of the war, the Soviet era and the post-Soviet transition to capitalism. At the same time, however, Tallinn’s
inhabitants hold on to the separateness of Estonian- and Russian-language life worlds and reproduce it continuously through quotidian choices and implicit mutual recognition. The dissertation introduces the term “commonality” to describe the coexistence of individuals who conceive of themselves in terms of differences rather than similarities and do not constitute a social network but are nevertheless interdependent by virtue of inhabiting the same social and institutional environment. Tacit recognition of the other’s otherness and the other’s space serves under these conditions as a means of downplaying the very same differences and preventing them from becoming the prevailing interpretative framework or a source of quotidian social conflict.

In addition to yielding new insights into the workings of nationalism and integration in post-Soviet Estonia, this study seeks to enhance the broader understanding of ethnicity and nationalism in post-Soviet and post-socialist states and regions. The unexpectedly comfortable fit between Soviet legacies, liberal multiculturalism and exclusionary culturalist arguments implies that ethnic nationalism takes different forms in different contexts rather than being confined to the “uncivilized” East. Moreover, the study shows that citizenship and integration policies can be interpreted and implemented in ways that consolidate rather than weaken both the power of the nation-state and the marginalization of minorities. Finally, the study is in conversation with scholarship on collective memory, demonstrating how various actors use this concept strategically and how they negotiate overlaps between putatively separate memory communities.
Dedication

In memory of my paternal grandparents, whom I continue to miss,

And to my maternal grandmother

For her support, courage, wit, and love.
Every dissertation is a team effort and this might be particularly – or differently true – of ethnographic projects. I have been fortunate to have supporters, friends and institutions, in multiple countries on two continents and I wish I could somehow bring them all together, but the following words will have to suffice for the time being.

I would first of all like to express my deepest gratitude to all individuals, organizations, and groups of other kind, who kindly gave me time and attention and opened their homes, even if it meant enduring my first poor and later mediocre Russian. I learnt tremendously from these exchanges and hope to have been able to put some of it into this work. Special thanks are due to the youth organization I worked with for several months in 2011 and continued to socialize with once the job was done. The following far too many pages are shaped by our time together in a manner that is rather invisible but all the more powerful.

I would have never made it to Tallinn as a fieldworker had it not been for the Fulbright program and the U.S. Embassy in Estonia as well as individuals who encouraged and supported me during the application process, making sure I ended up in a university that was just right for me. Dr. Gordon P. K. Chu Memorial Scholarship was of great help during preliminary research in summer 2009 and my extended stay in Tallinn would not
have been possible without the generous support from the Mershon Center for International Security Studies, which has also been an invaluable learning environment during the past several years. Archimedes Foundation/the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research funded two years of my studies and research and I am very grateful for that.

Drawing on different disciplines, this dissertation captures a minuscule of what the Comparative Studies department is about and I would like to thank both the faculty and fellow graduate students for their support and insightful comments on different occasions. Special thanks go to Marge Lynd, the Academic Program Coordinator of the department, as well as to Andrew Culp, Allison Fish, Kate Dean-Haidet, Ilana Maymind and Wamaee Muriuki, who read earlier versions of some of the chapters and gave useful feedback in our writing group while allowing me to learn from their work. Dan Reff and Philip Armstrong have been helpful Graduate Studies Chairs and supportive in other ways.

The Center for Folklore Studies has been at the center of much of my life in Columbus and is an integral part of this study. I would like to use this opportunity to say thank you to Katey Borland, Amy Shuman and Sabra Webber, to Barbara Lloyd and Tim Lloyd as well as to Kate Parker-Horigan, Joanna Spanos, Nicole Vangas, Ziyang You, and other members of the folklore community at the OSU for being inspiring, caring, supportive and also a lot of fun. Sheila Bock, Kirsi Hänninen, Ahsley Overstreet and Nancy Yan have all contributed to this dissertation in valuable ways, as has Cassie Patterson, who
read an earlier version of some of the chapters and has been an inspiring and insightful reading companion.

Warm thanks are due also to my colleagues and friends in Estonia, especially at the Departments of Estonian and Comparative Folklore and Ethnology at the University of Tartu and the Center of Excellence in Cultural Theory, for good conversations, feedback and support during my time in Tallinn and over many years: Anastasiya Astapova, Tiitu Jaago, Kirsti Jõesalu, Kristel Kivari, Kristin Kuutma, Liilia Laaneman, Art Leete, Margaret Lyngdoh, Merili Metsvahi, Toomas Pajula, Taisto Kalevi Raudailainen, Reet Ruusmann, Pihla Siim, Monika Tasa, Ülo Valk, Laur Vallikivi and Ergo-Hart Värstrik. Some of the ideas discussed in the following chapters were developed when working on an article co-authored with Kristin and Ergo-Hart. Eha Komissarov read earlier versions of some of the chapters and provided constructive feedback as did Veikko Anttonen; Karoliina Kagovere, Liina Siib and Aija Sakova accompanied me to some of the fieldwork sites and our conversations have shaped this work as well as helped me keep going; thanks are also due to Lilli-Krõõt Repnau. The support of my parents has been crucial and, as a matter of fact, chapters 6 and 7 came out from a conversation I had with them, changing the route of this work in a direction that seemed to matter a lot for many people I worked with in Tallinn. My partner has been a vital source of support, nurture and intellectual stimulation throughout graduate school, even if it has forced him to put up with more than anybody could ever ask.
Returning to the OSU, I would like to express my warmest thanks to my advisor Dorothy Noyes and other members of my dissertation committee – Nicholas Breyfogle, Ray Cashman, Richard Herrmann, and Margaret Mills – for support, guidance, time, attention, patience, good spirits and faith in every step of this process. Coming to study folklore in the U.S. was in many ways like entering a new territory and Dorothy Noyes has been essential in laying it out for me, challenging and inspiring me to think beyond the obvious, keeping me going and making me feel at home.
Vita

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Introduction

*Skipping Pages, Literally and Metaphorically*

In my childhood home, we used to have a round old metal picture frame that must have come from my mother’s grandmother and that my brother and I would play with. On one particular occasion around 1986 my brother, senior to me by four years, drew a blue-black-and-white flag and inserted it into the frame and I remember taking his drawing out, crumpling it up and throwing it away, because “this flag is against the state,” *riigivastane* – a word that was used to describe dissident activities. My brother laughed at me and my mother must have been confused if not startled by the oddness of the whole situation, not least because I was only six or seven years old at the time and my impulsive response did not come from my family, but from the state or the system itself. Likewise, my brother must have gotten the idea of drawing the Estonian national flag from some external source. While we both knew what the blue-black-white flag stood for, we were operating with words and utterances that were “other” to us in a bakhtinian sense – overpopulated with intentions and accents that we had not made our “own” but that had seized us instead (Bakhtin 1981). As a conversation between two youngsters, our dialogue was absurd, but it captured vividly the turning point in the Soviet Union in the latter part of 1980s, at the outset of *perestroika* (in Estonian *uutmine*) and *glasnost*, the restructuring and transparency reforms launched by Mikhail Gorbachev in January 1987.
Some time before this incident took place, my brother had gotten in trouble with his history teacher. The real source of the problem was our art-historian mother who had told her son not to read or believe his history textbook; eventually, our father had to act as a mediator and help my brother with his homework. The book was titled “Tales from the homeland’s history” or Jutustusi kodumaat ajaloost (Palamets 1982) and provided an introduction to national/Estonian history and to the history of Russia and the Soviet Union. It blurred distinctions between different kinds of loyalties and fused Estonia and the USSR/Russia seemingly into one fatherland (cf. Lane 1981, 140-143). As I have learnt since, this legendary fourth-grade textbook had been first published in 1960 during the Khrushchev thaw when national history was being re-introduced into the curriculum everywhere in the Soviet Union (Raudsepp 2005, 83-84; 88-90). Except for the addition of color illustrations and other pedagogical innovations,¹ the book had undergone only minor revisions over the decades. Hence, its umpteenth edition my brother was exposed to followed fastidiously the ideological demands and thematic priorities of post-Stalinist history teaching. For one thing, it demonstrated the heroism of Russian people, their friendship with Estonians – the friendship between different nationalities making up the Soviet Union – and the positive impact of membership in the Soviet Union on all peoples

¹ The second edition of this textbook from 1969 was the first history textbook in Soviet Estonia to have color illustrations (mostly hand-drawn pictures). Specialist in the pedagogy of history saw this as a major methodological innovation, arguing that pupils – and boys in particular – acquired the majority of information via illustrations (Raudsepp 2005, 90). While this testifies to effort and resources put into making history an appealing subject, reminiscences of “Tales from the Homeland’s History” demonstrate that its illustrations have indeed left an imprint on its readers’ minds (e.g., Raudsepp 2005, 144; Juske 2009).
inhabiting it. Hillar Palamets, the author of this textbook, had been one of my mother’s professors at the University of Tartu in the early 1970s and, as I was repeatedly told, had contributed to the expulsion students with non-conformist views. This was a time when history teaching was seen as a crucial tool for convincing pupils of the inevitability of the demise of capitalism and the victory of Communism (e.g., Raudsepp 2005, 79).

This story about my brother and mother had an ironic sequel when I started learning history around 1991-1992 in the newly independent Estonia. Out of lack of new teaching materials, we would use the same “Tales from the homeland’s history” textbook, but our teacher simply told us to skip the chapters and pages that dealt with “the bourgeois dictatorship” of the interwar era and the Soviet regime. To be sure, history textbooks were among the first ones to be replaced. In an article published just after Estonia had regained independence, Silvia Õispuu, a specialist in pedagogy of history, recounted measures that had already been taken by “progressive-minded historians” (Õispuu 1992, 7) in order to reform history programs in schools, proclaiming: “In our new textbooks the process of sovietization of life in Estonia will be described. I will say only the following: It began with the destruction of life at every level” (Õispuu 1992, 9).²

² In 1989, Mart Laar, Mati Laur and Heiki Valk, three historians of the same cohort born between 1955-1960, co-authored a book titled “The story of home” (Kodu lugu), published first in the literary journal/series Loomingu Raamatukogu (Laar, Vahtre, and Valk 1989a; Laar, Vahtre, and Valk 1989b) and as a separate book in 1992, before any of the new actual history textbooks (Laar, Vahtre, and Valk 1992). All three historians went on to co-author several history textbooks for middle school and high school, one of which will be discussed later in this chapter. Sirje Kivimäe and Mart Kivimäe have described “The Story of Home” as being “programmatically nationalist and thereby also anti-Russian as well as anti-German, populist”, and suggested that the book “responded to
This sort of categorical thinking was characteristic of the first years of independence when rejecting and reversing everything Soviet became a matter of principle. When Estonia declared itself independent from the USSR on August 20, 1991, it did so as the legal successor of the Republic of Estonia established in 1918, claiming to be picking up from where it had been forced to stop in 1940. August 20 is therefore celebrated as the Day of Restoration of Independence (taasiseiseisvumispäev), while the Independence Day (iseiseisvuspäev) and the Anniversary of the Republic of Estonia is February 24, the day when Estonia first declared itself independent in 1918. In addition, November 16 is celebrated as the Day of Declaration of Sovereignty (taassünni päev – lit. the day of rebirth) to commemorate the day in 1988 when the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian SSR passed a declaration of sovereignty.

The restoration of independence in 1991 was based on denunciation of the illegality of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the secret protocol to the 1939 Treaty of Non-Aggression signed between Germany and the Soviet Union that divided up Eastern and Central Europe between the Soviet Union and Germany, defining the Baltic states and Finland as the Soviet sphere of influence. In September 1939, Estonia and signed a Treaty of Mutual Assistance with the Soviet Union, as a result of which Soviet troops were based in Estonia. In June 1940, the Soviet Union demanded that Estonia and other Baltic states set up new governments better equipped to fulfill the Mutual Assistance Pacts and in the expectations of the Estonian society at the time”, i.e. the late 1980s (Kivimäe and Kivimäe 2002, 164).
same month, all three became members of the Soviet Union. A year later Germany occupied Estonia, treating it as occupied territory of the USSR, and in September 1944 the Soviets came back. (See Kasekamp 2000, 132-140, also for further references.) Estonian men ended up fighting in World War II both on the Soviet and German side, both voluntarily and by force (e.g., Kaasik 2011, Hiio 2011). However, the recent legal-restorationist approach to understanding the history focuses on the illegality of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (MRP), framing the Soviet era (1944-1991) as a period of occupation, Estonians as victims of the occupation regime, and Soviet-era settlers to Estonia as immigrants with no legal ties to the newly independent Estonian state.

The new Citizenship Act adopted in 1992 was built on the principle of *jus sanguinis*, granting citizenship only to pre-1940 citizens and their descendants. The population of Estonia at the time was about 1.5 million and, as a result of this decision, nearly one third of all permanent residents became people with undetermined citizenship. Most of them were given the opportunity to become naturalized, the knowledge of the Estonian language being the main requirement and challenge for obtaining citizenship. Today, twenty years into independence, a little over 1.36 million people live in Estonia, of which nearly 0.5 million live in Tallinn, the capital. Roughly 84 per cent are citizens of Estonia, 7 per cent are stateless or have undetermined citizenship, and 9 per cent the citizenship of
another country. Citizens of the Russian Federation make up the majority of “third-country nationals” (Citizenship).³

The idea of restoration presupposes that of a break or decay. According to the ethnologist Ene Köresaar “rupture” became in the 1990s a prevalent trope in scholarly and official as well as lay conceptualizations of the Soviet era (e.g., Köresaar 2004; Köresaar 2005, 69-73).⁴ She explains that while the official discourse relied on a political repertoire and concepts such as “occupation” and “annexation,” autobiographical accounts of these same events drew on an ethnic repertoire, equating the Soviet with the Russian ethnicity and describing “the coming of Russians” in 1940 in terms of a collision between “own” and “foreign” or “alien” (võõras) standards of hygiene, mentality, education, intelligence,

³ The term “third-country nationals” is used in the context of the European Union to refer to individuals who are not citizens of the EU. There is an overlap between “third-country national” and “migrant” and in Estonia, furthermore, “third-country national” is sometimes used to include stateless individuals, who in some cases have spent their whole life in Estonia. I will discuss these invisibilities created by means of terminology in chapter 2.

Citizens of the Russian Federation constitute 78.5 per cent (94,285) of all third-country nationals in Estonia (120,791), followed by citizens of Ukraine (5,383), Finland (4,504), Latvia (2,724), and other states all of which have less than 1,800 citizens living in Estonia. All numbers are as of July 2012 and from the Estonian Ministry of the Interior (Citizenship).

⁴ The discursive strategy of rupture is linked to those of normalcy (see, e.g., Rausing 2004 on “narratives of normality”) and return, to be discussed throughout this study. Another widely-used and partly overlapping metaphor and concept has been “(cultural) trauma” (e.g., Aarelaid 2006, drawing, among others, on Sztompka 1996; Sztompka 2000), which similarly to the tropes of rupture, return and normalcy subjugates the multiplicity of individual choices and points of view to an imagined national unity. For a critique of the application of the concept of trauma to societies and nations – constructed collectivities as opposed to individuals – see Laanes 2009, 51-53. Rupture, trauma, return and normalcy all frame the Soviet era as a sudden and complete break from life the way it used to be and Estonians as victims of this break.
and manners (Kõresaar 2005, 89-100). The folklorists Eda Kalmre (2007) comes to similar conclusions in her study of cannibalistic rumors that Estonians circulated after World War II in Tartu, at the time a scarcity-stricken town bombed to ruins. These stories lumped together Russians, Jews and Russian Estonians (*Venemaa eestlased*), \(^5\) i.e., people of Estonian descent who had been living in Russia but had returned to Estonia along with the new regime, and accused them of making sausages of human flesh. Kalmre shows, among other things, how the rumors united local people – Estonians – against the new regime as well as newcomers associated with this rule, framing them as others to the whole humankind. She concludes that the confrontation played out by means of rumors was ideological rather than ethnic in character (Kalmre 2007, 84). Indeed, few arguments imaginable convey the sense of a regime’s illegitimacy more powerfully than accusations that its representatives are engaged in cannibalism (on dehumanization, see, e.g., Haslam 2006, Castano and Giner-Sorolla 2006).

\(^5\) Some of the Russian Estonians had never been to Estonia before and spoke little or no Estonian; some belonged to the Communist Party and many were treated with suspicion by local Estonians. Among the returnees were communists who had left Estonia in the interwar years, but there were also people from Estonian settlements in Russia. For example, there used to be – and still are – Estonian villages in the Pskov oblast, Siberia, in the Caucasus, on the Crimea and elsewhere, most of which were established by Estonian settlers and deportees in the latter half of the 19\(^{th}\) century and beginning of the 20\(^{th}\) century when Estonia was part of the Czarist Russia. While people who came to Estonia in the aftermath of the war were perceived as a source of threat, *Venemaa eestlased* in Russia, i.e., in their own element, have during the past twenty years been the destination of numerous folkloristic expeditions (see Korb 2005, esp. pp. 11-20 for an overview and further references). In the 1990s in particular folklorists tended to regard these trips as “rescue missions” aimed at recording “old and archaic lore” (Korb 2005, 75) already disappeared in Estonia.
The sausage-mills rumors – like the rupture narratives analyzed by Kõresaar – have been productive of ethnicity and ethnic distinctions by means of expressing and reinforcing particular normative ideas about Estonianness: *Venemaa eestlased* who arrived with the Soviet regime were equated with Russians and excluded because of their alleged loyalty to the Soviet regime. Like the metaphor of rupture, this framing eliminates the possibility of there being Estonian communists. As I argue in the next chapters, the incompatibility of Estonianness with communism is one of the preconditions for the working of the legal-restorationist reasoning since Estonians cannot be victims of the Soviet regime if they are communists. Rather, even the mere adjustment to everyday life under the socialist rule poses from the legal-restorationist perspective a problem that needs to be explained away in order for the argument of rupture to hold. Sustaining the rupture is thus inseparable from sustaining particular normative ideas about Estonians – and hence also about those who are seen to represent and embody the antipode of Estonians.

The idea of the Soviet era as a period of rupture is furthermore significant because it has supported the disassociation of Estonia and Estonians from the previous regime and naturalized the post-Soviet political and social order that was new, but presented as old. In a less explicit manner, it has captured the *end* of the Soviet era, which in many ways was as abrupt and drastic as it’s beginning had been. Vocal denunciations of the Soviet regime have created more secluded and obscure spaces where the post-Soviet transition and its terms have been negotiated more freely, individually as well as collectively. There is a need for such spaces for, as the story I began this introduction with indicates, nearly
every person has pages of her or his own to skip. While Õispuu claimed that history-teaching in Soviet Estonia was based on lies and that “absolutely all history books compiled and published by Estonian historians between 1940 and 1988 were falsified” (Õispuu 1992, 7), she herself published in the 1970-80s, during the deepest stagnation, on how to combine history instruction with socialist ideological education (Raudsepp 2005).

Hillar Palamets, the author of the “Tales from the homeland’s history” textbook, provides an even more striking example of “skipping pages.” As early as 1993, he began with weekly broadcasts on Raadio 2, the youth-oriented radio station of Estonian Public Broadcasting, lecturing on former taboo subjects with the same vigor that characterized his writing style in the “Tales from homelands history.” His show titled “History lesson” or “History hour” (Ajalootund) has turned out to be popular enough to be still going strong today when its host is in his mid-eighties (Hillar Palamets. Saatejuhid). In 2011 footprints of Palamets were included in the Pathbreakers of Tartu Alley (Tartu Teerajajate Allee), a new walk of fame established in his hometown to recognize individuals who have contributed to Tartu’s development. The promotional text explaining the reasons for his induction into the Pathbreakers’ Alley focused carefully on Palamets’s recent radio career, omitting his activities in the Soviet era:

This man is a true people’s voice [rahvahääl]. He is one of the few to have understood what history [ajalugu] actually is; the story of time [aja lugu]; the Story that Time has to

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6 The promotional text is careful to speak about rahvahääl instead of rahva hääl: the former could be translated as a commonly known voice, i.e. a person whose voice people know and recognize (cf. rahvamees – man of the people), whereas the latter stands for ‘the voice of the people.’
tell to us. He has continuously told us this story, this story of time. Because He is a man on whose lips time becomes a story. He is a born storyteller.

(Hillar Palamets. 2011 Teerajajad.)

In all its selectiveness and vagueness, this account captures insightfully the muddy relationship between societal changes and everyday life, the need to adapt in order for the life to continue. It does not really matter what the narrator is saying but rather that the storytelling goes on with the narrator’s voice conveying a sense of continuity, fixity and communality to listeners who, similarly to the storyteller, find themselves living under ever-new political regimes.

The Pathbreakers of Tartu Alley is a popular and commercial project established by a downtown shopping center and “people” (rahvas) get to choose two of the four persons inducted into the alley each year. The makeover of Palamets in official realms has been less smooth and complete, which in turn testifies to tensions between the formal and the informal and the subversive potential of the latter: undertakings like the new walk of fame in Tartu open a window of opportunity for views and sentiments that contradict the official narrative of Soviet rupture. A decade ago, the city government of Tartu, led at the time by the current Prime Minister Andrus Ansip of the Reform Party, nominated Hillar Palamets as an honorary citizen of Tartu in order to recognize his services in popularizing history. The title was to be conferred on the historian during the Independence Day ceremony in February 2002, but he ended up declining this honor after a group of historians and archeologists, many of them his former students at the University of Tartu
and some now in politics, issued a protest letter describing Palamets as an eager falsifier of Estonian history and a servant of the Soviet regime:

It is precisely people like Hillar Palamets who had a hand in the sovietization of the Estonian people [Eesti inimesed – a term not necessarily tied to ethnicity], in suffocation of the spirit of freedom and in communist brainwashing. We find the nomination of Hillar Palamets for an honorary citizen of Tartu to be immoral and shameful.

(Palametsa saamine Tartu aukodanikuks tekitas vastuseisu.)

Unlike the walk-of-fame blurb, this harsh statement, coming from individuals who hold expert knowledge and political power, emphasized the existence and importance of personal choice and responsibility under any regime. It lacked sympathy for a private life that waits to be lived irrespective of political conditions and by extension aimed at censoring any recollections that do not denounce the Soviet era as repressive, abnormal and fundamentally wrong. And indeed, it could be argued that there is hardly any clearer indication of successful sovietization than people hailing those who arguably attempted to “brainwash them into communism.”

Among historians who signed the protest letter against Palamets back in 2002 were several authors of the first history textbooks written and published in the newly independent Estonia. Some of these textbooks were in turn accused of inaccurate treatments of the country’s most recent past, the process of re-establishing independence. In 1999 the second edition of a fifth-grade textbook co-authored by Mart Laar of the Pro Patria Party, the prime minister between 1992 and 1994 and 1999 and 2002, came under fire for overemphasizing his own role and that of dissidents at the expense of other
organizations and individuals involved in the nationalist movement of the late 1980s.\textsuperscript{7} The publisher justified this conspicuous subjectivity by claiming that all issues in society could and should be decided by the market and free competition: “since in Estonia there can be several competing textbooks in every subject, then this allows the textbook to carry its author’s subjective seal” (Neiman 1999).

The history textbook by Mart Laar resembled the Soviet-era “Tales from the Homeland’s History” by Hillar Palamets in that it sought to centralize the multiplicity of voices and points of view. Both textbooks told readers – the imagined ideal reader being a child who is only starting to learn about history – the official historical narrative, expecting them to not only know it but to believe in it or at least not to question it, so that it could become a part of readers’ individual identity (Wertsch 2002, 85). Both also sought to prevent the emergence of gaps between official historical narratives and ways in which individuals remembered the past: “construed as a totalized object that pretends to closure” and fetishized as such, “the historical text becomes a substitute for the absent past” (LaCapra 2001, 11).

Scholars analyzing post-Soviet historiography have drawn attention to the prevalence of facts and statistics as well as to historians’ reluctance to interpret the accumulated data.

\textsuperscript{7} Since history instruction begins currently in the fifth grade, Laar’s textbook was the counterpart of the “Tales from the Homeland’s History” by Palamets. On the controversy surrounding the textbook co-authored by Laar in media, see, e.g., Neiman 1999, Linnart 1999, Riigi kogu opositsioon ründas Laari õpikut; the discussion even made it to the Finnish press: Viron pääministerin kirja unohti osan historiaa [The book by the Estonian prime minister forgot part of the history].

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(e.g., Kivimäe and Kivimäe 2002; Wulf and Grönholm 2010). It could be argued that the reluctance to interpret facts or discuss the societal role of historical knowledge works as a strategy for maintaining the appearance of closure brought about by the fact-laden history text. Looked at from this perspective, the use of history teaching for de-Sovietization does not differ much from using it for Sovietization or ideological education and purposes of other kind. Moreover, the anthropologist Maryon McDonald, who conducted in the early 1990s fieldwork in the European Parliament and European Commission, has written about the need for “a historiography capable of keeping people at their desks in E[uropen] C[ommision] institutions” (McDonald 1996, 46). In the 1950s, when ‘Europe’ was taking its shape in opposition to perceptions of its immediate past, and in opposition to a perceived threat in the East. (It was only later that an opposition to the US became important, after the Vietnam war and the protectionist policies it encouraged.) Civilization, rights, and democracy were poignantly important visions to assert. A continuous past was constructed, a continuous ‘Europe’ from which notions of civilization, rights and democracy could be extracted and paraded, and in which both Nazi barbarism and Communism were historical aberrations.

(McDonald 1996, 50.)

McDonald noted back in the mid-1990s that this “style of history” continued to reappear from time to time in debates, anniversaries and discussions of “European culture.” As I will discuss in this study, this historiography has been evoked also by and in relation to former Communist countries and shapes the ways in which various actors in these states are able and unable to narrate the past – what are the pages they feel compelled to skip

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8 Kissane 2005 discusses corresponding revisionist developments and problems with teaching materials in history education in post-Soviet Kazakhstan.
and why and which narratives appear to be indispensable and to whom, which narratives define the public, becoming thereby ethnicized and exclusive.

Stories about skipping pages are stories about past truths that have since become obsolete. One of the arguments put forward in this study is that the legal-restorationist knot between pre-and post-Soviet statehood needs to be tied and fastened over and over again individually as well as collectively by Estonian residents in order to eliminate alternatives to the official interpretation of the country’s past, inseparable from the existing social, political and economic order. Hence, much is at stake in not recognizing, at least openly, the ambiguous relationship of Estonia and Estonians to the previous regime. Rather, the remaking of ties between pre- and post-Soviet state requires that ethnic Estonians and mostly Russian Soviet-era newcomers be assigned to the mutually exclusive and constitutive positions of victims and perpetrators, the occupied and the occupants. While the aim is to make it look like these positions belonged to Estonians and Russians – there are the occupied and the occupants – my starting point is that such essentializing claims seek to cover up the constructedness of historical narratives and to impose on the Estonian majority as well as on the Russian minority homogeneity that neither possess but that the container model of the nation state depends on.

When the government relocated in April 2007 a World War II memorial known as the Bronze Soldier from the center of Tallinn to a military cemetery in a more secluded part of the capital, it did so (in addition to fulfilling a promise given to the electorate) in order
to establish a monological public space where there is no space for alternatives. While the relocation was seen as a means of cleaning the city center of increasingly popular celebrations of Soviet-era holidays, it also sought to discipline Estonians and contain them in the legal-restorationist paradigm. Interpretations that approach or present the monument controversy as a conflict of ethnically defined collective memories or memory communities (e.g., Wertsch 2008, Tamm and Halla 2009) are, in my view, essentializing, taking the homogeneity of ethnic groups for granted and reinforcing the equation of the individual with the nation and furthermore with a language and territory. I suggest instead that official historical narratives as well as the normative ideas about Estonianness they reinforce are contested by Estonians in their daily lives, as are the regulations or expectations associated with European and other powerful institutions that seek to de-territorialize national polices.

“City Like an Ulcer on Limestone”

The incident with “Laar’s history textbook” exemplifies furthermore political uses of history teaching as well as the intertwining of capitalist ethos and party politics in post-Soviet years. Many individuals excluded from this textbook were at the time – and some continue to be – actively involved in politics and were/are Laar’s competitors and adversaries. By focusing on particular events and actors at the expense of others, the textbook glossed over controversies between different camps within the Estonian nationalist movements in the late 1980s, most importantly the Popular Front.

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9 A Google search for “Laar’s history textbook” (Laari ajalooõpik) suggests that it has become a metaphor for one-sided treatments of history.
(Rahvarinne) and the Estonian Citizens’ Committees’ movement (Eesti Kodanike Komiteed), to be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. By presenting the restoration of independence as the only possible solution for Estonia back in the early 1990s, the textbook suppressed discussion over alternatives and by doing so, naturalized the application of the legal-restorationist principle to citizenship and property, two key issues everybody has had to deal with in the aftermath of restoration of independence: everyone’s proprietary rights changed and everyone had to define their legal relationship to the Republic of Estonia. Both reforms prioritized blood over habitation and divided the population into groups with uneven access to opportunities, resources and rights of various kinds. While I analyze the citizenship policy in later chapters, a short excursion into the restitutionist property reform is in order for discussions surrounding it draw on and are productive of ideas about ethnicity and the spatialized separateness of Estonians from Soviet-era newcomers.

The property reform launched in 1991 aimed at the privatization of state, municipal and company housing and denationalization of property. Individuals and descendants of individuals, whose real estate and land had been expropriated at the outset of the Soviet regime, could submit applications for the restitution of their property. Sitting tenants, on the other hand, were given the right to privatize their dwellings by means of a voucher system, unless they happened to live on property to be returned to its previous owners. Liis Ojamäe writes in her study on the social construction of housing value in post-Soviet Estonia that “new homeowners [consequently] acquired property that was heavily
differentiated by the condition, location and, thus, also market value,” while people living in restituted houses and apartments could neither privatize nor “‘trade up’ on the basis of restituted or privatised housing property” (Ojamäe 2009, 57). In Tallinn in particular, restitution contributed to the rapid gentrification of several older neighborhoods where single-family homes had been divided into multiple small apartments in the Soviet era and were revamped back into family homes. The property reform helped to bring about a distinction between possessors and non-possessors and, since it concerned every household, was also a means to make Estonian citizens dependent on private property and banks, ultimately capitalism – a pattern that also characterizes many other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In 2006, 96 per cent of dwellings in Estonia were in private ownership, while the owner-occupation rate was 84 per cent (Ojamäe 2009, 57).

I have not come across any statistics regarding this distinction, but Vello Pettai, for example, has argued that there were more Estonians living on restituted property – houses and apartments dating from before World War II – than people who had moved to Estonia from other parts of the Soviet Union (e.g., Pettai 2004, 393-394) and that Estonians were therefore hit harder by the property reform. This assumption implies that Soviet-era settlers had better access to newer housing upon arriving in Estonia and/or that the native population preferred older neighborhoods to new districts of apartment blocks. Both arguments underline the separateness of Estonians and Soviet-era newcomers and are tricky to verify. The claim that settlers, most of them ethnic Russians, were in a

10 See Ojamäe 2009, 57 for references on restitution in other countries of Eastern and Central Europe.
privileged position is a staple of the Estonian occupation narrative, asserting as it does that the Soviet Union was executing a Sovietization and Russification policy in Union republics and sought to assimilate local peoples and ways of life. As I will discuss in the next chapter, these arguments have been challenged by recent scholarship on the Soviet nationality policy and its inherent contradictions, showing how relationships between the central government, local authorities and ordinary people to be complex and reciprocal.

The latter claim about Estonians preferring older houses and districts to mass produced apartment buildings indicates that Estonians and newcomers differed from each other fundamentally in terms of their culture, character and habitus. For example, Anu Kannike writes in her study on home decoration in the 1990s that during the Soviet era,

bourgeois values, bourgeois lifestyle and the respective way of life in the private sphere acquired a national meaning. To be a proper Estonian and a civilized person [olla korralik eestlane ja kultuurne inimene] actually meant sharing and following middle-class values. After WW II home as an organized cultural space acquired a symbolic and normative meaning as opposed to the alienating chaos of the public sphere. Domestic culture in the widest sense of the word enabled people to differentiate themselves from the Soviet system by an alternative civilized [tsiviliseeritud] micro-world.

The cultural analysis of the home reveals the close connection in the worldview of contemporary Estonians of the traditionally important values: love of nature, individualism and privacy. They are connected both in the ideas about an “ideal home” and in the home-making practice. At the same time closeness to nature and home-centeredness are very important components of the ideas about “national” [rahvuslik] and “Estonian” [eestilik].

(Kannike 2002, 235; English in the original; Kannike 2002, 209 for Estonian and Kannike 2005.)
Kannike based her study on Tartu, the second-largest town in Estonia (currently app. 103,300 inhabitants) with a clear Estonian majority (80 per cent) and conservative traditions. It is possible that the bigger and more heterogeneous Tallinn would have yielded different results: the capital is the only place in Estonia where the number of Estonian- and Russian-speaking inhabitants is almost equal. Even more importantly, it is worth asking to what extent the “ideal home” described by Kannike is itself a normative concept productive of cultural, civilizational, political and class differences— all of them signifying the separateness of Estonians from things and people Soviet and Russian. The approach taken by Kannike detaches notions of Estonianness from political and economic conditions (cf. Joseph 2002), treating it as a matter of being, and by doing so contributes to the naturalization of political and economic choices made in post-Soviet Estonia. Ojamäe (2009) found that evaluative meanings given to different types of housing in post-Soviet Estonia have been shaped strongly by real estate developers and other professional market actors, who have pitted Soviet-era residential districts against the ideal of owning “one’s own house” or oma maja: “a house of one’s own” and “the new house” symbolise preferences that have long been constructed as the often inaccessible

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11 As an old university town (1632), Tartu is said to have a unique spirit and mentality, which is often contrasted with the money- and power-oriented Tallinn. Until Sweden gained control of the whole of Estonia’s current territory in the 1620s, different rulers governed Tartu and Tallinn and Tartu had closer ties to Riga than Tallinn. In the Soviet era in particular, the spirit of Tartu stood for conservatism and nationalism bordering on dissident resistance. A significant part of Tartu was destroyed in World War II and the town became closed to foreigners soon after the war when Soviet air force built a large military airport on the outskirts of the town. See also discussion above regarding post-war rumors about “sausage-mills” set up by people associated with the Soviet regime.
ideal (…), in sharp contrast with the general characteristics of the existing housing stock and dominant housing conditions in large blocks” (Ojamäe 2009, 168).

One could also ask whether the newcomers from other parts of the Soviet Union were really being privileged if Estonians regarded the new districts and apartments as inferior? Most of the new residential districts built in Tallinn between the 1960-1980s were mass productions that followed the principle of free planning and depended on provisions provided by central planning institutions in Moscow (e.g., Bruns 2007). Consequently, they featured high-rise apartment blocks assembled of ready-made elements made of grey concrete (see Forty 2005 on “Cold War concrete”). Erected in wastelands surrounding the old neighborhoods, these districts had, at least to begin with, poor infrastructure and little to offer in terms of services and recreation, which gave rise to the pejorative term magala or “dormitory suburb” (Kalm 2001, 351) – a place where one only goes to sleep (magama). The first district Mustamäe, built in the 1960-1970s, was followed by Ōismäe in the 1970s and early 1980s and finally came Lasnamäe, the building of which began in

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12 In case of free planning, a principle devised in interwar years in urbanized Western Europe, buildings do not line the streets, but are detached from each other and oriented to cardinal points or at an angle to the streets in order to guarantee that all of them – and all inhabitants – have equal access to sunlight, fresh air and greeny as well as to separate pedestrian traffic from that of motorized vehicles. In the words of Kalm, “(t)he imposed free planning implemented in the Soviet Union in the late 1950s actually realized the utopian ideas of the leftist architects of the Weimar Republic and Le Corbusier, which, however, at that time were being revised in the West” (Kalm 2001, 351; see also Bruns 2007, 33-34). Much has been written during the past two decades about the cultural landscapes and aspirations behind Soviet/socialist apartment-block districts. Recent contributions include Czpczyński 2008 on Central and Eastern Europe, Zarecor 2011 on Czechoslovakia; Lankots and Sooväli 2008 discuss Mustamäe and Kalm and Ruudi 2005 Cold War architecture more broadly.
the late 1970s and continued until the end of the Soviet era (Bruns 1993, 168-176). Nearly all apartments in these districts are now in private ownership as a result of the 1990s property, though some new municipal apartment buildings have been recently built to Lasnamäe. Taken together, Tallinn’s “hills” (*mägi, mäe* – hill) continue to house nearly half of the capital’s population of 0.5 million (Bruns 2007, 38), whereas app. 30% of Tallinn’s inhabitants live in Lasnamäe (Raitviir 2009a, 25).\(^{13}\)

There are several works of literary prose from the 1970s that use Mustamäe to thematize the ills of urban life and alienation caused by modernist architecture (e.g., Valton 1978, Unt 1979). In Lasnamäe, this confrontation is ethnic, between indigenous Estonians and Russian-speaking migrants, and projected on the physical environment and architecture of the district. Built on a flat limestone plateau above the older parts of the city, this seemingly chaotic and ever-expanding sea of grey concrete came to be seen in the 1980s as an embodiment of the Soviet system and “stopping Lasnamäe,” as a popular nationalist song from the late 1980s demanded,\(^{14}\) equaled putting an end to the Soviet rule as well as to the influx of people from other parts of the Soviet Union.

Eva Näripea has argued that in the late 1970s and early 1980s, i.e., before perestroika, the issue of migration was thematized in Soviet-Estonian cinema by means of representations

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\(^{13}\) While so-called panel buildings were erected all over Estonia, the only bigger district of this kind outside the capital is Annelinn in Tartu, the construction of which began in 1973 and that was planned for 50,000 people (Port 1983, 12).

\(^{14}\) The title of this subchapter – “City Like an Ulcer on Limestone” (*linn kui paise paesel pinnal*) – comes from this anti- Lasnamäe, anti-Soviet nationalist song from the late 1980s.
of urban environments, which in turn drew on and coincided with concerns raised by environment psychologists (Näripea 2003). Environment psychology emerged as a field in the Soviet Union in the 1970s and in 1977 a special research group was established in Tallinn. As Näripea points out, the border between science and subjective criticism of the Soviet system was oftentimes blurry in the writings of environment psychologists, who argued that “the city construction in the Soviet manner made impossible both individual and group personalisation and identification with physical environment, which are essential for human beings for self-identification and for finding an existential hold” (Näripea 2003, 414). The Soviet regime was thus claimed to have a detrimental impact on people living under its jurisdiction with the physical transformation of Tallinn posing a

Illustration 1 The district of Lasnamäe in summer 2009
threat to Estonians: local people, territory, the built environment and nature were conceived to be inseparable. Lasnamäe became in this process a means of separating the Estonian from the non-Estonian, local from the alien, unique from the standardized, civilized or cultured from the uncivilized and uncultured, rootedness from rootlessness. Newcomers from other parts of the Soviet Union were seen to represent what Estonians were in danger of becoming through exposure to the new residential districts. It is significant from the perspective of this study that some of the scholars engaged in environment psychology came to play a crucial role in the 1990s in the formulation of Estonian integration policy, including the principle of “Estonian cultural space” to be analyzed later in this study.

This view of Lasnamäe as an instrument of governance and Sovietization was encapsulated by the architecture historian Mart Kalm in a 2001 volume on 20th century Estonian architecture:

In Estonia an ethnopolitical aspect was added to the dissatisfaction with the new [Soviet urban] environment for the big industries [suurtehased] that kept popping up helped to erect prefabricated buildings and allured workforce from Russia by offering apartments. In dormitory suburbs, referred to as Russification pumps [venestamispump], even though they were, in fact, a consequence of this process, the privileged immigrant folk prevailed and disturbed by means of its loose behavior [pidetu käitumine – unfixed, discontinuous, rootless behavior] Estonians who had received apartments in these buildings. A local [põline – lit. indigenous] Tallinner had usually little hope for a new apartment unless he/she used dishonest means, which is why ethnic tensions continued to grow under occupation.

(Kalm 2001, 349.)
Many Estonians have left Lasnamäe during the past 10-15 years in the pursuit of “one’s own house,” securing the district’s place as one with the greatest proportion of non-Estonians: Estonians are said to have constituted less than 30 per cent of Lasnamäe’s population in 2009, but made up 40 per cent of Mustamäe’s and half of Õismäe’s residents (Raitviir 2009a, 37). However, the promised land – suburbs erected on the fields surrounding Tallinn – is oftentimes plagued by similar problems of weak infrastructure, poor construction quality and planning that Lasnamäe and other Soviet-era districts have been criticized for. Andres Kurg, a scholar of architecture, has compared the “socialist” Lasnamäe to one of the “neoliberal” suburbs, asking whether “opposites attract”: in the new suburb, “the comforts of urbanization and healthiness of country life’ have been replaced by the imaginary privacy of one’s own house and garden and the density of an apartment building” (Kurg 2007). The subject of such a suburb is in his words “a group of individuals trying to forget the existence of their neighbors” (ibid.).

Jelena Tamberg, the editor of a popular Russian-language news portal in Estonia, points out that there “are virtually no non-Estonians” in the new suburbs built around Tallinn during the past decade (Tamberg 2009, 138). She describes the privatization of apartments in the 1990s as a process that was “halfway voluntary” and left non-Estonians enslaved by so-called property in Soviet-era districts (Tamberg 2009, 137). Lasnamäe in particular is in her in view in danger of becoming a ghetto: “the poor, less-educated, non-Estonians, and people without citizenship, who have been driven to debt or owe rent, are not capable of changing the situation without an extensive social network, supporting
relatives, and who lack both information and experience of independent life” (Tamberg 2009, 138).

Tamberg’s comments suggest that there is an overlap between Estonian nationalist discourse and the argumentation used by Estonian Russians critical of the Estonian state. Both use Lasnamäe as a means of social criticism: the district is a metaphor for mistakes made by the authorities and for the new economic system, and is used to imagine an alternative state of affairs. Once could conclude from her argumentation that the inability to leave Lasnamäe – the default assumption being that one wants to leave it – stands more broadly for an inability to cope in the capitalist system. Whereas in the Soviet era Estonians believed that non-Estonians were in a privileged position, the tables have since turned and now Russians and Russian-speakers argue that the new regime favors Estonians (Poleshchuk and Semjonov 2006; Saar 2006).

The income redistribution in Estonia in the 1990s was more rapid and drastic than in any other post-communist state apart from Russia (Hellman 1998: 224-225) and income gaps have continued to grow steadily since, both along and across ethnic lines (e.g., see contributions to Ainsaar 2011). At the same time, Estonia was the only Baltic country to join the Euro zone in January 2011 and has built up a reputation of strong fiscal discipline. Ted Hopf observed a decade ago, drawing on interview data from the latter part of the 1990s, that Estonia, in comparison to Ukraine and Uzbekistan, appeared “to be uniquely endowed to make its way through the [post-communist] transition” (Hopf 2002: 425). He concluded that Estonians slightly more so, but also Russians had naturalized the
absence of alternatives to transition to liberal capitalism and regarded inequalities resulting from this process as an inevitable part of the transition itself. It followed from this that neither the government nor any other locatable actor could be held responsible for the transition, which in turn transformed the question of transitional responsibility into a non-political issue beyond deliberate debate and protest: only individuals could be blamed for letting the transition down but not the transition or its specific conditions (Hopf 2002, 420). Hopf explains furthermore that choices and regimes that are naturalized – conceived to be inevitable because of absence of alternatives – need not be legitimized by means of democratic procedures, i.e., appreciated for the benefits they are yielding and weighed against other options (Hopf 2002, 404).

The connection between roots and respectable behavior – including the ability to adapt to new circumstances and succeed – is a crucial one for it posits an equation of the individual with the nation and furthermore with territory, so that uprootedness is seen to result in and to be manifested in unacceptable behavior and lack of moral values (cf. Malkki 1992). One could hereby refer to the “container model” of nation state where, in the words of Steven Vertovec, “social cohesion, cultural belonging and political participation are mutually defined within the geographical and administrative boundaries of the state” (Vertovec 2001, 5). The container called Estonia can include non-Estonians, but it has to be Estonian-centered. Having roots in an ethnic homeland is, according to this view, possibly the most important precondition for subjectivity and agency. The following chapters discuss how the territorialization of ethnicity constitutes one of the
starting points of minority policies in post-Soviet Estonia, including the national integration program launched in the late 1990s as a precondition for the international integration of the Estonian state.

*Boosting Similarity, Difference, and Static Truths*

Information about the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and its consequences permeated the daily life to its minutest details when I was growing up in Estonia in the late 1980s and early 1990s (my most personal and also banal memory in this respect is a sticker on the cover of my brother’s school planner from the late 1980s: an elongated red rectangle with letters MRP, a swastika and a hammer and sickle). Consequently, the legal-restorationist narrative of the MRP was readily available to me when I started doing research on ethnic interactions in post-Soviet Tallinn first in the summer of 2009 and again from January 2011 onwards. Reiterated countless times and in numerous forms since the late 1980s, this narrative provided me with a starting point for outlining changes and developments brought about by Estonia’s independence and I did not know how to *not* tell it. Most importantly from the perspective of this study, this narrative provided me with ready-made answers regarding ethnic interactions in post-Soviet Estonia, the very topic I was interested in. I could claim that the restoration of independence had reversed ethnic power relations and not question this outcome because the Soviet regime had been illegitimate from the outset.
However, I soon found myself trapped by this *historical* explanation because it seemed to predetermine the ways in which *current and emergent* societal processes could be approached and discussed. By explaining away Estonians’ involvement in the Soviet regime, the legal-restorationist narrative made it almost impossible for me *not to* present Estonians as victims of the Soviet occupation and Russians as Soviets/immigrants who pose(d) a threat to the existence and security of Estonians. As a result, I could not but repeat the nationalist story of occupation and victimhood in my prospectus, grant applications and whenever I had to explain where my research interests lied and why Estonia came across as an ethnically divided society. At the same time, and rather paradoxically, I was also determined *not to* spend more time on the Estonian history or the restoration of independence in my dissertation than necessary. Rather, mine was going to be an ethnographic study focused on ethnic interactions in contemporary Tallinn.

I was very much inspired by the approach developed by Rogers Brubaker (Brubaker 1996) in collaboration with several colleagues (e.g., Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Brubaker, Loveman and Stamatov 2004) and put into practice together with Margit Feischmidt, Jon Fox, and Liana Grancea in their study of “everyday ethnicity” in the Hungarian/Romanian town of Cluj/Kolozsvár in Transylvania (Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox and Grancea 2006). Drawing on these illuminating writings and studies, I conceived of “nation as a category of practice, nationhood as an institutionalized cultural and political form, and nationness as a contingent event or happening” (Brubaker 1996, 21).
Moreover, I planned to explore how ethnicity and national belonging were “happening” every day in Tallinn, assuming that ethnicity and nationness are embodied and expressed not only in political claims and nationalist rhetoric but in everyday encounters, practical categories, commonsense knowledge, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, mental maps, interactional cues, discursive frames, organizational routines, social networks, and institutional forms.

(Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox and Grancea 2006, 6-7.)

Following their lead, I was interested in “such everyday embodiments and expressions as a way of addressing basic questions about ethnicity: where it is, when it matters, and how it works” (ibid.). Or as Brubaker and his co-authors write in their study on Transylvania:

We do not assume the salience or significance of ethnicity and nationhood; we seek rather to discover and specify when, where, and how they become salient or significant. Ethnicity is not a thing, not a substance; it is an interpretive prism, a way of making sense of the social world. And it is always only one among many such interpretive frames. Everyday ethnicity cannot therefore be studied as a self-subsistent domain. Ethnicized ways of experiencing and interpreting the social world can only be studied alongside a range of alternative, non-ethnicized ways of seeing and being. To study ethnicity alone is to impose ethnicity as an analytical frame of reference where it might not be warranted; it is to risk adopting an overethnicized view of social experience. “If one goes out to look for ethnicity,” wrote anthropologist Thomas Eriksen [1993], “one will ‘find’ it and thereby contribute to constructing it.” To study ethnicity without inadvertently contributing to its reproduction, it is necessary to situate ethnicity in the context of “that which is not ethnic.”

(Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox and Grancea 2006, 15; emphases added.)

The idea of “everyday ethnicity,” understood not “a thing in the world, but [as] a perspective on the world” (Brubaker, Loveman and Stamatov 2004, 32; Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox and Grancea 2006, 169) used by various actors to categorize and make
sense of the social reality seemed to tally with the emphasis placed in folkloristics’ on lived experience, context and contingencies, creative forms and practices, communication, the making and remaking of community boundaries, investing authority in the informal and the suppressed, appreciating the art of subverting without getting caught (e.g., see Mills 2008, Noyes 2008). Moreover, the approach proposed by Brubaker and colleagues seemed to entail the use of ethnographic methods for one can only study “happenings” of ethnicity by “sharing time” (Fabian 1990, 12) with those who make it happen. The argument that ethnicity could not be studied alone, on the other hand, agreed with the Social Identity Theory (SIT) that has challenged me to think about identity in more structured and at the same time multiple or layered ways: the social identity derived from group memberships reflects “shared representations of a collective self” (Herrmann and Brewer 2004: 6; Brown 2000), whereas the collective in question can be a voluntarily association, an imagined community of co-ethnics or cohort members, a demos, nation state or an international organization like the European or NATO – all of which are relevant for thinking about social processes in post-Soviet Estonia and will be taken up in different chapters of this study.

In order to avoid the pitfall of reading ethnicity into where it was not, I intended to explore everyday life in the above-discussed district of Lasnamäe, a place I knew vaguely but had never lived in, and focus on how its inhabitants talked about, behaved and

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15 I grew up in a district called Kadriorg, established by Peter the Great and known for its Baroque park, wooden architecture from the late 19th and early 20th century as well as functionalist villas from the interwar era. Kadriorg is located in-between the city center
interacted in and used the urban environment. Brubaker et al. describe this as an “indirect research strategy” for it means studying ethnicity without asking questions about or signaling an interest in ethnic matters (Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox and Grancea 2006, 15). Since interactions across linguistic and ethnic boundaries – even if just in written form in signs and advertisements – cannot be avoided in Lasnamäe and, moreover, because the dominant discourses on Lasnamäe are over determined by ethnic connotations, the nationalist narrative of occupation, and moral judgments, I assumed that ethnicity would “happen” when talking about, observing and participating in the everyday life of the district. I was also prepared to change the focus of my research depending on what I saw to be recurring, emergent, and contradictory or in need of attention for some other reason. Similarly, I was going to have questions prepared for every interview, but would also follow whatever cues the interviewee seemed to be giving. Either way, I had to start somewhere and Lasnamäe seemed, for reasons discussed above, an obvious choice.

Once in the field (and back home) – I conducted research in Tallinn from January 2010 till June 2011 – I became engaged in what could be described as a “multi-sited ethnography” (Marcus 1995), albeit within the bounds of one city. First, I would spend time in Lasnamäe, observing and recording “happenings” of ethnicity around me: dynamics of code switching and other cases whereby language brought ethnicity to the fore, visual displays of ethnic membership in urban décor, intertwinements of political and Lasnamäe with a tall limestone cliff drawing “a natural border” between the old and new districts. About half of students in my class were from Kadriorg and the other half from Lasnamäe.
and religious symbols to signify a particular identity (e.g., Russian flags, soccer paraphernalia and small Orthodox icons in cars), use of Estonian and Russian names, observance of customs, interactions between Estonians and Russian-speakers in youth centers, the district’s cultural center, shops and public transport. I would also attend different kinds of public events and celebrations of holidays organized by the district government or some other organization. Second, I made contacts with individual Russian-speakers in Lasnamäe and would spend time with them as well as with Estonians who lived in the district and whom I knew from before. This “site” took me from the street and shopping centers to people’s homes, children’s playgrounds and in one instance to a meeting of an apartment association.

Last but not least, I attended dozens of concerts, celebrations, performances and other occasions organized by or featuring members of cultural associations of national minorities that are an important instrument of implementing the national integration strategy. These events usually took place in the Lindakivi cultural center in Lasnamäe or in the Russian Cultural Center downtown Tallinn and it was the former that got me in the latter. Most of the performances could be described as variety shows. For example, Ukrainians celebrate the birthday of the Ukrainian national poet Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861) with concerts featuring various Ukrainian choirs, song and dance ensembles. In terms of what went on the stage, the kinds of dances performed, melodies used and songs sung, the specific occasion, time and place seemed to sometimes lose their meanings: I could have been in Estonia in 2011 or in the Soviet Union.
Over time, I got to know people involved in these organizations, interacted with them in different settings, and conducted several interviews. Most of these interactions and settings were predominantly Russian speaking and in many cases I was the only or one of the very few Estonians present. I also became involved in the activities of one youth organization that is oriented more broadly towards social and educational issues, also sports, rather than performances of ethnocultural distinctiveness. 2010-2011 was also the last year before Russian-medium upper middle schools (grades 10-12) were expected to start teaching 60 per cent of subjects in Estonian and several schools, backed up by the government of Tallinn, sought to delay the deadline of the reform, making it an issue of much public debate and controversy.

Witnessing similar performances of ethnic distinctiveness over and over again, I found myself wondering about the places and functions of ethnic cultural associations in post-Soviet Estonia: funded and thus recognized by the state – authorized to represent a particular ethnicity/nationality – and yet preoccupied with activities that seem to have little bearing on what goes on in the society at large (e.g., the ongoing reform whereby Russian-medium schools are transitioning to the partial Estonian-language instruction) and, for the most part, engaging a small number of people. Timofei Agarin makes the same point in a recent article on the weakness of civil society in Baltic countries, observing that most civil society organizations ran by minorities in Estonia are engaged in cultural activities and for this reason “naturally fall out of the sphere of interest of”
Estonian – i.e., mainstream – civil society umbrella organizations that are working more closely with state officials (Agarin 2011: 190). During the 2010 mid-term review of the implementation of the integration strategy in spring 2010, about 2% of Russian-speaking and 0% of Estonian-speaking respondents reported participating in associations of national cultural minorities (Monitooring 2010, 4).

Estonian integration policy\(^\text{16}\) was devised in the late 1990s mainly in response to Western actors’ concerns and as part of the larger effort to shape the country into EU and NATO condition: implementing measures to decrease the number of permanent residents with undetermined citizenship was one of the preconditions for Estonia’s acceptance into these international organizations. Looking at the Estonian approach to integration, to be analyzed in chapters 5-7, one finds confidence in ethnic particularity combined with ambiguous notions of what it is that brings and keeps the country’s residents together. One the one hand, Estonian integration strategy seeks to homogenize Estonia’s multiethnic and multilingual permanent population by means of Estonian citizenship and Estonian language. On the other hand, it claims to be supporting the preservation and development of cultures and identities of ethnic minorities and there are currently more than 200 cultural associations of ethnic minorities in Estonia representing over 100 ethnic groups; two thirds of these organizations are funded by the state. Over and over again on

\(^{16}\) The “National program “Integration in the Estonian Society 2000-2007”” (Riiklik programm “Integratsioon Eesti Ühiskonnas 2000-2007”) was followed by “Estonian Integration Strategy 2008-2013” (Eesti lõimumiskava 2008-2013) and a third document is currently the making.
various occasions, I would hear different actors repeat the statement that representatives of over 100 nationalities lived in Estonia.

Hovering rather uncomfortably between, above and beneath these two poles of homogenization and multiculturalism has been the principle of maintaining and developing an “Estonian cultural space.” Spelled out in the first national integration program for years 2000-2007, it has been omitted from the follow-up strategy for years 2008-2013 but without becoming obsolete: the current policy document envisions “a state identity” common to all people, but drawing on many of the same principles as the earlier “Estonian cultural space” and “common core,” with the Estonian language imagined as both the strongest social glue and the main ethnic marker of Estonians. As such, language is a barrier to be overcome and cherished and captures the seemingly contradictory goals of the Estonian integration strategy. At the intersection of this contradiction seem to lie different understandings of culture: on the one hand, culture as one element in the “set of inalienable characteristics” (Tishkov 2002, 29) that distinguishes one national or ethnic group from others and, on the other hand, the culture of a liberal state detached from ethnic alliances and capable of bringing differences together.

There is little disagreement in Estonia about ethnicity: what it stands for and entails and how it comes about or about the sense that ethnic differences and boundaries have a certain reality to them, that individuals can be usually pinned down as “something” or “somebody” in ethnic terms – even if this something or somebody is layered and a matter
of negotiation. In other words, if somebody was to question the statement that Estonia is a home for 121 ethnic nationalities, it would be more likely because of the size of some of these groups which ranges from a couple of individuals to several hundred thousand, and not because the idea of such immense diversity in a country of 1.34 million might seem counterintuitive or because some of these groups might not have whatever it takes to claim ethnicity.

The Estonian integration strategy has received much scholarly attention from the very beginning (e.g., Järve and Wellmann 1998, contributions to Estonia’s Integration Landscape: From Apathy to Harmony, Pettai 2003, Feldman 2005a, Feldman 2005b, Feldman 2006, Feldman 2008, Brosig 2008, Tallinn Conference on Conceptualizing Integration, Malloy 2009, Feldman 2010). Moreover, several Estonian social scientists played a crucial role in the design of the Estonian approach, and have been revising it over the years as well as observing its implementation (e.g., Heidmets and Lauristin 1998, Lauristin and Heidmets 2002, Vetik 2002, Vetik 2007; Alapuro 2003 analyzes these multiple roles of Estonian scholars). However, none of these analyses have drawn on ethnographic data and, moreover, little attention has been paid on the preservation and development the cultures of different nationalities/ethnicities: how it is envisioned in policy documents, how it links to the goal of increasing cohesion and how this plan is being carried on the ground. Rather, if discussed at all, culture tends to be taken for granted or discussed as an abstract matter by both supporters/creators and critics of the Estonian integration approach.
One of the arguments put forth in this study is that the Soviet era and Soviet approaches to nationality, declared *terra non grata* by legal restorationism, constitute a conceptual, institutional and cultural ground that is shared by many majority and minority actors and thus one of the perspectives from which to unpack *post*-Soviet approaches to ethnicity (*rahvus* in Estonian, *национальность* – *natsionalnost* in Russian), the coexistence of people claiming or/and associated with different ethnic identities as well as the rationale behind particular ways of organizing difference that are being promoted by the state and executed by minorities in Estonia today. The approach that was institutionalized in the Soviet Union equated ethnicity with nationality and signified thus ethnic descent rather than citizenship or the actual place of birth or residence. At the same time, the equation of ethnicity with culture with peoples has been very strong in theories and policies of multiculturalism, on the one hand, and in what has been described as culturalism or cultural fundamentalism, on the other. The latter emphasizes the incommensurability of cultures as well as their mutual hostility emerging from human beings’ inherent ethnocentrism, arguing consequently for the spatial segregation of cultures. (E.g. Stolcke 1995, Hannerz 1999, Grillo 2003; for an overview of literature since, see Vertovec 2011.)

Merje Kuus, among others, has argued that more revealing insights into post-socialist transformations can be gained by approaching them “not as a wholesale adoption of

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17 For discussions of differences between the Soviet concept of nationality/ethnicity and Western notions of ethnicity, see, e.g., Gellner 1975; Dragadze 1980; Shanin 1986, 1989; Comaroff 1991; Verdery 1988.
norms but as a selective appropriation of narratives to advance specific political strategies of specific political groups” (Kuus 2002, 303; see also Alapuro 2003). I will argue in the following that the integration model devised in Estonia combines elements of the Soviet nationality policy and its specific takes on ethnicity and ethnic culture with discourses of multiculturalism adopted selectively from international documents that aim to de-territorialize integration strategies in Europe and beyond, but can be simultaneously used to argue for the unbridgeable differences between cultures. To put it differently: I suggest that there is an overlap between notions of ethnicity deriving from the Soviet-era and Western notions of multiculturalism. In the Estonian context, this combination is used to reinforce the separateness of Estonians and Soviet-era settlers, most of whom define themselves as Russians or are perceived as Russians by the Estonian majority as well by Russia. At the same time, it is this overlap that makes the “preservation and development of minority cultures” a feasible and implementable task comprehensible to majority and minority actors alike.

Equating ethnicity with nationality and treating it as an inherent set of qualities or as a set of particular components, one of which is national culture, is certainly not the only way how ethnicity is being thought and talked about and experienced, but it is one that offers a basis for both claimmaking and collaboration. Hence, minority actors contribute to their own marginalization by accepting the state’s definition of culture as a matter detached from contemporary affairs, but accepting this definition is also their means to hold the state accountable. Consequently, the state, majority, minorities and citizenry are ongoing
intertwined and mutually constitutive processes or as Michael Herzfeld might say, the nation-state’s “apparent fixities are the products of the very same things they deny: action, agency, and use” (Herzfeld 2005, 211). Herzfeld explains further:

An anthropology of nationalisms and nation-states must get inside this ongoing production of static truths. To do so means looking for it among all segments of the population, for all are implicated. The approach is thus neither “top-down” nor “bottom-up”: except in a narrowly organizing sense, there is neither a discrete “top” nor a discrete “bottom.”

(Herzfeld 2005, 10.)

Grounded in ethnographic research, this dissertation takes the present day as its point of departure and seeks to illuminate on ethnic interactions in contemporary Estonia. It is ultimately fieldwork, carried out in various settings from the “bottom” of the society and the everyday to festive occasions as well as spheres closer to the “top,” that enables me to bring together different actors implicated in the creation of static truths about the present-day Estonian state and about themselves as ethnic, civic, political and cultural beings within the state. The “view of Estonian independence as the de facto restoration of the country’s de jure continuous independent status” (Lagerspetz and Joons 2004, 4) is from this perspective not only a particular historical narrative – an interpretation of what happened in Estonia and Europe in 1939-1940 –, but also its own kind of approach to (re-)defining, (re-)creating and (re-)organizing difference and unity under new political conditions. It is no coincidence that the concept of restoring the pre-war “state of affairs” has been applied most rigorously to the very areas that underwent most drastic changes during the Soviet years – population and property.
Ethnicity Unbound and Bound

The assumption that the state is capable of implementing certain policies by virtue of the existence of a shared ground between the majority and minorities suggests that the ability to essentialize and reify one’s own identity and that of others is a form agency (cf. Herzfeld 2005). Brubaker and his colleagues, on the other hand, have been interested in demonstrating how ethnicity is constructed: “That ethnicity and nationhood are constructed is a commonplace; how they are constructed is seldom specified in detail” (Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox and Grancea 2006, 8). I was observing these daily construction processes in detail and while my observations were insightful, they were also somewhat fleeting and left me asking myself “So what?” Even though recorded in specific situations, the observations I was making came across as being detached – as if I was collecting and documenting stereotypes for the sake of stereotypes – and did not help me to understand the allure of ethnic groups in post-Soviet Estonia: how come the state can claim to be a home for over 100 nationalities when it is, at the same time, geared towards monolingualism and ethnocultural nationalism.

Moreover, similarly to the Soviet era, Tallinn continues to be divided into Estonian and Russian-language life worlds and there seemed to be no way I could switch from simply observing to participating and observing without giving rise and contributing to reproductions of ethnicity. Studying ethnic interactions entailed getting into them – even if only in the form of interviews –, and crossing the very same borders I had been raised
to uphold and not question, simply by virtue of growing up in an Estonian and Estonian-language “part” of Tallinn. When contacting institutions in Lasnamäe or representatives of cultural organizations of minorities, I never knew whether to use Estonian or Russian and I am convinced that some of my emails went unanswered because I had picked the “wrong” language. I was therefore always careful to be willing to speak Russian or switch into Estonian. One learns from mistakes, especially when doing fieldwork, but whereas ethnographers working in “foreign” societies seek to get to know the unwritten rules of behavior, I felt as if I had to go the opposite direction and do what I would not have done and go where I would not have gone had I not been doing fieldwork on ethnic interactions.

It would be easy to argue that this separateness of life worlds was an expression of hostility emerging from opposite interpretations of World War II and of the circumstances under which the Republic of Estonia became in 1940 the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic. This has been the official and most common explanation given to the 2007 controversy surrounding a World War II memorial known as the Bronze Soldier. Among other things, as was mentioned above, this study seeks to show how interpretations that frame the Bronze Soldier controversy as a conflict of collective memories essentialize and reify ethnonational identities and by doing so, run the risk of contributing to “the politicization of memory” that “tends to freeze historical events into myth thereby dismissing the complexity of the historical context” (Kattago 2009: 152). I was very much worried about “contributing inadvertently to the reproduction of
ethnicity” while in the field, but not because it might affect or otherwise compromise the data I was gathering, which I now think was the concern expressed by Brubaker and colleagues. Rather, I felt and feared that that my questions, presence in certain places or events might be conceived of as a provocation or just odd in an alienating manner and that I would be seen first and foremost as a representative of the ethnic majority.

While I did gain confidence over time, my sense of uneasiness was confirmed in one of the very last interviews I conducted before returning to Columbus in June 2011. The person I was interviewing – a representative of a Russian cultural organization, about 50 years old, born in Narva and now living in Tallinn for decades – asked me about my motivations for taking up such a topic:

_I think that [in order] to understand better this society, Estonian society, and what is going on here. I think Estonians have many stereotypes and they even don’t think about how we are different and how we are not so very different, because we live here together, Estonians and Russians._

Yes. Estonians, Russians and all others, already for very many years, hundred, two years, almost thousand.

_And it seems to be that politics here place Estonians first and one should think differently._

Integration has political motives. Because people who lived together and never thought that they had any problems, started to live separately and understood that there is a problem. It means that the situation is prescribed in every political slogan. I was born here and went to school and I never knew that there is such a thing as nationality/ethnicity [национальность]. I found out about it only when I graduated from school. It wasn’t that I didn’t know, I knew what different languages sound like: this is German, this is English. But in this circle where I lived, only when I graduated from school did I realize that there were Estonians, Jews, Russians, … who else, I don’t

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18 Interview on June 13, 2011 in Russian.
remember the nationality … it is not important. It was never declared. Nobody ever talked about it. It was indecent. I only realized afterward because I asked my grandmother why I never heard about it in my childhood. Even this word [nationality]. She is an Estonian. He is Jewish. There was name and there was a person. It was indecent [to talk about nationality]. And the feeling, maybe an ethical understanding of norms regarding the decent and indecent, where goes the line between the shameful and not shameful, this has disappeared as well because what is going on right now, it is a particularly shameless thing. Russians have two such concepts: стыд [styd] and срам [sram]. (…) Срам is an external concept, for example, when you look bad in front of people. But стyd is an internal concept. And when this internal concept ceased to exist, that something is стыдно [shameful], and when [nationality] became… a merchandise. Nationality became a marketable good, madly стыдно. What was earlier regarded to be sacred, closed, no matter whether it has to do with physiology, love, something else. It was a sacred, an inner thing. And [it was] so quickly inverted by means of mass information, because ideological work is the most efficient one. It this sense there is no difference between what Communists did and what Fascists did. This is all ideology. You give people an idea and by the time of the next generation, it seems as if this was always the case. Nobody pointed a finger at you, that you are a Russian or an Estonian, we’ll remove you or beat you. This was indecent. But now it is a normal thing: “We are national minorities! We are this and that!” All of a sudden it became a norm, like showing a sexual act on TV. It became a norm. And swearing on TV became also a norm. It seems to me that these are all links in one chain. (…) In my childhood, there was a saying: “It is good to be a cat, it is good to be a dog, I can pee where I want and I can pooh where I want.” But this is really characteristic of cats, not human beings. The human being has to distinguish himself from animals by having стыд [inner sense of shame] and some sort of moral criteria. One must understand that it is not decent and good to talk about certain things.

This interview kept haunting me throughout the writing process and I am still unpacking it. While not everybody would agree with the interviewee’s description of the Soviet era – people of different nationalities lived together and never thought they had problems –
the argument that talking about nationality was in some ways indecent and that people were first and foremost something else rather than Estonians, Jews or Russians resonated strongly with the ambivalent feelings and fears I had gone through while doing fieldwork. It is easy to describe Estonia as a divided society on the verge of ethnic conflict and more difficult to understand why incidents of violence are rare and, moreover, what it takes from the local people to maintain this balance.

The struggles that I was having with myself were, to some degree at least, productive of the very same insights I was striving for and, moreover, productive of meta-knowledge about ethnography and the kind of knowledge it is good for; where its subversive potential and destructive powers lie. Ethnic processes and interactions in Estonia have been and are being studied mainly by social scientists using quantitative methods or interviews focused on specific topics. So far, there are few ethnographies on Estonia and Estonians, Sigrid Rausing’s study of a disintegrating collective farm in the early 1990s constituting a rare exception (Rausing 2004), and the number of studies on ethnic interactions is even smaller. One reason for it is no doubt language – Estonian is an obscure Finno-Ugric language with 14 cases and learning it does not help with other languages, apart from Finnish. Moreover, unlike in the Balkans or some other places, Estonia’s post-Soviet transition during the past twenty years has been successful, peaceful and seemingly smooth. The Bronze Soldier conflict “helped” in this respect – I know of at least one dissertation by a Danish anthropologist that is under way – and some people were doing or had just finished fieldwork in northeast Estonia when I was
collecting my data; one person is writing on mixed families based on biographical interviews.

The majority of these ethnographic research projects are by Estonians, who are studying abroad and thus able to take distance as well as to be distanced from Estonia. For example, it mattered for many people I worked with and interviewed that I was in graduate school in a foreign university: the Atlantic seemed to be making me less Estonian and creating a neutral space where my interlocutors could be critical about the Estonian state without being confrontational. Possibly for the same reasons, other people would appreciate the fact that one of my grandmothers was Finnish or, even more importantly, that both of my grandfathers fought in World War II in the Red Army—a piece of information that I myself have no emotional connection to. However, it was now turned into a prominent feature and I remember being introduced once as “Elo-Hanna, whose granddad was in the Red Army,” to which the person I was introduced responded simply “These things happen.” I took such utterances to be strategic acts of de-essentialization, whereby the non-Estonians I was working and socializing with were deconstructing my Estonianness, making me less Estonian and perhaps more like them. I was doing the same thing myself by going beyond places, activities, linguistic practices and networks that make Estonians Estonian in Tallinn and part of me was struggling against it because, if one is to believe the anthropologist Michael Herzfeld, “social life consists of processes of reification and essentialism as well as challenges to these processes” (Herzfeld 2005, 26). I have therefore grown to be suspicious about the idea—
or ideal – of avoiding contributions to the reproduction ethnicity because as a starting point, it implies that scholars are capable of detaching themselves from the flow of reification that is the everyday life. Accepting that scholars reproduce ethnicity by virtue of studying it – while also using other kinds of perspectives on the world – does not mean that one could or should not be critical of unreflexive groupism.

The absence of ethnographic studies on ethnic interactions in Estonia reflects, in addition to disciplinary methodological traditions, also the separateness of Estonians and non-Estonians, Estonia’s ethnolinguistic geography, and the ethnonational mission of fields such as folklore or ethnology. Ethnography is bound to muddle things up, but there is no room for ambiguity in the container of nation state. In my experience, one has to be willing to go beyond one’s own comfort zone and the price can be high – I no longer have the Tallinn and Estonia I had before fieldwork and the process of writing this dissertation – and yet it might be inevitable when trying to meet people who live next to you and yet far away and to make sense of your coexistence.

On one occasion a few months into fieldwork, I attended a small seminar in Tallinn and in talking about my research, mentioned that I found it unreasonable to describe the Russian people I was working with in Tallinn as first, second or third generation immigrants [immigrant]. A well-known Estonian sociologist moderating the seminar responded that these people were immigrants and that this was the correct academic term for describing them. What made this exchange interesting was that both of us were
speaking from an insider’s point of view, as persons studying their own society. Though my colleague, senior to me by several decades, justified the use of the term “immigrant” by declaring it objective and scientific, it has strong emic connotations and relates to specific ways of interpreting and narrating the Soviet era and the Soviet regime, especially when used twenty years into independence. The word “immigrant” implies, among other things, that upon moving to Estonia, these people came to live in a different country rather than moving from one part of the Soviet Union to another one and that they continue to be outsiders or in transition, even if Estonia has been their home for two or more generations. In trying to establish a rapport with Russians and Russian-speakers in Tallinn, I could simply not afford such connotations and they also made no sense to me.

Moreover, this approach made little sense when trying to comprehend the coexistence of Russians, Estonians, Russian-speakers and many others in the capital of Estonia. The vocabulary and narrative schemata I had at my disposal for talking about the Estonian society did not match with what I was encountering and experiencing in the field and how I saw fit to present it in my work. The most commonly used term “Russian speaking” (venekeelne) stands for a heterogeneous assemblage of people of different ethnic background who speak Russian as their first language. The rationale behind this term seems to be to acknowledge that not everybody who speaks Russian is ethnically Russian in the sense of having Russian ancestors. As such, it underlines Estonia’s ethnic diversity and, by doing so, implies that “Estonian,” too, is to be understood in ethnic
terms and does not designate affiliation with the Estonian state and territory. Because the society is divided into “Estonians” and “Russian-speakers,” the latter term serves as a synonym for Estonians’ ethnic Others, lumping together all non-Estonian nationalities living in Estonia. Despite sounding neutral and descriptive, “Russian speaking” is therefore at least as ambiguous a term as “non-Estonian” (mitte-eestlane) if not more so: one Azeri woman I interviewed and interacted with explained to me that she prefers “non-Estonian” to “Russian speaking,” which might sound strange to those, who regard “non-Estonian” as being majority-centered or as one presenter at a conference I attended in Tallinn said: “A person cannot be defined through what she/he is not.”

Disarming this terminological minefield is a complicated task. First, the division into “Russian-speakers” and “Estonians” has empirical validity to it, at least in a place like Tallinn, because Russians constitute a quarter of Estonia’s permanent population and nearly half of Tallinn’s inhabitants. The number of Russian-speaking Slavs is even greater, making this the only linguistic community of remotely comparable size to Estonians. Looked at from this perspective, speaking of Estonians and “Russian speakers” instead of “Estonians” and “Russians” has the effect of downplaying the proportion of Russians in Estonia. On the other hand, as the representative of a minority organization I interviewed argued, “Russian speaker” is a term invented by “Russians” to make themselves look bigger numerically. Second, given that “Estonian” is a category reserved for ethnic Estonians, it is not clear what happens, in terminological and

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19 Fieldnotes from September 22, 2010.
classificatory terms, to those Azeris, Russians and Chuvash who have mastered Estonian and are citizens of Estonia. The word *eestimaalane*, literally a inhabitant of Estonia, is fit to include all permanent resident but in practice is used to describe everybody else apart from Estonains. One either evokes a Soviet-era confrontation between the titular nationality and the Russians or ends up talking about dozens of groups – “an ethno-mosaic,” to refer to a TV series introducing different nationalities living in Estonia –, essentializing and reifying their existence.

This lack of words for talking about Russian-speaking compatriots is, I would argue, indicative of a broader tendency in post-Soviet Estonia to suppress open, self-reflexive and -critical public debates over the Soviet era, noted also by other scholars (e.g., Onken 2007, Laanes 2009, Annus 2012). Ways for talking about and making sense of the non-Estonian population in contemporary Estonia and about Estonians’ involvement in the previous regime – or ways for *not* talking about either matter – are linked together and shaped (though not determined) by the doctrine of legal restorationism and Soviet ideology, but also by discourses and vocabulary taken over from be West. While I started out feeling determined that I would not write about the Singing Revolution, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact or at legal restorationism, I came to realize how exploring precisely these issues was – at least for me – a precondition for analyzing ethnic interactions or at the contemporary Estonian society. It is for this reason that this study combines ethnographic fieldwork data with readings of popular culture, legal texts and policy
documents, treating policy makers and executors as actors engaged in similar processes of essentialization.

**Chapter Overview**

The first four chapters lay the ground for the discussion of Estonian integration policy in the last three chapters by describing and analyzing the political, social and cultural conditions in which the Estonian integration model was formulated and where it is being implemented. Chapter 1 begins with a discussion of how Estonia came to be a home for over 100 nationalities or the influx of people to Estonia from various parts of the Soviet Union and the emergence of an ethnolinguistically divided society. It then makes an excursion into Bolshevik and Soviet nationality policy, focusing on the 1910-30s, i.e., the establishment of the federalist system and formulation of the notion of nationality as ethnicity, the introduction of the passport nationality and the oscillation of the Soviet approach between assimilation and the reinforcement of ethno-linguistic particularity. My aim is to shed light on phenomena that appear to be relevant to practices and governance of ethnicity/nationality and ethnic diversity in post-Soviet Estonia and to point out how striking a balance between unity and heterogeneity is an issue every state faces. The last subchapter touches upon how post-Soviet Estonia – and Eastern Europe as a whole – was cast by the West in the 1990s as a hotbed of ethnic conflict calling for special measures and how Estonia sought to reframe itself – and reframed its local Russian population – by drawing on Huntington’s thesis of the clash of civilizations.
Chapter 2 begins by taking a step back and looking at the 1980s popular movements for independence as a process of ethnonational consensus formation. I look how the Popular Front and Citizens’ Committees’ movement, which included the Heritage Society, organized mass events and used the calendar in order to summon Estonians as a territorially bounded ethnic community of descent with a common history and its own temporal order. While the two movements are usually treated as competitors, I suggest that approaching them as complementary phenomena illuminates notions of nation, ethnicity, and statehood that are prevalent in post-Soviet Estonia and form the basis of the legal-restorationist citizenship policy that yielded a monoethnic demos without explicitly discriminating against Soviet-era settlers and their descendants. Twenty years into independence, statelessness appears to have become a category of its own right, while many other permanent residents have opted for the citizenship of the Russian Federation. Both of these developments can be regarded as popular responses to Estonia’s ethnonationalist policies and together with the attempts of the European Committee to homogenize citizenship policies pose a challenge to the container model of the Estonian nation state. However, even though decreasing the number of stateless permanent residents (currently app. 7 per cent of 1.36 million) is one of the main stated goals of the integration policy, the coalition parties are adamant about not making even symbolic concessions to anybody (e.g., children of stateless parents), sustaining the view of “citizen” and “non-citizen” as ethnic categories that are synonymous with “Estonian” and “non-Estonian.” I also discuss two episodes from my fieldwork, one of them in Lasnamäe, which illustrate the reluctance or refusal of various actors to think beyond
ethnolinguistic dividing line and, moreover, how easily the past is drawn into the present day to sustain these distinctions.

While chapter 2 discusses the restoration of statehood and its “rightful” demos, chapter 3 looks at how ties between pre- and post-Soviet statehood are constantly threatened by members of this very same demos to the extent that their personal experiences and memories of the Soviet era do not coincide with the official narrative of rupture. The first subchapter looks at how collectors and scholars of life stories have framed as tellable narratives that legitimize the legal-restorationist interpretation of statehood, while contributions from Communists or so-called “Soviet biographies” have been discouraged or excluded from the canon. I discuss also a statement of the Estonian parliament from 2002 that framed all Estonians as victims of Soviet and German occupation regimes and reiterated the notion of Soviet-era newcomers to Estonia as tools of Soviet regime’s assimilationist policy, making it impossible to distinguish between victims, witnesses and collaborators among Estonians and hence suppressing discussion about the complexities of the past. The second subchapter focuses on post-Soviet national holidays, especially on days added to the official calendar during the past dozen years: the Native Language Day (1999), the Flag Day (2004), the Resistance Fighting Day (2007), the Day of Remembrance for Victims of Communism and Nazism (2009), and the Tribe Day (2011) dedicated to the Finno-Ugric language kinship. While some of these days are restituted, i.e. existed in some form already before World War II, others are observed in the EU and yet others have been invented recently in Estonia. The majority of these holidays were
proposed by conservative nationalist parties and their official “meanings” reiterate the thesis of Estonia as a restored nation-state and guardian of the language and culture of ethnic Estonians, even though the idea of a Native Language Day, for example, could also be interpreted in more inclusive ways. The Resistance Fighting Day is of particular interest because it seeks to provide a narrative that would recognize officially those Estonian men who fought in World War II on the German side – bestow agency on the nation – as well as to hold on to the legal-restorationist claim that Estonians were victims of occupation regimes. The last two subchapters analyze consecutive controversies surrounding World War II monuments, including the Bronze Soldier case, as an indication of Estonia’s inability to describe its complex past and the government’s efforts to erase the multiplicity of meanings from the public sphere and to bring about a closure. Significantly from the perspective of ethnic interactions and this study, the official interpretation of the incident linked the critics of government’s actions to the Russian Federation, which implies that the government is beyond criticism, but if it is criticized, the discontent has come from an external source and is thus a matter of national security. The gigantic (43 yards) monument erected in 2009 to commemorate the 1918-1920 War of Independence suppresses distinctions between different regimes, between individual Estonians’ different relationships to these regimes – and hence questions of responsibility – and at the same time, by means of its aesthetics, recognizes officially and publicly Estonian veterans of the Waffen SS. Drawing on fieldwork observations, I argue that similarly to new holidays, the monument is normative in framing the individual as a
member of the ethnonational community and makes a promise of unity the government’s own policies do not support.

Chapter 4 begins by reflecting upon how material culture and bodily memories associated with the Soviet era form a tacit shared base between Estonians and non-Estonians that undermines or subverts the verbal accounts of separateness. On the other hand, I argue that Estonians and Russian-speakers in Tallinn sustain the linguistic separateness of their life worlds not only out of hostility, but because it is part of the local way of life. The chapter goes on to document the popularity of Soviet Russian popular culture (animation films, feature films, pop music) and popular-culture interpretations of the Soviet era (TV shows, comedies) among ethnic Estonians at the time of my fieldwork and more broadly during the past decade. Unlike phenomena defined as national culture, popular culture is shared across borders and can therefore threaten the coherence of the territory-culture-people equation. I show how the threat posed by Estonians’ intimate familiarity with the Soviet era and Soviet-Russian popular culture is neutralized by restricting the right to publicly reminisce the Soviet era to representatives of the so-called winner’s generation: the last generation that grew up under the Soviet regime, but was too young at the time to have been entangled in it in a responsible adult manner. Another strategy accessible to representatives of different generations is to keep affectionate engagements in the Soviet era private. Enjoying them in the company of co-ethnics turns them into matters of “cultural intimacy” (Herzfeld 2005) that define the Estonian-centered public by virtue of being excluded from it. Drawing on interviews and fieldwork observation, I analyze how
distinctions between things and people Estonian, Soviet and Russian are not pre-given but made and remade constantly by actors under given circumstances and hence strategic. Whereas Russians in Estonia, Russia and elsewhere can claim Soviet Russian cultural texts as part of “their” native-language culture, the appeal of these same texts for Estonians’ needs to be rationalized or constructed as art, which establishes Estonians’ interpretative authority and creative power over that of local Russians, who came to Estonia during the Soviet era. The chapter argues furthermore that scholarly discussions of Soviet-era popular culture have tended to focus on texts and by doing so, have somewhat similarly deprived of agency the audiences and consumers of these texts, treating them as an indoctrinated mass unable of critical thinking. I seek to problematize this view by drawing attention to diverse reading strategies employed by audiences and shaped by local conditions. Moreover, I draw on Milan Kundera’s notion of kitsch as a totalitarian denial of individualism to argue that Estonians’ affectionate engagements in Soviet-era popular culture as “beautiful art” can be said to foster conformism under the current regime.

Chapter 5 turns to the analysis of the Estonian integration policy implemented since the late 1990s in the form of multi-year national programs or strategies. I begin by discussing how the existence of a national policy document on integration was a precondition for the international integration of the Estonian state, which in the late 1990s was seen as a means of enhancing national security. I argue furthermore that in analyzing the Estonian approach to integration, it is important to consider both stated goals of this policy, i.e., the
increase of social cohesion by means of citizenship (chapter 2) as well as the preservation and development of cultures of different nationalities who are said to be living in Estonia: the idea of Estonia as an ethnonationalist nation state and the idea of Estonia as a home for over hundred nationalities are mutually constitutive. I then trace the formulation of “the Estonian model of multicultural society” presented in the first “national program “Integration in the Estonian society 2000-2007.”” The model envisions a society that is united by an Estonian-centered “common core” (Estonian language and citizenship) but nevertheless plural by recognizing the group rights of both the majority and minorities: the former can preserve “the Estonian cultural space” and the latter particular ethnic cultures. This approach relies on a reifying and essentializing notion of culture that equates culture with territory and furthermore with people, treating different cultures and peoples as incommensurable, which in turn undermines the possibility of a “common core.” One could therefore argue that the integration model extended – beyond the Soviet era and the system of Soviet federalism (chapter 1) – both Estonians’ privileges as the “titular nationality” and the idea national/ethnic identity as a category one is born into and that comes with an – sometimes imagined – national language, homeland, and culture and is thus distinct from citizenship. The next subchapter discusses how the follow-up document “Estonian Integration Strategy 2008-2013” retains these same principles, albeit in revamped wording. Whereas the national program drew on elements selected from Western theories of multiculturalism and Will Kymlicka’s liberal theory of group-differentiated rights, the new strategy “sounds like” the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of Minorities, which is part of EU institutions’ broader
effort to de-territorialize or “Europeanize” integration policies (and thus also citizenship policies – cf. chapter 2). Among other things, the Framework Convention – and hence the Estonian strategy – talks about fostering “intercultural dialogue” and I analyze how this concept reiterates the idea that people are cultures and hence essentially different. I also discuss my observations from a course on “intercultural differences” that I audited as part of my fieldwork and that was aimed at Estonian teachers “of Estonian cultural background” working with “students of Russian cultural background.” Overall, I argue that the Estonian approach to integration combines elements of Soviet nationality policy with multiculturalism and that what makes this combination work in Estonia is that both reify and essentialize culture, treating it as a matter of being rather than doing and exchanging. In post-Soviet Estonia, personal nationality/ethnicity is no longer listed in passports, but institutionalized by means of state-funded cultural associations where minority individuals can develop and preserve their cultural particularity and that compete with each other over resources, members, attention and the authority to represent the given nationality/ethnicity vis-à-vis the state and the Estonian public. While minorities are incorporated into the state and the capitalist system by means of these associations, their narrow and static definition of culture contributes to assimilation in other spheres of life and can restrict the opportunity of minority individuals to participate in the re-shaping and re-defining of the currently Estonian-centered public sphere. Hence, rely on vocabulary used by one my interviewees, the integration strategy frames minorities as “guests” and they become “burglars” if they try to undo their guest status.  

20 Field notes from April 17, 2011.
While minority actors can hold the state accountable for the preservation and development of minority cultures, it is ultimately the state or the government that defines what counts as culture and the chapter argues that minorities contribute to their own marginalization. Since minorities’ cultural associations represent the civil society, at least formally, the chapter discusses also how this concept is being defined in the integration strategy.

The last two chapters elaborate on the guest-burglar dilemma by focusing on the issue of Russian-language education in Estonia, which was very much at the center of attention during my fieldwork and a matter of great concerned for many people I interviewed as well as for the members of the youth organization I worked with. According to the ongoing education reform, Russian-medium upper-secondary schools (grades 10-12) have already switched partially (60 per cent) into Estonian-language instruction and basic schools (grades 1-9) are expected to follow. The concept of partial Estonian-medium instruction is significant for it reinforces the sense of incommensurability of cultures, which forms the basis of the Estonian approach to integration. Chapter 6 discusses the “question of the Russian school” as I came across it in the field: in public and semi-public seminars dedicated to the school reform, in the youth organization, in interactions with representatives of cultural associations of national minorities. I analyze excerpts from four interviews where the interviewees brought up the future of Russian-language education in Estonia and discussed the reform as well as its impact on the cultural identity of Russians in Estonia, which is what the integration strategy claims to be
protecting. Interviewees’ concerns over the “wellbeing” of the Russian language resonate with Estonian nationalists’ discourse on the Estonian language, referring to a shared ground between minorities and the majority.

Chapter 7 approaches the school reform from a seemingly very differently angle, namely that of national security. In April 2011, i.e., after I had left Estonia, the Estonian Security Police published its traditional annual review, where it associated vocal critics of the school reform, including the deputy mayor of Tallinn, with the compatriot policy of the Russian Federation and framed their activities as threat to Estonia’s constitutional order. I argue that this chapter illustrates the inability of minorities do undo their guest status and hence the Estonian-centeredness of the Estonian public sphere. Moreover, I explore parallels between the official account of the 2007 Bronze Soldier controversy (chapter 3) and security police’s framing of school reform’s critics, arguing that they point to a pattern, habit or tendency of coalition parties\textsuperscript{21} to invalidate criticisms by means of framing them as threats to Estonian statehood that emanate from Russia and call for exceptional measures and interventions. It follows from this that the “authenticity” (a term used by the Security Police) is measured on the basis of their compliance with and support to the container model of the nation state or what Richard Handler (1988) has described as “a vision of totality.” The last subchapter discusses how individuals I did fieldwork with talked about the 2007 Bronze Soldier crisis three or four years later and their continuous distress. The problem was not so much \textit{what} the government had done –

\footnote{The Reform Party has been in power and Andrus Ansip has been the prime minister since April 2005.}
people tended to agree that the new location in a military cemetery was better – but rather *how* it did it. Reflecting upon these arguments, my fieldwork experience as well as previous experiences of growing up and living in Tallinn, I suggest that the coexistence of Estonians, Russians, Russian-speakers and non-Estonians in Tallinn depends on a tacit mutual recognition and acceptance of ethnolinguistic differences and boundaries and that this condition could be described as “commonality.”
Chapter 1: Tales from the Homeland’s History

When the Republic of Estonia celebrated its 90\textsuperscript{th} anniversary in 2008, the motto of the jubilee year \textit{A Country Built Together} “aimed at encouraging all Estonian people to rejoice in their country and to carry it forward” (Soobik 2008). Each month of the anniversary year was dedicated to a particular institution or topic with October declared the “Month of Nationalities in Estonia”. As the organizers put it,

In Estonia, there are 121 different ethnic nationalities, and October – the month of the Estonian nationalities – is dedicated to them. Our first Constitution provided national minorities with a chance to establish cultural autonomy, which made us innovative in Europe. The slogan “A country built together” has also been inspired by operating together here in Mary’s Land [\textit{Maarjamaa}].

(October 2008. Month of Nationalities in Estonia.)\textsuperscript{22}

Placed against the background of Estonia’s \textit{jus sanguinis} citizenship policy and the ongoing tendency to define “the Estonian people” in exclusivist ethno-cultural terms, the idea of post-Soviet Estonia as “a country built together” comes across as mythical as the image of Estonia as “Mary’s Land.” The blurb glosses over the fact that most of Estonia’s “121 different ethnic nationalities” would not qualify as “national minorities” entitled to cultural autonomy and that some of these groups are significantly bigger in numbers than

\textsuperscript{22} Cf. the Estonian title \textit{Eesti rahvuste kuu}: \textit{Eestimaal elab 121 erinevat rahvust ja neile on pühendatud oktoober – Eesti rahvuste kuu} (Oktoober 2008. Eesti rahvuste kuu); cf. also the Russian version of the website: \textit{Октябрь - месяц народов} (Oktyabr’ – mesyats narodov).
others: people who define themselves as Russians constitute one quarter of Estonia’s population of 1.34 million, followed by Ukrainians, Belarusians and others who together make up the remaining 7% (93,800) of Estonia’s permanent residents and represent the remaining 117 nationalities. In contexts void of the representative burden and weight that tends to go with celebrations, members of these different nationalities are described and classified rather differently – as Russian-speakers, immigrants or “ethnic minorities” in need of integration into Estonian society.

Despite – or because of – its deceiving optimism, the blurb of the “Month of Nationalities” provides an important insight into minority policies in contemporary Estonia for it captures vividly Estonia’s effort to govern post-Soviet realities in ways that combine the restitutionist program chosen in the early 1990s with elements of Soviet nationality policy. The concepts of “national minority” and “ethnic nationality” derive from the interwar Estonian republic and the Soviet era respectively, representing different epochs in Estonian history, very dissimilar ethno-demographic situations, and, furthermore, distinct approaches to ethnic minorities. By placing them side by side, the blurb bridges this temporal and conceptual gap, which in turn makes it possible to turn a blind eye to ongoing struggles over minorities’ position and rights in contemporary Estonia. The goal and appeal of restitutionism was to break with the immediate Soviet past by reclaiming a connection to a more distant past and reference to the prewar cultural autonomy legislation in the 2008 “Month of Nationalities” introduction provides evidence of the continued relevance of this paradigm. At the same time and somewhat
ironically, the blurb makes it clear that there is no way of picking it up from 1940 because the very statement about Estonia being a home to 121 “ethnic nationalities” draws on particular Soviet ideas about ethnic groups and processes.

The following analysis will therefore proceed by first discussing the formative impact of Soviet nationality policy on Estonia’s ethnic makeup and then trace its persisting influence on minority regulations adopted in post-Soviet Estonia. It will be argued that concepts and ideas prevalent in the Soviet era continue to shape the ways in which ethnic identities, nations, statehood and minority rights are imagined, managed and articulated in contemporary Estonia.\(^\text{23}\)

*How Estonia came to be a Home for 121 Nationalities*

Estonia’s current ethnic composition and geography took shape in the course of the Soviet era when several hundred thousand individuals from various parts of the Soviet Union moved to Estonia, settling mostly in the capital, railway towns and, most importantly, in the rapidly growing northeastern industrial centers; many came with the military. It has been estimated that immediately after the war in 1945, Estonians made up 97% of the total population of 854 000; according to the last Soviet census carried out in 1989, there were over 1 565 600 people living in Estonia and 62% of them were

\(^{23}\) Though this lies beyond the scope of this article, it is important to recognize that Soviet nationality policy – but also the minority policy of the interwar Republic of Estonia – built, among other things, on ideas and policies that emerged from Imperial Russia’s effort to govern its diverse population.
Estonians (Katus 1999, 129).\textsuperscript{24} The two peaks of immigration were in the 1950s and 1970s with the geographical scope of countries of origin broadening over time: the newcomers of the first decades were mostly from the Russian SSR and the European parts of the Soviet Union, while the late 1960s saw an increase in migration from the Volga region, Caucasus, and Central-Asia (Sakkeus 1999, 320; cf. Olcott 1985: 103).

The issue of citizenship bore no relevance to the movement of people within the Soviet Union for everybody was a citizen of the Soviet Union. The aim of Soviet citizenship was to separate inhabitants and peoples of the Soviet Union from foreigners – citizens of other states, while the distinguishing factor within the Soviet Union was nationality and from the 1930s onward, every citizen of the Soviet Union was assigned an official nationality that was recorded in the internal passport and became part of one’s legal status, shaping educational and career prospects. I will return to this practice and to the concept of nationality below, but it is significant to note in this connection that people who moved to Estonia from other parts of the Soviet Union were – in a very literal and institutionalized way – of diverse ethnic descent. Russians constituted the majority of newcomers, followed by Ukrainians, Belarusians and, overall, people belonging to over 100 other nationalities. The number of represented ethnicities increased over time along with the widening of the scope of regions providing immigrants. The bulk of these territories and

\textsuperscript{24} The “migration turnover” or the number of people who passed through Estonia was significantly bigger than the number of those who stayed: nearly 2.9 million persons are said to have been involved in the flow of migration between 1946-1991, which means that only every fifth person to enter stayed for a shorter or longer period of time (Sakkeus 1999, 319-320).
their inhabitants had been part of the Soviet Union for several decades longer than the Baltic republics and their populations and had fought in World War II on the Soviet side less ambiguously than Estonia and its residents (see Introduction).

This influx of people has been conceived in post-Estonia of as part and parcel of Moscow’s deliberate Russification policy, even though recent scholarship suggests that despite claiming scientific management of population distribution, the central government lacked full control over internal migration flows and the growth of major cities in particular (Buckley 1995; Mertelsmann 2007 and Mertelsmann 2010 on Estonia; Sahadeo 2011 for Central Asia and Soviet Russian metropolis). Migration processes were tied in a very concrete way to the system of institutionalized personal nationality mentioned above and discussed in more detail below. Namely, certain “classes” of people, most importantly workers of collective farms/peasants, were not given passports and hence lacked the right to exit their immediate area of residence and seek employment elsewhere. Available “channels of escape” included higher education, military service, and volunteering for construction work through the “System of Organized Recruitment,” which put men in a privileged position (Zaslavsky and Luryi 1979, 138-144), but people used all of them also in order to move to Estonia.

In practice, the opportunity and ability to move within the Soviet Union did increase the importance and presence of the Russian language. Large all-Union enterprises and whole sectors of industry and economy were run in Russian, which in turn shaped the service
sector by creating a demand for schools, daycares, doctors, clerks, shop assistants, libraries, theatres and other recreational and cultural establishments catering to Russian-speakers. Most newcomers to Estonia became integrated into the Russian-language societal culture that came to exist in the aftermath of the war parallel to cultural, educational, economic and other institutions operated in Estonian, the language of the titular nationality. The same happened in Latvia and Lithuania, leading David Laitin to describe the Baltic republics as an example of the “integralist model” of inclusion or state control, emerging from the fact that “the expanding [Soviet] state was unable to undermine the cultural integrity of its conquered people on its periphery” (Laitin 1998, 67).\textsuperscript{25} The rate of incorporating local elites into positions of political power at the center remained moderate throughout the Soviet period, leading to the “indigenization of high officialdom” (Laitin 1998, 70) \textit{within} the union republic. Laitin claims that this helped to “close titular networks from any incentives to develop social ties with Russians” (ibid.).\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{25} Ukraine represented according to Laitin the “most-favored-lord” model of recruiting local elites, characterized by a high rate of incorporation and mobility at the level of central government; Kazakhstan can be viewed as an example of the “colonial model” where elites served as mediators but are rarely incorporated into state-level positions of authority. Unlike the integralist model, both of these patterns gave, according to Laitin, incentives for adopting the Russian language and aspects of the Soviet culture. Laitin also proposed that these different Soviet contexts of state expansion would have implications for \textit{post-Soviet} interethnic accommodation and explain local Russians’ responses to newly independent states. (Laitin 1998, 60-82.)

\textsuperscript{26} This self-segregation contributed, among other things, to the ethnicization of the concept of class and one of the topics touched upon in chapter 4 is the post-Soviet suppression or imperceptibility of the category “Estonian worker”: how its invisibility contributes to the homogenization of the ways in which the Soviet era can and cannot be publicly talked about and remembered.
It is furthermore insightful to juxtapose the Soviet and post-Soviet separation of Estonian- and Russian-language life-worlds with earlier forms of ethnicization of social status and class in the feudal Baltic region. Until the national awakenings of the 19th century, the population of the present-day Estonia and Livonia was divided into free individuals and serfs or Deutsch and Undeutsch, with the “German” referring to habitus and a way of life rather than language or even descent. The Baltic German educator, pastor and literati August Wilhelm Hupel (1737-1819) published in the 1770-1780s three volumes titled Topographische Nachrichten von Lief- und Ehlstland where he provided a detailed ethnographic account of local economic and cultural life, explaining, among other things, the two “main classes” in the society:

Irrespective of the social status, the residents of the country [Estonia and Livonia] are divided into two main classes, German and non-German. The latter refers to serfs or, in other words, peasants. Who is not a peasant, is called German even if he cannot speak a word of German, for example Russians, Englishmen, etc. This class includes the nobility, scholars, citizens, officials, servants who were born free, even serfs who have been granted freedom as soon as they have swapped their previous clothing for German garments. These peoples living in Livonia are regarded as the main class.

(Hupel, cited in Jürjo 1999, 96.)

This coalescence of class and ethnicity is captured also in the Estonian word saks that was used to designate both Germans (sakslane) and more broadly people, things and ways of life positioned higher on the social ladder. The word “Estonian” (eestlane), or different forms thereof, were initially used by outsiders to describe the inhabitants of the region (e.g., the Latin Estones appears in Henry of Livonia’s chronicle from the 13th century), while local people referred to themselves as “the people of the land”
(maarahvas); eestlane started to be used as a parallel ethnonym in the 18th century, which is also when literacy rates among peasants increased and texts written and printed in Estonian became more common, regular and accessible (the Bible translation appeared in 1739) (e.g., Raun, T. 2003, 133).

Correspondingly, Germans rather than Russians have constituted the historiographical archenemy of Estonians. When intellectuals identifying as Estonians started “writing Estonians into history as a nation” (Tamm 2008, 503) during the national awakening of the 1860s – also by means of mass campaigns for collecting folklore (Arukask 2007; Valk 2004) – they framed the arrival of German crusaders and missionaries in the 13th century as the beginning of an ‘age of darkness,’ reversing the historiography that had earlier in the century been written for Estonians by the Baltic German Estophiles. The idea of an ‘age of darkness’ was developed during the interwar years into what Marek Tamm has described as the narrative template of “The Great Battle for Freedom” for it considers Estonian history as “centuries of struggle for liberty and against the Germans” (Tamm 2008, 505; cf. Wertsch 2002 on narrative templates). Tamm argues that this “thematic backbone (…) remained unbreakable” in Soviet Estonian historiography, while the post-Soviet period has been “characterized by a yearning to return to pre-war memory templates” (ibid.) with the Soviet era and restoration of independence incorporated into the great battle (cf. Wulf and Grönholm 2010 and the discussion of history textbooks in the Introduction).
To the best of my knowledge, the processes and cultural representations of self-Germanification (saksastumine; saksastama – Germanify) and self-Russification (venestumine, venestama – Russify) have not been studied comparatively and the material available would be rather different in either case. For example, while works of historic fiction by Estonian writers in the late 19th century and before World War II helped to heroicize Estonians’ fight against Germans (e.g. Tamm 2008, 507-508) and there are numerous literary representations that ridicule Estonians performing as Germans, treatments of self-Russification would be difficult to find already because of the Soviet censorship practices. Works created in the canon of Social Realism constitute a separate case to the extent that they depict and convey local peoples’ embrace of the new ideology rather than ethnicity, even though making this distinction becomes harder as the ideology is shown to be permeating the most mundane aspects of daily life. For example, one of the first social realist novels by an Estonian author, the 1949 “Light in Koordi” (Valgus Koordis, 1949; the Russian original in 1948) Hans Leberecht, describes the collectivization and electrification of an Estonian village (Leberecht 1949). Leberecht’s description of drinking vodka as a social pastime of male kolkhoz workers differs radically from peasants’ trips to country pubs in earlier Estonian literature and, one would think, also from the mainstream Soviet propaganda.

What is known about self-Russification during the Soviet era is that the rates of intermarriage and linguistic re-identification remained low throughout the Soviet period.

27 “Light in Koordi” was translated into several dozen languages, won the Stalin prize in 1953 and was furthermore turned into an opera.
sustaining the separateness of Estonian and Russian-speaking life worlds even more effectively than moderate career opportunities available for the Baltic elites in Moscow (cf. Laitin 1998). This is nevertheless not to say that Estonia and Estonians passed through the nearly five Soviet decades without becoming incorporated into the regime and influenced by ways in which the regime framed Estonians and enabled Estonians to frame themselves and others. The ethno-linguistic division of the population and society in the Estonian SSR was, in addition to other factors, also an outcome of the Soviet nationality policy, which is said to have been antinationalist, but not antinational (Brubaker 1996, 17). The regime suppressed nationalism, yet the federal system that took shape gradually after the 1917 October Revolution was based on an understanding and acceptance of the reality of national/ethnic differences and hence also of collectives embodying these differences. At the time of its disintegration in 1991, the Soviet Union consisted of fifteen union republics, twenty autonomous republics, eight autonomous regions (область – oblast), and ten autonomous districts (округ – okrug); the official number of different ethnic groups was 128 and their size ranged from a few hundred to millions (Tishkov 2002, 31).

Valery Tishkov has described the Soviet federal system as a realization of “the right to a

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28 Estonians were arguably the only nationality in the Soviet Union to claim a decrease in their knowledge of Russian as a second language between the censuses of 1970 and 1979. Commenting upon this devolution, one analyst in the West wrote in 1982: “In view of the fact that this directly contradicts the overall trend in the USSR towards increasing facility in Russian and that the decrease was not compensated by a commensurate increase in the numbers of Estonians claiming Russian as their first language, it has been suggested that more Estonians simply chose to express their antipathy to the use of Russian by refusing to admit their knowledge of the language” (Solchanyk 1982, 34).
national self-determination within the borders of a single state” (Tishkov 2002, 29). It was its own kind of solution to the incompatibility of state borders and ethnic boundaries that emerged in the first decades of the 20th century as multinational empires crumbled or, as Peter Blitstein suggests, “a distinctive response” to the challenge of managing cultural diversity in modern conditions (Blitstein 2006, 275; see also Slezkine 1994b). The introduction of the personal passport nationality/ethnicity in 1932 helped to cement this distinctive response, contributing to the further institutionalization of the ethnicity/nationality category and helping to secure certain privileges of “titular nationalities” (e.g. access to higher education, Party membership, executive positions). When the Soviet Union ceased to exist, it famously did so by disintegrating into aspiring nation states. Brubaker expresses a widely shared view in post-Cold War scholarship when he argues that it was the Soviet system that laid the foundation for these states’ “self-understanding as specifically national states” (Brubaker 1996, 45).

At the same time, however, the Soviet nationality policy was also built on the premise that different ethnic/national groups would be drawn together over time and ultimately merge or fuse into a new community embodying the new kind of unity made possible by socialism and communism. Ilja Gorenburg (2006), among others, has criticized post-Cold War “Western scholars” for overemphasizing the strengthening impact of Soviet policies on non-Russian ethnic identities. He argues that Soviet nationality policy oscillated continuously between institutionalization of ethnicity and ethno-linguistic assimilation and, moreover, that its effects varied depending on the status of the group in the
hierarchical system of administrative units. The network of ethnic institutions was most extensive in union republics like Estonia (education, media, academic institutions, theatres and other cultural institutions), while titular groups of autonomous republics, provinces and districts were provided with progressively fewer opportunities and resources leaving them more vulnerable to assimilation. Moreover, the rights and opportunities that an individual member of an ethnic group had at his or her disposal in his or her “own” territory (e.g., native-language education) did not carry over into other units “owned” by other groups. Gorenburg emphasizes that “scholars must recognize the tension between identity promotion and assimilation that was an inherent part of Soviet nationality policy throughout the Soviet Union’s existence” (Gorenburg 2006, 275), even though “assimilation” or “Russification” were never part of the public official vocabulary.29

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29 Aware of the multiple meanings of the concept “assimilation,” especially under Soviet conditions of official ascribed nationality, Gorenburg distinguishes between linguistic reidentification (minority individuals declare Russian as their native language while claiming a different ethnic identity) and ethnic reidentification or complete ethnic assimilation (change in both native language and ethnic identity). Gorenburg gives three reasons why scholars have in his view tended to underestimate the extent of assimilation: first, the emergence of strong nationalist movements in the late 1980s; second, assimilation is a slow process and its effects were only starting to show by the late 1980s. Third, because of the way questions regarding language were formulated in Soviet censuses, one of the main sources for data on ethnic processes, it is difficult to estimate the linguistic Russification among minorities: respondents were asked about their native language, a component of ethnicity, rather than their actual linguistic preferences and practices. (Gorenburg 2006, 277, 282.) It seems also justified to argue that scholars’ assessments have been shaped by their biographies. *Intellectuals and the Articulation of the Nation*, a volume edited by Ronald Grigor Suny and Michael D. Kennedy (Suny and Kennedy 1999), includes, in addition to articles, short autobiographical essays where authors reflect upon their own interest in nationalism and intellectual development. Many renowned scholars of Soviet nationality policy, it turns out, grew up in nationalist diaspora communities, which were often (e.g., Ukrainians) though not always anti-Soviet
Gorenburg’s critique serves as a reminder that the Soviet Union did not consist of union republics only and, moreover, that the Soviet Union was throughout its existence also a Marxist-Leninist state shaped also by Stalinist policies. Even if the content of the official ideological discourse lost touch with reality after Stalin’s death and was performed ritually for the sake of form, it was nevertheless constitutive of social realities and a resource that all social actors could reach for and employ (cf. Annus and Hughes 2004; Yurchak 2006). Gorbachev stressed as late as 1989 that perestroika meant “‘fully implementing in practice the principles on which Lenin based the union of Soviet republics’” (quoted in Smith, G. 1990b, 16). Hence, “renewing” stood for “heading back to the future” (ibid.) and it was not uncommon for Estonian intellectuals in the late 1980s to frame their critique of centralist policies and the influx of immigrants in exactly these terms (e.g., Jõgi 1988). It could be argued that in order to understand why the Soviet regime institutionalized both ethno-territorial federalism and extraterritorial personal nationality, two models that are usually opposed (Brubaker 1996, 34), and how these

and often socialist. For example, R. G. Suny, one of the scholars criticized by Gorenburg, writes about his childhood and upbringing in an Armenian family in Philadelphia: “For me and my father (but not in the same way for my mother and sister), the Soviet Union was an ideal against which the inadequacies of capitalist America, into which I seemed not to fit particularly well, were judged. (...) Socialism remained in my young adulthood a utopia that firsthand knowledge of the actualities of the Soviet system did not tarnish. For me, as for many who drifted from Old to New Left, the USSR was no longer the model of socialism but a distorted or degenerate failure to realize the emancipatory promise of Marxism. Still, when I finally arrived in the Soviet Union in 1964, I was extraordinarily happy with what I found, particularly the people I met. (...) Still, my own take was that the USSR was fundamentally a healthy society, but one that required radical reform to open its constricted public sphere. My very first published article (in a New Left journal published by Oberlin College students) was about the need for a “bourgeois democratic revolution” in the USSR” (Suny 1999, 54).
models paved the way for nationalizing policies in post-Soviet states, it is necessary to look at the conditions and teachings this dual system emerged from.30

Marx and Engels saw nations and national movements as emerging from struggles among the bourgeoisie during the period rising capitalism. The nation and nationalism were both regarded as elements of the superstructure, contingent and constructed, and to be serving the interests of the bourgeoisie. Walker Connor has pointed out that Marx and Engels paid in their early writings little attention to nationalism and the fate of nations after the anticipated world revolution, assuming that economic incentives and class solidarity would outweigh ethno-national ties and lead to the unification of workers across national and state borders. However, the European Revolutions of 1848 led them to argue that because nationalism was a progressive force during the period of rising capitalism, Communists could strategically support it in the interests of the global revolutionary movement. (Connor 1984, 6-20.) Bolsheviks propagated in the early 1910s the right to national self-determination in order to induce support for their program and though this entailed supporting the right to political secession, the socialist state was to be a unitary one and Lenin was, in fact, against federalism at the time. (Connor 1984, 33-42; Carrère d’Encausse 1978, 40-43; Roshwald 2001, 191-174.) All in all, it seems important to point

30 A detailed overview of different phases in Soviet nationality policy and its reinterpretations by consecutive leaders is a topic of immense complexity and beyond the scope and purpose of this study. Rather, the following discussion draws on a variety of sources in an effort to throw light on concepts and ideas that are relevant from the perspective of discussing ethnicity and minority policies in post-Soviet Estonia in the following chapter. See also discussion above regarding the changing bases for identification in Imperial Russia.
out in this connection, as Aviel Roshwald has done, that it was not clear before 1914 “what political configurations would replace the [Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman] empires if they ever did reach a point of total collapse” (Roshwald 2001, 33) and, furthermore, that national self-determination was not necessarily linked to independence, but could be imagined in terms of “harmony and cooperation among nations” (Roshwald 2001, 35). Marko Lehti has elaborated on this point, arguing that at the time, “Estonia and Latvia as national units were not imagined as sovereign states. Instead, national sovereignty was seen as being fulfilled by internal sovereignty” (Lehti 2005, 91; cf. “The Great Battle for Freedom” narrative in Estonian historiography that traces the yearning for statehood with pre-Christian times (Tamm 2008)).

From the perspective of the Russian Bolshevik movement and their anticipation of world revolution, it was of crucial importance that nationality – and hence the right to national self-determination – be understood in territorial terms. Lenin opposed vehemently the idea of non-territorial cultural autonomies proposed by Austro-Marxists because this would have decoupled national culture from territory, politics and economy – the very superstructure that arguably had produced nations and nationalism and was the basis for politicizing ethnicity/nationality (e.g., his 1913 essay “Cultural-National” Autonomy” (Lenin 1977); Bowring 2002, 238-240; Bowring 2005, 192-194; Roshwald 2005, 16-18). To quote from the Communist Manifesto: “Though not in substance, yet in form,

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31 The Austro-Marxist concept of non-territorial cultural autonomy served as the basis for the cultural autonomy legislation implemented in interwar Estonia and restored in post-Soviet Estonia with mixed results. Moreover, the system of cultural autonomies in post-
the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie” (Marx and Engels 1948, 20; emphasis added). Stalin’s 1913 essay “Marxism and the National Question,” authorized by Lenin and targeted against Austro-Marxists, illustrated the Bolshevik view of nations as territorially grounded, yet temporary entities as well as the incompatibility of bourgeoisie nationalism, which seeks to aggravate national tensions, and the international Communist movement. As Stalin explained, “In fighting for the right of nations to self-determination, the aim of Social-Democracy is to put an end to the policy of national oppression, to render it impossible, and thereby to remove the grounds of strife between nations, to take the edge off that strife and reduce it to a minimum” (Stalin 1954a, 233). In the same essay Stalin presented his definition of nation to which he would refer in his later writings:

A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture. It goes without saying that a nation, like every historical phenomenon, is subject to the law of change, has its history, its beginning and end.

(Stalin 1954a, 307; emphasis in the original.)

Bolsheviks’ promotion of the principle of national self-determination was instrumental in helping them to gain support from national forces in the Russian Empire and to come to power in 1917 – despite all odds, since the country lacked the class structure needed for a

Soviet Russia is built on the principle of non-territorial autonomy (Bowring 2002, 2005; Osipov 2010). Otto Bauer’s and Karl Renner’s ideas of non-territorial national autonomy have also received renewed scholarly interest under the conditions of the European Union (e.g., see contributions to Nimni 2005, Smith and Cordell 2008).
Marxist revolution.\textsuperscript{32} Lenin reversed his opinion on federalism, seeing it first as a temporary solution, but when the hope for global revolution was fading, concentrated on the consolidation of the Soviet state by focusing on economy and non-Russian nationalities (e.g., Carrère d’Encausse 1978, 43-47; Slezkine 1994b; Roshwald 2001, 1973-174).\textsuperscript{33}

The strengthening of the socialist state required strengthening class-based ties between its inhabitants, which from the Marxist-Leninist perspective could happen only after the weakening of ethno-national ties and loyalties. Since Lenin regarded nationalism as a response to imperial oppression and the great power chauvinism of Russians, the fear,

\textsuperscript{32} According to Fitzpatrick it was the Bolsheviks who “classed” Russians by ascribing to individuals social identities that enabled them to distinguish between the allies and enemies of the revolution. These ascribed identities looked like and were described as classes in the Marxist sense, but bore in her view more resemblance to the imperial system of social estates (sosloviie) in the sense that they were defined in terms of their relationship to the state rather than to each other (Fitzpatrick 1993, 770). The 1926 census contributed to the “classing” of the society by creating “virtual classes: a statistical representation that enabled Soviet Marxists (and future generations of historians) to operate on the premise that Russia was a class society” (Fitzpatrick 1993, 755; emphasis in the original).

\textsuperscript{33} According to Carrère d’Encausse: “Protecting the Soviet state thus became [after 1920] a task of the highest importance. The state had to be coherent and able to defend itself. Instead of open revolutionary borders, it required specific and defensible ones. This explains the great importance attached to the border treaties made in the early 1920” (Carrère d’Encausse 1978, 44). These developments are relevant for thinking about conditions that helped to make Estonian independence possible. Estonia had been at war with Soviet Russia since 1918, but in February 1920 the two countries reached an agreement and signed the Tartu Peace Treaty, mentioned in the introduction. The treaty ended the Estonian War of Independence (1918-1920) for Estonia and yet another episode in the Civil War for Soviet Russia (1917-1922), whereas a few years earlier the Estonian national struggle could have been framed rather differently as an episode in the global revolutionary process. The meaning and uses of the Tartu Peace Treaty in post-Soviet Estonia will be discussed in chapters 2 and 3.
suspicion and resistance of non-Russian nationalities was to be overcome by creating conditions that were favorable to their economic, political and cultural development and flourishing (развитие – razvitie), suppressed by the previous regime. (Connor 1984: 201-208.) Moreover, “showcasing the USSR as a harmonious, voluntary community of autonomous nations” was an integral part of foreign propaganda and means of stimulating nationalist revolutions elsewhere, especially in Asia (Roshwald 2001, 177).

Yuri Slezkine (1994a, 1994b), Terry Martin (2000, 2001), and Francine Hirsch (2005), among others, have provided detailed accounts of the Soviet state’s efforts in the 1920s and early 1930s to promote socialism by means of identifying, demarcating, organizing, and modernizing ethnic/national groups and nurturing native officials. According to Martin, the Soviet state sought to “support those “forms” of nationhood that did not conflict with a unitary central state. This meant commitment to support the following four national forms: national territories, national languages, national elites, and national cultures” (Martin 2001: 9-10). Martin claims that “Bolshevik plans for the social transformation of the country did not allow for any fundamentally distinctive religious, legal, ideological, or customary features” (Martin 2001, 12-13) and suggests that the “national culture” promoted by Stalin is best translated as “national identity” or “symbolic ethnicity”: “(p)romoting “national culture” meant aggressively promoting national identity, while undermining distinctive national beliefs and social practices” (Martin 2001, 183). As I will argue later in this chapter and throughout this study, the separation of the symbolic and the material, like that of form and content, turns a blind
eye to practices of reification that actors on all levels of the society engage in as well as to interactions between these actors.\textsuperscript{34}

The advancement and promotion of native languages (192 identified in the 1920s (Slezkine 1994b, 430)), native-language education and literary production was of particular importance in the indigenization campaign (korenizatsiia) for language was, in line with Marxist thinking, regarded as a superstructural phenomenon united with thought. Developing and transforming language was therefore a means of transforming thinking and accelerating the evolution of the society. (Slezkine 1995, 842.) Native languages served also as the main reason and principal means for setting up territorial units of/for particular nationalities. Moreover, it was characteristic of this feast of ethnic particularity that the state affirmed nationalities from all walks of the Marxist evolutionary spectrum and did not distinguish between those who had an ethnic homeland outside the borders of the Soviet Union and those who did not: Estonian settlers living in Siberia and the Caucasus – the Estonians of Russia mentioned in the introduction – were provided with “their own” schools and newspapers (Slezkine 1994b), which along with the system of official nationality no doubt contributed in one way or another to the continuation of Estonian communities’ in these regions.

The indigenization campaign framed national/ethnic ties as backwardness to be overcome

\textsuperscript{34} Recent studies on interactions between Soviet ideology and local ethnic traditions include Stronski 2010 on reimagining Tashkent, the capital of the Uzbek SSR, as a Soviet city between 1930-1960. Chapter 5 discusses how minority policies in post-Soviet Estonia focus on territories, languages, cultures, and elites.
in order to foster class solidarity. Yet by singling out for development non-Russians and non-Russian languages, *korenizatsiia* simultaneously de-ethnicized the Russian language and Russians, arguably already a full-fledged nation characterized by class divisions. Hence, ethnicity and class belonged to different levels of development\(^\text{35}\) and class struggle only reached non-Russians in 1928 along with collectivization, which presupposed the existence of classes for “all nationalities without exception had to produce their own exploiters, heretics, and anti-Soviet conspirators” (Slezkine 1994b, 440). As a proof this new equality of nationalities, the 1928-1932 “revolutions from above” (the first Five-Year Plan along with collectivization and industrialization, the Cultural Revolution) arguably coincided with the emergence of ‘socialist nations,’ described by Stalin as “Soviet nations, which developed and took shape on the basis of the old, bourgeois nations after the overthrow of capitalism in Russia, after the elimination of the bourgeoisie and its nationalist parties, after the establishment of the Soviet system” (Stalin 1954b, 354). In the same essay, titled “The National Question and Leninism,” Stalin explained that nations, national differences and languages would begin to come together and merge only *after* “the victory of socialism on a world scale” (Stalin 1954b, 357).

However, “(t)he amount of room allowed for “national form”” (Slezkine 1994b, 441) was cut back in the early 1930s by cutting down the number of official nationalities,\(^\text{35}\) Slezkine explains that the “ethnicity-based affirmative action in the national territories was an exact replica of class-based affirmative action in Russia. A Russian could benefit from being a proletarian; a non-Russian could benefit from being a non-Russian” (Slezkine 1994b, 434).
territorial-administrative units and languages. Because language, nationality/ethnicity and territory were defined as being mutually interdependent, dissolution of administrative units effaced the existence of ethnic/national groups, while centralization of economy and “cultural production” extended the role and presence of the Russian language. Martin also talks about “the right to assimilation” that emerged into rhetoric and attitudes after 1933 and how the 1937 census was arguably used to propagate assimilation: the official number of different national/ethnic groups went down from 200 in 1926 to 107 in 1937 to 57 in 1939. (Martin 2001, 408, 410; Hirsch 2005.)

The nationalities whose space was spared were expected under these new circumstances to come up with ever more concentrated and orchestrated performances of their ethnic/national distinctiveness. Karen Petrone shows in her analysis of Soviet parades in the 1930s how spontaneous expressions were to be replaced by folk costumes, dances and other “controlled “folk” customs” as well as by performances that defined union republics by their specific economic or military functions in the Soviet system. Hence, Uzbekistan equaled cotton, while the Turkmenistan, Belorussia and Ukraine, republics on the borders of the Soviet Union, were defined by their defence function. (Petrone 2000, 36-37; 41.)36 The Russian nation also gradually reentered the scene, but was defined as a harbinger of modernity and progress – “First Among Equals” (Petrone 2000, 35) – rather than through its ethno-cultural particularity.

36 Cf. Fitzpatrick’s argument that social classes in the Soviet Union were defined in relation to the state rather than each other (Fitzpatrick 1993, 770).
All in all, personal national identities were increasingly conceived of as being inherited, fixed and mutually exclusive – a view institutionalized in 1932 by means of internal passports that recorded each person’s ethnic/national descent. One could be of one ethnicity/nationality only, with children of mixed parents being forced to choose between their parents’ nationalities. Usually – at least officially – this was a choice made for life. (Cf. Martin 2000, 169; Gorenburg 2006.)

Martin emphasizes the radicalness of this shift from nations as historical products of capitalism to be dialectically overcome to an essentially primordialist understanding of nationality/ethnicity as a defining and permanent feature of all individuals. He argues that this turn was not intentional but rather “the result of unforeseen consequences of original Soviet nationalities policy” (Martin 2000, 173) (ethnic labeling, passportization and affirmative action programs) combined with the increasing role of state and the accompanying celebration of “ethnically distinct, folkloric, primordial national cultures” (Martin 2000, 171).

Martin claims to have found no evidence of debates over whether nationality/ethnicity should be included in passports or not (Martin 2001, 449). The system of internal passports was revised in 1953 and again in 1974 (Zaslavsky and Luryi 1979; see also discussion regarding migration to Soviet Estonia in chapter 2). Until 1974, internal passports also listed each person’s social origin (“from the workers,” “from peasants,” “from white collar workers” or employees), treating class in the same biological manner as ethnicity/nationality. Like ethnicity, social origin could increase or decrease social mobility (e.g. access to higher education, the Party, certain positions), but it was more easily manipulable, which is said to have led to the situation where social groups were perpetuating themselves. Zaslavsky and Luryi have concluded that the practice of recording social origin in internal passports had to be discontinued in 1974 because it had by then become artificial: “In such conditions the entry of “social origin” officially fixed in the document has become to some extent an obstacle to the generational transferal of privileges, and, more importantly, the preservation of the record of “social origin” in internal passports has drawn too much attention to the fictitious character of Soviet ideology and has undermined the legitimacy of the existing distribution of power” (Zaslavsky and Luryi 1979, 147).
Hélène Carrère d’Encausse has instead asserted that the shift towards a primordialist understanding of nationality/ethnicity after Lenin’s death in 1924 owed to Stalin’s particular definition of nation, which differed from that of his comrades in stressing ethnicity, territory, and culture – characteristics that are independent of the socioeconomic structure and, indeed, foregrounded already in his 1913 essay quoted above. History was from this perspective a struggle between nations rather than classes and the state “the framework for a nation’s development” (Carrère d’Encausse 1978, 49; cf. Slezkine 1995, 858-859 on Stalin’s post-war writings where he detached language and nationality from the superstructure, treating them as independent phenomena). Carrère d’Encausse claims that the state described “at the heart” of the new 1936 constitution “was a nation-state, and not a new state organized around social classes” (ibid.). For both domestic and international reasons, the USSR could not go publicly against the principle of self-determination; however, the economic and cultural “revolutions from above” launched between 1928 and 1932 all strengthened the state at the center and weakened nationalities vis-à-vis this center. (Carrère d’Encausse 1978, 47-51.)

Peter Blitstein has more recently suggested that once Soviet policies of the 1930s are placed within the contemporary context, they resemble those pursued by other “new states” in interwar Eastern Europe rather than the approaches taken by the colonial empires of France and Britain in Africa. Whereas the latter were engaged in a radical policy of differentiation, seeking to create distinctive, racialized African versions of
modernity (local form *and* content), the Soviet Union was by the 1930s oriented toward a universal modernity inclusive of all of its inhabitants (local forms, the same content). For example, the introduction of the mandatory Russian-language instruction in non-Russian schools in 1938 coincided with similar measures in many other European states and was implemented “not because Russian was the language of the ruling nation of the state, but because a common language was necessary for the effective functioning of a modern economy, polity, and military” (Blitstein 2006, 290; cf. Blitstein 2001).

For example, Estonia adopted following the 1934 *coup d’etat* a series of Estonianization policies and popular campaigns, most of which were somehow linked to the effort to secure the position of Estonian as the state language: Estonianization (*eestistamine*) of family names, the increase of Estonian-language instruction in minority schools, the requirement to use Estonian place names instead of Swedish, German or Russian ones (e.g. areas populated by Swedes and Russian Old Believers); while mixed couples used to be able to decide on their children’s language of education, they were now obligated to send them to a school that used the language corresponding to the father’s nationality (e.g. see Müüripeal 1999, 45-48 on education; Rannut 1999, 102 on the goals of the 1934 Language Law; Kranking 2009 on the reaction of the Estonian Swedish population; Kasekamp 2000 on events leading to the 1934 coup and the authoritarian rule of Konstantin Päts).

In the Soviet Union there was, according to Blitstein, a shift from nationalizing particular
ethnic territories towards “nationalizing the Soviet population and space as a whole” in the latter part of the 1930s (Blitstein 2006, 290; emphasis in the original), which meant that “Soviet policies ultimately became practically identical with those of their neighbors. The Soviet state was becoming a nationalizing state confronting a diverse society rather than the “un-national” state that Lenin and Stalin had initially established” (Blitstein 2006, 193). Blitstein points out on the same page that ‘nationalizing’ is not to be equated with ‘nationalist,’ which seems to be the opposite of what Carrère d’Encausse was suggesting.

Petrone also found that the Soviet government sought in the mid-1930s to create a Soviet identity in the sense of “a patriotic and holy allegiance to the Soviet motherland” for “in the inevitable future war the entire Soviet narod (folk) had to be willing to fight and die for their country” (Petrone 2000, 10). Corresponding preparations took place in Russian folklore studies, where scholars focused their attention, on the one hand, on national epic traditions, especially the East Slavic oral epic poems, the heroes and origins of bylina, and, on the other hand, on demonstrating the popular and hence unifying nature of oral tradition (Howell 1992, 365-367). Dana Prescott Howell summarizes that “(b)oth folklore and folkloristics were placed in the service of Soviet unity as resources for fostering of the Soviet patriotism” (Howell 1992, 365-367). Yet at the same time, Soviet officials grappled with balancing this unifying Soviet identity with national identities as well as hierarchies that inevitably rose from the regime’s desire and need to represent perfect symbolic order. Petrone discusses how parades sought to construct images of equality,
but inevitably displayed also the superiority of “men over women, center over periphery, Russians over non-Russians, Christians over Muslims, military over civilian, worker over peasant, city over countryside, Soviet culture over folk culture, and Stalin over all” (Petrone 2000, 45). Yet the greater the representative power bestowed upon parades and the more rigid the form, the greater the fear that something goes or, worse still, is made to go wrong and the order breaks down, undermining the legitimacy of the Party, its leaders, the center – all those inhabiting upper ranks of the hierarchies (Petrone 2000, 40-45).

Slezkine has insightfully discussed the ambivalent relationship between the promotion of non-Russian nationalities and the Russian language and culture on “the Soviet path to modernity and full national equality” (Slezkine 2000, 231). He argues that even at the time when the regime was focusing its efforts on the boosting of national cultures, mastery of the Russian language and culture “was a personal (if usually unself-conscious) strategy for most central officials, many of whom were non-Russians,” and various Russian cultural norms were simply taken for granted (ibid.):

Rusnianness was assumed to be largely transparent, meaningless, and therefore equal to modernity (the default culture, as it were). But of course it was none of those things. It was traditional because Soviet modernizers shared in the many rituals and styles that the [Russian] language carried with it. And it was also modern to the extent that it was centered around the written word.

(Slezkine 2000, 231.)

It followed from this that a Bolshevik and Russian, unlike a Bolshevik and Tajik, were in some ways inseparable:
Tajik and Bolshevik [were] different and sometimes mutually incomprehensible languages, but Bolshevik was the much feebleer of the two because nobody spoke it as a native tongue. It was neither Esperanto nor Russian: it was a Russian-based creole, fatefully associated with Russian but not equal to it.

(Slezkine 2000, 233.)

Slezkine claims that the party would periodically downplay or emphasize the difference between “Russian” and “Bolshevik” but could never quite figure out what this difference was about. Gorenburg (2006) is describing this same ambivalence, but from the perspective of non-Russians: downplaying the difference between “Russian” and “Bolshevik/Communist” resulted in assimilative measures (e.g., increased importance of the Russian language as the international language of communication), while emphasizing the distinctiveness of “Russian” from “Communist” boosted the particularity and self-consciousness of diverse nationalities.

Bruce Grant, in turn, has discussed how the Soviet regime would assign the Nivkh of Sakhalin Island “to both ends of the nature/culture” or tradition/modernity continuum at the same time and how “these two dominant approaches oscillated between political periods” (Grant 1995, 11). These were simultaneously “shifting allegiances between what constituted being Nivkh or Russian and what constituted being Soviet,” underlining “the complexity of the hybrid identities produced by the Soviet Union’s efforts to internationalize its constituencies” (Grant 1995, 15). Moreover, according to Grant, this oscillation contributed to “the Nivkh sense of culture as an object” – as something one is and has. “‘Culture’ meant subscribing to official tenets of equality but having special
access to goods and services on the basis of a continuing subordinate status rendered by structural discrimination.” (Grant 1995, 16.) Consequently, when the Soviet Union collapsed, Nivkhi lost their vision of both tradition and modernity (ibid.).

Due to the institutionalized interdependence of national and territorial units, the oscillation between these two poles deferred the fusion of nations until forever and kept the federal system intact, whereas figuring “it” out would have entailed changing the status quo – solving the ‘national question’ and deciding on the future of federalism. Cold-War era Western analysts of Soviet debates on federalism and the nationality question under consecutive Soviet leaders concluded time and again that there seemed to be no firm party ‘line’ on either question. The flourishing (razvitie) of nations, the coming together or rapprochement (sblizhenie) of nations, the merging (slyianie) of nations, the unity (edinstvo) of nations (Khrushchev), the new emerging historical community of Soviet people (Sovetskii narod) (Khrushchev), the dialectical unity (edinstvo) of national and international (Brezhnev) appeared to be simultaneous, partly overlapping, circular processes. (Allworth et. Al. 1971; Bilinsky 1962; Bilinsky 1980; Connor 1992; Hodnett 1967; Olcott 1985; Smith, G. 1989.) Martha Olcott suggested that the ambiguity of terms enabled the leadership – and Brezhnev in particular – to camouflage disagreements and ambiguities and to take distance from infighting (e.g., Olcott 1985).
Even this short excursion into Soviet nationality policy illustrates the difficulties involved in pinning down approach(es) to balancing unity and diversity in the Soviet Union – a task that most states have to deal with periodically if not continuously and which therefore is bound to yield similar or at least comparable approaches. Hence, differentiating between “nationalizing” and “nationalist” policies can be as tricky of a task in post-Soviet Estonia as it was in the case of the Soviet Union. Moreover, states oriented toward inclusive, universal modernity need a common language, but they also need to call their citizenry “something” and as scholars of nationalism have pointed out, even the most liberal and seemingly ethno-culturally neutral states assume the existence of a “sense of us” that is most often based on a common language and culture (e.g., Canovan 2000, Scruton 2003, Miller 2003), i.e. phenomena that are capable of uniting people because they extend through time.\(^{38}\)

This might also be a good place to be reminded of Herzfeld’s (2005) claim that the state, its leadership, officials, and “ordinary” citizens are all social actors involved in reifying the state, often because it enables them to further personal interests, which coincide with those of the state to a lesser or greater degree. Native officials’ private mastery of Russian is an illuminating example of this ambiguity as is their public mastery of “Bolshevik,”

\(^{38}\) Bill Bowring, among others, has drawn attention to similarities between Stalin’s definition of nation and “contemporary attempts” (Bowring 2005, 194). Consider the following definition provided by Anthony D. Smith: “By the term nation, I understand a named human population occupying a historical territory or homeland and sharing common myths and memories; a mass, public culture, a single economy and common rights and duties for all members” (Smith, A. D. 2000, 3).
whereas the latter could be performed, metaphorically, in a national garb, i.e., in order to maintain or strengthen the position of the ethnic/national administrative unit.\textsuperscript{39} The official policy of making ethnic/national forms blossom aimed at draining nationality/ethnicity of any content of its own. But while the Soviet leadership dictated the cultural forms deemed acceptable, it did not monopolize them. One could mention particular genres of literature (e.g., epic), music, theatre, and art; folklore the social base of which was regarded to be obsolete or folklore created to reflect the reality as it should be. Moreover, instead of simply granting access to these forms, Soviet rule imposed them upon national actors along with the institutional structure needed to execute these forms (unions of writers, artists and composers, theatres and orchestras, schools for ballet, art and music, concert agencies, palaces and houses of culture, etc.). According to Slezkine it was only in Stalin’s post-war statements and writings, where “the theoretical justification for non-Russian national aspirations was clearly formulated” (Slezkine 1994b, 448-449) and moreover, where Stalin ultimately detached both language and nationality/ethnicity from the social base, equating society with ethnicity (ibid.; see also Slezkine 1995, 858-859).

Hence, the obligation and pressure to perform one’s distinctiveness were still strong in the aftermath of World War II when Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians became part of the Soviet picture. Estonia’s openness to the sea was strategically crucial but also a

\textsuperscript{39} The question driving Blitstein’s comparative analysis is why Uzbek Komsomol secretaries were in the late 1930s discouraged from wearing “trousers made of ten meters of cloth and four shawls!” (Blitstein 2006, 273).
source of both threat and economic profit to be contained by and incorporated into the Soviet system. Fishing was to Estonia what cotton was to Uzbekistan. The topic of the sea, fishermen and fishing only appeared in Estonian art along with socialist realism, while the islands and some coastal regions underwent rapid modernization, which in turn eased the traditionally strong grip of poverty. At the same time, though Estonia and Estonians were defined through their proximity to the sea, local peoples’ access to the sea was restricted and carefully guarded by the Soviet military – the protectors of the borders and the working people inside these borders, including the Estonian fishermen.

Restoring civilians’ access to the sea in post-Soviet Estonia is a multilayered, still ongoing process that in various ways draws on the by now stereotypical image of Estonians as the people of sea and Estonia as a republic by the sea: the Stalinist imperative has become a seemingly static truth reified by various actors in new combinations and contexts for new purposes. In 2011 Tallinn was one of the European Capitals of Culture and the motto of the program “Stories of the Seashore” (Mereäärsed lood) sought to bring locals closer to the sea, i.e., to areas that were closed during the Soviet era and continue to be both underused and undervalued, as well as to present the city and the country to the rest of Europe and the world as a country by the sea (Tallinn 2011. Stories of the Seashore). The need to legitimize one’s existence and distinctiveness

40 During my stay in Estonia in 2010-2011, I co-taught a fieldwork course that included a three-day trip to one of the small Estonian islands, where fishing continues to be one of the main sources of income. For some inhabitants of this island, the Soviet era stands for a relatively prosperous period when, as one man put it, “the sea was free” in comparison to the present-day regulations. The island had in the beginning of the Soviet era its own kolkhoz, which merged later with a bigger one.
by means of performance is ongoing and the “symbolic initiative” of European Capitals/Cities of Culture itself is part of a broader effort to legitimize the European Union by crafting a cultural identity inclusive of its member states and their inhabitants (Sassatelli 2002; see also contributions to Herrmann, Risse and Brewer 2004).

The Soviet leadership relinquished some of the control of the content and handed it over to national actors in charge of performances by imposing particular forms on them. This is inevitable because contents and meanings attached to forms are context-dependent, they emergence in performance from interactions between or among performers and the audience under particular circumstances. “Constant signifiers mask shifting signifieds” and “(t)he more fixed the semiotic forms, the greater is the play of ambiguity and the more surprising are the possibilities for violating the code itself” (Herzfeld 2005, 20; see also Scott 1990 on hidden and public transcripts). Bolsheviks were very well aware of the fact that forms outlive contents and that the control of forms enables one to play with contents and, indeed, to change the reality. This is evident, among other things, in the regime’s use of folk calendar holidays for the creation of new holidays propagating the official ideology (e.g. Binns 1979, Binns 1980, Pashina 2008).

Moreover, the system of passport nationality constituted an important means of control or intervention, enabling the central leadership to appoint local leaders who were representative of the titular nationality but not of the titular population. For example, Karl Vaino, the First Secretary of the Estonian Communist Party between 1978-1988 was
Estonian – \textit{Venema\ae\ eestlane} or Russian Estonian – but knew little Estonian or at least avoided speaking the local language in the public.

Hence, the oscillation of Soviet (nationality) policies between centrifugal pushes and centripetal pulls along with the federal system gave all involved parties leverage, though some obviously less than others. Moreover, one could not make use of these opportunities and resources without also contributing to the perpetuation of the state and the illusion of cultural and ideological fixity. Looked at from this perspective, Brubaker’s conclusion that “(t)he [Soviet] regime institutionalized a sense of “ownership” of the republics by ethnocultural nations, but limited the political consequences of that sense of ownership” (Brubaker 1996, 46) is justified, but also misleadingly generalizing and, it seems to me, insufficient. In some cases, the Baltics included, the Soviet regime appears to have accommodated itself to whatever “sense of “ownership’’” that was already there, while simultaneously eroding it intentionally. In the course of its existence, the Soviet rule no doubt shaped local actors’ understandings of ethnicity/nationality, “\textit{national states}” (Brubaker 1996, 45) and of themselves as ethnic/national beings. Yet by doing so, it also provided them with a common frame of reference that, as I discuss in the next chapter, made it in the late 1980s possible for non-Estonian nationalities residing in Estonia to support the national movement of Estonians. To put it differently: by reducing all nationalities – and since everybody had a nationality, all individuals – to “a manageable iconicity” (Herzfeld 2005, 34), the Soviet regime created a degree of mutual awareness if not recognition among different “groups.”
Exploring the shared ground between members of the “titular nationality” and those of other nationalities contributes to a more nuanced understanding of post-Soviet state building processes and ethnic interactions, including the ways in which minorities or non-titular nationalities participate in the state’s nationalizing policies rather than being mere objects or opponents of these measures. This latter interpretation suggests that the outbreak of violence is only a matter of time and in the 1990s, with wars in Georgia, Tajikistan, Chechnya, in Nagorno-Karabakh and Transnistria, it was common to frame the former Soviet Union as a hotbed of ethnic frictions. There was also the expectation and fear in the West of the Baltics developing into Balkans, exemplified by such academic volumes as *Ethnic Nationalism and Regional Conflict: The Former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia* (Duncan and Holman 1994). Brubaker’s discussion of Soviet nationality policy and the nationalizing states of Eastern Europe was grounded in a similar anticipation of ethnic conflict: for example, his claim that the Soviet system “institutionalized a sense of “ownership” of the republics by ethnocultural nations” (Brubaker 1996, 46) drew on Donald Horowitz’s argument that notions of “ownership” are central to ethnic conflicts. By the early 2000s the Estonian case was being used in comparative studies on “Why some ethnic conflicts turn violent while others do not?” (e.g. *National Integration and Violent Conflict in Post-Soviet Societies: The Cases of Estonia and Moldova* (Kolstø 2002)). While this sounds different, it could be also regarded as a variation on the theme “illiberal ethnic nationalisms of the East.”
Matti Jutila has argued that Western policymakers, analysts and international organizations have used the Kohn dichotomy of Eastern ethnic/Western civic nationalisms to make sense of and contain the new complex situation that emerged in post-Cold War Europe (Jutila 2009; see also Smith and Cordell 2009). Jutila shows in his careful reading of policy documents and academic texts from the early 1990s how minority issues and nationalisms in Eastern Europe came to be framed as a threat to the “stability, democracy and the idea of Europe as a united continent” (Jutila 2009, 639-640) and hence in need of regulation and development, which in turn led to the creation of international institutions for dealing with this threat. Since similar problems in Western Europe were interpreted differently or ignored, the new mechanisms of protection were only applied to Eastern and Central Europe, leading to double standards of minority protection (Jutila 2009, 642-642).

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41 Hans Kohn distinguished in his 1944 book *The Idea of Nationalism* between voluntary, arguably prevalent in the West, and organic versions of nationalism common in Eastern and Central Europe. In the former case, the individual has the right to *choose*, which nation to belong to and the nation is understood as a voluntary contractual association, whereas organic nationalisms argue that the individual is *born* into a national collective and determined by it. Kohn claimed that the two types were prevalent in the West and East respectively because nationalisms in the West developed after the formation of future nation-states, whereas in the East nationalisms *preceded* the states, focusing on irrational, mystic and exclusive notions of organic unity. The voluntary/organic or ethnic/civic dichotomy corresponds to other hierarchical binary oppositions, such as *Gemeinschaft/Gesellschaft*, traditional/modern, and ultimately nature/civilization, cultural determinism/political will. For a discussion of Kohn’s theory and its ties to earlier thinkers, see Smith, A. D. 2000, 5-27; Smith traces the split between culture and politics with Rousseau.
Most importantly in this respect, in 1992 members of what was then Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (SCSE, since 1995 Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe or OSCE) established the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) as an international instrument for preventing conflicts in situations, where minority problems pose a threat to security, but have not escalated to violence or terrorism – a formulation that leaves ample room for interpretation. Natalie Sabanadze emphasizes that the HCNM was created and designed specifically “in response to the violent dissolution of the former Yugoslavia and proliferation of ethno-national conflicts throughout the post-communist space” (Sabanadze 2009, 103), even though all European states belong to the SCSE/OSCE. The criteria for membership in the European Union, decided upon in Copenhagen in 1993, were likewise only applicable to Eastern and Central European states. As Jutila notes, the accession criteria and HCNM “are the only instruments that do not require the target state’s approval in order to operate” (Jutila 2009, 643). There was, for example, an OSCE mission in Estonia from 1993 to 2001, seeking “to further promote and integration and better understanding between communities in Estonia” (The OSCE Mission to Estonia).

Sabanadze continues along the lines of Kohn dichotomy analyzed by Jutila: “The international community at a time appeared to be caught by surprise with the seeming resurgence of nationalism and the challenges it posed to the stability and integrity of multinational states. In the Helsinki Document [of 1992], the participating States acknowledged that aggressive nationalism and intolerance, coupled with economic decline, social tensions and gross violations of human, including minority rights, represented a clear threat to the peaceful development of society, particularly in new democracies” (Sabanadze 2009, 103). Elsewhere in the article she draws on Brubaker’s analysis of Soviet nationality policy and of the triadic relationship between the nationalizing state, minority and its ethnic homeland, arguing that in all post-communist countries “conditions conducive to the rise of ethno-centric nationalism were already put in place by the Soviet system” (Sabanadze 2009, 109).
In addition, the Council of Europe (CoE) adopted in 1995 Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities, which came to force in 1998 (Framework Convention on the Protection of National Minorities). Arguably “the first and only legally binding human rights convention on minority rights” (Brosig 2009, 80), it is only applicable to states that have ratified the convention. The FCNM links minority rights protection to minority integration, but the norms prescribed by the convention are vague and the Advisory Committee monitoring their implementation in the participating states can only make country-specific recommendations and socialize Parties into participation (Brosig 2009, 79-83). Among other things, the FCNM expects states to adopt, where necessary, adequate measures in order to promote, in all areas of economic, social, political and cultural life, full and effective equality between persons belonging to a national minority and those belonging to the majority. In this respect, they shall take due account of the specific conditions of the persons belonging to national minorities. (FCNM, Section II, Article 4.2.)

Brosig argues, when analyzing reasons for “behavioral compliance deficit” of Estonia and Slovakia – examples of “new members states” – that “(v)ague norms and unclear definitions of essential phrases can reinforce intentions of non-compliance and thus bear some responsibility for implementation deficits” (Brosig 2010, 395). His assessment marks a broader shift in scholarly attention from formal legal compliance to norm implementation or actual local practices, which for some no doubt proves that once an Easterner is always an Easterner.
Estonian integration policy was devised in the late 1990s in the context of the FCNM and other measures of minority protection, but also as a response to them: while the West securitized Estonian nationalism and Estonia’s exclusivist citizenship policy, Estonia framed its large Soviet-era settler population as a threat to the nation state, the Estonian nation and culture. Moreover, Estonia internationalized this threat by placing itself and the Estonian culture on the easternmost border of Europe and hence, arguably, the Western civilization. Merje Kuus (2002) and others have argued that a “cultural turn” took place in the construction of security in Estonia in the end of the 1990s: whereas in the beginning and middle of the decade, when Russian troops were still stationed in Estonia, the government would regularly issue statements on Russian military threat to argue for rapid international integration, by 1997 security was being framed in terms of identity, values and culture. As a result, it seemed as if Estonia was “not pushed to the West by a threat of invasion [from the East] but pulled by common values” (Kuus 2002, 307). This conception of culture as a site of real, basic and immutable differences had the effect of blurring the line between internal and external security, which meant, among other things, that “a border between “Us” and “Them” was depicted not only between Estonia and Russia but also within Estonia between ethnic Estonians and non-Estonians” (Lehti 2005, 95; emphasis in the original).

Both Kuus and Lehti underline that this new cultural emphasis owed to Samuel Huntington’s thesis of civilizational conflicts and discuss how Toomas Hendrik Ilves, at the time Estonian Minister of Foreign Affairs, would employ it when describing the
Estonian-Russian border as the demarcation between East and West and, moreover, how he wrote a preface to the 1997 Estonian edition of Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (Kuus 2002, 307; Lehti 2005, 94-95). This heavy reliance on Huntington was, no doubt, strategic, but it also echoed popular anti-Russian sentiments *as well as* institutionalized and internalized understandings of ethnicity as nationality and of nations as real entities complete with language, territory, economic life, culture, and national character (cf. Stalin 1954a, 307). All in all, Estonians did not need Samuel Huntington to tell them that culture served as a dividing line between ethnic groups and that every group had a distinct culture of its own, but his claim that “communists can become democrats, the rich can become poor and the poor rich, but Russians cannot become Estonians and Azeris cannot become Armenians” (Huntington 1993, 27) certainly helped.

Two broad interrelated questions come to mind in an attempt to sum up this eclectic chapter. First, who decides what constitutes assimilation? And second, where are the

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43 Ilves, currently the President of Estonia, was born in Sweden into a refugee family and grew up in New Jersey, so that he never actually lived in Estonia during the Soviet era. Rather, his biography is that of a diasporic activist and like many others, he worked in the Estonian Section of the Radio Free Europe. The BBC journalist Tim Whewell asked Ilves in 2007, during the second year of his presidency, why he did not speak Russian, to which the President is said to have responded “firmly” that speaking Russian “would mean accepting 50 years of Soviet brutalisation because most Russian-speakers settled in Estonia only after it was occupied by the USSR towards the end of World War II” (Whewell 2008; in this piece the author also reflects upon the response given by Ilves in the context of the 2007 Bronze Soldier crisis and Russia’s policies towards Georgia). In the light of this statement by Ilves, Huntington’s thesis on civilizational differences comes across as a bridge between “home Estonians” (*kodu-eestlased*) and “external Estonians” (*väliseestlased*), whose experiences of the Soviet era and “their” country are in many ways irreconcilable.
continuities and discontinuities – and again, in whose view? Both of these questions are also about interpretative authority and about the right to participate in the creation of culture as well as in conversations whereby culture gets defined and assigned to various actors differently. Lacking definite, single answers, these questions are good to think with when trying to make sense how ethnicity is understood, used and made relevant in contemporary Estonia.

In 1925 Estonian parliament passed the Law on Cultural Self-Government and National Minorities, which defined as national minorities and granted the right to cultural autonomy to Germans, Russians, Swedes and “those national minorities living within the borders of Estonia that numbered not less than 3000” (Vähemusrahvuste kultuuriomavalitsuse seadus: 41). Only citizens of Estonia were eligible to establish a cultural autonomy and in reality, only Germans and Jews used this opportunity in 1925 and 1926 respectively. In 1993, Estonian parliament passed the Law on Cultural Autonomy for National Minorities that was modeled after the interwar regulation despite radical changes that had taken place in Estonian minority population since World War II. The 1993 law defines as ‘national minorities’ citizens of Estonia who “maintain longstanding, firm and lasting ties with Estonia; are distinct from Estonians on the basis of their ethnic, cultural, religious, or linguistic characteristics” and “motivated by a

44 Virtually all Germans left Estonia by 1941 as part of Umsiedlung, Swedes left for Sweden by 1944, a great proportion of Russian émigrés perished, the majority of Jews escaped to Russia in 1941 and most of those who stayed behind were murdered later in the same year (Sakkeus 1999, 314-318). It is estimated that by the end of World War II, Estonia was up to 97.3 per cent Estonian (out of 854,000) (Katus 1999, 129).
concern to preserve together their cultural traditions, their religion or their language which constitute the basis of their common identity” (Law on Cultural Autonomy for National Minorities). Only minorities with at least 3000 registered members can establish a national minority cultural autonomy with the exception of “historical” German, Russian, Jewish and Swedish minorities whose numbers suffered in the course of World War II. So far only Ingrian Finns and Swedes have been successful in establishing a cultural autonomy in 2004 and 2007 respectively. However, because the current law does not specify the juridical status of cultural autonomies, neither of the two autonomies is officially registered or fully functional.

While this incompleteness and the requirement of Estonian citizenship as well as of the quota of 3000 have no doubt discouraged some minorities from applying for a right to establish a cultural autonomy, further complications are concerned with the definition of ‘national minority’ provided by the law. In particular, the criterion of maintaining “longstanding, firm and lasting ties with Estonia” is open to different interpretations and could be used to turn down applications coming from representatives of those nationalities that only settled to Estonia during the Soviet era. Estonian Russians constitute a case of their own because even though Russian presence in Estonia goes back centuries and Russians are counted among the historical national minorities along with Germans, Jews and Swedes, Russians living in Estonia today are for the most part Soviet era immigrants and their descendants and hence could be said to lack “longstanding, firm and lasting ties with Estonia.” Furthermore, the law demands from minorities internal
homogeneity that in practice is the more difficult to attain the bigger the group. While there have been two attempts by different representatives of Russians in Estonia to apply for a right to start the process required to establish the status of cultural autonomy, the Ministry of Culture rejected both of them after consulting selected Russian cultural organizations, claiming that the applicants were not representative of Estonian Russians as a community. Thus, the current Law on Cultural Autonomy gives the state the liberty to strategically bestow representative authority on selected minority organizations in order to deny greater autonomy to this particular minority as a whole. Given that the law was passed nearly two decades ago and, among other things, given the controversies surrounding the transition of Russian-language secondary schools to Estonian language of instruction, it is questionable whether the state is even interested in a fully functioning legislation on cultural autonomy.
Chapter 2: Ethnonational Consensus Formation and Citizenship

Summoning a Collective, Popular and Nationalist

Social problems tended to be “defined by campaigns defined from above” (Lagerspetz 1996, 81) in the Soviet Union. The restructuring (perestroika) and transparency (glasnost) reforms launched by Mikhail Gorbachev in the mid-1980s disrupted this order by making it possible for actors “down below” to approach different topics from unconventional angles and to raise new questions, which in turn led to a broad-based interest in societal issues and the emergence of activists ready to take responsibility. Mikko Lagerspetz has shown how the range of problems discussed in newspapers started to alter and expand in 1987, while the object of criticism shifted from individuals and institutions to the system and legislation as a whole (Lagerspetz 1996, 80-101). Vello Pettai emphasizes the role of intellectuals in formulating particular issues and communicating them via radio and television programs, conferences and other established forms of assembly. He has described the years in Estonia 1986-1987 as “a period of fluid consensus formation” (Pettai 2004, 74) whereby environment and pollution (e.g., the 1987 protests against the expansion of phosphate mining in northeast Estonia), ethnic relations and immigration, epitomized in the marginalization of the Estonian language, and the need for political and economic reforms emerged as key

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45 On the roles of intellectuals in nationalist movements and processes, see Suny and Kennedy 1999.
issues from recurrent debates and discussions in different forums (cf. Lagerspetz 1996, 91-93). For example, most speakers at the two-day Plenum of Creative Unions in April 1988 – social and natural scientists, writers, artists, composers, actors, film-makers, architects – focused on these topics, framing Estonians as an ethnic community endangered in its own home (see Jõgi 1988 for transcripts of speeches). Estonians were close to becoming a numerical minority in Estonia and this was acutely felt, especially in Tallinn where the titular nationality made up less than half of the population.

Many participants of the creative unions’ plenum came up with insightful analyses of Soviet society that testify to the complexity of relations between the regime and its subjects. For example, the writer Jaak Jõerüüt (b. 1947) discussed the power of information. Starting with seemingly banal observations, he arrived at observations about the workings of control and alienation:

Who put together the lacunal phone book? What is the quality of our drinking water, air, and food and what are the supplies like? What would complete medical statistics tell us? What would complete crime statistics tell us? Who drafts particular laws or directives? How are migrants, who have come to Estonia, divided in terms of nationality, place of origin, age and occupation? How and where does meat move? [reference to the gradual disappearance and shortage of particular produce] (…) We begin with the most innocent yet very symbolic fooling around – deficiency of the phonebook. By the way, this masterpiece makes use of the principle of co-ordination that is all too familiar to us. See – in order to find out one number, we must call another number. And we end with special collections and closed archives. We notice that our life is still so full of closed spheres, so full of lack of knowledge that we must ask ourselves in despair: is this really our life? Maybe it is somebody’s departmental private life and we are only allowed to take part in it as assistants? (Jõgi 1988, 150-151.)
Composer Lepo Sumera (1950-2000) also touched upon officials’ privilege to (with)hold information, but concluded with a statement that must have rang true to many of his colleagues, not least because it captured the ambiguous relationship between the suppressive political and creative power:

> I only had one sentence written down, I will read it. I wanted to say that the strength of our art that was mentioned here earlier today comes from these piled up tensions and desolation, from pessimism and hopelessness, it is full of inner defiance that has not been verbalized or is expressed through flowers and it is this that gives it its strength. Starting from Juhan Liiv to Hando Runnel,46 from *regilaul* [Estonian runo songs] to Veljo Tormis.47 I have also written here something about Kristjan Raud and [Jüri] Arrak48 and [Mark] Soosaar, about [Rein] Raamat and Priit Pärn and Leida Laius49 and all of us. The point is, let us not wish that our situation improved. The deeper are these tensions, the deeper is our art. But we are makers of art [*kunstitegijad*], after all.

(Jõgi 1988, 97.)

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46 Juhan Liiv (1864-1913) is regarded as one of the greatest lyrical poets in Estonia and is particularly well known for his nature and patriotic poems that combine social criticism with great sensitivity. Liiv suffered from mental illnesses and died in obscurity, receiving recognition only posthumously. Hando Runnel (b. 1938) is similarly known for his simplicity and patriotic poems full of implicit social criticism. The style of both poets is akin to Estonian folk songs and many of their poems have been set into music.

47 Veljo Tormis (b. 1930) is a composer known for his choral music inspired by Estonian folk music and *regilaul* as well as works dedicated to “small peoples” and their threatened languages and cultures.

48 Kristjan Raud (1865-1943) was among the first Estonian professional artist and is famous for his illustrations for the national epic *Kalevipoeg* as well as other works imagining the glory of ancient Estonians; Raud was also among the founders of the Estonian National Museum and a prolific publicist, propagating the use of material folk culture as a source for artistic creation (see, e.g., Seljamaa 2008). Jüri Arrak (b. 1936) was one of the leading Soviet-era artists known for his interpretations of Estonian mythology.

49 Soosaar (b. 1946) is the author of several ethnographic documentary films, including films on the small island of Kihnu; Raamat (b. 1931) and Pärn (b. 1946) are internationally acclaimed Estonian animators and Leida Laius (1923-1996) a film director who made into movies several classic novels by Estonian authors.
For both speakers, “us” was distinct from and yet intimately familiar with the “Soviet,” constituted by it in painful if not shameful ways. Whereas Jõerüüt’s use of passive voice emphasized that “we” do not know who is fooling around with “us”, as a result of which “our” identity is becoming displaced too, the composer Sumera spoke as a member of a community of creators that extends from the contemporary days and animation films to folk songs created by serfs, i.e., to the very first artistic expressions believed to be distinctively Estonian. According to this view, art has been from times immemorial an antidote to repression and exists in opposition to power: Estonian art and culture are the preconditions for the existence of Estonians.  

To the extent that social problems are a matter of collective definition and behavior (Blumer 1971), this process of “consensus formulation” (Pettai 2004, 74) was simultaneously a process of summoning a collective ready to be defined through and moved by these problems – affected and mobilized to come together and take action. Part of this process was becoming organized by means of establishing associations and societies, many of which claimed to be dedicated to culture. Towards the end of 1987, the Estonian Heritage Society was established in Tallinn on the basis of smaller already existent voluntary cultural organizations. The leaders of the Heritage Society included

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50 As will be discussed in the following chapters, today, the Estonian state is defined as a protector of the Estonian culture, language and nation and it follows from this that opposition to the state/government gets easily interpreted as an indication of disloyalty.

51 “Social problems are not the result of an intrinsic malfunctioning of a society but are the result of a process of definition in which a given condition is picked out and identified as a social problem” through collective discussion, which in turn is a precondition for mobilizing masses for action (Blumer 1971, 301).
Trivimi Velliste (b. 1947) and Mart Laar, whose history textbooks were discussed in the introduction, as well as several other graduates of the University of Tartu history department. The society was dedicated to the restoration and preservation of historical landmarks and cultural objects, which in the Soviet context served as a strategy for consciousness rising and taking control of the Estonian territory. The society’s activities instilled in participants, ordinary Estonians from all over the country, a sense of ownership of their surroundings, reinforcing the links between people and places (see Malkki 1992 on territorialization of national identity).

The Heritage Society is said to have had 10,000 members by fall 1988 (Vilgats 2011). Among its other activities, the society initiated a heritage collection campaign, comparing it to folklore-collection campaigns launched in the late 1800s by the Jakob Hurt (1839-1907), one of the founders of Estonian folkloristics (Kõresaar 2004, 11-13). Collecting folklore – rescuing it from oblivion – had been for Hurt at once an academic endeavor and “an ideological tool in recreating Estonian-ness” (Arukask 2007, 15). The Heritage Society launched its campaign in February 1988 just before the Independence Day of the pre-war Estonian Republic, presenting it as a way of returning history to people (rahvas).

Wulf and Grönholm have discussed links between the Estonian Heritage Society and students’ History Circle (Ajalooring) at the University of Tartu, arguing that the latter, established in 1946, played an important role in the 1960-70s in “promoting ethno-national concepts of history” and “effectively fostered a non-ideological interest in history and presumably ‘immunized’ a number of students against Party dogma” (Wulf and Grönholm 2010: 363-364). While I second the significance of such non-formal venues, I doubt the History Circle was “non-ideological.”
Individuals were thus treated as cells in the national body as their personal accounts of sufferings under the Soviet regime stood metonymically for the sufferings of the whole nation. In the words of Aleksandr Astrov, the Heritage Society’s call to give history back to people meant “something else: give the people back its place in the (world) history. And this stood for the state” (Astrov 2008, 76). On April 14-17, 1988, only a few weeks after the above-discussed Plenum of Creative Unions, the Heritage Society organized in Tartu the first heritage days (muinsuskaitsepäevad), featuring lectures, discussion forums, marches, excursions, screenings of documentary films as well as joint visits to the graves of significant cultural and political figures and cultural monuments (20 aastat tagasi toimusid esimesed muinsuskaitsepäevad). On the opening night of heritage days, a march took place from the main building of the university to the historical building of the Estonian Students Society, the first organization to start using the blue-black-white flag back in 1884. There were three flags attached to the building – a blue one, a black one, and a white one; for another march on the fourth day of the event, people are said to have brought blue-black-white flags with them (Vilgats 2011).

Just a day before the opening of heritage days in Tartu, April 13, the idea of Popular Front, a political mass movement in support of perestroika, was presented in a television

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53 The campaign ran between 1988 and 1992; by 2005, the collection of the Estonian Heritage Society, held at the Estonian Literary Museum, consisted of app. 2,000 manuscripts (Hinrikus 2005a).
54 One of the main organizers of heritage days was Tõnis Lukas (b. 1962), who has since been twice the minister of education and, as will be discussed in chapter 6, has been instrumental in reforming Russian-language schools in Estonia.
program and already by mid-June, the Popular Front was able to pull off a rally with 150,000 participants (Pettel 2004, 145). With hindsight, the summer of 1988 is regarded as the beginning of the Singing Revolution, many iconic events of which were organized by the Popular Front. While it is often claimed that the Singing Revolution expressed the sentiments and attitudes of the people (cf. Tammela 2010), I would like to argue for approaching the mass rallies of 1988-1991 as a series of collective performances whereby the national community and its attitudes as well as expectations came to be defined. In other words, the consensus of views, dreams and feelings was not ready to be expressed, but emerged from and was maintained through coordination of action and co-presence (Noyes 2003a), by means of coming together again and again to do – and feel – the same kinds of things with an ever increasing intensity. Drawing on Dorothy Noyes’s analysis of Catalan mobilization under and after Franco, it could be argued that these “protests had been rehearsed for years under less threatening names” (Noyes 2003b, 200) and in the form of those “few genres of public assembly permitted by the regime” (ibid.).

The most important such genre in Estonia has been the song festival (laulupidu), whereby a representative number of choirs from all over the country convene in order to give a one-time open-air performance of a program of choral music that has been agreed upon and mastered in advance. The tradition of song festivals in Estonia goes back to the 1840s and was initiated by German-speaking intellectuals of Estonian origin, who,

55 As part of my fieldwork, I attended the 25th All-Estonian Song Festival titled Üheshingamine – “breathing together” or “breathing as one” and held in Tallinn on July 2-5, 2009.
inspired by Baltic German song festivals (the first one in 1836 in Riga), would organize gatherings of local choirs and brass bands in different parts of the country (e.g., Kuutma 1996). The first all-Estonian song festival was held in 1869 in Tartu and laid the foundation for what has been an almost continuous tradition (there was a break between 1910-1923 and another one between 1938-1947). Currently, thee-day festivals take place every five years on the Song Festival Grounds in Tallinn (inaugurated in 1959) and bring together an average of 25-30,000 singers of all ages, including Estonians choirs from abroad. The program is divided into sections according to singers’ age and/or gender (children’s, boys’, men’s, women’s and mixed choirs performing separately and in different combinations (e.g., men and boys together, women and men together, etc.)); the very last songs of the festival are usually performed by “a joint choir” (ühendkoor) of 18-24,000 singers to an audience of 80,000 or more (Laulupidude ajalugu).\(^{56}\)

The structure of the program thus corresponds to the constituents of a traditional nuclear family, which in turn forms according to conservative values the basic building block of the nation and the society. The continuity and togetherness of the singing “collective body” is furthermore performed and achieved by means of the repertoire and particular songs, which have been performed consistently for years and in some cases since the inception of the song festival tradition: the poem “My fatherland is my love” (Mu isamaa

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\(^{56}\) Participation is competitive, but the main principle in selecting the repertoire is that “every village choir” would have an opportunity to make it to the festival; professional choirs also take part in the festival. Latvia and Lithuania also have a tradition of song festivals; in 2008, “The Baltic Song and Dance Celebrations” were inscribed on UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. (Laulupidude ajalugu.)
"on minu arm) by Lydia Koidula (1843-1886), the poetess associated with the national awakening of the 1860s (Koidula is a pseudonym referring to dawn (koit)), was set to music by her contemporary composer Aleksander Kunileid (1845-1875) for the first song festival held in Tartu in 1869 and has been arguably sung at every song festival since, also in the Soviet era when it was not always part of the official concert program. (See, e.g., Laulupidude ajalugu.)

Illustration 2 "Breathing as one" on Tallinn Song Festival Grounds in 2009

57 “My fatherland is my love” is oftentimes described as the unofficial anthem as people would – and continue – to stand up during its performance; nowadays, the joint choir sings it during the finale of the festival along with some other patriotic songs. During the concluding part of the 2009 song festival, the then minister of culture Laine Jänes, a conductor by profession, gave a speech and immediately after her speech conducted the joint choir as it performed “The Estonian Flag” (“Eesti lipp”), a song from 1922 that calls on people to adorn “the Estonian dwellings” with the three colors of home (kaunistagem Eesti kojad kolme kodu värviga) (see Jaanson 2009 on the history of this song). “The Estonian Flag” was not part of the official program; rather, the organizers of the festival regarded it as a component of the minister’s speech (Kodres 2009).
Since the interwar era, song festivals have been accompanied by dance festivals and in 1962, the tradition of youth song- and dance festivals was initiated in order to give a greater number of young people an opportunity to perform. (Tantsupidude ajalugu.) All-Estonian and youth festivals alternate, which means that there is a song-and dance festival every two years and the preparation process is almost continuous. It also follows from this that the majority of Estonians have an experience of performing at one or the other festival. As such, the song- and dance festivals constitute a true “performance of community [that] reinforces its own social base by fostering a dense and potentially multiplex interaction” (Noyes 2003a, 29).

The Singing Revolution in the late 1980s reenacted the song festivals (cf. Noyes 2003a, 29) as a way of summoning and reifying a national community with the goal of pushing the boundaries of this community’s existence and position. Mass gatherings on the Tallinn Song Festival Grounds were particularly powerful in this respect for they drew on participants’ intimate familiarity with the venue and a shared experience-based understanding of what it means to assemble in order to listen, sing and spend time together and to experience togetherness, but they filled this conventional form with an unorthodox content: simply talking politics in public in Estonian without having recourse to the ritual discourse of the Communist party (Yurchak 2005) was empowering and transformative experience. John Berger has along similar lines described mass demonstrations as “rehearsals of revolutionary awareness” (Berger 1968, 754):

The delay between the rehearsals and the real performance may be very long: their quality – the intensity of rehearsed awareness – may, on different occasions, vary
considerably: but any demonstration which lacks this element of rehearsal is better
described as an officially encouraged public spectacle.
A demonstration, however much spontaneity it may contain, is a created event which
arbitrarily separates itself from ordinary life. Its value is the result of its artificiality, for
therein lies it prophetic, rehearsing possibilities. (…)
The more people there are there, the more forcibly they represent to each other and to
themselves those who are absent. In this way a mass demonstrations simultaneously
extends and gives body to an abstraction.

(Berger 1968, 754-755.)

“The Song of Estonia” rally organized by the Popular Front on the Song Festival Grounds
in September 1988 is said to have drawn 300,000 people or nearly one fifth of the
country’s population (Tammela 2010). New ideas, hopes and expectations emerged and
came to be shared – experienced as feasible – there and then by virtue of seeing and
showing how masses filled the concave festival grounds to the point that people standing
under the “song arch” and those on the hillside were talking, listening and singing face to
face, with their voices and gazes meeting and fusing, reflecting back on each other. For
example, the idea of Estonian independence was uttered in the public for the first time at
this event by Trivimi Velliste, the leader of the Heritage Society, arguably to the dismay
of those who were hoping to reform the Soviet federalist system (e.g. Pettai 2004, 171-
174; Vilgats 2011). Overall, the events of the Singing Revolution used what Noyes has
described as the cross-cultural “techniques of incorporation drawing the individual into
the community and the community into the individual”: crowding, holding hands, singing
and chanting, moving to the rhythm of music for hours to an end, gestures (Noyes 2003b:
201). Once this sense of community and the ideas it represented had become embodied
and formalized through repetition of certain gestures and slogans,\textsuperscript{58} songs\textsuperscript{59} and practices (e.g. swaying to the rhythm of music with lifted-up arms and hands clasped together), it became movable and, as I will discuss below, would be evoked in different settings, even stretched out to cover the whole territory of Estonia.

The Popular Front started out by demanding the democratization of the Soviet Union and greater autonomy for union republics – and hence for titular nationalities. The agenda included gaining control over the state language, citizenship and immigration as well as over enterprises located within the republic. According to Pettai, the movement sought to combine Estonians’ ethnopolitical aspirations with the democratization of the society: to alter ethnic power dynamics and to unite supporters of perestroika irrespective of ethnicity (Pettai 2004, 145-148).

Consequently, the communities that emerged from perestroika and the Singing Revolution – with support from the Popular Front – were ethnic communities based on descent and the concept of “personal nationality” institutionalized by the Soviet regime (see chapter 1). Estonians’ “consensus formation” was accompanied by the organization and mobilization of representatives of other nationalities living in Estonia: Estonian Jews

\textsuperscript{58} The artist Heinz Valk finished his speech at “The Song of Estonia” rally by lifting up his hands and asserting “One day we are going to win no matter what” – Ükskord me võidame nii kui nii!, which became one of the slogans of the Singing Revolution.

\textsuperscript{59} The composer Alo Mattiisen created in collaboration with various poets a series of patriotic, anti-Soviet songs that became hugely popular. One of the songs stated “I am an Estonian and will always be an Estonian if I was created an Estonian”; another song from the same cycle, mentioned in the introduction, called for the stopping of the construction work in the new district of Lasnamäe.
established their own association in January 1988, Estonian Swedes in February and by July, there were already over ten such associations (Lõhmus, A.-E. 1999, 120). Seeking out the support of these different organizations/nationalities was of crucial importance for the Popular Front, not least because it forestalled accusations of promoting ethnic enmity and, furthermore, legitimized Estonians’ claims to self-governance. On September 24, 1988, the Forum of Estonian Nationalities (*Eestimaa Rahvuste Foorum*) initiated by the Popular Front took place in Tallinn, whereby organizations representing 16 nationalities expressed their support for Estonians’ aspiration for self-governance (ibid.).

Ants-Enno Lõhmus, who was actively involved in these developments, has written that representatives of minority organizations would visit their co-ethnics serving in the Soviet army in Estonia in order to “ensure by means of explanatory work that no Ukrainian, Azeri or Latvian would start shooting Estonians even if they were ordered to do so” (Lõhmus, A.-E. 1999, 121).

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60 The forum convened again in May 1989 and inaugurated the Association of Estonian Nationalities (*Eestimaa Rahvuste Ühendus*) that has since become one of the major umbrella organizations representing minorities and has made it a tradition to convene every year on or around September 24. In 2005, the presiding minister of population and ethnic Affairs declared September 24 the Day of Estonian Nationalities (*Eestimaa rahvuste päev*). I attended the 2010 Forum of Estonian Nationalities as well as other events organized in Tallinn to celebrate the Day of Nationalities; I also took part in some other events organized by the Association of Estonian Nationalities in 2010 and 2011.

61 Danger of violence against civil demonstrators was real at the time: arguably, at least 20 civilians were killed in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi in April 1989 and up to 160 in Baku in Azerbaijan in January 1990 (Lagerspetz 1996, 41); in January 1991, 14 civilians were killed in Vilnius, Lithuania. The late Chechen leader and president Dzhokhar Dudayev continues to be held in high esteem among Estonians for not using his power to intervene in the mass movements in Estonia: Dudayev was in the late 1980s the commander of a Soviet air division based in Tartu.
Details of this kind, however embellished in hindsight, imply that what is today oftentimes represented as Estonians’ disparate fight for their freedom was, when looked at from another perspective, intricately tied to and conditioned by the co-existence of different nationalities within the USSR and the Estonian SSR. As was argued in chapter 1, this tension between the particular and the universal was characteristic of Soviet nationality policy and, as I will suggest later in this study, appears to have been carried over into the integration policy pursued by the post-Soviet Estonian state. At least in part, the contradiction between the particular and universal is a contradiction between different terms of belonging, between communities of descent and communities of consent. As the nationalist movement gained momentum in 1989, citizenship emerged as the crux of these controversies over belonging. The Popular Front reoriented gradually toward building a new independent state *outside* the Soviet Union by means of step-by-step economic reforms and “accepting the ethnopolitical balance as it was” (Pettai 2004, 240), i.e., granting Estonian citizenship to all Soviet-era newcomers and their descendants who consented to Estonian independence.

Given these paradoxes of belonging, it is not surprising that the major rival of the Popular Front – the Citizens’ Committees’ movement – was likewise fixated on descent and implicitly also on ethnicity. Moreover, it bore an almost equally neutral title suggestive of inclusivity, confirming Slavoj Žižek’s claim that “the struggle for ideological and political hegemony is (…) always the struggle for the appropriation of the terms which are ‘spontaneously’ experienced as ‘apolitical’, as transcending political boundaries”
(Žižek 1997, 30). The movement of Estonian Citizens’ Committees was launched in Tallinn in February 1989 and brought together actors, who positioned themselves in opposition with the Soviet system as well as the Popular Front. It was initiated by the Estonian National Independence Party (Eesti Rahvusliku Sõltumatuse Partei, ERSP), founded in August 1988 by former political prisoners and other individuals involved in dissident activities, the Estonian Christian Democratic Union, and the Estonian Heritage Society (e.g., Roots 2009). Drawing on the illegitimacy of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact (MRP) signed by Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939 (see chapter 1) as well as on the fact that several Western states had never recognized the Soviet takeover of the Baltic states in 1940, the Citizens’ Committees’ movement demanded the restoration of Estonian independence on the basis of legal continuity. The cornerstones of this approach were the denunciation of the MRP and the recognition of the Tartu Peace Treaty signed on February 2, 1920 between the Republic of Estonia and Soviet Russia. The peace treaty ended what in Estonia is known as the Estonian War of Independence (1918-1920, Vabadussõda) and was important because it proved that Russia had recognized the independence of Estonia (see introduction and chapter 1).

The immediate objective of the Citizens’ Committees’ movement in February 1989, however, was to set up volunteer committees all over the country that would start registering Estonian citizens: people who had been citizens before 1940, their

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62 Žižek continues: “No wonder that the name of the strongest dissident movement in the Eastern European Communist countries was Solidarity: a signifier of the impossible fullness of society, if there ever was one” (Žižek 1997, 30).
descendants as well as individuals interested in acquiring Estonian citizenship. According to the legal-restorationist approach, only citizens of the Republic of Estonia were in a position to decide over the restoration of independence as well as other matters pertaining to Estonia. The registration of citizens was regarded as a precondition for the election of a representative body, the Congress of Estonia, that would, according to leaders of the Citizens’ Committees’ movement, represent the will of rightful Estonian citizens both at home and in exile. Unlike the Supreme Soviet (Ülemnõukogu), the legislative body or parliament of the Estonian SSR, the Congress of Estonia would lack executive power, but its representative power would originate in its independence from the Soviet “occupation regime.” It was on the same grounds that the Citizens’ Committees’ movement distinguished itself from the Popular Front, regarding the latter as a spin-off of the Communist Party. As one hardline legal-restorationist has put it, the Popular Front was popular (rahvalik) but not nationalist (rahvuslik) (Kiin 2000).

The idea of registering citizens of Estonia turned out to be extremely successful, meaning that the elections for the Congress of Estonia could take place only a year after the launching of the campaign, in February 1990. By that time, Citizens’ Committees had registered between 790,000-845,000 citizens and over 60,000 applicants for Estonian citizenship, i.e., individuals who lacked legal ties to the pre-war Republic of Estonia but wished to become citizens of Estonia. Over 591,000 residents of Estonia are said to have

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63 Trivimi Velliste, another leader of the Citizens’ Committees’ movement, explained in a recent interview: “The creation of Popular Fronts in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania had to be simultaneous, it was coordinated from Moscow, but the Popular Front took off too well, the control was lost. The whole perestroika started to spill over” (Vilgats 2011).
cast their vote at elections that were held symbolically on February 24, the anniversary of the Republic of Estonia. (Kiin 2010.)

Pettai has argued that the registration campaign’s success owed a great deal to the Estonian Heritage Society, which brought along a network of regional activists as well as a broad-based popular support that had been missing from dissidents’ earlier initiatives. In his view the Citizens’ Committees’ movement aimed at not simply outdoing the Popular Front, but developed over time an entirely alternative approach for transforming the whole social, political and economic system as well as socio-political mentalities. (Pettai 2004.) The doctrine of legal restorationism “was first articulated as a historical thesis (the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact), then as legalistic diagnosis (“occupation”) and finally as a restorationist prognosis” (Pettai 2004, 382). Pettai traced the principles of legal restorationism with petitions written by Estonian dissidents in the early 1970s. He observes that while the anti-Soviet opposition in Lithuania focused on religious freedom and in Latvia on human rights, “then in Estonia the first organized dissident actions involved propagating a recognition that the Baltic states had never joined the Soviet Union voluntarily and that this was the crux of why Soviet rule was unjust” (Pettai 2004, 91).

Coming Together in the Calendar

Ironically enough, it was Gorbachev's glasnost that provided dissidents with the opportunity to start disseminating their message and to come out, literally: the
demonstration on the 48\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the MRP on August 23, 1987 in Tallinn was followed by gatherings on February 2, the 68\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the Tartu Peace Treaty in Tartu as well as other initiatives tied to particular dates and places.\textsuperscript{64} The Citizens’ Committees’ movement itself was launched on February 24, 1989, the Independence Day of the pre-war Republic of Estonia. On the same day, the Estonian national flag, the same blue-black-white one that my brother once drew and I tore up, was ceremonially hoisted on the top of the Long Herman tower in Tallinn to replace the red flag of the Estonian SSR. Leaders of the Citizens’ Committees’ movement condemned this gesture as just another attempt by the Soviet occupation regime to co-opt “things” Estonian; representatives of the Popular Front attended the ceremony but used it to evoke crimes committed by the Communist regime (Pettai 2004; Kiin 2010). Another layer was added to this already heavily loaded date a year later when the elections for the Congress of Estonia were held on February 24, 1990.

Activists of the Citizens’ Committees’ movement used commemorative events and other meetings to disseminate information about the MRP, Tartu Peace Treaty and their interpretation of Estonia’s status as a state that was legally independent but factually occupied. They explained to people that the Republic of Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union, but had never ceased to exist and because it had never ceased to exist,

\textsuperscript{64} The demonstration was unsanctioned and local authorities used militia and dogs to disperse the protestors. According to persistently circulating accounts, the current prime minister Andrus Ansip, at the time an official of the Communist Party in Tartu, was involved in, either approved of or was responsible for this incident with dogs (e.g., see Laiapea 2011 and Reporter.ee: Ansipi väitel ei viibinud ta 1988. aasta meeleavalduse juures).
leaving the Soviet Union would be downright impossible for Estonia and Estonians: one could only demand the end of Soviet occupation. Moreover, because the republic had continued to exist de jure, citizens of the pre-war republic and their descendants “continued” to be citizens of Estonia and were not subject to the laws of the Soviet Union (e.g. Pettai 2004, 207-208, 259). As if to prove that this was really the case, the network of citizens’ committees’ was set up according to pre-Soviet administrative divisions, implying that Estonians did not live in paìõů’s, but in kihelkond’s or parishes and other administrative units of the pre-war republic. In this way, the Citizens’ Committees’ movement called on ordinary Estonians to switch to a different conception of themselves and their country, telling them that they could do this because they already were and had always been what they were to become: the national order of things was the natural order of things (Malkki 1992). As rightful citizens of the Republic of Estonia, people were to share a particular “temporal order” (Zerubavel 1981) and remember particular things, see their future in a new way.

This re-imagining drew on a clean legal argumentation concerned with justice and the movement’s leaders were careful to refrain from discussing ethnic grievances. Citizens’ Committees welcomed all people interested in applying for Estonian citizenship and granted them the right to nominate and vote for their own candidates at the elections for the Estonian Congress. However, because only citizens of Estonia could make decisions regarding Estonia’s future, applicants’ representatives in the Congress of Estonia could attend the meetings and give speeches, but were excluded from the actual decision-
making. Since the large majority of rightful Estonian citizens were ethnic Estonians, the Citizens’ Committees’ movement and the Congress of Estonia assured ethnic Estonians of their fundamentally different and justly privileged status in comparison to people who had moved to Estonia from other parts of the Soviet Union.

Despite opposing Citizens’ Committees’ legal-restorationist program, the Popular Front became over time more invested with historical grievances, which in turn meant that elements of restorationism gained a greater hold in the Estonian society as a whole. Vello Pettai (2004, 224-225) has observed how in the course of 1989, leaders of the Popular Front made the recognition and denunciation of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact into one of their priorities and started to rely on the mobilizational potential of anniversaries related to the interwar republic: “the dates were inevitable, since they would come up one way or another” (Pettai 2004, 225). This was a significant change in comparison to previous initiatives like “The Song of Estonia” rally that had intervened in the presence spontaneously, without mediation and support from the calendar and the past.

In May 1989 the Congress of the People’s Deputies opened in Moscow and one of the goals of Estonian deputies was to lay the secret protocols on the table with the hope that the Congress would discuss the matter before the 50th anniversary of signing the treaty in August. While they lobbied successfully for the formation of a committee that would give a legal and political assessment to the MRP and share its findings with the rest of the
Congress, it was not until December that this committee was able to present its conclusions and the Congress denounced the pact. (Lindpere 2009.) In order to protest against Moscow’s postponement-strategy, the Popular Front, together with its counterparts in other Baltic states, planned a mass demonstration for the 50th anniversary of signing the MRP and the secret protocols. On the evening of August 23, two million residents of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania took each other by the hands and formed a human chain that extended from Tallinn through Riga to Vilnius. Known as the Baltic Chain or the Baltic Way, this protest was one of the highlights of the 1980s nationalist movement and a powerful performance of both interethnic solidarity and ethnic self-awareness: co-organized by people of the Baltic countries, it simultaneously underscored that these were three different nations indigenous to their territory.65

Given that the registration of citizens by Citizens’ Committees was in full swing in the summer of 1989, the success of the Baltic Way demonstration commemorating the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact suggests that despite their radically different takes on how Estonian statehood should be established and who should be granted citizenship, either of the two mass movements was able to use historical grievances to mobilize masses to take action and enjoyed “a reasonable amount of popular trust” (Ruutsoo 2002, 351). Pettai has argued that ordinary people could and would oftentimes comfortably support the Popular Front and Citizens’ Committees precisely because these initiatives focused on

65 In 2009 (70th anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact!) the “documentary heritage of the Baltic Way” was inscribed to UNESCO’s Memory of the World Register of “items of documentary heritage of exceptional value” (The Baltic Way – Human Chain Linking Three States in Their Thrive for Freedom).
different issues or could be seen as sides of the same coin (Pettai 2004, 384-385). In his view, the legal restorationist approach eventually gained the upper hand largely because of the way “in which the doctrine was articulated as a frame, mobilized as a movement, and applied at key moments of political decision-making” (Pettai 2004, 383): it provided a neat package that appealed to ordinary Estonians as well as politicians. Rein Ruutsoo has with hindsight taken a more straightforward approach, claiming that the Citizens’ Committees’ “ethnic-defensive model” proved more successful because it “supplied people [the majority, i.e., ethnic Estonians] with the illusion of restoring their role as political subjects of politics” (Ruutsoo 2002, 333); the more inclusive “civic state model” advocated by Popular Front was in his words “ideologically stigmatized because it produced arguments for a more tolerant and dialogic attitude towards the immigrant community of the Russian people” (ibid., 231). In the words of Klara Hallik, the Popular Front represented an “antitotalitarian democracy, where the freedom of the nation [rahvuslik vabadus] and the protection of the rights of the nation [rahvus] had to constitute an organic part of building a human, open and plural society,” while the restorationist approach put the nation first (Hallik 2010, 148).

However, as I argued above, the effort of the Popular Front to combine democratization with the promotion of Estonians’ privileges (Lõhmus, A.-E. 1999) was not necessarily any less “ethnic-defensive” (Ruutsoo 2002, 333) than Citizens’ Committees’ approach, but laden with tensions between the particular and the universal. This might have been another reason for its rejection: for people longing for a change, the state envisioned by
the Popular Front was too reminiscent of the Soviet Union, which likewise claimed to be protecting different national groups and building a more humane and plural society.

Also, though the two movements are oftentimes seen to have been mutually exclusive, approaching them as complementary rather than incompatible phenomena sheds light on their success as well as on the understandings of nation, ethnicity and statehood prevalent in Soviet and post-Soviet Estonia. While any such explanation comes across as an after-the-fact rationalization, I would nevertheless add that these two movements also felt the same from the perspective of an average Estonian who came to support the idea of Estonian independence. Both sprang from a wish to put an end to what was felt to be an injustice and to secure the continuation and prosperity of the Estonian nation, conceptualized as an entity based on descent, language and culture. Consequently, there was no need to distinguish between “the popular” and “the nationalist” (cf. Kiin 2010).

Mass gatherings organized by the Popular Front induced a sense of togetherness through co-presence and coordinated action that took place here and now, while simultaneously reaching back in time by reaching for particular forms of performance that are powerful precisely because they are capable of taking over the rational and manipulating it, collapsing distinctions between different moments in time. The Citizens’ Committees’ movement, on the other hand, provided this emotional and experiential togetherness with a legal and rational basis, making it real in a defendable and, at least seemingly, objective way. Looked at from this perspective, the two movements were bound to support each other and did so because both of them struggled for the independence of ethnic Estonians,
this particular community of descent. To complicate things even more, it could be further argued that the Soviet system of union republics “belonging to” titular nationalities contributed to the acceptance of legal restorationism by nurturing the image of Estonia as a country of and for Estonians.

Creating Citizens, Non-Citizens and People with Undetermined Citizenship

In March 1990, the first multi-party elections for the Supreme Soviet of the Estonian SSR took place and the elected body declared a period of transition to independence, renaming itself the Supreme Council of the Republic of Estonia (cf. the earlier Supreme Soviet of the Estonian SSR; see Chronology. History of the Riigikogu). A year later, a referendum was held on the question of independence. The turnout was 83 per cent and 78 per cent of voters supported the idea of independence; Estonian researchers have drawn on additional calculations and polls to argue that up to 75 per cent of non-Estonians balloted against independence (e.g., Vetik 1993, 271-272). These numbers have been used widely as an indicator of bad interethnic relations in Estonia before the restoration of independence and later and presented as the rationale behind Estonian policies aimed at securing the dominance of the Estonia majority (e.g., see Vetik 1993; Vetik 2011, 233).

In November 1991, only a few months after the restoration of independence, the Supreme Council passed a resolution that recognized as citizens of Estonia only the pre-1940 citizens and their descendants (Lahi 1999, 106; Pettai 2010, 158). This interpretation was
made official and put into force in February of the next year through adoption of the Citizenship Act that had been first passed in 1938 (Eesti Vabariigi Ülemnõukogu otsus Kodakondsuse seaduse rakendamise kohta). The law used the term “a person of Estonian stock” (eesti soost isik) to describe individuals eligible to apply for citizenship by virtue of having been or descending from citizens of Estonia in 1940. Most permanent residents who were not “of Estonian stock” were given the option of applying for naturalization. Among the prerequisites for becoming naturalized were a two-year residence requirement, a one-year waiting period and, most importantly, a test of Estonian language. Applicants were also required to take an oath of loyalty, which in the words of Raivo Vetik “restricted certain categories of people from gaining citizenship, such as military officers and foreign intelligence personnel” (Vetik 2011, 232; see also Lahi 1999).

In theory, the entitlement to Estonian citizenship was not tied to ethnicity and all applicants had to provide documents proving that they descended from a pre-war citizen of Estonia. In practice, however, the law had the effect of excluding most Soviet-era newcomers and their descendants – at the time roughly half a million people or nearly one third of the country’s permanent population. The concept of continuity between pre- and post-Soviet statehood, interrupted by nearly five decades of Soviet occupation, framed these persons as foreigners even if they had been born and raised in Estonia or,

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66 Latvia chose the same restitutionist course and literature on both countries is abundant. For a recent overview of Estonian citizenship legislation and changes made to it over the years, see Vetik 2011; for a summary of debates surrounding the citizenship issue in the early 1990s, Smith, D. J. 2001, 72-74; also Hallik 2002.
moreover, descended from ethnic Estonians but not from pre-1940 *citizens* of Estonia.\textsuperscript{67} Dual or multiple citizenship was not allowed and continues to be prohibited, but because Estonian citizenship acquired by birth cannot be taken away, a few rightful citizens (including the émigrés and their descendants) do in fact hold dual citizenship. Soviet-era settlers’ and their descendants’ lack of this semi-legal opportunity attests to meanings and moral significance invested in roots and rootedness and “the importance of “natural symbols” for creating social facts,” as Dorothy Noyes notes in reference to Mary Douglas (Noyes 2003b, 7; see also Malkki 1992).

Naturalization did not take off until 1993,\textsuperscript{68} i.e., after the constitutional referendum in June 1992 and parliamentary elections in the fall of the same year. The Constitution had been devised by Constitutional Assembly convened for this purpose in September 1991

\textsuperscript{67} Since individual officials treated every application, it is difficult to say what actually happened, which illustrates the imaginairiness and negotiability of the line between in- and outsiders as well as the power of officials. The term “Estonian stock,” meant to be civic but laden with primordial connotations, also captures some of this ambiguity. The following explanation suggests that while citizenship and ethnicity/nationality were kept separate in legislation, this distinction did not necessarily hold in practice and ethnicity/nationality could be imagined or regarded as the basis for citizenship – or denial thereof: “in practice, information in birth certificates and other documents reflecting family status as well as Soviet-era passport entries were used to prove [“Estonian stock”]” (Lahi 1999, 106). At the same time there were cases where individuals and families from Estonia, fluent in Estonian and with Estonian-sounding names had to apply for citizenship through naturalization because they could not provide written proof of their legal ties to the pre-war Republic of Estonia – in a country where thousands of people became displaced during and after the war and where destroying possibly compromising documents has been at times a means to survive.

\textsuperscript{68} While 5,421 persons were naturalized in 1992, on average of 20,570 individuals acquired citizenship every year between 1993-1996 (Vetik 2011, 234). The process has slowed down since for various reasons, some of which will be discussed later in this chapter.
and elaborated on the 1920 Constitution, which was more democratic and parliamentarian than then 1938 Constitution that gave excessive powers to the president. Pettai has explained that the fact that Estonia did not return automatically to its last pre-Soviet constitution (as did Latvia) was not seen as problematic by restorationists, “since they argued that the continuity of Estonian statehood rested in the continuity of its citizenry” (Pettai 2010, 158; emphasis in the original). The fact that only citizens had the right to participate in the constitutional referendum and the parliamentary election made, according to some views, “a clear distinction between those who owned the state legally and those who had to henceforth obey the Estonian State power” (Hallik 2002, 67). The first post-Soviet/7th Riigikogu to convene in September 1992 did not include anybody identifying openly as Russian or as a Russian speaker, which no doubt facilitated the design and implementation of nationalizing policies and economic reforms aimed at breaking away from the Russian/Soviet sphere of influence.

Hallik has concluded that several legal regulations regarding non-citizens “were intended to make people want to leave Estonia” (Hallik 2002, 69). Indeed, the grand plan of the 1990s was “decolonization” and in the summer of 1992 – at the same time when citizens of Estonia were preparing for a referendum on Constitution and first parliamentary elections – Estonian Migration Foundation (Eesti Migratsioonifond) was set up to support

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69 See Taagepera 1994 and Adams 2008 for an overview of the work of the Constitutional Assembly; both men were members of the assembly and Taagepera, a political scientist trained in the U.S., illustrates the expertise brought to post-Soviet Estonia by expatriates. 70 In line with the legal-restorationist logic of rupture, the counting of Estonian parliaments begins from the first Riigikogu elected in 1920 (see, e.g., Chronology. History of the Riigikogu).
the remigration of non-Estonians and the return of ethnic Estonians (MISA Sihtasutus). The Aliens Act (Välismaalaste seadus) passed by Riigikogu in July 1993 framed permanent residents lacking Estonian citizenship as “aliens” or foreigners (välismaalased), turning a blind eye to any real, day-to-day and lived connections that these people might have had to Estonia. The law compelled non-citizens to apply for a residence permit and a work permit within a certain timeframe or, at least theoretically, risk expulsion. (Reinikainen 1999, 16-17; Hallik 2002, 69; Laitin 1998.)

The Aliens Act was adopted just after Estonia’s admission to the Council of Europe, which is said to have boosted nationalist sentiments among the Estonian public and the political elite (Kask 1994), suggesting that the impact of international/Western organizations and regulations on local/Eastern policies is not predetermined: formal compliance does not guarantee “behavioral compliance” (Brosig 2010) but can serve as a precondition for challenging the very same norms of behavior.

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71 The peak of emigration was in 1992-1993 and altogether app. 110,000 left Estonia in the 1990s, which arguably “represents about one-fifth (18%) of non-Estonians who lived in Estonia in 1989 according to census data” (Hallik 2002, 69); every fourth emigrant is said to have received support from the Migration Foundation (ibid.). While the majority of these individuals returned to Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union, there were also waves of emigration to specific “ethnic homelands”: Finns and Ingrian Finns sought to move to Finland, Germans to Germany, and Jews to Israel.

72 The draft law approved by the parliament earlier in the summer but rejected by the president had used even harsher language and contained arbitrary conditions that could have been used to deny residence rights to a wide range of people. For example, residence permits would not have been issued to people who “through their activities have damaged the state interests and international reputation of Estonia” (quoted in Reinikainen 1999, 17). Moreover, according to a strict legal-restorationist interpretation, non-citizens were residing in Estonia illegally since they had never received the permit to enter the country and the draft did not specify whether their entry would be legalized retroactively. For an overview of the development of and amendments to the law between 1992-1995, see Reinikainen 1999, 16-24.
In 1995, toward the end of its term, the 7th Riigikogu elected in 1992 adopted a new Citizenship Act that no longer used the term “Estonian stock” and established stricter conditions for naturalization (Kodakondsuse seadus 1995; see also Vetik 2011, 232-233). The residence requirement went up from two years to eight and in addition to passing a language exam, applicants now had to demonstrate their knowledge of the Estonian constitution and the Citizenship Act. Some of the conditions introduced in 1995 were dropped in the late 1990s in order to render Estonia fit for membership in the European Union and NATO. For example, children born in Estonia to a stateless parent are, since 1998, eligible for Estonian citizenship but receive it only if the parent is a permanent resident and files an application on the child’s behalf before the child turns fifteen (Kodakondsuse seaduse muutmise seaduse muutmise seadus). The 1995 Citizenship Act played a role in the slowing down of the pace of naturalization in the latter part of the 1990s, though the process picked up again somewhat in 2004 when Estonia joined the European Union and Estonian citizenship became a ticket out of the country.73

People with undetermined citizenship have been eligible to vote in local elections since 1992,74 but they are excluded from participation in national elections and political parties,

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73 On average 3,770 individuals were naturalized annually between 1999-2003 (cf. with 20,570 per year between 1993-1996), while over 6,500 acquired citizenship in 2004 alone and over 7,000 in 2005 (Citizenship).
74 The Non-Profit Associations Act (1994-1996) restricted the right to establish and lead non-profit organizations to citizens of Estonia (Mittetulundusühingute ja nende liitude seadus).
banned from holding certain positions (e.g., state and municipal officials, public-service jobs) and do not qualify as national minorities in the legal sense of the term.\(^7\) Several scholars have described the path chosen by Estonia in the 1990s as a form of “ethnic democracy” (e.g., Smith, G. 1996; Järve 2000), drawing on Sammy Smooha’s characterization of Israel and other regimes that combine “democracy for all with ethnic ascendancy” (Smooha 2002a, 425). Others were claiming that Estonia’s non-recognition of Soviet-era settlers as a group had furthered the country’s stability and development by contributing to the consolidation of political power and preventing the emergence of a bipolar political system (Vetik 1999, 24; Pettau and Hallik 2002; Smith, D. J. 2001, 76).\(^6\)

Some argued furthermore that this isolation had at the same time increased minorities’ socio-economic dependence on the majority and contributed to the society’s segmentation (e.g., Pettau and Hallik 2002). Hallik wrote back in 2002 in reference to the under-representation of the Russian minority in polity:

> Such a social and political configuration can not be perceived as a long-term and stable ‘model’ for a country soon-to-be an EU member-state. There is a reason to think that in the case of Estonia, the nationalisation strategy has exhausted the stabilizing resources characteristic of the first years of post-Soviet transition.

(Hallik 2002, 87.)

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\(^7\) The Law on Cultural Autonomy of National Minorities, discussed in the previous chapter, defines as minorities citizens of Estonia.

\(^6\) According to Smooha, in the case of ethnic democracy a certain population as an ethnic national claims ownership of the state and its territory while granting minorities individual rights as well as collective rights “that are deemed non-threatening in the eyes of the majority” (Smooha 2002a, 425; Smooha 2002b, 477-479). Hallik and Pettau (2002) have instead discussed Estonia as a case of “ethnic control,” arguing that the absence of violent ethnic conflict in Estonia resulted from processes of control over the non-Estonian minority by the Estonian political community and, moreover, that “‘control’ must not be viewed as a static regime, but a variable condition within any context of unbalanced power relations” (Hallik and Pettau 2002, 507).
Despite these observations, the citizenship policy established in the nationalizing 1990s has remained virtually intact and no party has taken steps to change it. As was mentioned in the introduction, the population of Estonia (1.34 million) is currently divided into citizens of Estonia (84 per cent), residents with undetermined citizenship (7 per cent), and third-country nationals (9 per cent), most of who have the citizenship of the Russian Federation. Though minors constituted nearly half of all the persons naturalized in 2010 and 2011 (Citizenship), there is a new generation of stateless individuals growing up in Estonia. The parliament’s refusal to make concessions to children of parents with undetermined citizenship is of particular interest, both because of the legal questions involved and the small number of people involved (app. 2,300), which makes the whole issue rather symbolic. For the past four years, chancellor of justice Indrek Teder has been suggesting in vain that “minors (aged under 15) of the parents without citizenship and with a valid residence permit should be granted the Estonian citizenship in the form of naturalization, provided that the parents are not against it” (Teder 2009, 2010, 2011). In the words of Teder,

the question is about the attitude and public declaration. By means of this act, the state declares that it values all of the children, all of the compatrios. This would also mean taking the interests of the child as a starting point.

(Teder 2009.)

The Convention on the Rights of the Child by the United Nations (articles 7 and 8) states that name, nationality and family relations constitute the basic elements of a child’s identity that states are obligated to protect. States do not, according to the international
law, have the obligation to give citizenship to children born on their territory, but they are obligated to do everything to ensure that a child would have citizenship by birth. (Convention on the Rights of the Child.)

Politicians’ main counterarguments have been that citizenship does not guarantee patriotism (e.g., Seaver 2009a, Seaver 2009b) and that granting children Estonian citizenship could be interpreted as forcing it upon them (e.g., Henno 2009). The first claim has been used by representatives of the nationalist conservative Pro Patria and Res Publica Union and the latter by the liberal democratic Reform Party, but both bespeak reluctance to detach ethnicity from citizenship. The current “Programme of the governing coalition of the Pro Patria and Res Publica Union and the Estonian Reform Party” for years 2011-2015 asserts rather bluntly: “the principles of citizenship policy will not be changed” (Valitsusliidu programm, 41). The coalition parties emphasize the need to inform “non-citizen parents” (mittekodanikest vanemad) about the possibilities for applying for citizenship for their children and to “pay special attention to newly-naturalized citizens of the Republic of Estonia in order to facilitate their merging [sulandumine] into the society,” but claim to be also respecting “the free will of every person to define his/her citizenship” (ibid.). It follows from this reasoning that any relaxation – or, indeed, change – in the principles of citizenship policy could be interpreted as a curtailment of individual rights.
The argumentation employed by current coalition parties illustrates the symbiosis of conservative nationalism and liberal capitalist thinking in post-Soviet Estonia, a combination that pits collective interests against individual ones: the protection of the individual rights and freedoms of stateless children and parents serves to protect the Estonian-centeredness of the Estonian demos and state. The symbiosis of nationalism and capitalism was furthermore the starting point of major economic reforms in post-Soviet in the early 1990s. One of the specific and rather implicit outcomes of this combination has been that it has discouraged and neutralized criticism: in the 1990s in particular, one could not criticize privatization, the restitution of property or other economic policies without questioning the citizenship policy and casting doubt on the principle of legal continuity, the cornerstone of Estonia’s restored independence. Consequently, “forced tenants” (sundüürnik) in restituted houses, unable to privatize their dwellings or take out a mortgage from the bank, became hostages of Soviet-era newcomers deprived of citizenship. Marju Lauristin has argued along similar lines that the citizenship policy in post-Soviet Estonia has in some sense functioned as an amplifier of ‘natural selection,’ giving even more opportunities to those who are capable and curtailing the opportunities of others, who by nature are not really capable of breaking through. Estonian citizenship regulations have been built on the same liberalist logic of market economy as the rest of our post-restoration mode of life that has systematically favored those who adapt better, excel in the competition of life and has “punished” the weaker, older, shier and more passive ones.

(Lauristin 2008, 161.)
This logic puts the blame for individual misfortune, be it statelessness or poverty, on the individual, while framing the state – and by extension the international arena of networked nation-states – as the context in which individual self-fulfillment takes place. Citizenship is thus regarded as a prerequisite for success, understood in terms of material goods, power, independence and youthfulness. Presumably inadvertently, this very same reasoning implies or admits that the descendants of pre-war citizens, most of them ethnic Estonians, have been in a privileged position in post-Soviet Estonia, capable of making the most of opportunities provided by market economy. It is furthermore a logic that precludes communication between the state and the stateless, suggesting that only those who are shy, old, and passive question the conditions laid out in legislations.

However, stigmatization is not the only game in town, especially in a place like Tallinn where nearly half of all permanent residents speak Russian as their first – and in some cases only – language. In aspiring to a full correspondence between the state, territory and “homegrown” citizenry – what some would described as the “container model” of the nation-state (Vertovec 2001) – the legal-restorationist policies created the surplus category “aliens.” Not included in the original triple plan of restoration of citizenship, naturalization, and remigration, the category of stateless has become associated with specific rights over the past two decades. As a matter of fact, when it comes to “access to employment, access to the educational system, access to the health system, right to set up business and to rent and buy property, right to work in the public service, right to residency and family reunification, access to the courts and justice system and right to
protection from detention and deportation,” the formal rights of non-citizens are said to differ little from those of citizens (Vetik 2011, 236; 234-242). Moreover, stateless persons living permanently in Estonia do not need a visa to enter the Russian Federation and since 2007, have been able to travel freely also within the European Union.

Hence, like the citizenship of Russia, Ukraine or some other state, statelessness could be viewed as an option that people with undetermined citizenship operate with and it is noteworthy, if not ironic, that this option has emerged as a consequence of a nationalist citizenship policy built upon the capitalist logic of competition. Looking at the slow pace of naturalization, it could be argued that Estonian policymakers have underestimated the power of “consumer” behavior: the desirability and value of the citizenship of the Republic of Estonia has dwindled radically, whereas the popularity of other opportunities has grown. Moreover, these alternatives to Estonian citizenship reflect the transnational connections and multiple loyalties held by many people in the contemporary world (e.g., Vertovec 2001). It is also possible, and I will come back to this in chapter 5, that these connections beyond the Estonian state have been reinforced by policies that prioritize rootedness. In other words, it is not only the Russian media, but also the concept of “ethnic homeland” cherished in Estonian minority policies that pushes local Russians towards the Eastern neighbor, essentializing as it does the relationship between people and places.
Last but not least, individuals excluded from national politics appear to be using citizenship – or rather, their (right to?) non-citizenship – to send messages to the state under circumstances where communication between minorities and the state is meager and, moreover, complicated by noise emanating from Russia. There was a dramatic drop in the number of naturalization applications after the Bronze Soldier episode in April 2007.⁷⁷ A study carried out in 2010 found that 40 per cent of people with undetermined citizenship (96,634) did not want the citizenship of any state (16 per cent in 2008), 38 per cent were interested in the Estonian citizenship (51 per cent in 2008), 15 per cent Russian citizenship (19 per cent in 2008) and 8 per cent the citizenship of some other country (14 per cent in 2008) (Monitoring 2010).⁷⁸ These numbers suggest that citizenship is simultaneously a political, social, cultural, pragmatic, and emotional affair and hence too elusive to be neatly contained by the rule of law or policy strategies, such as the Estonian integration strategy.

*At the Bottom of the De-territorialization List*

Since its inception in the late 1990s, decreasing the number of permanent residents with undetermined citizenship has been one of the main motives for and goals of the national integration policy, implemented in the form of multi-year programs: the “national

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⁷⁷ The number for 2007 was 4,228, followed by 2,124 in 2008, 1,670 in 2009, 1.184 in 2010, and app. 1,371 in 2012 (Citizenship).
⁷⁸ In 2005, 74 per cent of stateless persons preferred Estonian citizenship, 11 per cent the citizenship of Russia, 5 per cent the citizenship of another country, and 5 per cent wanted to citizenship; the percentages in 2000 were 60, 5, 7 and 16, respectively (Nimmerfeldt 2008). The 2010 monitoring also found that Russian-speakers’ trust towards the state is even lower than that of Estonians (16 per cent and 32 per cent, respectively) (Monitoring 2010).
program “Integration in the Estonian Society 2000-2007”’ adopted in 1999 was followed by the “Estonian Integration Strategy 2008-2013” and a new policy document is underway. I will explore the integration model devised and followed in Estonia in greater detail in chapter 5, but would like to draw attention here to tension between the idea of integration and the reluctance to detach ethnicity from citizenship that characterizes the citizenship policy of the post-Soviet Estonian state. According to this view, demos is imagined as a territorially bounded community of descent and fate defined by its culture and history. Integration, on the other hand, is typically about the inclusion of immigrants into demos. In the words of Elena Jurado,

integration can be defined, in the most general sense, as the process of ensuring the full political participation of an individual in a society’s economic, social, cultural and political life. All models of integration, wherever they are located on the multiculturalism versus assimilation spectrum – depict the acquisition of citizenship as a crucial step for individuals who wish to be integrated in a society.

(Jurado 2008, 45.)

In the same article on Estonian citizenship policy, Jurado distinguishes between assimilationist and multiculturalist integration models. The former view citizenship “as the ‘reward’ to be handed to individuals who have proven their loyalty to the state” and “are understood to have ‘completed’ the integration process” by means of demonstrating “proficiency in the dominant language, knowledge of a state’s history/constitutional system and subscribing to the ‘public values’ of the state” (Jurado 2008, 46). Multiculturalist models, on the other hand, accept immigrants’ multiple loyalties and
identities and regard the rights and responsibilities that come with citizenship as means of further integration (ibid.).

The multiculturalist approach reflects what Tove Malloy has described as the “de-territorialisation of integration strategies” (Malloy 2008, 40). De-territorialization results, in her words, from globalization, internationalization and Europeanization as well as the concomitant need to “overcome the narrow scope of the state”: “(d)e-territorialisation challenges the confinement of power to the governmental institutions of the territorial state” (Malloy 2008, 40). Looked at from this perspective, integration and citizenship are inseparable from global flows of market, work force, and money.

The Council of Europe and the European Commission have during the past decade made an effort to promote a coherent approach to integration both in Europe and globally, regarding it as a prerequisite for both social cohesion and economic efficiency (e.g., Niessen 2000). For example, the European Commission adopted in 2005 A Common Agenda for Integration: Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union, which lists “actions” members states are suggested to incorporate into national integration policies; moreover, funds have been made available in order “to foster a more coherent EU approach to integration” (A Common Agenda for Integration: Framework for the Integration of Third-Country Nationals in the European Union, 10; see also pp. 3-4 for developments in 2002-2005 and Vetik 2007b, 26-31). In addition, the Migrant Policy Group, a Brussels-based independent think-thank that works closely with
the European Commission and local actors in EU members states, has published so far three *Handbooks on Integration for Policy-makers and Practitioners* (Niessen and Schibel 2004; Niessen and Schibel 2007; Niessen and Huddleston 2009) that seek to exchange experiences and promote best practices in the field of integration.

Another instrument for de-territorialization and “benchmarking” integration policies is the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX), managed by the same Migrant Policy Group together with the British Council. MIPEX measures integration policies and their implementation in a growing number of states in Europe, North America and elsewhere. The index is produced in collaboration with national-level organizations, scholars and practitioners and looks at policies affecting third-country nationals – people without EU citizenship – in areas such as labor market mobility, family reunion, education, political participation, long-term residence, access to nationality, anti-discrimination. The study makes it possible to compare the policies of participating countries in these areas. The pilot study was carried out in 2004, the second one in 2007 and MIPEX III in 2011, involving 31 countries. (Huddleston 2008; Huddleston, Niessen, Ni Chaoimh and White 2011.)

Estonia holds according to MIPEX III in the policy area of “access to nationality” the second last place among 31 states, followed by Latvia and preceded by Lithuania.

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79 “Benchmarking is a methodology for good governance that can be defined as the systematic and continual improvement of policies and practices based on the identification of high standards and the application of lessons learned from best practice” (Huddleston 2008, 57).
(Huddleston, Niessen, Ni Chaoimh and White 2011, 23). Estonia and Latvia are said to “have the most serious problems of all 31 MIPEX countries with long-term democratic inclusion” (Huddleston, Niessen, Ni Chaoimh and White 2011, 72). Among other things, MIPEX III criticized Estonia for not granting children of stateless parents citizenship at birth, for the long residence requirement, lack of dual citizenship, high language requirements as well as the insecurity caused by the fact that authorities have many vague grounds for rejecting naturalization applications and taking away citizenship from already naturalized persons (Huddleston, Niessen, Ni Chaoimh and White 2011: 72-73).

In June 2011, I attended a seminar in Tallinn that was organized by the British Council in order to introduce the results of MIPEX III and discuss them with officials from various ministries as well as with scholars and selected members of the public, both Estonians and Russians; also present was Jan Niessen, one of the directors of the MIPEX III project. He spoke in English, while all other presenters were Estonians, presented in Estonian and the discussion was also carried out in Estonian, apart from questions to and comments by Niessen, who had an interpreter sitting next to him; translation from English to Estonian was not available but the moderator of the event would occasionally

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80 Overall, Estonia shared positions 19-20 with the Czech Republic, while Latvia ranked last and Lithuania 27th out of 31 countries; Sweden came first and Portugal second. (Huddleston, Niessen, Ni Chaoimh and White 2011, 6-7).
81 Cf. footnote 71 regarding the first draft of the Alien Act, which intended to give officials the right to turn down the residence permit applications of those people who arguably have damaged the reputation of the Estonian state.
82 Field notes from June 3, 2011; I heard about the seminar through one of the minority organizations I worked with as part of my fieldwork.
summarize in Estonian points made in English and would have been presumably glad to serve as an interpreter if needed.

There was confusion, reluctance and resistance in the air. In particular, several Estonians criticized the design of MIPEX and emphasized the importance of historical context, arguing that it does not make sense to compare Estonian migration policies with those of former empires or old immigrant countries. More specifically, it was claimed that the Estonian citizenship policy could not be discussed without taking into account Estonians’ claims to historical justice. One presenter, a representative of a ministry responsible for a particular policy area analyzed in MIPEX, used the presentation time to read out Estonian legislation, which came across as a strategy for avoiding the interpretation of criticisms. At the same time, one of the aims of MIPEX is precisely to stimulate a “debate on government objectives, progress and results” (Huddleston, Niessen, Ni Chaoimh and White 2011, 6; emphasis added).

One source of confusion was terminology for MIPEX uses the term “third-country national” to designate all people without EU citizenship (Huddleston 2008). Typically these are immigrants outside the EU, yet in Estonia this term covers, at least technically, also persons with undetermined citizenship and citizens of Russia, i.e., individuals who have lived in Estonia for decades or their whole life. Estonian officials spoke in their presentations interchangeably about foreigners or aliens (välismaalased), new immigrants (uus-imigrandid), migrant workers (migrant) and third-country nationals (kolmandate
riikide kodanikud), but it was not clear whether and how their statements concerned Soviet-era newcomers and their descendants, i.e., the primary target group of integration policies in Estonia. A couple of Russian audience members asked the officials for clarifications and seemed to be greatly puzzled by the fact that MIPEX equaled persons without citizenship with third-country nationals. Hence, while MIPEX draws attention to exclusionary laws and policies and creates a basis for comparing the policies of different states, it can be used – in the Estonian context – to support the very same nationalizing interpretations through which stateless individuals and many of the third country nationals in Estonia came into being. Estonian officials presenting at the seminar tended to use the EU jargon in ways that rendered Soviet-era settlers and their descendants invisible and, moreover, erased their long-term presence in Estonia by merging them into one with the small number of post-Soviet newcomers: essentially, the trickle of new immigrants sustained the exclusion of old newcomers, who can be defined as migrants in the light of some historical narratives, but not others. Looked at from this perspective, the comparative approach of MIPEX contributes inadvertently, by means of the rhetoric it makes available to officials and other local actors, to the marginalization of the very same population groups whose treatment it seeks to improve.

However, the insensitivity of MIPEX to local particularities could be also seen as an indication that historical narratives and perceptions of past injustice have no place in contemporary integration strategies and in citizenship policies in particular. One of the Russian participants of the seminar made a similar point during the question and answer
period, claiming that nobody insisted on historical injustice when Estonia joined the EU in May 2004 and agreed to participate in the European integration. According to this person, Estonia is myopic in the sense of wanting mutually exclusive things: to be part of Europe, “a state of the United States” as well as to be on its own, and while the historical background can be used to explain the current situation and Estonian policies, it does not justify them. This commentator was a bilingual Russian from Estonia, i.e., not a Soviet-era newcomer but a descendant of pre-war citizens of Estonia.  

It is noteworthy that in talking about citizenship and the need for greater inclusivity, this person spoke about ethnicity, identifying ethnic Estonians with the Estonian state.

The speed with which many Estonian participants of the MIPEX seminar reached for history in order to justify the strict citizenship policy suggests that the idea of de-territorializing integration policies has met with little support in Estonia. One of the questions raised or views expressed in the seminar was this: “Maybe Estonia wants to be there at the bottom of the ranking when it comes to access to citizenship?” Some participants also reiterated the argument that Estonian citizenship cannot be forced upon anybody. These negative responses indicate a refusal to detach citizenship or nationality from ethnicity and are all the more significant given the effort of the European Commission to homogenize integration policies within the EU.

83 I will discuss in chapter 6 how some of these “indigenous” (põline) Estonian Russians differentiate themselves from Soviet-era newcomers.
The citizenship regulations in post-Soviet Estonia have been exclusionary in their legalistic ethnic impartiality, by virtue of mapping pre-Soviet jurisdiction on post-Soviet demographics. Their aim in the early 1990s was to debar from full political participation the bulk of permanent residents who were neither of “Estonian stock,” i.e., descendants of pre-war citizens of Estonia, nor spoke Estonian and because ethnic Estonians constituted 90 per cent of rightful citizens in 1992 (Hallik 2002, 67), this goal could be achieved without explicit discriminatory measures. Consequently, “Estonian” and “citizen” became virtually synonymous, as did “non-Estonian” (mitte-eestlane) and “non-citizen” (mittekodanik). Looked at from this perspective, Estonians continue to be in post-Soviet Estonia the titular nationality that they were in the Estonian SSR, provided with a collective privileged access to the Estonian territory and rights that go with it. The 2010 monitoring of integration found that educational disparities were growing not between citizens and non-citizens, but Estonians and Russians-speakers with fewer young Russian-speakers receiving secondary and higher education than among their parents’ generation;\(^{84}\) Russian-speakers also perceive more socio-economic inequality than Estonians. The two groups continue to hold rather opposite views on the feasibility of naturalization requirements and, moreover, Estonians tend to regard Russian-speakers as being less interested in and engaged with Estonian matters than Russian-speakers themselves think they are. (Monitoring 2010.)

\(^{84}\) Other studies have found that there is a positive correlation between higher education and life expectancy. The average life expectancy for both men and women (but men in particular) in Estonia is among the lowest in the European Union, whereas differences in the life expectancy of Estonians and Russian-speakers have grown since the restoration of independence (Vetik 2008a, 11).
With ethnicity taking precedence over citizenship, “non-citizen” functions in post-Soviet Estonia also as an ethnic category. It is ethnic by virtue of not being Estonian. And to the extent that ethnicity is treated as an inborn quality or trait, naturalization does not make a non-citizen citizen in the sense of making him or her an in-group member. This is also why one should not read too much empowerment into stateless persons’ “right” to remain stateless: while this act of refusal no doubt sends out a message to the state, it also comes out from a recognition that having Estonian citizenship does not make a difference. Belonging is not a matter of citizenship but of descent and language, in ways that the rigorous comparative approach of MIPEX fails to register.

Raivo Vetik makes a similar point in his recent discussion of statelessness in Estonia, concluding that the “(t)he main peculiarity of the issue of statelessness in Estonia consists in the fact that legal status does not seem to have a very noticeable impact on how people manage their everyday life” (Vetik 2011, 251; see also Lõhmus, A. 2008). Vetik writes that

the situation of stateless non-citizens in Estonia should be viewed in the broader context of the situation of the whole Russian-speaking population, due to the fact most immigrants arrived in Estonia during the Soviet period. Most instances of discrimination against stateless non-citizens [e.g. in the labor market and the education system] are based not on their legal status but on cultural and other factors, which are related to their ethnicity.

(Vetik 2011, 235.)
Vetik explains elsewhere in the article that the arguably exclusionary nature of Estonian citizenship policy “can by explained, first of all, by high level of perceived threat and mutual distrust between the Estonian majority and Russian-speaking minority in the country” (Vetik 2011, 233). He goes on to cite the results of the above-mentioned 1991 referendum where up to 75 per cent of Russian-speakers are said to have voted against Estonian independence and refers furthermore to inter-state tensions between Estonia and Russia. However, the article ends on a somewhat different note:

One could argue that the long-term statelessness of a remarkable share of the permanent residents in Estonia is damaging to the Estonian national interest. The citizenship policy needs reconsideration as the challenges that the Estonian state is facing have changed considerably, compared to the time when the citizenship regulation was adopted in the 1990s. The internal and external context of the citizenship issue is now completely different, as Estonia has become a member of the European Union and NATO. Analyses of the socio-economic and demographic trends confirm that the quality of human capital is becoming the main developmental problem for Estonia in an international comparison. If the national interest of Estonia depends on successful adaptation in a rapidly globalizing world, then an institution of citizenship should exist that both Estonians and Estonian Russians can identify with and which supports the realisation of the human potential of all people in Estonia. Engaging long-term permanent residents as part of the Estonian citizenry and creating favorable conditions for realising their capacities is one of the most urgent policy challenges currently facing Estonia.”

(Vetik 2011, 251-252.)

This passage raises the same issue as the earlier quote from a Russian audience member of the MIPEX seminar: Estonia’s international integration and the concomitant need to detach ethnicity from citizenship. However, while the audience member criticized Estonia for justifying its exclusionary policies with history, here this exclusiveness – essentially legal restorationism – is framed as an adequate response to challenges faced
by the Estonian state in the 1990s. Moreover, accord to Vetik, the “context of the citizenship issue” (Vetik 2011, 251) has changed not because Estonian Russians are being seen and accepted in a new way, but because the threat posed by them has become contained now that Estonia is a member of the EU and NATO. Hence, local Russians continue to be regarded as a security risk, but there is no need any longer to manage this risk by means of citizenship regulations. Rather, citizenship is being reframed as a human resource issue and as a means of enhancing Estonia’s international competitiveness, presented as the new national interest. The above-quoted passage is ambiguous about whether this national interest should be understood in ethnonational or some other terms and as I will discuss in chapter 5, the current integration strategy for years 2007-2013 is not less ambiguous, despite (or by virtue of) envisioning a common “state identity.” Moreover, it is not clear what would make this shift to a new “institution of citizenship” (Vetik 2011, 252) attractive and feasible.

*Three Books and Two Communities*

I would like to conclude this chapter with a fieldwork episode that sums up many of the topics explored above, while also referring to others to be taken up below: the idea of Estonians’ separateness from Russians, manifested most prominently in language and particular interpretations of history, but also spatially; the ongoing processes whereby this separateness is reproduced and reinforced; the idea of an ethnonational community coming together in the calendar – the use of anniversaries and other forms of commemoration to enter the public sphere and bring about a closure or lack of
alternatives; the centrality of legal restorationism as well as the tendency to draw on the past in order to justify current conditions, the consequent presence of the past in the present; the penetration of everyday life by politics.

In May 2011 I visited the cultural center of the district of Lasnamäe in order to follow the semifinal of an international competition for young *estrada* or stage singers, a tradition of this institution for many years. The cultural center Lindakivi is located in a flat two-story building that like the district’s schools, kindergartens and other communal buildings is plastered and painted and stands out amid high-rise prefabricated apartment houses of grey concrete. The dark-brown entrance hall of Lindakivi is spacious with floor-to-ceiling-windows at both ends and a minimalist décor in line with the building’s functionalist design: some sofas and plants here and there, a fish tank, innocuous decorative artwork hanging from the walls. There is a receptionist’s desk by the main entrance and to its left a bulletin board with posters for upcoming events and advertisements of dance and music studios, ensembles and other groups active in the cultural center. Across from the notice board and the receptionist’s desk is a cloakroom and next to it a small round table that is usually covered with fliers of various kinds. Most fliers and posters displayed in the center are bilingual, mixing Estonian and Russian and hence the Latin and the Cyrillic alphabets.

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85 Field notes from May 20, 2011; *estrada* is a performance genre associated with Soviet entertainment culture. For example, there is a tension, already since the Soviet era and also in Russia (Olson 2004), between *estrada* and performances of folk culture that strive for authenticity.
As I was waiting to buy a ticket for the concert, I noticed a stack of books on the receptionist’s desk and later discovered another pile on the smaller table by the cloakroom. There were three different titles, two in Russian and one in Estonian, without any price tags or other explanations attached to them. The receptionist, an elegant Russian-speaking woman who is always careful to speak Estonian to Estonian-speaking visitors, explained, upon my question, that the books were free of charge. She added no further commentary but I grabbed a copy of each title just because the presence of books in the entrance hall of Lindakivi was unusual and hence their selection could not have been random. However, it would take me some research to figure out how these volumes made sense in this particular context, both individually and as a set, and why they were relevant from the point of view of my research on ethnic interactions in post-Soviet Tallinn.

First, there were Russian-language copies of a thick statistical-sociological overview of various ethnicities living in Tallinn titled “Diverse Tallinn” (Raitviir 2009b). I had previously come across the Estonian edition of the same book (Raitviir 2009a) and knew that the Tallinn City Government had commissioned this study in the aftermath of the Bronze Soldier conflict in April 2007.86 Second, there were Russian copies of “The Book of Free Society” (Tähismaa 2010), a collection of case studies, interviews and other

86 The Russian and Estonian version of the book bear slightly different titles, but both hold that the population of Tallinn consists of distinct ethnic groups: the Russian title Разноликий Таллинн could be translated as heterogeneous or diverse Tallinn or Tallinn constituted of different elements, whereas the Estonian Rahvuste Tallinn translates as “Tallinn of Ethnicities” or “Nationalities’ Tallinn.” (Raitviir 2009a, 2009b.)
materials compiled by Irja and Inno Tähismaa, a husband-and-wife-team of authors and bloggers who mix sensational bits and pieces with social criticism. One of their main concerns is what they see as the government’s increasing restrictions on the freedom of speech and press and Estonia’s development into a police state. “The Book of Free Society” was published initially in Estonian (Tähismaa 2009) and I did not even know the Russian version existed. The book discussed the protection of civil liberties in Estonia, focusing on the case of a former deputy mayor of Tallinn who was arrested in a theatrical manner and charged with corruption in March 2003, yet declared innocent five years later after media had repeatedly violated his right to presumption of innocence. Tallinn City Council decided in February 2009 to declare March 4, the anniversary of deputy mayor’s arrest, the Day of Free Society as a reminder of the values that Estonian democracy relies on and of the superiority of the court of justice (Ottender 2009).87

“The Book of Free Society” as well as the statistical overview of Tallinn could be easily linked to the Tallinn City Government and the Centre Party that has ruled the capital for much of the 2000s. Marking the cultural center as a territory governed by the Centre Party, these books also served to demonstrate the Centre Party’s concern for the interests of Estonian Russian-speakers. The third book I picked up in Lindakivi that day did not fit this pattern, at least at the first sight, because it was in Estonian and about history: a

87 A group of journalists, scholars and politicians, including the mayor of Tallinn Edgar Savisaar, established around the same time what they call “The Movement of Free Society” (Vaba Ühiskonna Liikumine). In a statement issued on this occasion, members of the group expressed their concern over weakening civil liberties in Estonia, corruption, and the subjugation of media and investigative institutions to political interests (Vaba Ühiskonna Liikumine: isikuvabaduste ring Eestis on ahenemas).
collection titled “MRP: Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact: A Difficult Confession” (Lindpere 2009a). Unlike the other two titles, this book had hard covers and was published by a well-known Estonian publishing house. Its front cover read “MRP” in big yellow letters against red background and featured a widely-distributed photograph of the signing of the Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the Soviet Union on August 23, 1939: the German foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop sitting at the desk with a document in front of him and a pen in his hand; behind him Stalin in his distinctive uniform and the Russian foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov, both of them looking into distance and not at their German colleague.

When I inspected the book at home, it turned out to be about the process back in 1989, whereby the Congress of the People’s Deputies of the Soviet Union came to admit the existence of the MRP and to denounce it (see pp. 122-123 above). Moreover, the book was a revised edition of a collection that had been first published in 1991. As such, it represented and mixed different temporal angles, making it difficult to distinguish contemporary impressions from conclusions drawn with hindsight. Heiki Lindpere, the legal scholar who had compiled the book, wrote in the introduction to the 2009 edition how Edgar Savisaar, one of the members of the committee set up by the Congress of People’s Deputies, Estonian prime minister in 1990-1992 and the mayor of Tallinn in 2001-2004 and again since 2007, had asked him in the summer of 1991 to hurriedly put together an overview of the process back in 1989 whereby the Congress had come to denounce the 1939 treaty between the Soviet Union and Germany (Lindpere 2009a, 5). It
follows from this that the revised edition published in 2009 had been timed for the 70\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the signing of the MRP, for the 20\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the denunciation of the secret protocols, which in turn coincided with the 20\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the Baltic Way and other mass events of the Singing Revolution as well as the revolutions in Central Europe. These different events were tied together on the book’s back cover that had “A difficult confession” written in yellow capital letters and underneath it a citation taken from a speech given by Edgar Savisaar on the border of Estonia and Latvia on August 23, 1989 during the Baltic Chain demonstration. In this passage, Savisaar claims that the acknowledgement of secret protocols was to indicate whether Moscow recognized and prioritized the interests of the indigenous population, i.e., Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians.

Because, as I have argued throughout this chapter, there is an expectation of consensus among ethnic Estonians over Estonia’s occupation by the Soviet Union and the principle of legal continuity, distributing or even just displaying Estonian-language copies of a book about disclosing and denunciating the MRP in 2011 could not but come across as an anachronism. Moreover, Lindpere’s book seemed to be out of place in Lindakivi because the Centre Party, unlike the more conservative nationalist parties, is not known for capitalizing on the legal-restorationist doctrine. Like the two Russian titles discussed earlier, “MRP: Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact: A Difficult Confession” was clearly a statement, but one that did not make literal sense. It was not about the secret protocols of
1939, but rather addressed to a primarily Estonian audience and linked to the Centre Party and its leader.

In December 2010 the Estonian Security Police *Kapo* (*Kaitsepolitsei*) disclosed that it had reasons to suspect Edgar Savisaar of acting as an “agent of Russian influence” (*Venemaa mõjuagent*). Savisaar had allegedly asked Vladimir Yakunin, the president of the state-run Russian Railways company and chairman of major charitable trusts in Russia, for a donation of 1.5 million euros towards the construction of a Russian Orthodox church in the district of Lasnamäe. The ceremony for consecrating the cross of the new church was scheduled to take place in February 2011 just before the 2011 parliamentary elections, arguably in order to influence the election results by winning over Estonian-Russian voters (*KAPO Declassifies Savisaar Files*). This is a telling

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88 The construction of the church began in 2006 and though not completed yet, the Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate is holding services there during Eastern and some other church holidays. Yakunin is the chairman of the board of trustees of the Centre of Russian National Glory (CRNG) that was established in 2001 and describes itself as “a non-political public organization which unites representatives of all social groups of society who want to pay their personal contribution to the spiritual and moral revival of Russia: teachers, doctors, scientists, cultural workers, priests and statesmen” (Centre of Russian National Glory). More specifically, security police linked Savisaar to Foundation of St. Andrew the First-Called (1992), an organization affiliated with the CRNG that aims at “the preservation of the historical, cultural and spiritual and moral succession of generations, for the sake of the preservation of Russia as a whole – in terms of values, nationhood and territory” (Foundation of St. Andrew the First-Called).

89 The argument has since become more complex with the prime minister Andrus Ansip claiming that while asking donations for the church has never been a problem, Savisaar has also “been [to Russia] to ask a former high KGB officer [Yakunin] for money for the election campaign” (Ansip Lengile: Savisaare rahaküsimine Venemaalt on 100 protsenti tõestatud). Yakunin spent his childhood in Estonia because his father, arguably a pilot in KGB Border Troops, was stationed in the coastal town of Pärnu after the war; on
argument because it equates the district of Lasnamäe with the Estonian-Russian electorate and the latter with Russian Orthodoxy, with particular political views and ultimately with Russia, treating both the Centre Party and Estonian Russians as a fifth column.

Placed within this context, Lindpere’s book about the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact came across as a parable told to Estonians in the name of Savisaar in order to convince or remind them of his crucial role in the process of restoring independence. References to the Baltic Way demonstration framed Savisaar as an in-group member whose loyalty to the Estonian state and Estonian people is beyond doubt. For the purposes of this study, it is even more significant that this parable affirmed the unwritten norms of Estonianness and the distinctiveness of Estonians and Russians. Though any visitor of Lindakivi would have been free to pick up any of these three books, their selection was tailored to reach a Russian-speaking and an Estonian audience, respectively.

The episode in the cultural center is revealing of the ways in which the past and particular historical narratives can become and are made to come alive at seemingly random moments. Claims regarding the past are claims to power in the present. Casual, unexpected and odd from the point of view of an ordinary visitor to Lindakivi, the

Yakunin’s own possible ties to KGB, see YAKUNIN Vladimir Ivanovich. Yakunin was present at the ceremony held to consecrate the cross of the new church in Lasnamäe and gave a speech where he reminisced about his childhood in Estonia (field notes from February 19, 2011).
presence of books was an outcome of careful planning and action: somebody had to come up with the idea of simultaneously distributing copies of these particular volumes in Estonian and Russian, doing it in Lindakivi, in the district of Lasnamäe associated by many with Russians and the Soviet era. The difficulty or calculated unwillingness to find a book that would suit everybody, all permanent residents of Estonia irrespective of ethnicity or primary language, lays bare the continuation of ethno-linguistic segregation in post-Soviet Estonia and lack of means or motivation for imagining coexistence in new ways. Integrity is looked for not in current or future challenges facing the country’s population as a whole but in past moments of effervescence or utter despair and pain, such as World War II.

Because of the principle of restored statehood, on the one hand, and the equation of the state with the ethnic community, on the other, the legal-restorationist interpretation of the past is treated at once as a shibboleth of loyalty to the Estonian state and as an ethnic marker. In August 2011, around the time of the 20th anniversary of restoration of independence, readers of the Estonian-language Delfi news portal were given the opportunity to ask questions from Tallinn’s recently-appointed deputy mayor Mikhail Kõlvart (b. 1977), a Centre Party member of Estonian and Korean background, whose mother tongue is Russian and who, as will be discussed later in this study, is a vocal proponent of Russian-language secondary education in Estonia (Mihhail Kõlvart: kõige kõvem mees on Kalevipoeg). One of the readers made sure to ask him whether in his view Estonia had joined the Soviet Union voluntarily or not and whether the current
Estonian state was a successor of the interwar Republic of Estonia, a completely new state or a successor of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic (ibid.). Since nobody would have asked the same questions of an incoming official perceived to be Estonian, this was essentially a test or a statement that demonstrates the ethnicization and polarization of historical narratives in post-Soviet Estonia.\(^9\) Moreover, this incident is indicative of ways in which particular narratives are kept at arm’s length and used to make sense of the present by dividing the population into ethnic groups assumed to be incommensurable in terms of language, culture as well as mentality. The next chapter looks at the ongoing efforts to reinforce this incommensurability as well as at struggles to make Estonia commensurable with Europe.

\(^9\) The deputy mayor responded “correctly” and diplomatically to both questions, claiming that Estonia did not join the Soviet Union voluntarily and that its independence was restored, but without using the word “occupation” (Mihhail Kõlvart: kõige kövem mees on Kalevipoeg).
Chapter 3: Naturalizing the Absence of Alternatives

The legal-restorationist interpretation of Estonian statehood emerged in the late 1980s as an alternative to official Soviet historiography and laid out new subject positions that enabled Estonians to distance themselves from the Soviet regime. Much of this revolutionary effervescence was carried over into the 1990s and probably helped to cushion the blow of market economy (cf. Introduction, pp. 25-26). However, the sense of national unity and foundations thereof have since become less and less self-evident and more and more something that people need to be reminded of. I find it to be significant that politicians’ interest in holidays, statements and other symbolic means of reinforcing togetherness has grown as the society has become more complex and the body of “rightful” citizens segmented along the lines of income, geography, gender, and age.

This chapter looks at tensions between top-down forces that seek to frame individuals as members of an ethnonational community of descent and fate and bottom-up claims for recognition and agency suggestive of alternatives to the official legal-restorationist interpretation of statehood. I seek to demonstrate how the inability of the legal-restorationist interpretation of Estonian history, state and society to account for current social processes as well as individual life experiences gives rise to ever new attempts to suppress the exploration of alternatives, also by means of reinforcing the sense of
ethnocultural distinctiveness and continuity. I start by discussing how the collection and study of life stories in post-Soviet Estonia has contributed to normative notions of Estonianness by inducing certain kinds of narratives and framing others as untellable – and as un-Estonian. I will then look at statements and a series of new holidays established by the Parliament during the past dozen years that assign Estonians and Russians to mutually exclusive, yet constitutive positions of victims and perpetrators or employ familiar and biological metaphors to conceptualize ethnicity as a natural, territorialized fact. The last two subchapters, on the other hand, explore bottom-up aspirations for agency and recognition that challenge Estonia’s official self-representation vis-a-vis Europe and reveal the authorities refusal to engage in dialogue.

Tellable and Untellable Lives

Similarly to other post-communist countries, Estonia went through a “biographical boom” (Kõresaar 2005, 7) in the late 1980s and 1990s with several organizations and research institutions holding competitions and campaigns for eliciting life stories from individuals willing to reminisce. A brief excursion into these initiatives is in place in

The major institutions engaged in the collection of life stories have included the Cultural History Archive of the Estonian Literary Museum and the Estonian National Museum, both located in Tartu. There is an established tradition in Estonia (and Finland, see Apo 1995 on teemakirjoittaminen – “topical writing” or “thematic writing”) of collecting written accounts of folklore and folk culture by means of correspondence between scholars and interested members of the public: an individual researcher or a research institution uses newspapers and other media channels to send out a call for submissions on a particular topic and can expect to receive written responses from people who feel they have something to contribute. While the researcher might seek to contact individual contributors, this is not the goal or a rule. In Estonia, this mode of communication between scholars and the public goes back to at least the 1860s and Fr. R.
this chapter in order to look at the relationship between the collection and study of life stories and the legal-restorationist model of transition and statehood. In the first years in particular, engagement in life stories\textsuperscript{92} was framed as a right to remember and narrate: the first ever call for life stories sent out by the Cultural History Archive of the Estonian Literary Museum in 1989 was titled “Do you remember your life history?” (\textit{Kas sa mäletad oma elulugu?}) and elicited over 500 responses in two years (Hinrikus and Köresaar 2004, 22). While this first competition was broad and bilingual, open to submissions in both Estonian and Russian by people from all walks of life, subsequent initiatives targeted Estonians capable of recounting particular historical events by virtue of their age and/or social background.\textsuperscript{93} The topics have included the interwar republic (essentially the childhood of people born in the 1920-30s – the only generation alive to

\textsuperscript{92} I am using the expression “engagement in life stories” to include the narration (either orally or in writing) of life stories, their collection, study, publication and reading, literary and theatrical reinterpretations of autobiographical materials as well as attempts by politicians to co-opt personal narratives and forge a collective life story of a nation. These partly overlapping activities are carried out by a wide range of actors with different agendas, including academics representing different disciplines and methods. The story of the study of life stories (\textit{elulugude uurimine}) in post-Soviet Estonia remains to be written; for an overview of collection and study until the mid-2000s, see, e.g., Hinrikus and Köresaar 2004.

\textsuperscript{93} For a discussion of the relationship between generational and national memory in post-Soviet Estonian novel, see Laanes 2009.
remember this era), World War II, the German occupation of 1941-1944,\textsuperscript{94} the Patarei Prison used by various regimes to detain political prisoners, memories of the year 1968 (see Kõresaar 2004, 10-39 for an overview of campaigns and topics up to mid-2000s). By virtue of selecting these particular topics, the collectors of life stories induced prospective authors to speak as “rightful citizens” in the name of the (occupied) Estonian nation, while implicitly advising against other topics and stories. The existence of this tacit normative horizon of expectations becomes evident in scholars’ self-reflective discussions of life narratives that do not fit in with the official historical narrative of occupation and rupture nor with the accompanying ideas about Estonianess. This includes life stories written by individuals who claim to have lived the Soviet dream of happy working people, admit that they benefited from the Soviet regime or held

\textsuperscript{94} The competition for contributions on the German occupation was opened in 2003 (Hinrikus and Kõresaar 2004, 24) and is significant because of the incompatibility between established Western-European and new Eastern-European accounts of WW II, Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia (e.g., Laanes 2009, 127; Lehti and Jutila and Jokisipilä 2008, Onken 2007). As was mentioned in the introduction and will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, Estonian men fought in WW II both in the German and Soviet army, both voluntarily and as a result of forced mobilization, which makes public commemoration of the war nearly impossible: either “side” is stigmatized and dangerous in its own way. Authors of life stories often contrast the discipline, politeness and handsomeness of German soldiers with the crudeness, untidiness and poverty of Soviet/Russian soldiers, who preceded and followed the Germans: Russians were “others” in ways that Germans were not (e.g. Kõresaar 2005, see discussion in the introduction). Selected accounts of the German occupation submitted to the 2003 competition of life stories have been published in two volumes, the gender-based organization of which reinforces these stereotypes of German masculinity: “Girls who grew up during the war: Estonian women’s memories of the German occupation” (Hinrikus 2006) and “Boys who grew up in the war: Estonian men’s memories of the war and German occupation” (Hinrikus 2011). In January 2012, all copies this new volume owned by all public libraries in both Tallinn (27 copies) and Tartu (5) were on loan, whereas in Tallinn, there were 20 individuals queuing for the first available copy (Ester E-catalogue, accessed 01.08.2012).
Communist views, but also persons who crossed ethnic and/or ideological boundaries by intermarrying with Russians.\textsuperscript{95} Moreover, after the first collection campaign launched in 1989, i.e., in the Soviet era, the collection of life stories in Russian was not resumed until 2003 and has remained modest (see Paklar 2009a, Paklar 2009b, Hinrikus 2005b for a selection).

Looked at from this perspective, the collection, study and more broadly engagement in life stories have constituted one means of reinforcing the legal-restorationist definition of the nation and state in post-Soviet Estonia. By focusing on selected topics, life-story collections frame others as untellable (Shuman 2005), shaping what counts as “collective memory” and who counts as a member of this collective. However, it does not follow from this that the personal and national narrative would fit together seamlessly. On the one hand, as Ene Kõresaar has shown, the assumption of the position of a “national witness” has not precluded narrators from voicing criticisms against the post-Soviet Estonian state: the metaphorical juxtapositions of the state with the farm in life stories written by older Estonians in the latter part of the 1990s could be read as a critique of reckless economic reforms and widening income gaps (Kõresaar 2005, 97-98). On the

\textsuperscript{95} For example, see Lauristin 2004 for an analysis of autobiographical texts by a female celebrity tractor-driver, Jaago 2004 on autobiographical accounts by an Estonian woman, who was first married to an Estonian Communist and later, after being released from a Nazi concentration camp in Germany, a Russian man with whom she returned to Estonia to live in Kohtla-Järve, an industrial town in northeast Estonia established after the war and inhabited at the time mainly by Russian-speaking Soviet-era settlers; Kõresaar 2005 discusses the life narrative by an Estonian man who described the Soviet regime as the beginning of a new and better life.
other hand, narrators, especially those born after war, can be reluctant to cast their life in terms of victimhood and to speak on behalf of “the nation.”

The period of mature or late socialism, the 1960-1980s, has proven to be particularly challenging in this respect because as a stable and peaceful period void of dramatic societal and political events, it contradicts the nationalist narrative of rupture. Kirsti Jõesalu has analyzed biographical accounts of the Soviet time collected in the early 2000s, finding that people born after the war tended to narrate “from the point of view of the everyday life during the Soviet period and the interactions of the individual with his/her daily world” (Jõesalu 2005, 94). She found the interviewees underlining “‘the right’ to personal happiness in any society, even in a totalitarian one” (Jõesalu 2005, 96). This claim to happiness is a subversive one to the extent that personal contentment could only be attained through becoming adjusted to and habitualizing the Soviet regime. Like the induction of footsteps of a former pro-Soviet historian Palamets into the new walk of fame in Tartu, out of popular will and demand (see Introduction), “the right to happiness” irrespective of the regime casts doubt on the legal-restorationist premise that Estonians were first and foremost victims of the Soviet regime.

Ene Kõresaar has self-reflectively criticized Estonian life-narrative scholars for prioritizing what she calls “national biographies” (rahvuslik elulugu). She argued back in 2005 that the concept of collective memory (kollektiivne mälu) in Estonia needed to be differentiated by including “Soviet biographies” representing “that part of the collective
memory that has no acceptable expression in today’s public space” (Kõresaar 2005, 212). In her words, “this [differentiation] may or may not be political, problematizing recognized national historical images” (ibid.). Though Kõresaar does not define the “collective” in question, what was meant by it was the community of ethnic Estonians: “collective memory” is the memory of an ethnocultural or ethnonational collective and “Soviet biographies” are part of this “collective memory” to the extent that they are the biographies of ethnic Estonians. Diversification of the “collective memory” does not mean opening it up to all residents of Estonia, but acknowledging the “internal” heterogeneity of the Estonian collective and broadening the scope of narratives that can be told by Estonians about themselves. Looked at from this perspective, diversification can be said to aim at a more accurate description or definition of “the concept of collective memory,” i.e., one that would include narratives previously excluded from the “public space.”

It seems to me that to the extent that the exclusion of “Soviet biographies” from “today’s public space” – the unification of “the Estonian collective memory” – has been a means of nationalizing the state, the inclusion of these biographies – or the diversification of the “collective memory” – cannot be but political either. Shuman explains that narratives can be untellable, among other reasons, because listeners are incapable of recognizing the categories or because they recognize the category, but exclude it as something that is unacceptable and should not have happened (Shuman 2005, 19). Accounts of Estonian Communists or even just Estonians’ personal happiness under the Soviet regime are,
from the perspective of the dominant legal-restorationist narrative, untellable because they are unacceptable to the point of being unrecognizable. Untellable narratives are constitutive of the social and political – and economic – order through their absence. However, as I am about to show, it is also possible to talk about taboo subjects in ways that secure the status quo. It follows form this that the gap between the “real” collective memory and public representations of it cannot be bridged by means of greater accuracy only (i.e., the inclusion of “Soviet biographies”). Rather, it is ultimately a matter of (re)defining Estonian statehood and (re)imagining who counts as a co-national and why (or why not).

A group of parliamentarians came up with a proposal in May 2001 – around the same time when the “right to happiness” claims analyzed by Jõesalu were recorded – that could be regarded as a preemptive attempt to neutralize the subversive potential of any voluntary engagement in the Soviet regime and to co-opt any positive recollection of this period. These MPs demanded that the Riigikogu pass a statement that would “give a solid and final assessment” to crimes (genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, nationalization of property) committed by the Soviet occupation regime against the citizens of the Republic of Estonia between 1940-1991 (note the legal-restorationist definition of citizenship) (Nõukogude Liidu kommunistliku režiimi kuritegudest Eestis (784 AE) (‘Statement of the Riigikogu on crimes of the communist regime of the Soviet
Interestingly enough, the majority of 33 initiators of the statement came from the conservative Pro Patria Union and the social democratic Moderates (Mõõdukad, predecessor of the current Social Democratic Party), i.e., parties that included the leaders of the Estonian Congress and the Popular Front, respectively; however, some supporters of the statement were too young to have been politically active in the Soviet era or had grown up in the West.

Though the proposed statement emphasized that individual members or employees of Soviet organs could not be held collectively responsible for crimes committed by the regime, its initiators framed the statement as an opportunity to turn a “pure page” and as a “litmus paper” that would indicate “whether we are capable of being bigger than our destiny, because we all come from that period, we all have wounds from it, wounds from belonging to one or another organization” (Avalduse “Kommunistliku režiimi kuritegudest Eestis” eelnõu (784 AE) arutelu jätkamine). The trope of destiny was crucial.

The claim for “a solid and final assessment” was in itself an assertion of legal restorationism for it ignored the fact that the Supreme Soviet, a representative body not elected by rightful citizens of Estonia (see chapter 1), had already condemned crimes committed by the Soviet regime back in 1989. Moreover, in 1992 the first Riigikogu of the newly independent Estonia had established the Estonian State Commission on Examination of the Policies of Repression in order to “formulate an objective scientific assessment of the activities of [German and Soviet] occupation powers in Estonia in the 20th century” (Okupatsioonide repressivpoliitika uurimise riikliku komisjoni küsimused). The proposal for the statement emerged before this commission had finished its work; the results of which were published only in 2005 in a collection titled The White Book. Losses Inflicted on the Estonian Nation by Occupation Regimes 1940-1991 (Koitla 2005).

96 The very first version of the document did claim that each personal case of collaboration would have to be given an individual ethical and legal assessment (Nõukogude Liidu kommunstliku režiimi kuritegudest Eestis (784 AE1)).
because it placed the responsibility for the crimes with the regime. As one MP, Andres Herkel of the Pro Patria Union put it:

The main tragedy of the Estonian society during the last decades of the occupation was that we [the rightful citizens of Estonia/Estonians] were forced to adapt and adjust to the mode of living forced upon us by the occupation regime. Career was based on membership in the Communist Party, history education was based on falsifications and individual wellbeing on loyalty to authorities, obedience and silence. Yes, we come from such an abnormal society. However, we have been building an entirely different kind of society for dozen years already and we have achieved certain success in doing so. Let us have fortitude to give a clear and univocal historical assessment to crimes that took place during Soviet occupation. Initiators of this statement think that this would not split the society but on the contrary, only in this way can we turn a new and purer page in the book of history. Let us emphasize that as members of the Riigikogu of the Republic Estonia we are not the inheritors of the occupation power [okupatsioonivõimu pärijad ja õigusjärglased] but carriers of the continuity of the Estonian statehood [Eesti riikluse järjepidevuse kandjad].

(Avalduse “Kommunstliku režiimi kuritegudest Eestis” eelnõu (784 AE) arutelu.)

It could be concluded from this that the “Statement of the Riigikogu on crimes of the Communist regime of the Soviet Union in Estonia” sought to naturalize the absence of alternatives to collaboration with the Soviet regime during the period of mature socialism. This comes across as the pinnacle of naturalization of legal restorationism for it follows from this that even when individuals in the Estonian SSR were making – or thought that they were making – career choices, being politically active and pursuing personal happiness, they were not exercising their free will but were first and foremost
victims of the occupying regime forced to adapt and play along. In other words, the proposed statement recognized the category of Estonian Communists only to exclude categorically the idea that any Estonian would actually and voluntarily believe in Communism. From the perspective of legal restorationism, Estonian and Communism is indeed perhaps the most dangerous combination for it opens the door to the possibility that what happened in Estonia in June 1940 was not entirely a spectacle staged by Soviet authorities, but that the regime change was supported by some Estonians.

The main objections voiced by members of the Riigikogu against the proposal did not concern this normative ideal-type ethnic Estonian, but the possibility that the statement might yield witch-hunts against former members and employees of Soviet organs. The proposal disappeared from the agenda in June 2001 only to reemerge a year later under a different title and in a slightly modified wording. The new version, statement “On crimes of the occupation regime in Estonia,” emphasized personal and private penance and condemned the crimes committed by the Soviet and the Nazi regime (Okupatsionirežiimi kuritegudest Eestis (784 AE)). It passed the Riigikogu in June 2002 without much ado and with support from 75 out of 101 members of the parliament; one MP was against it.

Cf. Alessandro Portelli on remembering the Fosse Ardeatine massacre in the occupied Rome during WWII: “It is not easy to distinguish between victim and martyr. They are not mutually exclusive terms, but rather the polarities in a continuum that includes a number of in-between figures, roles, and subjectivities. This is why any memory that reduces these diverse stories to one ideal type is inadequate and unfaithful. The enormity of the event can be gauged only through the multiplicity of the stories” (Portelli 2003, 197).
and another 14 present that day preferred not to vote (Avalduse “Okupatsionirežiimi kuritegudest Eestis” eelnõu (784 AE) arutelu).

The MPs who refrained from voting came from different parties, but all of them had Russian given names and/or surnames. Both the original 2001 document and the revamped version from 2002 asserted that the Soviet occupation regime had deliberately changed Estonia’s ethnic composition by means of a massive settlement of Soviet citizens in Estonia in order to Russify and destroy the Estonian nation. By means framing Soviet-era newcomers as a tool of the Soviet regime, the statement reiterated the popular equation of ethnicity with the regime and, moreover, deprived these individuals of agency and a will of their own. It also left open the position of these people in contemporary Estonia: could they be regarded as victims of the Soviet regime as well or did the statement condemn them for participation in an attempt to destroy and Russify Estonians?

As has been mentioned earlier, people who moved to Estonia during the Soviet era and their descendants constitute nearly one third of the present population of the country. Going back to Blumer’s idea of social problems as collective behavior (Blumer 1971), it is telling that in debating the statement proposal, members of the Riigikogu did not discuss the document’s particular framing of Soviet-era newcomers, let alone question

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99 For a variation on this argumentation, see Velliste 1995. Velliste, one of the founders of the above-discussed Estonian Heritage Society, served between 1994-1998 as the permanent representative of Estonia to the United Nations.
101 In 2001, one MP of Russian background from the Centre Party criticized the proposal without bringing up the issue of Russification. He started his speech by recounting his family history: the escape of his grandmother from Russia to Estonia in the aftermath of the 1917 October Revolution, the perishing of his grandfather and uncle in the 1920-30s under Stalin – the former had been a Russian social democrat and the latter an Estonian communist who had fled from Estonia to Russia. While this contextualization enabled him to demonstrate how he, too, was entitled to speak from the position of a victim of the Soviet regime, it simultaneously undermined the vulgar equation of ethnicity with particular political views and more generally the notion of a clean-cut edge between the self and the Other, “us” and “them”. The MP finished by saying: “I do not want to vote for a statement that does not lead the society to consensus and only leads to disruption” (Avalduse “Kommunstliku režiimi kuritegudest Eestis” eelnõu (784 AE) arutelu jätkamine).

100 Essentially, the statement “On crimes of the occupation regime in Estonia” reiterated the story of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and “the coming of Russians” (Kõresaar 2005, 89-100) in 1940 as a rupture. The very idea of such a document as well as its intense vocabulary indicate that emotional denunciations of the previous regime and self-victimization (“sovietization began with the destruction of life at every level” (Õispuu 1992, 9)) were still perceived as valid strategies ten years into independence and after Estonia had embarked on a national integration policy aimed at increasing cohesion between Estonian and Russian-speaking permanent residents.

Cf. the following excerpt from results published by the Estonian State Commission on Examination of the Policies of Repression in 2005 (see footnote 211): “In 1940-53 Estonia bore heavy population losses. It is not yet possible to give the exact figures of the losses because the compilation of databases reflecting large groups of people is still in progress. That is why many numbers published are only estimations. During the whole period (1940-1991) nearly 90 000 citizens of the Estonia perished, and about the same number of people left their homeland forever. The human losses of WWII and the repressive measures following it are estimated to be 17.5% of the number of Estonians, in addition to which the ethnic minorities in Estonia (except Russians) were almost totally destroyed. Estonians and Latvians are the only independent nations in Europe whose number is smaller today than in the beginning of the 20th century (that of Estonians is smaller by ca 10%)” (Rahi-Tamm 2005, 25).
Drawing on Dominick LaCapra (2001), Riigikogu’s statement “On crimes of the occupation regime” could be regarded as an instance of deliberate “acting out” of traumatic past events with the effect of turning these events into the basis for an ethnic and national identity. The statement did so by erasing differences between individual ethnic Estonians involved in and affected by the Soviet past (“we all come from the same past”) and, moreover, by overriding variance within the 50-year Soviet period: life under Stalin differed greatly from the Khrushchev thaw, which in turn differed from Brezhnev’s stagnation. According to LaCapra, totalizing takes of this kind inhibit individuals from engaging in and “working through” trauma – a process that is contingent on discriminating between different subject positions and realizing “that one is living here and now with openings to the future” (LaCapra 2001, 22; cf. Kõresaar 2005, 212 and the discussion above on differentiating within “collective memory”).

Such distance and differentiation can be inaccessible to victims of particular events, who have experienced specific losses in the past and repeat them compulsively in the present (e.g., deportees and in some cases also their children). However, LaCapra emphasizes that the

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102 LaCapra elaborates on Freud’s observation that forgotten and repressed – resisted – childhood experiences are remembered through acting out, i.e. transference of the forgotten past on the current situation. Patient needs to be made aware of these resistances and has to work them through (durcharbeiten). LaCapra sees acting out and working through as “countervailing forces” rather than a pure binary: they “constitute a distinction, in that one may never be totally separate from the other, and the two may always mark or be implicated in each other” (LaCapra 2001, 150). He also emphasizes that “not everyone traumatized by events is a victim” (LaCapra 2001, 79).

103 The documentary and book “Memories Denied” by Imbi Paju (Paju, Koljonen, Rünk and Lill 2005 and Paju 2006, respectively) use psychoanalytical trauma theories to analyze deportation experiences, including the experiences of Paju’s mother and aunt, as well as the transgenerational impact of historical traumas; the book has been since published also in Estonian and translated into Swedish, English and Russian. Leelo
generalization or imitation of this subject position is dubious to the extent it blocks possibilities of political and ethical agency (LaCapra 2001, 143-145; e.g., the distinction between people who were deported, witnessed these events and those who put together the lists of deportees or carried out the orders).

Similarly to the narratives and categories deemed untellable and unrecognizable, working through threatens the existing social, political and economic order by encouraging people to wander off to nonconformist paths. Turned around, this suggests that deliberate identification of the collective through trauma can serve as a means of bringing about a manipulable mass and repressing critical engagement in current problems. Moreover, as I argued above, one is not necessarily and only coerced into victim’s position, but can strategically choose it as a way of “skipping pages” and avoiding questions of personal responsibility, which are essentially also questions about national (dis)unity. Paul Connerton differentiates in a recent essay between “proscriptive forgetting” – believed to

Tungal, best known as a children’s author, has so far published two autobiographical novels (“Comrade Child and big people: Yet another story about happy childhood” (Tungal 2008) and “Velvet and sawdust, or, comrade child and kirjatähed” (Tungal 2009) where she recounts – in a warm humorous manner – growing up as a daughter of the “enemy of the people” in Stalinist and post-Stalinist Estonia and discusses also tensions between her relatives’ anti-Soviet stance (big people or grownups) and her own initial youthful enthusiasm for the promise of new life made by the Soviet regime (Comrade Child). Tungal’s grandmother and mother were arrested and deported when she was a toddler and spent the next several years living with her father (see also Kirss 2004). The narrator of Ene Mihkelson’s partially autobiographical novel “Dream of Ahasuerus” (Mihkelson 2001) was left with relatives as a child when her parents “went to the woods” to join the Forest Brethren guerilla movement; the novel explicates, among other problems, the repressive impact of official nationalist narratives on individuals’ attempts to remember and work through their past (for an analysis, see e.g., Laanes 2009). The greater preparedness or willingness of women authors to question or broaden the official narrative has, to the best of my knowledge, not been studied so far.
be in the interest of all parties to a previous dispute, it can be acknowledged openly – and forgetting that is “constitutive in the formation of a new identity” (Connerton 2010).

It is important from the perspective of this study that the collective (re)created through identification with past sufferings and skipping pages is simultaneously an ethnic community of descent and, moreover, that any identity based on victimhood calls for perpetrators. By framing the predominantly Estonian rightful citizens as victims, on the one hand, and by associating the predominantly Russian Soviet-era newcomers with the “occupation regime”, on the other, the legal-restorationist doctrine confines Estonians and Russians to subject positions that are mutually exclusive, yet mutually constitutive. Like the connection between pre- and post-Soviet Estonian statehood, the identification with the victim and the perpetrator, the distinction between the two, has to be redone – repeated – time and again, both individually and collectively.

National Holidays of Victimhood and Resistance

As I showed in the previous chapter, the calendar was instrumental in the nationalist movements of the late 1980s, providing exercises in boundary maintenance with temporal regularity and waving them into the rhythm of social life (Zerubavel 1981). Competing actors used the commemoration of anniversaries of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the Tartu Peace Treaty to bring about a change in individuals’ self-perception and to summon a community of rightful citizens. The restoration of independence was accompanied by a thorough reform of public and national holidays. The 1994 Public and National Holidays
Act restored many of the pre-Soviet holidays, including Christmas, Easter, Midsummer or the St. John’s Day, the Victory Day, Mother’s Day, Anniversary of the Republic of Estonia, and established several new ones marking the restoration of independence, such as the Day of Declaration of Sovereignty in November that commemorates the 1988 declaration of sovereignty and the Day of Restoration of Independence in August; the only holiday left in place was the New Year (Pühade ja tähtpäevade seadus 1994).

Somewhat surprisingly, the interest of politicians and political parties in the use of the calendar to reinforce a nationalist concept of the state and to secure the legal-restorationist doctrine has grown in time. The current Public and National Holidays Act came to force in 1998 and has been supplemented with six new national holidays since, all of which concern the Estonian language, family values, statehood and, more recently, particular events that endorse the principle of legal restorationism: the Native Language Day (1999), the National Flag Day (2004), the Resistance Fighting Day (2007), the Day of Remembrance for Victims of Communism and Nazism (2009), Grandparents’ Day (2010), the Tribe Day (2011). All of these new holidays are national holidays, which by definition means that they signify events and phenomena regarded to be of national importance; most national holidays are also flag days (National and Public Holidays; 104

104 The Victory Day on June 23 commemorates the victory of Estonian troops over Baltic-German and German troops or the so-called Baltic Landeswehr in the battle of Võnnu in 1919, one of the main battles of the 1918-1920 War of Independence. See Tamm 2008 on the development of the Victory Day into a major holiday in the 1930s.

105 The initiative for a Grandparents Day is said to have come from citizens and was proposed to the Riigikogu by Estonian Greens in January 2010 (Eestimaa rohelised aitasid realiseerida kodanikuinitsiatiivi).
Pühade ja tähtpäevade seadus 1998). Because national holidays, unlike public holidays, are regular working days, they are cheap to establish and observe, yet high in visibility: they are included in school curriculum, usually mentioned if not discussed in media and, most importantly, provide nationalist actors with occasions for the transference of the past on the present as well as with points of entrance into the public.

It was not accidental, in this connection, that the initial 2001 proposal for a statement on crimes of the occupation regime was timed to coincide with June 14, the 60th anniversary of June deportation (juuniküüditamine), the first large-scale deportation of Estonian civilians by Soviet authorities. Similarly, it was presumably for the same reason that the revamped version of the document did not reemerge before a year later, in June 2002.

The first post-Soviet Public and National Holidays Act passed in 1994 declared June 14 a national Day of Mourning and Commemoration (leinapäev); however, it was only in 2005 that a clause forbidding “public events incompatible with mourning” was added to the law (Eesti lipu seadus). The “public” and “incompatible” both being notoriously elusive terms, this restriction boosts the power of those who happen to have the authority to define and orchestrate “public” events “compatible” with mourning. To the extent that any commemorative event opens up the past to criticism and subversive interpretations, the 2005 restriction regarding public events could be regarded as a preventative attempt to block dialogue over the past and change.

106 Over 10,000 individuals were deported from Estonia in June 1941, followed by app. 22,000 in March 1949 (märtsiküüditamine – March deportation); the numbers for the Baltics – and the Soviet territory as whole – were, of course, significantly greater. For details, see Lists on the Museum of Occupations website (Lists. Introduction).
I finished fieldwork and left Estonia for the United States on June 13, 2011, missing out on commemorative events marking the passing of 70 years from the June deportation. In addition to smaller gatherings all over the country, there was an official ceremony by the monument of the Estonian War of Independence on the Freedom Square in Tallinn, attended by the president and members of the government. The ceremonial activities on the square were accompanied by an exhibition of means of transportation used for deportation: on display was a Soviet truck, the kind used to take people away from their homes, and a cattle wagon, used to convey the deportees to Siberia.\footnote{For images, see Juuniküüditamise 70. aastapäevast.} The nearby Museum of Occupations opened an exhibition dedicated to June deportation and the national television displayed in the course of 108 minutes the names of all the deportees who have been identified so far.

It would be difficult for me to estimate how much – and what kind of – attention residents of Tallinn and people of Estonia gave to these official commemorative occasions; it is possible, based on my experiences with other commemorative ceremonies I did attend in the course of my fieldwork, that the interest was smaller, cooler and less univocal than one would expect looking at the scale of events. In any case, while the Day of Mourning and Commemoration on June 14 in itself synchronizes “now” and “then” (present and past, calendric and historical time; Zerubavel 2003, 47), commemoration of the 70th anniversary of June deportation on the national level aimed – or at least appeared
– “to create an illusion of actual replication” (Zerubavel 2003, 46; emphasis in the original) of the deportation: people are brought together, trucks and cattle wagons are waiting, there is a list of deportees.108

Two of the new national holidays could be seen as acts of restoration. In 2004, June 4 was named the National Flag Day or the Day of the Estonian Flag (Eesti lipu päev) to commemorate the day in 1884 when the fraternity Estonian Student Association consecrated its blue-black-white flag (see the discussion of the 1988 heritage days in chapter 1, pp. 25-27), which became later the Estonian national flag. This holiday was first celebrated in 1934, during the first year of the authoritarian regime of Konstantin

108 Disgusted by the scale and amount of public commemoration of the anniversary of June deportation, the Estonian writer Wimberg (b. 1979) called in an essay published in one of the Estonian dailies after June 14 for “less mourning, more life” and for more private – and hence more spontaneous – expressions of grief: “I do not understand since when have Estonians started expressing their grief in the form of such mass campaigns? For instance, the commemoration of deportations already resembles the shopping rally during Christmas and the madness of St. John’s Day [Midsummer]. What has happened to keeping things to oneself, taking care of one’s own worries that is otherwise so characteristic of Estonians? This way [of dealing with problems] has its own downsides that make themselves apparent in Estonian men in particular [alcoholism], but I think that grief and coming to terms with the strain of the past should be precisely the kind of matters that everyone deals with by herself or himself or within the family circle. (…) This mourning by means of campaigns does not allow us to make peace with our past. We have torn our wounds open voluntary time and again to make sure they would not heal. World War II and the Soviet occupation are still not finished for us. We are still looking for culprits, requesting truth and justice” (Wimberg 2011). Arguing for personal working through in lieu of public acting out, Wimberg did not belittle the horrors of deportation nor their scale (in fact, he provided readers with a synopsis of his deported relatives, much like the MP in footnote 100, who placed his critique of the resolution on occupation regime within his family story). This practice or strategy of autobiographical contextualization of criticism, used also in the beginning of this chapter, suggests that individuals who lack historical family ties to Estonia – are not descended from Estonia – lack the footing needed to participate in conversations regarding the Estonian state.
Päts, who initiated several mass campaigns and holidays aimed at the Estonianization of the Estonian society.\footnote{Campaigns and developments included the Estonianization of surnames, place names (e.g. Kranking 2009), mass campaigns for collecting folklore with the help of school children, curtailments on minority education (Miüripeal 1999), but also increased role of the church and family and, correspondingly, decreased opportunities for women’s participation in public life (Kasekamp 2000, 120-131).}

Most recently, in 2011, the Tribe Day (hõimupäev), celebrated for the first time in 1931 during the peak of the Finno-Ugric tribal movement in Estonia, Finland and Hungary (see, e.g. Prozes 1997 and other contributions to Hõimusidemed), was elevated to the status of a national holiday to be observed on the third Saturday of October. Like the whole theory – and ideology – of kinship of Finno-Ugric languages and peoples, the Tribe Day is positioned at the intersection of culture, politics and biology. The idea of Finno-Ugric tribalism enables to imagine pre-modern and pre-national – natural and organic – forms of community (“the Tribe Day as a family reunion”),\footnote{Jaak Prozes, an activist of Finno-Ugric matters and lobbyist for the Tribe Day (e.g., Sikk 2010), has described “the Tribe Day as a family reunion where people party, but discuss also serious matters” (Jaak Prozes: hõimupäev on nagu sugulaste kokkutulek). In an interview given before the Tribe Day had been turned into a national holiday, he described how it could be celebrated in schools: “the principal could give a speech about Finno-Ugric unity [soome-ugri ühtsus] before [the concert of a folklore ensemble]. And the principal would speak like this: children, today is the Tribe Day. Let us think, what is our language and where does it come from. We see and hear that there are the same words in our language as there are in the Votian and Livonian language. And our language is not at all as small as we think it is. Maybe there are languages hidden in our language or we ourselves are hidden in other languages. And we think about the Votians, Livonians, Vepsians, Maris. Let us think, how they have been doing. We here speak Estonian but by the Maris, who might be also having a Tribe Day assembly today, the principal speaks… Russian. But why? Is it really the case that little Maris want to speak in Russian? Or would little Maris want to speak with their principal in the same language that their mother uses when talking to them.” (Sikk 2010.)} but is used to
argue for an ethnocultural definition of the nation as well as for the right of every ethnic group to self-determination. The proposal for turning the Tribe Day into an official holiday was made by a group of MPs representing both the coalition and opposition parties. According to their explanation, the aim of the Tribe Day:

is to raise Estonians’ awareness about belonging to the family of Finno-Ugric peoples, to value one’s own descent, mother tongue and cultural heritage. The Tribe Day would be a day of unique Estonian linguistic and cultural identity, of national indigenous culture [rahvuslik omakultuur], also a day for thinking about other Finno-Ugric peoples, introducing their languages and culture and discussing contemporary problems of kindred peoples [sugulasrahvad].

(Põhiseaduskomisjon toetas hõimupäeva riikliku tähistamist.)

The website of the state office explains that one of the aims of the Tribe Day is to express “support to cultural aspirations of the Finno-Ugric peoples” (Lipupäevad). Since most of the “kindred peoples” live on the territory of Russia, supporting them and discussing their problems is also a matter of foreign policy and a means whereby Estonia can present itself as an ambassador of democracy.111 At the same time, the Estonian Tribe Day

111 During the 5th World Congress of Finno-Ugric Peoples in Siberia, Khanty-Mansijsk in June 2008, the Estonian president Ilves spoke about the role of Europe as a protector of small languages and states, claiming, among other things, that “Hungarians, Finns and Estonians have chosen the so-called European values, manifested nowadays in the use of liberal democracy for running the society. Let us ask: was independent statehood a necessary precondition for making this choice? No. When these societies [Hungarian, Finnish, Estonian] decided to be Europeans [otsustasid olla eurooplased], they did not have their own states and Europe itself differed greatly from what it is today. But freedom and democracy constitute good rules of the game even in non-state structures. Freedom and democracy were our choice 150 years ago when even poets did not dream about statehood yet. Many Finno-Ugric peoples have not made this choice yet. It is important to point out as an aside, and this holds true for Estonia in particular, that once you have tasted freedom, you understand how much of it has to be given up in order to survive or simply get by” (Ilves 2008). Russian media channels are said to have
supports the view of the distinctiveness of Estonians and their culture, the dominant position of the Estonian language, and the privileged relationship of ethnic Estonians to the Estonian territory. Indigenousness and the accompanying idea of long history is central to the “tribal thinking” and can be put into different uses: for example, the argument that people speaking Finno-Ugric languages have been living on the European continent for 10 000 years serves as a proof of Estonians’ belonging to Europe.\textsuperscript{112} The elevation of the Tribe Day to a national holiday reinforces therefore the idea of the Estonian nation as a community held together by blood and language, genes and morphemes. Drawing on Etienne Balibar (1991), it could be argued that the idea of “Finno-Ugric unity” (some-ugri ühtsus) provides a superb example of the use of language and race in the production of ethnicity or “ethnicization”: the two “constitute two ways of rooting historical populations in a fact of ‘nature’ (the diversity of languages and the

\textsuperscript{112}the speech as a provocation targeted against the unity of Russia (Piirsalu 2008). On the following day, Ilves left the congress during the speech by a representative of the Russian Duma, who gave disorienting information about Estonia (Sikk 2008). World Congresses of Finno-Ugric Peoples have been taking place every four years since the first meeting held in Syktyvkar, the capital of the Komi Republic, in 1992 (The World Congresses of Finno-Ugric Peoples).

The overview of the Estonian society on Estonia.eu website contains an article on Finno-Ugric peoples that starts with the following, slightly anachronistic, statement: “According to recent studies, the peoples that speak Finno-Ugric languages have lived in Europe for about ten millennia” (Finno-Ugric Peoples). It is significant that information about Finno-Ugric peoples is placed under “Society” (i.e. facts about who “we” are and what Estonia is) rather than under “Culture and Science” (the study of language, interpretation). Cf. also Kirch 1997, an introduction to an early collection on the “integration of non-Estonians into Estonian society”. Kirch begins by citing linguistic and genetic evidence that “confirms the nativeness of Estonians to this [Estonian] territory” and proceeds with archeological evidence in order to claim that the beginning of Estonian sovereignty can be traced back to duke Vladimir’s expedition against “Estonians” in 997: “Only in 997 did the separation of Estonia from Russia take place and this first military conflict between Estonians and Russians is sufficiently proven in ancient documents” (Kirch 1997, 10).
diversity of races appearing predestined), but also two ways of giving a meaning to the continued existence, of transcending its contingency.” The two operate often together “for only their complementarity makes it possible for the ‘people’ to be represented as an absolutely autonomous unit.” (Balibar 1991, 96-97.) Elaborating on Balibar and analyzing German cultural politics of the 1990s and 2000s, Uli Linke argues that language has become increasingly racialized under the conditions of global capitalism, serving as a means of tying subjects to the political space of the nation state (Linke 2004). The concept of the Tribe Day is in line with Estonian integration policy, which, in addition to seeking to increase cohesion between permanent residents, underlines the distinctiveness of ethnic/national groups and claims to be supporting the preservation of ethnic identities, languages and cultures in Estonia.

The Native Language Day (emakeelepäev – lit. “the day of mother tongue”) celebrated since 1999 on March 14 carries officially a similar message, dedicated as it is to the protection of the status and purity or “wellbeing” of the Estonian language. The website of the state office gives the following definition of the Native Language Day:

Estonians’ mother tongue or the Estonian language has been regarded as the carrier of our culture [meie kultuuri kandja]. We communicate by means of language, but the language preserves also our unique cultural and historical experience. Language as a carrier of identity calls for attention and protection.

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113 I will return to the idea of the wellbeing of the language in chapter 6 when discussing the transition of Russian-language schools to the Estonian language of instruction. Several people I interviewed criticized the reform on the basis of its impact on the “beauty” of the Russian language, reiterating the concerns expressed by many Estonian about the Estonian language.
The idea of celebrating the Native Language Day was initiated by Meinhard Laks, a schoolteacher from Sonda, and it is observed on the birthday of the poet Kristjan Jaak Peterson (14.03.1801-4.08.1822). Peterson was one of the first persons who claimed that the language of the people of the land originating in the cottage of a peasant [talutarest päripinev maarahva keel]\(^{114}\) could be on a par with cultural languages [kultuurkeeled].

Estonian language has by now become in every respect a viable state, cultural and scholarly language. Nevertheless, Estonian language requires protection and attention also today. There is only one Estonia in the world, home of Estonians, where, of course, Estonian is being spoken.

The Native Language Day reminds us that the purity of the Estonian language and its continuation [eesti keele puhtus ja püsimäeamine] depend on the carriers and users of the Estonian language.

(Lipupäevad.)

Since everybody has a mother tongue (and some have two or more), the concept of “native language” is – at least theoretically – broader and more inclusive than that of a “Finno-Ugric language family” and could be thus used to bring Estonia’s ethnolinguistically diverse population together in diversity. However, the official interpretation of the Native Language Day seems to ignoring the level of the individual, equating the “native language” narrowly with the Estonian language and thus with the “state language.” In this way, this approach reiterates the idea of the privileged position of the Estonian language in Estonia. Furthermore, because this day is dedicated to “the mother tongue,” the language one inherits from one’s parents, this approach reiterates also the idea of language as an ethnic marker and thus implicitly the idea of Estonians’ privileged position in Estonia: Estonia is the home of Estonians, people whose mother

\(^{114}\) See chapter 1, p. 68 on the ethnonym maarahvas or “people of the land” used by Estonians well into the 19th century.
tongue is Estonian, and the only place in the world where they can speak “their own” language. Similarly to the Tribal Day, the Native Language Day emphasizes the inherent distinctiveness of ethnic/national groups, implying that the ethnic/national borders cannot be undone or crossed. Moreover, every nation/ethnicity has a territory of “its own” where, at least ideally, “its own” language dominates. (Cf. chapter 1 on Soviet nationality policy.) The expression “the language of the people of the land” in particular equates language with the land with the people.

At the same time, as was mentioned above, the initiative for the Native Language Day came from “below” and it is one of the very few new holidays in post-Soviet Estonia that does not commemorate a particular historical date or “restore” the pre-war calendar. The rural schoolteacher Meinard Laks (1922-2008) first came up with the idea of *emakeelepäev* in 1994, envisioning it as a day for the protection of the Estonian culture and language. President Lennart Meri proposed in March 1996 establishing a Day of

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115 Cf. Balibar: “The language community seems the more abstract notion [of language community and racial community], but in reality it is the more concrete since it connects individuals up with an origin which may at any moment be actualized and which has as its content the *common act* of their own exchanges, of their discursive communication, using the instruments of spoken language and the whole, constantly self-renewing mass of written and recorded texts” (Balibar 1991, 97; emphasis in the original).

116 Laks is said to have published over thirty articles in order to propagate his idea and managed to collect 175 letters of support from various academic and cultural institutions and individuals (Kuidas Sonda õpetaja 1999. aastal emakeelepäeva tegi (“How a teacher from Sonda made the Native Language Day in 1999”)). The teacher submitted these materials to a Pro Patria MP, who promised to endorse the proposal for a Native Language Day, but forgot about it and did not take any action when the Riigikogu started working on the public holidays act passed in 1998. Laks continued fighting and in February 1999, the parliament voted for the Native Language Day. (Ibid.) Among other things, this episode confirms the argument put forward in the beginning of this
Estonia (*Eesti päev*) instead of the Native Language Day and when asked about this idea in an interview he gave 2004 interview, Laks responded:

I have regretted it a little bit with hindsight and have thought that it was a rather wise proposal. The Day of Estonia would have caused no frictions between nations [*rahvus*] in the sense that how is the Estonian language better than the others, so that it should be celebrated, all worries of the Estonian land [*Eestimaa*] could have been drawn together under [the Day of Estonia].

(Kuidas Sonda õpetaja 1999. aastal emakeelepäeva tegi.)

I would like to argue that the focus on the state language in the official interpretation of the Native Language Day reflects one of the major contradictions of the Estonian integration model, to be discussed in greater detail in chapter 5: the mismatch between the Estonian language/state as the common language/home of all people living in Estonia and the concept of language as a defining marker of ethnic identity along with the idea that all people living in Estonia have the right to preserve “their own” ethnic/national identity and culture. Since Estonians, too, have the right to preserve their distinctiveness, it follows from this that the public sphere or language imagined to be common to everybody is always also ethnically Estonian, which in turn puts minorities in an in-between position: they are required to respect Estonia as the home of Estonians and at the same time become integrated into this home.

I saw this contradiction in action at a Native Language Day poetry recital competition that took place in the cultural center of the district of Lasnamäe and featured children subchapter, namely, that the interest of political actors in the calendar has grown over time.
from local kindergartens, some of which use primarily the Russian language and others Estonian. Despite different mother tongues, almost all children performed in Estonian and since Estonian was for many participants a foreign language, the competition was no longer about citing poetry in one’s native language, but about citing poetry in Estonian and performing one’s belonging to Estonia via the Estonian language. I could not help feeling odd or puzzled when listening to Estonian-language poems about the beauty and importance of the mother tongue, cited by children who clearly spoke something else at home with their parents. I was not bothered by their accents, but rather by the content of these poems as well as by how smoothly the state language took the place of native languages – in the context of this particular day (cf. footnote 110 on the imaginary speech given by a principal on the Tribe Day).

I was overcome by a similar sense of estrangement when visiting a Russian-medium high school in Lasnamäe in early March 2011, just before the Native Language Day. The walls of one of the hallways were covered with cut-out blossoms of cornflower – the Estonian national flower, swallows – the Estonian national bird, small figures of boys and girls in Estonian national costumes, holding hands or standing alone, whereas all girls had blond hair and all boys wore skullcaps – a stereotypical men’s headgear in stylized folk costumes. There were also Estonian flags students had drawn and colored. These symbols tied the Estonian state to the Estonian nature, peasant culture (“people of the land”) and physical features imagined to be characteristic of ethnic Estonians and in-

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117 Field notes from March 2, 2010.
118 Field notes from March 6, 2011.
between them were citations in Estonian and Russian by Estonian, Russian and foreign intellectuals about the importance of the mother tongue to an individual and the nation. The following two quotes in Estonian struck me as particularly significant, given that they were displayed on the wall of a Russian-language school, required by the state to teach an increasing proportion of the curriculum in Estonian:119 “The native language [emakeel] is the most beautiful one for every nation [rahvas]” (Igale rahvale on kõige ilusam tema emakeel) and “In the mother alone tongue can a person be internally genuine” (Ainult emakeeles üks võib inimene seesmiselt ehtne olla). The former aphorism was by Paul Ariste (1905-1990), an Estonian linguist, folklorist and polyglot best known for his work on Finno-Ugric peoples, especially Votians, and the latter by Jakob Hurt (1839-1907), a pastor, scholar and ideologist whose folklore collection campaign inspired the Heritage Movement of the late 1980s (see chapter 1). As in the case of the poetry competition, the state language took over from native languages, so that the Native Language Day was no longer about the native language of each individual, but became an occasion calling for displays of loyalty to the Estonian state by individuals who are not native speakers of Estonian. To put it differently: for Estonians, the Native Language Day signifies both their mother tongue and the state language, while non-Estonians are expected to associate it with the state language – which does not mean that minority actors could and would not associate this holiday with “their own”

119 The law requires both basic schools (grades 1-9) and upper secondary schools (grades 10-12) to teach at least 60 per cent of the curriculum in Estonian, though parents/schools can apply for exceptions. The ongoing and controversial transition of Russian-language schools to the Estonian-language instruction will be discussed in more detail in chapters 5-7.
language. Even the quotes and state symbols on the wall of the Russian-language school were open to different interpretations, including ironic and empowering ones.

Monuments and Peoples out of Place: Lihula and Tõnismäe

The European Union provides a framework for taking the transference of the past on the present to an international level, where it comes to serve the purpose of negotiating the position of “East” vis-à-vis “West” and thereby also renegotiating the identity of Europe. According to Maria Mälksoo, the attempts of the Baltic States and Russia to “seek pan-European recognition to the ‘Europeanness’ of their narrative of WWII and their ‘self’ thereof, whilst denying the Europeanness of the other, are indicative of their concurrent attempts to wrench apart their traditionally liminal position in Europe” (Mälksoo 2009, 65). Eva-Clarita Onken argues along similar lines that in order to better understand the links between memory and politics in contemporary Europe, one needs to pay attention to intertwined relations between domestic memory politics, memory politics in bilateral relations and in the European Union (Onken 2007).

In 2005, a group of members of the European Parliament from the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania and Slovakia called for a ban on communist symbols on equal terms with symbols of the Nazi regime (EU ban urged on communist symbols), which in the words of Onken marked “the beginning of a new phase in European memory politics” (Onken 2007, 43). Though this initiative was rejected, in 2006, following the grandiose celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the Victory Day in Moscow in May
2005, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe passed a report “On the need for international condemnation of totalitarian communist regimes” (Resolution 1481). Next, in 2008, a group of members of the European Parliament (including a MEP from Estonia) proposed that August 23, the day of signing the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, be proclaimed a Europe-wide day of remembrance for victims of Nazism and Communism. One of the initiators of this idea explained that “the meaning we give to August 23 with this declaration provides the history of our new member states with a role in the common history of Europe that is equal to that of Western Europe” (EP: 23. augustil võiks stalinismi- ja natsismiohvreid mäletada) This proposal regarding August 23 became linked to another initiative by another group of MEPs and in 2009 (the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall!) the European Parliament passed a resolution on European consciousness and totalitarianism, which called for the proclamation of August 23 the “Europe-wide Day of Remembrance for the victims of all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, to be commemorated with dignity and impartiality” (European Parliament resolution of 2 April 2009 on European conscience and totalitarianism).\(^{120}\) Later in 2009, the Riigikogu supported the government’s proposal to declare August 23 the Day of Remembrance for Victims of Communism and Nazism (kommunismi ja natsismi ohvrite mälestuspäev) (Pühade ja tähtpäevade seaduse muutmise seadus 2009). Though seemingly identical, the Europe-wide and domestic remembrance day fulfill different functions: the former seeks to include Estonia into “the common history of Europe” and

\(^{120}\) Among the initiators of the resolution was Tunne Kelam, who was instrumental to formulating the doctrine of legal restorationism and was among leaders of the Citizens’ Committees Movement and the Congress of Estonia (see chapter 2).
by doing so, rewrite this history, while the latter provides a means of internal boundary maintenance between victims and perpetrators.

This solidification of the victim’s position on the European stage has been accompanied by seemingly opposing attempts back at home at inscribing Estonia’s and Estonians’ resistance against occupation regimes into the annual cycle of official rituals. In February 2007, after two years of debating and shifting back and forth of various proposals,\textsuperscript{121} the Riigikogu declared September 22 Resistance Fighting Day (vastupanuvõitluse päev) (Pühade ja tähtpäevade seaduse muutmise seadus 2007). In an announcement issued in early September 2008, the government’s communication bureau explained that the Resistance Fighting Day commemorates efforts back in 1944 to look for a “third way” of international collaboration and neutrality instead of submitting to Germans or the Soviets. The statement recounted the formation of the National Committee in early February 1944, explaining that the National Committee had functioned as a proxy parliament and appointed a government on September 18 after the withdrawal of German troops from Tallinn and before the arrival of the Red Army on September 22. This government, led by Otto Tief, is said to have declared Estonia neutral in World War II. (Taustamaterjalid: vastupanuvõitluse päev 22. septembril.)

Though the announcement issued by the government focused on the activities of the National Committee, it follows from this argumentation that upon entering Tallinn on

\textsuperscript{121} The proposal was discussed in November 2005, February 2006, November 2006,
September 22, 1944, the Red Army did not liberate the capital but occupied it – again. Hence, though the rationale behind the Resistance Fighting Day foregrounded different actors and events than the narrative about the MRP, it sought to provide further evidence of legal continuity between pre- and post-Soviet statehood. Eneken Laanes has discussed the narrative of resistance as a means for evading situations of humiliation and impotence and imagining continuity under circumstances of rupture (e.g., the activities of dissidents in the Soviet era)\(^{122}\); she points out furthermore that once resistance is turned into a basis for collective identity, it makes it possible to bypass frictions among Estonians (Laanes 2009). As such, resistance could be regarded as the flipside of victimization: like the erasure of alternatives to collaboration with the Soviet regime, resistance narrative makes it possible to recount what is otherwise denied as unacceptable.

It is noteworthy in this connection that while the explanation issued by the government’s information bureau framed the Resistance Fighting Day as a commemoration of the neutral “third way” (kolmas tee), in a broader sense in the narrower Estonian context the notion of resistance covers also the fighting of Estonian men in the German army as well as the Forest Brethren guerilla warfare in the 1940s and after the war.\(^{123}\) These two categories overlapped to some extent and were both stigmatized as Fascist by the Soviet regime, giving rise to a joint veterans’ movement in post-Soviet Estonia – the Union of Estonian Freedom Fighters (Eesti Vabadusvõitlejate Liit) that has member organizations

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\(^{122}\) This notion of continuous resistance has also made it to scholarly interpretations of Estonia. See e.g. Bennich-Björkman 2007 on Soviet Estonia as a “society of “collective mobilization.””

\(^{123}\) One of the most productive scholars of this topic has been Mart Laar.
all over the country. German war veterans and former Forest Brethren have together
framed their armed fight against the Red Army as a struggle for Estonian independence
and position themselves as heirs of soldiers who fought in the 1918-1920 War of
Independence. This connection has been established, among other things, by means of
visual symbols. The logo of the Union of Estonian Freedom Fighters features an emblem
taken from the Cross of Liberty, the first Estonian military decoration awarded for
military and civilian services in the creation of the Republic of Estonia: an arm in armor
holding a sword and above it a Gothic letter “E.” This emblem, designed in 1919 by
Nikolai Triik, one of the first Estonian professional artists, was used widely in War of
Independence memorials erected all over the country in the 1920-1930s and was later
appropriated by Estonians who fought in World War II in the 20th Waffen Grenadier
Division of the SS.

124 Tamm and Halla 2008, 22-29 provide an overview of the evolution of the monuments
dedicated to the War of Liberty in the interwar years, pointing out that nationalism came
to replace communal grief over time and that the majority of monuments were erected in
the 1930s under the authoritarian rule of Konstantin Päts (see discussion of the National
Flag Day above, pp. 178). The observations by Marek Tamm and Saale Halla correspond
to conclusions reached by Jay Winter regarding the remembrance of the Great War in
Europe. Winter emphasizes that the aims and means of commemoration changed over
time and there were also generational differences: during the wartime, commemoration
was a political act, while grief and eventually new political meanings took over after the
war. (Winter 1995.) Estonian War of Independence monuments were destroyed or taken
down and in some cases hidden in the first years of the Soviet regime; their restoration
has been one of the means for establishing continuity between the pre- and post-Soviet
Estonian state.
In the early 2000s in particular, members of the Union of Estonian Freedom Fighters were demanding for an official state-level endorsement of their own interpretation of their participation in World War II. Veterans’ claims were a source of trouble and embarrassment for the government and other actors concerned about Estonia’s international reputation and integration, pointing at the uneasy fit between the “common history of Europe” (EP: 23. augustil võiks stalinismi- ja natsismiohvreid mäletada) and contradictory experiences of people living in post-Communist states. There is no place in established “Western” narratives for the commemoration of individuals who fought in World War II against the Soviet Union. Not surprisingly, veterans’ claims for recognition became more vocal and were openly backed up by nationalist parties in the mid-2000s, after Estonia’s accession to the European Union and NATO. Furthermore, more people

Illustration 3 A monument with a cross of liberty at the Cemetery of Defense Forces

125 In July 2004, several organizations of war veterans and of the repressed adopted an address to the Riigikogu, which the parliament ignored despite the fact that the address had been supported by the Pro Patria Union and Res Publica, at the time still two separate parties. The address requested the parliament to (1) give a political assessment to events of WW II in the name of the Estonian state; (2) pass a law that would recognize Estonians’ armed fight against the Soviet Union during WW II as fight for Estonian
came to share the veterans’ sense of injustice as a result of a 2004 incident involving a World War II monument in the western town of Lihula.

On August 20, 2004, the 13 anniversary of restoration of independence, a commemorative stone commissioned privately by individual member of the Union of Estonian Freedom Fighters was unveiled in the local graveyard of the town of Lihula. The monument included a bas-relief of a soldier with a German helmet and a gun pointing towards east; on his left front pocket was a cross – the Iron Cross or the Cross of Liberty –, on his sleeve a tricolor, referring to the Estonian national flag, and on his collar the above-described emblem with an arm, sword and letter “E.” The monument was dedicated “To Estonian men who fought in 1940-1945 against Bolshevism and for the restoration of Estonian independence,” i.e., on the side of Germany for the independence of Estonia.

The first attempt to erect a different version of this same commemorative stone was made in 2002 in the resort town of Pärnu, not far from Lihula. At the time, the soldier’s helmet

126 For a documentation of the unveiling of the monument, see “The story of the Lihula monument” on the website of the Union of Estonian Freedom Fighters (Lihula mälestussamba lugu); according to this source, the police had forbidden participants from singing the national anthem but they sang it anyway and asked a local Lutheran pastor to bless the monument. See also Madisson 2004 and Lihula Teataja 8 (18), a special issue of the local newspaper dedicated to the opening of the monument and the 60th anniversary of defense battles in the summer of 1944.
bore SS insignia and the inscription read “To all Estonian soldiers who died in the second war for the liberation of the fatherland and a free Europe in 1940-1945.” The city council ordered changes to be made to the inscription and the relief before the monument could be officially unveiled and it was subsequently removed. (Estonia removes SS monument; Lauri 2002.) The prime minister at the time, Siim Kallas of the Reform Party, described the monument’s “text and strong message” as “regrettable,” while one of the initiators of the commemorative stone explained to the international press: “Of course Europeans will not understand us. (…) We made this [monument] for our soldiers and not for Brussels” (ibid.).

When the monument reemerged in Lihula127 with a new inscription two years later, after Estonia had been accepted by “Brussels” and the NATO, it could stand less than two weeks before the government, led this time by the Res Publica prime minister Juhan Parts, ordered it to be removed without prior warning.128 The whole operation was carried out in a rather brutal manner, making many Estonians feel as if the government was using violence against its own people. Over forty policemen, including members of special forces, arrived in the local graveyard one evening and restricted access to the monument.

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127 The town of Lihula has just under 1,600 inhabitants and is the center of the Lihula rural municipality, which at the time was led by Tiit Madisson, a former dissident, political prisoner and member of the Estonian National Independence Party that was among the initiators of the Citizens’ Committees’ movement.

128 The prime minister had a meeting with a representative of the Union of Estonian Freedom Fighters’ to discuss the removal of the monument but the government did not wait to hear back from the organization before taking action (Valitsus ei arvestanud Lihula küsimuses vabadusvõitlejatega “The government did not take freedom fighters into account”).
while starting to remove it with a crane; the police ended up using pepper gas, dogs and batons against locals, about 400 people, who had gathered to witness the operation and were throwing stones at the policemen as well as blocking their way out from the graveyard (Vilgats 2004). The prime minister apologized for the incident on the national television and admitted that it had hurt the “sense of justice of ordinary people” (Sildam 2004).129 Locals have claimed afterwards that they were interrogated after the incident, in some cases for hours (Tammer 2005). One of the members of the parish council said in an interview given on the first anniversary of the incident that in her view, the episode had brought to the fore the most serious problems of the Estonian state: interpretation and knowledge of history (“It feels as if we don’t know our own history properly”) and what she described as the “government’s incompetence”:

Nobody bothered to talk to people. Neither officials nor psychologists, who might have been able to ease the tensions. Only copies of the order to remove the monument were thrown around [at the graveyard]. I believe there would have been no tussle [mäsö] had somebody spoken to people and explained why something was being done.

(Quoted in Tammer 2005.)130

129 Parts made a visit to Lihula later in the same year and while he was in town, locals found out that there was a unit of special police forces waiting around in the nearby forest. This operation was arguably the initiative of the regional police and came as a surprise to the prime minister. (Märulipolitsei tuli Partsile üllatusena “Special forces came as a surprise to Parts.”)

130 The same member of the municipal council confirmed that the decision to erect the monument was made jointly by the local people: “We interpreted history the way it was at the time in every Estonian family, that one brother could fight in one and the other in the other [armed] force. In the background there was also the knowledge about how the whole first and second cohort of the Lihula high school went to war voluntarily. And they went [to war] precisely to protect Estonia. We thought that in the honor and memory of these and many other boys there could be a place where one could bring flowers. Being the good-natured country folk [heatahtlike maainimestena] that we are, we thought about
Res Publica, the party of the prime minister Juhan Parts, regretted the conflict, but justified the removal of the monument, arguing that the initiators of the commemorative stone had acted irresponsibly and ignored the national interests (rahvuslik huvid) by including elements that could be used to associate Estonia with Nazism and thus giving Russia the opportunity to discredit Estonia. (Partei kiitis samba eemaldamise heaks.) The foreign minister Kristiina Ojuland (Reform Party) asserted similarly that the monument had “endangered Estonia’s international reputation”: “Estonia that shares European values and is building its future as a members state of the NATO and the European Union cannot rely in its treatments of the past on World War II era German army uniform that in the democratic world is identified unambiguously with Nazism” (Ojuland: maailm ei mõistnud sammast (“Ojuland: the world did not understand the monument”).

The opposition party Pro Patria Union, on the other hand, claimed that the incident had given a blow to the democratic development of Estonia: “In a state that follows the rule of law, politics must be first and foremost citizen- and nation-centered [kodaniku- ja people [inimesed], not politics and all possible political backgrounds, implicit currents and backrooms” (Tammer 2005).

131 Cf. the view expressed by the Lihula parish council member in the aftermath of the Lihula episode: “If Estonia wants to be an independent and democratic state, we have to have the right to decide our own internal matters in our state. It is furthermore our right to talk about history precisely in the way it really was [nii, nagu see tegelikult oli]. Because nobody knows it better than us. We must have the right to stand up for ourselves. We must not be afraid of Americans, European Unionists [euroopaliitlased], Jews or whoever and must not let ourselves be influenced by others’ opinion” (Tammer 2005).
The opposition criticized the government for its “ineptitude and inability to explain the issues of Estonia’s recent history to our allies in the European Union and Nato” and claimed to be continuing its own “efforts to condemn the crimes of Communism on an equal footing with those of Nazism on an international level” (Eesti demokraatia on ohus? “Estonian democracy is in danger?”; see also Sammas kadus välisriikide survel (“The monument disappeared due to pressure from foreign countries”)). The Pro Patria Union furthermore juxtaposed the Lihula monument with Red Army monuments and especially with the Bronze Soldier in Tallinn:

If the government justifies the removal of the Lihula monument [by arguing] that it recalls the totalitarian regimes that have occupied Estonia, the question emerges why the government has not taken down the monument of a solider in Soviet uniform in Tõnismäe that veterans wearing the uniforms of this same occupation pay homage to every year.

(Punasõdur kadugu koos natsisõduriga? (“Should the red soldier disappear along with the Nazi Soldier?”))

The Union of Estonian Freedom Fighters issued a couple of days later a similar statement where it condemned the government’s approach as “Soviet”:

Estonia is a democratic state that follows the rule of law. The government has been emphasizing this with respect to victory days of red veterans [punaveteranide võidupühad] and the celebration of the “liberation” of the towns of Narva and Tallinn and

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132 Cf. the previous chapter on the implicit equation of “Estonian” with “citizen” in the Estonian legal-restorationist citizenship policy.
133 The Day of Remembrance for Victims of Communism and Nazism and the Europe-wide Day of Remembrance for the victims of all totalitarian and authoritarian regimes observed since 2009 and discussed above could be regarded as outcomes of these efforts.
134 The same news story mentioned that the last time dogs were used “against own people” (oma rahva vastu) was in February 1988 in Tartu when Soviet militia dispersed commemorators of the Tartu Peace Treaty (Punasõdur kadugu koos natsisõduriga?)
the preservation and maintenance of the monuments of foreign conquerors [võõrvallutajad]. (...) However, when dealing with its own people [oma rahvas], there is an end to democracy and the rule of law. Then the government acts in line with the best Soviet traditions.

(Vabadusvõitlejad: valitsus käitus nõukogulike tavade järgi (“Freedom fighters: the government behaved according to Soviet traditions”))

According to the Union of Freedom Fighters, Estonian men were “forced to fight [in WW II] in a foreign uniform [võõras mundris], but because there was the emblem of the Cross of Liberty and the blue-black-white insignia on this uniform, it must be regarded as a uniform of the Estonian soldier” (ibid.).

Somebody – the police would not release the name of this individual – submitted a statement to the police, claiming that the Lihula monument violated the Penal Code by inciting “social hatred” (sotsiaalne vaen), i.e., hatred on the basis of nationality, race, confession, origin or political views. The police ordered an expert opinion from Peeter Torop, a professor of semiotics at the University of Tartu, who compared the relief to war-era images of German soldiers and concluded that the monument was overly bellicose but did not include any elements of SS symbols and was keyed to Estonia rather than Nazi Germany (Semiootikaprofessor Toropi hinnangul ei ole Lihula sammas

135 Cf. Alessandro Portelli on the relationship between German-speaking Italians from Tyrol conscripted into the German army and the Italian resistance movement in World War II: “The Resistance was also a war among Italians, a war in which Italians killed each other. Thus, the fact that these ex-Italians were wearing a foreign uniform only made them guiltier in the eyes of the anti-Fascists. (...) when one wears a uniform, one is on one side only” (Portelli 2003, 145; emphasis added).
At the same time, if one looks at images of the gathering organized in Lihula on the first anniversary of the removal of the monument, most young people attending this event appeared have been dressed like skinheads (Lihula – aasta hiljem). The meanings of “texts,” whether they are monuments or emblems or uniforms, are ever emergent in interaction and thus context-dependent.

“The story of the Lihula column” (Lihula samba lugu; mälestussammas – lit. commemorative column) gave rise to a wave of acts of vandalism targeted against the Soviet-era World War II monuments, placing them under public scrutiny (e.g., Vandaalid sodisid Pärnumaal nõukogude sõdurite monumenti; Vandaalid rüüstasid Lihula punavõitlejate ausamba; Vandaalid rikkusid Nõukogude monumendid Kaarmas ja Haapsalus; Politsei vaatab Läänemaa punamonumendid üle; see also architect Mart Port’s essay “One does not fight against cultural monuments” (Port 2004)). The so-called

136 Torop found that “(a)ll possible SS symbols have been suppressed [in the monument]. The relief has a cross on the chest, but there is no swastika. The man is carrying a universal German helmet and there is no reason to associate its shape with Nazism. One should rather say that the monument puts a strong emphasis on Estonian elements. For example, there is an image of the tricolor on the sleeve and on the collar an emblem from the inner part of the Cross of Liberty [see pp. 192]. (...) In the expert report, we juxtaposed the monument with photographs and war-era mobilization posters where there is a soldier in exactly the same position and looks similarly towards east. One could probably say that the monument is impolite or contradictory,” Torop says, referring to the monument’s failure in the contemporary context. “In principle, the question is that it is nevertheless difficult to explain to the external world [välismaailmale] that this is an Estonian soldier who served in a national combat unit of the German army. The Waffen SS has been never deemed criminal but try to explain it to foreigners [võõrastele]. (...) One does not have to go far for examples. Our Italian colleagues [semioticians] asked us agitatedly about the restitution of fascism [in Estonia]. One had to explain to them calmly and with the help of facts that there has never been anything like that in Estonia” (Semiootikaprofessor Toropi hinnangul ei ole Lihula sammus natslik).
Bronze Soldier memorial in Tõnismäe, a neighborhood in the center of Tallinn next to the Old Town, was bound to become the center of attention already by virtue of its prominent location. Moreover, as was mentioned above, the Pro Patria Union and the Union of Freedom Fighter both drew attention to this monument in their statement on the incident in Lihula. This bronze statue of a soldier standing against the backdrop of a limestone wall was erected in the aftermath of World War II and served simultaneously as the burial site of 14 persons, who, according to the official story, had died when taking over Tallinn from the German army. Titled initially Monument to the Liberators of Tallinn, it followed the same pattern of function and form as many other war memorials erected by the Soviet regime in the aftermath of war to mark its sphere of influence in the Eastern and Central Europe (see, e.g., Fowkes 2004). Within the Soviet Union in particular these monuments sought to create and demonstrate “a sense of political community transcending all internal diversity” (Lane 1981, 141). Essentially, the Monument to the Liberators of Tallinn was presented as a gift from the grateful city and the new union republic to Soviet

137 Information regarding the burial is contradictory and incomplete. The historian Peeter Kaasik has concluded on the basis of archival documents accessible in Estonia that it is likely that two fallen soldiers were buried to Tõnismäe immediately after the Soviet takeover of Tallinn, but that the remaining 12 bodies were exhumed from temporary graves in different parts of Tallinn and reburied together in April 1945 (Kaasik 2006, a report commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2006). A temporary wooden monument erected on the grave was blown up by two Estonian schoolgirls on May 8, 1946 and their act was later copied in some other Estonian towns (Kaasik 2006, 16-17).
soldiers for their sacrifices in World War II: the ensemble was designed by Enn Roos and Arnold Alas, local artists of the pre-war generation; utilized limestone, a natural resource characteristic of Estonia; the opening of the monument took place on September 22, 1947, the third anniversary of “liberation of Tallinn” from the German occupation. The memorial was at the center of official ceremonies throughout the Soviet era and an eternal flame burned in front of the statue from 1964 till 1991 with pioneers standing as guards of honor. The memorial’s identity as a burial site weakened over time: in 1979-1980, for example, the names of the buried persons on the limestone wall were covered over with panels that listed the names of the Red Army units that took part in the “liberation of Tallinn” (1234 II maailmasõjas hukkunute matmispaik; Kultuurimälestiseks tunnistamine).

Whereas these earliest Soviet monuments in the new territories were arguably often characterized by a “visible aggressive character” (Fowkes 2004, 11), the Bronze Soldier is overcome with grief rather than belligerence. His head is bowed down, helmet clutched to his hand and gun tucked under his cape with only the handle showing from behind his back; his other hand holds the rim of his cape rather than being clutched into a fist. The few medals on his wide chest are unrecognizable – unlike the Cross of Liberty on the pocket of the Lihula soldier – and even the buckle of his belt is plain rather than

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138 The ensemble with the monument was built on a square opposite the Kaarli Church built of limestone; in the 1980-1990s the Estonian National Library was built on its other side, likewise of limestone.
139 The initial plan was to open the monument on the 29th anniversary of the October Revolution in November 1946 and the next deadline was May 1, 1947 (Kaasik 2006, 14).
embellished with a little five-pointed star. In fact, there are no “red” stars to be seen and when the Tallinn soldier is compared to his colleagues in the Treptow Park in Berlin, in Sofia or in Prague (see Fowkes 2004 for images), he comes across as modest and inward-looking.\footnote{140 The design competition held in 1945-1945 explained that “ideologically [ideeliselt], the monument must express the patriotic rise of the Estonian people [eesti rahvas] and its fight against fascist German conquerors. The monument must express the friendship of Soviet peoples [Nõukogude rahvaste sõprus] and cherish the memory of the manly sons of the fatherland, who have given their life in the fight against the enemy” (cited in Kaasik 2006, 15). Hence, the call for proposals underlined and downplayed ethnic/national distinctiveness simultaneously: unlike “the Estonian people,” “the manly sons of the fatherland” is a broad supraethnic category denoting loyalty to the Soviet state.}

Illustration 4 The Bronze Soldier in its new location
The Bronze Soldier was one of the few major Soviet monuments left in place after the restoration of independence. After a renovation in the early 1990s, it was rededicated – in Estonian and Russian – “for those who fell in World War II.” In 1995 it was entered into the “national registry for cultural monuments” (kultuurimälestiste riiklik register) as a “historical cultural monument” (ajaloomälestis) along with other burial grounds of those fallen in World War II (1234 II maailmasõjas hukkunute matmispaik; Kultuurimälestiseks tunnistamine). In the same year the city of Tallinn announced a new competition for re-designing the area and commissioned a preliminary project, according to which the original ensemble would have been supplemented with elements signifying, first, death as the common ground between all fallen soldiers irrespective of their uniform; second, opposition to the Communist ideology (a big metal cross, a row of columns separating the new elements from the old memorial) and, third, the continuity of national identity (an oak tree) (Kaasik 2006, 14-15). However, nothing came of these plans. At some point in the early 1990s, the little paved square in front of the monument was replaced with grass and a new footpath was created that ran diagonally through the square, leaving the soldier to stand alone on an island along with trees and other natural objects: the monument was there but also inaccessible, cut off from “regular” trajectories. One could not approach the statue without leaving the footpath, a marker of civilization and normative behavior, and stepping on the grass or snow.

141 The Soviet-era inscription read: “Eternal glory to fallen heroes who have fallen for the liberation and sovereignty of our land [maa]” (Kaasik 2006, 14); again, the national and the Soviet merged into one (is “our land” Estonia or the Soviet Union?; cf. the history textbook “Tales from the homeland’s history” discussed in the introduction).
Though Victory Day and the Day of Liberation of Tallinn ceased to be official holidays in post-Soviet Estonia – indeed, Estonian statehood is built on the denial of the very same historical narrative these holidays were created to cherish. However, mainly Tallinn’s Russians and Russophones continued to bring flowers to the memorial and by mid-2000s, the time of the Lihula conflict, the popularity of the Victory Day and the Day of Liberation of Tallinn appeared to be on the rise again with gatherings at the Bronze Soldier becoming more visible and drawing younger participants. While this development coincided with the renewed importance assigned to World War II in the Russian Federation, especially since the 60th anniversary of the “Great Victory” in 2005, it indicated simultaneously a new situation in Estonia in comparison to the 1990s when the position of the Russian and Russian-speaking population was too precarious to allow for conspicuous – public – celebration of holidays condemned by the new regime.142 To the extent that many individuals, especially those born and raised in the Soviet Union, had continued to observe the Victory Day or the Day of Liberation of Tallinn all the time irrespective of the current state ideology, the renewed visibility of these commemorative practices in the early 2000s could be regarded as a sign of increased stability and sense of trust towards the Estonian state: being seen by the monument alone or together was no longer perceived as a source of threat. Also, with most of the other Soviet-era monuments gone, people observing these holidays had no other place to go to. For example, one middle-aged Russian man I interviewed told me that he would celebrate the Soviet Army and Navy Day (February 23) by meeting his army pals by the monument of Yevgeny

142 See chapter 1 for the discussion of the Aliens Law and other nationalizing legislations in the early 1990s.
Nikonov in Kadriorg; they would walk by the sea and in the park and reminiscence. Since the statue of Nikonov was taken down in the early 1990s, they have been getting together in downtown and visiting the Bronze Soldier.

To come back to the increase in the visibility of commemorative engagements with the Bronze Soldier memorial, the beginning of the millennium had been a period of rapid economic growth during which Estonians and Russian-speakers both are said to have shifted towards consumerist values, placing emphasis on self-realization, wealth and “good life” (Kalmus and Vihalemm 2004). Another sign of mutual accommodation

The Soviet Army and Navy Day was renamed Defender of the Fatherland Day in the Russian Federation in 1991 and continues to be observed officially in many parts of the former Soviet Union. The day commemorates the first mass draft into the Red Army during 1918 Civil War (see chapter 1) and was initiatives by authorities in 1919; until 1949, it was celebrated as the Red Army Day. Several Russian and Russian-speaking men I interacted with, especially those who had been to the Soviet army, assigned personal commemorative meanings to this day. On February 23, 2010 I visited Kostya, a Russian man in his late 30s whom I interviewed repeatedly and will return to later in this study. Kostya excused himself at some point during the evening and left the room in order to make a phone call to his friend because it was the “Army Day” and his friend had rather grim experiences of the Red Army. However, February 23 is also celebrated as the Men’s Day, i.e., as the counterpart of March 8, the international Women’s Day. On February 23, 2011 I was out and about with members of the youth organization I became involved with as part of my fieldwork, helping them to organize an event. The young Russian women collected money and bought a fancy cake for male members of the group, most of who were too young to have experienced the Soviet army.

Yevgeny Nikonov (1920-1941) is said to have been a young Soviet sailor killed by Germans. According to his official biography, he was captured by fascists near Tallinn, tied to a tree and burnt alive. Nikonov was awarded the title of Hero of the Soviet Union posthumously; a street was named after him in Tallinn in 1951 and a decade later his monument was erected in Kadriorg. (Gens 1982, 7-9.) A story I remember from my childhood discredited this “hagiography,” arguing that Nikonov had participated in the opening of his own monument.

Field notes from September 22; I will return to this interviewee in chapter 7.
according to sociologists was that Estonians’ anxiety over the use of the Russian language and the presence of Russians lessened (Kruusvall 2005), which in turn prompted nationalists to become organized in defense of the Estonian language and to reinforce links between language and identity (e.g., the establishment of the Association for the Protection of the Estonian Language in 1999; Ehala 2008, 100). Martin Ehala has therefore argued that by 2004, “the fear for the weakening of ethnic identities had become severe among radical nationalist circles” and that these actors were actively looking for ways to mobilize people on the grounds on nationality (Ehala 2008, 101). In his view, the incident in Lihula provided conservatives with means to demarcate “the prototypical part of national identity” from other identity markers that were becoming blurred and to initiate a chain of conflicts that would again increase the distance between Estonians and Russians (ibid.).

At the same time, veterans’ claims to recognition and the government’s actions in Lihula suggest that there was no consensus among Estonians regarding “the national identity” because of the untellability of the past (Shuman 2005) due to both internal contradictions (Estonian men fighting against each other on the German and Soviet side) and the incompatibility between the internal and external or European understandings and expectations. In the aftermath of the incident in Lihula, the impossibility of commemorating “Estonian soldiers” came to clash with the “Russian Bronze Soldier” and commemorative activities surrounding the monument on the Victory Day, the Day of Liberation of Tallinn and some other holidays of the bygone regime, suppressing the fact
that Estonians, too, fought and were forced to fight in the Soviet uniform. Nationalist actors framed the juxtaposition of Lihula with Tõnismäe as an issue of ethnic group rights and, furthermore, as a question about the right to use and define the public space. Consequently, the Bronze Soldier emerged as the symbol of Soviet occupation and what looked like its paradoxical continuation in the independent Republic of Estonia: when a couple of Estonian men approached the monument with an Estonian flag on the Victory Day of 2006 – clearly a provocative gesture –, the police took them away, while the celebrators of the Victory Day were allowed to wave red flags and those of the Russian Federation.146

Peeter Torop, drawing on Yuri Lotman’s theory of cultural models, has argued along similar lines that the monument controversies in post-Soviet Estonia are indicative of the “ability of the Estonian culture to describe itself” (Torop 2008, 81):

Without a coherent take on history, it is difficult to create an approach to identity that would guarantee the nation’s [rahvus] self-respect and would not deny traumas. One cannot organize identity-based matters when lacking self-respect or knowledge about one’s special worth and history. One cannot create a dialogue because dialogue, too, is based on the knowledge of the self-other relationship [oma-võõras vahekord]. Where there is no identity, there is no self-confidence, giving easily rise to fear that can also come across as courage.

(Torop 2008, 92.)

146 This incident has been captured in a 2007 documentary film by Urmas E. Liiv titled Bronze Night: The Russian Riot in Tallinn. Documentary about two violent nights in downtown Estonia that shook Estonia, Russia and the whole Europe (Liiv 2007).
The Riigikogu discussed between 2005-2007 drafts of several resolutions and bills that could be regarded as efforts to define the self-other relationship once and for all, both within Estonia and in relation to the West/Europe. Pro Patria Union and Res Publica proposed repeatedly that the Riigikogu pass a resolution “On the armed fight of Estonian citizens against the military occupation of the Soviet Union”\textsuperscript{147} in order to give the self-appointed “freedom fighters” – veterans of the German army and the Forest Brethren – a definite place within the official interpretation of World War II (Riigikogu otsus “Eesti kodanike relvavõitlustest NSV Liidu sõjalise okupatsiooni vastu” (688 OE)). The draft resolution was formulated on the basis of veterans’ claims (see footnote 125) and argued that because Estonia had been \textit{de facto} occupied during World War II but had continued its existence \textit{de iure} (the basic argument of legal restorationism) and because the National Committee had called in February 1944 upon Estonian citizens to protect the Estonian territory (see pp. 190-191re), those who responded to this call and fought against the Soviet Union were fulfilling their constitutional duty and fighting for the restoration of the \textit{de facto} independence of the Estonian republic. When this draft resolution was discussed in the parliament for the first time, Trivimi Velliste of the Pro Patria Union explained that the resolution was addressed first and foremost to veterans, “second, to the rest of the Estonian nation \textit{[Eesti rahvas]} that has to know its history and indebtedness, third, to the international public that still needs additional tutoring in Eastern-European history, and fourth and lastly and this is the most important part, to the forthcoming

\textsuperscript{147} The draft resolution was first submitted June 2005 and discussed and rejected in April 2006 and anew in May and September 2006 and again in June 2006 and September 2006, respectively.
Estonian generations, so that they would know what to do once the new ordeals begin” (Otsuse “Eesti kodanike relvavõitlusest NSV Liidu sõjalise okupatsiooni vastu” eelnõu (688 OE) esimene lugemine). Velliste emphasized that the resolution excluded from the category of “freedom fighters” Estonians who had fought in the Red Army or at all resistance to German occupation for its aim was to make it clear that “Estonians did not fight for the interests of the Großdeutschland [Suur-Saksamaa] but for the interests of Estonia. If they had to drive out the devil with the Beelzebub, it was not their fault” (ibid.).

The second time Pro Patria Union and Res Publica submitted this proposal (Riigikogu otsus “Eesti kodanike relvavõitlustest NSV Liidu sõjalise okupatsiooni vastu” (910 OE)), the government responded with a competing proposal for a resolution “On the fight of Estonian citizens for the restoration of independence of the Republic of Estonia” (Riigikogu otsus “Eesti kodanike võitlusest Eesti Vabariigi iseseisvuse eest” (933 OE)). The government suggested broadening the concept of “freedom fighter” to cover potentially all rightful citizens of Estonia:

> It is not important whether individuals fought [for freedom] by means of armed resistance (for instance forest brothers) or mental resistance (…) The aim of this resolution is to impersonally acknowledge all citizens of the Republic of Estonia who feel that they have in one way or another contributed to the restoration of the independence of the Republic of Estonia.

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Hence, the government blocked veterans’ narrow concept of “freedom fighter” by going to the other extreme and proposing a definition that erased all markers that could be used to distinguish between different subject positions among Estonians and to make sense of the past. As such, the government’s proposal could be regarded as a mirror image of the Riigikogu’s above-discussed statement “On crimes of the occupation regime,” which framed all Estonians as victims of the occupation regime (see the discussion of the Resistance Fighting Day (pp. 190-191) as well as LaCapra 2001).

At the same time, several parties were looking rather frantically for legal grounds for the removal or relocation of the Bronze Soldier monument in the run-up to March 2007 parliamentary elections (Keelatud rajatisi ja sõjahaudade kaitset reguleerivad eelnõud jõuavad Riigikogu ette). In October 2006, the Reform Party submitted together with Social Democrats and the new Res Publica and Pro Patria Union two bills suitable if not designed for this purpose. First, the Disallowed Construction Removal Bill that sought to prohibit the erection and display in the “public place” (avalikus kohas) of “a construction that glorifies the occupation of the Republic of Estonia, mass repressions in Estonia or that may endanger people’s life, health or property, instigates enmity or may cause disruptions of the public order [avalik kord]” (Keelatud rajatise kõrvaldamise seadus (1000 SE), 203). The bill also “disallowed” the erection and display in the public space of “monuments, works of monumental art or other constructions that glorify historical
figures who have massively destroyed the Estonian people [eesti rahvas] or ravaged extensively the historic Estonian area of settlement” (ibid.).\textsuperscript{150} A stipulation added to the bill stated that the Bronze Soldier monument constituted a “disallowed construction” and would be relocated by the government in the course of 30 days after the law has become effective. The Riigikogu approved the Disallowed Construction Removal Bill in mid-February 2007 (Õiguskomisjon toetas pronkssõduri kiiret teisaldamist; Riigikogu võttis vastu keelatud rajatise kõrvaldamise seaduse), but the president deemed it unconstitutional and sent it back to the Riigikogu barely a week later (Keelatud rajatise kõrvaldamise seaduse väljakuulutamata jätmine).\textsuperscript{151}

The second bill proposed by the same parties in October 2006 was titled War Graves Protection Bill (Sõjahaudade kaitse seadus) and took a radically different approach by framing the Bronze Soldier memorial as a war grave and arguing that the Estonian state was obligated to “guarantee the protection, respect and dignified treatment of the remains of persons who have died in acts of war conducted on the territory of Estonia” (Protection of War Graves Act; see also Sõjahaudade kaitse seadus). Hence, the argumentation was

\textsuperscript{150} One such historical figure would be Peter the Great; Narva has repeatedly discussed the possibility of erecting a monument in his honor (e.g., Lamp 2006; Bärenklau 2009a on why Russians in Narva “need the statue of Peter the Great” and Kahu 2009 for a response by prime minister Ansip, who stated that Peter the Great “was a murdered and a conqueror”). Smith and Burch 2007 discuss objects connected with Peter in relation to other commemorative initiatives in post-Soviet Narva.

\textsuperscript{151} Among other things, the law violated the principle of separation and balance of powers between the Riigikogu (legislative power), government (executive), president, and courts (justice) (Constitution, § 4, 59, 86, 146), the principle of legal certainty (§ 10) as well as the principle that everybody is equal before the law and should not be discriminated against (§12) (Keelatud rajatise kõrvaldamise seaduse väljakuulutamata jätmine).
moved from the ethnic and national level to one of civilization and culture, from constructions to contexts. The problem was no longer in the monument and the subversive commemorative practices surrounding it but rather in what the memorial signified, i.e., a burial ground. The Bronze Soldier was “a matter out of place” not because of its uniform, but because it was a tomb and a busy downtown street was not a place where fallen soldiers could rest in peace. As the preamble to the bill explained, the War Graves Protection Act was motivated by the recognition that burying persons who have died in the war “in inappropriate places does not correspond to the European culture and to the tradition of honoring the memory and remains of the deceased [ei vasta euroopaliikule kultuurile ning surnute mälestuse ja säilmete austamise traditsioonile]”:

§ 8. Remains subject to reburial and deciding of reburial
(1) Remains are subject to reburial on the basis of this Act if a war grave is located in an unsuitable place [ebasobivas kohas]. In particular, parks, other green areas and buildings within densely populated areas outside of cemeteries, as well as places in which public events are organised or constructions not related to the graves are located, and other places which preclude dignified treatment of the war grave are unsuitable places for war graves. The war graves committee shall determine the unsuitability of the location of a war grave. (…)

(2) The Government of the Republic shall decide the reburial of the remains in a war grave in the case when the grave is not located in an unsuitable place within the meaning of subsection (1) of this section but reburial is in the public interests [avalikes huvides] for another reason. (…)While deciding the reburial of the remains, the Government of the Republic shall determine the new burial site of the remains and shall resolve issues relating to the relocation, adjustment, dismantling and preservation of the grave monument or mark [hauamonument või -tähis] and to the establishment of a new grave monument or mark.

(…)

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(4) Reburial of remains on the basis of a decision of the Minister of Defence or the Government of the Republic shall be arranged as soon as possible and the expenses of the reburial shall be borne by the Ministry of Defence or the Government of the Republic.

(Protection of War Graves Act; cf. Sõjahaudade kaitse seadus)

The parliament approved the War Graves Protection Bill on January 10, 2007 and it, entered into force ten days later (The Riigikogu passed the War Graves Protection Act). It was ultimately the War Graves Protection Act that provided the government with a legal ground for the relocation of the Bronze Soldier monument from the center of Tallinn to the Cemetery of Defense forces in a more secluded part of the capital, with consequences that will be discussed below as well as in the last chapter of this study.

In addition, in mid-December 2006, i.e., before the Riigikogu had decided upon either of the two bills, the government proposed amendments to the Penal Code. According to the government’s suggestion, the display and distribution of Soviet and Nazi state and party symbols should be regarded as activities that “publicly incite to hatred, violence or discrimination on the basis of nationality, race, color, sex, language, origin, religion, sexual orientation, political opinion, or financial or social status.”\(^{152}\) Hence, similarly to the Disallowed Construction Removal Bill, the Bill on Amendments to the Penal Code treated meanings as inherent qualities of symbols and “constructions,” erasing the agency and subjectivity of human actors engaging with these objects and concepts: if the ability

\(^{152}\) The parliament discussed the amendments to the Penal Code for the first time on January 24, 2007, i.e., after the president had already proclaimed the War Graves Protection Law and the “solution” to the Bronze Soldier had been found. The bill was never taken up again. See, e.g., Menetlusse võeti eelnõu Iraagi missiooni pikendamiseks; Keelatud rajatise ja keelatud sümboolika eelnõud lähevad täiskogusse.
to glorify the Soviet regime and to instigate enmity resides in the monument or a flag, the intentions of people who bring flowers to the monument or display flags are always already predetermined by the fixed meanings of the material world.

Looked at from this perspective, the Bill on Amendments to the Penal Code and the Disallowed Construction Removal Bill represented a particular reading strategy that seeks to suppress the inherent ambiguity of symbols and symbolic practices, used by various actors to negotiate their multiple belongings and identities. Whereas the Disallowed Construction Removal Bill targeted architecture and other monumental objects, amendments to the Penal Code aimed at policing small-scale statements made by individuals and groups within space conceived of as public. Moreover, both bills set up an essentializing correlation between ethnicity/nationality, commemorative practices and interpretations of history, dividing the Estonian population into two groups distinguished by opposing views on both the past and the present. The Disallowed Construction Removal Bill in particular framed Estonians as a collective victim of the ethnically motivated Soviet terror and equated commemoration with glorification, regarding it further as a threat to the existence of the “Estonian people.” Implicitly, this approach sought to increase – or would have led to an increase in – the power of those selected actors entrusted with “disallowing constructions” and proposed furthermore an ethnic division or hierarchy in the use and definition of the public space.
The Resistance Fighting Day discussed above and observed since 2009 on September 22, the Soviet-era Day of Liberation of Tallinn, originates in a similar ethos and, in fact, the Riigikogu approved it on the very same day in February 2007 as it voted for the Disallowed Construction Removal Day deemed unconstitutional by the president. The initial proposition was submitted by Pro Patria as early as 2005 and called for proclaiming September 22 the Resistance Fighting Remembrance Day (vastupanuvõitluse mälestuspäev) as well as prohibiting on this day public events incompatible with the Resistance Fighting Remembrance Day (Pühade ja tähtpäevade seaduse muutmise eelnõu (734 SE) esimene lugemine). This would have meant following the precedent set in 2005 when “events incompatible with mourning” were prohibited on the Day of Mourning and Commemoration dedicated to Soviet deportations from Estonia (see pp. 176-178 above). Hence, in addition to reinforcing the legal-restorationist argumentation about the continuity between the pre-war and post-Soviet Estonian state and recognizing, albeit implicitly, the veterans of German armed forces as “freedom fighters,” the Resistance Fighting Day was designed as a means for defining public space and excluding from it particular interpretations of history, practices that manifest these interpretations and ultimately also people associated with these practices and historical narratives.

I would like to argue that the Resistance Fighting (Remembrance) Day, the Disallowed Construction Removal Bill as well as all the other bills discussed in this subchapter created what they sought to police to the extent that the need to exclude particular people and activities from the public space came from imagining them in a particular way. This
need for exclusion emerged essentially from the legal-restorationist division of the population into rightful citizens/Estonians and immigrants/Russians – categories that are attached to specific understandings of history, which in turn are seen to predetermine the mutual relations between these people. As such, the Resistance Fighting Day and other such initiatives police all members of the society, imagining them in particular interrelated ways and seeking to pin them down. To the extent that September 22 was celebrated throughout the Soviet era as the Day of Liberation of Tallinn, the Resistance Fighting Day could be regarded as a restituted holiday, but in an inverted manner. It was brought back to kill an undead holiday: an official holiday (the Day of Liberation of Tallinn) that has gained new popular meanings as it has become obsolete officially.

The co-optation of existing holidays and traditional modes of behavior has through history been an important instrument of bringing about, legitimizing – or adapting to – political and social change and much has been written about interactions between the system of Soviet holidays and folk calendar as well as religious traditions in various parts of the Soviet Union (e.g., Binns 1979, Binns 1980, Hiiemäe 2003, Hiiemäe 2006, Pashina 2008, Seljamaa 2010). The Resistance Fighting Day seeks to eliminate alternative meanings attached to the day when Tallinn, according to the official historical narrative, fell anew to the Soviets.
A Cross for the Whole Estonia: The War of Independence Victory Monument

The Resistance Fighting Day was the brainchild of the Pro Patria and Res Publica Union. However, it was the Reform Party that won the parliamentary elections in March 2007, governing in coalition with the Pro Patria and Res Publica Union as well as with Social Democrats. The minister of defense, head of the institution responsible for the respectful treatment of war graves, came from the Pro Patria and Res Publica Union. Soon after its appointment, the government began preparations for the exhumation of the remains buried in Tõnismäe, referring to the monument as a “grave mark” (hauatähis). On April 25, i.e., just before the Victory Day on May 9, the memorial was surrounded with a fence and a big tent was erected inside this area, blocking the view on the monument. In the afternoon of April 26, mostly Russian and Russian-speaking people started to gather around the fence to get a sense of what was going and to protest against the government’s actions. As in Lihula in 2004, none of the authorities came to meet and talk to people, who had gathered to observe the authorities’ actions. Later in the same evening this “standing” or demonstration evolved into a violent confrontation between the police and protestors, some of whom went on a rampage through the main streets of the city center, smashing windows, looting, setting cars and kiosks to fire; one young man was stabbed to death, while hundreds were arrested by the police. The government removed the monument from Tõnismäe in the same night and by the Victory Day on May 9, the Bronze Soldier was already standing in its new location in the Cemetery of Defense Forces, receiving more flowers than he had ever seen in the course of his 50 years of life. The Russian Federation intervened aggressively, sending a delegation to Estonia and
demanding the Estonian government to resign, while members of the pro-Putin youth organization *Nashi* (*Haavu* – “Ours”) protested for days in front of the Estonian embassy in Moscow, literally harassing the Estonian ambassador, and the servers of Estonian state institutions suffered from cyber-attacks coming from Russia. The Estonian state, on the other hand, accused four Russian men of “organizing” the mass protests according to guidelines received from Moscow. Later, the court found all of them to be innocent (e.g., Rand 2009a, 2009b).

Prime minister Andrus Ansip gave a speech to the Riigikogu on May 2, a couple of days after “the Bronze Night,” where he spoke about things using their “real names,” rather than the vocabulary provided by the War Graves Protection Act: the Bronze Soldier was again a monument rather than a “grave mark” and it had to be removed from the city center because it had symbolized the previous occupation power and was being used for political provocations. By means of the relocation, Ansip claimed, the monument had been given a univocal meaning:

I have also discussed with you [MPs] here [in the parliament] that the Bronze Soldier lacked a univocal meaning [*ühene tähendus*] when it stood in Tõnismäe. If the monument standing in one of the most frequented sites in the city center symbolized for some occupants and deporters, for others the memory of the deceased and grief, for yet others nostalgia for an obsolete totalitarian state, it could not have been a monument unifying the society. (…)

During this short time [since its removal and re-erection] the bronze monument has already been accepted by hundreds of people in its new location. “Beautiful,” said a Russian-speaking lady [*vene keelt kõnelev proua*], summarizing the situation in the new location. Her simple reaction conveys probably most aptly the opinion of those people
who really care about the monument, rather than using it as an excuse to rampage and incite [people] to overthrow the state.

I think that there will be many more people like this in the near future. There will be [people like that] among both Estonian- and Russian-speaking residents, because in the new environment the monument no longer has multiple meanings [pole monumendil enam mitut tähendust]. In the cemetery, the monument [monument] has become a memorial for those fallen in the war [mälestusmärk sõjas langenutele] and there it can no longer symbolize a culprit in the sufferings of our nation [süüdlane meie rahva kannatuses] – the deporter and killer of 100,000 persons, the one who forced 100,000 Estonians to escape from home.

(Ansip 2008, 230-231.)

Thus, the prime minister described the cemetery as an environment that is by nature univocal, depriving individuals of the ability to create new meanings. The prime minister did not explain why or how this was the case. However, his argumentation did imply that there is no place for multiplicity of points of view in the city center of the capital. Rather, it has to be univocal and Estonian-centered and thus free of people and objects that could contradict or challenge this norm (cf. analysis of the Disallowed Construction Removal Bill and the amendments to the Penal Code proposed by the government in the previous subchapter). Looked at from this perspective, the monument is “safe” in the cemetery because it is out of the site of Estonians, “our nation,” which in turn implies that the multiplicity of its meanings can be suppressed or denied but not erased.

Most Russian and Russian-speaking people I met in the course of my fieldwork in 2010-2011 continued to be highly critical and insulted if not hurt by the government’s actions in April 2007. I will return to their claims as well as the securitizing argumentation
employed by the Estonian leadership in the last chapter of this study, discussing, among other things, how May 9 or the Victory Day is since 2007 (also) April 26, anniversary of the “Bronze Night.” However, I would like to conclude this chapter by looking at the third “column” in the monument saga, one that seeks to beat its “Russian” and “German” competitors on a scale beyond imagination.

In spring 2005, i.e., in the aftermath of the Lihula incident and before the tensions surrounding the Bronze Soldier had developed into an open confrontation, moreover, in the same year the Russian Federation organized a grandiose Victory Day parade in Moscow (Onken 2007) and Arnold Rüütel, the Estonian president at the time, declined the invitation in order to “be with his own people [oma rahvaga],” the Riigikogu decided to fulfill the pre-war dream of erecting a national War of Independence Victory monument on the Freedom Square, the main square of Tallinn and the site of Independence Day parades.\(^{153}\)

In 2006, the ministry of defense organized a competition for the design of the new monument, explaining in the contest guidelines that “through the memorial, the Estonian people are showing respect and recognition to those who, gun in hand, established our independence, as well as those who have stepped up with words or weapons in the name of Estonia’s freedom and independence” (Fact Sheet April 2009). Proposals could be

\(^{153}\) See Tamm and Halla 2008, 26-29 for an overview of interwar attempts to erect a national War of Independence monument. According to the last plan from 1938, the monument would have been opened in 1943 to celebrate the 25 anniversary of the Republic of Estonia.
submitted between March and July 2007 and the ministry received over 40 entries. The jury, headed by the archbishop of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church and consisting mostly of politicians,\textsuperscript{154} chose a project that made the most literal connection to the War of Independence memorials of the interwar period. The winning entry titled \textit{Libertas} was designed by two mechanical engineers and two architects, all in their early and mid-twenties, and proposed a 24-meter (over 26 yards) tall pylon crowned with an enlarged replica of the Cross of Liberty, the first Estonian military decoration discussed above in connection with the Lihula monument (see pp. 191-192). The column and the cross were to be covered with glass panels and lit up in the dark, symbolizing the crisp and clear Nordic nature and local peoples’ yearning for the light as well as representing Estonia as a wellspring of innovative technical solutions that draw on traditional forms and materials (Sternfeld, Laidre, Kiho and Savi undated, 7).\textsuperscript{155} The center of the cross in

\textsuperscript{154} The jury had twelve members: in addition to the archbishop, five politicians, including the minister of defense (Pro Patria and Res Publica Union) and the minister of culture (Reform), a representative of the Union of Estonian Freedom Fighters, a businessman, two architects, two artists. Seven members of the jury voted for the winning entry. (Vabaduse monument. Ehitus.)

\textsuperscript{155} “The column is made of glass, which aims at capturing the Nordic crispiness, purity, natural uniqueness and everlastingness of ice. At the same time, ice is also delicate and fragile in its powerfulness, as is freedom – it is not self-evident. The Nordic person [\textit{Põhjamaa inimene}] lives nearly half of his/her life in darkness after sunset. Since the beginning of times, light has been an element conveying a sense of security, be it a dot of light on the window of a farmstead seen on a forest path or the lighthouse glowing in a fishing village [i.e., the sea and the forest – two dwellings and natural environments imagined to be characteristic of Estonians]. Usually monuments can be only looked at in the day and some in the night if they are illuminated. The War of Independence Victory monument lives round the clock. The column is lit up at sunset and turns in the winter and summer alike into an icily glowing landmark [\textit{jüiselt kumav maamärk}], reminding us of forefathers’ fight for freedom. Perhaps the story of the Estonian people [\textit{Eesti rahva lugu}] will reach the next generations this way” (Sternfeld, Laidre, Kiho and Savi undated, 7-8).
the completed monument features the emblem used in the original Cross of Liberty decoration – the arm holding a sword and the Gothic letter “E.” The column is placed on top of a quadrangular platform made of dark granite and the construction is raised above the ground by means of plateau and stairs made similarly of dark granite. The overall height of the memorial is 42 meters or nearly 46 yards from the ground (Alas 2008). The inscription on the dark wall behind the column reads in Estonian “Estonian War of Independence 1918-1920,” followed by the first stanza from the patriotic poem “Raise the flag!” written by Gustav Suits (1883-1956) during the War of Independence and published in newspapers on the first anniversary of the Republic of Estonia in 1919.\textsuperscript{156}

Many artists, architects and members of the public criticized heavily the monument’s anachronistic design as well as its narrow approach to the idea of liberty, collecting signatures against the use of the winning entry (Vabadussõja võidusamba vastaste pöördumine). On the other hand, around 12,000 individuals, organization and institutions donated over a short period of time nearly three million Estonian kroons for the construction of the monument (Vabadussõja võidusamba toetajad). The total expected cost was about 62 million Estonian kroons or over 5.6 million USD.

\textsuperscript{156} The initial idea of the monument’s authors was to use an excerpt from a speech given by Konstantin Päts, the president associated with the authoritarian silent era of the 1930s. Also, the authors proposed using an image of the map of Estonia at the center of the cross, but the jury recommended the emblem with the arm and sword. (Vabaduse monument. Ehitus.)
The government and the authors of the monument presented the War of Independence Victory memorial as the climax of past decades’ restoration work and also as a means for “paying back the debt of honor to forefathers” (Sternfeld and Laidre and Kiho and Savi undated, 9). The cross on top of the pillar was said to depict the II division 1st rank Cross of Liberty for personal bravery during the War of Independence. As the ministry of defense explained before the opening of the memorial, this particular “Cross of Liberty – the highest order of merit for personal bravery – has never in history been given to anybody. Now the whole of Estonia [kogu Eesti] will be rewarded with [this order] symbolically” (Vabadussõja mälestuse jäädvustamine). The young authors of the monument explained along similar lines:

Realizing the effort which all of the Estonian people have made to gain, re-gain, build up and keep our independence, it was clear that this cross [for personal bravery] should be given to the whole nation [kogu rahvale]. As for Estonia, winning the War of Independence was the first time in our 700-year history that we had gained our independence, that we had established ourselves as a free country. Therefore, the connection between freedom and our Cross of Liberty is quite obvious: before our freedom there was a war, and only after winning it was there independence.

(Sternfeld and Laidre 2008, 4.)

During the construction process, the ministry of defense commissioned a video promoting the concept of the monument and broadcasted it in on YouTube in Estonian, Russian, and English. Accompanied by the patriotic oratorio Pro Patria written by the Estonian composer Urmas Sisask,157 the video mixed old black-and-white documentary

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157 The oratorio uses poems by the Estonian author Jaan Lõo (1872-1939) and tells the story of Estonians’ arrival on the shores of the Baltic Sea, their military successes and relations with neighbors. It was commissioned in 2003 for the brass orchestra of defense
shots of the War of Independence and the interwar era with idyllic colored images of an Estonian farmstead at daybreak, reenactments and stereotypical images of local nature and landscapes. The viewer was provided with detailed statistical information on different divisions and ranks of the Cross of Liberty ever awarded. The video ended with the announcement that the II division 1st rank crosses will be now, by the opening of this monument, “bestowed on all those who fought for Estonian freedom.” This promise appeared against the background of an image of masses of people with national flags on the Song Festival Grounds in the very end of the video (The Monument to the War of Independence; Monument Popedy; Vabadusõja Võidusammas).

Explanations of the monument equated “the whole of Estonia” with “the whole nation,” and furthermore with “all those who fought for Estonian freedom.” The monument’s authors in particular described the recipient of the Cross of Liberty for personal bravery in terms of a national body that has been moving toward independence consciously for the past 700 years: it was “we” who were serfs for 700 years, fought in the War of Independence and established “ourselves” as a free country. Rhetoric of this kind erased distinctions between different eras and fights, equating the War of Independence with the Singing Revolution and the Song Festival traditional more broadly, fighters of the 20th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS with Estonians who fought in the War of Independence and with those who protested against the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact by participating in the 1989 Baltic Chain demonstration. The use of the arm, sword and letter forces. (See, e.g., Garshnek 2004). Cf. chapter 1 and Tamm 2008 on the narrative template of “The Great Battle for Freedom” in Estonian historiography and nationalism.
“E” at the heart of the cross was of crucial importance in this respect for by means of this emblem, a network was created that interconnects all War of Independence memorials and gravestones all over the country as well as the controversial monument of Lihula commissioned by members of the Union of Estonian Freedom Fighters. Looked at from this perspective, the War of Independence Victory monument could be regarded as a symbolic, but nevertheless official response to veterans’ request that their fight against the Soviet Union would be recognized as fight for the restoration of Estonian independence and that they themselves would be equated with soldiers of the Estonian War of Independence. The last “real” holder of the Cross of Liberty Karl Jaanus (b. 1899) passed away in 2000 (Pihlak 2006), meaning that there is nothing or nobody standing on the way of appropriating the past for the needs of the present.

Illustration 5 War of Independence Victory Monument of Freedom Square
As was discussed above in relation to Estonians’ involvement in and experiences of the Soviet regime, totalizing takes of this kind inhibit individuals from taking distance to the past and by doing so, repress critical approaches to current problems (see also LaCapra 2001). Focusing on the victorious War of Independence reinforces the principle of legal continuity, which in turn enables “the nation” to skip its contradictory contributions to and experiences of World War II, its involvement in the Soviet regime as well as inequalities in present-day Estonia. It is only in the myth “of all those who fought for freedom” – or in the myth of collective victimization – that the nation and Estonia become whole, complete and homogeneous.

I would like to argue that the “column of liberty” (vabadussammas) visualizes and materializes the argumentation that formed the rationale behind various resolutions and bills discussed by the Riigikogu during the past dozen years and discussed throughout this chapter. By mixing conservative anachronistic aesthetics and current political populism, the concept of the memorial seeks to accommodate different, even contradictory expectations and circumstances as well as to provide a final official interpretation of the past, to bring about closure. If remembering is understood as process whereby members of the society negotiate the identity of their society in relation to its past and thereby also their own past and identities (Beiner 2007), the War of Independence Victory memorial does not intend to leave much room for dialogue and discussion.
Yearning for a closure is evidenced also by ceremonies and activities that the architecture of the memorial encourages, enables and disables. The memorial was unveiled at midnight on June 22, 2009, on the eve of the Victory Day marking the 90th anniversary of Estonians’ victory over Germans under Võnnu. The president gave a speech and the monument was consecrated by the archbishop of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, the head of the jury that decided upon the design of the monument, with assistance from the heads of other Christian confessions in Estonia; the Orchestra of Defence Forces, choirs and opera soloists performed the patriotic Pro Patria oratorio used in the promotional YouTube video; the ceremony involved more flags, torches and uniformed people rising up the stairs under the pale Nordic sky than most Western Europeans could have comfortably absorbed.

Since the opening of the memorial, an effort has been made to introduce the tradition whereby the president, representatives of the government and defense forces, foreign guests and members of the diplomatic corps lay wreaths to the War of Independence Victory monument on major historical holidays as well as on anniversaries relating to the War of Independence. In the morning of February 2, 2010, I observed one such ceremony dedicated to the 90th anniversary of the Tartu Peace Treaty that had ended the War of Liberty and whereby Russia had recognized the independence of Estonia. Given the number of people who had donated money for the building of the monument as well as the masses that had attended the opening ceremony barely six months earlier, I was

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158 See Tamm 2008 for the significance and uses of the battle of Võnnu in interwar Estonian politics and interpretations of history.
struck by the fact that virtually nobody had come to the Freedom Square to participate in or witness the ceremony. Granted, most events dedicated to the 90th anniversary of the treaty were taking place in Tartu and, moreover, it was a regular weekday and snowy – 8 inches over the night and it kept snowing all the time. And no doubt some people were disappointed and tired of technical problems surrounding the memorial. The glass panels imitating the uniqueness, crispiness and purity of everlasting ice (cf. footnote 155) had started to gather dust soon after the opening of the memorial, three tiles had turned pink and had to be replaced (e.g., Randlaid 2009, Tralla 2009); the lighting system had stopped working a couple of months later, leaving the column and the cross in darkness (e.g., Bärenklau 2009b); neither the authors nor the builder, a Czech glass company, had been able to fix the problem for months (Võidusamba remondiga tähtajast üle läinud tšehhe ootab trahv) and it was clear by the end of 2009 that the lighting system would have to be replaced (Kaitseministeerium lõpetab koostöö Sans Souciga; Kahu and Aasaru 2010). The ministry of defense had announced in the beginning of 2010 that the memorial had already cost over 110 million kroons (over 10 million USD) and admitted to be feeling embarrassed about the many technical problems (Võidusamba maksumus ületab 110 miljonit krooni; Jüriso 2010).

Despite these scandals and disappointments, I was greatly surprised when I approached the monument around 10 a.m., just before the ceremony for laying wreaths was supposed to begin, and found an empty square. Apart from a couple of random passersby, there was one elderly man with glasses and a big winter coat standing about ten or fifteen meters
away from the stairs leading up to the plateau on which the monument stands. He had a tote bag in his hand and was looking up towards the monument. I walked past him and up the stairs, stopping behind a cameraman and a reporter who were standing on top of the stairs. A small elderly lady was standing by the monument, arranging small branches of pine tree around a candle on the granite base of the column and trying to get the candle to burn. Then two soldiers stepped on the base of the monument in order to stand in guard of honor on either side of the column; a couple of more men in uniforms were waiting nearby. There was nobody else around. Wind blew the candle out and the old lady went back to the granite base, trying to light it again. At the same time about four officials from defense forces arrived, dressed in uniforms and accompanied by a couple of young men, presumably representatives of fraternities. The sole female official greeted the reporter, who was still standing at the top of the stairs along with the cameraman, wishing him “*Head rahu aastapäev*” or all the best for the anniversary of peace.

Two soldiers carrying a fir-tree wreath marched to the monument and placed it on the base of the monument between the two guards; behind them came officials. A second wreath followed and the female official lit two candles on granite the base of the monument. There was a moment of silence, after which the photographers and cameramen rushed to take pictures of the soldiers, the wreaths, and the burning candles. The only “real” audience member was the little old lady since everybody else – the soldiers, officials, journalists, myself – were there for business, doing our jobs. The man with the tote bag was still standing on the square, observing the monument and the
ceremony from a distance. The little old lady walked up to me and told me that she could not get the candle to burn. I offered to help but she said that she had tried already several times and given up. “My father and uncle fought in the War of Independence, but it seems like without a reason,” she said to me. When I asked why, she replied with tears in her eyes: “Look around, there is nobody here.” She was devastated and I offered to take a picture of her, just to do something, but she refused, telling me she didn’t have a festive face on. She then went to talk to the soldiers who had carried the wreaths and were probably waiting for a permission to leave. I heard her ask them where everybody was. One of the older men, probably a higher officer accompanying the soldier, replied that everybody was in Tartu, meaning the president and ministers. He then pointed towards the building of Tallinn City Council on the edge of the Freedom Square, adding that he did not know why “they,” meaning the representatives of the city and the Centre Party, were not present. The lady responded that she even did not want to look towards this building and the men smiled and laughed: they had found a common language and defined themselves as “proper” Estonians by contrasting the monument and themselves with the absence of the Centre Party from the ceremony.159

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159 I later learnt that the city government had organized its own ceremony, laying wreaths on the grave of Jaan Poska (1866-1920), a long-term member of the city council, a former mayor of Tallinn (1913-1917) and the Estonian minister of foreign affairs, who led the peace talks with Russia and signed the Tartu Peace Treaty in the name of Estonia (Linnavalitsus mälestab Tartu rahulepingu eestvedajat Jaan Poskat). Since Poska came from a Russian-speaking Orthodox family, his personality suits the needs of politicians seeking the support of both Estonians and Russians in present-day Tallinn.
The old lady left soon after this conversation and once the photographers were done, the guards were given the permission to leave their position and all the soldiers walked away together. One of the news crews stayed around, looking for people to interview, but with little success. Two old men, one of them dressed in a coat resembling a uniform, happened to come up the stairs at the same time and headed towards the monument with a cameraman at their heels. The man in civilian clothes had come to light a candle, but he could not get it to burn because of the wind and snow and rushed away as soon as he saw the TV camera. The man wearing the uniform stayed on to give an interview and held his hand to his head, giving a military salutation.

Illustration 6 Journalists approaching a commemorator of the Tartu Peace Treaty
The news crew went down the stairs, hoping to talk to passersby on the square, but with little luck. At some point they came back up again and wanted to interview me: “Young lady, what do you think, why are there so few people here?” I told them that I was also observing the process and asked them for their opinion, but the cameraman said that they were not allowed to have an opinion and suggested I watch the evening news. They continued their search for opinions for almost another hour and I left soon after them.

I did not watch the evening news on this particular channel because I was in the district of Nõmme, attending a service in a local Lutheran church dedicated to the Tartu Peace Treaty (Nõmme Rahu Kirik). The minister of foreign affairs, who lives in the same district and is probably a member of the congregation, was also attending the service. The priest said in the sermon that nations are born and develop out of God’s guidance but only moral nations survive. He also said to be glad that Estonia has a government and leadership that knows God and thinks “in the spirit of God” (jumala vaimsuses), knows God in hearts. When listening to him, I could not stop thinking about the design of the monument – the Cross of Liberty – and the archbishop’s role in the jury. The minister of foreign affairs also gave a short speech, emphasizing the importance of the Tartu Peace Treaty for Estonia and the democratic principles guiding the founders of the Republic of Estonia: the 1918 declaration of independence had granted freedom to “all the peoples of Estonia” (Declaration of Independence) and the interwar Estonia had more generally been an island of tolerance, a safe home for everybody.
The story told by the minister does not hold true for everybody in the pre-war republic, at least not for the whole interwar era, but it is a tellable story and told often by Estonians but also, as I will show in later chapters, by representatives of minorities. Whoever the teller is, the story about the interwar era is really about the present day – about current things that are for some reason untellable or would not be listened to if they were discussed as issues belonging to the present. Proponents of the continuation of Russian-language education talk about the pre-war era in order to criticize current reforms and the minister talked about the 1918 manifesto “To all the peoples of Estonia” and about the Tartu Peace Treaty in order to talk about current Estonian-Russian relations and implicitly the relationship between the Estonian state and Russians as well as “other peoples of Estonia” (*Eesti inimesed*).

When I finally got home that evening, in time for the evening news on another television channel, there was a news story about the wreaths ceremony by the War of Independence Victory memorial. The camera showed the memorial, the soldiers and wreaths but not the empty surroundings. It occurred to me on this morning on the Freedom Square that the architecture of the War of Liberty Victory memorial only makes sense and works as a stage for carefully orchestrated large-scale performances, like the opening ceremony of the memorial had been. By virtue of its size, the monument requires masses and gestures an individual cannot afford or handle – not a couple of small pine-tree branches and candles but torches and wreaths so big they have to be carried by two soldiers. If the grand ceremonial infrastructure complete with state leaders, symphony orchestras and
masses is not there, the memorial can be disorienting and belittle the individual rather than reinforce his/her sense of belonging and purpose: the little old lady had come to commemorate her father and uncle, close relatives who fought in the War of Independence, but ended up leaving the memorial embittered and with tears in her eyes, essentially because the monument had not fulfilled the expectations it had set up. This is a vicious circle to the extent that the fulfillment of these expectations – the provision of a ceremony large enough to fill the plateau of the memorial and the square surrounding it – calls for the presence or intervention of the state and displays of homogeneity that are rare in today’s complex world that claims to be cherishing the individual and his or her freedom of choice.

Historians Karsten Brüggemann and Andres Kasekamp have expressed the view that the War of Independence Victory monument indicates “a desire to import an “imagined” pure national identity from a past century that today seems to be at odds with the wider context of the EU” (Brüggemann and Kasekamp 2008, 438; see also Lehti, Jutila and Jokisipilä 2008, 408-409). The film scholar Mikhail Yampolsky suggests in an essay on iconoclasm and time that “the main reason for raising a monument is the desire in some kind of magical way to affect the course of time, either to change it or to avoid its influence” (Yampolsky 1995, 95). “(M)onuments of predecessors are organizers of continuity, fictitious indicators of the uninterruptedness of time and, simultaneously, the presence of an origin (the very act of foundation, the first model, the primordial act of creation)” (Yampolsky 1995, 103-104). To the extent that monuments create around
themselves a protective zone where time moves differently and a given moment is preserved unchanged, keeping viewers at distance is written into the functions of the monument: transgressing the zone surrounding the monument, interrupting continuity and denying origin, equals iconoclasm. Aggression against a monument expresses therefore “deep dependence of the masses on the monument they are attacking.” Accordingly, “(t)he transfiguration of the masses, their transformation, often symbolically takes place around the monument.” (Yampolsky 1995, 105.) The “attribute of distance” is linked to size as immensity ascribes to monument “the fiction of infinite height and unconquerable strength” (Yampolsky 1995, 94). Yampolsky writes, drawing on Derrida, “that colossal proportions are nothing other than the expression of the figure’s incongruity with whatever concept it is ostensibly called upon to represent” (ibid.). It is the wish to present the unpresentable that gives rise to immense monuments. Moreover, gigantic dimensions are a manifestation of power for, as Maurice Agulhon remarked regarding Republicans in 19th century monarchist France, “you cannot erect Colossi on public squares unless you are in power” (Agulhon 1981, 124).

As was mentioned above, the new victory column (võidusammas) on the Freedom Square is over 20 meters tall and the memorial as a whole, together with the stairs and the granite base of the column, over 40 meters (43 yards or 129 feet). The conditions of the 1945 competition for the design of the “liberators of Tallinn” memorial stated that the height of this new monument could not exceed 5 meters (16.4 feet; Kaasik 2006, 13), which is the approximate sizes of the Bronze Soldier monument. This latter construction was
dedicated to a recent, almost contemporary event, whereas the former commemorates a victory over 90 years ago. To the extent that the War of Independence Victory monument completed the pre-war plan and dream of a central, national War of Independence memorial, it constitutes yet another legal-restorationist project. Its gigantic size along with the idiosyncratic technical solution seeks to bridge a gap between the pre-war and post-Soviet Estonian republic, to establish continuity by beating into non-existence monuments erected during the 45-year break from normalcy. As such, the “Cross of Liberty” could be regarded as a three-dimensional addition to holidays, resolutions, bills and legal acts as well as normative life stories discussed elsewhere in this chapter. Taken separately and together, these initiatives have endeavored to achieve a state of national unity and clarity and to “disallow” objects, ideas, experiences and peoples that do not fit in. By conceptualizing freedom (vabadus) narrowly in terms of the Estonian War of Independence (Vabadussõda), statehood (omariiklus) and the nation, the monument subjugates individuals to the nation state – seeks to keep them from violating the imaginary boundaries of Estonianness.

The formal anachronism of the monument is highly contemporary because it is by means of War of Independence aesthetics, appropriated in World War II by Estonians fighting against the Soviet power, that veterans of the German army and other self-appointed “freedom fighters” can be commemorated publicly and prominently, on the main square of the capital. Going back to the War of Independence means going “back” to a time – creating a mythical space – where neither the Estonian state nor most people alive today
have any pages to skip, where there is no Nazi Germany stigmatizing Estonians’ fight for Estonia’s freedom, no knot between pre- and post-Soviet statehood to be fastened again and again, no Soviet-era settler-population to be integrated, and, furthermore, no European Union to comply with.

Decisions regarding the establishment of the memorial and its design were made between 2005-2007, during the height of the Bronze Soldier controversy. If attacks indicate the attacker’s dependence on the monument, it was the Bronze Soldier that brought along the temporary transfiguration of the Estonian masses, mobilizing thousands of individuals to donate money for a new “Estonian” memorial. At the same time, and I will elaborate on this point in last chapter of this study, the attack of many Estonians on the Bronze Soldier contributed to the consolidation of many Russians in ways that only emerged as a result of the decision of the government to pull down and relocate the monument in the way it was pulled down and relocated.

The emptiness of the Freedom Square on the 90th anniversary of the Tartu Peace Treaty suggests that the completed monument lacks power to avoid the influence of the time, be it the present day or Soviet decades. Looked at from this perspective, the size of the column reflects not only the unrepresentability of freedom, but also the incongruity between the claims made by “the story of the War of Independence victory monument” (cf. Sternfeld, Laidre, Kiho and Savi, undated) and the life stories of many residents of Estonia. I would like to argue furthermore that the size speaks for different occasions on
which the authorities have refused to speak to people – in Lihula, by the Bronze Soldier on the evening of its relocation, when thousands of people protested against this particular design of the memorial. Suppressing the discussion of differences between subject positions and choices within one ethnic group imagined as a bounded community is simultaneously a means of suppressing similarities across groups and communities. Moreover, the inability to imagine a different past is indicative of an inability to approach the present differently and to envision a different future, though this is what Estonian integration policy claims to be doing. Before going into Estonian minority policy, I would like to take a closer look at Estonians’ ambiguous relationship to the Soviet era by focusing on bodily memories of material culture and emotional attachment to popular culture – non-verbal intimacy that further complicates the notion of a national community defined by its shared memories and territory.
Chapter 4: Our Culture, Their Culture, and Soviet Culture

*Peasants eat like the lady ate in the back room*

A boy brought strawberries for the lady [*mõisaproua*]. The lady took the strawberries from the boy and went to the back room. The boy stayed waiting behind the door. The door was not entirely closed and he could see how the lady was stuffing strawberries into her mouth with her hand.

The lady returned to the boy a little later, holding the plate with strawberries. She was picking strawberries with a toothpick and asked the boy: "How do you, peasants, eat strawberries at home?"

The boy is said to have responded: "We always eat strawberries like the lady ate them in the back room."

(Collected by J. Ekermann from Tapa in 1893, reprinted in Lätt 1957, 33.)

*Intimate and Public Distinguishing: Lived differences and embodied sameness*

Imagine a hair salon on the ground floor of a 16-storey apartment block in a Soviet style residential district: low ceilings, yellow walls, a leather couch and a coffee table with glossy hairstyle magazines, four or five barber chairs in a row, a Russian radio station playing in the background as hairdressers chitchat in Russian with their customers, most of whom seem to be regulars. When one of the hairdressers, a younger woman with short dark hair, is finished with a customer, a new client lands on her chair and tries to make herself understandable in her mediocre Russian. Her voice filled with sincere surprise, the hairdresser asks the customer: “Как вы сюда попали?” – “How did you get here?”
The hairdresser’s question conjured up the borders that divide Tallinn into Estonian and Russian places and zones. Language serves as the most obvious, visible and audible, dividing line and while it can be crossed relatively easily, it almost never comes alone. Linguistic segregation becomes physical once it is mapped onto buildings and people’s daily routes and, moreover, structural once it is linked with greater mobility, entitlement to belonging or, as during the Soviet era, with distinct spheres of economy. The capital’s inhabitants also sustain these distinctions by replicating particular trajectories and ways of doing things on a day-to-day basis. In asking me about my choice of hair salon, the hairdresser was also observing and commenting upon these regular patterns. She pointed out to me that I was being transgressive and it was our shared acknowledgement of my being in a “wrong” place that enabled her to demand for an explanation, even if in a friendly manner for she was clearly amused by the whole episode.

Ethnography is in many ways about “going beyond” and in my case, to the extent that I am a native of Tallinn and an Estonian, it entailed going beyond the borders I had been socialized to reproduce. Hence, the process of entering into new spaces, as banal as a hair salon, was a prerequisite for establishing contacts and at the same time also in itself productive of data and knowledge about the workings of ethnicity. Fieldwork took me, literally, to beauty parlors, cafes, bars and performance venues I had never visited before because Estonians do not frequent these particular places. It also took me to homes of Russian families and some of these apartments had wallpapers and linoleum-floors with patterns I recognized from places I had grown up in; I knew, without having to touch or
sniff, what they felt and smelt like. These homes had living rooms where one whole wall was covered with a heavy section shelf or closet the like of which most people in Estonia own or have recently gotten rid of. Moreover, while in Helsinki in the wintertime, I came to notice that buses shuttling between the city center and the West Terminal, the harbor for ferries to and from Tallinn, had the city’s highest concentration of women in fur coats and hats, luxury items that in Finland – and elsewhere in Western Europe – are surrounded by moral controversy, but much less so in Estonia.

At the same time I had trouble complying with Russian male interviewees and new friends, forgetting or sometimes simply not realizing that they regarded it to be their duty to open doors for me, help me put on or take off my coat, carry my bag, support me when I was getting off the bus or jumping down from the wall I had climbed on top of in order to get better photographs. Though nobody ever commented upon my awkwardness, I myself felt as if I was on a different regime that was cultural in a very embodied manner – I had to think before allowing time and space for these chivalrous gestures that were not always symbolic. Time and again I was reminded of an observation made by one of my

\[160\] Ene Kõresaar (2003) found that in writing about life under the Soviet regime, Estonians tended to focus on “normative things” that were seen to be signifying “good life” as well as the ability to procure “good things” and thus social competence. Owning objects that were in deficit and thus difficult to obtain was closely tied to normative behavior and notions of respectability, while non-conformism could be interpreted as ineptitude. The section shelf, a display case for smaller acquisitions and material tokens of social competence, was an apotheosis of this culture of procurement. However, because most “good things” were in deficit (from certain books to crystal vases to pieces of furniture and apartments, from exotic fruit to cars and plots for vocation homes), not owning something could also serve as a statement about class, education, political views or ethnicity.
Estonian girlfriends, a young mother of two who lived in Lasnamäe and would sometimes use public transport to get to the city center: if somebody was going to help you get your baby carriage on or off the bus, it was likely to be a young Russian man.

Fieldwork also brought me together with Russians and Russian-speakers of my own age who scrape their yogurt cups and ice cream bowls as clean as I tend to scrape mine, even though there is no shortage of sweets any longer and kids growing up in Estonia today have very different ideas of what constitutes a treat. Upon returning to Tallinn in late October 2011, I reconnected with the youth organization I had worked with as part of my fieldwork and brought with me mellow crème pumpkins, something not easily found in Europe. At the time of my visit, the organization’s office was filled with small children watching a Harry Potter movie and as I walked around offering them sweets, one of the employees, a Russian woman in her late twenties, smiled and commented to me: “It is like having foreign candies.” The pumpkin-shaped orange candies were exotic and foreign all right, but it was “like having foreign candies” because it reminded her of our childhood when anything that came from overseas was a real treat. She could say this to me knowing that I could and would relate to it, whereas the same remark would not have made sense to today’s kids whom we watched getting high on corn syrup. While mellow crème might have been a new flavor for them, this is all it was now that shops are filled with “foreign candies.”
According to Ray Cashman, it is the materiality of a given moment or encounter that provides “the catalyst for remembrance, draws the past into the present, and allows for the world of experience, memory, and ideas” to be linked to it (Cashman 2008, 258). Memories, habits and ideas relating to food, material culture and domestic spaces reflect everyday environments where sensory experiences recur and become internalized along with particular behaviors. Unlike written autobiographical accounts that can be tailored to meet the expectations of a particular audience and edited or ignored by scholars, recollections driven by physical surroundings and embodied ways of knowing and doing are too elusive and embedded in daily life to be contained or even pinned down. They can show connections that official narratives fail to disconnect. “Ours” is sometimes “theirs,” sometimes “Soviet” and sometimes something else.

Estonians’ “Return to the West” in the early 1990s, intertwined with legal-restorationist reforms, was simultaneously a return to or arrival in the “East” to the extent it forced Estonians to face their difference from the “real West”: albeit Westerners of the Soviet Union, they were poor Easterners in relation to the more affluent West. Anthropologist Sigrid Rausing describes how Estonians on the collective farm she studied in the early 1990s would measure Russians according to the same standards they themselves were being measured by Swedish donors delivering humanitarian aid to this region: “Estonians are to the Westerners what the Russians are to the Estonians, and both the Russians and the Estonians maintain a sense of defiant lack of thrift and caution when faced with the objectifying gaze from the West, whether the West be the Swedes observing the
Estonians, or the Estonians observing the Russians” (Rausing 2004, 22). Rausing found that locals expressed keen interest in subtle differences between East and West, asking her discreetly about exotic fruits or the use of teabags, while at the same time treating these items with “studied indifference” (Rausing 2004, 150) and yet as tokens of success (cf. footnote above on consumption of “good life” under the Soviet regime). According to Rausing, such questions were motivated less by curiosity and more “by the desire for knowledge of a coherent Western habitus to which they had a particular, collective, or national, relationship of affinity, but which was also tantalizingly subtle and difficult to grasp for the individual” (Rausing 2004, 40).

Rausing’s ethnography provides a rare insight into on-the-ground interactions in the early 1990s whereby Estonians in one particular rural location were categorizing and denouncing certain practices and goods as “Soviet” in order to claim as their own “Western” acts and objects they did not always know how to perform or could hardly afford. These were complex processes of silent negotiations in so far as the “Soviet” was what was actually habitual, attainable or affordable and the publicly claimed “West” was only to be acquired in an invisible manner.

161 “The consumption of Western products, then, constituted an appropriation of Westernness that defined the transformation to Westernness, at the same time as it revealed and emphasized the Soviet rather than the Western aspects of Estonia itself. The relationships to the new objects articulated a particular social and historical trajectories, entangling the Soviet past and the relationship to Russia with the relationship to Sweden and the restoration of Swedish cultural heritage on the peninsula” (Rausing 2004, 78).
Michael Herzfeld has launched the concept “cultural intimacy” to signify “those aspects of a cultural identity that are considered a source of external embarrassment but that nevertheless provide insiders with their assurance of common sociality” (Herzfeld 2005, 3). These “intimate faces of identity” (Herzfeld 2005, 53) coexist with public or official ones, whereas various social actors are constantly negotiating distinctions between the intimate and formal at multiple levels. Herzfeld’s starting point is that people, communities, the nation-state and even international structures deploy similar strategies of essentialism in order to invest transient identities and labile truths with rigidity they lack in practice but that is required in order to pursue any goals. Looked at from this perspective, essentialization and agency are two sides of the same coin (Herzfeld 2005, 211). All social interaction consists of such acts “of creating the illusion of fixity” (Herzfeld 2005, 66) and hence sameness, which is why strategies of essentialism depend on the production and recognition of iconicity or resemblance by means of stereotypes, laws and other ideal types (Herzfeld 2005, 47). It is this kind of knowledge that people on Rausing’s collective farm yearned for and needed in order to create convincing, i.e. recognizable, resemblance with “West” and that, moreover, guides the everyday activities of Tallinn’s Estonians and Russians who hold on to their “own” daily patterns and trajectories.

Conceived in opposition to an influential pole, cultural intimacy represents an alternative to the current official view or self-representation, but one that is kept discreetly secret and by virtue of its secrecy serves as a demarcation between insiders and outsiders, between
those who know and don’t know about flaws that undermine the official self-representation. It follows from this that in order for the larger structure to succeed, the knowledgeable need to be personally invested in keeping the secret, which makes the conceptual distinction between “top” and “bottom,” “elites” and “ordinary people” futile if not deceptive. Herzfeld argues that the power of the state or other influential actors to exercise control comes from strategic manipulation of stereotypes that are already in popular circulation and used by actors to pursue their own interests. (Herzfeld 2005, 30-31.)

To refer back to the previous chapter, legal restorationism, unlike the program proposed by the Popular Front, mapped the distinction between West and Soviet/East on the distinction between rightful citizens of the Republic of Estonia and immigrants, Estonians and Russians, and this same hierarchical dichotomy between East and West structured Soviet Estonia’s and Estonians’ interactions with the Soviet system and Russian-speaking settlers (Estonians as Westerners of the Soviet Union) as well as individual Estonians’ oftentimes-humiliating encounters with Westerners (Estonians as Easterners and Soviets). People on Rausing’s collective farm had a personal motivation for passing as Westerners.

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Ray Cashman drew my attention to the fact that this “is parallel in dynamic to the way Gramsci says hegemony works – not through force and coercion but by manipulation of ambient discourse to persuade people of the naturalness of the elite’s dominance” (personal communication). Herzfeld criticizes Althusser’s concept of “interpellation,” arguing that its atemporality and determinism reinforces and reproduces the power of the very same institutions the workings of which it seeks to analyze (Herzfeld 2005, 30). In the words of Althusser, “all ideology interpellates or hails concrete individuals as concrete subjects, by the functioning of the category of the subject” (Althusser 2001, 173).
and by performing familiarity with the West, they were simultaneously performing continuity between pre- and post-Soviet statehood and, furthermore, understating the toll that the regime change and transition to capitalism were taking on their lives. The official self-representation framed unemployment, homelessness and other new social problems as matters of personal failure, which made them even more difficult to tackle and also constitutive of the new political and economic order.

Denouncement of the Soviet era is furthermore intertwined with Estonia’s ethnolinguistic segregation, another feature omitted from the nation-state’s monolingual façade. Though not a source of embarrassment like unemployment or poverty, the virtual bilingualism of the capital or the dominance of the Russian language in northeast Estonia are tough things to negotiate with the constitutional idea of the Estonian state as the guarantor of the Estonian nation, language, and culture through ages (Constitution of the Republic of Estonia). At the same time, the state’s – and its subjects’ – fixation on language and the equation of language with ethnicity, to be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, could be regarded as strategies of essentialism par excellence for they create the public appearance of distinct bounded communities characterized by internal homogeneity here and now as well as through time. This permanence and thingness is achieved and remade continuously through stereotype-based daily actions, such as one’s choice of hair salon or gendered courteous gestures, but it also serves to conceal transgressions of these same norms by group members as well as resemblances between arguably dissimilar groups. The psychological and physical unease of “going beyond” the habitual zones that I had to
face up to during the first months of my fieldwork stood in striking contrast to familiarity that I sometimes encountered upon making it from here to there, from сиит to сюда. Distinctions between and definitions of “us” and “them,” “Russian,” “Russian-speaking,” and “Estonian,” “East” and “West” became increasingly subtle and problematic as did pinning down the “Soviet” – by now an object of remembrance.

My aim in this chapter is to explore how people in contemporary Estonia address and make distinctions between Estonian, Russian and Soviet by means of popular culture. This particular angle comes out from observations on the popularity of Soviet-Russian film music among Estonians, which at the time of my fieldwork was not only greater than among Estonian Russians’ and Russian-speakers,’ but also seemed to be serving different purposes. Estonian audiences’ expressively emotional identification with songs from Soviet films prompted me to explore engagements with other genres of Soviet popular culture as well as popular-culture representations of or references to the Soviet era and Soviet popular culture. I will start by discussing a comedy series about life in Soviet Estonia, which premiered in 2010 on Estonian Television, a play the characters of which reminisce about their childhood in the Brezhnev era, and selected post-Soviet takes on Soviet-Russian cartoons. I will then proceed with analyzing two theatrical productions, both of which featured songs from Soviet-Russian films but were tailored for Estonian and Estonian-Russian audiences respectively. Last but not least, I will compare the show of the (Soviet-)Russian superstar Alla Pugacheva to a concert given by the Russian rock band Splean. Both took place in Tallinn in early 2010, the former in the country’s biggest
performance venue and the latter in a small rock club. My discussion of these cases draws mainly on fieldwork observations and interactions, but I also conducted interviews with cast members of the two theatrical productions and in some instances will pursue textual analysis.

In all of these cases I am interested in two sets of issues. First, I am intrigued by the incongruence between the formal denouncement of the Soviet regime, discussed in previous chapters, and the success of entertaining takes on the Soviet era among Estonians, which suggests that Soviet-Russian popular culture constitutes a sphere of cultural intimacy and, moreover, that popular culture allows for affective engagements with the Soviet past suppressed in verbal autobiographical accounts, official ceremonies and statements. Since cultural intimacy is constitutive of the official order and formal self-representations, I am interested in hierarchies and distinctions made within this zone. I also look at how different genres and performances invoke communities of particular kind and how the ethnic composition of the audience gives rise to strategies of essentialism, whereby ethnic group borders are drawn, reinforced and reified. Second, I discuss the (im)possibility of autonomy of art and aesthetics from ideology, which is further linked to questions regarding the interpretative autonomy and authority of listeners, viewers and audience members. This leads me to the concept of kitsch and the association of taste with class and ethnicity – topics that are linked to ties between iconicity, essentialization and agency as discussed by Herzfeld and serve as an introduction to the discussion of Estonian minority policies in the next chapters.
In addition, the following discussion is in conversation with scholarship on collective memory and remembering. Since at least Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945) (e.g., Halbwachs 1992), scholars have approached memory as a social phenomenon, recognizing the coexistence of the individual and the group. As Peter Burke summarizes, “(i) individuals remember, in the literal, physical sense. However, it is social groups which determine what is ‘memorable’ and also how it will be remembered. Individuals identify with public events of importance to their group” (Burke 1989, 98). More recently, there has been a shift towards distinguishing between memory and remembering, which enables to get at processes whereby ‘the memorable’ takes shape and is continuously reshaped – socially constructed. According to Guy Beiner

Without binding the term to a restrictive definition, social remembrance can be roughly described as a process by which members of a community negotiate the identity of the society with which they are affiliated in relation to its past; the “past,” in socio-cultural terms, being a selective collection of interpretative constructions based on both authentic and fabricated sources.

Social memory is collective insofar as it is neither the exclusive property nor the faculty of one individual, but commonly shared by a community. It is a discursive reproduction of the past performed and promulgated by multiple agents and relating to numerous participants. Members of a society draw and contribute to a communal body of cultural knowledge relating to the past.

(Beiner 2007, 28; cf. Burke 1989)

James Wertsch, who similarly emphasizes the need to regard “remembering as something that we do” (Wertsch 2002, 17), defines collective remembering as “a form of mediated action,” the mediators being narratives and other textual resources and “cultural tools”
provided by the given sociocultural context and, again, shared by members of the community (Wertsch 2002). It is the sharing of context-dependent textual resources that yields a shared representation of the past as well as a “textual community.”

I find Beiner’s definition appealing, sensitive as it to multiple authorship and receptions, selectiveness, contestations and battles – the processuality of remembering. At the same time I am also troubled by it for it seems to assume that there always already exists a remembering community, equated with “members of a society” (Beiner 2007, 28). The same is true for the Wertsch’s take on collective memory, which has been influential in Estonian life-story scholarship, not least, I would argue, because it fits the notion of a homogeneous national community set apart from other communities (or the other community) by its language: national collective is a textual collective and ultimately a linguistic collective with the unity of language overriding the multiplicity of choices and points of view. Wertsch’s own interpretation of the 2007 Bronze Solider incident framed

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163 “(T)o be human is to use the cultural tools, or mediational means, that are provided by a particular sociocultural setting” (Wertsch 2002, 11). Wertsch developed his approach on the basis of studying collective memory in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia. For example, he has analyzed how new and potentially subversive information about the Soviet regime (e.g., the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact) has been integrated into post-Soviet history teaching without shaking or changing the established collective narrative of World War II/the Great Patriotic War as a heroic triumph over alien forces. Together with the Estonian psychologist (and by now politician) Peeter Tulviste, Wertsch has also published on the distinction in Soviet Estonia between official history taught at schools and unofficial historical knowledge passed on privately at homes (Tulviste and Wertsch 1994).

164 Cf. Paul Connerton’s emphasis on habit and ritual and claim that social memory is habitualized and ritualized (Connerton 1989).
Estonians and Russians as distinct “mnemonic communities” (Wertsch 2008), converting particular interpretations of history into ethnic essences.

Given the (self-)censoring that goes into representing and narrating the Soviet era in post-Soviet Estonia and drawing on Herzfeld, the very supposition of a remembering community comes across as an exercise in nation building – something that Beiner’s replacement of ‘collective’ by ‘social’ seeks to avoid – or at the very least raises the question of what is at stake in presupposing such a collective. Processes and cases discussed in this study suggest that it is not always clear who does the remembering and to what extent remembering “makes” communities, which shifts the attention from “things” to the pursuit, enactment and contestation of “thingness.” Folklore studies have in recent decades moved from treating communities as entities towards regarding community as “an idea appealed to and effected through performance” (Cashman 2008, 10), which is evidenced also in ways in which folkloristic approaches to memory and remembering take up the complex interrelationship between the individual and the collective in its various forms. Ray Cashman (2008) is interested in commemoration as “remembering together,” the emphasis being on activities of commemoration and on imagining and enacting communities that are local in the sense of being grounded in both daily empirical networks and social imaginaries (cf. Noyes 2003a). He uses “the term collective memory to name the mutable product of commemoration during social

165 Cf. Beiner on preferring “social memory” and “social remembering” to “collective memory”: “The broader scope implied in the term social reflects the intention to go beyond the standard use of collective memory, which has limited itself to political history of national “mythologies”” (Beiner 2007, 28; emphasis in the original).
interaction” (Cashman 2008, 259), adding that “collective memory exists in the same way society, culture, and tradition do – not as superorganic forces that transcend and control individuals, but as metaphors for human action, expression, and experience” (Cashman 2008, 265).

Because of the multiple and intertwined processes of exclusion at work in post-Soviet Estonia (and any state) and because of scholarly contributions to these exclusions, exemplified by life story scholarship discussed in the previous chapter, I shy away from the term collective memory even in this metaphoric sense, while at the same time sharing an interest in grounded acts of “remembering together” and genres of expressive culture whereby communities are imagined, evoked, maintained and made to feel and look real. Popular culture provides an intriguing vantage point for thinking about remembrance or commemoration and communality because it is positioned ambiguously at the intersection of the personal and the shared, private and public, all of which are layered concepts. Any popular-culture text reflects cultural, political, and economic conditions of its production and has been created with a particular audience in mind, yet its meanings are local and emergent, tied to personal, oftentimes formative experiences and memories. Also, to the extent that popular culture is about entertainment and consumption, it can be enjoyed – and read differently – without necessarily and definitely committing to a political program or agenda of other kind.
Soviet-Russian cartoons or film music are akin to linoleum, section shelves and fur coats in that they constitute and attest to the existence of a shared ground between Estonians and Russians in Estonia – a set of “cultural tools” and resources (Wertsch 2002) or “a body of communal cultural knowledge” (Beiner 2007) – that connects them further, at least potentially and on some level, to millions of people across the former Soviet Union.

The very starting point for this chapter is that having the Soviet era – or the period of mature socialism – in oneself in one way or another is one of the few things that the majority of grown-ups in post-Soviet Estonia share, something that crosses linguistic and other dividing lines because it comes from living together, albeit in a segregated manner, in a closed society haunted by scarcity of choices and incentives to conform. My aim is neither to reverse Wertsch’s argument by demonstrating how Estonians and Russians constitute one “mnemonic community” nor to lay bare the selectivity of narratives and other “cultural tools” used by various actors to define communities. Rather, I intend to show how differences do not always lie in the content or “stuff” being remembered but are (re)made in performances and interpretations that emerge under particular circumstances and not others.

*Winners’ Childhood, or who is Entitled to Remember the Soviet Era*

In fall 2010, Estonian Television or ETV, the country’s biggest public service television channel, came up with a comedy series titled ENSV (acronym for Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic). The show offers humorous scenes from the daily life of an Estonian

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family in the early 1980s: a woman employed by the Communist Party, her partner who works as a teacher, the woman’s daughter and son, their neighbors in the communal apartment, and the woman’s separated husband who works as a sailor and has thus access to desirable Western goods. All of the characters are ethnic Estonians and while some of them are pro-Soviet (for example, the neighbor is a female veteran of World War II and his son works in militsiya or the Soviet police), this setup reflects and reproduces the notion of Estonia’s ethnic homogeneity and the country’s separateness from the rest of the Soviet Union. The show strives to create a visually convincing and elaborate representation of Soviet material culture and the flow of action is occasionally interrupted by explanations of distinctive Soviet-era concepts and phenomena (à la foreign currency store or valuutapood – a shop where one could pay in foreign currencies and buy products not to be found elsewhere). Despite these educational features, the authors of the series have claimed that ENSV is not “a history lesson” and “does not pass judgments, but jokes about topics and situations that today might seem incredible not only to the new generation but also to those who back then went through all this” (ENSV). The show’s focus on the absurdity of Soviet life makes it possible to stereotype characters to the extreme, as if to affirm that average Estonians – even those working for the Communist Party – were victims of the circumstances. They were never serious about the Soviet regime, but only trying to get by – a stance that keeps the questions of personal involvement and responsibility at bay, while re-affirming the reasoning behind Riigikogu’s statement on crimes of the occupation regime, discussed in the previous chapter.
ENSV is co-written by Villu Kangur and Gert Kiiler, born in the late 1950s and mid-1970s respectively, and directed by Ain Mäeots (b. 1971). During the economically successful 1990s and early 2000s in particular, it was common to refer to the late 1960s and 1970s cohort as “the generation of winners” (Titma 2002; Grünberg 2009). The last generation to have come of age in the Estonian SSR, it was on the threshold of adulthood at the time of the regime change and thus in a position to make the most of new opportunities without having to answer for the Soviet past. The caricaturing approach of ENSV to the period of late socialism could be seen as an audiovisual representation of this mixture of familiarity with and detachment from “things Soviet”: detailed memories and excessive representation of material and popular culture combined with flattening out more complex experiences and moral controversies that daunt people who led adult lives under the Soviet regime.

Nearly all prominent popular-culture interpretations of the Soviet era so far have been by members of “the winner’s generation,” which attests to this cohort’s drive to remember as well as its a license and means to do so in a public manner. 167 Among the first such texts

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167 One example, beyond the scope of this study, includes the coming-of-age movie “Revolution of Pigs” (Sigade revolutsioon, 2004) co-directed by René Reinumägi and Jaak Kilmi, both born in the 1970s. The film draws on its creators’ memories of youth summer brigades (malev) meant to serve as tools of both ideological education and recreation. Set in 1986, the film shows how tensions between strict instructors and rebellious teenagers, heated by Western pop music, spill over into an ideological conflict. Kilmi has also co-authored, in collaboration with other directors and writers of his generation, a teleplay and several documentaries on the period of late socialism, many of which mix facts and fiction as if to mimic the point of view of a child (e.g., “Disco and
to receive more attention was “The Light-Blue Wagon” (*Helesinine vagun*), a comedy by one of the most popular and critically acclaimed contemporary Estonian authors Andrus Kivirähk (b. 1970; Kivirähk 2002). The play premiered in 2003 and is about a group of thirty-somethings (today’s forty-somethings), who transform a birthday party on May 1st – the International Workers’ Day – into a reenactment of their Soviet childhood. Hence, the entry into play mode is enabled by an overlap in personal ritual calendar and the ritual calendar of a state that once was. Whereas the ENSV comedy series resembles a carefully planned and decorated theme party, characters of “The Light Blue Wagon” go on a spree, pouring out their thoughts, emotions, longings and recollections, a sense of displacement that clashes with their social, economic and ethnic capital in post-Soviet Estonia.

The play was produced by the Ugala theatre in Viljandi and stayed in the repertoire for over six years. I have only seen recorded excerpts from it and read the play.

The birthday boy Indrek and his two friends, Tõnu and Märt, are waiting for the arrival of Sirts, a significantly younger girlfriend of Indrek with whom he is supposed to travel to the United States the next day. The two calendars become fused as Tõnu tries to stop Märt from nagging Indrek about the arrival of Sirts:

“Tõnu: Drop it, Märt, don’t intrude into the happiness of the youth! We are already old men, what do we know about girls and trips to America. The important thing for us is that today is May 1!

Märt: Correct! Congratulations to us all on the day of solidarity of the working people! Have you been to the parade already?

Indrek: I could not make it today, unfortunately. It used to be in the old days [*vanasti*] that I would go to the parade with my dad in the morning, but in the evening we would celebrate my birthday. There were balloons up in the ceiling and I would put into vase a little red flag that had “Mir” [Russian for peace] written on it and a dove of peace. Dad would buy it. He didn’t really want to buy it himself, said that it was a stupid thing, why would you wave it, but I really liked it” (Kivirähk 2002, 223).
The title of the play refers to a song that was written for and became known and popular through Soviet-Russian cartoons featuring Gena the crocodile and his tiny, big-eared and big-eyed companion Cheburashka, characters invented by the Russian children’s author Eduard Uspenky in the 1960s and turned into stop-motion animation films by Roman Kachanov in the 1960-70s. One of the films in this series, “Shapoklyak” (Шапокляк, 1974) ends with the protagonists riding on the roof of a blue train and contemplating life as the crocodile, accompanying himself on the Russian instrument garmon, performs a song about the passing of time. While the train and train ride become metaphors for human life, the wagon’s light blue color suggest that this is only a dream: in Estonian, as in Russian, the idiom “light blue dream” (helesinine unistus, голубая мечта) stands for a pipe dream. The protagonists of the comedy “The Light Blue Wagon” long for a different world order and commonality despite, or by virtue of, being winners in Estonia’s transition from socialism to capitalism and independence.  

The comedy and debates surrounding it are said to have given birth to another designation for the 1970s cohort: “the Russian cartoons’ generation” (Grünberg 2009, 4). Kristi Grünberg argues in her analysis of the play/production and its reception by Estonian critics that “The Light Blue Wagon” materialized or fixed the ‘everyday memory’ of one generation, turning it into “a part of cultural memory fulfilling

170 Cf. the theatre’s blurb of the production: “an insight into the nostalgia for the Soviet period in the souls of today’s thirty-somethings, the so-called Russian cartoons generation. It is a story about the people who are tormented by the transformation of common ideals and dreams with the change of social order. A story about remembering and forgetting. (...) A play for people who long for a different world” (cited in Grünberg 2009, 4).
collectives’ identity needs” (Grünberg 2009: 3); in this process and by facilitating discussions over the Soviet era, the play itself became part of everyday memory (ibid.).

It is notable that both Grünberg and the reviewers whose appraisals she discusses seem to lose sight of the specificity of the “collective” whose “identity needs” the play is said to fulfill: all of the play’s characters engaged in reminiscing are men and the intensity of their identification with the Soviet past correlates with the amount of alcohol consumed.

One could argue that Kivirähk is depicting an instance of male bonding among a group of lifelong friends and that this bonding takes the form of recalling their childhood in Tallinn, the hometown of the play’s author. Yet in meta-commentary on and interpretations of the play this particular masculine form of remembrance becomes representative of a whole generation that has been seen to embody the aspirations of the newly independent Estonia and thus representative of the national community.

Grünberg draws on Jan Assmann’s distinction between ‘communicative’ or ‘everyday memory’ and ‘cultural memory.’ The former is informal, disorganized, thematically unstable and its temporal horizon shifts with the passing of time, whereas the latter is distanced from the everyday and fixed in particular significant events of the past the memory of which is maintained through “figures of memory”: “cultural formations (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance)” (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 129). It is the cultural memory that in Assmann’s view “preserves the store of knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity” (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 130). “The communicative memory offers no fixed point which would bind it to the ever expanding past in the passing of time. Such fixity can only be achieved through a cultural formation and therefore lies outside of informal everyday memory” (Assmann and Czaplicka 1995, 127).

While I recognize the analytical value of Assmann’s distinction, I also find it to be over-generalizing and somewhat artificial, exaggerating the fixity of “cultural memory” and the haphazardness of “everyday memory,” the distance of the former from the latter. Similarly to concepts of ‘social’ or ‘collective memory’ and ‘remembering’ discussed in the introduction to this chapter, Assmann’s distinction takes the remembering group for granted, equating it with ‘the society’ and ‘a culture.’ Contributions to Ben-Amos and Weissberg 1999 take a different approach to cultural memory, showing how memory is cultural by virtue of its embedment in everyday life.
According to Grünberg, members of the generation represented in and by the play claim that “in order to constitute themselves as coherent subjects, they need to be able to remember their [Soviet] childhood” (Grünberg 2009, 11). It is this group’s assumed innocence that validates their yearning, while lack thereof smears and outlaws the longings of adults assumed to be enmeshed in the system. The comedy series ENSV with its focus on absurdities of Soviet life (“Who does not remember the past has less things to laugh about”; ENSV) suggests that there is nothing to be remembered from the Soviet period that would support a coherent sense of self.

Kivirähk’s comedy “The Light Blue Wagon” – and many of its reviewers – use Soviet-Russian animation films as a shorthand for affectionate familiarity with the Soviet era, drawing on the cultural imaginary of childhood as a period or state of purity defined by the absence of politics and ideology. However, the play’s characters’ most vivid memories of the Soviet era relate to parades, the funeral of Brezhnev and other official ceremonies designed by the state to permeate through the whole society and all bodies,

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172 Cf. the distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia put forward by Svetlana Boym (2001). The former seeks to reconstruct the past, treating it as a model for the present, while the latter signifies longing for the sake of longing, sometimes ironically rather than seriously: “Restorative nostalgia evokes national past and future; reflective nostalgia is more about individual and cultural memory. The two might overlap in their frames of reference, but they do not coincide in their narratives and plots of identity. In other words, they can use the same triggers of memory and symbols, the same Proustian madelaine pastry, but tell different stories about it” (Boym 2001, 49).

173 When ENSV first came on in fall 2010, a childhood friend of my mother, an Estonian woman born in the late 1940, asked her peers during their annual reunion why the Soviet era was always represented in ways that made her feel ridiculous.
getting them into the same “temporal order” (Zerubavel 1981). Though hyperboles, grotesque and juicy language characteristic of Kivirähk’s writing counteract even the slightest hint that protagonists’ fond memories could carry over into life outside this specific context of playful performance, the rhythm of Gena’s song cannot be completely separated from the marching order the Soviet regime imposed on its subjects.

Animation films produced by Soyuzmultifilm or Union Animation Film studio and broadcasted daily throughout the Soviet Union were similarly to official ceremonies a form and vehicle for distributing ideas emanating from the center. The peak of animation

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174 Consider the following passage about Brezhnev’s funeral:

“Indrek: Brezhnev had much better orders [than the Komsomol did]. And actually he had much more of them, there were already five Golden Stars of Hero. I remember, when he died, these orders were carried like lapdogs on red pillows in front of his coffin. There was an award sitting on each pillow like a frog [reference to Russian fairy tales where frogs are transformed into czarinas] and an officer carried them ceremonially across the Red Square.

Märt: Fuck, Brezhnev’s funeral was grand! They canceled school.

Indrek: But before that we had a mourning rally. Remember? There was a picture of Brezhnev in a black frame in the assembly hall and the principal gave a speech. It was terrible, everybody was biting their tongue in order to not burst into laughter.

Tõnu: Jaanika broke wind because of the exertion, nice and loud just during the minute of silence. The deputy principal took her out and her dad was invited to school.

Märt: Brezhnev’s stuff was crazy. I watched the funeral on TV.

Tõnu: That’s nothing, everybody did! Factory chimneys whistled. I rang the doorbell at the same time.

Märt: I blew old man’s horn on the balcony. The old man was really mad when he found out, said that we would be imprisoned. But sure we were.

Indrek: You would have been shot dead during the Stalin era. You and your old man and all of your relatives. And the workers of the factory where the horn was made.

Märt: The Stalin era, what are we talking about! Things were in order back then. It was looser under Brezhnev.” (Kivirähk 2002, 226-227).

175 Soyuzmultifilm was established in 1936 as a subdivision of Soyuzkino, the central cinematic agency, and had studios in some other Union Republics (Kononenko 2011, 275).
film production coincided with the period of late socialism when televisions had become widespread across the Soviet Union. In Estonia these Soviet cartoons were shown regularly until the early 1990s, which means that they made it to the childhood of those born as late as in the mid-1980s. Because the pool of both cartoons and television channels was limited, the same films would be watched over and over again, even after one knew them by heart.

David MacFadyen emphasizes in his study of Soviet-Russian cartoons that though illiberal, the Soviet regime could neither dismiss nor control public desires. Politics is in his view hard pressed not to try to use the positive emotions evoked by songs, books, and images that people actually like, but because emotions and enjoyment precede language and any ideology, the co-optation or subjugation of the genuinely popular to dogma can never be complete: “at the root of preference and liking is affect,” a supra- or pre-personal state that ignores the linearity and coherence of grand narratives (MacFadyen 2005, xvii). MacFadyen’s analysis of animation films, their reviews, and debates on the cartoon genre in the 1960-80s led him to conclude that Soviet-Russian animation “films and their characters speak and act in radical advocacy of joining an amusing, eternally inclusive (and therefore eternally changing) realm that suggests kinship with all of nature (or at least all of mankind) more than it suggests the exclusive, pragmatic, and progressive notions of one nation or one class” (MacFadyen 2005, xvi). He claims that animation films from the 1960-80s aimed to affect viewers and increase their emotional proximity to cartoon characters by creating all-embracing “visual music”: sounds,
melodies, and images were coordinated into sentimental tales where rhythm and plasticity of forms took priority over narrative. Language became displaced and with it the verbally expressed ideological content. Hence, films made in the period of mature socialism engaged the audience not in the political dogma but emotions and lyrical states common to humans irrespective of particular local conditions and hierarchies. (MacFadyen 2005.)

Gena the crocodile, wearing a black bowler hat and a red tailcoat complete with a bowtie, and the fantasy creature Cheburashka, who arrived in Russia by accident in a box of oranges, share the same world with humans against all the rules of “truthful representation of life” called for by Socialist Realism. However, they do socialize with young pioneers and in one episode build a “House of Friendship”, which brings to mind the official doctrine of “Friendship of Peoples.” Depending on the viewer’s point of view, the very idea of “joining in” emphasized by MacFadyen could be interpreted as a manifestation of Soviet imperialism and of the idea of crafting Soviet citizens out from Soviet Union’s diverse population – a project that gained new relevance in the period of late socialism (see chapter 1, pp. ). Along similar lines, given the repressiveness of the Soviet system and the fact that not all “characters” joined this “amusing, eternally inclusive realm” voluntarily, the inclusivity of cartoons could be seen as an attempt to naturalize the Soviet federalist regime or as another Potemkin village, an audiovisual

176 It has been noted that the most successful Soviet comedies of the 1960-70s, especially those by director Leonid Gaidai, also used visual effects and songs to undermine the linear narrative that had structured films so far (see Prokhorov 2003).
reiteration of the statement that children in the Soviet Union have the happiest childhood in the world.\(^{177}\)

Natalie Kononenko has noted critically about “most Western scholarship” that “(w)hile most things Soviet were assumed to be purveyors of a Soviet socialist message, animation is not” (Kononenko 2011, 273). She discusses Soviet animation films as a tool of marginalization of non-Russian peoples and cultures, arguing that folklore-based films in particular “played their part in bombarding non-Russians with Russian language and Russian culture” (Kononenko 2011, 279): when animals are shown working together, they do so under the leadership of the bear, the symbol of Russia; Ukrainians are presented as backward peasants rich in folklore but deficient in coherent language (\textit{ibid.}).

Though Kononenko and MacFadyen arrive at contrasting conclusions, both of them focus on films, their creators, commissioners and the ideal imagined audiences, paying little attention to cartoons’ empirical audiences, viewers’ interpretative strategies and local

\(^{177}\) There is a joke set in a Soviet kindergarten that I remember from the early 1990s but that must be older. A preschool teacher describes the Soviet Union as a country where children have the best toys and the happiest childhood. One boy raises his hand and says that he, too, would like to live in the Soviet Union. The joke draws on incongruity between the constantive (content) and performative (form) dimension of official discourse, which according to Alexei Yurchak emerged after Stalin’s death when the same ideas and phrases were ritually circulated and performed despite being out of touch with realities (Yurchak 2005; cf. Annus and Hughes 2004). While the boy takes the teacher’s description of the Soviet Union literally, his wish to live in the Soviet Union comes from noticing that he does not live in a place like the one described by his teacher.
conditions of reception in different parts of the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{178} In parts of Estonia, for example, Soviet animation films could be and were watched alongside with Finnish, Central-Eastern European and other more Western productions shown on Finnish television. For the intoxicated protagonists of Kivirähk’s “The Light Blue Wagon,” Disney’s Snow White, seen once on Finnish television, continues to embody ideal female beauty to be sheltered from sexual desires (Kivirähk 2002, 228-229). Moreover, some teenagers approached Soviet cartoons with the essentially camp attitude “it’s good because it’s awful” (Sontag 1966, 292). As one of my interviewees, an Estonian man born in the early 1970s, put it: “For a normal guy in the mid-1980s, Soviet pop culture was out, anything that came from the East was completely out. (…) Cheburashka was camp for us back then, not to mention the cult film “Hedgehog in the fog.”\textsuperscript{179} Now they

\textsuperscript{178} Kononenko 2011 is based on a paper titled “Soviet Cartoons on Folklore Topics” (Kononenko 2008) presented at the 2008 Annual Meeting of the American Folklore Society in Louisville, Kentucky. When I suggested to Kononenko at the conference, drawing on my own childhood, that these animation films were open to diverse and less ideologically laden interpretations by children living in different parts of the Soviet Union, she responded that my saying so indicated that I was already indoctrinated enough as a child to not be aware of the cartoons’ ideological content. While this interpretation is probably true in so far as the same holds true for any child in any society who grows up around television, it also points to notions of the Soviet Union as a monolithic bloc and of the absolute power of the Soviet central government – ideas that have been disputed by scholars during the past two decades. Moreover, media-audience studies have demonstrated cultural differences in the reception of widely-distributed contents and genres (a classic study is Ang 1985 on Dallas), which suggests that looking at local receptions of popular-culture texts (a notoriously difficult task) rather than texts can yield a more nuanced understanding of the workings of the Soviet system and ideology in different parts of the Soviet Union and also in post-Soviet societies.

\textsuperscript{179} “Hedgehog in the Fog” (Ёжик в тумане, 1975) is a renowned animation film by director Yuri Norshtein and author Sergei Kozlov about a hedgehog who gets lost in fog and faces existential fears on its way to see its friend the bear cub. When Kozlov died in January 2010, the Estonian newspaper Postimees published a short announcement that instantly evoked sympathetic Internet comments (Suri muinasjutu “Siil udus” autor). See
no longer come across as camp, but as incredibly cute. Very nice, likeable animation films. Back then it was necessary to take distance and one could do it through camp.”

Texts are open to diverse interpretations, enabling individual viewers to adopt different subject positions. While looking for “a private zany experience of the thing” behind its “straight” public sense (Sontag 1966, 281) may serve as a strategy for achieving distinctiveness from the official system, this cool distance can be turned into affection under new circumstances: resistance becomes intimacy.

Perhaps the most important local factor in the reception of Soviet cartoons for the purposes of this study is that before these films were shown on the Estonian Television, they were dubbed into Estonian using well-known Estonian actors. As a consequence, once these cartoons reached the Estonian-language audience, they were already also something else, imbued with local nuances, despite being visually identical to the Russian originals and using the same sound effects. It followed from this that the same images and narratives were being consumed by Estonian and Russian children in Estonia but in linguistic isolation from each other, to the extent that the former watched ETV and the latter all-union channels broadcasted in Russian.\(^{180}\)

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MacFadyen 2005, 164-166 for a discussion of the film’s reception by contemporary animation specialists and for an analysis of its visual and sound effects.

\(^{180}\) The Estonian colloquial word multikas – short for multifilm – is essentially a Russian loanword (мультфильм [multfilm] or мультики [multiki], which comes from мультипликация [multiplikatsiia] or animation). I only became aware of this linguistic connection in the course of fieldwork, after having used the word multikas for my whole life, which is perhaps another example of how Estonians have been living, experiencing, imagining and recreating themselves as a discrete linguistic collectivity.
MacFadyen claims that it is the “rhythm and visual “musicality’” “that allows the (Soviet) childhood experience to repeat and even become a memory” (MacFadyen 2005, 156). In the era of the Internet, the ride on the roof of the blue wagon is only a click away, awaiting to be repeated and returned to again and again. Video-sharing websites and social media bring together millions of individuals watching, listening, remixing, and commenting upon these films, whereas the comment threads in Estonian exist side by side with but usually separately from those in Russian. For some viewers and commentators, Soviet cartoons come to stand for the lost paradise of the USSR while Internet becomes an arena for expressing sentiments of this kind. I myself have spent long evenings in the company of close friends watching one YouTube video after another one, one version of “Gena’s song” after another one, while bumming further recommendations off other friends who happen to be online at the same time. On rare instances when I get together with my childhood friends, it is not unusual for us to talk about Soviet-Russian cartoons: recount their plots, recall certain phrases or discuss Estonian actors and actresses who gave their voice to specific characters. Though some of us grew up watching also children’s programs on Finnish television, these are never discussed in this same communal fashion. It is the engagement with Soviet Russian cartoons that appears to have taken on the form a communicative genre of its own right.

181 Consider, for example, a comment posted in Russian in October 2011: “USSR – thank you for childhood, I was still able to catch a piece of wellbeing.” To go back to the joke discussed in footnote 177, with Soviet realities gone, animation films have become a record and proof of the happiest childhood in the world that according to the joke never was.
I do not recall the topic of cartoons coming up with my Russian-speaking interviewees and new friends of my own age, which could be, for example, because no such occasion availed itself, because we were not close enough or because animation films are not an established conversational topic among this particular group of people. Even so, Soviet-Russian animation films constitute a realm and pool of texts that “we” share in some elusive ways and, furthermore, that is shared by certain generations across the former Soviet Union, setting “us” apart from “our” Western peers. Looked at from this perspective, Kivirähk describes in “The Light Blue Wagon” a practice that is not unique to his own generation or even Estonians and Estonia. The reception and interpretation of Soviet animation films is an ongoing process and an activity set within particular empirical networks, sociopolitical and economic contexts, yet never wholly determined by them.

The notion of “Russian cartoons” as a defining property of “the generation of winners” expresses the need of individual members of this generation to distinguish themselves from previous and subsequent generations. However, it also suggests that this cohort fulfills in the public treatment and representation of the period of late socialism a similar role as the 1920-30s generation has done in attesting to the pre-war Republic of Estonia. Both recall childhood and youth under a regime that has been since abolished, which means that the object of their remembering is doubly beyond their reach. In both cases the recollections of the selected few become representative of a larger collective, ultimately the nation understood in ethnic terms. Moreover, the selection of
representatives differs in terms of geography and occupation but less so in terms of class: countryside and hardworking wealthy farmers of the interwar republic are replaced by urban northerners with access to Finnish television and greater exposure to tourists – essentially inhabitants of Tallinn, yet with the exclusion of workers, a class associated with the Soviet regime and Russians. Characters of “The Light Blue Wagon” play are aware of their different class backgrounds but these distinctions are overridden by ethnicity: though workers’ children had better balloons filled with helium and have more vivid memories of parades, this appears to have had no impact on their attitudes or position in contemporary Estonia. What matters is that they went to the same – Estonian – school as the offspring of the “shabby intelligentsia” (Kivirähk 2002, 227).

Hence, “The Light Blue Wagon,” the comedy series ENSV and several other popular-culture interpretations of the Soviet era by the 1970s cohort have broadened the repertoire of narratives that can be told about the Soviet era and, more specifically, have provided a model for representing the period of late socialism that nurtures the perception of Estonia’s and Estonians’ insularity within the Soviet Union and the country’s inherent Westernness.

*Songs From Our, Their and Soviet Cinema*

The premiere of the ENSV comedy series in fall 2010 coincided with a wave of productions that reinterpreted Soviet-Russian film music. Despite featuring some of the same materials and performers, these performances were created with ethnically
differentiated audiences in mind. In Spring 2010, I was surprised to come across monolingual advertisements in major Estonian newspapers for a concert titled “The Great Concert of Film Music. Seventeen Moments of Spring” (Suur Filmimuusika Kontsert. Seitseteist Kevadist Hetke). Without mentioning the word nõukogude or Soviet, the ad made it clear that this was going to be a concert of music from Soviet-Russian productions: the subtitle “Seventeen Moments of Spring” was written in retro 1960-70s font (in red color) and pointed to a legendary 1970s comedy series about a Soviet spy operating in Nazi Germany.182 Furthermore, the poster listed famous feature films from the period of late socialism and included images of their iconic characters. The show promised to feature four singers and singing actors of different generations, two “Estonian women” and two “Russian men”: Gerli Padar, Ülle Lichtfeldt, Eduard Toman, Aleksandr Ivaskevich (the order comes from the ad). The ad also mention the director of the show, Ain Mäeots, suggesting that this was going to be more than “just” a concert.183 The production would tour to major concerts halls in Tallinn, Tartu and Jõhv, the cultural center of the predominantly Russian-speaking northeast Estonia, yet it was clear that “The Great Concert of Film Music” sought to attract Estonians.

182 “Seventeen Moments of Spring” (1973) is a television series about Stierlitz, a Soviet-Russian spy operating in Nazi Germany. The character of Stierlitz became a hero of countless jokes that were popular also in Soviet Estonia.
183 Gerli Padar (b. 1979) is a singer, TV presenter and actress, Ülle Lichtfeldt (b. 1970) an actress who sometimes performs as a singer, Eduard Toman (b. 1960) and Aleksandr Ivaskevich (b. 1960) are both actors who are also known as singers and Ivaskevich additionally as a tap dancer. The director of the show, Ain Mäeots (b. 1971), is also an actor.
I attended the performance at the Estonia Concert Hall in Tallinn in April 2010 only to be stunned by the passionate reaction of what was indeed a predominantly Estonian audience. Singers interacted with the audience and each other in Estonian or in a mixture of Estonian and Russian, while all the songs were performed in Russian. Moreover, the entire repertoire was drawn from iconic films made in the Soviet Russia in the 1960-70s and in-between musical acts, the audience was shown excerpts from these movies with the clear purpose to reminisce about legendary actors, specific jokes and catch phrases. The concert got spectators to sing along in Russian, applaud in unison after every song and finally give a standing ovation to demand for an encore; some people had tears running down their cheeks. Looking around in the concert hall, it felt as if music was opening a direct channel from here and now to some place else, taking down all possible barriers and reservations regarding the Soviet era and the use of Russian language. Overwhelming response of this kind and degree was all the more remarkable because the audience consisted of representatives of at least three generations: “the Russian cartoons’ generation” in their late 30s and 40s, people in 50s and 60s, and, last but not least, spectators who appeared to be in their early 20s if not late teens and who followed the show intensely despite lacking personal memories of the Soviet era. The concert seemed to be creating a cathartic space, invoking comparisons with Victor Turner’s definition of *communitas* as a “transformative experience that goes to the root of

each person’s being and finds in that root something profoundly communal and shared” (Turner 1969, 138).

Bewildered by what I had witnessed, I started looking for other contemporary interpretations of Soviet-Russian film music and was not to be disappointed. I discovered that one of the performers, Eduard Toman, had released an exceptionally successful album of Soviet-Russian film music towards the end of 2009. Also, he was the director of “Songs of Our Cinema” (Песни нашего кино), a ‘theatrical cinema session’ that had recently premiered at the Russian Theatre in Tallinn. It was this latter production that became my next destination.

The Russian Theatre (Русский Театр Эстонии) in Tallinn is an institution that seeks to embody Russian culture and to represent Russians in Estonia. Among other things, this means that the Russian language prevails in the theatre: all productions are in Russian, though some performances have Estonian subtitles and the audience tends to be mixed. “Songs of Our Cinema,” described by the theatre as “a theatrical cinema session,” turned out to be a play that had no traditional plot and involved no talking – only songs from famous and also less-known Soviet and post-Soviet Russian-language films arranged into loosely tied thematic scenes set in a film studio. In performing these pieces, the actors were simultaneously acting out archetypical characters and scenes in (Soviet/Russian) film industry and culture: aging actresses hanging around in the film studio, hoping to be noticed by a director one more time, (actors playing) comrades-in-arms and men who
play the guitar and sing, tricksters and sleazy heartbreakers, dignified old artists with their young muses; leisurely moments when the cast sits around, waits, plays the cards, and drinks or breaks out to a dance spontaneously. As such, the “Songs of Our Cinema” worked as a reflective self-representation of the cultural basis from which “our cinema” has emerged.

I went to see “Songs from Our Cinema” twice at the Russian Theatre, in May 2010 and again in October, and on both occasions there were no more than a couple of hundred spectators in the audience (the grand hall of the theatre seats 600). Elderly Russian ladies seemed to predominate, but only slightly: there were also some teenagers and people who had come to theatre from work. While the audience was responsive and clapped after every song, it hardly ever seemed to find a common rhythm. Every now and then somebody would utter “Bravo!” in a loud voice and individual spectators would sing along particular songs, but not once did everybody break into singing together and the distinction between the stage and the audience remained intact. It was hard for me at first not to draw parallels with “The Great Concert of Film Music,” but I gradually realized that this crowd was not up for an immersion and that the production itself was designed to encourage contemplation rather than a plunge into the Soviet past. The audience did react with laughter to certain characters and scenes, especially those involving the herd of elderly ladies-actresses. I could relate to this response – perhaps see what other spectators were seeing – in so far as such groups of active female pensioners were a common sight at many if not most concerts and other events I attended as part of my fieldwork in
Lasnamäe and the Russian Cultural Center. As a matter of fact, some of these very same ladies were sitting in the audience there and then – watching a representation of themselves on the stage, whereas my reading of the play came from observing them in different settings and dancing with them.

In July 2010, I traveled to the mining town of Kohtla-Järve in order to see “Songs from Our Cinema” performed there and to compare the reception in the capital with that in the Russian-speaking northeast. The audience in Kohtla-Järve turned out to be different already by virtue of being more numerous: the town rarely hosts performers of this caliber and local authorities had decided to buy all the tickets, making the entrance free for everybody. The performance took place in the local cultural center, a grand palace-like building in the town park, which in turn is part of a larger ensemble exemplifying Russian Stalinist architecture in Estonia (Kalm 2001, 266-276). Females were in the

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185 Field notes from July 12, 2010. The town of Kohtla-Järve was established in 1945 as the center of rapidly expanding oil shale and chemical industry, though settlement in this area goes back at least to the 13th century. Most current residents came to Estonia from other parts of the Soviet Union to work in the mining plant or are descendants of post-war immigrants. The population has decreased significantly since the end of the Soviet era and was app. 41 400 in 2010 – down over 50% from 1980. The website of Kohtla-Järve explains that the town’s inhabitants represent 50 nationalities and Estonians are said to constitute app 20% of the population; most residents speak Russian as their first language (Kohtla-Järve; Kohtla-Järve linna arengukava 2007-2016.) Folklorist Tiitu Jaago has worked on and in the town for several years, focusing primarily on inhabitants’ life stories and relationship to the place (e.g. Jaago 2004; Jaago and Printsmann and Palang 2008).

186 The building of the cultural center is a copy of a similar establishment in a small Russian industrial town (Kalm 2001, 272) and a provincial version of the Russian Cultural Center in Tallinn dating from the same era. It was inaugurated in 1953 as a club for workers and continues to house local choirs, dance ensembles and other cultural activities of the townspeople, embodying the significance attached to amateur art by the
majority again but there were also many families – parents with their teenage or grown-up children. Before the performance began, a representative of the cultural center greeted the audience first in Estonian and then in Russian, ending her speech with the folkloric statement that since the day of seven brothers (seitsmevennapäev, July 10) had been sunny, according to the Estonian folk calendar the town was headed for seven weeks of drought. While the woman sounded like a native speaker of Estonian, she code-switched to Russian a couple of times. I could also hear people sitting around me switch back and forth between Estonian and Russian, which suggests that the coexistence of the Estonian and Russian language – and of the speakers of these languages – in predominantly Russian-speaking areas takes more diverse forms than the monolithic term “Russian-speaking” implies.187

From the outset, audience members responded to each song with a strong and long applause, whereas it appeared to be easy for them to pick up a common rhythm. On a couple of occasions the applause would go on after the actor or actress had already left the stage and the next performer was waiting for his or her turn. Throughout the play the audience would break into hand clapping to cheer particular activities on the stage, for

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Soviet regime. Kohtla-Järve was designed to represent an ideal socialist industrial town and its center continues to be dominated by grandiose Stalinist residential buildings, prompting the architectural historian Mart Kalm to compare its general appearance to that “a southern Donbass [eastern Ukraine] mining village” (Kalm 2001, 276).

187 In front of me sat what looked like an elderly Russian-speaking couple with their grandson and a female friend of the woman; when everybody was sitting and waiting for the performance to begin, the grandmother all of a sudden said to the grandchild a couple of sentences in Estonian. They were simple statements about the performance venue (e.g. See on kultuurimaja. – “This is the cultural center.”) and coming out of blue, left me wondering about their purpose in this particular setting.
example, when an actor ended a tango by giving his co-actress a passionate kiss. The stage of the cultural center was small, creating an intimate atmosphere and bringing the performers closer to the audience than was possible in Tallinn. I noticed how many actors were quietly singing along to their colleagues’ solos. Spectators sang along as well but individually – their collective responses seemed to be coming through clapping hands and unlike in Tallinn, there really was a responsive collective sitting in the concert hall. When the first part of the performance ended with the whole cast on the stage and singing together, the audience gave a massive round of applause and it seemed as if everybody was breathing the same air: many spectators were still humming the last song when leaving the hall for intermission.

Kohtla-Järve constituted a different experience than the two performances at the Russian Theatre in Tallinn and overall, despite drawing on the same pool of texts, “Songs of Our Cinema” differed from “The Great Concert of Film Music” in terms of its goals, the reception of these goals and ambience. The concert made sure to leave no gaps between melodies, images and verbal clichés, whereas “the theatrical cinema session” played with melodies and lyrics rather than seeking to restore the “originals”; the former was aimed at Estonians and the latter at Russians and Russian-speakers, the target audience of the Russian Theatre. Intrigued by these different takes on the same material and still
bewildered by the fervent response of the Estonian audience in April, I set out to interview some of the cast members.\textsuperscript{188}

Ukrainian-born actor Eduard Toman came to Estonia three decades ago and worked until recently at the Russian Theatre in Tallinn. By now virtually bilingual, he is one of the few Estonian-Russian actors who has appeared consistently in television series produced in Estonian and hence for the Estonian audience. In addition, he also gives performances as a singer. Towards the end of 2009, Toman released an album of classic Soviet-Russian film music titled “\textit{A nam vsjo ravno/ A нам всё равно}”, which could be translated as “We don’t care” or “It’s all the same for us”. The title originates in director Leonid Gaidai’s 1968 cult comedy “Diamond Arm” (Бриллиантовая рука) where in one episode set in a fancy bourgeoisie restaurant the drunk protagonist climbs on the stage and performs an obscure piece called “Song About Hares” (Песня про зайцев). The song is about hares, who compulsively cut magic grass in an eerie forest in the middle of the night and, despite shaking of fear of wolves and owls, sing about not caring and going on with their mission.\textsuperscript{189} According to Toman, both the record and its title were inspired by his

\textsuperscript{188} I conducted three interviews, all of which took place in October 2010 in different parts of the country. I interviewed Eduard Toman and two other members of “The Great Concert of Film Music” cast; in Spring 2011 I also interviewed two actors from “Songs of Our Cinema” but the focus of our conversation was elsewhere.

\textsuperscript{189} Leonid Gaidai was the leading Soviet-Russian comedy director of the 1960-70s and virtually the only one to rely heavily on slapstick humor. According to Aleksandr Prokhorov (2003), Gaidai disrupted the goal-oriented and coherent verbal narrative endorsed by Soviet official ideology by foregrounding the visual and the human body and reintroducing alcoholism and crime to popular entertainment. For Gaidai, narrative was in the service of visual attractions rather than the other way around. The function of songs was similarly to provide occasions for new visual jokes and hence further undermine the
Estonian fans who at small and private concerts would, to his great surprise, ask him to perform this particular song as well as other pieces from Soviet-era films, including stylized “blatnoy” or prison music.\(^\text{190}\)

Toman’s producer suggested making a record of film music and his intuition turned out to be spot-on: *A nam vsjo ravno* came to be the first, and so far only, CD in Russian to make it number one in the chart of bestselling albums in Estonia. Moreover, Toman’s record held this position for eight weeks (Kulli 2010). The chart is compiled by *Raadio 2*, the youth- and music-oriented radio station of the public broadcasting company on the basis of sales by selected music stores and reflects mainly the musical preferences of Estonians. In Toman’s estimation, “Mainly Estonians bought it [the record] because many Russians even don’t know about it and Russians here [in Estonia] don’t buy that many CDs, especially with this kind of music. They would rather look for originals on the Internet.” Though the cover of his album featured both languages, Estonian dominated: the name of the singer appeared only in the Latin alphabet, followed by “A

\(^{190}\) Interview on October 15, 2010.
nam vsjo ravno. Vene filmimuusika klassika/ A нам всё равно. Классика русской киномузыки” (“We Don’t Care. Classics of Russian film music”). It was after the release of this album that Toman was contacted by organizers of “The Great Concert of Film Music” and though I have not been able to clarify which came first, these projects have no doubt fed off of each other: for example, the printed ad and poster for the concert foregrounded an image of the protagonist of “Diamond Arm,” the performer of the “Song About Hares.”

Toman told me that he does perform songs from films to Russian audiences as well and said it is like leading “a double life”: “The principle is the same, but communications are different.” The “Songs of Our Cinema” directed at the Russian Theatre created yet another communicative and expressive space. According to Toman, his aim was not so much to reminisce about particular films as to encourage the audience – first and foremost Russians, given that this was the Russian Theatre – to use their own imagination and make up their own stories around familiar songs and melodies: “My stance was that I don’t want to offer Russians excerpts from these films; they have to know them through and through.” Ability to map songs on films was thus left up to audience members’ memory and sophistication or, to follow Toman’s argumentation, their knowledge of their own, Russian, culture.

Toman gave me several interpretations of the genitive pronoun “nashe” or “our” in the title of the show “Songs of Our Cinema” (Pesni Nashego Kino), making it clear that it
had nothing to do with the Russian pro-Putin youth organization *Nashe*. Rather, “nashe” stood for people like himself who have come to Estonia from elsewhere and identify with these films: “songs from our films when we were young; films that belong to us and stay with us.” These were also songs that the performers could and did claim as their own. During my visit to Kohtla-Järve, I got into an informal and impromptu conversation with Hirvo Surva, the musical director of “Songs of Our Cinema” and a well-known Estonian conductor. Surva recounted how actors would break into tears in rehearsals just because the songs were so beautiful and because they felt a strong attachment to them: “despite history and everything else there has been, these are their songs [*nende laulud*]. They might sing them at home with a guitar and now they are singing them on stage.”

Along similar lines, Toman interpreted the title “Songs of Our Cinema” as an invitation to Estonians to “come to the Russian Theatre to listen and watch *as we sing songs from our films*. Had I written “Songs from Russian films,” this would have been like anything you can buy from a store” (emphasis added). His reasoning exemplifies how the Russian Theatre provides a setting where Estonians can be framed as guests and where Russianness is defined, underlined and performed in interaction. Toman recalled the feedback he had received from some Estonians who in his words had rushed to see the performance “in our theatre” and seemed to have liked it, but had not expected to hear so many

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191 Field notes from July 12, 2010. We talked as both of us were hanging around in front of the cultural center, waiting for the performance to begin. I had come earlier in order to get an overview of the audience as people were arriving, while the conductor was taking a break after having just finished a rehearsal with the cast. Hirvo Surva kindly insisted that I go backstage after the show to greet the performers, which gave me the opportunity to make initial contact with Toman.
unfamiliar songs. Such moments of confusion lay bare the complex relationship between the “Soviet” and “Russian” and shed light on the kind of work done by means of entertaining interpretations of Soviet-Russian popular culture.

Almost all of the cast members of “The Great Concert of Film Music” I spoke with claimed to have been greatly surprised at the concert’s success in the capital and particularly in Tartu, which in comparison to Jõhvi and even Tallinn is “an Estonian town” (eesti linn): “Tartu is not Tallinn, Tartu is an Estonian town, Tartu vaim [the spirit of Tartu] and eestlus [ethnocultural and linguistic nationalism] and everything.” In fact, the show was so well received in Tartu that an extra concert was scheduled for May 2010 and a whole additional tour for November. Reflecting upon the show’s success in Tartu, one of the interviewees said the following:

That we twice made the audience stand up to Russian songs. (…) If Russians had seen what happened in a concert hall in Estonia that was filled mainly with Estonians. There were some Russians as well but few, mainly Estonians stand up and go along with this song in Russian. Where do Putin and all the rest of them go with their propaganda? It is unbelievable what art can do. Often politicians hate artists because of that.

The reception in the predominantly Russian-speaking town of Jõhvi was, on the contrary, described as cold: “They [local Russians and Russian-speakers] don’t need it, they are inside it all the time. Estonians who live there have their own opinion about Russians, they are not as euphoric as Tartu or Tallinn.”

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192 See introduction footnote 11 on Tartu.
193 My interviews with cast members took place before the second tour in November 2010 and I was unable to attend any of these concerts due to a conference trip.
Comments on the concert’s reception in Tartu and Jõhvi are of particular interest because of the underlying assumptions they contain. The interviewees took the distinctiveness of Estonians and Russians for granted, giving no thought to the Soviet era as a possible common ground. Rather, they observed that while both groups were familiar with films and songs featured in the show, they could or would not enjoy them together. The first remark about Tartu highlighted the unexpected immersion of the predominantly Estonian audience into Russian-language songs from the Soviet era, pointing at the incongruence between Estonians’ self-representations in the public and their behavior among insiders, in an “Estonian town.” The comment referred furthermore to the subversive potential of this situation or sight and suggested, interestingly enough, that Estonians’ loss of face might have a transformative impact on local Russians in the sense of rendering them less susceptible to Russian propaganda. Hence, in treating Russia’s desire to intervene in Estonian matters via Estonian Russians as a fact, the remark also implied that this security threat was being sustained by public self-representations of the Estonian state and Estonians, but transgressed in settings perceived as already “Estonian.” As Herzfeld would have it, official ideology is not “what the nation-state is actually about” (Herzfeld 2005, 1).

The second observation regarding a cooler response from the audience in Jõhvi took a somewhat different approach by suggesting that individual Estonians’ interest in Soviet-Russian popular culture correlates with their ability to take distance from Russians and
Russian language in their everyday life. The speaker suggested that Estonians who live as a minority in a predominantly Russian town and region feel less enthusiasm for this kind of music than do Estonians in the virtually all-Estonian Tartu or in Tallinn, a city that is big and diverse enough to accommodate both languages and groups without there being too much overlap between them. Russians in Jõhvi, on the other hand, are “inside it all the time” because these are “their” films, songs, and actors speaking their language (cf. comments above regarding Toman’s record); they don’t need Estonians to act as mediators. As in the case of “Songs of Our Cinema,” Russians’ ability to claim these films and songs as part of “their” culture sets them free from the need to distinguish between the Soviet and Russian. Cultural intimacy is about relationship and it is the desire – and ability – of Estonians to “get inside” that calls for detailed explanations and finer acts of essentialism.

Estonians’ familiarity with Soviet-Russian films and film music comes from the Soviet era. Flooding cinemas and screens across the Soviet Union, these films became interwoven with the lives of their viewers and, as in the case of cartoons, it is the existence of personal layers that makes touching base with these texts possible, desirable and meaningful. Watching particular films over and over again or simply listening to familiar melodies can serve as a means for reconnecting with oneself and restoring coherence: as one Estonian born in the early 1970s said to me, “One grew up with these films and animation films. Even today, when I’m going through a difficult period or feel knocked out, I put on “A Cruel Romance” [Жестокий романс, 1984] or “Moscow Does
Not Believe in Tears” or [a movie directed by Andrei] Tarkovsky.” The same person emphasized the grandness of “Russian culture” (vene kultuur), on the one hand (“Interesting, why is it that Estonians are so into Chekhov, why time and again somebody produces Uncle Vanya or The Seagull?”), and, on the other hand, lamented the lack of “intelligent Russians” who would care for local theatre productions in Russian.

Looked at from this perspective, the disinterest of Jõhvi’s Russians in “The Great Concert of Film Music,” a reinterpretation of “their” music, becomes a sign of their ignorance and inability to be outside of their own culture, to appreciate artistic meta-level takes on culture and life. When talking about Russians’ being “inside it,” the interviewee referred back to an earlier statement from the beginning of our conversation: “The Russian of Lasnamäe would rather buy a 600 kroon ticket to a pop concert than a theatre ticket.” This utterance set up a value-laden distinction between “popular” and “sophisticated” forms of culture and not only mapped ethnicity on this hierarchy, but by bringing in money turned “low” and “high” culture into ethnic essences. It is because “the Russian of Lasnamäe” has means to go to theatre but prefers to spend money on significantly pricier pop concerts that “cheap” entertainment – and hence uncultured taste – manifests an essence that is the opposite of the appreciation of Chekhov that arguably characterizes Estonians. The aim of the geographical designation “Lasnamäe” in this context is to distinguish among Russians rather than single out Russians in this particular district of the capital. “The Russian of Lasnamäe” stands primarily for working-class Russians or/and Russian-speakers who – or whose parents – have moved to Estonia during the
Soviet era, setting them apart from Russians whose roots are in Estonia, especially Russian Old-Believers, as well as from Russians in Russia. In this way “high” culture and ability to appreciate it is further linked to an ethnic homeland and roots, while “Lasnamäe” becomes a metaphor for rootlessness and lack of culture – or a breeding ground for culture alien to Estonia.

Disparate comments made by interviewees demonstrate the ongoing strategic process of creating distinctions and resemblances or alliances between the Soviet, Russian, and Estonian. Given the uneasy and ambiguous communality of Soviet-Russian popular culture, it is notable that the interviewees emphasized the beauty of film music, i.e., a quality that holds the promise of locating these texts and engagements with them beyond ideology – which is what MacFadyen was arguing about Soviet-Russian animation films. One person in particular claimed that aesthetics could be enjoyed – and hence also reproduced – independently of ideology: performing and appreciating Soviet-Russian film music was not to be taken for longing for the Soviet regime. The interviewee spoke about the distinctiveness of “artistic truth” (kunstitõde) and “real truth” or “truth of life” (elutõde), arguing that “The Great Concert of Film Music” did not deal with reality, but created a particular representation of the Soviet era on the basis of songs and films that themselves were already representations and images of this period. More specifically, this person was fascinated by Soviet popular culture as a borderland between the serious and kitsch, kitsch and camp: “Russian film music appears to be oh so naïve and at the same time is well composed.”
Framing something as camp requires detachment from it. In the words of Susan Sontag, “Camp is art that poses itself seriously, but cannot be taken altogether seriously because it is “too much”” (Sontag 1966, 284). Camp is in her view also “a disengaged sensibility” that “converts the serious into the frivolous” (Sontag 1966, 276-277) by focusing on aesthetics, style and the artificial. Yet analytic demarcations of this kind tend to become blurry once emotions are involved and one is dealing with materials of personal relevance. As I suggested above, the allure of Soviet-Russian film music for the Estonian audience comes from preexistent connections between art, life and sense of self that extend beyond here and now. Melodies evoke memories and feelings and “draw the past into the present” (Cashman 2008, 258) despite the fact that life “back then” was restricted and unsatisfying in so many ways. The interviewee interested in camp recognized this shift from the seemingly objective “truth of life” to subjective personal life, admitting that “The Great Concert of Film Music” had to aim at a high artistic level and honesty because the audience would never forgive if their personal memories were turned into a potboiler. It follows from this that even if the appeal of the Soviet-Russian originals’ might have come from their failed attempt to be serious, a (commercially) successful interpretation of these films and songs in post-Soviet Estonia for the Estonian audience has to be serious in the sense of taking seriously spectators’ emotional involvement and, moreover, addressing or awaking this involvement in the form of a recognizable reproduction of the original.
Detachment of film music from the Soviet era is furthermore problematic because these movies were created under and funded by a regime that strategically used cinema for its own purposes, though with varying intensity at different times. The fairytale-like musical comedy became the dominant genre under Stalin in the 1930s when it was used “to sell the Soviet ideology to the masses” (Beumers 2003, 443) in an environment of fear and terror; Gaidai’s visual slapstick humor could only emerge after Stalin’s death, but had to give way to more traditional narrative-driven comedies “in the 1970s when Soviet cinema abandoned both aesthetic and economic experimentation and returned to its neo-Stalinist narrative models” (Prokhorov 2003, 472).

The Soviet regime exercised control over audiences through manipulating the number of physical copies of films released into circulation (Beumers 2003, 442, 448). Hence, it is not by accident that people “grew up” with particular cartoons and motion pictures and not others. “Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears” (1979), a film recalled fondly by one of the interviewees, uses songs and popular culture to mark the passing of time as it follows the lives of three Muscovite female friends from 1950s through 1970s. Directed by Vladimir Menshov, it won an Oscar for the best foreign film and was hugely popular in the Soviet Union, gaining over 84 million viewers in 1980 alone (Gillespie 2003, 481). At the same time, contemporary Soviet film critics and intellectuals criticized the movie for reinforcing the illusion of a trouble-free, just and stable Soviet society (e.g. Beumers 2003, 452; Gillespie 2003). Birgit Beuemers has regarded “Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears” as a prime example of the continuation of Socialist Realist conventions in the
period of late socialism. Even though the Thaw had shifted individual and personal happiness in the foreground, individual actions were seen as a contribution to the collective good: for example, one of the film’s heroines finds the love of her life, i.e. achieves personal happiness, only after fulfilling her duty to the community. (Beumers 2003, 450-451; cf. also Prokhorov 2003, 472.) According to David Gillespie, songs and music played a key role in the film’s promotion of conformism and social conservatism by enhancing viewers’ identification with protagonists and thereby with the glossed-over representation of the stagnating Soviet society (Gillespie 2003).

Moreover, many of these films comment upon the Soviet life and the satiric comedies in particular require viewers to be acquainted with ideological narratives and prosaic living conditions mocked in the movies. For example, director Eldar Riazanov’s “Irony of Fate, or enjoy your bath!” (1975), the traditional New Year’s film of (Soviet) Russian television channels, draws and comments upon the disorienting uniformity of Soviet society and urban environment: the fact that every bigger Soviet town has a Builders’ Street or Road (in Tallinn Ehitajate tee in Mustamäe, the first district of prefabricated buildings), that the new residential districts (à la Lasnamäe) look and feel the same everywhere because they consist of blocks of flats with apartments that have the same floor plan, the same or very similar furniture and the same interior design (section shelves, floor plans, wallpaper and linoleum discussed in the beginning of this chapter) to the extent that one can mistake one’s home for somebody else’s, which is what happens to the film’s male protagonist. At the same time, songs featured in “Irony of Faith” use
poems by eminent Russian-language poets Marina Tsvetayeva, Boris Pasternak and Bella Akhmadulina, none of who had a smooth relationship with the Soviet regime. It is in part by means of these songs – and their spontaneous performance by protagonists – that the film sets up a tension between individual human beings and the normative Soviet system. On top of all this, several songs featured in this film were recorded by Alla Pugacheva, one of the most eminent Soviet-Russian pop singers who continues to be immensely popular in Russia and, as will be seen in the next subchapter, among Estonians in contemporary Estonia.

Despite the meager choice of entertainment in the Soviet Union, liking films like “Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears” and preferring them to other types of entertainment was, among other things, a matter of taste and class. One of the defining features of kitsch, according to Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, is that it “requires the abdication of critical judgment because it tells us what to think and feel” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 278). Milan Kundera’s contemplation of kitsch in his novel The Unbearable Lightness of Being (1984) about Czech intellectuals in socialist Czechoslovakia led him to regard kitsch as a totalitarian denial of individualism, doubt, irony and anything else that contradicts the “categorical agreement with being”: “When the heart speaks, the mind finds it indecent to object. In the realm of kitsch, the dictatorship of heart realms supreme” (Kundera 1984, 250). Because kitsch induces feelings that masses can share, it is “the aesthetic ideal of all politicians and all political parties and movements” (Kundera 1984, 251).
Looked at from this perspective, critics and intellectuals who chastised films like “Moscow does not believe in tears” for conformism were protesting against kitschy representations of life, but there seems to have been more to it than the intellectuals’ scorn for popular culture or “the avant-garde delivering the slap, kitsch the caress” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 278). The socialist regime expected scholars and other members of the intelligentsia to participate actively in the improvement and building of the society, while it also sought to co-opt the genuinely popular. Hence, the intelligentsia’s rejection of films that glossed over real problems placed them in opposition with the mass audience as well as with the establishment eager to control both the masses and the intelligentsia.

Kundera’s approach suggests also that any attempt today to look at Soviet-Russian film music separately from Soviet ideology is kitsch to the extent that “kitsch excludes everything from its purview which is essentially unacceptable to human existence” (Kundera 1984, 248). Framing songs from Soviet-Russian films as pure beauty or art glosses over their initial complex embeddedness in Soviet cinematography, society and politics as well as Estonians’ involvement in the Soviet regime. As such, this approach results in an image of unity that furthermore suppresses frictions and social inequalities in today’s Estonia both within and across ethnic boundaries. At “The Great Concert of Film Music” in Tallinn, the audience carried itself as a homogeneous collective and one of the interviewees actually referred to the Estonian song festival tradition when describing the
concert’s effect, suggesting that it was natural for Estonians to sing together on such occasion: “simply these people were together and they had something in common and they didn’t look whether there was something in the lyrics [of these songs in Russian] and there wasn’t anyway.” It is not about the content but form and about being possessed by it from before. The theatrical cinema session “Songs from Our Cinema” at the Russian Theatre left confused those Estonians who had come to see the show in order to reconnect and be reconnected with the already familiar: by refraining from establishing overt links between the screen and the stage and including obscure songs not necessarily known to Estonians, the play foregrounded difference and individuality and pointed to the ambiguity of “us.” Recognizable sounds, on the other hand, reverberate across individual bodies gathered together, making them manipulable by whoever controls the sounds and, paradoxically, aware of their togetherness in ways that can be taken to new contexts and put into new uses (e.g., the Baltic Way and other mass demonstrations discussed in chapter 2). As Dorothy Noyes has written about Catalans who cannot ‘unmake themselves Francoists,’ “the language of the body does not differentiate: all similar motion provokes similar emotion” (Noyes 2003b, 212).

Yearning for “an categorical agreement with being” is for Kundera part of the human condition for “none among us is superman enough to escape kitsch completely” (Kundera 1984, 256). However perverse forms this agreement might take, it carries life forward
from one political regime to the next.\textsuperscript{194} As such, kitsch exists independently of political regimes and ideologies that seek to appropriate it. The question then emerges, what is at stake in calling it kitsch. Kundera and the protagonists of his novel use the concept to analyze the workings of the Communist regime. They employ the category of kitsch in order to distinguish themselves from the official ideology and to insist on their individuality, their freedom to think, to ask questions and doubt, to ignore parades and other mass demonstrations: to protest against the erasure of multiple perspectives within oneself and in the society. Kitsch is from this perspective a means used by different social actors to both wipe out and maintain distinctions.

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett’s (1998) take on kitsch comes from elsewhere, but she similarly arrives at kitsch as a means of differentiation and the possibility of multiplicity of cultural expressions. She is interested in “the social location and circulation of value in everyday life” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 259), whereby social hierarchies are made and remade and their constructedness concealed. While the value of objects fluctuates, good taste and bad taste are consistently associated with the elite and the mass, respectively: autonomous individuals of wealth and influence create and hold culture that cannot but become kitsch as it trickles down to undifferentiated masses consisting of intertwined social categories of ethnicity, age, education, religion, and class. (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 277-281.) What makes such theories of culture and

\textsuperscript{194} This might be part of the irony of unbearable lightness of being, but Kundera’s characters who oppose the totalitarian kitsch of the Communist regime by emigrating or opting for inner isolation have no offspring (the male protagonist has a son who was born before 1968) and die prematurely or alone.
reception insidious, according to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “is their denial of the possibility of cultural production of any significant value anywhere but at the top” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998, 281). In so far as individuals lumped together under the heading of ‘the mass’ are sentenced to feel and act as collectively as people living under illiberal regimes, “affirmation of the possibility of creative expressions in all quarters” (ibid.) carries a subversive potential and power, while the act of denying the possibility of creativity sets up a hierarchical relationship. Chekhov for some and overpriced pop concerts for others, while in the next moment it is the ability to reinterpret pop songs that counts as creativity.

It is telling that the organizers of “The Great Concert of Film Music” chose to define the films and songs as neither Soviet nor Russian; the subtitle of the show “Seventeen Moments of Spring” refers to the well-known television series “Seventeen Moments of Spring” that everybody knows to be a Soviet-era production. Yet as Toman claimed, “Seventeen Moments of Spring” “was the first production to show that the Russian spy is a human being, too, and that the German officer is a human being. (…) This film was against the whole system. It did not say that Russian spies were the best ones in the world. There was nothing like that about it.” The refusal to label the concert’s repertoire conveys the subversive potential of popular culture: located at the intersection of public and personal or intimate, popular culture is “too much” to be neatly subjugated.
Soviet-Russian popular culture in particular is “theirs” as well as “ours” but on different grounds. Individual Estonians of certain age are familiar with Soviet-Russian popular culture through the Soviet era and can claim it as part of their biography and self-conception. However, unlike Russians, Estonians as a national collective cannot claim ownership of these texts – unless they are framed and claimed as part of a common Soviet heritage, which cannot be done *openly* without jeopardizing notions of national identity and statehood that are based on distance from and not identification with things Soviet/Russian. In so far as familiarity can be denounced but not erased, denounced familiarity gives rise to reconnections in controlled and secluded settings: in all-Estonian environments, in the privacy of the home, under the protecting covering of childhood or mockery or drunkenness, or by making sure that affection is contained within selected songs and corresponding images and does not spill over beyond the performance setting. To paraphrase one of the comments quoted above, “if Russians had seen” there would have been nothing to see to the extent that Estonians only go along with “songs in Russian” in the (seeming) absence of Russians. It is the absence of the Other that makes identification with Other’s attributes accessible, acceptable and/or desirable. Yet paradoxically, it is the very need to deny affinity in the presence of the Other that bespeaks kinship with the Other. The last subchapter explores expressions of familiarity and the making of distinctions in mixed settings while staying tuned in to popular music.
Once More on The Estonian, Russian, and Soviet: “Splean Is No Alla Pugacheva”

A few months before the film-music concert, in February 2010, Alla Pugacheva (b. 1949), possibly the Soviet/Russian superstar alive, performed to a full house at Tallinn’s biggest performance venue Saku Arena (holds up to 10,000 spectators). The concert was part of Pugacheva’s goodbye tour, which arguably ended her active singing career spanning 45 years (Alla Puqatšova jātab eestlastega hūvasti; Kas Alla annab alla?) The audience was diverse in terms of age and even more diverse income-wise; somewhat more women than men. Estonians made up a significant part if not half or more of all the spectators. With the exception of a Finnish couple, I could only hear Estonian being spoken where I was seated, whereas I had chosen one of the more expensive tickets to make sure I had a good overview of the whole concert hall. I was therefore amused when before the start of the concert I heard an Estonian woman describe the scene to somebody on the other end of her cell phone and claim to be surrounded by “bouffant hairdos and Russian glitter” (puhvis soengud ja vene litrid), which according to Estonian stereotypes serve as attributes of Russian women and their over-the-top Slavic taste.

Pugacheva took the classic route from Moscow to Tallinn, arriving in the morning by train and giving her admirers a chance to greet her at the station (Popdiiva Alla Puqatšova saabus rongiga “Armastuse unenāgusid” ette kandma; Estraaditàht Alla Puqatšova saabumine Tallinna, Alla 2010.). After the opening song of the concert, she turned to

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195 Field notes from February 12, 2010.
196 Two Estonian websites pointed out that there were exceptionally many women in fur coats among the audience: Alla Puqatšova kontsert töi kokku kasukate paraadi; Karusnahkade paraad: Puqatšova publik (“A parade of fur coats: Pugacheva’s audience”).
audience members, addressing them as companions of many years. The singer told the audience that she has always liked Tallinn very much and then “I remember everything, everything” (Я всё, всё помню), a statement that aroused a spontaneous round of applause. She went on to say how God has given her in this life a big sun of love (an utterance that would have been unthinkable in the Soviet era) and thanked her listeners, “the main heroes” in her life, for giving her their friendship “during Soviet years [советские времена] and during these, who the hell knows [чорт знает] how to call them… Ha! Non-Soviet times [не-советские времена]!” The audience, including Estonian women in my vicinity, laughed and responded enthusiastically.

A couple of songs into the concert, people seated in different parts of the hall started running towards the stage in order to give Pugacheva flowers. At this point Pugacheva stopped the show, saying that she would rather come to the audience, which again was received with approving laughter. With one of her hits blasting out at full volume, the singer stepped down from the stage, accompanied by bodyguards and an assistant. I could hear somebody sitting near me say in Estonian “Now it will begin!” (Nüüd läheb lahti!). And it did. What followed was a collapse of structure: Pugacheva, surrounded by her assistants, made her way along the aisle with people from all over the concert hall rushing towards her to hand over their flowers, gifts and kisses and just to be close to her; mothers pushed their children towards the singer to have a picture taken with her; many stood up and danced in the aisles or, like me, climbed on their seat to see better; people were clapping in unison and cheering. Transfer to this specific mode of togetherness was
immediate and anticipated, something that both the singer and her fans had been waiting for and knew how to handle (see Davidjants 2005 for a discussion of a similar scene during Pugacheva’s 2005 Tallinn concert; see Galerii: hetki Pugatšova kontserdilt for images). However, behavior within this phase was spontaneous and liberating, changing the atmosphere of the occasion for good. The evening concluded with people giving standing ovations after Pugacheva had performed the last song, which she ended by drinking to bottom a glass of something strong and real.

While people were quick to make their way out of the concert venue, I heard many expressions of satisfaction and saw beaming faces. As I was waiting for a trolley bus after the concert, I overheard two middle-aged Estonian women discussing the concert. One of them criticized Saku Arena, saying it looked like a sports arena, but her friend interrupted her and told her to “enjoy the emotion. Alla Pugacheva is really, really Alla Borissovna,” Borissovna being Pugacheva’s patronymic. Because the bus stop was packed with people from the concert, I had to let a couple of trolleys go by before I could get on one. Once on the bus, I got into a conversation with two Estonian women, one of them my age and the other one in her late 50s or 60s. We were strangers to each other, bound together by Pugacheva for the duration of the bus ride. The younger woman had moved to Tallinn only recently from northeast Estonia and praised Pugacheva for the nuanced lyrics of her songs – something that most Estonians her age, myself included, would not be able to appreciate due to insufficient language skills. The older lady, who turned out to be from Tartu, said that she was surprised to see young people’s interest in Pugacheva (and to her
credit and with all due respect to Alla Pugacheva, for me, the concert was primarily work and I don’t know of any of my Estonian peers who would have gone to the show). She had received the concert ticket for Christmas from her children who were also paying for her stay at a local hotel. “People seem to have come from all over the republic [vabariik],” the woman from Tartu said, adding warmly: “How people [rahvas] love her.”

To me, these two sentences had a whiff of Soviet about them and the words vabariik – as in ‘union republic’ (liiduvabariik) – and rahvas in particular conjured up the Soviet-era practice of loading working people in rural areas or towns on buses and taking them to the nearest center to attend a theatre performance or to be entertained in some other equally organized, structured and “cultured” manner. The sight of dozens of buses parked around theatres and concert halls is a rare sight nowadays, yet the woman mapped Pugacheva’s concert onto these earlier patterns, talking about “people” in a non-discriminatory manner. She was not referring to Estonians or Russians or other distinct groups, but about people all over the republic who enjoy Pugacheva and her music and have done so for years. Pugacheva’s identity and greatness as a performer are inseparable from her fans in the former Soviet Union and from the fact that the Soviet Union existed.¹⁹⁷ In contrast to Western performers like Madonna,¹⁹⁸ Pugacheva was able to

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¹⁹⁷ PBK, the Russian-language television channel broadcasted in the Baltics, ran ads before the concert that described Alla Pugacheva as великая (velikaja), i.e., using an adjective that seems to be reserved for phenomena and persons larger than life: the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 (Великая Отечественная Война), the Great Victory
draw on her long-term relationship with the local people: audience members could, both individually and as a group, relate to her statement that she “remembered everything” because they, too, could claim to “remember everything.” The singer invoked this common past – and its still inconceivable closure – immediately in the beginning of the concert, using it to link herself to her audience and to create continuity between the Soviet and “non-Soviet” times (cf. Davidjants 2005).

A few weeks after Pugacheva’s concert I visited Kostya, a Russian acquaintance and interviewee who lives in Lasnamäe in an apartment he shares with his mother. Kostya is about to turn 40 and neither him nor his mother speaks Estonian; both of them have grey passports, which means that they are persons with undefined citizenship. They came to Estonia in the 1980s from the island of Sakhalin in the North Pacific together with the man Kostya’s mother was married to at the time, a by-then retired Soviet army officer of Jewish descent. The family settled first in Rakvere, a railway town with a sizeable Russian and military population, and later in Tallinn. Upon arrival in Tallinn in the mid-1980s, Kostya started working at the Dvigatel military plant, an all-union enterprise that, among its other secret products, manufactured parts for submarines. Kostya’s mother divorced in the early 1990s and his ex-husband migrated to Israel together with their mutual son, Kostya’s half-brother. Originally from the Russian countryside, she has moved from one place to the next her whole life, doing odd jobs while raising her kids.

198 Madonna came to Estonia in the summer of 2009 and Estonian-language media and Internet commentaries actually juxtaposed the two singers.
At the time of my fieldwork, she was working as the janitor of the apartment building they lived in, while Kostya was employed as a metalworker in a small company in the district of Lasnamäe. Neither of them has acquired a formal profession.

I met Kostya in January 2010 at the concert of St. Petersburg rock band Splean (Сплин, literally ‘spleen’) at Rock Café, a live music club located in a former paper mill.\textsuperscript{199} I was with a girlfriend of mine. Neither of us knew the band, but attending the performance had seemed relevant to me from the perspective of my fieldwork and my friend agreed to accompany me. Though her father is Russian and lives in Russia, visiting Estonia once or twice annually, she was socialized as an Estonian and has never had any Russian friends despite being fluent in Russian. We grew up and went to school together and were now both in graduate school in different parts of the world. Looking for a place to sit while waiting for the concert to begin, we spotted a table with some empty chairs and my friend used her Russian to ask the two young men sitting at the table whether we could sit down. Once seated, the two of us carried on our conversation in Estonian, which, as we were later told, had been a source of confusion for our table companions who had first taken us for Russians. They soon struck up a conversation with us and we introduced each other to each other, switching to Russian. The men were curious about our reasons for coming to this particular concert and asked us repeatedly whose idea it had been. As Kostya’s friend

\textsuperscript{199} Field notes from January 31, 2010.
Andrey put it when expressing his amazement at our presence: “Splean is no Alla Pugacheva whom Estonians would go to see.”

When I now told Kostya that I had attended Pugacheva’s concert, he was surprised, again, and asked me ironically which performer I had liked better, Splean or Alla Pugacheva, adding that he does not see the point in paying to see somebody lip-sync.

He and his mother both claimed that Pugacheva has lost her voice and for some time already only moves her lips, which was also why she was bringing her career to a closure. Whereas this seemed to be common knowledge for Kostya and his mother, I had not seen Estonian-language media touch upon this topic, contrary to its usual eagerness to follow up any scandal or bit of news that could be turned into a scandal. Instead, the media coverage focused on the show’s Russian-ness, laying out essential differences between Estonians and Russians in a manner that obscured Estonians’ strong numeric presence as well as emotional participation in the show. For example, once the enormous amount of flowers brought to the singer has been framed as a “Russian custom” (vene komme) (Korolev 2010), flowers brought by Estonian fans – and Estonian fans themselves – become invisible (see also Alla 2010b; Galerii: hetki Pugatšova kontserdilt).

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200 Kostya and Andrey explained to us that Splean, established in 1994, represents the second wave of Russian rock and is somewhat akin to Britpop. Indeed, the name of the band refers to Alexander Pushkin’s Eugene Onegin who suffered from a malady that “was nothing but the British spleen/ transported to our Russian clime” (Pushkin 2009, 27).

201 Field notes from February 23, 2010.
Some of the above-discussed responses and reactions of Estonian audience members could be viewed as similar strategic employments of essentialism whereby the Russian is pinned down and becomes marked, enabling the Estonian observer to go unmarked. The comment about “bouffant hairdos and Russian glitter” is particularly revealing of the power of stereotypes to reduce other social actors and situations to “a manageable iconicity” (Herzfeld 2005, 34) and, moreover, of the power entailed in not recognizing iconicity: the woman saw differences but not similarities between Estonians and Russians, the most obvious resemblance being that all of these people had come to see Pugacheva perform. Whoever uttered “Now it will begin!” in Estonian when Pugacheva was about to leave the stage and make a round among the audience, drew on and expressed emic notions about differences between Estonians and Russians. While this observation framed Estonians as spectators observing Russians being Russian – overly emotional, open, generous, loud – it simultaneously revealed an intimate familiarity with this Other and Other’s ways of being: the observer, like the singer and her most passionate fans, knew what to expect – what this “it” about to start would include.

The woman in the bus stop who said that Pugacheva was “really, really Alla Borissovna” was using the patronymic to underline particular attributes and qualities of the singer and to deem them Russian. She thereby linked the emotions she had received from the concert to the performer’s ethnicity and articulated particular ideas about Russians and Russianness. For Kostya and his friend Andrey, on the contrary, Pugacheva seemed to represent that which is known to and shared by Estonians and Russians and hence not
purely or even primary Russian. For them, Pugacheva was not about difference, but sameness and about particular musical taste rather than Russian-ness or the Soviet era. The contemporary St. Petersburg rock group Splean was Russian in ways that Pugacheva was not because only Russians could be expected to know about and listen to its music, which is why Kostya and Andrey had hard time locating my friend and me and comprehending our presence at the band’s concert. They, too, were operating with pre-existing notions of ethnicity and taste, but without setting up a coarse correlation between the two. Rather, Kostya and Andrey were suggesting that Estonians and Russians are similar in that some like Pugacheva’s style of music, while others prefer bands like Splean. In the beginning of our conversation at the club, they actually gave us a list of Estonian punk rock bands from the 1980-1990s that I could relate to.

Attended by very few Estonians and conceived as Russian by at least some of the Russian audience members, the concert of Splean was, literally speaking, more of a Russian event than the performance given by Pugacheva. However, it came across as an ordinary rock concert and there seemed to be no anticipation of it being anything else (cf. Pugacheva’s invocations of a shared past). There was no division within the audience into different ethnic groups, spectators and performers, and the predominantly Estonian staff of the rock club maintained a professionally neutral stance.

Juxtaposing the concerts given by Splean and Pugacheva helps to grasp the ritual character and functions of Pugacheva’s performance, reinforced by the singer herself.
Her whole visit was built on little stereotype-based acts that invoked familiarity and communality grounded in the Soviet past: arrival by train, the speech in the beginning of the concert, stepping down from the stage and meeting her fans, toasting herself and her audience at the end of the concert. To the extent that this is what the audience longed to see, hear and experience, it did not really matter whether Pugacheva was lip-syncing or singing – the truthfulness of her performance, like that of “The Great Concert of Film Music,” came from its power to reconnect. The concert of Splean was a disappointment for Kostya and Andrey because the band did not perform its hits. Looked at from perspective, David MacFadyen’s characterization of Soviet-Russian cartoons under the period of late socialism – “repetitive and recurrent rhythm for the eyes, ears and heart” (MacFadyen 2005, 162) – captures the appeal of popular culture in a broader sense.

This chapter began in a hair salon and ended at a rock concert, both being places or spaces “invested with meaning in the context of power” (Cresswell 2004, 12): it was pointed out to me in both of these places that I was “out of place” and by means of this comment, identified as an Estonian, while the place itself became Russian or Russian-speaking, non-Estonian. Tallinn’s contemporary division into Estonian and Russian places goes back to the Soviet era202 that constitutes an ambiguous shared ground between most adults in contemporary Estonia. Performances, texts, comments and

202 There are also earlier layers of distinctions inscribed into the city space. One of the streets in the medieval quarter of Tallinn is called Vene tänav or the Russian Street after many Russian merchants who used to live in this part of the Old Town, whereas Germans were the unmarked category and Estonians invisibly marginal (cf. chapter 1, pp. 67, on the distinction between Deutsch and Undeutsch). Just outside the Old Town is Tatari tänav or the Tatar Street, the only other “ethnic” street I can think of.
reactions analyzed in this chapter attest to the continuous personal relevance of this period to many people in Estonia as well as to its complexity. To the extent that the post-Soviet Estonian statehood is built on public denunciation of the Soviet regime, Estonians’ familiarity with things Soviet constitutes an undisclosed aspect. This space of cultural intimacy emerges and becomes filled with meanings and contents in relation to West, on the one hand, and East or Russia or Russians, on the other, which means that it is a source of both embarrassment and threat to Estonia’s self-representation as a Western nation-state.

Though individuals knowledgeable about contradictions between public self-representations and private behavior are tied together in secrecy, cases discussed in this chapter suggest that cultural intimacy is not an egalitarian zone but one where hierarchies of the public sphere are replicated and reinforced. The cohort entitled to public commemoration of the period of late socialism is the one whose ties to the Soviet regime can be counteracted by the imaginary innocent childhood. Moreover, beauty serves as an equivalent of childhood, as an imaginary realm beyond the call of ideology, beyond responsibility and guilt. It is a ticket for a ride on the roof of a blue train. In settings where otherwise segregated Estonians and Russians meet, there seems to be a need on the part of the former to neutralize affinity and to deny the possibility of a merger between the Self and the Other by turning the Other into an object of gaze. Such strategic acts of essentialization serve the double purpose of enabling and protecting in so far as the control of forms enables to play with the content.
Reproduction of ethnolinguistic differences and segregation serves the interests of those in power to the extent that focusing on the existence of the nation, culture and language diverts attention away from social and economic issues or abuses of power. Slippery distinctions, overlaps, and similarities between Soviet and Estonian, Soviet and Russian, and, hence, Russian and Estonian evoke parallels with contradictory Soviet policies that institutionalized ethnicity and ethnoterritorial federalism, while also forcing, encouraging and allowing for the movement of people and, moreover, pursuing homogenization or assimilation. The next chapter explores Estonian approach to minorities and integration in the light of these contradictory policies, arguing, among other things, that the state and many representatives of minorities draw on Soviet concepts of ethnicity, national culture and coexistence of differences. However, as a means of state building, the Estonian approach to integration is bound to turn a blind eye to any common ground deriving from the Soviet era: whatever is already there has to be kept away from the public, in the sphere of cultural intimacy, where it cannot delegitimize claims made by the new regime.
Chapter 5: Integrating Estonia

From East to West, Culture to Culture

As an East-European people, Estonians have embraced the concept of state, proceeding from culture. When this nation was rising in the past century, it was not the political ideas that determined the developments. As opposed to the pressure from Russian Empire, highlighted were the promotion of the own-language culture, collection of cultural heritage and creation of new nationalist traditions. In the Soviet period, too the cultural resistance movement was a natural strategy of the Estonian man [sic!], to withstand the deleterious communist ideology. Evidently, this time honored tradition still affects the modern attitudes, although both the internal development of the society and the external European environment make it imperative the premises of nation-statehood of Estonia be reconsidered with a view to change, revision, or revocation. 

(…) The Estonian society is tearing itself loose from the constraints of ethnically conceived nation state, heading for the nation state on political foundations. This shall be a state, where the public sphere will operate in the Estonian language and lean upon Western political values and cultural stereotypes; where in the private sphere there will be guarantees securing the conditions for preservation of culture, language and traditions of the minorities. In view of Estonia’s history, geopolitical position and other factors, this development will by no means be straightforward or easy, as suggested by the notorious figure of 46%. However, visualized in dynamics and in a wider context, it can be safely asserted that the majority of Estonian people will have no alternative to integration.

(Vetik 2000a, unpaged.)

203 Quoted from the English original.
This excerpt is taken from the conclusion of an English-language report prepared by Estonian scholars on integration processes in 1999, the year when the state was about to launch a national integration strategy that had been prepared for since 1997. Scholars found, among other things, that 46 per cent of Estonian respondents agreed either strongly (15 per cent) or with some reservations (31 per cent) with the following statement: “it would be beneficial for Estonia if non-Estonians would leave the country” (Kruusvall 2000, unpaged).

However, it is not because of “the notorious figure of 46%” that I am beginning the discussion of integration policy with a quotation from the 1999 integration monitoring. Rather, the passage quoted above seems to capture several starting points of integration efforts in Estonia and to provide a vantage point from which to assess changes and continuities in this sphere during the past dozen years. Written in English, the monitoring was aimed at an external audience and the conclusion of the report described integration in spatiotemporal terms as an inevitable transition from East and past to West and future, from one chronotope (Bakhtin 1981) to another one. At the time, the West – organizations and actors, whom the newly independent Estonian state was aspiring to (re)join – still feared that minority problems in Central and Eastern Europe could escalate into a violent conflict and framed Estonia’s nationalizing policies (see chapter 2) as a security risk calling for surveillance and exceptional measures, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (see chapter 1 and Jutila 2009, Sabanadze 2009). The existence of a domestic integration policy was thus a precondition
for Estonia’s international integration and the conclusion of the monitoring sought to assure external – Western – readers that Estonians knew they had to change (“external European environment make it imperative”) or at least declare to be in the process of becoming what the West claimed to be or was imagined to be like. Reiterating western stereotypes of “East-European people” and casting Estonia in radical khonian terms as an epitome of uncivilized Eastern nationalism (see footnote 95) was from this perspective a strategy for demonstrating Estonia’s potential to change and move from a modern stage of exclusive nation building to a postmodern stage of building a democratic and open multiethnic state (cf. Vetik 2000b, 67-68).

At the same time, by means of declaring the Soviet era a period that had been inherently alien to Estonians and by virtue of its alienness triggered an ethno-nationalist self-defense reaction, the conclusion reiterated the legal-restorationist narrative of rupture and resistance according to which the Soviet regime had had a formative impact on the ethnic composition of Estonia, but not on the “Estonian man.” Correspondingly, the integration policy takes as its starting point a linguistically bifurcated society where any common ground between permanent residents of different ethnic and linguistic background is only to be built. As the popular-culture case studies explored in the previous chapter indicated, expressions of intimate familiarity of the Soviet era and the Soviet regime – shared to a degree by most adult residents of Estonia – are to be guarded, regulated or downplayed because they refer to the existence of alternative if not competing bases for commonality.
Moreover, the image of a bifurcated society denies differences within either of the big two “groups,” treating both Estonians and non-Estonians as a homogeneous mass.

The argument that Estonians’ reliance on “cultural resistance movement” had been a self-defense mechanism implied that this reaction had to be on the wane now that the political situation had changed and Estonia was again independent. In actuality, as was discussed in previous chapters, even the political elite has been – for various and usually calculated reasons – reluctant to tear itself “loose from the constraints of [an] ethnically conceived nation state,” initiating throughout the 2000s new national holidays and taking other steps conducive to the reinforcement of ethnonationalist notions of the state and the demos. Moreover, politicians’ reliance on the calendar as a means of boundary maintenance and redefinition appears to have grown since Estonia has established itself as a member of the EU, NATO and, most recently, the Euro zone (see chapter 3). Whereas much emphasis was put in the 1990s and early 2000s on the state’s formal approval of conventions and various treaties, scholars working on minority rights issues have started to pay more attention since on ways in which norms are being interpreted and implemented by particular states (e.g., Brosig 2010).

Though Estonian integration policy envisions a state “based on Western political values” and hence a new kind of unity between the permanent residents of Estonia, to be discussed in greater detail below, it is subjugated to legal restorationism and its elusive ethnonationalism. The idea of legal continuity between pre- and post-Soviet statehood
provided Estonian policy makers with a means to summon in the early 1990s an ethnically homogeneous body of citizens without drawing explicitly on discriminatory ethnic arguments. The integration policy could be regarded as a follow-up or companion to legal restorationism since one of its main goals has been and continues to be to foster the naturalization of individuals excluded from the demos. However, it can only do so within the bounds of the Citizenship Act and prevailing policies in this sphere: the integration policy can set the goal of reducing the number of individuals with undefined citizenship, but the successfulness of this task depends also on decisions of the Riigikogu and the coalition parties, which for the time being have agreed not to change “the principles of citizenship policy (Valitsusliidu programm, 41; chapter 2, pp. 134-135)

In addition to seeking to increase cohesion between the country’s residents, Estonian integration policy envisions a culturally plural society where representatives of minorities are provided with opportunities for the preservation and development of their distinctive ethnic identities and cultures. While much has been written about the conceptual grounds and aims of the Estonian integration model, these analyses have tended to take culture for granted by focusing on citizenship and leaving the concept of culture unproblematized. Consequently, one easily ends up with a problem-free ideal, as in the passage quoted in the beginning of this chapter and other articulations of “the Estonian version of a multicultural society” (Heidmets and Lauristin 1998; Vetik 2002, Vetik 2007a), or a dystopia, à la “social cohesion Estonian style: minority integration through


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constitutionalized hegemony and fictive pluralism” (Malloy 2009). According to the preamble of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia, the Estonian state “shall guarantee the preservation of the Estonian nation, language and culture through the ages,” which as led the minority rights’ scholar Tove Malloy to conclude that the Estonian integration policy sets “fictive targets of pluralism for some but not for others” by promoting multiculturalism in a situation where the dominant position of ethnic Estonians is “legally enshrined in the constitution” (Malloy 2009, 246).

One of the arguments put forward in this chapter is that despite what looks like a gradual shift from Estonian-centeredness towards a more complex and abstract idea of a common “state identity,” the Estonian integration strategy distinguishes between the state-bearing Estonian majority and minorities, whose ability to enter the public sphere and negotiate the conditions of their integration is limited. However, there is more to the relationship between the state and minorities, as I learnt in the course of fieldwork and again when I returned to Tallinn in fall 2011. During this short visit, I gave a presentation at a seminar at Tallinn University that sought to familiarize teachers of basic schools (grades 1-9) with academic methods and vocabulary for studying culture, especially approaches to “cultural memory” and “cultural identity.”205 The new state curriculum for basic schools approved

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205 The seminar and workshop series “Teacher as a carrier of cultural memory” was launched in 2009 by the Centre of Excellence in Cultural Theory, uniting archeologists, ethnologists, folklorists, landscape scholars, media scholars, semioticians and religious studies scholars from the University of Tartu and the Tallinn University. So far, the project has yielded two one-day seminars (2009, 2010) and one edited volume, designed as a handbook for basic-school teachers (grades 1-9) (Harro-Loit and Tasa 2012,
in the beginning of 2011 posits “cultural identity” (*kultuuriline identiteet*) as one of the key topics that permeates the whole curriculum and should be used by teachers and schools to integrate different subjects together (Põhikooli riiklik õppekava).\(^\text{206}\) The aim of my presentation was to analyze ideas about culture at work in the curriculum, especially the interrelationships between “national culture” (*rahvuskultuur*) and “multiculturalism” or “cultural pluralism” (*mitmekultuurilisus*). I found that the curriculum defined culture as a manifestation of ethnicity/nationality, equating cultural identity with ethnic/national identity. To the extent that this identity was seen to be territorially bounded, the curriculum was reiterating the idea of Estonia as a country of and for Estonians, where there also live representatives of other nationalities/ethnicities/cultures. “Multiculturalism” consisted according to this view of distinct “national cultures” but the culture/ethnicity/nationality of each individual was said to be fixed, pre-given and as such detached from the surrounding contemporary life: the curriculum emphasized the cultural pluralism of the society but not of every individual. Drawing on my fieldwork, I argued that this approach was too static and out of touch with complex situations that students from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds – as well as their teachers – were dealing

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\(^{206}\) The curriculum gives the following definition of the topic “cultural identity”: “the development of the student into a culture-conscious human being [kultuuriteadlik inimene], who understands the role of culture in shaping peoples’ ways of thinking and their behavior as well as the transformation of cultures through time, who has a sense of the diversity of cultures [kultuuride mitmekesisus] – plural, i.e., not cultural diversity] and the particularity of life practices determined by culture [kultuuriga määratud elupraktikate eripära] and who values national culture [omakultuur] and cultural diversity [kultuuriline mitmekesisus] while being culturally tolerant and cooperative” (Põhikooli riiklik õppekava).
with on a daily basis. I also claimed that this approach discouraged minority students from positioning themselves as actors who could participate in the shaping of the Estonian society as minorities; I was thinking particularly of the ability of Russians and Russian-speakers to have a say in the future of Russian-language education in Estonia (Seljamaa 2011).

One of the few Russian teachers from a Russian-medium school attending the seminar raised her hand after my presentation and commented – in Russian – that what is most important “for us” (для нас), Russian educators, is multiculturalism (мультикультурность). It seemed to me that the teacher was rejecting my call for a broader definition of culture, possibly thinking that it would lead – or that I was speaking in favor of – assimilation. One of the Estonian participants of the seminar told me over the lunch that she had found my approach provocative and it could be that the Russian teacher had felt the same way and had wanted to make clear – in front of her Estonian colleagues – that she and other Russian teachers were not to be manipulated. A couple of days later, still in Tallinn, I discussed this episode with a Russian-speaking friend of mine, a convinced supporter of the continuation of Russian-language education in Estonia, who suggested that there had been a miscommunication and the teacher would have supported me had we understood each other correctly.

Either way, the teacher’s response reminded me of how easily scholarly analyses based on texts, in the narrow sense of the word, deprive of agency and opinion the very same
actors whom scholars would like to see empowered. While I share many of the views expressed by critics of the Estonian integration model and draw on their insights, I also think that multiculturalism in Estonia is neither a fiction nor unconstitutional (cf. Malloy 2009, 242). The cultural pluralism of Estonia was a very real “thing” for the teacher who commented my presentation and it was also a fact for most people I interacted with as part of my fieldwork, especially for individuals involved in cultural associations of national minorities. There are over 200 cultural associations in Estonia today, claiming to represent over 100 ethnicities/nationalities, and many of these organizations function by virtue of state funding, which depends on their compliance with terms laid out by the state. Recognizing the state and its policies is, quite literally, the precondition for the existence of these organizations and thus also for any attempts on their behalf to modify current policies. The state and actors representing minorities have common interests and benefit from each other, which in turn implies that they share certain ideas about culture and ethnicity.

Consequently, Estonia’s pluralism is a matter of how rather than whether, starting with the question of how one understands culture and ethnicity and the relationship(s) between the two. As I will argue below, the integration model pursued in Estonia and actors engaged in its execution operate simultaneously with multiple concepts of culture, some of which serve as bases for inclusion and others justify exclusions. Moreover, some of these ideas derive from the Soviet era while others, such as the concept of multiculturalism, have been “imported” from the West only recently. The idea of a public
sphere operated in the Estonian language brings to mind headscarf controversies and other states’ efforts to delineate a space claimed to be common to and unifying all permanent residents, with immigration constituting the greatest challenge on both sides of the Atlantic. The French’s periodic “dislike of headscarves” (Bowen 2007) suggests that the public space is contested and, moreover, that it is contested both by those seeking to enter it and the unmarked category, whose real, self-proclaimed or aspiring spokespersons frame the public presence of Other/minority as a threat to the society as it ought to be. In this process, the Other is reduced to selected attributes that are seen to manifest both a danger and irreducible differences. As a result of these framings, “(w)hen Muslim women in headscarves say that it is with these clothes and this religion that they choose to abide by the rules of the Republic and the life together (la vie commune) that is France, they are challenging the conditions for belonging to the nation” (Bowen 2007, 249; emphases in the original). As I will argue in the next chapters, the same could be said about those Russian-speaking permanent residents of Estonia who criticize the ongoing reform of Russian-language education in Estonia.

What makes the analysis of minority and integration policies in post-Soviet Estonia so knotty is that they combine specific Soviet-era concepts and practices with the minority rights protection discourse promoted by the EU and furthermore with nationalism, the very ideology that the European integration was meant to battle and go beyond (e.g., Holmes 2000, McDonald 1996, McDonald 2006). Close readings of laws and other pertinent texts are therefore important but insufficient and possibly distorting unless they
are combined with empirical case studies of how particular policy measures are being received, executed and employed by various actors “on the ground.” This includes looking at how the state summons minorities, how these actors participate in the “ongoing production of static truths” about the nation-state (Herzfeld 2005, 10) and by doing so, come to occupy particular places within the state, from which they can, in turn, challenge the state and its take on minorities. As in the previous chapters, I am interested in the continuous production and organization of differences in post-Soviet Estonia, assuming that the state building, nation building and minority building are mutually constitutive processes. To the extent that Estonia fashioned its approach to integration by drawing on “Western” role models in an effort to become accepted by the “West,” contradictions plaguing integration in Estonia reflect the problems faced by the very states held up as prototypes of “Western political values and cultural stereotypes” (Vetik 2000a).

The Estonian Model of Multiculturalism

Estonia began to formulate its approach to integration towards the end of the 1990s as part of the broader process of international integration. Vello Pettai has summarized that “this effort was prompted by three factors: research by the academic community, a group of Estonian social scientists had launched projects to study “the Russian-speaking population” (e.g., contributions to Lauristin, Vare, Pedastsaar, Pavelson 1998) and foreign scholars, too, were publishing on this issue (e.g., Laitin 1998).
pressure from international organizations, and political opportunity within the Estonian government” (Pettai 2003, 64). In 1997 Andra Veidemann was appointed the first Minister of Ethnic Affairs (though without a ministry) and formed a government committee in order to draft the starting points of the integration policy. The committee consisted of scholars, schoolteachers and other practitioners, but as Pettai has noted, it “fell far short in including a broad range of minority representatives” (Pettai 2003, 67). Rather, “the starting point was clearly centered on preparing a political document for the Estonian government and within the context of the new ethnopolitical balance” (ibid.). The short document titled “The starting points for the Estonian state integration policy for the integration of non-Estonians into the Estonian society” (“Eesti riikliku integratsioonipoliitika lähtekohad mitte-eestlaste integreerimiseks Eesti ühiskonda” heakskiitmine) began by explaining the need for a state integration policy, its principles as well as goals driving it:

Estonian integration policy [up to 1998] has taken shape in a social-political context characterized by the restoration of Estonian independence and the need to restore justice for the Estonian people [eesti rahvas] and state. This context has shaped the attitudes and the content of policies. Today, the alien-population [muulaskond] in Estonia can be divided between four legal categories: citizens of Estonia, citizens of other states, persons with undefined citizenship and persons who lack any legal ties to the Estonian state. As of 1998, both the domestic and international situation has changed. A shift has taken place in the mentality of most non-Estonians, i.e., the acceptance of the Estonian independence as an inevitable fact. Estonians’ stance on the issue of aliens [muulasküsimus] has gone through a development as well; attitudes have become more tolerant and open.

New questions regarding immigration have come to the fore. The most important question domestically concerns the remoteness of a significant part of non-Estonians
from the Estonian societal life [Eesti ühiskonnaelu], [the fact] that they are shutting themselves off into a world of their own language and frame of mind [omakeelne ja omameeline maailm]. (…) The changed domestic and international situation requires the Estonian integration policy to take a next step. This step has to be based on internationally recognized conventions and on principles laid out in the Estonian constitution, on our current state interests and those of the society, on the aim of securing the society’s speedy modernization in the context of joining the European Union, while maintaining domestic stability as well as the orientation towards the protection and development of Estonian culture. The new step has to entail the replacement of a so far mainly spontaneous development with a state strategy that aims clearly at the integration of non-Estonians into the Estonian society. (…) This concerns primarily the enablement of non-Estonians’ actual participation in the Estonian societal life – a breakthrough in teaching the state language, transforming the other-language school [muukeelne kool] Estonian-centered, education, the inseparable part of which is raising citizens. The readiness of non-Estonians who are applying for Estonian citizenship to fulfill civic duties on a par with Estonians is in the interest of the Estonian state.

(“Eesti riikliku integratsioonipoliitika lähtekohad mitte-eestlaste integreerimiseks Eesti ühiskonda” heakskiitmine.)

Importantly from the perspective of this study, the authors of the document found it necessary to point out in a separate footnote that integration does not aim at changing ethnic identity:

By integration is meant the entry [lülitumine] of a person to societal life on all its levels. Integration does not imply a change in ethnic identity [etniline identiteet], but means bringing down barriers that currently prevent many non-Estonians from fully participating in the Estonian societal life.

209 In practice, “the other-language school” referred to schools using the Russian language of instruction. See chapter 1 and chapter 4 on the separateness of Estonian- and Russian-language life worlds in Soviet Estonia. The next two chapters discuss the ongoing reform of Russian-language education in Estonia.
The government and Riigikogu adopted “The starting points for the Estonian state integration policy for the integration of non-Estonians into the Estonian society” in spring 1998 and the government established a non-governmental Foundation for the Integration of Non-Estonians (Mitte-eestlaste Integratsiooni Sihtasutus; MISA Sihtasutus) in order to execute the new policies. Malloy has argued in her discussion of the Estonian integration model that “(i)t is quite clear from reading the document that the Estonian elite was facing a dilemma in terms of having to meet international normative and modernization standards while also seeking to build a mono-ethnic based state” (Malloy 2009, 234). In the words of Vello Pettai, the 1998 document “represented what was essentially the predominant Estonian consensus on the issue, a bottom-line position on what Estonians would accept,” and thus the subsequent policy documents “would flow from these same principles” (Pettai 2003, 67). The focus was – and, as I will show below, continues to be – on enhancing non-Estonians’ ability to operate in the Estonian society by means of improving their language skills; it follows from this that ethnic Estonians were seen to belong by virtue of being Estonians and native speakers of Estonian.

210 Foundation for the Integration of Non-Estonians was renamed Integration Foundation (Interatsiooni Sihtasutus) in 2008; in 2010 Integration Foundation merged with the Estonian Migration Foundation established in 1992 (see chapter 2) and the new organization is called Integration and Migration Foundation Our People (Integratsiooni ja Migratsiooni Sihtasutus Meie Inimesed) (MISA Sihtasutus). Changes in the name – from “non-Estonians” to “our people” – reflect changes in the vocabulary perceived to be correct more than actual changes in attitudes.
I find it furthermore significant that from the start, the Estonian approach set ethnicity apart from the society and social processes, framing it as an aspect of identity that should and possibly could not be changed. Correspondingly, the Estonian model also excluded assimilation. Rather, Estonians and non-Estonians seemed to share a sense of their distinctiveness and the document listed “the feeling of security/safety” (*kindlustunne*) regarding the preservation of this distinctiveness as one of the starting points of integration policy:

> the actual breaking down of barriers can only take place in a situation where all parties feel confident and secure [*kindlalt ja turvaliselt*]. Estonians understand it as guarantees for the preservation and security of Estonianness [*eestlus*]. Non-Estonians understand it as confidence that the policies of the Estonian state are not aimed at their expulsion or assimilation. The model of two separate societies objectively increases the insecurity for Estonians and non-Estonians alike. In order to achieve a mutual feeling of security, there is no alternative to integration.

(“Eesti riikliku integratsioonipiilitika lähtekohad mitte-eestlaste integreerimiseks Eesti ühiskonda” heakskitmine.)

In spring 1999, an Action Plan followed the first document and outlined “the Estonian version of a multicultural society” (Heidmets and Lauristin 1998). This was to be characterized by three principles: “an individual-centered approach” (*indiviidikesksus*), “a strong common core” (*tugev ühisosa*), and “the Estonian cultural predominance” (*Eesti kultuuridominant*). Individual-centeredness was understood as the right of each individual to decide upon his or her group membership and cultural identity. Sociologists Mati Heidmets and Marju Lauristin, who belonged to the authors of the Estonian integration model, explained in an article based on the Action Plan:
Individual-centeredness means that along with the recognition of minority groups’ 
[vähemusgrupp] right to cultural identity, the right of choice [valikuõigus] of every 
individual to define his/her group membership [grupikuuluvus] and cultural identity will 
be strongly emphasized. No one may be restricted in advancing [edendama] one’s 
national culture [omakultuur – lit. one’s own culture], yet no one may be “obligated” to 
belong to a particular national group. The primacy of the individual choice means 
furthermore that multiculturalism does not rely on legally fixed group rights but mainly 
on attitudes and understandings cultivated in the society. For this reason the active 
development of tolerance and openness will become central among Estonians and aliens 
[muulane] alike.

(Heidmets and Lauristin 1998, 14.)

The notion of a “strong common core” proposed that all members of the society would be 
brought together in public by means of the state language, state institutions, citizenship 
and shared democratic values to be adopted as part of the Europeanization process 
(Heidmets and Lauristin 1998, 14-15). “The Estonian cultural predominance” (Eesti 
kultuuridominant), on the other hand, asserted that one of the goals of the Estonian state 
was to protect and develop the Estonian national culture (Heidmets and Lauristin 1998, 
15; see also Pettai 2003, 69-71 and Malloy 2009, 234-235). Raivo Vetik has drawn 
attention to contradictions between these principles: the idea of the “Estonian cultural 
predominance” posited the privileged position of Estonians as a group, contradicting the 
claim made in connection with individual-centeredness that “multiculturalism does not 
rely on legally fixed group rights” (Vetik 2007 [2004], 66). As Vetik emphasized, the 
“ideology of multiculturalism is based on a substantial concept of society, which supports 
the recognition of group rights” (ibid.). Malloy has described the Action Plan as “a
statement that included no linguistic rights of minorities and indeed lacked entirely a human rights approach” (Malloy 2009, 233; Järve and Wellmann 1998).

Taking into account some of these criticisms, the “State program: Integration in Estonian Society 2000-2007” (hereafter IES 2000-2007; see Vetik 2007 [2004] on the creation of this document) adopted a year later in spring 2000 held on to the term “strong common core,” but rephrased the idea of the “Estonian cultural dominant” and, most importantly, switched from “individual-centeredness” to “cultural pluralism” (kultuuriline pluralism) or “multiculturalism” (mitmekultuurilisus). The program stated that “integration is clearly a two-sided process – both Estonians and non-Estonians partake in the homogenization of the society on equal terms” (IES 2000-2007, 5; emphasis in the original) and was bound to pose a challenge for Estonians and non-Estonians alike. The latter would have to realize that their “prospects of a successful future in Estonia depended primarily on [their] own activeness and ability to cooperate,” while Estonians would have to adopt a definition of statehood based on politics rather than ethnicity (cf. the passage from the 1999 integration monitoring quoted in the beginning of this chapter) (IES 2000-2007, 18). Integration was to decrease Estonians’ “repelling attitude towards ethnic minorities in the context of recognizing the multicultural model of society” and diminish their “fear about the preservation of their national identity [oma rahvuslik identiteet] and cultural space [kultuuriruum]” (IES 2000-2007, 16). However, the program did not list any concrete measures for achieving these goals.
In accordance with the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) adopted by the Council of Europe in 1995 (see chapter 1, Brosig 2009 and contributions to Weller 2005), the IES 2000-2007 distinguished between linguistic-communicative, legal-political and social-economic integration. Not surprisingly, the program foregrounded linguistic-communicative integration, describing it as the “reproduction of an Estonian-language sphere of communication and environment in the context of cultural pluralism and mutual tolerance” (IES 2000-2007, 5). Integration in this particular sphere was expected to be conducive to integration in other domains: to decrease the number of people without Estonian citizenship, contribute to the “formation of a population loyal to the Estonian state” as well as to boost the mobility and competitiveness of “non-Estonians” (IES 2000-2007, 5-6; 16-18). Measures planned in the field of legal-political integration focused mainly on speeding up the naturalization process and coincided thus with steps taken towards linguistic-communicative integration. However, no special activities were planned to support social-economic integration. (IES 2000-2007, 21; see also Pettai 2003, 72-75; Vetik 2007 [2004], 68-69; Jurado 2008, 47.)

The principles of “the common core,” “cultural pluralism” and “the preservation and development of the Estonian cultural space” deserve more attention for it is their interrelationship that captures the contradictory goals of homogenization and diversification. “The common core” designated the territorially bounded public sphere that was to emerge in the process of integration and to consist of the following elements:
1) general humanistic and democratic values;
2) a common field of information and the Estonian-language environment;
3) common state institutions;
4) the knowledge of basic facts of the Estonian history, appreciation of the Estonian citizenship and recognition that the society is multicultural.

(IES 2000-2007, 20.)

The program drew a clear demarcation line between the homogeneous and homogenizing public sphere and the “ethnic” private sphere:

Such phenomena of the private sphere as the language of ethnic minorities [etniliste vähemuste keel], ethnic traditions, religious beliefs, family traditions and personal life styles will not be regarded as belonging to the common core of the Estonian society. These phenomena need not be common to all members of the society because they belong to the rubric of each individual’s personal interests [iga indiviiidi erahuvide valdkond] where there are opportunities for advancing them.

(IES 2000-2007, 20; emphases in the original.)

Hence, similarly to the preparatory documents discussed above, the integration program emphasized that Estonia was not seeking to assimilate non-Estonians. At the same time, the principle of “preservation and development of the Estonian cultural space [eesti kultuuriruum]” rephrased the earlier idea of “the Estonian cultural dominance,” asserting the privileged position of the “Estonian culture”: 211

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211 The term “Estonian cultural space” (eesti kultuuriruum) had appeared already in the 1998 document though it in a different if not opposite meaning: one of the aims of the state integration policy is “the adaptation of non-Estonians into Estonian cultural space, their involvement in active social life” (“Eesti riikliku integratsioonipoliitika lähtekohad mitte-eestlaste integreerimiseks Eesti ühiskonda” heakskiitmine.) See also the introduction for “environmental psychological” research conducted in Soviet Estonia in the 1980s.
All cultures operating [toimima] in Estonia are equal in the societal dialogue. Yet the status of the Estonian culture [eesti kultuur] in relation to the state differs from that of minority cultures [vähemuskultuurid] since one of the aims of Estonian statehood is the preservation and development of the Estonian cultural space. Estonian society is multicultural and the state’s task is to create opportunities of cultural development [kultuurilised arenguvõimalused] for minorities, yet in the sense of a cultural space common to everybody, Estonia is and will remain Estonian-centered [eestikeskne].


Pettai has described this wording as being “refined” and “softer” in comparison to the Action Plan (Pettai 2003, 74-75). While this might be the case, I would argue that it signaled at the same time a more reifying and essentializing approach to both culture and ethnicity, which was manifested also in the accompanying switch from “individual-centeredness” to “cultural pluralism” or “multiculturalism”:

Ethnic minorities [etnilised vähemused] living in Estonia have been guaranteed opportunities for the preservation of their linguistic and cultural particularity [eripära], primarily in terms of organizing native-language education and associations [seltsielu – lit., social life revolving around associations]. The concept of pluralism involves furthermore the introduction of the cultural particularity of minorities to the Estonian society. Thus, the aim of integration is the adaptation [kohanemine] of cultures of different ethnic minorities to Estonia and not their assimilation into the Estonian culture.

(IES 2000-2007, 19; emphasis in the original.)

To the extent the principle of “cultural pluralism” recognized group rights as well as the state’s responsibility towards minorities, it could be regarded as a step forward in comparison to the 1998 Action Plan and other preparatory documents: one of the aims of “individual-centeredness” was, no doubt, to ward off Russians’ claims to autonomy or other demands conceived as a threat to the integrity of “the Estonian cultural space.” Yet
at the same time, by virtue of “pluralism,” the IES 2000-2007 no longer talked about the right of each individual to decide upon his or her ethnic/national/cultural identity or at all about the possibility of crossing such boundaries, emphasizing instead the preservation of cultural/ethnic particularities.

Illustration 7 Azerbaijan condensed: a mini exhibition at a kindergarten in Tallinn

Raivo Vetik, one of the authors of the IES 2000-2007, argued in the above-mentioned 2004 article that “individual-centeredness” had been a deceptive idea from the start (Vetik 2007 [2004], 66). He explained that the IES 2000-2007 continued to regard individuals as “the direct subjects of integration” and that “integration on the level of individuals would shape a strong enough common core [piisavalt tugev ühisosa] in the public sphere of the society.” However, “integration based on this principle [of the
common core] is complemented by the recognition of collective rights belonging to ethnic groups, expressed in the principle of cultural pluralism as well as that of supporting a holistic [terviklik] Estonian cultural space.” (Vetik 2007 [2004], 70.) The group rights of minorities were confined to the private sphere, whereas “supporting a holistic Estonian cultural space” was both a private and public matter (ibid.).

Malloy has claimed that a functional separation between the public and private is not feasible and that it forces minorities to accept assimilation in order to partake in the public (Malloy 2009, 237-240). The idea of the separation between the homogeneous public and diverse private sphere drew on John Rex (Vetik 2007 [2004], 67; Vetik 2007, 11,13), who proposed in the mid-1980s in the context of Britain that an ideal multicultural society was characterized by equality of opportunity in the public domain and multiculturalism in the private domain:

Under this option, every individual would have equal rights before the law, in politics and the market place as well as equality of social rights where these are provided by a welfare state, while at the same time having the right to conduct ‘private’ matters (i.e. religion, family arrangements, language and the cultural arts) according to the custom of a separate ethnic (and sometimes racial) community.

(Rex 1986, 121.)

212 The idea of integration as a combination of equal opportunity and cultural diversity was put forth already in the mid-1960s by, among others, the British politician Roy Jenkins: “I do not think we need in this country a “melting pot,” which will turn everybody out in a common mould, as one of series of carbon copies of someone’s misplaced vision of the stereotyped Englishman. (…) I define integration, therefore, not as a flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity, coupled with cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance” (Jenkins quoted in Grillo 2001, 11). Rex has later elaborated on his public-private distinction, emphasizing, among other things, that minority cultures change and adapt to new circumstances and, moreover, that
R. D. Grillo suggested a decade ago that this “here but different” approach probably constituted – at the time – “a widely held ideal in Europe” (Grillo 2001, 15). The US scholar David Theo Goldberg has described this kind of approach as “weak multiculturalism,” arguing that it “extends local values into universal ones”:

[“Weak multiculturalism”] consist of in a strong set of common, universally endorsed, centrist values to which everyone – every reasonable person irrespective of the divisions of race, class, and gender – can agree. These universal principles are combined with a pluralism of ethnic insight and self-determination provided no particularistically promoted claim is inconsistent with the core values.

This standard view rests in an only slightly revised fashion upon the traditional premise of philosophical liberalism. (…) Even in this lightly revised version (…) the implicit monoculturalism dressed up as weak pluralistic multiculturalism presumes a fixed “we” or “us” at an unshifting center.

(Goldberg 1994, 16.)

“Stronger” versions of multiculturalism, in comparison, recognize “demands for the institutional recognition and acceptance” of cultural and religious differences in the public sphere, also in the form of separate education (Grillo 2001, 3; 15; Grillo 2007, 987). The adherence of the Estonian model to “weak multiculturalism” is evidenced also by its selective interpretation of Will Kymlicka’s theory of group-differentiated rights from the 1990s (e.g. Kymlicka 1995, 2000, 2001).^213 Whereas the Canadian philosopher

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they constitute an important source of moral and emotional support as well as a means to collective political action, especially in the context of waning class-based politics (e.g., Rex 2000). See also Rex 1995 on differences between multiculturalism in Europe and the United States.

^213 The applicability of Kymlicka’s liberal approach to post-Communist East and Central Europe was debated by academics in the 1990s (see contributions to Kymlicka and
aimed at a liberal theory of minority rights, the Estonian version regarded the majority as one of the groups, whose rights are in need of protection – on a par with minorities: “cultural space” is to Estonians what “cultural pluralism” is to minorities. This interpretation seems to run counter the very goals of liberal nationalism that Kymlicka has sought to further. Liberal nationalism has called for measures that would protect minorities’ interests from the majority, the starting point being that even the most liberal and seemingly ethno-culturally neutral states assume the existence of a “sense of us” that is most often based on common language and culture (regarding this assumption, see, e.g., Canovan 2000, Scruton 2003, Miller 2003).

Kymlicka has employed the term “societal culture” to describe what one might say is essentially the dominant society: a territorially-concentrated monolingual culture that tends to be associated with a particular national group and covers a full range of social, political, educational, economic, legal, religious and other institutions in both public and private sphere (Kymlicka 2000, 31). Minorities should be given the opportunity to participate in the design and reform of the institutions of the larger society so that they would “feel more at home in these institutions” (Kymlicka 2001, 35). Being able to feel at home is of central importance to Kymlicka’s liberal approach because ultimately it is the societal culture or cultural membership that makes individuals free by providing them with meaningful options for making choices about ways in which they want to lead their lives.

Opalski 2001, including Pettai 2001 on Estonia and Latvia) and he was also invited to speak at a conference on Estonian integration policy held in Tallinn in 1999 (Kymlicka 2000).
lives and, equally importantly, with an opportunity to reconsider their choices (Kymlicka 1995: 82-94). Kymlicka distinguishes between minorities on the basis on their differential rights to “their own” cultural and social institutions: because immigrants have left their home country, often for economic reasons, they can be expected to integrate into the host society and its “societal culture,” while national/homeland minorities indigenous to the given territory are entitled to a “societal culture” of their own.

When Kymlicka’s prioritization of descent and indigenousness is applied to the post-Soviet Estonian population, it reinforces the legal-restorationist distinction between rightful citizens – the majority of them ethnic Estonians – and individuals, mostly Russians, who “immigrated” to Estonia during the Soviet era or descend from Soviet-era settlers and are not eligible for citizenship at birth. The concept of homeland of

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214 The starting point of Yael Tamir, another theorist of liberal nationalism, has been similar in that she regards national membership as a matter of choice and claims that it is meaningful because is gives individuals opportunities for self-realization and creates mutual responsibility between people (Tamir 1993).

215 In addition, Kymlicka has described as metics migrants who are not given the opportunity to become citizens (e.g. Turkish Gastarbeiter in Germany, illegal immigrants). More recently, he has been involved in the Multiculturalism Policy Index (MCP), which measures the presence or absence of multiculturalism policies in selected Western democracies. The MCP distinguishes between three types of minorities: immigrant minorities, indigenous peoples, national minorities (Multiculturalism Policy Index). MCP is related to the Migrant Integration Policy Index or MIPEX (see chapter 2, pp. 133-144) and provides further evidence of efforts of certain actors to promote standardized transnational norms and policies.

216 Kymlicka himself has argued that “Russians in the Baltics” constitute along with the Roma, Crimean Tatars, and Cossacks one of the “hard cases” that falls in-between the categories proposed by him (2000, 45-51; 2001, 76-79). Alexander Osipov has criticized Kymlicka for building his critique of ethno-nationalist policies “on the same or similar logic and language” that treats the society as “a sum of ‘collective individuals’ possessing a set of rights and interests” (Osipov 2001, 182-183).
national minorities, on the other hand, corresponds to the exclusivist definition of national minority (vähemusrahvus) provided in the Law on Cultural Autonomy re-adopted in the early 1990s, at the height of post-Soviet nationalizing policies (see chapter 1).

Another discord between Kymlicka’s theory and its application in Estonia concerns language. Kymlicka endorses in his own words “a thinner conception of integration, in which the emphasis is on linguistic and institutional integration, but not the sharing of culture or ways of life in any thicker sense” (Kymlicka 2000, 52). Yet in Estonia, the Estonian language cannot be thin – or too thick. Rather, it is one of the raisons d’être of the Estonian statehood and as such a matter of national security, of life and death. As has been pointed out earlier in this study, according to the preamble to the Estonian Constitution, the Estonian state exists in order to guarantee “the preservation of the Estonian nation [rahvus], language and culture through the ages” (The Constitution of the Republic of Estonia). Since Kymlicka’s societal culture is monolingual, it seems to have been tailored to alleviate Estonians’ existential fears and perceptions of threat that tend to be channeled into the Estonian language (e.g., Rannut 1999, 103; see also Hallik 2002, 71-73).

Kymlicka’s view on the thinness of language is somewhat puzzling. Pettai, for example, has described language as one “the most ‘difficult to appropriate’ elements of social communication [on which a nation can be built], short of extensive re-socialization or assimilation” (Pettai 2003, 58). He suggests that elements used in nation building should be the more accessible and easier to appropriate than the more ethnically diverse the state is because exclusive elements (such as the language and religion) are likely to make the nation-building process more conflictual (ibid.).

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Overall, it seems as if the Estonian approach to integration has been selective if not arbitrary in its application of Kymlicka’s ideas. His theory of group-differentiated rights has been used to exclude minorities from decision-making processes as well as to justify curtailments on “meaningful options” minorities have at their disposal for making choices about the ways in which they want to lead their lives (e.g., the partial transition of Russian-medium schools to the Estonian language of instruction). Moreover, the societal culture, claimed to be common to everybody, is simultaneously the “Estonian cultural space” safeguarded by the group rights of the majority.

I would like to argue that it in addition to Kymlicka, Rex and other openly declared “Western” examples, the approach put forward in IES 2000-2007 drew on Soviet-era ideas on nationality/ethnicity and the system of ethnoterritorial federalism, the Soviet version of group-differentiated rights. As was discussed in the first chapter, the Soviet nationality policy took the equation of ethnicity with nationality with culture, language and territory as one of its starting points. Nationality/ethnicity was conceived of as a category of descent and for over five decades, the regime followed the practice of assigning to each individual an official nationality that was in most cases immutable and independent of one’s actual place of birth or mother tongue – albeit language, ethnic homeland and culture were conceived of as defining components of national/ethnic
In addition to the institutionalization of the personal nationality, *imagined* to be territorially bounded, the Soviet regime institutionalized titular nationalities and their territorially bounded group rights (e.g., Brubaker 1996). (See chapter 1.) The resemblance between the Soviet approach and the one outlined in the 2000-2007 integration program is evidenced in a 2002 English-language article where Vetik described the integration model as a model for “multicultural democracy”:

Multicultural democracy differs from liberal democracy in that it recognises ethnic heterogeneity and group rights in multiethnic states. One group is the titular nationality of the state, whom the state is named after. The titular group’s language forms the basis of a common communicative field as well as the societal cultural space of the state. In all other respects multicultural democracy is similar to the liberal democracy. (…)

Both [multicultural democracy and consociational democracy] recognise the ethnic heterogeneity of the state, but in multicultural democracy it is institutionalised only culturally, not politically. (…) Ethnic differences can, for instance, establish the grounds for cultural autonomy for ethnic minorities, but not for their territorial autonomy or federalism.

Finally, multicultural democracy is similar to ethnic democracy in the sense that both recognise the existence of group rights. They differ, however, because multicultural democracy does not institutionalise the political domination of one national or ethnic group and does not claim that the state belongs to that group (which would give political privileges to it). Recognition of certain substantive rights of the titular national group in multicultural democracy does not mean discrimination against ethnic minorities or privileging the national group. It simply reflects the fact that, in a modern nation-state, certain group rights of different national and ethnic groups vary depending on their different connections to the state.


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218 Cf. the influential definition of nation by Stalin: “A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture” (Stalin 1954a, 307; emphasis in the original); see discussion in chapter 1).
Both the argumentation and vocabulary used in the description evoke parallels with the Soviet approach to nationality/ethnicity, especially the idea of Estonians as the “titular national group”: ethnic/national groups are reified and conceived of as real entities and there are over 120 of them in Estonia. Estonians, the titular nationality, have, this approach claims, certain substantive rights that others lack by virtue of being from Estonia – belonging to the Estonian territory. Hence, Estonian is spoken in Estonia not in order to privilege the “titular group” but because it is the language of this land (selle maa keel) and the only place in the world where it can be spoken (cf. the official interpretation of the Native Language Day, chapter 3, pp. 181-187): it is not a matter of discrimination but roots, the natural order of things. On the other hand, one could argue that the Estonian “multicultural democracy” set out to trump the Soviet Union by promising to “create conditions for the cultural development of ethnic minorities” (Vetik 2002, 60) without differentiating between groups on the basis of their size or other criteria. The argument that the state’s “ethnic heterogeneity” would be “institutionalized only culturally, not politically” is both significant and odd: while it attests to the “weakness” of multiculturalism à la Estonia, it is also oblivious to Estonia’s and Estonians’ own powerful experiences of cultural forms and performances as politics (e.g., the song festivals and their impact discussed in chapter 2).

In the context of Estonia’s first integration program, IES 2000-2007, “cultural pluralism” could be regarded as a means of “preserving and developing the Estonian cultural space.”
To put it differently: it is by way of providing minorities with means for preserving “their own” culture that Estonians can preserve theirs. According to this view, a person is culture, which in turn is equated with territory. Consequently, minority cultures/peoples in Estonia are outsiders and while they are required to learn the language and can be expected to become adapted to Estonia, they cannot become part of the Estonian culture: “introducing the cultural particularity of minorities to the Estonian society” means that this “particularity” is to be brought to the attention and sight of the “Estonian society” rather than made part of it in a manner that would change this society and its majority-centeredness. The argument that “the aim of integration is the adaptation of cultures of different ethnic minorities to Estonia and not their assimilation into Estonian culture” (IES 2000-2007, 19) is particularly revealing in this connection, talking as it does about the integration of cultures and not peoples.

Assimilation is not only about domination of one group over another one, but involves also mixing and becoming mixed. The integration model devised in Estonia in the late 1990s spoke decisively against this prospect and, implicitly, for the purity of cultures – and peoples, in the private sphere of reproduction. The educational system operates at the intersection of the formal and the personal, producing citizens as well as members of a particular ethnolinguistic collective. Dismantling or even reforming the system of separate Estonian- and Russian-medium schools has therefore been – and, as I will discuss in the next chapters, continues to be – a painful process ridden with contradictions. In describing Russian-language students in Estonian-language schools, the
IES 2000-2007 made it clear that knowing and learning the Estonian language will facilitate communication but is not going to erase cultural particularities or even help Estonians and Russians overcome tensions attributed to culture/ethnicity. The following passage illustrates furthermore the tendency to explain and present problems in terms of ethnic essences, which makes them virtually insolvable and implies that Russian-language children in Estonian-medium schools constitute “a matter out of place” (Douglas 1989):

Opinions expressed by the [Russian-language] youth [studying in Estonian-medium schools] suggest that they do not prioritize the Estonian school where they will lose their safe Russian-language environment and have to adapt to alien cultural attitudes [võõrad kultuurihoiakud] in addition to having to communicate in Estonian. Neither teachers nor students can handle communication problems caused by intercultural differences [kultuuridevahelisest erinevustest tulenevad suhtlusprobleemid].”

(IES 2000-2007, 30-31.)

The anthropologist Gregory Feldman conducted in 1999-2000 and 2001 fieldwork among Estonian and foreign policymakers involved in the production of IES 2000-2007 and has claimed in a series or articles that Western diplomats – “the elites of statecraft” – shared Estonian officials’ view of Russian-speakers as “matter out place” that was jeopardizing the homogeneity of the Estonian nation-state and, by extension, “the entire European inter-state system” (Feldman 2005b, 235; see also Feldman 2005a, 2005c, 2005d, 2006). The integration strategy was correspondingly hailed as a means of aligning Estonians with the Estonian domain or as one diplomat is said to have put it, the integration strategy made “Estonia as a concept work” (Feldman 2005a, 687; Feldman 2008, 335). The language-centeredness of the policy was not questioned; rather, the successfullness of
integration was made dependent on Russian-speakers’ ability to change their attitude towards the Estonian language and ultimately their “mentality” (Feldman 2008, 329). However, if people are culture and essences rather than deeds, Russians as a “big culture” can neither change nor aligned with “the Estonian cultural space,” though the effort has to continue to keep “Estonia as a concept working.”

State Identity and Intercultural Dialogue

“Estonian Integration Strategy 2008-2013” (hereafter EIS 2008-2013), the follow-up to “Integration in the Estonian Society 2000-2007,” is more condensed (just under 40 pages instead of 75) and uses more sophisticated language, avoiding, for example, references to “non-Estonians,” “common core,” “the Estonian cultural space” or even “cultural pluralism” (*kultuuriline pluralism*). “Multiculturalism” (*mitmekultuurilisus*) can be encountered a couple of times, but the preferred term is *kultuuriline mitmekesisus*, which could be translated as “cultural diversity.” Tuning down the explicit groupist language characteristic of the IES 2000-2007 gives evidence of the increased influence of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) of the Council of Europe (e.g., EIS 2008-2013, 13), which frames minority issues as *individual* human rights issues. Arguably “the first and only legally binding human rights convention on minority rights” (Brosig 2009, 80), the convention refrains carefully from any references to “collective rights enjoyed by groups” in an effort to avoid the alienation of states concerned about secessionist demands (Malloy 2005, 50; Heintze 2005, 85-86).\(^\text{219}\)

\(^{219}\) The sovereignty of states is asserted in the preamble as well as in several articles of
Instead, the FCNM frames as its beneficiaries *individuals belonging to minorities* and seeks to protect the group through protecting “the rights of individuals belonging to that group” (Heintze 2005, 85; see also Malloy 2005, 50). Hence, Article 3(2) of the Framework Convention describes the right of “persons belonging to national minorities” to “exercise rights and enjoy freedoms (...) individually as was as *in community with others*” (emphasis added), recognizing that these individuals “cannot avail themselves of the rights listed in the FCNM without the participation of others belonging to the same group” (Heintze 2005, 86). Article 3(1) states that “every person belonging to a national minority shall have the right to freely choose to be treated or not to be treated as such” (FCNM).

Interestingly enough, despite its careful avoidance of any direct references to group rights, the FCNM does use the word “community” in an un-critical manner to distinguish between the majority and minorities (Art. 12 (2) “Parties shall […] facilitate contacts among students and teachers of different communities”).

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the convention: Article 20: “In the exercise of the rights and freedoms flowing from the principles enshrined in the present framework Convention, any person belonging to a national minority shall respect the national legislation and the rights of others, in particular those of persons belonging to the majority or to other national minorities”;
Article 21: “Nothing in the present framework Convention shall be interpreted as implying any right to engage in any activity or perform any act contrary to the fundamental principles of international law and in particular of the sovereign equality, territorial integrity and political independence of States.” See Hilpold 2005a and Hilpold 2005b respectively.

220 Article 3 (2): “Persons belonging to national minorities may exercise the rights and enjoy the freedoms flowing from the principles enshrined in the present framework Convention individually as well as in community with others” (FCNM).
Though the Framework Convention does not give a definition of “national minority,” it talks about persons’ “ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity” and thus also about people belonging together on the basis of these criteria. Since the FCNM takes as its starting point the multifaceted and -layered character of personal identity (e.g., Malloy 2005, 65), there need not be an equation between these different elements of identity: one can identify as a Russian-speaker without identifying as a Russian or Orthodox. However, as I will argue below, the approach taken in the framework reifies culture and naturalizes links between peoples and culture, facilitating in turn culturalist approaches that link culture to territory and regard different cultures – and thus peoples – as incommensurable.

Whereas the venekeelne (“Russian-language” or “Russian-speaking”) dominated in the IES 2000-2007, the adjective muukeelne, lit. “other-language” (e.g., “other-language population”), has become more frequent in EIS 2008-2013. The distinction between other- and Russian-language serves to emphasize the linguistic and ethnic diversity of Estonia, but vene and muu both refer to language and people other than Estonian and seem to be used interchangeably for the most part. In addition, the current strategy distinguishes between “new immigrants” (uusimmigrant), who have moved to Estonia since 1991, and “other-language residents who have lived in Estonia for a long time” (EIS 2008-2013, 12), assuming that they need to be approached somewhat differently by

221 The distinction between other- and Russian-language is not easily translatable and in the unofficial English translation of the strategy provided by the Ministry of Culture, most cases of “other-language” have been translated into “Russian-language.” Compare EIS 2008-2013 and EIS 2008-2013 unofficial translation.
virtue of their different “cultural or linguistic background” (ibid.). The new key term of the strategy, to be discussed in more detail below, is “state identity.”

Unlike the previous integration program, formulated in the late 1990s when Estonia was aspiring to join the EU, the EIS 2008-2013 places Estonia and integration in Estonia firmly within the European context, recognizing the recent efforts of the European Commission and Council of Europe to promote a coherent approach to integration both in Europe and globally (see discussion in chapter 2). The opening chapter of the integration strategy lists the principles of integration in Estonia, the first of which is “Adherence to European core values [Euroopa põhiväärtused]”:

It follows from Estonia’s belonging to the European Union and more broadly to the European cultural space [Euroopa kultuuriruum – cf. Estonian cultural space in IES 2000-2007] that policy in every area, including the given integration strategy, contributes to the democratic development of Estonia as well as to the development of the European Union. Consequently, the integration strategy draws on European core values (as defined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union [2000]): democracy, rule of law, peace, the individual right to self-determination, adherence to human rights and cultural diversity [kultuuriline mitmekesisus].

(IES 2008-2013.)

The other six principles are, in the order of their appearance in the IES 2008-2013:

- Estonian language as the overall language of communication in the public sphere;
- strengthening of the state identity;
- the involvement of all residents in the development of the society;
- equal opportunities;
- avoidance of ethnicity-based separation [rahvusest tingitud eraldatus];
integration as a process that originates in the individual and involves the whole society.

(EIS 2008-2013, 4-5.)

During a conference on integration held in Tallinn in fall 2007, i.e., in the aftermath of the Bronze Soldier conflict (see introduction and chapter 3), the then head of the Integration Foundation Tanel Mätlik explained that the major difference between the integration program for 2000-2007 and the new strategy for 2008-2013 was to be “the attempt to define more clearly what it is that all people living in Estonia have in common”:

In the new strategy [for 2008-2013], this keyword is the Estonian state identity. It is characterized by: 1) acceptance of the principles of a democratic state based on the rule of law, 2) a command of the Estonian language as the official and main language of communication in society, and 3) ensuring the protection of minority cultures. At the same time, this definition is too abstract at the moment and needs to be clarified. The creation of a practical meaning for the state identity which is understandable to all people is still to be carried out. We can argue that the common identity of Estonians and non-Estonians – the feeling of “togetherness” – is rather unclear at the moment. The state identity should definitely foster the understanding that all ethnic groups living in Estonia are our compatriots, and that there are more things that unite us than those that separate us. Amongst others, we have to agree on one name for all the inhabitants in Estonia and use it persistently – for example, compatriots. Also, it is very important to keep in mind that a more accurate definition and construction of the state identity is a great challenge. This process will last for several generations. In other words, no quick solutions exist for finding a common element between people in a society. This, however, does not mean that we do not need to set such clear targets.

(Mätlik 2008, 11.)
The final version of the 2008-2013 refrains from using the word “compatriot” – stigmatized somewhat because of Russia’s “compatriot policy” – and it also does not discuss “state identity” as an emergent phenomenon the content of which is unclear and to be figured out over time by residents of Estonia. Rather, the strategy explains:

**Strengthening of the state identity**
The goal of integration is to strengthen the identity of the common Estonian state [ühtse Eesti riigi identiteet], to develop among permanent residents of Estonia a common understanding of the state [riigi ühistähendus], based on the constitutional values of Estonia as a democratic state governed by the rule of law, on the appreciation of Estonian citizenship and on the recognition of everyone’s input into the development of the society, while accepting the difference of cultures [kultuuride erinevus].

(EIS 2008-2013, 4.)

**State identity and the feeling of belonging**
The common state identity as the sense of us [meie-tunnetus] of the Estonian nation [Eesti rahvas] is tied to people’s feeling of safety [turvatunne] about being a participant in the Estonian societal and political life as well as to the positive emotional feeling of belonging [kuulutuvstunne] tied to the nation [rahvas] and the territory.222

(EIS 2008-2013, 11.)

**Participation in the civil society [kodanikuühiskond] and citizen education**
The joint activities of citizens strengthen the state identity. At the same time, the civic engagement [kodanikuaktiivsus] is greater among Estonians than among people belonging to other nations [rahvus]. Only 12% of the Estonian-language population [eesti emakeelega] and 1% of the other-language population [muu emakeelega] belong to associations that act in the general interest of the society and people, such as

222 The unofficial translation provided by Estonian officials smoothes over some of the awkwardness of the Estonian original: “Common state identity, i.e. the “sense of us” of the Estonian nation, is linked to the sense of security of the people in that they are part of the Estonian social and political life and share the positive emotional sense of belonging with the people and the territory” (EIS 2008-2013 unofficial translation, 11).
environmental movement, charity, village societies, block watch, the temperance movement and Defence League [Kaitseliit].

(EIS 2008-2013, 12.)

In the 2008 integration monitoring, Vetik provided a similar definition of the state identity, arguing that it “characterizes peoples’ involvement in the Estonian state through the public sphere” (Vetik 2008b, 164). The strength of the state identity shows in his view if and to what extent people of different nationality (eri rahvusest) identify collectively with “the Estonian state and its holidays, values and symbols” in addition to their distinct ethnic (etniline) and suprastate identities (riigiülene identiteet, e.g., Estonian Russians identifying with Russia) (ibid.). Vetik discussed in the same article also results of a survey that sought to measure Estonian Russians’ (i.e., Russian-speakers’) emotional ties to the Estonian state and its symbols by asking them to assess the following statements: “Nowhere in the world do I feel myself more at home [koduselt, kodu – home] than in Estonia” and “I feel proud when I see the Estonian flag wave.” (Vetik 2008b, 165-166.)

All of thee above-described conceptualizations of the “state identity” are fixed on positive emotions, ruling out the possibility of there being multiple points of view on

223 Defence League or Kaitseliit (app. 8,700 members; established in 1918) is “a voluntary military national defence organization” the main goal of which is “on the basis of the citizens’ free will and initiative, to enhance the readiness of the nation to defend the independence of Estonia and its constitutional order” (Defence League (Kaitseliit)). Affiliated with it are the Women’s Home Defence or Naiskodukaitse (900; 1927), the Young Eagles or Noorkortkad for boys (4.400; 1928) and the Home Daughters or Kodutütred for girls (3.400; 1932). Defence League was liquidated in 1940 and re-founded in 1990 on popular initiative; it is part of the Estonian Defence Forces and its representatives as well as those of the affiliated organizations take part in Independence Day and Victory Day military parades (see chapter 3).

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what it means to belong or feel attached to Estonia. In particular, the third excerpt from the EIS 2008-2013 regarding civil society implies that there is to be no disagreement over what constitutes “the general interest of the society.” Rather, civil society is to be engaged in activities that have strong nationalist undertones in the Estonian context (e.g., environmental movement was one of the sources of the national awakening of the late 1980s) or evoke ideas about community as a small close-knit unit – akin to a village – where people seem to be looking after each other and where irregular behavior is to be condemned and ideally eliminated (temperance, block watch).

Vetik’s idea of “holidays, values, and symbols” as sources of state identity (Vetik 2008b) is likewise significant in this connection for it brings to mind Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) and his concept of ritual as a “functional prerequisite” for any society (Lukes 1974, 292). Durkheim argued that rituals – including national holidays – provided individual members of the society with means to interpret the social world, render it intelligible and to express and dramatize social relations (Lukes 1974, 292). As such, rituals constituted a controlled environment for creating and experiencing effervescence, a transconscious enthusiasm that brings about the unity of a group and regenerates society as well its individual members (Preus 1987, 173). Durkheim’s theory has inspired numerous studies on social integration around shared values, but it has been also criticized for its failure to deal with changes in culture and to take up questions of power and social hierarchy (e.g., van Gennep 1994 [2013], Lukes 1974).
Steven Lukes, a leading scholar of Durkheim, has pointed out that instead of fostering unity, ritual expressions of hegemonic ideology can strengthen the already dominant groups within divided societies: “Ritual here exacerbates social conflict and works against (some aspects of) social integration” or institutionalizes in exaggerated ritual form “underlying social conflicts, whose continued existence, together with the social order which contains them, is accepted as a given and unchangeable by participants and observers” (Lukes 1974, 300-301). Dorothy Noyes, for example, has analyzed how the Patum, a Catalan Corpus Christi festival, theatricalizes “social divisions in ways indirect enough to be denied if necessary, but legible enough to be understood by community members” and supersedes “the pains of coexistence (…) through the shared experience of participation” (Noyes 2003b, 6). According to Noyes, the Patum mimics everyday encounters and emerges from a sense of mutual economic and social interdependence (Noyes 2003b).

As I discussed in chapter 3, the new national holidays introduced by the parliament during the past twenty years reinforce a sense of cultural, historical and linguistic separateness of Estonians and other nationalities living in Estonia as well as the privileged position of ethnic Estonians vis-à-vis the Estonian territory. Rather than collapsing everyday distinctions, these holidays reinforce and elaborate on them and, consequently, the state identity forged with their help would in all likelihood be one of institutionalized social conflicts and divisions (cf. Lukes 1974, 301).
At the same time, the civil society envisioned in EIS 2008-2013 is not one that would challenge the notion of “state identity,” which raises questions about the ability of citizens to criticize state policies – an issue that was discussed in chapter 3 and will be taken up again in the following chapters. With its emphasis on consent and harmony, the vision of “state identity” laid out in the EIS 2008-2013 illustrates the “romance of community” Miranda Joseph has criticized and claimed to be inseparable from the workings of capitalism (Joseph 2002). Approaches that frame voluntary associations as means of reinforcing norms, trust and network, turn local communities into “sites of incorporation into hegemonic regimes” (Joseph 2002, 12). The civil society envisioned in the integration strategy appears to be subjugated to the state from the outset if not produced by it: later in this chapter I will discuss state-funded minority cultural organizations, which make up the most common form of civic associations of minorities in Estonia, at least quantitatively.

Malloy has argued “that the idea of a state identity is odd” and because of its oddity “must cover for something that is too sensitive to be mentioned” (Malloy 2009, 242). A closer comparative look at the IES 2000-2007 and EIS 2008-2013 suggests that the “state identity” is the new/old “common core” for both are described in terms of constitutional values, appreciation of the Estonian citizenship, recognition of cultural differences and common state institutions. Thought descriptions of the state identity refrain from mentioning the Estonian language (cf. “a common field of information and the Estonian-language environment” as one of the elements of the common core in the IES 2000-
knowledge of the state language is the precondition for Estonian citizenship – and for many the main obstacle to naturalization (see also Malloy 2009, 242). Moreover, as was mentioned above, one of the principles of the EIS 2008-2013 is “the Estonian language as the overall language of communication of the public sphere” (EIS 2008-2013, 4; emphasis added), which reiterates implicitly – the expression “private sphere” (erasfäär) is nowhere to be found in the EIS 2008-2013 – the public-private separation that was central to the earlier integration program and its approach to multiculturalism.

The strategy continues to allocate most attention and resources to the field of “educational-cultural integration” and, correspondingly, the most important aim of “legal-political integration” is still naturalization – within the confines of the established legal-restorationist citizenship policy (see chapter 2, especially criticisms regarding responses to criticisms from MIPEX and the Estonian Chancellor of Justice). The deployment of the language of the Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of Minorities is most evident in the strategy’s delineation of educational-cultural integration. For example, the EIS 2008-2013 envisions repeatedly a situation where “opportunities have been created in Estonia for speaking other languages and developing national cultures [Eestis on loodud võimalused kõnelda teisi keeli ja arendada rahvuskultuure]” (EIS 2008-2013, 3, 14). Along similar lines, the EIS 2008-2013

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224 Cf. the preamble to the Framework Convention: “Considering that a pluralist and genuinely democratic society should not only respect the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of each person belonging to a national minority, but also create appropriate conditions enabling them to express, preserve and develop this identity” (FCNM; for an analysis of the title and preamble of the convention, see Malloy 2005) and
claims to be supporting “the cultural activities of different nationalities [rahvus], the preservation of [their] cultural ties with their country of origin [kultuurisidemete säilitamine päritolumaaga] and involving them [kaasamine] into the Estonian cultural life” (EIS 2008-2013, 8; see also p. 18). The document calls for the improvement of conditions that “would help other nationalities [teised rahvused] to preserve their [oma] culture and language” and promises to provide continued support to “intercultural dialogue, in recognition of everyone’s right to take part in native-language culture [emakeelne kultuur]” (p. 17). Media has to report positively on “society’s cultural pluralism” and devote more time to “the topic of intercultural communication and to linguistic minorities” (pp. 24, 29).

Article 5(1): “The Parties undertake to promote the conditions necessary for persons belonging to national minorities to maintain and develop their culture, and to preserve the essential elements of their identity, namely their religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage” (see also Gilbert 2005a).

Cf. Article 17: “(1) The Parties undertake not to interfere with the right of persons belonging to national minorities to establish and maintain free and peaceful contacts across frontiers with persons lawfully staying in other States, in particular those with whom they share an ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity, or a common cultural heritage; (2) The Parties undertake not to interfere with the right of persons belonging to national minorities to participate in the activities of non-governmental organisations, both at the national and international levels” (FCNM; see also Jackson-Preece 2005).

Cf. Article 5(1) quoted above and Article 5(2): “Without prejudice to measures taken in pursuance of their general integration policy, the Parties shall refrain from policies or practices aimed at assimilation of persons belonging to national minorities against their will and shall protect these persons from any action aimed at such assimilation.” Also Article 6(1): “The Parties shall encourage a spirit of tolerance and intercultural dialogue and take effective measures to promote mutual respect and understanding and cooperation among all persons living on their territory, irrespective of those persons’ ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious identity, in particular in the fields of education, culture and the media” (FCNM; see also Gilbert 2005b).
In the field of education, “the ability [võimekus]” of Estonian-language kindergartens “to receive children of diverse cultural background” is to be “enhanced” and “the willingness” of graduates of basic school (9th grade) to “communicate with representatives of other cultures and nations” is to be “increased”, while high-school graduates need to become “tolerant towards cultural differences” (pp. 18-19). Teachers are to be instructed to be capable to “work with students with a different cultural background and with varying level of knowledge of the language of instruction” (p. 20); there will be “trainings of intercultural communication [kultuuridevahelise kommunikatsiooni treening]” (p. 23).

In these statements, individuals are defined through “their” culture and language, which in turn are conceptualized as ethnic or national traits traced with a particular territory, a

\[227\] Cf. Article 6(1) quoted in the previous footnote and the following paragraph from the preamble to the Framework Convention: “Considering that the creation of a climate of tolerance and dialogue is necessary to enable cultural diversity to be a source and a factor, not of division, but of enrichment for each society” (see also Malloy 2005, 66-67).

\[228\] Cf. Article 12: “(1) The Parties shall, where appropriate, take measures in the fields of education and research to foster knowledge of the culture, history, language and religion of their national minorities and of the majority. (2) In this context the Parties shall inter alia provide adequate opportunities for teacher training and access to textbooks, and facilitate contacts among students and teachers of different communities. (3) The Parties undertake to promote equal opportunities for access to education at all levels for persons belonging to national minorities” (for an analysis, see Thornberry 2005).

Article 14: “(1) The Parties undertake to recognise that every person belonging to a national minority has the right to learn his or her minority language. (2) In areas inhabited by persons belonging to national minorities traditionally or in substantial numbers, if there is sufficient demand, the Parties shall endeavour to ensure, as far as possible and within the framework of their education systems, that persons belonging to those minorities have adequate opportunities for being taught the minority language or for receiving instruction in this language. (3) Paragraph 2 of this article shall be implemented without prejudice to the learning of the official language or the teaching in this language” (see discussion in de Varennes and Thornberry 2005).
“country of origin.” Hence, as in the earlier integration program IES 2000-2007, the preservation of other languages and cultures serves as a means of preserving the language and culture “originating” in Estonia. The sense of incommensurability of cultures is evidenced by preparations that are arguably needed in order to make ethnic interactions more frequent, smoother or at all conceivable: people have to be trained to be able to work or communicate with people of different cultural and linguistic background. The clash of civilizations is as near as it was in the early 1990s when Estonia first started its journey back to West, but the state has to contain it by providing “people of different cultural background” with opportunities to partake in “their own native-language culture.”

Malloy’s distinction between two interpretations of toleration is relevant in this connection: first, “a narrow scope of toleration, an act of moral disapproval, or rather a ‘non-act’ in terms of leaving someone alone” and, second, “a more positive notion” that refers “to a form of acceptance of the other’s right to existence that builds on a sentiment of respect.” While the former kind of toleration is likely to make social interaction difficult, the latter can promote respect and possibly interaction, but neither of these approaches requires interaction – dialogue – to take place. (Malloy 2005, 67.) One of Malloy’s criticisms regarding the Estonian integration model has been that it aims at “mutual tolerance”: “(t)here is toleration only where there are things that are disapproved” and “(t)oleration of [minorities’] non-approved cultural practices can result in contempt and resentment” from the part of the majority as well as feelings of
superiority (Malloy 2009, 232-233). Toleration is thus antagonistic. Because it does not “put identity at risk” and push one beyond the comfort zone, it cannot lead to mutual respect (Malloy 2008, 41).

Furthermore relevant from the perspective of respect and interaction is the distinction between “multiculturalism” and “interculturalism” brought up by another scholar with respect to the Framework Convention and its preference of the latter term:

‘Multiculturalism’ reflects the coexistence of cultures in the same society and is usually understood as a programme or policy to recognize cultural differences expressed through the education system and elsewhere, in order that individuals ‘may’ know their own culture. ‘Interculturalism’, or intercultural dialogue (…) in essence denotes reciprocity of learning among cultural groups.

(Thornberry 2005, 373.)

Drawing on Malloy’s discussion of toleration, it could be argued that in order for an “intercultural dialogue” or “intercultural communication” to yield better understanding, it would need to bring about a change in or at least shake either party’s self-conception. Two issues strike me as particularly important in this connection and when thinking of the Estonian approach to integration. First, the concept of culture is not self-evident but has to be defined by somebody somehow – either implicitly or explicitly – and by framing something as culture, something else is defined as no-culture. In the context of an integration policy that claims to be providing minorities with conditions for preserving and developing their own culture, the question thus becomes what is being preserved and developed as culture and who decides what does and does not count as culture. Second,
multiculturalism and interculturalism are the same – “varieties of culturespeak” (Hannerz 1999) – to the extent that they emphasize the distinctiveness of cultural identity among groups and substitute individuals with cultures. Ulf Hannerz wrote back in the late 1990s about “the growth of ‘culture shock prevention industry’” run by “interculturalists” – “cultural technicians in an era of globalization, trying to assist clients practically in dealing with others ‘of a different cultural background’” (Hannerz 1999, 396-397).

I would like to end this subchapter with an ethnographic account of an “intercultural differences” course that I audited as part of my fieldwork and that sought to teach “Estonian” teachers sensitivity toward “students of Russian cultural background.” Arranged under the auspices of the Integration and Migration Foundation Our People (see footnotes 71, 210) and funded by the European Union, the course was part of the implementation of the national integration strategy. This small case study illustrates how measures taken to foster “intercultural dialogue” can reinforce – rather than challenge – essentialized and territorially bounded notions of identity that according to Malloy stand in the way of interactions. Moreover, it suggests that integration policy can be also viewed as an industry or branch of national economy: problems posited in the national integration strategy by drawing on the international language of integration (e.g., lack or weakness of intercultural dialogue) are to be overcome by providing local people (e.g., teachers) with certain kinds of services (courses) commissioned from local experts or “interculturalists” (Hannerz 1999) with money that tends to come from the European Union.
From March till May 2010, I audited a course titled “Intercultural differences: Students with Russian cultural background” (Kultuuridevahelised erinevused: Vene kultuuritaustaga õpilased) that was aimed at teachers. The beginning of the course was delayed because not enough people had signed up for it and once it did kick off, it so happened that the class met on the premises of an art school I had attended as a teenager and its teachers – professional artists, including some of my own instructors from back in the day – made up the bulk of the students. From what I understood, the school was preparing for an evaluation and credits earned from the completion of the course were going to boost teachers’ qualifications. At the same time, I found the participation of these individuals in this particular course amusing because in my experience, this school has always been very laid-back when it comes to the coexistence of different nationalities: Estonian-and Russian-medium groups study together in the same space, several instructors teach in both languages and some speak Russian as their first language. When I was a student there for five years in the mid-1990s, Estonian-language groups would have little or no contact with Russian-language groups, but there was also never any hostility. We simply coexisted, doing our own thing.

The course came with a compendium (Nõmm and Piirimägi 2010) and was taught by two faculty members of the Narva College of the University of Tartu that, among other things, prepares teachers for Russian-language schools. I had imagined the course would focus on Russians and Russian-speakers in Estonia, but found myself listening to lectures
on and reading about “the Russian national character,” “the value system in the Russian culture,” “foreigners’ stereotypes about Russians and Russia,” “characteristic traits of the Russian culture from the perspective of culture differences,” “particularities of verbal culture in the Russian culture,” “particularities of non-verbal communication in the Russian culture,” “traditions of bringing up children in the Russian culture” as well as on “Russian celebration culture” (Nõmm and Piirimägi 2010). Some of the exercises in the compendium did focus on Estonia and its residents, but by and large, we were being introduced to the Russian culture: a monolithic phenomenon that has evolved over time (discussion of bringing up children “in the Russian culture” begun with Byzantine culture and society; Piirimägi 2010), is imagined to be territorially bounded, shaped by local nature and climate, but is nevertheless characteristic of all people of Russian descent irrespective of their actual place of birth and residence. The opening topic of the course “ethnic identity” established a firm link between culture, ethnicity/nationality, history and territory: “features used to distinguish between ethnic groups [etnilised grupid] include language, values and norms, historical memory, religion, notion of one’s own country [ettekujutus oma maast], myth of common ancestors, national character, folk art and professional art” (Stefanenko cited in Nõmm 2010a, 7).
One of the exercises encouraged teachers to use calendar customs for integration purposes (Nõmm 2010c): there was a list of holidays in the “Russian culture” and course participants were supposed to come up with a list of similar or coinciding holidays in the “Estonian culture.” Hence, in accordance with the principles laid out in the Estonian integration model and following the language employed in the Framework Convention, the exercise encouraged educators to organize cultural events that would highlight and illustrate the distinctiveness of Estonian- and Russian-language students’ respective holiday traditions and, by extension, cultures. The list of “Russian” holidays in the

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229 I have analyzed elsewhere (Seljamaa 2010) the celebration of Russian Shrovetide or maslenitsa in contemporary Estonia: how this originally religious holiday is being used, on the one hand, by Russian-medium schools to build bridges with Estonian-language schools and to familiarize Estonians with “the Russian culture” and, on the other hand, by
compendium drew on the Orthodox ritual cycle as well as on holidays of the Russian Federation, some of which have been taken over from the Soviet calendar (e.g., the Victory Day, Women’s Day, Defender of the Fatherland Day (see footnote 143) and others initiated only recently (e.g., the Day of Russia) (Nõmm 2010c, 79-82). As such, the design of the exercise naturalized links between territory, religion and historical narratives. In order to complete the exercise, I would have had to turn to Lutheran traditions, the by now obsolete holidays of the agrarian society as well as to new national holidays of the 1990s and 2000s, which, as was discussed in chapter 3, serve to reinforce particular ethnonationalist interpretations of the Estonian state and demos. The starting point of the exercise was the notion of pre-given and fixed, indeed, inborn differences between students of Estonian and Russian “cultural background” rather than whatever they might already share by virtue of living in the same city or state or being of the same age.

The chapter on “Russian culture in Estonia” began with the first known “Estonian-Slavic contacts” from the end of the 10th century and ended with the arrival of Soviets in 1940 (Nõmm 2010b). This is a significant timeframe to the extent it implies that there was no “Russian culture in Estonia” in the Soviet era – even though the majority of Russians

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Slavic cultural associations to build up the presence of Slavic culture in the capital and to summon a Russian-speaking community. Shrovetide signifies the beginning of the Great Lent and is thus associated with Easter, the central holiday in the Orthodox calendar, but was celebrated in the Soviet era as an atheist holiday marking the end of winter and beginning of spring; in post-Soviet Tallinn, it has evolved into an important means of performing Russian culture and its distinctiveness from the Estonian culture: there is maslenitsa and there is vastlapäev, the Estonian equivalent of Shrovetide.
living in Estonia today moved there precisely during these decades or their parents or grandparents did. By reiterating the legal-restorationist narrative of rupture, the compendium avoided discussion about these peoples’ ties to and place in the Estonian society today. I would like to argue that this absence of the Soviet era attests to difficulties involved in narrating this period without sliding back into the victim-perpetrator confrontation, the very corner stone of legal restorationism reinforced throughout the 1990s and 2000s by means of legislation, declarations and, most recently, new national holidays and monuments (see chapter 3). At the same time, as I aimed to show in the previous chapter, the Soviet era is, in addition to being a period of rupture, also a sphere and source of “intercultural similarities” between “peoples of different cultural and linguistic background,” victims and perpetrators, and as such a threat to the thesis of “intercultural differences.”

Culture Reified and Shared

The Council of Europe’s Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and other intergovernmental documents used to shape and “Europeanize” national integration policies reassert the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of states and challenge it at the same time. At the same time, these “texts” seem to be walking a tightrope between the individual and the collective, with culture, religion and language serving as shorthands for the latter. As Dorothy Noyes puts it in a forthcoming article, “culture is understood to confer personality upon groups” – to make difference dignified and endow it with rights (Noyes forthcoming). Consequently, “both subaltern
groups and powerful states have found culture a viable claim in which to frame their interests” (ibid.).

Gerd Baumann, among others, has arrived at similar conclusions in his ethnographic study of Southall, a multi-ethnic town on the outskirts of London (Baumann 1996). Baumann set out to do a “community study,” but came to question the equation between “culture” and “community” that constituted the implicit starting point of contemporary community studies and prevailed in public discourse about ethnic minorities. “Community” functioned in this dominant discourse “as the conceptual bridge” that connected culture, conceived of as an object in itself, with ethnos or biology, lending “a spurious plausibility to the assumption that ethnic minorities must share the same culture by necessity of their ethnic bond itself” (Baumann 1996, 16). Baumann found that the inhabitants of Southall would replicate this dominant discourse in some contexts, especially when competing for resources amongst themselves, while in other contexts they would deny the congruence between the reified “culture” and “community” or dissolve it by engaging in the making and remaking of culture – rather than being produced by it. The meaning of “community” was conceived to be more negotiable than that of “culture,” which was “still largely reserved to describing the stable heritage about which, for the sake of which, or indeed against which, one negotiates change” (Baumann 1996, 196). Moreover, Southallians were aware of their shifting or multiple identities, regarding themselves as members of several “communities,” each with its own “culture,” and changing footing depending on the situation and need.
Not surprisingly, Baumann’s observations are applicable to national minorities in post-Soviet Estonia and could be furthermore extended to Estonians. The Russian teacher who rejected my criticism of the new national school curriculum was replicating the equation between culture and ethnicity and, furthermore, community: for “us,” she said, multiculturalism is the most important matter (see pp. 313-315 above). To recall the discussion of Herzfeld’s (2005) concept of “cultural intimacy” in chapter 4 (see pp. 246-247), reification and agency are two sides of the same coin: by creating an appearance of fixity and continuity, actors are capable of making claims and responding to the demands of the given historical moment, i.e., changing and reacting to changes. Essentialism is thus a strategic act, employed by states and “ordinary people” alike. My call for a more flexible – de-essentialized – approach to cultural identity threatened to disempower the teacher and the people on whose behalf she claimed to be speaking. Moreover, in objecting to my approach, she validated the notion of Estonia as a multicultural state endorsed by the authorities and policy makers.

Looked at from this perspective, the episode at the seminar demonstrates how minorities cannot be outside the state. Rather, the state, the majority and minorities constitute each other mutually and continuously and they do so by manipulating “stereotypes already in popular circulation” (Herzfeld 2005, 31). Consequently, it is in the interests of the authorities to draw on stereotypes that are already “out there,” used by people in social interactions to create and challenge resemblances. Since the restoration of independence,
minority actors have been drawing on the notion of the interwar Republic of Estonia as a harbinger of minority rights, a stereotype that is often evoked and savored by Estonian actors and nationalist politicians in particular. On the other hand, the authorities and policy makers have been able to secure the involvement of non-Estonians in the building of a multicultural Estonia by operationalizing ideas, experiences and practices of ethnicity that are already “in popular circulation” and used by people in their daily acts of reification and essentialism. Many of these stereotypes – including the very equation of nationality with ethnicity with culture – could be traced with the Soviet era and Soviet nationality policy.

In post-Soviet Estonia these ideas have been put in the service of multiculturalism and cast into vocabulary adopted from the Europeanizing/globalizing integration discourse, which seeks to de-territorialize policies while acknowledging the sovereignty of nation-states. Both come with their own, partly overlapping, stereotypes. Yet what makes this mixture feasible and work (at least in the sense of being comprehensible to actors at home and abroad) is that all the components – Soviet-era notions, multiculturalism and the globalizing discourse – reify and ethnicize culture, regarding it as a matter of belonging, as something that is “owned” and defines one’s essence (cf. Grillo 2003, 160). The following description by Steven Vertovec of “certain implicit understandings of ‘culture’” shared by diverse uses of “multiculturalism” captures what I have in mind:

In this set of understandings, ‘culture’ is: a kind of package (often talked of as migrants’ ‘cultural baggage’) of collective behavioural-moral-aesthetic traits and ‘customs,’ rather mysteriously transmitted between generations, best suited to particular geographical
origins yet largely unaffected by history or a change of context, which instills a discrete quality into the feeling, values, practices, social relationships, predilections and intrinsic nature of all who ‘belong to (a particular) it’. Populations and population segments, it follows, are categorized culturally according to cultural essences which are presumed to be imparted at birth.

(Vertovec 1996, 51.)

The claim of Estonia as a home for over 100 ethnic nationalities, witnessed again and again in the field, evokes the friendly family of Soviet nations, where every individual was born into a national/ethnic category complete with a “set of inalienable characteristics” (Tishkov 2002: 29), including culture, language, ethnic homeland and national character (see chapter 1). The Estonian model of multiculturalism, put forward in the first national integration program for 2000-2007, has implicitly drawn on this system of passport nationality and the sense of belonging to a national/ethnic category it instilled in many people. The state has induced non-Estonian actors to become organized around their ethnocultural distinctiveness by making funds available for this purpose, which in turn has led to competition both among actors claiming to represent the same nationality/ethnicity and between different groups. There are currently over 200 cultural associations of national minorities in Estonia, representing more than 100 nationalities; approximately two thirds of these organizations receive funding from the state through the Ministry of Culture. In order to be eligible for funding, they need to be registered as non-profit organizations (mittetulundusühing) and belong to an umbrella organization, some but not all of which unite associations representing a particular ethnicity (e.g., there are “mixed” organizations (e.g., Lyra and the Association of Estonian Nationalities (see
footnote 60); several umbrella organizations representing Ukrainians)). In terms of activities, most of these associations could be described as dance ensembles, choirs, music schools, theatre and art studios, folklore ensembles, so-called Sunday schools, where minority children can learn their language and culture, or simply organizations uniting individuals who claim a particular ethnic/national identity.

This Estonian way of “preserving and developing” the culture of “other nationalities” by means of cultural associations has received little scholarly attention, presumably because of the seeming banality of these organizations and their activities. However, having sat through dozens and dozens of performances and celebrations put on by different organizations and interacting with several of them, I would argue that they are as intrinsic to integration as the citizenship policy. For one thing, the breadth of nationalities and organizations obscures the fact that Russians make up nearly a quarter of the population and the number of native speakers of Russian is even greater; that many individuals are stateless or have opted for Russian citizenship despite regarding Estonia as their home country; and, last but not least, the ever-growing income disparities. As Baumann has argued, the dominant discourse that equates culture with community “is based upon, and reinforces, a denial of the cross-cutting social cleavages that characterize plural societies” (Baumann 1996, 28).
Miranda Joseph makes a similar point in her Marxist analysis of the relationship between community and capitalism, observing that community tends to be “articulated as “values” that are autonomous in relation to material (that is, economic and political) conditions” (Joseph 2002, 10) that have transformed the social relations (Joseph 2002, 9; see also discussion above in connection with “state identity”). Her take “against the romance of community” provides a starting point for thinking about the place of cultural associations of national minorities in contemporary capitalist Estonia – and, by extension, other voluntary organizations and claims about the weakness of the civil society in the Eastern and Central Europe, a topic that is linked to but also beyond the scope of this study (see chapter 1). The bulk of cultural associations of minorities in contemporary Estonia are a
product of the integration policy and their – stated – focus is on the preservation and development of minority cultures and identities. While this need not be a conservative goal aimed at social harmony (e.g., nationalism was progressive under the Soviet rule), the integration policy defines minority cultures in a manner that precludes minority actors from using their cultural associations to openly challenge the state policies. Rather, these nonprofit organizations stand in for ethnic communities and cultures metonymically (cf. Joseph 2002, 70), reinforcing the notion of culture as people as a bounded unity. Moreover, the existence of a system of state-funded minority organizations establishes certain criteria that any actor seeking recognition from the state as a national minority must follow, starting from the requirement to be registered as a nonprofit organization. Looked at from this perspective, the cultural associations of national minorities can be regarded as sites of incorporating minority individuals into the hegemonic regime of the nation-state and that of capitalism, the two being mutually constitutive in a rather tense manner.

The stated purpose of many of the national minority organizations is to foster integration by means of preserving and developing particular minority cultures in Estonia. Oftentimes these engagements and performances focus on cultural heritage or items, forms, practices and skills claimed to have been passed down from one generation to the next and originating in the ethnic homeland. By reproducing and performing the ethnocultural distinctiveness of particular groups as well as their ties to their respective “ethnic homeland,” these organizations simultaneously boost the entitativity of the
Estonian majority and naturalize links between territory and identity. That minorities’ performances of themselves and their cultural distinctiveness – their contributions to a multiculturalist Estonia – draw oftentimes on stereotypes that emerged in the Soviet context is another matter of cultural intimacy, especially since the success of the Estonian integration policy depends also on the state’s ability to summon popular support by employing the existing stereotypes. Many cultural associations of national minorities are led by or rely on instructors who were trained as cultural workers and specialists – choreographers, musical instructors, folklorists, directors of mass holidays – in institutes and universities all over the former Soviet Union and have a background in working in clubs, houses of culture and other venues of amateur art characteristic of the Soviet era. Looked at from this perspective, the boosting of ethnocultural heterogeneity in post-Soviet Estonia draws on the Soviet tradition of amateur artistic work (самодеятельные художественное творчество – samodeiatel’noe khudozhestvennoe tvorchestvo; isetegevus or taidlus in Estonian) that was promoted and supported extensively by the Soviet regime as a means of organizing the leisure time of the working masses in a modern, cultured and educational manner (e.g., Mally 1993, Siegelbaum 1999, Ristolainen 2008, Olson 2004).

Continuities embodied by individual actors are translated into aesthetic continuities and continuities on the level of content or repertoire (e.g., costumes, body language, singing styles, choreography, recurrent themes, melodies, gender stereotypes, interaction with the audience). The continuity between the Soviet and post-Soviet era can also be spatial, on
the level of venues of cultural activities and performances. Moreover, some of these organizations are as old or not much younger than the post-Soviet Estonian state, meaning that they have already built up a heritage of their own making, in some cases own real estate or have a sense of entitlement to an increase in resources that would enable them to maintain the professional level they claim to have achieved and develop further: theatre studios would like to become real theaters while established dance ensembles are weary of having to compete for funding with groups that are only getting their act together. However, the development of minorities cultural associations into full-fledged theatres and dance companies seems to be going beyond the scope of preservation and development of minority cultures and identities as laid out in the integration policy.

It would happen every now and then that a concert, performance or some other festive event organized by a non-Russian minority organization would involve speeches whereby minority actors thanked the Estonian state and the Integration Foundation for enabling national minorities to preserve and engage in their own culture. On these occasions, I could never not think about Soviet peoples expressing their thankfulness to the Soviet regime and Russians. One instance during a meeting organized on the 2010 Day of Nationalities (see chapter 2) was particularly memorable and insightful. A representative of a non-Russian minority organization, a woman dressed in her national garb, gave a speech in Russian. She started by thanking the Estonian state for the

\[230\] Field notes from September 26, 2010.
opportunity of celebrating “our own day,” i.e., a day dedicated to nationalities living in Estonia. “This is very pleasant,” she said, and continued with a personal narrative about her childhood in another union republic, presumably some time in the 1970s:

When we studied at school, there was a drawing almost at the end of our textbook: all nationalities [национальность], fifteen autonomous [sic!] republics held hands and sang in choir. This was some time before May 1, and on May 1 we celebrated the Day of Solidarity and our teacher told us that everybody has to dress up as a nationality of some kind, as some kind of culture. And beautiful girls would be Ukrainians with atlas ribbons in their hair and dance and boys would be dzhigits [джигит; geographically reference to the Caucasus and Central Asia] and somebody was Armenian. There was a day like this. But I never thought that a day will come where we really with all these nationalities…

Back then we were in another culture and it was somehow cold. We [the speaker’s ethnonym] would perform other peoples [народ]. But today it is very nice to hold hands and sing with other peoples, invite each other over, prepare national dishes for each other. I am very glad that there are national cultures like this; that we can all interact with and learn from each other. This is very pleasant.

The woman’s speech seemed to be collapsing the distinction between the Soviet and the post-Soviet. I was furthermore reminded of my very first textbook, an ABC book we had used during the last year of kindergarten (probably in 1986-87) and that had also inside the back cover a drawing of boys and girls in national costumes of the different union republics. The drawing was accompanied by a short poem – in first person – about traveling to see other peoples of the Soviet Union as a grown-up. However, I also have a vague recollection of the drawing in the inside of the front cover: a typical Estonian seaside landscape and a poem – again in first person – about Estonia being my home country (кодумaa). Many people in the audience seemed to be shaking their heads as the woman in the ethnic dress was reminiscing and comparing the Soviet Union to the post-
Soviet Republic of Estonia in Russian: the latter was in her view as diverse as the Soviet Union, only better and “warmer” for in Estonia all nationalities could be themselves rather than having to perform somebody else. Moreover all the peoples of the Soviet Union still somehow belonged together, each distinguished by its own dances, songs and dishes. The speaker took the Soviet notion of nationality as in earnest and was praising Estonia on the basis of this understanding. If the minorities must explain themselves and legitimate their claims in the hegemonic language (Baumann 1996, 192), this woman was maybe being too sincerely and naïve.

Preoccupation with “one’s own” culture can be a strategic act of essentialism, aimed at providing the given ethnic group with an appearance of historical continuity and, in some cases, presence in Estonia. For example, Ukrainians have erected a small monument in Tallinn to commemorate the visit of the Ukrainian national poet Taras Shevshenko in the 19th century, Armenians like to point out that the founder of modern written Armenian studied at the University of Tartu, likewise in the 19th century, and a stamp has been released depicting the Orthodox St. Catherine’s Church in Pärnu designed by Pjotr Jegorov (1731-1789), an architect of Chuvash descent (Postmargid. Pärnu Katariina kirik/448-23.03.10; Zahharova and Serman 2011, 29-30). To the extent that these connections go back to the days of the Imperial Russia, an era before nation-states, celebrating them undermines the claims made by the Estonian state to fixity and eternity.
At the same time, projects like a stamp or monument initiated by minority activists in Estonia empower these same individuals back in their “ethnic homeland” and, furthermore, serve as a means of displaying one’s origins: being able to demonstrate one’s roots has moral bearings under circumstances where newcomers have been stigmatized en masse as occupants. As Noyes has pointed out, heritage can also be “a strategy for managing an anomaly, and the identification of an anomaly is in turn a way to dispose of the body that signals an inconvenient historical bond” (Noyes forthcoming). “Culture reduced to heritage is far more easily dealt with than culture enlarged to a clash of civilizations” (ibid.), which is evidenced also by the Estonian case: the people who are being integrated now were expected to leave the country in the early 1990s.

Estonian integration policy was devised in the late 1990s, i.e., at a time of what has been described as a cultural turn (see chapter 1, pp. 98). Military threat from without was
swapped for a value and identity threat from within with cultural borders becoming hard and essential. As I argued above, the language used in integration policy documents grew increasingly essentialist towards the end of the decade, suggesting that other peoples/cultures were different to the point of being incommensurable and thus inassimilable. It is telling that cultural differences were framed as an obstacle (Gershon and Taylor 2008, 420) to belonging precisely at a time when it was becoming clear that the exodus of Soviet-era settlers from Estonia was over and that the remaining people would thus have to find a way of living together.

The principle of cultural pluralism put forward in the integration program for 2000-2007 was intertwined with that of an “Estonian cultural space” and taken together, they provided a model for a spatial segregation of the majority and minorities, whereas the place of the common core, to be shared by everybody, was much more ambivalent. The integration strategy for 2007-2013 sounds rather different than its predecessor, but the idea of a separate “Estonian cultural space” seems to have disappeared from the picture only in the last phase of preparing the new document. The new concept of “state identity” appears to have inherited many of the elements as the earlier “common core,” including its vague position. As in the earlier program, it seems as if the majority is determined to eat its cake and have it. The Estonian language as the basis for inclusion, including naturalization, is simultaneously the basis for exclusion to the extent that

231 In fall 2007 it was still claimed that the “Estonian Integration Strategy 2008-2013” would draw on the “integration paradigm” as the earlier state program, including the triad of cultural pluralism, common core, Estonian cultural space (Mätlik 2008, 11). The final document approved barely a year later referred to none of them.
language is part of culture and thus ethnicity and to the extent that the Estonian integration policy does not seek to change ethnic identities. Consequently, the Estonian language is a barrier to be overcome as well as cherished. Minorities are expected to partake in the public sphere in the Estonian language but also to acknowledge that the language of the public sphere is not theirs to keep because it belongs to Estonians and because they have languages and cultures of “their own” in need of preservation and development.

The idea that the majority could eat its cake and have it too – share the Estonian language and treasure it as the basis of an exclusive, inherent ethnic identity – is at the center of the contradictory goals of the Estonian approach to integration: the simultaneous processes of homogenization and ethnocultural differentiation. I would like to argue that it is based on a reasoning that employs simultaneously different definitions of culture in order to classify people and to set up hierarchical relations between them. On the one hand, there is the idea of culture as one element in the “set of inalienable characteristics” (Tishkov 2002: 29) that distinguishes one national or ethnic group from others. It is this definition of culture that enables various actors to describe Estonia as a home to over 120 nationalities, all of them similar in form: they come with a culture, language, an ethnic homeland and national character. According to this definition people and communities are culture.
On the other hand, the integration strategy invokes culture in the sense of a uniform modern society detached from ethnic particularities: every modern state needs a common state language and a set of shared, conventional practices, and in the broader context, Estonia itself is said to belong “to the European cultural space” (EIS 2008-2013, 4). The Estonian national group is included in this shared culture from its inception and hence in a position to secure its status as the only state-bearing nationality by classifying – or marking – all others as culture-bearers. Estonians are culture-bearers too, but also the only group to have the right to a fully institutionalized societal culture that is everything the purely “ethnic culture” is not: it is a space or domain and not an association; public, not private; national rather than local and total rather than partial, one and not many; unmarked and invisible rather than marked and conspicuous; it has the option of not wearing the folk costume, whereas the “ethnic culture” has to be dressed in an ethnic uniform in order to explain itself. Moreover, the state-bearing Estonians have the right and power to decide what counts as culture and, correspondingly, to create “spaces of no culture” (Gershon and Taylor 2008, 421) where – since there is no culture – can be no assimilation. Because the Estonian language, territory and culture are simultaneously where the distinctiveness of Estonians resides in, the public sphere is never quite public, leaving the minorities in a precarious position.

It follows from this reasoning that ethnic minorities (as opposed to “national minorities” as defined in the cultural autonomy law) are in a very fundamental sense guests in Estonia – even if Estonia is the only country they have ever lived in. Merle Karusoo, an
Estonian theatre director, has elaborated on this idea in an essay published in the aftermath of the monument crisis in April 2007:

There are customs [tava] that have been maintained all over the world since the beginning of times. People [rahvas] sit around a campfire and suddenly an unexpected stranger [võõras] arrives. How is this situation handled? The newcomer is the first one to greet and will say something about him/herself: who he/she is, where he/she is coming from and why did he/she approach the campfire. (…)

Those non-Estonians whose offspring make up the Estonian Russian community [Eesti vene kogukond] have never introduced themselves. They either did not understand or did not want to understand that they had taken seat at a campfire that does not belong to them. (…)

(H)ow to make [our young Russians] realize that our country [meie maa] is not their home country [kodumaa]? They were born here, they have never had another home, they love this country, they are ready to die “hundred deaths” [“sada surma surema”] for this country. Do not have doubts about this – they are far more patriotic than we ourselves are [i.e. Estonians]. Grandfathers were forced to fight, sons learnt to justify and grandchildren are in a schizophrenic situation because they are our hostages. They are afraid that we will take from them their only ties: the Russian language, the unknown soldier [the Bronze Solder monument] and the Estonian land [Eestimaa]. (…)

If a civil war should break out in Estonia, then it will be Estonian Russians’ [Eesti venelased] (who outside Estonia call themselves Estonians, by the way) war against us, indigenous Estonians [põliseestlased]. In the name of Estonia! Not in the name of the Russian Federation…

(Karusoo 2008, 109-112.)

232 The phrase “die a hundred deaths” comes from a poem and song titled “My fatherland is my love” (Mu isamaa on minu arm: “My fatherland is my love, whom I shall never leave, even if I should die hundred deaths for her”), which has been arguably performed at every song festival since the inception of this tradition in 1869. See chapter 2 on this song as well as on singing and the Estonian national movement.
The guest metaphor was used also by one of my interviewees, a representative of an umbrella organization uniting over dozen cultural associations of minorities. We were talking about the relationship between the state and nation (rahvus) and the interviewee – who identifies strongly with one particular nationality/ethnicity, but is neither Estonian nor Russian – told me: “non-Estonians [mitte-eestlased] are guests in Estonia but act like burglars [murdvargad].”

The use of the word “non-Estonian” was a conscious, critical and political choice because “Russian-speaker” was in this person’s view – and I heard versions of this same explanation from some other representatives of non-Russian minorities – a category that identifies strongly with one particular nationality/ethnicity, but is neither Estonian nor Russian. 

Field notes from April 17, 2011. The conversation was in Estonian and I did not record it but made notes immediately after the meeting. Though I had come prepared with questions and we were supposed be done in an hour, it took us over 2.5 hours and I ended up having to ask very few questions. The interviewee (about 50-60 years old) established a senior-junior relationship with me and would say on several occasions in order to stress the next point: “Child, pay attention now” (Laps, pane nüüd tähele). At the same time this person came across as being very supportive of young people in a non-patronizing way and convinced that the younger generation, presumably less “damaged” by the Soviet era and regime, is better suited to take the country and minority policy forward (one of the first things said to me was along the lines: “I’m a Soviet-era person, what can I tell you.”). After making the first contact, I would receive invitations to different events and was able to attend some of them, which deepened my understanding of our conversation as well of the principles this particular organization is based on.

The interviewees’ grandfather moved to Estonia from the European part of Russia in the interwar era, knowing neither Russian nor Estonian. The family became trilingual – Russian, Estonian and the native tongue –, while maintaining a strong sense of ethnic identity, which entailed animosity towards Russians – and the Russian language. However, learning Russian was a must because as the interviewee’s father had put it: “You have to know the language of your enemy [vaenlase keelt peab tundma].” The interviewee uses Russian when communicating with some of the minority organizations and their representatives but criticized the Ministry of Culture for corresponding with minority organizations in Russian and said to be deleting emails sent from the Ministry in Russian.
constructed by Russians in order to present themselves as a numerically bigger group than what they actually were. Schools that use Russian as their language of instruction constitute according to this view a mechanism of Russification and pose a danger to other nationalities, especially those that are part of the “Russian empire” (Vene impeerium) and are oppressed also in their ethnic homeland (oma kodumaal). The interviewee cited as the most “horrifying example” cases where an Udmurt-Mari couple, i.e., a mixed Finno-Ugric couple, brings its children up speaking Russian and sends them to a Russian-language school in order to be able to keep an eye on their studies and to help (which implies, I would add, that the parents are already more comfortable speaking Russian than “their own” language). My interlocutor asserted that the teaching (õpetus) and frame of mind (mõttemaailm) are different in the Russian school (vene kool); moreover, high school is the time of romance and one is likely to tie the knot with peers, who would then be Russian-speakers. The bottom line seemed to be that the Russian language is big and not endangered, while small languages and the languages of small nationalities living under the “empire” are fragile (habras).

This is essentially the view held by the nationalist Pro Patria and Res Publica Union and most ministers of education during the past twenty years have come either from this union or, before the merger, from Pro Patria. However, the interviewee claimed loyalty to the state but distance from politics and politicians and was particularly critical of the ministry of culture for sending out Russian-language group emails to minority organizations and seeking the support of Russians in other ways. I was told how the then
minister of culture (Reform Party) would hold receptions for minority organizations and their representatives at the time of Orthodox or “Russian Christmas” (vene jõulud)\(^{234}\) – and thereby alienate Muslim and other non-Christian nationalities “who don’t give a damn about Christmas” and in some cases have painful historical experiences of both Russians and Christianity (the interlocutor brought up the case of Tatars in this connection, describing how they were forcibly baptized Orthodox by Ivan the Terrible in the 16\(^{th}\) century).

I had the opportunity of attending the 2011 Christmas reception, thanks to the organization I was working with as part of my fieldwork. My companions – Russians, whose stance on the Russian school differs from that of the interviewee – seemed to be taking the minister’s Christmas reception as a social duty to be performed for diplomatic reasons. However, they refused to take in any food offered at the reception/by the minister, using this rejection to draw a clear demarcation line between themselves and people/organizations pleased by the minister’s invitation and attention. Following their lead, I also ate nothing and when we left the reception, we went to a nearby restaurant – and paid for our food.

If the minister was using the “Russian Christmas” to co-opt the (Russian) minority organizations, rejecting the invitation or accepting it only to refuse the hospitality come

\(^{234}\) There is usually about 10 days to two weeks between the Lutheran Gregorian calendar and the Russian Orthodox Jurlian calendar, observed by the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriach; the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church decided a couple of years ago to follow the Gregorian calendar (Loel 2008).
across as strategies for maintaining one’s independence and establishing one’s distinctiveness from others who do go and eat and enjoy – and lose at least some of their
ground to criticize the minister, government policies and the whole integration establishment. Yet in essence and in terms of funding, both the interviewee’s organization and the one I collaborated with were executing the integration policy laid out in EIS 2007-2013 – and approved by a government led by the minister’s party. However, these actors would never describe their activities in integration terms and the word integration was a taboo in the organization I worked with. Moreover, from what I saw, representatives of the Integration Foundation would not show up at its events, though they would regularly attend those held by some other organizations, sometimes giving little speeches to thank minority activists for their contribution to integration and presenting them with publications of the Foundation or other symbolic gifts.

It follows from this that not all minority actors are the same and differences between them do not come from ethnicity/nationality, but rather from the way they position themselves vis-à-vis the state and politicians/officials. Some seek the attention and approval of the ministry of culture and the Integration Foundation, while others try to establish a direct relationship to the state by the liberty of formulating and executing their own vision of what the state is or should be about and how they as non-Estonians would like to fit in as non-Estonians. Refusal to engage in integration discourse does not necessarily entail opposition to the stated goals of integration policy. Indeed, the burglar and guest metaphor employed by the interviewee express strong support for the idea of a
common public sphere operated in the Estonian language, regarding Estonian-centeredness as an antidote to Russification – which is said to be continuing by means of schools that use the Russian language of instruction. At the same time there are also minority actors who question the path to social cohesion outlined in the integration policy and seek to participate in the definition of the public sphere, rather than being content with the framework created for them by the state so that they could engage in the preservation and development of their own culture. To put differently: they want to have a say in where spaces of culture and no-culture lie.

However, I would argue that actors who refuse to break bread and small talk with state officials share a critical attitude towards institutionalization and bureaucracy that have resulted from having an “integration policy” – the middlemen and regulations creating ever new layers between “the state” and “minorities” and conditions for valid forms of participation. Looked at from this perspective, having an integration program or strategy in place does not only contribute to cohesion but obstructs or even prevents it by rendering social interactions into projects and businesses to be planned, executed, governed and inspected. Several representatives of minority organizations I spoke to, including the afore-discussed interviewee, criticized the Integration Foundation and its officials for making a good living at the expense of minorities. Intertwined with this idea is the notion of integration as an undertaking that is embedded in party politics, which it certainly is in a myriad of ways: the minister of culture held the Christmas reception not only for representatives of minorities but also for potential voters – and it did take a
couple of months before parliamentary elections. As one of the individuals I interviewed put it:235

The only thing is that one really does not want to take part in political games. This is not pleasant. I understand that the situation depends a lot… Estonia is in the EU and national minorities are used for speculation purposes. Some have their own interests and are wearing their own pair of “political spectacles” [политические очки], but they use in these games real living people, who write and talk before elections and afterwards they are no longer needed and are forgotten. This constant feeling all the time that people are using you, from one side and from another side. This integration, if it didn’t exist, it would have to be made up. A grand European adventure, in my view. A grand, good financial adventure that is forever and if it did not exist, it would have to be made up because it is a wonderful source of constant refreshment of financial streams. (…) I gather that we, national minorities, create jobs for structures of integration. Do you get it? It turns out that if we did not exist, these jobs would not exist and people, who are occupied with this, would be unemployed. But they have jobs because there are national minorities.

The idea of integration as a sector of national economy that is to be kept going “forever” gives a twist to the integration policy’s starting point of a bifurcated society where togetherness is only to be built. All in all, it seems follow from this that non-Estonians – and the majority of them are Russians or use Russian as their primary language – cannot undo their guest status: they can neither become Estonians (culture as an ethnic trait) nor participate in the design and shaping of the Estonian public sphere or state as non-Estonians – seek to change its Estonian-centeredness – without risking being labeled burglars. The burglar metaphor is a sharp one because it gets at the ongoing securitization

235 Interview on June 13, 2011 in Russian.
of minorities in post-Soviet Estonia – the very issue that Western actors hoped the integration policy would help to put an end to (e.g., Aalto 2003). Burglary stands for housebreaking, an illegal entry from outside, which in the case of Estonia and Estonian Russians would be Russia.

The analysis in this chapter suggests that Estonia has desecuritized its minority population by framing it as a collection of ethnic/national groups/cultures to be kept out from the public sphere, but that these groups/cultures become a threat – re-emerge as a “matter out place” – once they leave the area designated for their cultural difference and challenge the definition of culture this demarcation is based upon. The future of Russian-language education constitutes a tough, painful and telling issue because it lies at the intersection of public and private and also at the intersection of different takes on culture: is receiving secondary education (grades 10-12) in Russian part of “preserving and developing one’s own culture” and if not, how is high school different from basic education (grades 1-9) or even kindergarten?

In spring 2012, the Estonian Security Police published its annual review, where the vocal opponents of the education reform were linked to the Russian Federation and its controversial compatriot policy and, by extension, to extremist activities and the international terrorism threat. This story told by the security service differs greatly from how I saw and heard “the Russian school” being discussed during my fieldwork in Tallinn and I find this disconnection significant and worthy of closer examination.
Overall, I would like to argue in the next two chapters that the controversies surrounding the school reform and the framing of this problem as a security issue is indicative of limitations of the integration model as well as of a broader tendency in contemporary Estonia to foreclose open discussion and criticism of government policies by means of linking any criticisms to Russia and its geopolitical interests.
Chapter 6: “The Russian School” and “The Russian Person” in the Field

This chapter begins with an overview of Russian-language schools’ partial transition to Estonian-medium education, how this reform has been presented in consecutive integration policy documents and how it came to be a subject of much controversy during my stay in Tallinn in 2010-2011. I will then explore the question of “the Russian school” (русская школа – russkaya shkola) as I came across and recorded it as part of my fieldwork, both incidentally and on purpose, describing seminars and other occasions where diverse Estonian and Russian actors discussed this issue. The third subchapter presents and analyzes excerpts from four interviews with four Russian-speakers between the ages of 25 and 60, all of them graduates of Russian-language high schools in Estonia. None of these conversations focused on the school reform per se but the interviewees brought up this topic and my aim is to show and discuss how it was in their view and experience intertwined with the broader question of what it means and takes to be a “Russian person” (человек русский – chelovek russkii or vene inimene) in Estonia.

The focus of this chapter is thus intentionally domestic – on criticisms, misgivings and interpretations that I was exposed to when interacting and working with Russian-speaking inhabitants of Tallinn. As such, the following analysis counters the securitizing interpretation of school reform’s critics by the Estonian Security Police, to be discussed
in the next chapter. My aim in juxtaposing fieldwork data with what could be described as the official assessment of school reform’s critics is to elaborate on the limitations of the Estonian integration model discussed in the previous chapter. I argue that these limitations are indicative of a broader tendency in contemporary Estonia to foreclose open discussion and criticism of government policies by means of linking it Russia and its geopolitical interests. I am not saying that the Russian Federation is not looking for ways to control the Russian and Russian-speaking population in Estonia or elsewhere in the former Soviet Union. However, I propose that the securitization and internationalization of domestic problems diverts attention away from problems in Estonia, also from power struggles and behaviors that pit Estonians against Russians and are thus conducive to the very situations that give the Russian Federation an opening to intervene in Estonia’s internal matters. Moreover, interpretations that unquestionably frame Russia as the “external homeland” of the “Russian minority” (e.g., Brubaker 1996) reiterate Estonian nationalist claims by defining Estonian Russians as outsiders hard-wired to speak on behalf of the Russian Federation.

The Short Story of a Long Reform: Transition of Russian-Medium Schools to the Estonian Language of Instruction

The decision regarding the transition of Russian-medium upper secondary level (grades 10-12)\textsuperscript{236} to the Estonian language of instruction was made back in the early 1990s during

\textsuperscript{236} There are three types of schools in Estonia: primary schools (grades 1-6, most of them in rural areas), basic schools (grades 1-9; common in rural areas and small townships and towns), and upper secondary schools or gymnasiums (grades 1-12 or only grades 10-12;
the height of legal-restorationist reforms initiated by the Pro Patria party\textsuperscript{237} and discussed in earlier chapters: the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act was approved by the Riigikogu in September 1993, only a few months after the controversial Aliens Act that had framed all non-citizens as aliens (app. 30 per cent of the population) required to apply for residency and work permits (see ch 2; Välismaalaste seadus; Jurado 2003 on the efforts of the OSCE and Council of Europe to mediate between minorities and the state). The new education law stated that the language of instruction was to be Estonian, though the municipal government could give basic schools (grades 1-9) the permission to use some “other language.” Russian-medium upper secondary schools or gymnasiums (grades 10-12), on the other hand, were to transition to Estonian-language instruction between 1993-2000.\textsuperscript{238} In 1997 the decision was made that Russian-medium upper secondary schools would be obligated to \textit{start} switching to the Estonian-language instruction by 2007 at the latest,\textsuperscript{239} but intensive transition is said to have begun only in centers and towns). Most schools in towns have traditionally covered grades 1-12, all of which are often housed in the same building, and it has been common to go to the same school and school building with more or less the same people for twelve years. There are school districts and each child is assigned a place in a school near home, but it is also possible to apply for a place in another school, some of which are very competitive, especially in Tallinn and Tartu. It also follows from this system that parents are free to choose the language of instruction for their children and there has been an increasing tendency since the mid-1990s for Russian-language parents to “give” their child to an Estonian-medium school. I will discuss in this chapter some consequences of this trend and responses to it.

\textsuperscript{237} Since 2006 Pro Patria and Res Publica Union.

\textsuperscript{238} Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act § 9 on language of instruction and § 52 regarding the transition of Russian-medium schools to Estonian-language instruction (Põhikooli- ja gümnaasiumiseadus 1993).

\textsuperscript{239} Põhikooli- ja gümnaasiumiseaduse § 52 muutmise seadus; the prime minister and minister of education both were from the by now disbanded center-right liberal Estonian Coalition Party (Vabariigi Valitsus 17.03.1997-25.03.1999).
2007 (Tokareva 2011b). According to another amendment made to the school act in 2000, the language of instruction would be the language used to teach 60 per cent of the curriculum or more; this decision was made under the Pro Patria government of Mart Laar and a Pro Patria minister of education, Tõnis Lukas. On the other hand, in 2002, the municipal upper-secondary schools’ boards of trustees, which consist predominantly of parents, were given the right to apply for the right to use of some other language of instruction: the school’s board of trustees submits an application to the municipal government, which in turn submits an application to the government of the republic that makes the decision regarding the exception. At the time, the prime minister was Siim Kallas from the Reform Party and the minister of education Mailis Rand (now Reps) from the Centre Party.

There were also other changes made to the 1993 Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act’s regarding the language of instruction and the coexistence of students of different nationality/ethnicity. For example, according to the initial version of the law, students of Russian-medium basic schools were to start learning Estonian in the 3rd grade, but in 1999 a decision was made about starting in the first grade. The same amendment law from 2000 that defined the language of instruction, stated that conditions would be created for those students of Estonian-medium schools, whose mother tongue is not

240 Põhikooli- ja güümnaasiumiseaduse §-de 9 ja 52 muutmise seadus.
243 Põhikooli- ja güümnaasiumiseaduse § 9 muutmise seadus.
Estonian, for “learning [their] own mother tongue and getting to know [their] own national culture [rahvuskultuur] in order to preserve their national identity.”

All of these requirements and rights were maintained in the new Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act approved in September 2010. The right or parents/schools to apply for the use of some other language of instruction is also in line with the constitution, which claims: “Everyone has the right to receive instruction in Estonian. The language of instruction in national minority educational institutions shall be chosen by the educational institution.”

As of the 2010-2011 school year, the last year before the transition to Estonian-language instruction, there were still 58 schools in Estonia where instruction in grades 10-12 was in Russian (i.e., over 60% of subjects were taught in Russian). The majority of these schools were located in Tallinn (24, three of them private), followed by the northeastern towns of Narva (8, including one private school), Kohtla-Järve (6), Sillamäe (3) and Jõhvi (2); Tartu had two Russian-language high schools (Lukas 2011). The total number

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244 Põhikooli- ja güümnaasiumiseaduse §-de 9 ja 52 muutmise seadus; in 2003 this clause was moved from §52 (transition to Estonian-language instruction) to §9 (language of instruction) (Põhikooli- ja güümnaasiumiseaduse muutmise seadus 2003).

245 Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act, especially §21 Language of Instruction, which corresponds to the earlier § 9 (Põhikooli- ja güümnaasiumiseadus 2010); for an English translation as of January 1, 2011, see Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act.

of high-school students in these schools was app. 4,500 (ibid.). In addition, there were according to the Ministry of Education and Research 28 schools that were already teaching 60 per cent or more in Estonian and the rest in Russian. Currently (2011-2012), only eight schools are left where the language of instruction continues to be Russian; 77 schools use both languages (i.e., 60 per cent Estonian). Since 2000, a growing number of kindergartens and schools have switched partially to the language-immersion methodology, which aims to provide students with proficiency in both Estonian and Russian. Though the Ministry of Education and Research likes to showcase language immersion, describing it as one of the “Estonian success stories” (Joamets 2009) the number of students studying according to this methodology is surprisingly small and has not grown significantly over the years: in 2005, there were 2,645 students being educated according to this model and in 2011, 4,647.

In comparison, there were 138 schools providing gymnasium-level education in Estonian. Altogether in 2010-2011, there were 454 Estonian schools (600 in 1995-1996) and 86 schools using Russian or both Russian and Estonian (cf. in 1995-1996, 116 Russian schools and 26 using both Russian and Estonian). The total number of students acquiring general education (grades 1-12, including adults) has decreased from 221,060 in 1995 to app. 145,939 in 2011. (Statistics from the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research: Kõigi valdkondade statistilised andmed. Üldharidus: õppeasutuste ja õppurite kohta käiv statistika tabeli kujul.)

The Estonian approach to language immersion followed the model used in Canada to teach English to Francophones. Early or total language immersion begins in kindergarten or the first grade with all subjects taught in Estonian; the proportion of Russian-language instruction increases over time and by grade 6, half of the subjects are taught in Estonian and half in Russian. Late immersion begins in grade 6 with the proportion of subjects taught in Estonian growing over time. (About Immersion.)

Statistics from the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research: Kõigi valdkondade statistilised andmed. Üldharidus: õppeasutuste ja õppurite kohta käiv statistika tabeli kujul.
Latvia embarked on a similar reform of Russian-language education somewhat later in 1998, but was done with it by 2004 (e.g., Budryte 2005; for a comparison of the Estonian and Latvian reform, see Raun, A. 2010b). Perhaps one of the reasons why it took nearly two decades to – formally – complete the reform in Estonia is that it was decided upon at a time when the state lacked financial and other means to actually implement the new policy: the language switch constituted only one part of a bigger and even more fundamental reform of Russian-language education, which included the introduction of new curricula, textbooks,250 and, perhaps most importantly, new requirements and expectations regarding both teachers’ and students’ skills of the Estonian language. Also, the reform presumably was not on the priority list of all governments and ministers of education in Estonia, which in turn suggests that there has been no consensus of opinion among political parties. Moreover, as was discussed earlier in chapter 2, the prevailing expectation among Estonian parties throughout the 1990s was that most Soviet-era settlers and their descendants would leave the country, setting the Estonian state free from the obligation to upkeep Russian-language schools (see pp. 129-130).

250 The duration of Russian-language secondary education in the Soviet era was eleven years, while students in Estonian schools studied a year more. Russian schools used textbooks authored and printed in Russia, while Estonian-language schools had their own textbooks, most of which were written by Estonians and published locally. However, there was, for example, a translated textbook on Russian literature, co-written by the renowned semiotician Yuri Lotman and his wife Zara Mints; the leading Estonian surrealist artist Ülo Sooster illustrated a physics textbook that was used widely in the USSR. The Lotmans lived after the war in Tartu while Sooster was based in Moscow. See also chapter 1 on the emergence of Estonian- and Russian-based life worlds.
It is not surprising in this light that the education reform would receive renewed attention in the late 1990s when Estonia began drafting its integration policy. In line with the language-centered approach to social cohesion, the integration program for 2000-2007 stated that the education system would become central to integration and the main means to overcome barriers preventing “other-language” youth from participating in the Estonian society (EIS 2000-2007, 16-17). The policy document set detailed goals regarding language learning and teaching (pp. 31-37). At the same time, it described the growing trend among Russian-language parents to send their children to an Estonian school, describing it as a source of problems for both schools and children: “[Students] coming from a school with another language of instruction, from an other-language home [teiskeelne kodu] cause Estonian-language schools usually new problems – the need for teaching materials and teacher training, extension of the nominal time or need for tutoring” (IES 2000-2007, 30-31; see also Vihalem 1999 and Laitin 1998).

Russian-language children in Estonian-language schools were thus seen to be representing and embodying otherness that could not be undone by Estonian-language instruction – which implies by extension that Estonian teachers could not handle teaching in Russian-language schools and, moreover, that knowing Estonian would not bring down the barriers between Estonians and Russian-speakers (see also the discussion in the previous chapter). Yet Russian-language schools and teachers, i.e., the schools and teachers of “other-language” students, were described in rather skeptical terms and as not really part of the Estonian society in the late 1990s, ten years into independence:
The proportion of graduates from Estonian universities and colleges [among teachers in Russian-language schools] is small [i.e., they had received their degrees elsewhere in the former Soviet Union]. Teachers’ knowledge of Estica [Eesti ainestik] and school traditions [koolitraditsioonid] are insufficient. Feelings of inferiority and exclusion prevail. Teachers’ knowledge of the Estonian language is generally insufficient for everyday and professional interactions, their participation in professional trainings tends to be ineffectual and the support as well as example they can provide for students is minimal. The language skills of principals and teachers are not up to requirements (…).

Depending on the region and school, there is opposition to requirements regarding the Estonian language and Estonian-mindedness [eestikeelsus- ja meelsusnõuded]. Participation in language training has been futile, because there is little inclination to work independently and little courage to communicate [in Estonian]. (…) The preparation of teachers in pre-school institutions tends to be also weakly tied to Estonia.

(IES 2000-2007, 29-30.)

The integration strategy for 2008-2013 reiterates the idea of education as the hub of integration and while it uses different vocabulary, it describes similar kinds of problems as the earlier integration program and, moreover, continues to define students and teachers of Russian-language schools through their detachment from the Estonian society:

The aim [of integration in the field of language and education] is to provide all residents of Estonia with equal opportunities for receiving education in a uniform educational system and with conditions for the preservation of their own [oma] culture and language. In addition to ongoing language learning, great attention will be paid to teachers’ and students’ opportunities to communicate in the Estonian language outside of school on

My guess is that by “school traditions” are meant the traditions of education in the Estonian cultural space, which are historically linked to Lutheranism. Cf. the previous chapter on “the preservation and development of Estonian cultural space” as one of the principles of integration in Estonia and how it is, as the example of “school traditions” indicates, overlapping with notions of the public sphere intended to be common to everybody.
topics that are of interest to them and thereby offer them in addition to language support also opportunities to participate in the societal life [ühiskondlik elu] (teacher and student exchanges, joint trainings for teachers with Russian and Estonian language schools of instruction, field trips, etc.). (…)

One the one hand, in order for the society to function in a cohesive manner, a uniform education system is needed, which in the Estonian state presupposes that all members of the society know the Estonian language. In addition, conditions that would help other nations [rahvus] to preserve and develop their own [oma] culture and language will need to be improved. Support for intercultural communication will be continued as part of guaranteeing a sense of social security [sotsiaalne turvatus], acknowledging the right of every person to partake in mother-tongue culture [emakeele kultuur]. Attention will be continuously paid to teaching the Estonian language and to education in general, yet additionally, the integration strategy places importance on activities outside the formal education system, which helps to create and maintain good relations among persons of different linguistic backgrounds [erineva keeletaustaga inimesed]. It is important to foster the understanding in the society that having cultural differences in the society is a resource, not a problem.

(EIS 2008-2013, 17.)

Hence, even though the language skills of Russophone teachers’ are still in need of improvement, the formal school system itself is by now regarded as part of the Estonian society by virtue of using the Estonian language. However, both students and teachers appear to be in danger of becoming detached when they are “outside the school” – and presumably speaking “their own” language and engaging in “their own” culture. The passage illustrates clearly how the Estonian integration model puts forward and authorizes a particular definition of culture and uses it to exclude other phenomena as no-culture: leading one’s daily life as a native Russian-speaker does not count as partaking in one’s “mother-tongue culture” or “in the societal life” because the latter has to be carried
out in Estonian and the former under conditions created for these purposes, i.e. in the framework of cultural associations. At the same time, the very need for special measures in order to bring people “of different linguistic backgrounds” together suggests that the Estonian society is not monolingual but that the definition of “societal culture” used in the integration strategy excludes “other” languages.

This excerpt from the current integration strategy is furthermore exemplary in that it defines equal opportunities in narrow linguistic terms, equating social cohesion with linguistic uniformity and overriding all other factors that condition individual choices and opportunities, including gender (the gender wage gap in Estonia is the highest in the European Union, while men lead the shortest lives (Aaviksoo 2009)), age, geography (growing differences between urban center(s) and rural peripheries in just about everything (Noorkõiv 2010), ethnicity (what is left of after language has been taken out, including prejudices and stereotypes), and finally education itself. All in all, having a linguistically uniform education system does not guarantee equality in terms of quality and accessibility. Looked at from this perspective, the integration strategy’s preoccupation with the Estonian language conceals other inequalities that are eroding unity or working against it. As such, it comes across as a reluctance or refusal on the part

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252 I am hereby reminded of my interactions with Russian hairdressers in Tallinn. See chapter 4 for a discussion of how the capital’s residents recreate ethno-linguistically segregated geographies and patterns through their daily choices not out of hostility but custom, habit and culture.

253 The 2009 Human Development report regarded the increasing regional differences (ääremaastumine) as one of the main problems of Estonia and the “crystallization” of these differences as a sign of social stagnation (Lauristin 2010).
of policymakers to, first, deal with socio-economic problems *shared* by Estonia’s permanent residents across ethno-linguistic lines and, second, face up to non-linguistic ethnic discrimination, i.e., discrimination that cannot be eliminated by learning the language or blamed on not knowing the language (e.g., see Lõhmus, A. 2008, contributions to Vihalem 2009 in the 2008 Estonian Human Development Report). Either way, the equation of social cohesion with linguistic cohesion results in a flattened interpretation that reduces complex social situations and processes to a blunt distinction and confrontation between Us and Them – in practice, those who speak Estonian and those who speak Russian.

When I first started doing research for this study in 2009, the high-school reform did not come across as an issue that would cause much public debate or, moreover, mobilize Russians and Russian-speakers in Estonia to take joint action. The seeming passiveness of local Russian-speakers appeared to be setting Estonia apart from Latvia, where the education reform was met with significant resistance and caused Russians to become politically organized (e.g. Burdyte 2005). The situation in Estonia started to change noticeably only in 2010-2011 as the deadline for transitioning to the Estonian language of instruction was drawing closer – as were the March 2011 parliamentary elections. In the run-up to the elections, several candidates of the Centre Party positioned themselves as fighters for the continuation of “the Russian school.” My starting point in the following discussion is that the developments in the political sphere and the civil society – among non-profit organizations, parents, schools, and activists – were simultaneous, mutually
reinforcing, partially overlapping but nevertheless also separate. From what I saw and was exposed to, one did not have to be a supporter of the Centre Party to have misgivings about the school reform and seek ways to reverse it. At the same time, as I discussed in the previous chapter, many representatives of minority organizations in Estonia feel as if they are being used constantly by various political actors, both the state and political parties. It is also worth remembering in this connection that the principal decision regarding the transition of Russian-medium schools to the Estonian language of instruction was made by an all-Estonian parliament in the early 1990s when the majority of Russians and other non-Estonians did not have Estonian citizenship and their ability to “say something” was limited.

In June 2010, Tallinn, the municipality with the greatest number of Russian-language schools, nominated a new deputy mayor – Yana Toom – who would in the following months become openly critical of the high-school reform.254 In September 2010, about 140 people – mostly teachers, parents, politicians, representatives of non-profit organizations – convened in Tallinn to establish a “council” of “Russian School in Estonia” (Совет объединения “Русская Школа Эстонии” or “Vene Kool Eestis”), which claims to be a successor of a non-profit organization “Russian School in Estonia” established in 2004 by parents of a Russian-medium school in Tartu (Russkaya Shkola Estonii). A couple of months later, Tallinn City Council held a seminar dedicated to the

254 Yana Toom (b. 1966) is a former journalist and editor of several Russian-language newspapers. She has five children, some of whom study or have studied in Estonian- and others in Russian-language schools and she has often drawn on her own experiences as a parent when criticizing the reform.
school reform, which I attended and will discuss below along with another seminar dedicated to this issue.

The main argument of Toom was that many Russian-language schools in Tallinn were not ready to switch to Estonian-language instruction, even though most of them had been so far reporting to the ministry on the steady progress they were making and receiving extra funding to prepare for the transition (Protestivad koolid said sadu tuhanded; see also Lukas 2011). In January 2011, up to 21 Russian-language high schools in the capital were said to have doubts that they would be capable of meeting the 60% criterion in September 2011 (Pealinna vene koolid on jätkuvalt keelehädas); five schools in Narva reported similar problems (Tokareva 2011b) as did some other schools elsewhere in the country; in some cases, these schools were already using language immersion (e.g. Raun, A. 2010b, Ammas 2011).

Drawing on the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act and applications submitted by schools’ boards of trustees, the government of Tallinn submitted in March 2011 an application on behalf of eleven schools under its jurisdiction to continue Russian-language instruction (Gnadenteich 2011b). All had staff shortages, but some schools were claiming that their students would not be capable of studying in Estonian because of their insufficient language skills, whereas others did not want to lower their high standards. As the principal of one of the most competitive Russian-language schools in the capital explained in April 2012, i.e. after the parliamentary elections: “We have a
very good math instructor who teaches in gymnasium [grades 10-12]. I see no point in replacing him/her with some person who only knows Estonian and nothing else. (…) We look for other opportunities but we cannot lower the quality of our work simply in order for things to be run in Estonian. Our parents also see no point in this and this is why they wrote this application [for an exception]” (cited in Gnadenteich 2011a).

Tõnis Lukas (Pro Patria and Res Publica Union), the Minister of Education and Research from April 2007 till early April 2011, declared towards the end of 2010 that he would personally veto any application to postpone or opt out of the reform (Raun 2010a) and maintained this position without distinguishing between different schools and their different concerns (Gnadenteich 2011a). After the elections, when he was no longer the minister, Lukas published an article where he recalled that the decision regarding transition had been made back in 1993 and described the intensive – or actual – preparations that begun in 2007 as “the final stage”:

For this reason, it is weird to read opinions as if the transition was only beginning and could depend on new decisions. There is nothing left to decide here – all decisions have been made and the transition is going to be completed. If attempts are being made in public debates to show the end of the road as its beginning, it is already a propagandistic victory for those who seek to put a break on the natural development.

(Lukas 2011.)

Lukas undermined the critics of the reform by framing them as propagandists in the service of Center Party’s election campaign, even though the application submitted by Tallinn represented ultimately, according to the law, the wish of parents. At the same
time he and high officials of the education ministry underlined also the diminishing number of (high-school) students and regarded the reform as a means to cut the overall number of schools, which in turn would support the implementation of the new high-school curriculum that requires every gymnasium to offer three specializations – and to have enough students and teachers for all of them (Lukas 2011, Tokareva 2011a, 2011b).  

As I pointed out above, the question of the Russian school did feature in the election slogans of Centre Party and helped its candidates gain supporters, which indicates that voters deemed this issue important. Among the Centre Party politicians and candidates openly critical of the reform was Mikhail Kõlvart and like Toom, he was elected to the parliament in March 2011. When Toom left for Riigikogu, Kõlvart was offered the position of the deputy mayor and accepted it, giving up his seat in the parliament before the 12th Riigikogu had gotten down to work in early April 2011. He has continued to criticize the transition even after the formal completion of the high-school reform in  

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255 The Ministry of Education and Research is pushing for the formation of separate gymnasiums (i.e., the separation of grades 10-12 from the basic schools), which would enable the ministry and local governments to decrease the total number of schools. While the reform aims at homogenizing high-school curriculum and thus decreasing differences between schools, fears have also been expressed that it will limit the accessibility of high-school education, especially in rural areas, and that it aims at limiting the number of students continuing to higher education as opposed to vocational schools.

256 Kõlvart (b. 1977) was largely unknown to the Estonian public before taking office as vice mayor. He holds two law degrees from private Russian-language colleges in Tallinn and has worked as a lawyer and lecturer; he is also a former athlete and long-time martial-arts trainer and has been involved in several non-profit organizations of national minorities. Like Toom, he is a graduate of a Russian-language high school in Tallinn. While Toom comes across as bilingual, Kõlvart has been criticized for his language skills.
September 2011 and Tallinn city government continues to look for ways to secure the continuation of Russian-language secondary education in Estonia.\textsuperscript{257} Various protest activities have been carried out since I left Tallinn in June 2011, including several rallies in front of the Riigikogu. While I have been following these developments from the U.S., I find it hard to estimate their impact or pull without having observed them at first hand and attending the demonstrations.

At the same time, the education reform does have supporters among the Russian-language population and youth. Among the steadfast proponents of the language switch is the Youth Association Open Republic (Noorteühing Avatud Vabariik/ Молодёжное объединение “Открытая Республика”) established in 1999 as an assembly of student councils (Õpilasesinduste Assamblee) of Russian-language schools and led since its inception by Yevgeny Krishtafovich (b. 1983).\textsuperscript{258} The organization has broadened its base since, claiming to focus on citizenship education, integration and the representation of young people and their interests (Noorteühing Avatud Vabariik). The Assembly of Student Councils is today a member of the Open Republic and both organizations receive funding from the Ministry of Education and Research, among others.\textsuperscript{259} One of the

\textsuperscript{257} As was explained above in connection with the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act, the municipal government has the right to decide the language of instruction used in basic schools, i.e., grades 1-9.

\textsuperscript{258} Krishtafovitch graduated from the University of Tartu faculty of law and is, among other things, interested in the democratization of Belarus. Among the several nongovernmental organizations he belongs to is a Belarusian-Estonian NGO “The New Way for Belarus” (Valgevene Uus Tee).

\textsuperscript{259} In a 2009 interview, Krishtafovich described the organization’s cooperation with ministers of education of different parties: “The Center party supports segregation; we
former assembly leaders Sergey Metlev (b. 1991) recently joined Krishtafovich in the leadership of the mother organization.\footnote{60}

On its website, the Open Republic describes itself as an organization “free of politics” (\textit{poliitikavaba} or \textit{свободная от политики}) (Noorteühing Avatud Vabariik), which I take to understand that it is not affiliated with any one particular party.\footnote{61} The organization appears to be critical of the state and the government for not doing more of the same than what is already being done. In an interview he gave in 2009, Krishtafovich described Russian-language schools as a means of creating “artificial ghettos”: “The Russian school had a lot of arguments with their minister of education. We are very interested in the language reform in Russian schools. Now that we have Tõnis Lukas as the minister, things are getting better. The Center party did not want to support us, we got no penny from them, they made up all sorts of justifications for preventing our work” (Masso 2009).

Metlev, currently a law student at the University of Tartu, became known in 2009 when he was still a senior of a Russian-language high school in Tallinn and as the leader of a student organization, criticized the ambassador of Russia for intervening into Estonia’s internal matters. The ambassador had expressed the view in a newspaper published in Russia that Estonia is using the education reform to engage in a “cleansing of cadres” and that Russian students are being discriminated against in schools. Some of Metlev’s teachers rebuked him for his statement and he was pressured to step down from his position in the student council, but the principal later issued him an apology on behalf of the school administration. Metlev and other members of the student organization were arguably harassed after the incident and are said to have received threats from individuals linked to the Russian embassy (Jüriso 2009).

Krishtafovich has belonged to the right-wing Res Publica and explains on his personal bilingual website that he supports the “right-wing” (\textit{paremjöud} or \textit{правые силы}) because of its tax policy: “How much do you earn? Would you like to earn more? Will you be able to earn more in the future than you do now? If so, you would rather not want your tax rate grow along with your income? I hold exactly the same view! I invest in my education, career, I want to achieve more. I am motivated to work more and I want my state to help me rather than punish me with higher taxes. People who earn more pay more taxes to the society anyway. I am standing for an equal starting position for everybody” (Jevgeni Krištafovitš. Kodaniku veeb).
is now the most important factor creating the ghetto. People graduating Russian schools do not speak Estonian, they are only required very limited, basic level skills. Even the middle level that is required in high school is ridiculous. We demand that after school all students speak Estonian at high level” (Masso 2009).

Hence, like the critics of the education reform, the Open Republic calls for measures that would improve the language skills of students in Russian-language schools but regards the (partial) Estonian-language instruction as an optimal means to achieve this goal. According to this view, the proportion of Estonian-language instruction (i.e., subjects taught in Estonian) should be increased already in basic schools (grades 1-9) in addition to intensifying language teaching in pre-school educational facilities (e.g. Metlev 2010b; Krishtafovich 2010). At the same time – and similarly in line with the integration strategy and its concept of cultural pluralism – the organization emphasizes Estonia’s ethnic diversity and the need to preserve and develop national cultures and identities of minorities by means of opportunities created for this purpose by the state. In 2010, i.e., the last year before the formal completion of the transition, Metlev published several articles where he reiterated the principles of integration policy and education reform, including the need to decrease the number of schools (e.g., Metlev 2010a, 2010b). One of these pieces titled “The dead end of the other-language school [muukeelne kool]” (2010b) criticized “other-language” schools for not using the mechanisms for teaching minority cultures and languages provided in the Basic and Upper Secondary Schools Act:

When talking about the other-language education, we forget that there is no big Russian national minority [rahvusvähemus] in Estonia, but that representatives of dozens of
nations [rahvus] live here. Every interested representative of a national minority has to have the opportunity of learning his/her own mother tongue and culture even if to a minimal degree. In case there are ten representatives of a national minority in a school, who want to study the language and culture of their people [oma rahvas], then the school administration must establish contacts with organizations of this national minority, invite specialists from abroad if needed, and the state must help with money. The mechanism is there but for some reason only one other-language school used this opportunity – the a school in Sillamäe where the Ukrainian language and culture are being taught [according to this system].

(Metlev 2010b.)

Discussions of the School Reform in Group Settings

Because of the afore-described developments during 2010-2011, “the Russian school” became a topic I would bump into as well as seek out while doing research, though I was not interested in the reform per se but more in how it fitted into the approach laid out in integration policy documents and the contradictions I was finding there. During the first months of 2010, I visited repeatedly one high school (grades 1-12) where some students are in the language immersion program and others are taught regularly, i.e. some subjects in Estonian and others in Russians. I first contacted the school to interview the principal, who later invited me to observe the students as they were celebrating maslenitsa or

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262 Basic and Upper Secondary Schools Act § 21 Language of instruction: “(5) A school shall organise language and cultural teaching for students acquiring basic education whose native language is not the language of instruction or who communicate at home in a language different from the language of instruction, which is the native language of at least one parent, provided that no fewer than ten students with the same native language or with the same language of household communication request it. (6) The Government of the Republic shall establish the conditions of and procedure for language and culture teaching specified in subsection (5) of this section.” (Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act).
Russian Shrovetide and the anniversary of the Republic of Estonia. The headmaster seemed to be taking the reform with cool pragmatism and also as a rewarding challenge, working hard to make sure that the school would be up to its task. The principal was acutely aware of the competition among Russian-language schools over teachers and students and expected it to get only tougher as the number of students would decrease and more students and parents would opt for an Estonian-language school. The headmaster had been brought up bilingual and appeared to be taking pride in this being a language-immersion school but also a Russian school that was not to be confused with an Estonian school. Based on our interactions and my visits to the school, I came to see language immersion as a means to guarantee the continuation of Russian-language education in Estonia while providing students with sufficient skills of the state language.

In the autumn, winter and spring of 2010-2011, I attended several seminars in the Russian-language that were either dedicated to “the Russian school” or ended up focusing on this topic spontaneously because this is what participants wanted to talk about. These meetings were organized by small minority organizations and not all of them were open to the public, resembling more a gathering of friends and acquaintances. More often than not, I was the only ethnic Estonian in the room but never at the center of attention and I did not participate in conversations. People who had invited me knew about my research and interests and over time I would get to know many others belonging to this circle; in cases where the event was open to the public, I would introduce myself to organizers.
On one such occasion in October 2010, I attended an afternoon seminar organized by a minority organization and held in the National Library – on neutral territory in the center of Tallinn and in the vicinity of several Russian-language schools.\textsuperscript{263} The seminar was targeted at students of Russian-language high schools and featured short presentations by a lawyer and two journalists as well as a discussion forum. There were no teachers or other representatives of schools present, only students – about 15 of them –, the speakers, a moderator and another organizer, and a couple of adults, who I know from my fieldwork to be affiliated with various cultural associations of national minorities. The only materials distributed to attendees were a sheet of paper with the program and discussion questions as well as an anonymous voluntary questionnaire about the school reform. It took a Google search to find out that the nonprofit organization had applied for and received funding from the city of Tallinn to hold this seminar.

The start was delayed because students were late in coming and clearly preparations had been made for a greater number of attendees. The presenters spoke about the history of the school reform, explained laws pertinent to minority education in contemporary Estonia and discussed the results of a recent study conducted among teachers and students of Russian-language high schools. One of the speakers argued that the reform was undemocratic and inconsiderate and that there was no consensus of opinion in the society regarding its goals. Rather, the whole undertaking could be described in terms of Brownian motion (броунское движение) with molecules (Estonians?) of the surrounding

\textsuperscript{263} Fieldwork notes from October 14, 2010.
medium (Estonian society?) continuously bombarding microscopic particles (non-Estonians?) in the fluid and causing them to move randomly and erratically.

Another speaker compared the current situation to interwar years when the Estonian state arguably did a lot in order to guarantee the preservation of Russian-language education, even though policies became geared towards assimilation in the 1930s (cf. chapter 1). In the view of the presenter, Russians in interwar Estonia succeeded in preserving their culture and language owing to many Russian intellectuals, whereas the current reform was giving rise to cultureless people – *mankury* – who are dangerous by virtue of being neither Russians nor Estonians. The term *mankurt* (манкурт) was used in the 1980s in particular to describe Russified and Sovitized natives (e.g., Kazakhs who had adopted the Russian language and become Russified (Laitin 1998, 134)) as well as more broadly the alienating impact of the Soviet regime and its official memory policy on people living under this regime (Horton and Brashinsky 1992, 130-131). The term mankurt originates in the Kyrgyz author Chingiz Aitmatov’s novel *И дольше века длится день* (1980; in English *The Day Lasts more than a Hundred Years* (Aitmatov 1983)) that has been described as “a grim parable about the enslavement of the human mind” by totalitarian forces (Rollberg 2009, 35). In the book, one tribe enslaves another one by depriving its members of memory: the captives’ heads are covered with a piece of raw camel skin and as the camel hair continues to grow and penetrates the skulls of the captives, they no longer remember who they are and can no longer recognize themselves as human beings.
By arguing that the Estonian education policy was giving rise to mankurty, the speaker was thus drawing parallels between the Soviet regime and the Estonian government, accusing the latter of deliberately depriving Russians of their own language, memory and national identity. The speaker went on to describe the education reform as a Potemkin village: schools are required to teach particular subjects in Estonian even though the director of the Language Inspectorate has claimed that the language skills of 70 per cent of teachers in Russian-language schools are insufficient.\(^{265}\)

\(^{264}\) The concept mankurt draws on Kyrgyz folklore and folk belief, which Aitmatov (1928-2008) knew well by virtue of being raised by his nomadic grandmother after his father, a Communist activist, perished in Stalin’s purges in 1937 (Rollberg 2009, 35-36; see chapter 1 on Stalin’s policies in the late 1930s). The novel The Day Lasts Longer than a Century served as the basis for the film Манкурт (“Mankurt,” 1990) by the Turkmen director Khodzha Kuli Narliyev. In this Turkic-Turkmene co-production a Turkic warrior is captured by Chinese troops and turned into a mankurty. (Rollberg 2009, 482.)

\(^{265}\) The director made such a statement in August 2010 (Kirejeva 2010); in 2008, only 3 per cent of teachers were found to know Estonian on the required level (Jaagant 2009). Interestingly enough, Masso and Kello found in analyzing interviews conducted with teachers of Russian-medium schools in 2009 that their knowledge of the Estonian did not “significantly affect the teachers’ readiness for transition to Estonian-language instruction” (Masso and Kello 2010, 53). Teachers’ attitude towards the reform seemed to depend more on the strength of the collegial network, their level of social integration and the expected effects of bilingual education (ibid.).

The Language Inspectorate (Keeleinspektsioon), established in 1998, is the successor of the Language Board that was created in 1990 to observe the implementation of the Language Law passed in 1989, i.e., during the Singing Revolution when Estonia was still part of the Soviet Union and when the protection of the Estonian language and securing its status as a public language was perceived as one of the most burning issues. The institution has had the same director since 1995. According to its current bylaws, the main task “of the Inspectorate is to ensure that the Language Act and other legal acts regulating language use are observed” and, depending on the severity of the breach, issue warnings, written orders or fines. (The Brief History of the Language Inspectorate.) Among other things, “language inspectors” visit schools and other educational facilities to test the language skills of the teaching staff, i.e. that they have the “category” required of teachers (e.g., see Lasnamäe õpetajad said keeleinspektsioonilt trahvi).
The third speaker explained the opportunities provided by the constitution and Estonian legislation for choosing the language of instruction and, more generally, for expressing one’s views and discontent. The emphasis was on consciousness-raising (“We are talking about your rights!”): what are the legal means that students have at their disposal to stand up for their interests and rights both in the society at large and in school. The speaker underlined that the “form of education” – language of instruction, methods – depends ultimately on students and parents, i.e., it is a personal matter and not something to be dictated by the state.

The same idea was reiterated in the discussion forum, whereby students were encouraged to talk about their take on and experiences of the reform as well as its possible social implications. One of the discussion questions proposed by organizers in the handout concerned the possibility of using Estonian teachers in Russian-language schools, but students did not take it up. Overall, there seemed to be mixed feelings and adolescent protest in the air as one student asked rather accusingly why Russophone teachers have not been able to acquire the Estonian language during the past twenty years, while another one claimed to be in no need of Estonian as one would not communicate with Estonians anyway. Students appeared to be frustrated with anxious teachers, whose knowledge of the Estonian language was in their estimation not always sufficient to explain the subject or, worse still, not on a par with students’ language skills; or, on the contrary, they described teachers who know the subject as well as the language but would never get to the substance as translating the vocabulary would take up most of the
classroom time. As one student put it: the aim of education is knowledge, not language skills. The presenters raised the issue of competitiveness, arguing that the reform would produce unskilled masses and would not enhance Russians ability to compete with Estonians. The moderator – not an ethnic Russian – described lack of solidarity and respect for human dignity as distinctive post-Soviet conditions. The same person called students to support teachers by being understanding rather than critical and, moreover, at the very end of the seminar said something along these lines: “There are many Estonians for whom you are interesting. Respect those Estonians so that they would not feel guilty. To blame them would be the same as to blame Russians for Stalinism.”

Many of these concerns and criticisms were reiterated about six weeks later at the two-day “Domestic Peace” forum (Kodurahu foorum/Гражданский Мир) convened by Tallinn city government and dedicated to school and education. The first day focused on safety issues in schools and the second one on “The Russian at the intersection of reforms” (Vene kool reformide sõlmpunktis) or “The main milestones of the reform of the Russian-language school” (Основные вехи русскоязычной школы).266 Tallinn started holding “Domestic Peace” forums in the aftermath of the 2007 April crisis in order to bring together Estonians and Russian-speakers and has continued to hold them to discuss current issues, such as the unemployment, education, the integration of youth, the war between Georgia and Russia and its impact on Estonia (Kodurahufoorumi arhiiv; Kase, undated). “Domestic Peace” forums are unique in that they bring together actors –

266 Notes from November 30 and December 1, 2010; the forum was held at the conference center of a downtown hotel. All citations are approximate.
scholars, officials, experts, and random members of the public – who would usually not
meet, let alone converse. Both presenters and audience members are free to use either
Estonian or Russian and there is simultaneous translation available from Russian to
Estonian.\textsuperscript{267} Invited speakers on the first day of the education forum included the mayor
of Tallinn, an MP from the Estonian Social Democratic Party (at the time in opposition),
a sociologist and a graduate student in psychology, a high-school student, two principals
of Estonian-language schools, and on the second day, the deputy mayor Toom, an
executive official from the Ministry of Education and Research, two scholars, one of
them from Latvia and speaking about the Latvian education reform, the principal of a
Russian-language high school in Tallinn, and a parent. In addition, two persons had
signed up for short presentations on the second day, including a representative of the
“Russian School in Estonia” organization. The audience (at least 100 people or more on
both days) was actively involved. I could recognize many attendees from other fieldwork
settings and locate them on the map of minority organizations and actors in Tallinn; there
were also people whom I had interviewed and others whom I would get to know soon.

\textsuperscript{267} I am not sure about the availability of translation from Russian to Estonian. In some
cases the forum seems to be coming a stage where Russian-speakers choose to speak
Estonian, while emphasizing that this is neither usual nor easy for them.
An open discussion forum usually follows half a day of presentations by experts, but
audience member can also sign up for a short presentation of their own. Coalition
politicians in particular tend to ignore the forum and see it is as part of Center Party’s
propaganda, which it is to the extent that the topics, presenters and the timing of meetings
are decided upon by the city government and the forum gives city and party leaders an
opportunity to present their own views and showcase measures they have implemented.
However, because the meeting is open to anybody – registration is free and advisable but
not necessary –, and the audience is given ample opportunities for participation, its
content is emergent and depends on agendas brought along by attendees. In May 2010, I
also attended the forum dedicated to unemployment and held in the same venue.
The atmosphere got intense and heated at times and at some point when the audience started asking accusative questions from the representative of the ministry of education, deputy mayor Toom felt the need to insert: “She [the official] is a brave person for having come here today to meet us. She is only doing her job” to which the audience responded with a recognizing applause and one Estonian-Russian activist, whose roots are in Estonia and who is bilingual but a fierce opponent of the reform and Estonian minority policies more broadly, shouted back in Estonian: “We are thankful to her.”

The audience was by no means homogeneous, yet it contained enough like-minded critics of the reform for there to be spontaneous rounds of applause. The representative of the non-profit “Russian School in Estonia” argued in his short presentation that the reform was serving an ideological-political purpose only, had been poorly prepared for and was focused narrowly on language learning. A strong applause interrupted his speech when he stated: “If a person does not know how to express himself in his mother tongue, he can do it in no other language either” and somebody from the audience commented: “There’s no need to experiment on us [Russians in Estonia].” The other person who had signed up for a remark in advance referred to a survey according to which the majority of parents and students of Russian-language schools saw the reform as a means to eliminate Russian schools; he was also one of the few people to openly emphasized the importance of Russian-language school to Russian national identity.
An Estonian teacher of a Russian-language school commented, starting in Russian and then switching into Estonian, that it would take two or three generations for the reform to start working and, moreover, that it was a shame that politics dominated the forum rather than “the voices of teachers.” The same man went on to say that Estonians are biased against the Russian school, but before he did that, he was sure to draw a clear line between the Estonian and Russian community (kogukond) by claiming to be speaking as a representative of the Estonian community who lives in Estonia:

Estonians experience the Russian community primarily through acquaintances and through politicians and media. The Estonian community feels as if the Russian school is representing Russia’s political interests. I myself would have never thought that the Russian school is as progressive as it is.\(^{268}\) The Russian-language school in Estonia is in a difficult situation and was condemned during the Bronze Night.\(^{269}\) A different tone must prevail when talking to the Estonian community about the Russian community.

As if to illustrate these prejudices, another Estonian audience member had earlier in the day questioned the preparedness of “the Estonian-language school” to receive a great number of Russian-language students because of the conditions these children might be coming from:

If the attitude at home is something completely different [hoopis midagi muud] and one lives in a completely different environment and culture, it is very difficult [for Russian children to adapt to an Estonian school] (…) For sure these children have to be approached differently. They are not new immigrants. A family might have lived in

\(^{268}\) When he said that, a woman sitting behind me sighed deeply and I do not know whether she did it to express agreement or disagreement.

\(^{269}\) Students of Russian-language schools participated in protests in April 2007, which was seen by many Estonians as an indication of the kind of mentality that prevails in Russian schools and this argument continues to be used in online forums, for example, to justify the Estonian language of instruction.
Estonia for 20-30 years but they come from another culture [teine kultuur], a different cultural space [kultuuriruum – cf. “the Estonian cultural space” in EIS 2000-2007] and historical background [ajalooline taust].

When the deputy mayor Toom explained the meaning of the term “new immigrant” (uusimmigrant) in Russian to the audience, the same person who had thanked the official from the ministry of education shouted, this time in Russian, “We are not old immigrants.” Later this person claimed that what is needed is a moratorium on the reform and a referendum because this is a political question. Another audience member claimed that teachers who live under the threat of the Language Inspectorate (see footnote 265) cannot teach creatively – applause – and recalled that in the Baltic Gubernias of the Russian empire, children were taught in their mother tongue. Another audience member asserted that the Estonian constitution gives individuals the choice – applause – and “we as little people have to obey the law.”

From what I could tell, many attendees were highly critical of the reform and of politicians pushing for the transition, referring to its implicit political and ideological goals. At the same time, nobody questioned the need of knowing Estonian or the position of Estonian as the state language. The reform was seen as an internal matter and problems related to it were to be solved by means of laws of the Estonian state. Hence, there

270 Cf. concerns expressed in 1999 in the first integration program: “Opinions expressed by the [Russian-language] youth [studying in Estonian schools] suggest that they do not prioritize the Estonian school where they will lose their safe Russian-language environment and have to become adapted to alien cultural attitudes in addition to having to communicate in Estonian. Neither teachers nor students can handle communication problems that emerge from intercultural differences” (IES 2000-2007, 30-31).
seemed to be a shared understanding of principles not to be questioned and I would argue
that the following incident exemplifies the existence of such a consensus. Towards the
end of the first discussion session, a short middle-aged lady in the front row stood up,
turned to the audience and stated in Russian something along these lines:

We live in the Republic of Estonia but this is a primeval Russian land. This is the truth.
This is our land [наша земля] and we [Russians] are here the main people. We have the
right to speak Russian here and teach children in Russian. We have not elected this
parliament and we do not have to obey the laws. This is the truth.²⁷¹

She finally invited people to boycott the law and the reform, but the audience seemed to
be utterly bewildered and there was this uncomfortable silence that emerges when
somebody does or says something so inappropriate that it comes across as a sign of
mental problems. For once during the whole forum there seemed to be an agreement and
nobody referred back to this incident later in the day.

I was furthermore exposed to the complexities of the reform and its reception while
spending time with my newly found Russophone and Russian companions and, most
importantly, witnessing them discussing “the Russian school” amongst themselves on the
basis of their own (recent) experiences in the capital’s schools. Most of these young
people were in their twenties and early thirties and many spoke Estonian fluently; some I
never heard using Estonian and I suspect they were my Russian counterparts: their

²⁷¹ Ironically or strangely enough, the woman’s argumentation resembled the attitude
propagated by the legal-restorationist Citizens’ Committees’ Movement in the late 1980s:
Estonians/rightful citizens of the Republic of Estonia are not subject to Soviet laws
because Estonia did not join the Soviet Union voluntarily (see chapter 2).
experiences with Estonian corresponded to my own experiences with Russian before I started fieldwork (i.e., you learn it without expecting to speak it). However, some younger folks had graduated from Estonian-language high schools and were now studying in Estonian-language colleges and there were occasions when they would have to pause and look for words when explaining something in Russian.

The concerns of these young people overlapped with those expressed by critics of the reform at meetings discussed above. They were particularly worried that even though the switch to Estonian-language instruction was supposed to boost the competitiveness of Russian-language youth, it would further weaken it because instead of focusing on understanding and acquiring the subject matter, students would have to focus on understanding the language and acquiring the Estonian vocabulary; moreover, they would not develop their native-language skills by picking up the same terminology in “their own” language. What was needed therefore was a more rigorous approach to teaching the Estonian language as a language and the state was criticized for not having made it happen so far.272 This was seen to be conducive to a situation where the state sets up

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272 For example, there are inconsistencies between the language skills expected of ninth-graders and high-school graduates. According to the national curriculum for basic schools, “a good learning outcome” by the end of the grade 9 is level B.1.2 and “a very good learning outcome” level B.2.1, which is also “a satisfactory” result for a twelfth-grader. “Good” and “very good” result for high-school graduates is level B.2.2 (Põhikooli riiklik õppekava lisa 2, ainevaldkond “Võõrkeeled” (national curriculum for basic schools, field “Foreign languages”); Gümnaasiumi riiklik õppekava lisa 2, ainevaldkond “Võõrkeeled” (national curriculum for gymnasiums, field “Foreign languages”)). The level B.2.1 expected of basic-school graduates/high-school juniors includes the ability to understand spoken language and texts on familiar topics, to handle most “typical situations,” the use of basic vocabulary and common expressions, pronunciation mistakes
Russian-speakers to fail or where Russian-speakers give up native-language education voluntarily and ultimately opt out of “their own” language by choosing an Estonian kindergarten and later an Estonian-language school. At the same time, these young people were skeptical about the willingness and ability of the Estonian-language education system/Estonians to receive a horde of Russian-speaking students and would exchange stories about instances of rejection and disapproval.

One person I would have long conversations with repeatedly questioned the 60% requirement: “Why 60% and not 40% or 50%?” On the one hand, 60% was just a number, arbitrary from the point of view of the reform, and on the other hand, it was the first “number” that would guarantee the dominance of the Estonian language as well as some sense of distinctiveness between “the Estonian school” and “the Russian school,” “the Estonian community” and “the Russian community.”

“The Russian School” and the (Un)Making of “Russian Persons”

The topic of the school reform would furthermore emerge in interviews that I conducted with representatives of cultural associations of national minorities, state officials, and

do not interfere with communication, ability to express one’s own ideas in writing (National curriculum for basic schools, field “Foreign languages”). Some of the young people I interacted with argued that this was not sufficient to succeed in an Estonian-language gymnasium and, moreover, that many ninth-graders of Russian-medium schools did not achieve this level.

The above-quoted principal of a Russian-language school in Tallinn referred to a similar problem with language skills required of teachers: “The law says that a teacher must know Estonian on level B2. But this is not enough. In order to teach in Estonian, one should be on level C1 and in reality, not only on paper” (quoted in Gnadenteich 2011a).
individuals concerned about the future of Russians in Estonia as well as random inhabitants of Tallinn who agreed to be interviewed but with whom I did not establish an extended contact. Many of these people had graduated from Russian-language high schools in Estonia, either during the Soviet era or in more recent years, and as parents had picked – or would have to pick – a school for their own children or were thinking about the options their grandchildren would have, should they be born and go to school in Estonia rather than somewhere in the West. In some cases, people’s personal views and worries stood in stark contrast with the official policy that they were themselves implementing and executing in their professional life and they would oscillate between these different subject positions when talking to me. Most often than not, it was the interviewees who brought up this topic, which indicates that they were processing it intensely and, moreover, that for them, the school reform was intertwined with the broader question of what it means and takes to be a “Russian person” (русский человек or vene inimene) in Estonia.

The following excerpts are from four interviews, labeled B, C, D, and E, all of which were carried out in Tallinn between June 2010 and June 2011 and lasted from half an hour to two hours. Three interviews (B, C, E) were in Estonian and one (D) in Russian. In each case, the choice of language came out from my earlier communications with these individuals, but was essentially up to the interviewee to decide. All four interviewees were born in Estonia and native speakers of Russian; some had a parent or parents who had moved to Estonia during the Soviet era. All were graduates of Russian-language high
schools in Estonia, some during the Soviet era and others in post-Soviet Estonia. All had higher education and again, some had been educated during the Soviet era and others in the Republic of Estonia. Two had worked as schoolteachers in the past; some worked for cultural associations of national minorities and were thus employed in the same “sphere of economy,” but none of them were coworkers in the strict sense of the word. Interview B was the only one where the topic of religion did not come up; the other three interviewees discussed their relationship to the Russian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate and one (E) was a practicing Russian Orthodox.

The following excerpts seek to demonstrate the emergence of the school-reform topic in conversation, which explains the length of some of these passages. My aim is to show how the interviewees were contextualizing the issue of the Russian school and linking it to other topics of interest and significance to them, i.e., how and why the transition of Russian-language schools to the Estonian language of instruction mattered for them. The excerpts also bring out recurrent phrases, ideas and concerns, some of which echo the opinions expressed by participants of above-described seminars as well as by members of the youth group I worked with. Omissions have been made where names or other information mentioned could be used to identify the interviewee or other persons involved.

Interview B, recorded in a park in the vicinity of the interviewee’s (30-40 years old) workplace in June 2010; the interviewee has worked as a teacher in the past.
How do you see it on the basis of your own experience, is there a need for further distinction? The cultural autonomy law is based on the idea of indigenous minorities. Would it make sense to have a separate law for national minorities?

I don’t think so. The constitution says that everybody’s equal. Why would we want to single somebody out, to distinguish? This precisely would run counter to the idea of integration if we started to differentiate and say that you are minorities here. And of course for me as a Russian person [vene inimene], the question of the Russian school is a very burning one because my child goes to a Russian school. On the one hand, of course, it would be natural that there was a joint educational system, and then there would be no problem with integration, so that all children go to an Estonian school, they all grow up and there is going to be one society [üks ühiskond]. On the other hand, of course, [laughs] what a pity to lose such a rich culture. When parents make their choice in terms of where to put their child, this is where the stakes are [see on see küsimuse koht]. But at the same time it is very important to have options. Whether you give your child to an Estonian school, a Russian school or a school that uses language immersion. This [freedom of choice] is definitely a plus.

And you gave your child to a Russian school?

Yes.

Well, in Latvia, it was the protest against [the reforming of] schools that mobilized [Russian-speaking] people and it happened much earlier [than in Estonia]. In this sense, when I was still in the U.S. and started to deal with this topic, I wondered why the same has not happened in Estonia or is it happening now with a slight delay?

If one looks at it generally, then of course it is logical that there is the Estonian school and that’s it, but if on a personal level, then of course one would want that there was… [laughs] At the end of the day, every person has a limit for language. Only one language can be learned to perfection [täiuslikult ära õppida] and there are very many examples of people, who already don’t know how to speak Russian as beautifully as one should [nii ilusti nagu peaks]. But in Estonian, too, they don’t grasp this language as deeply [ei saa sellest keelest nii sügavalt aru] and you end up with a person who knows [ei oska] no language. This is the biggest concern.
Could it be that this is a transitional problem in the sense that once this reform is completed and schools acquire a certain experience of teaching a particular proportion of subjects in Estonian, this situation will somehow even out?

Maybe so, but here of course we have the problem of cadres. If more Estonian persons [eestimõjusid] came to teach in Russian schools, there would be more use of this reform and it would go quicker and more successfully because if a Russian person, no matter how well she/he speaks Estonian, teaches something in Estonian to Russian persons, this is a little bit… unnatural, let’s put it this way. If an Estonian person comes to teach in Estonian, this is useful. It should go in this direction and not in the direction where we prepare Russian teachers, so that they would teach in Estonian, but rather that young [Estonian] people would want to come to Russian schools.

What do you think, has the willingness of young people increased over time (…)?

(…)

I don’t know (…) But all in all, people [laughs] don’t really want to go to [work in] schools. I don’t know how it is in Estonian schools, but teachers in Russian schools tend to be old. This new generation could consist of Estonian people.

Interview C, recorded in a downtown café in October 2010; the interviewee’s (25-30 years old) parents came to Estonia from Ukraine during the Soviet era and would sometimes speak Ukraine to each other but the common language in the family was and is Russian.²⁷³

What is it that makes your theatre studio a Russian studio? It is the language or that you are interested in Russian authors?

No, it is mostly language (…) Not only, um, Russian authors though recently it has just happened so that we do Russian things [productions based on texts by Russian authors]. It is Russian in the sense that the performances are in Russian. So that the culture, precisely Russian culture would be preserved. Very many Russian people [vene inimesed] don’t know how to speak Russian. They don’t use the opportunities provided by the Russian language. Even in schools they teach Russian on a very low level. So very many concessions are being made currently in the sense that you can say a word in this way or

²⁷³ See chapter 2 on migration within the Soviet Union and how it contributed to the emergence of two distinct language-based life-words in Soviet Estonia; also, chapter 4.
that way, according to laws that is [i.e., official recommendations and regulations for language use], but this old Russian language, let’s put it this way [laughs], it is beautiful and correct. Precisely this is what one would like to preserve more so that the Russian people living here would know the Russian language, too.

*But these Russian schools here in Estonia, the level of Russian taught there is weak?*

I see it by looking at people, how they write, for example, I see how many mistakes are being made. I don’t know how Estonians write, because I make very many mistakes when writing Estonian, especially the word endings, um…

*Oh, this is a difficult matter, nobody really knows...*

Maybe Estonian people make many mistakes too, which is a pity and this is something that could be improved. Okay [okei], we live in Estonia but if Russian is, like, our own language [*meie oma keel*], our culture, one would want to preserve it too. This is the way it should be…

*But where does it come from that language seems to be going downhill, so that people speak and write with mistakes?*

Very often people graduate from an Estonian high school, go to an Estonian university. If you study two years for your baccalaureate, two years for master’s degree, this language tends to go away [*siis kipub see keel ära minema*] during these five years. You already think in Estonian if you listen to the Estonian language all the time, write in Estonian, when you go to work, you also speak in Estonian. And, um, one has to read books. One has to educate oneself one the side. Russian people, who live in Russia, it is much easier for them because they use this language all the time. But we have to think sometimes: “Is this the accent? Where do you put this accent?” Because in Estonian, the stress is on the first syllable. But for us [in Estonia], it is more difficult, sometimes you think, what the correct way is, you consult the dictionary or call our stage speech instructor, who knows it very well.

*And you noticed it too that when you were studying in Estonian, then...*

Yes, and it is still easier for me because I read Russian books. Reading in particular helps to preserve it [the language]. But I know many who don’t read and they write so badly [laughs] and, um, this is no longer… They don’t speak Estonian that well and they also don’t speak Russian that well. As if… there is no balance. This is a real pity. One should know at least one language, isn’t it so?
So what do you think in this context about it that the high-school education should switch into Estonian?

I personally think that there should be both Estonian schools and Russian schools. Like, um, everywhere in the world actually. We cannot… Like there are two ends to this matter. You graduate from an Estonian high school, you go to a university, it is much easier for you. But then you go to Russia and speak… Um, you feel yourself like a Russian [tundes ennast nagu venelasena], then you go to Russia and you cannot read well, you are not a good speaker of Russian, this is somehow… weird that… Russian people know Estonian anyway if they study here and work here [Nagunii vene inimesed oskavad eesti keelt, kui nad õpivad siin ja töötavad siin]. Actually it does come to you, it is not that hard. Of course it depends, some cannot learn any languages, not even English or some other language. I don’t know… [sighs] Personally, I would leave some Russian schools as well, like we have it now. We have all sorts of English, French, that you can study in different languages. I would leave [Russians schools] as well. But this knowledge of the Russian language would have to be on a very good level. Um, of course, that of Estonian, too.

But when you go to Russia, how do you feel yourself there?

No, I feel myself very well there because… Russian people [vene inimesed] say that I don’t have an accent whatsoever, that I speak Russian beautifully. But you know, this theatre studio helps as well because I take stage speech lessons and I perform myself. You develop anyway, whether you want it or not. You learn more, you use texts, you read more. You, um, deal with your pronunciation. So, um, in this sense there is no problem at all. I am an educated person [haritud inimene], um, who knows [oskama] Russian and more or less speaks [rääkima] Estonian because, um, it is my language too, actually, I have to speak it and I like Estonian, I have many Estonian friends. (…) I feel myself like an Estonian person who speaks Russian, maybe, because I don’t know, when I go to Russia, I am not a Russian. For them, I am not a Russian at all.

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274 Several schools in Tallinn and Tartu in particular have long traditions in specializing in one particular foreign language. In addition to intensive language learning (sometimes up to 8-10 hours a week), the curriculum usually contains some other subjects taught in this language (e.g., cultural history, literature, and some other subjects (e.g., geography in the Soviet era)). However, these schools are not really comparable to the Russian-language school system because the language of instruction is still Estonian.
Even though you speak Russian beautifully?

I feel that I am a European [eurooplane], I am not a Russian person [vene inimene]. Even how, um, how I conduct myself [käituma], how I talk or even in terms of directing [lavastama], how I stage [performances]. I do not direct like Russian people [vene inimesed], I direct like a European. Or how I dress or...whatever. I have, I have inside me somebody, who rather... I think, rather an Estonian [Mul on ikkagi, mul sees on ikkagi keegi, kes pigem... ma arvan, et pigem eestlane]. Even though I feel that emotion-wise I am Ukrainian... Um, I find different facets in myself [Noh, erinevat külge leian endas]. And when I go to Ukraine, for example, I kind of feel this connection [side] more there. I feel myself like home there even though I would not want to live there, but I feel myself very well there. Not in Russia, maybe because I don’t have relatives there. And Ukrainian people are also very close to me. Maybe because of the family. That I understand their emotions, um, how they behave. Yes.

But, are Ukrainians and Russians different?

They are. And I even cannot tell you why. They are different. I don’t know. It is so, so difficult to understand what actually...[See on nii, nii raske aru saada, mis tegelikult]. That this is such a point, that... Because there are so many people and all of them are different. And you find something, even if I was a Turk, I would find that I have something, some sort of connection with them [other people], isn’t it so [eksju]. Or somebody else, an American, for example. It depends on which society you move in [Sõltub sellest, kus ühiskonnas sa liigud]. Because I went to an Estonian university and in this department we had, um, half, half Estonians, half Russians, but I felt myself Estonian there because [of an earlier training in a different setting dominated by Estonians/an Estonian approach]. There I was surrounded by Estonian people [eesti inimesed]. And, um, this thinking comes from there, this is more like Estonian, Estonian thinking [laughs]. I don’t know, maybe if I lived in Russia, I would maybe think the other way around, I’m afraid. This is a very difficult topic [See on väga raske teema; said very quietly].

Interview D, conducted in Russian in the office of the interviewee (50-60 years old) in downtown Tallinn in June 2011.
I guess it is also when you organize something, it requires so much work and the audience comes and only sees the result but...

Yes, of course, there is always the preparation work, be it a concert, an exhibition, some sort of lecture. (...) These lectures go to schools to fill in blanks in the education of Russian children [русские дети]. Very serious lectures on the history of the Russian community [русская община] in Estonia, cultural figures who came here, how they were tied to Estonia, under what circumstances, what were they doing here. It is very important that people would not forget their roots, their culture, their history. It does not matter where they live, in which country, they must have ground under their feet, a nourishing ground supporting such invisible matters as soul [душа], which in my view is of utmost importance and if the soul is nourished, everything else will work out.

What do you think, what is the situation with the soul of Russian people in Estonia?

(...) On the whole, it seems to be that is not really certain and you see yourself what is going on with Russian education. One can understand both sides. One can understand the state that does not want to finance education in a foreign language. One can understand the people, who work in schools and of course... In my view there always has to be choice in terms of where a person wants to study, in which language. It is not the fault of the children that they were born in this country and that their parents came here or were born here. For example, I was born here, my mother, grandmother, my great-grandmother – all of them have been living here for 200 years. I was educated in my mother tongue and in my view it is a principal matter that a person has to be educated in his [sic!] mother tongue because then he can get it 100%. He can pass it on in any language, but what matters is how he receives it. In order for [high-school] graduates to be well-educated people, they must receive their education in mother tongue. It seems to me.

And to me.

Afterwards you can put it into use in whatever language.

So education is an important issue?

Yes, and this has an effect on the nervous system of the whole society. And many things happened here in the past couple of years that are, in my view, strange [странно], to put it mildly, strange. (...) If people have only material interests, this will bring everything to a closure – development of individuals, development of the society, of the country because one must not think about money only. So that I don’t know what the soul is like
because I work with young people. We have a Russian theatre school, a private one. And young people come there to engage in theatre, they are in grade eight, nine, eleven, some are already 25 years old. They are very badly educated, they are very unknowledgeable, they speak Russian very badly.

And they are from different schools?

They are from Russian schools but speak Russian badly.

Why is that?

Because it is psychological. There is this urge all the time to be in an Estonian environment, to speak the Estonian language. When they graduate from school, they study in universities in Estonian, work in some sort of collective. They even don’t have the correct articulation, they don’t move their mouth in the right way. There are many nuances that a professional [actor] knows. Russian articulation is vertical, Estonian horizontal. And they speak Russian with the Estonian articulation. Their pronunciation is not right. Television plays a great role in this crumbling down of the Russian language. It is not the case that Russian and Estonian would be parallel, even in commercials, but Russian has traces of Estonian, in the word order, for example. This is good neither for the Estonian nor the Russian language. When Russian children hear this, they get certain stereotypes. In my view, they should not translate it all if it is not being done correctly. There is so much misinformation in this field. Almost every commercial, and they play such a huge role in our lives. Children sit in front of the television for so much of the time. There is a mistake in every ad. It is terrible and young people even don’t react to it. I feel almost physically sick every time I hear it, but they already speak in this way, from the beginning, they speak Russian wrong, they don’t use the words correctly. Terrible!

And probably they don’t know themselves they are not speaking correctly?

Of course not. And the strangest thing is that nobody is saying anything about it. Parents are busy earning money, teachers are afraid or busy with paperwork or go to courses of their own, but children grow up to be unknowledgeable. And the strangest thing is that they are no longer Russians but also not Estonians. In my view this is simply a catastrophe because a person has to be somewhere in terms of his inner condition, with his thinking [мысль], his mentality, his roots, his spirituality. He has to be in one place. From there… any tree, with roots in soil, the tree can grow in any direction and swing,

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275 This is not the same theatre studio as the one mentioned in the previous interview.
but it stands in one place. In this sense, the generation that grew up here [in the Republic of Estonia], it won’t be a particularly good generation for Estonia. And it won’t play the best role in the goals of the country.

Interview E, recorded in a downtown café in July 2010; the interviewee (50-60 years old) worked during the Soviet era as a Russian-language teacher in an Estonian school before embarking on her current career. The following passage was preceded by a discussion of the interviewee’s family history. The interviewee’s mother came from a mixed Estonian-Russian background but the family became Estonianized (eestitus) by virtue of the Estonian father. For the interviewee, however, the influence of father was decisive. The father also came from a mixed Estonian-Russian family and his siblings, the interviewee’s aunts and uncles, came to define themselves as Estonians, whereas he brought up his children to be bilingual and chose a Russian-language school for them despite the opposition of his mother, i.e., the interviewee’s paternal grandmother, who was Russian by birth but had married an Estonian, switched to Lutheranism and become Estonianized (eestistuma).

It went on in this way that I also put my children into a Russian high school, with the Russian language of instruction, but now I am faced with the sad fact that Russian high schools will be liquidated in Estonia. And I don’t know again whether this is a good thing for the Estonian culture generally because Estonian Russians [Eestimaa venelane] have through times constituted something completely unique and interesting and in my view have enriched the Estonian culture. And if you wipe out this Russian school by force,

276 In the Soviet Union, the state “sent” university graduates to work in the field of their specialization. The interviewee studied Russian philology at the University of Tartu and had to subsequently work as a schoolteacher a certain number of years.

277 Eestistuma suggests that the Estonian identity was adopted voluntarily, as a matter of choice, whereas eestisiama refers to coercion to become Estonian, a policy of Estonianization.
leaving perhaps only a couple of private schools, because you have to pay for them and for sure not everybody can afford it, this is clear. And eliminating completely this unique phenomenon that the Estonian Russian is, does this benefit the Estonian culture? I personally doubt whether it is beneficial [kasulik]. Maybe somebody disagrees. But I’m afraid that my grandchildren will already have problems with studying in this Russian school because it simply does not exist. And not because one would not want to give one’s children there, but simply… And Estonians are, of course, very hypocritical and insidious about this whole thing. Why? Because all the time throughout the years politicians and common people argued that why not, Russians schools are there and as long as there are students and people put their children there, so long these schools will be maintained. This is not the case at all. Why? Teachers. This is one question. We know very well that in Estonia, again quietly and insidiously, there is no preparation [of new teachers]. In all subjects, there simply are no teachers being prepared [for Russian-language schools]. These crumbs from [the] Narva [College of the University of Tartu]. I looked into this matter. They run in all sorts of directions only to avoid school. Maybe only a few go to school [to work as teachers]. But in Russian schools there is currently, and in Estonian schools also, the bitter problem that teachers are old, retiring, there simply are not enough teachers. And this is the most painful blow of all, because it is not as if there were not enough children, but there are no teachers. Soon. And then there is nothing else left but to go to the Estonian school, to the Estonian school, to the Estonian school [eesti kooli, eesti kooli, eesti kooli].

And of course, then there is one more problem. I don’t want to be irreverent about Russians who were not born here, who don’t know the [Estonian] language and I never say that they are some kind of enemies to me. They are of the same blood as me and I love them dearly, they are Russians and this is a proud feeling. But I must say that they are doing a disservice²⁷⁸ to us, to people like me, let’s say. Disservice in what way? Let

²⁷⁸ _Teevad meile karuteene_ (Russian: _Медвежья услуга_) – lit. they are doing us a the service of a bear or a service that does more harm than good. The expression comes from a widely known folktale about a bear who befriends a man and one time when the man is asleep, uses a rock to chase away flies and kills his companion (ATU 1586 “a fool kills an insect resting on someone’s head, with catastrophic consequences”) (Uther 2004). La Fontaine has written about this motive as has the Russian poet Ivan Krylov (1769-1844) in his fable “The Hermit and the Bear.” Krylov’s version of the fable contains the line
me explain. They indeed came here from the Soviet Union, I mean, from this big, big [Soviet Union]. And they usually have a lot of relatives all over Russia all the way to Vladivostok. But they want to stay in Estonia because it is a little bit better here, a little bit more kulturnye [культурнее – cultured]. These living conditions here are, you see, salfetochki and stuff like that [points at napkins on the table]. This is very important for them, very important. And then, of course, they are afraid of Estonian authorities [Eesti võimud]. We [Eestima venelased] are not afraid of Estonian authorities at all. They are. Why? Because they don’t know the [Estonian] language. It is not possible for them to be boastful here, to boast or at all to come out. (...) We are sometimes even called the fifth column [by Estonians] even though we are not their fifth column in the classic sense of the word. They [Estonians] say that we are worse than those who came here because we know Estonians too well, we know the Estonian language and we know how things are being done here and we are dangerous. But they, the Soviet ones [Soviet-era newcomers] are not dangerous. And by the way, do you know how these legal citizens [järjepidevad kodanikud, chapter 2] like us... They call those, who have come in from everywhere [sissetulnud igalt pooll], in here and there and everywhere, sovetskye. There is this term. Sovetskye [lit. Soviets]. People who don’t really have these roots [kellel eriti ei ole neid juuri]. We have roots, they are so immensely strong and so deep and far into the soil of Pskov that were are in there inside it with our blood and our flesh. But they [sovetskye] are not. And they are cowardly, they are afraid of the Estonian authorities. Как бы вы не сделали. They will put their children into an Estonian school, they will change their surnames to an Estonian name, they will become completely Estonianized

“Услужливый дурак опаснее врага” – “An obliging fool is more dangerous than a foe” (Serov 2005). Hence, the interviewee was implicitly describing sovetskye as fools whose obligingness is doing a disservice to themselves as well as to “Estonian Russians” – people who could protect their interests.

279 A city on the coast of the Sea of Japan.
280 It is worth noticing how the interviewee refrains from using words like immigrant or migrant, even though sissetulnu, lit. somebody who has come in (sisse tulema – to come in, enter), describes the same phenomenon and indicates a sense of borders and the crossing of borders but lacks the connotations of legal restorationism and the narrative of occupation.
281 The Pskov Oblast in Russia shares a border with Estonia and following the Tartu Peace Treaty signed in 1920 between the Soviet Russia and the Republic of Estonia, parts of Pskov were united with Estonia but belong now again to Russia.
[eestistuma] and yet they will never become Estonianized in this good sense as we have become because never will they start speaking Estonian. Never will somebody like that understand the Estonian culture in the same way as we do because it will remain strange to him/her [sest ta jääbki talle võõraks tegelikult].282 I know these people. They will remain strangers [to the Estonian culture]. But if you look at the surface, they are pioneers, they try. They try so very hard. They put, I tell you, children into an Estonian kindergarten, into an Estonian school. They take a new name. And yes, this does a disservice to us because Estonians see them and [tell us]: “What do you want from there? What do you want [Mis sina siin hüppad? Mis sa hüppad? – lit. what are you jumping around here?] Look! Look!” My own aunt (...) told me to my face “Listen, you should really be ashamed of yourself. Looking at everything, language, relatives and like that. Look, I have this acquaintance, who is from Leningrad and came to live here in Estonia, but you see, she has already almost acquired the Estonian language. She wants it, she wants it! Her children go to an Estonian school, she wants it.283 What’s the matter with you all the time? You don’t like this and that, the attitude is not right, you are not allowed here and there they are not doing it right. Why are you like this?” I try to explain then, like I’m explaining to you right now, that there are such things here… That one has to simply… The moment of respect. The moment of respect for another culture. It’s not

282 The expression used by the interviewee (sest ta jääbki talle võõraks tegelikult) could be translated in both ways: sovetskye remain strangers to the Estonian culture and the Estonian culture remains alien to sovetskye.

283 I am hereby reminded of another interview I conducted with a leader of a Russian cultural organization in Tallinn; the interviewee also had a day job, working as a teacher in a Russian-language school. However, the topic of the school reform did not come up in our conversation. The interview was conducted in Russian.

“*You were born here in Estonia?*

No. I have an interesting fate. I myself was born in the Volgograd oblast [in the southern part of European Russia, shares a border with Kazakhstan, which is on the border of Europe and Central Asia] but it so happened that my parents came here [Estonia] and brought me here. I was already 7-8 years old. We came in the Soviet era, some time in 1978-79. We maintained contacts with our relatives in Volgograd and also studied culture there (...). After graduation from this college, I went to a university. And after graduation I was in love with Tallinn, a city that I could have never imagined I would return to. (...) Sometimes I think that I was invited [to return]. Because of all this I even cannot say where my home is, here and there and I’m always in-between, in-between. But my child already goes to an Estonian school. Everything as it should be [все, как положено].”

Interview on June 9, 2011.
simply that you sit here in Estonia and have respect for Georgian culture, Russian culture, the Russian balalaika. You have to let it go through your heart somehow, I mean, so that you understand that they live here next to you. They are here. There’s nothing one can do because they are here. What to do, they are here. It is better to understand and try to cope with it in some normal way rather than simply Estonianize them or start forcing these things on people: “You must! You must! You must!” No, I absolutely don't. And I owe nothing to anybody. I am in my own land [maa]. It is my land just as much as it is that of any old Estonian. What else did you want to know about?

In all four interviewees there is a tension between permanence and variation or change with the Russian-language school serving as an anchor that is further tied to Russian language and culture. The condition of being anchored or rooted is regarded as the precondition for having a full and coherent personality, which in turn is the precondition for leading a meaningful and productive life. At the same time, this condition is not a given, but is brought about by making concrete choices with parents making choices on behalf of their children. Choices that can be made depend on the society and ultimately the state – more specifically, they depend on choices and decisions made by policymakers. It follows from this, for example, that the Russian-language education is not sustainable unless the state invests in the preparation of teaching staff and find means of enticing Estonians to work in Russian-language schools.

Consequently, all four interviewees described themselves in rather essentialist terms as “Russian persons,” but at the same time they were painfully aware of the fact that their children or grandchildren might not be able to claim this same identity because of the steps taken – or not taken – by the Estonian state regarding Russian-language schools.
While the children of D and E are already adults and “safe,” the child of B fairly recently started a Russian-language school. The interviewee had made this choice despite recognizing the uncertain future of Russian-language basic schools (grades 1-9) in the near future and admitting that opting for an Estonian school would have solved some of the problems (e.g., the “unnatural” situation where “Russian persons” teach “Russian persons” in Estonian).

It is interesting in this respect that it was B who introduced the topic of the Russian school in response to my question about the need for legislations that would regulate the relationship between the state and minorities. B did not support the idea of laws that would distinguish between inhabitants of Estonia based on their ethnicity because this would work against integration or cohesion, but instead of stopping there, went on to say: “for me as a Russian person, the question of the Russian school is a very burning one because my child goes to a Russian school.” The interviewee further juxtaposed the “one society” (üks ühiskond) to be achieved by means of the school reform with the loss of “such a rich culture,” i.e., the loss of culture of “Russian people” in Estonia, and emphasized the importance of having the freedom of choice as a parent, which includes the freedom to choose a Russian-language school. When I tried to pursue this topic further and asked about it directly (“And you gave your child to a Russian school?”), assuming that this is what the interviewee wanted to talk about and expecting to hear an explanation, I received a very brief answer (“Yes”), followed by a pause. When I then tried to take the conversation back to a more general level, referring to the analogous
reform in Latvia and popular reactions to it, the interviewee felt again comfortable or safe to continue expressing personal views on the Estonian reform and its downsides, essentially ignoring my question about the reasons for why the criticism was so late in coming in Estonia. B, a former teacher, drew attention to the reluctance of Estonians to teach in Russian schools, but balanced this criticism by pointing out that young people in general are not interested in working as teachers. The reform was unlikely to yield desired results any time soon, producing instead young people who “know no language.”

All in all, based on the manner we were able and unable to talk about “the question of the Russian school” with B, it seemed to me that this matter could not be discussed directly even though it was a question of great personal significance for the interviewee. Though B never used this word, “the question of the Russian school” is also a question about rights and the rights of individuals are determined in the law – which is what I had asked about and it was this question that prompted B to bring up the school reform. The freedom of choice – the freedom to choose a particular kind of school for one’s child – is also a right to choose and B emphasized the importance of having this choice or right. From what I understood, B had used this right as a parent and chosen a Russian school in order to stay in the same linguistic and cultural realm with the child and also to do one’s best to secure that the child would “learn one language to perfection,” “speak it as beautifully as one should” and “have a deep grasp of it.”
D, like B, pointed out that the goal of a linguistically uniform education system was understandable from the point of view of the state and underlined the significance of having a choice. However, D and E both openly expressed the view that the linguistic homogeneity achieved by means of the education reform would be skin-deep and doubted whether it would benefit the Estonian state and society. D, a practicing Russian Orthodox, seemed to have a rather specific spiritual approach. While I might have evoked or encouraged it by asking about “the state of soul of the Russian people in Estonia today,” the wording of my question drew on the vocabulary and reasoning used by the interviewee, who had said: “It does not matter where [people] live, in which country, they must have ground under their feet, a nourishing ground supporting such invisible matters as soul, which in my view is of utmost importance and if the soul is nourished, everything else will work out.” In the view of D, this nourishing ground and roots were to be provided by mother-tongue education, literally the language of one’s parents (“It is not the fault of the children that they were born in this country and that their parents came here or were born here”; “In order for [high-school] graduates to be well-educated people, they must receive their education in mother tongue”). Policies that overlook this “nourishing ground” are accordingly symptomatic of a society where money and material interests have taken priority over immaterial values – matters that are invisible but “of utmost importance,” affecting directly “the nervous system of the whole society.”

D claimed to be understanding of parents who are immersed in work, in the earning and making of money, and of teachers who are busy learning the language themselves or
afraid, an argument that will be looked at more closely in the next chapter. At the same time, the interviewee criticized this situation for it was due to this lack of attention from adults that the children were growing up ignorant (“And the strangest thing is that nobody is saying anything about it”). Similarly, the wish of the Estonian state to unify the education system – or any other attempt at modernization and enhancement – is understandable but also unethical to the extent that it puts money first at the expense of people’s well-being. Moreover, the Estonian integration policy could be criticized for the same reasons to the extent that, as I discussed in the beginning of this chapter and elsewhere in this study, Estonian policymakers conceive of integration in terms of enhancing personal competitiveness and thereby also the competitiveness of the Estonian state. It follows from this the Russian-language education system becomes an obstacle to cohesion/competitiveness, whereas the pressure to learn and speak Estonian and apply for Estonian citizenship is simultaneously a pressure to improve one’s chances on the job market – and ultimately to earn more money. According to D, this focus on money is bound to bring the development of the society to a halt and provoke a backlash, and the interviewee seemed to regard the “strange” things that have been happening in Estonia over the past couple of years, including, presumably, the incident in spring 2007, as symptomatic of this focus on the material and negligence of the immaterial or invisible.

D used the tree and roots metaphor to illustrate the significance of native-language education to the development of a person and, by extension, the society. Education is part of what gives the person “a place” and “(f)rom there, any tree, with roots in soil, the tree
can grow in any direction and swing, but it stands in one place.” Russian children growing up in the Republic of Estonia are according to this view in the process of losing the place of their own and becoming rootless: “they are no longer Russians but also not Estonians.” The fourth interviewee or E also employed the trope of roots and associated rootlessness with a state of ignorance and materialism. However, for E, the ground nourishing the roots was not only the metaphorical ground of native language and education received in one’s mother tongue, but also soil in the sense of place and geography. Unlike other interviewees (at least D could have made the same claim but did not), E distinguished between indigenous Estonian Russians or Eestimaa venelased, whose roots are in the local soil, and sovetskye or “people who have come in” (sissetulnud; cf. footnote 281 above) to Estonia from “the big, big” Soviet Union and lack roots. Hence, whereas D used the criticism of materialism primarily to criticize the post-Soviet Estonian state and society (rootlessness results from certain kinds of policies), for E it was also a means of distinguishing between different kinds of Russians in Estonia (rootlessness as a distinctive feature) and explaining their different relationship to the state and the government. E, too, was concerned that the withering away of the Russian-language school was going to wipe out Estonian Russians (lack results from state policies), but argued that the adaptation strategies employed by sovetskye were conducive to the school reform and other policies that limit the choices available to Russians and Russian speakers in Estonia.
E described *Eestimaa venelased* as Russian people who are *from* Estonia and “Estonianized in a good sense,” i.e., in the sense of knowing the language, understanding the Estonian culture and Estonians while also constituting a unique phenomenon of their own. They are distinct from but not strangers to people and things Estonian and because they are “in their own land,” they are according to E in a position to make claims: “I owe nothing to anybody. I am in my own country. It is my land just as much as it is that of any old Estonian.” People whom B described as *sovetskye*, on the other hand, lack this ground in Estonia – or any ground anywhere – and hence also the footing to criticize, make demands or even negotiate. According to E, their wish to become Estonianized and Estonianize their children comes in part from fear, which in turn emerges from their lack of knowledge of the local context and language. “The people who have come in” are now eliminating the external, audible and visible, markers of their separateness (Russian name, language) without nevertheless developing an understanding of the Estonian culture. Hence, despite blending in seemingly, *sovetskye* remain strangers to the Estonian culture and the Estonian culture remains beyond their reach. Moreover, the docility of *sovetskye* restricts the ability of *Eestimaa venelased* to criticize the official policies and participate in decision-making processes on a par with Estonians. Being an *Eestimaa venelane* or *sovetskye* is thus a matter of taste as well as of profound value statements and choices.

Based on how E put it, the rootlessness of *sovetskye* is evidenced, among other things, by their admiration for things that *look* good and make those surrounded by or using these
Things look better, more cultured (ku’lturveyee) and thus more respectable—tablecloths, napkins, cozy cafes and other indicators of “good life” that in the Soviet era made the Baltic republics look more Western and set them apart from many other parts of “the big, big” Soviet Union. At the same time, these “people who have come in” do not care about the culture or are not capable of seeing culture in what they are losing or giving up by sending their children to an Estonian-language kindergarten or school or by taking an Estonian name. Culture in this latter sense is built up over time and involves knowledge of literature, music and cultural history—hence the importance of having a full circle of Russian-language education from kindergarten to high school, from Russian fairy tales to Pushkin and Tolstoy. In the very beginning of the interview E explained to me:

Dad’s holy duty was… He saw it this way and went through all these places with us. Yasnaya Polyana, this is [the estate of] Tolstoy, Turgenev and, of course, Pushkin and Mikhailovskoe [the estate of his mother near Pskov]. We went through all these places and by the time you went to school, you were already so intertwined… You became totally immersed. You were so inside it, you could put it this way. And this idea that you would go to an Estonian school and start reading and studying these things in Estonian, this whole idea was alien even to little children actually.

E’s use of different ideas about culture and culteredness to distinguish between different kinds of Russians in Estonia is akin to the distinction between “the intelligent Russian” and “the Russian of Lasnamäe” established and used by one of the interviewees in chapter 4, who remarked critically that “(t)he Russian of Lasnamäe would rather buy a 600-kroon ticket to a pop concert than a theatre ticket” (see pp. 285). Looked at from this perspective, sovetskye and “the Russian of Lasnamäe” appear to be the same phenomenon or collective person, a product of the Soviet regime as seen by individuals
who define *themselves* through their roots, steadiness, values and ability or right to criticize the authorities, all of these factors being mutually reinforcing. Moreover, in both cases, rootedness and rootlessness are presented as immutable essences: *sovetskye* remain aliens despite doing what looks like putting down roots and “the Russians of Lasnamäe” prefer pop music to Chekhov even it they could afford going to the theatre.

It is furthermore worth noticing that the concept of *sovetskye* tallies with Estonians’ reproachful descriptions of people who moved to Estonia during the Soviet era.²⁸⁴

²⁸⁴ Consider, for example, the following description of “hyper-adjustable population” by the Estonian demographer Luule Sakkeus from the late 1990s: “The [Soviet] policy favored migration, especially by means of offering material rewards, and primarily got on the move groups of people with a heightened consumerist inclination as well as an inhibited feeling for homeland [*kodumaatunne*]. People like this tend to feel themselves at home anywhere where the material conditions are only slightly better or where there are other conditions they deem important. Hyper-adjustability means precisely the ability to adjust rapidly to consumption opportunities. Even though the social policy of the Soviet Union favored migration from one place to another one and thus hyper-adjustability, this consumerist section of the population is usually incapable of achieving anything anywhere. What makes Estonia special is that it has developed into a concentration point for these groups of people from various hinterlands. Albeit usually apt to move on to new “hunting grounds,” they stayed around upon restoration of independence, waiting to see what the change might offer. Precisely this part of the population uses the various benefits of the resettlement policy [see chapter 2] in its own interests (including retaining a place of residence in Estonia), whereas it has no intention of settling back. However, having said that, this does not mean these people might not be among the first ones to resettle to countries where new consumption opportunities are being offered should there be a concurrence of circumstances” (Sakkeus 1999, 320-321). Since then and especially since Estonia joined the EU in 2004, there has been – and continues to be – a significant outmigration of people from Estonia, irrespective of their ethno-linguistic background or training (e.g., nurses and bartenders as well as doctors. It would the topic of another study to compare discourses used by Estonians to describe the settlement of people to Estonia during the Soviet era and the settlement of people from Estonia to West in the Republic of Estonia; also, how these people are described in Finland, Ireland, Norway and other countries receiving immigrants from Estonia and elsewhere.
However, whereas “the Russian of Lasnamäe” is an ethnic other, sovetskiye are co-ethnics and E was sure to make this clear to me before making the distinction between the indigenous Estonian Russians and “the people who have come in”: “I don’t want to be irreverent about Russians who were not born here, who don’t know the language and I never say that they are some kind of enemies to me. They are of the same blood as me and I love them dearly, they are Russians and this is a proud feeling.” Thus, on the one hand, the interviewee’s argumentation resembled the one put forward by Will Kymlicka and other scholars of minority rights who have used indigenousness or rootedness as the basis for distinguishing between different minority groups (Kymlicka 1995, see also chapter 5). At the same time, the Estonian case and E’s interpretation of it imply that indigenousness is a slippery basis for both differentiations and rights: the so-called homeland minorities and “people who have come in” can be “of the same blood” and, moreover, it is the submissiveness of the latter that is seen to restrict the range of meaningful choices available to the former – and eventually both. As E argued, it is precisely the people who belong and cannot be coerced into silence or the Estonian language who constitute the “problem” from the perspective of exclusivist nationalist policies. To continue this line of reasoning, even if it means getting awfully cynical, it could be argued that the Estonian policymakers have benefited over the past twenty years from having a large “other-language” population.

The second interview with C provides an interesting point of comparison, not least because C represented a different generation: 25-30 years old, this person was the same
age as the children of D and E. Moreover, the parents of this interviewee had moved to Estonia from the rural Ukraine, i.e., “from this big, big Soviet Union,” in the late 1970s and had become integrated into the Russian-language life-world, choosing to speak Russian rather than Ukrainian to their children.\textsuperscript{285} However, the family did \textit{not} live in a major center with a substantial Russian-language population and services and the interviewee’s mother, for example, learnt to speak Estonian quickly because of her profession.\textsuperscript{286} C graduated from a Russian-language high school in hometown and later from an Estonian-language university in Tallinn, holding on the side various jobs where both Estonian and Russian were required. We did not discuss this matter, but somewhere on the way the interviewee must have applied for and received Estonian citizenship.

Though C was done with high school before 2007, i.e., before the transition to the Estonian language of instruction began in earnest, in many other ways this interviewee was living the life that D described as “this urge all the time to be in an Estonian environment, to speak the Estonian language. When they graduate from school, they study in universities in Estonian, work in some sort of collective.” Whereas D and E saw this situation as a form of pressure or coercion, it seemed to be a fact of life for C and the interviewee had been shaped by these conditions: “I am an educated person, who knows Russian and more or less speaks Estonian because it is my language too, actually, I have

\textsuperscript{285} See chapter 1 on Soviet nationality policy and the linguistic and ethnic re-identification. See also chapter 5 on discussion of the Russian-language school as a means of continuous Russification in post-Soviet Estonia.

\textsuperscript{286} “Dad is in the construction industry and he kind of had no need [for the Estonian language]. Um, he knows it and understands but he doesn’t speak as beautifully as mom does, for example.”
to speak it and I like Estonian, I have many Estonian friends.” At the same time, similarly to all the other interviewees, C was observing the harmful effects of this reality on the Russian language spoken by Russian people in Estonia: “Very often people graduate from an Estonian high school, go to an Estonian university. If you study two years for your baccalaureate, two years for master’s degree, this language tends to go away during these five years. You already think in Estonian if you listen to the Estonian language all the time, write in Estonian, when you go to work, you also speak in Estonian” (emphasis added). Like all the other interviewees, C described disapprovingly Russians who no longer “speak Russian that well,” cannot read or write properly and overall are not very knowledgeable about or interested in the Russian culture, but who also “don’t speak Estonian that well.”

The user of this kind of argumentation positions himself or herself as a member of the educated elite. Whereas in the case of D and E such observations were accompanied by criticisms of the government and its integration policy, I could detect no antagonism when talking to C. Rather, C seemed to be looking at the interwar era for models, emphasizing the role that the educated elite played back then in the preservation and development of Russian culture in Estonia. This came up in the interview as well as on another occasion when I heard C present on the history of Russian cultural life in Estonia from the interwar years to the present day. C seemed to be transposing current problems to the past, arguing that the main question for Russians in Estonia in the 1920-30s was the “preservation of the identity of the Russian people” (vene rahva identiteedi
säilitamine): back then, Russian people (*vene inimesed*) wanted to preserve their own culture and language in order to stay Russians while living in the Estonian state. In the interview C elaborated on this point when I referred back to the presentation. Similarly to E, C distinguished between Russian people living in Estonia based on their interest or disinterest in theatre, poetry, literature and other forms of what C regarded as culture. Neither C or E – or any other interviewee – used the word class, even though one could argue that they were describing taste differences emerging from class differences.

Whereas E, as was discussed above, linked the ability to appreciate certain kind of culture to rootedness, C, a descendant of Soviet-era settlers, did not provide this kind of comprehensive theory and when I asked about it, claimed to have noticed no differences between Russians who are *from* Estonia (*Eestimaa venelased* represented by E) and those who came during the Soviet era. Instead, C emphasized age – a factor that implicitly brings up the distinction between the Soviet and post-Soviet time: “I only feel generational differences, that those, who are over 50, have a different take on life. I only feel this. (…) Maybe because I'm young and almost everybody around me is young and have already lived in Estonia for long enough [nad on elanud Eestis juba piisavalt kaua].” The argumentation in the following excerpt from my conversation with C does not mentioned age, but it does describe the routines of responsible adult life, juxtaposing them with the expectation that people become more cultured by means of going to theatre and developing themselves. Moreover, the interviewee juxtaposed Russians’ ignorance of

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287 Field notes fall 2010.
theatre with Estonians’ habit of going to the theatre, reiterating the differentiations made in chapter 4 (“Interesting, why is it that Estonians are so into Chekhov, why time and again somebody produces Uncle Vanya or The Seagull?”):

We [our theatre studio] would like that this Russian community [vene ühiskond – presumably translation from русская община] started going to the theatre because they [Russians] very rarely go to the theatre. To offer them this language and to preserve this culture so that they would develop, develop themselves [areneks, et nad arendaks ennast]. I know very many people who only go to work, maybe stop by at a shop on their way home, to work and back home. They don’t go anywhere and then this level of educatedness [harituse tase], this level goes down and we would like that there was this elite around, that there would be cultured people [kultuursed inimesed]. But I know that among Estonian, for the Estonian people it is more like a habit, isn’t it. Estonian people go to the theatre a lot more. And they, they don’t need to be retrained [neid ei ole vaja ümber õpetada].

The culturedness C wished to foster is, again, not the culture of tablecloths and napkins but the immaterial culturedness of theatre and literature. Unlike D, who claimed that sovetskje or “the people who have come in” would never change, C seemed to believe in the possibility of “retraining” people described as members of the “Russian community,” so that there would be “this elite around” and so that they would be more like or on a par with Estonians.

No matter how one defines the relationship between elite and Estonians, the starting point of C was different from that of the other interviewees, especially D and E. All in all, C came across as the kind of young person envisioned in the integration strategy – beyond the language barriers, actively involved in the Estonian society, eager to preserve “one’s
own” culture, open to things and people Estonian as well as to Europe. Most importantly in the context of this chapter, it was from this somewhat privileged position of a well-integrated bilingual young professional that C called for the preservation of Russian-language schools. In the view and experience of C, graduation from a Russian-language school did not deprive one of equal opportunities, whereas the current policy of mixing Estonian and Russian was having a detrimental effect on the Russian language and thus on the Russian culture in Estonia as well as on the position of Russians in the Estonian society. C’s detailed observations on language (mis)use were very similar to the critical comments made by D. Both interviewees were engaged in theatre and as D put it, “there are many nuances that a professional knows. Russian articulation is vertical, Estonian horizontal. And they [young Russians] speak Russian with the Estonian articulation.”

All four interviewees used the “level” of one’s Russian language as an indicator of education and knowledgeablebility: there is the norm or concept of the beautiful Russian language and any speaker can be estimated or ranked based on how close he or she gets to this ideal. All interviewees also pointed out that the partial transition to the Estonian language of instruction had already widened the gap between this ideal and the actual linguistic practice, giving rise to people, who, in the words of B, “don’t know how to speak Russian as beautifully as one should.”

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288 “Russian people know Estonian anyway if they study here and work here. Actually it does come to you, it is not that hard. Of course it depends; some cannot learn any languages, not even English or some other language.”

289 C: “So very many concessions are being made currently in the sense that you can say a word in this way or that way, according to laws that is, but this old Russian language,
language exists independently of its users and is worthy of preservation for its own sake, which, as I argued in chapter 4, is one of the ideas driving Estonian cultural nationalism (e.g., the Native Language Day). In both cases, language is endowed with an objective reality or object-like qualities and native speakers of this language become responsible for its wellbeing: as Eva Piirimäe has put it, people become servants of the language (Piirimäe 2008).

It also follows from this kind of thinking that the crossing of linguistic boundaries – which cannot really be separated from the mixing of peoples – poses a threat to the beauty or purity of language. Urmas Sutrop, the director of the Estonian Language Institute, has described integration as the greatest enemy of the Estonian language (Filippov 2008), explaining that the addition of several hundred thousand non-native speakers to the small circle of Estonian-speakers is bound to alter the grammatical and speech-sound structure of the Estonian language and “when this starts to crumble down, the language will quickly collapse” (Sutrop 2008).290 One of the interviewees discussed

let’s put it this way, it is beautiful and correct. Precisely this is what one would like to preserve more so that the Russian people living here would know the Russian language, too”; “we live in Estonia but if Russian is, like, our own language, our culture, one would want to preserve it too. This is the way it should be.”

290 In the same essay, Sutrop called for “an analysis of dangers” emanating to the Estonian language from integration: “Authors of integration programs should ask themselves what is the price that we [ethnic Estonians?] are willing to pay for the social cohesion of the society and for the right of the Estonian [eestlase õigus] to use in his/her own country only the Estonian language? What kind of Estonian language are we going to hand down to our grandchildren?” (Sutrop 2008, which was an elaboration on the interview given by Sutrop on the Native Language Day (Filippov 2008). For a critical response, see Raud 2008; on language as the source of social cohesion, see the beginning of this chapter; on the Native Language Day, see chapter 3.
in this subchapter made a similar point, arguing that bilingual TV-ads contribute to the “crumbling down of the Russian language”: the two languages are not parallel or separate, but “Russian has traces of Estonian, in the word order, for example. This is good neither for the Estonian nor the Russian language. When Russian children hear this, they get certain stereotypes. In my view, they should not translate it at all if it is not being done correctly.”

Overlaps of this kind confirm the argument put forward earlier in this study that Estonian nationalists and minority activists share some common ground that is instrumental in the implementation of the integration policy and its essentializing take on cultural pluralism (see discussion in chapter 5). Both objectify cultures and languages, also as a means of talking about interethnic interactions, i.e., about relationships between peoples of different ethnic background.

The objectifying take on language appeared to be particularly strong in the case of C, the youngest interviewee, who described also personal efforts to achieve and preserve a beautiful Russian language. As a performer, this person was doubly self-conscious, but I would like to suggest that this preoccupation with language has also something to do with C’s multifaceted and fluid sense of self. Whereas the other three interviewees

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291 For example, “one has to read books. One has to educate oneself one the side. Russian people, who live in Russia, it is much easier for them because they use this language all the time. But we [Russian people in Estonia] have to think sometimes: “Is there an accent? Where do you put this accent?” Because in Estonian, the stress is on the first syllable. But for us, it is more difficult. Sometimes you think, what the correct way is, you consult the dictionary or call our stage speech instructor, who knows it very well.”
described themselves rather consistently as “Russian persons,” basing this claim on the primacy of the Russian language and thence the Russian-language education (e.g., “a person has to be somewhere in terms of his inner condition, with his thinking, his mentality, his roots, his spirituality. He has to be in one place. From there, any tree, with roots in soil, the tree can grow in any direction and swing, but it stands in one place”), for C language was only one basis for identification out of many, all of which were rather detached from each other. C started with a self-description along the lines of Soviet passport nationality: “both of my parents are actually from Ukraine. I am not Russian, I am not Estonian. If one thinks of nationality, in terms of where I am from.” The interviewee went on to identify with the Russian language (“One should know at least one language, isn’t it so?”) and claimed to be capable of passing for a native in Russia (“I feel myself very well [in Russia] because Russian people say that I don’t have an accent whatsoever, that I speak Russian beautifully”) but only in terms of language: “I feel myself like an Estonian person who speaks Russian, maybe, because I don’t know, when I go to Russia, I am not a Russian. For them, I am not a Russian at all.” And then: “I feel that I am a European [eurooplane], I am not a Russian person [vene inimene]. Even how I conduct myself, how I talk (...) I do not direct [performances] like Russian persons [vene inimesed], I direct like a European. Or how I dress or. Whatever. I have, I have inside me somebody, who rather… I think, rather an Estonian [eestlane]. Even though I feel that emotion-wise I am Ukrainian.”

Cf. the opinion expressed by D: “a person has to be somewhere in terms of his inner condition, with his thinking, his mentality, his roots, his spirituality. He has to be in one
These claims testify to a sense of identification as an ongoing context-dependent process involving feelings, actions, and thinking. Looking at C’s self-description, it seems as if the elements of Soviet passport nationality/ethnicity have become dispersed among different territories and/or nationalities: language from Russia and a Russian-language school in Estonia, emotions or national character from Ukraine, which is also the homeland in an imaginary or inherited sense – because this is where the parents of C come from, one can be neither Estonian nor Russian (Ma ei ole üldse venelane, ma ei ole üldse eestlane). Last but not least, professionally C claimed to have a thinking that comes from being around Estonians. Hence, a person who is Russian in Estonia – a native speaker of Russian – becomes somebody else in Russia, despite the beautiful language, but cannot pass for an Estonian in Estonia because of the language. In this situation, Europe seems to be becoming a way out: one becomes European if one cannot be Estonian but is also not Russian. Hence, European is Estonian minus the Estonian language: one can have “an Estonian inside,” but it comes out – is presented and received – as European. Moreover, it is also not clear in this respect what is the difference between being an Estonian (eestlane) and an Estonian person (eesti inimene) or Russian (venelane) and Russian person (vene inimene). Can somebody, who is not Estonian and cannot become Estonian, nevertheless become an “Estonian person”? 

(place. (…) any tree, with roots in soil, the tree can grow in any direction and swing, but it stands in one place.”

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Existing Separately and Together

None of the interviewees seemed to buying the argument put forward in the integration strategy and Estonian education policy that the Russian culture and identity in Estonia could be preserved and developed solely by means of cultural associations or that Russian-language education could be replaced by lessons about Russian language and culture. This was so despite – and probably by virtue of – the fact that some of these individuals were themselves actively involved in cultural associations of national minorities and thus executors of integration policy measures as well as beneficiaries of resources allocated to this end. Moreover, these people knew from their own or their family history that the choice of school – and the freedom or possibility to choose a particular kind of school for one’s child or oneself – had in many cases had a decisive impact on how one came to define oneself and it was in this sense akin to the choice of a spouse or partner, a matter nobody thinks that the state has the right to intervene in. E might have “joined” the Estonian extended family had the father not immersed his children in the Russian culture, much to the dismay of his own mother, who had become Estonianized by marrying an Estonian; the parents of C chose to speak Russian to their children instead of Ukrainian, sent them to a Russian-language school and C now has a strong connection to the Russian language and culture, working in order to preserve it in Estonia. It is, among other things, through the Russian language and culture that C is claiming a place among the elite (one is educated, knows Russian and speaks Estonian).
Correspondingly, the interviewees were either implicitly or explicitly critical of the idea that the education system and school could be defined as phenomena belonging to the sphere of no-culture that is common to everybody in the sense of being dominated by the Estonian language (cf. discussion above). “The Russian school” was in the view of these people a crucial means of preserving and developing the Russian culture in Estonia and they regarded the situation of the Russian language as a barometer of this culture – much like various Estonian actors have used and continue to use the Estonian language to comment on the state of ethnic Estonians nation, Estonian culture and the land more broadly (e.g., the national movement of the late 1980s intertwined environmental arguments with linguistic ones: both the Estonian nature and language were becoming polluted and taken over; see chapter 2).

The conviction that languages are people and that people, like languages, are different is thus accompanied by sensitivity to balance or lack thereof: both people and languages cease to be themselves if the balance is lost or shaken. The maintenance of equilibrium requires respect and collaboration on an everyday basis – it cannot survive on polite attention when the other is on the stage: “It’s not simply that you sit here in Estonia and have respect for Georgian culture, Russian culture, the Russian balalaika. You have to let it go through your heart somehow, I mean, so that you understand that they live here next to you.” To put it differently: one can claim to have respect for the Russian balalaika and at the same time curtail the choices that Russian parents have at their disposal. E argued elsewhere during our conversation that the nationalist “politics drove Estonian people
completely out of their mind” in the early 1990s and, moreover, that there was an immense political pressure on mixed families, oftentimes leading to divorces or, like in the case of E’s extended family, estrangement between close relatives.\textsuperscript{293}

That the point of this whole thing fell apart but the point of this thing was indeed wonderful. Each of us existed in one’s own culture and also together. This was an ideal model. They can say about this Soviet time whatever they want but this is the way it was, this is the way it was. I cannot see how we would have been Russifying [\textit{venestama}, i.e., coerce to become Russian, see p. 69 footnote] those Estonians of ours. For instance, when taking the example of our family, I am talking about all these cousins of mine (…). They studied in Estonian schools during the Soviet era, they received an excellent education from the University of Tartu. I don’t know that anything would be have been wrong with them. They were Estonians. They were Estonians and nobody was Russifying them [\textit{Ma ei tea, mis neid häda oli. Nad olid eestlased, nad olid eestlased ja mitte keegi neid ei venestanud}]. And indeed, Russian was a compulsory subject in Estonian schools and I myself taught Russian in an Estonian school for three years as was required [after graduation], but it was just one subject, not that you were made to study Russian from morning till evening, never. A completely normal Estonian school [\textit{täiesti normaalne eesti kool}], a completely normal Estonian school and I was a Russian teacher there like you currently have English teachers, German teachers and so on. No sign of becoming Russians [\textit{Ei mingit venestumist}, i.e., becoming Russian through one’s own choice or actions]. The same thing with theatres, libraries, whatever. This all existed. Where do you… And if we don’t talk about politics, only talk about culture, what was wrong with a person staying Estonian? I am an Estonian and will remain Estonian.\textsuperscript{294} And maybe they really… This political Soviet stuff was such that some Estonians were themselves, just like these \textit{sovetskye} Russians of ours, who want to turn into Estonians [\textit{tahavad muutududa eestlasteks}]. And those [Estonians] wanted to Russify [\textit{venestuda}].

\textsuperscript{293} This was one of the topics E claimed nobody has studied.

\textsuperscript{294} \textit{Eestlane olen ja eestlaseks jään, kui mind eestlaseks loodi} (“I am Estonian and stay Estonian if I was created Estonian”) – reference to one of the hugely popular patriotic songs of the Singing Revolution. See chapter 2 and also chapter 1 on the Soviet approach to nationality/ethnicity as a category or complex of traits one is born into.
русский, я русский! [I’m Russian, I’m Russian!] I don’t know, the example of Vaino or something.\textsuperscript{295} Maybe there were [people] like that, too. Tell you the truth, I don’t really know [people like that], that massively… This was not the case. Even if you look at our family where there is really all kinds of blood [kus on tõesti igasugust verd]. I didn’t see that our Estonians would have run to become Russians or Jews or what not [et meie eestlased oleks jooksnud nüüd venelasteks või juutideks või kelleks veel].

This depiction of the Soviet era as a time when “Each of us existed in one’s own culture and also together” (Me eksisteerisime kõik igăükks oma kultuuris ja koos) comes across as Soviet nationality policy in a nutshell (see chapter 1) but also as a kind of prestatist paradise or a time before time characterized by mutual respect and perfect reciprocity (“And if we don’t talk about politics, only talk about culture, what was wrong with a person staying Estonian?”). Moreover, the interviewee was using the family as a model for other communities (e.g., school) and the society at large, drawing on personal memories of how things used to be (we, Russians in our family, were not Russifying (venestama) “our Estonians”). According to this view, it was the arrival of nationalist politics and politicians in the early 1990s – i.e., after the Singing Revolution (the school reform was decided upon in 1993) – that brought discord, driving Estonians out of their mind and non-Estonians out of the families, both literally and metaphorically.

Herzfeld has described the “idea of a time when state intervention was unnecessary for the conduct of a decent social life” as “structural nostalgia,” arguing that various social actors from the state to its most lawless citizens employ this model in order to legitimize

\textsuperscript{295} Karl Vaino, the first secretary of the Estonian Communist Party in 1978-1988, whose official nationality was Estonian but who spoke very little Estonian. See chapter 1.
their actions (Herzfeld 2005, 147). One of the crucial features to the definition of structural nostalgia according to Herzfeld is that “the object of this rhetorical longing (…) takes the form of a damaged reciprocity”: the allegedly decayed virtue longed for “always entails some measure of mutuality, a mutuality that has been, perhaps, irreversibly, ruptured by the self-interest of modern times” (Herzfeld 2005, 149). Among other things, this rhetoric of nostalgia obscures the inequalities in these mutual relationships. To go back to the interviewee’s description of the Soviet Estonia, Estonians did not feel a pressure to become Russified (venestu) until they did not try to exit or broaden the area assigned to them and their language by the central government at any given period in time.

At the same time, the model of a society or state where each exists in one’s culture and also together inevitably raises the question of the common core: what it is that holds members belonging to this community together? This was one of the toughest questions facing the Soviet leadership and it is also one of the main challenges of the post-Soviet Estonian state. Estonian integration policy envisions the Estonian language as the source of social cohesion and the unified Estonian-language education system as a source of

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296 Another crucial feature is said to be “replicability in every succeeding generation” (Herzfeld 2005, 149). It could be argued that in the early 1990s in particular, the interwar Republic of Estonia was frequently imagined as a prepolitical home of the nation, especially the silent era when the role of the state and its leader was foregrounded.

297 To bring one example, from some time in the 1970s onwards, all doctoral dissertation had to be submitted and defended in Russian, which brought down the number of doctorates in humanities in particular and especially in folkloristics and literature – fields were scholars work with poetic texts in Estonian (e.g., alliterative old folk songs, a core genre of Estonian folkloristics, are essentially untranslatable). Many folklorists did not receive their doctorates until the 1990s when it was again possible to defend in Estonia.
language skills, but the issues raised in this chapter suggest, language is not enough or not *it*. When I asked E what had held things together in their extended family, the interviewee told me to have given it much thought and suggested that it must have been the paternal grandmother: “this personality held together. This level of personal charisma [*isiksuse tase]*,” adding:

and probably the [Soviet] politics was different, too. At the end of the day, the state sorts these things out [*Ikkagi riik ajab ju need asjad korda lõppude lõpuks*]. This roof, what is it like to live under this roof. What kind of signs [the state] gives you because it gives you some kind of signals all the time. And what kind of signals a person listens to. This is the way it is.\(^\text{298}\)

If the idea of a strong charisma holding things together is carried over into the state, one ends up with a cult of personality and possibly dictatorship. If the idea of the state sending signals is applied to the afore-quoted account of the Soviet era, one can read it as a critique of contemporary Estonia, looking for signals the Estonian state is *not* sending or is sending instead in comparison to the Soviet state in E’s account: the school reform is about Estonianization – *eestistamine* – and deprives Russians of choices and freedoms Estonians themselves could count on in the Soviet Union despite politics. Some other critics of the school reform discussed earlier in this chapter also recalled the principle “treat others how you wish to be treated.” Some of these people would juxtapose Estonian policies with those of the imperial Russia – another rule Estonians claim to have been oppressive but that nevertheless enabled or allowed them to receive education in

\(^{298}\) E continued: “Probably I did not hear the signal that these are [the] right [kind of people] and those are bad and I’m telling you, this crap started in the early 1990s and then I heard things from my relatives that I had never heard from my relatives before. But now I had to listen to these things. This way. And now we are essentially strangers.”
their native language – and also with the interwar Estonian republic, the legal predecessor of the current Republic of Estonia where minorities were provided with exemplary opportunities for mother-tongue education.

To recap some of the other above-discussed arguments regarding the transition of Russian-language schools to the Estonian language of instruction. Many felt that the reform was politically and ideologically motivated and that there was no clear understanding regarding its desired goals, which made it look like an attempt to eliminate Russian-language education in Estonia and to marginalize Russians and Russian-speakers. In this way, to go back to the beginning of this chapter and the Estonian integration model, this actors were also questioning the idea that a formally linguistically uniform education system would enhance social cohesion, especially under circumstances where this linguistic togetherness was to be brought about by teachers for whom Estonian was a foreign language and, moreover, whose ability to teach in Estonian was officially deemed insufficient by the Language Inspectorate – over and over again.

At the same time, both Estonians and Russians had doubts about the ability of Estonian schools – essentially Estonians – to “absorb” Russian students in great numbers and about the prospect of Estonian teachers coming to teach in Russian schools. There seemed to be a shared sense of distinctiveness of the “Estonian people” and “Russian people,” reflected also in concerns expressed over the state of either language. Some Estonians, however, equated this difference with local Russians hostility towards and
distance from Estonia – and, consequently, proximity to Russia instead. Russian activists, on the other hand, were looking for ways to stand up for the rights of Russians and to challenge the education reform by means of Estonian laws. Hence, they were positioning themselves as citizens of Estonia – as members of the polity – exercising their constitutional rights and by doing this, laying a claim to the Estonian state: interpreting its constitution and laws in order to carve out a place for themselves rather than submitting themselves to the interpretation put forward by majority policymakers. When approached from this angle, criticism of the education reform becomes a matter of interpretative authority and suppression thereof – who has the right to create and recreate meanings and who is expected to march along as a polite guest or, as the analysis in the next chapter suggests, risks being accused of burglary by the Estonian Security Police. Moreover, there seems to be an increasing tendency on the part of the government and government institutions to polarize disagreements over government policies in such a way that the difference of opinion becomes a matter of national security and thus something that is to be suppressed and avoided.
Chapter 7: Securitization and Commonality

In April 2012, the Estonian Security Police published its 2011 annual review, where it linked vocal supporters of the continuation of Russian-language education in Estonia to the Russian Federation and its efforts to maintain and increase the Russian influence in the Baltics and elsewhere in the “near abroad.” The report singled out the activities of Tallinn’s deputy mayor Mikhail Kõlvart, though without providing any concrete evidence and the security police later described his inclusion in the review as a prophylactic measure.

My aim in this chapter is to use this incident to elaborate on the argument that the ability of Estonian Russians and Russian-speakers to negotiate the terms of their inclusion in the Estonian society is limited to the extent that by criticizing official policies, they risk being labeled as henchmen of Russia or as burglars, to draw on the metaphor used by one of the interviewees quoted in chapter 5. I suggest furthermore that the security police’s treatment of school reform’s critics’ manifests a broader pattern, habit or tendency to invalidate criticisms of government policies by framing them as an existential threat emanating from the Russian Federation. By means of this framing, domestic issues of common concern are removed from the polyphonic sphere of everyday politics so that they are no longer open to discussion but treated as security problems to be solved by the
government. Consequently, the official point of view becomes a norm and anybody who does not comply, even ethnic Estonians, can be excluded from the realm of things and people defined as Estonian: it is the possibility of Russia’s influence and the possibility of stigmatization and exclusion that is used to keep people in check.

Unlike the previous chapter, which drew on my own fieldwork observations and interviews, the following analysis is based on published texts intended for public distribution and consumption. I will begin with a close reading of the 2011 Annual Review of the Estonian Security Police and by drawing on the concept of “securitization” developed by scholars in the field of security studies, approach the review as a speech act whereby criticisms of government policies are constructed as threats to the constitutional order of the Republic of Estonia. I explore how the security police legitimates its securitizing claims by drawing on the international vocabulary of counterterrorism, creating a sense of ever-present danger. The third subchapter discusses the possible implications of this sense of threat, including the pressure to say the “right” kinds of things or to say nothing at all, which was one of the concerns raised by critics of the annual review in the Estonian-language media. Whereas several commentators drew parallels between the security police’s prophylactic measures and those used by the Soviet regime to silence dissenters, others took over the securitizing and dichotomizing reasoning of the security police. I discuss how the adoption of this kind of argumentation by journalists and representatives of non-profit actors reinforces the existing ethnic hierarchies and, moreover, raises once again questions about the concept and place of the
civil society in post-Soviet Estonia: if the government is framed as the source of the truth, what is the role of non-governmental organizations? The last subchapter draws attention to similarities between the security police’s take on supporters of the Russian school and the government’s interpretation of defenders of the Bronze Soldier monument back in 2007, arguing that both incidents can also be regarded as ultimate efforts to bring about a monolingual public sphere where particular ideas about Estonianness constitute the invisible norm and difference is relegated to culture.

The 2011 Annual Review of the Estonian Security Police

The Estonian Security Police or KaPo (from Kaitsepolitsei)\textsuperscript{299} has been publishing annual reviews since 1998, seeing it as a way to harvest popular support and “to inform the public of possible security threats and risks” (History and goals of the traditional of annual reviews). The reviews are released in Estonian and English, accessible online and tend to receive a lot of media attention. The 2011 annual review published in mid-April 2012 was just under 35 pages long and divided into the following main topics or chapters:\textsuperscript{300} introduction by the director general of the security police; “Defence of Constitutional Order” (9 pages), “Counterintelligence” (2 pages), “Safeguarding of state

\textsuperscript{299} The Security Police, like many other state institutions and the state itself, was re-established and is the legal successor of the Security Police established in 1920. See “Estonian Security Police in 1920-1940” and “Re-Establishment of the Security Police” on the website of the Estonian Security Police.

\textsuperscript{300} The following analysis is based on the Estonian version Kaitsepolitseiamet Aastaraamat 2011 (referred to henceforth as Aastaraamat 2011) and all translations into English are my own. I will occasionally juxtapose the Estonian and the English variant Security Police of the Republic of Estonia Annual Review 2011 (referred to as Annual Review 2011) in order to draw attention to differences in framing, i.e., how something is presented to insiders and outsiders respectively.
secrets” (2 pages, including a full-page illustration), “Prevention of international terrorism” (6 pages, including a full-page illustration), “Fight against corruption” (4 pages) and “70 years since a communist mass murder in Pirita-Kose,” a chapter that commemorates the indictment of Estonian Security Police officers by the NKVD war tribunal in 1941 (2 pages). The following analysis will focus on the first – and by far the longest – chapter, which is dedicated to dangers emanating from the Russian Federation and discusses opposition to the school reform as an instance of “influence action” (mõjutustegevus) aimed at influencing Estonia’s “constitutional order” (põhiseaduslik kord).  

The opening chapter “Defence of the Constitutional Order” begins with a birds-eye image of the 2012 youth song and dance festival on Tallinn Song Festival Grounds: audience, the stage under the song arch filled with singers, and in-between the audience and singers are dancers who have formed the contours of the map of Estonia. The chapter is divided into several subchapters or sections, only three of which are listed in the review’s table of contents: “Extremism,” “Russia’s so-called compatriot policy” and “Russia’s information-based influence action” (Aastaraamat 2011, 3). The first section on

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301 See the introduction on the role of the Estonian state as the protector of the “Estonian nation, culture and language.”
302 See chapter 2 on the tradition of song and dance festivals in Estonia and their role in national movements of both the 19th and 20th century. Since the late 1980s or early 1990s, dance festivals have oftentimes ended with dancers forming the map of Estonia.
303 The table of contents in the English-language version of the review presents a somewhat different selection: “Extremism,” “Russia’s so-called compatriots policy,” “Exploitation of Russian-language gymnasiums” (Annual Review 2011, 3).
extremism begins with the following statement, exemplary of the vague yet
dichotomizing discourse employed throughout the review:

Neither classical right-wing extremism nor left-wing extremism exists in Estonia in an
organized manner. Yet the lack of organization does not mean that there would be no
individuals, who hold extremist views, which under certain circumstances can influence
their behavior. The current task of Security Police is to prevent the import of organized
activities and ideas of extremists operating both East and West of Estonia.

(Aastaraamat 2011, 7.)

The key assumption here is that the Estonian society is essentially homogeneous for it
makes it possible to describe as “extreme” any idea or activity, which – in the
interpretation of the Security Police – comes across as “imported” and threatening.
Throughout the 2011 annual review, “extreme” and “extremist” are used loosely to
describe a variety of individuals, contexts and groups from Estonian-Russian political
activists, “Kremlin-minded elderly people” and organizers of peaceful demonstrations
against the school reform to “Islamic extremist,” “extremist Kurdish groups” and
“extremist Sunnis” in the Middle East. 304 Working backwards from the end of the review

304 For example: “Violent displays of extremism, attempts to alter the existing political
order, separatism and foreign aggression may pose a threat to the state’s constitutional
order and territorial integrity” (Aastaraamat 2011, 7); role of the Internet “in the spread of
extremist ideas and radicalization” (ibid.); “In October, November and December 2011,
Kõlvart organized several with help from the members of extremist organization
Notshnoi Dozor several demonstrations against changes in the language of instruction.
Several dozen students were included in the demonstrations [against the school reform]
by means of extremists, yet the events were nevertheless dominated by individuals well-
known to the Security Police” (pp. 10-11); “mainly elderly people, including many well-
known Kremlin-minded extremists, attended the meeting” (p. 11); “At the inaugural
meeting of MBZ [Mir Bez Natsizma or World Without Nazism] on 22 June 2010, the
well-known extremist from Estonia [name] was elected to the organisation’s presidium”
(p. 13); “To the disappointment of extremists and the Russian media, the event passed off
towards its beginning, extremism equals terrorism equals Islam equals Middle East equals East equals Kremlin equals Russians in Estonia equals anybody who does not agree and comply with this reasoning.305

The same passage goes on to discuss the shootings and bombings in Norway in June 2011 and the incident in Tallinn in August 2011, whereby an armed man, a citizen of Estonia of Armenian descent, entered the building of the Estonian Defence Ministry, opened fire and set off several explosives after which he was shot dead by the police and special forces (Gunman killed after Estonian ministry shooting). According to KaPo, these two incidents “proved once more how extremely [sic] difficult it is to capture the moment at which the extremist views held by an individual escalate into violent deeds” (Aastaraamat 2011, 7). This implies that anybody who holds “extremist views” in KaPo’s

yet again peacefully and without incident” (p. 15, on the annual gathering of Estonian veterans of the German army); “While what happened [the killing of Osama bin Laden] was undoubtedly a significant psychological blow to the grouping, it is nevertheless likely that the loss of leading figures will not put an end to the ideology promoted by Islamic extremists” (p. 21); “This resident of Sweden, wanted internationally by Interpol for supporting an extremist Kurdish group, was released and sent back to Sweden after it became evident that supporting a terrorist crime was not yet considered a crime in Estonia at the time he committed a crime” (ibid.); “The ongoing investigation in Estonia and Lebanon has determined that the kidnapping of [seven Estonian] cyclists [near the Syrian-Lebanese border in March 2011] was planned and carried out by extremist Sunnis” (p. 24).

305 KaPo’s loose use of the term “extreme” evokes parallels with the attempt to prohibit by means of law “public events incompatible” with the official historical narrative (e.g., the prohibition of “public events incompatible with mourning” on June 14, the anniversary of June deportation, and the attempt to forbid “public events incompatible with Resistance Fighting Remembrance Day” on Resistance Fighting Remembrance Day; see chapter 3). In all of these cases, particular actors claim monopoly on definitions of the public, whereas their concern over incompatibility paradoxically undermines these very claims).
interpretation (Kremlin-minded elderly people, organizers of peaceful protests, etc.) is likely to burst into violent actions and requires special attention, which essentially justifies KaPo’s use of preventative measures as well as assessments presented in the annual review.

The next section of the chapter, “Russia’s so-called compatriots policy,” describes the policies of the Russian Federation towards Russian citizens, Russians, and Russian-speakers abroad:

the main goal of this concept [of compatriots] is not the preservation of the cultural connection or invitation to return to the home country [kodumaa] but the manipulation of particular groups in order to influence the sovereign decisions of the state they are based at [asukohariik].

(Aastaraamat 2011, 9.)

The annual review explains furthermore that in the forthcoming years, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs plans to establish and use non-governmental organizations (NGO) or government-organized nongovernmental organizations (GONGO) in order to execute the compatriot policy (Aastaraamat 2011, 10; see also pp. 8-9):

[Russian] Ambassador’s directions [to Russians in Estonia]: what is required is the consolidation of Russian compatriots and the formulation of coordinated positions on the Russian language and especially on the preservation of Russian-language education.

(Aastaraamat 2011, 10.)

306 Cf. the more neutral and generalizing wording in the English version of the review: “Russia’s aim is not to maintain cultural links with these people [compatriots abroad] nor invite them to return to Russia. Rather its goal is to influence the sovereign decisions of other countries” (Annual Review 2011, 8).
Not surprisingly, the next subchapter is titled “Exploitation of Russian-language gymnasiums” (pp. 10-11) and suggests that people who criticize the transition of Russian-language schools to the Estonian language of instruction and have become organized in order to try to change the conditions of the reform (e.g. the above-mentioned organization “Russian school in Estonia”) are doing so because they are following the “ambassador’s directions.” Most notably, the annual review describes initiatives taken by Tallinn’s deputy mayor Mikhail Kõlvart to protest against the reform and links him to the Russian embassy:

> Among the priorities of the influence activity [mõjutustegevus] of the Russian Federation is the preservation of the Russian-language education system and the special status of the Russian language, established as part of the Russification policy of the Soviet Union.\(^{307}\)

The Russian Embassy in Estonia also supports these activities through the coordination council of Russian compatriots’ in Estonia. Remarkable in this connection are the both public and secret contacts of M. Kõlvart with the Russian Embassy diplomat Yuri Tsvetkov, who may be using them to influence and direct Kõlvart.

(Aastaraamat 2011, 11.)

The section on “the exploitation of Russian-language gymnasiums” is illustrated with a series of images of Kõlvart and Tsvetkov in a martial arts training and of the deputy mayor presenting the diplomat with some books. The photos have been taken secretly through the window, which offers the readers a glimpse into KaPo’s working methods, while simultaneously sending them a message that the eyes of the security police are

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\(^{307}\) Cf. the more blunt English explanation: “The Russian-language educational system and the special status of the Russian language were established as part of the Soviet Union’s Russification policy. Preserving them is a priority of Russian influence operations” (Annual Review 2011, 11).
everywhere. The caption of the illustration reads: “Handing over history textbooks to a diplomat of another country is not a crime, but gives rise to unanswered questions” (ibid.).

The photographs along with this cryptic-sounding caption serve as a connector between the “exploitation” of Russian-language schools and the discussion of “Russia’s information-based influence action,” which is the title of the next subchapter. The section discusses Russia’s increasing use of non-governmental organizations and public diplomacy as a means to promote its own interpretation of World War II and to fight what Russia sees as the rehabilitation of Nazism. KaPo explains that Russia’s “angry attacks against Estonia’s and, more generally, Europe’s concept of history make sense because Russian authorities [Venemaavõimud] are reviving with increasing consistency Soviet traditions and historiography” (Aastaraamat 2011, 12). The annual review mentions cases where various Russian actors have denied that the Soviet Union occupied the Baltic republics or belittled the scope of repressions under Stalin (e.g., misinformation regarding how many people were deported from Estonia (see chapter 2; Aastaraamat 2011, 12-13).

The same page contains a rather curious illustration sans any captions or other explanations: nine stills of nine different men being interviewed for the television channel RT (formerly Russia Today), which is owned by the Russian state, has offices in the U.S., India, Israel and many European cities and broadcasts news in Russian, English, Spanish
and Arabic. Among those depicted are Kõlvart, the Finnish pro-Russia activist Johan Bäckman – famous for his critical and controversial views on Estonia, Vadim Poleshchuk from the Legal Information Centre for Human Rights, a non-profit organization established in 1994 with support from Danish human rights organizations, Maksim Reva, whom the Estonian state accused of “organizing” the Bronze Night, and several other individuals representing different organizations, some of which are linked to Russia (e.g., Andrey Zarenkov of the Anti-Fascist Committee of Estonia) and others that clearly are not (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe). Last but not least, the illustration includes an image of Ivar Raig, an Estonian law professor and one of the very few persistent and somewhat vocal EU-skeptics in Estonia. (Aastaraamat 2011, 12.)

308 Bäckman does not recognize Estonian independence and has described the integration policies in Estonia and Latvia as apartheid. He is, together with the Finnish writer and freelance journalist Leena Hietanen, one of the founders of the Finnish Antifascist Committee. Hietanen also argues that there is apartheid in Estonia and the subtitle of her blog “dissident” reads “Thoughts and articles from over the years about the development of Present-day Estonia into one of the least democratic countries of Europe” (Hietanen 2012). For Hietanen and Bäckman, it is the post-Soviet rather than the Soviet era, Present-day Estonia [Nyky-Viro] rather than the Soviet Estonia [Neuvosto-Viro] that stands for rupture and lack of normalcy, an anomalous non-state. Hietanen explains in her blog why she lives in Estonia: “Estonia gives you an excellent view into multiple directions. One can see from Estonia into the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, and into the European Union, mass media’s way of treating east and west as well as into the tsuhna-phenomenon. One understands in Estonia why Russians speak about Estonians and Finns as tsuhna. This is so because the most important characteristic of tsuhna is incredible stupidity” (Hietanen 2012). Чухня – chuhna is linked to чудь – chud, which is an old, partly mythical ethnonym associated with Finnic and also Russian tribes and groups in the Russian European north (Saarikivi 2006, 11-14). It is also a derogatory name used by Russians about Estonians.

309 Maksim Reva and four other individuals were arrested during the events in April 2007 and charged with organizing mass protests. The court found all four to be not guilty (Rand 2009a; see also Rand 2009b and Rand 2009c).
The inclusion of Raig into KaPo’s annual review in this context is bizarre and bewildering because unlike the other eight individuals, he is not known for his views on integration, minority policies or ethnic issues and, moreover, he was actively involved in the restoration of Estonian independence in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Overall, it is not clear – based on the illustration itself – whether or when the images seek to draw attention to individuals, particular organizations or, moreover, views that KaPo deems dangerous. As I argued above, this kind of vagueness characterizes the whole report and is constitutive of KaPo’s take on extremism and containment thereof. The next subchapter on government-organized non-governmental organizations (GONGO) as a means to influence Estonian policies discusses only some of the organizations and two of the individuals included in the “gallery” – Reva and Zarenkov. KaPo explains that Russia uses GONGOs to replace and, if needed, supplant genuine [tõeline] free associations of citizens, which generally criticize governments and their activities. GONGOs are loyal and more or less covert collaborators of Russian state power, used to implement [Russia’s] domestic and foreign policy and block opponents’ attacks.

(Aastaraamat 2011, 13.)

The last section of the chapter on defending the constitutional order in Estonia is titled “Influence action in media” and looks at anti-Estonian propaganda in Russian media and on the RT news channel in particular. The latter is, in KaPo’s words, aimed at “an international public [rahvusvaheline üldsus] that is not really familiar with local conditions and therefore manipulable more easily” (Aastaraamat 2011, 15). According to
the security police, Russian media portrays Estonia as a safe haven for Nazis and also as “the poorest state in the European Union,” claiming that what used to be “the most successful republic of the Soviet Union has become one of the most backward states of the European Union” (ibid.).\(^\text{310}\) Concern over this last argument might well be the reason for the inclusion of Ivar Raig in the “picture gallery”: EU- and euro-skeptics like him pose a threat to the “constitutional order” by virtue of holding and expressing views that can be picked up by Russia and used to denigrate Estonia as well as the achievements of its government, the only one in the Baltics that was able to take Estonia to the euro zone, even if a few people think it was a sinking ship by then and others find the price of this leap to have been too high.

*From Everyday Politics to National Security*

That the Russian Federation has a compatriot policy is a well-known fact (e.g., Simonsen 2001, Doroshko 2006, Conley and Gerber 2011). However, what makes KaPo’s treatment of this issue remarkable is that it utilizes Russia’s concept of compatriots to lift *domestic* problems and disputes above everyday politics and into the realm of existential threats and *foreign* policy where they can be no longer dealt with by means of ordinary procedures but require extraordinary measures. Drawing on Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and others working on the construction of security issues, the annual review of the security policy could be regarded as an act of securitization (e.g., Wæver, Buzan, Kelstrup, Lemaitre 1993; Wæver 1995; Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998). “Security” is,

\(^{310}\) See Grant 1995 on dynamics between modernity and tradition in Soviet discourse.
according to these scholars, “a self-referential practice, because *it is in this practice* that the issue becomes a security issue – not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented as such a threat” (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998, 24; emphasis added.). Securitization “means to present an issue as urgent and existential, as so important that it should not be exposed to the normal haggling of politics but should be dealt with decisively by top leaders prior to other issues,” whereas “(p)oliticization means to make an issue appear to be open, a matter of choice, something that is decided upon and that therefore entails responsibility” (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998, 29).

Looked at from this perspective, opposition to the school reform and euro-skepticism are not security issues in themselves but only become threats to the constitutional order if they are framed and presented in this way. The 2011 annual review of the Estonian Security Police comes across as an attempt to push the school reform from the sphere of everyday politics into the security realm in order to avoid further public discussion of this issue and to prevent it from becoming a matter of choice or interpretation – contrary to the wishes and expectations of various minority actors discussed in the previous chapter, who have sought to negotiate the conditions of the reform, arguing that the language of instruction is not a state matter, but up to parents and schools to decide. Because the annual review was published in 2012 *after* the opponents of the education reform had become more active, visible and vocal in 2010-2011, it comes across not only as a proactive but also as a counteractive step, as an attempt to contain as well as prevent criticism.
Moreover, “the Russian school” itself becomes a national security threat as a result of this framing as does the Russian language to the extent that the school helps to preserve “the special status of the Russian language” established by the Soviet regime. To go back to one of the passages quoted above (Aastaraamat 2011, 11), “the Russian-language education system” in contemporary Estonia constitutes in KaPo’s assessment simultaneously a vestige of Soviet Russification policy and a tool of “influence activity” carried out by the Russian Federation today. The latter is essentially a continuation of the former with Russian-language schools serving as a bridge between the two. All in all, this reasoning seems to be suggesting that the Soviet/Russian occupation is ongoing and justifies – indeed, insists on – measures that would bring “the Russian school” into the Estonian society by means of making it speak Estonian, even if formally.

Furthermore, agreeing with Russia on its definition of compatriots enables the security police to frame any collective initiatives taken by Estonian Russians as “influence actions” emanating from Russia (“ambassadors’ directions”), which in turn implies that these people cannot have agency of their own: they are either being manipulated by Russia “to influence the sovereign decisions of the [Estonian] state” or have to have an authority figure confirm that this is not the case. The need for authorization is written into KaPo’s argumentation regarding this issue because if the non-governmental organizations established by the Russian state aim to replace “genuine free associations of citizens” (Aastaraamat 2011, 13), somebody has to be in a position to decide which organizations
of Estonian Russians are genuine or authentic and which are simply tools of compatriot policy – especially since both would be criticizing the government, given that this is expected of NGOs.

KaPo’s explanations regarding its presentation of deputy mayor Kõlvart are significant in this connection. Raivo Aeg, the Director General of the Security Police, stated at the press conference held on the occasion of the publication of the annual review in April 2012 that “Kõlvart fights very actively against this law that is the law in effect in the Republic of Estonia and that state officials and officials of local governments should follow” (Teder 2012).311 Also, “(w)e [KaPo?] know that Kõlvart very actively directs activities towards not following the law by creating different kinds of associations, bringing together teachers and parents, also expressing a political message. The other side is contacts with people from the Russian embassy” (ibid.). As was described above, the annual review included a series of images of the deputy mayor handing over history textbooks to a Russian diplomat in a recreational setting. It turned out after the publication of the review that the books in question are available in mainstream bookstores and some of them are being used in Estonian schools (Leitmaa 2012; Teder 2012).312 KaPo’s Director General Aeg also admitted at the press conference that Kõlvart has done nothing illegal: “On this day, Kõlvart is clearly using his constitutional rights

311 It is unclear whether Aeg was referring to a particular law (e.g., the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act) or the “constitutional order.”
312 Kõlvart explained on several occasions that he gave these textbooks to Tsvetkov because the diplomat has a degree in history and is learning the Estonian language (Leitmaa 2012; Teder 2012).
and liberties and has not crossed a border in using them” (Teder 2012). Marko Pomerants, a member of the Riigikogu and of the parliament committee responsible for the surveillance of security authorities, explained elsewhere that the inclusion of Kõlvart into the Annual Review could be regarded as a preventative measure: “KaPo’s annual reviews have for years included a rubric that I would call “Think for yourself from here on out!” (…) How far is it sensible to let things go? It makes sense to recall borders” (Krjukov 2012).

The need to recall borders suggests, once again, that Estonian Russians have the choice between burglars and guest, but even the latter status is a precarious one. This is all the more so if ethnicity is equated with nationality, language and an ethnic homeland and treated as a category one is born into – and it tends to be in Estonia, as I have sought to show throughout this study –, because it follows from this that Russians in Estonia are always going to be linked to Russia and will always constitute a source of potential threat unless the Russian Federation gives up its compatriot policy and motives driving it. Otherwise, one can eliminate “the Russian-language education system” and along with it “the special status of the Russian language,” but the “compatriots” would still be there, constituting one quarter of Estonia’s population, and the only means to end the (threat of) occupation would be to expel them from Estonia. As was discussed previously, this was the prevailing expectation among most Estonian politicians throughout much of the 1990s and something the integration policy launched in the late 1990s was expected to put an end to.
To the extent that framing something as a threat to national security or constitutional order should be the last resort, the securitization of internal problems indicates an inability or unwillingness to solve them by other means. Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde argued back in 1998 that pushing normal politics into the security realm is more likely to occur in “weak states (Nigeria under Abacha, the USSR under Stalin) or in states mobilized for total war,” whereas in “well-developed states, armed forces and intelligence services are carefully separated from normal political life, and their use is subject to elaborate procedures of authorization” (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998, 28). While this distinction was probably too neat to begin with, September 11th appears to have changed things in a fundamental manner for both “well-developed” and “weak states” and I would like to argue that it is important to regard KaPo’s securitization of Estonian Russians within the broader discursive context of “war on terror.”

The Finnish scholar Pertti Joenniemi has discussed how political elites in the Baltic countries and other post-Communist states were during the run-up to the invasion of Iraq in 2003 motivated to position “themselves as US-designated “new” Europeans” or “peoples of faith,” not least because this positioning held the promise “of gaining a much more central position within a differently premised European configuration, one that can be achieved only if the traditional delineations of European political space are profoundly shattered and undermined” (Joenniemi 2005, 69; see also 73-74). Indeed, the administration of George W. Bush claimed that “the distinction between old and new
Europe is a matter of attitude, of vision that countries bring to the transatlantic relationship” (Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld in Germany in June 2003, cited in Joenniemi 2005, 68), not of resources or size or experience. This “new” attitude was arguably manifested in a break with the “old thinking – the thinking of the Cold War years, which deterred and negotiated with, and otherwise compromised with evil” (Secretary of State Colin Powell in a testimony to the U.S. senate in April 2003, cited in Joenniemi 2005, 71). As Joenniemi has remarked, according to this new thinking the evil no longer had “the face of communist or that of the “East” but has taken the form of terrorism and tyranny” (Joenniemi 2005: 70). Its unbounded and unpredictable character mandated “a constant state of emergency. One has to be alert. The risk of being targeted is constant and incorporates also a variety of aspects related to civil society” (Joenniemi 2005: 70; emphasis added). Moreover, struggle against this evil is a moral duty, rather than a matter of political choice or at all something to be discussed in the realm of politics (ibid.).

This sounds very similar to KaPo’s take on “extremism,” suggesting that one needs to look not only at what the new post-Communist states brought to the “transatlantic relationship,” but also what these countries took away from it and how they have combined these selected bits and pieces of discourse and empowerment with what they already had and utilized them back home where “evil” has perhaps never ceased to have the face of “East” and of communism. KaPo’s annual review reserves the word
“terrorism” for international settings and Islam, describing the contributions of the Estonian Security Police to the “prevention of international terrorism” (Aastaraamat 2011, 20-25), but there is an overlap between “terrorism” and “extremism” (e.g., “Islamic extremists,” p. 21) and no clear dividing line between fighting terrorism abroad and defending the “constitutional order” in Estonia: “terrorists” abroad are “extremists” back home and both call for authorized actors to take extraordinary measures. Paradoxically, this world filled with gray danger zones calls for sharp distinctions – there are the good and the bad, Estonia/Europe/transatlantic allies and Russia, allies and enemies. The fusion of domestic and international affairs is achieved primarily by means of consistency of language and argumentation, which lends substance to KaPo’s domestic security claims and makes the “defence of constitutional order” fit in with “counterintelligence,” “fighting against corruption” as well as other more conventional activities of secret services. However, even if the Estonian Security Police “sounds” like its colleagues abroad, the reception of the annual review in Estonia, to be discussed in the next subchapter, suggests that in the post-Soviet context, this discourse evokes parallels with the “old” regime and its practices – as if the future was, yet again, the past.

313 The following observation regarding Muslims in Estonia is characteristic in this respect and illustrates also the idea of national communities as neatly bounded entities living side by side as well as the proper behavior expected of “guests”: “The Estonian Muslim community [moslemikogukond], which consists mainly of Tatars and Azeris, has blended into the [Estonian] environment rather well and is at peace with local conditions. There have been isolated statements in support of terrorism but this has not led to actual actions” (Aastaraamat 2011, 21).
Because securitization aims to break free from normal political procedures and compromises and to justify the use of extraordinary means (tapping phones and other secret means of data collection and surveillance, limitations on otherwise inviolable rights), it entails increasing or at least protecting the power of those selected few actors who are authorized to rely on such measures, most importantly the government or the state, but also the security structures themselves. Buzan et al. have argued regarding the securitization of international issues that “(n)ational security should not be idealized. It works to silence opposition and has given power holders many opportunities to exploit “threats” for domestic purposes, to claim a right to handle something with less democratic control and constraint” (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998, 29).

The implications of securitization and internationalization of internal affairs are likely to be even more problematic to the extent that securitization is about establishing a monologue and investing one particular perspective with truth-value, whereas domestic issues, such as education, affect many if not all residents in different ways and cannot but invoke a polyphonic response. Moreover, securitization of domestic issues liberates politicians from accountability to their own constituencies. It is crucial in this respect that KaPo’s annual review presented the goals of Russia’s compatriot policy in vague enough terms314 to create a situation where anybody who criticizes the government policies could be linked to the Russian Federation and, on these grounds, regarded with suspicion,

314 “The main goal of this concept [of compatriots] is not the preservation of the cultural connection or invitation to return to the home country but the manipulation of particular groups in order to influence the sovereign decisions of the state they are based at” (Aastaraamat 2011, 9).
stigmatized and marginalized. KaPo’s loose use of the label “extremist” and the accompanying sense that extremism is elusive, inherently alien to Estonia and yet ever-present supports this kind reasoning and essentially justifies the activities of the security police: “extremist views” held by individuals may escalate into violent deeds any minute and somebody has to try to predict when this happens.

At the same time – or perhaps precisely in line with this elusive sense of danger (à la “see something, say something”) – the Estonian Security Police has sought to position itself as a next-door neighbor, downplaying the illocutionary force of its securitizing speech acts (Austin 1975). For example, Raivo Aeg, the director general of KaPo, claimed in his introduction to the 2011 annual review that in a democratic state, everybody is entitled to an opinion and the report expresses the point of view of the security police:

True, every kind of information influences the behavior of somebody. Estonian state agencies [riigiasutused] exist so that decisions made in Estonia would be influenced by us together, not those, who continue to be bothered by Estonian independence [iseolemine].³¹⁵ We [the Estonian Security Police] express our opinion because we regard ourselves as a part of the Estonian society. Nobody has monopoly on truth in a democratic state – neither security services nor PR agencies, the guild of not one single field. If opinions differ, truth will become clear in disputes. If somebody’s guilt is being disputed, the court has the final say. (…)

The security police does not try to be a judge of what is ethically reprehensible and what is not. Yet the law obligates the security police to collect information on facts that have a

³¹⁵ Cf. the English translation provided by KaPo: “We must keep in mind that Estonian authorities exist so that decisions in Estonia can be made by us – together – and not by those who continue to object to Estonian independence” (Aeg 2012b, 5).
dangerous connection [puutumus] with national security.\textsuperscript{316} We do not collect this information for ourselves, but in order to inform the makers of nationally important decisions. Always so that these decisions would be weighed carefully from every angle and would serve the interests of the Estonian people [Eesti rahvas] and not those of some foreign state and anti-Estonian influence group [Eesti-vastane mõjupühgrup].\textsuperscript{317} It is never excessive to remember that according to the constitution, the supreme power is not vested in the parliament or the government of the republic but in people [rahvas]. The decisions of people depend on what is known to people.

(Aeg 2012a, 5)

Aeg’s description of the role of KaPo is difficult to pin down if not contradictory: decisions are emergent and to be shaped and made “by us together,” and yet there seems to be a distinction between “the Estonian people” and “the makers of nationally important decisions” (Aeg 2012a, 5) or, worse still, “our nation’s decision-makers” – the expression used in the English version of the annual review (Aeg 2012b, 5). Moreover, decisions must benefit “the Estonian people,” but who decides who counts as one of these people if individual citizens of Estonia can be described to be fighting against the law for exercising their constitutional rights or labeled “anti-Estonian influence group” for

\textsuperscript{316} The word puutumus is rare in everyday usage and according to the wordbook of Estonian language means contact, link or association (kokkupuuude), but is also a legal term: “personal involvement with the administrative matter or procedure being sued; activity that is linked with the crime after it has been committed” (Puutumus). The example given is Kuriteoga puutumus, which could be translated as “an association with crime.” The English version of the Annual Review translates puutumus as “impact,” which is more neutral and vague, lacking references to individual involvement in crime in the legal sense of the word: “Yet the Security Police does have the legal responsibility to collect information on facts that have a dangerous impact on national security” (Aeg 2012b, 5).

\textsuperscript{317} The English version uses, again, a more neutral term that lacks connotations with Russia’s “influence operations”: “anti-Estonian interest group” (Aeg 2012b, 5; emphasis added).
becoming organized around a common concern? It is furthermore significant that though “nobody, neither security agencies nor PR companies” are said to have monopoly on truth in Estonia, the argument that the security police “collects information on facts that have a dangerous connection with national security” (Aeg 2012b) implies that national security is a matter beyond debates and predetermined with KaPo collecting *information on facts* that have already been fixed by somebody somehow.

*One Truth and Countless Suspicions: The Reception of the 2011 Annual Review*

The bulk of Raivo Aeg’s introduction to the 2011 Annual Review of the Estonian Security Police was reprinted in *Postimees*, one of the two national dailies, about a week after the publication of the report under the title “Kapo has no monopoly on truth in Estonia” (Aeg 2012c). The newspaper explained that KaPo had refused to comment upon the criticisms evoked by the 2011 annual review, but had given *Postimees* the permission to publish an excerpt from the review’s introduction.

Reactions to KaPo’s use of the annual review as a preventative measure in Estonian-language print and online media appear to have been ambivalent, which is telling in itself. On the one hand, the security police’s “treatment” of Kõlvart and professor Ivar Raig raised discussions about democracy and the kind of state Estonia is or is in danger of becoming, whereas several academics born in the 1940-50s drew parallels with the Soviet era and the Soviet regime. The political scientist Rein Ruutsoo commented in an article titled “The end does not justify the means”:
For people who are my age [Ruutsoo was born in 1947], this evokes a parallel with another office that did “prophylaxis” with dissenters and those who interacted with the “wrong” [vale – means both “inappropriate” and “untrue”] kind of people, trying to publicly stigmatize them by dishonorable means. Is it really the case that citizens of Estonia who publicly pass on public publications [the history textbooks] or communicate with lawful persons (of whom kapo might think differently) are faced with a repression described affectionately as a preventative measure?

(Ruutsoo 2012.)

Ruutsoo claimed furthermore that the argument that Kõlvart fights against the law goes itself against the principles of democratic rule of law by suggesting that citizens have no right to discuss laws that have already come into force:

This way of thinking has been inherited from the Estonian Communist Party (and arguments of this kind come almost without exception from former communists), according to which there existed the “right” [õige] kind of policy, embodied in “right,” i.e., indisputable laws. Yet in a parliamentarian state, there is no law that would be beyond the criticism of citizens, i.e., that could not be disputed by legal means.

(Ruutsoo 2012.)

Rein Veidemann, another scholar and publicist of the same cohort, asked in connection with the “picture gallery” of interviewees of the RT news channel whether from now on “one has to act in accordance with the Soviet-era requirement of giving an ideological counterblow” whenever being interviewed by a Russian media channel (Veidemann 2012). Linking security to spirit or outlook (meelsus) is in his view anachronistic unless “the aim is guided democracy [juhitud demokraatia] or a new silent era. This is a point where the Estonian public as well as the Constitutional Committee and the Security Authorities Surveillance Select Committee [of the Riigikogu] need to think.”
Some of the more vocal younger actors, on the other hand, responded very differently and without taking the discussion to a broader philosophical level about the state and democracy. Sergey Metlev and Yevgeny Krishtafovitch of the Open Republic, the youth association in favor of the education reform and language-centered approach to integration, published articles in the aftermath of the release of the review, expressing their wholehearted support for the securitizing claims of the security police (Metlev 2012, Krishtafovich 2012). Metlev in particular came up with what might have been the most graphic and imaginative summary of the main argument of KaPo’s annual review:

The mechanisms of influence [described in the Annual Review] are like a beautiful Russian matryoshka: the outer matryoshka is Mikhail Kõlvart and his friends mentioned [in the Annual Review]. Inside, somewhat tucked away, lives Edgar Savisaar [the Mayor of Tallinn and leader of Centre Party] and deep down is Vladimir Putin. If somebody starts poking the matryoshka, it makes noises, turns things around, ridicules and calls for help. It is very dangerous to trust the noise created in this way.

(…)

Secret communication with representatives of Russian embassy is not the same as meetings with diplomats of friendly states. Diplomatic representatives of this state are clearly local executors of influence policy and work-related contacts must therefore be transparent and known to the public. Kõlvart can endlessly talk about his wish to teach Estonian and Estonian history to diplomats, but healthy logic, existing experiences and commonalities between the deputy mayor’s fight with Estonian-language education and Russia’s positions show that Kõlvart is becoming a security threat to Estonia.

(Metlev 2012.)

A couple of days after Postimees had re-printed the introduction to the 2011 annual review quoted above (Aeg 2012c), the newspaper published an editorial titled “That,
which must be talked about” where it reiterated the arguments presented by the security chief and concluded that “KaPo’s annual review does not stigmatize but contextualizes” (Juhtkiri: see millest peab rääkima). Postimees claimed that in assessing the “picture gallery” of people being interviewed for the RT television channel, it is important to distinguish between the criticism of the form and that of the content:

The grievances of Ivar Raig are understandable – for most people of Estonia, being in the same row with Maksim Reva and Johan Bäckman\(^{318}\) would have amounted to an accusation of treason. In a similar manner, the concern has been voiced already whether the publication of such a gallery will not bring about the stigmatization of criticism of the state more generally. This might seem like a precedent, but is not one. This is merely an unsuccessfully assembled gallery, to which at least explanatory captions should have been added. KaPo has to learn from this experience, because the criticism of the form should not displace the content and render it secondary.

(Juhtkiri: see millest peab rääkima.)

By calling for formal improvements but justifying and endorsing the content of the annual review, the newspaper was repeating the view expressed by the Prime Minister a couple of days earlier during a meeting with members of the parliament, one of whom asked Ansip about the purpose of this publication:

This annual review of the security police has evolved into a very good means of communication. I dare to say that it is overall one of the most awaited periodicals in Estonia and that the resonance of this periodical is usually fairly strong. People start to think and in my view this is the goal of this publication – to inform people so that they would have food for thought in terms where, in which direction they want our state to develop. (…) I read through this book only because I knew that you [MPs] would ask me questions about this book and it is important for me to know what knowledge of the knowledge that I already have is in that book. I dare to say that I have not discovered not

\(^{318}\) See p. 466 Bäckman and Reva, respectively.
one single erroneous factual statement. I have found one hyphenation mistake, but this is also the only mistake that I have found in this annual review.

(Ansip: kapo aastaraamat on üks aasta oodatuimaid perioodikaväljaandeid.)

The idea of distinguishing between form and content inadvertently brings to mind the Leninist-Stalinist approach to nationality policy discussed in chapter 1. The starting point seems to be in both cases that “truth” exists in an objective manner and it is by virtue of this presumption that one can approach the form and content with the same eye for factual errors. Consequently, there is nothing to be discussed because one either hyphenates correctly or makes mistakes. If “KaPo’s annual review does not stigmatize but contextualizes” (Juhtkiri: see millest peab rääkima) it is because there is one correct context and truth can hurt but not stigmatize. If one – be it an individual or the population – is gravitating to the “wrong” kind of people or ideas, it makes sense to issue a warning and recall the borders, which are there, hard and solid.

Presenting an interpretation as a fact conceals the source and act of interpretation. The Prime Minster’s argument that he read the annual review only to see “what knowledge of the knowledge” that he already has is included in this book is particularly remarkable in this respect, but so is Metlev’s blunt acceptance of KaPo’s interpretation. Because “the” truth is out there, it is easy to err; consequently, there is a pressure to conform and say the “right” kinds of things or, on the contrary, to say nothing at all in order to avoid the danger of finding oneself inside a matryoshka doll protecting and helping Vladimir Putin.
The historian David Vseviov, the deputy chairman of the Estonian Press Council, wrote in connection with KaPo’s 2011 annual review on the relationship between dangers and fear and how the latter can give birth to the former (Vseviov 2012). Vseviov recalled Holocaust and other examples of past instances where frightening people into silence has led to dire consequences, suggesting that while Russia’s attempts to influence Estonia are a source of danger, the successfulness of these attempts depends on the existence of a soil

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David Vseviov (b. 1949), professor at the Estonian Academy of Arts, is the author of a popular radio show on Russian history, of several history textbooks, volumes on Russian history as well as of numerous essays on Russia, Estonia, history, memory, and power (e.g., Vseviov 2009). Estonians often regard Vseviov as a mediator between Estonians and Russian-speakers in Estonia and he has received several awards for his societal essays, including the Concord award of the Open Estonia Foundation. However, when asked about (his) nationality (rahvus), he has emphasized the importance of seeing the person and not nationality: “I want to be free. Jewishness is deeply my own personal, intimate matter. I do not interact with any community on the basis of nationality. I am very pleased when the honorable president [Toomas-Hendrik Ilves] cites me in the newspaper, but I am not sure, whether I am pleased when he says in the same article in parenthesis that he principally agrees with non-Estonians. I want to take myself the right of defining myself” (Vseviov 2009, 18). Vseviov’s parents were born in Estonia and his roots from his mother’s side go back to the island of Saaremaa and further to Kurland in southern Latvia.

The following excerpt from a 2008 interview with Vseviov attests to the significance attached by Estonians to the way Estonian is being spoken as well as to the diversity of linguistic habits and strategies employed by inhabitants of Estonia throughout the history and different regimes: Journalist: “You have a slight accent when you speak Estonian. What kind of school did you graduate from? I was born in Tallinn, we spoke Estonian at home, but I graduated from a Russian-language school. My grandmother is from Saaremaa, maybe my ö-s come from there [the dialect spoken in Saaremaa lacks the vowel ő]. Although the home language there [in grandmother’s place in Saaremaa] was German” (Vseviov 2009, 9).

Estonian Press Council or Pressinõukogu, established in 2002 by the Estonian Newspaper Association, is a voluntary body of media self-regulation that handles complaints from members of the public regarding materials published in the media. The Council consists of representatives of Estonian- and Russian-language press as well as other realms of life; the membership and chairmen rotate every two years. (Pressinõukogu.)
that is fertile for these “seeds of influence” (ibid.). In the discreet wording of Vseviov, it is justified to ask

whether such an influential organization [as KaPo] has in turn been able by means of every word and thought uttered by it to avoid the danger that in drawing justifiably attention to dangers of Russia’s influence activities, no contributions have been made in the versions of some formulations and examples to the emergence of a “danger of silence and fear” [“vaikimis- ja hirmuoht”] in Estonia. That is, to the emergence of a danger that eventually could create a more fertile ground for influencing people.

(Vseviov 2012.)

Vseviov concluded his essay by referring to another article published in Postimees roughly a week after the publication of KaPo’s yearbook. The news story had described preparations for a concert of classical music and Vseviov cited its first two sentences, which had brought to his mind “the year 1935 of another state”: “In order for the Narva boys’ choir to perform tomorrow in [the] Estonia [Concert Hall] Dmitri Shostakovich’s cantata and oratorio praising Stalin, conductor Paavo Järvi had to sign a document confirming that this was purely art, not political propaganda. It was precisely the latter that the parents of young singers feared” (Rudi and Teder 2012 cited in Vseviov 2012; cf. chapter 1 on the Soviet Union in the 1930s).

This controversial concert titled “Songs of the Forests” was put together and conducted by the Grammy award-winning conductor Paavo Järvi321 and featured the Estonian

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321 Paavo Järvi (b. 1962) is the son of the conductor Neeme Järvi and has two younger siblings, both of whom are internationally renowned musicians; the whole family emigrated from the Soviet Estonia to the United States in 1980. They continue to live abroad, but visit and perform in Estonia frequently. Neeme Järvi is currently the artistic
National Symphony Orchestra, the Estonian Concert Choir, the Narva Boys’ Choir as well as two soloists from Russia. Together, they performed three vocal-symphonic works by the Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975), known for his difficult relationship to Stalin and the Soviet power: the cantata “The Sun Shines over Our Motherland” (1952) and the oratorio “Songs of the Forests” (1949) composed during the Stalin era as well as the post-Stalinist poem “The Execution of Stepan Razin” (1964) (Shostakovich.org: Dedicated to the Music of Dmitri Shostakovich). The first two pieces, written to lyrics by Yevgeny Dolmatovsky, glorify Stalin and the progress made under the Soviet leadership with an ostentatiousness verging on satire (e.g., pioneers planting poplars, trees native to northern regions, in the Central-Asian desert), while the poem (words by Yevgeny Yevtushenko) focuses on the 17-th century Cossack uprising and the killing of its leader: the tsar has Stepan Razin decapitated, but the Cossack’s chopped-off head continues to laugh at the killer.

Järvi explained before the concert that he had wanted to perform these works by Shostakovich for a long time and precisely in Estonia because “we have a connection with this time! This is why I want to do it in Estonia, after that when Estonians were deported and most of them died in Siberia” (Paavo Järvi dirigeerib Eestis kiitust Stalinile – “Paavo Järvi is conducting praise for Stalin in Estonia”). “My aim is not to glorify Stalinism but to show in 2012 in free Estonia how absurd and disgusting this time was and how a brilliant composer had to try to survive under the pressure of the regime”

director and Paavo Järvi the artistic advisor of the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra.
(ibid.). And elsewhere: “To live in free Estonia and to listen to a whole choir sing “kommunisty, vpered” [communists, onwards!] – this is brilliant! You must see it! Nowhere else would it be understood, but we [the people of Estonia] get this irony, absurdity and the surreal” (Rudi and Teder 2012). However, the conductor also expressed the opinion that it might be already too late for such a project since many participating singers were too young to remember the Soviet era or (in the case of Estonians,) to understand the Russian language (Rebane 2012; Paavo Järvi dirigeerib…).

The presupposition that personal experiences of the Soviet regime provide the basis for an appreciation of Shostakovich’s genius and struggles that is somehow deeper and truer and beyond the reach of those who lack a comparable “connection with this time” is a tricky one, not only because it fails – or refuses – to discriminate among Estonians and their different relationships to the Soviet regime (e.g., Estonian communists), between first-hand and secondary experiences and, moreover, between different periods within the Soviet era. In fact, Paavo Järvi himself is too young to have first-hand experiences of Stalin’s reign. His assertion “we have a connection with [the Soviet] time” was constructive of this “we” by means of assuming the existence of a collective experience of the Soviet era. As such, it was akin to attempts described in chapter 3 to continuously assign Estonians and Russians/the Soviets to mutually exclusive positions of victims and perpetrators, respectively. Yet unlike the initiators of Riigikogu’s statement on the crimes of the occupation regime or of the Resistance Fighting Day, Järvi also expected the audience and co-performers of the Shostakovich concert to be able to relate to Stalinist
repressions from a critical and reflexive distance, i.e., to go – if not already be – beyond the compulsive repetition of past traumas (cf. chapter 3 and LaCapra 2001). This is a critical position attentive to art’s embeddedness in ideology and contemporary conditions of production and thus not to be confused with the strategy of decontextualization employed by performers of Soviet film music, who sought to distinguish between the artistic truth and truth of life (see chapter 4).

While the concert “Songs of the Forests” is said to have received an impressive ovation from the audience (Garshnek 2012), pre-concert reactions from (prospective) performers indicate that the distanced position anticipated by the conductor was not shared or even accessible to everybody. On the one hand, there were musicians who declined the invitation, presumably because the repertoire was “too much” or too Stalinist (Paavo Järvi dirigeerib…). On the other hand, as was mentioned above, there were the instructors and parents of singers from Narva, a predominantly Russian-speaking town on the Estonian-Russian border, who asked for a written confirmation before the concert that they would not be accused of political propaganda as a result of participating in this project. In the first case, the obstacle was presumably in painful memories of the past, whereas in the latter case, it was in the present. Asking for a document that the performance of vocal symphonic music is going to be interpreted as art and not politics or

322 “Actually, if you listen to this text [by Dolmatovsky], it’s like some film by Fellini, surreal /…/ Sometimes I have a feeling when conducting that I don’t know where to look because the text is so hideously absurd” (Järvi quoted in Rebane 2012). This reminds me of personal communications with an Estonian art historian, who once told me that some of the Stalinist works by some Estonian visual artists are so horrific that they can never be taken out of the storage or at all shown to anybody.
at all in *one* particular way might come across as paranoid – hence parallels with the Soviet Union in the mid-1930s – and yet it makes perfect sense in a situation where the existence and preservation of the Russian-language educational system is being described as a continuation of Soviet Russification policy. If already the Russian language is framed as a security threat, why would singing “Forward, almighty communist party! Glory to Stalin, noble leader” (Paavo Järvi dirigeerib…) in Russian *not* count as a manifestation of Russia’s policy of influence, all the more so if the solos are being performed by opera singers from Russia?

The fact that in the case of a joint concert involving both Estonian and Russophone musicians only the latter felt apprehensive about performing particular pieces raises questions about belonging to and in Estonia. For example, what made or makes Estonians’ performance of Shostakovich’s Stalinist works safe? Or to refer back to the chapter on popular culture, why is it that Estonian performers of Soviet-era film music felt authorized to tell me that they were engaged in art and not ideology, whereas representatives of choral boys from Narva lacked this same self-confidence or sense of entitlement to self-definition? What would happen if a group of Estonian-Russian musicians decided to perform exactly these same works by Shostakovich *on their own*, without input from Estonian colleagues? Or, furthermore, if Russia was to send a concert like that to Estonia? Who would be in a position – or, indeed, willing – to issue a letter of confirmation in these latter two cases?
If Estonians have fewer reasons to worry, it suggests that the majority possesses more interpretive and creative authority than representatives of minorities and especially Russians, which in turn suggests that the distinction between form and content is secondary to context and to the authority to provide contextualizations that are binding on a national level – in the public sphere defined to be Estonian. “Narva’s” request for a letter of confirmation from Estonian actors associated with the “center” followed the hierarchy put forward by the Security Police in its annual review – and endorsed, among other actors, by the Prime Minister: the idea that somebody has the authority to decide or say what the correct answer is and where the borders are. It does not matter whether one actually believes in this truth because it is the act of applying to the figure of authority that establishes or reinforces the hierarchical relationship. To put it differently: there is no reason to think that instructors and parents from Narva would actually think that the meanings of an artistic work and performance could be fixed and predetermined, yet by asking for a letter of confirmation from the conductor, they invested him with the authority – and hence responsibility – to define the reception of the Shostakovich concert. While this was an act of submission, it was also a means to establish a mutual relationship, to make the nearby figure of authority accountable, and, last but not least, also a pledge of loyalty to the Estonian state.

“The Russian School” and the Bronze Soldier as Threats to the National Totality

Scholars working on the construction of security argue that security claims have to be recognized and accepted by a significant audience in order to be successful, i.e., to
receive the license to break with normal politics (Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde 1998). The case with securitizing claims analyzed in this chapter appears to be different because rather than applying for a right to employ extraordinary means, the annual review seeks to justify and maintain the status quo – the current political leadership as well as the ethnic distribution of power that has prevailed since the restoration of independence. To the extent that the transition of Russian-language schools to Estonian-language instruction was decided upon by the first post-Soviet all-Estonian government and parliament back in 1993, setting this issue free and letting parents decide could be easily seen as an act of selling out or capitulation to Russian-speakers. In a more specific sense, the annual review implied that if the Centre Party came to power, Estonia’s independence would be in danger. By cracking down on Tallinn’s deputy mayor Mikhail Kõlvart, the annual review was implicitly casting aspersions on the Centre Party – the biggest opposition party and the main rival of Prime Minister’s Reform Party.

But while Kõlvart was an easy target, he might have been a strategic one as well to the extent that he seems to be representing a new phenomenon in Estonian politics: he is not afraid to speak the Estonian language despite having an accent, barely in his mid-30s and laying a claim to the Estonian state as a representative of the Russian-speaking population. Similarly to the activists discussed in the previous chapter, he aims to use the rights and opportunities provided by Estonian legislation to secure the continuation of Russian-language education in Estonia. Despite being relatively new to national politics, Kõlvart was able to mobilize support for himself in parliamentary elections in March
2011 and since the continuation of Russian-language education was one of the foci of his campaign, his success casts doubt on KaPo’s claim that the critics of the school reform lack the support of “the Russian community” (vene kogukond) (Aastaraamat 2011, 10-11).

Rather, there are many ways to endorse or oppose an idea, some of them public and others, such as casting one’s vote, more private and thus also safer.

The absence of mass demonstrations indicates compliance with but not necessarily support for the reform and the particular way it has been carried out. As the previous chapter sought to demonstrate, Russians and Russian-speakers have different kinds of misgivings about the partial switch from Russian- to the Estonian-language instruction, some of which are personal (e.g., the relationship to one’s children and grandchildren) and others general or social (e.g., the competitiveness of Russian-speaking youth), while yet others relate to the inability of the state to create conditions conducive for the success of the reform (e.g., the lack of teaching staff and the reluctance of Estonians to work with Russians/in Russian-language schools). If knowledge of the Estonian language is used as an indicator of integration, there seems to be no clear correlation between being integrated into the mainstream Estonian society and endorsing the language reform in

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323 Kõlvart collected 1039 votes in Tallinn in the electoral district of City Centre, Lasnamäe, and Pirita, which has due to Lasnamäe a Russian and Russian-speaking majority. This was the third-best result of the Center Party in this district. Kõlvart was elected to Tallinn City Council in 2009 local elections, receiving 274 votes. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, he was a member of the social-democratic party Moderates, the predecessor of the current Estonian Social Democratic Party, and ran unsuccessfully for both local government (1999, 2002) and the parliament (2003). (Vabariigi Valimiskomisjon.)
education. On the contrary, in my experience, individuals with a good command of Estonian are likely to be more critical of the school reform.\footnote{According to the state program “Integration in Estonian Society 2000-2007,” parents with Estonian citizenship were “more passive” in what came to placing children in Estonian schools (EIS 2000-2007, 30). The number of naturalized citizens was still small at the time, in the late 1990s, meaning that the majority of Russian-language parents with citizenship were rightful citizens.}

All in all, “the Russian community” is no more homogeneous than the Estonian one, but crisscrossed with educational, generational, ethnic, political and biographical differences as well as class distinctions. As one of the interviewees saw it, there are the indigenous Estonian Russians and “people who came in from the big, big Soviet Union” and the former distinguish themselves from the latter by their sense of entitlement to the Estonian land and state – they can afford to be critical and make demands. In the words of this person, uttered in perfect Estonian, “I owe nothing to anybody. I am in my own country. It is my country just as much as it is that of any old Estonian.” On occasions where one’s forebears have been schooled in Estonia in Russian for several generations, in some cases going back to the imperial Russia, the wish to maintain the opportunity of receiving native-language education needs to have little to do with “ambassador’s orders” (Aastaraamat \textit{2011}, 10). Rather, it reflects the actuality that Estonia has never been monolingual, which in turn helps to grasp the radical newness of the current effort to create a linguistically unified education system.\footnote{The interwar Estonian republic held on to an education system based on nationalities until 1940, i.e., there were separate schools for Germans, Swedes, Jews, Russians and Latvians; also a couple of schools of Finnish for Ingrain Finns and Finns and one school that used Polish (Müüripeal 1999). Despite measures taken to strengthen the position of}
language and Russian-language education with the Soviet era is, in this light, indicative of nationalist underpinnings driving state building and decision-making in post-Soviet Estonia.

In the light of the opinions expressed by E and other interviewees discussed in the previous chapter, the eagerness of young activists like Metlev and Krishtafovitch comes across as a wish to belong and to be accepted by the majority. The leaders of the Youth Association Open Republic draw a border between the Soviet era/Russia and the independent Estonian state they have spent all or most of their life in – i.e., it is a political and to some extent generational distinction rather than one based on family history and rootedness. The critics of the school reform represent according to this view a different time and space, whereas the Estonian state cannot be efficient and quick enough in its implementation of reforms and policies aimed at overcoming Soviet-era legacies. The notions of progress at play in this argumentation resemble the ones promoted by the young Soviet state in its territories with the new regime standing for modernity,

the Estonian language as the state language, everyday life tended to be multilingual, especially in urban settings. E.g., see Jansen and Saari 1999, 240-241 on German, Estonian and Russian as the three languages of the public sphere in the 19th century and before World War II as well as on the expression “three local languages” (kolm kohalikku keelt); the Swedish author Carl Mothander (1997) has published memoirs on life in Tallinn in the interwar years and the relationships between the “Balts” or Baltic-Germans, Russians and Estonians. See also Jaago 2003 on transforming the University of Tartu into a “mother-tongue university” (emakeelne ülikool) in 1918 and the process of finding suitable professors who would be or would become capable of teaching in Estonian, also in “national disciplines” such as folklore and ethnology.

326 Cf. interviewee C discussed in the previous chapter, who highlighted generational differences (pp. 442).
development and new clean buildings filled with light. By virtue of their unwavering support to the official policies of the Estonian state and current government’s interpretation of the law, actors like Metlev and Krishtafovitsh could be described as uber-Estonians or carriers of the state identity envisioned in the integration strategy (see pp. 402-403): they represent neither ethnic Estonians nor Russians or Russian-speakers, but the idea of a democratic Estonian state where there is one state language and different nations preserve and develop their own cultures by making use of opportunities created for them by the state for this purpose. How one advances civil society from this position, which is what the Open Republic claims to be doing, is a question worthy of a separate study.

Cf. the following excerpt from the website of Krishtafovitsh, where he describes himself as “Estonia’s last Little Octobrist” (member of the Soviet organization for children): “My dark communist past is limited to becoming a Little Octobrist, but what makes it remarkable is that we were accepted into this organization in 1992 when independence was already being restored in Estonia and preparations were being made for the election of the first parliament after 50 years of occupation. Democratic reforms reached our school with delay and we, the third-graders, were forced to give an oath to Lenin. Yet the only thing that resulted from this oath was that we had to do the chores in the classroom and lunchroom in groups of “red stars” [i.e., groups of five students]. The festive assembly of becoming a Little Octobrist looked like this: we were taken to the assembly hall, which was full of dust, lined up… and something was done to us. What exactly, I do not know because based on an agreement with our teacher, I sat at the piano and played a march for young communists as the political self-determination of my companions was being mocked. My collaboration with the occupation regime ended with that” (Jevgeni Krištafovitš. Kodaniku veeb).

The subject position assumed by Krishtafovitsh corresponds to the one used by Estonian nationalist politicians to discuss the Soviet era and the position of Estonians as victims of the Soviet regime (see chapter 3). However, the excerpt gives also a sense of the isolation of Russian schools in the newly independent Estonia (cf. the description of “the Russian school” in integration policy documents) and illustrates the persistence of the ritual form.

It also remains to be seen whether this is a viable – or even desirable – starting point for a political career. When Krishtafovitsh belonged to the Res Publica party, he ran for local government in Tallinn in 2005 and received 8 votes. (Vabariigi Valimiskomisjon.)
I am saying this because I find it hard to get over what looks like a complete disconnection or abyss between KaPo’s securitizing claims, endorsed by the prime minister and leaders of the Open Republic, and the complex concerns I witnessed individuals express in the course of my fieldwork. If all these latter people discussed in the previous chapter were inside Putin’s matryoshka, trying to “influence the sovereign decisions of the state they are based at” (Aastaraamat 2011, 9), the Republic of Estonia would not exist. At the same time, because Estonian Russians’ motives for criticizing the government appear to be always already predetermined, there seems to be no place or means to voice one’s apprehensions without being trapped in the matryoshka: one is expected to deny one’s doubts and individual concerns and march along in the rhythm of the “categorical agreement with being” (Kundera 1984, 250; see chapter 4).

I do not intend to argue that the Youth Association Open Republic or other similar organizations are but an extension of selected Estonian political parties: to say so would mean to reproduce KaPo’s argument that the Russian Federation seeks to replace “genuine” nongovernmental organizations with government-organized nongovernmental

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In December 2010 I attended a “democracy workshop” (demokraatia töötuba) at the Riigikogu Information Centre titled “Other-language youth – opportunities and challenges” (Muukeelne noor – võimalused ja väljakutse). One of the Estonian presenters claimed to be representing a non-conformist view within “the Estonian community” (eesti kogukond) and argued that Kristhafovish is “an inner critic” (sisekritik) or dissenter “within the Russophone community,” which invoked several critical comments from the audience: one person asked the speaker to specify whom Krishtavofish represents, given that he received so few votes, and somebody else argued that he cannot be compared to non-conformists among Estonians because ultimately, he is on the side of the majority. Field notes from December 9, 2010.
organizations (Aastaraamat 2011, 13, cf. pp. 497). As folklorists, among others, have demonstrated, authenticity is not a disinterested concept, but exclusionary and tied historically to the emergence of nationalism and nation states (e.g., Bendix 1997, Handler and Linnekin 1984). Holding the promise of natural and true unity and expression, authenticity presupposes the existence of an expert authorized to sort out the genuine from the spurious, which in turn presupposes an objectifying logic. Richard Handler has therefore described nationalism as a “never-ending quest to locate authenticity in individuated units” (Handler 1988, 189) imagined to be bounded in space and time and homogeneous. Nationalists are in Handler’s words “haunted by a vision of totality”:

The national totality will know its own essence, will control the definition of its own being. It will acknowledge the existence of other national entities, it will even be “open to the world,” as a commonplace of nationalist rhetoric has it. But its identity will not depend on interrelationships and exchanges. “Our true being” can only be an inner quality, a natural essence.

(Handler 1988, 194.)

I find it significant that the Estonian Security Police located the authenticity of nongovernmental organizations in the object of accountability, but that this object or source of authenticity was different in the case of Russia and Estonia, respectively. When criticizing the Russian Federation, KaPo juxtaposed the “genuine” NGOs critical of the government with government-organized NGOs, implying that the latter were bogus and insincere by virtue of representing the government and not the people. However, in the case of Estonia, the conversation shifted from the level of citizens and the government to that of the “constitutional order,” i.e., ultimate principles everybody is expected to abide
by. Consequently, NGOs in Estonia are expected to be accountable to the “constitutional order,” which in turn is linked to the government. By means of this shift, KaPo could deem organizations critical of the government fake without commenting directly on the relationship between the Estonian government and NGOs in Estonia: organizations critical of the education reform are spurious not because they disagree with the government, but because they claim to represent Estonian citizens but are “really” trying to influence decision-making processes for the benefit of Russia.

Measuring the genuineness of nongovernmental organizations against the constitutional order eliminates the level of everyday politics where citizens can interact with the government. This is essentially what KaPo accused the Russian Federation of doing and it is also what securitization is about – framing certain issues as existential threats calling for the use of extraordinary measures. However, I would like to suggest that the reasoning employed by KaPo is also consistent with principles and goals laid out in consecutive integration policy documents and analyzed in earlier in this study. Like the concepts of “the common core,” “state identity” and cultural pluralism, KaPo’s securitizing claims illuminate notions of the civil society, state and ethnicity influential in post-Soviet Estonia.

As was discussed in chapter 5, the integration model drafted in Estonia envisions a society where there is no disagreement over what constitutes “the general interest of the society and people”: the “general” is simultaneously “constitutional,” Estonian-centered,
yet common and not to be questioned. Strengthening “the common state identity” is about developing “a common understanding of the state” and a sense of belonging to this state. Accordingly, “civic engagement” has to serve “the general interests of the society and people” rather than the interests of particular groups. (See EIS 2008-2013, 4, 11-12 and discussion in 5). Hence, similarly to the annual review of the security police, argumentation in integration policy documents takes place on the level of “national totality,” where identity has to be bounded and self-sufficient and cannot depend on exchanges or interrelationships (cf. Handler 1988). Organizations and individuals critical of the education reform (e.g., the non-profit “Russian School in Estonia” mentioned in the previous chapter and in the annual review) are not genuinely civic but extreme and spurious – fake and insincere – to the extent that they seek to fragment the totality or, since integration is about creating togetherness, call into question the official route to social cohesion, especially the idea that barriers to equality are linguistic only and thus independent of the views and actions of the ethnic majority.

It follows from this reasoning that the state, government, ethnicity and nation become indistinguishable. Support for official policies can be easily cast as a matter of loyalty to the state and the official stance becomes normative – constitutive of what being a citizen of Estonia is (not) about: as the above-quoted parliamentarian put it, “(i)t makes sense to recall borders” (Krjukov 2012). The idea that people need to be kept in check for the sake of the “constitutional order” gives government actors the authority to intervene in citizens’ doings and at the same time liberates them from accountability to citizens.
The similarities between KaPo’s framing of school reform’s vocal critics and the government’s interpretation of the 2007 conflict surrounding the Bronze Soldier monument are striking in this respect. The central argument was in both cases that the objections to the government’s actions were orchestrated by Moscow with the help of local collaborators, forcing the authorities to use extraordinary means. As was discussed in chapter 3, the government of Andrus Ansip had the Bronze Soldier monument removed from its original location in downtown Tallinn impromptu in the early morning hours of April 27, 2007. The government, having previously surrounded the area with a fence and erected a big tent blocking the view on the statue, had just begun the exhumation of remains of “unknown soldiers” buried on the site of the memorial in the 1944-1945. These initiatives drew on the War Graves Protection Act, adopted a few months earlier in order to create a legal basis for the relocation of the monument. On the afternoon and evening of April 26, Russian and Russian-speaking people started to gather around the fenced-out monument in increasing numbers, standing and waiting to see what was going to happen and shouting critical comments at the government. One of my interviewees who was there this evening used the expression “grand standing” (suur seismine) to describe this situation.\footnote{Interview on July 1, 2010.} In the course of the evening, this spontaneous protest spilled over into a confrontation between demonstrators and the police and later vandalism on the main streets of the capital. The police arrested several hundred people and took them to a terminal building in the harbor, where they are said to been treated
unnecessarily brutally (e.g., accounts in *Bronze Soldier: April Crisis*). A couple of days later the monument was erected in its new place in the cemetery of defence forces in a more secluded part of the capital.

In the aftermath of “Bronze Night,” the Prime Minister Andrus Ansip explained to the parliament that the monument had become “the focus of political provocations” and moving it to a more suitable place there and then was for this reason “an inevitable step from the perspective of state security” (cited in Petersoo and Tamm 2008, 230). Both Ansip and president Ilves gave speeches where they focused solely on looting and other acts of vandalism, treating everybody who had come out this evening as burglars in the literal and metaphoric sense of the word: as plunderers and as henchmen of Russia, who seek to inflame hatred between Estonians and Russians. Correspondingly, both leaders laid claims to Russians and Russian-speaking people who had stayed at home and by

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330 See also the address of Prime Minister Andrus Ansip to residents of Estonia on April 28, 2007 (reprinted in Petersoo and Tamm 2008, 212-213) and speech in Riigikogu on May 2, 2007 (reprinted in Petersoo and Tamm 2008, 229-232). Along with many – most? – other (Estonian?) residents of Estonia (or the capital?), I received the following text message towards the evening of April 27, 2007, the second night of protests in downtown Tallinn: “The Government of the Republic requests: Stay home, do not yield to provocations! Government of the Republic of Estonia” (*Vabariigi Valitsus palub: Jääge koju, ärge alluge provokatsioonidele! EV Valitsus*).

331 The journalist and writer Andrei Hvostov compared the “Bronze Night” and reactions to it within the Estonian society to the episode in Milne’s *Winnie-the-Pooh* where the little kangaroo falls into a stream and different characters of the book try to rescue her: the Piglet jumps up and down hysterically, the Owl starts a lecture on how to proceed if one suddenly falls into water, Christopher Robin and the Rabbit look for a stick, while Pooh has already found the stick and is waiting for Roo to grab it and Eeyore has stuck his tail in the water for the same purpose. According to Hvostov, “the Estonian media acted during rampaging as the hysterical Piglet” by creating an image of the “Russian thug” (*Vene pätt*) as well as the “understanding that the thug represents the Russian community in its entirety” (Hvostov 2007).
appropriating their silence – and that of Estonians – created a situation where one can only be for “us” – “on the side of order and safety” – or against “us”:

We have to admit it to ourselves honestly that those who provoke quarrels have a sneaky wish – Estonians and Russians should not get along well. But these agitators will be disappointed because we are not going to let them make us feud. This is the best way to demonstrate our superiority over those, who manipulate with us. (…)

Let’s face it; the majority of our Russian-speaking compatriots [venekeelsed kaasmaalased] were during last week’s tense days and nights with Estonia. You were with all of us, on the side of order and safety, and I thank you for this. Let us not be distracted by looters who carried out their deeds in the darkest hour of the night, but would have sooner or later found an opportunity for stealing. (…)

Dear compatriots, I invite you to be constant, worthy and friendly. If you feel like you cannot understand each other, talk to each other. We do not need in this communication any mediators, whose actual purpose is to stir us up against each other. The Estonian state talks to everybody, apart from rampagers and agitators of hatred, to whom investigators and judges will talk.

(Ilves 2007.)

This passage from a statement made by president Ilves on May 2, 2007 illustrates Estonian leaders’ stubborn rejection of the idea that those who gathered by the memorial on the evening of April 26 were protestors, citizens objecting to the actions of their government and seeking contact with the authorities. The number of people who came out this evening was times greater than the number of those who ended up engaging in illegal actions and the refusal to make this distinction – to recognize the majority as protestors – was simultaneously a refusal to listen to or talk to these people. Hence, even though the president encouraged his “compatriots” to talk to each other, by means of his own framing of the whole incident he outlined a monological space where anybody who
speaks up against the leadership – comes out instead of staying home – risks being labeled an agitator of hatred or simply a criminal. In a broader sense, this framing implied that the actions of the government are indisputable or that citizens lack the right if not ability to decide what to protest against. As in the case of KaPo’s treatment of school reform’s critics, the authorities assumed responsibility for assessing the sincerity of citizens and their discontent.

If this securitizing explanation is left aside and the controversy surrounding the memorial is regarded as a domestic problem emerging from the society’s internal diversity and complexity, the approach taken by Estonian leaders indicated an inability or unwillingness to meet their opponents halfway or even to acknowledge them as equals. Contrasting looting with the preservation of the memory of fallen soldiers, the government’s stated motive for the exhumation of remains, was significant in this connection because it deprived the protestors of the capacity to feel humiliation, guilt, gratitude and other emotions involved in remembrance.\textsuperscript{332} Hence, the argument put forward by the state leaders was not simply that these people behaved inappropriately, but rather that they lacked the ability to show respect for the dead and are thus

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{332} As the prime minister put it, “I find it hard to imagine anything more insulting for those who fought in World War II than showing images of a drunk shoplifter all over the world in their so-called “memory.” The behavior of local [siinne] rampagers is a derision of soldiers’ bravery and ideals of freedom” (cited in Petersoo and Tamm 2008, 212-213).
\end{quote}
uncivilized, fundamentally different from “us” and possibly not “fully human” (Castino and Giner-Sorolla 2006, 805).

Looked at from this perspective, the prevailing Estonian interpretation of the April crisis reinforced simultaneously ethnic or national group borders and distinctions between civilized/human/culture and uncivilized/less human/nature with the Estonian government and the ethnic majority standing for emotional cohesion, cultivated forms of commemoration, order, security, and the use of words rather than that of blind force and violence. This reasoning calls to mind the cannibalistic rumors about Russians/Soviets circulated among Estonians in the aftermath of World War II (see Kalmre 2007) as well as Estonians’ sense of superiority over the rest of the Soviet Union, which similarly intertwined ethnic distinctions and those based on the level of development or the state of being civilized/uncivilized. However, the Bronze Soldier case was also different and more complex because unlike Estonians under the Soviet regime, the current leadership of the Republic of Estonia cannot afford to exclude all of its Russians or non-Estonians, at least not any longer. Even though ethnic and civilizational borders continue to coincide, the present situation calls additionally for finer distinctions and thus for the detachment of ethnicity from the civilized/uncivilized distinction: all demonstrators were

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333 Psychologists Castino and Giner-Sorolla argue that depriving the other group of capacity to feel love, guilt, humiliation, and hope – secondary emotions unique to human beings – functions as a form of dehumanization, which they call infrahumanization and see as “a strategy for people to reestablish psychological equanimity when confronted with a self-threatening situation” (Castino and Giner-Sorolla 2006, 807). Their experiments carried out with different groups showed that in-groups were more likely to infrahumanize members of a victimized out-group if they were made aware of their in-group’s role in persecuting the out-group.
Russian and all demonstrators were looters but not all Russians “went out” this evening; rather, the majority “stayed home” with Estonia and were “with us all, on the side of order and safety” (Ilves 2007), as the president stated.

The president’s claim illuminates how the detachment of the civilized/uncivilized distinction from ethnicity is a precondition for the co-optation of the (seemingly) silent majority, which in turn is a precondition for the enforcement of behavior deemed normative. What made the “official” interpretation of the Bronze Solider controversy thorny is that it equated normative behavior with normative thinking: staying “on the side of order and safety” did not only mean refraining from looting, but also from criticism of “official” interpretations. To the extent that normative behavior is unmarked, it is conducive to invisibility and if behavior is thinking, invisibility is silence, which can be appropriated easily by actors who seek to define the norms of behaving and thinking. Behaving in a manner that sticks out – performing a Stalinist piece of classical music – gives rise to suspicion or to anxiety about suspicion, driving one to ask for a letter of confirmation that the concert will not be interpreted as a provocation.

Because one belongs to the Estonian society by virtue of complying with norms and values, because some of the very basic norms and values concern the Estonian-centeredness of Estonia, and because the authorities present themselves as guardians of these ultimate principles, non-Estonians seem to be lacking the option for raising objections without breaching the very norms and expectations the observance of which
makes them recognized members of the Estonian demos. Moreover, to the extent that the normative is Estonian, one cannot behave in a civilized manner without being or passing as an Estonian. One is either at home or rampages on the streets.

The same holds true for ethnic Estonians to the extent that “official” interpretations and policies operate with a very narrow and monolithic definition of Estonianness. For example, neither the president nor the prime minister acknowledged the lack of consensus among Estonians regarding the monument. In addition to reinforcing ethnic boundaries and a sense of ethnic confrontation, this homogenizing take gives rise to the need to keep Estonians in check in order to maintain the legitimacy of government’s claims and policies. However, since the Estonian stands for the civilized and constitutes the norm, ethnic Estonians cannot be disciplined or excluded by means of the civilized/uncivilized dichotomization applied to non-Estonians. Rather, Estonians who decide to behave and think out loud critically have in recent years risked being labeled “red,” which could be regarded as the antipode of “blue, black and white,” the Estonian default.

When a group of dozen professors from various Estonian universities published on April 23, 2007, just a couple of days before the government began excavations at the

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334 It might be relevant to point out in this context that there is no tenure track system in Estonian universities in the U.S. sense of this concept. Rather, each department has a limited number of full professors and smaller units have only one professor who usually acts also as the department chair. Consequently, there are fewer professors around, which
memorial, a public letter to the minister of defence in order to convince him and the government not to relocate the Bronze Soldier monument (Professorite avalik kiri kaitseministrile), they were subsequently labeled “red professors” (punaprofessorid) in anonymous online forums as well as in mainstream media. For example, Urmas Sutrop, the director of the Institute of the Estonian Language and a professor at the University of Tartu, issued shortly after the Bronze Night an article in one of the two national dailies where he distinguished between three kinds of academicians: “red professors,” “patriots of Estonia,” who, like himself, “support publicly the actions of our constitutional government,” and finally the majority who “sadly remain silent in an academic manner” (Sutrop 2007). The author reprimanded his colleagues for thinking and acting differently than he does and than the government does, equating patriotism with loyalty to the “constitutional government” and this loyalty with being Estonian: disagreeing with the government is according to this view an inherently un-Estonian thing to do. Like the president in his speech, Sutrop called on his colleagues to speak up, but made it clear that they are only expected to say certain kinds of things and not others.

The epithet “red professor” denies coevalness by evoking parallels with Communism and Marxist theories that prevailed in the Soviet era and implying that the person so labeled is not competent to assess the current situation: academics can issue statements about the damaging impact of the monument’s relocation on Estonia’s international credibility and in turn adds visibility if not authority to their statements and especially to statements made jointly by several professors.

See chapter 6 for his views on the impact of integration on the Estonian language.
domestic stability or argue that it will not solve disagreements (Professorite avalik kiri kaitseministrile), but unlike the security police and the government, they do not know about security risks and political provocations emanating from Russia. Hence, the “red” in “red professor” refers also to Russia and dangers emanating from the east, serving the same disciplining and invalidating function as linking protesting Russians to the Russian Federation. However, whereas the latter are said to deliberately foster the interests of Russia, “red professors” pose a threat because of their naiveté and gullibility. Either way, the “red” signifies a breach of Estonianness. To go back to the annual review of the security police, displaying the portrait of a EU-skeptic next to individuals described as executors of Russia’s “influence actions” is another – visual version or instance – of “red-professoring,” the ongoing process of defining and policing things and people Estonian vis-à-vis Russia.

Similarly to KaPo’s 2011 annual review, the normalization of the label “red professor” prompted Estonian intellectuals to discuss the state of democracy in Estonia and to draw parallels with the Soviet era. For instance, Valle-Sten Maiste, one of the editors of Estonia’s only weekly cultural paper, claimed in a February 2008 essay “Why I love red professors” that the “crusade against the red professors” is a symptom of the “wretched need to conform,” which formed the basis of the society led by the communist party and thrives also under capitalism (Maiste 2008). In Maiste’s view, “professors” are uncomfortable because they don’t let this conformism to be forgotten. The poet Aare Pilv argued in response that Maiste himself seems to trapped by conformism since he felt a need to explain why he continues to publish “red professors.” Pilv interpreted this reaction as an indication of “a specific mechanism of adjustment” or “false shame” characteristic of polarized societies where one avoids taking the position of the accuser and at the same time does not want to become accused, though the problem is precisely “that one definitely has to take sides.” As a result, one refrains from attacking, but takes protective distance from the stigmatized, feeling ashamed of proximity to and possible contact with them. (Pilv 2008.) These debates suggest that at least some people in Estonia are if not silenced, made aware of their choice of words and interlocutors or of the possibility that they themselves can be labeled “red.”
In the same article where Sutrop used the epithet “red professor” without quotation marks, as an unmarked expression, he also elaborated on the civilized/uncivilized dichotomy, bringing in social class and integration (Sutrop 2007). The author described the Bronze Night as “the rabble” (pööbel, from the German Pöbel) pouring out its “proletarian wrath on everything that is sacred to Estonians and Russians who have become integrated into our society – cultured behavior, security, quiet, peace, private property” (ibid.; emphasis added). In the light of this interpretation, integration is a civilizing mission and a process of re-classification in a twisted Marxist-Leninist sense (see chapter 1): un-integrated Russians – Russians in their “natural” state? – constitute an un-cultured proletarian mob whose class-based alliances are to be overcome by turning them into middle-class suburban homeowners (the real estate bubble had not burst yet in 2007). By treating class as an attribute of ethnicity, Sutrop reiterated the Soviet-era stereotype of Russians/Soviets as working-class people and Estonians as inherent Westerners and by doing so, drew attention to the contradictory starting points and goals of integration in Estonia, discussed elsewhere in this study. For instance, if class is a defining feature of ethnicity and integration entails the adoption of middle-class values and culture, what happens to ethnicity in the course of this transition? Will ethnicity/national differences wither away along with class differences, like Marx, Engels and Lenin predicted, and if so, what is the difference between integration and assimilation? If, however, ethnic differences persist – and according to the integration strategy they are to be preserved in the field of culture –, how is the “culturedness” of Estonians and integrated Russians different from the ethnic cultures to be preserved? Or,
to sum it up, what is the difference between Estonians and those Russians who arguably have come to share the values of Estonians? Similarly to state leaders, Sutrop took silence for support and homogeneity (à la “Russians who stayed home have become integrated and are like Estonians”), suppressing the multiplicity of points of view among Estonians and Russians alike. All three men denied the fact that the traffic in Tallinn was exceptionally slow in the aftermath of the Bronze Night as hundreds of motorists of all ages – “normal” people in “normal” cars, probably homeowners and parents concerned about security – refused to drive at a normal speed.

Commonality and Breach Thereof

Similarly to the transition of Russian-language schools to the Estonian language of instruction, the topic of the Bronze Soldier would come up again and again in the interviews I conducted as well as in my other communications with Russians and Russian-speakers in Tallinn. It was something that people wanted to talk about or could not stop processing. Even three or four years later, it made some men (sic!) cry while other men and women continued to be angry or bewildered, whereas there seemed to be no difference between those who had stayed home that April evening and others who had been “there,” standing at the fenced-out memorial for hours and later witnessing – or experiencing – police violence. Most people I interacted with did not object to the relocation of the monument, but they could not accept the way it was done: it was not so much what but how. Some were hurt by the government’s refusal to communicate with the Russian-speaking population during and after the crisis, while others felt disgusted by
glossy Russian-language leaflets the prime minister’s party had distributed into their mailboxes in the run-up to the 2009 local elections. In the view of these individuals, it was the government that had behaved in an “uncultured” manner (некультурно), preferred brutal violence to words, and engaged in “state vandalism.”

If one is to believe the thesis that denying the other group a “fully human status” (Castano and Giner-Sorolla 2006, 805) justifies the use of violence against it, this overlap between the “official” and “popular” or “majority” and “minority” argumentation is rather daunting.337 The expression “state vandalism” (государственный вандализм) was used by a middle-aged businessman I met at the monument’s new location at the cemetery of defence forces in September 2010, around the Day of Liberation of Tallinn (see chapter 3, pp. 204-206), and interviewed later in the same month.338 He told me that

337 Cf. the use of the term mankurт to describe the goals and outcomes of Estonian education policy, see chapter 5.
338 Fieldwork notes from September 23 and 29, 2010. The parents of this interviewee moved to Estonia shortly after the war and he was born in Estonia; the family lived in different parts of the country, including the island of Saaremaa that has always had a very small number of Russians. The interviewee’s mother had been a pediatrician and he told me that both of his parents had worked in mixed collectives and made a conscious effort to learn Estonian: “They had their own approach. If you live here, you need to learn the local language. They were young specialists. They passed this attitude on to my brother and me. One has to live in an integrated manner.” The interviewee also learnt to speak Estonian as a child and according to his own estimate, knows it well for somebody of his cohort. Yet he opted for Russian citizenship, despite living in Estonia and having never thought of moving elsewhere – Estonia is home, while Russia is a place to visit. The issue of citizenship was clearly bothering him for he returned to this topic repeatedly, recalling promises given by the leaders of the Popular Front in the early 1990s and criticizing more recent decisions not to facilitate naturalization process, including the government’s refusal to give children of stateless parents citizenship at birth (see chapter 2), which is what the chancellor of justice had recommended. The interviewee clearly wanted me to
he had had many conversations with random persons while visiting the cemetery and that the Bronze Night had made even those people “think” who had previously maintained a neutral attitude towards Estonian policies. Another person, the head of a Russian-language theatre studio,\textsuperscript{339} described how members of the studio would no longer take the Estonian flag with them when traveling to theatre festivals in Russia and not because of the reception there but because “something collapsed” in April 2007 and they no longer felt the same.\textsuperscript{340}

Andrey, the young man I met at the concert of the Russian rock band Splean (see chapter 4) was one of the protestors in downtown on the evening of April 26 and was particularly disturbed by how brutally the police had treated women.\textsuperscript{341} This topic emerged when I visited Andrey, his wife and their little daughter in their Lasnamäe apartment on the Estonian Independence Day on February 24, 2010 together with Kostya, Andrey’s friend whom I had met at the same concert (see chapter 4). Andrey’s wife Alla had baked an apple pie with sour cream and explained that the recipe came from Marina Tsvetayeva, “the famous Russian poet” mentioned earlier in chapter 4. After several hours, the conversation turned to politics and Andrey asked me directly whether I had voted for the Reform Party, the underlying assumption being, shared by many Russians and Russian-speakers, that \textit{all} Estonians support Ansip. Alla inserted that she had always been loyal to know that he knew what he was talking about, mentioning historical facts and names from the interwar era and more recent history.

\textsuperscript{339} This was neither of the two theater-related interviewees discussed in the previous chapter.
\textsuperscript{340} Field notes from June 7, 2011.
\textsuperscript{341} Field notes from February 24, 2010.
the Estonian state but wishes that Estonians would let go of the past. Then Kostya started criticizing the prime minister, taking out a slip of paper on which he had written a quote by the prime minister and read it out loud. Andrey joined in, recalling the time Ansip had said that he, too, has a mortgage to pay but has no trouble making ends meet. And finally all of them started talking about how “things” had gotten worse since the Bronze Night.

All of the haphazard issues raised by Alla, Andrey and Kostya concerned the relationship between the state or the government and people, especially the Russian-speaking population. In this context, the relocation of the monument came across as only one, albeit a particularly dismaying episode in a series of arrogant, self-centered acts and statements. Earlier in the evening we had discussed the Independence Day parade held on the Square of Liberty in the morning; I went to see it as part of my fieldwork, while Kostya and Andrey had watched the live broadcast on television. Kostya criticized the lieutenant general Ants Laaneots for his speech where he had described Estonia as a small country that was under attack and the target of vicious lies. Essentially, the chief commander reiterated the main points of the Bronze Soldier narrative, which in turn would be reiterated by the Estonian Security Police in its 2011 annual review: harmful

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Alla and Andrey bought their two-bedroom apartment in 2008 at the peak of the real estate boom, paying over 2 million kroons (nearly $200,000). The value of the property had dropped and the job marked changed drastically by 2010 when I got to know them and the couple of was concerned about foreclosure.
forces are at work in order to weaken Estonians’ belief in their own state and in the ability of Estonia to defend herself.\textsuperscript{343}

Kostya and Andrey both found the commander’s seriousness inappropriate – as if the Independence Day was not a “praznik” (праздник), a public holiday and an occasion to celebrate. However, their own relationship to this holiday seemed to be contradictory for they appeared to be living it and looking at it from a distance at the same time. On the one hand, we watched the broadcast of the Independence Day reception hosted by the president and the first lady (Alla wanted to the see the dresses women were wearing and I did not object), which is the ritual observed by ethnic Estonians on the evening of the Independence Day. On the other hand, Kostya asked me how Estonians greeted each other on the Independence Day and whether there was a particular wish or phrase used on this occasion. Andrey, who similarly to Kostya spoke very little Estonian, wanted to know if president Ilves, born and raised in exile, spoke bad Estonian.

I found these questions (and some other similar discussions I would have with Kostya) bewildering and illuminating at the same time because they bespoke distance from life in Estonia but came from people who were very much grounded in Estonia and in

\textsuperscript{343} On the next day I happened to listen to the weekly discussion forum on politics on Radio 4, the Russian-language radio channel of Estonian Public Broadcasting, and the guests of this show were likewise critical of the speech, whereas I did not come across any such remarks in Estonian-language media.
Tallinn. They were not betwixt and between in the sense of living in Estonia but in the sphere of influence of Russian media, which is what many Estonians think and say about local Russian-speakers. Neither man had Estonian citizenship (or that of any other state), meaning that they could not vote in parliamentary elections, but they did follow Estonian politics and participated in municipal elections. We could and would have conversations about the Estonian state we were all living in and about the town we considered our home. At the same time, by asking me about the Independence Day, the president or about my own political views, Andrey and Kostya were positioning me as an Estonian and as a representative of the ethnic majority. I was crossing boundaries and my questions opened up a space where they, too, could ask questions that might have been interpreted as a provocation or insult under other circumstances by other kinds of Estonians.

Neither Kostya nor Andrey had traveled widely; Kostya had visited Finland once and his last visit to Russia was years ago.

Alla was in a somewhat different situation for she speaks Estonian, used to work in a mixed collective and is a citizen of Estonia. However, her views did not seem to differ from those expressed by Kostya and Andrey and she was very upset about events in April 2007. Alla and Andrey’s five-year old daughter Maria was already learning Estonian in her Russian kindergarten and both parents regarded it as normal and inevitable. However, Alla told me about Maria’s friend from a mixed Estonian-Russian family who had transferred to an Estonian kindergarten in order to prepare for an Estonian-language school and according to Alla, his accent had already changed (cf. discussion in the previous chapter on the emphasis placed on speaking a language beautifully).

I am thinking hereby particularly of Andrey’s question about the language skills of president Ilves. As I have showed elsewhere in this study, Estonians tend to be sensitive to the way Estonian is being spoken and if one speaks in a manner that sticks out, it requires an explanation (cf. footnote 319), gives rise to concerns over the “well-being” of the language or can be used as a grounds for exclusion and marginalization. The claim or even suspicion that the Estonian president does not speak Estonian well partakes in this discourse, but it suggests also that Estonians are hypocritical and ready to do anything in order to exclude Russians and Russian-speakers: the language requirements for

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Their questions – like mine – called up the separateness of many Estonians and Russians in Tallinn: I myself would not have been sitting in Andrey’s and Alla’s living room had it not been for my research. Even more importantly from the perspective of this chapter, their questions called up the distance between many Russians and the Estonian state and its institutions, i.e., the very same factors and phenomena that according to the integration strategy should form the basis shared by all permanent residents of Estonia (cf. chapter 5). Again, as was argued above, it was not Russia that was keeping these people disconnected and their lives were very much grounded in Estonia. However, there seemed to be little reciprocity between them and the state. Andrey’s question about the president’s command of the state language must have emerged from an earlier discussion among Russians and indicated that he did not perceive of Ilves as “his” president. Similarly, the president did not acknowledge Andrey as a resident Estonia to the extent that he linked him and all the other people who gathered on April 26, 2007 by the Bronze Soldier memorial to Russia, labeled them “shoplifters,” and argued that they were seeking to inflame hatred between Estonians and Russians.

All in all, I would like to argue based on my fieldwork that the government’s actions regarding the Bronze Soldier monument were perceived as a breach of commonality or the tacit recognition and acceptance of difference that structures everyday life in Tallinn. Citizenship are strict and demanding, but the foreign-born president can get by with poor Estonian. Moreover, to the extent that Ilves grew up and was educated in the United States, the criticism of his language skills is simultaneously a comment on Estonia’s sympathy for the U.S. and NATO membership.
In order to explain what I mean by it, I would like to return to chapter 4 and the hairdresser’s question “How did you get here?” upon my visit to a “Russian” hair salon in the district of Lasnamäe (see the beginning of chapter 4). Like Andrey and Kostya with their questions, the hairdresser was calling up ethnolinguistic borders. However, whereas the questions posed by Andrey and Kostya attested to the marginality of Russians in the Estonian state, the hairdresser was referring to differences sustained by Tallinn’s Estonian- and Russian-speaking inhabitants voluntarily on a day-to-day basis by virtue of their habits, needs and preferences: there are “Russian” or “Russian-speaking” hair salons and Estonian ones, shops and bars where Russian is the default language and others where Estonian prevails, kiosks where you can buy greeting cards in Russian and others where almost everything is in Estonian, theatre studios that operate in Estonian and others that use Russian, etc. People usually choose “their own” and the resulting language-based apartness can be regarded as a way of letting the other be rather than an expression of hostility. When crossing over, people are tacitly expected to be willing to negotiate, i.e., to recognize the other: had I demanded the hairdresser to use Estonian – as I could have done on the basis of the Estonian language law –, I would have probably come across as a rude and provocative Estonian nationalist.

Similarly, though Estonians are concentrated in certain parts of Tallinn and Russian-speakers in others, all districts and neighborhoods of Tallinn are mixed to some degree. In apartment buildings where there are Estonians and Russian-speaking residents, the cooperative societies representing apartment owners tend to operate in two languages: all
announcements I received from my apartment association in Tallinn were in two languages and our meetings took longer because everything was translated from Estonian into Russian and vice versa. I witnessed the same kind of mutual recognition and acceptance at apartment association meetings in the district of Lasnamäe my friends kindly took me to. Keeping things bilingual was a pragmatic choice but it was also a gesture and an act of mutual recognition. Moreover, it was by virtue of not deciding for one language or the other that the ethnic/national connotations of language could be downplayed. For example, at a question and answer session organized by the district authorities of Lasnamäe for representatives of apartment associations, some Russian-speaking participants protested and one person stood up and left when one of the invited speakers stopped using both languages. Keeping things bilingual was also a way of not foregrounding ethnicity/nationality and turning it into the prevailing interpretative framework.

By virtue of their mundaneness, these episodes suggest that the recognition and acceptance of ethnolinguistic differences and boundaries is the precondition for the coexistence of Estonians, Russians, Russian-speakers and non-Estonians in Tallinn. These expectations are one of the factors structuring everyday life and to the extent that Tallinn’s inhabitants share them, they give rise to what could be described as commonality. I am using this term to signify mutual recognition as an essential for the coexistence of people who live side by side and depend on each other but are also conscious of their distinctiveness and reluctant to see these differences dissolve. Thus,
commonality does not seek to define a group but to describe the mutual interdependence of individuals with multiple identifications. As such, commonality differs from both network and group, the two interdependent terms folklorists often use to conceptualize the people they are studying. For example, Dorothy Noyes has suggested distinguishing “between the empirical network of interactions in which culture is created and moves and, and the community of the social imaginary that occasionally emerges in performance” (Noyes 2003a, 11). “The community exists as the project of a network or some of its members. Networks exist insofar as their ties are continually recreated and revitalized in interaction” (Noyes 2003a, 33).

The distinction between network and community captures well the activities and aims of some of the minority actors I communicated and worked with in the course of my fieldwork and I myself entered in this process one network to the degree of changing its shape and not being able to depart (cf. Noyes 2003a 13). However, such group-oriented concepts become easily misleading if not counterproductive when exploring the Bronze Soldier controversy, the subsequent renaissance of the Victory Day or more generally the coexistence of Russians and Estonians in Tallinn, to the extent that they run the risk of reiterating the same confrontational argumentation employed by political actors speaking on the behalf of the Estonian state or the Russian Federation. As I aimed to show above, this argumentation denies and is used to suppress the internal multiplicity of point of views, taking as its starting point a “national totality” in need of protection. The application of the network metaphor to the Bronze Night would result in a replication of
the government’s securitizing claims that the monument had to be relocated there and then because of provokers acting in the interest of the Russian Federation. Yet based on my fieldwork, I would describe the gathering of people at the memorial as a spontaneous reaction to and criticism of the government’s actions by individuals united by a sense of injustice. This shared sense of injustice pointed to shared expectations towards the government and shared frustration, but it would be misleading to argue that it emerged from an empirical network of everyday interactions between the protestors. Correspondingly, it seems to me that the protestors were not enacting a community of their own but calling on the government for recognition and reciprocity.

By means of its securitizing interpretation of commemorative practices surrounding the monument and of individuals critical of the government, the government put ethnicity/nationality first, breaching the tacit expectation of mutual recognition and flexibility that makes the people accountable to each other and keeps the daily life going. One the one hand, the removal of the monument from downtown was one of the promises the Reform Party of Andrus Ansip gave its voters in the run-up to parliamentary elections in February 2007 and to the extent that “the squirrels” won, the government was fulfilling its promise. As the political scientist Tõnis Saarts wrote in the aftermath of the Bronze Night, the government had to take action promptly after the elections and before yet another Victory Day in May in order to avoid criticism from the Pro Patria and Res Publica Union, the competing right-wing party. In the words of Saarts, “if the Estonian party landscape was more balanced, Estonian party leaders would not fight over the issue
“who is the toughest nationalist.” (Saarts 2008, 106). One the other hand, the Reform Party did win the elections, which indicates that the competition over the title of the toughest nationalist has resonance among voters in contemporary Estonia, which helps to explain also the rigid position of the government and Estonian politicians regarding the Russian school. And form yet another hand, the relocation of the monument and the school reform are both in line with the Estonian-centered public sphere envisioned in the Estonian integration strategy and the narrow definition of Estonianness that forms the starting point of this model. As I have argued earlier in this study, there is no place, literally and metaphorically, in the “common core” or “state identity” for other languages and for other peoples, beliefs and practices – unless this otherness is compatible with or subjugated to the concept of Estonia as a multicultural state. The principle of cultural pluralism followed in Estonia calls for special programs, whereby minority students can learn about their culture and language within the Estonian-language school setting under the supervision of specialists, but not for the continuous use of Russian as the language of instruction. Similarly, the public celebration of Russian folk-calendar holidays counts towards the preservation and development of a distinctive linguistic and cultural identity, whereas the Victory Day commemorating the end of World War II does not. In terms of “the national totality,” Russian-language education and the Victory Day are elements that belong to another national entity and have to be contained in order to prevent them from weakening the ability of the Estonian entity to “control the definition of its own being” (Handler 1988, 189).
All of these claims and aims are very much grounded in the present, suggesting that the Bronze Soldier crisis had less to do with the past and collective memory and more to do with contemporary struggles over power (cf. e.g. Wertsch 2008, Tamm and Halla 2008). Conflicting interpretations of the past were and are enmeshed in this issue, but in a manner that cannot be solved by means of relocating monuments or erecting new one. Rather, framing the Bronze Soldier conflict as one of memory communities is a way of suppressing frictions between Estonians and reinforcing the legal-restorationist doctrine and narrative that few Estonians are capable of living up to.

The most obvious result of the relocation of the Bronze Soldier monument was the erasure of Victory Day celebrations from the center of Tallinn. The new site of these celebratory-commemorative gatherings at the cemetery of defence forces is not remote, but it is out of sight: one has to go there in order to see and hear it, but this it is no longer on display in the center of the capital and the symbolic center of the republic. The formal requirement that 60% of school subjects be taught in Estonian by a certain date is similar in that it does not dissolve the Other but relegates it to a marginal position.

On May 9, there is nowadays a constant flow of cars and people to the monument from the early morning till evening hours, Soviet patriotic songs blasting out at full volume, young men and women dressed up in World War II uniforms reenacting the guard of honor and candles replacing the “eternal flame” that used dignify the monument during the Soviet era at its old location in downtown Tallinn; thousands and thousands of red
carnations piled up on top of each other in front of the monument, distributed to the surrounding graves of Red Army veterans or stuck in the ground one by one in order to create a temporary sea of flowers admired for its beauty and attesting to a joint effort and coordinated action here and now.

Illustration 11 Victory Day 2010 at the Cemetery of Defense Forces

Similarly to celebrations at the monument’s earlier location in downtown, spontaneous expressions and performances are intertwined with calculated moves of actors who seek to fix the meaning of the occasion and appropriate it for their own purposes. Somebody has to choose the songs, provide the amplifiers and costumes for the young guards of honor, come up with the idea of distributing to people ribbons in the color of the Russian flag, so that if an Estonian sees images of the celebration, it looks like a Russian enclave.
Illustration 12 The Bronze Soldier monument on May 11, 2011

However, having spent two consecutive Victory Days in the cemetery of defence forces, I would agree with one my interviewee’s who described the post-2007 May 9th as April 26th: the “grand standing” next to the fenced-out memorial has transformed into “going” to the monument at its new location and the cemetery is filled with people who “stayed home” that April evening. These people go and take their children to the monument but not to Victory Day concerts held in the Russian Cultural Center or to screenings of Russian and Soviet war movies organized by the Russian Embassy. Like Estonians, they are more concerned with the present than the past and the continuity of life from day to day, part of which is the need to come to terms with those around you, irrespective of the language they speak or holidays they observe.

347 Fieldwork notes from May 2010 and May 2011.
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