

# BALTIC WORLDS

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- Putin's grip on the state apparatus
- Female representation in the spotlight
- Media's role during Euromaidan

## Power in disguise

also in this issue

Illustration: Karin Sunvissom

**BELARUS IN MAPS / SEXUAL RIGHTS IN POST-SOVIET / HERITAGE IN RUSSIA / ART IN SKOPJE / NATIONALISM IN THE EU**

editorial

## Power relations & imaginations

Is there to be a late Russian spring? In an interview professor Olga Kryshchanovskaya gives her view on the current situation around the future presidential successor in Russia, and the potential political upheavals connected to this shift in power. She claims that the elites and the security services have serious splits and clashes and that there is an informal rivalry.

“I am probably expressing an alarmist attitude of how the transition of presidential power in Russia will take place, but there are serious grounds for such alarmism”, she says to Ilja Viktorov.

She lists the qualities needed for Putin’s successor and it seems to be a limit amount of candidates that meet those.

And, I might add, very few, if any, women.

**CAN A WOMEN TAKE** a leading position in future Russia? In 2018 Ksenia Sobchak ran for president in Russia. The authors Liudmila Voronova and Emil Edenborg in an essay analyze the visibility of female politicians in the Russian public sphere. They note that running for president in a notoriously male-dominated sphere could hardly be considered an easy business. According to the 2017 Global Gender Gap Report, Russia is ranked 121<sup>st</sup> (out of 144) when it comes to the political empowerment of women.

Sobchak was, according to them, represented in mainstream Russian media as an “unruly woman” who was transgressing the existing patriarchal norms and rules, and she was explicitly reminded by male journalists and TV anchors of the “real” and “traditional” role a woman is supposed to play.

Is media to be trusted? The role of media

Ninna Mörner

is also brought up in a peer-reviewed article by Roman Horbyk, who is analyzing the role of Ukrainian journalists that covered the events of Euromaidan. Historically, media have often been loyal to the state and military during wartime, and this seems to be true also for Russian and Ukrainian media. Further, he argues, media can play a role as stabilizer in worrisome times.

“It seems tempting to conclude that in a revolutionary situation, when the traditional power collapses and can no longer fulfill its functions, society still cannot be left with a vacuum. In a modern society, such a political vacuum can be filled by media and journalists (provided that levels of trust and the cultural tradition allow it)/...”

**CAN SOLIDARITY** be restored? Among many different other contributions in this issue Tihomir Topuzovski reports from Skopje on a new educational programme that explores to what extent socially engaged artistic practices can contribute to reinventing the principle of solidarity. This further raises the question of what vision culture and art can create or how can they imagine the future. ✕

in this issue



### Blackmailing in Lviv

“It is difficult to overestimate the role of blackmail in worsening the situation of the Jews in Lviv during the Nazi occupation.

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### Review of “Belarus in maps”

“Belarus was one of the few countries in Europe that fought against the Nazis but lost part of their territory after 1945.

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### colophon

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# SPATIAL IMAGINATION AND POLITICAL NOTIONS OF THE BALTIC SEA REGION

"Towards a New Baltic Sea Region? North-Eastern Europe at the End of World War I." 9<sup>th</sup> International Conference on History and Culture in North Eastern Europe. Organizers: The Academia Baltica, Germany, Aue Stiftung, Helsinki; and the University of Szczecin. The Town Archive of Tallinn hosted the symposium in its medieval building in the Old Town.

Professor Seppo Zetterberg's introductory keynote speech *World War I and the People's Spring* formed the background to the detailed presentations during the symposium. It recounted how the Baltic Sea region became one of the most fateful theaters in Europe, with two great powers being truncated and several territories becoming nation states under both internal and external tensions. Zetterberg (University of Helsinki) gave the keynote speech in Estonian in the Old Town Hall of Tallinn.

The meeting started with lectures on concepts of the Baltic as a region. Michael North (University of Greifswald) took a long historical perspective, starting with Adam of Bremen and pointing to the different economic, political, and cultural interpretations and how their balance has changed over the centuries. Pärtel Piirimäe (University of Tartu) put an emphasis on the last 100 years of the Baltic region as an imagined space.

**THE ROLE OF** Germany towards the "Baltikum" during the First World War 1914–1918 was highlighted by several lectures. Ron Hellfritsch (University of Greifswald) presented German politicians' ideas of colonization and Germanization of Kurland, partly as an offer of land to its discharged soldiers. Eberhard Demm (University of Lyon) covered German attempts



The introductory key note speech was held in the Old Town Hall of Tallinn.

to influence the nation-building process of the different ethnic nations with ideas that ranged politically from die-hard annexationists among the military to adherents of a softer German hegemonic influence, particularly by industrialists and towards Lithuania. Mart Kuldkepp (Oxford University) spoke about the internal Baltic reactions to Germany's "national policy" with different attitudes not only between the different nationalities, but also within them.

While Germany was relatively politically intact until the bitter end, Russian geopolitics towards the area differed for obvious reasons, even after the Bolshevik coup in November 1917. Karsten Brügge-

mann (University of Tallinn) pointed out Lenin's sudden change from a Marxist theoretician to having to grapple with realities, not the least the clash between class and ethnicity (and its spatial consequences). "Let Finland, etc., go – they will soon join us anyway". But some Baltic Marxists saw independence only as subjugation under imperialism.

**ASPECTS OF** the "smaller nations" were covered by a number of participants. Jens Olesen (University of Greifswald) presented research on the burning geopolitical question of providing a hungry and politically unstable Finland with grain and the different deliberations made by possible

providers. Anne Hedén (Södertörn University) covered the relations between Finland and Sweden, particularly the role of Swedish volunteers on the White side in the civil war, and their degree of support in Sweden. The Red side received no support from Sweden, partly due to instructions from their leaders who saw them as necessary for the revolution at home. While Sweden never tried any irredentism towards "Finland proper", the Åland Island question was an important issue for activists from very different parties, shifting in intensity and actions from 1917 to the solution finally agreed on in 1921, as explained by Ralph Tuchtenhagen (Humboldt Universität Berlin).

**FOR LATVIA AND LITHUANIA**, just coming into being, territorial questions were important. Tilman Plath (University of Greifswald) presented the case of Letgallia squeezed between Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Russia from 1917 to 1920. Attempts at internal autonomy for Letgallia, including language rights, failed, as the area was finally annexed by Latvia. For Lithuania, according to Vasilius Safronovas (Klaipėda University) it was important to bridge the cultural gap between Catholics under Russian-Polish rule and Protestants under German rule, and to get access to the sea by annexing the Memel part of the latter. This fight over territories was carried out during the Paris Peace conference by official and unofficial representatives of Estonia and Latvia. Maps played an important role in the arguments, as demonstrated by Catherine Gibson (Università di Firenze).

After independence, Estonia (and to a limited extent Latvia) introduced cultural autonomy for national minorities. Olev Liivik (University of Tallinn) presented the consequences of such autonomy particularly for the most vociferous group, the Germans, who like all German minorities in Europe were supported by the Weimar Republic but felt badly treated in Estonia as principal victims of the land reform and by conflicts within the Protestant church. The Russians, by number the largest group, never managed to unite for a common cause, but their situation is under-researched.

**"ASPECTS OF THE 'SMALLER NATIONS' WERE COVERED BY MANY PARTICIPANTS."**

Apart from the total "communalization" of land in Soviet Russia, the Estonian land reform was the most radical re-arrangement of land ownership in Europe, with the German gentry as the main losers. In 1925 about 70 percent of large estate land had been distributed, resulting in 41,000 new farms, but former landowners received very little compensation. Eli Pilve (University of Tallinn) provided this information but was unable to attend the conference because of cancelled flights.

Marco Nase (Södertörn University) related the political side of Baltic Sea research, especially the ideological battle between Polish and German research centers during the inter-war period to dominate the problem formulation and their attempts to include Swedish and Danish researchers on their respective sides. Related to the subject was Thomas Lundén's (Södertörn University) presentation of some Swedish and Baltic geographers' dream in the inter-war period of a "Balto-Scandian Federation" based on alleged cultural and natural physical similarities.

**THE POST-SOVIET** situation as seen from the Russian discourse on Baltic regionalism was analyzed by Aleksander Sergounin (University of St. Petersburg) who pointed out that the transformations in Russian academic and expert communities had been rather receptive to the European concepts and models of regionalism, although in many ways elements of traditional thinking still remained even at the peak of the EU-Russian cooperation in the 1990s for the Kremlin, regional integration made sense only under certain conditions. However, Sergounin pointed to today's general dynamic in the Baltic Sea region as grounds for cautious optimism.

Silke Berndsen (University of Mainz) covered the different attempts to create formal contacts between the three Baltic States after independence. Some of the incentives came from diaspora organizations and "Western" neighbors, but these efforts met with different obstacles.

The whole symposium was concluded with a lecture by its main organizer, Jörg Hackmann (Szczecin and Greifswald Universities) (together with Robert Schweitzer of the Aue Stiftung), entitled "History as Argument? Spatial imagination and political notions of the Baltic Sea Region since the 1980s" and by a final discussion. One of Hackman's main points was the value and importance of developing multi-perspective views of the history of the Baltic Sea area, regardless of the current trends in security policies and the ebb and flow in the ongoing cooperation projects in the EU.

**AMONG MANY TOPICS** in the concluding discussion, there were some reflections from the participants on how to relate to the changing definitions and redefinitions of concepts like regionalism and nation as well as the relevance of these ideas in a period of speedy change. A suggestion was that that the populations in the Baltic Sea region perhaps practice regionalism in everyday life but think in nation-state terms when it comes to politics, and this is but one of many challenges for historians and political scientists to address in future research.

The symposium brought several interesting issues to the table, and as usual contacts and coffee-break discussions added to the growth of knowledge. Hopefully the presentations will result in separate articles or perhaps even an anthology. ✖

**Thomas Lundén**

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Continued.  
Path dependency and gender norms

household work were being relegated to women, and families were redefined as the primary sites for socialization, education, and the recreation of the producing selves.

**THE CONTRADICTION** expectations towards women as caregivers and workers provide the larger context for today's norms regulating intensive motherhood, a role that is omnipresent both in the region and elsewhere. The withdrawal of the state from the provision of care for the elderly has fueled the increasing demand for migrant care workers. While Russian society relies on women from Central Asian countries, the care chain is much more global, with Central and Eastern Europe featuring as sending countries. Two chapters deal with the situation of educational inequalities. One compares Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, claiming that in spite of roughly equal support and assistance received from international donors for their reforms, the socialist and pre-socialist culture and heritage shape the extent to which women have access to higher education. In a similar manner, technical studies in Hungary are male-dominated, a situation equally determined by past failures of the socialist regime and recent lack of adequate policies.

The inadequate tackling of the patriarchal gender order by socialism and the states' perceived interference with people's private lives made traditional, conservative values even more desirable and resilient. These norms have shaped women's self-perceptions in the Czech oral histories conducted with older women and the meaning of homes as the site of women's aspirations for harmony in Russia and probably elsewhere. Past trajectories of Eastern European societies have led to the emergence of "male democracies" from which women are more or less excluded and to the persistence of gender segregation in different sectors of the labor market such as the medical services.

**ALTHOUGH THE EMPIRICAL** data presented in some of the chapters suggest that the phenomenon that we call today re-traditionalization can be traced back before the nineties, the new regimes oriented towards liberal democracies and market economies are doubtfully responsible for the hegemony of the neoliberal ideology that has an impact on gender norms on two levels. First, in terms of material possibilities, market fundamentalism, and the state's lack of involvement in the re-production of human resources, families and especially women are expected to fill the gaps left by the state. This problem is raised by the papers that deal with issues of care for the elderly and for children. On the second level, the hegemony of the market can only be sustained through the ideology of the self-reliant and flexible self and its underlying techniques of governmentality of the self. These norms of full responsibility for one's successes or failures have become almost completely internalized by unemployed men, as well as by mothers struggling with multiple tasks, by Russian women taking up hostess work in Japan, and sometimes even by female university graduates. It is rare for individuals to challenge

or resist such neoliberal norms, even among those who fail to meet the social expectations.

I started this review by emphasizing as one of the volume's strengths its challenging of the unitary, homogeneous image of Eastern Europe as the "Other" of the West whose specific culture determines the trajectories these societies have followed and will follow. Still, the chapters contribute to a representation of the postsocialist world as a region where legacies and contemporary political processes shape people's lives and shape women's and men's opportunities differently. Unfortunately, none of these seem to lead towards gender equality. ✖

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