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Mapping Common Ground: Towards the Environmental Humanities in Latvia

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The conceptual framework of "environmental humanities", interdisciplinary in nature and pluralistic in its theoretical models, is increasingly used to address the current ecological crisis from entangled ethical, cultural, philosophical, political, social, and biological perspectives (Neimanis et al. 2015, Oppermann, Iovino 2016). Also, the notion of the Anthropocene, a term that was coined by two senior geoscientists (Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer), has graduated from being a buzzword to something like a keyword that animates daily discourse in the academic, political, commercial, and public domains alike (Castree 2014: 235). In the context of ecological crisis, enveloped by the notion of the Anthropocene, even the idea of "the environment" itself, not to mention "climate change" and "bio- and geoengineering", is at the stake considering the living, managing, narrating, and theorizing the local and planetary sustainability and the scope of human-environment interactions. As Bergthaller et al. (2014: 266) puts it, these terms not only refer to distinct material entities, phenomena, and social practices, but they also help shape and guide our understanding of the meaning of human life on Earth.

The environmental humanities (EH) as an interdisciplinary endeavour developed simultaneously in many parts of the world, grounding on the idea that scientists can excel at identifying and explaining environmental issues, but they alone cannot solve them. To solve and communicate these problems and dilemmas, which have been created by industrial society, political and cultural expertise and civic and indigenous knowledge is required as well (Emmett, Nye 2017: 1-7). EH has recently been established at various universities on every continent and is becoming increasingly visible through a lively publication activity (Schmidt et al. 2020: 225, see also, Tüür, Soovik 2020, Neimanis et al. 2015, Emmett, Nye 2017). This movement as a new research field is also gaining its visibility and relevance in Latvia.

Environmental humanities in Latvia: building a common platform

The EH as a platform for interdisciplinary conversations officially announced itself in Latvia in 2018 with the first BALTEHUMS conference1 that was brought to Riga by a group of researchers from Estonia (KAJAK, the Estonian Centre for Environmental History at the Tallinn University) and Sweden (KTH Royal Institute of Technology). The conference was held at the University of Latvia, Faculty of Geography and Earth Sciences and brought together up to 100 scholars, resulting in exchange of ideas and local and international collaborations. Among the Latvian research presented at the conference a variety of thematic topics stood out: studies of military formations of the last century and their instrumental role in the development of nature conservation areas, human-animal relationships in the context of nature conservation and rewilding projects, sustainable living, ethnobotany and permaculture, popular

1   BALTEHUMS conference program: https://www.geo.lu.lv/fileadmin/user_upload/lu_portal/projekti/gzzf/EURENSSA/Baltehums_program_for_print_01.pdf [Accessed 01.12.2021]

enlightenment and environmental history, eco-narratives, and ecological awareness. Altogether they represented a broad spectrum of environmental scholars of various academic disciplines interested in the objectives and imperatives offered by the EH (from philosophy, anthropology, history and folkloristics to environmental science and geography). Besides, the BALTEHUMS' event facilitated relationships that resulted in various international and local collaborations, for example, the University of Latvia's participation in the international research project Cold War Coasts, which explores the role of the military in shaping the Baltic Sea's coastal landscapes since 1945 and its legacies. Another fruitful collaboration emerged between environmental geographers and philosophers of the University of Latvia by engendering wider conversations on nature discourses and environmental management and ethics. This has resulted in a joint research project *Competing Discourses of Nature in Latvia and Ecological Solidarity as a Consensus Building Strategy* (NATURED) financed by Latvian Council of Science. The project aims as well to create a common platform for researchers, practitioners and ecological activists to aspire critical alliances and facilitate discussions on environmental issues through conferences and public lectures and dialogues. For example, the NATURED's collaboration with Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art's transdisciplinary network project "Communicating Difficult Pasts", which focuses on uneasy relations between past and present and their entangled nature, has opened a space for a joint communication and creative art projects on the complex relationships of Latvian society and its environment in the 20th and 21st centuries. Another such a platform event is forming at the annual conference of the University of Latvia within the interdisciplinary section dedicated to the EH and in two years it has attracted already a broad transdisciplinary audience.

The contributions on research collected in this special issue (SI) of *Letonica* is part of the NATURED's activities aimed at mapping the common ground of the EH research in Latvia. What are the historical and contemporary "hot topics" in environmental research and thought? How can the EH contribute to environmental research urgency in Latvia? What discourses and study areas have the EH brought together in the context of this special issue? The articles submitted and accepted for this SI will showcase only a few examples from the research activities and initiatives that takes place in Latvia. However, they already mark the zones of interest that have been outlined in the last decades by various academic research, initiatives and projects. We will trace and discuss the broader topics within which the enclosed SI articles are situated.

Nature and struggles over values and power

About two decades ago Latvian-American political scientist Katrina Schwartz published a series of articles and later also a book (Schwartz 2006) focused on the environmental politics, national identity and globalization in post-Soviet Latvia, a book that is an important conceptual contribution to environmental history in Latvia. Although much attention in her research was directed towards the analysis of the two main competing discourses: agrarian nationalism

and pro-European internationalism, which were subjects of debate in the transition period in the 1990s and 2000s, the book discloses the issues that are still not resolved in the modern-day Latvia. These are: the struggle over land uses of denationalized land property and the struggle over power and values related to the politics, management, and conservation of nature. Among the many examples brought up in this context, Schwartz (2005; 2006) described the idea and initiative to preserve the pre-agricultural landscape shaped by natural processes that would include the nature-based tourism as a way to "export" wilderness and biodiversity to Western Europe. This was the Nature Park *Pape*, where the first introduction of semi-wild Konik horses to further enhance wild nature through their grazing brought in with the help of Dutch consultants took place in Latvia, creating heated debates among locals and nature conservation experts favouring the conventional agricultural landscape instead of such an unfamiliar wilderness. The Nature Park *Pape*, however, continued with the rewilding projects bringing in heck cattle and bison as well. Zariņa et al. (2022, this issue) discuss the twisted fate of Pape's bison who due to the unpredicted conjunctures escaped their fenced enclosure in 2008 and gradually became the wild animals still roaming in the surroundings of Pape. This event brought up a few important issues related to the wild grazing ideas and practices (see also Reķe et al. 2019), as well as the human-animal relationships that has a potential to overcome the Nature-Society divide. The idea of such a wilderness entails in its essence the gradual deconstruction of fences (and here we would like to stress not only material but also metaphorical meaning of the word) thus dissolving the boundaries between the tamed and the wild and, as Lorimer (2015: 4) asserts, catalysing modes of "stewardship" based on nature that is always-entangled with humans. As several rangers of Latvia's nature parks have admitted, Latvian society is not ready to have wild nature outside protected areas' zones yet.

Similar issues are raised by Reķe (2022, this issue), who analyses the discourses surrounding the human-wolf relationships as they are portrayed by public media in Latvia. The analysis discloses the struggle for power in wildlife conservation politics and the role of biopolitics of agriculture and forestry in creation of hunting favouring discourses. This is one of the cases that show the populist politics grounded in the cultural representations of the fear of wolves having direct effect on wildlife management policies (e.g., Schmidt et al. 2020). And the problem and its solution of the aforementioned examples and alike is not only instrumental here, that is, refers to the subsidies, the status of a protected area or schemes of financial compensations, but it lies in the absence of understanding of what is at stake in living in and after the Anthropocene, what are our contemporary social-ecological predicaments. The communication towards this understanding, certainly, is the task for the EH.

Narrating and representing environment of the Soviet and post-Soviet

One of a pivotal topics in the post-Soviet country such as Latvia is the stories of the Soviet past and the environment itself is central to telling these stories. And very often these stories convey

the dark political agenda of communist rule that destroyed the environment in the pursuit of military and economic power (e.g., Peterson 1993, Agyeman, Ogneva-Himmelberger 2009, Barcz 2020). Indeed, the Soviet period coincided with the era of modernist transformation of rural and urban space in Latvia by massivization of the agricultural lands (Melluma 1994), transformation of wetlands (Zariņa, Vinogradovs 2019), militarization of various societal and natural domains and Soviet housing mass constructions (e.g., Gentile, Sjöberg 2009). These processes culminated in the 1970s and the beginning of 1980s with the hyper industrial projects setting into motion, yet subtly, the environmental movement. Bunkse (1979), for example, already in 1970s addressed the rational, socioeconomic solutions of urban development in Riga, which largely ignored local factors and the needs of individuals, questioning the assertion by Soviet urban planners that their goal is to create a humane environment. Matvejs (2022, this issue) adds to that analysing the portrayal of urban residential outdoor space in films of the Soviet era, showing that only in the mid-1980s filmmakers shed lights on existing flaws of the residential neighbourhood of *micro-rayons* in Riga.

The transformation of cultural landscapes at the time and the destruction of the environment, signified, by many, the destruction of homeland (Schwartz 2006, Galbreath, Auers 2009). The Great Tree Liberation Movement, which emerged during the mid-1970s, led by a praised Latvian poet Imants Ziedonis with the goal of registering great trees as national monuments to protect them from both undergrowth and reclamation that was associated with agricultural intensification and farmstead liquidation (Schwartz 2006, Steger 2009, Ūdre 2019). Also, environmental protests challenging a threat posed to the Latvian cultural and ethnic landscape by Soviet land-use planning, the development of grand infrastructural projects and immigration of the workers from other parts of the USSR took the form of an anti-dam and anti-metro movement in the 1980s (e.g., Schwartz 2006, Grava 1989). As elsewhere in Eastern Europe, this ushered the era of Green Awakening led by the Environment Protection Club in Latvia (cf. Ūdre 2019), which held on to the idea of synthesis of environmentalism and national identity or as Guattari (1989: 18) has put it—ecology and separatist demands.

Having all this in mind, Galbreath and Auers (2009: 334) state that "Latvia is an interesting case of overlap between environmentalism and nationalism"; and this has eventually led to some bizarre forms of political alliances of the post-Soviet era, especially in the context of Western politics, for example, alliance of conservative and agriculture lobby-party Latvian Farmers' Union with Latvian Green Party, resulting in politics where "green" is mere colour of logo. Nationalism still plays an important role in environmental and nature conservation discourses, however, there are still a myriad of issues to be critically reassessed and communicated in relation to the Soviet environmental heritage through overcoming the conservatism of idolized ethnoscape and the notion of Soviet era as all-encompassing evil times. For example, Zariņa et al. (2018) has discussed the evidently endless struggle over land uses between nature protection agencies and conventional domain of agriculture in the reclaimed wetland spaces of Soviet agro-industrial heritage (agro-polders). Krumberga (2022, this issue) draws attention to the diversity and hybridity of spatial relations involved in the geographical meaning-making and production of the coastal landscape where the socio-political problematics

arise not because of the military legacy but from the contemporary discursive attempts to separate the Cold War's past from its geographical context and to present a purified (hi)story of the coastal environment. Kozlovs and Skulte (2022, this issue) study how people living in the city are re-imagining the reorganization of urban space by positioning signs for an alternative reading of urban environment. At the same time Āboliņa and Zīlāns (2022, this issue) question the possibility of "being at home" and the struggle for the "urban commons" within the neighbourhoods located next to the industrial Freeport of Riga, which bears the spatial imprints of Soviet urban planning in the context of contemporary neoliberal urban developments and environmental impacts of industrial business-as-usual.

Expanding the subject of biophilosophy

The notion of biophilosophy is mostly used to name an area of research that could also be described as the philosophy of biology (Mahner, Bunge 1997). It concerns methodological issues of biology and ontological puzzles like the possibility of reductive explanations of life, or the ontological status of taxonomical systems. The term "biophilosophy" on its own does not preclude a broader application of the word, and certainly there are other issues that concern the subject of life and are relevant for philosophical reflection. And there are authors who try to expand the notion of biophilosophy by bringing into the analysis of life a whole spectrum of relationships (Thacker 2015), including the social practices (Žukauskaitė 2013), and ethical issues (Köchy 2008).

As far as the Latvian philosophers have applied this term, they have chosen the second approach, and have used the term "biophilosophy" in the broader sense—as a philosophical reflection on living nature, human involvement in it, and the natural, physical, and biological conditions of human existence (Bičevskis 2020, see also Stepiņš 2020, Sauka 2020). The concept highlights the relationship between the society and the biological character of human existence and positions this relationship for philosophical and ethical research. That also means that the natural, the physical and the biological are seen as inseparable from their social, political and technological contexts, their social presentation and the resulting ethical consequences. Basically, biophilosophy raises the question of how to think of humans as biological, bodily beings, without reducing this effort to some biological determinism, or opposite—without discarding the biological and the natural as irrelevant, or just social constructions. Ultimately, it is a question of how we should think about life, body, or nature within the humanities.

From the perspective of philosophy this SI addresses several important biophilosophical issues. Both Sauka and Bičevskis (2022, this issue) analyse the contradictory nature of modern discourses, and demonstrate the way these discourses construct the meaning of life, nature, and body in contemporary Western society. Although both authors emphasize the self-deceptive and alienating character of some of these discourses, they do not demand for

rejection of modernity but rather invite us to notice in these contradictions the potential for a substantial reimagination of ourselves, our being, and our environment. This potential for thinking and living differently are hidden under a complex network of ideological, including metaphysical, assumptions and dispositions but they are still there. Both authors express doubts about the attempts to think of nature and society separately, and Sauka in particular focuses on the necessity to develop a new kind of ontology that overcomes this and other dualistic structures that are ubiquitous in our discourses and practices and invite as to take seriously the processual ontology as a promising approach to understanding environmental, social and ethical issues. In fact, the analysis and criticism of dualistic structures has become an integral part of post-humanist project and the debate on the Anthropocene. So, it is not surprising that this topic keeps returning in SI, and that includes Neikena's (2022, this issue) research of representation of violence in media. Writing from a perspective of an anthropologist, she focuses on the problematic but widely encountered practice to use animals for marking the Other, but just like many authors of SI, she also notices that the representations of nature, in this case animals, often are ambiguous and contradictory. That creates a space for new and more imaginative discourses on nature and environment that would better suit our situation of living in the Anthropocene.

Concluding remarks

One of the challenges for EH and that includes EH in Latvia is a difference and certain tension between two tasks of the EH project—"on the one hand, the common focus of the humanities on critique and an 'unsettling' of dominant narratives, and on the other, the dire need for all peoples to be constructively involved in helping to shape better possibilities in these dark times" (Rose et al. 2012). Researchers in EH cannot ignore any of the two but "dominant narratives" can turn out to be more effective, at least in a short run, for environmentalism agenda. Another related issue is the international character of contemporary research and the local issues of environment protection and nature conservation including the conflicts that emerge among the variety of stakeholders and that are often articulated using these dominant narratives.

As to the local context, it is evident that the contemporary talking points in environmental research and thought in Latvia are embedded in the situation that still deals with the institutional and environmental legacies of the Soviet past. It relates to urban structures and environment, post-military developments, nature conservation issues and practices, as well as the politics of the Natural in general. One of the important challenges for the EH in Latvia is to construct a bridge between local environmental issues and those of the global scale for overcoming the dominant ethno-national discourses, which in Latvia manifests not only in the environmental and nature conservation domains but also in the issues related to various social inequalities. Thus, on one hand, the EH must "speak in the local language" in order to make any difference in policy decisions which means that one of the tasks of EH is

to "translate" theoretical reflections and research results in a way that can be communicated in the local cultural and discursive context. On the other hand, the EH is instrumental in recreating those local cultural and discursive contexts by reimagining of ourselves, and our environment that would allow "better possibilities in these dark times" to emerge.

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Boundaries of Modernity: History—Nature—Society—The World

Raivis Bičevskis

"Crossing the line, reaching point zero, *divides* the performance in two parts; only the middle has been reached instead of the end. Definitive security regarding the end is still very remote. And that is precisely why hope is still possible."

Ernst Jünger, *Across the Line*

"Modernity" is a concept, which, in the contexts of various studies and analyses, is related to the era in European history that began with the Enlightenment and the French Revolution and extends to this very day. In discussions about modernity, its beginnings have been pushed back to a much earlier time and also there is no consensus regarding the stages and chronology of modernity. As any philosophical and historical category, "modernity" reflects the efforts to find orientation in history, legitimize (or, just the opposite, criticize) certain novelties and construct social political discourse. Yet the dense pile of research by historians, idea researchers, philosophers, and others about the time since the French Revolution not only testifies to the feverish interest of this era in itself but also about the era as a self-reflective problem whose solutions imply decisions regarding how the era would proceed.

From the very beginning of the era, a constant battle has raged over both its legitimacy and continuation. There has also been continual talk (and with particular intensity at some stages) of the end of modernity and "leaving" or "exiting from" modernity. In the 1980s, Jürgen Habermas criticized the predictions of and wishes for leaving modernity when, in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, he argued with Arnold Gehlen and protested against the diagnosis prepared by "neoconservatism", i.e. that modernity might be buried in a system of "concrete" economy, state, technology and science, which can no longer be influenced and behind whose monolith walls cultural entropy reigns, and that it could be thus "crystalized" and exhausted of its potential (Habermas 1993: 11).[1] Habermas himself wished the modernity project to continue and hoped that the resources of a fully understood rationality, emancipated from its deficient forms by way of self-criticism, had not been exhausted

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1   This diagnosis was put forward by Gehlen in one of his most influential works *Die Seele im technichen Zeitalter* (Gehlen 1957), which was published in Ernesto Grassi's *Rowohlts deutsche Enzyklopädie*—the series of books which reflected the philosophical and social-political discussion that was taking place at that time in West Germany (Morat 2009: 321).

or "crystalized".[2] This hope, however, ran against the fact that from the very start modernity has possessed a very self-critically ambivalent (even up to its self-reversal) recessive trajectory and that there has never been just a project of "one" modernity. "Modernity" has existed and continues to exist as a conflict between several parallel "modernities", a battle for the future through visions of modernity.

Still, even the very different modernity projects share some features and trajectories of self-criticism in common. In this article I provide four sketches of the perspective of self-criticism by and recession of modernity. Four discourses for grasping modernity as a project are presented, involving both getting over and continuing it. These approaches reveal the aporia that modernity (and approaches themselves as self-critical continuations of modernity) possesses.

This article aims to show versions of modernity, in each of which the protagonists realize the aporia of their projects and, by resolving it, face the temptations of "leaving modernity". To this end, four versions of modernity or four modernity discourses are sketched out within the framework of the article. The sketches of these four versions turn first, in the medium of history, to romanticism; second, in the medium of nature, to cultural criticism; third, in the social and technological medium, to the theory of the dictatorship of secondary systems (which is topical to this day, despite having been conceived in the middle of the 20th century, for such are its fixed social systemic phenomena); and fourth, in the medium of the relationship with reality, to the Frankfurt school of criticism and third generation ideas after Habermas. These four attempts at grasping, critiquing, and continuing modernity are not uniform: (1) from its very beginnings, romanticism is not ideologically homogeneous and in the 19th century evolves in different directions and on different levels; (2) the stream of cultural criticism is sufficiently ideologically homogeneous, albeit very politically bipolar and containing radical expressions of the critique of modernity and the modern era, but also —in following the leftist, liberal, conservative, and right-leaning political and social views—possessing a wide range of modernity continuation offers; (3) the perspective of secondary systems theory, and (4) the perspective of the third generation of the Frankfurt school which is likewise bipolar, the leftism of the Frankfurtian modernity as an incomplete project and the pessimistic rightwing tendencies of Hans Freyer entail in fact looking in opposite directions, undoubtedly *united* by the diagnosis of modernity (alienation, technique, governance, anonymity, mass culture).

In the perspectives of these four sketches of self-understanding, self-criticism, and self-perpetuation of modernity, outside the political and social programs and tendencies, I have tried to look into the aporias and battles of modernity to whose ambivalence the protagonists of the sketches testify—i.e. to look into the "face of modernity" (without reducing and improving its features). To the sketches of the aporias of modernity I have dedicated the four sections of this article, in which the aporias have been revealed, taking as their point of departure one concept (history, nature, society, the world, respectively).

2   Habermas expands on his idea and provides it with theoretical support in close connection with his "theory of communicative action" and texts from the 1990s on democracy, justice, the fate of European philosophy and the social sciences, etc.

1. History: from past myths to fighting for the future

In 1798, one of the leaders of romanticism, Friedrich Schlegel, published fragments in the first volume of *Atheneum*, among which there was this statement: "A historian is a prophet looking backwards" (fragment No. 80) (Schlegel, Schlegel 1984: 69). This was not just a description of a researcher or interpreter of the past (i.e. historian). It involved the relationship between time dimensions: the past in these words is closely tied to the future: someone is predicting the future here while looking at the past. Instead of the present, it is the past that gives meaning to the future. Which past is meant? Is it the past of the "facts" of history: a historian describing the past "the way it was", as later formulated by the historian Leopold von Ranke (v. Ranke 1877: VII)?[3] Would the past "facts" diligently described by a selfless researcher of history really tell us anything about the future (moreover, provide it with sense and direction)? If we are to believe the old adage that history is the teacher of life (historia magistra vitae), it could lead to the conclusion that knowledge of the past would prevent past mistakes from being repeated in the future. Yet it is probably clear that it is not a moral lesson that someone learns (or fails to learn) in investigating and evaluating the past that is of concern to Schlegel in the *Atheneum* fragment. Along with young people from his generation, he has trustingly (and daringly) walked out to the edge of the much wider ocean of time and ventured into it. Instead of morals, it is the beautiful and the noble that accompany him on his journey. The attractions and dangers felt in childhood tales and dreams stare at him also from history: poetic images from myths, legends, and stories wander the borderline between the somewhat clearly grasped yesterday and the murky and unconscionable day before, which increasingly blends with the darkness that holds the beginning of all days. In his extensive lecture series popularizing romanticism and contrasting it with Enlightenment, Friedrich Schlegel's brother August Wilhelm talked about the day as the symbolic twin of the mind, as it too had to sink into the darkness every night. There, as in the primeval chaos, thousands of sparks of imagination are flying, hundreds of streams of life are flowing before being named and becoming that which is ordered and accumulated by understanding and explained by the mind. The sun of the mind breaks into a thousand sparks of the imagination (cf: Schlegel 1884: 68-69). All historical eras and all historical achievements draw from the original spring of the primeval night. It is possible to continue with what has been inherited as something complete "from the fathers" (i.e. tradition), but at some point there is a need to go to the origins of all cultural forms, to the incomplete, creative source. To remind us of the flow of this effervescent spring deep in any cultural achievement and then "go to the mothers" (Goethe's *Faust* I, 1) and create from the primevally sizzling—this is at the heart of the Romanticism's *program*.

To (again) provide the usual with the look of the unusual, to provide (again) the usual with the form of the noble: this is the romantic *method*. Another romantic author, Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg), wrote in the well-known fragment No. 37 of his *Fragments and Studies* (1797/1798):

3   On the meaning of this statement by von Ranke,—that with its help, the historian wanted to limit the impact of his subjectivity and allow the past to appear in its own historical greatness and tragedy, thus testifying to the historical existence—, see: Vierhaus (2003: 358 and further).

> The world must be romanticized. Only then we can find its primeval meaning. Romanticizing is nothing but quality potentializing. In our everyday I we discover a higher self and identify our I with it. We too are series of quality potentializing. This operation is still unfamiliar. To what is known by all I accord a special, mysterious significance, a puzzling look to the common, to the familiar the respect of the unknown, to the finite an infinite glow—that's how I romanticize. [...] [That is] romantic philosophy. Lingua romana. (Novalis 2001: 384-385)

Only he who gives in to the lure of ancient myths and stories and his own imagination, which sinks into the primeval creative chaos and brings surprising treasures to the light of day, only he is invited to become the architect and prophet of the future. Only he who is capable of quality potentializing, i.e. augmenting the invisible behind the obvious, seeing the unfamiliar in the familiar, and making the commonplace mysterious; only he will see future in the past.

The question arises however: Why is romanticism so concerned not only with the past but also with the future? Why does the backward looking romantic have to be a prophet? In his backwardness, the romantic could dream ancient dreams and immerse himself in the original night of the flow of time. But no—there is talk of the future. What kind of future? And for what purpose does the romantic poet conjoin the darkness of the past with the darkness of the future across the prosaic moment of the present?

The future is a field for endless battles already in the Enlightenment. The projects of future society and future state, stories and projects of utopian authors turn into a long string of future visions that runs through the 18th century. After the French Revolution, the number of stories about the future increase: the range of future prospects, hopes, plans and visions grows by mathematical progression. The entire modernity since the end of the 18th century is the century of architects of the future—from Rousseau to Marx, from Fichte to Nietzsche, from Novalis to the ideologues of nation states. Looking back in history, everyone prophesies while at the same time constructing the past and the future.

In *Christianity or Europe* (1799), Novalis wrote: "Where there are no gods, ghosts reign" (Novalis 2001: 513). Which of the future and past constructs of modernity are "gods" and which are "ghosts"? Almost a century later, Nietzsche answered this question in Fragment No. 150 of Part 4 of *Beyond Good and Evil*: "Everything surrounding a hero becomes a tragedy, everything surrounding a demigod, becomes a game of satyrs; and surrounding a god everything becomes—what? Perhaps the 'world'"? (Nietzsche 1954: 637). In which world do we wish to live? And is it (i.e. life in a historically created world) a matter of an individual choice? It rather seems not: gods are replaced by "ghosts"; replacing the "old" world, the collective unconscious creates new myths and invents the past in its dreams and nightmares; the secret orders sung by conspiracy theories determine the course of history, ethnic groups vomit fiery streams of songs and dances, the truth of history is on the side of the working class, and even a business needs "a corporate spirit".

The departed gods have left behind an empty space where now the modern myths and ghosts are roaming. Reason is one of them. It has been attributed to the universe, cosmos, life, and humans. Intelligent design attempts to take the place of *all* the departed gods. Something that is difficult to describe and name is forming around all of these ghosts. Nietzsche wrote about a god around whom "a world" comes into being. Around ghosts, it's simulacra, world historical battle-filled scenarios, social swarming, education and re-education programs and projects, and penitentiaries form. But is "a world" coming into being? Modern society (roaming along with ghosts) is a society without a world. It is the grim dialectic of modernism in which the romantic, having gone out to look for the primeval, finds himself with the construed, artificial, forced, ideologized, and calculated. A prophet, he finds himself in the bureau of prognostications where they calculate the distribution of votes among leftist, centrist, conservative, and radical right parties. In the early 19th century, Heinrich von Kleist in his article "On the Puppet Theater" (v. Kleist 1980) expressed hope that the modern era, albeit incapable of returning to the paradise from which it has been chased, still will find itself able (by circling the meridian) to enter paradise from the other side: culture, which has become so reflexive and metacritical of itself in some way will overcome the loss of its origins and naïve non-reflexiveness, returning to the beginning, only in a different form, informed by reflection. The power of the modern reflexive culture has turned out to be rather fragile after all: it is precisely in the name of the power of reflection and reason that excessive construction and ideological production have taken place in modernity. The clear vision of *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* by Adorno and Horkheimer is most convincing in their description and analysis of cultural industry and rationalized production of new myths (Horkheimer/Adorno 2002: 94-136). These analyses, however (just like the social criticism developed by the Frankfurt School) owed much to early 20th century thinkers who were not at all left-leaning, such as Ludwig Klages. He created myths of life and the primeval while at the same time coming up with arguably the most eloquent descriptions of the negativity of the modern era (e.g., in the manifesto "Man and Land"). Klages's prophecies point to a range of modern ghosts that have replaced the departed gods: progress, science, industry, capitalism, consumer society. The "invisible hand" of these ghosts directs our lives.

Men hardened in the material battles of the 20th century come up with a new myth of "steel romanticism": total mobilization. It is impossible to flee modernity in a peasant's footwear; modernity is fate, and fate must be loved; so a new aesthetic of the technical world, a symbiosis of science and the educated masses, apotheosis of modern reality must be found. The nation oriented toward learning and innovations, which joins others in another battle. For what? What has to be fought for? Is this battle only the convulsions of modern man before the arrival of Übermensch? Myths accumulate one atop another—technical, archaic, trembling in apocalyptic expectation of the future or created in an *amor fati* determination. The program of new mythology of romanticism is continuing and living even in forms alien to their creators. The scientific myth blends together with the enigma of the cosmic reason and longing for the archaic blends with the myths of consumer society.

It would probably be wise to try to understand: are these the only alternatives among which to make a desperate choice: between one myth and another, one prophet and another, one

ghost and another? Is there not another possibility safely tucked away in the darkness of imagination and the light of reason? Reflecting on the enthusiasm of modernity (and, more comprehensively, the modern era) for doing, one said that before doing we should first determine what "doing" and "action" really are (Heidegger 2010).

2. Nature: from the language of nature to radical cultural criticism

As we know from the times of Heraclitus, nature (*physis*) likes to hide (Fragment No. 123). It is hiding behind the diversity and overabundance of its expressions and phenomena (phainēsthai). But nature also hides behind the many images and notions applied to it, over time, by humans. In their efforts to uncover the secrets of nature, humans have inadvertently got entangled in the nets of culture—the labyrinths of symbols, systems of signs, meanings of words, and ritualized activities. Even when it seems that science has helped us to capture the very nature of things, we end up only with that which we ourselves have put into them. Humans receive answers only to the questions they ask themselves. Yet these questions are inevitably impacted by the cultural perspective. The "nature" concealed behind the screen of culture does not speak; it is mute or, at best, announces itself in undecipherable codes. With their self-construed questions, humans must force mute nature to speak and respond. The modern-time science is a way of asking questions, receiving answers, and turning what has been obtained into resources, means, and innovations.

This approximates the point of departure of the romantic Novalis's so-called natural-science novel *The Disciples at Saïs* (1802) (Novalis 2001, 95-99). In a city of ancient Egypt, disciples are looking for another approach to the human relationship with nature. Modern science has taken as a given that nature does not speak; its many sounds—birdsongs, voices of animals, the bubbling of water and rustling of leaves, the rumble of landslides, and the howling of winds are meaningless sounds akin to the clatter of cogwheels. Nature is matter to be approached according to the wishes and desires flashing in the human cultural network. Yet such an approach to nature has been wrong from the start, muse the disciples at Saïs. Nature speaks. Man has simply forgotten its language, forgotten how to listen to what nature says. The disciples proceed to search for nature's language or, to be more precise, they are looking for the key to unlock the skills necessary to hear what nature says. It will no longer simply reply to questions posed by humans but speak for itself—when they shut up. Nature will begin to speak the language still resonating in man, albeit too softly, too obscured by the diverse images of nature produced by culture. This language has been perverted by a certain course cultural development has taken and it has become rare, momentary flashes of memory, which people of the modern "disenchanted" world (Weber 1919: 16) fail to join in the original coherent speech.

The motif of the language of nature is found throughout the European modernity (18th-20th c.). Inspired by romanticism, it is not only poets or modern shamans and soothsayers

who seek a primeval harmony with nature, adherents to the reform movement and receivers of rhythms of nature, but it is also scientists. If not for this quest, the concept of "organism" would not find any purchase: i.e. that nature is not a mechanism but an interplay of organic forces with its own special expression and articulation that match the world/environment surrounding the organisms generated and existing in this interplay. If not for this quest, there would be no 19th century philologists and their search for a prehistoric Indo-Germanic/Ancient Indo-European language. It was in fact found, and the researchers of pre-history created another great story about the ancient Indo-European world, its myths, and gods from ashes brought to the light of day. Many 19th century philosophers and scientists viewed Ancient Greece and what was passed down in it close to expressing what was dictated by nature itself. And then the worlds of Ancient Indo-Europeans and Ancient Greeks were no longer enough: Johann Jakob Bachofen in his work *Das Mutterrecht: eine Untersuchung über die Gynaikokratie der alten Welt nach ihrer religiösen und rechtlichen Natur* (Bachofen 1861) as well as others discover ancient Europe—the world of matriarchy before the arrival of Indo-Europeans in Europe. Perhaps then people could still listen to nature and hear what it had to say? Perhaps then people were still sufficiently perceptive instead of actively loud and demanding? Perhaps then they heard the language of nature? Romanticism launches a multilayered and self-contradictory project of a "re-enchantment of the world"—one of the most ambivalent stories of modernity, which, in variations, continued (parallel to the obsession with technological progress and posthuman visions) in the 20th century and has been continuing to this day.

In his paper "Man and Earth" published in 1913, which can well be considered the first ecological manifesto, philosopher Ludwig Klages discusses *ex negativo* a once existing option—the perceptive, yielding ("pathic") listening to nature.[4] In his manifesto, however, he mostly sharply criticizes modern science, capitalist market economy, and Christianity whose trinity is the pillar of the civilization that has forgotten the language of nature. Klages passionately condemns this trinity for creating a death civilization and ruthless exploitation and extermination of nature. He writes:

> Make no mistake: 'progress' is the lust for power and nothing besides, and we must unmask its method as a sick, destructive joke. Utilizing such pretexts as 'necessity', 'economic development,' and culture, the final goal of 'progress' is nothing less than the destruction of life. This destructive urge takes many forms: progress is devastating forests, exterminating animal species, extinguishing native cultures, masking and distorting the pristine landscape with the varnish of industrialism, and debasing the organic life that still survives. [...] All technology is subservient to this progress and an even greater force is in its service: science. (Klages 2013: 18-19)

4   H.-P. Preusser has this to say about the meaning of "pathic" as used by Klages: "Since the functioning of the world is no longer permitted, it is no longer real. [...] The pathian revolts against this", for his self yields to the "stream of experience" (Preusser 2015, 149).

Overall, "progress, civilization, capitalism are different aspects of the intention of a single will".

This intention is obvious not only in the human attitude toward the living but also in the way that humankind itself has been alienated from the natural landscape, environment, and the phenomena that are characteristic of them and have formed the lives of people living in them. Klages observes a most intimate relationship between science and a particular form of economic and social way of existence of society:

Today, no thinking person can have any doubt that the brilliant success of physics and chemistry serve only capital. [...] the special achievement of new science is the replacement of all quality differences with a set theory in all areas; it functions as a fundamental rule imposed by will; it erases the magnificent diversity of the soul's glowing values, which now [...] has been transformed into a monetary value. (Klages 2013: 26)

These pronouncements by Klages are not, however, simply a criticism of social or economic processes, but an attempt to point at wider and older relationships underpinning them:

Capitalism and its enabler, science, are a realization of Christianity, which [...] in the name of an only spiritual divinity declared war on the countless diversity of world's gods and now are dragging their feet on a leash of the thought of an all-encompassing One. (Klages 2013: 28)

The so-called interconnected world, particularly emphasized by Christianity and perpetuated by science and capitalism, is only a power tool with whose help as much of natural treasures as possible should be grabbed, without paying any heed to "the life of the still primitive peoples" or "the right of diversity of natural phenomena", or the hidden ability of an individual to hear the language of nature, which (translated into the terminology of the unified, globalized world), mean only the ungovernable, uncontrollable, and thus the undesirable and exterminable in man. A person who has heard the language of nature is no longer subject to the grasp of modern civilization, in which it is self-referentially strangling both nature and man. "The language of nature" is an element of *cultural criticism*—nature and its language become a radical and revolutionary slogan calling for a new, i.e. well-forgotten archaic, primeval, i.e. *original* life. "Nature" is a keyword of the modern conservative revolution (or at least one of the top ones in the series). As one of such keywords, "nature" is no longer the "nature" as understood by the ancient Cynics, as something to return to. The recourses of the conservative revolution are quite self-reflective and oriented toward the future—just as "already for Rousseau and Schiller", the faction of friends of nature in the conservative "return to nature" revolution is a call to recognize the problems of civilization instead of returning in the literal sense (Bollenbeck 2007: 14).

I must hasten to add that it is not just a slogan of *this* revolution. In modernity overall, "aesthetics and the experience of nature have been established as the spheres of resonance *sui generis*" (Rosa 2013a: 10); i.e. man looks to them for possibilities for a special, unalienated interaction with the world. One of the many examples here could be the concept behind

the Norwegian series *Beforeigners* whose first season was in 2019. The series depicts a world where, because of a glitch in time's unidirectional movement, people from previous eras appear in the present. A large part of the narrative is taken up by a social upheaval and misunderstandings because of "time migrants" or people with a "multitemporal background." The series also shows various groups of modern people—neo luddites who voluntarily have given up all the "benefits" of modern civilization and consider the arrival of people from previous eras as a sign for an eschatological change in times. Similar groups of people within modern culture have in fact existed and continue to exist. There are many examples. To be sure, their referent is not always "nature" to which they want to "return". Interestingly enough, those of the groups for whom the "return to nature" motif is the main constituent of their group identity include very politically and socially polarized participants: their cultural critique can be left- or right-oriented, conservative or anarchist—these radically opposing orientations are no obstacles for "returning to nature". That is in fact similar to the classical examples of modern cultural criticism: even though Adorno and Horkheimer's Dialectic of Enlightenment as a critique of contradictions of modern society and description of its inner logic is not an invitation to "return to nature", this work too is unimaginable not only without Marx but also Klages and Bachofen's matriarchy myth extolled by Klages. Studies in 20th century history of philosophy clearly show that the leftist cultural criticism of Frankfurt was inspired by the ideas of rightist esoterics and conservative revolutionaries (see Dörr 2007). The relationship with nature is a prevalent modernity theme both in a socioeconomic and self-critical sense. At the same time, it is a theme indicative of the aporias of modernity, which sharpens along with the sharpening of the other prevalent themes of modernity and repeats with the flashes of its other immanently perpetual problems.

The vision of the language of nature and the relationship with nature it underpins indicates that "nature" is not only nature. Within the modernity framework, it becomes a seminal element in the critique of civilization and a protuberance of the aporetic nature of modernity. It is that today as well. As such, it has become another symbol of the cultural network with whose help the modern man has tried to get behind the cultural screen to avoid losing reality, which permanently threatens to disappear behind the constructs of nature (as well as history, world, society). Does it mean that man is thus following the "call of nature"?

3. Society: from lifeworld to the reign of secondary systems

In his work *Soul in the Age of Technology* (1957), the aforementioned anthropologist Arnold Gehlen wrote:

> Just like the Englightenment-era faith in reason has been formalized into readiness for new [rationalized: R. B.] forms and plans of organization, the legitimization of happiness in this world (the other Enlightenment discovery) is an offshoot of the other need of industrial society—consumption (Gehlen 1957: 79)

Faith in reason has turned into a plan for social organization and rationalized governing; the depiction of this world in which there is no longer any need to include otherworldly points of reference has become an industry of consumerism and mass culture.

By the time Gehlen made this pronouncement in mid-20th century, his teacher, the sociologist Hans Freyer, had already sketched a more detailed portrait of industrial society. In his late period, mostly in his book *Theorie des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters* (Freyer 1955), he described the stages of industrial society he saw realized in the course of modernity.[5] In modernity, a society is formed and undergoing fast development whose life and possibilities on various levels is determined not by a lifeworld that has formed naturally or in a slow historical process (in other words, our everyday world of primary perceptions and habits) but by so-called "secondary systems". With the portrayal and critique of these systems, Freyer manages to provide not only a surprisingly brilliant overview of industrial society, but also to give a specific description of the "technologizing" of society, i.e. that phenomenon of modernity in which technology not only becomes an essential part of human life but takes over its other areas (language, behavior, action, planning, cultural and social memory, domestic life, communication, future horizons etc.).

Freyer divides the development of the industrial society in two stages. The *first stage* is characterized by free market (including a free labor market), competition, and growth of the proletariat. In the *second* stage, state and society, which in the first stage are still separate, knit together (in the direction of the welfare state). A new pluralist democracy is formed, and a system of labor rights and contracts and a social middle class develop.

The second stage of industrial society is characterized by four "trends" (Freyer 1955: 15-78), which are active already in the first stage but are particularly prominent in the second one (chronologically, it refers mostly to Europe after 1945). The trends are as follows:

(1) The doability of things. Instead of waiting for the benevolence of nature, doing things (*manufactura*, *fabrica*, *homo faber*) is a principle of life; moreover, it is the case that "the boundary, which delimits doability, becomes difficult to identify" (Freyer 1955: 23).
(2) Organization of labor. The doability of things brought out in modernity receives an additional emphasis from the way it is organized: the doability of things is at the same time rationalized and organized work whose organization is perfected through science and research; the principle of this work is the control of its productivity, systemic productivity; to do this work, a specifically educated and civilized individual is needed, one that fits in the division of labor, the process of production and the growth of productivity; paradoxically, it

5   Thomas Gil, who has analyzed the philosophies of history of modernity, remarks that in the second half of the 20th century, it was already habitual to talk not of "industrial" but rather of "postindustrial", "communication", "information", "knowledge", "science", "risk", "experience", "consumption" etc. societies. According to him, that however does not make Freyer's perspective outdated, for, if we take a closer look, Freyer talks of the stages of industrial societies, and the description of the second stage of such societies fits well with those descriptions of the second half of the 20th century in which the analysis of the growing together of state and society, complexity of governance and organization, plural democracy, labor rights and regulations, as well as socioeconomically and scientifically generated risks dominates (Gil 1996: 150).

is the requirements of labor organized in the so-called age of education and knowledge that generate de-qualification of the labor force, i.e. limits an individual's productivity to *particular* aspects: the principle of the organization of labor is that "instead of a machine involved in the process of human work as a more highly developed tool, human labor, reduced and transformed, is involved in the machine process" (Freyer 1955: 38).

(3) Civilizing of man. The reduced human involved in rationalized production processes is regarded only from the viewpoint of functional usefulness: their abilities and skills have to fit controllability, standardization, homogenization, uniformity; an individual is civilized if they fit systemically planned competences required for the production process; these competences in turn are matched by a particular type of behavior and normalcy, which is to be provided with the help of scientific findings, turning the research of psychology, management and other social sciences in this direction ensuring and supporting the production process: "feelings must be turned into contracts, expectations into predictions, hopes into a calculation of possibilities, desires into plans. These are the intricate yet sturdy walls within which civilizing takes place" (Freyer 1955: 47); true—beyond these walls, the "unconscious" and "natural" exists, yet it is reduced to a sensation, a Western, a football game in a big city stadium (Freyer 1955: 60).

(4) The completability of history. Progress is the mode of existence of industrial society. Its principle is development based on ceaseless growth. Yet it is also paradoxical: progress is supported in the sense of "more and better" of *the same*, but not in a radically *different* direction. An average member of society is not thinking of the world as radically different but only that in which there is more of what already is present in the circulation: for the concern is about reaching a world in which

> [...]everything has become doable, all workforce has been perfectly organized, and humanity is completely civilized. [...] Struggle for the content [of such a world: R. B.] is unavoidable, yet it is nothing more than scholastic arguments of managers—for a more rational coordination, arguments among educators and psychiatrists about the psychology of a totally civilized human being, the arguments among technologists about what would be the most purposeful convertibility of materials and forms of energy in the given situation concerning resources [...] The completability of history is reality in the sense that the volumes of what can be subjected to planning and what is already planned keep rising, as do the number and power of the forces getting involved [with these plans: R. B.]. (Freyer 1955: 78)

History as a struggle for possibilities and forms of freedom has finished (or is close to being finished) in a totally organized and technologized civilization.

The four "trends" modelled by Freyer are not static. They not only converge but also become manifest or real "through" something, in some *medium*. This medium. or media. are simple enough. Once created, they organize and determine the social order and system in a modern society. The power of these media is in that they are rationally constructed, they provide

simple patterns for action and areas of life; without much effort, they can penetrate any area of lifeworld, covering its uncertainties and ambiguities with an unambiguous regulation of codes. Such media are *secondary systems*. Freyer devotes much space for the conception, description, and analysis of these systems. Secondary systems are most intimately tied to the place and role of *technology* in an industrialized society.

In all the social and economic processes of modernity technology comes to dominate—in culture as much as in production. Modern society is a society of "technology become reality" (Gil 1996: 151). It is the *technologized* industrial society that has created a range of secondary systems, which medially realizes the main logic of this society. These systems are not natural but have been rationally (operationally) generated; things and their systems (apparatuses, technology, machinery) are socially and institutionally used, and, in such a way, that they are quickly beginning to *determine* and *adapt to themselves* the style and essence of social and institutional proceedings.

> Historians have long since understood that even very ancient institutions, which were considered almost primevally natural, for instance, the village structure [in the Middle Ages: R. B.], were a well-thought-out way of management, and its introduction were guided by forces interested in purposeful development of production. [...] Yet all the rational constructs, at least the long-lasting and influential ones were based on social order, which existed previously: it was not created by these constructs, which were thus rational constructs on a pre-existing [lifeworld: R. B.] foundation. (Freyer 1955: 86)

The secondary systems model, on the other hand, is "constructed according to a completely different formula." Here construction is not taking place on a given foundation, i.e. in an already existing social space (Freyer 1955: 88). In the face of these systems, everything that is socially complex, historical, individuated (i.e. lifeworld) is reduced; these systems do not take into account man as a complex historical being, instead reducing them to particular competences, abilities, and functions. Traffic regulations, the insurance system, centralized government institutions, functionalization schemes for businesses—all of these are examples of secondary systems, and they indicate that people enter them in a reduced form: they reduce or fragment man because in every instance they are concerned with only some simple ability or aspect of man; they are "second", rationalized and operationalized "nature", for they have been separated from the natural and historical; they require learning, conformity, and adaptation. They do however need particular qualities, resources, and energies, which they do not generate themselves (people, labor, relationships, resources).

Industrial society represents an *overlap and network of such secondary systems*. It functions through and with secondary systems; they are the concrete form of industrial society. The secondary systems network strategies of technologization, and standardize and functionalize these strategies as a pattern for action in other (and newly generated) secondary systems. It is not only the socioeconomic dimension that functions through them in a technologized form—increasingly, it is also culture: the secondary systems affect the way of speaking, language, behavior, mode of perception, self-interpretation, and way of thinking. Technical

language takes over all areas of language. Non-technical uses of language are made technical (Freyer 1955; Freyer 1970). Language and soul are produced in a technological age. As a brilliant metaphor and factual description at the same time, Freyer conjures a scene from an industrial society governed by secondary systems:

> Where the secondary systems of the social order obviously appear—but they do so very rarely, most often and usually they seize a person in a way they do not notice —, an almost identical picture emerges. A subway train, which enters a city station through a network of lights and dozens of automatized switches or a single world bureaucracy through the accounting system, a decision is passed and regulated as if through an independently functioning machine—that is the overall picture of activity in the style of the 'secondary systems' model. (Freyer 1955: 92-93)

In his article "Uprising Against the Secondary World", the writer and essayist Botho Strauß called the enthusiasm for the secondary (as regulating one's life) in the context of art as "a technological mutation of culture as a whole" (Strauβ 2012: 51). The secondary world no longer knows what is "primary", it forgets even to ask what could be primary; for only the secondary can be controlled.

4. The World: from accessibility to management and vice versa

And yet can modernity still perceive anything that cannot be managed? Does man in modernity still perceive, hear, see, and feel the rationally unmanageable? Would it really be completely captured and written into the socioeconomically technologized system in which even the "unconscious" and "natural" amounts to calculations and an object? True, it is modernity, which in the legitimacy of this world has strived to expand the opportunities provided by the world—it is the man of modernity who has wished to hear "nature", see "reality", hear the reply from the "world" (instead of something otherworldly). It is modernity that has provided so many new possibilities—both in terms of quantity and quality—to feel, experience, yield, learn, hear, see, taste, and experience.

The Frankfurt critical theory third generation author Hartmut Rosa, who has much discussed acceleration in culture (Rosa 2005; Rosa 2013a; Rosa 2013b), writes that the form of life that is called *modern*, really does spin a perception of the world as being at the disposal of and subjected to someone.[6] Yet liveliness and real experience reside only where the world

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6   Historian Wolfgang Reinhard has impressively described the history of modern Europe as a history of discovery, subjugation and exploitation of the world (Reinhard 2016), which at the same time is the history of globalization where European modernity enters a relationship with world cultures and regions—thus discovering the other and the different for itself. One could say that Reinhard here both provides an insight into the long prehistory of modernity and describes the material and geographical dimension of modernity.

is *uncontrollable* and it avoids our grasp. True, real experience is possible where the illusion of controllability falls apart. Perhaps that is the reason why modernity generates the feeling that we live in an illusion, in a diastasis, in a breach with the world and that it has become the screen for projecting our plans, goals, and desires because it has been robbed of the main "index" of genuineness? It returns exactly and only when a *resonance* with the world is the case—only then the *world* itself returns. A world that would be completely managed, planned, and known would be a "dead world" (Rosa 2019: 4) or it would not be a world at all.

H. Rosa writes: "Life takes place like a game between what is accessible to us and what, being inaccessible, still applies to us; life takes the form of a borderline between these poles" (Rosa 2019: 4). What is uncontrollable constitutes human experience. To ask about the relationship of modernity with the world means to ask how institutions and cultural practices in contemporary society relate to the world and how the modern subjects are placed in the world, i.e. how we *relate to the uncontrollable* individually, culturally, institutionally, and structurally. Rosa believes that the everyday practices and social conflicts of (late) modernity stem from a relationship with the world in which the emphasis on controllability and subjection dominates. Late modernity as a whole tends toward controlling the world and *for that very reason*, the world appears *as* a point of aggression or a series of aggression points, i.e. as objects to be known, reached, conquered, managed, used, and felt and for that very reason, a resonance with the world (which includes the unmanageable and unreachable) is not possible. Instead of the world, "a replacement world" in which fear, frustration, burn-out, despair, aggression, and discontent reign, where alienation from the world and oneself is the rule (cf: Rosa 2019: 9).[7]

For that reason, Rosa sketches in a sociology of the relationship to the world,[8] centering on the assumption that the subject and the world are not simply the given but the result of a certain relationship, a certain intentionality toward the present in which we are born and which we then learn to call the "world". The kind of relationship it is determines *what kind* of people we are and *what* we encounter as the world. Our relationship with the world is not given along with our simple becoming a person but depends on social and cultural conditions under which we are socialized. Subjects and the world form a mutual relationship, they are "constituted in it" (Rosa 2016: 62), understanding as the world (with a reference to H. Blumenberg (Rosa 2016: 65)), the totality of *possible-to-experience*.

What is this totality of "possible-to-experience" in (late) modernity? Rosa is very harsh: it has turned into "exploding *to-do* lists" (Rosa 2019: 14)—entries in the planner where there

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7   Other representatives of the third generation of Frankfurt critical theory, such as H. Rosa and Rahel Jaeggi, consider "alienation" as a central and still relevant concept in describing modernity (See: Jaeggi and Loick 2013; Jaeggi 2016).

8   "We should check not only the knowledge of the world of modern subjects or their 'mentality' but rather their relationship to the world per se (and thus inevitably their relationship to themselves), and it is constantly and primarily bodily, emotional, sensual, and existential and only then mental and cognitive" (Rosa 2013: 11).

are only "points of aggression" representing the "world": shopping, doctor's appointments, work, birthday celebrations, yoga course, travel, adventure, going to a bar: "done", "take care of this", "crossed out", "managed", "solved", "done", "liquidated" etc. Of course, we can ask, has it not always been like that in human life? Has the world not always been a point of resistance to man?[9] No, the *normalization* and *naturalization* of an aggressive relationship with the world is the result of several centuries of transformations in society with "dynamic stabilization" and "continual increase in accessibility" at their epicenter (Rosa 2019: 14). The definition of a modern society reads as follows: "A society is called modern, which can stabilize itself only dynamically, i.e. to preserve its institutional status quo through continuous (economic) growth, (technical) acceleration, and (cultural) innovations" (Rosa 2019: 15). Moreover, it seems in this society that a good and happy life means to increase our ability to achieve and our range of possibilities—that which can be attained, obtained, achieved, felt, and enjoyed. Our life is better if we manage to attain more of the world, *at least* to hold it on the leash of attainability, always "close at hand". The imperative of modern life reads: "Act in such a way that the availability of your world would be ever greater" (Rosa 2019: 17). The world has to be reached: make money and learn foreign languages and new travel destinations will open for you, "the world of mountains", "the world of tango", "the world of penguins", "the world of diving", "the shopping world of Dubai": all of these are fragments of the world that in some way can and should be "conquered", "obtained" or "achieved" and it pays off because it expands "our horizons", which in turn makes our lives good, dynamic, worth living and therefore—happy.

Yet in modernity we are structurally (from the outside) and culturally (from the inside) urged and driven to such a relationship with the world; world as aggression points—they have to be known, learnt, achieved, managed, controlled; moreover, it is best if it happens quicker, more effectively, simpler, cheaper, safer (Rosa 2019, 20).

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9   There is no doubt that, from the anthropological perspective, the ability to distance oneself from one's surroundings and to manage things is an *essential* human ability. It can however become a problem where *historically* and *socially* it is made the basic mode of all areas of life. Rosa believes that resonance or responsiveness is a more primeval anthropological mode of the relationship between man and the world: it is the essence of man's presence and there before the ability to obtain a distance from the environment and control over the world. On an anthropological level, Rosa characterizes resonance as a triad of three elements: (1) affection generated by the world (something in the world "touches" or "speaks" to us), (2) emotion (self-effected response to an address through which a relationship is formed), and (3) mutual transformation (cf: Rosa 2019: 42). Interestingly, these descriptions of resonance include references to problems tackled by many strains of 20th century and contemporary philosophy. Rosa himself refers to phenomenology (B. Waldenfels), Heidegger, and Marxism, at times seriously departing from the tenets of his Frankfurt School predecessors. This can be considered a hint at the search for such ontological, anthropological, and social elements, which, in the development of critical theory, have yet to be worked out. Rosa's orientation to a rapport with the world is obvious, and it is a much more general (and theoretically more dangerous) approach than Habermas's emphasis on communicative relationships in society or Axel Honneth's (another Frankfurt School representative) emphasis on recognition (Anerkennung) in society as the central problem of modernity (df: Peters and Schulz 2017: 14).

Let us look closer: What does it mean "to make accessible"? It means to make something (1) visible, (2) reachable, accessible, (3) manageable, (4) useable. The following match these aspects: (1) science, which tries to expand the boundaries of knowledge (scheme: "Existing Knowledge-Research-New Knowledge"), (2) technology, which helps to manage what science has revealed as a part of the world, (3) economic development (scheme "Money-Goods-More Money") provides it all with resources. Once brought into motion and coupled, the EK-R-EK and M-G-MM schemes are a great stimulus. Finally, (4) the legal regulations and the political and administrative apparatus tend to calculate and guide the social processes, which are the preconditions and consequences of the amalgam of science, technology, and economics. To plan and submit to jurisdiction is the task of the legal and political administration. The joint functioning of these four items constitute *power and power relations*. These relations are all directed toward a single goal: "Power [in modernity: R. B.] is manifested in the extension of world accessibility" (Rosa 2019: 24).

But it so happens that in modernity "the world that has been made scientifically, technologically, economically, and politically accessible, keeps mysteriously avoiding us; it is avoiding us and becoming unreadable and mute; moreover, it appears to be fragile and, finally, even as threatening, i.e. constitutively unmanageable" (Rosa 2019: 25). Modernity's problem is "a terminated catastrophe of resonance" (Rosa 2019: 32). *Resonance* is the name for such a relationship with the world that would not be alienated. Resonant relations are such in which the uncontrollability of the world is accepted, i.e. the world is accepted as one to be listened to instead of controlled and managed.

"The world becoming silent [...] is the greatest fear of modernity" (Rosa 2019: 34). Modernity fails to hear the world and thus itself and *at the same time* fears this silence. The relationship of non-relations (absurd, denial of the world, hostility of the world to man, inner worldlessness, external loss of the world etc.) detected by existentialism and other strains of 20th century philosophy provide eloquent testimonies to this contradiction.

Resonance with the world is an event open to experience, contradicting to the social logic that envisions continual increase and optimization; resonance cannot be accumulating, preserved, and instrumentally augmented; it cannot even be predicted or planned for. As soon as we want to do anything like that, resonance vanishes; as soon as we want to break into it, it can no longer be reached. Rosa criticizes the attempts, in late modernity and capitalism, to translate the need for a relationship with the world *as* a wish for an object. The tension between the need for resonance *and* the need to subdue, to make available is the basic contradiction of the relations observed in modernity. The world that can resonate, talk to humans and address them has been hidden behind a screen of the world with which resonance is impossible but which presents a "world" that can be subdued. Desires are projected on this screen, and things are accordingly "wrapped" into a coating that seems to indicate that they can be subdued. An "aura" of readiness to be subdued and obtained is created for things.

But it is precisely *there*, where it is impossible to subdue, life is enjoyable; where things defy complete understanding—*there* is life and liveliness;[10] *there*, where resonance is generated, life acquires new, alluring prospects. Where a thing possesses an "inner voice", an "inner will", it is directed at me and I perceive it as speaking to me—that is where resonance is. From "objects of knowing" and "goods to acquire" things could once again become "things of resonance" (Rosa 2019: 64).

Summarizing the sociology of his relationship with the world, Rosa emphasizes that the *mixing* of availability and manageability is the reason for the muting of the world and things in modernity (Rosa 2019: 67).[11]

The tension between the desire to make the world manageable and longing for the world to enter a resonance relationship with us appears very distinctly in modernity —it is its basic conflict (Rosa 2019: 107). The signs of alienation of society struggling under the yoke of bureaucratic regulations and management optimization are observed in thinking, talking, and action. "Identifying thinking", whereby things are trivialized and seen as "only" and "nothing more than..."—as if they were grasped and known—is ubiquitous. This way of thinking "robs us of any possibility of listening to any encountered thing as unmanageable. We encounter things as known, manageable, obtainable, buyable, doable" (Rosa 2019: 113-114). Rosa tries to show us that by allowing an encounter with things only in the control and management mode, they "turn their back to us", becoming threatening, unreachable, horrifying. "Unmanageability that is generated in the management processes leads to radical alienation" (Rosa 2019: 130).[12]

10   It is interesting to compare the points made by Rosa, a left-leaning Frankfurt School representative, with statements made by 20th century right-leaning authors. A good example is Ernst Jünger, mentioned at the beginning of this article. In his *African Games* (1936), he wrote: "To know that there are still wild places where no one has set foot was of great delight to me" (cit.: Kiesel 2009: 49). Jünger brilliantly depicts both modernity's longing for the new, the undiscovered, the adventure, and yet a relationship with a world that is not yet completely subdued and controlled.

11   The change in the relationship between man and the world was written up by the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor who has deeply influenced Rosa's thinking (starting with Rosa's dissertation on identity and cultural practice in Taylor's political philosophy (Rosa 1998)). In his *Sources of the Self* (1989), Taylor demonstrates, among other things, how this relationship has transformed in modernity (Romantics have described the co-constituting of the subject and the world, thus demonstrating modernity's potential for self-criticism). The "buffered Self", secluding itself from the world (the relationship with the world has become distant and mediated and therefore functional and contingent) is analyzed by Taylor in his book (2007) and serves as a model for the alienated relationship with the world (cf: Rosa 2016: 63).

12   "Where everything could be controlled, the world has nothing to say to us; where it becomes unmanageable in a new say, we no longer hear it because it is no longer accessible to us" (Rosa 2019: 131). An example of such a world is radioactive radiation. It is no longer a world with which man can resonate. Man's relationship with the world (the so-called lifeworld) dissolves, disintegrates, becomes totally traumatized, and unable to resonate.

Can modernity be continued without radically refusing it? Rosa is convinced that it can, if only:

> the world is no longer a point of aggression but of resonance, where we encounter something not in the acquisition, management, and control mode but in a way that involves hearing and self-effected listening and responding, which are directed at mutually responsive reachability. If something like that is possible, then the logic of acceleration [which was the determining principle of capitalism: R. B.] loses its meaning and psychological driving force. A different world then becomes possible. (Rosa 2019: 123)

A different world along with a different, post-growth, post-acceleration society.[13]

The central question for Rosa is: does resonance cancel "alienation"? This question, in the context of modernity can be formulated as follows: is modernity possible such that it is self-critical vis-à-vis its inner logic of control, subjugation, and accelerated growth?[14] The post-growth society would allow acceleration, growth, and innovations, yet it would no longer be driven by their dynamic. A resonant relationship with the world in such a society would be a precondition for a happy life that would be recognized as successful (Peters, Schulz 2017: 15). A changed relationship with the world would also change the kind of happy and successful life for which man would strive: "The quality of life, as I wish to demonstrate [...], does not depend on the material well-being achieved or to be achieved or on the sum of life possibilities but rather of the possibilities and abundance of experiences of resonance" (Rosa 2013a: 16).

Conclusion

Four modernity discourses in the four sketches of the aporia present in modernity—the new mythology of romanticism, the recourse of cultural criticism to nature, the view of technology of the secondary systems theory, the promise of resonance with the world against alienation—find themselves balancing on the borderline between the possible and the factual. It is also the borderline of modernity. It is clearly visible in the four aporia (1) between the thesis of open-endedness of history and the real battle of sociopolitical and cultural-ideological constructs of the future, (2) between modern industrialization and glorification of nature

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13   Within the framework of a project supported by the German Research Society ("DFG-Kolleg-Forscherguppe Postwachstumsgesellschaften: "Landnahme, Beschleunigung, Aktivierung, Dynamik und (De-)Stabilisierung moderner Wachstumsgesellschaften"), Rosa turns to the examination of a post-growth society.

14   "It is an accelerating society that does not allow a resonant relationship with the world because it drives itself to alienation: for Rosa, alienation consistently involves the lack of a constitutive, responsive relationship" (Peters, Schulz 2017: 16).

and the desire for the return of the primitive, (3) between the introduction of technological innovations and the transformation of technology from "secondary" to "primary", (4) between the desire to control things and processes and the negative consequences of this desire. These aporias swell when one (trying to think within the framework of modernity) approaches the boundaries of modernity.

In every instance of these four aporias, we can repeat what Rosa says about modernity as a whole: "Resonance is modernity's promise; alienation is its reality" (Rosa 2016: 624); aporias show to what great extent modernity does not achieve its promise and also to what great extent the tension inherent in the aporias gives rise to ever new hopes and new strategies to make good on modernity's promises.

If such a diagnosis of modernity *horizontally* encompasses or strives to encompass all its differentiated manifestations, then *vertically* it is an example for a differentiated thought about an age where to lose its level of self-reflection would mean to lose the possibilities of the thought achieved in the course of modernity. We can conclude that the range of possibilities for legitimization, cancellation, overcoming, surmounting, continuation, turning points, "other modernity", post-modernity and other ways of reflecting on it and the potential of self-criticism of modernity *is one of the most impressive achievements of modernity*. To lose this level of thought would mean losing the possible future. The greatest enemy of self-reflective modernity is not reflections on overcoming or abandoning it ("voices of sirens"), but a mindless yielding to the whirlwind of modernity's social, ideological, economic, and political complications "and so on".

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Modernitātes robežas: vēsture – daba – sabiedrība – pasaule

Raivis Bičevskis

Atslēgvārdi: modernitāte, modernitātes aporijas, romantisms, kultūrkritika, sekundāro sistēmu teorija, rezonanse ar pasauli

Raksta mērķis ir parādīt modernitātes apraksta versijas. Šo versiju protagonisti katrā no tām apzinās savu projektu aporijas un, tās risinot, saskaras ar "aiziešanas no modernitātes" vilinājumiem. Šo versiju skices pievēršas, pirmkārt – vēstures medijā – romantismam; otrkārt – dabas medijā – kultūrkritikai; treškārt – sabiedrības un tehnikas medijā – sekundāro sistēmu kundzības teorijai; ceturtkārt – cilvēka un pasaules attiecību medijā – Frankfurtes kritiskās skolas trešās paaudzes idejām pēc Hābermāsa. Četri modernitātes diskursi, kuri parādījušies četrās modernitātes aporiju skicēs – romantisma jaunā mitoloģija, kultūrkritikas rekurss uz dabu, sekundāro sistēmu teorijas skatījums uz tehniku, apsolījums pret atsvešinātību no rezonanses ar pasauli – balansē uz iespējamā un faktiskā robežas. Tā visai skaidri saskatāma rakstā ieskicētajās četrās aporijās (1) starp vēstures atvērtības tēzi un nākotnes sociāli politisko un kultūrideoloģisko konstruktu reālo cīņu, (2) starp moderno industrializāciju un dabas glorifikāciju un vēlmi atsaukt pirmatnējo, (3) starp tehnikas inovāciju ieviešanu un tehnikas pārtapšanu no "sekundārā" par "primāro", (4) starp lietu un procesu kontroles vēlmi un šīs vēlmes negatīvajām konsekvencēm. Šīs aporijas samilst, kad kāds (mēģinot domāt modernitātes ietvarā) tuvojas modernitātes robežām. Četru modernitātes pašizpratnes, paškritikas un pašturpinājuma skiču perspektīvās – viņpus politiski sociālajām programmām un nosliecēm – mēģināts ielūkoties modernitātes aporijās un cīņās, par kuru ambivalenci un neviennozīmību liecina skiču protagonisti; skiču aprakstos un analīzēs izstrādātās modernitātes aporijas uzrāda modernitātes robežas, no kurām tā aizvien atkal no jauna atgrūžas un kuras atkal sasniedz.

Border Geographies of the Cold War: Hybrid Production of the Baltic Sea Coastal Landscape in Latvia

Kristīne Krumberga

Introduction

If you visit the Baltic Sea coast of southwestern Courland in Latvia, you will not find many traces of the Cold War's militarized border regime that used to be the daily reality of coastal life a few decades ago. Rather you will be welcomed by tourist information stalls presenting photographic snapshots of coastal nature, ethnographic heritage, and romanticized imaginaries of the fishermen villages and a way of life from the early 20th century. The recent past of the border regime and military presence, if mentioned, is laconically wrapped in a phrase—"a closed border zone", as if referring to a separate geographical environment. The discursive vagueness about the (dis)continuation of coastal life within the militarized border regime and fragmented spatio-temporal evidence of military-civilian co-presence as well as the existing sporadic landscape studies on the Cold War's history and legacy in the Baltics (see Järv et al. 2013; Peil 2013; Sepp 2012; van Vliet 2016), was exactly what drew my interest to trace the peripheral history of the Cold War at the Soviet Union's territorial frontier in Latvia, in southwestern Courland. The aim of the research was to examine how the coastal landscape was produced through spatial, environmental, and social enactment of militarized border regime in the particular coastal circumstances and along the dynamics of Soviet socio-economic and ideological regime.

In line with the relational ontology of space (Massey 2004; Murdock 2009; Whatmore 2002), actor-network theory (ANT) (Latour 2005) and contemporary approach of military geographies (Woodward 2004) I approach the production of coastal border landscape as a spatio-temporal arrangement of military-civilian-environmental relations formed and transformed through hybrid interactions between humans and nonhumans.

Methodologically, the study combines both geographical and historical research perspectives. Data and methods were selected using the triangulation approach (Hastings 2012). The study builds on data gathered from media texts, newspapers, and collections of official documents and declassified reports, archive documents for land allocation, and cartographic materials in combination with semi-structured on-site interviews and conversations with local residents including former and current administrative personnel during two field visits performed in the summers of 2016 and 2019. For the textual data and interview analysis and interpretation, a comparative narrative analysis is used to detect and trace the unfolding of events and related landscape changes by comparing different perspectives.

The triangulation was also applied to trace and validate the information of different sources and scales ranging from individual experience and memories to collectively shared situations, formally legitimated facts, and evidences in the coastal environment. Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping was used as an analytical and interpretative technique for spatial analysis to retrospectively pinpoint localities of past significance and display the spatial inter-relationality between events, people and places and their current social significance.

Border geographies: the conceptual perspective

The conceptual framework of the research combines performative and relational perspectives on what borders are and how they are spatially and socially produced.

Borders as spaces in the making

Borders, while often perceived as static, unidimensional "lines of separation" (Popescu 2012: 7), or conceptualized as discursive, socially constructed, and imagined formations (Brambilla et al. 2015) are nevertheless real, geographically expressed, enacted and practiced borderlands, border landscapes, and border environments (Rumley, Minghi 2015).

From the functional perspective, borders are made, often through military means, to mark a difference in space (Popescu 2012), to control movements of people and things (Sack 1983), to form and reform, particular, yet contingent, order(s) (Potzsch 2015: 217), and contribute to political and social construction of territories and states. However, borders do not exist as simply opened or closed, but rather operate as critical spatial filters between the exteriorized *outside* and the interiorized *inside* (Popescu 2012). Thus, the border regimes established for this purpose, by different means and degrees of control, also imply different degrees of permeability that can vary geographically, ecologically, temporally, and performatively. In other words, the earthy life of a territorial border rarely is as simple and straightforward as the line drawn on a map suggests.

Recently, it has become more broadly recognized that borders and border regimes are not static states but rather are relational, performative, and eventful socio-spatial practices (Kaiser 2012); or "spaces of bordering" (Johnson et al. 2011) that are enacted through multiple relations and material, discursive or affective means such as the deployment of physical obstacles, normative restrictions, or "a presence of power that is mediated in space and time" (Allen 2003: 11). Rephrasing geographer Rachel Woodward, border-making, also as a militarized practice, is both geographically expressed in that it shapes the environment in which it is emplaced, and geographically constituted along with the material and discursive conditions in which it evolves (Woodward 2009: 122). Bordering as a performative, relational, and contextual making of space involves a constant process of political, socio-technological, ecological, and spatial negotiations between the efforts to uphold the existence of the

border itself and the geoecological and socio-material dynamics and impermanences they are situated, especially in such highly dynamic areas as coasts.

Hybridity and relational production of (border) space

Borders, as materially and socially constructed realities, are spaces of relations and made through relations. Relational ontology "decenters human agency" and "de-couples from the subject/object binary" (Whatmore 2002: 4-9) and sees space as a spatio-temporal process where heterogeneous relations of the natural, the social and the political, the human and the non-human come together (Massey 2003; Murdoch 2009). It suggests that space is continuously produced, performed, enacted, and transformed rather than exists, per se, as a static, self-existent, and passive "container" where things simply take place. In line with the actor-network theory (ANT) (Latour 2005), relational space can be understood as a material expression of hybrid relations between human and non-human actors of any kind (living beings, things, processes, ideas, discourses, etc.).

Both humans and nonhumans become and are made into actors through their entanglements in social relations and circulation thus acquiring a particular agency. In the broadest sense, the agency is referred to one's ability to affect, influence, change, or make an effect on another actor (either human or non-human) and the networks it operates. The agency of an object is the marks, imprints, or traces that are produced between elements forming new associations and arrangements having also a spatial dimension. The agency of non-human actors, if compared to human actors, is largely considered as "non-intentional", yet both the agency of humans and non-humans are technologically, corporeally, and discursively "distributed" as much situated and contextualized in space and time. As an example, Hummel (2005) demonstrates how US militarization played out as a "geographical agent" in the production of Alaska's landscape through an increased presence of military personnel and infrastructure during the Cold War, whereas Eckert (2019) highlights the agency of the border regime of the Iron Curtain between East and West Germany in the production of "transboundary natures".

A space made of relations is a space of hybridity where entities and phenomena "transgress of assigned borders" (Edensor 2005) either in a biological, physical or conceptual sense, emerge as something new and subvert, refute and challenge our preconceptions about how things are and how the world is made, unmade and remade. Combining the perspectives of actor-network theory, relational production of space, and hybridity of human-nonhuman agency, I conceptualize border as space produced through a mix of socio-material, technological, ecological, and discursive actors and their interactions. In the research, coastal border space is approached as a complex and dynamic interface between land, sea, and atmosphere, between terrestrial and aquatic lifeworlds where military presence, socio-material living strategies, habits, and changing socio-politico-environmental agendas produce coastal landscape through a variety of simultaneous, episodical, correlated and even contradictory activities, relations, encounters and arrangements between humans and nonhumans.

Courland's coastal landscape: a historical perspective

Tidal history of Courland's coastal nature

Coastline is a landmark that never stands still. The coastal area of the southwestern Courland is a narrow strip of earth that has emerged between the Baltic sea, the lagoon lakes of Pape and Liepāja, and the Nida bog (see Figure 1). Once a seabed, it is now a landscape with patches of sandy dunes, pine forests, swampy wetlands which, over the last centuries, has been developed through politico-ecological and socio-technological tides of erasure and recovery. In the 17th century, coastal forests in the area were cut down for shipbuilding material and the production of wood tar that caused a subsequent shifting of sand. It buried several households without a trace and only two dune hills— Ķūpu and Pūsēnu dune—were left standing as living monuments of scarcely documented past events (Janševskis 1928: 13). Under the Tsarist rule, around 1830, more targeted coastal protection actions were organized, and coastal dunes were covered with spruce twigs and reforested to secure the territorial frontier from further erosion and loss of land (Janševskis 1928: 15). In the 20th century, the forests aimed for coastal protection were largely damaged during both world wars—the frontline passed the area and trees were used to build military railway tracks, trenches, and bunkers. The last serious damage happened in 1967 when the coastal forests in the surrounding area were largely destroyed by a hurricane-like storm. The damaged areas were restored, and as told by the local people, forests were replanted by workers (locally known as *gucuļi*) brought to Latvia from the Carpathian mountain regions in Ukraine for this particular purpose. Currently, the coastal land is eroding away, and the coastline is retreating due to sea-level rise that most urgently has been observed at Bernāti where, during the last 200 years, the coast has been washed away by more than 100 meters.

The development of the coastal landscape in Courland highlights the dynamic, sensitive, but also hardly controllable environment with a particular agency of dunes that historically have had a dual functionality for territorial protection. On the one hand, the mobilization of trees and plantation of forest has been used as the most efficient means for the fortification of and against the power of shifting sand and sea erosion. On the other hand, for the territorial securitization dunes themselves have been used as means and allies for militarized bordering and defence against exteriorized "others".

The militarization of dunes

Coastal defence is an important issue to be addressed for sea-bordering territories. From the perspective of territorial securitization, the coastal area of the southwestern Courland provides certain geographical advantages: the sequence of swamps and lakes forms a natural "line of obstacles", whereas dunes serve as excellent elevated areas and voluminous mediums for implanting surveillance posts and camouflaging facilities.
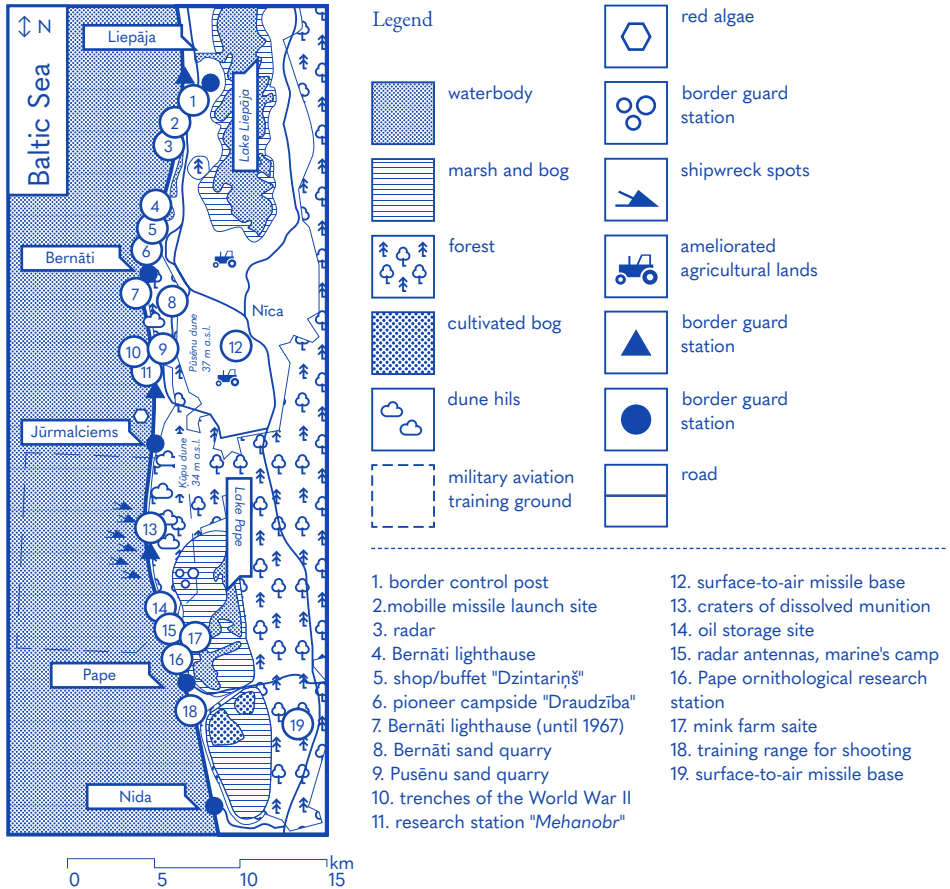
Figure 1. Coastal border landscape during the Cold War era in southwestern Courland.

Since the end of the 19th century, the main military centre for maritime and coastal defence for the Russian Empire near the southeastern part of the Baltic Sea was established in Liepāja, in Karosta. The remote, sparsely populated, and woody coastal area southwards as part of the territorial anterior was primarily equipped with facilities for coastal surveillance: border guard posts (cordons) distributed along the coastline and lighthouses in Pape and Bernāti, but no specific infrastructure for the military preparedness towards potential invasion or attack was located there. The first explicit militarized entrenchment happened during World War II when the surroundings of the village of Jūrmalciems were mobilized as one of the front lines was situated there, and several trenches and defence positions were delved in dunes.

After World War II, the coastal border regime was set through the presence of border guards and on-site patrolling along the shore and in the sea assisted by alarm wires stretched along the dunes. Soviet military activity expedited in Latvia and particularly in Courland mostly after 1952, as initially Soviet military expenditures in the Baltics were primarily concentrated on the German coast and East Prussia, especially in the region near Kaliningrad and around Klaipeda ([Anon.] 1951).

The militarization of the coastal border during the Cold War, when compared to former border regimes, was much more intensive in terms of spatial distribution and the presence of military personnel as well as infrastructure for surveillance and weaponry for long-distance targeting and anti-aerial attack. The first watchtowers distributed along the coast were built in a size to blend with the contours of the coast and to be indistinguishable from the sea ([Bez aut.] 1951). Later, for the panoptical overseeing of the coast and the sea, numerous checkpoints, watchtowers, wired fences, and searchlights (Vēveris 1995) were installed in coastal dunes gradually supplemented or replaced by more advanced means including radar, mobile missile launch equipment, and telecommunication antennas (Upmalis et al. 2006). However, thetechnologically upgraded installations of border surveillance and warning systems were no less vulnerable to the enemy's attack as to internal, more ordinary incidents. For instance, local people remember situations when grazing sheep at coastal villages occasionally initiated false alarms of signal-wires, or cows on their way to pasture hitched and distorted radar antennas. The encounters between infrastructural objects and animals are only some among many that highlights co-spatiality between military and civilian uses and production of the coastal environment.

Socioeconomic production of coastal border space

Militarized areas, including militarized borders, most often are imagined as socially void spaces where military presence presumably excludes civilian life and activities. However, social geographer Sasha Davis (2011) observes that social relations developing as a response to military presence and activities can range from active resistance, co-existence, or conflicts regarding the most viable ways of land use that vary according to the spatial concentration and functionalities of different armed forces.

At the coast of Courland, soldiers of three functional units of the Soviet military were present—border guards, naval soldiers, and missile troops—yet only border guards and naval troops were permanently based at the coastal villages or placed near them. The relational dynamics between military personnel and villagers and social activity in the border regime varied across time and in response to the unfolding events and the political atmosphere of the Cold War, dynamics of Soviet socioeconomic agenda as well as through personal familiarization and mutual need to share the space of living—the coast.

Between a controlling presence and pragmatic co-existence

As remembered by local people, stationary Soviet border guards in the coastal villages were placed in the early 1950s. Initially, they were settled in the houses of the villagers or barracks formerly built for the border guard until separate facilities were built or transportable van-like containers were provided. The Soviet border regime, although primarily focused on "unwelcomed guests" from outside, was equally attentive and strict towards potential "treason" from inland—the territorial rear and from the border area itself. Therefore, in the early years, the relations between militarists and local people were tight, distressed, and mutually distrustful. The seashore, as the most outer part of the border zone, was fenced, wired and conversed into a highly controlled, surveilled, and remotely sensed space with regular check-ups and strictly regulated access to the sea, especially during the night-time (from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m.) when the whole beach was raked to make detecting footprints of border-crossers easier. However, even the militarized coastal border zone had no privilege to stay outside the Soviet system of social and economic production that gradually normalized a militarized presence and even developed relations of pragmatic and episodically beneficial co-existence.

Following the Soviet industrialization agenda, fishing was reoriented towards deep-sea fishing for which the fishermen in the coastal villages were not prepared either with equipment or skills (Stūre, Gustiņa 2015). The lack of technological and financial means along with border zone restrictions made small-scale fishing unprofitable, while intensified agricultural activities in the newly ameliorated wetlands and polders around Lake Pape (Zariņa et al. 2018) and a growing construction industry in Liepāja attracted people from the coastal villages as more profitable occupations.

On the coast, instead, the extraction of mineral and aquatic resources, like peat, sand and red algae, was undertaken as an economic alternative. In the marine area at Jūrmalciems where one of the largest growths of red algae, *Furcellaria*, commonly known as seaweed, was found, a seaweed gathering was established in a strictly organized and industrialized manner (see Figure 2). The collected seaweed was dried and packed in wooden boxes and exported to a factory in Archangelsk (Krūmberga 1968), a city in the northern part of the Soviet Union, for the production of agar, a chemical substance used for jellies. Since Archangelsk was also known as the major naval and submarine base for the Soviet Navy, it was suspected by the locals that agar from Baltic seaweed was used for experiments on chemical weapons. However, after 1975 the transportation of seaweed was rerouted to the agar production factory of the kolkhoz *Nākotne* near town Dobele in Latvia that produced agar for food industry (especially, confectionery) and fodder (Pliens 1976).

In 1967, the coastal life in Pape was heavily shaken by a storm that seriously damaged fishing equipment, flooded houses and fields (Stūre, Gustiņa 2015). To diversify economic activities and increase the productivity outputs of the fishermen kolkhoz "Bolshevik", farms for chicken and mink breeding were established complimenting the fishing industry, as minks were fed with minced codfish. In a year, the initial amount of 1200 minks increased up to
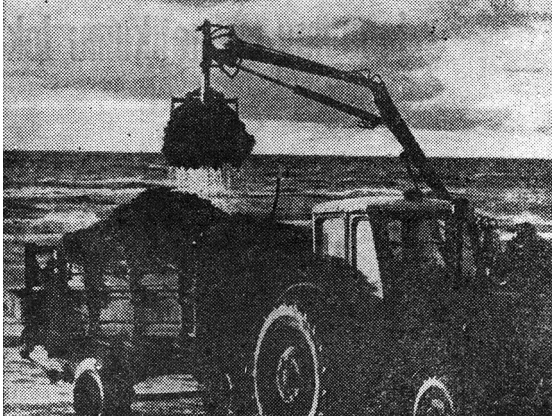
Figure 2. Mechanized gathering of seaweed at Courland's southwestern coast, 1969 (photo credit: V. Evaldsons (Lapsiņš 1969))

5000 making the farm one of the biggest mink farms among the fishermen kolkhozes at the time (Bergs 1968). However, none of the novel supplementary niche industries was viable enough and, in few years, they were abandoned, but minks that occasionally escaped from the factory joined the local ecosystem becoming a bother for nature conservation specialists (France 2010).

In the 1960s, coastal sand gained industrial importance as a raw material and resource for brickmaking at the newly established silicate brick plant in Liepāja. At first, sand was extracted in dunes the south of Bernāti, but soon it was admitted that their physical properties and chemical composition were inappropriate to ensure the needed quality, and the area was abandoned (Ķīns 1970). Shortly afterward, another try was made on Pūsēni dune hill, but by the mid-1970s, due to similar results and rising environmental concerns, the extraction of sand also ended there (Ibid, 1970) leaving rummaged openings in the forested dunes.

As interactions and encounters between villagers and military personnel became more frequent, the militarized control was "softened" through various informal relations. While the Soviet army guarded the coast, local people were employed as guards for the technical equipment and industrial establishments. Additionally, military personnel, due to their proximity and *ad hoc* operationability, assisted villagers as local police, firefighters, and even as a service for public transport and delivery of products. However, not all the military-civilian encounters were in line with the imposed regime of control.

Creative resistance

The militarized border regime and authority were generally respected but not completely accepted and obeyed by the residents, and, in some situations, it was questioned and provoked in playful ways. One of the Jūrmalciems inhabitants remembers that during his childhood he used to sneak to the sea and walk across the sandy beach by going backward to make an impression of the arrival of "intruders" from the sea. Apparently, there were no clear prescriptions for the punishment of such quasi-contraventions as arbitrarily entering in the forbidden border zone and visiting the sea by locals, who, in many cases, were children. The most common punishments were simply physical tasks such as an order to peel potatoes for the army kitchen or confiscating boots and being forced to walk home barefoot from the site of capture. These punishments depended on the border guards' imagination and interpretation of what punishment should be like, indicating the internal inconsistency of the Soviet military manual.

Some residents recall anecdotal moments for countering the Soviet army. At Jūrmalciems, one of the wooden watchtowers for sea surveillance was located on the coastal dunes near the homestead "Vālītes". In the late 1980s, when the end of the Soviet Union was already "felt in the air", on the night of the midsummer celebration, *Jāņi*, the house owner together with some friends burned the tower down. The next morning when the Soviet border guards arrived and questioned him about the accident, he pretended not to know anything. In another case, when the military base in Nīca was built, local people refused to participate in the construction process and thus Lithuanians were recruited for that. The local Latvians, intending to slightly burden the activities, placed sharp spikes across the road during the night that damaged tires of the trucks delivering building materials and the works were suspended until the necessary repairs were done. Later, another attempt to delay the building process was made by burning the fuel tank of an excavator truck.

These cases, while not representing an active and openly stated opposition, do illustrate the creative provocations as political counter-tactics and subtle resistance to militarization and control imposed by the border regime.

Bernāti forest as disciplined and disorderly recreational space

When visiting the Bernāti seaside by car, a sign indicating "parking" will direct you to the spot in the forest that is nothing more than a patch of crumbling asphalt. Together with barely noticeable pine-covered trench lines in dunes and a few scattered white sand-lime bricks they give a vague notion about the past military significance of the place as a border guard station and its co-existence with a recreational, although, disciplinary space for children—a pioneer summer camp.

In the early 1950s, a pioneer summer camp was established in the Bernāti forest by the labour union of the Liepāja "Red Metallurgist" factory. One of the last headwomen of the pioneer camp remembers that the border guards' station was a big complex of several buildings, including a sauna. In the near distance there was also another training camp for naval soldiers known as Tombasova camp. While the co-location of the three camps may seem unusual, their primary function was to replace and *sovietize* already existing establishments—the former border surveillance station used by the Latvian army and a pension-guest house "Villa Alma".

Every year, 300-400 children of the workers of Liepaja metallurgy factory as well of Liepāja and Ventspils ports were sent to spend their summer holidays at the pioneer camp. In the mid-1960s it was renamed *Draudzība* ("Friendship") which coincided with the time when the camp was visited by pioneers from Africa—Morocco and Ghana (Hānbergs 1965; Krūms 1965) and, presumably, was a symbolic gesture of the communistic ideology.

Practically, the pioneer camp was operated by students from the Liepāja Pedagogical institute who spent their pedagogical traineeship there. The educational and recreational curriculum was a combination of physical and scientific activities as well as survival skill training such as sports games, berry picking, making of herbaria of rare plants and butterflies, building of sandcastles on the beach and walks to nearby Bernāti lighthouse and Pūsēnu dune-hill at Jūrmalciems. It also included training of civil defence for fire safety and stylized war-like games to develop skills of teamwork, scouting, and orienteering.

The campsite, although established as a permanent facility, was occupied only seasonally which complicated the task of finding of appropriate workers every year. In 1974, the local newspaper reported a case of 4 drunk youngsters from Liepāja breaking into the pioneer camp and damaging the facilities (Kiršteins 1974). The alcohol was bought at a local shop/buffet *Dzintariņš* ("Little Amber") which had opened at the roadside in Bernāti a few years before, and since then had become a popular and well-appreciated place by coastal visitors. The roadside at the shop was also the meeting place for the border-pass check-ups of the attendees of the pioneer camp and their families. Apart from that, there was not a lot of interaction between the border guards and the camp's inhabitants—due to both the seasonal presence of the pioneer camp and the clear spatial demarcation for the allowed activities for civilian use in the border zone.

Starting from the 1980s, the coastal area of southwestern Courland became a more popular vacation and holiday destination. The Bernāti forest was actively visited by people from Liepāja for seasonal recreational pleasures, yet it was often accompanied with environmentally damaging and supposedly "uncivilized" behaviour such as parking cars in the dune zone despite the restriction signs, careless attending of campfires, grilling shashliks, drinking alcohol, and littering all over the place (Pliens 1980). Meanwhile, another popular vacation destination, primarily for Lithuanian tourists, was the village Pape. In the beginning, locals offered rooms for rent, but gradually Lithuanians started purchasing land and building summer cottages themselves, and eventually established several camping sites that successfully operate to the present day. One of the researchers at Pape ornithology station ironized that the Lithuanian tourists pushed

the Soviet border guards out of the coasts, both in Lithuania and Latvia. Here, the very presence of the ornithology research station in the militarized border zone opens a new dimension of the coastal relations and tells as much about the scientific activity highlighting the historicality of the scientific representation of environment and construction of coastal biodiversity.

Production of environmental knowledge at the border

The coastal environment has continuously been a space of its own geological and ecological dynamics as much as it is a transitional movement-space of various nonhuman biological beings such as birds, animals, and plants. For this reason, in line with rising global environmental awareness, the coastal area between Pape and Bernāti was made into space where migratory trends for birds, bats, and other flying species were eagerly documented and geological and aquatic resources were searched, monitored, mapped and probed despite the global political tensions of the Cold War and regulatory border regime.

Species statistics of militarized airspace

The coastal strip of southwestern Courland forms a geographical "bottleneck effect" between Lake Pape and the Baltic Sea, thus being an important stop for nesting and resting for a large variety of seasonal migratory winged species, particularly birds, bats, and butterflies that travel southwards along the Baltic-White Sea migration path.

In 1966, an ornithological research station was established in Pape. The station, made of a few small wooden cottage-houses and a bird catching net (see Figure 3), was the first step towards a long-term scientific engagement in capturing, measuring, numbering, and comparing of the seasonal and nocturnal avian diversity in the area with additional attention drawn towards "non-regular migrants" (Reinbergs 1986) and "invasive species" (Štāls 1980). The studies were carried out seasonally, mainly from mid-July to October, and for visiting the ornithological research station researchers were obliged to obtain a permit for entering the border zone.

In the early 1970s, a joint cross-border research program "Baltic operation" was undertaken where ornithologists from the Soviet Union, including Soviet Latvia, the Polish People's Republic and the German Democratic Republic carried out mass bird ringing to gain a more comprehensive insight into bird migration patterns across Europe (Gūtmanis 1972), although practically along the Iron Curtain. Migratory birds provided not only scientific data but also a more tangible possibility for the geographical imagination of unlimited mobility, encounters with exotic "foreigners"—rare species, and bird-embodied connectivity with far-away southern countries such as France, Spain, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, India (Grigulis 1964).
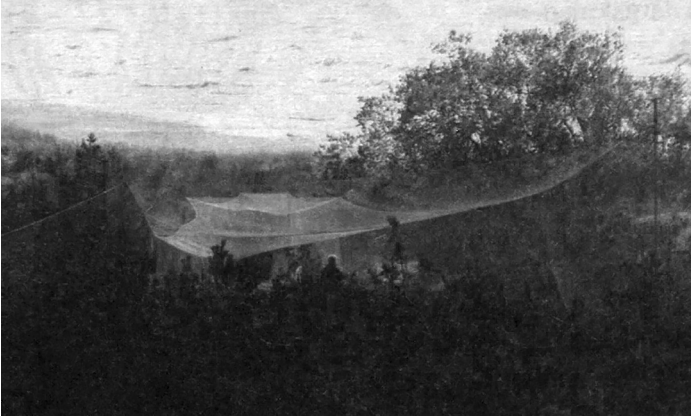
Figure 3. Bird catching net at the coastal dunes in Pape,
1996 (photo credit: A. Eglītis (Baltvilks 1996))

In 1974 a military training ground for air-bombing in water was established between Pape and Jūrmalciems. The new "neighbour" imposed not only unpleasant psychosensorial experiences such as disturbing sounds and the unexpected appearances of aircraft for the nearby residents and domestic animals (Stūre, Gustiņa 2015), but also required the sharing of coastal airspace between military trainees and aerial trespassers—migratory birds and bats. Yet, it did not hinder further development of environmental accountancy and ornithologist-bird relations.

The extensive research results and the encouragement of the recently signed Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat led to an official legitimisation and establishment of an ornithological reserve at Lake Pape in 1977. The establishment of the ornithological station and scientific exercises of species quantification not only produced environmental knowledge about bird demographics and migration patterns, but served as the scientific basis for the establishment of the nature park of Lake Pape several decades later, in 2003.

Exploration of geological and aquatic resources

The specific geological composition and hydroecological circumstances of the coast evoked certain extractivist imaginaries for mineral resources which made the coastal borderland interesting for subterranean and maritime exploration. In 1962, the Institute of Scientific Research of Baltic Fisheries was established with one of the field study bases located in Pape.

Figure 4. a) Tower for oil probing in Bernāti, 1967
(photo credit: N. Rostislavskis; b) an oil probe at
Bernāti shore, 2019 (author's photo)

The institute was in charge of a hydroecological and hydrochemical analysis of the sea, the exploration of aquatic ecologies and fish resources, monitoring of aquatic diversity, red algae stands and sprat spawning habits, as well as the mathematical modelling and economic evaluation of fish stock ([Bez aut.] (S.a.)).

In the mid 1960s, the sediment layers beneath the sandy surface around Bernāti were identified as having a potential for oil. A research expedition was undertaken, around 20 probes were drilled and tested but findings did not pay off the high hopes—the reserves of oil were too little to be economically viable and the idea was eventually dismissed (Bolotina 1988) (see Figure 4). Today, some of the metal probing cones sprout up here and there at the Bernāti beach reminding of this endeavour.

Another experimental attempt to use Courland's marine area as an open-air laboratory was made in 1978 when a geological research station was established in Jūrmalciems. In the beginning, as told by the villagers who were partly employed at the facilities, the centre—a three-story sand-lime brick building with deep ponds carved in the front yard—was used for the exploration of the seabed by amphibious vehicles in search of titanium and gold sediments and the testing of metal corrosion in a seawater environment. In the late 1980s, the site was taken over by the Baltic Division of the General Research Institute for the Mechanical Processing of Minerals of the USSR Ministry of Coloured Metallurgy, in short *Mehanobr* (Štāls 1988). The centre employing scientific personnel of around 60 permanent and 30–40 temporary workers carried out studies and tested technologies for extraction and processing of sea minerals. In 1988, according to an official order issued by the government

of the USSR, remarkable development plans for an experimental production plant, renamed "Geookeantehnologija", were proposed. The grand expansion of the research institute projected reconstructing the laboratory centre (1230 m2) and utilities, and establishment of an experimental training facility (2700 m2), a swimming pool (500 m²) and a recreational base with around 200 beds. It had also been planned to locate two hydromechanical divisions at the Lake Liepāja and the Lake Pape. Yet, the utopic development plans were rejected by local political activists pointing out their incompatibility with the sensitive coastal ecosystem (Štāls 1988).

The exploratory interests of scientific, economic, and industrial motives resulted in varying success. While ornithologists managed to obtain an abundance of research data, geologists found only decent amounts of sedimental valuables. In either case, the activities carried out produced more varied and nuanced knowledge about the coastal environment and respective social values at the time.

(Post)militarized environments: between natural and contaminated

Border regimes and bordering activities produce diverse environmental effects. On the one hand, the regulated or forcedly absent human activity seemingly enables the preservation or return to the *natural* state of the area. On the other hand, bordering activities and associated militarized exercises can produce harmful, even toxic effects on coastal ecosystems. Yet, the current public imagery of Courland's coastal nature in the advertisement narrative does not explicitly address either of them. The institutionalized areas for nature protection and conservation—nature parks—not only declare *nature* as a separate, individuated territorial entity, but implicitly label the former militarized border environment as "natural". Together with the discursive absenting and physical erasure of the remains of the Cold War's past, they attempt to enforce a purified interpretation of the complex history of the coastal environment.

Peripheral nature as dump

The introduction of new jet aircraft required larger areas for testing. Thus in 1974, an aviation training ground of 10,480 ha in size (2540 ha of land, 7940 ha of the sea) was established between Pape and Jūrmalciems for the Baltic Fleet's Naval aviation forces. The territorial remoteness and coastal conditions were beneficial for the selection of the area. To simulate the close-to-reality situations, six shipwrecks were submerged at the shore and airplane mock-ups made of rubber tires were placed in the northern part of the Lake Pape. During training, the bombs not only missed the targets but often fell in the forest cratering dunes and causing fires. The same dunal forests were also used for

Figure 5. Pine trees in the former Pape military training ground (photo credit: J. Laurs (Laurs 2011))

incinerating unnecessary ammunition (Riekstiņš 1997). The last and the most damaging case was recorded in 1988 when the Soviet army disposed of 260 phosphorous bombs in the forest area and on the beach. The heatwave of explosion burned a large patch of the surrounding area and deformed trees (see Figure 5) and more than 20 tons of white phosphorus was deposited in the sea (Štāls 1990). In the following years, pieces of it started to reappear on the shore up to Liepāja but the visual and textural similarity to amber—a sea-washed gemstone with historical significance as a national symbol (see Zariņa, Krumberga 2018)—made it a rare find that caused skin burns when held in hand; it was a dangerous "souvenir" popularly being termed "false amber". Ironically, the largest and longest-lasting contamination of Courland's seacoast happened during a phase of demilitarization.

Another case when the marine environment was toxically contaminated and coastal land was subsequently used for the burial of "waste" happened in 1981 when the British tanker "Globe Assimi" was crushed at the entrance of the Klaipeda port gate during a storm and sank. The 16,000 tons of black fuel oil which spilled in the Baltic Sea then accumulated on the beaches from Klaipēda to Pape (Zvaigzne 1988). As told by a representative of the Rucava municipality, black fuel oil on the Latvian coasts was collected almost only by hand and buried underground in clay layers near Nida. For the recovery of the seashore, almost 600,000 tons of sand were brought in from nearby quarries ([Bez aut.] 1988); whereas for the regeneration of the former spawning fields for Baltic sprats, a number of rubber tires were submerged in the Baltic Sea aiming to create artificial reefs for restoring red algae (Jansons 2003).

Decontamination of dunes, excavation of the past

In 2012, 19 metal containers, each 40 m3, were extracted from dunes nearby Pape village and sold as metal waste ([Bez aut.] 2012). Local people remember that the containers were buried there in the 1980s and used as oil reserves for submarines and ships (possibly also military ships). After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, despite the loss of their functionality and assessed soil contamination, they remained in the ground for almost two decades. The removal of these underground monuments was suspended due to their location in the dune protection zone. The special status made the excavation of these "technofossils" (Zalasiewicz et al. 2014) linger in a political limbo state, facing normative contradiction between the requirement to clean up the contaminated area and restriction on physical removal of the containers due to the provisioned harm it might cause for the coastal biotope.

The case presents not only a paradox of dealing with the Cold War's infrastructural legacy but also the dilemmatic rationalities of "environmental harm" either by leaving or removing troubling objects. As environmental philosopher, Neil Evernden, points out "pollution" concerns not only physical abuse, uncleanliness, or impurity of the environment, but rather our perception of "moral contamination" where the contaminant is identified as "something out of place"—something hostile and dangerous (Evernden 1992: 6). Interestingly, over the years the metal carcasses had already been integrated into the dune relief and accepted by coastal vegetation. Their removal, on contrary, created a visually impressive spatial effect—an "object-like absence" (Fowles 2010: 26-27) (see Figure 6) that now exists as a self-standing presence and spatial notification—if not about the Cold War's legacy then definitely about a grand *something* which once had been there but was now removed.

Three decades after the end of the Cold War, demilitarization and debordering the harmful military impacts and historical contamination to a large extent have been digested by coastal ecologies. However, the current positioning and marketing of the naturalness of the coastal biotopes highlights that *the natural* and *the contaminated* is largely discursively ambiguous rather than solely biochemical matter or, in other words—a matter of hybrid origin, history, and future.

Conclusion

The actor-network theory as a conceptual perspective and methodological tool allows us to develop an ontologically more inclusive understanding of the complex social realities and diverse human-nonhuman relations involved in the production and shaping of the Baltic Sea coastal landscape as a geographical and political borderland. This paper highlights the various aspects in which Courland's coastal landscape was produced as a hybrid actor-networked space of military presence, socio-economic endeavours and environmental values challenging such conceptual binaries as closed vs. open, militarian vs. civilian, and natural vs. contaminated.

Figure 6. Former oil storage site in Pape Priediengals, 2019 (author's photo).

During the Cold War era, the coastal borderland of southwestern Courland was more than a rigid, closed state of concentrated militarized power. The military presence and strictly controlled border regime was enacted through a spatio-temporal distribution of military personnel and various material, semantic, technological nonhuman actors including wires, searchlights, warning signs, radar, watchtowers, sand-lime brick and concrete facilities, reconfigured the coastal movement and living space, and the imposed limitations on everyday mobility diminished the coastal inhabitability and socio-economic liveliness. These changes were also largely influenced by the broader Soviet industrialization agenda and accompanied urbanization. Despite the spatial limitations in terms of accessibility and usage of the seaside, the coast was not isolated from other economic, social, and even scientific activities such as seaweed gathering, animal husbandry, sand mining, bird banding, recreation, and marine exploration. Even more, the military presence was ingrained in local social life through various formal and informal relations and encounters between villagers, border guards, and with military nonhumans (technological infrastructure) that go beyond the simple binary of military vs. civilian modes of operation.

Regarding the environmental aspect, the biotope composition that is now appreciated as "natural values" and coastal biodiversity, in contrast to the popular assumption, was not explicitly produced by the forced absence of human activity. Rather dunes and coastal forests were also preserved due to their usefulness and affordances provided for the bordering purposes—as sites convenient for coastal surveillance or mediums for embedding and

camouflaging of military infrastructure and activities. Even more, those are the multiple actor-networks of humans and nonhumans such as dunes, twigs, villagers, pines, algae, metal, concrete, sand miners, sea, "fake amber", birds, nets, ornithologists, minks, and rubber tires that have produced the unique topological, ecological, visual, discursive and affective diversity of Courland's coastal landscape which we can experience, categorize, re-imagine and re-shape.

The Cold War's past and militarized border regime is still present and encounterable in coastal dunes, forests, and villages either as dysfunctional rubble, object-like absences, ecological disturbances, or simply a spatial awkwardness. In any expression, these spatial deviations communicate the presence of a landscape that is more articulated than an uncomfortable past to be forgotten, nature to be protected or traditionality to be nostalgic about and where new socio-technical and politico-ecological hybridities are (re)produced along with current regulatory regimes and environmental logics of dune protection zones and nature parks.

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Aukstā kara robežu ģeogrāfijas jeb Baltijas jūras piekrastes ainavas hibrīda veidošana Latvijā

Kristīne Krumberga

Raksts sniedz padziļinātu ieskatu Baltijas jūras Kurzemes dienvidrietumu piekrastes kā pierobežas režīma ainavas vēsturiskajā attīstībā Aukstā kara periodā. Pētījuma intereses pamatā ir pretruna starp mūsdienās valdošo diskursu, kurā piekrastes ainava tiek vienlaikus attēlota kā *tradicionāla* un *dabiska,* un retrospektīvo telpisko iztēlošanos, kas piekrasti portretē kā "slēgtu robežas zonu". Pētījums analītiski iztirzā, kā piekrastes ainava tikusi telpiski, ekoloģiski un sociāli veidota militarizētā robežas režīma un piekrastes vides apstākļu ietekmē un padomju sociālekonomiskā un ideoloģiskā režīma kontekstā. Pētījuma konceptuālo ietvaru veido saiknota telpas veidošanas perspektīva ar fokusu uz cilvēku un ne-cilvēku mijiedarbību un attiecību hibriditāti. Pētījumā telpiski identificētas un lokalizētas dažādas padomju militārajā robežas zonā ietilpstošo Papes, Jūrmalciema un Bernātu apkārtnē notikušās aktivitātes un to izpausmes un pēctecība piekrastes ainavā. Pētījums parāda, ka, par spīti ierobežotajai jūras un krasta pieejamībai un izmantojamībai, piekraste nebija izolēta no plašākiem sociāliem un ekonomiskiem procesiem un vides aizsardzības idejām. Vēl jo vairāk, dažādās sociāli materiālās, tehnoloģiskās, performatīvās un diskursīvās cilvēku un ne-cilvēku (*nonhuman*) attiecības ir kolektīvi artikulējušas piekrastes ainavu, veidojot tās mūsdienu ģeomorfoloģisko, ekoloģisko, vizuālo un afektīvo daudzveidību, kas sniedzas ārpus bināriem dalījumiem militārs/civils vai dabisks/piesārņots. Pētījums vērš uzmanību uz telpisko attiecību daudzveidību un hibriditāti, kas iesaistītas piekrastes ainavas ģeogrāfisko nozīmju radīšanā un piekrastes ainavas veidošanā, kur sociālpolitiskā problēmatika parādās nevis militāro pēcietekmju dēļ, bet gan mūsdienu diskursīvajos mēģinājumos nodalīt Aukstā kara pagātni no tās ģeogrāfiskā konteksta un kultivēt selektīvu piekrastes ainavas attīstības stāstu.

Being at Home Matters: Urban Commons of Neighbourhoods near the Freeport of Riga, Latvia

Kristīne Āboliņa, Andis Zīlāns

There's no place like home

Introduction

Individual, social, and urban resilience as concepts are not losing their importance; on the contrary, within the existing global ecological, economic and social context, the task to minimize local vulnerabilities necessitates the study of urban neighbourhoods from various perspectives. Looking at specific urban vulnerabilities, for example, urban shrinkage[1] that is present in many cities across the globe and in Europe from the wealthiest economies to the poorest countries (Martinez-Fernandez et al. 2015), the important question is how to curtail the outflow of urban residents to more wealthy places (Ibid: 40). As shown in recent studies, an attachment to a place and a sense of "being at home" can play an important role for the decision not to move (Clark et al. 2015; Casakin et al. 2021). On the other hand, the urban character is alive if a city is diverse and dynamic. Thus, the key challenge of urban development policies is to maintain a balance between change and existing assets in order not to diminish the attractiveness of a place as a long-term home.

The urban neighbourhood is an appropriate scale at which to analyse processes of change, as it is here that an extension of a sense of "being at home" and a personal attachment to place, particularly to some of its physical and qualitative aspects, is possible as well as where a sense of community and cooperative activities can develop (Appleyard 1982; CNU s.a.). The neighbourhood is also the appropriate scale for urban research and planning as it is the meeting place for different landuse objectives and users with different agendas (Park, Rogers 2015; UN Habitat s.a.).

In this context, one of the longstanding challenges facing urban planning is spatially organizing and balancing the needs of different, and frequently conflicting, landuse functions (Park, Rogers 2015). This dilemma is most clearly evident in the context of neighbourhoods and ports that have historically developed together, where

1   If a municipality is adapting the policies to the reducing number of inhabitants and smaller economy, then a shrinkage is not a vulnerability aspect. The point is that existing economic paradigm is asking for growth and thus usually creating disbalance between expectations for growth and supporting resources for it.

the industrial functions of ports impinge on the environment quality and health of the neighbourhood (Viana et al. 2014; Bauleo et al. 2018). As different landuse functions make an impact not only on environmental assets like air quality, biodiversity etc., a relevant framework for analysis can be the use of the concept of commons (Ostrom 1990; Huron 2015). This concept traditionally was used to discuss the depletion of common-pool resources like fisheries, forests, groundwater basins, and other renewables as well as related policy alternatives (van Laerhoven, Ostrom 2007; Ostrom 2009). More recently virtual resources have been added to the urban commons and innovative perspectives of communities and resources in cities are studied (Borch, Kornberger 2015; Huron 2015; 2017). In the context of urban commons it needs to be mentioned that they encompass resources; institutions for regulating those resources; and the community that devises the institutions, both shepherding and benefiting from the resources (Dellenbaugh-Losse et al. 2015). Besides the previously mentioned elements that address the questions *what* (neighbourhood as an extension of home) and *who* (community or residents of neighbourhoods), management or govenance methods should be added that are related to *how* commons are maintained or depleted (Ostrom 1990; Low 2015).

The objective of this study is to identify, through the lens of the urban commons, the issues that are important for residents living next to the Freeport of Riga and contribute to a sense of "being at home" in the neighbourhood. Although the study did not further consider the theoretical implications of the concept of urban commons, nevertheless its use as a reference for the analysis of the "neighbourhood as home" can serve as relevant input for its further shaping in the future. In this paper the attribution of the concept of being at home in the neigbourhood is viewed in a multidisciplinary context. The characterization of "home" as having the qualities of a personal special place is derived mainly from anthropological studies, whereas the concept neighbourhood is characterized by using recent conceptualisations of urban sustainability.

Qualities of home

There is deep wisdom in the old saying "feel at home", which can be interpreted individually, and as the expression says—according to "feelings of home". Although home cannot be defined on the basis of unified feelings, as everyone can have a completely different experience of home; nevertheless, it is possible to identify some common characteristics (Mallett 2004: 64).

Research undertaken by Witold Rybczynski (1986) illustrates that since the 17th century important categories for the analysis of home design and domestic space have been privacy, domesticity, intimacy, and comfort. These, as well as aspects of security, are also prominent and recurring themes in the analysis of homes today (Mallett 2004). As the approach to viewing a neighbourhood from the perspective of a home was inspired by Mary Douglas (1991), who wrote about home as embryonic community, it is necessary to examine this viewpoint in

more detail to fully appreciate the premise for the present research. According to Douglas, home is inextricably linked to resources and time or to a long-term perspective. At the basis of the idea of a home as collective goods is a group of people working together for collective long-term goals. In the context of a neighbourhood as a home, Douglas also examines the concept of resources—already existing or being created. It is important that resources are not wasted, so that they are available in the long-term (Ibid). Herein lies the crux of the concept of the neighbourhood as a home—"the primary problem of virtual community is to achieve enough solidarity to protect the collective good", so from the long-term perspective the main dilemma is fairness of distribution (Ibid: 299).

In relation to the management of common resources, there is a need for someone to oversee the resources and to coordinate their use. In turn, financial resources are one of the main instruments that determine the direction of the common effort. However, even in a home a consensus may not be reached or preferences may diverge, but at least an opportunity for compromise exists, not to satisfy all preferences, but to avoid conflict (Ibid).
This section has outlined some of the qualities and characteristics of a home; however, in fact, the most precise indicator regarding a place or building as a home would be a very subjective response to the question "Do you feel at home here and why?" The next chapter discusses the parallels between the characteristics of home and urban commons in neighbourhoods.

Qualities of a liveable and sustainable urban neighbourhood

What is needed to feel at home in a neighbourhood? Urban planners, researchers and other urban practitioners (World Health Organisation, European Healthy Cities network, Resilient Cities Network, Climate Neutral Cities, Smart Cities, Local Governments for Sustainability, Union of Baltic cities and others) have identified issues that are relevant for the effective functioning of urban areas including neighbourhoods (ICLEI s.a., UBC s.a.). To mention one example, the Aalborg Commitments are 50 criteria or actions cities can pursue to further sustainable urban development (Zilans, Abolina 2009) and this framework is widely used in practice to promote the creation of liveable and sustainable neighbourhoods (ICLEI s.a.). The New Leipzig Charter recognizes the important role of the neighbourhood level in inclusive sustainable urban planning and development (European Comission s.a.).

In turn, the 10 European Common Indicators were quite an innovation in urban planning using qualitative and quantitative data collection to measure the sustainability of the cities and towns (UBC s.a.). The first indicator in this set is a qualitative question for residents: Are you satisfied with the local community? Satisfaction is measured against the following criteria: Standard of housing and its availability and affordability, employment opportunities, quality and amount of natural environment, quality of built environment, level of cultural, recreational and leisure services, level of social and health services, standard of schools, level

of public transport services, opportunities to participate in local planning and decision-making processes, level of personal safety experienced (EEA 2002). This indicator therefore links individual and spatial aspects—personal satisfaction and availability of services and infrastructure.

In terms of feeling at home in the neighbourhood from a spatial perspective, the quality and elements of public space are of crucial importance, including aspects such as privacy, places for communicaton, and comfort (Gehl 1996; Jacobs 1961; CNU s.a.) which are similarly mentioned as being important for a home. In addition to assessing the level of satisfaction of residents, the European Common Indicators capture several spatial features that are essential for a sustainable city or community, including availability of basic services and environmental quality (EEA 2002). Furthermore, in relation to the spatial aspect, the urban literature includes the issue of security (Alonso et al. 2007; Jacobs 1961). Spatial security is related to spatial transparency (ICOMOS 1979; Gehl 1996), which needs to be balanced with the right to privacy, to avoid the undesirable extremes associated with the concept of the panopticon.

Both the previously mentioned Aalborg Commitments, used for urban planning and management by practitioners, as well as the European Common Indicators, which are used to assess urban and neighbourhood sustainability are coherent with the concept of urban commons, as they consider basic resources, which require particular attention, as well as communities and aspects of a healthy society and governance issues. One of the most important connecting elements are residents, without which the creation of a good neighbourhood is not possible; therefore, it is critical to know whether residents are satisfied with living in their neighbourhood. And alternatively, whether residents and the community are participants in the neighbourhood development process.

When viewing sustainable urban neighbourhood issues through the concept of commons a number of urban commons can be identified: streets and mobility infrastructure, service infrastructure, public space and greenspace, and others. Classical urban commons include: air quality, quiet space, and land and water resources which are subtractable, meaning they can be degraded by overuse. Feelings and atmosphere are examples of non-material and non-subtractable urban commons (Borch, Kornberger 2015; Lofgren 2015). Gardner and Stern (2002) analysed the main behavioural change methods needed for more pro-social and pro-environmental behaviour, paying particular attention to community management as an underservedly forgotten method. At a time when various factors are weakening a community's ability to exist, which is important not only from the perspective of community management, but also for sustainable urban development as such, the concept of subsidiarity must also be taken into account as different processes have very different levels of effective governance (Strati, Schleicher-Tappeser 1999).

In this context, the Transition Movement that arose in Totnes, England has endeavoured to focuss urban planning on the needs of local communities and neighbourhoods and use of the concept of commons. The movement, whose members comprise both municipalities and community organizations, has gained traction not only in the United Kingdom and

Europe, but has spread elsewhere in the world (Transition Network s.a.). This speaks well for people-centred governance, important changes in subsidiarity regarding better governance and an effective planning system and regulation, as well as to the capacity for societal cooperation and bottom-up initiatives.

Research methodology

The focus of the study are five administrative neighbourhoods in Riga which are shortly described in the next chapter. The views of neighbourhood residents were investigated using an online non-probability survey consisting of 50 questions, one quarter of them open-ended. The goal of the survey was to find out the views of the adult population on diverse environmental, developmental and social issues of their neighbourhood. The invitation for residents of abovementioned neighbourhoods to participate in the survey was distributed through Facebook local social networks. The questionnaire was available both in the Latvian and Russian languages. A total of 1143 questionnaires, or 51% of total opened questionnaires, were fully completed. 3% of residents of the neighbourhoods of Bolderāja, Vecmīlgrāvis and Daugavgrīva and 11% from Kundziņsala and Mangaļsala completed the survey.

Residents were surveyed about positive and negative aspects of their neighbourhood using two open-ended questions: What do you like about your neighbourhood? and What do you not like about your neighbourhood? For each of these questions, respondents were provided separate spaces for three answers, and it was not unusual for respondents to provide even more responses, all of which were taken into account in the compilation of survey results. Results for each survey question were grouped and analysed separately.

A total of 3085 and 2930 responses, respectively, were received regarding things residents like and do not like about their neighbourhood. Responses were coded and grouped considering the planned data analysis according to urban commons such as greenspace and nature territories, environmental quality, social atmosphere and community, services and infrastructure and governance. The analysis of responses was focused both on the total diversity of responses (liked/disliked aspects of the neighbourhood) from all neighbourhoods and the full range of responses in each neighbourhood. Responses to other survey questions provided more in-depth contextual insight into the views of residents concerning factors influencing their experience of living in the neighbourhood. The analysis of survey responses was used to identify the issues that are most important to neighbourhood residents in relation to "a sense of being at home in the neighbourhood".

Subsequently, City of Riga planning documents (Riga Spatial Development Plan, Thematic Plans, Action Plan and Building Code, as well as Action Plan of Riga Freeport) were analysed to identify if and how selected policy prescriptions particularly impact on urban commons issues that are important to residents "sense of being at home in the neighbourhood".

Quantitative noise and air quality data was accessed from official reports published by the municipal government and the Freeport Authority. Alongside the undertaken survey, semi-structured interviews as well as expert interviews were also used. In addition, the neighbourhoods were visited and local public events attended to gain a deeper perspective of the physical and social environment of each neighbourhood.

To ensure that the research maintained a clear focus on neighbourhoods "as a home" in the context of urban commons, neighbourhood residents, the Freeport of Riga (subsequently Freeport) and neighhbourhood businesses were identified as the key stakeholders with conflicting interests on neighbourhood resources. Municipal institutions are considered stakeholders regarding governance (planning, decision manking) issues. Most often discussions in the public arena between these stakeholders related to conflicts over development planning and environmental quality issues in the neighbourhoods. The study did not analyse other neighbourhood community stakeholders such as service providers, visitors, non-neighbourhood users of greespace recreational ammenities as well as developers, whose impact on urban sustainability warrants a separate study.

Five port neighbourhoods of Riga

In 2020 Riga had a population of 632,600, a 30% decrease since the 1990s due to a low birth rate nationally, outmigration and suburbanization processes stimulated by more attractive housing and living conditions in neighbouring municipalities. Riga is a Baltic Sea port city. The Freeport is the fifth largest port in the Baltic Sea transit corridor. Due to a decreasing transit of coal and oil from mainly Russia to Western Europe, the Freeport is seeking other perspective cargo types like wood and containers to remain economically viable. Bolderāja, Vecmīlgrāvis, Kudziņsala, Mangaļsala and Daugavgrīva, located in the northern part of the city adjacent to the Daugava River and the Freeport, are five of the 58 administrative neighbourhoods in Riga (Figure 1). The specific feature of these neighbourhoods is their proximity of the Baltic Sea—the sandy seaside beach in Daugavgrīva and Mangaļsala is approximately 7 km long.

The number of neighbourhood residents varies from 358 in Kundziņsala and 1,241 in Mangaļsala to 20,937 in Vecmīlgrāvis. Bolderāja is home to 12,557 residents, whereas Daugavgrīva has a population of 8,314. In total, these neighbourhoods represent about 7% of the total population of Riga.

Prior to World War II, because of their geographic location, life in these neighbourhoods was closely interwoven with the sea and river through fishing and marine activities and vocations. Today, these neighbourhoods no longer directly border the Daugava River, but are separated from it by the intervening fenced-off Freeport (Figure 1). The heritage of the two smallest neighbourhoods, Mangaļsala and Kundziņsala, is still evidenced by historical landuse
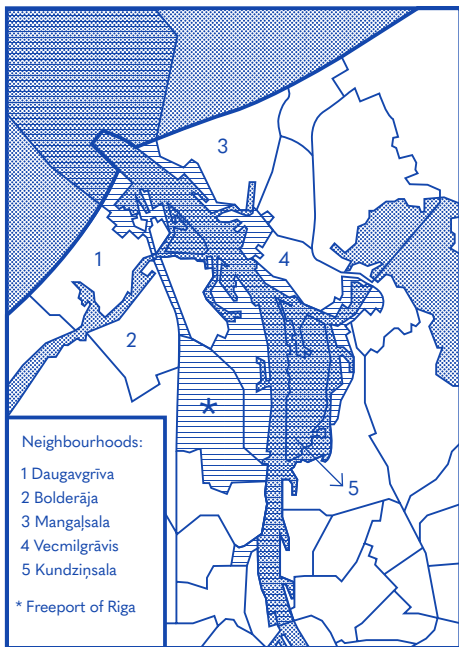
Figure 1. Location of the five neighbourhoods in relation to the Freeport of Riga

Neighbourhoods:

1 Daugavgrīva
2 Bolderāja
3 Mangaļsala
4 Vecmilgrāvis
5 Kundziņsala

* Freeport of Riga

Figure 2. (a) on the left—local street in Kundziņsala (photo: Āboliņa) and (b) on the right—dust from coal transit activities in the Freeport (source: Anonymous 2019)

patterns and architecture; narrow winding streets, individual family homes with traditional gardens—a world upon itself (Figure 2a). Meanwhile, the historical layout of Bolderāja has been impinged upon by large-scale multi-story residential apartment complexes, whereas in Vecmīlgrāvis only remnants of the historical settlement pattern remain as isolated islands in a sea of nine-story apartment blocks. In Daugavgrīva, most of residents live in Soviet era multi-story buildings.

Four of the neighbourhoods are located adjacent to the port territory, but Kundziņsala is situated fully within the Freeport. Cargo handling operations within the port territory and local industrial enterprises contribute to local air quality issues, such as, particulate matter/dust from open loading of coal and odours/volatile organics, including benzene, associated with hydrocarbon product storage and handling operations (Figure 2b). Road traffic is another significant source of air pollution including particulate matter (PM) and nitrogen oxides. Additionally, port activities are a source of noise pollution during all hours of the day. Issues related to neighbourhood environmental quality and spatial planning are often the main reasons for the existence of neighbourhood associations. In parallel with environmental activism some neighbourhood associations are active organizers of local cultural events.

Urban commons highlighted by neighbourhood residents

The pleasant aspects mentioned by surveyed residents reflect the common goods of the neighbourhoods. "Surrounded by nature", "the sea is nearby", "the forest is close by", "water", "a green neighbourhood", "silence"—the closeness of nature can be felt in the responses by residents.

Close proximity to the forest, greenspace, the sea and water are clearly the most popular responses. Contact with nature such as leisure activities in the forest, at the seashore or in the yard are often mentioned as everyday activities which in the context of the neighbourhood can be equated to intimacy and privacy aspects of a home. As the neighbourhoods are located at the estuary of the Daugava River, wind surges are an integral part of the experience of nature by neighbourhood residents. Long-term residents (some are fourth or even fifth generation residents) have a closer relation with water as evidenced by their flood stories wherein water is portrayed as a living being (Bula forthcoming).

More than half of the responses describing positive aspects of living in the neighbourhood were related to nature (Figure 3); thus, greenspace is the most important and liked urban commons for neighbourhood residents. The evident importance of nature for neighbourhood residents can be explained by either the location of relatively large nature tracts directly within the neighbourhoods (Daugavgrīva, Bolderāja and Mangaļsala) or next to them (Bolderāja and Vecmīlgrāvis).
Figure 3 shows that for the residents of all neighbourhoods the port, industrial enterprises and

Unpleasant aspects of the neighbourhoods

5 — 39%
1 — (unlabelled)
2 — 28%
3 — 21%
4 — 8%
5 — 4%

1. Pollution and port 2. Services, infrastructure 3. Social abd emotional aspects 4. Developments trends and attitude from the municipality 5. Neighbourhood, specific places

Pleasant aspects of the neighbourhoods

4 — 8%
3 — 12%, 22%
2 — 58%
1 — (unlabelled)

1. Nature 2. Neighbourhood, history, atmosphere 3. Services, infrastructure 4. Social and emotional aspects
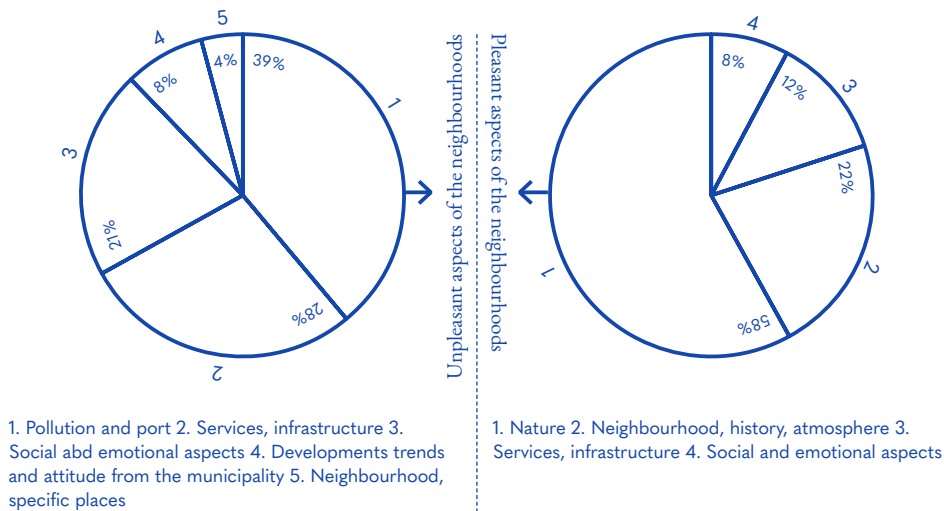
Figure 3. Summary of responses regarding positive and negative aspects of neighbourhoods.

the associated negative environmental impacts are amongst the most unpleasant aspects of their neigbourhood. These account for 39% of all negative aspects with air pollution, noise, and port activities being mentioned as the main environmental impacts. Residents are very specific in their responses as they know precisely the sources of unpleasant odours, dust and noise. This points to the over-use or depletion of the quality of the urban commons "air quality" and "quiet space" that diminishes the comfort and domesticity of the neighbourhood as a home.

It is significant that in the survey responses of residents nature, the environment and environmental quality are the largest of all of the response groups, and as illustrated by Figure 3, this aligns well with the concept of nested sustainability where the environment is the basis for both the social and economic dimensions of sustainability.

Other popular responses in this group included "cultural history", "atmosphere and charm". Further valued aspects of neighbourhoods include specific places, which are important local landmarks for residents. Vecmīlgrāvis stands out in this regard, wherein 16% of the responses regarding pleasant aspects of the neighbourhood indicated Ziemeļblāzmas Palace and Park, a recently renovated cultural venue. Only 2% of responses indicated the neighbourhood as being unpleasant and another 2% of responses referred to specific unpleasant places within the neighbourhood.

The group "neighbourhood location, history and atmosphere" includes urban commons both as a physical (location, place) and as a non-material (history, atmosphere) aspect complementing and giving meaning to each other, and together can be linked to domesticity. Here the responses of residents themselves demanded the merger of the material

and non-material in this specific combination, thus highlighting the long-term continuity dimension or sustainability of urban commons and the coining an appropriate designation for atmosphere—"provincial atmosphere" (Bolderāja). In turn, residents of Vecmīlgrāvis and Kundziņsala with a marked size and population difference (21 thousand and 0.4 thousand residents, respectively), like that their neighbourhood is relatively small and quiet. The response "few people" was frequently mentioned as a positive feature by residents of Daugavgrīva, Bolderāja and Vecmīlgrāvis. Of course, the creation of ambience and "feelings" involves any of the other local urban commons and for every person that is a completely different combination.

"Closeness" was used by 19% of responses as a descriptor to characterize valued features of the neighbourhood, such as, the closeness of the sea and forest, close to the school, kindergarden, work and everything that is needed is "right here". Here an apt comparison can be drawn with a comfortable home where everything that is needed is "right nearby". The keyword *close* which was frequently used by residents in their responses regarding pleasant aspects of their neighbourhood in relation to nature and services is the unifying aspect for the anthropological characterization of home and urban quality indicators—European Common Indicator criteria characterizing access to basic services close to home (EEA 2002). In relation to the availability of essential services, in Vecmīlgrāvis, Bolderāja un Daugavgrīva they are located only a short walking distance from home.

Services are the second largest group (28%) of issues which neighbourhood residents expressed dissatisfaction with. Although some responses were quite general in nature (i.e. infrastructure, services), the greatest dissatisfaction was directed towards the condition of roads and traffic congestion, as well as the poor quality of public transportation services and the shortage of bicycle infrastructure. The quality of city streets and availability of mobility options is a classical "urban commons" and for this resource the neighbourhood scale is inextricably linked with the rest of the city as mobility links neighbourhoods with other parts of the city.

Both the highest ranking negative aspects of neighbourhoods—pollution and poor mobility infrastructure are problematic in other parts of Riga as well. According to air quality monitoring results from next to the Freeport, there are periods lasting several hours when benzene concentrations are significantly elevated, however, since the air quality standard for benzene in Latvia is based on an average annual concentration, the standard is not formally exceeded. Noise and particulate matter (PM) pollution impacting neighbourhoods located next to the Freeport are the result of both Freeport activities and road traffic, whereas elsewhere in Riga the main source of air pollution is road traffic.

In relation to the availability of services, in Mangaļsala and Kundziņsala, essential services are partially or completely lacking (accordingly, services are 0% and 4% of pleasant aspects). In these two neighbourhoods, which are the smallest in terms of population, pleasant aspects pertain to social issues (13% and 22% of all pleasant aspects), whereas in the largest neighbourhoods social issues were less often cited. Out of all responses, 5% in the social issues

group dealt with the question of ethnicity and language—residents noted that a majority of residents are either Latvian or Russian speakers. In neighbourhoods the language spoken by a majority of residents is relevant to the question of feeling at home.

In general, these social aspects can be considered as elements of the "atmosphere" of the neighborhood and to some extent indicate that a positive aspect of the neighbourhood is a "sense of community". However, one particular social aspect was highlighted as being particularly unpleasant. The open-ended nature of survey questions highlighted problems specific to the Daugavgrīva and Bolderāja neighbourhoods—social issues that are not commonly covered by urban development indicators. In terms of importance, negative social issues (31% of all responses in Daugavgrīva and Bolderāja) ranked even higher than port activities, environmental pollution and the quality of services. The heightened importance of social issues is related to the expansion of a social housing complex and social service center (from 4 to 7 buildings) by the City of Riga in Bolderāja next to Daugavgrīva. Responses, such as, "many alcoholics, drug addicts", "social housing", "criminal elements" highlight the propensity of social, health and safety issues facing the neighbourhood and are relevant to the urban commons "atmosphere". It is significant, that in the context of "feeling at home in the neighbourhood", the perspective of personal safety was mainly linked to social segregation and addiction issues (alcoholism, drug abuse).

In turn, survey responses of residents relatively infrequently mention safety aspects related to the close proximity of elevated risk objects to their neighbourhood. Of the 28 elevated risk objects in Latvia, 15 are located in the Freeport. The Riga Fertilizer Terminal, with an ammonia nitrate fertilizer storage capacity of 50 thousand tonnes and over 150 thousand tonnes of other mineral fertilizer products is one of the largest elevated risk objects in the Freeport and is located adjacent to the Kundziņsala neighbourhood. The infrequent mention by neighbourhood residents of such elevated risk facilities attests either to a deceptive sense of security concerning visually unseen risks/hazards or to a psychological survival strategy used by residents to contend with otherwise unattenable circumstances.

Residents of Kundziņsala are in a unique situation regarding "feeling at home" in their neighbourhood. Since 1995 their neighbourhood has been legally located within the Freeport, and since the 1970s, piece by piece, the neighbourhood has been cut off from the Daugava River. Nevertheless, 40% of responses mention nature as a value of the neighbourhood largely due to the greenspace surrounding the detached single-family homes of residents. Meanwhile, water was mentioned by Kundziņsala islanders in less than 10% of responses pertaining to nature as a pleasant aspect. A former employee of the Freeport Authority characterized the situation of Kundziņsala residents as follows: "they are like indians on a reservation"[2]. Notwithstanding their unenviable situation, responses from Kundziņsala residents reveal that the most valued aspects of their neighbourhood are social ties—the feeling of community as well as the rural atmosphere and a love for their neighbourhood. The relevance of mental maps is illustrated in the response of a few residents of Kundziņsala—that

2   From an interview with former employee of Freeport of Riga Haralds Apogs in 03.12.2019.

they like their neighbourhood because it is an island. However, in reality the only tangible expression of this is the bridge spanning a narrow channel of the Daugava River that must be crossed to reach their neighbourhood or city.

Survey results indicate *what* factors are important for residents in relation to a sense of "being at home" in the neighbourhood—the four urban common resources: greenspace, air quality, neighbourhood aura, and social atmosphere, as well as services and infrastructure. The following section will address specific issues related to these urban commons, particularly governance—*how to* and *who* can influence common resources.

Discussion

How to govern common resources—plans and processes

One element of safety is a secure future. At the level of the neighbourhood, awareness of proposed changes over time or, alternatively, stable and unchanging aspects, are in part determined by development plans adopted by the city. Development plans should serve as a guarantor of the predictability of development decisions, as far as it is possible in the context of dynamic development processes, otherwise spatial planning loses its meaning. Residents consider the presence of public greenspace as the most pleasant aspect in their neighbourhood, and thus they are interested in ensuring the long-term availability of this resource. The results of the analysis of Riga development planning documents indicates that the area of greenspace in these neighbourhoods is expected to decrease in the future at the expense of new residential housing developments, public buildings and large (40-50 ha) industrial development proposals. The greatest transformation of greenspace is planned in Mangaļsala and this process has already begun. There the planned development towards the sea will not only cut-off existing homes from woodlands, but due to the planned scale of the development the population is expected at least to double. This will undoubtedly impact on the sense of community and the small-town ambience which residents highlighted as one of the positive features of living in the neighbourhood.

Greenery is also highly valued in private housing developments, but is facing competing interests, such as space for cars, playgrounds and other courtyard uses. Meanwhile, enterprises and services are interested in gaining maximum value from the development on their properties and, thus follow the Building Code which sets the minimum requirement for greenspace at 10% of the plot area. Development plan proposals to situate new development in neighbourhood greenspace are consistent with the findings of David Harvey (2011: 102), that urban commons compete for space.

Over the last 20 years, the area of greenspace has decreased resulting in an increase in the intensity of greenspace use. Characterizing urban commons, Borch and Kornberger (2015: 6) argue that the act of consuming subtractive resources like streets and parks does not take away their commercial and subjective value, but increases it, and "at least to some extent" they are nonsubtractive resources. However, this argument regarding the increase of subjective value does not align well with greenspace as a common nonsubtractable resource since the tastes of different greenspace users are different regarding intimacy or being alone with nature. Additionally, intensive use of greenspace can reduce environmental quality and biological diversity—it is a challenge to define this *some extent* and to balance recreational load with non-disturbance of nature.

Regarding services and infrastructure, residents have little direct means to affect change as improvements are dependent on municipal development and mobility policies. No significant improvements in development planning documents for public transportation services have been proposed. In relation to noise levels and air quality, the lack of noise standards for manufacturing enterprises and differences in air pollution standards for residential and manufacturing areas explains why air quality and noise pollution are the issues that most negatively impact on "being at home in the neighbourhood". This aligns with De Angelis (2012: 39) who states that capital cannot reproduce itself; sources from which capital takes what it needs so that the production of added value can function are unpaid work, natural resources, and commons. Herein lies an internal conflict within neighbourhoods: on the one hand, the desire for economic growth in parts of the territory at the expense of environmental quality, and on the other hand the need for a liveable environment for residents, or as stated by Mary Douglas the long-term continuity of not-for profit homes is sometimes the only justification for non-rational decisions (1991: 298).

Meanwhile, why is good air quality an important resource for the Freeport Authority? In 2017, the Freeport was working at 53% of maximum operational capacity, however, complaints by neighbourhood residents and air quality monitoring results indicate that air quality levels in relation to particulate matter (PM) are already at the maximum allowable level. Optimistic scenarios in the development plans of the Freeport Authority foresee cargo volumes remaining at present levels whereas an expansion of other industrial activities in undeveloped greenspace has been proposed (Rīgas Brīvosta 2019). Consequently, if the Freeport Authority wishes to attract new industrial enterprises, then emissions from existing sources of particulate pollution must be reduced. Otherwise air quality stardards will not be met, and environmental impacts on adjacent neighbourhoods will increase in the future. Existing municipal pollution risk maps are not accompanied by policy initiatives to reduce environmental pollution in order to increase the quality of life for neighbourhood residents located in and adjacent to the Freeport (RD MVD 2016). Opposition to proposed development plans that will impact negatively on these neighbourhoods is being publically sounded by neighbourhood residents and associations. However, neighbourhood objections are being overriden by the argument that the proposed industrial development is needed to stimulate economic growth.

Who governs common resources—a disbalance in stakeholder influence

A major difference between a home and a neighbourhood is that, in the former, it is possible to affect change with respect to undesirable aspects. Mary Douglas (1991) points out that members of a home are those that self-organize to ensure the protection of household resources; whereas in a neighbourhood, residents have limited opportunity to affect common resources such as the quality of streets, greenspace, air quality and services. These aspects are largely governed by urban development policies thus highlighting the importance of public consultations and participatory planning methods to ensure cooperative planning of urban commons. Survey results showed that the participation rate of residents in public consultations differs depending on the size of the neighbourhood. In small neighbourhoods, such as Mangaļsala, the participation rate in public consultations organized by the city was higher (40% of respondents) than in a larger neighbourhood such as Vecmīlgrāvis (12% of respondents).

Turning to the *institutions* that regulate urban commons *resources* and the *community* in which these institutions are embedded, it is apparent that the residents of neighbourhood communities only indirectly have an opportunity to influence the air quality commons, street and other infrastructure commons and greenspace commons, issues that are primarily the responsibility of the municipality. Here it is relevant to mention that 8% of all responses in the negative group by neighbourhood residents pertain to development trends and the attitude of the Riga City Council.

It is largely only in the city planning process where the material and non-material interests of neighbourhood residents as homeowners and tenants can be advanced. It is also here where developers lobby in relation to proposals for economic development and investments in real estate holdings. Likewise, the Freeport Authority, which manages one-fifth of the entire territory of Riga, consisting of municipal and state owned land, is one of the most influential actor in the city planning process. It is obvious that a significant imbalance in influence exists between neighbourhood residents and the Freeport Authority that has influence over a significantly large share of common resources. Herein lies the value of the neighbourhood level in balancing urban policy for the common good (European Comission s.a.).

Survey results highlight the issues neighbourhood residents agree on as being environmental problems. However, it is not easy for a community consisting of several thousand residents to organize a response, as the source (e.g. industrial emission) is created by other stakeholders and the community first needs to communicate on the issue internally in order to develop a plan of action. From the perspective of individual neighbourhood homeowners and tenants they are in a rather weak position to defend their interests in the face of a 40 ha large commercial enterprise. Herein, lies the *raison d'etre* of neighbourhood or community organizations as a coordinator of neighbourhood activities. From the diverse experiences of individuals and neighbourhood associations who participate in urban planning processes comes a wider understanding and new meaning in relation to Tim Ingold's (1995) observation that a place becomes meaningful to a person precisely through living in it and its environs and not as a result of someone formally designing a house.

Conceptually, another change in scale is possible—a village or town as a home, in which residents and the business sector are part of a larger community and where city administrations are entrusted with the responsibility "to keep the home in good order". A shift to context-dependent approaches, commoning (Linebaugh 2008), nuanced subsidiarity, greater shared governance, and bottom-up participatory planning as advocated by the Transition network and implemented in different places for various urban commons, including previously privatized resources, could perhaps serve to better align the existing urban development agenda with the needs and values of neighbourhood residents (Coaffee 2019, Hopkins 2014, Transition Network s.a.).

Conclusions

Survey responses from residents of five neighbourhoods located next to the Freeport of Riga demonstrate that greenspace, air quality, neighbourhood aura and social atmosphere, as well as services and infrastructure are four urban common resources, which for residents are important for the creation of a sense of being at home in the neighbourhood. Although there are many similarities between the five neighbourhoods, significant differences in their pleasant and unpleasant aspects also exist.

Considering their spatial relatedness, a neighbourhood can be analysed as an extension of a home. When relating the main characteristics of a home—privacy, domesticity, intimacy, comfort, and safety to the scale of a neighbourhood, the use of the word "close" in the survey responses of residents permits associating the location and accessibility to neighbourhood basic services and greenspace with the degree of domesticity and comfort of the neighbourhood. The environmental quality aspects of air pollution, odours, noise from the harbour and nearby enterprises, as well as fresh sea air or the peace and quiet in the adjacent woodlands can be related to domesticity and comfort (or hampering factors) as well as security, since in the case of the exceedance of environmental quality standards the health of residents is adversely affected. The opportunity to be close to nature can be be linked to the issues of privacy and intimacy. Housing diversity as well as urban design, particularly the characteristics of public open space, which were not considered in this study, are those neighbourhood aspects that are most directly related to the issues of privacy and intimacy.

The amount of greenspace and its future development are impacted by urban planning policies both in relation to public nature areas and the amount of greenspace on individual plots of land. Air quality which is considered an important urban commons is adversely impacted by differing interests of residents and the industrial sector, as well as by differing environmental standards in living and industrial zones. For residents the social milieu is an essential aspect of feeling at home in their neighbourhood. Although social relations and a sense of community are not measured by urban sustainability indicators, in specific contexts they can be highly relevant. Research also reveals that a municipal social policy to expand a social housing complex in a neighbourhood can have a marked negative impact on the social atmosphere.

The main difference between neighbourhoods as a home and a home is the ability to make and influence decision-making. Decisions regarding the use of urban commons, the most significant qualities of neighbourhoods as a home, are mainly made outside the neighbourhood at the level of city planning and decision-making and by state regulatory enactments (e.g. environmental quality regulations). Neighbourhood residents have less influence over these decisions than stakeholders with economic interests. Although neighbourhood associations operate in the neighbourhoods, representing the views of residents and seeking to influence urban policy, a more flexible subsidiarity could be useful for reconciling different interests and ensuring the preservation of neighbourhoods as attractive and liveable homes for residents.

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Jušanās kā mājās un kopējie resursi Rīgas pieostas apkaimēs

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Daudzviet Eiropā notiekot pilsētu sarukšanai, urbānās vides kvalitātei ir svarīga loma iedzīvotāju piesaistē vietai. Šī raksta mērķis ir identificēt pilsētvides kvalitātes un pārvaldības aspektus, kas ir nozīmīgi, lai iedzīvotāji apkaimē "justos kā mājās". Rīgas iedzīvotāji piecās pieostas apkaimēs kā (ne)patīkamākos aspektus tajās ir izcēluši dabas teritorijas, gaisa kvalitāti, sociālo atmosfēru un pakalpojumus, tie analizēti, izmantojot kopējo resursu pieeju. Rezultāti rāda, ka patīkamāko apkaimju aspektu – dabas teritoriju daudzumu – potenciāli samazinās plānotā dzīvojamā un industriālā apbūve. Savukārt atšķirīgi vides kvalitātes normatīvi dzīvojamās un rūpnieciskajās teritorijās izraisa pretrunas gaisa kā kopējā resursa pārvaldībā. Pētījums rāda, ka pilsētas attīstības politika ir kopējo resursu galvenais ietekmes faktors. Vienlaikus iedzīvotājiem kā kopējo resursu lietotājiem ir mazākas iespējas ietekmēt lēmumus nekā industriālās puses pārstāvjiem, un lēmumu pieņemšana par kopējiem resursiem nenotiek apkaimju līmenī.

Outdoor Spaces of Soviet Riga's Microrayons: The Cinematography of Residential Courtyards

Jānis Matvejs

Introduction

The Soviet film, a cult comedy, *The Diamond Arm* (*Brilliantovaya ruka*, Leonid Gaidai, Mosfilm, 1969) features a scene where a nosy building superintendent governs the residential courtyard and activities of tenants. The scene with the courtyard is shown in a satirical dialogue between superintendent and a tenant with a dog, "Dogs walking not allowed! Our lawns aren't made to walk on!—Then what are they made for?—Their aesthetic beauty!—But where can I walk him?—You can walk him in your flat!". In this film, and this scene in particular, we can glimpse the idea of spatial and social organisation of residential courtyards that served as an open space of social control, aimed to show the absurdity of an imagined Soviet citizen's model behaviour. Were those residential courtyards constructed and meant for aesthetical enjoyment only or as this "read between the lines" scene suggests that, on the contrary, the Soviet residential courtyards were spaces of various conflicts? The mass building of multi-story residential neighbourhoods came together with a new urban space—large courtyards, something completely new for people to adjust to. Such film scene analysis can offer an excellent account on various social conflicts and symbolic representations of the Soviet residential space in general and in analysing the specific places, contexts and situations chosen at the time by cinematographers.

It was not until the 1990s that the first film studies began to focus on the description of cinema and the city (Prokhorov 2001). Cultural geographers have developed a theoretical framework of the interrelationship between the rapidly evolving urban environment and contemporary cinema by systemizing repetitive motifs, subjects, scenes, and landscapes that are significant to certain geographic locations (Kraftl, Horton 2009). To acknowledge a relationship between the filmed subject, space, and cinema, it is important to understand how certain locations in films are selected and institutionalized as "cinematographic" (Hay 1997). Three main approaches in cinematic research are used to examine the connection between geography and film: the technical and aesthetic characteristics used in recording geographical locations; the social and historical context implemented in the filming process; and the impact of geographical representation among viewers (Orueta, Valdes 2007). Such approaches give historiographical perspective and address a critical understanding of geo-historical aspects of particular societies and environment (Koeck, Roberts 2010).

City planning in the Soviet Union was very much a political process, and decisions taken reflect this reality as general principles for physical and economic planning (Bater 1980). The architectonic signs implemented by the Soviet ideological system have been present in the city of Riga for a very long time, and the Soviet regime sought to fully control the residential space (Grava 1993). Moreover, every Soviet city needed to stick to a Master Plan (Marana, Treija 2002). Although the development of Riga's residential space was regulated according to a plan developed in Moscow, the real recommendations were implemented by the city's chief architect. This provided an opportunity to develop neighbourhoods of Riga according to local interests. In terms of quantity, Soviet Riga microrayons (also called *micro-districts*) were a great achievement for the city by allocating more than a half of the total city population in these housing projects. Whereas in terms of building and outdoor space quality, there was a room for improvement (Bater 1980; Grava 1993).

Another crucial aspect discussed in this article is Soviet Latvia cinema. Films were initially characterized by a lack of technical innovation and, instead, were based mostly on creative ideas and acting technique (Pērkone 2012). Visual solutions in films were sought to hide the glorification of the Soviet man under the power of social realism. To achieve this goal, a series of individual milieu scenes served as a focal point on the geographical surrounding. Filming an individual's social environment allowed the contrast of Soviet man with nature's superiority. In the representation of the Soviet city, both the outdoor and indoor spaces became the narrator of the Soviet ideology (Sīmanis 2012). Ewa Mazierska (2014) points out that the study of socialist films provides an opportunity to find contradictions in the official history of the Soviet period through cinematic representation.

The central residential structure discussed in this article is the courtyard (in Latvian *iekšpagalms*). The quality of courtyard was achieved not only through the access to greenery, but it also affected the mutual connections and the wellbeing of residents (Īle 2011). Residential courtyards provide a certain level of privacy, different from the streets outside the residential buildings (Wittmann et al. 2018). In fact, courtyards were designated for recreation and communal services, and they had their own regulated social existence (Humphrey 2005).

This article thus examines the complexities of cinematic representation of these courtyards in the Soviet period. In this article I assert that a spatial approach to cinema provides a framework for the interpretation of various aspects of the courtyard and its connection to private (indoor) and semi-private (balconies, entrance) space. First, I describe actions related to the development of courtyards in Riga's micro-rayons, followed by the question of the representation of space in the Soviet-era cinema. Secondly, an insight into representation of courtyards in Soviet Latvia documentaries and fiction films has been established. I examine various elements of courtyard representation in Soviet films including filmic techniques, spoken text and location. In particular, that is applied as a classificatory system consisting of information about represented courtyards in Soviet films. Finally, I discuss the dissimilarities of representing courtyards in various decades and genre.
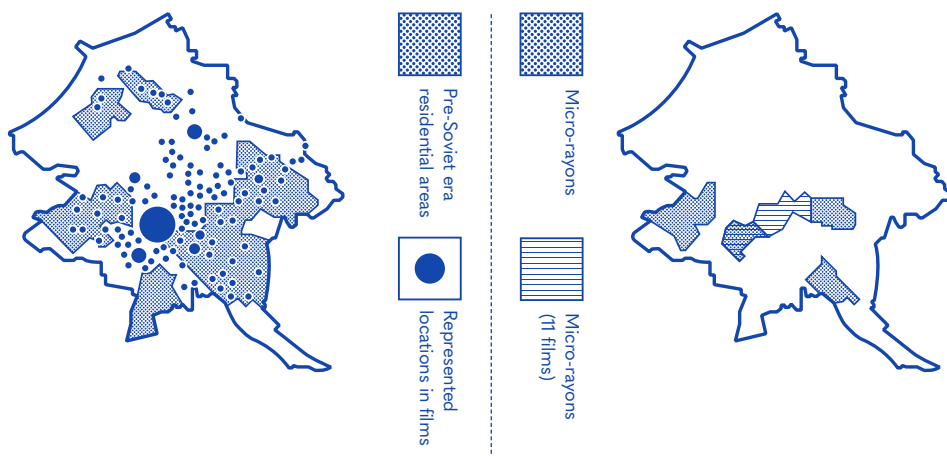
Figure 1. Represented locations in the reviewed Soviet films between 1945 and 1990: a (left) all locations, b (right) depicted courtyards.

Research design

Cinematography has hardly been the dominant angle from which to study the Soviet courtyard. Film studies has mostly been used to study cities and explain several interdisciplinary aspects, such as, film in the process of exploring the space (Novikova 2008); Soviet urban environment as a psychologically transformed space (Näripea 2003); the search for national identity (Näripea 2012); and a comprehensive description of the Soviet city (Mazierska 2008). In this article, film is used as a descriptive material of discursive and social practices of Soviet Riga's courtyards.

The methodology of this article is best described as a "spatialized' version of content analysis. The article consists of a qualitative visual approach that offers an effective and critical way of describing Soviet residential neighbourhoods in Riga, as well as a quantitative analysis that allows one to examine the similarities and disparities of lived space. Moreover, features of residential area development and outdoor territories of the socialist city have been identified through an extensive analysis of literature, especially studying residential complexes of the Soviet Latvia cities—Riga, Daugavpils and Jelgava.

The study about the representation of Riga's courtyards consists of a review of 525 films produced from 1945 through 1990. Films for this research were randomly selected by using the data base of the National Film Centre of Latvia. In the content analysis of the Soviet films, the analytical research method is used (Hazan et al. 1994), where each film of the Soviet period was divided into five-minute sequences. Representation of the living space and

courtyard at each of these sequences was recorded in a previously created database that was described by nine indicators. The data was collected using the data-base of the National Film Centre of Latvia.

The task of mapping existing "filmic sites" and courtyards of Riga allows to identify certain changes in cinematographic and urban development processes. This study understands the term courtyard more generally—it can include the real yard and also the open space between residential buildings. Collected data about filmed neighbourhoods' locations and types of residential structures was stored in a spatial database (QGIS software) in order to employ methods of a geographical information system to analyse and visualize the data. Mapping reveals a snapshot of the compiled data and the process of data compilation has a qualitative meaning as it questions why certain sites are important to a film's location choice. In total, 2531 locations were identified in Soviet films (Figure 1a). Cinematographers have mostly chosen the city centre of Riga for the filmed surroundings. Nevertheless, Soviet-era residential neighbourhoods are also important setting in films, together with depiction of courtyards and greenery near micro-rayons (Figure 1b).

Establishment of Soviet micro-rayon and adjacent residential courtyard

During the Second World War, 155 residential buildings were destroyed in Riga, accounting for 7.9% of the city's housing stock. The removal of the effects of the war in Riga lasted into the mid-1950s (Rubīns 2004). Stalinist architecture was seen as an important target for emphasizing the symbolic objects and the "cultural heritage" of the Russian Empire's classicism. Comparatively few buildings were built in the Stalin era (Gentile, Sjöberg 2006). In addition, these flats were small in size, located in semi-built neighbourhoods and inhabited by Soviet nomenclature—the elite (Grava 1993).

Since the second half of the 1950s, the main objective of the USSR housing policy had been to provide every Soviet family with their own flat. Such a goal was declared by the 1957 Nikita Khrushchev's housing decree (Reid 2006). It provided a solution to the housing issue for 10–12 years and postulated the means—mandatory use of prefabricated concrete blocks. Accordingly, the volume of population growth in Latvia between 1959 (when mass flat construction began) and 1978 ranged from 11,600 to 14,300 people a year (Šneidere 2001). The real pace of flat construction during this time in Soviet Riga, in turn, could only provide 1,000 new flats per year, which constituted in a shortage of living space (Melbergs 1993).

In the late 1950s, housing construction in the USSR had been based on the so-called micro-rayon (in Latvian *mikrorajons*) principle, concentrating about 3,000–5,000 residents in one area. Legal residence was only possible upon receipt of a record (*propiska*) certifying the right to live within the boundaries of a given administrative unit and also to obtain a

residence order (Bessenova 1993). The purpose of micro-rayon development was to provide as many Soviet citizens with a living space as possible. To achieve this, the costs of building design and construction had to be reduced by using prefabricated reinforced concrete structures and building components (French 1995).

Most large-scale panel housing micro-rayons in Riga were built from the end of the 1950s to the late 1980s and were located in the suburbs. In total, nearly 485,000 people were settled in the housing estates of Riga created during the Soviet era (Marana, Treija 2002). In 35 years, 13 residential areas were built. Most importantly, it was a utilitarian living space that provided people with flats but offered minimal comfort and did not take architectural aesthetics much into account (Varga-Harris 2008). In this period, socialism accomplished the idea of the coexistence of housing, work and leisure, separating gigantic buildings of the Brezhnev period with the green areas of courtyards. In this way, small urban communities were created with the main benefit being the people-to-people mutual communication around the green gardens. Inhabitants of neighbourhoods were obliged to take care of these courtyards themselves (Dushkova et al. 2016).

Starting from the mid-1950s, when the first brick high-rise building quarters in Riga appeared, the greenery occupied around 40–45% of these territories (Rubīns 2004). Buildings tended to have a rectangular space between them, open at either end but still enclosing a recognizable space that grouped residents. In the later era, from the 1970s to 1980s, the high-rise panel construction buildings might still stand grouped as though around a courtyard, but courtyard space tended to be too large to be recognizably enclosed. There was often substantial greenery, but the sense of enclosure depended on the building size and grouping that permitted circulation of air and sunshine (Dixon 2013). In most cases the open spaces between buildings became isolated empty voids lacking the planned recreational facilities (e.g., playground, benches) of a micro-rayon's design (Harris 2003).

In order to acknowledge the residents' satisfaction of the courtyards built in Soviet Latvia, a sociological survey was carried out in the mid-1960s. One third of surveyed respondents were satisfied with micro-rayon's recreational abilities, delighted with outdoor greenery, and pleased by activity places, including children playgrounds and lawns (Lūse 1971). As historian Steven E. Harris (2006) points out, receiving the separate flat helped to achieve state goals because better living conditions would lead to a healthier and more satisfied workforce, which would result in higher productivity and economic growth. As a result, the reported satisfaction of the population with the courtyard could only be a relative reaction to the general happiness with acquiring a long-awaited dwelling.

The problem of landscaping courtyards became more topical in the decline of the Soviet period. Only with the new political movement, *perestroika*, widely associated with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and his openness (*glasnost*) policy during the 1980s, both society and researchers took a closer look both at environmental realities and their historical contexts in the Soviet Union (Bonhomme 2013). It was during this time that the National Awakening movement began, the guiding motive of which also became several ecological and

urban landscape questions; for example, public objections to the construction of Daugavpils Hydropower plant or Environment Protection Group's (*Vides aizsardzības klubs*) organized clean-ups and conferences.

The City in the Soviet-era films

The representation of residential neighbourhoods in Soviet films has a complex character, as the plots of many Soviet films are based on literary works and the action takes place in rural landscapes (Näripea 2003). The so-called "few film" period in Soviet cinema began in the late 1940s. Both the need to save resources and ideological conditions caused a decline in the number of films (Pērkone et al. 2011). In the period from 1945 to the end of the 1950s, residential spaces are depicted as utopian and monotonous, continuing the representation of the huge buildings typical of Stalin's time (Kaganovsky 2013).

Close analysis of films shows a frozen spatial matrix of early socialist art regarding both urban and rural spaces, where cities and nature were often turned into a landscape, that strengthened the action and narrative. The cinematic approach in choice of location, in its own way, maintained illusions of ethnic identity. Soviet ideologists assumed that stronghold of ethnic sentiment was the countryside. In addition, urban spaces in the Soviet Latvian films of the mid-1940s and 1950s were characterised by a sense of touristic distance, a perception of space detached from reality, which can be explained by the fact that films were made by cinematographers who were not familiar with local conditions (Mazierska 2008).

As Soviet cinema in the Thaw era moved towards reinventing its role in society, it did so by exploring and reshaping the spatial principles of filmic representation as a means of rethinking the organization of social space (Oukaderova 2017). One of the first reviewed films underlining social space is *The Soviet Latvia Nr. 2* (*Padomju Latvija, Nr. 2,* Josifs Šapiro, 1953), where movement is formed showing people bypassing and greeting each other in the stairwell of a residential building. Since the 1960s, the city's portrayal in films had become anti-monumental, with the protagonist experiencing the city through movement (Prokhorov 2001). In the late 1960s and 1970s, cinema told about the individual's limited ability to be in charge of surrounding space and the need to accept existing living conditions in microrayons (Näripea 2012), while the task of the main character in films of this period is usually to glorify the rapid construction process of flats, courtyards, factories, schools and hospitals (Mazierska 2008).

In the mid-1980s, a new cinematic tendency, called *chernukha* was started in Soviet cinema when Soviet ideology and censorship was on its limit load. This type of cinema represented reality from an ideologically external point of view, doing its best to downgrade Soviet lifestyle (Novikova 2008; Shcherbenok 2011). *Chernukha* films draw attention to visual and thematic features of Riga: crowded flats, littered courtyards and urban streets at night. There

were several themes in films that pointed to the disadvantages of the Soviet system signalling the beginning of the revival movement. Topics included ecological issues, factory relations with the environment, people demonstrating and the raising of the Latvian national flag.

The imagined ideal and represented accuracy of courtyard in Soviet films

Non-existent courtyards during Stalin's regime films (from 1945 until 1953)

Mass-marketed documentaries defined the individual's relationship to the collective, between the public and private, family roles, the nature of heroism, and key aspects of national history during Stalin's reign. In this article, the 276 documentaries from 1945 until Stalin's death in 1953 are reviewed. Documentaries have traditionally interested geographers mostly because they appear to be more factual representations than fiction films. In theory, place and nature are supposed to be unbiased representations of reality in which documentaries can unfold (Kennedy, Lukinbeal 1997). In fact, hidden agendas of documentaries may lurk beneath the surface.

A lack of residential space was an issue during the post-war years Riga. This is confirmed by an analysis of films made up to 1953. Only 16 documentaries depict the housing stock, illustrating the construction process and interiors of pre-war properties instead of outdoor space. Over the course of nine years, three films introduce viewers to the Soviet flat. The interior scenes of these flats are similar: friends are invited to see the new dwelling (e.g. *The Soviet Latvia Nr. 7 (Padomju Latvija Nr. 7)*, Viktors Šeļepeņs, 1950) or the family sits around generously laid table (e.g. *The Soviet Latvia Nr. 41 (Padomju Latvija Nr. 41)*, Hermanis Šuļatins, 1952). Cinematographers in this stage depict only the living room as a central place of a flat, avoiding representation of shared spaces or outdoor territories. The flats in the workers' homes were not spacious, and the infrastructure of adjacent courtyards was still in development (Woll 2000), which is one of the reasons for the limited representation of other space than living room. This is also ascertained by filmed locations of residential buildings. In most of the films the setting takes place in spacious flats of the city centre (10 films), while the construction of micro-rayons with the scene of flat and overview of the courtyard is present only in four films.

In films up to 1953, representations of outdoor territories were not in a cinematic focus. Only four documentaries depict adjacent courtyards. The courtyard in films is part of the construction site around which the new micro-rayons with multi-storey flats are built. Using the panning effect by rotating a camera on its horizontal axis in order to allow the film to record a panorama, cinematographers highlight the size of the neighbourhoods. During filming, focus points are marked: multi-storey buildings and the access roads next to them.

In turn, one documentary of this period (*The Soviet Latvia Nr. 42 (Padomju Latvija Nr. 42)*, Aleksandrs Jevsikovs, 1946) depicts the social aspects of the courtyard in a building built during the interwar period, where the residents get together and perform the common activity of loading firewood.

The non-existent courtyard in films between the mid-1940s and mid-1950s is related to the distinctiveness of Stalin's period architecture. The quarters of 3–5-storied houses had open courtyards, and gaps between them were proportionally linked. This was the difference from the closed green gardens developed in the later years (Ptichnikova, Antyufeev 2018). More important is the portrayal of the construction process in documentaries where the narrator provides over-the-top information about model flats. The informative text in documentaries on housing construction contains factual information as well as praise of short and long-term programs using utopian statements: "we, construction workers, will work to bring more beautiful homes to our city. It will be our contribution to the fight for peace" (*The Soviet Latvia Nr. 36 (Padomju Latvija Nr. 36)*, Leonīds Kristi, 1951). In the 1950s, cinema became more focused on spoken text than on visual representation.

Latent courtyards in Soviet films (from 1954 until 1979)

From the mid-1950s onwards, the following composition of residential areas is particularly pronounced in films: courtyards, the assembly of building panels, construction worker's perspective in construction process, and a general overview of microrayons' structure by using horizontal panning shots. From 1954 until 1979 Riga's micro-rayons (Jugla, Vecmīlgrāvis, Ķengarags, Āgenskalns, Imanta, Iļģuciems, Purvciems, Mežciems) are essential settings representing residential areas in Soviet films. This is best illustrated in the feature film *The Willow Grey Blooms* (*Kārkli pelēkie zied,* Gunārs Piesis, 1961) that most directly signalled the beginning of modernism in the USSR. Soviet residential structures are represented as more spacious, with more than one room and the newest appliances (television, radio, bookshelf and closets for clothing and linen) compared to represented residential interiors in the Old Town or pre-war worker areas. At this stage, substantially more courtyard scenes are revealed. Initially in the films, the courtyards appear as part of a building site on where construction machinery is located (e.g. *The Spear and Rose (*Šķēps *un roze),* Leonīds Leimanis, 1959).

Many films between the mid-1950s and 1970s evoke an attachment of people to new residential neighbourhoods and their homes. This is supported by various visual features of what is considered to be a "utopian happiness", even if it is presented in a shell of socialist realist glory. Films from this period illustrate both satisfied residents who appreciate the infrastructure of micro-rayons while meeting friends, visiting cafes and, walking around streets near buildings (e.g. *The Soviet Latvia Nr. 28 (Padomju Latvija Nr. 28)*, Hermanis Šuļatins, 1961), and idealized house assemblage where a gender-equal, diverse, and multicultural labour force builds a "better future for the Soviet citizens" (e.g. *The Soviet Latvia Nr. 13 (Padomju Latvija Nr. 13)*, Irina Masa, 1959). Film analysis of this period shows that the Soviet courtyard was not only an "empty space", thus filmmakers use courtyard scene for establishing complex

Figure 2. Residential courtyard as part of the building layout in the film "The White Bells" ("Baltie zvani") (Source: screen capture of the film, retrieved from filmas.lv)

Figure 3. Balcony as a "panopticon", where Ņina and Ļiļka rationally observe the courtyard in the fiction film "To Remember or Forget" ("Atcerēties vai aizmirst") (Source: Riga Film Museum Archive)

characters. It was intended to be a protected inner area, contrasted with the outer zone of streets and squares, and it was meant to generate the friendly congregation of all kinds of neighbours (Humphrey 2005).

Visually, the construction process of residential buildings is represented the most. A great number of films also feature exemplary interiors of one to three rooms. By contrast, only 17 of the films in this phase represent courtyards of micro-rayons. In most films the courtyards are still reproduced as part of a construction site (Figure 2). Significantly, none of the films highlight the role of the courtyard in the structure of the micro-rayons during the construction process (e.g. *The White Bells (Baltie zvani)*, Ivars Krauklītis, 1961). Likewise, in newly completed residential neighbourhoods, film directors avoid portraying courtyards entirely, while focusing on building layouts and infrastructure. This is revealed both by reproducing different modes of transport (cars, buses, motorcycles) and by emphasizing the role of traffic in neighbourhoods: "street names and house numbers have not yet been designed here, but traffic to the city centre has begun" (*The Soviet Latvia Nr. 35 (Padomju Latvija Nr. 35)*, Mihails Šneiderovs, 1958).

The study shows that the outdoor territories of the newly built micro-rayons are not entirely inhabited. This is especially apparent in documentaries, where only a few people in motion are recorded on the streets of neighbourhoods. It is also evidenced by the presence of limited social groups, mainly male workers. Empty courtyards and a lack of outdoor facilities are explained by a utopian vision of a brighter future, claiming that "it is good to live here, but it will get even better" (*The Soviet Latvia Nr. 28 (Padomju Latvija Nr. 28)*, Hermanis Šuļatins,

1961) and "a far-sighted nation moves forward with great strides set by the noble Lenin" (*The Soviet Latvia Nr. 15 (Padomju Latvija Nr. 15)*, Mihails Šneiderovs, 1959). Conversations in documentaries highlight the improvement process of residential structures where courtyard establishment is planned for the very near future. Thus, courtyards are existent in films both visually and aurally, but not yet manifested as a detached space from the interior, construction, and other public structures around the micro-rayon.

Unlike most footage, two films from the mid-1950s and 1960s depict the courtyard of a pre-war residential building as a social and cultural space. The documentary, made in 1955 (*The Soviet Latvia Nr. 3 (Padomju Latvija Nr. 3)*, Aleksandrs Jevsikovs), depicts the courtyard as a meeting point for the inhabitants of the house, where children play on the playground and their parents watch them sitting on benches. Lenin Street 35 (now Brivibas Street) courtyard is used as a model, according to which it would be necessary to organize an outdoor territory in any Soviet Riga neighbourhood. The instructive aspect is also used in the representation: "children are grateful to the head of the house administration for organizing a playground, moreover, it is worth thinking about the arrangement of such playgrounds in each house administration". While in the late 1960s, the film *24-25 Does Not Return (24-25 neatgriežas)* (Aloizs Brenčs, 1968) places particular emphasis on the courtyard as a recreational space. On the protagonist's reprimand for children, who use his car as an element to play hide–and–seek, a neighbour of the dwelling shouts out loudly, "Why do you keep the car in the courtyard and not allow children to play?".

The spacious courtyard, which the windows of all apartments face, is not only an ideal place for everyday activities, but also a scene where individuals are exposed (Groshaufmanis, Ozola 2019). Opening rooms into a shared semi-private enclosure enables a degree of social discourse across a space that cannot be shared with the street (Prizeman 2016). It is crucial to mention here the importance of representing balconies in films. As balconies were not a popular type of outdoor space in Riga's micro-rayons, they were abandoned in the mid-1970s and replaced by loggias and semi-loggias (Rubīns 2004). In spite of the changes in the building structures, the portrayal of the balcony retained its importance in cinematography and it was intensely reproduced in the early 1980s (e.g. *The Weather Forecast for August (Laika prognoze augustam)*, Lūcija Ločmele, 1983; *The Last Indulgence (Pēdējā indulgence)*, Ada Neretniece, 1985). For people depicted on the balcony, the courtyard is a reference point of the conversation, where the external space is observed by emphasizing social and not environmental aspects. For example, in the film *To Remember or Forget (Atcerēties vai aizmirst*, Jānis Streičs, 1981) the courtyard is being observed and people there are examined: "Have a look! Who is the woman he is with?". It is possible to compare the balcony structure in Soviet films with Foucault's social theory of panopticon, where the main character acts as a watchman (Figure 3).

Several micro-rayons had to face the dilemma of demolishing existing homes—dating back to the 18th century, or preserving them. Soviet films provided a futuristic illusion of forthcoming residential neighbourhoods. "It will no longer be possible to recognize the city. Two-story wooden houses have a low potential for use," as said by the house manager (*The*

City at the Microphone (Pilsēta pie mikrofona), Mihails Pjarns, 1973). Residents, subject to official ideology, are depicted as being pleased with the flats assigned to them. The protagonist in the film *Apple in the River* (Ābols *upē*, Aivars Freimanis, 1974) says: "I would love to live there," when talking about large panel housing in Ķengarags micro-rayon. Urban green space as a resource of urban nature was largely decreased and replaced by multi-storey buildings with significantly less greenery. In turn, the characters portrayed in documentaries and fiction films come to terms with new conditions of city planning, and the destruction of one-storey buildings with adjacent gardens is considered an essential feature of the era.

Cinema also shows the contrast between the countryside and city, where the countryside plays the role of recreation rather than residence. A large country house with several rooms is portrayed in the centre of films. It is usually a place where relatives, friends and acquaintances from the city come to spend their free time (e.g. *The Bulrush Forest (Meldru mežs)*, Ēriks Lācis, 1971). Rural houses are usually located in picturesque places, near the seashore or in forests. The beauty of the countryside is also evidenced by the expression used by the main characters, "Oh, how wonderful it is here!" (*A Limousine the Colour of Midsummer's Eve (Limuzīns Jāņu nakts krāsā)*, Jānis Streičs, 1981). The mix of rural and urban space can be interpreted as an artificial and hasty process of Riga's urbanization and industrialization. A distinction is drawn between ethnic space in the countryside and "Soviet space" in Riga.

Another spatial structure akin to the rural landscape is a garden and summer house or *datcha* on the outskirts of Riga. The urban green area was perceived as a decoration and a space to be desired. This might explain why a large part of urban green space in the Soviet times was developed as an aesthetic category and not a place of everyday use for the local population (Dushkova et al. 2016). To fill this gap, gardens in *datcha* provided a very important source of livelihood for the residents of Soviet cities. In films, the summer house is an important setting that highlights the shortcomings of courtyards. These structures provided city residents with basic vegetables and additional income from the sale of products and as an alternative way to spend one's free time (Lovell 2003). The protagonists in films visiting their *datcha*, confirm the desire to escape from the city and get closer to the nature (e.g. *My Friend—a Frivolous Person (Mans draugs-nenopietns cilvēks*, Jānis Streičs, 1975).

There was continuity in perception of a "good housing location". The socio-spatial models that the cities inherited from the pre-socialist era were characterized by a higher status of residential areas in the city centre. The status tended to decline from the city centre to the periphery (Ruoppila 2004). If the peripheral areas of the city are depicted with numerous courtyard scenes in films, then the representation of outdoor territory in the city centre is limited. The representation of micro-rayons' courtyards in the city centre is replaced by the depiction of gardens and parks (e.g. *If You Love (Ja mīl)*, Aloizs Brenčs, 1961). The rental buildings in films are associated with adjacent public parks. For example, in film *My Friend—a Frivolous Person (Mans draugs-nenopietns cilvēks)*, an older woman oversees a public park from her kitchen window. Seeing two lovers kissing on a bench, woman pours the water on top of them.

Courtyard as a manifestation of freedom

The 1989 Population and Housing Census materials shows that the housing stock of Riga was morally and physically depreciated. In 1989, 70% of Riga's residents lived in homes built after 1941 (Rubīns 2004). The level of human demands was changing rather rapidly, including demands for housing and the adjacent space, which became an increasing concern to the residents of neighbourhoods. With Mikhail Gorbachev's openness policy throughout the 1980s, censorship of cinematography was liberalized. It was just the right moment for film directors to showcase a number of people's important housing issues.

Starting with the early 1980s, "the average person" no longer existed, and standard housing for a standard person did not satisfy the entire population. The micro-rayons revealed major shortcomings when certain features were not built, including recreational facilities and greenery development (Hess, Metspalu 2019). It also opened a new perspective in the portrayal of space (Näripea 2003). Residents in micro-rayons are depicted as dissatisfied—that was novel feature in Soviet films. It was related to several flaws in the living space, such as the narrowness of rooms, lack or greenery, and poor quality of construction materials. A striking example is the film *Wish Me Bad Weather for the Flight* (*Novēli man lidojumam nelabvēlīgu, laiku,* Varis Brasla, 1980), in which the central protagonist Ilmārs expressed: "There is no water again! Why is there no water?". The same film complements the scenes of a flat with a contradictory represented outdoor territory illustrating an unfinished courtyard, a polluted lawn, and the lack of a playground (Figure 4). This footage is combined with aerial video shots, emphasizing the uniformity of various courtyards.

For the first-time in Soviet cinema, films pay special attention to the portrayal of marginalized groups of society. This is related to the new cinematic movement—*chernukha* films. These dark and depressing films had come to represent the contemporary Soviet city with its filth, poverty, and violence. *Chernukha* films draw from a common source of visual and thematic features: dirty street corners, crowded flats and littered courtyards, populated by feral dogs and cats. Characters in films live either in urban isolation or with other members of a truncated tribe (White 2016). In order to accentuate these characters, they are partly depicted outdoors by producing a contrast with other residents of the neighbourhood. The film *To Remember or Forget* depicts a domestic scene with a drunk man at his shed in the neighbourhood, while the animation "The Adventures of the Old Janitor" ("Vecā sētnieka piedzīvojumi" Arnolds Burovs, 1985) shows a janitor who criticizes the unidentified micro-rayon's residents for throwing their garbage out the windows. The animation is complemented by the title song performed by the residents of building "Shut it, old man! Why are you so lazy? You are being paid for this job!"

Documentaries addressed a number of issues, such as the oppressive standardized architecture of micro-rayons (e.g. *Zolitūde*, Ivars Seleckis, 1990); use of poor quality building materials (e.g. *The Soviet Latvia Nr. 18 (Padomju Latvija Nr. 18)*, Hercs Franks, 1983); and a multicultural workforce from Vietnam, which the locals were worried about (*The Soviet*

Figure 4. Unfinished courtyard in film *Wish Me Bad Weather for the Flight (Novērli man lidojumam nelabvēlīgu laiku)* (Source: Riga Film Museum Archive)

Latvia Nr. 20 (Padomju Latvija Nr. 20), Daila Rotbaha, 1988). Georgs Baumanis, the chief designer of the city of Riga, praises the courtyard of the Imanta micro-rayon as a model after which other residential areas of Riga should be created. The architect points out that in other districts, builders are not interested in the area around the flats, but in the need to finish the construction project quickly. Moreover, local residents claim that "the dust clouds in the courtyards are terrible" (*The Soviet Latvia Nr. 19 (Padomju Latvija Nr. 19)*, Imants Brils, 1980). Courtyards, once expected to be tranquil and tidy, are used for heavy delivery purposes, with an adverse effect upon safety and cleanliness.

The 1980s residential neighbourhood architecture became artistically revivalist, socially inclusive, and regionally significant—with a wide range of building forms (Treija et al. 2004). This is also evidenced by the rapid growth representing single family houses, which were almost non-existent in the previous stages. The appearance of private houses in films at the end of the Soviet-era revealed the dream of "one's own corner of the land". It is a canonical commitment to the Latvian mentality and solitude, as well as a diametrically opposed model of living in the dense flat building environment of the USSR. Visual representation reveals forms of living space that had previously been completely banned: neglected courtyards or basement flats of pre-war wooden housing neighbourhoods (e.g. *The Soviet Latvia Nr. 26 (Padomju Latvija Nr. 26)*, Natālija Kožuhova).

Conclusion

Every residential area's main accessory of the outdoor space is greenery. The planting of trees and flowering bushes in courtyards was a strong part of Soviet urban ideology. Greenery provided a pleasant environment for leisure of the working masses and greening was a process that involved the broad participation of the population (Humphrey 2005). The planning of residential gardens contained several requirements, for example, their position in the centre

of buildings with a service radius up to 500 meters and division into zones—recreational, sports, and attraction (Buka, Volrāts 1987). Each micro-rayon also included well-established sports facilities and playgrounds (Hess, Metspalu 2019).

On the other hand, scenes with greenery, facilities of courtyards or residents' participation of preserving outdoor territory are depicted on a small scale in Soviet cinema. In films until the mid-1940s, existing power played an important role in visual representation—either through a gathering space or historical places.   Representations of space depended on the political burden with focal points of technological development, industrialization, and urbanization. Industry and building construction served as cinematic scenes of ideology. Considering that micro-rayons were a new construction phenomenon and allocation of living space to the residents was gradual, the representation of neighbourhoods and courtyards among them was limited until the end of 1950s.

Although the portrayal of flats during the 1960s and 1970s increased, depiction of court-yards were still absent in the representation of neighbourhoods, predominantly depicting flat interiors and micro-rayon at a distance. By representing interiors in films, filmmakers created a *secure space* where residents expressed themselves. The typical scene is the kitchen where individuals verbalized their feelings and acknowledged emotions. In contrast, the courtyards in films have always been a socially active and mundane space, where it is much more difficult to discover the different layers of an individual's character. Starting with the 1980s, portrayal of outdoor territory intensified, displaying such physical features as recrea-tional facilities or infrastructure.

Key decisions affecting courtyard infrastructure and design were affected through executive orders from Moscow, which inevitably led to inefficiency in addressing the resident needs of micro-rayons (Caddell 2009). Representation of negligent approach of courtyards only appeared in films starting in the 1980s. Filmmakers used several artistic means in the descrip-tion of courtyards—interviews, screenplay, close-ups, long shots, and panning. Intensified concerns about outdoor territories are largely associated with cinematic mode of *chernukha* films which questioned individuals' comfort by representing settings like littered courtyards or crowded flats. The readiness of residents and authorities to discuss courtyards is also defined by *glasnost* policy that developed into freedom of expressing oneself—lacking chil-dren playgrounds, insufficient parking spaces, dusty courtyards, and other topics that were covering the flaws encountered every day.

The limited representation of courtyards does not suggest the absence of greenery during the Soviet period. Representations of outdoor territories in films rather illustrate the extensive building process of micro-rayons that, in films, appeared as the display of dump truck, wheel barrow, measurement tools or sand piles around the courtyard, especially between the mid-1950s and 1970s. Films also depict the entrance to the buildings, the parking lot, driveway and auxiliary buildings as essential elements of the outdoor territory. Evident representation of greenery in the Soviet Riga films is only present in the scenes "behind" the residential complexes—panoramic overviews of nearby waterfronts or forests, that served as

an additional element for cinematographers representing micro-rayons. This is largely due to the geographical location of micro-rayons in the city: they were built on the periphery and provided a link with the nearby nature (Bunkše 1979).

This study has found that micro-rayons are frequently portrayed in Soviet period cinematography and thus form an essential part of visual setting in Soviet Riga. On the other hand, representations of courtyards are limited in Soviet films. From almost non-existent cinematic structure throughout 1940s and 1950s to hidden space in 1960s and 1970s, the courtyards acquired its role in films only starting in the 1980s. Insufficient representation of courtyards in Soviet films primarily does not point to the neglect of greenery by Soviet authorities, but rather highlights the very complex aspects of filming outdoors, e.g. technical (lightning, noisiness), privacy (curios residents may be tempted to wander onto set) or unsuitable setting (unused courtyards or destroyed facilities).

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Ārtelpa padomju Rīgas mikrorajonos: iekšpagalmu kinematogrāfija

Jānis Matvejs

Rakstā tiek pētīts Rīgas iekšpagalmu atveids padomju posma filmās laikā no 1945. līdz 1990. gadam. Pētījumā apskatītās 525 hronikas un spēlfilmas raksturo mikrorajonu būvniecības gaitu, kā arī atklāj pavisam jaunu pilsētas struktūru – lielus pagalmus, ap kuriem ir izvietota daudzstāvu apbūve. Lai novērtētu iekšpagalmu tehnisko stāvokli un simbolisko lomu padomju Rīgā, pētījumā tiek izmantots filmēšanas vietas, filmas naratīva un kinematogrāfisko paņēmienu apraksts.

Filmu satura analīze atklāj, ka dzīvojamās ēkas mikrorajonos ir bieži attēlotas padomju kino, savukārt iekšpagalmu atveids filmās ir ierobežots. No gandrīz neesošas dzīvojamā rajona sastāvdaļas 20. gs. 40. un 50. gados un "paslēpta" mikrorajona kopuma 20. gs. 60. un 70. gados iekšpagalmu loma kinematogrāfiskajā atveidā tiek nostiprināta, sākot ar 20. gs. 80. gadiem. Pētījums atklāj, ka nelielais iekšpagalmu atveids filmās liecina par sarežģītajiem ārtelpas filmēšanas aspektiem.

Signs of Death as Notifications of "The Other" in an Urban Environment: An Analysis of Riga's Stencil Graffiti"

Normunds Kozlovs, Ilva Skulte

Introduction

"Post-secularism" is a concept introduced by several authors (Habermas 2008; Cloke, Beaumont 2013; McLennan 2010) trying to grasp and interpret the phenomena of social opposition examine two centuries of secular rationality and technocratic thinking. This concept helps to understand the newest tendencies in modern society that include a recognition of the place of religious world-view in the subjective construction of reality of contemporary Western man and woman, and an increase of power/sense dimension given to religious institutions, religion-related habits, and public space behaviour. There is an emerging broader field of non-secular and alternative ways of social existence open for a re-conceptualization of a human's place in the world (and beyond both human beings and the world). These ideas and intentions are present and pushed forward by many contemporary subcultures co-habiting multiple metropolises. Urban subcultures express their views through alternative media (zines, stickers, graffiti, etc.). Some of them are aimed directly into the public space of the city, challenging its environmental legacy (Snyder 2006). Sometimes they leave traces of *status quo*-challenging signs, sometimes marking territories, but always involving statements of their specific value systems and world-views. There is a demand for additional de-coding by scrupulous semiotic analysis because the interpretation involves a broad (sub)cultural context of semiurgic activities not formed yet in a fully articulated way (Snyder 2006; Duncombe 2008).

In this article, we analyse examples of the stencil graffiti from the streets of Riga representing or using signs of death for different messages. These messages are mostly, as we argue, aimed at introducing an alternative world-view supposing other ways of conducting social life, other (non-hierarchical) kinds of organizing the city space. They more broadly admit "The Other" (nature, the native-tribal, the sub-cultural, the feminine, the minority, the sacral) as a kind of post-secular alternative to the rationalized, instrumental, automatized, hierarchical models of society implemented into plans of contemporary cities. In doing so, we attempt to show how the technocratic order of modern society is receiving harsh criticism through the medium of graffiti in the very place where it is communicated through the planned hierarchical organization of space and buildings. Thus, the overall goal of the article is to analyse messages of stencils as a form of subcultural communication to understand how the concept of death is involved in representing alternative perspectives of the social change—the change of social relationships,

institutions, behaviour norms, values, models and the environmentally aware existence among other ways of implementing the former—evolving slightly into the direction of post-secular society (and post-secular city).

The article is divided into two parts. At the beginning we present our understanding of the role that subcultures play in the re-imaging the relationships and structures underlying the way of life in contemporary society through the messages expressed in the medium of stencil graffiti in the city's environment. We build this conceptualization into the perspective of the philosophies of space, territory, and city that gives way for further research of other, i.e. a non-secular mapping of it. The following section is the analysis of the examples containing signs of death—representations of dying and death in ecological catastrophism and apocalyptic terms as a breakthrough for new post-secular ways of thinking recorded in the streets of Riga.

A post-secular city and the concept of Other and otherness

Post-secularism in social theory at the beginning of the 21st century was a reaction to the mainstream projection of city life for its "loss of community" and "exclusion of the religion from the public sphere" by stressing the "impossibility of absolute secularity" (Parmaksız 2018). This post-secular view on society was first driven by the criticism of secularism in the work of Peter Bergman in the late1960s (Cloke, Beaumont 2013: 33-34) and became a new trend in social sciences and humanities at the end of the first decade of 2000s initially seen in the writings of Jürgen Habermas and other authors from a wide variety of fields (Habermas 2008; 2010; Habermas, Ratzinger 2006; McLennan 2007; 2010; Braidotti 2008).

Viewed in a post-secular way, a modern city has places where the complete otherness can offer the perspective and social imaginary. The lack of belief in modernist ideals of secular society and following disinterest breaks out in an attitude not directly in opposition (to the religious), but a critical stance that can be called "intra-secular" or "anti-secular" (McLennan 2010) rather than religious. Cloke and Beaumont (2013: 32-33) describe several types of religious grass-root organizations which have emerged in post-secular cities and are re-forming the space providing the places of care and spaces of resistance. In the religious context, these transformations are determined by the principles of hope, resilience, and a symbolic opposition to death in terms of what Michel Foucault described in the late 1970s as the exercise of the biopower of modern state—the extermination of other species and races by establishing a gap between those who must die and those who must live by using arguments of a safe, pure and healthy life (Foucault 2003: 254-255). Rebellious signification tends to do "something about"—to point on the unfinished conceptualization of the real, of becoming otherwise (Povinelli 2016). It acts subversively to the mainstream industrialism. In order to adjust parts of the territory of the city to activities, ethics, and intentions that ensure eco-friendly and environmentally responsive way of living it transforms the public space of the city and the urban geography.

Apocalyptic perspectives introduce a different experience of time harkening back to secularized space. Where the subcultural urban tribes have a message of (new, revocable) salvation, they bring the full experience of time against space into psycho-geography of the city (the last days' experience). Theocratic ideas are thus emerging in the composite post-secular urban social environment. Krzysztof Nawratek (Nawratek 2018, Nawratek 2020) draws on Rudolf Otto and Jacob Tabues in his conclusions about the Absolute Other—the mysterious unknown in the temporal and spatial contexts of urban planning and architecture. Introduced in the discourse of public space it can be part of the rebellious and anti-authoritarian discourse.

Subcultures and writing in/of the urban space

In the case of the graffiti subculture, there is a struggle for the aesthetic design of public space. It is a response from the rebellious sons to the "city fathers" who have the money and power to design urban public spaces through monetary-funded architectural means. In other words, space organized and designed as such include power and define power relations in society unequally (Elden, Crampton 2016). An analysis of Riga city stencils has shown the critical potential of stencil messages (Kozlovs, Skulte 2020).

This use of the street as an alternative and independent medium for the transmission of radical political ideas, and thus, in certain propagating work, is a form of civil disobedience—an example of creative idealism described already by Henry David Thoreau in his treatise on "civil disobedience" that has entered anthologies of political and social philosophy (Thoreau 2000). The stencils here can therefore be seen as a non-violent protest. To some extent, stencils in Riga as a tactical tool can be possibly seen also in the context of the Soviet-era's "samizdat" tradition (desk top publishing often providing an alternative worldview), both in terms of a socially critical message and in the use of alternative media.

In the transformation of urban space, spontaneous graffiti must be distinguished from the planned. Graffiti/stencils as the intended product of the subcultural field bear deliberately encoded messages, e.g. in the form of a political slogan. These differ from the spontaneous byproducts of the transformation of urban space into a menacing concrete "jungle" with alarming traces of unfamiliar "animals". Henri Lefebvre analyses the development of the urban environment as a "Production of Space" (Lefebvre 1991). Also, the outcome of any production, the product, for example, by Ewald Ilenkov, is similarly defined in Marxist terms as:

> In the form of the ability of activity, an active person as a public production agent, an object as a product of production has the potential to exist ideally, i.e. as an internal image, as a need, as an engine and as a goal of human activity (Ilenkov 2006: 20).

The ideology of monetary power clashes in urban space with the signs of a graffiti-induced utopia through conflicting opposition:

The social and political (state) forces which engendered this space now seek, but fail, to master it completely; the very agency that has forced spatial reality towards a son of uncontrollable autonomy now strives to run it into the ground, then shackle and enslave it. Is this space an abstract one? Yes, but it is also 'real' in the sense in which concrete abstractions such as commodities and money are real. ls it then concrete? Yes, though not in the sense that an object or product is concrete. Is it instrumental? Undoubtedly, but, like knowledge, it extends beyond instrumentality. Can it be reduced to a projection - to an 'objectification' of knowledge? Yes and no: knowledge objectified in a product is no longer coextensive with knowledge in its theoretical state (Lefebvre 1991: 26-27).

In following we will analyse stencils of Riga as part of the urban reality in this sense—as concrete instrumental uses of space, as "objectified" knowledge that needs to be referred to the "knowledge in its theoretical state".

Social semiotic analysis of stencils in Riga's urban space: research approach

To understand the function and meaning of stencils in the context of transformation of the discourse and practice in Riga's urban space we used the social semiotic approach. Social semiotics sees the relationship between the text and the immediate context in which the texts and images are produced and received as well as interactions between social actors, producers and receivers of messages, as exclusively important (Hodge, Kress 1988: 46). Another key element of this method is the respect for multimodal complexity that allows the most attentive insight in the laconic multi-layered expressiveness of stencils (taking in account colour, image, composition, story, visual and verbal rhetoric or interaction, verbal expression, graphical form) (Kress, van Leeuwen 1996; Van Leeuwen 2005). These two aspects make social semiotics a key method for the research of graffiti/stencils that, in its vast majority, consist of visual (pictorial) and verbal signs used in creative (poetic), but a socially engaged and engaging form. The special connection to place and community that defines its spatial identity through discourse (Scollon, Scollon 2003) is an additional aspect as to why social semiotic analysis is often applied in the study of graffiti in many cities (Chmielewska 2007; Bowen 2013; Stampoulidis 2016; Zieleniec 2016; Karlander 2018; Kane 2009; Shep 2015).

In subcultural communication, each subculture first defines itself against the dominant (mainstream) culture, but it also participates in a conversation in the current context. In connection to this situation, the social semiotics of graffiti/stencils can be analysed within the framework of the triadic structure of the sign: the nature of the icon (for a specific ideological theme), the sign-symbol (for counter-cultural rebellion), and the marker/index (marking of one's territory). Graffiti topologically mark surface segments and existentially switch from semiotic to social level in the city and from the physical to the mental level in humans.

In many European cities, an artistic movement that is characterised by the switch from modernism to post-modern condition is the artist squatting in ghosted factories, the remainders of the industrial time of Fordism. It was not so typical for Riga where, as in many post-socialist cities, the urban landscape is regulated by norms typical to the uncritically imported neoliberal attitude. For example, Krzysztof Nawratek (2012: 8) describes Riga as "an adopted model of imitative development ignoring the potential of the hybrid solutions these cities could become". That especially applies to the territories in the Old City and central part of the city, where privately-owned objects are treated as "sacred" taboo. This adds a partisan premise to the activity of graffiti authors, contradicting with officially established discourses; here, the walls of private as well as public buildings are treated as a physical channel for messages from different subcultures that try to use urban space as a space for hybrid creative and political practices.

For our analysis we used photographed stencil material from the private collection created by Jeremy Smedes (consisting of 1031 images, that were sent to the webpage by anonymous volunteer photographers from various sites of Riga mainly at the peak of street art boost during the economic recession years 2008-2009). As the technique of stencils is based on usage of an intermediate object with predesigned patterns that allows replication each of the stencils may appear many times in the city space. By applying two criteria: 1) verbal or visual sign(s) containing, denoting. or connoting "death" or "dying", and 2) the level of informativity in the picture. Twelve pictures were selected for analysis. It must be noted that the items in the archive are not marked in connection to place or the time of recording, so it was impossible to provide deeper situated insight, thus limiting historical perspective to post-Soviet Riga as a cultural and political space of stencil communication.

The following part of the article is devoted to the analysis of selected stencils from the streets of Riga representing death or dying. By the semiotic analysis of both visual and verbal signs we are analysing signs, symbols, and narratives that are typical for ideologies of subcultures co-living in the social environment in Riga city introducing their fracture, breakage, their type of *différance* (Derrida 2016) in the continuum of urban space. The messages of stencils were analysed by taking into account two dimensions: the nature of the icon initiating a specific ideological theme, and the sign-symbol that appeals before the people in the everyday public spaces of the city (Noonan, Little, Kerridge 2013).

Due to a harsh climate, strict police control, and a lack of tradition for direct confrontation with national state authorities, there are no squatting activities in Riga in contrast to Western metropolises that could contribute to the spread of graffiti. Therefore, graffiti appears mostly at breakage points of continuous Riga's *Art-Nuovo* or historic architectural landscape; trash bins (as seen in spatial referential message Fig. 2c of garbage's life-circle); infrastructure auxiliary elements, such as electric circuit transformation boxes, bridges, concrete walls, etc.

There were some very innovative projects, for example, the one representing national epos hero Lacplesis appearing like in a zoetrope picture on the electro-boxes all along his eponymous street. No direct oppositional political messages (excepting popular local
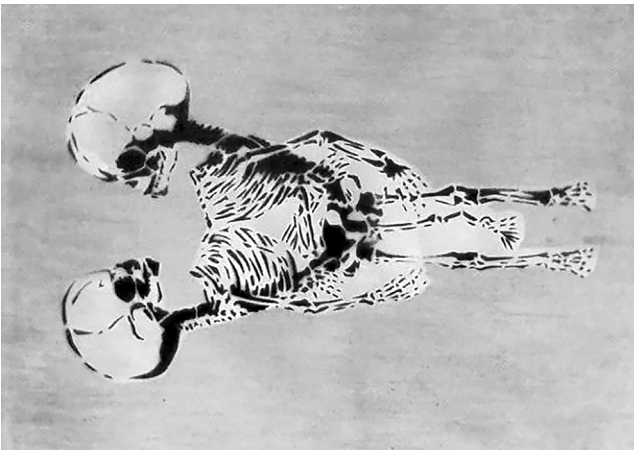
Figure 1. Stencils with Skulls. From left to right: 1a—Siamese twins, 1b—Tuxedo, 1c—Jesus (source; Jeremy Smedes digital archive at http://www.balticdesigners.com/gallery/#stencils).

politician memes) in graffiti as in eastern neighbour dictatorships like Russia and Belarus. If assuming the eternal and laconic counter-culture definition of "sex, drugs and rock'n'roll", most of Riga's stencil pictograms are dedicated to banned psychoactive substances including mainly easy-to-draw cannabis and mushrooms as well as popular rock-music bands that might appear anywhere else. Although there is large block of critical to the sex-tourism (notorious British bachelor parties via low-cost air-flights) human-sized erotic pictures appeared during economic recession years branded "Riga: sex city". Despite the Russian language as mother tongue in Riga for a majority of inhabitants, most stencils are in Latvian or English (Fig. 2d, e; 3a, b). There is also a mixing in the message: "SMILE!" written in Latvian using the Russian Cyrillic alphabet "пасмайди" aimed at reducing ethnic tension.

We have chosen a detailed semiotic analysis of a few death representations in stencils while there is always a persistent threat element in the obvious fact of illegal messaging board on streets, sometimes in pictorial forma as a sudden human-sized fist fighter shadow on the corner.

Analysis of Notifications of Death in the Stencils of Riga City

Skulls

Three of the twelve stencils selected from the Riga city collection for analysis include an some element of a human skull. The image of a skull represents death using a visual metonymy—when life processes stop in the body it becomes part of the non-living material world, this is the mystery of death that the skull represents.

Figure 1a "Siamese Twins" illustrates two skulls that have grown or been bonded together as one corpse. The image denotes anatomical preciseness of the tranformed body. The overall form of the image is aesthetically appealing. The skulls look friendly as if they may be in love with each other. The viewer is positioned along with figures in the image. The bright red colour signifies alarm or passion (the symbolical meaning of red in many cultures, the colour is used to draw special attention, to create a special condition of perception). The image has a message of the complexity of connections or conjunctions that we can't break. It can also be read in line with contemporary criticism of digitized society that, for example, Franco "Bifo" Berardi (2015: 21) expressed as follows: "In the sphere of conjunction, the agent of meaning is a vibrating organism, where vibration refers to the uncertain and unresolved oscillation around an asymptotic point of isomorphism." The connotation of death that the skulls potentially bring into this "vibration", makes the nicely looking concatenation appear to be a deadly, poisonous connection—an alarming end; while, at the same time, it has (the skull in the context of pirate romanticism) a rebel element inviting us to break through to overcome death; perhaps a kind of religious promise.

Figure 1b depicts a whole skeleton in a tuxedo and top hat that, according to the dress code, allows the interpretation of its bourgeois status. The juxtaposition of both a skull that is seen out of costume representing death or destruction and elements of things connoting social status is not rare in socially critical graffiti. It allows reading the skeleton as a criticism of the extermination of life from the capitalist (materialist, secularized) way of living. The symbolical meaning of a counter-cultural rebellion here is based on the subversive convergence of two sides of reality. The image of a fine suit clashes with the skeleton, a dead body (without a soul), is based on a contradiction meaning that those whose social class is indicated by their clothes are dead people—people without individuality or a soul. Signs using dress-codes can be site-specific appearing in the parts of cities where new and old or rich and poor meet, but are usually segregated giving some of them (the poor ones) invisible—dead (this picture ironically states that only the costume can make a person that is worth enough to see and is fun as far as the contradiction of skeleton and tuxedo surprises). In any case, this image can be read as a warning—society doesn't (or did not) notice the process of terrible erasing and the destruction of the soul/life/humanity, and, as such, it is not as much fun anymore.

In the sign system of subcultural imaginary a lack of visibility, vision, social prospect, seeing behind the surface, and importance of hidden aspects of social life become visible and these play an important role. Subcultures compete to insert narratives based on their ideologies in public spaces. They also promote their readings of other messages, so it is important to point on the lack of vision i.e. lack of perspective by other (possible) participants "inhabitants" of public spaces. That is one of the often-used motives of signs on the level of the proposed theme. This is so also a context in which religious motives come into stencil imagery. In Figure 1c we see the image of Jesus Christ depicted in a traditional motif borrowed from multiple reproductions circulating in Christian communities.

The inviting facial expressions and gestures let the viewer follow the Christian narrative about life, death, and resurrection (of Jesus) to understand the question posted below in letters indicating the Holy Scripture (the old Gothic style of letters used in the stencil underline the sacral status of the message). "Kurp jūs ejat?" is the Latvian translation of Latin "Quo Vadis?" —the question pointing the wrong path humanity has taken and the possibility to improve. In the lower part of the picture with blurred, floating letters, there is a proposition to reflect on: "Dzīve" (meaning "life" in Latvian). The image clearly sets the opposition of both—the way towards death that humanity has taken, and life that is Christ. It is represented by the two sides of the figure in the image—the human way is visually depicted via the visual sign of skeleton, and, alternatively, the holy divine with a traditional symbolic image usually used in a religious context. Thus, the alternative, the complete Otherness, the Holy is brought into the secular space of the city along with the very idea of the possibility of another way in the individual, but also the social life of the modern urban community. There is already the over-secularised imagery of iconic Christ; although here it is deconstructed dividing into two halves "the body of Christ" in an x-ray technological manner recalling a sort of blasphemy or iconoclasm both to the traditional religiosity and "the society of spectacle" (Debord 1994). The multimodal

Figure 2. Stencils conserning human ecology. From left to right: 2a—Think, 2b—Fur-Murder, 2c—Trashbin, 2d—Destroy, 2e—Copro-human, 2f—Blind (source: Jeremy Smedes digital archive at http://www.balticdesigners.com/gallery/#stencils).

semiotic resources of the stencil are used for that as well as the traditional rhetoric. With an unrecognizable object (possibly a knife) the image of the Christ is shown in pointing toward the death that is to overcome, but not for the people living in sin. He is trying to show something obvious, logical, clear, but scary to humans (death), and through it let the people believe in a truth that is not perceptible, but real. The image is made drawing on the visual representation rules for iconic signs (proportions, perspective) that are again pointing to the paradoxical connection between visible (we see because we are used to taking into account sets of rules for visual perception established from the Renaissance to the Modernity's primacy of the visual) and invisible (we do not see the Other (side) because precisely the same sets of rules are not allowing us to interpret data differently).

Human Ecology

The lack of proper vision is also hiding the life of other species from the view and proper public discussion. The following group of stencils delivers a strong and sometimes ironic criticism to the relationship between humans and nature as it is discussed in the discourse of human ecology.

Within Figure 2a the message is expressed in an image of a brick wall that separates humans from an abstract animal. But on the right and left of the image of the wall, verbal signs form the words "Neredzu—nedomāju" (Latvian for "I don't see—I don't think"), respectively; the first person form of the verb puts the viewer into the familiar role of contemporary consumer who is only concerned with personal good (the abstract figure of a man in the image is eating) with a lack of attention toward other living creatures (which are supposedly subordinated). The two-fold image (the figure of the wall stresses the supposed importance to categorize species) is also the sign of opposition between non-thinking and non-seeing consumers, on one hand, and animals being killed on the other (including the industrial growing of animals for killing to produce meat). The Other here is represented by the falling dog on the left side of the composition, which can be interpreted as a given (Kress, van Leeuwen 1996: 186) where the new (information) is—not thinking. The image means actually: we know the animals are dying (death here is represented to evoke compassion as a process resulting in death), but we don't care, because we don't think as we eat— all the attention of humans is put on the satisfaction of their physical needs. The other is annihilated by this indifference and blindness, but it is still permanently there, though permanently dying. This stencil represents elements of teachings connected to speciesism that are part of the ideology of several urban subcultures, especially, hippies and hipsters.

Figure 2b has approximately the same message; however, it is essentially simple—both in terms of signifier and signified. Written words represent concepts of killing (in Latvian "slepkavība" means "murder") and fur ("kažokāda" in Latvian), the mathematical symbol for equality between them builds a laconic and clear statement. The link here is represented by the symbol "=". It stands for death and takes ethical issues (of killing the subordinated, invisible other) into the centre of this act of public communication. Similarly, a short form of verbal criticism is used in Figure 2c, where it says in Latvian: "Miskastes radīts, miskastes aprīts" (English translation: "Created by garbage, swallowed by garbage"). The message

metaphorically gets back to the risks that the polluted environment creates for humanity—a critical diagnosis of the post-industrial and consumer society. However, as the fragments of wall writing around the stencil show, it appears in the site where punks used to gather in the slums remaining in the city centre. The title of the song ([No] "future") and name of legendary Sex Pistols musician ("Sid" [Vicious] point to death.

Taking the invisible into public discussion and putting it in the centre with its emergency is often connected to the subcultural elaboration of the question of risk. For contemporary youth subcultures one of the living narratives supported by scientific data and media provided arguments is the one about an ecological catastrophe that the humanity in its secular, rational, instrumental modernity is approaching. The warnings of death and destruction, the expectations, and terrors of some kind of apocalypse have been deeply rooted, not only in many traditional and new religious teachings, but also in narratives and symbols of subcultures. The man represented by very abstract figure (Figure 2d) is explained by the title in big English letters "Earth destroyer". Although it does not directly address the matter of death or dying, the effect of the simple message is clear—to destroy Earth means to end life (in the only known form until now). The symbolic figure of a man in the centre is an indication of humanity and seems to be too abstract to add any other meanings. But such an image often appears in various industrial settings. This allows the inclusion of an interpretation of this stencil's one-dimensionality of man getting back to the critical ideas in the seminal work of Herbert Marcuse (Marcuse 2002). This work has become a building block of the critical imaginary of citizens of modern industrial states and of several subcultures. Through ideas of total death and collapse of everything this stencil intends to save the world, and the potential destroyer him/herself as the blue colouring of the image connotes is not provoking pessimistic ideas, but it also does not directly push for action. The message is rather "religious" (Latin popular etymology of *religare* - binding together): Turn back, destroyer! Think of the consequences! See that you are seeing but are used to neglect! Bind elements of the destroyed unity/wholeness together! In the multimodal message with the same idea (see Figure 2e) it is represented in a more radical or even vulgar way by equating (by mathematical symbol) people (said in word) to what is shown as an unclear mass with curves and lines—iconic representation of warm vapours coming out of it—apparently meaning "shit".

In most of the stencils, death is not represented directly in the picture. If there are no words that give more precise cues the message about death, it must be conveyed by the process or action depicted. Interestingly, death in messages of risk and danger appearing from the supposed blindness (and deafness, in Judeo-Christian tradition God speaks to the people but they are not hearing) towards the Other is often represented as a process of falling. What the viewer sees is the process of falling (started because people are taken the wrong way in the development of the social life), or a process based on the laws of nature (gravitation law). These laws rationally predict a bad end (that is in reality caused by the rage of the Other), and it is seemingly impossible to stop the process resulting in death. In Figure 2f, we see a group of people (viewing angle is from beneath because most of the figures are placed in the upper part of the picture it gives the scene more respect) who like in "The Blind Leading the

Figure 3. Stencils criticizing consumerism. From left to right: 3a—McDonalds, 3b—Nike (source: Jeremy Smedes digital archive at http://www.balticdesigners.com/gallery/#stencils).

Figure 4. The monster's stencil (source: Jeremy Smedes digital archive at http://www.balticdesigners.com/gallery/#stencils).

Blind", a famous painting by Peter Bruegel the Elder, are approaching the scarp and then falling (we see some of the bodies getting destroyed in a kind of sea). In the upper right corner of the picture (this place is interpreted as a location in the field of the visual message of the new information and an ideal as opposed to real (Kress, van Leeuwen 1996: 181-203). Even if it is difficult to clearly understand what exactly is depicted it seems that there is a fisherman in the position of action (again a symbolic system borrowed from Christian tradition) or (another reading) the dynamic scene can be read in many scenes of the afterlife and purgatory, where some of the falling (dead) can escape to paradise, but only some of them. In general, this message doesn't specify the sins people are found guilty for, but they are to expect the fall and suffering. We can imagine that appearing in the city space this message is yet another warning to develop the ability to see (the Other).

Consumerism

In opposition, very clear statements are contained in stencils of the subversive type where logos of famous brands that have become representative of the consumer society, like McDonald's or Nike, are used in a subversive way by changing small elements of the picture to create a different message. In both cases analysed here, this is through the sign of death how the authors of stencils metaphorically point to the dangers of consumerist globalization. The McDonald's sign (Figure 3a) with the letter M is surrounded by two falling airplanes, the scene referring to the 9/11 airplane attack on the World Trade Center towers. Thus, the playful, childish picture develops a message of revenge (by the Other), thinking of doom, terror as the inevitable consequences of the consumer-style of living. The brand sign of Nike (Figure 3b) is used as an uprising knife or spear, with a human figure impaled the sharp tip of it, dying.

The verbal message here is typical ironic phrase coming from the common global urban subcultural repertoire of proverbs (pointing on the recklessness and dumbness of modern citizen). It says in English: "Don't think, just buy it!" (subverted Nike's slogan "Just do it!").

Monster

The last message analysed here represents neither the death nor dying but makes a solid rhetorical conclusion of the philosophical and critical interpretation of the contemporary society with dangers that it represents for itself.

Figure 4 shows a creature grown from a simple instrument—pliers here are in a position which calls to mind dinosaurs or Godzilla, a fantastic creature belonging to global urban subcultural folklore taken from the many comic books and films. The terror possible through unknown/unrecognized Otherness—be it nature, God (referring to Leviathan) or a simple mistake of rational, instrumental, scientific thinking (referring to Mary Shelley's Frankenstein) becomes very clear here through this complex but laconic visual representation.

It is notable that the peak of stencil art in Riga appeared at the years of economic recession 2008-2009 in contrast to the hip-hop culture's huge graffiti murals or tagging in the

post-soviet transition era. Video surveillance networks were not yet widely spread (possible blocking "vandals") due to the technology costs (as nothing like that was observed in Iceland— the next largest impact Europe's economy in crisis).

Thus, there are four main ideological contexts in which signs of death appear in subcultural messages. First, death is a sign connoting the loss of importance of life in capitalist technocracy; second, it marks typical practices of consumerist society as "deadly" or driving to death; third, death is signified in the ecological apocalypse; and the last context is the story of death and salvation in Christianity.

Discussion

The modern urban environment is the product of planning, design, and construction developed by following the rules of rationality, the storyline of technological advance, and the logic of consumer society. According to this mindset, it is a carefully organized, hierarchy-based space with a clearly defined centre (where the main money and power flows concentrate and circulate) and periphery organized as a secondary space. This is especially true for Riga, the capital of Latvia and a post-socialist city characterised by strong historical centre, half-destructed industrial sites, block-house areas, in-between let-down districts, and a neo-liberal attitude in city planning. This attitude includes the idea that private ownership is indisputable base for understanding of city's public space. Riga is one of the typical cities of East and Central Europe where neoliberal freedom did not initiate creative and smart usage of the potential of hybridity and "in-betweenness" offered by the historical and geographical situation (Nawratek 2012). In opposition, global flow of information, capital, goods, people, ideas crossing its landscape that has been reorganized and rebuilt after the end of the Soviet Union and several smaller and bigger crises, leaving its grass roots initiatives mostly undone. Its spatial and social order reproduced this inablity in terms of loosening structures of public spaces in favour of the discourse of capital and private property.

Here, the signs of death in graffiti appear as the strongest symbols of a break with the existing readings of city space. They oppose the technocratic view and consumerist way of life connected to the secularist worldview that drives humanity and the world into the death (or at least is associated with the death as bad, as the moral evil (especially, in stencils showing skulls)). For example, some of stencils verbally announce a destroying force of humanity (Figure 2d) or accuse people of blindness (Figure 2f). But, in a post-secular manner, they look over death. Nothing ends with the death—neither does the dead body or destroyed object disappear from the material world, nor is the afterlife impossible for the human soul. Stencil graffiti messages indicate several possible alternatives and/or changes in thinking, some of them suggesting minor, others radical including changes in attitude towards society, public, place of life, and human agency, often imposing, first of all, an ecologically apocalyptic threat (e.g., figures 2a-f).

So, people living in the city are re-imagining alternative organizations of this space. In opposition to rebuilding the city, we argue that this is also possible by positioning signs for alternative understanding into the urban environment. The stencils and signs of death possess a transformative force in this sense. This creates a perplexed spatial construct of meaning for those "stochastic semioticians" such as inhabitants, tourists, and researchers that are aimed to orient themselves within the dynamics of contemporary city life and society.

The communicative foundations of this counter-cultural ideology are the signifying (i.e. semiurgic) activity of social formations opposed to the technocratic society. To break with the existing mindset and to draw the public attention to their (different) proposed agenda(s) and prospects for a moral and political change in society, they use strong, impressive, and shocking signs to construct warning messages, including messages of death in/and ecological catastrophe.

It must be said that the main messages of stencils communicate globally important ideas (especially in subversions of the global brands (Figures 3a-b)). However, appearing in the local context of post-socialist Riga, signs of death are needed to activate imagination of its cracked public space, rebounding social ties, regaining faith in the future, and connecting it all to individual perspective.

Conclusion

A semiotic study of Riga city stencil graffiti reveals that signs indicating or showing the death are used to point to the Other in a broad sense—an alternative system of thinking, another way of living, and/or other creatures, species, an even the Other in terms of the sacred or divine. Otherness here can be interpreted as being opposed to the technocratic hypocrisy of mainstream culture with the new order of neo-liberal capitalism entering Riga after the end of the USSR. The Other is represented by alternative structures of subcultural crowds in the urban environment, or alternative teachings of the organization of society. The alternative imaginaries of the other life are brought forward to promote care, tolerance, and (social) responsibility. In this context, urban stencils can develop the potentiality of transforming the space of governance through permanent articulation and re-articulation and becoming aware of the Otherwise. Death and dying as a part of the message plays an important role in enacting this process of transformation by establishing links and relations between the living and non-living, dead and non-dead, and concepts of birth, death, and life— situated outside of the system (of the city) by biopolitical governance.

So, death is not the end of everything in this case. The promise is: one can overcome death in terms of a religious afterlife or in terms of including into the scope the wide diversity and complexity of the lifeworld that is, acting not only against the death of an individual or particular species but for an inclusive environment. The alternative models proposed can be

used to overcome or prevent individual, social, and total death. With this attitude of graffiti, authors can be understood as post-secular— death is a strong symbol that characterizes the consequences of the secular society and economy. However, the message seems to be made to alter it. Counter-cultural signs are calling for a change by including life and overcoming death in the post-industrial city. According to the ideology of the group, the narratives of stencils analysed vary from ecological risks and criticism of capitalism to salvation. Consequently, with their insistent notification of death, these stencil graffiti messages are part of the modern urban environment's post-secular dimension. It is especially important in the urban space of Riga, with its post-socialist attitude towards private property, biopolitical governance, and freedom and its communication culture where public discourses are tending to accept and support the actions of government and private capital in the name of common social security and national development, as we have shown elsewhere (Kozlovs, Skulte 2016). Stencils in Riga can be interpreted as alternative overwriting of the urban spatial and social order by projecting signs of death right onto the very heart of the city—it's streets with their facades.

Acknowledgements

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Nāves zīmes kā Citādā pieteikums urbānajā vidē: Rīgas grafiti stencilu analīze

Normunds Kozlovs, Ilva Skulte

Urbāno telpu gan pilsētu iedzīvotāji, gan profesionāļi (arhitekti un pilsētplānotāji), kas konstruē un attīsta šo telpu iedomātai publiskai dzīvei, saprot kā organizētu, hierarhisku sistēmu (ar centra / perifērijas dalījumu). Šo procesu lielākoties vada sekulāras – tehnokrātiskas un patērnieciskas – sabiedrības loģika, kas nepieļauj citus telpas organizācijas principus, alternatīvas pilsētas sistēmas, atšķirīgus dzīves veidus. Tomēr cilvēki, kas pilsētā dzīvo, urbānās telpas organizāciju savā iztēlē pārinterpretē, novietojot alternatīva urbānās telpas lasījuma zīmes tieši tās iekšienē, un tādējādi izaicinat šīs vides tradicionālo uztveri. Tas rada sarežģītu telpisku nozīmju konstruktus "stohastiskajiem semiotiķiem" – iedzīvotājiem, tūristiem un pētniekiem, kas tiecas iegūt orientāciju mainīgajā mūsdienu pilsētas dzīves dinamikā un sabiedrībā. Kontrkultūras ideoloģijas komunikatīvie pamati ir apzīmēšanas (t. i., semiurģiska) aktivitāte, ko izvērš sociālās formācijas, kas pretojas tehnokrātiskajai sabiedrībai. Mūsu pētījuma uzmanības centrā tie nonākuši, pateicoties alternatīvam medijam – grafiti stenciliem Rīgas urbānajā telpā. Grafiti semiotiskā analīze parāda, ka zīmes, kas attēlo nāvi vai norāda uz to, bieži vien tiek izmantotas, lai pieteiktu "Citādo" (visā šī jēdziena konceptuālajā izvērsumā) – uzturētu citādas dzīves iespējamību. Tā traktēta pamatā divas nozīmēs – vai nu reliģiskā pēcnāves dzīves izpratnē, vai arī uzsverot dzīves pasaules daudzveidību.

Addressing Human-wolf Conflict in Latvia: A Study of Discourses in Online News Media

Agnese Reķe

Introduction

After a consistent population decline for several centuries, wolves are making a comeback in Europe. According to the statistics of European Commission (European Commission 2019), currently there are around 17,000 wolves in continental Europe, excluding the territory of Russia and Belarus. This is the largest number of wolves Europe has experienced in centuries. The most influential factors causing the population growth are believed to be the effectively introduced species conservation measures and farmland abandonment that has led to more areas being suitable for wolves' existence (Trouwborst 2010; Svenning et al. 2016). Even though the return of wolves might be a victory for nature conservationists, it has caused fierce discussions between stakeholders about the place of wolves in the European landscape: groups welcoming the return of wolves vs. groups stating that wild wolves do not belong in the modern European landscape (Drenthen 2015). There is also a lot of tension between stakeholders regarding hunting restrictions (Andersone, Ozoliņš 2004; Torres et al. 2020) and livestock depredation issues (Linnell, Cretois 2018). The highly emotional attitudes towards the return of wolves might be linked to the long and complex history of human-wolf conflicts in Europe. Due to wolves' predatory behaviour and stigmas linked to the species, they have been subjected to a heavy persecution and extermination since the Middle ages (Pluskowski 2006). In the following centuries human-wolf conflict had escalated even more because of epidemics of rabies, famine, urbanisation and an increased importance of livestock farming, leading to a continent-wide war against European wolves that drove the wolf population near extinction in the late 19th century (Trouwborst 2010; van Maanen 2019). The numbers of wolves slightly increased after both World Wars; however, the population still did not manage to bounce back due to continuing persecution efforts. Not until the 1970s was there an end to the mass extermination of wolves in Europe when they were included in the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats as a strictly protected fauna species (Council of Europe 1979).

The heated discussions about the return of wolves have caused a rapid growth in the number of studies focusing on attitudes towards wolves. Thus far researchers have found that acceptance of wolves and other large carnivores are influenced by many factors such as education, place of residence (urban or rural), personal interests, age and gender (Røskaft et al. 2003; Kleiven et al. 2004; Torres et al. 2020). The attitudes towards wolves vary from positive to negative, and in general wolves are still among the most controversially rated

Figure 1. Image from an article that propagates wolf hunting (Kalniņš 1930).

animals in Europe. Moreover, according to a report by the European Commission (European Commission 2012), the largest threat to wolves in Europe is low public acceptance. Hence it is crucial to assess the human-wolf relationship to find solutions for the co-existence of both species in the 21st century Europe.

In Latvia, the number of wolves has increased significantly during the last century, mainly due to lower hunting intensity and species conservation measures implanted after joining the European Union. Studies show that in Latvia, as in other European countries, attitudes towards wolves vary greatly based on several criteria such as place of residence, gender, and personal interests (Andersone, Ozoliņš 2002; 2004; Balčiauskas 2007). The dislike towards wolves is mostly linked to the perceived threats that wolves might cause to humans, as well as to livestock and game depredation. In the year 2014, during the development of the current species conservation plan, the wolf was nominated as the Animal of the Year (Latvian Museum of Natural History 2019) in order to boost public knowledge on the ecological role of wolves. Research has shown that better knowledge of the species is linked to a higher acceptance rate (Tack et al. 2019). Unfortunately, there is

no scientific evidence on the actual impact the event had on the public attitudes. Despite previously conducted research there are also some other unknowns about the human-wolf relationship in Latvia. For example, all of the aforementioned studies are based on surveys, addressing mainly the societal attitudes towards wolves. Thus far there is no research on the public discourses on wolves that, in fact, play a vital role in building knowledge and opinions of the general public (Anthony, Tarr 2019).

With this study I aim to contribute to the understanding of the human-wolf conflict from the perspective of environmental humanities by analysing the portrayal of wolves in online news media. Even though online news media might not represent the attitudes of all society, it provides a valuable insight into the discussion on wolves in Latvia, the main stakeholders of the discussion, as well as their potential objectives. Moreover, online news is one of the most popular news sources for general society. Drawing on the semi-quantitative content analysis of the articles published in the most popular online news media websites in Latvia, I discuss the dominant discourses that have permeated the public media space since 2003. To gain an insight into the continuity of the discourses thorough the last century, I analysed selected newspaper articles and official data during various periods of Latvia's history. The discourse analysis is structured around the following aspects: (1) how the portrayal of wolves constitutes a particular discourse, (2) what stakeholder groups are behind particular attitudes and discourses, (3) what arguments are used for reasoning the attitudes, and (4) what are the potential objectives of the identified discourses.

Wolves in Latvia: from subjects of legitimate mass elimination to protected species

The main characteristic that makes the human-wolf relationship different in Latvia from the majority of other European countries, is the more or less continous presence of wolves. Unlike in most European countries, wolves never completely vanished from the Latvian landscape despite fierce extermination efforts during the 20th century. The main reason for this is likely because of the presence of vast forest areas in Latvia and the neighbouring countries, as well as a relatively low population density (Ozoliņš et al. 2017).

Statistics show that the wolf population has fluctuated greatly in the last century from less than 20 individuals in the 1930s to more than 1000 today (Ozoliņš et al. 2017; Valsts mežu dienests 2019). The population changes are mostly related to hunting intensity that is strongly linked to the political attitudes towards wolves and major historical events, such as the world wars. According to a compilation of historical statistics (Ozoliņš et al. 2017), the first population growth of wolves in the 20th century is linked to World War I. During the time of war, hunting intensity decreased, hence wolf population grew, reaching approx. 500 individuals. However, already in the late 1920s, mass elimination campaigns of wolves were initiated (Figure 1). The number of wolves continued dropping until World War II, reaching only 14 individuals left in the wild in 1935 (ibid.). After World War II, the wolf population

Number of livestock
attacked by wolves

0

1 – 10

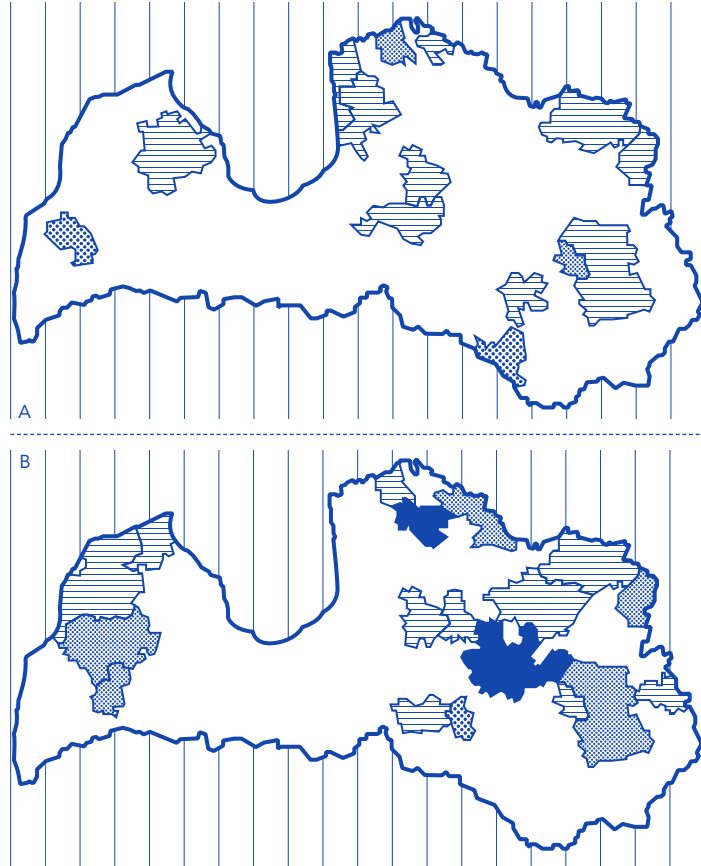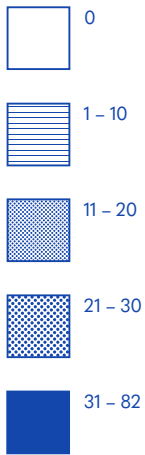11 – 20

21 – 30

31 – 82

A

B

Figure 2. Livestock depredation by wolves per
municipality in 2013 (A) and 2019 (B). Data source:
State Forest Service of Latvia.

grew back to around 200; however, again only for just a decade. In the mid-1950s intense elimination campaigns of wolves began once again - this time led by the ideology of Soviet Union that interpreted all large carnivores as pests hindering economic growth. At the end of 1960s, there were again only a few wolves left. In the 1970s, the intensity of wolf hunting decreased and the population managed to bounce back to around 200. A more rapid population growth followed in 1990s when, due to changes in the political regime of Latvia, wolf elimination campaigns were suspended. In the mid-1990s the number of wolves increased to around 1000 animals. The population maximum in the mid-1990s marked the beginning of a new wave of wolf elimination that continued through the early 2000s. In year 2000 around 500 wolves were roaming in Latvia's landscape (ibid.).

The hostile attitudes towards wolves are vividly visible in the press materials from the 20st century. For example, an article published in the newspaper "Cīņa" reports on a meeting between hunters and representatives of a local municipality in Madona (Robinzons 1958). At the meeting, hunters state that they have captured one wolf pup, killed one lynx, but no adult wolves. The representatives of the municipality comment that it is not enough for a group of professional hunters, and that they should put more effort into eliminating the predators. Another example comes from a brief article published in 1948 stating that a hunter was rewarded with a cash prize, as well as several kilos of sugar, salt and soap ([Annon.] 1948).

Wolves have been denoted as harmful predators, robbers, a disease to land, a danger to rural inhabitants and predatory beasts by the press throughout the 20th century. Newspapers published articles with such titles as "Let's destroy the wolves!" and reported on a case when a driver was rewarded with a cash prize of 50 lats after he unintentionally killed a wolf in a car accident ([Annon.] 1996). It should be noted that in 1996 the average monthly wage in Latvia was 100 lats; 50 lats was a quite generous reward. The hostile attitude towards wolves is not unique to only the 20th century, it dates centuries back—evidence for cash prizes for wolf elimination can be found as far back as 1825 (Lamsters 1937), demonstrating that in Latvia, as in other European countries, the "war against wolves" has a long history.

An important turning point in "wolves' politics" was Latvia's accession to the European Union (EU). To join the EU, Latvia undertook implementation of several nature conservation measures, including the protection of wolves. As a result, in 2003 the first species protection plan that set wolf hunting limitations and provided guidelines for species management was developed (Ozoliņš et al. 2017), transforming the wolf's image from a harmful pest to a protected species on the political level.

Main issues and conflicts in the governance of the current wolf population

Nowadays Latvia hosts a stable and slowly growing population of about 1200 wolves (Valsts mežu dienests 2019) — around 7% of all wolves in Europe. According to the available statistics, it is the highest number of wolves since the beginning of the last century. Moreover, it is believed that wolves in Latvia currently have the widest geographical occurrence range in the last fifty years (Ozoliņš et al. 2017).

The population growth in combination with hunting quotas introduced after joining the EU have caused tension between government representatives, hunters, and farmers. The most topical issue for hunters seems to be the size of hunting quotas. Latvia is one of the few countries European countries where wolf hunting is still legal due to the assumed favourable population size and health, yet controlled by hunting quotas (Ozoliņš et al. 2017). The hunting quota is set every year to balance the interests of hunting community and species

protection, as well as to keep the population size under control. In 2021 the hunting quota was 280 individuals. Considering the official statistics on the current population size, it is around 23% of the whole population. Nevertheless, according to information in public media, some hunters believe that hunting quotas should be still significantly increased.

For livestock farmers, the most pressing matter is the unresolved livestock depredation compensation issue. Latvia is one of the few European countries where farmers still cannot apply for state's compensation for damages made by wolves (Linnell, Cretois 2018), although the number of livestock affected by wolf attacks is increasing (Figure 2). The number of livestock attacked by wolves (mainly sheep, occasionally also goats, cattle, and dogs) has tripled in the last 5 years (105 incidents in 2013, 305 in 2019) (Valsts mežu dienests 2019), indicating a potential growth of tension between wolves and livestock farmers as well.

Data and methods

The prevailing discourses on wolves were assessed by conducting a semi-quantitative content analysis of articles published in the eight most popular Latvian news websites (data on media popularity (Gemius 2019)): Delfi (www.delfi.lv), Apollo (www.apollo.lv), Tvnet (www.tvnet.lv), Kas Jauns (www.jauns.lv), Latvijas Avīze (www.la.lv), Skaties (www.skaties.lv), Diena (www.diena.lv) and Latvijas Sabiedriskie mediji (www.lsm.lv). All of the chosen websites cover a wide range of topics from daily news to politics, culture and sports. None of them is specialised in nature conservation topics. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that the main target audience of *Latvijas Avīze* is the rural community, and it focuses more on topics related to agriculture and hunting in comparison to other websites.

The media analysis was conducted as follows: In the analysis, I included all articles published from 2003 to 2019 (115 articles in total) that were available in the archives of the news websites and that contained keywords "wolf" or "wolves" (in Latvian—"vilks" or "vilki") either in the title or text. The year 2003 was chosen as a reference point because it was the year when first wolf conservation measures were introduced in Latvia, limiting species hunting (Ozoliņš et al. 2017). After collecting all articles, each article was analysed separately by assessing the following aspects: year of publication, publishing media, main topic (or topics) of the article (hunting/attacks to livestock/other human-wolf conflicts/species conservation/popular science content/other), occupation of the commentators cited in article as stated by article's author (e.g. hunter, livestock farmer, zoologist, a representative of a municipality), a short summary of article, quotations that state attitudes towards wolves, and other potentially relevant information. Additionally, content analysis of the articles' titles was conducted to gain an overview of main topics covered by media and to analyse language used to describe wolves. Based on the collected information, dominant discourses on wolves in the news websites were identified.

Figure 3. Illustration from article that informs that hunting quota of 2011 is almost met (Photo: Delfi, [Anon.] 2011),

Wolf as a threat

This discourse is based on the assumption that wolves cause a threat both to humans and forest ecosystems, and that their numbers should be strictly limited by hunters. Arguments used for strengthening the discourse are often highly emotional, based on subjective interpretations of the perceived threats caused by wolves that often contradict scientific knowledge on behaviour and ecology of wolves. It is mostly generated by hunters and, occasionally, also livestock farmers, mainly to campaign against the current species protection measures and the lack of compensations for livestock depredation.

Journalists tend to participate in the creation of this discourse as well (intentionally or unintentionally), for example, by choosing article titles such as "Wolves from Russia swarming Viļaka Municipality, local inhabitants are endangered", even though the article only states that several attacks to dogs and wild animals were registered in the municipality, providing no proof that humans might be endangered.

The journalists' interpretation of wolf as a threat is visible in the adjectives chosen to describe wolves too, for example, bloodthirsty wolf, cruel wolf, vulturous animals. The portrayal of wolf as a dangerous and aggressive animal is also present in the images chosen for visualising articles, sometimes even in articles that are not related to conflicts or aggressive wolf behaviour (Figure 3).

The discourse of wolf as a threat consists of three main parts, each of them focusing on a different aspect of the perceived threats: wolf as a threat to human safety, wolf as an economic threat, and wolf as a threat to forest ecosystem.

Wolf as a threat to human safety

Although studies show that nowadays wolves do not cause serious threat to humans (Linnell et al. 2002), in Latvia's media the perception of wolf as a threat to humans is very common, especially in articles focusing on predator control issues and hunting. Speculations about possible attacks are used mainly by hunters for advocating the need for larger hunting quotas. For example, a comment by the Chairman of Latvian Hunters' Union quoted in an article in *Latvijas avīze*:

> If wolf hunting would be prohibited as the environmentalists want, the population of wolves would increase rapidly already in a couple of years, and wolves would stop fearing humans. [...] Soon after that we would see the first attacks on humans. (Šterna 2016)

Even though his comment is not backed up by scientific evidence, it clearly paints a dramatic picture for readers who do not possess knowledge on wolves' behaviour and ecology. Using the fear of wolves is a solid basis for propagating more intense wolf hunting as it is deeply rooted in the public memory or "the circulation of recollections among members of a given community" (Houdek, Kendall 2019: 2). In Europe, there are indeed some registered lethal wolf attacks on humans; however, the majority of them date back to at least the 18th century. There are also some more recent records of wolves, especially rabid wolves, attacking humans in Europe in the 21st century; however, such incidents are highly rare (Linnell et al. 2002). Today, many more Europeans are injured in ungulate-vehicle collisions (Langbein et al. 2011) than by attacks of large carnivores. Nevertheless, humans still fear wolves more than ungulates. This might be linked both to the predatory behaviour of wolves, as well as to the mentioned public memory. As stated by Houdek and Kendall (2019), the recollections in the public memory are often inaccurate and they tend to differ from official historical facts because they entail the specifics of human memory— which aspects are remembered, which aspects are forgotten, and how particular events are contextualised. In the course of time, some of the registered wolf attacks to humans might have mutated into rural myths, far from real facts and timeline of the events. Moreover, some of the historical incidents might been replicated in the popular culture, increasing their influence even more. It is found that wolves are among the most common "villains" in the Western popular culture (for example, in fairy tales, stories for children, animation movies), resulting in the cultural stigmatization of wolves (Lynn 2010; Drenthen 2015). By actively using the public memory and stigmatisation of wolves, the creators of this discourse (intentionally or unintentionally) perpetuate the perception of wolf as a threat to humans.

Wolf as an economic threat

This part of the discourse is focused on species predatory behaviour and threats that they might cause to farmers' property (livestock). It is mostly present in articles on the wolf attack compensation issues and hunting quotas. The main generators of this perception are hunters and farmers. Farmers mostly argue that due to the growing economic threats caused by wolves, the compensation issue should be assessed, as currently Latvia does not offer any

financial compensations for livestock depredation. Hunters, in turn, use the discourse of wolf as an economic threat to argue the need for larger hunting quotas, insisting that the best way for decreasing livestock depredation is more intense hunting.

Economic threats caused by wolves are indeed a topical issue in many European countries, including Latvia. However, it should be noted that in most cases the economic losses caused by wolf attacks to livestock are linked to the lack of anti-predatory measures such as proper electric fencing or guard dogs. To deal with the livestock depredation issues, a common practise is state's financial compensations for livestock depredation (*ex post facto* compensations) and financial support for improving anti-predatory measures (Linnell, Cretois 2018). Some European countries like Sweden have chosen an alternative path and introduced preventive payment system or *ex ante* system that compensates farmers for the risk caused by large carnivores (ibid.).

A study by Nauhton-Treves et al. (2003) suggests that in the context of tolerance towards wolves, *ex post facto* compensations for livestock depredation do not make a significant difference. Funding for anti-predatory measures is believed to be a more effective solution (Linnell, Cretois 2018). For the *ex ante* compensations, the results are contradictory—in Sweden, the *ex ante* compensation system has helped to achieve nature conservation targets (Persson et al. 2015); however, in Norway, Finland, and Portugal potential implementation of *ex ante* payments instead of *ex post facto* compensations was strongly opposed by farmers (Linnell, Cretois 2018).

Still, in Latvia there is no national compensation system at all. The only available financial support for livestock farmers is funding for installing anti-predatory measures such as electric fencing. However, many farmers choose not to use the available funding, arguing that it takes too much personal financial and time investment and that the number of wolves should be limited instead.

Wolf as a threat to forest ecosystem

The third aspect that shapes the broader discourse of wolf as a threat is related to forest ecosystem. This perception is generated exclusively by hunters. It is based on a scientifically unjustified assumption that wolves kill too many wild animals, hence disturbing the forest ecosystem.

A quote that illustrates this perception comes from an article titled "I am not as cruel as a wolf" that tells a story about a hunter who has devoted his 50 year hunting career to wolves:

> I was fascinated by the wisdom and adaption abilities of this animal. Nevertheless, I also believe wolves cause a lot of damage to forest ecosystems, thus they should be hunted and their presence in a forest—strongly controlled. ([Anon.] 2014)

The comment shows that on the one hand, the hunter has some respect towards the intellectual abilities of wolves, but on the other hand, he believes that wolves are harmful

species to forest ecosystems. In turn, scientific knowledge states that wolves are among the key species ensuring proper functioning of ecosystems. According to scientific evidence, wolves perform many ecologically vital functions such as disease control by eliminating sick and weak animals (Ripple et al. 2014) and modification of ungulates' grazing patterns that benefit many other flora and fauna species (Kuijper et al. 2013). These functions of wolves are ignored by the generators of the discourse.

Wolf as a protected species

This discourse is generated by governmental experts working with the species management (mostly representatives from Latvian State Forest Research Institute "Silava" and the State Forest Service of Latvia). It portrays wolves as controversial animals that are, however, vital for the biodiversity, and, therefore, need to be legally protected. The discourse is mostly present in articles covering farmer-wolf or hunter-wolf conflicts (in the comments of governmental representatives) and press releases from governmental institutions. The discourse is mostly used to advocate the need to support current specie's conservation policy, despite the inconveniences wolves might cause to humans. Articles focusing on this perception also tend to differ in terms of images chosen for illustrating the articles—they mostly portray wolves as charismatic and majestic animals roaming in the wilderness (Figure 4).

This perception also seems to be used as an attempt to reconcile the tension between stakeholders (especially hunters vs. governmental representatives) as it repeatedly states that the existence of wolves in the modern-day Europe will always be a result of compromises—all stakeholders cannot meet all their objectives, yet it is possible to discuss the best compromise for everyone.

The discourse is based on the conventional nature conservation values in Europe, and it considers both advantages and disadvantages of sharing a landscape with wolves without emotional involvement. Such measures for population regulation as lethal control by hunting and elimination of problematic individuals (rabid wolves, aggressive wolves etc.) are evaluated in a pragmatic and emotionless way: "We base hunting quotas on the evidence about the population's fertility, gender, and age structure. One might say, system is based on data similar to the human population demographics" (comment of J. Ozoliņš, one of the leading experts in wolf population management in Latvia (Ambote 2017)). Even though such perception raises some ethical concerns, in comparison to the previously discussed discourse of wolf as a threat, it fits the current EU nature conservation's vision about Europe as a place where wilderness, culture, and progress co-exist (European Commission n.d.).

Figure 4. Illustration from article that informing that wolf has been nominated as "The animal of the year in Latvia" (Photo: Kas Jauns, [Anon.] 2014)

Discussion

The two prevailing and conflicting discourses in media—*wolf as a threat* and *wolf as a protected species*—differ greatly. The former is rooted in the already historically hostile attitudes towards wolves that were characteristic to Latvia throughout the previous centuries, and it is mostly used to communicate hunters' desire for larger hunting quotas as wolves are both competitors for game and a highly-valued hunting trophy. The latter is linked to the conventional nature conservation ideas in Europe and objectives of current nature conservation policy.

Media analysis indicates that hunters' opposition to the current species protection might be strongly linked to their distrust to the government officials responsible for the management of wolves. In Latvia, hunting quotas are responsibility of the State Forest Service (SFS). Each year, SFS defines hunting quotas by evaluating population growth trends and population health. According to information published in the media, a part of the hunting community tends to believe that the official statistics on wolves do not reflect the real number of animals, and that the current policy has been developed by persons "who have no idea what is going on in the forests" (Gaross 2005) However, it should be noted that the hunters' attitude reflected by media does not represent the opinion of all Latvian hunters, rather just a part that is more active in communication with media. According to their belief, the wolf population in Latvia is much larger than stated by officials, therefore hunting quotas should be increased significantly. In turn, species management specialists argue that the official statistics might in fact even exaggerate the number of wolves in Latvia due to methods used for population evaluation (Ozoliņš et al. 2017).

This brings to attention the issue of stakeholder involvement in nature management. Research shows that the public demands a greater voice in nature management issues (Lord, Cheng 2006), and it is believed that a proper involvement of stakeholders in the decision-making process can increase the effectiveness of nature conservation measures (Grodzinska-Jurczak, Cent 2011). However, nature conservation measures, especially the lethal control of species, still should be based on proper scientific evidence, not on opinions of stakeholders, generating a complex challenge of balancing interests of stakeholders and scientific evidence for responsible experts. If this issue is properly assessed in the future, it might decrease the tension between stakeholders and potentially also lessen the hostility towards wolves.

Another interesting aspect revealed by the study, is the absence of discourse generated by environmental or animal rights activists or so called "wolf lovers" (Drenthen 2015) and rewilding discourse in the context of wolves. Typically, the discourse generated by "wolf lovers" is based on the assumption that wolves are charismatic animals that have become victims of "hostile human culture" (ibid.). It tends to idealize wolves and demonize hunters or any measures for population control. In turn, the rewilding discourse contextualizes the growing number of wolves as part of Europe's rewilding. Rewilding is a novel concept of nature conservation that combines ecological restoration with an emphasis on the renewal of ecological processes with less human involvement, and the return of wild large carnivores to the European landscape has an important place in the concept (Perreira, Navarro 2015; Svenning et al. 2016).

Both discourses are present in the media of other European countries (e.g., Vaughan 2014; Dickinson 2019); however, the conducted media analysis shows no sign of these discourses in the analysed websites of Latvia. This might be linked to the previously mentioned continuous presence of wolves—the excitement that the return of the species caused to part of society in some countries (such as in the Netherlands, see Drenthen 2015), might not be relatable to the inhabitants of Latvia. As for the rewilding discourse, the absence of it in the context of wolves might be related to Latvia's nature conservation system that is still based mostly on conventional nature conservation ideas, and the controversial and highly emotional reactions towards the implementation of rewilding concepts. Since the early 2000s rewilding ideas have been lobbied by the World Wildlife Fund of Latvia when the first grazing site of semi-wild large herbivores was created in the Pape nature park (Schwartz 2005; Reķe et al. 2019). In the following years some more rewilding ideas were implemented, including the creation of several more grazing sites of semi-wild large herbivores (Reķe et al. 2019) and a controlled burning in the forests of Gauja National Park (Dabas aizsardzības pārvalde 2014). The ideas of rewilding in Latvia were controversially received (Schwartz 2005, 2006; Zariņa et al. this issue), and currently the implementation of rewilding ideas, as well as public discussions on the topic seem to be on hold.

Conclusion

Two major discourses were revealed in this study: *wolf as a threat* and *wolf as a protected species.* The former is actualized by hunters and farmers, the latter by government experts working in the field of large carnivore management. The discourse generated by governmental representatives (wolf as a protected species) is based on the values of conventional nature protection in Europe. In this discourse, wolves are perceived as subjects of management and human-wolf co-existence — as an art of compromises. The discourse used by hunters and farmers is characterised by hostility towards wolves. It might be rooted in the historical attitudes towards wolves (centuries-long interpretation of the wolf as a harmful species), as well as personal interests of the stakeholder groups, such as trophy hunting or the desire to reduce competition on game. The main issues causing the hostility are game and livestock depredation by wolves, as well as tension between stakeholders (livestock farmers vs. governmental representatives regarding livestock depredation and lack of compensations; hunters vs. governmental representatives regarding the size of wolf hunting quotas). Some arguments used in the discourse of wolf as a threat are highly emotional and scientifically unjustified (for example, the statement that wolves cause a threat to forest ecosystems). They also exploit stigmas about species behaviour, portraying them as aggressive and highly dangerous to humans. In general, there is more online media coverage on negative stories about wolves. This tendency might have an impact on the public attitudes towards wolves, but more research should be done to draw any final conclusions on the media influence.

To sum up, this study adds to the belief that although the return of wolves might enhance Europe's biodiversity, it also illuminates many issues about society's abilities to co-exist with large carnivores and increases tension between certain stakeholder groups. It also raises some unanswered questions about human-wolf relationship in Latvia to be addressed in future studies. For example, whether and how the dominant public discourses in news media influence attitudes in a broader society, and what are the best ways how to deal with the tension between stakeholder groups. Given the current population growth trends and the current EU species protection measures, we need to be aware that the presence of wolves might increase even more in the future. Answering such questions and developing species management policy that considers the scientific knowledge, might be among the greatest challenges for the nature conservationists in the 21st century.

Acknowledgements

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Cilvēku-vilku konflikts Latvijā: vilku diskursīvais portrets digitālajos ziņu medijos

Agnese Reķe

Vilki Eiropā tikuši vajāti un intensīvi iznīcināti gadsimtiem ilgi. Nesaudzīgās izmedīšanas dēļ lielākajā daļā Eiropas tie izmiruši jau 19. gadsimta beigās. Tomēr pēdējo desmitgažu laikā, pateicoties dabas aizsardzības iniciatīvām un pārmaiņām zemes lietojuma veidos, vilku skaits Eiropā ir ievērojami pieaudzis. Šobrīd kontinentālajā Eiropā (neskaitot Krieviju un Baltkrieviju) mitinās aptuveni 17 000 vilku. Tas ir lielākais skaits vairāku gadsimtu laikā. Arī Latvijā šobrīd ir lielākā vilku populācija kopš 20. gadsimta sākuma (aptuveni 1200 indivīdi). Vilku atgriešanās Eiropā ir liela uzvara dabas aizsardzības nozarei, taču tai pašā laikā process ir saasinājis cilvēku-vilku attiecības un raisījis diskusijas par to vietu mūsdienu Eiropā. Viedokļi par vilku aizsardzību dalās gan iesaistīto pušu, gan plašākas sabiedrības vidū. Daļa uzskata, ka vilki ir būtiska, saudzējama dabas sastāvdaļa, ar kuru mums, cilvēkiem, jāiemācās līdzāspastāvēt, savukārt daļa – ka vilkiem ir vieta tikai dabas rezervātos, kur tie nevar radīt kaitējumu cilvēku interesēm. Pretrunīgās attieksmes dēļ vilku aizsardzības īstenošana Latvijā un citviet Eiropā ir sarežģīta. Lai nodrošinātu veiksmīgu vilku pastāvēšanas nākotni, zināšanas par attieksmi pret vilkiem ir vitāli svarīgas.

Šī pētījuma mērķis ir analizēt cilvēku-vilku attiecības Latvijā no vides humanitāro zinātņu perspektīvas, apskatot dominējošos diskursus par vilkiem populārākajos Latvijas digitālajos ziņu medijos. Pētījumi ir pierādījuši, ka ziņu medijiem ir būtiska loma, veidojot sabiedrības viedokli par dabas aizsardzību. Šī iemesla dēļ tajos atrodamie diskursi var ietekmēt plašākas sabiedrības attieksmi. Analizējot 2003.–2019. gadā publicētos rakstus, secināts, ka medijos dominē divi diskursi: (1) vilks kā drauds un (2) vilks kā aizsargājama suga. Pirmā diskursa galvenie veidotāji ir mednieki (reizēm arī lauksaimnieki), kuri vēlas panākt atļautā medību apjoma palielināšanu, pamatojot savu vēlmi ar riskiem, ko rada vilki. Otrā diskursa veidotāji ir dabas aizsardzības nozares pārstāvji, kas strādā ar sugas apsaimniekošanu saistītās iestādēs un argumentē nepieciešamību sugu sargāt, pamatojoties uz to ekoloģisko lomu.

The Presence of Animals in Violence-related Online News in Latvia

Māra Neikena

Introduction

While conducting research on violence and violence prevention, our research team noticed that animals are often present in cases of violence in Latvia. Animals are a part of the scene in violent situations or victims of violence, objects onto which human tensions or lack of care are played out. They are an important part of human communities and their presence in situations of crisis should be considered in order to come to a better understanding of human violence as a phenomenon.

The role of animals in human relationships can also be observed in the manner in which they appear in discussions of cases of violence. For example, when hot topics related to proposed changes of long-held beliefs and values are discussed, animal metaphors and comparisons are often used. For example, the relatively recent two large-scale political events of the Me Too movement that made sexual violence mostly against women more visible, and the Istanbul Convention,[1] a human rights treaty against violence towards women, sparked especially active debates. Articles about these events received up to 300 below-the-line comments, much more than any other articles on violence. In these below-the-line discussions people engaged in sharing their ideas about the appropriate ways to raise children, and whether corporal punishment or smoking near children is or is not acceptable. Similarly, themes of women's rights and domestic violence provoked polarized opinions. Some part of those discussions on parenting, child-rearing, manhood, and womanhood were mirrored in animal worlds.

Human-animal relationships and violence are both topics of power inequality. Animalness is a significant tool with which to comprehend and explain different groups, including the gender, age group, profession, culture of the Other. The idea of "the animal"—not just the word representing all other species besides humans—is a constantly shifting category that can be applied or used for comparisons in various situations. Animals can be seen as "us", i.e. humans, if their behaviour corresponds to human norms and values, but if it does not, they represent that which is alien, unknown, uncultured.

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1   The "Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence", in short the "Istanbul Convention" was signed in 2016 by Jānis Reirs, the then-Latvian minister of welfare. However, Latvia was the final EU country to do so and has as yet failed to ratify the Convention.

It is possible to choose which aspect of an animal is made visible, and that turns them into useful resources for different kind of conversation strategies: attack, defence or an educational and empathetic approach.

This article will tackle the role of animals in discussions on violence in order to show the contexts in which animals become visible, are utilized as tools of communication and whether there are ways in which this knowledge about animal contexts in discussions on violence could help society more towards nonviolence, or prevent violence.

Theoretical context

There are huge numbers of anthropological studies on animals on variety of topics, starting from animal consumption as food or for clothes, to animals used as symbols for mythical representation and ritual purposes. Their embedded multi-layered symbolic, entertainment, psychological, or production value greatly influences many cultures' understanding of their lifeworlds. Animals are employed in describing complex yet fundamental ideas such as good or evil, and the use of animal comparisons and metaphors can help in building identities, e.g., gendered (Parry 2010) or ethnic (Harris 1966). These can cause practical consequences. Jerolmack (2008) shows, for example, how pigeons metaphorically described as "rats with wings" have had some influence in shaping the understanding of health and hygiene issues.

Animals serve as easy to reach, morally unoffendable (or so it is thought) subjects that can mediate human relationships in symbolic representations. For instance, heraldry and national symbols often use animals or animal-like creatures to emphasize characteristics such as bravery, independence and strength (Garcia 2020). On the other hand, the devil, a being that incorporates elements from animal physiology—a tail and horns—represents something that should be avoided. Historically, the presence of mythical animals was associated with shamanism and traditional religions. However, it can also be demonstrated that animals continue to constitute a fundamental part of the underlying mythologies in modern urbanized environments (Ambros 2010, Watson 2016).

The debate on the presence of animals (and plants) in belief systems has long revolved around the concept of totemism. Claude Lévi-Strauss (1962) examined the role of animals in his book *Totemism* in order to discuss cognition. He emphasized the necessity for humans to comprehend and organize the world around them, and that animals are useful for building systems as they may embody ideas, values and relationships. One of his most commonly cited quotations about animals states that:

> The animals in totemism cease to be solely or principally creatures which are feared, admired, or envied: their perceptible reality permits the embodiment of ideas and relations conceived by speculative thought on the bases of empirical observations. We

can understand, too, that natural species are chosen not because they are 'good to eat' but because they are 'good to think'. (1962: 89)

The animal is "good to eat" but also "feared, admired, or envied", and their presence and perceptive capacities are recognized beyond direct utility. This theoretical direction by Lévi-Strauss focusses on humans as categorizing beings. The interrelations between various abstracted opposites such as nature and culture, or animals and humans, is for him, in short, a necessary part of human thinking as these contrasts help to distinguish between identities.

James A. Serpell (2003) looks at human-animal relationships through the lens of anthropomorphism, the ability to project human experiences onto other species. Animals serve as objects onto which human motivations, thoughts, and feelings may be projected, and in that process, human-animal interactions, in a way, become extensions of human relationships. Seeing animals as "friendly", "caring" or "angry" and "negligent" is an aspiration to understand other species through anthropomorphistic projections, but these projections also mirror human relationships, e.g. dogs metaphorically described as "best friends" hint at the importance of social contact among humans (ibid).

Anthropomorphistic thinking permits one to simultaneously describe a particular animal as multiple things. The pigeons as "rats with wings" that need to be avoided are simultaneously birds that can represent "spirits of God" that can be embraced. A dog can be "man's best friend" or "worst enemy" if it is a neighbour's *barking* dog. The characteristics of animals are creatively imagined; they can become anything as demonstrated in children's books. According to Serpell (2003), anthropomorphism has survival value because it has been helpful in hunting techniques and domestication processes, but its value is not only historic. Wood (2019: 31), for example, describes how anthropomorphism, an inevitable part of human experience, can be viewed as a tool for productive learning. He suggests that it can be used in teaching science as it "induce[s] positive emotions, influence value judgements and attitudes".

Comparing and contrasting humans and animals thus is a way in which people try to comprehend the world, organize it (Lévi-Strauss 1962), as well as project and mirror human experiences onto other species (Serpell 2003). But the purpose of these mechanisms is to provide some guidance for what is "right" or "wrong", "acceptable" or "unacceptable", and to send a moral message (Tapper 1994). In the context of the topic of violence this becomes central when people point at the differences and hierarchies between groups of people and make judgements about others.

A comparison to an animal is one of the strongest tools with which to distinguish, separate or even dehumanize (Haslam 2006). Such comparisons build boundaries between "us" and "Others", and the Other is seen as lacking certain human traits which can be damaging to relationships, or even makes relationships impossible. There have been historical instances where human groups were systematically compared to animals as a result of identity politics

(Hinthens 2001) which resulted in genocide[2] or extreme mistreatment such as in cases of past and modern slavery. If people fail to see humanity in a certain group, it may give the idea that they may also be treated like animals. As much as animals such as domestic pets are liked and may seemingly enjoy all kinds of privileges or even be considered persons, nevertheless, even the friendliest relationships between humans and animals remain unequal and based on ownership in nature (Herzog 2011, Ambros 2010). Comparisons to animals are rarely meant as a compliment and one risks offending even if the comparison has good intentions, unless the comparison takes place among people in close and trusting relationships.[3]

Judith Butler (2020) argues that an improved understanding of violence has to begin with attention to social bonds and inequality between members of societies, and that violence prevention strategies should recognize the underlying systemic and organizational reasons that promote inequality. Violence is complex, has many forms, some of which (emotional, sexual, neglect, structural) can remain hidden for long periods of time, and it also meets with political and technological challenges. The public may not be willing to recognize some forms of violence (as with the Istanbul Convention in Latvia), and the online domain and its potential anonymity creates new ways in which violence takes place and requires regulation. Below-the-line comments on online news stories are one of these spaces which, if uncontrolled, perpetuate violent behaviours. Mediated communication with and between readers is an area where some level of interaction and/or social bonding (or lack of it) takes place, and this gives an opportunity to apply Butler's methodological guiding principle for the media content analysis.

Methodology

The project from which this article results began its research with a broad media analysis. The research team, of which I was a member, gathered a large database of online news articles that discuss violence. These were crime reports publicized by the police, accounts by eyewitnesses of cruelty, victims revealing their experiences of maltreatment, experts and institutions responding to such situations, violence prevention campaigns and so on. To limit the research boundaries, we agreed to use a common list of keywords in order to identify the online articles to be studied. These keywords were related to different types of violence and different contexts such as educational institutions, workplaces, or families. The word "animal" was not a specific keyword itself, yet articles on violence included animal topics due to violence being carried out on or by animals.

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2 For example, before and during the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 Tutsis were referred to as cockroaches.

3 Mensah (2017) writes, for example, how in Nigeria young people "foster solidarity, inclusion and integration" with the help of different (including animal) nicknames.

The qualitative research tool Atlas.ti was used to store the collected documents. The total amount of documents collected was 3991. 2713 of these documents were news articles from the most popular news sites in Latvia (Delfi, Apollo, Diena, LA, LSM, NRA, TVNet) published between 2008 and 2018. The remaining 1278 documents were lists of the reader responses ("below-the-line" comments) to those articles, when available. 768 of the total number of the files were from news sites in Russian, due to local demographics. For the purposes of this article, I have used only those articles and "below-the-line" comments available in Latvian, the language of which I have a more nuanced knowledge, in order to grasp possible overtones and loaded meanings. From this selection, 73 articles mention animals and 220 below-the-line comments contain the word "animal". Other animal-related words (e.g. beast, cow, pig, cat, dog) were also selected and compared to the central word "animal". The results included derivations from the word "animal" such as "animalness", "animality' and pets. The different contexts in which animals appear were grouped into themes. These themes are used to structure the data and resulting content analysis. The examples in each theme have been enumerated to demonstrate the frequency of the various ways in which animals appear in the data.

The texts produced by journalists outline the contexts in which animals have an important role as participants of the community. The below-the-line comments illustrate the reactions of the public that comments on the articles. The tone of the below-the-line comments is more passionate, spontaneous and expressive; however, the distinguishable themes in the comments overlap with journalists' representations.

The data

The data is organized into three sections. The first section provides a general outline of how animals appear in news on violence, showing the frequency of different contexts: animals as direct victims, as examples in commentaries by professionals, or with numerical values in statistics. The second section provides a broader context of particular cases that were widely depicted in the news, and in which animals played a role. As one of the intentions of this article is to make animals more visible as participants of human society, these cases provide illustrative and analysable examples. The final section portrays the use of animal comparisons in the below-the-line comments of articles and describes some of the most common contexts in which animal metaphors were used.

News articles: general outline

Eleven out of 73 articles depicted direct violence towards animals. These were cases of animals violently wounded, abandoned or otherwise harmed by families, adults and children. Four of these reports included invitations to donate money towards the rehabilitation of the animal, and one asking readers to help rehome the animal victim. In sum, five thus appealed

to reader compassion. The second emotion, provoked by four articles, was horror or anger due to the graphic descriptions of the violent act or by including phrases such as "an horrific event", "shocking news" or by mentioning the "tears in the eyes" of the animal's caregiver. Three of the articles briefly discussed the possible punishments for the animal abuser, one of which described the necessity for strict punishment in order to set a precedent so as to teach the public that animal mistreatment will not be tolerated. One of the articles described the potential punishment of people who had killed their aggressive pet and whether they did it in the right way. The final matter was campaigns by animal rights activists. There were five articles devoted to protests against the use of animals in circuses and against fur farming. They depicted the event itself, as well as discussing the legal measures required in order to improve animal welfare.

There are multiple ways in which animals are depicted as indirect victims of violence. Six articles mentioned animals as being present in a violent scene between humans. In twenty cases, comment pieces by various experts (mostly psychologists, psychotherapists, journalists with some expertise on violence issues, and also some animal experts) included animals. These comment pieces promoted the recognition of domestic violence, including suggestions for parents to shelter children from violent content online (against animals among other things). In the context of domestic violence, the reader is informed that animals are used as a medium of abuse in family conflicts such as through threats to harm the animal. One of the experts, a psychologist called Griškina (Delfi 14 May 2018), is quoted as saying that "[...] younger children who do not yet speak, and *even animals* [my emphasis], can read the signs of emotional tension in the home atmosphere". Experts also caution that children being violent towards animals may indicate that this behaviour has been picked up at home. On the other hand, a report on the positive effects on children who had visited an animal shelter was also mentioned. Another indirect indicator of animals as objects of violence is visible in three crime reports on the confiscation of obscene (including zoophilic) materials found by the police. And lastly, animals also appear in statistical data. These were records on injuries caused by pets "due to violations of pet keeping", the national law on animal protection is usually quoted. Additionally, the loss of a pet is one of the reasons teenagers call to seek psychological support as is mentioned in a report by Skalbe crisis centre (Delfi, 24 October 2015).

News articles: individual cases

In 2017, two particularly unfortunate episodes of child neglect took place and caused an uproar in the public and the media. During that summer, a five-year-old boy wandered away from home, also using public transport, in one of the largest towns in Latvia. Even though thousands volunteered, and a dog was employed to search for him, he had died from hypothermia and was eventually found in a forest. The dog that was employed for the task was specially trained to find dead bodies and the police were questioned about this choice as people likely wanted to remain hopeful that the child could still have survived. The explanation was based on the days that had passed since the boy was lost.

The second incident, known commonly as "the tragedy in Dobele", a town 80 km south-west of Riga, also resulted in the death of a child at the beginning of the same year. This episode included animals as accidental participants and, therefore, requires a more detailed elaboration: a case of drug overdose by parents who had four children of three, four and five years, and an infant. The two parents and the infant died (of thirst), but the three other children survived a week with no care but with heavy consequences. The police had received a call about a neighbouring flat because of the crying of a cat whom the tragic family were supposed to feed while its owner (their relative) was away. Police maintain that there was no mention of children when they had been contacted and did not attend for that particular matter. The tragedy was very upsetting for multiple reasons, but the fact that the plight of an animal was noticed before that of the children was additionally aggravating for the public.

Below-the-line comments

Animals were either given as "good" or "good examples" for people thirteen times, eighteen times emphasis was on how humans are not animals, but most commonly the animal is seen as something less than a human. For example, in complaints about the articles depicting cruelty towards animals, a few people stated that the needs of children are more important than those of animals (five mentions) and, therefore, attention, and financial or social resources, should be directed elsewhere. Sometimes this kind of desired resource management is applied to criminals by stating that there are other more pressing social issues besides improvements in the penal system, especially when the resocialization and material circumstances of convicts are discussed. Sexual offences and paedophilia are often seen as crimes that should be punished through castration. Castration is a necessary action for some pets or farm animals; therefore, applying this practice to humans equates them with animals. If the word "castrate" is searched for separately in the database, it is mentioned 56 times as a punishment, mostly for sexual assault. Direct or indirect comparisons between criminals (or aggressive humans) and animals were common. This is, for example, expressed in the following excerpt where a mother is blamed for failing to socialise her child properly (a theme that appears eight times).

> [...] it's a fact that the mother has the main responsibility for raising such an animal. It would be normal to raise the issue here to deprive of parental rights.
>
> Comment by "jh" [username] on "The mother of the boy blamed for violence in Jaunjelgava: the boy is hyperactive, but not a bully", *Delfi*, 25 May 2013.

> Also, animals are castrated, and there is nothing complicated about it, and it is not expensive. Castration [as a solution], and that will make one remember the harming of others for a lifetime. It is incomprehensible why the police protect him [...].
>
> Comment by "Latvian" on "The staff of the central prison makes sure that the paedophile of Imanta is not psychologically and physically harmed", *Delfi*, 30 August 2015.

The previous examples show distinctions such as socialized/unsocialized, criminals/non-criminals. Distinctions were also made between cultures and genders. In the following examples, women are seen as being animalistic and Islam is contrasted with Christianity.

> Take a look at the example: one aunt in Hollywood thinks she will dress in black to support 'me too'. Almost everyone else instinctively follows. At the same time, all of them think that they are the crown of creation, who have the choice to follow instinct or not. Practice shows that they have not been anywhere far from the level of sheep or other herds

Comment by "The smart one" on "April is a month of awareness and prevention of sexual assaults, Trump has announced", *Delfi* 31 March 2018.

> In reality, the [Istanbul] convention is based on countering the spread of Sharia law in Europe, where in Islam, women's rights are equated with animal rights. In Islam, women have no soul. Not so long ago, Christians thought the same. [...]

Comment by "Norietis" on "33 Latvian scientists respond to LZA [Science academy of Latvia] call for ratification of Istanbul Convention", *Diena* 24 May 2018.

As mentioned before, animals are also used as "good" examples for humans but that can be expressed in distorted ways such as to justify physical violence towards children and others and to justify sexual violence. In the following examples the justification of physical violence is based on potential endangerment to the child's life or the parent's right to control their child, and sexual violence is seen as natural.

> Even animals sometimes hit their babies if they do something that is not allowed or something that could endanger them. I am in favour of combating domestic violence in the strict sense, where a child has bruises and fractures. But what is happening in England, Norway, is absurd! Parents have no rights at all—if a child doesn't want to, they can't even be forced to go to school!

Comment by "Anjutka" on "Campaign against child beatings launched in Latvia", *Diena* 30 May 2014.

> Sex is so simple. In nature, sex is always more or less associated with violence. Always! And violence, to some extent, is always a part of it. Just look at the animal world to be certain. [Comparisons with roosters, chickens, and dogs follow].

Comment by "Me too" on "Only 40% of the population know that forcing a partner to have sex is illegal", *Delfi* 18 August 2018.

In total, there were 76 generalized comparisons between people and animals. Additionally, the words "male" (*tēviņš*) and "female" (*mātīte*), which in Latvian are not normally attributed to humans and are strictly reserved for animals' biological sex, are also quite common.

These classifications were used to talk about women 60 times, and men just over 100. There were other more general but also related words which also point at comparisons between humans and animals, e.g., the word "natural" has over two-hundred mentions and "instinct" over one-hundred mentions. These could be further explored and analysed, but space here precludes this.

Finally, animals are present in the below-the-line comments as plain insults. There were eleven instances where the exact word "animal" was used as an insult. The number of insults that include references to animals is much greater if words such as "beast" (thirteen times), "pig" (fifteen), "goat" (twenty), "sheep" (ten) are included. Here, only very direct insults were enumerated; the more nuanced references to "males", "females" are not included.

Discussion

The contexts in which animals appear as participants of scenes of violence were diverse, especially in the descriptions of expert commentaries, but the representation of animals when direct violence towards them was described by online news writers was limited to emotion and punishment. On the other hand, the presence of animals was also simply instrumental. Animals were used to dramatize a crime scene, to make language emotional, or they served as a foundation for opinions on socialization, sexuality or politics. Additionally, this instrumentality appears when distinctions (men, women, criminals, religious groups and others) are drawn. The following discussion will analyse these observations and it is organized around Butler's (2020) methodological advice to focus on social bonds and inequality.

Social bonds

The media articles and below-the-line comments offer some level of communication either with the public (and also with those people who only read the articles and comments by others and do not engage themselves), or between the article and the responses in the below-the-line comment sections. Alongside this is the communication (bonding or lack of it) that takes place between the commentators themselves. In any case, these represent social linkages between people.

The data provide evidence of a relatively nuanced understanding of animal experiences and perceptive capacities. Various experts provided depictions of animal presence in scenes of violence in peoples' homes, and potential risks online. On rare occasions animals are given some agency and they appear as active participants in the community: the employment of the police dog, or cats signalling suffering.

The manner in which the message about violence towards animals is construed in the news gives a rather simple framework to the reader on how to view the cases: emotion and

punishment. Appeals to emotion, compassion and horror, and also solidarity when donations are requested, are combined with a discussion of the most appropriate punishments for the person who harmed the animal, or the normative framework that should regulate such punishments. This somewhat formulaic template as to how violence against animals is depicted (and often against humans, too) is often reflected in the comments where writers much too readily express ideas on punishment of the violent person. While news writers refer to a potential normative or criminal code that might be used by the punishing authority, readers freely fantasize in unpredictable directions. It is hard to tell if this emotion-punish reflex in the news and comments is somehow related, and if one would change if the other also did. However, there are also the people the articles depict and those who know the victims described in the news. In the context of violence prevention measures, the focus on punishment could also be harmful to them. The frequent comparisons with animals and suggestions to treat people like animals in comments sections create an impression of intense, intolerant, unforgiving and even hate-filled space. A suspected criminal would be sentenced to corporeal mutilations or even death by commentators, and a barking dog is blamed for its own violent treatment due to its noisemaking, as described by Mileiko & Hamilton (2020) who used the same database of articles. It is likely that the careless and rash communication style, and lack of control mechanisms that filter rude expression in comments, contribute to the marginalization of particular groups of people. With the help of animal metaphors and comparisons the gap between, for example, criminals and non-criminals is imagined being as wide as among humans and other species. There, information about the importance of resocialization, and the necessity for psychological support in situations of crisis, seems scarce. It is also possible that speaking about human issues through animals provides an opportunity to distance oneself from the direct addressing of the people involved, that is, the opinions are grounded in the animal world in order to not address the particular issue, and to remain distanced from it. The natural world thus potentially provides a more neutral zone in which the relationships between human participants may be played out.

One way or another, animals do attract interest and curiosity, for better or for worse. The children who visited the animal shelter gained some guidance from professionals and this turned out to be a positive experience even if animal shelters are not particularly joyful places. Animals spark interest not only in children, but also adults, and it seems that news about animals being subjected to violence provides a learning opportunity that could go beyond mere emotions and punishment—that is, more information on the needs of animals and the necessities for their care, which, I would speculate, could be very useful.

Inequality

The positioning of humans, human groups and animals constantly refers to a hierarchical structure which even if it does not illustrate actual inequality itself, which is beyond the scope of this research, then at least those inequalities in the minds of people, and in the attitudes and judgements that can be observed in the data.

Even though animals were sometimes seen as "better" than humans or were equated to them in the data, it was also demonstrated that this was done for the "wrong" purposes (such as justifying violence) or in a manner where animal capacities and/or human abilities were represented in a distorted or patronizing way. The position of the animal is in a strict hierarchy. If pets are considered, they are vulnerable because they are dependent, and journalists, experts, and animal rights activists speak *for* them. If animals are considered more generally, they most commonly represent something that is not controlled or does not control itself. Even if the hierarchical distinction between humans and animals remains clear, the seriousness with which the animals are taken into account varies, such as when the teenagers grieving for their pets (the seriousness of the loss of a pet) is a statistically significant category, while on the other hand the police did not immediately investigate a report on animal distress.

By contrast, the hierarchies in human contexts are more difficult to describe. Commentators project demeaning comments and insults towards each other based on age, gender or culture, but this does not say anything about how the participants relate to each other. Mentions of the Istanbul Convention and #MeToo provoked demeaning comments towards women in general, and women in other cultures in particular. The contexts in which men were dehumanized (for example, the suggestions to castrate) were even more common, except that they appeared in somewhat different, more individualized contexts. The previous subsection stressed below-the-line comments are a space where the mistreatment of victims of violence can flourish. Another interpretation could be that this is a place which gives some level of "control". This is where the reality can be shaped into naturalized simplicity, where the "unknown" is actively organized, and part of this is done with the help of animal metaphors. I would rather see the below-the-lines comments not as spaces in which people violently argue with each other (although that does happen), but rather as a place where the resources with which people aspire to explain complex events are demonstrated and where some level of control over the events, such as possible policy changes, is sought.

Conclusion

In summary, the animal presence in news on violence is quite noticeable in multiple ways. Animals suffer from physical, sexual violence or neglect by humans within households. Animal rights activists and different experts on violence make them somewhat visible. Animals appear as perpetrators or witnesses of violence, and experience stress in violent contexts. The animal presence in these contexts is sometimes there in order to talk about people's priorities and the allocation of scarce resources. People question who is more deserving of financial resources or attention (from the police), but the idea of animal innocence is contrasted with human traits. Thus, the distinction between humans and animals serves as a guiding principle, a reminder of human superiority, of nature as something that is sometimes a part of humans, but most commonly something to be overcome.

Furthermore, animals are used as tools with which to organize the world: good/bad behaviours and what should be done about the bad behaviours, what a just world would look like, and how should women, men, children, or criminals be treated. Animals are used to explain experiences and feelings, anger, compassion, and distrust etc. The use of animals in language represents the flexibility of animal metaphors and that they carry the potential for exclusion, but also inclusion and mutual understanding. It is likely that people about whom news is written are affected. They are not always anonymous, especially if the victim or the perpetrator of violence comes from a smaller town. The below-the-line comments run the risk of emotional abuse. But at the same time online news pages and comments sections are places where meaning making (or reaffirmation of previous meanings) can take place. Political changes can be resisted, and discussed with the available tools such as comparisons to animals.

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Dzīvnieku loma ziņās par vardarbību Latvijas tiešsaistes medijos

Māra Neikena

Ziņās par vardarbību Latvijas tiešsaistes medijos ik pa laikam parādās dzīvnieki. Lai labāk izprastu, kāda ir dzīvnieku loma šajā kontekstā, tika atlasīti un analizēti 73 raksti un 220 lasītāju komentāri. Vardarbīgu uzvedību bieži vien skata kā pretēju cilvēciskumam, un dzīvnieki, dzīvnieciskums palīdz veidot morāles robežas, vērtības un zināšanas. Metaforas, salīdzinājumi un arī konteksts, kādos dzīvnieki tiek pieminēti, veido nošķīrumu starp cilvēkiem un dzīvniekiem, bet arī starp dažādām cilvēku grupām. Tajā pašā laikā dzīvniekiem un dzīvnieciskumam ir saliedējošā, empātiskā puse, kuru var izmantot nevardarbīgas uzvedības veicināšanā un zināšanu stiprināšanā par vardarbības novēršanu.

Bison in the Latvian Ethnoscape:
A Contingency of (not)Becoming

Anita Zariņa, Dārta Treija, Ivo Vinogradovs

Introduction

In his seminal work, Landscapes and Memory, Simon Schama (1995: 37), starts the chapter about the European bison (the Royal Beasts of Białowieża) with a taste of their meat, "[...] it tasted like nothing I have eaten before: a strange sweetness lurking beneath its cheesy pungency". Indeed, hunting for meat has long defined an important aspect of human relations with this animal. Another aspect that penetrates, and, in a way, defines the human-bison relationship is the acknowledgment of their grace, majesty, special treatment, and protection, for example, by royalty in the Białowieża Forest (Baerselman, Vera 1995; Schama 1995), or currently by international regulations. Moreover, they are also a subject of awe, as this long forgotten Latvian tale suggests:

> Far away a king ruled. His son was a great hunter [...] Once, accompanied, he went to hunt and arrived at a great forest abundant with game. Carried away by the heated hunt from other hunters, the prince spotted a bison and shot an arrow towards him. The bison vanished instantly, a huge wizard appeared in its place and cursed him by pointing his hand [...] (Šmits 1927: 253).

On a grey and windy day in December 2014, together with the Director of Pasaules Dabas Fonds[1], Jānis Rozītis, we were out in a field in search of bison in the wild surroundings of Lake Pape (southwestern Latvia). The landscape at this time of the year in the coastal lowlands is damp and muddy; ditches are full of water limiting the possibility to traverse these young, deciduous forests on foot. Within eyesight, some elk crossed the road and ditches, leaving numerous footprints, similar to the ones we were looking for. Confused by the plethora of animal footprints, we were carefully looking for other hints: noises, smells, gnawed off pieces of tree bark, etc. Yet we knew that we were wandering in a bison landscape, imagining them living there rather than truly expecting to encounter them at once. They are animals of the dusk and dawn; fast and silent, masters at remaining unseen among trees.

Although bison are large mammals, they have quite a narrow body shape enabling them to hide easily behind tree trunks. Some analogies of this can also be found in language. The word in Lithuanian

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1   An NGO, former WWF-Latvia, now associated partner of WWF in Latvia (World Wide Fund For Nature).

for European bison is stumbras, which in kindred Latvian means tree trunk (stumbrs), but the name for bison in Latvian is sumbrs (ancient, sūbrs). The bison is also a meadow animal. Some excrement that we found in their former home of fenced meadows confirmed their presence in the area (as it did in the spring of 2013 during a similar quest) where they have been roaming in the wild for the past ten years.

The experimental bison (re)introduction in Pape, followed by a contingent bison escape from the enclosure, exposes yet unarticulated complexities relating to a general understandings of the bison's place in this particular landscape, and their becoming wild animals, along with social implications and broader meaning of bison becoming part of the national landscape. This research traces the bison's movements since their arrival in Pape until today, giving insight into bison cultural history in the region as well as into the ideas and meanings of rewilding itself. In particular, we aim to explore the ways in which attitudes towards bison in Pape are formed, using Deleuze and Guattari's (2014 [1987]) notion of "three kinds of animals", and the role of local human and non-human actors in shaping the bison milieu in Pape.

We used field observations, interviews with locals, park managers and nature protection experts, media content analysis, analyses of literature and documents to understand the geography and timeline of the events as well as to interpret the bison project in larger socio-political contexts. Our fieldwork was conducted from 2013–2015 when we visited Pape surroundings, including visits to the former bison enclosure and farmsteads in the local neighborhood.

An insight into the history of bison

In 1854, The Latvian Newspaper (Latweeschu Awises) writes that bison is the largest forest bull, which still can be seen in Lithuanian and Białowieża forests, while elsewhere it has been exterminated. This is presumably the oldest record in Latvian, published during the time when Courland was a part of the Russian empire; it describes in detail the management of the bison in Białowieża that at the time belonged to "our emperor". Could it be so that bison have roamed Courland's forests hundreds of years before, rhetorically asks the author? Yes, they had sometimes entered from Lithuanian lands, they had also been spotted in Prussia until they were all shot. And, after all, there is a Latvian name for the beast, concludes the author ([Bez aut.] 1854).

Formerly widespread throughout Europe, the European bison Bison bonasus became nearly extinct in the beginning of the 20th century (Balčiauskas 1999). In Holocene and early historical times, the range of European bison covered western, central and south-eastern Europe, extending up to the Volga River and the Caucasus. Since then the population of bison was subject to gradual shrinkage and fragmentation: decreasing number of individuals and the isolation of sub-populations lead to extinction (Pucek 2004).

In Latvia, bison were extant in the end of the Iron Age and throughout the Middle Ages (5th–16th century), yet the archaeological findings indicate that bison hunting remains are particularly characteristic to the Late Iron Age period (10th–12th century) in the southern parts of Latvia's territory (Bīrons et al. 1974). Afterwards, its presence in the territory of Latvia is hardly evidenced; while in captivity bison were registered in the so-called manorial deer garden (Hirschgarten) of Valmiermuiža (Wolmarshof), where a pair of bison from Białowieża was brought in the end of 19th century to enrich the animal diversity of a park created for royal hunting pleasures.

By the 18th–19th century, larger herds of European bison were found only in Białowieża, a large sparsely populated forest, which was preserved by monarchs for over 400 years (Samojlik 2005). Due to the protection measures of the royal game, the number of bison grew up there to almost two thousand in the 1850s, but by the end of the century only 380 animals were left there (Morris 2015); then the population increased again by 1915 to approximately 785 animals (Ricciuti 1974). War and post-war chaos lead to uncontrolled poaching of bison; during World War I, around 600 bison were killed, mainly for meat, leather, and horns, but after the retreat of German soldiers only nine bison had survived (Ricciuti 1974). Eventually, in 1919 a poacher shot the last European bison in Białowieża Forest. In 1929, efforts were initiated to reintroduce bison on the basis of a handful individuals, which were saved in a few European zoological gardens (Samojlik 2005). Nowadays, Białowieża is the only lowland primeval forest left in Europe—around 900 bison roam freely there (Deinet et al. 2013).

The history of bison in Latvia, which have long been absent from the national landscape, can be disclosed only through scrupulous archaeological research or folk studies, whereas in the neighbouring country of Lithuania bison became extinct much later in the 17th century (Kibiša et al. 2017). The reintroduction of bison in Lithuania —bison has been known to be the animal of the ancient Lithuanian State (Bonda 2013) —began in 1969, and the first bison were set free in the wild in 1973 (Balčiauskas 1999). Since 2003, the size of their population has rapidly increased, and there are currently nearly 200 bison (Kibiša et al. 2017).

The idea of a wilderness with large herbivores

In Latvia, the idea of wilderness that precedes our bison story stems from World Wildlife Fund (WWF) -Latvia's initiative in the late 1990s aimed at restoring the pre-agricultural landscape with its shifting mosaic of open land and forests, continuously reshaped through natural disturbances of fire, wind, grazing, and predation. This wilderness was established within Pape Nature Park, composing the landscapes of wetlands and migrating birds, natural meadows grazed by Konik horses and auroxen, and European bison that also inhabited the park's forests. However, the acceptance of the idea at the beginning of the 2000s proved to be controversial here, because, according to the spokesman of the Latvian Fund for Nature, Jānis Priednieks,

The introduction of the Konik horses signified that 'an enormous territory [had] been taken out' of the Latvian landscape; that the nationally iconic Latvian farmer had been driven off the land, to no good purpose, by 'animals of fairly bizarre genetic origins' (Schwartz 2005: 293).

Indeed, wilderness, in the sense it is used in Anglo-American understandings, is not a word found in the Latvian vocabulary. Latvians, going back to the ancient Balts, have always fought for the land, slashed and burned "dark forests" and reclaimed impassable wetlands, transforming and maintaining the land to render it usable for dwelling. This even applied to lands with poor and sandy soils as well as to areas with articulated topography or marshes. The whole national narrative of an iconic ethnoscape, as it is for any of non-industrial nations, was built upon the ideals of peasantry (e.g. Skultans 2001)—the Latvian as a ploughman in folk culture, "masters of our own land" in the years of national awakening from the mid-19th century and onwards, and productivist agriculture as national business during the years of the country's first national independence. As to a social construct, the wilderness occurred perhaps as an idea of untouched nature preserved for scientific purposes during the Soviet period when strictly off-limits nature reserves were established. They were small and discrete, open to scientists, but not accessible and of interest at all to the general public.

This wilderness, however, was something new. According to the former WWF-Latvia Director, Uģis Rotbergs, this idea was based on new values regarding grazing animals as landscape inhabitants and the main caretakers of land, with the whole area functioning as a demonstration site for economic, ecological, and social benefits that would come from the reintroduction of large herbivores. Together with the neighbouring village, Pape Village of Rucava and the whole of Rucava County were always considered to be historically unique and rich in material and immaterial ethnographic values. At Rucava, locals would have held with the idea of basing tourism on local ethnographic traditions and everyday life. As Schwartz observed, in the minds of many, this vision of heritage tourism directly conflicted with the western vision of wilderness-based ecotourism. To locals, unrestrained nature "was nothing more than worthless 'jungle', unfit for human enjoyment unless redeemed through cultivation" (Schwartz 2005: 310).

Taking place: bison arrival and exodus

The landscape of Lake Pape's surroundings was redeemed, in fact, through cultivation during the productivism era of the mid–20th century (Zariņa et al. 2018). On the dump lands with naturally limited agricultural potential the Pape polder (515 ha) was engineered at the end of the 1960s. The polder was seen as a solution for redeeming the kolkhoz's weak subsistence, and, indeed, both then and now providing the locals with extra, albeit still poor, agricultural lands. The natural habitats in and around Lake Pape (a Ramsar site since 2004) were considerably transformed by various forms of drainage over the course of the 20th century (van de Vlasakker, 2006).

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Figure 1. Bison arrive at their enclosure in Pape polder in 2004 (photo: Pasaules Dabas fonds).

As a relatively marginal location, Pape attracted WWF-Latvia because of its nature potential (lagoonal lake and migratory bird site, raised peat bog, wet meadows, and vast forest areas) and its depopulated landscape. In Lake Pape immediate surroundings, just 15–20 residents lived in farmsteads, while the small village of Pape comprised only a few permanent inhabitants. A regional newspaper promoted the WWF-Latvia's vision of the future landscape pictured as the one from a thousands of years long past, "[...] it will be as a view from yore—in a lush meadow wild horses will roam, from a thicket bison would leer, while sky would traverse a skein of cranes. Would there be a place for man?" (Tišheizere 2002: 7).

Nineteen Konik horses arrived at Pape in 1999. During the next project phase in 2004, Pasaules Dabas fonds brought the first 5 European bison (Figure 1) and 24 auroxen. Another 12 bison arrived from Poland and the Netherlands in 2006. The bison were released in an enclosure built on the before mentioned polder lands; soon after this, an observation tower and information stand for tourists were installed there. All things considered, the arrival of bison, in particular, was an event of national importance: up to 100 people attended the great opening of the enclosure (among them were representatives of the media, stakeholders, and locals). Back then, the local newspaper wrote that "[...] the reintroduction of herbivores will be the most challenging and best investment in the landscape; both environmentally friendly and utmost sustainable" (Cepleniece 2003: 16-17). Before the reintroduction, the project's inquiry data demonstrated that more than a half of Pape's population supported the project. Their expectations were related to tourism development and new job opportunities, etc. Yet this attitude partly changed as soon as the bison agency intervened in the private lives of locals. Bison left their grazing area twice (in 2006 and 2009); the second time no longer returning to their enclosure. The media declared quite clearly at that time (Vīksne 2009a, Vīksne 2009b) that the bison project in Pape had been unsuccessful.

What caused the bison to leave this place? In human-related terms, we would characterize this "escape" as evacuation or exodus, because the bison were, in fact, fleeing from the wet and sometimes even flooded grounds that were caused by the malfunctioning polder. As park managers noted, the second time the escape itself was rather an effort—they had crawled under the bottom of a broken fence and swum across the polder canal. Various experts, before and after the escape, acknowledged the unsuitability of the place for bison. Jānis Ozoliņš, a zoologist at the Latvian State Forest Research Institute Silava in 2003 commented the forthcoming project:

> There are strict rules for breeding bison in captivity [...]. Particularly, the safety precautions regarding the enclosures must be considered, because these animals can be aggressive. The release of bison into the wild would be a crazy experiment. An ecological expertise is definitely needed here. [...].

On the same page was Jānis Priednieks, the director of the Department of Zoology and Ecology at the Faculty of Biology, saying:

> In Latvia, there are no suitable biotopes, necessary food base or living space for bison, especially in the poor surroundings of Lake Pape. They need broadleaf forests. [...] These animals need a proper fence, because they cannot be allowed to go into the wild (Zemberga 2003: 37).

Essentially, the malfunctioning polder played a key role in the whole process of bison eventual returning to Latvia's landscape, which was set by a chain of relational contingencies between human and non-human actors. Another question is the suitability of the place itself. In the socio-ecological assessment of the potential European bison habitat, Kuemmerle et al. (2011) have acknowledged Latvia as suitable for bison populations. However, in

Pape no ecological assessment had been performed prior to the bison's arrival; there is also no monitoring of their movements; no particular laws or guidelines for their conservation or management have been issued so far. From the point of view of the State, the bison are almost non-existent. Yet there they are, having last been seen on October 13, 2018 by early morning travellers. The ecological conditions of the place itself, apparently, are not paramount to measure the suitability for bison in the contemporary landscape. Rather, the relational formations between human and non-human actors and events taking place, as well as human and society's attitudes (e.g. the State, locals, stakeholders) are the ones that may determine bison's potentiality in Latvia's landscape in general. As Kuemmerle et al. (2011) state, in contemporary conservation planning, moving from bioclimatic niche models toward broadscale habitat models is a necessary step to restore the ecological roles of large herbivores in human-dominated landscape. With this in mind, we must have a closer look at people's modes of relating to these animals.

Three kinds of animals

Essentially, this bison project involves much more than (re)introduction, a local developmental asset or locals' disapproval and eventual acceptance. It is a precedent of becoming a bison, that is, a tamed animal becoming a wild animal, likely a place becoming a place with bison in it. In human geography, becoming designates a process-based movement, in which the world is conceived of as a dynamic and open-ended set of relational transformations (McCormack 2009). Deleuze uses the term "becoming" to describe the continual production of difference intrinsic to the constitution of events whether they are physical or otherwise (Stagoll 2005). If we consider "becoming" as "pure movement" between particular events, as Deleuze and Guattari suggest (ibid.), we can trace "bison becoming" as relational to the events that triggered and changed bison and their movements in this particular story. However, we will not speak here of bison "becoming" as such or some inherent characteristics of bison themselves; instead we will discuss people's modes of relating to these animals. To illustrate this, by using the examples from Pape and elsewhere, we will employ Deleuze and Guattari's (2014 [1987]) idea of there being three kinds of animals of which only the third kind is capable of becoming.

First, there are individuated animals, family pets, sentimental ones that invite us to regress and draw us into narcissistic contemplation (Deleuze, Guattari 2014 [1987]). These were bison during the phase of their transfer to Latvia, the ones carefully selected and transported, the ones people were willing to see and feed in their enclosure. They occupied approximately 70 ha of territory covered partly by meadows and partly by forest, and because of the latter, they were not always visible to observers. Gradually adapting to the place and people, these bison became more secure to come out of the wooded area, yet still keeping the distance from the visitors. "The bison, although they arrived only this year, slept calmly in the distance. It was a rainy October day, but our group watched those unusual animals

with great pleasure and admiration", wrote a local newspaper (Jansone 2004). Eventually, becoming unalarmed by people, the bison even approached the fence with visitors behind it, "sometimes we even tried to feed them bread from our hands…" recalls a local woman, who years later came face to face with them in her backyard. The local and even national media followed the implementation of the project, scrupulously describing the bison's adaptation to people and place. Even when they were already outside the fence, roaming quietly in the fields, sleeping for hours in the backyards of some farmsteads, some locals regarded them with sentiment, as disoriented animals that were the part of a project that failed because of human negligence.

Currently, bison in captivity in Latvia are encountered only in two privately owned parks in Vidzeme Region: the deer park Zemitāni (a deer farm and safari park), which, in its 300 ha area, holds a large number of animals, among which there are more than 1200 deer, but also moufflons, wild boar and European bison. However, of 17 bison at the beginning of the 2010s, only one is left there for various reasons, among which, as the park manager Vasiļonoks notes, prevailed the territorial management and breeding issues. This free-range safari park, on the one hand, is like a fairy forest—that is how the official site of the Latvia Travel Agency ([Bez aut.] S.a.) describes it; on the other hand, it is also a hunting park (Hirschgarten), similar to the ones in manorial times: the hunter's club Hiršenhofa (a word play with German Hirsch and Hof would mean a manor of deer) is also established there. Three bison from Zemitāni are now owned by a private estate, perhaps, of with similar purposes to the ones during the manorial time. At Līgatne Nature Trail (an open-plan zoo of indigenous fauna) of Gauja National Park, a pair of bison was brought there from Białowieża during the Soviet period in 1984; they eventually died of natural causes (the last one died in 2012). Now, the park represents only the indigenous fauna and, regardless the requests from visitors, they have abandoned the idea of reintroducing bison there again. This denotes the official position of the State, that is, the Nature Conservation Agency.

The second kind of animal is the one with characteristics or attributes; genus, classification; or animals as they are treated in the great divine myths (Deleuze, Guattari 2014 [1987]). For example, they might serve a purpose for science or idea. In this sense, bison (as well as tarpans and auroxen) represent the idea of the restoration of the pre-agricultural landscape. They serve also as a particular trademark for Pasaules Dabas Fonds as an institution understanding and supporting the Western narratives of reintroduction, biodiversity, and wilderness. But for Latvia it meant even more than that. It was an attempt to question and dispute landscape developmental paths, based on conventional yet contestable ethnoscape values, particularly in depopulated areas. As Schwartz (2005: 313) described, it was "the first step in teaching Latvians to look beyond the limits of the agrarian paradigm and to see relatively 'wild' nature as a new kind of developmental asset". Indeed, since 1999 such wilderness territories have increased in ranging from one to eight in various places in Latvia (Reķe et al. 2019). However, the predominant attitude of the public and experts have remained the same, favouring the icons of the ethnoscape, as a result of which even now a constructive dialogue has not been possible. This deals with not only eco-tourism or western nature values, but also with changes in the whole system of the function and meaning of marginalized landscapes in Latvia.

As the Deleuzian second kind of animal bison is also the State animal. And here we must speak particularly about Lithuania, Poland, and the former Russian Empire; and, nowadays, also about Belarus with bison as their national animal. After all, as Samojlik (2005: 87) has put it, bison, due to the monarchs' protection, have become "a living relic of the time of Kings". Schama (1995: 41) performed an apt account on the bison's historical meaning for the Lithuanian-Polish realm at the time, writing, "the bison was as important to the Lithuanian-Polish cult of knighthood as the bull was for Spanish warrior caste". In the significant poem of Hussovianus (also Hussowski—a poet and catholic priest of Grand Duchy of Lithuania), A Song about the Appearance, Savagery and Hunting of the Bison, dedicated to Pope Leo X to satisfy his desire to know more about European bison (Bonda 2013), the animal, writes Schama (1995: 41), "was depicted as a miraculous relic of a presocial, even prehistoric past—a tribal, arboreal world of hunters and gatherers, at the same time frightening and admirable". Even more than that, the whole poem was, regardless of its title, in fact, a historical and social account about the ancient Lithuanian state and its regents (Bonda 2013). After all, another common name for European bison is Lithuanian bison (e.g. Schama 1995).

The European bison is also a species on the IUCN Red List—declared as a vulnerable species with a currently increasing population trend (Olech 2008). For human-bison relationships, such institutional status of bison in the wild Pape surroundings settles tense situations, particularly in relation to local hunter community. Bison, which were used to people, freely roamed from one farmstead to another, from a wildlife-feeding place to a field with fodder for livestock, creating unprecedented dissatisfaction for locals, and the overall project's critique from nature protection experts. Nevertheless, this set of relational transformations of human attitude towards bison led to what many now acknowledge as the proper "bison return to Latvia's landscape"

Third, the behaviour of bison in the yards of locals for about a year after their escape created numerous conflicts that eventually ceased along with the bison's retreat into the forest—the wild. Some locals perceived bison as giants or devils who had escaped from fairy tales. "I have not grown up with them [...] I go out in the yard and there's huge livestock [...] a huge cow with hair". This is how the contact with bison was described by a local woman during our first field visit in 2013. The first encounters with bison, thus, may be described as symptomatic of fear and danger of the foreign and unfamiliar: fear for children walking on their own, fear of a sudden encounter, fear for their properties, etc. Indeed, there are lots of stories about fearful, destructive and somewhat comical encounters: a boy running away from a bison on the way from his school, a man passing by an enraged bison with recently delivered offspring, trampling down lawns and croplands, gnawing at an apple tree's bark, licking the windows of a house, creating minor disorder in someone's barn, and other such incidents.

Yet some human kindness towards the bison shone through the majority of these stories. It seemed that, in a way, they understood the world of this at that time perplexed animal; perhaps because at the time of these inquiries, the bison were already out of their everyday landscapes. However, during the most heated discussions amidst the first conflicts, local men were ready to "hunt them down immediately" (Pujēna 2007: 5). More than that, as it turned out, the most dissatisfied section of the locals in Pape are hunter communities, because the

bison partly feed at feeding places meant for game. The local hunters, however, cannot hunt bison because of their legal status in the Red Book and because of the overall uncertainty of the status of bison in the Latvia's law

Years later, a similar story took place in Latgale (the southeastern region of Latvia), when a solitary bison crossed the border with Belarus and roamed quietly in the local farmsteads, apparently used to people and their assistance. It sometimes followed some livestock herds, sometimes slept in gardens, and, of course, created also some disorders in yards. People tried to keep off the bison from their properties by throwing stones, brandishing sticks, or driving towards it on their tractors. It was going on until one of the farmers decided to take the bison in his care with the future intentions to settle this bison in an enclosure constructed on one of his forest properties (Jonāne 2018, Blass 2017).

However, we can talk about Pape's bison as a third kind of animal, the "more demonic animals, pack or affect animals that form a multiplicity, a becoming, a population, a tale..." (Deleuze, Guattari 2014 [1987]: 281), only after their retreat to forest, that is, when they faced the deadly encounters with people. Lorimer et al. (2019) use the term "animals' affective atmospheres", which can be shaped by changing wider political ecological dynamics: for instance, landscapes torn apart by poaching can generate "traumatic" circumstances (Bradshaw 2009). For the bison, the real trigger for becoming wild animals—avoiding people and living without their assistance—was the precedent of poaching, perhaps followed by more than this one, as Lake Pape Project Manager Mednis, as well as local rumours, suggest.

Bison as a third kind of animal, from the perspective of human relation to it, is the animal that can be also hunted. The tales of bison hunting were particularly vividly described in the media during the end of 19th and the beginning of 20th century, when territorial links with Białowieża were sustained through the bounds of Russian empire. For example, a hunting magazine ([Bez aut.] 1928) published an account of a royal hunt in Białowieża in 1860, which was organized by the court of Alexander II involving a lot of preparations (this includes about 2000 peasants to encircle the hunting grounds); 28 bison among other animals were hunted down. This is how F. A. Glinsky depicted the bison hunt:

> [...] Howling and barking of dogs that resemble a hellish music, indicates the nearing of bison. The beaters stop at a designated spot and dead silence befalls the forest once again. But soon one can hear as if trees are cracking and branches breaking, and soon enough a huge shaggy head with two horns turns up from the thicket, then another one till the whole pack of bison appears. As if realizing that the silence that came after this hellish noise does not mean anything good—the bison stop. Their bloodshot eyes inflame with wildness. The leader of the pack lifts his head high in the air, all of his limbs and muscles are strained, and each posture shows the forest king's commitment to sell his skin at the highest cost possible. But when the bison notice the crowd around them, they suddenly decide to retreat trying to break through the row of beaters. Hundreds of shots that are charged only with powder fall upon them. Bison then rush forward again, where they receive the hunters' bullets. Bison rarely falls from one bullet [...]

Figure 2. The pack of eight bison in the surroundings
of Pape in an early morning of October 2015 (Photo:
Gaston Lacombe, a courtesy of Pasaules Dabas fonds).

The culling of bison nowadays, for example, in Poland takes place in order to regulate local bison populations and for the sake of bison habitat; mainly because in most of free-living populations the European bison have no natural predators (Pucek et al. 2002). The authors also admit that the regulation of bison by selling hunting licenses for the shooting of a protected species is legally and ethically ambiguous. However, as a journalist for the Geographical sharply remarks (Stacy 2017), although commercial hunting of bison is not currently allowed by Polish law, a quick Internet search for "Bison hunting Europe" brings up several outfits offering hunters the chance to shoot wild bison in Poland (the same can be said about Belarus). The hunting websites also display a variety of photographs with hunted down bison during these so-called trophy hunts.

In Latvia, trophy hunting of bison certainly is not on agenda for now, nor for the near future. However, in a situation when an animal, regardless of its protective status, would become danger of death to locals, it can be hunted down immediately, without consulting the Nature Conservation Agency. Having said this, we can only speculate what has happened to the rest of bison from the Pape enclosure.

We will not observe Pape's bison roaming near human yards and gardens during daytime anymore, not even on adjacent roads and fields. Lodgers, for instance, may see bison only occasionally during early morning hours on the edge of the deep woods (Figure 2). While hunters would trace their footprints around feeding places and some locals would observe them here and there by accident. The remaining pack of five bison now roam an area of approximately 500 ha, following familiar paths, one of which is their former enclosure.

Conclusion

To humans, Pape's landscape inhabited by bison is not something wilder than it was before when in particular instances human dwelling-worlds met with those of wild boars, wolves, or elk. This, however, signifies a precedent that has changed the perspective for the potentiality of the wilderness in the landscape. Pape's landscape is still in the process of becoming a landscape with bison, with no units of measurement for understanding its success or failure. Nevertheless, the wild bison in Pape can be regarded rather as an epiphenomenon of this rewilding project, brought into existence due to the set of relational interactions among nature potential in Pape, the Soviet landscape alterations (the polder) and current post-productivist landscape management, land owners and managers, wider politics (including the conflicting interests between nature protection and agricultural subsidies) and local interests, local residents, various interest groups (families with small children, small-scale farmers, hunters, tourists, nature protection institutions), the media, and national discourses. But also, since Latvia's territory is located in such close geographical proximity to the heart of bison rewilding projects in Lithuania, Poland, and Belarus, Latvia's State should reconsider their position towards this majestic animal that once was part of Latvia's history.

The bison precedent in Pape, in a way, rendered it possible for a space to be shared with, and occupied by, an animal long absent in Latvia's landscape. It also becomes a symbol of the multiple possibilities of the wilderness, changing inevitably the institutional thought embedded within the system of conventional landscape values. Although the constructed and desired wilderness as the face or idea of a new landscape in Latvia today is still inside the fence, the openings in its walls are there to be found.

We would like to close this bison story with a remark, heard at the Latvia's Radio 4 program Noev Kovcheg (Čera 2019), where a zoologist and nature protection expert Vilnis Skuja, talking about the moose in Latvia (it is declared the animal of the year 2019), mentions that the moose is, actually, the second largest animal here. "But who is the first then?", asks the surprised journalist, "the bison", quickly answers Skuja with confidence and some kind of satisfaction in his voice.

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Sumbri Latvijas etnoainavā: tapšanas (ne)iespējamība

Anita Zariņa, Dārta Treija, Ivo Vinogradovs

Sumbri šodienas ainavā Papes apkārtnē ir daļa no lielo zālēdāju (re) introdukcijas projekta, kas tika īstenots 21. gadsimta pašā sākumā un kura iecere bija saistīta ar jaunas savvaļas ainavas veidošanu marginālās lauksaimniecības zemēs Papes Dabas parkā. Nejaušības un dažādu apstākļu sakritību rezultātā sumbri izkļuva no aploka un pamazām pielāgojās dzīvei savvaļā. No vienas puses, rakstā uzmanība tiek pievērsta sumbru tapšanai par savvaļas dzīvniekiem un ar to saistītiem notikumiem un dažādām mijattiecībām, kuras noteica gan nacionāla mēroga pārmaiņas sociāli ekonomiskajā situācijā, konfliktējošie dabas diskursi un to ietekme, gan lokāla mēroga zemes apsaimniekošanas konflikti un vietējo iedzīvotāju attieksme. No otras, rakstā tiek aplūkota izpratne par sumbru vietu Latvijas ainavā vēsturiski un šodien, interpretēta sabiedrības līdzdalība šīs izpratnes potenciāla veidošanā un īstenošanā un vispārināts Papes piemērs etnoainavas vērtību kontekstā. Cilvēka-sumbra attiecību aspekti ir aplūkoti Delēza un Gvatari "trīs veida dzīvnieku" un tapšanas jēdziena kontekstā, analizējot dažādas cilvēka idejas par sumbriem un to reprezentāciju, kā arī konkrētu vietas apstākļu un notikumu lomu sumbru savvaļas ainavas veidošanā Papes apkārtnē.

Shopping for Meaning: Tracing the Ontologies of Food Consumption in Latvia

Anne Sauka

Introduction

Researchers of different calibres from phenomenology to posthumanism and beyond have outlined the processuality of the body and the environment (Alaimo 2010; Gendlin 2017), stressing the importance of changing the ontological presuppositions of the body-environment bond (Schoeller and Duanetz 2018: 131), since the existing models facilitate the alienation and intangibility of the environment, thus, leading to reduced societal awareness of the importance of environmental issues (Neimanis, Åsberg, Hedrén 2015: 73–74). In this article, I argue that in questions relating to food, product-oriented ideologies dominate over process-oriented ethicality, in part, due to an embodied and lived ideology that can be best described via the concept of reactive nihilism and substance ontology. The article aims to demonstrate a necessity to rethink and recontextualize situated practices as alternatives to the prevalent ontogenealogies[1] of the Global North. By problematizing the complimentary axis of *reactive nihilism* in food contexts and the genealogy of contemporary pop food "ethics", I argue for a shift away from product-oriented ideologies and supplementation of the ontologies-we-live-by with situated alternative models.

1   The notion of "ontogenealogies" refers to the combination of the notions of "ontology" and "genealogy" that I use as the framework of my research. It refers to a life understood as senseful materiality in a nature-culture continuum as genealogical and acknowledges the ingraining and co-constitution of materialities via genealogies and ontologies, where genealogy represents the vertical axis of becoming, while the related ontologies represent the horizon of understanding. While genealogies co-constitute senseful materialities, they do not exhaust or essentialize this sphere, allowing a nexus of ontogenealogies. The theoretical framework of the ontological character of genealogy is discussed further in my recent article (Sauka 2020a), in context with Philipp Sarasin's consideration of Michel Foucault and Charles Darwin as genealogists that surpass the spheres of biologization and poststructuralism and demonstrate the discontinuity of the bio-(il) logical and the often-rigid stability of the cultural codes (Sarasin 2009). In the further text, I refer to "ontologies" when I denote the horizon of understanding as if uprooted from the vertical axis of genealogies, and I say "genealogy" to stress the vertical realization. An ontogenealogical approach is a tool that allows taking into account both authors that refer to social constructs and those that focus on the material embeddedness of lived experiences. The conceptualization of life as fundamentally processual and pluralist and, thus, ontogenealogial via a biophilosophical standpoint (Thacker 2008; Radomska 2016), however, grounds the possibility of such a conceptualization.

Thus, I employ a new materialist approach[2] that highlights the processuality and entanglement of life and argues that ontologies and ideologies are part of a socio-material experience. This view presumes that since the seemingly cultural phenomena (for example, the concepts pertaining to the understanding of the body) have material and lived consequences, it is especially crucial to rethink and reconfigure predominant ontological presuppositions in the face of the climate crisis and the sixth extinction.[3]

I explore food-related practices in context with the ontologies that frame the societal perception of food consumption today, arguing for building greater awareness of situated (in this case, Latvian) ontogenealogies in thinking about food ethics and environmental ethics for tomorrow. The scope of this problem is rather broad, and, thus, I limit my interest to the aspects that prove significant to everyday experience contexts, discussing the attitudes and praxis that stem from a larger socio-political and existential context.

A consideration of the lived experiences with regard to ethics is, hence, significant both as a way to problematize the predominant genealogies of the body-environment bond and as a way to construct the possible paths forward to facilitate the societal engagement in questions relating to food ethics. In this article, I understand ethics as a phenomenon, embedded in the ontogenealogical nexus of the sociopolitical sphere, arising, and developing with the meanings, praxes, and attitudes of the lived materialities, in the context of what Tom Hertweck calls "embodied ideologies" (2018).

Although ethics does not coincide with the field of ontologies-we-live-by (Radomska 2016: 75–76), I seek to show that a shift in ontologies is needed to promote new connectivity of

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2   A feasible definition of the most crucial aspects of new materialism is provided by Susan Yi Sencindiver "Seeking to move beyond the constructivist-essentialist impasse, new materialism assumes a theoretical position that deems the polarized positions of a postmodernist constructivism and positivist scientific materialism as untenable; instead, it endeavors to account for, in Baradian idiom, the co-constitutive "intra-actions" between meaning and matter, which leave neither materiality nor ideality intact." (Sencindiver 2017). It is, thus, a move away from essentialism not by discarding nature, biology, and materiality, but, instead, by radically rethinking the sphere of the material and biological as transformative, processual, and sense-ful based on a nature-culture continuum (Alaimo 2008: 242 – 250). I here follow mostly the works that could be accounted for as feminist materialism or the material turn in feminist theory, a strand of new materialism that highlights a processual and transformative understanding of materiality (Alaimo 2008). For further discussion of various feminist materialisms see Alaimo and Hekman, 2008. For further discussion of new materialism, see Coole and Frost 2010.

3   The analysis of situated practices is based upon a broader framework of ontogenealogical embeddedness in materiality. If one accepts that ontologies are connected with the materialities, a shift in the ontological presuppositions such as the shift presumed by postanthropocentric authors seems to be imaginable only there, where alternative models are already existing; a completely novel ontology seems unable to root itself in material experience (except if the experience itself radically changes). Thus, a premise of life as ontogenealogical allows conceptualizing experienced changes in ontologies, as well as genealogical transformations and understanding them in the context of a material lifeworld. Thus, the investigation of the ontogenealogies in existence allows searching for alternatives to the predominant models and to consider materiality as co-constituted by the prevalent ontogenealogies.

the body and the environment on an affectual level, and, hence, approaches in ethics should also be informed by ontogenealogical investigation. Thus, I am not interested in any particular moral philosophies *per se,* but their embeddedness in prevailing ontologies. Therefore, I do not take any food ethics at "face value" but rather address the factors that sustain existing nutritional lifestyle choices, critically examining the ontological presuppositions that frame the existing praxes and attitudes.

In the first part of the article, I use a genealogical approach, tracing the predominant meaning cluster encapsulated in Feuerbach's famous expression "Man is what he eats" (Feuerbach 1846-1866, X: 5) in today's contexts. To illustrate the leading discourses, I follow a Deleuzian understanding of the concept of "reactive nihilism" and contextualize food choices with the dominant understanding of the body in the Global North. With this discussion, I hope to provide context for the need to reconsider local ontologies as knowledge resources for the future.

In the second part of the article, the framework present in the Global North is then complemented by a discussion of some local factors, to suggest ways in which global food philosophy and, particularly, lifestyle choices of food consumption could benefit from acknowledging the knowledge embedded in food consumption trends in Latvia. Here I argue in line with researchers who highlight the need to consider Latvian and Baltic food cultures and politics as a viable source of knowledge for sustainable food practices in the future (see Jehlička et al. 2020; Mincytė, and Plath 2015; 2017), highlighting the consumer position in the discussions. As a post-Soviet European country with a rich and diverse food culture, access to high-quality products, and a history of wild food foraging, non-monetary food exchange, and domestic gardening culture, Latvia provides fruitful ground for considering alternatives to the prevailing trends of the Global North for thinking of food consumption ethically.

1. Food, Choice, and Guilt

Let me start with the seminal phrase of Ludwig Feuerbach: "Man is what he eats"[4]. Today this phrase has become well-known in a modified form "you are what you eat"[5] and is even regarded

4   "Der Mensch ist was er isst" (Feuerbach 1846-1866, X: 5).

5   For a further critique of the contemporary popular understanding of this phrase, as well as a brief history of the changing meanings of its usage, facilitated also by the publication of Victor H. Lindlahr's book *You Are are What what You Eat* in 1940 (Linlahr 1940), see Landecker 2015. Lindlahr is one of the most prominent figures, introducing a direct link between eating and being: "what you eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner is converted into your hair, eyes, nose, mouth, lungs, fingernails, and the many, many other tissues of which your body is composed. This changing of foodstuffs into flesh and bones and blood, this impregnation of life into particles of lifeless matter, is no simple business. A process which can change a fruit cup, a lamb chop, and a dessert into you, into living body cells, is surely miraculous" (Lindlahr, 1942: 7, cited in Landecker 2015).

as cliché for advertising healthy or *stylish* foods and bringing attention to new and trendy lifestyles that might just change your lives by 180, or, more likely, 360 degrees, and then vanish as fast they arrived.[6] These are the kinds of "pop food philosophies" that have formed today (and together with other "lifestyle philosophies" which allow for dismissing philosophical inquiry).[7]

When Feuerbach coined this phrase in his review of the Dutch-Italian physiologist's Jakob Moleschott's *Lehre der Nahrungsmittel* (Moleschott 1950; Cherno 1963: 399) it was not used in the sense in which we are used to seeing it today. Instead, it referred to the a) interaction of food and humans, i.e., the fact that the substances found in food are also present in humans and *vice versa;* and b) financial inequality. Thus, Feuerbach states that: "Nothingness in the stomach—a very real, because perceptible, Nothingness" (Grün 1874: 86, cited in Cherno 1963: 401) and:

> Food becomes blood; blood becomes heart and brain, food for thoughts and feelings. Human food is the foundation of human development and feeling. If you want to improve the people, give them better food instead of declamations against sin (Grün 1874: 90, cited in Cherno 1963: 401).

These quotations highlight the social necessity for questioning human relationships with food, demonstrating the impact of material resources on the potential for leading a dignified life. This social aspect of *becoming food* does not, of course, exclude material embeddedness. On the contrary, Feuerbach's exclamation emphasizes the entanglement of lived materialities, societal issues, and ethics, and invites questioning—how does the distribution of food co-constitute the lived materialities of human bodies?[8] That is, however, far from the network of meanings in which the phrase seems to be embedded today.

Ironically, Feuerbach's ideas can be explored as a critique of the contemporary meaning of the phrase "man is what he eats". Nowadays, widely used in media to advertise healthy eating as a lifestyle and the key to overall wellness and fitness, the phrase is used as an introductory rhetorical element for various "food philosophies," namely, different collections of

6   To avoid misunderstanding, I should note that I do not presume that the statement here is the origin of human relations with food today. Rather, it manifests as a prominent element in food philosophies, and thus functions as their facilitator, which is why it can be analyzed in context with the reactive nihilism that it represents. A critical genealogy necessitates some sort of an anchor that I here find in the phrase "you are what you eat"— hoping that by analyzing the meanings conveyed by this phrase, it might be possible to unearth parts of the structure of meaning it conceals. To note the popularity of the phrase—when written in Google, "you are what you eat" shows 1,730,000,000 results.

7   The advent and proliferation of lifestyle philosophies, in context with the downfall of human sciences, and the ironic demand for pop philosophy and the simultaneous reprimand of serious philosophical inquiry would need a separate study but could also be analyzed via Deleuze's concept of reactive nihilism, considered later in the article (Deleuze 2006: 148–151).

8   In context with the latest developments in evolutionary theory and epigenetics (Jablonka and Lamb 2014), the social inequalities might also be said to ingrain and transform materialities along the genealogical axis of genetic inheritance.

normative advice on how to become a better, more effective, super-human[9] self, and goes hand-in-hand with the popularization of a moral imperative "to eat well," which often means high-end, expensive food products, inaccessible to a broader society.

Simplistically understood (outside of the romantic and esoteric undertones) the phrase conveys the message "people are as good as the food they eat" (on linking health and pleasure, Mol 2009: 271–273). Doubtless, a great steak uplifts my spirits; however, does good food make a good person? Nowadays, by linking food and civic/environmental duty, the scope of meaning for this phrase has broadened and refers also to: "ethically responsible food makes a good person" (on linking fairness and pleasure Mol 2009: 274 – 277).

Both variants are problematic—they not only actualize the notion that those, who can afford comparatively expensive vegan cookies, instead of a suspiciously produced milk powder and palm oil products, are better people, but might also construct a moral imperative of categorizing people in "better" and "worse," viewing the sad figure of a "microwave dinner eater" with pity and even disdain (Steim and Nemeroff 1995). Such categorization works against societal solidarity, facilitating alienation and individualization regarding societal nourishment.

Furthermore, the use of this phrase allows shaming not only those who cannot afford good food but also those that do not adhere to dominating beauty standards—you are what you eat and *vice versa*—you are eating according to how you look, so why are you poisoning yourself?

Thus, "you are what you eat"[10] is contradictory to the idea that Feuerbach transmits, stating the self-evident truth that a man without food is nothing and is consumed by the perceptible nothingness of malnourishment. Instead of highlighting the obvious materiality of socio-political discourse, the use of the phrase only broadens the chasm between comparatively well-off population and more impoverished groups of society.

These "embodied ideologies" stem from a broader physiological discourse and the reactive nihilism paradigm, within which a better future both socially, physiologically, and ethically is envisioned via the betterment of individual bodies. Gilles Deleuze has coined the concept of reactive nihilism that denotes the age of God's murderer, where the ideals of the traditional dualism (namely, "negative nihilism") are brought "to Earth," yet, maintaining the same form via reductionist scientific objectification (Deleuze 2006: 148–151, see further Sauka 2020b). Reactive nihilism is strongly connected to the reductionist understanding

9   One extreme example of this might be the movement of "biohackers"—a group advertising a kind of transhumanist approach to medicine, nutrition and lifestyle, for exploring possibilities to "overcome" or mitigate the limits of human mortality. (Coenen 2017; Wexler 2017). Other examples include keto, non-gluten, etc. diets that are gaining popularity today.

10   The transformation of "man is" to "you are" would also make interesting genealogical research that should also be informed by Brillat-Savarin's famous exclamation: "the fate of citizens depends on the way they eat" (1825/1970: 13). The scope of this article, however, does not allow further exploration of the topic.

of the enfleshed self, a view of the human body as a mechanical, measurable thing that can be normalized and optimized; far from the experienced, lived materiality and a processual enfleshedness. It is a reversed (not refuted) dualism that first develops within the reductionist discourse of physiology in the 19th Century (Sarasin 2000: 51–52) and upholds a hope of overcoming enfleshedness, either by mechanical optimization or an outright escape from the flesh by, for example, uploading the conscious mind onto some type of data carrier.[11] In a less extreme version, the dualist presuppositions within this kind of reversed dualism are present in all manner of health advice employing the prefix *neuro*-[12], advertising a reductionist, yet, transformable view of the human brain—a meaning cluster that proliferates the paradoxical image of a preset and deterministic bodily apparatus that should nevertheless be adequately maintained and enhanced. A picture not unlike the ideology of eugenicists[13], where one's body is simultaneously an inescapable fate as well as individual responsibility.

From phenomenology to biology, many thinkers today agree that "the skin-line is not the great divide" (Gendlin 2017), and the body is instead a stable process, influenced and co-constituted by its outside and inside working together (see Dupré 2012; Nicholson and Dupré 2018; Gendlin 2017). Next to *Leib* phenomenology, the link between bodies and environments via a nature-cultured understanding of senseful materiality is emphasized by feminist posthumanist and new materialist thinkers, such as Stacy (2010), Astrida Neimanis (2017), and others.

Although scientific theories and scholarly endeavours that theorize neuroplasticity (Rose and Abi-Rached 2013: 12), transcorporeality (Alaimo 2010), epigenetic variation (Jablonka and Lamb 2014), and the enactive mind-in-the-brain environment dynamic (Noë 2009; Varela, Thompson and Rosch 1991), challenge the reductionist view, the image of an autonomous, brain-centered mind as a governor of its materiality continues to rule within the cultural imaginaries. That is due, possibly, to a lack of theorizations that would speak to the individual (Schoeller and Dunaetz 2018: 31) and insufficient exploration of the link between genes and the environment (Alaimo 2010: 3); thus, upholding the image of a genetically determined individual that is nevertheless separately autonomous from the environment and could strive for control over the "inner environment". It is on these premises that the systems of moral judgment of the eating person today are formed.

The underlying understanding of the body as a mechanical "thing" that, nevertheless, also exhausts the plane of meaning of the human self, facilitates this figuration—as the main

11   The ideology of reactive nihilism is, thus, closely linked also to the transhumanist ideology. For example, *Strategic Social Initiative 2045*, 2012.

12   On the prefix *neuro-,* substituting *psych* see Rose and Abi-Rached 2013: 6–8.

13   "[...] National Socialist ideology rested on the belief that social relations and political problems could ultimately be attributed to biological causes. At the same time, representatives of the regime regularly denied concepts of biological determinism and stressed that natural, organic facts were essentially 'historical and spiritual' facts. As a result, education and willpower were regarded as having a decisive meaning for the development of individuals and collectives" (Lemke 2011: 11). In contrast, with eugenics, however, today the responsibility is individual, rather than societal, see Rose 2007 on ethopolitics.

source of selfhood, the reversed dualism of reactive nihilism ascribes to the body the same aspirations and responsibilities that negative nihilism inscribed onto the soul. Your body should also be the main conveyor of identity, and negligence of the body is almost identical to negligence towards the soul. Consequently, a sort of sacral secularity of the body strengthens the moral imperative to keep the body "pure," not for the sake of an eternal soul, but its own sake—for extending its functions and enhancing performance (see further Sauka 2020b).

Furthermore, the presupposition of supposedly autonomous agents is upheld by the underlying substance ontology that values *things* before *processes* (Nicholson and Dupré 2018). Thus, the other side of the coin in the equation "individual agent and food" is the food itself, which is also reduced to individual products. That is evident in the context of capitalist consumerism that values things and goals before processes. Autonomous identity is established via purchasing the right products. The idea of identifying the self with what one has (and in this case—eats) rather than with what one *is,* is already discussed in detail in Erich Fromm's studies *To Have or to Be?* (Fromm 1976) and *The Art of Being* (Fromm 1992). Here I venture to transform this distinction in a Deleuzian vein to a conceptual distinction of *becoming*[14] and *having,* as the imagery of "being" as something static and characterized by fixity and autonomy is only possible via a discourse of objectification, namely, the mode of having.[15]

Understanding food as something that *becomes* rather than *is* (as consumable, passive materiality) is especially highlighted by Jane Bennett, who states: "Food too reveals materiality's instability, vagrancy, activeness" (Bennett 2007: 136). Becoming and having, thus, respectively represent: a) food as part of life's processes and b) food as an accessory of a personality that leads to shopping for meaning in the supermarket.

Instead of considering body-environment processes, the embodied acceptance of a substance ontology urges to encapsulate the meanings such as "health" or "green thinking" in the products themselves. Today, meaning can be quite literally bought in a shop that will cater to all tastes of "food philosophies." Starting from products for vegans and sugar-haters, to a juicy

14   "The concept of becoming is in many respects simply an extension of the notion of multiplicity, highlighting the temporal process, the production of multiplicities. Deleuze and Nietzsche both, of course, are here engaging one of the central problems of the history of philosophy: the relation between being and becoming. They emphasize becoming to highlight the fact that being itself is an act of creation, and that creation can only be understood as the production of differences, of multiplicities." Michael Hardt's "Foreword" to *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (Deleuze 2006: ix).

15   The difference might seem only linguistic, yet it also moves beyond the dialectic of being and having as two seemingly disassociated characterological modes of existence, when, in fact, having is to be thought of as part and parcel of what becoming is, since it is part of the experienced materiality and the way intentionality allows objectification of the body. A *cancerous,* pathological proliferation of having—alienated from becoming—facilitates attributing *thingness to identity* and highlights the problematic aspects of the endeavors to constrain, fixate and stop the continuous movement of meaning production and view life and identity as consumable and hoardable things. Deleuze's philosophy is characterized by a refutation of dialectics; here I specifically refer to the overcoming of dialectics in context with becoming and the Dionysian element in Nietzsche's philosophy (Deleuze 2006: 8–10).

steak for those who follow Feuerbach's rule "whatever is eats and is eaten" (Grün 1874: 83; cited in Cherno 1963: 400) and: "A man who enjoys only a vegetable diet is only a vegetating being, is incapable of action" (Grün 1874: 83; cited in Cherno 1963: 401).[16] Such a setting provides a fruitful ground for shopping for meaning. If meaning is constituted in fixed states of selfhood considered via the ownership of a magnificent body or an ideal morality, individual agents become the perfect consumers for the widest variety of products. Given current environmental anxieties, there is a shift in product marketing, yet the underlying paradigm, embedded in substance ontology and reactive nihilist attitudes is left unchanged. Complemented by official policies, lifestyle marketing today has found a new niche that addresses the consumer-citizen (Mol 2009), and two interrelated axes emerge: a) the association of the product with "health" and b) the association of the product with "greenness" and "fairness". Both also result in a peculiar association of "health" with "environmentalism".

Annemarie Mol outlines this shift in meanings, stating that the search for "pleasure" has been supplemented by the orientation on "health" and "fairness" in product advertisement and purchasing. Although the imperative of health, prevalent in Northern societies today (Elton 2019: 10), seems admirable, the lack of conceptualizing the entanglement of food products and environments and humankind necessitates assuming a critical distance towards accepting the consumption of certain products as the epitome of a healthy lifestyle. Seeing that the conceptual tie between food and health is mostly conceptualized via food as the end-product focusing on its *thingness*; dismissing the food production and consumption networks (Elton 2019: 10), it is easily understandable how the industry largely comes to appropriate the discourse of health for gaining profits. Consequently, the notion of health itself becomes problematic—among others, a relational understanding of health would reflect on long-term health effects rather than the immediate health effects for the individual.[17]

Hence, while I can agree with Mol's reflection that today's association of pleasure and fairness and pleasure and health provides a conceptualization that oversteps the traditional dualist mind and body distinction (Mol 2009), the overcoming of the mind/body distinction reflects the predominant reversed dualism that rests on a substance ontology, rather than merges the lines of mind/body and the environment. The product-oriented conceptualization of health, pleasure, and fairness, thus, does not take into account the processual character of the eating process and the entanglement of selfhood and the outside world and creates cultural imaginaries populated by biophysical markers and Instagram pictures of portions that either picture food as "fuel" or as an identity marker that does not facilitate the understanding of the body to go beyond autonomous selfhood only serving to embed moral gratification of the eater in the things themselves.

16   To be fair, I should note that Feuerbach here was referring to potatoes, which he advised to replace with beans, hence, this is again a case of a misread phrase.

17   In the words of Sarah Elton: "Even if the food provides needed nutrients to the body and keeps disease at bay, if food production damages water systems and contributes to climate change, we cannot continue to call this healthy food if we embrace a relational notion of health" (Elton 2019: 11).

In a way, one might agree with Žižek, who outlines the problems of green capitalism in his speeches, and even expresses the wish to bomb "Starbucks"[18] for including a fee for environmental causes into the coffee prices. The inclusion of price for environmental damage alleviates the guilt that usually comes with buying consumer products and transforms consumerism into a path to achieve instant moral gratification via monetary means. Today, consumerism has not only appropriated individual longings and desires but also caters to the broader moral trepidation about ecological and environmental problems. Thus, food has become the "quick fix" of existential and ethical concerns.

The elusive 'thingness' of the achievements—namely, the belief in the possibility to get perfect results and the idea that a perfect, fixable "thingness" is obtainable, together with the factual inaccessibility of these ideals, immeasurably broadens the limits of imagination of the producer. The ideology of acquiring perfection without pain and effort—present in both Žižek's (2010: 7) and Fromm's (1992: 24) critiques of capitalism—allows attracting consumers to the corresponding products for their "lifestyles". Having a product that fixes all the desired body goals and allows instantly achieving success fits the scenario of building an identity without considerable effort nor the involvement of a process of progression (see also Mol 2009: 272–273).

Moreover, to eat a specific diet responsibly often requires a super-human effort since it is hard to find out all the information on food logistics, food products used in farming and producing a specific product, etc. It is, thus, most often easier to rely on the producer and buy pre-packaged goods for a specific lifestyle, rather than filtering raw products for cooking "from scratch" and finding out if they adhere to the standards of one's ideal diet in both an ethical and health-related context. When the focus is entirely product-driven, health appeal easily opens up possibilities for creating "health products" that substitute those product categories that would otherwise fall into the "healthy eating" category (such as fresh produce) with their industrial pseudo-counterparts.

In the words of Annemarie Mol:

Criticism seems appropriate. What is 'natural' in all of this? And what about the price: 'health foods' provide producers with impressive profits in a market where non-processed food (should I say 'natural' food?) has very small margins. What is more: most scientific knowledge about the relation between food and health is thin and easy to contest (Mol 2009: 273).

Not to mention that some of the popular lifestyles today include diets such as keto and non-gluten diets that were invented for specific medical goals and, thus, require complicated planning as it is. The consequences of the producer politics to invent products for specific diets, however, are not that good for the environment—every specific diet opens a broad scope of possibilities for packaging agricultural products in enticing forms that rest

18   "I am not a terrorist, but if I were to be a terrorist, I would say—bomb Starbucks" (Žižek 2018). Also see Žižek 2010: 236.

on monoculture farming. Since the consumption and production of animal products and animal food have not significantly decreased, veganism, for example, only adds to the environmental threat of monoculture farming industries instead of diminishing it (Clark 2018). Moreover, specific products often also require additional packaging.

However, the situation is aggravated by the fact that buying "organic" or "ecological" is the exception, rather than the rule, and, according to the World Health Organization[19], most of the products in supermarkets today contain much more sugar (Nordqvist 2018) and food additives than a regular human diet should contain. This fact, complemented by the increasingly contradictory health-advice on which products are safe to eat, understandably has driven people towards finding a specific healthy lifestyle, which then necessitates the use of products designed specifically for such use. Furthermore, this is discriminatory against lower-income households, as for many, the vegan diet will inevitably mean oatmeal with water, rather than avocados, the production of which is also quite controversial (Gaeta).

The ethical consequences of the ontogenealogies[20] represented by and facilitated by the formula "you are, what you eat", however, might be acceptable (or rather could be critically assessed via a different approach) if this message represented the factual existential standing of humanity. Unsurprisingly, however, this is also a problematic question. In a sense, humans definitely are what they eat; when the food reaches stomach and guts, it is, however, processed, no longer a bun or a roast, it is converted into nutrients, waste materials, mineral substances, vitamins and, in the last instance, energy. In the words of posthumanist thinker Jane Bennett, "My meal is and is not mine; you are and are not what you eat" (Bennett 2007: 134). If food, as something that "one is", is conceived in a reductionist manner—outside of the nexus of human and non-human actors—I could nourish myself with futuristic nutritional tablets instead of fancy lifestyle foods.

However, the message conveyed by "you are, what you eat" is concerned instead with the *surface*, the moment when food becomes something external, an accessory to take pride in or feel shame about—an *instagrammable* portion for self-identification. The identification process has its materiality, of course, although the symbolic meaning here might be much more pronounced. Who are we as citizens, family members, and how do we relate to others in our communities? (Mol 2009). These questions are important; however, problematic here is the tight bond that concrete food products build with certain ways of presenting one's identity, particularly taking into account the fact that one is never completely free in making food choices. Decisions are influenced by everything that co-constitutes humankind, starting from the gut-bacteria (that supposedly have a say in this choice, see Leitão-Gonçalves et al. 2017) to the industry, communities, and the leading ideologies of healthy lifestyles, which are heavily impacted by the competing food producers of either fat or sugar-packed foods.

19   "WHO suggests a further reduction of the intake of free sugars to below 5% of total energy intake (conditional recommendation)" (*Guideline: Sugar Intake for adults and children,* 2015: 16).

20   The use of this term is here, in my opinion important, since the lifestyle genealogies also co-constitute lived materialities.

Shifting guilt and responsibility to the individual whose choices are regarded as defining for the future of the environment, two birds are struck with one stone: first, an individual can gain moral gratification for a moral decision at the shelf of a supermarket and; second, the individual sense of guilt conceals the necessity for structural changes.[21] While stores continue to provide sliced broccoli packed in plastic, the demand for the product will continue because a responsibility shared with everyone often results in a diffusion of responsibility (Nollkaemper 2018) that, in this case, leads to no responsibility at all.

In line with the overall paradigm of reactive nihilism that inscribes meanings in physiology while upholding its autonomy, food today has acquired almost a sacral meaning, as the stuff of identity (Probyn 2003). With the *negative framing* of the environment (Neimanis, Åsberg, Hedrén 2015), society has become an easy target to advertisements and loud manifestos of "health" or "ethics" which can, among others, also instigate an "allergic" reaction against changing supposedly "bad" consumption habits. Thus, product-centered food lifestyles also facilitate societal polarization—food becomes a bone of contention for sharpening one's teeth while concealing the factual processuality, inclusion, and interaction of societies, environments, and bodies (incl. the bodies of non-human actors).

In context with the prevalent consumption patterns in the Global North, global discussions on the benefits of certain food preferences (esp. in popular science and marketing contexts) propagate an ideology that assumes by implication that the food involved is store-bought. The discussion, thus, disregards sociopolitical situatedness. Where environmental concerns meet animal ethics, these generalizations are particularly evident, as animal suffering, for example, is assumed to be a prerequisite for acquiring eggs or milk. The alternative of domestic food production is rarely addressed in the ethical considerations or severely underrepresented. Close relations with animals and a personal involvement in food production is the reality for many in Latvia, which leads me to consider Latvia as a possible source of knowledge production in the juxtaposition of product and process-oriented approaches to ethical questions relating to food.

2. Thinking Food in Latvia

Public discussions on political and cultural issues of foodways and consumption focus on Global Northern or Western European contexts, underrepresenting post-Soviet or Baltic experiences (Mincytė, and Plath 2015; 2017). While the Global South slowly gains scholarly attention, praxes characteristic to the European East are continuously marginalized and not considered as a source of knowledge production. The reasons for this situation stem from a broader problem of knowledge networks.

21   Picking out food in restaurants strengthens this point of argument—how can I choose between broccoli or a burger if I do not know how this broccoli was harvested or if it was packaged, etc.?

Social scientists of different spheres have problematized the marginalization of Eastern Europe (see, for example, Kovačević 2008; Wolff 1994) or the constitution of the "East" as the Other that co-produces the identity of the West as its better counterpart (Neumann 1999). Some scholars argue that the advent of the distinction of the Global North and South saw the vanishing of the "Second World" of the former USSR countries (Müller 2018, pp. 3–4; Jehlička et al. 2020: 286–287) that has led to the East's exclusion from the "map of knowledge production" (Müller 2018: 3).

Additionally, since product-centered marketing strategies and moral gratification packaged as a consumer goods often speak over the voices of science-based advice and sustainability politics, and policies in everyday consumer-directed contexts[22], societies globally undergo increasing commodification of ethical and health-related values and attitudes.

Caught between t twofold distinctions of North and South, and East and West that are further complicated by the Soviet past, Latvia has hitherto mostly been on the receiving end of knowledge production. In a recent article, "Thinking food like an East European: A critical reflection on the framing of food systems" (Jehlička et al. 2020), the authors introduce their research on food systems, providing a discussion of "agro-food practices in peripheral, non-Western context" (Jehlička et al. 2020: 290) that could benefit European discussions on sustainability and environmentally friendly food systems in the future.

For this article, it is relevant that they mention *exchange, transfer,* and domestic *production* of food as significant characteristics of Eastern European practices, stating that:

> East European food systems are remarkably resilient as compared to the societies in the 'centre'. The combination of options for obtaining food via *exchange* (people use their labour to purchase food), *transfer* (people use their membership in a local community to obtain food as a gift), and *production* (using land and skills people produce or forage their food) gives these societies a unique opportunity for experimentation and creativity—processes that should inspire scholars both within and beyond the region (Jehlička et al. 2020: 293).

Here I argue that this focus also falls in line with a philosophical discussion of food and sustainability in everyday social contexts (namely, in context with the consumer position), as traditional food systems in Latvia show an affinity with proposals for reconsidering the importance of human relationships with food in terms of taking into account the situatedness of local practices and prioritizing process before product. Far from providing perfect solutions for sustainability, climate neutrality, and waste reduction[23], traditional praxes of Latvia

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22   That is in some sense unavoidable in a capitalist market and refers to what Bourdieu conceptualizes as "symbolic capital" (Bourdieu 1990: 112 – 121).

23   The discussion of the systemic aspects of policy-making and structural change falls outside the scope of this article. It is impossible to evaluate specific policies within the terms of product-oriented or process-oriented practices that refer to a broad context of social ontogenealogies.

could provide insight for recontextualizing ethical approaches in terms of processes involved in food production and consumption, rather than the concrete food products themselves. These praxes include, for example, non-monetary exchange of food grown in private gardens and domestic animal breeding, beekeeping, fishing, and foraging, and point toward alternative ontologies that are possibly tied also to Baltic folklore and could provide viable ontogenealogical alternatives to the reactive nihilism contexts discussed in the previous section.

Traditions, such as gardening, food transfer, and foraging, although less significant in a pragmatic context, remain "extremely important as a historical and cultural practice" (Trenouth and Tisenkopfs 2015: 369). This realization suggests that these practices could be revitalized within the new, largely West-originated contexts of environmentally conscious and health-oriented lifestyles that increasingly influence the daily lives of Latvian consumers.

Although the consumerization of food in the post-Soviet period has left a negative impact on traditional food-exchange practices, with the younger populations drawn to more attractive lifestyles coming from the Global North, Latvia has also been quite successful in synthesizing environmentally friendly and eco-conscious attitudes with traditional practices of gardening, foraging, and small-scale animal agriculture. In the article "Evolution of Household Foodscapes in Latvia" (Trenouth and Tisenkopfs 2015), research on changes in household foodscapes between the late Socialist period and today, the authors observe that:

> Among many consumers, there is a common discontent with what Buchler, Smith, and Lawrence (2010) term 'modern risks' in the form of increased adulteration of foods, presence of chemical residues from pesticides and fertilizers, and the addition of artificial additives (Trenouth and Tisenkopfs 2015: 367).

Their observations suggest that in Latvia, parts of traditional knowledge have served as a barrier for adopting Western food consumption patterns (regarding industrial food consumption and consuming high volumes of convenience foods, import foods, and foods with chemical additives), by proxy also defending traditions such gardening, exchange, and foraging. The authors also conclude that:

> Gardening and gathering of wild foods remain common practices in many households and are strongly rooted in cultural traditions. Social networks in exchanging homegrown food with relatives, neighbors and friends remain relevant, albeit in lower importance, and food continues to nourish social ties (Trenouth and Tisenkopfs 2015: 370).

The reasons for this cultural synthesis are manifold and could be partly related to the high value of nature in Baltic folklore and the self-identification of Latvians as peasants (Schwartz 2007) that has been formed at least from the 19th century, and after the 1990s was partly reinforced as a protest to Soviet industrialization.

Reinforcing existing process-oriented practices could help in developing an inclusive framework of the ethics of care (Elton 2009: 12) that would be more accessible in a financial and

societal context and facilitate ecological solidarity. Although food poverty often hinders the possibility of the financially disadvantaged populations in urban settings to look into the production patterns of foods consumed, the highlight of processuality allows moving beyond the focus on autonomous, individual bodies and stress environmental factors instead.

In a country, where the average earnings are 1076 Euro per month before taxes (Data of the Central Statistical Bureau, 2019) and a considerable part of the population lives on a minimum income (500 Eur per month before taxes, as of the year 2021), the revitalization of non-monetary food systems seems even more valuable. Today, the results of a recent Baltic Studies Centre's study on food consumption and choice in Latvia shows that 59.6% of 1046 respondents agree with the statement that healthy eating is expensive (Ādamsone-Fiskoviča et al. 2020: 15), and 31% of the respondents state that price is the most crucial criterion in food choices (Ādamsone-Fiskoviča et al. 2020: 7).

Moreover, the facilitation of process-oriented practices would also help to promote environmental consciousness. The future of the world's ecosystems does not, after all, rest on the fitness of individuals, and, although a transcorporeal understanding of the body does presume that environmental pollution also includes the toxicity of the body (Cielemęcka and Åsberg 2019: Marder 2021: 55–65), there is no direct reciprocal link that would allow cleaning the planet by purifying human bodies. Often the imperatives of health and the environment are conflictual (Resnik 2009). One could imagine a health-oriented argument that food produced in a domestic setting might not provide the health benefits of expensive "organic" products, as the domestic soil could presumably be contaminated by some local pollution that is thought to not be affecting farms that have acquired the label "organic". An implication here seems to be present that only a product that enhances one's health can be sufficiently environmentally friendly or that the eco-conscious attitudes are of value mainly due to their health benefits.

In context with societal solidarity, focusing on processes of food production and consumption, rather than products themselves, would be more inclusive of those who do not seek health advice or do not feel welcomed by the aesthetic ideology encapsulated in the phrase "you are what you eat" that facilitates the assumption that a person's appearance might suggest what they eat. It would also mitigate the conflicts of different lifestyle groups, such as vegans and keto dieters. The possibility that such conflictual situations might arise is also suggested by data, as the aforementioned research report states that almost half of the respondents (47.6%) cite consumers as responsible for eating healthy and environmentally friendly food, putting the "blame" also on food processing companies (45.4 %), but less so on government (22.2 %) or the European Union (8.7 %) (Ādamsone-Fiskoviča et al. 2020: 18). This may have an affinity with what Žižek so vehemently criticizes (product-oriented moral gratification strategies); yet, the acceptance of consumer responsibility also provides fruitful ground for revitalizing non-monetary food systems as individual living strategies via the promotion of processuality.

Lastly, an ethics of care centered on the sustainability of food networks, rather than the health benefits of the foods, could prove beneficial for promoting inclusiveness and

solidarity of the local community in Latvia with regard to environmental concerns. A processual understanding of food consumption is more inclusive of rural communities, where the transfer and exchange of traditional goods provides a sustainable alternative for economically disadvantaged and advantaged populations alike, providing fresh and local produce that might not adhere to the standards of a "fitness-oriented" diet (such as potatoes, dairy products, etc.).

This is crucial today, at a time when the locals in Latvia still doubt the seriousness of climate concerns and tend to perceive such notions as an alien threat rather than a supplement to traditional knowledge. Moreover, individuals rarely cite environmental concerns as the driving reasons for food consumption and choice practices: in the aforementioned research report, only 3.7 % of 1046 respondents stated that in the last 12 months that they have started to choose products that are more environmentally friendly, while 17.8 % state that they have started to eat "healthier" (Ādamsone-Fiskoviča et al. 2020: 14). Overall, consumers are more concerned with health factors than meeting environmental or ethical goals, with only 17.9 % citing socially responsible and ethical production as one of the three main factors directing their consumption choices, while 70.7 % cited health reasons—thus, demonstrating health as the second most important factor contributing to food choices after price, which was significant for 71.7 % of the respondents (Ādamsone-Fiskoviča et al. 2020: 8).

It seems paradoxical for a country where "nature" has always been held in such high esteem, yet this could indicate that environmental concerns are viewed as alien and not recognized as related to traditional practices, already in place. When certain praxes are viewed as foreign and invading, the realization that recycling resembles composting and "the Nordic diet" basically equals traditionally prepared Latvian meals, might be lost, leading to either enthusiastic acceptance of product-oriented, eco-consciousness, and lifestyle changes or a denial to take part in any environmentally-focused activities. Environmental consciousness, thus, acquires the form of either an unattainable ideal or a looming threat to the existing tradition. Both options suggest a level of reverence toward the perceptually "more-developed" West and lead to evading environmental consciousness altogether as a sort of Western luxury *or,* alternatively, investing oneself in the consumption of morally or health-wise "appropriate" goods.

It might be argued that this is not the case in Latvia, as gardening and foraging already enjoy a synthesis with the new eco-conscious lifestyles (at least for younger generations); however, marketing strategies of health and wellness industries, as well as the capitalist appropriation of moral gratification in ethical matters threatens to disrupt or destroy this fragile bond[24], which is still comparatively new. For example, Latvians seem to value pure "natural" foods, but mostly cite taste and health benefits, rather than environmental aspects in their pursue of organic products. As, an example, Trenouth and Tisenkopf's notice that:

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24   The fragility of this bond is exemplified by the fact that 13.4% of respondents in the Baltic Studies Centre's research report cited "weight control" as a reason for changing their food consumption habits in the last 12 months, while only 2% cited "care for the environment" as a driving factor for that change (Ādamsone-Fiskoviča et al. 2020: 12). The data suggests that the discourse cluster detailed in the first part of this article might also be strongly present in Latvian society.

> [...] informants felt that organic, clean, natural, Latvian products, reminiscent of what they ate as children, simply tasted better than their more adulterated, new, and foreign counterparts. [...] Health concerns have become more prominent in today's decision-making process, especially amongst women, where 'healthy food' is often associated with organic, unadulterated products, relatively free of additives and chemical residue from production. Šūmane (2010) noted that in the initial phase of organic agriculture in Latvia in the 1990s, health concerns were among the driving factors for farmers in their transition to organic agriculture. (Trenouth and Tisenkopfs 2015: 367)

Positive reinforcement of existing practices might facilitate the recognition that eco-consciousness is not foreign. Moreover, it could promote the acceptance of European Green Deal policies, and lead to a fruitful synthesis of local and West-originated approaches in gardening, forestry, and agriculture.

3. Conclusions

The conclusions that can be drawn from the discussion of food consumption and production practices in Latvia are not univocal. On one hand, the continuous marginalization of Baltic and Eastern European contributions to scientific and everyday discourses might facilitate the disintegration of traditional food systems, such as domestic farm animal breeding and vegetable growth, especially when faced with the reactive nihilism practices of "you are what you eat"— strengthened by the invasion of import "health" goods in Latvian markets. On the other hand, scientific insight coming from the European West (also in popular culture translations) often reinvigorates forgotten practices—a growing interest in "healthy foods" also facilitates growing foods in urban settings and highlights the benefits of traditional food systems, making it possible for Baltic considerations to be heard. In this science-based context, Western-based food sustainability efforts and environmental philosophies are, thus, a necessary informational tool.

The complexity of the situation reinvigorates the discussion of existential philosophical context framed by the processual (*becoming* oriented) and substance-oriented (*having* oriented) directions of understanding bodies and the ecologies in which they are involved. Significantly, the aforementioned Latvian food practices denote a process-oriented outlook that goes beyond "shopping for meaning" and ascribes meaning to *how* food is prepared and gathered, rather than the product itself. The value of certain food products is not directly health-related but instead depends on human-environment interaction, and this relation itself is culturally valuable.

This factor points toward an alternative ontogenealogy, beyond the reactive nihilist paradigm and possibly beyond substance ontology. Intermixed with the patterns imported from the Global North, possibly since the Christianization of Latvian communities in the 13th

Century, Latvia, as one of the last pagan communities in Europe, provides ample ground for further ontogenealogical investigation that, however, lays out of the scope of this article.

Overall, it seems that the systemic, processual approaches that are increasingly gaining significance in large-scale structural policies could also benefit from existing Latvian praxes that could be employed as local vehicles for popularizing process-oriented attitudes. Namely, the local practices and attitudes, inherited from the previous generations, can function as a close-to-home alternative to the leading consumerism-driven discourses as sources of moral gratification and examples of processual, food-network centered environmental activism, as well as possibly provide a fertile ground for scientific insight to food sustainability (as suggested by Jehlička et al. 2020). That might also be a mutually beneficial process, as eco-conscious and health-oriented trends from Western Europe might facilitate maintaining and revitalizing the cultural heritage practices that have lost some of their popularity since the declaration of independence.

Thus, for now, it seems sufficient to conclude that traditional food networks in the Latvian community can serve as an example of the merits of process-oriented ethics of food in sustainability contexts, and as such, could add to the global discussion of environmental ethics. This is especially crucial at a time when environmental humanities warn against the intangibility of the environment and the depoliticization of environmental concerns (Neimanis, Åsberg, Hedrén 2015), while scholarly discussions express the need to reconceptualize the idea of sustainability to bring it closer to the community (Ingold 2021), and posthuman theorists point out the importance of considering the processual embeddedness of food (Elton 2019; Whatmore 2002).

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Jēgas lielveikalā: pārtikas patēriņa ontoloģijas Latvijā

Anne Sauka

Iezīmējot Ludviga Feierbaha slavenās frāzes "cilvēks ir tas, ko viņš ēd" ģenealoģiju, šajā rakstā tiek analizēti pārtikas patēriņa eksistenciālo un ētisko prakšu ontoloģiskie pamati, nošķirot uz produktu orientētas un procesuālas ontoloģijas. Paplašinot ierasto kritiskās ģenealoģijas jēdzienu ar jaunā materiālisma teorētiskajiem apsvērumiem par ķermeņa procesualitāti un dzīvoto materialitāti, rakstā izmantota ontoģenealoģiska pieeja, kas ļauj pievērsties sociālpolitisko transformāciju un dzīvotās materialitātes savstarpējības analīzei. Konceptuālais fons cilvēka attiecībās ar ēdienu rakstā tiek skaidrots caur reaktīvā nihilisma un substanču ontoloģijas prizmu. Šiem jēdzieniem piesaistītās parādības rakstā tiek problematizētas kā "iemiesotās ideoloģijas" kontekstā ar jaunā materiālisma diskusijām par pārtikas, veselības un vides savstarpējību. Otrā raksta daļa ir veltīta diskusijai par pārtikas sagādes praksēm Latvijā. Tradicionālas ēdiena sagādes prakses rakstā tiek aplūkotas kā alternatīvs zināšanu avots, kura ontoģenealoģisko fonu veido marginālas, citastarp arī procesuālas ontoloģijas un "iemiesotās ideoloģijas", ko šobrīd pamatā nomāc dominējošais ontoģenealoģiskais fons. Kultūras mantojuma iedzīvināšana pārtikas ražošanas un patēriņa sfērā tiek izskatīta kā iespējams nākotnes risinājums vides humanitāro zinātņu cīņā ar produktu orientētu ideoloģiju negatīvajiem faktoriem, īpaši kontekstā ar patērētāja morālā apmierinājuma piesaisti noteiktam produktam un vides atsvešinājumu. Raksta mērķis ir demonstrēt nepieciešamību pārdomāt un rekontekstualizēt situatīvas ontoloģijas, akcentējot to nozīmi iekļaujošas rūpju ētikas veidošanā. Rakstā secināts, ka situatīvu ontoloģiju iedzīvināšana varētu ne vien piedāvāt alternatīvu valdošajām ideoloģijām, bet arī veicināt vides problēmu apzināšanos un mazināt atsvešinātību attiecībās ar vidi, iedibinot saikni starp šībrīža procesuālām pieejām vides izpratnē un lokāli situētām zināšanām un tādējādi rūpes par vidi padarot kā kaut ko lokālā kontekstā pazīstamu.

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