

# CULTURAL ANALYSIS

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY FORUM ON FOLKLORE AND POPULAR CULTURE

## Volume 10: Narrative Spaces in a Multicultural City

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**An Interdisciplinary Forum on Folklore and Popular Culture**  
**Volume 10: Narrative Spaces in a Multicultural City**  
**Special Issue (in association with SIEF)**

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## Introduction

This volume has evolved as a follow-up to the panel under the same title, which we organized at the 10<sup>th</sup> Congress of the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF), in April 2011 in Lisbon. During the General Assembly congress participants were informed that the journal *Cultural Analysis* and SIEF had decided to be associated. Therefore we are particularly pleased that this special issue is the first volume of *Cultural Analysis* after the important decision was made and that most of the contributors are SIEF members.

The theme of this volume reflects an ever growing scholarly interest in various aspects of city life. The number of urban dwellers is constantly growing, and according to UN forecasts, by the middle of this century 70% of the world population will live in cities. The continuing processes of urbanization bring about new challenges and trigger scholarly and public debate (Bandarin 2011, 121). The very emergence of the subfield of urban anthropology is intertwined with the study of complex societies. As Eames and Goode aptly observe, even if a city emerged or was created for one dominant function it quickly draws to itself ancillary functions. Moreover, cities are not isolated geographic units but are linked in dynamic interaction with a hierarchy of contexts, from the local hinterland to regional, national and even international fields (Eames and Goode 1977, 79). Among the many roles of the city, its cultural role, including continuity and changes in cultures, remain the primary concern of urban anthropology. Due to globalization

and mass migration most of the cities have become multiethnic and multicultural, but constituent cultures do not always act in unison. Urban spaces act as an arena within which different lifestyles interact and compete. As Simmel argues in his seminal work, it is the diversity, the constant tension created by the presence of numerous *others* and the multiplicity of economic, occupational, and social life that create the sensory foundations of mental life of city dwellers (Simmel 2002, 11-12). Unlike Simmel's work, none of the articles in this volume are concerned with a metropolis, yet middle-size and small towns on which the authors focus also reveal complexities and challenges of multiethnic and multicultural interaction in urban life.

Among the central and interrelated notions in the discourse on space in general, and on city space in particular, are place identity, reading space and constructing its meaning (See, e.g., Cuba and Hummon 1993; Lefebvre 1991, 1-67; Lewicka 2008; Relph 1976, 8-26). People's self-conceptions are related to spaces that they experience as their own, perceive as belonging to the *other* but attractive in their very *otherness*, or just the opposite, regard as alien and insecure and so try to avoid them. Essays presented in this volume show that these perceptions may be rooted in history (Amosova, Protassova and Reponen, and Vitti) and socio-political changes (Jaago, Janev, and Nosenko-Stein). Memories of the past are inscribed onto places significant for an ethno-cultural group and play a variety of functions: from domesticating the city and making it one's own to reviving community that virtually ceased to exist. Much thought is

given by the authors to symbolic borders between urban and rural (Blumen and Tsafir, and Kaurinkoski), and borders that are imposed by ethnic politics and power struggle (Janev, Yelenevskaya and Fialkova). The latter can be either reinforced by residents' behavior or weakened when members of different ethno-cultural groups find it beneficial to cross them. Another theme that comes up in the volume is places of consumption and their role in the city image, as well as in interethnic and intercultural relations.

Urban studies is an interdisciplinary endeavour, and the background of the authors in this issue testifies to this, as they specialize in cultural anthropology and human-resource management, linguistics and immigration studies, folkloristics and gender studies, homework relations and Jewish studies. The geography of the studies presented in the volume is also diverse and will take the reader from the Baltic (Finland and Estonia) to various regions of Russia and Western Ukraine, to East European Slovakia and Macedonia and then further South to the Mediterranean (Greece and Israel). But although the authors look at urban life and urbanites from the perspective of their various disciplines, and although the towns where fieldwork was conducted vary in dimensions, socio-political structure, and ethno-cultural composition, observations and analyses made by the authors "talk to each other," pointing to similar trends and problems in multiethnic cities.

We would like to thank all contributors for their commitment to our joint project and for the creativity and reflectiveness that marks their work. We are indebted to the editors of *Cultural Analysis*, whose

competent advice and generous help were invaluable to us. We would also like to extend our gratitude to Rafael Flickstein, whose computer expertise saved us from many a disaster.

Maria Yelenevskaya  
Larisa Fialkova  
Guest Editors, *Cultural Analysis*

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# Narrating the Nation, Narrating the City<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*This article analyzes expressions of power relationships in the built environment through the concept of narrative spaces. The specific case analyzed in this study is the major remaking of public space in Skopje, the capital of the Republic of Macedonia. The emerging ethnocratic regime in Macedonia aims at the creation of an ethnocratic spatial order through the installation of symbolic markers in the built environment that practically fragment the city into ethnically-defined territories. The citizens of Skopje have reacted to this division by crossing these new symbolic borders and by attending places at the border zone and transforming it into a contact zone.*

## Introduction

Studies of inter-ethnic relations, typically provoked or inspired by recent or ongoing conflicts and prolonged tensions, often remain confined to analysis of political discourse and actions. Analysis of spatiality in this branch of research is largely limited to the notion of territoriality, which is most closely connected with research into nationalism and is linked to the concept of the nation-state. As the compilers and authors selected in the copious reader on state space demonstrate (Brenner et al., 2003), probing beyond this assumed “territorial trap” opens up almost limitless analytical possibilities. I propose a more thorough elaboration on spatiality in the study of inter-ethnic relations within a nation-state. Moreover, I extend the application of the notion of territoriality

to street level, in an urban setting in particular. I will use a spatially-oriented approach to examine the tense ethnic relations in Macedonia in the capital city of Skopje. I employ the concept of narrative spaces to better understand social action in the political realm, expressed both in spatial practices and contained in the built environment, and the mutual influences of the social relations thus shaped, or inter-ethnic relations specifically. Since the early days of independence, the Republic of Macedonia—once famous for its ethnic diversity and even today with a significantly mixed population of 2 million structured as follows: 60 per cent Macedonians; 25 per cent ethnic Albanians; and 15 per cent Roma, Turkish, Serbian, Bosnians, Vlachs and others—has been negotiating a formula for the new nationhood that can accommodate such diversity. The emphasis on ethnic politics has led to the development of a political and social order dominated almost completely by ethnic interests. I will elaborate below on how the emerging order of the past two decades has led to the formation of an ethnocratic regime. Yiftachel (2006, 32) defines as “ethnocratic” those regimes that rupture the concept of the *demos* in favor of a single ethno-national group. On the basis of my material I suggest that relocating political legitimacy to ethno-national groups and emphasizing the plural is what has caused this rupture of the concept of the *demos*. The ethnocratic regime that has emerged in Macedonia, as I argue in this article, is best observed in the new spatial order. That is why I rely on spatiality to explore and explain the working of ethno-politics.

My fieldwork site is the city of Skopje

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where I was born and raised. I later trained as an anthropologist elsewhere and conducted my first fieldwork study in Macedonia as a researcher from abroad. For this present paper I have again conducted my research from abroad. I first became sensitive to spatiality through my interest in local government and the process of decentralization in post-conflict Macedonia. In 2001 there was a brief military confrontation between radical ethnic Albanians and Macedonian state security forces that maximized the polarization of inter-ethnic relations between Macedonians and Albanians. The new territorial distribution of the municipalities in 2005, designed to appease ethnic Albanian demands, provoked a renewal of tensions. The devolution of powers to local government held out great promise for a more participatory democracy but, at the same time, carried the danger that democratic participation would be limited to ethnic collectivities.

Macedonian-Albanian inter-ethnic relations are arguably the most appropriate for observing the subtleties of political economy of scale (Brenner et al., 2003) as they involve troubled international relations in the reshaping of the region of South-East Europe, inter-ethnic relations within the Republic of Macedonia, and local administration and regional dynamics within the country at sub-national scale. I started designing my research in 2008 when I realized that ongoing efforts to build a number of cultural institutions and erect a number of monuments were increasingly growing beyond affordable, imaginable, or necessary dimensions. Already, by late 2008, some of those intentions to

remake the city in nationalist fashion were becoming apparent and I decided to focus on this symbolic reconstruction. It was not until early 2010 that the government announced the "Skopje 2014" project, but it soon became obvious that acts of planning and urban design were rooted in existing power structures of nationalism (Fenster and Yacobi 2010, 1). This grandiose project is intended to make the capital of the Republic of Macedonia into the national capital of ethnic Macedonians. Favorable demographic distribution and ethnopolitical engineering in 2005 created an Albanian-controlled municipality of Chair. The local government responded by proposing the construction of a "Skanderbeg Square" to symbolically express their indisputable right over the part of the city that forms the nucleus of the old city. Therefore I decided to adjust my analytical apparatus to accommodate the increased importance of spatiality in my research. In this article I will elaborate the usefulness of the notion of narrative spaces for the study of politicized inter-group relations in urban settings.

My engagement with the city of Skopje demanded that I make a decision about my primary unit of analysis. In many ways this unit transpired to be Skopje's Old Bazaar, a remnant of the city nucleus from medieval times. On the other hand, I also explore the workings of nationalist forces in a country of great ethnic and religious diversity. Therefore, the bazaar, or *charshija* as it is called locally, is where I concentrated my fieldwork activities, but the implications of this study are much wider.

I was familiar with the *charshija* since my mother, a ceramic artist, ran

a studio/gallery in the bazaar with my father for five years in the early 1990s. At that time I was a student of ethnology and would often go to the gallery to allow my parents to have a break. The research I conducted fifteen years later has benefited from this prolonged engagement, for I was very familiar with the physical terrain. The social terrain had altered significantly, however, and so I needed to acquaint myself with the changed *charshija*. I conducted more than twenty in-depth interviews with various shopkeepers and held many other shorter exchanges and conversations. I also organized a short survey with over 400 respondents, including almost all of the shopkeepers in the Old Bazaar. Given that the word *charshija* still means “the talk of the town”, and given that this particular place still affords insights into the traditional social order and is located between the new boundaries in the Macedonian ethnopolitical landscape, I believe that the *charshija* holds the key to understanding the emerging ethnocentric spatial order.

In recent decades, spatiality has finally won a more generous reception across various disciplines, including anthropology. It has never been completely absent and there have always been researchers interested in observing social life through the analysis of spatial phenomena. In spite of the fact that engagement with social space was one of the major concerns of the founders of the social sciences, as noted almost half a century ago by Kuper (1972) space, social space, or any aspect of spatiality has yet to attain a mainstream position. The renewed and intensified interest in urban phenomena has contributed towards a

more privileged treatment of spatiality. Increasing disciplinary specialization, however, has been accompanied by a slight neglect of spatiality in the social sciences in general. With this case study of Skopje—and its Old Bazaar in particular—I propose that spatiality is a central aspect of inter-ethnic relations in an urban setting and requires openness between disciplinary boundaries to allow fruitful conceptual borrowings.

Urban scholarship that accepts spatiality as constitutive of social phenomena also tends to disregard disciplinary boundaries. This results in cross-disciplinary conceptual fertilization because borrowings and adoptions of concepts, studies, findings, metaphors and approaches are plentiful in current literature dealing with the spatial aspect of societies. Certainly, there are a great many sub-disciplinary divisions and sub-specializations stemming from increased attention to spatiality. That could be used to argue that many concepts have lost their communicative value as they have been specifically utilized within different contexts within each discipline. Creative license in the manipulation of concepts allows for breakthrough findings but could also introduce a great amount of confusion. There are also concepts that travel across social sciences and humanities and we should be careful when employing them if we are to avoid misunderstandings.

Rather than steering clear of such a potentially confusing situation, I intend to engage with spatiality by borrowing a concept of narrative space that has been developed elsewhere. This concept has been widely used in film and literary criticism, where it also means two similar

but different things. Narrative space has already been welcomed in the social sciences. I will use the notion of narrative space to analyze the consequences of the establishment of an ethnocratic regime in Macedonia and the ways in which this regime enforces a corresponding spatial order. Moreover, I will not limit the construction of narrative spaces by merely observing the narrative functions of the built environment and symbolic landscaping. I argue that narrative spaces are also constructed by immaterial actions of spatial practices that do not even require oral or literary expression. The approach to spatial practices and spatial acts that I use to construct my argument follows, to a certain extent, Bourdieu's (1977) conceptualization of *habitus*, the unspoken transmission of spatially-learned social roles and rules.

### **Narrative spaces**

In a comprehensive volume that sets out to take stock of developments in the field of urban studies at the end of the twentieth century Eade and Mele propose that the most remarkable advance was achieved through a cultural turn. Including the symbolic and discursive within urban studies has enriched analysis which was hitherto concerned mainly with implications stemming from political economy (Eade and Mele 2002, 6). The cultural turn in urban studies has provided a broader base for critiquing the capitalist production of space, no longer confined to political economy. The field of urban studies has certainly benefited from the inclusion of processes that produce meaning in social space. Narrative space, however, is used in a great variety of ways in spatially-

informed analysis. In the same volume we find the definition of narrative as an analytical tool of urban scholars as an appropriate way to comprehend the expanding role of identitarian politics in increasingly diversified cities around the globe (Fincher, Jacobs and Anderson 2002). Trubina (2010) uses the term "rhetorical space" to explore the construction of the identity of Volgograd, formerly Stalingrad, the defining moment of which was the Battle of Stalingrad in World War II. Although often referring to various and contradictory narratives, Trubina opted for "rhetorical space" as most expressive of the transformations of the memory practices that define this city. Finnegan (1998) engages directly with the concept of narrative and remains dedicated to it from the title of her book, *Tales of the city: a study of narrative and urban life*, to its very last page. In her view, scholars tell their stories just as city planners, investors and people do. This perspective is quite similar to de Certeau's persuasive treatment of the planners' view from the top of a skyscraper that reveals the grid organization of the urban space of crosscutting streets at right angles and the acts of transgression of this order by walkers at street level whose trajectories cut through the planned corridors of movement (Ward 2000, 101-119). I build my argument in a similar way, but I add the notion of narrative space to help identify the emerging disjuncture between the clear-cut ethnic space of the new urban planners in Skopje and the trajectories cut through this space by the citizens of Skopje.

I am interested in the production of narrative space both as a top-down process and the social construction of

narrative space as a bottom-up process. In doing so I take my cue from Setha Low (2009) on the distinction and interplay between the social production and social construction of space. I am only adding the concept of narrative spaces to better capture the frantic developments in my research location. Therefore I intend to engage with narrative spaces not only as they are intentionally produced to invoke certain identitarian connotations, but also to understand how this production is accepted by the local population. In the case of Skopje, as mentioned above, this population is extremely diverse, and this is especially relevant, given that the producers of symbolic meaning in Skopje are acting as if they were oblivious to that diversity. With their interventions in the public space intended to define that space along ethnic lines, the ethnocrats are continually challenging the citizens of the capital city and their capacity to ignore the new symbolic order that divides the city by ethno-symbolic markers. By contrasting different narratives—those materialized in space by the ruling elites, and those of the immaterial spatial practices of Skopje citizens—I disclose the artificiality of ethno-nationalist discourse and the dangerous imposition of a divisive spatial order.

Finally, the concept of narrative space accommodates intangible components that shape and influence our relationships with the built environment. Narrative space can absorb Giddens' (1990, 19) phantasmagoria of global links that shoot through every corner of the planet and Appadurai's (1996) techno-, media- and ethno-scapes that are more than just a spatial metaphor. Pile's (2005) more urban-bound conceptualization of

a phantasmagoria of past traces, ghosts and local histories can also be used as a basis for conceiving narrative spaces. It is in these stories and otherwise-articulated urban imaginations that narrative space emerges. Narrative spaces are created by elaborated social relatedness in memories and imaginations regarding the past, present and future social and spatial positioning of individuals and their group belonging. Of course various, and even contradictory, narratives exist simultaneously, depending on converging or diverging positions. Which narrative prevails depends on the actual power relationships that determine the acceptance and promotion of the dominant narrative. The nationalist imaginary narrative has proved to be critical in defining social space and the narratives that legitimize it.

Nevertheless, everyday practice invariably proves the nationalist imaginary narrative to be an impoverished and oversimplified representation of reality, while spatial practices invariably reveal those contradictions. Rather than defining the concept itself, I will only point out the uses to which I will put the concept. Applying the notion of narrative space allows for a better understanding of symbolic interventions in the built environment as expressions of the power relations of ethno-nationalism. I will engage this concept to unpack the power relationships based on ethnicity which are turning Macedonian society into an ethnocracy. The exercise of political power in the built environment can be more or less implicit and on occasions apparently symbolic. The notion of narrative space is most useful when we analyze politically-motivated interventions in public space.

The project “Skopje 2014” and the project for Skanderbeg Square are examples of ongoing operations in the Macedonian capital, and the concept of narrative space will help to frame more precisely my ethnographic material which is awash with ethno-politics. Since the collapse of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Macedonia has been turned into a country in which ethno-politics determine the social and physical boundaries between members of different ethnic groups. At the same time, Macedonia is a country that has demonstrated incredible resilience to the perpetual confrontation between different “national interests” as they are conceived by the dominant ethno-political elites, as well as resistance to numerous calls for ethnic violence made by more radical individuals and politically-articulated organizations. This seeming contradiction is best explained by focusing on the spatial features of ethno-politics in Macedonia. The concept of narrative space is useful for observing the effects that the complex field of political action has on everyday practices that, in turn, reflect it, and reflect upon it, by constructing social reality through spatial practices, a set of inter-related processes that form the crux of this article.

The city of Skopje is currently under intensive assault by irresponsible ethno-politicians. I reiterate that the current building offensive encompasses the entire central part of the capital; it is aimed at no less than a total redefinition of the image of the city of Skopje. Over a dozen new buildings designed in an historicist and eclectic mishmash of Neoclassical and Neo-Baroque styles are being erected in

and around the central city square and will completely change the cityscape. Even the facades of the adjacent modern buildings are to be redecorated and adorned with Baroque ornaments. Over a hundred monuments and sculptures are being installed within the radius of one kilometer, none of them less than four meters high and the tallest being fifteen meters high and perched on a pedestal some 12 meters above the ground. All of the historical characters have been chosen for their value and function in the construction of Macedonian national identity. A Macedonian Triumphal Arch has even been built at the entrance to the city square. The central and tallest figure is that of Alexander the Great sitting upon a rearing horse and holding up a sword. This total reordering of the capital city's center has been dubbed “Project Skopje 2014”.

Macedonian political life has been reduced to the activities of ethno-political parties. Naturally, the Albanians who form the second largest ethnic group in the country are not inactive, passive onlookers in this spatial reordering. Their contribution to the new symbolic landscaping has not been directed towards the overcoming of ethnic divisions but to deepening these divides. In mid-January 2012, the leadership of the most powerful Albanian political party and the local government of the municipality of Chair, which is adjacent to the location targeted for Skopje 2014, inaugurated the construction of Skanderbeg Square. The equestrian statue of the greatest Albanian national hero will have no company in the square that carries his name. There is one such statue in Tirana, the capital of Albania, and one in Prishtina, the

capital of Kosovo. The construction of the Skanderbeg monument disregarded legal regulations when it appeared in November 2007. Skopje is divided into ten municipalities and Chair is one of those in which Albanians form the majority. The Mayor of Chair is a high-ranking party member of the largest Albanian party, the Democratic Union for Integration, which emerged transformed from the National Liberation Army that ignited the military confrontation in 2001. The total dominance of ethno-political parties and their respective policies and public discourse lead to the conclusion that Macedonia has stepped out of democracy into ethnocracy. These costly and gigantic projects are a direct expression of the ethnocratic regime in the social space. The intention is to create a new spatial order with clearly-marked ethnic territories within the capital. This new spatial order in Skopje is a perfect example of ethnocratic spatial order.

Public space has been targeted as a field for symbolic struggles since the early days of Macedonian independence. The practice of displaying flags, religious symbols and built objects, and finally monuments, has been used to mark ethnic territories over the past twenty years and has kept fragile inter-ethnic relations aflame. While there is no space here to fully engage with all the aspects of these symbolic struggles (Harrison 1995), it is rewarding to focus on the politicization of flags and the nationalist abuse of the flag as a symbolic object that marks out ethnic territories (Eriksen and Jenkins 2007). A whole separate study on the display of flags deserves to be written and would reveal the politicization of ethnicity in Macedonia since the first

days of independence. The most serious symbol-related incident in Macedonia occurred in the summer of 1997 and was provoked by contested rights and regulations about the use of national flags. The mayor of Gostivar, a small town 70 kilometers south-west of Skopje with a predominantly Albanian population, refused to obey court orders to take down the Albanian national flag displayed in front of the municipality offices—a flag which was only officially allowed to be hoisted on national holidays. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of July, police dispatched special troops to take down the flag. Thousands of Albanians came to demonstrate, calling for the flag to be reinstated. Several people were killed in the tense shootout that followed. The Mayor was arrested and sentenced for inciting hostilities on the basis of ethnicity and religion. He later lost his appeal at the European Court of Human Rights, which reaffirmed the prosecutor's claims that he had incited ethnically and racially motivated violence. Today, having served his prison term and having briefly pursued an academic career, Rufi Osmani again serves as the Mayor of Gostivar.

The flag incident and its aftermath have had profound and long-lasting consequences for the citizens of Gostivar. When I was doing my research in the town in late 2000 and in 2001, almost every person from any ethnic background I interviewed would inevitably mention the incident. The great significance attached to the armed confrontation concerned the numerous arrests, injuries and acts of police brutality that took place in the aftermath of the incident. The flag was not centrally present in these stories, but the violence sparked

by it remained a top priority for Gostivar citizens, both Albanian and Macedonian, for years afterwards. Those struggles over symbols in the hands of ethno-politicians always gain paramount importance and achieve an atmosphere of fear and distrust by being constantly related to security concerns. Social geography constituted in this way (cf. Banks 1992), based on spatial practices additionally defined and determined by the mapping of ethnic businesses, residential zones, and religious symbols, amounts in our case to the creation of safe and unsafe zones, depending on the ethnic composition of the neighborhood or part of the city. Fortunately, residential ethnic segregation in urban settlements in Macedonia is only at an early stage, yet some prevalently Albanian and Macedonian neighborhoods have gained the ethnic labeling that marks them as safe or unsafe depending on demographic predominance. This ethnic labeling further perpetuates ethnic segregation and makes it yet more concrete. The town of Gostivar is incredibly mixed, one finds Macedonians living next to Albanians and next to Turks in almost every other house—only the Roma live in relative cohesion, for multiple reasons related to their exclusion. In general, the residential segregation in practice is lesser than the ethno-political propaganda representations.

In Skopje such labeling practices are more frequent and areas with a highly visible Albanian presence are notorious for drugs procurement and other illegal, dangerous and mafia-related operations. Those parts of the city with only small numbers of Albanians are self-proclaimed as “pure”. This could also be explained

by the fact that the composition of the population of Skopje is constantly changing through the influx of new arrivals more prone to feeling insecure in their new setting. While there is growing correspondence between residential ethnic segregation and ethno-political rhetoric, the segregation encountered in workplaces and in cultural and educational establishments is potentially far more of an impediment to social cohesion. The Macedonian ethnocracy has turned the logic of minority rights on its head by creating a parallel society even less coherent than the pre-modern pluralist societies that managed multi-ethnicity through more accommodative practices (Grillo 1998). The final and most dangerous development is territorial segregation, a direct outcome of the ethnocracy established in Macedonia.

I shall now turn to another more recent territorial ethno-symbolic incident, analyzing it in the light of the current remaking of Skopje before focusing on one locality that still resists drives for ethnic territorial divisions. Both examples will be used to demonstrate the effects of ethnocratic spatial reordering and the reactions and even resistance to these impositions.

Acknowledging the symbolic dimension, signaling properties and semiotic content of the built environment is not novel, yet it remains somehow understated in social sciences. The concept of narrative spaces which relies on this perspective provides immediate access to the political dimensions of the built environment (Bender 2002). This understanding of political meaning in buildings, aesthetics and even infrastructure is of particular importance

in contested, divided and conflict-ridden cities. Narrative space implies a layer of meaning beyond the physical presence of the construction material used for building. It generates stories and histories, perceptions, intentions, aspirations, fears and hopes that help us orient ourselves in the maze of our built environment. To overlook the political dimension of symbolically-constructed space is to severely impoverish our analysis of related social phenomena.

Before approaching more directly the case that I offer for analysis on these grounds, let me clarify my argument about an implicit political spatial dimension, especially the nationalist dimension. As Kuper (1972) and Lawrence and Low (1990) remind us, the founding fathers of the social sciences—such as Durkheim and Mauss, and Morgan—engaged with social space through the study of classificatory practices and as expressions of native cosmologies. It is not my point here to criticize or praise binarism and it should suffice to say that all these categories and many others that appear from ethnographic evidence are intertwined and often combined but almost always permeated with power relationships, regulating and being regulated by intra- and inter-group relations. This leaves us with the political quality of space as universal and ubiquitous in every human culture. Twenty years ago, Gupta and Ferguson (1992) launched a powerful warning against this oft-neglected aspect of the spatial spread of the nation-state in social sciences. Appadurai (1996) is no less critical of this practice and offers a view in which the concept of locality is seen as a historical product with layers

of accumulated practices that form social relations which regulate diversity by accommodation and not by negation. Therefore locality almost always contains diversity and stands as a serious obstacle to nationalistic, territorially homogenizing efforts. Those authors who have engaged with territoriality and nationalism are firm in their belief about the aims of nationalism to homogenize the territory of the nation-state (Kaiser 2002). I bring together concerns about nationalism and territoriality to the inherently spatially oriented field of urban studies in order to demonstrate that it will enrich the analysis of ethno-nationalism. Amin (2002) tackles the problem of urban encounters of ethnic and racial groups that could go either way by focusing on micro-publics, the local public sphere, and mixed neighborhoods where daily negotiation of diversity occurs. The two examples I offer below demonstrate that some of his arguments can be applied generally.

### **The Kale Incident**

In the past few years, archaeologists have been daily examining the Old Fortress overlooking the Old Bazaar and the central part of Skopje. The excavation and reconstruction of this fortress is one of many projects proceeding from the remarkable intensification of archaeological research that has taken place throughout Macedonia over the past several years. Even some of the defending walls of the fortress have been rebuilt. The fortress is now properly illuminated, more than ever dominating the city skyline at evening time. This is the site from which contemporary Skopje began to develop, over fifteen centuries ago, on

a huge rock which forced the River Vardar to skirt around it and thus create an ideal medieval fortification. The archaeological excavations at Kale, the Turkish word for fortress still in popular and official use for this place, are just a fraction of many other intensive explorations around the country. The government coalition of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization and the Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (IMRO-DPMNU) is particularly keen on excavating historical evidence to prove and showcase the national continuity of Macedonia. As archaeological artifacts require public display, a plan was put forward to build a museum within the fortress to house the artifacts excavated exclusively from that site. (A separate building to house the main archaeological museum with national treasures from all over the country is under construction on the bank of the River Vardar and is connected to the central city square by a new pedestrian bridge.)

The museum inside the fortress is planned only for those archaeological findings unearthed at Kale. The building for this museum happened to be designed in the shape of a church resembling a medieval Byzantine basilica. The museum was to be built where the foundations of such a construction had been found. In general, there is nothing provocative or contradictory in such an attempt to preserve the cultural heritage. As we shall see, however, this scientifically-attired conservation and reconstruction project was anything but calmly accepted. It almost provoked ethnic clashes in a country that barely ten years ago somehow managed to avoid a full-scale civil war provoked by ethnic

Albanian militants. The controversial museum is just one part of a much greater undertaking that is reordering the Macedonian capital into a Grand National Capital, producing territorial divisions in a city renowned for its diversity and openness, in a country that inspired the mixed fruit dessert called *salade macedoine*. The essentialist perspective of local politicians is forced upon Macedonian citizens by aggressive and radical interventions in public space. The story of the museum on Skopje Kale will help us unpack a set of complex socio-spatial or politico-spatial relationships.

It was a few weeks after I had returned from one of my fieldwork trips in Skopje to my cozy office in Göttingen that I was stunned by the news of a bloody incident involving hundreds of young Macedonians and Albanians at Kale. During the fortnight of my absence from the field, a metal construction for the new museum had appeared on the horizon. The metal frames unambiguously suggested that the new building at the edge of the old fortress would be a church, at least in its external form. Concerned citizens of ethnic Albanian origin reacted to this imposition of the cultural symbols of the dominant ethnic group in the country and alerted the mayor of the municipality of Chair. The mayor asked the Cultural Heritage Office to halt the construction. The ruling coalition government partners—IMRO, which represents Macedonian citizens of ethnic Macedonian origin, and the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), which represents ethnic Albanians—agreed to disagree, but a promise was given anyway that construction would be stopped until further notice.

Despite this assurance, the Cultural Heritage Office in charge of the reconstruction of the Kale fortress proceeded with the construction of the church/museum in the evenings after dark. Concerned citizens discovered this work and, led by the mayor of the municipality, marched to the construction site and chased away the workers. They arrived with pre-prepared banners and metal-cutting machines and began vandalizing the metal frame. The police arrived in small numbers and merely observed the protest with interest. Television cameras were there to document the event. After this energetic display of determination, the building of the church/museum was stopped for good. This provoked an avalanche of reactions in the ethnically-polarized public sphere. Hate-speech abounded and many Facebook groups were promptly banned as a result.

One marginal radical right-wing party (TMORO-VEP) called for the defense of Macedonian pride and scheduled a protest on 13 February 2011.<sup>2</sup> Its call was answered by a group of football fans called the *Komiti*, named after the rebels who fought against the Ottoman Empire. The public meeting was scheduled for noon on a Saturday. The Albanian NGO organization *Zgjohu!* (Wake Up!) was quick to organize counter-protests. Many football fans from ethnic Albanian clubs responded. When the two groups arrived at the fortress at the same time, police were there to divide them. First the Macedonians got in their round of speeches. As they were climbing down the slope of the fortress, Albanian youngsters succeeded in running past the small number of police officers and managed

to get hold of the Macedonian protesters. They outnumbered the Macedonians and the police were unable to prevent them from kicking and beating the cornered *Komiti*. Over the following hours and days the entire media—including Facebook—grew frantic. Public panic was so strong that I decided to catch a plane home to where I conduct my research.

### **The Skopje Old Bazaar**

On the following Saturday riot police in armored vehicles surrounded Kale and secured central parts of the city to prevent any fresh protests. The next day I met with a friend at the entrance of the Skopje Old Bazaar just below Kale. It was the end of February but not very cold and with copious winter sun warming the air. It was a Sunday and many shops in the bazaar were open and there were a number of visitors. I observed to my friend that the bazaar was definitely coming back to life after all those years of abandonment from the mid-1990s onwards. He responded by telling me how he had come here with his wife and three-year old daughter for a midday stroll and some Turkish tea on the weekend before the incident at Kale. There had been hundreds of people thronging the narrow streets of the bazaar, he said, incomparably more than at the moment when we were speaking. He was concerned that the recently- revived bazaar might lose its momentum for recovery due to renewed ethnic tensions. As we were talking we arrived at my favorite part of the bazaar and entered a newly-opened coffee shop. We were the first customers that morning and when I wanted to pay with one of the larger banknotes the owner of the

place (apparently Albanian, as I had been able to overhear in the distance his phone conversation some minutes earlier) simply waved his hand as if to say “it doesn’t matter” because he had no change. I encouraged him to check options, to ask a neighboring shop for change, but he explained that we could pay some other time. At that point my friend took charge of the situation and found the exact amount in his wallet. The moment we left the coffee shop to continue our tour on the sunlit cobblestones of the tiny, winding streets of the bazaar, we simultaneously commented that there was still hope for the bazaar.

The bazaar was the central part of the town under the medieval fortification and has witnessed many changes of fortune—wars, fires, earthquakes, conquests, prosperity and misery. In the five centuries under Ottoman rule until the beginning of the twentieth century, it certainly gained an oriental flavor. Regardless of the source of the legacy to which I want to refer, the bazaar kept alive the ideal of *esnaf*. An *esnaf* was a guild, an association of craftsmen or traders, and was a fully-functioning institution under Ottoman rule which regulated all economic activities from production to trade, including the education and recruitment of new labor (Janev 1998). Even today, there is an association of shopkeepers that carries the generic name of *esnaf* where once each larger group of producers used to have a separate organization. The contemporary NGO unofficial association is far from the kind of organization suggested by the same name, but the choice of this name is an indicator of the high esteem in which the ideal of *esnaf* is held. In my

interviews and in the survey I organized in the bazaar, I learnt that *esnaf* evokes the highest moral qualities of decency, honesty, trustworthiness, reliability and integrity. Many would say that it is a value regretfully dying or even already extinct. The young owner of that coffee shop, however, proved that not all hope is gone. The bazaar itself produces a certain kind of sociability, open and receptive to diversity, since its primary values are entrepreneurial and civil, just as urbanity was once distinguishable and praised in its own right. The bazaar is no longer the central public space of the city—that city has grown ten or twenty times bigger since the bazaar last commanded Skopje’s trends, fashions, moods, and opinion. Yet the bazaar keeps alive the ideals of proper civic values and its stories offer many lessons to contemporary politicians.

Skopje Old Bazaar is one of the largest bazaars preserved in the Balkans. The 1970s and 1980s were a golden age for the bazaar. After the disastrous earthquake in 1963, Skopje was rebuilt as a modern city. The Japanese Modernist architect, Kenzo Tange, won a United Nations-organized competition for the new master-plan for Skopje. A large part of the old bazaar was incorporated in the new city of concrete buildings and straight boulevards. The bazaar gained improved infrastructural amenities and also acquired some additional functions. Several of the old Turkish baths were turned into art galleries, one of the old inns was turned into a lapidarium and, behind it, a museum complex was built to house the Macedonian Museum of Archaeology, History and Ethnology, while another old inn was adapted to host the Academy of Fine Arts. The revitalized

bazaar saw incremental progress and prosperity. The collapse of Yugoslavia and the wars in the north in the early 1990s destroyed the market for many products from the bazaar. The full-blown transition to private property resulted in a mushrooming of shopping malls in Skopje and availability of vast amounts of imported goods, both luxurious and cheap. The bazaar was simply unable to restructure itself under the pressure of transition. But this political-economic explanation of the misfortunes of the old bazaar from the 1990s to the present is incomplete: it was practically through the Albanianization of the bazaar that ethno-politics entered the main political stage in Macedonia, even in socialist Yugoslavia.

Radical demographic changes followed the growth of post-earthquake Skopje. The number of citizens doubled every fifteen years. The socialist ideal celebrated the happiness of industrial workers and the newly installed industries in Skopje needed a labor force. Not all of the workers who moved to Skopje were of ethnic Macedonian origin. Ethnic stratification in Macedonia was already taking shape in this period and Albanians were often sidelined when it came to employment or promotion. The bazaar was loosely connected to the socialist state that had begun to tolerate private economic initiative, after an initial period of collectivization and prohibition of capitalist modes of production. By the early 1970s, the flourishing businesses of the *charshija* offered opportunities for self-employment. Growing numbers of Albanians at that time would offer large amounts of cash to buy up the shops of elderly shopkeepers and craftsmen. This

was an opportunity for such shopkeepers to gain cash before retirement if they had no one to whom they could pass on their trade. This increasing presence of Albanians amounted to the Albanianization of the bazaar in the popular imagination. This is how the story of the bazaar can be concluded as far as it concerns developments during socialism.

The period since independence saw one unfortunate incident lead to the bazaar being sealed off for the next fifteen years. The Bit Pazar riots of 6 November 1992 were sparked off by an incident involving two violent police officers and a young Albanian seller of smuggled cigarettes. The boy was pushed, kicked and finally, after losing consciousness, carried away in an ambulance. Rumors spread fast and thousands of Albanians soon started rioting. They clashed with the police and gunshots were exchanged, leaving four people killed, including one overly-curious old lady who was shot by a stray bullet while peeking from behind her curtains. In the following days and weeks the police patrolled the area heavily and this police presence marked a border around the Old Bazaar as an unsafe area of the city. The threat to security was seen as coming from the Albanians. The *charshija* was still popular, however, and we continued visiting our favorite bars since police patrols would let us through their barriers as soon as they heard that we were speaking Macedonian. The police presence was reduced in less than a month, but the line was deeply drawn. The new geographies of power, colored with nationalist sentiments, left deep scars on the map of Skopje. The co-incidental change of consumption

patterns that arrived with the transition and the securitization of the perceived Albanianized space contributed towards the demise of the bazaar for a long period.

It took almost two decades for the *charshija* to come back to life and once again bustle with young people. This revival started in 2008 with the opening of a wine bar and a small alternative club close by. The two friends who own the alternative club illustrate the diversity that ethno-politics seeks to negate: one is a woman of mixed Macedonian and Greek ethnic origin, the other woman is of mixed Albanian and Turkish origin. In the following summer, the Macedonian owner of the wine bar, a busker who had spent his youth travelling throughout Europe, opened a beer garden above the wine bar and a fish restaurant further down in the bazaar. His businesses are flourishing. Next to his wine bar, a *rakija* bar has opened offering a variety of traditional Macedonian liquors (*rakija* is a traditional spirit). Next to these bars is a Turkish-owned tea house and around the corner is an Albanian-owned bar. The timing of this revival of the bazaar is curious. The rediscovery of the bazaar could have happened at any time between 1992 and 1997, or in 2001, 2005, 2006, 2007, or any other year. This poses the question of why the *charshija* is popular again right now? I argue that the movement of people across the old Stone Bridge from the city square to the Skopje Old Bazaar is an act of protest created and expressed by spatial practice. Pile invites us to think beyond the dichotomies of dominance and resistance, spatial technologies of governance and open acts of resistance, structural power relations

and articulated political identities: “it is not so much the act—and its structural determinations—that defines resistance (as has been the case so far), but the meanings that social action takes on in the practice of everyday life.” (Pile 1997, 14). With spatial practices, by creating only ephemeral trail, not even a trace, transgression is occurring across ethnically-prescribed spaces. The spatial practices of Skopje citizens, through movement, transform these ethnic spaces into spaces of mixture and diversity. We can argue that what has occurred amounts to a transgression of ethnic boundaries, a breaking of ethnic barriers that happens simply through the act of sitting next to one another. The mingling of ethnic bodies in a shared space is evidence of a possibility contrary to the claims of ethno-politicians who disregard ethnic *others* in their urban plans and commemorative sites. The trajectories that cut through the boundaries of ethnic territories refute ethnic segregation by showing the impossibility of achieving such clear-cut borders in an ethnically-mixed city.

The cosmopolitanism of those new bars owners is palpable. As is the cosmopolitanism of many shopkeepers I have met in recent years who further attest that new and traditional values which accept and accommodate diversity can achieve synergy in this locality. Such is the Turkish silversmith who is also a trained Islamic scholar, the Albanian owner of an antique shop who was trained as an electrical engineer, and the Macedonian owner of a souvenir shop who is trained as an ethnologist. These and many others have come to the bazaar driven by the desire to make a living; but

they are also aware that the bazaar has a history, different from the history which the dominant political discourse would like us to accept. In spite of the current dominance of Albanian shopkeepers in the bazaar, the *charshija* remains, and perhaps always will remain, a locality in which diversity is treated as an asset. The numerous stories I heard from the shopkeepers in the bazaar during my research testifies to their resilience to divisive ethno-politics. The majority of those I interviewed showed a high awareness of the political manipulations that endanger inter-ethnic relations in the country, while clearly positioning themselves as Macedonians or Albanians. The shopkeepers were even telling me about their regular quarrels about ethno-politics that affect, but do not destroy, their neighborly or friendly relationships. This situation resembles the agonistic political culture model emerging in places of regular contact described by Amin:

What goes on in them are not achievements of community or consensus, but openings for contact and dialogue with others as equals, so that mutual fear and misunderstanding may be overcome and so that new attitudes and identities can arise from engagement. If common values, trust, or a shared sense of place emerge, they do so as accidents of engagement, not from an ethos of community (Amin 2002, 972).

Even if they keep their ethnic identities entrenched, all the shopkeepers I interviewed would say that their immediate neighbors, one or two at least, were their best friends on whom they could count in any situation. As part of

the survey, I asked shopkeepers to name and rank their five best friends and later to attach ethnicity to them. Almost the entire sample responded by refusing to undertake such an exercise: they claimed there were no such divisions, despite the reality that there are. A similar answer was given to my question about the ethnic composition of their customers. This ideological position, even if only wishful thinking, demonstrates that socialization in the bazaar entails inclusivity, not exclusivity.

Almost everyone I interviewed invoked *esnafluk*, the quality of being a proper member of *esnaf* as it used to be and as it is remembered. *Esnafluk* is a moral standard which socialization holds in high esteem and which overcomes other markers of social differentiation. I realized that elder shopkeepers took a certain pride in pointing out that they had spent their entire lives in the bazaar. They see themselves as belonging to a rare and endangered group but they also carry with pride their lifelong membership of the otherwise undefined *charshija* community, a community characterized by *esnafluk*, a community of hardworking, trustworthy, skilled and honest shopkeepers. Many responses to the survey evoked *esnafluk* as a rich word, pregnant with obligations and moral imperatives. Those imperatives do not overlook ethnic and religious differentiations, but respect them. Sustaining or renewing those values is not so simple under the pressures of an ethnocentric regime, but the sudden popularity of the bazaar holds the promise of an opportunity as it emerges as a site offering an alternative model for negotiating diversity.

## Conclusion

Ethnicity in Macedonia has been politicized and this affects everyday practices; a closer look at such practices, however, reveals a resilient resistance to ethno-politics. One level of resistance consists of a shared memory of more harmonious inter-ethnic relations. Here the bazaar plays a particular role as a locality that attests to those times. Secondly, *esnaf* is a key concept that contains a whole moral universe dictating mutual respect and disregard for ethnic or religious differences as defining characteristics of the shopkeepers in the *charshija*. Thirdly, the fact that the revival of interest in the bazaar has taken place precisely after the greatest effort to remake public space in the city according to the logic of ethno-politics can also be taken as an indicator of resistance contained in the trajectories of movement—of revolt expressed in spatial practices.

The Kale Incident reminded Skopje citizens that political manipulation of national sentiments can be quite dangerous. The use of archaeology for political purposes exaggerates the identity-related struggles and is not only a temporal extension of the nation, from the perspective of myths of continuity, but also supports the territorial claims of the nation-state. Therefore, that archaeological battle can be expected, if we read Pullan's analysis of similar processes in Jerusalem:

Archeology is a favoured vehicle for attempting to legitimate the settlers' presence in the Old City, primarily in order to enhance their claim to biblical continuity. In doing so, they follow a long tradition of using archaeology for nationalist purposes, and sometimes

the excavations have resulted in violent clashes (Pullan 2011, 8).

Pullan can be quoted word for word to explain the situation in Skopje "where many groups and individuals wish to impose their national and religious identities upon the city" Pullan 2011, \*\*). In its eventful history, Skopje has attracted quite a few contenders. Those presently sharing the central government and controlling adjacent municipalities at local government level, guided by their ethno-political essentialist view, pose the greatest threat to the ethnic balance in Skopje.

In this article I argue that acts of resistance can be of an ephemeral nature—simple acts of crossing envisaged symbolical borders. The revolt against divisive policies and the awareness of the dangerous ethnocentric order is best expressed in the action of Skopje's most prominent flash activist group, the "Singing Skopjians". Only a few days after the incident at Kale, this group gathered to sing a song in both Macedonian and Albanian just outside the police-secured zone below the fortress. The song was titled "Injustice", which had been written by a legendary Macedonian rock band active in the 1980s which was composed of Macedonians and led by an Albanian. This song was an honest reaction to growing consumerism and emerging social stratification in socialist times and was very popular at the time. The bilingual cover version of the Singing Skopjians, who are themselves composed of many ethnicities, highlighted the absurdity of ethno-politics. There are other forms of activism and protest that react against the "Skopje 2014", like the "First

Archibrigade” and “Freedom Square”, but here I am interested in those verbally and discursively unarticulated spatial practices. Less overt acts of resistance are manifested by the mere presence of all ethnicities in the “dangerous” border-zone, thus transforming it into a zone of contact and habitual encounter. This, in itself, is not a guarantee of long-lasting transformative effects against the divisive intentions of those in power to carve out ethnic territories within Macedonia and within Macedonian cities. It deserves our analytical attention, however, as it serves to correct the picture of irreconcilable ethnic divisions. The dominant imposition of ethnic narratives in the built environment is met by spatial practices that undo such divisions.

Those government-led archaeological and architectural interventions in the public space of this remarkably diverse city are used to mark ethnic territories by way of unearthing material evidence and constructing symbolically-laden buildings. Bell (2003) defines this as a production of “mythscape”, but this materialization of myth-scaping affects not only imaginary but everyday life with its imposed spatial order that, in turn, has its own logic and dynamic. The mutual interdependencies and habitual encounters (Amin 2002, 969) that happen in the Skopje Old Bazaar, however, make it a typical place that contains diverse micro-publics and provides bases for daily negotiation of diversity. Those traditionally-established practices based on mutual respect are under constant pressure from the ethno-nationalistically driven pragmatic populism of Macedonian ethnic politicians. The bazaar is a reminder of alternative possibilities.

The revisiting of the bazaar by Skopje citizens demonstrates a desire and a will to overcome ethnic divisions that demand naïve acceptance of ethnic stereotypes and prejudices. The resistance that stems from the sheer fact of residential and otherwise expressed spatial mixing, as seen in the distribution of shopkeepers along the streets of the Old Bazaar, the resistance that this mix inspires as seen in the renewed popularity of such spaces, and the resistance expressed in the transgression of those ethnic lines and contained in the trajectories of Skopje citizens that transgress the invented ethnic boundaries, amounts to the creation of alternative narrative spaces totally opposite to those imposed narrative spaces of the ethnocratic spatial order.

### Notes

- 1 This article is based on the findings of research funded by the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, Göttingen, Germany.
- 2 *Tatkovinska Makedonska Organizacija za Radikalna Obnova—Vardar Egej Pirin* approximates in English to “Fatherland Macedonian Organization for Radical Reconstruction-Vardar Aegean Pirin” (which refers to the three parts of Macedonia: Vardar, the current Republic of Macedonia; the Pirin part in Bulgaria; and Aegean Macedonia in Greece). This was, allegedly, the solution to the notorious Macedonian Question of the political destiny of the geographical territory known as Macedonia.

The partition that disregarded the Macedonian national aspirations happened in 1913 after the Second Balkan War. Seeking historical justice after a century of otherwise defined political reality amounts to irredentist claims made in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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# One Area, Several Cultural Spaces: Comparative Analysis of Stories as the Bases of Local Identity<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*The article examines how different ethnic and cultural groups living in the same multicultural micro-environment (a small town) establish the boundaries for the group with which they identify. The article is based on texts that describe local life (personal interviews, life stories, memoirs, local historical research by amateur historians, etc.). We will be looking at the small industrial town of Kohtla-Järve, located in north-eastern Estonia, which became a multicultural environment during the period when Estonia was a part of the Soviet Union (1940–41 and 1944–1991). The regime changes during the 1940s and in 1991 caused the mutual relations between the various communities to become politicised. In order to avoid addressing the political aspects, the research focus in this article is not on communities (e.g. the Estonian-speaking and Russian-speaking communities in Estonian society), but rather on small groups (e.g. the activity groups and cultural societies that uphold and create ethnic and cultural boundaries). From this perspective, Kohtla-Järve can be viewed as a network of intellectual and practical spheres of life that contains junctions for affirming one's 'own' cultural identity as well as intersections where a group can find common ground with groups that constitute the 'other'.*

It is 14 June 2010. I have just arrived in Kohtla-Järve from Tartu, and I want to get from the town centre to nearby Vanaküla in order to take part in the meeting organised by local amateur historians. I have never taken this road before and I ask the bus driver to tell me when the bus gets there. I am speaking Estonian; the bus driver is Russian and does not understand me completely. We are also using different words to describe where Vanaküla is located. As a researcher who specialises in cultural studies, I try to remain alert and pay attention to what language we are speaking, but at some point I notice that I have unconsciously started using Russian. The bus driver has also begun to understand me: “Aa-aa, staraya derevnya” (“old village,” the literal translation of “Vanaküla” in Russian). There is no cultural conflict in our conversation. We both want to understand each other and make ourselves understood. It is a situation that is strange to me but common in Kohtla-Järve—a meeting on the border of two local cultures.

The focus of this article is on the degree to which different cultural spaces are experienced in the multicultural town. I also examine the places that are perceived as common areas by the different communities (ethnic groups) and where they prefer to function separately. I have been intermittently monitoring the interaction of cultures in Kohtla-Järve since 1991. My research is based on surveys and interviews conducted during fieldwork, the written memoirs and autobiographies of local residents, and research done by amateur historians.

As a researcher, the primary aim I pursue is to observe and interpret: although I proceed from texts pertaining to local life, which have been created for a variety of purposes, I analyse them according to my own research objectives.

In the next section, I will provide an overview of the area in question—Kohtla-Järve. I will thereafter introduce the points of departure for the article, namely, its source material and theoretical framework. In the main part of the article, I will present a comparative analysis of the texts by people of Kohtla-Järve based on the aspect of cultural diversity. Cultural diversity can be analysed both at the level of the community (e.g., the Estonian-speaking and Russian-speaking communities in Estonia) and the level of the individual (e.g., the cultural identity of a member of a mixed family). In this article, I look at the manifestation of cultural diversity at the level of small groups: local hobby groups, the staff and students of a school, and miners working in the area. Hobby group activities, school life and the workplace provide representatives of different cultural groups with the opportunity for more in-depth, long-term and varied contact than, for example, random or superficial encounters in such meeting places as the street, public transport or apartment buildings. However, it is probable that the ethnic and cultural boundaries are expressed with different intensity in the aforementioned spheres of activity. For instance, a hobby group focusing on specific cultural features is more likely to create boundaries, while ethnic and cultural boundaries may never become an issue if one works in a mine.

### **Kohtla-Järve as a culturally diverse town**

Kohtla-Järve is a mining and industrial town with a population of 44,000 and is situated on the southern shore of the Gulf of Finland. It takes about one hour by bus to travel from Kohtla-Järve to Russia's western border. Kohtla-Järve became a multicultural environment after World War II when Estonia was annexed by the Soviet Union. Although there were people of 30 ethnicities living in the town according to the 1989 census, the two largest ethnic groups are Estonians (23.1%) and Russians (63%) (Valge 2006, 59-60).

The Soviet-era migration brought about a significant change in the ethnic balance compared to the pre-war situation (the status quo during Estonia's period of national independence).<sup>2</sup> Before World War II, ethnic minorities constituted 10% of Estonia's population; this number had increased to 25.4% by 1959 and to 38.55% by 1999 (Veidemann 1999, 143). The collapse of the Soviet Union and the restoration of Estonia's independence in 1991 caused another shift in the balance of mutual relations between the ethnic groups. The political preferences of the Soviet era were dominated by the ideology of a state of workers and peasants, which classified the population primarily on the basis of social categories. After Estonia's independence was restored, however, there occurred a re-emergence of values related to heritage, language, and culture, which were based on the ideology of the pre-war nation state. The contradictions between the two political orientations, namely, the efforts related to the restoration of Estonia's independence as opposed to emphasising the importance

of the unity of the Soviet Union, became topical for journalists in (Soviet) Estonia at the end of the 1980s (see, e.g., Brady and Kaplan 2009, 52) and have retained their importance in contemporary politics (ELK 2008, 4-5; Vetik 2008, 4). In principle, the conflict described above (Estonian versus Soviet identity) also exists in present-day Estonian society and is expressed in private reflections on the Soviet era as well as in the data gathered through sociological surveys (Vihalemm and Masso 2007).<sup>3</sup> In general, it appears that at the level of group identity Estonia's ethnic groups are divided into two relatively independent communities that have comparatively little contact with each other (cf. Brady and Kaplan 2009, 65). The primary marker for differentiating between the communities is language use: one consists of Estonian-speakers and the other of Russian-speakers. However, in addition to people's native language, we also have to take into consideration the importance of their medium of education (whether they attended a school where the language of instruction was Estonian or Russian). A more in-depth observation reveals the importance of different identity-shaping experiences (we have to note that the boundaries of language use and experiences might not overlap). We can generally distinguish between two communities: the representatives of the local way of life, and minority groups characterised by their migration experience. This experience determines a community's place identity which, in turn, influences how that community interprets the past and present events occurring in society (cf. Brady and Kaplan 2009, 33).

Kohtla-Järve is an interesting environment since the previously discussed problems characteristic of Estonia in general emerge here in a concentrated manner. Despite the prevalence of the Russian-speaking community, the town has cultural strata that date back to the time before the Soviet era, as well as those that developed within the Soviet system. This is to say that Kohtla-Järve embodies a combination of two contradictory ideologies. On the one hand, the town was established in 1946 by the Soviet regime as a *socialist city* (cf. Valge 2006, 3-7; Löw, Steets and Stoetzer 2008, 102). At first glance, the centre of Kohtla-Järve does indeed appear to be a Soviet town rather than an Estonian one: instead of consisting of small buildings surrounding a central market square and family dwellings with small gardens, Kohtla-Järve has streets that are straight as an arrow, lined with Stalin-era buildings planned by architects from Leningrad (Valge 2006, 42). This difference in the milieu is also felt by the people who live in Estonia. I will provide an example taken from a life story stored in the Estonian Literary Museum (EKLA 350v, 16). In the story a Russian woman who came to Estonia from Leningrad after World War II compares her first impressions of Kohtla-Järve and the neighbouring town of Rakvere. When she came to Rakvere looking for a job and a place to live she found it to be a small, beautiful and clean Estonian town which was, however, completely alien to her. On her way back to Russia she came to Kohtla-Järve, which reminded her of home and turned out to be the town that accepted her. On the other hand, the Soviet town of Kohtla-Järve was built on the sites of

former villages and mining settlements and, as a result, each part of the town has its own history dating back to the time before the establishment of Kohtla-Järve. The town is comprised of districts that are located at a distance from each other and commonly use place-names pre-dating the establishment of Kohtla-Järve (this practice was also common during the Soviet era). The local identity of the Estonians living in Kohtla-Järve is based on their appreciation of the history of the place they call home. They use historical information to emphasise the centuries-long continuity of the place.<sup>4</sup> Interruptions in the continuity, namely, drastic changes in the local environment (its transformation from an agricultural environment into an industrial centre and the loss of national independence during the Soviet era), are tied together with a method where the fixed points that represent different time periods are juxtaposed at the time of speaking. This results in a narrative where the place is permanent (*everything has been and still is here*) while times change (*there was that and then there was this...*):

Open oil shale mines or quarries were built on these lands. In 1927, they went underground again in the open quarry on our and Suuban's fields. Now [1991], the bus stop next to the old town department store stands in the same spot and the pieces of the Kohtla-Järve War of Independence memorial destroyed in 1945 are also buried there<sup>5</sup> (Mägin 1991).

The fact that the sense of continuity of the "us-group" is based, among other things, on the preservation of names (as is in the case of Kohtla-Järve) is confirmed by

research in social psychology regarding the combined effect of variable and invariable factors on the sense of self continuity (Hamilton, Levine and Thurston 2008, 120-123). However, coming back to the subject of Kohtla-Järve as a socialist town, we can assume that the urban space was not differentiated according to ethnicity or, for example, where the people came from (native inhabitants as opposed to immigrants) because the Soviet Union worked towards achieving social homogeneity (workers, public officials). Residents could apply for apartments based on their place of employment rather than in accordance with the principles of a free market economy. In spite of this, a closer inspection of the urban environment reveals that Estonians and immigrants who arrived in Estonia during the Soviet time tended to live in different parts of the town. For instance, human geography expert Janek Valge demonstrates in his research on the distribution of dwellings in Kohtla-Järve that the percentage of Estonians is higher in those parts of the town where the houses were built before the Soviet era. The principle of equality characteristic of socialist cities is, however, evident in the context of employment: in 1989 approximately 40% of the population of Kohtla-Järve was involved in the production of oil shale and related industries and the living conditions of this group were similar, regardless of heritage and ethnicity (Valge 2006, 91-92).

In general, regions in Estonia tend to be mainly inhabited by the Estonian-speaking community *or* the Russian-speaking community. Russian-speaking communities dominate places like the

town of Sillamäe, created during the Soviet period, Narva, on the border of Estonia and Russia, and Lasnamäe, a city district in Tallinn. Due to the high percentage of Russian-speakers, Kohtla-Järve and the surrounding county are also considered to be dominated by the Russian-speaking community. Therefore, it was natural for my colleague to be surprised by the fact that I conducted folklore-related fieldwork in Kohtla-Järve. "What would a folklorist do in Kohtla-Järve? It is an entirely urban environment inhabited only by Russians," he said. I have also encountered the attitude that Kohtla-Järve is a place lost to Estonian culture on a broader scale. However, when we adopt a closer perspective instead of looking at the big picture (thereby moving from the level of the community to the level of an actual functioning group), the variety of cultures and ethnic groups becomes apparent. This allows us to step beyond studying separate cultural groups in the specific context of time and space and also explore the mutual connections between these groups, especially their power relations. For example, tolerance towards 'the other' also makes it necessary to determine the boundaries of one's "own" culture in more detail.

**Framework of the discussion: approach, objective and sources**

The study of cultural diversity from the folkloristic standpoint is not very prominent in Estonia, despite the fact that folkloristics tends to compare cultures and that cultural diversity has been a topical issue in Europe and Estonia since the end of the Cold War. To date, the aspects of cultural diversity in Estonian society have been studied from

the folkloristic standpoint by Elo-Hanna Seljamaa who is focused on observing the everyday culture of Lasnamäe, one of Tallinn's districts. She has discussed at length the controversial role of the contemporary (folk) calendar in Estonian society. She deliberately overlooks the discrepancies between Lutheran and Russian Orthodox holidays (Estonia is traditionally a Lutheran country) and discusses the celebration of International Women's Day, which was introduced during the Soviet era, as an example of a holiday that transcends the boundaries of communities and has adapted to life in present-day Estonia. On the other hand, the celebration of 9 May as a 'Soviet Victory Day' has proved to be an event that splits Estonian society in two (Seljamaa 2010). In my research I have used life stories as the bases for analysing migration experiences and the resulting changes in identity after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of new national borders, and for conducting a closer examination of the experience of cultural boundaries based on the example of a mixed family (Jaago 2011a; 2011b; 2012)<sup>6</sup>.

In my research on Kohtla-Järve I rely on the observation that Kohtla-Järve does not exhibit the characteristics of a culturally mixed area that could be seen as intercultural (cf. Schmeling 2000, 349). Instead, I see groups that can be defined in terms of their culture and which sporadically communicate with each other, whilst establishing definite boundaries between each other. (I would like to emphasise that I do not see the situation described above as a constant state but rather as a process where each group has to adapt to

historical and political as well as social and individual/generational changes.) Hence, one can see certain dynamics in the communication between different cultures: on the one hand there is an orientation to “own” culture which, on the other hand, simultaneously shows a certain portion of “open” communication to “others”. Such examples can be found in migration studies elsewhere. For example, describing the institutions established by immigrants in Haifa, Larisa Fialkova and Maria Yelenevskaya conclude: “We do not believe that these institutions contribute to the social isolation of Russian-speaking Israelis because they welcome members of other ethnic groups and accommodate the needs of the wider public” (Fialkova and Yelenevskaya 2011, 159). For the purposes of the present study, I chose to observe three spheres of activity: hobby groups, school life and the workplace. I assume that hobby groups represent a sphere of activity where both ethnic and cultural boundaries are clearly determined and the inclusion of members of the “other” community cannot be taken for granted. The workplace (the mine in the case of this discussion), meanwhile, is a sphere of activity where ethnic and cultural boundaries are least clearly defined. Bilingual schools as institutions that are officially intended to bring together different communities allow us to gain a better understanding of the specific needs for boundaries between spheres of activity in the context of an integrated institution.

My analysis is based on texts published by local publishers, journalistic interviews and articles, and manuscripts of life histories. Local publications, such as the

research conducted by amateur historians and school almanacs comprising students’ creative works and teachers’ memoirs (Toomsalu 2008; Kiristaja 2010; Võrsed 2004), represent the views of the Estonian community. The articles were published in the local Estonian-language newspaper *Põhjarannik* (“The Northern Coast”) which, in 2009, published 30 issues containing texts about the representatives of various ethnic groups living in Ida-Viru County and Kohtla-Järve (with the exception of Estonians). The articles were published in the *Meie inimesed* (“Our people”) section and they contain interviews that offer information on the activities of ethnic societies, descriptions of events organised by ethnic communities and so forth. The texts provide an insight into the attitudes of local ethnic groups towards cultural diversity in Estonia. However, since the section was funded by the European Fund for the Integration of Third Country Nationals, the Office of the Minister for Population and Ethnic Affairs, and the Integration and Migration Foundation, the articles tend to emphasise the goals of Estonia’s integration policy (this is made evident by the choice of topics, the connections between the topics and national integration programmes, and discussions on the successes and criticisms of the policy). The third category of sources is life histories, which are stored in the life histories collection of the Estonian Cultural History Archives (EKLA f 350). This life histories collection is located in Tartu and contains more than 2,500 stories recorded from 1989 to the present time. These stories include nearly one hundred autobiographical narratives in Russian, so the collection can be used to

simultaneously examine the experiences of both the Estonian-speaking and Russian-speaking communities.

In the context of cultural diversity, I primarily look at Kohtla-Järve as a social and cultural space or a *product of social action* (Löw 2008). My approach towards cultural contacts and boundaries is inspired by the concept of the semiosphere, created by cultural semiotician Juri Lotman, which makes it possible to look at the boundary between the “self” and the “other” not only as a line that separates cultures, but also as space where meanings are created as a result of a dialogue with the “other” (Lotman 2005, initially published in Russian in 1984). What is more, the *semiosphere* simultaneously allows us to observe the process of meaning creation from the synchronic and the diachronic perspective. This is important for the purpose of understanding the reasons behind the current positions held by the communities, which are usually connected to past experiences. This aspect is discussed in Estonia’s National Integration Programme as the historical dimension of integration (ELK 2008), which I referred to at the beginning of the article. The application of the theories formulated by Martina Löw and Juri Lotman does not presuppose the existence of clear and visible boundaries, such as unambiguous ethnic and cultural boundaries. The boundaries of the space they describe are open and flexible and several of them can coexist in the same place. Furthermore, the boundaries shift over time according to the development of the mutual relations between the communities but never disappear.

The following three examples

represent the boundaries between different cultural groups (if we consider them from the standpoint of the sphere of activity itself) as well as the common ground they share (if we look at the products of the sphere of activity from the perspective of the general public). It is important to emphasise, however, that the boundaries are not absolute from the standpoint of the individual either: the same person may belong to a group characterised by cultural limits in one sphere of activity, while the importance of cultural boundaries is overshadowed by limits related to professionalisation or the career ladder in another sphere of activity.

#### **Example 1: hobby groups**

Estonia’s national integration policy supports the operation of cultural societies by ethnic minorities. In 2007 there were 153 “cultural societies and other organisations that received support from the state and were operated by non-Estonian speakers” (ELK 2008, 29). This integration policy has been criticised by folklorist Elo-Hanna Seljamaa (2010). In her opinion, the policy restricts cultural self-expression by confining it exclusively to the private sphere. This criticism is, in part, based on a differing understanding of the concept of culture. In the integration programme, “culture” is related to “the preservation of one’s culture and language,” which largely falls within the purview of cultural societies. For Elo-Hanna Seljamaa, the concept of culture also includes aspects related to everyday life. In this sense, “culture” does not mean engaging in cultural activities in addition to living one’s daily life—it is a natural part of life that is connected to all

of the spheres of activity of an individual. This aspect of the criticism is acceptable, although the issue here is clearly the difference in the interpretation of the concept of culture due to the different functions of the approaches, seeing as one is related to cultural research and the other to the shaping of integration policy. The second part of Seljamaa's criticism is problematic, according to my research. Seljamaa claims that a culturally diverse society should strive to exhibit cultural differences in the public sphere since this would allow the minorities to establish contact with influential partners, such as the Estonian government, the Estonian ethnic majority, the European Union, Russia and so forth (Seljamaa 2010, 683-684). Based on my research experience, I cannot unequivocally support making cultural differences a part of the public sphere since, besides promoting contacts and mutual understanding between the different cultural and ethnic communities, this approach could exacerbate conflicts. At the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, I encountered expectations similar to those expressed by Seljamaa in Kohtla-Järve regarding integration on the basis of ethnic and cultural differences through joint public events, but this did not yield the expected results.<sup>7</sup> It is possible that integration is a process where success in different stages requires the implementation of different strategies. At present Kohtla-Järve has reached a stage where the establishment of local cultural societies resembles the creation of hobby groups (in a mono-cultural society)—although it is impossible to make them palatable for everyone, they are important to a certain group.

I will take an in-depth look at this

subject based on the articles published in 2009 in the *Põhjarannik* in the section titled *Meie inimesed* and an overview of the 20 years' of activity of the Kohtla Historical Society (Toomsalu 2008). I would like to state in advance that the activities of cultural societies and hobby groups can be interpreted according to Lotman's definition of the cultural boundary: it is important to understand that, although cultural boundaries are important in this field, the activities also provide an opportunity for the definition of the relationships between "self" and "other". This is evident; for example, when we look at the fact that formulating a more thorough definition of one's "self" becomes increasingly important in a culturally diverse environment as well as in the vicinity of cultural boundaries. Therefore, from the perspective of a researcher, cultural boundaries are dialogical in nature, although we cannot find evidence of dialogue *per se* in the texts in question. Despite the fact that there is no direct dialogue with the "other," the entities do define their position and characteristic traits in their environment in a remarkably obvious manner. The definition of "self" is based on differentiating oneself from the "other". Therefore, descriptions of one's "self" also provide the outline of the "other" by default.

The articles published in the section *Meie inimesed* describe the activities of the representatives of various ethnic and cultural communities in Kohtla-Järve and its surroundings. The questions of the journalists are generally focused on the issues of language, the activities undertaken by societies, and school education. To a lesser degree, the articles

also touch upon the topics of heritage and religion (the latter, for example, is discussed in connection with Jews and Muslim Tatars). While (the Estonian) language is viewed as a central marker of ethnic identity by Estonians, other people of various ethnic backgrounds and/or migration experiences see it simply as a means of communication (Ruutsoo 1998, 139-202).<sup>8</sup> They switch between languages without paying attention to it: “Our language of communication at home develops completely freely; there are no rules—and we are very comfortable with speaking Estonian as well as Russian” (*Põhjarannik* 4/07/2009). They learn and forget languages:

Hilja herself began to learn her father’s native language—Estonian—only after becoming an adult. [...] Hilja only regrets the fact that she is starting to forget her Latvian, since there is no longer anyone to speak it with and keep the language alive (*Põhjarannik* 28/03/2009).

In this context, Estonian is primarily seen as the national language that is linked to education and career opportunities. For example, a Russian-speaking Estonian top athlete explains: “I guess you have to decide for yourself how much of it [Estonian] they need but if you want to accomplish something, you have to know the language” (*Põhjarannik* 18/04/2009). To the journalist’s question: “Do you always understand what you are talking about?” a Russian-speaking communications specialist at Estonian Oil Shale answered: “At first it was difficult, of course, since I did not know the words they were using even in Russian [...] if I do not understand something, I always

immediately ask for an explanation” (*Põhjarannik*, 30/04/2009). The majority of the articles discuss issues related to the cultural societies. In general, the societies are linked to specific ethnic groups (Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Ingrian Finns, Tatars, etc.) and emphasise the need to carry on their cultural heritage (handicrafts, music, language). Contacts with the ‘other’ mainly develop through joint concerts or public events:

The people of Kohtla-Järve were very surprised on Tuesday when they saw a strange tent near the town’s cultural centre with people eating, drinking and dancing in it. It turned out that the Jewish community was celebrating one of its most important religious holidays—*Sukkot* (*Põhjarannik* 10/10/2009).

Experiences related to simultaneous contacts of the same nature with members of different ethnic groups are connected to teaching (dance, music) and, to a lesser degree, parties organised at clubs. In both cases people tend to mention the considerable differences in the temperaments of Estonians and Russians. It is also noteworthy that, although the importance of maintaining one’s “own” culture is stressed at the community level, at the individual level people’s interest in the “other” tends to arise from their interest in someone they are close to who is a representative of the “other” culture, rather than their fascination with the culture itself.<sup>9</sup>

The Kohtla<sup>10</sup> Historical Society, established in 1988, is an organisation of local Estonians who are interested in history. Although the activities of the Society are open to Estonia’s general

public, they are relatively inaccessible to the people who came to Kohtla-Järve after World War II. The Historical Society expresses its openness to the public through its active collaboration with the Estonian National Museum in Tartu. Between 1988 and 2006, 25 members of the Kohtla Historical Society submitted 112 contributions to the Estonian National Museum (Toomsalu 2008, 16-21). Among the subjects researched were “The bicycle through the ages” in 1997; “The history of skis and skates” in 1998; “Life in Soviet times” in 2004; and “Research into village history” in 2005. When preparing their contributions the correspondents follow the interview plans established by the Museum and used as the basis for telling a story based on the contributor’s own experience, which may take the form of a narrative, a study or simply answers to a set of questions. Some contributions have also been prepared at the initiative of the people of Kohtla-Järve who are correspondents of the Estonian National Museum (e.g. the contribution regarding the creation and disappearance of Servaääre Village, submitted in 1997; the contribution regarding the founding of Kohtla-Järve and its effect on the villages, submitted in 2000). These contributions are mostly either memoirs or works of amateur historical research. Therefore, one of the outlets for the members of the Historical Society is the creation of texts in different genres about their places of residence. Through this activity and the agency of national institutions (such as the aforementioned Estonian National Museum) the Society is connected to similar writers and interest groups all over the country.

The manner in which the Historical Society is closed to the locals is expressed through the principles that connect the members of the group. They share the same cultural experience and the same place identity based on their local heritage and similar interpretation of the past. They are connected to each other through the Estonian school system and cultural history. According to the idea behind the Historical Society, Kohtla is more than just a place on a map—it is also an intellectual living space that ties together the people “whose roots are here” (Toomsalu 2008, 9). It is the sense of being connected to a place through one’s roots that creates a boundary between the local native population and the people who came to Estonia after World War II. The former see themselves as being connected through their “roots” even to those Estonians whose ancestors lived in or near Kohtla but who reside elsewhere themselves. At the same time, the residents of Kohtla and its surroundings who are locals now but whose “roots” are elsewhere do not converge with the Historical Society.

Despite this, the activities of the Historical Society are, in some respects, open in the context of local cultural life. The Society has published research and memoirs pertaining to local history (e.g. in the series titled *Kohtla vaimne eluruum* [“The intellectual living space of Kohtla”] and *Kohtla-Nõmme lood* [“The stories of Kohtla-Nõmme”]) in addition to organising public events (I mentioned one such event, the commemoration event in Vanaküla, at the beginning of the article) and exhibitions. Its greatest achievement was the collaborative project with the local government, which led to

the establishment of a new museum in the Kohtla mine after it was closed in 2001. Kohtla mine was built in 1937 and before its closure was the oldest among the functioning mines in Kohtla-Järve. The museum has become a relatively popular tourist destination in Estonia and is visited by approximately 27,000 people per year (Kiristaja 2010, 3). From the perspective of the Historical Society, it is also important that the Museum makes it possible to maintain a settlement that grew together with the development of the mine since the 1930s and now possesses a certain degree of cultural and environmental value (Toomsalu 2008, 11).

The activities of hobby groups in culturally diverse environments focus around people who share the same cultural identity. The activities of the societies also include more private spheres (events for members, regular meetings). Although the “others” are not directly prevented from attending these events, their nature presumes that the participants share a strong sense of communality and this creates a boundary between the “self” and the “other”. Therefore, while there are no formal restrictions that apply to hobby group activities, identity-related boundaries do become apparent. However, the activities of such societies always include a component that is directed at the public. The closed nature of hobby groups and societies is linked to the need for one’s “own” group and culture. The closed and clearly defined nature of the “self” seems to be one of the characteristics of a culturally diverse society (since the “self” functions naturally in a mono-cultural environment even without the presence

of the “other” and, as such, there is no need for establishing specific cultural boundaries).

### **Example 2: bilingual schools**

As a rule, schools in Estonia are either Estonian-speaking or Russian-speaking. As I mentioned before, the medium of education at school (language of instruction) is a significant factor in terms of differentiating between ethnic and cultural communities in Estonia. In accordance with the education reform that is being carried out at the moment, Russian-language schools should be gradually moving towards adopting Estonian as the medium of instruction (in 2011, 60% of all subjects should be taught in Estonian in secondary schools where the medium of instruction is Russian). There is a bilingual school in Kohtla-Järve that has been practising language immersion since 1994. In a school where language immersion is practised, at least 50% of all subjects must be taught in a language that is not the learner’s native language. Kohtla-Järve Ühisgümnaasium is currently one of 21 language immersion schools in Estonia and was one of the first to adopt an immersion programme. At the same time this school, established in 1949, has never functioned as a mixed school. It has always consisted of an Estonian-speaking part and a Russian-speaking part, which have furthermore been separate in terms of location: there have been times when each has had its own building as well as times when the space in one building has been divided between the two parts. For example, a former teacher wrote the following about the situation in the 1950s:

The Estonian-language classes had already been located in the kindergarten building for some time. It was like being hidden in plain sight—we were completely separate and everything was done in Estonian (Võrsed 2004, 5).

People also mention the head teacher of the Estonian part of the school (who was not the head teacher of the entire school) and the fact that the study processes were distinctly separate:

At one meeting of the teachers' council a Russian teacher said that our life was easy and that it was as if we were working in a greenhouse. And, in truth, our children were more calm and diligent (Võrsed 2004, 10).

The extracurricular events organised at the school are also divided between the two parts in a logical manner. For example, the song festivals and theatre visits organised by Estonians are closely related to upholding the traditions of Estonian language and culture. During a conversation with the teachers of the Estonian part of the school on 31 January 2006, I learned that the school organises separate parties for the Estonian-language and Russian-language parts of the school (MK: Virumaa, 2006). This is due to the different temperament of the students as well as their different understanding of what a party should be like. As a result, each half of the school has its own employee who organises extracurricular activities. Both of these employees have a blog.<sup>11</sup> In addition to the separate events, however, the two parts of the school organise joint sports events and undertakings connected to national symbols, such as a trip to the

memorial for the victims of fascism and the celebrations of national holydays that are mentioned in the memoirs.

When we observe the present-day school life by looking through the school's website at <http://www.kjug.edu.ee/index.php> (last accessed on 14 December, 2011) it appears that certain sections of the website are bilingual. By clicking on an icon, you can choose between viewing an Estonian-language version and a Russian-language version of the website. It mostly contains general information and notices in both languages for the parents of the students. The Russian-language version of the site does not include some areas (e.g. the history of the school). The schedule of events reveals that Christmas is, in part, celebrated separately by the two halves of the school. This is to be expected, since Estonians consider Christmas to be one of the most important holidays in December, while the Estonian way of spending the holiday season and celebrating Christmas is alien to Russians: rather they celebrate the New Year or the Orthodox Christmas in January.

The local practices related to cultural diversity are manifested in the bilingual school: rather than follow state regulations, the educational institution tends to function according to previous experience on how best to cope with the ethnic and cultural situation in question. It follows that the administration of the school is simultaneously run in two languages and some events related to hobby activities are organised for the whole school while others are separate. The opportunities for cooperation are increased by the fact that the language immersion programme works in both

directions: in Estonian as well as in Russian. The less significant the language barrier becomes the more joint events the school will be able to organise. The joint events tend to be of a more general nature (holiday camps, health days, Fathers' Day, sports days, etc.). The events held separately are more closely linked to cultural traditions (e.g. Christmas). Culture-specific events are organised for the language immersion classes (beginning with the 5th year students), such as the Russian Culture Week in October 2011. Meanwhile, the students of both parts of the school belong to a single student community. Texts by students are published in the school's literary almanac, regardless of their ethnic background (Võrsed 2004). The students participate in national inter-school events, such as Olympiads, sports competitions, singing contests and so forth. Looking at the school almanac and the website, it is possible to make guesses as to people's ethnic and cultural backgrounds in this field based, for example, on names or language use. However, this would simply be an observer's interpretation. In this context, the students are presented as a single community that does not categorise its participants based on ethnic or other features. It is noteworthy that the interviews with former teachers of the Estonian-language part of the school (Võrsed 2004, 19-22) contain no questions regarding the links and relations between the Estonian-language part and the Russian-language part of the school. I have experienced the same phenomenon in the course of my own fieldwork: people do not want to answer direct questions about cultural conflicts or even the general attitude towards the "other" community (MK: Virumaa, 2010).<sup>12</sup>

### Example 3: the workplace

I chose to examine the difference and coexistence of cultures in the workplace on the basis of texts related to working in mines. I used two types of text for this purpose. My first source was the collection of articles *Kohtla kaevandus* ("Kohtla mine"), published in 2010 as the third part of the series *Kohtla-Nõmme lood* ("The stories of Kohtla-Nõmme") (Kiristaja 2010). The articles tell the story of the same mine that I mentioned above in connection with the activities of the Kohtla Historical Society. In terms of genre, the collection is a work of research carried out by amateur historians. The collection is structured on the basis of a linear time frame, and the individual articles depict the development of the mine over time.

My second source consisted of the autobiographies of four former miners, which are preserved in the form of manuscripts in the life history collection of the Estonian Literary Museum. Unlike the aforementioned amateur historical research, the life histories do not focus directly on the issue of working in a mine. The discussion of issues related to working in the mine generally comprises a relatively small part of the life story and accounts for just a few pages of the entire life story.

The historical research brings out opinions regarding the upkeep and culture of work of the mine. For example: "The Kohtla mine was known for its high-level culture of work, low manufacturing cost of oil shale and exemplary upkeep" (Kiristaja 2010, 3). Due to the fact that this is a recurring theme in the characterisation of all of the periods in the mine's history, I believe that this is the theme that carries on the legacy of the mine's history.

Interruptions in the continuity of the history of the mine are portrayed through the political history of Estonia. The political turning points depicted are as follows: firstly, the Soviet occupation in 1940-41 marked the destruction of what had been built up in the Republic of Estonia. Secondly, the German occupation in 1941 which was interpreted as the reconstruction of the mine. The third break in the history of the mine occurred with the destruction of the mine in 1944 when the front moved west, after which it was possible to start the reconstruction works during the second half of the 1940s. Descriptions of the stable period that began in the 1950s focus on two subjects: occupational safety and the development of the technology used in the mine according to contemporary requirements. As is characteristic of the Soviet era, the important issues that are discussed also include the problems related to the fulfilment or non-fulfilment of national production plans.

All in all, it can be said that the texts concerning the operation of this mine prefer to discuss history in terms of a technological rather than a political framework. Accordingly, the sources discuss the adoption of mining machinery and provide rather field-specific technical data. Even if the texts happen to mention the ethnicity or background of the people who participate in the management of the mine, they do not contain stereotypes or judgements based on ethnicity—instead, the texts discuss how specific individuals handled their roles as managers or workers:

However, the mine kept failing to fulfil its production plans and therefore J. Lust had to resign as the

head of the mine. He was replaced by an Armenian named Sergei Zebeljan from the 10th mine. He told everyone that we would have to bid farewell to the resort named “Kohtla mine” and start working (Kiristaja 2010, 16).

It is important to note that, due to Estonia’s political history, the issue of ethnic and cultural diversity may intertwine with that of power. For example, it might be said that either Estonians or Russians, or some other group, had access to better conditions during the Soviet era or after the end of the Soviet period. In the collection in question, such claims have been avoided. The book presents a field-specific look at mining from the perspective of the management of the mine.

Three of the aforementioned autobiographies of miners are written in Estonian and one in Russian.<sup>13</sup> The Estonian narrators are older by a generation, having been born between 1926 and 1927. The Russian narrator was born in 1943. The stories were recorded between 1990 and 2007, although the time of narration is mainly important with regard to the life story as a whole and does not have a direct influence on the subject of working in the mine. Two of the texts are handwritten, one has been written on a typewriter and one author has used a combination of handwritten text and typewriting. The shortest story takes up 12 pages and the longest spans 86 pages.

Compared to the previously mentioned research articles, the autobiographies of the miners focus much more on the dangers of working in a mine.

I was teaching new workers in the longwall face [a long, narrow corridor-like supported area of the mine, T.J.]. First the safety techniques—then the support and machines. When you move the support, the roof immediately collapses. That district had only begun its operation and the first roof collapse had not yet occurred. The roof could collapse at any moment. The supports had signs on them that said “Stop! Unsupported!” We were looking at the shearer when I suddenly noticed that one of my students was walking around in an unsupported area. I was afraid to call out and just waved with my arm. If the roof had collapsed, I would have gone to jail. My student would have been dead (EKLA f 350, 487).

The miners discuss specific accidents and the effect of these on the work. They often mention that working in a mine is physically hard work. However, this issue is touched upon in the context of coping with the difficulties and attaining professional mastery.

Ethnic traits are discussed in the Russian narrator’s story since he talks about his work experience in an Estonian team as well as in a Russian team. These stories illustrate the difference in the work ethic of Russians and Estonians. Although the narrator describes the difference, he does not present it as an ethnic or cultural conflict. For example, he briefly mentions the characteristics of two of his Estonian colleagues and then links them to a stereotype concerning Estonians:

They stood knee deep in icy water, scraping up oil shale fragments with

their shovels and loading it onto the chain conveyor without saying a word, thereby inadvertently showing me the patient characteristics of a true Estonian (EKLA 350v, 39).

It is noteworthy that while ethnic and cultural boundaries may arise as sources of conflict in other parts of the life stories of the same narrators (e.g. childhood; a political context; relationships in the public urban space), this does not occur in the descriptions of mining work.

The life stories in question are told from the perspective of the people who worked down in the mine, rather than the management. This brings the experiential aspect of the miners’ work into the narratives. However, despite the different perspectives of the management and the miners, the focal points of the historical research and the life stories coincide in terms of the description of the mine’s development, especially its technological development. Cultural differences are either casually mentioned in the mining stories (as in the case of the life story that describes the work methods that had developed in the Estonian team and the Russian team) or are avoided completely (in the case of the historical research). In my opinion, this is due to the political colouring that accompanies the rhetoric of cultural diversity and unavoidably emphasises the conflicts between the communities. Based on the other episodes in the life stories analysed for this article, as well as my general knowledge of life stories, I can say that the issue of cultural conflicts surfaces in discussions concerning history (cf. Kõresaar 2005). History is not simply a collection of past events that can be left behind—history is used to determine

one's present-day social identity and connection with Estonia (Jaago 2011a; 2011b; 2012). In the case of the topic at hand, the politicisation of the past has been avoided in the analysed texts. This makes it possible to focus on the work that was done in the mine, rather than Estonia's political history. However, it is also probable that this approach allows the narrators to emphasise the continuity, characteristic of themselves and the group they identify with, in regard to the history of the development of the mine.

### Conclusion

In this article I have presented my analysis of a culturally diverse environment at the level of a group (rather than the level of an abstract community with schematic characteristics or the level of a specific individual). My sources included texts created by narrators and amateur historians who belonged to certain groups, as well as newspaper interviews with representatives of specific groups. The texts analysed in the article represent three spheres of activity: societies and hobby groups, school life and the mine as a workplace.

The texts portray cultural diversity as a network of intellectual and practical spheres of life of the people of Kohtla-Järve, which contains opportunities for affirming one's own identity as a member of a group as well as intersections where common ground can be found with other groups. The more we deal with culture-specific needs, the more noticeable the boundaries between the groups become. The differences are apparent in the case of hobby activities and ways of spending free time as well as everyday culture—for example, the daily organisation of

school life or the working methods of the miners. In spheres of activity where specific cultural traits are less important than some other characteristics (e.g. aptitude for a school subject, professional competence at work, etc.), the factors that mark cultural boundaries also recede into the background. In these cases, the fading of cultural boundaries is a result of the general context: the different groups live and operate in the same conditions (e.g. a mine where technological development is tied to the given situation, therefore, has the same effect on members of different groups).

The texts or segments observed here do not contain descriptions of cultural conflicts (although such descriptions can be encountered in other episodes of the very same life stories). Therefore, the situations described above do not give rise to opposition based on cultural differences. These situations (unlike historical and political situations) are not seen as a danger to the "self" group. Some of the texts used here (e.g., the newspaper articles) are directed at promoting a culturally diverse model of society and so intentionally avoid the subject of cultural conflicts. Therefore, it is evident that research into cultural diversity in society depends on the texts that are analysed (e.g., the genres of the texts), the size and nature of the group that is observed (e.g. community, family), as well as the situations that are described. As such, it continues to be a multifaceted and topical phenomenon.

### Notes

1 This research was supported by the projects SA131578, ESF 8190, and the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund (Centre of Excellence CECT).

2 The migration that occurred during the Soviet era (and is defined in present-day Estonian politics as a result of the occupation) plays a significant role in Estonia's integration policy and contributes to the need to stress the importance of the historical dimension in addition to the international dimension. It is said that avoiding the historical and political conflict between the different communities living in Estonia would be impossible and that "simplified solutions along the lines of 'let's live together as friends' unfortunately do not work" (Vetik 2008, 4). Instead, we have to ascertain the common interests of the communities that will allow us to bring Estonian society together (ELK 2008, 4-5).

3 For instance, the sociological identity studies conducted in the 1990s and the 2000s indicate that the identity of the Russian-speaking community currently living in Estonia is based on two factors: the first is the understanding that Estonia is a part of the Soviet Union that broke away (therefore they may not see the Soviet Union as a phenomenon of the past) and the second is related to the fact that living in Estonia is seen foremost as living in the European Union (Vihalemm and Masso 2007). According to this research the concept of Estonia as an independent and historically separate territorial and cultural entity is not a part of the approach that Russian-speakers in Estonia adopt with regard to their "own place". The life histories available

in the form of manuscripts (Estonian Literary Museum, EKLA f 350 and 350v) also reveal that the population of Estonia is generally divided into two in terms of their attitude towards Estonia: those who see Estonia as a territorially and culturally indivisible whole and those who consider Estonia to be a part of Russia (Soviet Union) (see Jaago 2011a). The relationships between the communities are usually not discussed in the life histories stored in the aforementioned archives, although there are a few stories about ethnic conflicts as well as mutual understanding in communicating across ethnic, linguistic and cultural boundaries at the level of everyday life (EKLA f 350v, 5; 57; and 74; and EKLA f 350, 1071).

4 The collection of articles titled "Kohtla 755" that has been prepared by local amateur historians about the history of the region proceeds directly from the wish to celebrate the 755<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the time when the place was first mentioned in 1241. For local amateur historians the collection is an authoritative reference book (see Toomsalu 2008, 7). The date when Kohtla was first mentioned has been determined on the basis of the Danish Census Book (*Liber Census Daniae*), a source from the 13th century or, more specifically, the study on the document published in 1933 by historian Paul Johansen (Kala 2005). Johansen's study contains information on Kohtla as well as Järve village and manor (Johansen 1933, 938 and 940).

5 The monument in question was erected in 1932 in memory of the battle of the Estonian War of Independence (1918-1920) fought near Järve village in January 1919 and of those

who fell in the battle. The monument was destroyed by the Soviet regime in 1945.

6 All of the articles have been written as part of the project “Writing Cultures and Traditions at Borders” and constitute a single body of work in the series of studies concerning Kohtla-Järve.

7 While interviewing representatives of cultural societies as part of my fieldwork in and near Kohtla-Järve in 1991 I heard the head of the Belarusian cultural society say that he felt the need to organise joint folklore festivals with Estonians (EKRK I 93). The Collection of Estonian Life Stories contains the memoirs of a Russian-speaking man who lived in Kohtla-Järve in which he describes, among other things, his participation in events organised by Estonians. He talks about how he felt alien and excluded when attending the events. This was not due to the standoffish attitude of the Estonians. On the contrary: he could speak Estonian, was known to the people organising the party and was also an expected guest. He felt excluded at the party that celebrated Estonian culture because he became more acutely aware of his different heritage and identity— instead of finding common ground he saw how he was different (EKLA f 350v, 350; cf. Jaago 2011b).

8 On relationships between language and nation-states in Europe see McDermott 2011, 6-15.

9 An Estonian woman who lives in Kohtla-Järve and is married to a Russian man describes her interest in Russian culture specifically as an interest in her husband’s intellectual world. She says that they used to attend events that were important to

her husband as well as events that were important to her in order to make each other happy. She believes that the common ground of the different cultures is human in nature and can be summarised with the phrase “good people” (EKLA f 350, 405, EKLA f 350v, 57. For an analysis of the life story see Jaago 2012).

10 Kohtla is one of the regions in Kohtla-Järve.

11 In January 2006 I gave a couple of lectures to the secondary school classes of the Estonian part of the school. I also met several teachers at the school and was able to ask them about subjects that interested me (MK: Virumaa 2006). You can read the blogs of the individuals responsible for extra-curricular activities in the Estonian-language part and the Russian-language part of Kohtla-Järve Ühisgümnaasium at the following address: [http://www.kjug.edu.ee/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=252&Itemid=162&lang=et](http://www.kjug.edu.ee/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=252&Itemid=162&lang=et), last accessed on 14 December, 2011.

12 At times, when I asked people in Kohtla-Järve direct questions about the relations between ethnic groups or the feeling of alienation towards other cultures, the responses were general or neutral. For example, people often mentioned the different temperaments of the ethnicities or the differences in culture-specific holidays. In places where the cultures come into contact with each other, relationships with the representatives of other ethnicities and cultures tend to be rather concrete; therefore, the communication and attitudes are based on the level of actual contacts between people (rather than stereotypes). However, I have

also encountered situations where people are motivated by my questions to talk about issues that are important within the context of their own culture. I presume that focusing specifically on one's own culture is a method for dealing with the presence of the "other".

13 The selected life stories (EKLA f 350, 154; 487; and 643; and EKLA f 350v, 39) contain mining-related episodes that could be compared to each other: they are relatively long and describe the everyday work of a miner. The Russian life story discussed here is the only life story in Russian that talks about the life of a miner.

#### Archive Material

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EKLA f 350, 350v—Estonian Life Histories: Manuscript Collection (1987-2011). Estonian Cultural History Archives at the Estonian Literary Museum, Tartu.

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## Understanding Urban Spaces: How Speakers of Russian Talk about Helsinki

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### Abstract

*Helsinki, the capital city of Finland, is multicultural. It has a distinct Russian component glorified by writers and poets. The city is also the history of the people who lived here in the past and who visit every day. Russian is the most spoken foreign language in Helsinki. This article examines how the inhabitants of Helsinki, whose first or second language is Russian, experience this city and describe it, what places in Helsinki are relevant for them, and what emotions and associations are connected to the urban places and names. Similarities and differences in the descriptions are discussed and explained. Peculiarities in the perception of urban spaces are discernible among the Finnish and Russian speakers.*

### Introduction

To love or to hate a city, to understand its historical past and to penetrate its multicultural modern life is a task that can never be completed, and our different backgrounds lead us to verbalize it differently. The goal of this article is to find out whether the image of Helsinki is similar or different among Russian-speaking residents and visitors of different ages, and how this compares to the perceptions of the city as expressed by tourist guides and shared by the Finns.

The center of the city was built in the 19th century in the period of autonomy,

when Finland was under Russian rule, and so has a special appeal for the Russians. The city of Helsingfors (the Swedish name for Helsinki) was growing at the time. Deviation from its Swedish-language past went hand in hand with Russification. This can be illustrated by the history of the adaptation of the Russian street names. Some places in Helsinki have well-established Russian names. Many of them date back to the beginning of the 19th century, when Finland became part of the Russian Empire; others appeared later as new streets were built. We therefore began our project by studying historical documents.

The historical minority of Russian-speakers has been recently joined by large groups of immigrants and tourists. Today, one per cent of the population of Finland are native speakers of Russian. The historical Russian-speaking minority comprises about 5,000 speakers, and their language differs from that of the so-called “New Russians” (not to be confused with the proverbial *nouveau riche* in post-Soviet Russia). Forty per cent of the 50,000 native speakers of Russian live in the Helsinki metropolitan area. Russian speakers are a heterogeneous group consisting of people of different ethnic backgrounds and of different nationalities. Russian is the third most spoken language after Finnish and Swedish. The history of the city with regard to its ties to Russia has been analyzed by Klinge and Kolbe (1999) and by Kuhlberg (2002). Different perspectives are presented by Poxljobkin (1974) and Jussila (2010). The image of Helsinki among Russian-speaking tourists has changed since Soviet times, along with geo-political and ideological changes.

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In the framework of this project, members of the heterogeneous community of Russian-speakers were interviewed in groups and individually, with attention focused on the use of place-names and/or language biography. In addition, we organized an open essay-writing competition in Russian under the title *My Helsinki*, in which both Finnish- and Russian-speakers took part. We compared articles in the Russian language media in Finland with opinions expressed on Internet forums. We also studied Russian tourists' views of Helsinki in order to find out what places are perceived as familiar, cozy, important, interesting, appealing to the heart, and experienced as one's "own," and what places are avoided or perceived as miserable, foreign, belonging to the domain of the "other". The results should help us understand the process of integration that follows immigration and is linked to adjustment to a new space.

### **An overview of the linguistic and demographic history of Helsinki**

Looking back on the history of Helsinki, we can see that it has always been a multicultural city. Established as a trading town by King Gustav I of Sweden in 1550, at first it was predominantly Swedish-speaking. Despite the fact that Helsinki has 450 years of history, the present-day site of the city center is much younger: the city was moved there in the 17th century. The naval fortress *Sveaborg*, constructed in the 18th century, transformed the place into an important military maritime fortification on the Baltic Sea. The meaning of its Swedish name was the "Swedish fortress," and in Finnish it was pronounced and written as

*Viapori*. Today the official Finnish name is *Suomenlinna*, the "Finnish fortress," but *Sveaborg* remains its official Swedish name and is also used in Russian. After Russia defeated Sweden in the Finnish War and annexed Finland in 1809, the land was proclaimed the autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland, and *Sveaborg* came under Russian command. These changes led to the introduction of Russian as an official language in Finland that had to be learned by civil servants. Czar Alexander I of Russia moved the Finnish capital from Turku to Helsinki to reduce the Swedish influence in Finland; its original location was changed, and the new town was built in the style of St. Petersburg. Helsingfors, as it was called in both Swedish and Russian, continued to grow and flourish as a trilingual city.

The period of autonomy is often described as a time when the Finns elaborated their national and linguistic identity as they began to use the Finnish language in newspapers, public meetings, and schools. All the art forms began to prosper, and the masters of architecture, painting, music, and literature had close ties not only with Swedish and French artists, but also with Russian ones. It is linguistically important that the Finnish-speakers outnumbered the Swedish-speakers in 1890 and became the majority of the city's population (61,530 citizens). A special urban slang called *stadin slang* evolved on the basis of non-native Swedish and non-native Finnish with a substantial Russian component. Russian-speakers played a significant role in the life of the city, even though they did not form a big group. They were entrepreneurs, merchants, and military (Tommila 1983).

Finland gained its independence in 1917 and both languages, Finnish and Swedish, were adopted as state languages. Russian was regarded with disfavor because of the recent Russification attempts and a massive influx of Russian-speaking émigrés, as well as a fear of communist influence. The status of Russian deteriorated further during the Winter War (1939–40) and later, when the Soviet Union was the enemy of the Finnish Republic. From the end of World War II and until the 1970s, there was a massive exodus of predominantly Finnish-speaking people from the countryside to the cities of Finland, primarily to Helsinki. Between 1944 and 1969, the population of the city nearly doubled, from 275,000 to 525,600, and the role of the Swedish language kept declining.

In the last two decades, immigration has grown in Finland and now accounts for 2% of the whole population. Immigrants usually dwell in the metropolitan area (that is, Helsinki, together with the neighboring cities of Espoo, Kauniainen, and Vantaa) because more services are available to them in their own languages and because they are able to form communities (cf. [www.infopankki.fi](http://www.infopankki.fi), an electronic resource providing basic information about Finnish society and culture, accessed 19 February 2012).

Nearly one per cent of the total population are people who speak Russian as one of their home languages, and about the same number of Finnish- or Swedish-speakers have learned Russian at some point in their lives. Most of the “New Russians” are ethnic Finns and Ingrians and their family members. They emigrated from Russia within the

framework of a repatriation program launched in the early 1990s.

The population of the city of Helsinki is 588,941 (31 January 2011), making it the most populous municipality in Finland. Finnish-speakers make up 83.7% of the population, Swedish-speakers 6.0%, and speakers of other languages 10.2%. Foreign-born citizens comprise 7.9% of the population (44,400). The largest groups of residents with a non-Finnish background come from Estonia (5,900), Russia (5,633), Somalia (2,400), China (1,150) and Thailand (680) (see [www.tilastokeskus.fi](http://www.tilastokeskus.fi), a governmental source giving Finnish statistics, accessed 19 February 2012). In Helsinki, 2% of the population are native speakers of Russian. About 67% of the population are Evangelical Lutherans, and up to 2% are Orthodox (Finnish, Russian and Greek).

Helsinki has 190 comprehensive schools, 41 upper secondary schools, and 15 vocational institutes. Many of these use more than one language of instruction, and several languages are studied as target languages. Even at the pre-school level, bilingual kindergartens with Finnish and Swedish, English, German, French, Hebrew, Russian, or Spanish offer a variety of linguistic programs. In schools, more than 50 home languages are taught as optional courses.

### **Research on immigration and toponymy**

To adopt a second way of life after immigration means to adopt the routes taken by the locals, to speak their language, and to act in the same way they do. The natives are aware of the history of generations who lived in the area; they know stories about remarkable

or strange people, and legends about the city's past. For the newcomers, the context is totally different. They may come from bigger or smaller towns or villages, bringing their image of the world with them. Some try to reconstruct what they left behind: émigrés from St. Petersburg find *Nevisky* avenue, and Muscovites recognize images of *Tverskaya* street in *Mannerheimintie*, the main thoroughfare of Helsinki. Others pick up knowledge and habits from the local people, and then there are those who just build their history, shaped by their own ordeals. Many remain oblivious to the metaphors behind the place-names, which are so dear to those who have lived their whole life in the city.

A new cultural context imposes a specific use of familiar and newly-learned names and reflects an interplay between imported and newly-acquired experience (a similar phenomenon of making a city "your own" was described by Fialkova and Yelenevskaya 2011). This is true for place-names too. Du Bois (2010, 122-127) considers name references as one way of constituting cultural identity in immigrants. She mentions that spatial references such as river and street names have a commonsensical meaning that is important for bilinguals: they discover what the locals call places in their new surroundings, partly real, partly mythological, and functionally polysemous. While identifying themselves with the city, immigrants demonstrate their knowledge of its geography and their rootedness in its rituals. They affirm their belonging, even if their speech habits differ from those of the native inhabitants. Sharing experiences of different events with the

local people is also important, and such occurrences accumulate throughout the years one lives in a district. Immigrants' spatiotemporal orientation to the city and their embodiment within it remain individual and linked to the toponymy.

For all the immigrants places such as the police station where they received their residence permit, the embassy of their own country, and restaurants with their national cuisine are culturally marked. Many retain memories of the buildings where they studied the language, outpatients' clinics and hospitals they visited, the firms that employed them, and so on. As we will show further on, for children describing their favorite places in Helsinki such landmarks are not significant (cf. the notion of nodes in Fialkova and Yelenevskaya 2011).

Table 1 illustrates the methods of Russification of the street names in Helsinki during the time of autonomy; these are official names, as printed in Adres 1911, and Plan 1900 and 1903 (cf. Pesonen 1970). First, the Swedish name was used. On Russian maps of the period the name was transliterated. During the 19th century maps of the city often also appeared in German and French. Later, a Russian name was derived from the Swedish one with the help of a Russian suffix. At the third stage, the Russian name was translated from Swedish, and so was its Finnish version. Nowadays, maps of the city appear mostly in Finnish and Swedish and, for the use by Russian-speaking tourists, the street and place-names are transliterated from Finnish.

### The street names in the history of Helsingfors

Swedish	Russian 1 (19 <sup>th</sup> century)	Russian 2 (1900)	Russian 3 (1911)	Finnish
Främlingsgatan	Фремлингсгата	Фремлингская улица	Чужеземная улица	Muukalaiskatu
Gengatan	Генгата	Енская улица	Ближняя улица	Oikokatu
Högbergsgatan	Хёгбергсгата	Хёгбергская улица	Высокогорная улица	Korkeavuorenkatu
Berggatan	Берггата	Бергская улица	Горная улица	Vuorikatu
Villagatan	Виллагата	Вилла улица	Дачная улица	Huvilakatu
Brunnsgatan	Бруннсгата	Брунская улица	Колодезная улица	Kaivokatu
Skillnadsgatan	Шилнадсгата	Шилнадская улица	Раздельная улица	Erottajakatu

From 1833 to 1917, street signs in Helsinki also bore Russian names. One example is Sofiankatu, [“Sofia’s street”], named after the mother of Alexander I, Maria Fjodorovna. One of the original names given to this German princess at birth was Sofia. In present day Helsinki Sofiankatu was chosen to be the street museum of the city in order to restore its historical atmosphere, and one sign has survived since the time streets had triple inscriptions. The Russian history of Helsinki is known only to a small section of the Russian-speaking immigrants. As a rule, new immigrants do not adopt the traditional Russian street names and other place-names used by the historical Russian-speaking minority. One of our informants singled out *Sofia* street, because it is the only name written in Russian on a street sign in Helsinki (*Софийская улица* – вот это да, потому что

она по-русски написана, единственное название, которое сохранилось).

The onomastic variations in the speech of Helsinkians when they refer to their home city is discussed in Ainiala and Lappalainen (2010), and the role of place-names in the sociolinguistic construction of immigrant youth identities in Ainiala and Halonen (2009). Other studies examine what reasons people give for using or avoiding specific names, whether official or unofficial, stigmatized or neutral. It turns out that these choices are connected with the process of self-construction. The ethnomethodological and socio-onomastic research that we conducted focuses on the use of urban place-names in Helsinki in spoken Russian, and is based on unofficial names and place terms in Russian and Finnish. The toponymic perspective combined with the sociolinguistic approach allows us to

investigate the language and toponym usage of Russian speakers in Helsinki. The individual and group interviews that we conducted were videotaped, or tape recorded and transcribed. They make up approximately 40 hours of recording with “Old Russians” (cf. Reponen 2004; Protassova 2007) and about the same amount of time with “newcomers” of different ages. The interviewees discussed their attitudes to different languages, to their place of residence and its names.

Immigrants as name-users is a special theme for research, because patterns of name usage reflect ways of integrating into the receiving society and thus constructing their new identity on Finnish soil. Obviously, Russian speakers mostly use the same place-names as other Helsinki—predominantly official Finnish names. However, for various reasons, places are also named unofficially. The place itself may be relevant for a person even if its official name remains unknown or identified incorrectly. For example, meeting places are often named unofficially. Self-invented unofficial names can be used to express stance, opinion of and feeling for the place itself, and certain name variants can be used as speakers’ identity markers or in order to convey specific implications or interpretations of the situation. Unofficial names belong to the toponymic landscape of all speakers, but there are particular sites which Russian-speaking Helsinki call by the names coined by in-group members. We will demonstrate how these are formed, of what linguistic elements they are built, what functions they have, and what their social meaning is. We will also quote excerpts from the interviews in which our informants reflect on their naming practices.

Many names for things related to everyday practices are borrowed into Russian from Finnish, even if these concepts already have appropriate equivalents (cf. Protassova 2004). These are common nouns, although some place terms, such as a library, or an activity/shopping/sports center, are used as proper nouns in speech, for example, “подойди к *kirjasto*” [“come to the library”]. In the utterance “М-бар – это прямо *ihan keskustassa*” [“M-bar is right, right in the center”], the speaker switches from Russian to Finnish in the middle of his turn and produces the particle “right” twice: first in Russian—*прямо*—then in Finnish—*ihan*. The place term “center” is produced in Finnish in the correct grammatical case—*keskustassa*. For some reason, the speaker chooses the Finnish variant instead of the Russian *центр*, although the latter is also used in this particular sequence. Perhaps the speakers remember the signboards above the buildings or heard Finns mention the names of these spots, and this is why they insert Finnish while primarily speaking Russian.

Many informants say that they Russify the pronunciation of Finnish names, which occasionally leads to misunderstandings. Thus, talking about her daughter, one interviewee says:

...она не воспринимает названия, если мы скажем с русским акцентом; то есть, ей надо  $\Omega$  по-фински потому что она, как бы, воспринимает это вообще, как другое место вообще, может, как это не в Хельсинки”. [“... she doesn’t grasp the names if we talk with a Russian accent, so we have to repeat them in Finnish because she sort of perceives them as some other places, maybe not in Helsinki at all.”]

For a young bilingual, the Finnish variants are easier to recognize. She hears them outside her home, whereas her parents feel more comfortable using Russian-colored pronunciation of these names. The informant's remark about her daughter certainly reflects more common linguistic differences between first and second generation immigrants.

The referent of the name may be unknown to the speaker, or it can be confused with some other place. The linguistic meaning of the place may also be unclear. Our interviewees told us where and how they had encountered such puzzling names, for example, some Finnish slang names, and how they found out what the referent or meaning of that name was. In the next example two informants are discussing the name *Kompas* ["compass"] which refers to a spot in the central train station that is a popular meeting place. In the course of the conversation it turns out that one of the interlocutors, Tanja, mistakenly believed that the name referred to an old observatory located in the Kaivopuisto park:

- Таня, вот, не знала, где это, раньше ["In the past, Tanja didn't know its whereabouts."]

- Да все знают, а мне, а мне объясняли, где такой, я знала Компас, который вот там, Kaivopuisto

["Yes, everybody knows, and they explained to me, to me, where it is, I used to know the Compass which is there, in Kaivopuisto."]

*Temppeliaukio* ("temple square") church is very popular among tourists who come to Helsinki. Russian speakers call it церковь в скале ("church in the rock") because it is actually built into one. Notably, while

almost all Russian speakers, both tourists and local residents, know this unofficial name, Finnish speakers do not have a corresponding informal version, and stick to the official name:

- А-а, как это церковь в скале называется? ["Um-um, what is this church in the rock called?"]

- По-фински? ["In Finnish?"]

- Да. ["Yes."]

- Это, ну... (pause) *Temppeliaukion kirkko* ["This is, well, it's Temple Square Church."]

- Вот мы никогда не говорим, так не говорим. Церковь в скале же же она одна единственная и легче сказать, вот прямо, церковь в скале. [And we, like never say it in this way. *Church in the rock* ha-ha it is unique and it is easier to say simply *Church in the rock*."]

Meeting places often have names invented by their users. In Eastern Helsinki, in a large shopping center, there is a sculpture officially called *Kuru*, a "stony gorge". In one of the group interviews our young informants say that this is their meeting place, and they call it Камень ["stone"]: "Ну, мы обычно встречаемся возле Камня, ну вот этот памятник, что-то похожее на него, вот там мы обычно встречаемся с друзьями" ["Well, we usually meet near the Stone, you know, this monument, it's sort of like a stone, and it's there that we meet our friends"]. During the interview one of the informants speaks on the phone to his girlfriend in Finnish and uses the same name, Камень, but in Finnish, *kivi*. The speaker is not sure whether the place is known to the girl, so he also describes it as a flower: "*menti takas se kiven luokse Itiksee ulkon siin on semmone kivi sellane kukka tiätsä*" ["we went back to that rock, to *Itis*, outside there is such a stone, sort of a flower, you know"]. In general, talk

in interaction is recipient-oriented, and place descriptions are no exception. The meeting place is described in different ways to the interviewer and to a close friend.

Another example comes from the Helsinki train station, one of the notable architectural spots in the city. The building is decorated with four statues called *Lyhdynkantajat*, “lantern carriers”. In Finnish folk toponymy, the statues are called *Kivimiehet*, the “Stone Men”. One of the interviewees describes this meeting place:

Мы много раз назначали встречу около страшных дядек, это значит около вокзала, там, где центральный выход; там же эти мужчины” [“Many times we fixed to meet near these frightening guys?, that is, near the train station, you know, there, at the main entrance, where you can see these men”].

The statues of the “Stone Men” are so popular among Helsinki residents that they were used in several advertisements favorably received by the public (see, e.g., [www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wh3coG3pLg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wh3coG3pLg), accessed 20 February 2012).

Young speakers of Russian use both Finnish and Russian slang names. Russian slang names are often derived from official names by using the colloquial Russian suffix *-ik* (masculine), as in *Kaisik* (for the Finnish *Kaivopuisto*), *Espik* (*Esplanaadi*), *Itik* (*Itäkeskus*), and *Rautik* (*Rautatientori*) (cf., Fialkova and Yelenevskaya 2011, 161). The subjects account for their use of slang names by making it clear that those names are the speakers’ own inventions and are used for their own reasons among friends. Yet, in Russia, the normal onomastic slang suffix used in street names and in some other cases is *-ka* (feminine), and the

masculine variant may have appeared under the influence of the Finnish slang variant in *-is* (*Rautis* for *Rautatientori*, *Itis* for *Itäkeskus*). These hybrids are declined like genuine Russian words. Informants claim that such usage is much easier and handier when the conversation is in Russian. For the sake of convenience, some of our older informants change Finnish urbanonyms. By adding suffixes and adapting them to Russian morphology they make them sound like native Russian words. Besides, by making them familiar and handy, the speakers add a humorous touch: *Kontulovka* (for *Kontula*), *Matveevka* (for *Matinkylä* “Matthew’s village”). Matthew is *Matti* in Finnish and *Matvej* in Russian, so the etymology plays a role in these innovations). Again, the popular form in Russian is neuter, ending in *-ovo*, but in Finland the original Finnish word influences the slang form.

The following example illustrates how the Finnish word can be Russified in pronunciation and declension, and how the informants explain why they prefer to employ the Finnish borrowing *kehä* (“ring road”) in their Russian speech:

- Почти все говорят «кеха три», кеха один, кеха три», то есть как бы читают финское слово, а цифры говорят по-русски, «рядом с кехой», (смех) «на кехе» (смех) [“Almost everybody says ‘*kehä* three, *kehä* one, *kehä* three,’ that is, as if they were reading a Finnish word while saying numbers in Russian, ‘near the *kehä* (+instr. case) (laughter) on the *kehä*.” (+prepos. case) (laughter)]

- Рядом с кехой, где ты по кехе, то мне эта первая кеха заколебала (смех) с ее пробками (смех) [“Near the *kehä* (+instr. case), where are you on *kehä* (+prepos. case), or this first *kehä* is driving me nuts (laughter) by its traffic jams.” (laughter)]

- А вот что на кольцевой, как-то вот по

Финляндии это не звучит, даже кольцевая, такие там в Москве, в Питере – там кольцевая [“As to the ring road, this somehow doesn’t sound right in Finland, the ring road of this sort, this is in Moscow, and in *Peter* (the informal name of St. Petersburg), that’s where the ring roads are.”]

- Э, ну а здесь кеха [“And here there is *kehä*.”]

As mentioned earlier, the local identity of Helsinki Russians is constructed, among other things, through linguistic nuances and place-name usage. Whether official or unofficial, toponyms in immigrants’ speech are conventionalized among certain Russian-speaking immigrant groups (for example, among young people) as markers of double belonging: to Finland and to its Russian community (cf., Yelenevskaya 2011). A name can be misunderstood even if only its pronunciation deviates from the local norm. Immigrant Russian speakers hear names around them and learn them. They choose and use various versions of the same names creatively, differentiating between them, depending on the purpose. For example, young people are aware of slang names used by their Finnish-speaking peers but often prefer their own versions, as they put it. Besides Finnish speakers, Helsinki Russians also make a distinction between themselves and Russians living in Russia. So, they say *kirpushka* for *kirpputori* [“flea market”], while St. Petersburg dwellers sometimes use *kirpputorij* which sounds more like a Latin name. In the interviews our informants describe how the new environment with its unfamiliar names and the new language have affected their perception of the linguistic landscape. Obviously, many official Finnish names are widely used as well.

### Impressions and connections

For our contemporaries, most events of their life take place in towns, and this is where their cultural forces are applied and tested. Every city should have its own *genius loci*, understood here as an individual who connects intellectual, spiritual, and emotional events with their material milieu and shapes the image of the city for the group which shares the multi-layered subjectivity of his texts (Vail 2007).

The Russian-speaking *genius loci* of Helsinki was a famous writer Alexander Kuprin (1870–1938). He had visited Finland many times before the October Revolution of 1917, and afterwards lived in Finland as an émigré. In the 1930s he moved to Paris but kept warm memories of the country that had given him refuge.

It is so close to St. Petersburg, and this is a real European city. From the train station we pass to a large square, as big as half the Field of Mars. On the left-hand side, there is a massive gray marble building looking somehow like a church in the Gothic style. It is a new Finnish theater. On the right-hand side, there is a severely styled National Ateneum. We are in the very center of the town.

We go upwards along Michelsgatan. Because the street is so narrow, and the houses have three or four storeys, it seems to be dark but, nevertheless, it makes an elegant and solid impression. Most of the buildings are Jugendstil [Art Nouveau] architecture, with a Gothic nuance. The facades have no cornices and no ornaments; the windows are placed asymmetrically, they are often framed on all sides, etc.

(Kuprin 2001, 313, translated by the authors).

The themes raised in this essay are still warmly embraced by the Russian speakers visiting Finland or living here permanently. First and foremost, it is the question of equality: the absence of beggars but also of the rich; secondly, it is appreciation of cleanliness and neatness. It is also about the respect for women, children, the elderly, and the disabled. Even the places mentioned by Kuprin have retained their importance for contemporary visitors: the central train station, the Finnish National Theater and the Ateneum (the museum of Finnish national art) are unlikely to be missed by Russian visitors to Helsinki. The pseudo-Gothic architectural style of Helsinki still makes the visitors dream of an ideal medieval city, although this image is misleading.

In order to have a more detailed picture of the role of the city in the life of Russian speakers we organized an essay-writing competition on the subject of Helsinki, supported by the local Russian-language newspaper *Spektr* which is published in Helsinki, the University of Helsinki, and the City Council of Helsinki. We asked the participants to write about their feelings and about places that were dear to them in Helsinki. We received 64 texts, all submitted in Russian. Some of these contained impressions of tourists from different countries, some were written by Finns learning Russian, the rest were composed by speakers of Russian living in Helsinki and able to write in Russian. The level of proficiency among members of the latter group differed, revealing various stages of attrition. In addition, we

analyzed Internet discussions to obtain further evidence of the impressions of Russian tourists. The views of those who live in Helsinki were supplemented by articles about Helsinki in the Russian-language media in Finland.

The first excerpt we cite was authored by a retired Finn whose hobby is studying Russian, which is rather typical of the leftists, and whose youth fell in the 1960s. He reflects about his relations to the city, important places in the town and the stages in its history that he has witnessed and gone through like many of his peers:

My home town is Tampere. I was born there during the war time. I loved this town very much, I was a local patriot! As a child, I visited the maritime capital Helsinki many times with my parents. My mother came from Helsinki, and my grandmother, my aunt, and my cousins lived here.

I remember the Olympic Games of 1952 quite well. Helsinki was then in the center of attention of the whole world! I do remember that it rained every day!

Having completed my high school studies at Tampereen *yhteiskoulu*, I entered the Medical School of the University of Helsinki. I managed to succeed at the second attempt. The city was really bilingual at that time, and one could hear and see the Swedish language in the streets of the capital much more than today. After I had become a physician, I worked for some years in other towns of Finland, but I came back to Helsinki at the end of the 1960s.

Today, Helsinki is quite a different city! Connections to the outside world, to the West, South, and East have become better and, especially in the last few years, we have had more and more tourists from Russia. Today, the Russian language can be heard in the streets and in the shops of our town. Yes, the former bilingual city has become a multilingual international city.

My dearest place is *Esplanadi* with its monuments. It is the heart and soul of the capital, especially on a spring evening one can experience the magic “blue hour” there! In summer, my favorite is the sea fortress of *Suomenlinna*, and in winter the museum island *Seurasaari* where I usually walk once a week.

My wife and I, we have two traditions. In spring, together with our friends, we take part in the day concert of the City Orchestra in Finlandia Hall. One can notice that our student caps, once white, are becoming yellower every year... The festival of the First of May in Helsinki is a unique carnival, It means champagne, balloons, and spring music played by students. The second tradition belongs to the Day of Independence on the 6th of December. Then we visit the common grave in the *Hietaniemi* cemetery where Marshal C.G. Mannerheim lies among the heroes of the capital who fell in the war of 1939–1945.

What about Tampere? I haven't forgotten it! I often go there. But now I may say that I am a “*stadin kundi*” [slang: a “guy from the capital”] and I love the capital of Finland ...

T.L., a 14-year-old bilingual boy from a mixed Finnish-Russian family who participated in the competition, wrote:

I live in Helsinki. Helsinki is a typical European city. Everything is clean, tidy, comfortable and peaceful, and one doesn't find crowds of mad people anywhere. That is why it is pleasant to live in Helsinki. It seems to me that the city is constructed especially for the habitation of many people. All of the areas have something of their “own” and whatever differences there are between them, they were built almost in the same style.

For example, when I walk in my district, *Itäkeskus*, I feel that it is “my” district. I know where the things are as if they were in my own pockets. I also know that it was built wisely. Houses, department stores, and parks surround a big shopping center. It is interesting for us, teenagers. On the other hand, the center of Helsinki is a large labyrinth with tall buildings, department stores, and shopping centers. It's Babel, and people are in a hurry. So I like it less. It still remains strange to me, and I am not really familiar with it.

If we compare the center of Helsinki with the center of St. Petersburg, the center of St. Petersburg is more beautiful and old. But the suburbs of St. Petersburg are terrible! They are dirty and messy. There is nothing like this in Helsinki. Of course, Helsinki has its imperfections. There is absolutely no antiquity like in the European cities. Even Stockholm, another northern city, has its Old Town. Not to mention beautiful Paris, where the whole center is old and gorgeous with its medieval and Renaissance buildings and cathedrals. Helsinki was assembled in the Middle Ages from wood, therefore

nothing old has remained. But Helsinki is my dear capital, and it was built not for tourists, but for the Finns, the inhabitants themselves, and to my mind, there is no better place to live.

So, the image of Helsinki is compared to other places familiar to the author. Due to his age, what may be considered by adults to be the most important things about the city—historical and artistic values—remain unknown to the adolescent. His experience of the Russian city of St. Petersburg makes him appreciate the calmness of Helsinki, while many Russians sometimes feel bored by its tranquility. This attitude can be frequently found in other essays by the young writers. For example, S.P., a 15-year-old girl from a Finnish family studying Russian since kindergarten, composed this text:

I was born here and I want to live here. My elder sister already lives on her own and can go to the city center whenever she wants to, but I cannot. I practice figure skating six times a week, and when this is over, I have to go home immediately. My parents do not like it when I go to the city center in the evening, but when they allow me to go, it becomes a very happy day. When I can go to the city center, I go to the cinema, cafés, or to the *Kamppi* Center for shopping.

I go to the cinema at *Tennispalatsi* because this is my favorite theater. The auditoriums there are very big and the choice is very good. In *Tennispalatsi* I like it that when you have no time to go to the shop to buy something

because the film is about to start, you can buy candies, ice-cream, popcorn, or lemonade right there. When you watch a film at *Tennispalatsi*, it is very easy, you just buy your ticket and popcorn and that is all you have to do, you watch the film and you will have lots of fun. *Tennispalatsi* is situated in the very center of the city, and this is one of the reasons why it is easy to go there.

My second home and another place I like to be is the Helsinki Ice Hall which is very big and old and not so cold. It lies not so far from the city center and can be easily reached. There are two arenas and many locker rooms. When I was small and came with my mom to see how the girls were skating there, I told her that when I grow up I would skate there too and people would applaud me very loudly. This is the dream that I would like to fulfill.

Helsinki is the place where you can dream and make your dreams come true.

This essay reflects the naive picture of the city where people go shopping and to the cinema, sit in cafés and practice sports—one of the most important hobbies among Helsinkians. Girls and boys intuitively love their closest neighborhood and places where their friends live. Most of the Finnish youngsters appraised the city in the same way. When the results of the essay competition were published such vision of the city was criticized by the Russian-language newspaper *Spektr*. The editor wrote that she was sad that the children had not learnt about any of the other interesting things in the city

(Gusatinskaja 2011). Yet the essays of the children from the Russian-speaking families in Helsinki could console her. These texts depict cultural attitudes of families who encourage their children to visit museums and architectural monuments. These essays also reflect the writers' love of nature, the zoo, squares, and avenues. Thus, the expectations of adults differ, and so do the texts produced by the children.

The essays of the adults can be divided into two groups: those written by visitors and those by inhabitants. The inhabitants tend to look for those aspects of Helsinki that are connected to the Russian influence, so that they can justify their presence in this city, their immigration, and their sense of belonging to the city's past and present, to its cultural heritage and contemporary life. They seek to affirm their membership in the community of Helsinkians and, therefore, their equal share in the city's investments and dividends. The contribution to the modern prosperity may be justified by deeds aimed at the wellbeing of the community, and also by strolls, trips and excursions through the city that provide good knowledge of its structure, past and present, and by living memories. This is the way the Russian-language newspaper *Novosti Helsinki* ["Helsinki News"] positions itself. A sense of delight at the Finnish way of life is commonplace, although many are disappointed by the lack of joyfulness in the atmosphere and their own inability to cope with difficulties when the Finnish way of life, including its values, has not been learned at an early stage of immigration (Tabakova 2010). We also observed gender-related differences in

the perception of Helsinki. Men's essays emphasize military monuments and remnants of the wars. Women are fond of the "masculine" character of the city that helps in many ways and supports whatever happens in their life (Helsinki is like the male protector they dreamed about in Russia but who never appeared there, indeed, to feel safe does not necessarily mean to have a husband with enormous biceps—good social welfare is sometimes enough).

As mentioned earlier, we have also received essays from speakers of Russian from different parts of Russia and the "near abroad" (the CIS countries). For many, Finland is the first European country they ever visited, and it ranks high as a tourist destination in Russia. On their road of discoveries some tourists tend to look for stereotypes and expect prejudices against the West to come true. In this case they see only what they want to see, for example, medieval fortresses associated with the tales by the Grimm brothers who belong, of course, to the German tradition, while ignoring the real Finnish history as reflected in the fairy tales by Z. Topelius. This is why they skip the modernity but enjoy the *Jugend* style. Another conception is the "Scandinavianism" of Helsinki that is definitely different from other Nordic metropolises, by virtue of its Russian past *inter alia*. Alternatively, the visitors imagine what life could be like in Russia if the Bolshevik October Revolution had not happened. The places that visitors like in Helsinki are those tourist attractions where they can relax or enjoy life, but not those where the Finns like to be, with the exception of *Suomenlinna* (sea fortress) and *Seurasaari* (open air

museum). Many essays mention that thousands of seagulls and squirrels are part of the city landscape and they capture the imagination of the visitors.

Writing for the oldest Finnish Russian-language newspaper known by its asymmetric name as *The Finland* [in Russian] or *Russia* [in Finnish] *Trade Road*, Jakkonen (2011) summarizes what brings Russian tourists to Helsinki: They come for shopping and for non-material quasi-retailing from tertiary industries such as sports, medicine, and so on. They wish to visit various places of interest, or just to obtain a Schengen visa, which is allegedly easier to do in the Finnish embassy than in the embassy of any other country. Judging from the topics discussed on the Internet forums, among the specific products attracting Russian tourists are fish, candies, coffee, tea, clothes and even the dishwashing detergent "Fairy," known to be of better quality and cheaper than in Russia. Importantly, these consumption-related issues are hypocritically avoided in the essays written by the Russian participants of our competition, as these topics may be considered too petty or too arrogant.

When Mumford (1961) was dreaming of an ideal organic city where nature and technology achieve a balance, he was perhaps imagining a town with the qualities of Helsinki. Nature and hi-tech, for example, meet here every day. In 2009 Helsinki became a member of the international Network of Good Food Cities of the World, and in 2011 Helsinki came first in the "Quality of life" survey conducted by *Monocle* magazine (Monocle 2011). Due to this symbiosis of qualities and what came as a surprise to us, almost all the young

Finnish authors underscored the comfort of living in Helsinki, and writers of all ages were impressed by its tranquility and orderliness.

For Russians, as for Finns, the city is a place where dreams come true, yet the Russians perceive the city as a mystery, while the Finns emphasize its comfort. When something is put into action and functions without great pomp, it always comes as a big surprise for the Russians. The city embodies freedom and, for a Russian, to feel free and on your own, when nobody oppresses you, is to learn about yourself and your feelings, to live making use of all your senses. For visitors from Russia and many other countries, Helsinki is unlike any other city in the world; it is like an animal from the woods. The Russians ask themselves what kind of inhabitants Helsinki can shelter and what it means to become a true Helsinkian. They wonder whether they are ever going to be like Finns. The essay writers reflect about dilemmas of allegiances: If Helsinki is not their birthplace, how can they love something other than their own homeland? Does this mean that they are traitors, or just that they have found a place for honest and free people that they always longed to find and now aspire to stay with? Then, more general questions about urban life arise: If this is a town, then what can be called a town? What is the meaning of culture and architecture in urban settings? Is the town its people or its nature? What is the meaning of life? Without the experience of Helsinki, these reflections might not be possible. Such reflections often arise among travelers. A participant in the competition, E.S. from the Ukraine, shares her experience:

I am thankful to you, the magic city, for having shown to me what is true love and real friendship. I thank you for making me appreciate every moment of life. I would like to say a lot of grateful words but, instead, I will again confess my love and my infinite respect for you, my dear town.

An anthropomorphic attitude to the city (the city as a friend, father, and mother) is a very strong element of the relationship with the city in literature and in informal discourse.

### The image of the city

Due to the pronounced Russian influence in architecture (an example of which is the Uspensky Orthodox Cathedral dominating the harbor, although it operates mostly in the Finnish language), the official tendency is to describe Helsinki as a capital where Eastern and Western cultures meet. This description replaces the previous “Daughter of the Baltic Sea” that did not fully correspond to the inner form of the word “Helsinki” in many languages other than Finnish. The image-makers of Helsinki underscore that Helsinki is a northern city, enjoying its marine surroundings with many islands, combining the old and the new, traditional and high-tech, artificial parks and natural woods, museums and nightlife—the city where everything is nearby. “Helsinki’s identity has been formed by cultural influences from both the East and West” (the *Helsinki Today* brochure, 2011).

The series of Helsinki City Tourism brochures (*Helsinki—Visitor’s Guide*) underlines different features of the city every year. Thus, in Helsinki 2010, as

compared to Helsinki 2009, the best places recommended to visitors reflected the results of the visitors’ votes on the Internet, while Helsinki 2011 placed on its cover words from different languages describing the city as “peaceful,” “green,” “friendly,” and so on. Among these is the Russian adjective *modnyj* [“in vogue”], which might mean that this characteristic of the city is most attractive to the Russian-speaking tourists who come to Finland in their millions, often just for shopping. For the Finnish people, it is important that Helsinki hosted the Summer Olympics in 1952. This symbolized recovering from the war and post-war sufferings, and put Helsinki on the world map. More recently, membership of the European Union, participation in the program of the “European City of Culture” in 2000, and designation as the World Design Capital in 2012 are milestones in self-perception and are dear to all Finns. For the Russian tourists, these achievements are markers of the life they could not benefit from at home and a source of reflection:

Why do the Finns, who have received far from the easiest part of the Earth to inhabit, and who share a common past with the Russian Empire, do better than the Russians? Why is their quality of life so high?

The brochures do not answer these fundamental questions. The idea that in the past Finland and Russia were parts of the same country is the most important myth about Finland, and without myths no symbolic domestication of any city can be performed (Istorija 2005).

The brochure *24 hours in Helsinki* (Tourist and Convention Bureau 2011, 16) recommends, among other things, a visit

to *Kafe Moskova*, i.e. “Moscow café”. It was founded by the famous film director Aki Kaurismäki to suit his own taste, so that nobody else would like it, but it became popular nevertheless. Besides, Helsinki has several restaurants specializing in Russian cuisine, which is held in esteem thanks to Marshal K.G. Mannerheim, who liked it. The Russian restaurants are run by Finns, and a number of dishes are thought to be Russian, although they are not (for example, salted cucumbers with honey, borsch with sausages, and open cabbage pie with mayonnaise). Many people enjoy the special flavor that Russian culture from Czarist and Soviet times has given to Helsinki.

To get to know a city should give a special pleasure. To absorb the city, to identify the relationship between maps and the 3D reality, to classify its qualities, and to sort out impressions of its sights and attractions is partly hard work and partly an adventure. “Nearly every sense is in operation, and the image is a composite of them all,” wrote K. Lynch (1960, 2). In the Russian tourist guide (Goldenzweig 2003, 5) we read:

There is no such city.

There is salty sea air, boulders strewn around, the mirror of the *Sanomatalo* and the balls of light in the hands of the train station Atlantes. There are no Atlantes—their silhouettes fade in the granite. Here people do not look you in the eyes; they worship silence and treat an accidental touch like an electric discharge. The city is dissolved in an unrealistic manganese sunset, a sterile world behind the glass, a pervasive mirage of Scandinavia leaving you perplexed: where is the city? Where is

smog and where are traffic jams, where are fashionable clothes and, after all, where are palaces and castles? What is happening?

Nothing.

Nothing will happen in Helsinki: it lives for itself, absorbed in itself, and concentrated on itself. It neither rejects nor pays attention to strangers, being matter-of-fact and polite. It hides, bringing the invisible mobile phone to the ear. This is teleportation through the receiver. It [the city] conceals traces and leads you onto the streets where you will find the sun, ceremonial shop windows and Japanese tourists with cameras, but where you will never get hold of the city itself.

Similar reflections can be found in a series of advertising photographs published by *Time* magazine in 2000. Helsinki was celebrating its 450<sup>th</sup> anniversary then and was declared the official European City of Culture. The photographs emphasize the feeling that the nature of Earth and the nature of men and women can be genuinely sensed in a city that is nowhere and yet everywhere. Appealing to the five senses, the pictures do not tell us anything about the structure of the city, except that it is full of moisture and water.

Some essays submitted by Russian-speaking residents of Finland and analyzed in this study reflect the same sensitivities and emotions. To illustrate this, we cite an excerpt from the text by V.P., a Russian-speaker living in Helsinki:

This city smells like spring: the early spring of March, the dripping water of

a thaw that comes after the Epiphany frosts. It smells like the melting snow upon the reddish-brown sidewalks, like the almost sweet salt of the Gulf of the Baltic Sea and like sharp fir-needles. It rains, and the light drizzle hovering in the air—now icy, now prickly, now warmly and gently enveloping the streets—evaporates and leaves traces of moisture on the cheek of a passer-by, as if a palm passed over it. [---] This city seems to hint that it is on its own, like a cat on a seafront pier, as if by accident found near the fishermen. It belongs to nobody, it is ephemeral, mirrored in the rain spilled upon the pavement that will dry up. It looks as if there were no city, as if the mirage of the daybreak dream disappeared the minute you opened your eyes. The tramways clank at the turns and pedestrian crossings, as if telling each other the latest news. The bells of the Three Cathedrals play the second part, and the bicyclists rushing along the roads echo them.

The texts we analyzed reveal striking similarities in the image of the city created by very different people with different life experiences.

The image of the city, changing only slightly over time, is presented in *Finljandija* 1972, 1994 and 2000). For example, in 1972, the words of V. Lenin from 15 June 1913 are quoted: “If in Finland we see culture, civilization, freedom, literacy, educated women, and so on, this is *solely* because there is no such ‘social disaster’ in Finland as the Russian government” (*Finljandija* 1972, 6). Unfortunately, 100 years later, the same opinion is expressed by the Russian media.

## Conclusion

In order to discuss the social environment of the places we live in, we must take into account not only the demographic constellation of the citizens and various urban aspects (including architecture, history, design, and so on) but also field research exploring communication about places and, in particular, their names. In our research, we combined methods derived mostly from socio-onomastics, ethnography, sociolinguistics, content analysis, and conversation analysis.

Owing its uniqueness partly to its “Russian” past, Helsinki has a specific romantic flavor in the eyes of the Russians visiting or living here. It is a European capital with a false Gothic style, a city boasting proximity to nature (the sea, seagulls, forests, rocks, and stones). It is a Nordic town without particularly long traditions, eluding those who want to capture its particular character. This study enhanced our understanding of the image of Helsinki for the speakers of Russian and Finnish, as well as for the bilingual immigrants who have their own peculiar patterns of communication. We understood what places are dear to them, what their feelings are when Helsinki is compared to the places where they lived before, and how the Russian-speaking community is layered. We also came to understand how familiarity with the city affects the quality of everyday life, and *vice versa*.

We studied historical transformations of official place-names and the emergence of unofficial ones coined by immigrants of different age groups. We explained the use of such names linguistically, for example, in comparison with the slang terms used in Russia, and gave

their psychological and sociological antecedents. The “Old” and the “New” Russian terms for various places were also discussed: the names used in the Czarist era have vanished from the city’s toponymy, but they are still present in the discourse of the “Old Russians”. The new immigrant identity is constructed through the use of markers of the new life. Historically, Russian names of the Helsinki streets went through a series of transformations. First, they were transliterations of the Swedish names; then they were partly adapted to the Russian language: the word “street” was translated and a Swedish name was transformed into a Russian-like adjective with a Russian suffix. At the final stage the Swedish name was translated completely, in the same way as its Finnish counterpart. Today, Russian speakers adopt Finnish names in their original or slang form, or make up their own variants. Young people use hybrid slang words, while some adults apply Russian models to Finnish place-names. Urban names commemorate facts of integration, acquaintance with Finnish urban culture, a clash of prejudices, and real-life stories. Different explanations have been offered to interpret the specific use of urbanonyms in the speech of Russians in Helsinki.

The image of Helsinki is reflected in the minds of its residents and tourists, and it contributes to the fusion of cultures. The Finnish sources try to present a visitor-friendly version of the Finnish understanding of history, whereas the local media in the Russian language seek to facilitate a long-term task of familiarization with the new surroundings by immigrants and guests.

What happens in the minds of those who try to formulate their feelings about Helsinki reflects conflicting feelings that range from repugnance at their former sufferings to satisfaction with the city that offers them completely new and favorable experiences. Their perceptions and prejudices clash and, as a result, they either seek emotional refuge in the past or comfort themselves saying that their dreams have come true, even though reality turned out to be a far cry from what they expected.

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The Column of the Empress Alexandra



The Uspensky Orthodox cathedral, one of the symbols of the city



The Statue of Emperor Alexander II in Senate Square



The former house of the Russian Seller Kiseleff, now a fashionable department store



Sofia Street, a museum about streets



Café Sofia which serves Russian food



# Sentenced to Commute: Indigenous Young Women at a City University<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*This study unveils the city from the perspective of young, indigenous women, undergraduate students who commute to a city university from remote, traditional communities. Relying on in-depth interviews with 22 Israeli Druze women, natives of Galilean locales, it explores their daily transition to and from the city. The analysis divulges key issues worth attention: the respondents' use of temporal frames to organize their experience of transition, the effects of place and mobility on how they negotiate their identity following their interactions with the urban way of life and, finally, a comment on the spatialization of multiculturalism is conveyed.*

## Daily commuters and the multicultural city

Multiculturalism is a term mentioned with regard to non-hegemonic groups, most commonly: immigrants, national minorities and indigenes. It refers to the decent response to the socio-cultural heterogeneity of the demographic composition in specific places (Song, 2010). Most typically, cities are such diversified places attracting many who seek to benefit from their qualities as trading hubs, marketplaces, industrial complexes, transportation nodes, governmental cores, foci of political activity and centers of service provision. Cities are also the location of many institutes of higher

education—the pivot of the current study. Urban multiculturalism is largely evaluated by spatial separation into neighborhoods so that social groups, usually ethnic and racial, are sorted into various parts of the housing market. This is largely explained by prejudice and discrimination against such groups and by own-group preferences to maintain distinctiveness within specific urban parcels (Clark 2002; Krysan and Farley 2002; Massey and Denton 1993; Yinger 1995). This common focus on spatial segregation dismisses the temporal impact of daily dynamic, misreading additional forms of segregation across the urban space. Some recent research has noted that racial and ethnic transformation of urban tracts occurs through employment. As many urbanites move to their places of work, where they meet people from different socio-cultural groups who live in other neighborhoods, their commuting disrupts the known segregated order of the housing market, yielding additional urban patterns of segregation (Blumen and Zamir 2001; Ellis, Wright and Parks 2004).

However, as a focal point for various activities, the city also attracts many, employees and others, who reside beyond the metropolitan limits. Not only does this flow of incoming people increase the city's day-population, it also intensifies its diversity, portraying new, short-lived, hard to measure and unexplored spatial patterns of interactions and segregation. One well-acknowledged familiar daily influx is that of ex-urban employees who re-enter the city for employment purposes. Another relatively ordinary flow of incomers is that of university

students who have not located to the city and commute regularly from their remote, often rural, neighborhoods. This study explores such a case, tackling multiculturalism from the less common perspective of daily migrants. It turns the light on their reality, focusing on the experience of indigenous young women who, in their pursuit of higher education, re-enter the city and experience its spirit while adding to its multicultural characteristic.

In the last decades, in most developed societies as well as in many developing ones, a remarkable boom in higher education has been largely centered on women. Higher education increases the chances of women to upgrade their earning potential and enhances their social capital as well as that of their family and community (Becker, Hubbard and Murphy 2010). In developing societies in the Arab world these advantages often provoke a paradox, challenging the traditional confinement of women to the home environment and the strict supervision over their movements and social contacts. This study explores the experience of young women, undergraduate students, who live in this paradox. It conveys the perceptions of Israeli Druze women who dwell in remote, semi-rural, traditional communities and commute to a city university. Previous research on Arab Palestinian women in the Israeli system of higher education focused mostly on long-term processes of identity re-construction after their university period and homecoming. The current study highlights their university period, exploring their present actuality as students. Following their commuting to and from the city, this study seeks to

unveil their accumulative experience of frequent urban encounters and habitual fluctuations between these two, traditional and modern, gendered worlds. After considering the status of Israeli Druze women and methodological issues, this experience is conveyed and then analyzed with reference to multiculturalism in the city.

### **Druze in Israel**

The Druze people of the Middle East reside in Syria, Lebanon and Israel where they exist as small minorities with no national aspirations. They make up a small, traditional and religious community whose origin is unclear. Today it is common to identify Druze with Arabs because of some similar ways of life: customs, popular beliefs, dress, food and language. However, alongside some unique cultural traits, their esoteric religion (evolved in Egypt about one thousand years ago) separates them from their neighboring Arabs. To protect their mores and maintain their distinctiveness the Druze tend to live in isolation, mostly in small, mountainous villages away from national centers. Solidarity with the Druze collective is very strong and includes powerful ties between patriarchal, patrilineal clans that rank women at the bottom of social hierarchy (Dana 1998, 49; Farraj-Falach 2005; Firro 1992; Katz 1990; Layish 2000). In Israel, some 123,000 Druze comprise less than 2 per cent of the national population and only 10.1 per cent of the Arab citizens minority (82% Muslim), residing in 16 mountain locales. Living in isolation, Israeli Druze have shaped a rural, conservative and close-knit community that strictly preserves its

religious and traditional values with strong clan solidarity (Al-Krenawi and Graham 2001; Dana 1998; Hassan 2011).

Israeli Druze are a recognized, autonomous religious group with a separate education system where Druze heritage is integral in the curriculum. Unlike the majority of Arab-Palestinian citizens who are exempt from military service, military conscription for Druze men is compulsory following agreement between the state and the community. As a result, individuals and locales are entitled to some lawful privileges, such as, subsidies in housing, infrastructure investments, construction and welfare benefits. Existing research has tended, mostly, to illuminate Druze involvement in the Israeli political system. Studies of Druze multiple-identity in connection with their Israeli and Arab identities show that the majority adheres to the Arab identity component and dissociates itself from the Palestine narrative, while considering Druze Israeliness as a real, non-instrumental identity (for detailed discussions see Nisan 2010; and Yiftachel and Segal 1998). Unlike many Arab citizens who live in cities and in semi-urban locales close to urban centers, Druze tendency of separatism confines most of them to isolated, rural locales. As a result, the ability of Druze women to rely on modern ideas of equality and negotiate the traditional gender regime and the patriarchal constraints it imposes on their daily lives barely exists. The effect of this dissociation from urban life has been noted, though not researched, by few scholars and only with regard to Druze involvement in the Israeli labor market (Kirschenbaum and Goldberg

1992; Hassan 1992) and not with their level of education. In recent years, however, Druze emphasis on schooling has yielded a rapid increase in schooling, including tertiary education for women.

### **Druze women**

The patriarchal nature of the Druze community in Israel has been meagerly researched and, similar to other characteristics, much information has been extrapolated from research on Muslim women which attenuates Druze distinctiveness where, for example, religious proscription of polygamy most prominently singles out Druze women. Nevertheless, women's status is low and social control over them is especially tight. They are obliged to obey the men of their extended family and to assume housework and child-rearing (Farraj-Falach 2005; Hassan 2008; Layish 2000). Women's behavior greatly determines the reputation, "honor", of their entire family and hence their chastity must be demonstrated by modest clothing, limited individual mobility, male chaperonage in public places and, in many cases, also by refraining from driving and physical exercise (Dwairy 1998; Lewin-Epstein and Semyonov 1992; Farraj-Falach 2005; Weiner 2004, 2008).

Although in Israel, higher education is considered important and has raised self-awareness among indigenous women (Pessate-Schubert 2003), cultural barriers still constrain Druze women's access to institutes of higher education (Weiner 2004 and 2008). Adherence to traditional cultural practices is greatly affected by locales' distance from the metropolitan center of Haifa. This cultural geography has determined the expansion of higher

education among women in recent years. In the late 1980s, despite stringent forbidding by religious traditional leaders, several Druze women from the two Carmel vicinities, on the outskirts of Metropolitan Haifa and a ten minute drive from the University of Haifa, broke through patriarchal hindrance and attended higher education. Leaving their home neighborhoods, often unescorted, and studying in the company of men, these women contravened traditional norms and they encountered powerful opposition, at times even ostracism of their families and excommunication from the Druze religion (Falach 1991; Weiner 2004)—a punishment ordinarily reserved for murderers and adulterers. Approximately a decade later these trailblazer women were followed by young women from their Carmel vicinities and, a few years later, young women from the more remote, rural and traditional locales in the Galilee joined them. Over the years, higher education slowly gained legitimacy, yet some Galilean communities still disapprove of higher education for women. Today some 80% of high school Druze female students aspire to higher education (Farraj-Falach 2005, 61) and, within higher education, female Druze students outnumber their male peers.

Most research attention to Druze women is centered on their education. Tertiary education, especially at universities, presents Western culture to Druze women and equips them with new perspectives on their own needs and values regarding the place of individuals in the family and society. University teaching differs greatly from the traditional methods common in the

rural schools, promoting intellectual curiosity and academic independence, and legitimizing the questioning of taken-for-granted knowledge and arguing with authority. As the effects of this openness extend beyond academic texts, university women students also challenge patriarchal authority and norms common in their own community. They illustrate their university period as a time of intense individual change and as an opportunity to discover their true “inner selves” and restructure their identity in a more individualistic way. Their reconstructed, new identity is fragmented and divided between covert and overt components: the covert, suppressed identity is constructed by Western, more individualistic norms, while the overt, openly-expressed identity manifests traditional cultural norms common in their semi-rural home communities. The overt component regulates the identity displayed in public and this observed femininity involves modest clothing and adherence to traditional gender roles (Weiner 2004).

Indeed, this identity reconstruction reflects the paradox of higher education for women in developing societies where increasing the likelihood of women’s earning and of the community wealth might not keep the need to preserve specific indicators of women’s (lower) status and identifiable pointers of the traditional gender regime which are often considered as a brand-marking symbol of the distinctiveness of the whole community. The potential of space to unravel this paradox is important though hardly recognized in these studies of Israeli Druze women and their Arab Palestinian peers. Distances and

the nature of movements between places may influence the flexibility of patriarchal control, although the need to travel to a city university from small, isolated, rural communities seems to work against such flexibility. Only one study of Bedouin women identified chaperoning and religious clothing as instrumental means that legitimate entry to the modern, Jewish space of the university, but consequences are discussed as a long-term process the effect of which appears mostly after finalizing university studies (Abu-Rabia-Queder, forthcoming). Thus the spatialization of everyday life, of how distances and movements turn into a matter of daily decision-making and daily practices within the “big” pattern that conditions attendance at higher education, is generally overlooked. This study seeks to unveil how such performance of routine transitions structures the daily reality of young Druze women students who move between their traditional home communities and the modern city where their university is located.

### **The city, the university and the research setting**

To illustrate the setting of the current study about the daily transitions of young Druze women we have to rely on studies about Arab-Palestinian students. Previous studies have hardly concentrated on Druze students in Israeli universities. Considering the focus of the review on Druze and two important similarities between Druze and Arab-Palestinian female students, their minority language, that is, Arabic as the mother tongue, and living under strict patriarchal regime, some relevant

insights can be derived from research on Arab-Palestinians. Israel, which defines itself as a modern, democratic and Jewish state, granted equal rights to Israeli-Arabs at its inception, including the affirmation of Arabic as a formal language. However, Hebrew evidently dominates the entire spectrum of life outside indigenous locales and this almost guarantees a serious disadvantage at the level of higher education for graduates of the Arabic language based secondary education. This structural disadvantage generates an enduring confusion and a tendency toward collective separatism on the part of Israeli Arab-Palestinians alongside the view of university education as an important path to upward mobility, at least for individuals (Rabinowitz and Abu Baker 2002). While, today, many young Arab women are encouraged to become university students, they are still marginalized by the socio-cultural strategies of a traditional society which, in the last few decades, has selectively adopted modern influences. Primarily, gendered cultural norms encourage women and men to maintain their distinctiveness from each other; women are inculcated from childhood to give precedence to their families’ and clans’ interests and curb their individuality (Haj 1992; Hassan 1991; Rapoport, Lumski-Feder and Masalha 1989; Sa’ar 2001; Shokeid 1993).

The respondents are students of the University of Haifa. Haifa is the third largest urban area in Israel, the population of which exceeds half a million, nearly 10 per cent of the national population. The city is situated on Mount Carmel, and its range of influence includes the Northern District where Israeli Druze

live. Haifa is one of a few Israeli cities where Arab-Palestinian and Jewish citizens live together, and it is known for its comfortable coexistence. A magnet for many students from the north, the city affords young Arab-Palestinians, especially women, a relatively free social environment (Kashua 2004). As a result, the University of Haifa is the only research university in the country where the percentage of Arab-Palestinian students (23%) is higher than its percentage in the Israeli population (almost 20%). The number of women students, especially young women, has risen dramatically in the last decades and today they make up over 65% of the Arab-Palestinian students on campus. As a result, the University of Haifa is a unique Israeli arena with a long tradition of teaching mixed classes of Palestinians and Jews (Safir, Nevo and Swirski 1994). Hence, the choice made by many scholars to focus on Arab-Palestinian students of the University of Haifa is not surprising, but this is the first study that focuses on some parts of the experience of Druze women.

### Methods

Considering the complexity of this situation, we asked how they reckon with the decision to commute to the city and how they feel about their experience of daily transitions to and from the city. The study relies on in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 22 young Druze female students. The respondents' fathers are mostly skilled blue-collar workers (11) and self-employed (9), usually outside the locale (18) in urban vicinities, and the men in the immediate family (fathers and brothers) assumed military service. The respondents describe the economic

situation in their families as "relatively good" and "a little better than average" which is supported by the fact that none were involved in paid work. While these characteristics imply openness to the outside, modern world, the fact that the majority of their mothers (19) are full-time homemakers and that all the respondents said that they spend a considerable amount of time doing domestic chores in the immediate and the extended family, indicates the prevalence of the customary gender regime and women's focus on their traditional roles (see also Fogiel-Bijaoui and Bechar 2003; Seginer, Karayani and Mar'i 1990). At the time of interviews the respondents were 19-21 years old, second- to fourth-year full-time undergraduate students at the faculties of Humanities, Social Sciences, Education and Law at the University of Haifa. They all lived with their birth families in their native neighborhoods in three Galilean Druze locales, the most distant being about 60-80 kilometers from the University of Haifa and an 80-130 minute drive each way. Thus, this group of respondents represents a relatively long and bothersome commute and the interviewees are well acquainted with this experience of daily transitions.

Interviews were conducted in Arabic (the Druze mother tongue) by two young, female Druze peers (as part of a wider research project about the effect of higher education) previously unacquainted with the interviewees, at a place chosen by the interviewees (usually off-campus), lasting about ninety minutes. Interviewees were re-approached (by the same interviewer on campus or via phone) to verify the impressions gained in the course of the interview. This matching was valuable in

enhancing our access to such relatively intimate information (Bhavnani 2004; see also the discussion in Wolf 1996). Interviews were recorded, translated and transcribed; the text was analyzed by the authors with the help of indigenous young women in a process of double verification across cultural boundaries within the research team. Taken together we believe that these measures assure high-quality, authentic information.

### **Transition to the city through time frames**

The experience of transitions is primarily and most prevalently structured in temporal terms. Time represents itself as a manifold array made of various frames, serving as a high-level apparatus by which reality is sorted. It embraces daily transitions as a two-way, concrete occurrence, and a sense of passing through time that implies mid- and long-term processes. Typical interviews started with daily concerns, and then long-term processes, which contextualize daily transitions, were expressed. This order indicates that sorting out daily occurrences is a more pressing issue for the interviewees while dealing with long-term processes is a much more transparent and comprehensive undertaking.

The “management of time” is a term often used to describe day-to-day routines and occurrences which are largely structured around commuting to and from the university. Daily transitions are foremost about handling the routine as university students. The respondents attend the university four to five days each week and distinguish their “university days” from their “home/family days”. University days are described as a

“chain of sprints” and the respondents say that they feel like participants in a “race” or as attempting to “grow wings”. The daily routine is quite similar for all respondents who start their day very early in the morning aiming to reach the classroom in time for the earliest lecture (8:30 am).

I wake up at about five thirty [am] to catch the first bus. My mother has already prepared some hot beverage for me and I grab a pita [bread] or a sandwich or a cookie to eat on the way. I have to dash. I arrange all my stuff the evening before, not to waste “sleeping time” in the morning. If I miss the bus the whole day gets messy and stressful. It’s better to be on time for the first bus, then you can relax. I have to take my big bag which is quite full and heavy, especially in the winter [when] it is annoying, [because of] the cold, the wind and the rain, it’s easy to be late and sure, you’ll be late often. If I take the second bus I’m late. And also I spend the whole ride with those [students] who slept over, most [of whom] are not very good [students]. I am not like them, I am a good student, though I am from a [distant] village. I’m not in one of these “nothing” [low-level], though closer, colleges. (Rim)

University students are distinguished from college students by their ability to handle the burden of long commuting. Clearly, space is considered to be a barrier for the students’ academic achievements and wellbeing. Evidently, spatial mobility is constrained by two institutional times. The first is determined by the city university. Besides the need to study and prepare academic assignments, its daily effects are felt in the evening before the commute, when the students

do all their non-academic preparations. University institutional time clearly sculpts the morning waking time and other arrangements so as to enable the interviewees to fit into another institutional time which is scheduled mostly by commercial considerations of the public transport service. Meeting the time constraints of the, usually two, public transport schedules facilitates the students' capability to synchronize their transition from their domestic setting to that of the university. Five of the respondents are regularly driven by a family member (father) to a nearby bus station on the main, intercity road where many buses heading to the city central station stop. Without parental help the mornings of these students would be extremely stressful because of the scarcity of public transport in their village as compared to the neighborhoods of most of the other respondents.

Morning transition is also indicative of class, including issues such as economic background, mode of commuting, personal expenses and family support. All respondents reported on satisfying occasions when they are driven by a family member "door-to-door", from their home to the university. These are rare occurrences and unaffordable by their own, "above average", families:

Public transport [to the university] costs a lot, more than 70 shekels [20 US\$] per day to go back and forth. My mother prepares some food and a vacuum flask with coffee and a bottle of water that I take but it's a long day and I often buy some snacks. I don't work because they [family] want me to excel and know that travelling so many hours each day is really tiring.

I also need time to study at home. So they pay a lot for me to go to the university in the city and I am grateful. (Arin)

Although none of the respondents holds a driving licence, and none actually knows a young Druze woman who drives her own car to the university, either occasionally or regularly, all do share a fantasy of commuting by their own self-driven car:

I wish I had my own car, it's so less stressful, makes you free not sentenced [constrained] to the bus. Having your own car to go to the university it's almost like living in the city, you can be yourself, go where nobody knows you. Just knowing that changes you much more than going to the university with some [familiar] people. But I couldn't ask my father to also pay for this [out of home residence], it would break his heart to turn me down for something that could really ease my studies, make me an even better student. (Arin)

Although class nuances are mostly associated with the pricey commuting, the respondents recognize this costly transition as only one part of their comfortable status as full-time students that burdens their families. They try to reciprocate by physical efforts such as travelling in overcrowded buses, carrying their heavy luggage all around during their long university days, consuming less expensive food and, obviously, by aiming towards high academic achievements, including association with students of similar academic aspirations (see an excerpt from Rim's interview quoted earlier). Yet their experience induces a wish for a less

constrained existence with regard to the institutional time of the transport service and social control (as expressed by Arin), but not necessarily with regard to the university institutional time. The latter triggers this imaginary flight to the city, away from their native neighborhoods. The inaccessible car clearly epitomizes autonomy as the benefit of potential exercise of anonymity and individualism which are characteristic of city life. Seven respondents are more direct, contrasting the city with their home locales:

I usually wake up a few minutes before my mother checks on me and think about the day. I think about how I need to hurry to catch the first bus to the [inter]city and catch the city bus; how it is going to be overcrowded and move slowly through the jam-packed, noisy streets and the smelly smog. It is different from what we have at home, not frightening, but intriguing. [City] people can come and go as they like, wear what they want, talk to whoever they wish and have coffee with anybody. They are not recognized and labeled [by passers-by]. I think this place suits me. I often ask myself whether I could move, really separate from my life and live in the city, alone [independently], having a job, an apartment, and new friends. But this is too expensive a dream and my family could never pay for such an undertaking. (Maysloon)

Notably, the respondents refrain from explaining the contrasting circumstances that inspire such fancies of flying away as a liberating step. Although this refraining may be related to a wide, taken-for-granted understanding of the restrictive regime in the home environment, it also attests to the respect they have for their

native culture and to the importance of family ties and approval. The reports on such fancies are withheld by financial concerns and even Maysloon aborts her outspoken desire to experience city life, which would rely on her own independent income, for that reason. Very interestingly, gender, though unmistakably implied, is not brought up directly with regard to these socio-economic and mobility concerns of the morning bus ride. It is, however, tackled most prevalently with regard to the evening ride.

### **The evening transition to the home**

The evening commuting is usually very tight and demands coordination of several passages between different means of transport. Latest buses on campus are strictly timed 10-15 minutes after the evening lectures (18.00 and 20.00), which barely leaves enough time to reach one of the bus stations on campus.

Missing the [last] bus is not an option. It means that my father or my older brother has to drive to the city, to the university, about one hour each direction, to drive me home. It's unthinkable. Now [normally] one of them has to drive to the main road and pick me up at the bus station, but this is only about half an hour altogether, not two hours. The second [intercity] bus drops me off on the main road and it's late and the service is slow [infrequent]. I call home about 15 minutes before my stop, and my brother leaves to wait for me. There is little light and it is quite frightening for a girl [young woman] alone at night on the road and they [the family] don't want me to wait because it's dangerous. It's better not to be [seen] alone, to be waited for. We [women]

have to be careful. What if a [male] student or somebody else is already at the station? People [might] think we are together and talk [gossip]... By the time of the spring semester it is not so terrible because the night comes later and he [her brother] waits for me only after the last lecture. But winter nights are terrible. Not only do I have to pay attention [coordinate] to call home on time when on the bus and see nothing outside, it's also very cold, windy and often rainy. So it's really better that he waits. It could have been better to drive my own car but this is a dream for most unwedded [young, female] students. Also for me even if we [the immediate family] are modern, not religious. ... This is my last year [at the university] and I never miss the [evening] bus... With all these layers of clothing, the heavy bag and the crowded corridors, I have to be quick though I'm tired. Sometimes I skip the toilet to be on time for the bus, and remember, it's a long ride. Honestly, I'm careful not to drink during the last class. (Belkis)

Belkis touches upon most of the issues mentioned by the other respondents. It is indicated that, similarly to the morning commuting, the institutional schedules of the university and of at least two more public transport services shape the journey back home. Means of commuting appear to be very important and, while driving a private car is mentioned and dismissed immediately as irrelevant for women, being driven in a private car by a family member is an important component, typical of the evening transition. In this context several other aspects are emphasized: physical discomfort, tiredness and climate hassles are accumulated over the night-darkness

and the deserted environment. These signify moral panic and generate a sense of vulnerability and insecurity in the young women upon their late return to their distant locales. To reduce the perceived risk and the panic it raises, evening commuting is also constrained by the personal time of men, usually brothers, who chaperon the women for the last part of their journey. Although seemingly personal, the chaperons' time is also largely institutional: it represents the family whose men provide the chaperonage and whose evening schedule incorporates this need to care for the family women. The chaperons' time is also embedded in the second institutional time, that of the community by which the circumstances for chaperonage are determined. Clearly this moral panic is gendered, centered on the protection of women's modesty (sexuality) as a signifier of the family reputation and "honor". Phrases such as, "because we are girls", "especially important for women" and "only for women" were often voiced as indicators of this concern.

Because of their burdensome commuting, ex-urban students who try to make the most of their university days usually stay late which integrates such a late, anxious ride into their routine. Reflecting on this evening anxiety, the interviews resort to irony and even cynicism:

It is not only that these [daily] journeys are tiring for me, they are also more expensive for my family than dorm living. During the first year some of us [female friends] even indicated it to the parents, to show how we [the family] can save money, make university less

costly. All received the same response saying that “some things are worth more than money such as our tradition, values and honor” and that “women and daughters that respect their [religious-traditional] origin don’t fancy city living, where sinful episodes are a daily matter”. Isn’t it funny? I voice my opinion to my parents but not outside [publicly]. So I respect their view and go [commute]. I’ll never be disrespectful, immodest [because] that might hurt them. (Ranna)

Apparently class nuances and economic concerns are tied in with social control and the need to commute daily in order to avoid the peril of the urban lifestyle. Yet, it is attested by all the respondents that some criticism, individualism and sense of autonomy are expressed indoors, within the confines of family privacy. This gap indicates how gender is negotiated within the context of modernization, where processes within the family are muted in order to protect the social consensus outside, in the community public space. This negotiation is discussed later.

Similar to the morning bus, being confined for a long ride with only vaguely familiar fellow-passengers—women and men, yields opportunities for mixing. Following her description of the morning bus, where socializing with students of high academic aspirations seems important, Rim conveys the different atmosphere of the evening ride:

You meet a lot of new [young] people on the bus and it’s nice. You are still “city pretty” [voiced in Hebrew “*Yaffa La’ir*”, see Amira below] and a little bit droopy, and the evening is dark. If you are not too tired, you can talk with

new people [unknown male students]. It’s fine because you are never alone on the bus and must be careful not to chat with them for long because you’re not really unfamiliar... You know how it is for women, people always know people who know people who know you and your family. It is *not* [her emphasis] like you are walking alone in the city and there is little chance to meet acquaintances. On the bus you meet a lot of new people who speak your language and you are relatively free to look, talk and laugh, and then you can meet later on the campus, elsewhere in the city. It’s surely not easy but possible even if I myself never did such a thing, especially with someone who is not like me [Druze]. Anyway, as you get closer to home, you have to arrange your clothes to [suit] the home [community milieu] and call your brother to come and meet you and, even if you have a nice chat with someone, he knows your family watches you, and soon you get off. You are a “good” girl. You can continue later on facebook, but you have time to think if you are interested at all. (Rim)

Thus, evening commuting becomes a discrete arena for mixing and matching opportunities where social control, though existing, is not as tight as usual. It is interesting to note not only that considerations for mixing on the evening bus are different from those on the morning bus, but performance of social control such as re-dressing to affect a modest appearance and coordinating chaperonage are used to “correct” random flirting on the bus. The respondents are familiar with a few cases of romantic relations that had originated on the evening bus and tend to clarify

that, normally, young Druze women follow the code of chastity and separate themselves from strangers. This latter emphasis reflects the Druze tendency of separatism from non-Druze Arabs with whom they share a mother tongue. Segregation from the Jewish majority differs because, as Amira implies, it is embedded in their dependence on institutional time:

I have to catch the bus and don't have time to talk with the teacher and others [students] when the class ends. This is bad mostly when we [students] have to do team tasks. [As a result] I can work only with other Arab [female] students, and it turned out that we [Druze] usually study together and sometimes with [Arab] Christian [female] students. Many [Jewish] students want to work with us [Druze] and we want to work with them, but it's hard, we never have time to hang around and do things together with them so we stick to each other. (Amira)

It is indicated that the evening pressure not only incapacitates personal preparations but it also purges discussions with teachers and cooperation with other students. While separatism is maintained, academic achievements and aspirations suffer.

It is, however, noteworthy that, though common, commuting *to* the home does not always imply a late bus ride. The respondents reported that at least once a week they return home earlier, in the afternoon:

On Tuesdays it turned out that I have some time to do what I like. Usually I go to the mall [at the central station

where she takes the intercity bus] and I walk around window-shopping, watching the people in the cafes, going in different directions. It seems like a big mess but it's not, everybody goes somewhere, nobody is lost. I like to watch all kinds of people: old, young, children, Arabs, Jews, tourists... I look at the women wearing beautiful, fashionable clothes, some wearing tight T-shirts and shorts; they are lovely though they look so naked. Sometimes I ask myself if I could walk like that on the street, not at home [neighborhood], of course, but elsewhere around the world. I wear trousers and it's fine, but never tight jeans. When I'm there [in the city], I try to make myself prettier, modern, to be fit for the city. I put on some make-up, lipstick, arrange my blouse...

[She re-presents her body: tightening her blouse, opening the top button, hanging her coat on her hand, shaking her head to let the hair fall freely, stretching her body upright and wearing a big smile.]

I don't overdo it because someone [familiar] might notice me, but I do change myself a little. I feel different, freer, more myself, the real Amira, more than in the university and certainly more than in my neighborhood. I always dress nice for the university and take special things [clothes and accessories] to change into in the [public] toilets. But when I go to the mall I pay more attention to be "city pretty". Sometimes I go with a [girl] friend and it's more fun, but even by myself it's nice. It is not like going to *Hadar* or to the *Merkaz* [local business districts] where you are actually out [doors], where it's more dangerous around places [sites] which are really no good for women. Anyway, I don't have much time to wander around,

but every other week for one or two hours I feel different, like abroad.

Interviewer: Did you ever go to *Hadar* or to *Merkaz*?

Sometimes I go, but always with friends. It's interesting for me because I'm used to the village, but I feel better at the mall. I'm more comfortable to do some little shopping for myself, clothes and in the drugstore, and [costume] jewelry, and all the other stores. In my neighborhood the stuff [selection] is boring, at the university it's limited and at the mall there is everything. (Amira)

Returning home in the afternoon offers an advantage which is most often taken by the young women to encounter city life as a fourfold experience: reduced social control, exploring "improper" territories, restructuring bodily appearance, and joining consumption as a relatively private act. While all these aspects are unquestionably embedded in their "going-to-the-university", they are experienced as spatially and temporally separated from the campus life. The semi-public space of the mall seems to provide an agreeable mixture of anonymity, safety, and hubbub that enables these young women to encounter city life without seriously challenging their community conventions. Interestingly, bodily restructuring, which is admittedly an important component of the morning daily commuting, was mentioned in passing by only two interviewees. Yet it was brought up with regard to this less frequent ride which was mentioned by an additional 16 respondents. While this neglect might be related to privacy and modesty it, nevertheless, indicates the extent of social control which is felt by these young women also when

on campus where they are recognized as Druze by others, including kith and kin. It is noteworthy that all the respondents dress in a modern way yet, as they move toward the city, all slightly amend their appearance in a way which is less acceptable as modest in their neighborhood but hardly noticeable by modern outsiders. Altogether, these seemingly minor changes in representing the body at home, on the campus, and in the city, reflect variations in the sense of the gendered self which are related to place and mobility. These are discussed in the last section.

#### **Home days: transitions through the weekly and yearly frames**

Although the women's experience of daily transitions is fragmented between the morning and the evening bus rides as separated endeavors, the two are not unconnected. To explicate their connectedness, the respondents turn to different time frames that better capture the cyclic experience of their transitions—the weekly and the yearly routines. Out of the seven days of the week the respondents spend two or three days at home. They usually describe themselves as adult daughters in their parents' home:

The most important thing is to study, to prepare my academic tasks, including reading. Written assignments always come first and then reading [which is] extremely difficult and time consuming because it's mostly English [second foreign language]. Often I tend to avoid it... I know it's not right, my parents are making [financial] efforts, and I don't have to [take paid] work except during the [summer] vacation... I am

a good student, but I could do much better. [Hence]It's good that I don't live there [dorms] with all the friends and the "city fun". I would probably have studied even less, go out to wander around with friends, to spend time in the city and the [dorm's] club and so on. I do imagine what it could be like to live there but, still, even with all these annoying tours [commuting], I have more time to study at home. Here I can help my Mom at home, you know, cleaning, washing, in the kitchen. I help my aunt with her young toddlers, I do some shopping for my grandmother and help her in the house, and once a week I help some of my uncle's kids with their homework. There are many things that I do and my family counts on my help. And I spend some time, actually a lot of time, with my friends and some of my cousins. Here there are a lot of family affairs but I can always say that I have to study to avoid some of them; in the dorms you're alone [independent]... who can tell you what to do? You don't need to say you're studying to have a little peace [privacy]. (Mariam)

Mariam's description clearly identifies studying, domestic and family work, and same-sex mingling as the three most prevalent activities that dominate the students' "home days" routine. These are portrayed hierarchically so that the prioritization of studying is widely accepted. The effect of gender is noticeable with regard to the non-academic activities, such as, domestic chores, child minding, controlled social links and exemption from financial worries, which altogether structure a relatively sheltered environment for young women students. For Mariam living on campus in the city implies an alternative order

to that of her native neighborhood with regard to studying, personal autonomy, domestic work, unsupervised mingling and mobility. Although none complained about their home-days' routine, all respondents confessed envisaging such an alternative. Thus, while descriptions of daily commuting are mostly structured around practices and habits of moving *to* and *from* the city, contrasting "home days" with "university days" offers a fuller perspective of the women's transition between the two worlds.

Mariam alludes to another cyclic order that contextualizes the transitions to and from the city. The yearly order separates the university period from the four-month summer vacation. Besides the short-term ceasing of daily commuting, the most important aspect of summer vacation is the involvement of most (19 out of 22) of the respondents in paid work for three to four months. All are employed in jobs near to their homes, working as temporary shop assistants, cashiers, child minders and other types of helping jobs, often in local businesses owned by members of the extended family. While all said that they were treated fairly well at their jobs, 14 (of the 19) reported on being underpaid—below minimum wages and commented that such unlawful salaries are common among employed women in the region:

I believe that in the city people [employers] who don't know you or your family wouldn't dare to pay you less [than minimum wages] but I live here. Even those who live on campus return home for the summer vacation and are underpaid. But we usually have to work during the summer for at least three months to help the family

and save some money, not to ask [money] for every petty thing. (Rula)

Apparently city jobs appear more profitable than local ones because the typical anonymity of urban reality seems to protect against social control. At the home locales, traditional values of gender hierarchy and loyalty to the clan and to the community seem to cultivate a closely-knit reality that enables financial abuse of these (and other) employed women. Rather than expected vacation-topics such as relaxation, leisure, independent earning and occupational considerations, the ill-feeling of being financially abused dominates the “home days” experience of the employed respondents during their summer vacation. This experience also shapes their future view of themselves as employed women.

#### **A life course perspective**

References to the respondents’ past and future, though not necessarily voluminous, are found throughout the various testimonies, illustrating an additional time frame. The life course perspective is a taken-for-granted frame, serving as an underlying principal that contains the venture of university education as one part of a longer and diverse course. Samira, who was interviewed on the last week of her four-year university course, offers a retrospective view of her venture:

Sometimes when I’m alone [with no acquaintances] on the [intercity] evening bus I think about my life. I try, I need to explain myself, justify this burden. I see [adopt] a wider picture, a panorama that helps me to appreciate this long, tiring ride. My family

always emphasized education and I always tried to be good [at school]. My father always wanted me to go to the university, to have a better future as a woman and a mother. I now know what a better future means for me. Not being a homemaker who has no money [earnings]. To have a better job than just cleaning or arranging vegetables at my uncle’s grocery [where she works on vacations], and it will be more interesting [fulfilling]. My fiancé and I will make a “good” family with [higher] education and income to support our family. My mother never worked outside [the home] but I will ... have my own money and my own life. I’ll live in a [the nearby] village with my fiancé’s family. We will not live elsewhere, not even in Akko [a neighboring, medium-size, mixed—Arab-Jewish, city at the metropolitan outskirts]. But having visited the city often, watching how people live there, I learnt a great deal about how to manage my life as a modern woman who will also be a mother and who won’t stop respecting her tradition. (Samira)

The effect of the “big picture” is usually pushed aside. It typically emerged with regard to descriptions of some long moments of solitude which were occasionally offered by the long evening commuting. This broad perspective entails a strong sense of future disposition, encapsulating issues of family life with motivation for social mobility as the main benefit of university education, and depicts some differences from the typical lifestyle of the parents’ generation. Social mobility is conveyed in conventional-modern terms of occupational and income characteristics and in the more traditional terms of reputation in the community.

Like most others (19) who are engaged to be married when completing their university course, Samira realizes that the coming wedding implies migration to her partner's native locale, and predicts her future in the bosom of her Druze community. Although the option of future city residence is declined, she appreciates the input of her urban encounters to the enhancement of her future prospects as she portrays a kind of middle ground where the traditional and modern value systems are integrated. Evidently, she differentiates her "urban experience" from her "university experience" and recognizes the inconsistency between city life and the traditional life in her locale. Altogether, this "university-city" phase in her life helps her to formulate a future which is believably viable.

### Discussion

This study unveils the city from the perspective of a transient population of young, indigenous women students from remote, traditional communities, examining their experience of daily transition to and from the city. The analysis divulges some key issues that are worth attention: the respondents' use of temporal frames to organize their experience of daily transitions, the effects of place and mobility on how they re-construct their identity following their interactions with the urban way of life and, finally, a comment on the spatialization of multiculturalism is offered.

Throughout the testimonies, the most prominent issue is the intuitive tendency of the interviewees to order their activities as well as their multifaceted experience in cyclic and linear time

frames, demonstrating the interlock of the spatial and temporal dimensions (Hägerstrand 1985). The interviewees recognized two cyclic time frames by which they organize their routine, the week and the year. The weekly order separates university days from home days. University days are structured around academic activities and loaded with urban impressions. Although home days are also structured around the priority given to academic concerns, they include many more activities which are typical for young women in these Druze neighborhoods. Thus, while each daily routine is perceived as linear, the full impression of daily transitions to the city and encounters with the urban milieu is evidently captured and conveyed within the respondents' experience of the weekly cycle. This time frame enables them to process and evaluate their urban encounters against the common standards in their native neighborhoods. Most likely this lag is explained by the overtiring and exhausting routine of each university day and the relief offered by the weekly perspective.

Some correlation can be found between the weekly and the yearly cycles which separate university terms from summer vacations. It is notable that throughout the testimonies the entanglement of space and time includes common references to the effect of seasonal changes as part of the yearly cycle. Vacation, however, implies withdrawal from urban encounters and involvement in paid work close to the home. Individual earning does not necessarily entail personal autonomy, indicating the respondents' experience of tension between some "home conventions" and some "urban-

modernist" basic rights. This cycle represents the sense of moving back and forth between their two statuses: during university terms they are privileged young women who are permitted to access higher education and, in the course of that, also experience a weakening in social control and licitly encounter the urban milieu. During university vacation they are young women of the community who experience (re)intensification of social control and restricted mobility which makes them captive, exploited employees.

Unmistakably, cyclic and linear time frames are twisted together. Despite the obvious pairing of the morning and evening transitions and that each typically reflects "transitional concerns" which are contained by the other, they were described as separate, linear activities. Quotations that enclose both within the sequence of one day were hardly voiced and their correlation is articulated within the cyclic time frame of the week.

An overarching linear time frame is that of the respondents' life course. The women are aware of their current stage in the final phase of their formal education. During this (three to four year) university phase, the yearly cycle though lively and sparkling, is mostly hesitant and ambivalent. Daily transitions are entwisted with the life-course frame and, together, the twisted time frames epitomize a wavering experience of time-space expansion and compression (Katz 2001). For these young women attending the university implies access to the benefits of modernity and their world has grown bigger, practically in spatial terms as determined by their daily mobility. Their urban encounters, however,

are rather limited by the institutional schedules that prescribe their commuting procedure—temporal constraints—as nights outside the home and dormitory residence are not acceptable (for them). They are also limited by the life course frame which implies time-space (re)compression upon their graduation and home-coming, when traditional gender hierarchy will regain hold on their lives and re-confine them to the home environment (Blumen and Zinaty 2010). Altogether, going to the university shapes an incoherent experience which entails identity discontinuity. Narrating their mobility through the various time frames helps the respondents to cope with the challenge that mobility between the two places brings into their lives. In that process, the effects of place and mobility on identity (re)construction transpires.

### **Place, mobility and identity**

The need to reckon with the effects of place and mobility is a recent development in identity research and is mostly applied to international migration, transition from pre-modern to modern settings and the rise of hybrid identity (Bauman 2001; Easthope 2009; Urry 2000). This study emphasizes daily mobility, exploring the experience of indigenous young women who move from their traditional remote communities to the city with a typically modern purpose of entering higher education (Tuan 1996 "hearth" and "cosmos"; see Ley 2001). To understand how they negotiate their identity components in that chapter which is typified by diurnal transitions, the significance of place must not be overlooked. It is, however, worth

mentioning that, unlike international migrants, the respondents routinely exercise travelling by which mobility itself turns out to be a stable identity component and their hybrid identity extorts more vitality from encounters with the two places at both ends of their daily journeys.

The urban way of life (Wirth 1938) is probably the best term to capture the meaning of their daily going to the university and exposure to the city. It refers to the erosion of moral structure and community life in the traditional sense as a consequence of new division of labor, cultural diversification and socio-economic segregation which isolate individuals within the propinquity of strangers. The traditional nature of the respondents' home communities, their place of departure, was described earlier. Clearly, the respondents are situated within a broader modernization of their Druze communities. In the Israeli Druze (and Arab-Palestinian) communities this process has typically leaned on men's daily commuting to relatively close employment foci. As a result, some modern-urban features have been "imported" into the traditional-rural locales by men commuters and residential outmigration to urban centers has been scarce. Women, who were traditionally confined to the rural locales, have had limited direct encounters with modernization and its benefits and continue to perform their gender role in the traditional ways. Consequently, their adherence to the traditional gender role was ingrained into place identity, reaffirming the authentic Druze character of these locales.

Under these circumstances, the recent development of daily migration of young women to the city is tolerated, but with reservations, doubts and suspicions. This inconsistency largely shapes the way these women negotiate the urban way of life. They are curious, some even passionate, about city life, and their urban experience is typically modernist as it is set against their lives in their semi-rural home communities. It embraces some physical features such as noisiness, smelliness, throng, and some more abstract thought-provoking issues, for instance, individuality, anonymity, autonomy and, most prominently, a sense of a new moral order which is based on the slackening control on their sexuality and their discontent with their summer job arrangements. It is noteworthy that these women recognize the "liberating", modernist potential of city life for women, which is deeply seated in the urban way of life (e.g., Nava 1996). Yet they differ from the original context of the term "urban way of life" in that they have no intention of becoming urbanites. Their strong home attachment, clan and ethnic loyalty, and deep sense of community belonging renounce urban citizenship (see Maya-Jariego and Armitage 2007). Thus, the hybridity that the urban way of life phases into their identity mostly reflects this multifaceted bond to their place of departure. This somewhat overshadows the effect of their current encounters with city life, which include some minor "provocations", such as, less modest clothing and appearance, socializing with unfamiliar others, some (usually) innocent flirting, unchaperoned mingling in central streets and malls, independent purchasing of personal

things and frustration with their vacation jobs. However, the effect of the urban way of life is easily detected by their intention to modernize their future life within the community limits: they plan to marry, to have a family, to become employed mothers and assertive spouses, and then to grow to be respectful, convincing women in their communities. This order of things implies that the hybridity acquired through their current encounters with city life (and university education) is suspended, turning into a future orientation. It also unveils their identity re-construction at present by which daily boundary crossing indicates that gender and ethnicity are re-negotiated within a unitary system that involves place and time. Yet it is noteworthy that, within this unity, gender, though re-negotiated, is categorically subordinated to the ethno-cultural component as the preponderance of the life course linear time frame indicates.

Currently, however, they come to the city as day migrants who are distinguished by their appearance, that is, clothes, limited social interactions and temporal constraints, language and studying habits. Their visible foreignness and observed engagement with in- and out-daily migration embody some non-modern Druze values that they “import” to the modern-Jewish city. In that sense these mobile women challenge the binary distinction between rural and urban ways of life, infusing attributes of one milieu into the reality of the other: their daily mobility infuses modernization into their native locales and, by the same token, also diversifies the city, intensifying its multicultural character. Thus, daily transitions and city encounters do not

only hybridize their identity as Druze women, but also liquefy the place identity of their origins and destination. But this liquefying effect differs between the two places. Whereas the effects of their encounters with modern city life, especially those related to their gender, are often suspected, disapproved of, and even criminalized, within their home communities, the city milieu tolerates their apparent strangeness. In that sense it is also noteworthy that despite the “Arabic” characteristics of their observed strangeness, none of the respondents reported prejudice or discrimination against them either on that ground or as a woman. While this does not suggest that they have not experienced such harassments, it does indicate the extent of forbearance and signifies the city milieu as tolerant, supporting its multicultural characteristics. The difference between the two places, though understandable and even justified by some, shows how multiculturalism is spatialized. The entanglement of gender, education, tradition and hegemonic power relations emphasizes that, beyond multiplicity and diversity, multiculturalism involves tolerance, acceptance and inclusion as integral to its “decent” component (Song, 2010), and that this component is not necessarily policy-dependent but can also be detected as integral to routine practices of daily life. Thus the spatialization of multiculturalism is also affected by the varied maps of decency, as reflections of various systems of power relations.

Overall, this study sheds light on the viability of city multiculturalism as emerging from a transient, non-hegemonic population which is unquestionably

accepted by urbanites and other passersby with whom they fleetingly interact and share the urban space. Focusing on the urban day population, the current study skips the common disposition to map wards of residential segregation and delves into the experience of one group of this day population. Yet it is indicated that a spatial investigation of the impermanent, daily patterns is a challenging direction for future research. Identifying, documenting and mapping urban routes and spaces of multicultural encounters, indifference and avoidance across the metropolitan area are worthy of research attention. They will provide a better understanding of the city as a mosaic of social spaces and how these vary between day and night.

#### Note

We are much indebted to the interviewees and interviewers, young Druze women who chose to maintain their anonymity but willingly shared their experiences and views with us. They became our teachers and interpreters, acquainting us with many facets of the lives of our neighboring Druze countrywomen. We also appreciate the comments of the editors Larisa Fialkova and Maria Yelenevskaya on the early versions of this article.

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# Sacred and Profane Space in the Modern Russian City: A Choice of Russian Jews

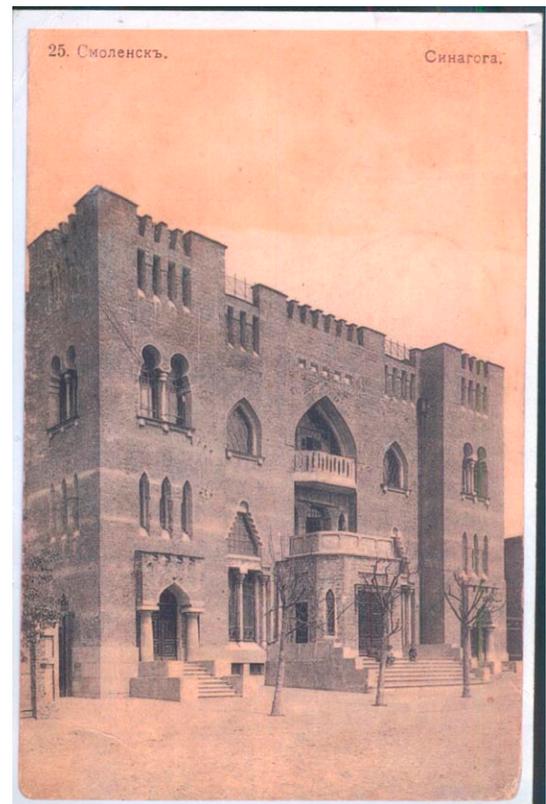
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## Abstract

*A profound transformation of the cultural memory in the former Soviet Union has resulted in deep changes in the cultural identities of all Soviet—and ex-Soviet—ethnic and religious groups. This transformation led to a change of perceptions about sacred and profane spaces and the connections of these spaces to the urban landscape. As a result of complex historical and cultural processes, contemporary Russian Jewry is a highly heterogeneous community and its perception of traditional Jewish sacred places—synagogues, cemeteries, saints' tombs—is that they have lost their function. During the Soviet era these places had often not been considered by Jews as sacred. Moreover, non-Jewish sacred places, like Christian churches, had, paradoxically, in some cases, become Jewish sacred places. The so-called Jewish renaissance in post-Soviet Russia has led to a revived interest in Judaism and Jewish traditions. Therefore, Jewish communal centers, philanthropic and youth organizations, centers for economic support, leisure time activities, and places for Jewish sentiments and memories function as Jewish sacred places. This inversion of sacred and profane spaces, typical of post-modern culture, is visible, especially in small urban centers, where there are no synagogues and where the role of secular or semi-secular Jewish organizations is growing. In this article I will try to demonstrate the specifics of Jewish sacred and profane spaces in modern Russian urban centers.*

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*This postcard of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century depicts the building of a former synagogue in Smolensk. At present the college for Communication Studies is located there*

## Introduction

Some scholars stress the decline of many traditional collective identities, and the emergence of new ones at the same time (Davidman 1991; Giddens 1992; Vermuelen and Govers 1994; Eriksen 1993; Anthias 2001). The deep crisis of some traditional religions and nations is one aspect of the phenomenon (Gans 1994; Smith 1995; Horowitz 2001; Calhoun 2004). The other is the “ethnicity explosion” and the “religious renaissance” in many parts of the world (Bentley 1987; Banks 1996; Brubaker 2004). In any case, a person

identifies him or herself more and more with his or her religion or culture, even though some ethnicities and religions are declining. Paradoxically, we can see that personal self-identification, free from many former collective ties, is very widespread (Cavalcanti and Chalfant 1994). These tendencies are also typical of Jewish identities in many countries.

All these processes, including ethnicization and de-secularization, have led to a change—real and perceptive—of urban space. The Soviet homogeneity has been substituted by diversification—ethnic and religious elements of the urban landscape are more evident now in Russian urban centers. “Patterns of popular taste [I would also add, patterns of mass culture, *E. N-S*] reflect, among other things, attitudes to the city, the state, the nation, the family, money, foreigners, minorities, the arts and the system” (Stites 2000, 2). Temples of various religions (churches, mosques and synagogues), as well as centers for ethnic activities (communal and Diaspora centers, all kinds of clubs for studying ethnic traditions, music etc.), play a more significant role in the lifestyle of modern Russian citizens and in the urban landscape than formerly. These changes, in their turn, result in deformations, sometimes strange ones, in the identities of ex-Soviet people.

This article is dedicated to the choice of sacred and/or profane spaces by modern Russian Jews. These spaces refer to synagogues, Christian churches, and/or other places, mainly spaces of leisure activities and centers of economic support for their members. I will try to demonstrate the perception of these places in the context of Jewish or non-

Jewish identities of the Jewish population in Russia today.

Modern Russia is a deeply divided society. We can see many splits in the social and cultural spheres of this country so it is impossible to speak about a common sacred myth or a grand narrative in Russia. Russia’s Jewry, being a part of this “society in transition,” is also a very heterogeneous community (Kochan 1972; Gitelman 1988). As a result, there is no common Jewish identity (Nosenko 2004: 52-53) and no common sacred spaces for Jews in Russia today.

### **Sources and Methods**

In conducting my research I chose to use qualitative methods, such as oral and life history, since they are more useful than quantitative ones in anthropological studies. This article is based mainly on the results of my field research which I carried out from 1999 to 2009 in several Russian cities and towns (Moscow, St Petersburg, Penza, Krasnodar, Smolensk, Veliky Novgorod, and some other urban centers in the European part of Russia). I conducted a total of 250 in-depth interviews. Interviews were informal and indirect, that is, informal conversations where the interviewer tried to minimize her role and give the lead to the narrator. Yet I had a special interview guide that included several areas of topics that I wanted to cover. Interviews lasted from thirty minutes to six hours, depending on the willingness and time of the informant. There is no single representative sampling in qualitative research; I relied on what is known as “theoretical saturation”, where the researcher gets enough evidence for his/her theory and new interviews might add details but do not affect

the main concepts (see Bertaux 1981; Hummersley 1989). As a result, the main source of this study is texts of interviews with the attendants of different Jewish organizations, as well as with people of Jewish origin who have never visited them. Among the informants 137 were women; their age ranged from seventeen to eighty-eight years old. Out of all the informants 221 had undergone higher education or were students in universities and colleges at the time of the interview. I found the informants as a consequence of my contacts with Jewish organizations and the use of the snowball principle.

In addition, during my research trip, I carried out a survey in order to verify the results of the qualitative research. The general sampling included 300 respondents whom I found mainly in the Jewish organizations. Most respondents were aged between 16 and 30, or older than 60. These age cohorts represent the age structure of attendants and members of Jewish organizations. The data of this survey is, therefore, an additional and important source. In some cases I used the data of sociological surveys conducted by other scholars (Gitelman *et al* 2000; Chervyakov *et al* 2003; Ryvkina 2005; Shapiro *et al* 2006; Osovtsov and Yakovenko 2011).

An additional and very important source was participant observation. It was especially helpful in the Russian periphery because, although my field trips were not very long, they were intense: I stayed in private homes, spent whole days with my informants, listened to their stories and gossip, and learned their routines. All of this added considerably to my understanding of Jewish life in these towns.

### **Diversity in Singularity**

For many centuries to be a Jew meant “to perform ceremonial laws of Judaism.” A synagogue was a Jewish sacred place and an opposition to the sacred places of *Others* (churches, monasteries, mosques) or Jewish/non-Jewish profane spaces, including public places— markets, various offices, etc. The situation had started to change in the 19<sup>th</sup> and much more so in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when a secular Jewish identity had emerged and spread out (Klier 1995; Nathans 2002; Zipperstein 1999; Frankel 1981). In the former USSR Jewishness has been almost totally cut off from Judaism and the Soviet variant of Jewish secular identity was based mainly on the principle of ethnic origins and state anti-Semitism (Shneer 1994; Shternshis 2006; Nosenko-Stein 2009). In modern Russia the crisis of Jewish identity has its unique characteristics. The Jewish population in Russia is culturally diverse and it is impossible to speak about a single Jewish self-identification. There is a set of cultural self-identifications based on different symbols and values (Nosenko 2004). Therefore, it is also impossible to speak about a common Jewish sacred or profane space because its perception depends on the self-identification of many people of Jewish origin.

The analysis of texts enables me to suggest a classification of cultural self-identifications of persons of Jewish origin in Russia and their relationship with their religious choice. It is very important to take into account that most of my informants, like most Russian Jews today, are people of partly Jewish origin (i.e., they were brought up in mixed families).

1. East European Jewish (East Ashkenazi). Self-identification is often based on the Yiddish language and traditional Ashkenazi culture. The informants were aged 75+. However, this self-identification is actually quasi-traditional, because it is detached from Judaism and represents a Soviet variant of Jewish traditional culture. The main Jewish symbols for these people are events of World War II and the Holocaust.

2. Russian (or non-Jewish) self-identification. Informants with this type of self-identification were usually born through intermarriage, and usually declare that they are Russians and have never regarded themselves as Jews. They prefer Russian values and often declare that they are Christians (Russian Orthodox).

3. The negative type. These informants perceive their Jewishness as part of quite a negative personal experience and have a negative form of Jewish self-identification that very often has been formed through anti-Semitism, often *par excellence*. They declare themselves as non-believers or in relation to Christianity.

4. Dual self-identification (a kind of hybrid identity). Persons of this large group often say that, in some situations, they are Russians and, in others, Jews. They were brought up in a Russian milieu, but during recent years they have often become interested in Jewish culture and tradition. Some of them converted to Christianity but at the same time they are interested in Judaism.

5. The “new Jewish” self-identification differs from the traditional Jewish self-identification that existed in Russia until the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as from the Jewish self-identification

in the USA, Western Europe and Israel. These informants, like the previous group, had had no traditional Jewish education either. Nevertheless, they knew something about Jewish tradition and values from elder relatives. During recent years they have often tried to “find their Jewish roots” by studying Jewish culture, history, etc., and by taking part in Jewish life. They try to observe some Jewish ceremonial laws; and sometimes convert to Judaism.

### *Their Sacred Space?*

I will begin with Judaism and the synagogue as a Jewish sacred place. According to my survey, 4 to 10 per cent of Jews (in different age cohorts) in Russia today fulfill Jewish ceremonial laws; a higher percentage (13.7) consider Judaism as “the most attractive religion” (Gitelman *et al* 2000, 72). Ryvkina even found that 35 per cent of the respondents believed so (Ryvkin, 2005, 120). Osovtsov and Yakovenko are more realistic—11.7 per cent of their respondents regularly visit a synagogue (Osovtsov and Yakovenko 2011, 75).

The informants with East Ashkenazi self-identification do not regularly go to the synagogue but they occasionally do, as part of a traditional way of life, and, in these cases, they say that they want to be with Jews, or commemorate their parents:

Of course I am a non-believer, all of us are Soviet Jews, you know. If anybody tells you that he believes in God, don't believe him. ... I was a communist and I didn't abandon my party. ... However, I come here [to the synagogue]. I do this in memory of my parents, and they were religious.

I have great regrets that I didn't ask my parents about all these customs, I am sure they knew all of them (Yakov B., 82, a pensioner, Veliky Novgorod, 2007).

In this case the synagogue functions as a *lieu de memoire*, a place of memory (Nora 1984) or, more accurately speaking, *au lieu de memoire*, instead of a place of memory, because the real memory is often lost. Some informants also have a free meal there, and this is very important for most of them, as pensioners, especially in the Russian periphery, are extremely poor. In this case, synagogues once again play the role of a soup kitchen, a role that almost totally disappeared during the Soviet era. I would say that informants usually perceive the synagogue as a Jewish sacred space, even when they are non-believers, and therefore they state that former synagogues should be returned to Jewish communities.

The informants with the Russian and negative self-identification usually do not visit the synagogue and perceive it as a sacred place of *Others*:

Now I would like to believe in something. I believe in destiny, in fate. But I didn't believe in all that before. In recent years I wanted to observe rituals—both Russian Christian and Jewish. But I realized that it is impossible to worship two Gods. You just cannot do that. ... Sometimes I go to church. My husband's relatives [Russians] are Russian Orthodox, and they are very religious and I have to fall into line with them. ... Sometimes I'd like to buy and light candles, order a memorial service. Both my daughters are Christian and they baptized their children. (...) I have never visited a

synagogue, I am afraid to go there. Besides, I know that women are not allowed to go there (Tatyana P., 68, a pensioner, whose mother was Jewish, St Petersburg, 1999).

The informants with the dual self-identification also usually do not visit the synagogue. Their hybrid self-identification often develops an ambivalent perception about synagogues, i.e., they regard them as a Jewish sacred space but not *Their Own*. Nevertheless they often visit the communal centers.

"New Jews" visit the synagogue even if they only observe a few ceremonial laws of Judaism. They usually do so in their own way, separately from the elderly people. For example, they begin the Sabbath when it is convenient for them, after the lectures or working day. That is, they consider the synagogue as a kind of youth club, a space for leisure activities, and therefore as *Their Own* profane space.

At the same time, those who have converted to Judaism visit the synagogue very ardently and perceive it as *Theirs*, as a Jewish sacred space:

I can't say I didn't believe in God. I just didn't think about it. I had no need for faith. But over the recent years I thought about these things a lot. I went to church, then to the synagogue. I spoke to the rabbi and liked him very much. He is very intelligent, he helped me a lot. I began reading the Tanakh, and then some Midrashim. Now I observe everything. ... When I was in Israel I went to see her [the informant's daughter's] wedding and liked to be in a Jewish Orthodox milieu. I liked to wear a long skirt and a hat. I think if you want to be Jewish, you have to

perform Jewish ceremonial laws. ... There is no synagogue here now, you know. But I often come to this room where I can see our rabbi and feel so comfortable here. I hope there will be a real synagogue in Smolensk (Olga F., 45, a businessperson, whose mother is Jewish, Smolensk, 2007).

### **Isn't Alien Sacred Space No Longer Alien? Profane Becoming Sacred**

All the same, the results of my research, as well as studies conducted by some other scholars, show that Christianity is more popular or, at least, more attractive for persons of Jewish origin in Russia, especially among offspring of intermarriages (Ryvkina 2005, 120; Gitelman *et al* 2000, 72). My survey shows that 14 per cent of the respondents in a general sampling considered themselves as Christians (mostly Russian Orthodox). Young people more often preferred a church than a synagogue—25 per cent (according to Ryvkina) and 10 per cent (Gitelman *et al*).

The reasons for their conversion to Christianity were very diverse. Some intellectuals became Christians in the late Soviet era because they considered it as a kind of opposition to the Soviet regime, or tried to fill the spiritual vacuum in the anti-religious state, but were in a situation of lack of information about Judaism (see, e.g., Deutch Kornblatt 2003):

I converted to Christianity because I needed it, I mean, to have a religious experience. But it is just accidental, I mean, that I am a Russian Orthodox. We did not know anything about other religions then [in the 1970s-1980s]. I am not sure, but had I known a good rabbi then, I would have converted to Judaism (Mikhail D., 58, a psychologist

whose grandfather was Jewish, Moscow 2007).

Many “half Jews,” (i.e., people who have one Jewish parent) were baptized in infancy by their non-Jewish relatives, who were often non-believers, but performed this ritual as part of the Russian tradition. The baptism was not the informants' choice but sometimes determined their preference and affiliation later, because they were usually raised in a Russian cultural environment. Even during the Soviet era they could observe some elements of Christian culture—books, icons, painted eggs and other dishes of festive meals, etc., moreover, as I have already mentioned, in the late Soviet era some Jews converted to Christianity (see Deutsch Kornblatt 2003; Nosenko-Stein 2010). So, in the 1990s, many of them made their implicit Christianity more explicit after *perestroika*, in the era of the “Russian Orthodox boom” in Russia. Most, however, converted to Christianity in the 1990s, the period of the above-mentioned religious boom (Nosenko-Stein 2010).

The informants with the East Ashkenazi type of self-identification very seldom declared themselves as Christians. But, at the same time, some of them went to church, explaining that the church was nearer, or that the atmosphere there was friendlier than in the synagogue. Some informants, who live in towns where there is no synagogue, consider their visits to the local church as a kind of substitute for the Jewish sacred place:

There is no synagogue here. There is no rabbi here. Rabbis don't come here. They prefer to earn money in your Moscow and don't want to come here.



*Yom Kippur eve in a private apartment in Gelenjic, 2007*

Sometimes I go to a church because it is possible to pray in any place. But I feel more comfortable here [in a small Jewish center located in a private apartment] because some people like me come here (Pyotr G., 73, Gelenjic, a resort in the South of Russia).

However, some researchers show that most elderly Jews in Russia do not visit either a church or a synagogue (Shternshis 2007, 280-282), although more often, they prefer churches. Therefore, churches function not only as a substitution for the Jewish *Sacred*, but rather as a place where a person can find his or her very vague and uncertain sacred place.

The informants with Russian self-identification, who declare their affinity to Christianity, perceive a church as *Their*

natural sacred space:

I am Russian because I am Russian Orthodox. All of us are Russian Orthodox, all my family. We observe only Russian Orthodox holy days, not Jewish ones. ... My father often goes with my mother and me to church (Natalia A., 19 years old, a student, whose father is Jewish, Moscow, 2000).

The informants with the negative type of self-identification usually affirm they are non-believers, but in some cases they were baptized, mostly at the time of the religious boom in post-Soviet Russia, and perceive the church as non-Jewish and *Their* sacred space, sometimes even as an opposition to the synagogue:

There was a very difficult period in my life, a time of depression. Sometimes I went to church and felt good there. ... Once a friend of mine told me: you should know where you feel better. Besides, I didn't feel Jewish [her mother is Jewish, her father was born in a Jewish-Armenian family]. So I got baptized and go to church now. And after that [baptism] all Jews—of course I don't consider them to be enemies—but I feel more comfortable in a Christian milieu, among Russians, Russian Orthodox (Lina B., 49, a secretary in a small company, Moscow, 2000).

The emotional factor has great importance in such cases—the friendly atmosphere of the church and the beauty of the Russian Orthodox liturgy often attract people—especially women—in difficult periods of their lives.

The informants with dual self-identification were sometimes baptized in the late Soviet era but, during the last 10 to 15 years, they have become interested in Judaism and believe that it is impossible to be a Jew and a Christian at the same time. Sometimes they try to keep their Christian faith a secret.

Yelena K., 20, a teacher of music, began visiting the local Hillel club, a Jewish youth organization, and, as a result, became deeply interested in her Jewish roots. She tried to explain:

I was baptized when I was nine years old; I often go to church and pray there and feel at home. I observe Russian Orthodox holy days and fasts. I have friends who are Russian Orthodox. Regarding the synagogue, I can't go there. I think it is improper to attend a church and a synagogue at the same

time. But I don't want anybody here [in the Hillel club] to know about my Russian Orthodox faith (Yelena K., 20, St Petersburg, 1999).

The unstable self-identification often leads to an uncertain perception of what is *Their Own* and what is *Others'* sacred and profane space. A synagogue is often considered as an *Alien* sacred place, albeit highly esteemed and sometimes even attractive. The emotional distance to the church is shorter, even if the respondents were non-believers or agnostics and did not perceive the church as a sacred space.

As to Jewish communal centers, they often substitute for different hobby clubs and free places for leisure activities which were widespread and popular in the Soviet era. These places of cultural consumption are not only places for leisure “time, money and energy but also for the super-cultural effects adopted by consumers—the songs they sing together for certain functions, the clothes they wear, styles of behavior, emulative postures (e.g., movie stars), dances, and even speech patterns ... and narrative styles” (Stites 2000:3).

For the “new Jews” a synagogue is the only Jewish sacred place, however, if they had already had another religious experience, they do not consider the synagogue as the only Jewish sacred place. Sometimes they also perceive a local Jewish communal center as a Jewish *Sacred Place*. Tatyana P., 34, a teacher of foreign languages, whose mother is Jewish, was Russian Orthodox, and who now fulfills some Jewish ceremonial laws said:

When I was a Christian I never considered Christianity as the only true faith. Even now I think there are different ways and different faiths, but they all say the same thing. But I suppose that if I am Jewish, I shouldn't hesitate. ... I think Judaism is more rational than Christianity. I go to the synagogue but not very often. The atmosphere is too formal, too cold there. ... And at our Jewish center the Jewish life is very hectic and so interesting! (Tatyana P. 34, St Petersburg, 2000).

One of the specific characteristics of all of the above-mentioned types of self-identification is the loss of great importance, even of most Jewish symbols and values, including Judaism itself. In this context the *Others'* sacred space is not perceived as Alien. Thus, the church can be often considered as *Their* sacred space, especially by so called "ordinary Soviet people", who were raised in the Soviet era and were cut off from Judaism, but had some knowledge about Christianity. This perception is especially popular among non-Halakhic Jews (i.e., patrilineal Jews), who do not feel comfortable in an orthodox synagogue. As an example, here is what a student, whose mother is non-Jewish, told me:

When I came to the synagogue for the first time, they paid attention to me because I was new there. And I was young—you know that most people there are very old. ... But then they asked me about my mother. And after hearing my reply they just turned away from me and didn't notice me anymore. I was shocked. I will never go there anymore! I don't attend church but, if I wish, I can go there and nobody will ask me about my mother (Stas K., 21, Penza, 2007).

No wonder that in search of a sacred place many people of Jewish origin in Russia convert to Christianity and find a sacred space in a church or in the Jewish communal center.

At the same time, we can observe a very slight tendency to return to Judaism. This tendency is most prevalent among "new Jews" —young people involved in Jewish life. They try to find *Their* sacred space in the synagogue. A young businessperson, whose parents are Jewish, visits the synagogue regularly:

I was brought up as a non-believer, but I have always felt there was something; maybe I knew there was God. But all my family was atheistic. Nevertheless, several years ago I met a very good rabbi. He explained many things to me. And I understood that a Jew must perform the ceremonial laws of Judaism (Denis O., 32, Krasnodar, 2007).

In these rare cases (2 to 3 per cent of the respondents said they belong to orthodox Judaism, both Hassidic and non-Hassidic; less than 1 per cent prefer the reformist Judaism) they perceive both the synagogue and the Jewish communal centers as Jewish and *Their* sacred places.

In addition, we can see some attempts to construct a kind of "civil Judaism", mainly by people with "new Jewish" self-identification. They try to observe some commandments of Judaism which they consider as important:

My religious principles largely coincide with Judaism, but I am not an observant Jew, just partly observant.

-*What do you observe?*



*Dancing modern Israeli dances in the yard of the Jewish community center in Veliky Novgorod, 2007*

Mostly the Sabbath, sometimes holidays and kashrut—to a certain extent. I try not to eat pork or mix milk and meat. ... Sometimes my father and I [his mother is Russian] go to the synagogue (Matvey R., 21, a student of sociology, St Petersburg, 1999).

Moreover, some young respondents even perceive the synagogue as a Jewish profane space:

I come here [to the synagogue] because I like it. It is so interesting: this is a real club. Before that I went to another club, but I like this club better. I have never seen all these Sabbath and festivities, this is so interesting! And people are so friendly (Olesia K., 21, Penza, 2007).

This phenomenon—an inversion of the Jewish sacred and profane places—is rather typical of many informants who go to Jewish centers. Most of them even prefer the local communal organization to the synagogues. Thus, the profane space plays the role of the sacred one. Some visit all three institutions, a Hassidic synagogue, a reformist center and a secular Jewish organization.

A pensioner who came to a Hassidic center and a synagogue and a reformist center for the Jewish holy days said:

This house [a building of the academy where the reformist center is located] is a real Jewish place. I don't mean anything bad by speaking about our synagogue. It is good and the Jewish holy days are interesting there.

You were with us at the New Year ceremony and you saw that a lot of people come. But here people can come at any time and see each other. There are different courses for our young people. ... It is so good of you to come here. Do you like this Jewish house?

*Yes, I do.*

You are really Jewish! (Rimma S., 58, Krasnodar, 2007).

During the Soviet era, “the entertainment possessed certain universal features and mechanisms dictated by the desire of the producers to have their products consumed on some kind of market, however controlled” (Stites 2000, 4). Nowadays, other “producers” create new places and opportunities for entertainment, which are sometimes perceived as new sacred places.

### Conclusion

Thus, in many cases, Jewish and non-Jewish sacred places substitute for each other, and we can see the inversion of *Ours* and *Theirs* or, more accurately, the mixture of *Our* and the *Others'* sacred spaces. This interchange is particularly pronounced in small Russian urban centers, where churches can substitute for synagogues, and communal centers substitute for them both. At the same time, we can also observe such a replacement in large cities, where the distance to the nearest synagogue is too far, especially for the elderly. Besides, some people, whose self-identification is cut off from Judaism, perceive a church as a friendlier place, open to everyone irrespective of ethnic origin or gender. In some cases, churches and synagogues are

not just sacred spaces, they are centers of economic support for poor people (free meals, free second-hand clothes, free food etc.) and, sometimes, places for the commemoration of relatives. Therefore, they are important for elderly people with different types of cultural self-identification, irrespective of their perception of the place—either as *Ours* or *Theirs*.

Moreover, sometimes Jewish sacred and profane spaces change their function or supplement each other. Thus, many Jewish organizations are considered as all sorts of clubs—World War II veteran, youth, hobby, and so on. These clubs are often free or very cheap. In addition, Jewish organizations offer some free or cheap services, like medical services, financial support, education, leisure etc., as well as lectures about Jewish tradition, history and culture, celebrations of Jewish holy days and memorial dates. All these events are expected to strengthen Jewish identity and many people, especially non-religious or agnostics, sometimes perceive Jewish profane places as sacred ones. Their role is of great significance in constructing a “new Jewish” identity and reinforcing the Jewish component of a hybrid identity.

Generally speaking, we can see a highly diversified picture in which Jewish and non-Jewish sacred and profane urban spaces replace each other, coincide, and lose their original functions. This phenomenon can be seen in the context of so-called implicit religion (Bailey 1983, 1990). It is defined by scholars as a very vague core of beliefs and practices taken personally from different religious and secular systems, including the UFO, diets, meditations etc. This is a kind of

personal religion that is more convenient for a person who does not want to be restricted by any prescriptions or dogmas of a traditional religion (see also Cavalcanti and Chalfant 1994).

In spite of so-called the religious revival supported by the state, many people in contemporary Russia continue their search for the *sacred* in different religious and secular systems and places. So, on the one hand, we can see a specific return of some young people to Judaism and to the synagogue as a Jewish sacred place but, more often, they turn to a kind of civil Judaism, which they construct on their own. On the other hand, some people of Jewish origin prefer Christianity and try to find the sacred space in the church. However, most people of Jewish origin in Russia follow an implicit religion with its inversions or mixtures of all sacred and profane places. This quasi-religion and the mixture of sacred and profane spaces, are typical of the post-modern culture.

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# Jewish Culture and its Heritage in Slovakia after 1989: Urban sites of remembrance in Košice and their meanings.

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## Abstract

*This multiple-perspective ethnographic case study explores the current meanings of the Jewish cultural heritage for the Jewish community of Košice in Slovakia and its urban environment. Based on interviews with experts, and narrative interviews, archival research, media monitoring, object-analysis, and participant observation, the author's analysis focuses on the city's synagogues which emerge as narrative spaces triggering discourses of conflict between different interest groups and witnessing social practices that address cultures of remembrance.*

## “The last regime has destroyed the Orthodox synagogue”

This is the headline of an article (Jesenský 2006)<sup>1</sup> published in 2006 by the Slovak daily *SME*.<sup>2</sup> It was devoted to the oldest synagogue in Košice which was virtually destroyed during the Socialist era. Košice is home to nine officially recognized ethnic minorities, and the ecumenical church district has ten member groups. The city is generally viewed as the multi-cultural and multi-religious urban center of East Slovakia. Numerous buildings reveal its Jewish heritage: a community center with the oldest *Mikveh* (Jewish ritual bath) in Slovakia, four synagogues, a *Yeshiva* (an Orthodox Jewish school for studying the Talmud and Torah), two Jewish schools,



The building of the Orthodox Synagogue on Pushkin street in Košice (photo taken in 2010).

two cemeteries, and a house of culture called ‘Kasino’. The number of buildings, their size, architecture and distinctive décor, suggest that there used to be a sizeable, rich and heterogeneous Jewish community in the city.

About 12,000 Jews lived in Košice before the Holocaust.<sup>3</sup> Today, the city’s Jewish community comprises 300 official members which is nowadays the second largest in Slovakia. Fifteen thousand Jews from Košice and surrounding areas were deported to Auschwitz, and only 2,000 of them returned to the city after the war. Many Jews emigrated when the communist regime came to power in 1948, and some others did so after the collapse of the Prague Spring in 1968.<sup>4</sup> Only a small group stayed in the city, but after the political rupture in 1989 many members of this group moved to Western countries.

Today, it is mostly material relics that bear witness to Jewish life in Košice. In the socialist era, the authorities expropriated the buildings of the Jewish community that remained intact after the Holocaust.

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Like in many other Slovak cities, these buildings were no longer used for their original and intended purpose. The Orthodox synagogue on Zvonárska Street (Slovak for “Bellmakers”), for example, served as a storage facility for the State Library. Jesenský 2006, quotes an art historian, observing the renovation of the synagogue:

Never in my life have I witnessed a greater act of barbarism. They robbed the furniture, disposed of it in a landfill or completely destroyed it. Today, it is no longer possible to restore some parts of the interior to the original state. For example, they broke open the holy shrine used for storing the Torah, installed boards in it and put the writings of Lenin inside. For years, rain has been pouring through the leaking roof, so plaster has come off the wall revealing brickwork, and the stucco has fallen off too.

In 1989 the process of restitution started, and the synagogue was returned to the Jewish community which is now responsible for renovating it. Since the building is dilapidated this is a serious challenge. The renovation work was scheduled to be completed by 2013 when a museum of Jewish culture in East Slovakia will be inaugurated in the building. Košice was designated to be the European Capital of Culture in the same year.

According to the cultural studies scholar, Jörg Skriebeleit, places serve:

...as a medium for constructing cultural spaces of remembrance that can be associated with a variety of meanings and connotations. These

interpretations of places as media of remembrance or as symbols are, in turn, dependent on the cultural and societal discourses surrounding them; i.e., they rely on the subjective experiences and attitudes of the groups affected and interested, groups using the site, and groups involved in the discourses in question (Skriebeleit 2005, 219).

What ‘space’ do the Jewish community and the Jewish culture occupy in the city and its memory? How does the synagogue, as a material space, structure individual activities and social relations in the city? What meanings and functions do objects and spaces of remembrance acquire when they become linked to the memories and experiences of the inhabitants of Košice?

### **Narrative Spaces in the City**

There is a reciprocal relation between space and social life. The urban environment reflects structures and ideas; at the same time, the materiality of the built space structures social action. Yet the past is not just present in material relics; in the urban space, there are conscious and intentional acts of marking past events in order to preserve their presence in the here and now (Binder 2009, 15).

Beate Binder portrays urban space as a product of social construction. According to her, social construction in this case is based on the reciprocal effects that people and buildings have on each other. Different actors decide where in the urban space past events should be remembered, and which objects and spaces should act

as media of commemoration in order to become part of the cultural memory. According to Aleida Assmann, cultural memory evolves from a wealth of knowledge and experience. Divorced from their original living bearers, they have been transferred to material data media and have become part of social practices (Assmann 2006, 47).

In this article I am presenting some ethnographic observations made during the fieldwork I undertook for my Ph.D. dissertation, which is devoted to the development of Jewish life and culture in Slovak cities after 1989. I will focus on the question of how synagogues, as sites of remembrance, draw some features of the past into the present and thus function as “zones of contact between the past and present” (Assmann 2006, 217 ff.). With the help of examples, I will sketch out the nature of these “contacts” and look at breaks with the past. I view synagogues and their urban environment not only as socially constructed, but also as narrative spaces. As Rolf Lindner remarks, “cities are not empty pages, but narrative spaces in which particular (hi)stories, myths and parables are inscribed” (Lindner 2006, 57).

### Difficult Struggle for a Future

Synagogues confront the policy-making bodies of the new Eastern Europe with a far more complex problem than do cemeteries: something must be done with the synagogues. ... “Doing something”, however, creates an even greater dilemma, especially in the post-1989 era when the disjuncture wrought by the Holocaust is exposed again and in new ways (Bohlmann 2000, 45).

Despite its status as an (inter)national heritage site, the oldest existing synagogue in Košice<sup>5</sup> is one of the many “tragic” objects that form part of the Jewish cultural heritage in Slovakia. Nevertheless, there are good prospects for it to be saved. If the renovations are completed by 2013 and the museum of Jewish culture does open, this synagogue will be a rare example of a successfully restored site related to Jewish culture. Located in the city center and housing the new museum, the synagogue will fit well into the multi-religious and multi-cultural image of the city. Moreover, it will be economically beneficial for the Jewish community, thanks to admission charges. All in all, the synagogue will have a multi-faceted symbolic value: it will serve both as a site of remembrance for the Jewish community and as a museum disseminating knowledge about Jewish culture in East Slovakia among members of the general public. Notably, commemoration of the Holocaust will be an essential goal of the restored synagogue: the names of the murdered Jews from Košice will be inscribed on its walls. This would be a welcome change from the situation with the Jewish cultural heritage in Slovakia today:

Out of 107 synagogues and prayer halls in Slovakia, only about six are used as active Synagogues, about fifteen of them serve at least partially as cultural venues. These include a broad spectrum of uses: from specialized art galleries to cinema halls. The remaining synagogues are warehouses, dwellings and shops, and also abandoned sites (Borský 2010, 136).

Besides two Orthodox, there are two more synagogues in Košice: one is Chassidic, converted into a technical laboratory in the 1950s, the other is Neolog, turned into the "House of Arts" around the same time (Borský 2007, 123). The Neolog synagogue has been the seat of the Philharmonic Orchestra of the State ever since and is owned by the City Council. Since 1994 the Jewish community has been fighting in court for the ownership of this synagogue and of the *Yeshiva* also owned by the city council.

### **Cultural Heritage at the Intersection of Social and Cultural Memory: Remembrance in the Urban Present**

Among the residents of Košice there is a distinct interest in the history and culture of Judaism in their city. One proof of this is the popularity of the guided tour "Jewish Košice" operated since 2005 by the Košice City Information Center. These tours are conducted twice a year and, according to a city guide I interviewed, they are more popular than any other tour offered by the Center because they give a unique opportunity to see the interior of the buildings belonging to the Jewish community. Notably, some of these buildings were inaccessible to the public in the past. When the tours take place the other Orthodox synagogue on Pushkin Street becomes a site where the strange encounters the familiar: visitors learn about Jewish history and culture and approach this authentic place as if it were some exotic curiosity.

During my field work, I interviewed some inhabitants of Košice and found that the majority hardly knew anything about the synagogues in the city center. Neither were my interviewees aware

of the Jewish community or its cultural activities. Yet, even if it remains outside the orbit of everyday life of the non-Jews in the city, it can be assumed that they possess at least some knowledge about the community thanks to the publications in the local media.

My research in the archives of local newspapers revealed that they did not only regularly cover the history of the Jewish community, but also informed readers about the situation with the synagogues as regards problems with their restitution and renovation. In the early 1990s, when the press began to show interest in the Jewish community, the journalists focused on the Jewish holidays and days of commemoration. In 1994, for example, there was a report on objects of commemoration headlined "The history of Judaism in Košice dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century" (Duchon 1994). Headlines, such as, "The State returns destroyed property" (Hriadelová 2000), or "The Jewish community goes to court over the House of Art" (Hriadelová and Jurkovičová 2001) testify that, in the last few years in particular, the media have been reflecting upon the current conflict of interests over the ownership of buildings with complex history.

I conducted online interviews with the current mayor, who has been in office since late 2010, and with his predecessor. Both said that the Jewish community and its traditions constituted an integral part of the city's culture, and so people highly value the contribution of the community to city life. The Club of National Minorities and the Commission of Churches, both municipal organizations, represent the interests of the Jewish community vis-à-vis the city council. Besides, the

Jewish community is a member of the Ecumenical Church District which also closely cooperates with the city council. The Jewish community is an active participant in an important cultural event—an annual Festival of Sacred Art which brings together people of various creeds. Finally, associations run by members of the Jewish community organize various public cultural events, such as concerts, exhibitions and recitals. Big events are always attended by official representatives of the city administration. On closer inspection, I noticed that these events were frequented by the same group of people. Later, the organizers confirmed my observation.

There is ample evidence that the media and the city are interested in the Jewish cultural heritage. As the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs states, no memory is possible outside a shared social framework (Halbwachs 1967, 2). The social framework embedding the past and present of the Jewish community can be traced in Košice. However, it is maintained by a relatively small group of citizens and some sections of the media. It seems that the Jewish Community fails to reach the wider public. On the one hand, it does not advertise the events it organizes frequently enough, and the scope of publicity remains limited. On the other hand, not all inhabitants of the city are capable of accessing the social and cultural memory of the city. In sum, as results of my field work demonstrate, the Jewish cultural heritage remains in some people's functional or "canon" of memory: the type of memory characterized by its relatedness to, and its presence in everyday life. Yet, for the majority, things are different: the

Jewish cultural heritage is located in their "memory-archive", which is latent and constitutes an unconscious, hardly accessible archive of recollections (cf, Assmann 2006, 56; and 2010, 37).

I am now moving away from the discursive frames of memory and will take a close look at the synagogues and their current role in the life of Košice. My aim is to allow the spaces of remembrance to "speak".

### **"Restoring the past by connecting it to the present"**

But synagogue restoration in Eastern Europe is not truly about plaster and drywall. It is about restoring the past by connecting it to the present. Such continuity, such processes of transition, however, cannot be undertaken effectively. The historical disjuncture is too great. It is, nonetheless, precisely this historical disjuncture that can be sutured and repaired, if not restored (Bohlman 2000, 68-69).

In the case of the synagogue on Pushkin Street, it has proven difficult to connect the past to the present and ensure that the marks of history remain visible in the restored appearance of the building. This synagogue, the newest one in town, is one of the few buildings that remained in the hands of the Jewish community in the socialist era. Its members have used it continuously for religious purposes. One of my interviewees, an expert employed at the Office for the Protection of Historical Monuments, remarked that everything in this synagogue had been "liquidated", including "the ornate windows and stained glass". It

was reopened in September 2009 after a laborious process of renovation that took six years.

Designed for 800 people, the synagogue on Pushkin Street is an impressive edifice which stands out against the adjacent old buildings, most of which need restoration. The wall next to the entrance carries a memorial plaque dedicated to the victims of the Holocaust. The interior decoration of the building absorbs visitors, whose eyes are immediately captured by a well-chosen combination of wood, metal, textile, and stone. The clear-cut structure, soft light and a balanced color range contribute to the atmosphere of opulence. However, a closer look reveals that here and there the newly renovated brickwork is blemished. In the left- and right-hand corners of the building, next to the Torah shrine, one can easily notice large stains on the light painted wall. The stains look as if they could be caused by leaking water and, according to the representative of the Office for the Protection of Historical Monuments, drainage pipes behind the walls should have been inspected and replaced but were not, which might cause further damage. Both members of the Jewish community and employees of the Office for the Protection of Historical Monuments say that they did not always find it easy to communicate and cooperate with each other. The Jewish community has to carry out all the renovation and restoration work needed, and this work has to conform to the guidelines of the Office for the Protection of Historical Monuments. But it is the community that is solely responsible for funding the project. Since the money allocated by the Ministry of Culture for restoration

of old buildings is insufficient to finance all the renovation projects, the Jewish Community failed to get significant support. Even though the restoration processes were partly funded by Košice City Council and a number of foreign foundations, the Jewish community was forced to sell the 'Kasino' and the Talmud and Torah school in order to rescue both Orthodox synagogues. The struggle for saving the buildings is accompanied by disputes and conflicts of interests between the client and contractors. One example is emergence of marks on the brickwork which prove that restoration work was done inadequately, threatening the future of the buildings.

On the wall with the water stains in the synagogue on Pushkin Street, there are signs of the Holocaust. These are four messages written in pencil by Jews who were held in the synagogue shortly before their deportation in April 1944. Two of the messages are identical. They read: "I am here, I don't know where they will take me. 21.IV.1944. Lily". One of the messages was signed by Lily's small son. For her elder son, a survivor, these messages are the only visible memory of his family from the period. The inscriptions were discovered during the restoration of the building and were sealed and protected with the help of a special technique. Hidden behind the back of long benches placed in front of the wall, the inscriptions become visible only when small doors in the wooden benches are open. Otherwise, the benches completely cover up the messages.

According to Aleida Assmann, such "traumatic places" are "multi-faceted, ambiguous, and associated with different memories and interpretations" (Assmann

2006, 221). Besides obvious signs of the past, visitors discover many others that are mere hints and are hardly visible. Whenever the rabbi explains what is special about the synagogue on Pushkin Street to the ever-expanding groups of people visiting it during the guided tours of "Jewish Košice", he shows them the messages on the wall. At this point, at latest, he will start talking about the synagogue as a witness to crimes against humanity during the Holocaust. According to Wolfgang Benz, there is no place where remembrance crystallizes "in a more terrifying and imposing way than at the historical site, at the places where things shaping memories and determining commemoration happened" (Benz 2005, 197).

Following Aleida Assmann, the synagogue should be seen as a palimpsest or as a traumatic place containing palimpsests. "Despite the fact that in this place, a certain history has culminated and found its catastrophic conclusion, history is continuing even here and presents itself in the form of a "stratified" space" (Assmann 2006, 225).<sup>6</sup> In the synagogue, history has not stopped: the signs of history and trauma have been preserved and are passed on to younger generations. Moreover, new signs have been created that threaten to destroy old ones, as exemplified by restoration work breaching the guidelines. But how is the Jewish community using this space?

### **Religion and Tradition: The synagogue as a space for collective and individual negotiations over history and identity**

The synagogue is an ethnographic site, not just a place to experience

community but a liminal border space where one crosses into the sacred spaces of the past. The synagogue is also a narrative space, where the texts that narrate ritual and ritualize history concentrate time and the experiences of being Jewish (Bohlman 2000, 46).

In the course of my fieldwork I spent some of the Jewish holidays with a Jewish family, my interviewee Lea and her mother. During *Rosh ha Shana*, the Jewish New Year, and *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement, I observed the ceremonies in the synagogue, afterwards recording the account of events and my impressions in my ethnographic diary.

While we are sitting down on the benches reserved for women, Lea's mother takes out her lace shawl and covers her head. This indicates that she is married, and some other women in the synagogue also wear lace shawls. Around us, prayers are underway. The cantor is singing, and the rabbi standing in the center of the synagogue is calling up a number of men, one after another. All of them wear *kippot* (skull caps), *tefilin* (phylacteries), and prayer shawls. One by one they walk up to the shrine, read out passages from the Torah, touch the dark red velvet curtain in front of the shrine and return to their seats. I am captivated by the liveliness of the ceremony, the singing of the young cantor flown in from Israel for the occasion, and the devout atmosphere around me. Apart from Lea and me, there are only three young women present. Only a few of the older women pray in Hebrew. Lea's mother has brought a prayer book. She tells me that it belonged to her late mother, but she is unable to read it. Her mother died recently, and as they had been very close

to each other the daughter adopted some of the Jewish traditions observed in her home: she lights a candle on *Shabbat*, fasts on *Yom Kippur* and prepares traditional dishes for each of the holidays.

The synagogue evokes memories of the past in the people who visit it. This is also evident in a statement by one of my interviewees. During a concert in the synagogue, this man is showing me a chair in one of the rows in front of the *Bimah* (a pulpit located in the center of an (Orthodox) synagogue). This is where his father used to sit. At this point, the individual and family memories activated in this space become connected to the ritual practices of the Jewish community. In turn, this connection contributes to the development of identities of the actors involved (cf, Assmann 2006, 208 ff.).

At first sight, it is hardly noticeable that only a few of the people present are able to join in the prayers. Most others appear to be listening, with the exception of Lea and her mother who are having a lively conversation. I keep on watching the people around me and notice that many are not praying but talking to each other in whispers. In fact, only a small group is actively participating in the service. When asked afterwards, many of my interviewees confirmed this observation. They go to the synagogue in order to commemorate deceased family members, revive the family tradition or just to meet their friends and acquaintances.

The synagogues may symbolize Jewish religious life to outsiders but, in actual fact, very few people observe the Jewish religious tradition. Due to the Holocaust, there was a rupture in the Jewish religious life in Slovakia. So far, it has not been possible to revive it, partly

due to the ban on religion in the socialist era, which created a gap of knowledge and a gap between generations. At present, there are no young Jews left in Košice Jews to keep up the religious traditions. This is both a product of a lack of interest and of labor emigration to the West after 1989. Hardly any of my interviewees, members of the Jewish community, are religious. People are motivated to observe the tradition and go to the synagogue because they want to commemorate and pay respect to their Jewish roots and ancestors. One example is the decision of Lea's mother to wear a lace scarf in the synagogue and to fast on *Yom Kippur*. The rabbi confirmed my observations: "My attempt to guide these people to religion is like a single drop in the ocean".

### Conflicting palimpsests

Spaces of remembrance and memory, relics and marks of the recent and the long-gone past are located close to one another in urban space, and they are closely interwoven. Cityscapes are like palimpsests on whose surface signs overlap, intersect and communicate with one another (Binder 2009, 15).

Beate Binder suggests that we should "read" cities. I have tried to decipher the content of the narratives connected to some places and spaces of the Jewish community in Košice, as well as their partly overlapping, partly conflicting, meanings. My impression is that after the repressive regimes of the past, the citizens of Košice and the Jewish community are only step by step learning how to handle the Jewish cultural heritage of their city. First and foremost, this is reflected in the

existence of “conflicting palimpsests” in which different layers of the city’s history interact and interplay. Sometimes this leads to conflicting interpretations as manifested by the “inheritance dispute” between the city council and the Jewish community, and by talk about the problems caused by restoration work at the synagogues. These current discourses merge with the diverging, partly traumatic, memories of the actors, members of the Jewish community who are in the process of negotiating their strategies of handling tradition and, thus both individuals’ and group identity of the Jewish community of Košice.

Wherever past and present meet, there emerge almost irreparable ruptures in the brickwork of memory archives and of (hi)stories inscribed in them:

A place is everything one seeks in it, everything one knows about it, everything one associates with it. As much as it is concrete and physical, it appears multi-faceted if looked at from all the different perspectives (Assmann 2006, 225).

*Translated from the German by Alexander Gallas*

#### Notes

- 1 All the translations from Slovak are by the author.
- 2 The *SME* (“We are”) is one of the most-read dailies in Slovakia.
- 3 There are no exact numbers on the Jewish population in Slovakia. According to the census in 1938, there were 11,420 Jews in Košice, 20% of the total population of the city, cf, Slovenské Národné Múzeum [SNM] Múzeum Židovskej Kultúry. 2010. *Encyklopédia Židovských Náboženských Obcí*.

A-K. *Edicia Judaica Slovaca*, 200 and 210. Bratislava.

4 The Prague Spring was an attempt by the then leader of Czechoslovakia Alexander Dubček to liberalize and democratize the country controlled by the Communist Soviet Union. The reforms were stopped violently after the invasion of the troops of the Warsaw Pact (for further reading see Williams 1997; Mannová 2000, 274 ff.; Borský 2007, 47).

5 Maroš Borský’s project “Slovak Jewish Heritage Route” has documented the entire Jewish cultural heritage in Slovakia. As a result of this work six Jewish sites and objects of remembrance have become part of the European Route of Jewish Heritage, and the synagogue on Zvonárska Street is among them. (cf, <http://www.slovak-jewish-heritage.org/> Accessed 25 November 2011.

6 Translator’s note, in which the italics are his: “The original quote: ‘Obwohl eine bestimmte Geschichte hier kulminierte und zu einem katastrophischen Abschluss kam, ist auch hier die Geschichte weitergegangen und stellt sich als eine räumlich, geschichtete’ dar’ contains word play that does not translate into English: Assmann highlights common etymological roots of the German words *Geschichte*, (*history*), *Schicht* (*stratum*) and *geschichtete* (*stratified*)”.

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## There Are No Jews Here: From a Multiethnic to a Monoethnic Town of Burshtyn

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### Abstract

*This paper is devoted to the preservation and transformation of historical memory about the Jewish population of Galicia among Ukrainians and explores how memory about Jews functions in the town of Burshtyn, although Jews have not lived there for over seventy years. The study is based on 20 in-depth interviews that were conducted in 2009-2010. The subjects, ethnic Ukrainians born before World War II, were eyewitnesses of the Jewish life that once flourished in the town. The interviews targeted three major themes: (1) life stories of Jewish families, (2) religious life, (3) Jewish calendar rites and rites of passage.*

*Today, Burshtyn is one of two towns in Galicia, where memories about the Jewish population are still preserved albeit in a fragmented form. Pierre Nora coined the term «un lieu de mémoire», a place of memory. The “Jewish local text” in Burshtyn is a case in point. The source of memories is symbolic spaces in the townscape – the cemetery and the synagogues. The “text about Jews” has survived only among those people, who lived in the town before the war and among their descendents and, what is particularly significant, only in the old part of the town, where Jews had lived. The case of Burshtyn enables us to observe a transformation of a polyethnic town into a monoethnic one at the level of “local memory.” Notably, the transmission “vehicle” of information about Jewish life is town toponymics: the informants describe some places as “Jewish”.*

### Introduction

Pierre Nora coined a term “lieux de mémoire”, places of memory. He spoke about French places of memory which incarnate the national memory of the French people. In my article I would like to present a much more complicated interaction of place and memories. This case study discusses the functioning of objects produced by one ethno-religious group and serving as the places of memory of another completely different ethno-religious group. In other words, I would like to analyze metamorphoses undergone by memories about Jews in the places where they have not lived for more than seventy years. The study is based on the fieldwork conducted in the historical region of Galicia, where Jewish population perished seventy years ago, during the Holocaust. The fieldwork, which my colleagues and me conducted in 2009 – 2010 years, was part of the project “*Jewish History in Galicia and Bukovina*”. Before World War II, Galicia was a multiethnic region of the Polish Republic, but in 1939 it was annexed by the Soviet Union. After World War II Galicia turned into a monoethnic Ukrainian province: the Jews had been exterminated by the Nazis and Poles expelled by the Soviets. During fieldwork members of the expedition conducted interviews in a dozen of former *shtetls* – Yiddish for “small towns” (e.g., Bohorodczany, Nadworna, Rozhniatov, Chernelytsia, Dolina, Kalush, Maniava, Otyniia and others) which once had predominantly Jewish population. The town of Burshtyn was one of the two former *shtetls* in Galicia, where there was no problem to find Ukrainian interviewees able to speak about local

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Jews (The second one is Solotvin). (All materials documenting this expedition are posted on the website: <http://www.jewishgalicia.net/>). In Burshtin my colleagues and me worked in August 2010. We collected data through in-depth interviews. Seventeen interviews with local inhabitants (date of birth between 1920 and 1930) have been recorded.

In my opinion, this unusual situation is caused by the preservation and “structure” of Jewish objects in this town. These objects play the role of “places of memory”.

#### **“Places of memory” in Burshtyn**

Two kinds of physical remnants play the role of “places of memory” about Jews in present day Galicia: Jewish cemeteries and former synagogues. In Galicia, like everywhere in Eastern Europe, the situation with Jewish cemeteries varies from complete destruction and disappearance to a relatively high degree of preservation. For example, only one quarter of the Jewish cemetery in Burshtyn is still preserved, and according to the local inhabitants, the rest had been destroyed by the Nazis who used the tombstones to pave a road. Buildings of former synagogues serve as a second place of memory about Jews. By contrast with cemeteries, these buildings were mostly destroyed. The few that survived were reconstructed. They seldom bear Jewish symbols. The buildings of former synagogues are now used as shops, sport halls, or storehouses (Cf. Vitti 2011, 108). However, in the memory of our elderly interviewees these buildings used to be “Jewish churches.”

#### **Urban Topography**

Using the town of Burshtyn as an example, I would like to show how the memory about Jews is preserved and constructed anew, and how it is connected with Jewish objects of Burshtyn’s urban topography.

The majority of our elderly interviewees said that Burshtyn had significantly changed after World War II. The Jewish and Polish population disappeared, and the structure of the town altered. Burshtyn grew considerably after a heat-and-power plant was built there in the 1950s. What used to be a downtown became a suburb. Some of the prewar buildings burned down during the war and others were demolished in the post-war years. Now the town consists of two parts: the new one with apartment buildings that rose near the heat-and-power plant, and the old one with small private houses. It is not surprising that the majority of those who work at the power plant are newcomers from neighboring villages and other parts of the Ukraine. They inhabited the new apartment houses, while the original, “indigenous” population remained in the old part of Burshtyn. Therefore it is quite logical that only families living in the old town preserve some memory about Jews who also lived in the old town. Ukrainians living in the new center are unaware that Burshtyn was multiethnic before World War II.

Our elderly interviewees in the old town mention that Jews constituted the majority of prewar population in Burshtyn. They owned shops and were engaged in crafts. One woman recalled a proverb that circulated before the war: *“The streets are Polish and the houses are*



*The building of the second synagogue in Burshtyn was constructed (or restored) in 1931*

*Jewish*” (SII, 1920). However, today only one street is perceived as a Jewish one. It starts from two former synagogue buildings and continues to the Jewish cemetery. In the interwar period this street was named after Theodor Herzl – the founder of political Zionism and the World Zionist Organization. In the Soviet period it was renamed after Alexander Herzen, a Russian author and thinker, without any Jewish roots. His writings introduced socialist ideas to the Russian reader. In the Soviet period they were part of the school curriculum, so his name was widely known. The majority of our Ukrainian interviewees live in this street. They did not pay special attention to the name change and seem to believe that renaming was due to the change of the official language from Polish to Russian after the war. Moreover, they are convinced that Herzl and Herzen are two versions of the same name:

-- З кладбищі того, то Герцена вулиця. Не знаю, чому назвали вулиця Герцена, по-моєму то був письменник який чи що, по-моєму.

-- А як вона ранніша називалася?

-- Так і називалася ще за Польщі, весь час вон Герцена називався ще за Польщі

-- there is Herzen Street near the cemetery. I do not know, why it was named Herzen Street, I think he was a writer or something.

-- And what was it called earlier?

-- This is what it was called in Poland. It was always called Herzen Street in Poland” (NFS, 1929)

-- Вона називається Герцена, а до війни називалася Херця.

-- Ну, то по-польськи

-- Герця по-польськи. А по-руски Герцена

- It is called Herzen Street, and before the war it used to be called Herzl.

- It is a Polish name.
- Herzl is a Polish name. And in Russian it is Herzen (SGM, 1932)

One interviewee even thought that Herzen was a Jewish figure:

- Герцена.
- А хто єто?
- Я не знаю точно, хто він був. Але я знаю, що він був якийсь старий... старший рабін. А хто він ще то я не можу вам сказати, то я не знаю. Но так уважали все, що раз він Герцена, раз вулицю назвали Герцена, значить, та людина щось заслуговує і що вона якась відома людям і так назвали вулиця Герцена і вона і до сьогодні вулиця Герцена
- It is Herzen [Street]
- Who was he ?
- I don't know precisely who he was. But I know that he was an old... chief rabbi. I don't know who he was. But he was respected by everyone, so the street was named Herzen. It means that he was known to people. And it is Herzen Street now (SII, 1920).

All our interviewees were children before the war; therefore their reminiscences about neighbors are connected to those individuals who maintained contacts with their parents. For the most part these were business contacts, so the interviewees remember the names of shop owners or their parents' employers. Some Jewish people were very important for children, for example, Gedalya, who produced dairy products, including ice-cream:

От за нашим огородом була одна хата, друга хата, третя хата, в тій хаті, третьої хаті, там було молочарні, робілі морозиво, робілі молоко, сметану - все там робілі, все. Не було. Але нам не було треба, мама малі свою господарку [apparently

the interviewee meant господарство] не було треба, а шо ми колись казали "ледом", ми за тім морозиво бігали. Ми бігали, мама давала чи молока, чи сиру, а вони нам давали морозиво.

-А от як їх звали тих, у кого морозиво?

-Я не помятаю, як писав, то була хата – називали Бранци, а друга – Ханци, а той молочарня називали його Гедаля. А як писав не знаю. Було прізвище, а я не знаю.[...] У них був гробарь, там була хата, він там жив, мал кози, і там жив. Він ходив за тім цвинтером. Але хата була тут на переді, бо я помятаю добре...

Here behind our kitchen was one house, and another house, the third house. In that house, in the third one there was a dairy. They made ice cream, milk and sour cream. They made everything. But we didn't need it. My mother had a farm, but we used to say to her that we were buying the "ice", for ice-cream. We used to go there. Mother gave us milk or cheese for them. They gave us ice-cream.

-And what was the name of these people with ice-cream?

-I don't know how they spelled it.

That house was called Brantsi, and the second house was Hantsi's, and the dairy was Gedal'ja's.. I don't know how they spelled it. He had a family name, but I know [...] They had a coffin-maker. There was a house there. He lived there, he had goats and he lived there. He took care of the cemetery. But the house was here, in front, I remember this well... (SGM, 1932).

### Hasidic court

What makes Burshtyn markedly different from other Galician settlements is reminiscences about the Hasidic court of Rabbi Moshe Branwine (1890-1943) which functioned in the shtetl in the late 1930s (Alfasi 1995, 350). In other



*The Jewish cemetery in Burshtyn*

Galician towns, where Hasidic *Rebbes* (Hasidic leaders) lived, the memory about them has already disappeared. Elderly Ukrainians in Burshtyn describe how they peeped into the windows of the *Rebbe's* court in order to see him.

In addition, they remember the hollowed grave of the previous Hasidic *Rebbe*, Rabbi Nahum Branwine (1847-1915) in the local cemetery and say that the Jewish funeral processions would stop at this grave and only after paying respects to the *Rebbe's* grave would continue on their way to the place prepared to bury the deceased. Importantly, Hasidic *Rebbes* and Jewish “miracle-working” tombs were significant not only for Jews. We managed to record narratives about the once widespread practice, when non-

Jews asked *Rebbes* and graves for help in important matters:

Я была мала, у меня очи не видели, очи, а соседка еврейка каже: “Иди до рабина, доню”. Мама меня повела малу, детиной, я не знала, не знала. У мэнэ так було. Дюже не видела! А еврейка та сказала: “Сонечко, иди до рабина”. Мешкай там недалеко от нас. Я зазрела! Сами, сами. Еврейка. Рабин такой, зробил так, что я зазрела

I was a child, my eyes did not see, my eyes, and a Jewish neighbor said, “Go to the Rabbi, darling.” Mum took me, I was a little child then and I didn’t know, I didn’t know. I didn’t see anything. . And that Jewish woman said, “Sonechko, go to the rabbi.” The rabbi lived not far from us. And I began to see! My eyes began to

see clearly! The Rabbi did something so that I could see. (PYI, 1923).

Another old woman told us that she had asked the holy grave make her healthy:

А то на середине [кладбища] зара був рабин, я все шла и говорила: “Рабин, рабин, дай мне здоровья!” Рабин, рабин, дай мне здоровья. А рабины такие поважные были, как ксендзы, их уважали люди, великий, великий був рабин. А даже когда парканы не було, то я шла в том конце, я все равно: “Рабин, рабин, дай мени здоровья

In the middle of the cemetery there was a rabbi's grave. Each time I passed by, I would say “Rabbi, rabbi, give me health, rabbi, rabbi, give me health.” The rabbis were so important, like Catholic priests, people respected them. This was a great rabbi, a great, a great rabbi. Even after the fence around the cemetery had disappeared, I kept saying, rabbi, rabbi, give me health (GMT, 1922).

The practice of visiting synagogues and rabbis still lingers on among Ukrainians in the neighboring regions (Amosova, Kaspina 2009, 1–24), but in Galicia it has disappeared completely, and only some reminiscences are still preserved.

In addition to the stories mentioned above we collected many descriptions of Jewish religious life, calendar rites and rites of passage. These descriptions often have folkloric nature and rely strongly on stereotypes (Cała 1995; Belova 2005). For example, Jews are believed to be buried in sitting position, and Jewish weddings to be organized on a pile of garbage:

воны шлюб берут на мусорной куче. А свадьбу они добре, они разные блюда. Я не знаю. Я не знаю, я не ходила. Спивают, спивают, так дюже гарно: вай-вай-вай. Это я запомнала. Они так поют”

Their weddings take place on piles of garbage. But the wedding was good. They made various dishes. I do not know. I do not know, I did not go. They sang so well: wai-wai-wai. I remember this. They used to sing (MP, 1929).

Ховали по-моему сидя і до сонця (на восток), у цю сторону клали у білому чи то халат був, чи покривало.

I think they were buried facing the sun (on the east) and in this way they were placed in a white robe or blanket (NFS, 1929).

It is interesting that among different fragmented memories the best preserved is the memory about funeral rites. The reason may be that funeral is the most noticeable rite for non-Jewish neighbors, and there are many more stereotypes about the funeral than about other life events. Secondly, the reminiscences about Jews are often connected to an existing cemetery and therefore begin with the funeral.

### Conclusions

We have seen that the whole “Jewish local text” in Burshtyn is based on the objects in the townscape – the cemetery and the synagogues. The “text about Jews” exists only among those people, who lived in the town before World War II and their children. What is particularly significant is that it exists only in the old part of the town where Jews used to live. This “text” is mostly widespread among the people

living in Herzl – Herzen Street. Thus, we may say that the existence of Jewish objects in the townscape constructs and preserves historical memory. This illustrates the thesis of Pierre Nora: “The less memory is experienced internally, the more memory needs external support and points of support. The memory exists due to the points of support.” (Nora 1999, 17 – 18).

The local memory about an extinct group exists very often only around extant Jewish objects in the townscape and only thanks to their existence. The Jewish cemetery which nobody visits, two former synagogues and the “Jewish” name of a street in Burshtyn play a significant symbolic role in the town’s narrative. The less the degree of preservation of these places of memory, the less the preservation of the local historical memory about the Jewish life.

In this context it is important to mention that stereotypes are usually preserved better than real facts about the Jewish way of life and tradition, about Jewish neighbors and their names. But in today’s Galicia we see not only the disappearance of real reminiscences, but also the disappearance of ethnic stereotypes. Young people have no memory about Jews who lived in the town before the war. Usually they only remember that there used to be Polish population in the area in the prewar period since the border with today’s Poland is situated nearby. Quite often they consider all “strange,” non-Ukrainian objects in their town to be Polish heritage, excluding completely any remembrance of the past Jewish presence.

The example of Burshtyn shows how a multiethnic town becomes monoethnic

at the level of “local memory.” For the majority of present-day inhabitants of Burshtyn the memory about its multiethnicity, about its “others,” and non-Ukrainian history is meaningless. This memory has no symbolical value.

### Note

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# Globalization in the life of small island towns: Changes for better or worse?

## The case of the island of Kos (Greece)

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### Introduction

**G**lobalization describes the process by which regional economies, societies and cultures have become integrated through communication, transportation and trade. The term is most closely associated with economic globalization: the integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, foreign direct investment, capital flows, migration, the spread of technology and military presence (Bhagwati, 2004). According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word "globalization" was first employed in a publication entitled *Towards New Education in 1930*, to denote a holistic view of human experience in education. However, it was only in the 1960s that the term began to be widely used by economists and other social scientists. Since its inception the term has inspired numerous competing definitions and interpretations. Most of them acknowledge the greater movement of people, goods, capital and ideas due to increased economic integration which in turn is propelled by increased trade and investment. Tom G. Palmer defines

globalization as "the diminution of state-enforced restrictions on exchanges across borders and the increasingly integrated and complex global system of production and exchange that has emerged as a result".<sup>1</sup> Thomas L. Friedman argues that globalized trade, outsourcing, supply-chaining, and political forces have changed the world permanently, for both better and worse. He also argues that the pace of globalization is quickening and will continue to have a growing impact on business organization and practice (2008, 49).

Globalization and international tourism are interconnected processes. *Tourism* in the small island context involves people who come from other countries to enjoy the special atmosphere of living on an island. Usually, the tourists who come to the islands have been attracted by the image of the island environment: the sun and the sea, white sandy beaches and waving palm trees, lush vegetation and friendly natives. Tourism thus depends for its success on the quality of environment, and good tourist development requires protection and even improvement of the environment.

Economically, tourism can create jobs for local people and bring money. However, many tourists like the comfort they are used to at home, and increasingly, import a large part of their requirements, so that much of the money may leave the country again to pay for these imports. Moreover, if the hotels have been financed by foreign investors, they want to export their profits. The social impacts may also be important. Tourists often come from other societies with different values and lifestyles, and because they come seeking

pleasure, they may spend large amounts of money and behave in ways that they themselves would not accept at home. Out of ignorance or carelessness, they may fail to respect local customs and moral values. Overall, tourism tends to be a mixed blessing in its benefits and impacts on the island environment. If it is allowed to grow unplanned, it can have serious social and environmental repercussions while providing little real economic benefit. If developed with care, it can bring advantages to small island communities with few other resources (Dahl, 1982).

For Western and Northern Europeans the Mediterranean region has for a long time had a special aura of relaxed and restful atmosphere. In this case, it is similar to the Soviet Union, where the idea of rest and vacation was closely linked with the Black Sea. The local populations of both the Mediterranean and the Crimean and Caucasian coasts to a large extent live off tourism, yet they tend to dislike and despise holiday-makers.<sup>2</sup>

Likewise, the opening of borders following the political changes in Europe since 1990 has been often accompanied by opposing processes of closure at the level of the local society. Border regions are particularly interesting places for the observation of such phenomena as has been demonstrated by recent research (Green, 2005; Sutton, 1998). The aim of this essay is to reflect on the effects of globalization, international tourism and migration on the island of Kos. Particular attention will be paid to the integration of "foreigners" and to the coexistence of different ethnic groups in the context of an island community in contemporary Greece.<sup>3</sup>

### **The case of the island of Kos**

Kos is one of the main islands of the Dodecanese and one of the most important islands from an administrative, demographic and economic point of view. Because of its geopolitical location, its history and the diversity of cultural and religious influences across time, this island group is a particularly interesting place for fieldwork. In the Middle Ages, the Dodecanese belonged to the Knights of Saint John (1309-1522) and from 1522 to the Ottoman Empire. In 1912, after a war between the Ottoman Empire and Italy, the Dodecanese were subjected to Italian administration (1912-1943). During World War II, it was occupied by Germany and then placed under British control. It is the last region incorporated into the Greek State in 1947.

There are substantial differences in the manner these islands have developed in the course of the twentieth century. The Italians undertook important infrastructure work on the main islands, Rhodes and Kos. They created a naval base and settled 14 000 colonists in Leros. Yet, they did little to retain the inhabitants of Kalymnos, Symi and Kastellorizo after prohibiting sponge fishing on the Libyan coast and when cultivation of land in Asia Minor, where "many had their fields" was no longer possible. As a consequence, many inhabitants, in particular from these islands, emigrated overseas. Others, coming from smaller islands, find seasonal work in Kos and Rhodes (Kolodny, 2004).

Since the 1970s Rhodes and Kos have mainly followed a development pattern meeting the demands of the tourism sector. Each island has an international airport and both were among the first



*The temple of Asklepeio on the island of Kos*

international charter flight destinations in Greece. The other islands have followed a different development pattern in the field of tourism. Patmos is mainly known as a place for pilgrimage for Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholics, whereas Kalymnos, the only island where sponge fishing is still practiced, has gained international fame as a favorite meeting place for rock climbers.

Kos is also known as the spiritual home of Hippocrates (460-370 B.C.), considered to be the greatest physician of antiquity. The ancient sanctuary of Asklepeion and a plane tree are consecrated to his memory. There are Roman and Greek ruins, as well as Latin, Byzantine and Ottoman monuments there. The remains of an old synagogue and the Jewish cemetery remind us of the local Jewish community of the past.

Rich and culturally diverse history of Kos is reflected not only in its monuments but also in its population. Today, the great majority are Greek Orthodox but there is also a Muslim population of ethnic Turks, as well as a small number of Roman Catholics and Lutherans. Since the 1980s Kos has been a home for large numbers of foreign residents, as well as economic migrants and refugees. The former are mainly Western and Northern Europeans, whereas the latter mainly come from the Balkans, Eastern Europe, South-East Asia and the Middle East.

Moreover, Kos is an island that has water, an important resource lacking on many Greek islands. All in all, the island covers an area of 295 square kilometers and has a population of approximately 30,000 inhabitants. The principal socio-

professional activities of the population are tourism and agriculture; a smaller number of residents are employed in the public sector.

In the early 1990s, Kos became an important venue for Scandinavian and British youth and gained fame as a party island. The first large hotels with more



*The central square in the town of Kos*

### **A brief overview of tourism development in Kos**

The first tourist groups arrived in Kos in the 1970s. The 1980s saw the opening of the first larger hotels. In the 1980s, the socialist government of Andreas Papandreu granted long-term loans to returning ethnic Greeks who wanted to construct hotels or start their own businesses. A small number of Greeks from Kos who had migrated to Australia in the 1960s repatriated to Greece taking advantage of this opportunity.

than 200 rooms were constructed in the 1990s. These were “all inclusive” resort hotels, which meant that a minimum three meals a day, soft drinks, most alcoholic drinks and possibly other services are included in the price. Many also offer sports and other activities. Thus a new concept of tourism was born.<sup>4</sup>

Some of the owners of the all-inclusive hotels in Kos are native Greeks, however, the large chains are usually foreign owned. This means that the money does

not stay on the island. According to the representatives of the tourism sector, the majority of clients who stay in these hotels come from Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Many spend their holidays in the hotel compound – these are usually located on the seashore at some distance from the town of Kos – and do not even visit the island. Some others take pleasure in spending time in a tavern.

They come, sit down and order a *tzadziki* or a *choriatiki* (Greek salad), for two. And that is all. For dinner they return to the hotel where everything is included in the price. For the local tavern owners, the situation is tragic. (Representative of a tourism agency)

Tourists' geographic choices follow a distinct pattern according to nationality. Kardemena, Kefalos and Kamari on the southern and eastern coasts are the favorite tourist villages of the British. There are numerous British pubs and food places with a "British" menu. On the western coast, Tigaki, Marmari and Mastichari are the villages of choice among the Germans and the Austrians. Tourists from the Nordic countries usually spend their holidays in the town of Kos.

In the spring and fall, most tourists are older people and families. July is the preferred holiday month of young people aged 20-30 and August of the Greeks. Traditionally tourists in Kos come from Germany, Britain, Holland and the Nordic countries. The *aficionados* come back every year, even twice a year. There are tourists who have visited Kos regularly for more than 20 years. Over the years, there have been changes, especially as far as the countries of origin and the type of stay

of the holidaymakers are concerned. As mentioned earlier, the all-inclusive hotels are gaining predominance. Moreover, there has been a decrease in the number of Nordic tourists. On the other hand, new groups have found their way to the island, mainly from Croatia, the Czech Republic, Russia, Italy, France and Turkey. From the local perspective, the Russians and the Turks are particularly welcome tourists.

When they travel they live well, they eat and drink well, and they buy presents for the entire family. They are very good clients: they leave money on the island.

The duration of the season has also changed. In the past, it started in April and lasted until the end of October. Today, it starts in May and ends in September. There have also been other changes, for example in the practice of holiday romance. In the past, young girls, most of whom were Western and Northern Europeans, were often accompanied by local men. The latter saw the girls off to the airport (usually on a motorbike) and waited for their return to the island. Today, this is no longer the case. People are well traveled and even villagers have seen the world, so they are less attracted by newcomers than in the past. A recent documentary, *The colossi of love* by Maria Koufopoulou depicts the practice of *kamaki*<sup>5</sup> in Rhodes during the golden years of mass tourism.

One of my interlocutors, a historian who works in the local archives of a neighboring island, recalls this period with nostalgia. In the 1980s, Greek society and the island society in particular were still rather conservative. The arrival of

Nordic girls in Kos and Rhodes in the 1980s was a “social phenomenon”.

All of a sudden, we saw large numbers of Nordic women arrive on the island, alone without men. They were tall, blond, and wore shorts or bikini. We had never seen anything like this before. It was spectacular. We watched them eyes wide open. In the evening when one went to the disco, there were couples everywhere. Everyday was alike: the sun, the sea, alcohol and sex. Some women returned to the island two or three times, and some couples got married. However, most relations did not last. ... Later things changed. Greek society became more liberal, Greek women started dressing up and putting on make-up.

Social phenomena, according to John Markey, are considered as including all behavior which influences or is influenced by organisms sufficiently alive to respond to one another (Markey, 1925-1926, 733). Agneta, a Swedish woman who lives in Kos with her husband and children since the early 1980s told me about her experience. She first came to Kos in 1979 as a tourist. According to her, at that time one did not see Greek women.

In the street, in the discos, there were Greek men and foreign women. There was a mutual curiosity; the foreigners wanted to get to know the Greeks and the Greeks wanted to meet the foreigners. Today, the tourists spend their time with their co-nationals; they are not interested in Greeks. On the other hand, today Greek women also go out, so the Greeks do not need foreign women anymore.

The first mixed marriages between foreign women and Greek men in Kos were concluded in the 1980s. In most cases, these were between Greek Orthodox men and foreign Catholic or Lutheran women. Mixed marriages between Greek Muslim men and foreign women were relatively few. Many couples would share houses with the husband's parents for years before getting married. It was not easy to get accepted because many Greek families were “afraid” of foreign brides. In particular, they feared they would take the children and leave. Such cases have been observed in mixed marriages between Greek men and Swedish women. Some foreign women converted to Greek Orthodoxy. Others concluded a civil marriage or were wedded in the bride's country of origin.

Children of mixed marriages between foreign women and Greek Orthodox men are usually baptized as Orthodox. This is easily explained by the hegemonic position of the Orthodox Church in Greek society. Likewise, as a rule, male children of Muslim fathers are circumcised. In the choice of the name, the prevailing Greek tradition is usually followed.

In the 1990s, with the increasing number of children born out of mixed marriages, the transmission of the mother tongue to children became an issue. Today, the Finns, the Scandinavians, the Germans, the British and the Dutch have their own associations and Sunday schools where language education for school children is provided in the mother tongue. The Municipality of the town of Kos has provided the associations with a building, free of charge. After completing the compulsory school education, children tend to continue their studies

in Greece or in the mother's country of origin.

### **Political changes in Europe since 1990 and the effects of globalization**

Political changes that occurred in Europe in the 1990s led to the arrival of large numbers of migrants from the Balkans, South-East Asia and the Middle East, causing further changes in the everyday life in Kos and the neighbouring islands. The estimated number of foreign migrants in Kos is 3,000, which makes 10% of the total population of the island and is consistent with the situation nationwide. Over the last decades, Greece formerly better known as a country exporting migrants and refugees turned into an immigrant receiving country. Today, it has one of the highest number of immigrants per inhabitant in Europe. This means that Greece has been confronted with political, economic and social challenges but also with cultural otherness: old forms have been politicized and new forms have taken shape in Greek space (Papataxiarchis, 2005).

The situation of foreign migrants varies from one case to another; as a rule, the majority of migrants from Eastern Europe are females while males prevail among migrants from South-East Asia. Albanians and Bulgarians often bring families along. In addition to "regular" migrants, there are migrants whose legal situation in the country is "irregular"; among the latter some are refugees or asylum seekers. The geographical position of Kos and the other Aegean islands, – Rhodes, Leros, Patmos, Lesbos and Samos – make them a passageway for clandestine migration from the Turkish shores. The majority are Iraqis, Afghans,

Iranians, Somali and Pakistani. Both genders are represented; there are also families and newborn babies. As a rule, the Iraqis and the Afghans stay on the island only as long as it takes to obtain a medical certificate and a certificate that grants them the status of asylum seekers. Then they continue their journey to Athens, Patras and other destinations in Europe.

On the whole, the arrival of migrants and new groups is not a new phenomenon in Kos. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Kos received a number of Greek-speaking Muslims from Crete. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it saw the arrival of Greeks from Asia Minor. Residents of other islands also moved to Kos attracted by the employment possibilities offered by the Italians. More recently, during the expansion of the tourism sector, a significant number of Greeks from neighboring islands, Kalymnos, Pserimos, as well as from central and northern Greece, came to work on the island.

Ironically, the arrival of large numbers of migrants from the Balkans, Asia and the Middle East – who do the "worst" jobs – has altered the old hierarchy of social and ethnic groups present on the island. *"With the arrival of the East-Europeans, our social status has degraded as well,"* says one of my Finnish interlocutors who has lived in Kos since 1981.

All of a sudden, we have all become foreigners, *xenoi* (in Greek). When we came, we came from a better, more advanced society. We knew English. Among the locals, few knew English in those days, mainly those who had lived in Australia. We found work immediately. Here, everything was expanding. There was work for



*The Ibrahim Defterdar mosque in the central square in the town of Kos*

everybody. The point of departure for East-Europeans is different. There are many East-Europeans who work here, [...], many work in night clubs.

The change in social hierarchies is particularly interesting as far as the perception of the old Muslim community is concerned. Until recently, the latter were largely considered to be people of a “lower God”. According to my foreign-born interlocutors, *“Everybody had his rifle ready and was ready to shoot”*, in particular, after the events of Imia (Kardak in Turkish) in 1996. Since 1999 the situation has been changing. This should be seen as a consequence of the political changes in Europe, pressure from European institutions<sup>6</sup> and the recent rapprochement between Greece and Turkey and more generally between EU and Turkey.

#### **Ethnic Turks in Kos: from Ottoman subjects to Greek citizens**

Ethnic Turks or the “Muslims”, according to the official Greek terminology, are part of a historic minority present in Rhodes and Kos since 1522, as subjects of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>7</sup> In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, significant numbers of Muslim Turks from Crete settled on these islands (Savorianakis, 2000, 88). During the Italian administration, the Muslims were recognized as one of the three existing religious communities with the right to elect their own Councils. After the incorporation of the Dodecanese into the Greek State, the great majority automatically became Greek citizens. Although the Dodecanese Muslims were not recognized as a minority, because they were not deemed as a category falling under the protection of the Lausanne Treaty,<sup>8</sup> special status was acknowledged for the waqfs<sup>9</sup> and Turkish schools (Kurban, Tsitselikis, 2010, 7; Georgalidou, 2004).

The incorporation of the Dodecanese into the Greek State and the Cyprus conflict which took the form of a military confrontation in 1974 forced large numbers of Muslims to leave their native islands and migrate to Turkey. In many cases migration was motivated by economic considerations. In connection with the Cyprus conflict, it was mainly a reaction to the discrimination that Muslims faced in Greece. Field research suggests that the 1960s and the 1970s were particularly difficult years for the Muslims, marked by sabotage of shops, fields and cattle. Discrimination in the fields of education and health service continued even later. Usually, those who left were deprived of their Greek citizenship and also of their property (Kaurinkoski, 2012).

Today, the estimated Muslim population in the Dodecanese is 5,000, with 3,000 to 3,500 living in Rhodes, and 1,500 to 2,000 in Kos. In Kos, the Muslims mainly live in the town of Kos and in the village of Platani (or *Gkerme-Kermentes*). The latter is situated a few kilometers outside the town of Kos and is the last village on the way to the Archeological monument of Asklipeio, which is one of the most important tourist attractions on the island. The Turkish name of the village, *Gkerme-Kermentes*, most probably derives from the homonymic place of origin of its inhabitants whose ancestors settled there in the sixteenth century having migrated from the other side of the Aegean (Savorianakis, 2000, 58). Today, half of the population of Platani are Greek Orthodox and schools are mixed, although all the teachers are Greek Orthodox. Since the 1970s all pupils have attended Greek public schools, while the Turkish language is mainly

used for purposes of oral communication within the communities.

Generally speaking, today the Muslims in Kos and Rhodes wear the same clothes,<sup>10</sup> do the same jobs and bring their children to the same schools as their Greek Orthodox brethren. All in all, the Muslims constitute a young population. Young men are subject to compulsory military service in Greece. However, it seems they are not recruited to the Military Academy.<sup>11</sup>

Locally, the Muslims have a reputation of hard workers. Traditionally, many used to work in agriculture and cattle breeding. Today, the great majority are self-employed and work in agriculture and tourism. Other frequent occupations are mechanics, technicians, shop and restaurant keepers or specialists in the construction field. Some are employed in the public sector but hold low prestige positions. Among university graduates a few are employed in public administration or in education. Some others have opened their own businesses. Over the years, important changes have taken place in Greek society and polity, and entrance to Greek Universities has been facilitated by laws and quotas of positive discrimination. As a consequence, an increasing number of Muslims pursue their education in secondary schools in Greece and later in Greek Universities. In parallel, studying in Turkey is not incompatible with further career opportunities and a good quality of life in Greece. Religion remains a separating factor, and mixed marriages between Greek Muslims and Christians, Greek Orthodox in particular, remain rare. In the case of Muslim women, they are socially unacceptable.

In 2000, a local Muslim association

was founded in Kos, called *the Muslim Brotherhood of Kos*. It is a cultural and educational association of ethnic Turks. The main issues on the agenda of the association are promotion of the institutionalization of the Turkish language and Islamic education in the context of the Greek public schools in Kos with a large number of Muslim pupils, as well as issues related to the management of the waqf foundation.<sup>12</sup> Recent migrants from the Balkans, Middle East and South-East Asia do not have their own associations.

As far as the rather successful integration of the Muslims in Kos into the wider Greek society and economy is concerned, this can be partially explained by the economic development of the region and the effects of globalization which have benefited the entire population of these islands. However, what seems equally, if not more important is the fact that the Muslims in Kos pursue their education in Greek public schools together with the majority population. The public school is perceived here as an institution providing students with essential language skills in Greek and developing Greek national consciousness.

As regards neighborly relations, many Muslims in Kos emphasize that *today* they live like brothers with their Greek Orthodox co-islanders. Some others claim that *"their best friends are Christians"*. Their children go to school together, they invite each other to weddings and holiday celebrations. Official relations between the confessional groups are mutually evaluated as very good. In the end, it seems that relations between members of different confessional groups, people and individuals are characterized by a

*savoir-vivre* where everybody knows his/her place (Kaurinkoski, 2012).

### **Globalization: changes for better or worse?**

Globalization has brought *inter alia* tourism, migration and wealth to Kos. It has also brought technology, infrastructure and physical changes. As late as in the 1980s, during summer months telephone lines would collapse frequently due to overloading. With the advent of mobile phones and the internet, the communications problem has been resolved. At the same time, technology and globalization have brought uniformity.

Earlier, each bistro and tavern had its own personalized character. Today, the same white parasols are everywhere. In the past, Greek music was played in the taverns and the night clubs; today, it is the same Anglo-Saxon tunes that are heard all over.

Moreover, some feel that globalization has brought about "laziness". Indeed, there has been a shift in the labor market. In the past, there were a number of small factories in Kos, and many people were employed in agriculture and fishing. Today, most of the factories have closed down, and few people work in agriculture and fishing perceived as hard work. *"It is easier to open a supermarket or a mini-market."* Tourism has brought "easy money" to the island.

Moreover, globalization has intensified social stratification among the island people. The cost of living has risen, in particular after the introduction of the euro in 2001. *"In the past people would work five months and relax the rest of the year;*

*today, this is no longer possible.*” One of my interlocutors who arrived in Kos in 1982, recalls her first years on the island:

In those days, there was work for everybody. Everybody had money. People were more sincere and happier. Today, everybody is stressed. Life has become very difficult.

often explained by the presence of large numbers of foreign migrants on the island, in particular of Albanians. Partially, this should be seen as a reflection of the image portrayed by the national Greek mass media throughout the 1990s and the following decade. It is also explained by numbers; 60% of migrants in Greece are Albanians (Baldwin-Edwards, 2004). However, there are also positive



*The central square in the village of Platani*

The change in the rhythm of life is also reflected on the associational level. In the past, the associations of foreigners organized lotteries, carnivals, bazaars, as well as celebration of Christmas and other holidays every year. Today, only the bazaar is left, its main aim being money raising for the children’s language education.

While reflecting on various consequences of globalization, people often mention growing crime rate, insecurity and fear. Locally, these are

developments and signs of integration. School achievements of second-generation immigrants are often very good. Moreover, some migrants have bought plots of land and apartments on the island. In parallel, Albanians and Bulgarians also invest in their countries of origin. There are signs that Albanians are gradually becoming accepted by the host society; it is Muslim immigrants from the Middle East and South-East Asia that have become the “disturbing other” and “a cultural threat” to Greece (Tsitselikis, 2010, 243).

Since traditional tourism is on decline, local authorities in cooperation with representatives of the tourism industry began rebranding Kos in order to attract new groups of tourists to the island. As part of this process, bicycle roads have been constructed in the town of Kos and along the coast. In the summer months, various cultural events are organized to celebrate the history and the local cultures of the island. There are daily excursions to the neighboring islands and several ferry connections to Turkey. Today, despite the economic crisis that has been raging in Greece since 2008, the number of tourists in Kos is considered to be satisfactory. The trouble is they are reluctant to spend money.

In this context, the recent decision of many EU countries, including Greece,<sup>13</sup> to allow Turkish citizens with Green passports (*Yeşil Pasaport*)<sup>14</sup> to travel to EU countries without a visa is a positive step that facilitates border crossing between the two countries. In the summer time, Greek and Turkish excursion boats and private yachts are frequently seen in local harbors on both sides of the Aegean. There are some signs of new dynamics in border-crossing that are economically beneficial for both sides. As these examples show, globalization has also had an effect on people's minds contributing to openness towards otherness. Coexistence of different ethnic groups, in particular of the 'Greeks' and the 'Turks', is much more harmonious than in the past.<sup>15</sup> In this context, the current crisis, which is not exclusively economic as it also puts values to test, affects everybody and may contribute to greater social cohesion, at least on a local and regional level.

The deepening of the crisis that began in 2010 has triggered further changes in everyday life in Kos. What survival strategies are adopted to cope with the crisis? Among the local residents, many are property owners with fields and shops that they rent. An increasing number of plot owners have started cultivating land and growing their own vegetables for personal needs and for sale. In parallel, new agricultural techniques and biological processing methods are becoming popular. For example, there are people who are cultivating snails for export. In winter months many internal migrants and foreign nationals return to their home places or look for employment opportunities elsewhere. Return migration is becoming a common practice among Albanians employed in construction and among mixed couples with two homelands.

Globalization is widely known to widen the gap between the "rich" and the "poor" (countries). In the case of Kos we can also speak of the widening gap between the local and foreign populations. Notably, the situation is strikingly similar to that of Ancient Greece. In Ancient Athens, there was a clear distinction between the *Greeks* and the *barbarians* on the one hand, and between various groups of barbarians on the other.

"A free man was only he who lived in the city, possessed and cultivated his land or had it cultivated by his slaves; in other words, a master of soil and a master of slaves, a citizen who 'represented' the society, making human order complete" (Godelier, 2010, 279-280).

## Notes

- 1 Tom G. Palmer. Globalization is Great! The Cato Institute, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Globalization>, accessed November 24, 2011.
- 2 I wish to thank Dr. Larisa Fialkova and Dr. Maria Yelenevskaya for drawing my attention to this issue, in particular to the parallel between the images of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea resorts among the locals and holiday-makers.
- 3 My initial field research in Kos (October 2008) was enabled by a grant from the French School of Athens. Subsequent field research (September 2010, May 2011) was done in the framework of the BALKABAS project supported by the “Young Scholars” programme of the French National Research Agency since January 2009 (ANR-08-JCJC-0091-01). Any names of informants/interlocutors quoted in the text are fictitious.
- 4 The all-inclusive model originated in the Club Med resorts which were founded by the Belgian Gerard Blitz.
- 5 The term *kamaki* literally means “harpoon” or “fish-spear”, but is colloquially used for “gigolo”. On *kamaki* in the Greek context see e.g., S. Zinovieff. *Έλληνες άντρες και ξένες γυναίκες: το «καμάκι» σε μια επαρχιακή πόλη*. In E. Papataxiarchis, Th. Paradellis (eds.), *Ταυτότητες και φύλο στη σύγχρονη Ελλάδα*, Athens: Alexandraia, 1998, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition., 251-276.
- 6 In 2009 a motion for a resolution on “the situation of the Turkish minority in Kos and Rhodes” was presented by Mr. Andreas Gross to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) (Doc.11904, 6 May 2009). In 2010, the PACE criticized “the recurrent invoking” of the “principle of reciprocity” by both Greece and Turkey and reminded that “first and foremost the countries in which the minorities live are responsible for their own citizens, including the members of the respective religious minorities”. *Freedom of Religion and Other Human Rights for non-Muslim minorities in Turkey and for the Muslim Minority in Thrace (Eastern Greece)*, Resolution 1704, 2010, paragraphs 5 and 8, quoted in Kurban, Tsitselikis 2010, 8.
- 7 According to the Ottoman population census of 1884-1886, Kos had a population of 12,965, out of whom 10,449 were Christians, 2,439 Muslims and 67 Jews (Savorianakis 2000, 74).
- 8 The Lausanne Treaty sets the legal framework for minority protection in both states regarding “non-Muslims” in Turkey and Muslims in Greece. The Treaty does not enumerate the “non-Muslim” minorities in Turkey and the “Muslim” minorities in Greece. It grants legal protection to all non-Muslim communities in Turkey and all Muslim communities in Greece. In practice, Turkey has limited the protection of the treaty to Greek Orthodox, Armenian and Jewish communities. In Greece, likewise, Muslims of the Dodecanese islands have not been deemed as falling under the Lausanne protection system (Kurban, Tsitselikis 2010, 7).
- 9 The waqf is an organization in charge of the management and restoration of Muslim community property. The waqfs in Greece (in Thrace and in the Dodecanese) are regulated by special laws that are part of the broader minority protection measures designed for Thrace. In practice, the established laws have not always been implemented and the waqfs have often been mismanaged (Kaurinkoski 2012).
- 10 Atatürk’s reforms, in particular with regard to clothing and secularism were implemented in Kos and Rhodes in the 1920s. This was not the case in Western Thrace, where head scarves are widely worn by women.
- 11 Until the late 1990s, the Muslims were not exempt from military service; however, they were discriminated against in other manner. For example, they had to serve unarmed and were mainly asked to carry out auxiliary tasks.
- 12 Currently, the President and all Council members of the waqf foundations in the Dodecanese are appointed by the Greek authorities.

13 In the case of Greece, this decision came into force on July 28, 2010.

14 The Green passport allows its bearer to travel visa-free to some countries. It is issued to 1) former members of the National Assembly; 2) first, second or third grade public servants; 3) pensioners formerly employed as first, second or third grade public servants; 4) mayors; 5) spouses of special passport holders; and 6) unwed children of special passport holders who live with their parents until they turn 25.

15 On the perception of Turks in Greek society see, e.g., Theodosopoulos 2007, and on the situation of ethnic Turks in Kos and Rhodes, see, e.g., Kaurinkoski 2012.

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## **“Holiday of Holidays” Festival in Haifa: between Hope and Reality**

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### **Introduction: Haifa as a Mixed City**

All localities in Israel are divided into three groups according to their ethnic composition: Jewish, Arab and mixed. According to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), eight urban localities are defined as mixed. These towns “with a large majority of Jews, but with a considerable minority of Arabs” are: Jerusalem, Tel Aviv-Yafo, Haifa, Akko, Ramla, Lod, Ma’alot-Torshiha and Nazerat Illit (CBS, Statistical Abstract of Israel 2010, 2011, 29). Life in these cities is a subject of heated academic and public discussions. Academics who study planning and development strategies, distribution of housing, public space and resources believe that on the one hand, Arab neighborhoods are treated as ‘internal frontiers’ into which Jewish presence keeps expanding thus turning mixed cities into urban ethnocracies, where citizenship is unequal, and resources and services are allocated on the basis of ethnicity rather than residency (Yiftachel, and Yacobi 2003, 680, 690). On the other hand, the mixed city context may be favorable for forming perceptions of coexistence (Falah et al. 2000, 792). Among the mixed urban localities, Haifa, the

third largest city of Israel, has gained the reputation of a model of tolerance among mixed localities. This might be partially explained by the history of Haifa, where Jews and Arabs lived under the same municipality prior to the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 (Yacobi 2009, 1). In the empirical study conducted by Falah et al., the ranking for positive perceptions of coexistence is highest in Haifa for Arab respondents and second highest for Jewish respondents (2000, 787). At the same time, the international conference *From Mixed to Shared: The Haifa Alternative* organized by the NGO *New Israel Fund* reported results of a study based on the discussions with 165 residents in 22 focus groups which indicated that “the majority of the town’s residents live in a sort of cultural indifference devoid of neither desire to interact with members of other populations nor outright hostility” (New Israel Fund 2010). In addition, like in other Israeli towns, the interethnic relations in Haifa visibly deteriorated in the period of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Intifada also known as Intifada Al Aqsa (2000-2005), when there were several terrorist attacks in Haifa buses and restaurants and clashes between Arab demonstrators and policemen. Animosity that soared in that period were hardly alleviated by the fact that among the victims of the terrorists were not only Jewish but also Arab and Druze residents of Haifa.

The total population of the Haifa district which includes the city’s suburbs is 880,000. The Arab sector makes 213,600, the rest being “Jews and others” (CBS, Statistical Abstract of Israel 2009, 2010, 106).<sup>2</sup> Like other mixed cities, Haifa is still ethnically divided into the so called

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“Arab” and “Jewish” neighborhoods. The former are located in the low-prestige areas of the city. In fact, Jews also live there, although not by choice but due to financial constraints. Rich neighborhoods are primarily occupied by Jews, although socially upward mobile Arab families have corners in them as well. One Arab neighborhood in the old part of the city stayed empty for 50 years after the War of Independence which took place in 1948 after the State of Israel had been proclaimed. According to Israeli law, abandoned houses cannot be transferred to other owners for a period of 50 years. Since Palestinian refugees are not allowed to return to Israel, the real estate was appropriated by the city and today this district is in the process of renovation. Most of the restored buildings house offices and shops.

On a daily basis interaction between Jews and Arabs occurs in the work place, for example in hospitals where both Jews and Arabs can be found among the staff and patients, in shopping centers and malls, in pharmacies and post-offices, and at the universities and colleges (see Blumen & Tzafrir 2011). One can add that at the universities, there are many more Arabs among the students than among the professors, engineers, librarians, and secretaries. Notably, although there are four mixed bilingual schools in Israel<sup>3</sup> none of them is in Haifa (Mor-Sommerfeld et al. 2007, 11). Yet some Arab and Druze parents send their children who intend to go to the university to Jewish high schools in order to facilitate their further studies, because instruction at Israeli universities is in Hebrew. In addition, both Arab and Jewish children, including Russian-speaking immigrants, study together at

the Rubin Conservatory located in one of the Arab neighborhoods of the city. Despite a long history of living under the same jurisdiction and abundance of contact zones, Jews and Arabs in Haifa continue being apart maintaining social networks and engaging in leisure activities primarily within their own ethno-cultural groups.

Attempts to bring Haifa communities closer to each other are made by *Beit Hagefen*—the Arab-Jewish Center founded in 1963 (information about *Beit Hagefen*'s activities can be found on its website ([http://www.beit-hagefen.com/En/Web/En\\_%20Home\\_Index.htm](http://www.beit-hagefen.com/En/Web/En_%20Home_Index.htm), accessed 9/01/2012). Its current head, Asaf Ronen, says that from 2003 to 2010 the center was in crisis and only now is trying to reinvigorate residents' interest in its initiatives (Korin 2012). One of the most successful among them is the December festival known as Holiday of Holidays. It was launched in 1993 as a joint venture of the Municipality of Haifa and *Beit Hagefen*. The name and the time of the festival was chosen because the holidays of the three main religions represented in Haifa - Christmas, Hanukkah and Ramadan happened to be almost at the same time in that year. Moslems use the lunar calendar, and since then neither Ramadan nor any other Moslem holiday has fallen on December, yet in the consciousness of the residents the festival is still associated with the three religions, although the events of the festival are secular. The first experience of holding an intercultural festival was successful and from year to year it is getting more popular attracting Israelis from all over the country as well as foreign tourists. Today it is generously covered in the

media, including electronic sources. The festival has its own web page which posts the schedule of events, announcements and photographs (<http://www.haifahag.co.il/>, accessed 10/12/2011). It is covered on the site of the Haifa Municipality (<http://www.haifa.muni.il/Haifa/Pages/NewsItem.aspx?OneId=306>, last accessed 20/01/2012) and on the homepage of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (<http://www.altawasul.com/MFAAR/israel+beyond+politics/society+co-existence+and+peace/Holiday-of-Holidays-Festival-celebrated-in-Haifa-13122011.htm>, last accessed on 20/01/2012). Note that on the municipal site the page is given in Hebrew, Arabic and English, and the Ministry adds the Russian page. In 2011 we also found that the festival was advertised on the web pages of travel agencies in Russia and Ukraine (see e.g., <http://tours-service.ru/news/9161> and <http://www.rv.org.ua/blog/prazdnik-prazdnikov-v-haife/>,<sup>4</sup> last accessed 20/01/2012). The articles on the official Israeli sites underscore the inter-confessional nature of the holiday, contributing to peaceful coexistence of ethno-religious groups. Sites for tourists, on the other hand, emphasize a playful and happy atmosphere and the entertaining nature of the events.

This essay is based on participant observation and monitoring of websites. We have attended events of Holiday of Holidays since the year it was launched, first coming as curious members of the audience, and in the last two years talking to participants, watching behavior and reactions of children and adults, collecting advertising leaflets, making notes in our ethnographic diaries. In January 2012 we interviewed the head

of *Beit Hagefen*, Asaf Ronen. We read and analyzed internet materials devoted to the festival on institutional and non-institutional sites, such as discussion forums and blogs in English, Hebrew and Russian. Unfortunately, we were unable to cover sites in Arabic, although we spoke about the festival with our Arabic-speaking colleagues and students. Moreover, we conducted a short online interview with Roseland Daeem, a Ph.D. student in the Department of Hebrew and Comparative Literature of the University of Haifa, specializing in folklore, and a lecturer at the Academic Arab College of Education.

The Holiday of Holidays in Haifa is an attempt to promote Haifa's image of a tolerant multicultural city by creating a unifying festival. At the same time, for years Haifa has struggled to shed its image of a provincial city, which has little to offer to young and ambitious people.<sup>5</sup> A widely used method of revitalization of a city's image, developing its economy and place identity, and capitalizing on cultural resources is conducting festivals (Cheng-Yi and Woan-Chiau 2009, 1317-1322). This trend is a distinctive feature of post-industrial societies, where urban landscapes "become less tied to production and more concerned with organization of consumption" (Zukin 1991, 57).

### **The Festival and Its Chronotope**

The term "Chronotope" (literally "time-space") was introduced into literary studies by Mikhail Bakhtin for the analysis of novels. He defined it as "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtin 1981,

84). Although initially understood as a formally constitutive category of literature, this concept was later extended to the study of culture and folklore. Specifically, Bakhtin discussed at length the Chronotope of the carnival in the feudal society, and some of his insights seem to be relevant to the festivities of our age. According to Bakhtin, as opposed to the official feast, carnival in Middle Ages, “celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions” (Bakhtin 1984, 10). Although there is a marked difference between feudal and post-industrial societies, hierarchies, norms and prohibitions have not disappeared from the way our contemporaries celebrate holidays. We still witness ethnic and religious divisions: festivals of one group leave members of other groups indifferent at best, but sometimes trigger alienation and hostility.<sup>6</sup> The rejection of national holidays by Arab citizens of Israel seems to be strongest on the Independence Day (cf. almost identical conflict in the perception of the Victory day among Estonian and Russian denizens of Kohtla-Järve in Jago 2011, 27).

The spatio-temporal framework of the Holiday of Holidays festival has clear-cut borders. The official opening takes place on the afternoon of the first Saturday in December, which already demonstrates the secular nature of the festival, because due to the conventions of Judaism, public events in Israel are limited from Friday evening to the Saturday evening, the time of Sabbath. The rest of the program encompasses Thursday nights, Fridays and Saturdays until the 31<sup>st</sup> of December.

Most shows, concerts and happenings of the festival take place in the two adjacent neighborhoods: *Wadi Nisnas*<sup>7</sup> and the German Colony which are populated primarily by Christian and Muslim Arabs. The district known as the German Colony had been established in 1868 by German Templers, whose descendents were expelled at the beginning of World War II by the British for pro-Nazi sympathies. In post-war years the area gradually deteriorated, but in the 1990s its main street, Ben-Gurion Avenue, located at the bottom of the Bahai gardens that stretch from the top to the bottom of Mount Carmel was renovated. Numerous restaurants opened there and turned it into one of the favorite locations of nightlife entertainment. The European-style architecture of the Templers and the Bahai shrine visible from any point of the street make the street attractive and exotic by its “otherness”. This area is easy to reach for those who come from other towns because it is situated close to a train station and the port.

The second main location of the festival, *Wadi Nisnas*, is visually separated from the adjacent streets and has just a few narrow entries. The impression of separateness and autonomy is reinforced by the absence of public transport and scarcity of cars there. With its narrow streets *Wadi Nisnas* seems to be an inappropriate location for mass festive happenings; on the other hand, the combination of shabbiness, disorderliness and often naïve but moving decorations makes it picturesque. Many houses look dilapidated needing repairs badly, but this seems to be beyond the means of low-income owners (cf. with the situation of the Moorish historical district of Albaicin

in Granada discussed in Shaw et al. 2004, 1986). Despite its pitiful state, *Wadi Nisnas* was chosen by Arab and Jewish artists for displaying their works. The streets and houses of the district are decorated with numerous sculptures, frescos, ceramic bass reliefs, and metal installations which turned it into an open-air museum. On the pavement of the streets one can see painted foot prints indicating the route of “Coexistence Walks” – guided tours organized by *Beit Hagefen*. Besides its art, *Wadi Nisnas* attracts secular Jews who like to visit it on Friday afternoon and Saturday, when shops in the Jewish quarters are closed.

During festival events these two neighborhoods become exclusively pedestrian and are separated from the rest of the city by railings with guarded entrances. Used to check-ups at the entrance to any public building, members of the audience patiently queue at the gates, opening their bags for inspection which should boost the perception of personal safety (cf. with the importance of ‘gateways’ in Shaw et al. 2004, 1991). Festive atmosphere presupposes the feeling of trust. As Giddens indicates, “Risk and trust intertwine, trust normally serving to reduce or minimize the dangers to which particular types of activity are subject” (Giddens 1990, 35). At the same time, the clearly marked border between alleged risk and safety may be viewed from a different angle:

Although security is vitally important during mass public events, a whole neighborhood is blocked. If residents leave it in order to do their shopping in a nearby store or have to do some chores outside their district, when they come back home, they have to pass

through security control, and their bags are checked. It is also humiliating for youngsters to be checked by security at the entrance to their own house (from an interview with Roseland Daeem).

The interconnection of risk and trust is particularly meaningful for Israeli society for years tormented by military conflicts and terrorist attacks. According to the study conducted by Jabareen, the area of the German Colony is perceived by both Arab and Jewish Israelis as a safer place than other parts of Haifa. This is explained by lively economic and social activities attracting members of both sectors, and by the belief (unfortunately, mistaken) that Arab quarters and Arab-owned businesses are unlikely to be targeted by suicide bombers (Jabareen 2009, 97-98). Our own participant observation of both the German Colony and *Wadi Nisnas* based on multiple visits to these neighborhoods on week days, weekends and during holidays is ambivalent. Although we share with Jabareen’s subjects the feeling of trust and safety, we know that many Jewish residents of Haifa avoid Arab neighborhoods. Moreover, on the occasions we guided guests from other Israeli towns and from abroad through the area, we were often confronted with their fear and suspicion. Sometimes it requires quite a bit of an effort to convince visitors to “set foot on the Arab territory” (cf. reluctance of international tourists to visit predominantly Moslem neighborhoods in London after 09.11.2001 in Shaw et al. 2004, 1992). In the last years when the events of the festival have become more diverse, the Holiday of Holidays has not been confined to the two neighborhoods described here. In December admission fee



*The German Colony is decorated for the festival. The lamp posts fly the flags of Israel and Haifa, and plastic Christmas trees are covered with garlands. (Photo courtesy of Hadas Itzcovich)*

to Haifa museums is reduced from 30 to 5 shekels, and in the Jewish neighborhood of *Bat-Galim* artists open doors of their private apartments and studios for free visits. Thus, the Holiday of Holidays festival offers both “high” and popular culture. In the literature about festivals, researchers observe that the audiences that choose high culture events tend to ignore popular culture and vice versa. Specifically, high culture events with low ethnic minority participation are more attractive to older audiences (Richards, and Wilson 2004, 1932, 1940, 1942). We also observe that during the Holiday of Holidays ethnic groups mix primarily in restaurants and open-air happenings.

The two main locations of the festival are decorated with garlands lit in the evenings, posters in four languages (Arabic, English, Hebrew and Russian), multicolored balloons, Hanukkah candlesticks and imitative Christmas trees. The latter deserve a special description. Some are young cypress trees, others are plastic. In the last two years a 10-meter plastic tree assembled of 5,000 mineral water bottles is mounted on one of the roundabouts of the German Colony. Designed by Hadas Itzcovich, who specializes in ecologically-friendly installations, this semi-transparent blue structure looks slightly weird in the daytime, but closely resembles a fir tree at

night when it is decorated with blinking lights. When it was first installed in December 2010, it immediately became a curiosity and attracted numerous residents to gaze at it and photograph it. In 2011 one of the Christmas trees in the German Holiday had to be removed because it had been placed in front of a synagogue, which was perceived as an offensive gesture by the religious Jews. While walking through the area during December festivities we looked for decorations associated with Islam, but the only one we found was a crescent crowning one part of the metal installation permanently attached to the building of *Beit Hagefen*. It presents stylized Christian, Jewish and Moslem temples, each with a respective symbol, and embodies the unity of the three groups of the Haifa residents. When we asked Asaf Ronen about the lack of Moslem symbols in the festival decorations, he explained that they would be out of place in the absence of a Moslem holiday at the time, so on his initiative, in 2011 posters advertising the festival did not mention the names of the three holidays. He added that although there were no complaints about it on the part of the Moslem community, it was worth considering how to present Moslem symbols during future festivals. Importantly, 5 % of the festival's budget had been spent for Ramadan festivities that took place in August 2012.

Objectively speaking, we have to admit that these are not three holidays. Decorations reflected December holidays: Hanukkah and Christmas. Holiday of Holidays is a trademark that emerged under specific circumstances but they have changed. The dynamics of the festival remain

the same: celebration of coexistence in Haifa. The Holiday of Holidays is the trademark of coexistence in Haifa (from an interview with Asaf Ronen).

The main events are the opening of the festival taking place in *Wadi Nissnas*, a happening in the German Colony at the end of December and a Hanukkah procession in the old city center, *Hadar*. All the three are advertised as "happenings for the whole family". Indeed, the variety of entertainment can satisfy people of different ages, tastes and financial means. The Hanukkah procession is organized by the municipality, a *Hadar* community center and the Chabad-Lubavitch Center<sup>8</sup> of the Russian-speaking Jews of Haifa and suburbs. The procession is headed by a large truck brightly lit with torches and dubbed in the press the "Habbad tank" (Igoshina 2011). Participants of the procession also carry torches. Although a fire brigade and an ambulance accompanied the procession, some of the Internet users commenting festivities in 2011 expressed anxiety about the danger of fire<sup>9</sup> (<http://haifa.israelinfo.ru/comments/?id=7825#rules>, last accessed on 02/02/2012). At the same time all admitted that the atmosphere was festive thanks to the abundance of light, Hanukkah songs, fireworks and torch juggling. Notably in 2011, the two big happenings in *Hadar* and in the German Colony were held on the same day. So it was possible for the festival goers to attend both, and in their reports about the festival some bloggers mentioned attending both events.

During the festival events the streets of *Wadi Nissnas* are overcrowded. They are lined with stalls where crafts, toys, Christmas decorations and religious



*The roof of a two-storey house in Wadi Nisnas is used as a stage for music bands and street theater groups.*

books in different languages as well as various foods are offered to the customers. Importantly, shop owners of *Wadi Nisnas* do not necessarily profit from the festival:

Festival goers coming to the *Wadi* mostly buy food or toys for children. On the other hand, stores selling clothes, shoes, building materials, and so on do not attract visitors; just the opposite, the entrances to their stores are blocked by the stalls, and so traders from all over the country, not the local people try to make a buck. The local jeweler simply closes his shop for this period (from an interview with Roseland Daeem).

Children are drawn to body-art stalls and to young people on stilts dressed as angels, fairy-queens and various characters of Christmas tales. Street theater groups, some of them with Jewish-Arabic casts, perform one after another using the roof of a low building on a small square as a stage. On the balcony across, young men disguised as females dance provocatively exchanging jokes with the audience filling the square. Notably, guards can be seen on other balconies making sure that no provocation would disturb the festivities.

One of the main events of the big happening in the German Colony is a parade of Santa Clauses. This made

Santa-style red caps with blinking light popular. Made in China, they can be found in numerous shops selling Christmas-tree decorations and paraphernalia in *Wadi Nisnas*, and many children and young people both Christian and Jewish wear them during festival events. Notably, some caps have one of the following inscriptions in Russian: *Люблю Снегурочку, Ищу Снегурочку, Хочу Снегурочку* (I love Snow Maiden, I am looking for Snow Maiden, I want Snow Maiden). *Snegurochka*, Snow Maiden, is the granddaughter of *Ded Moroz*, Grandfather Frost - the Russian counterpart of Santa Claus. Unlike Santa, *Ded Moroz* and *Snegurochka* have a folk rather than a religious background. They are inseparable from childhood memories of those who grew up in the former Soviet Union and who make a large part of the Russian-speaking community in Israel (Fialkova and Yelenevskaya 2007, 275-280). Noteworthy, when we interviewed Asaf Ronen, he asked what was missing for us in the festival. Without a minute of hesitations we both mentioned *Snegurochka* and were promised to see her at the next year festivities. It is worth mentioning that *Snegurochka* dolls have been on sale in Russian and Arab-owned shops for years. This year we also saw the typical blue-white-and silver *Snegurochka* dress in one of the Arab-owned shop.

Music is an important component of the festival. First to be mentioned is liturgics concerts in churches which are also situated in the area of festivities and nearby. The rest of the music program of the festival consists of open-air performances by professional and amateur musicians. Several stages are installed in the German Colony on the



*The best known Santa-Claus of Haifa is always in demand: children want to be photographed with him, and journalists come to interview him. (Photo courtesy of Avner Korin)*

day of the big happening. One can hear classic music performed by chamber ensembles, Latin-American dance music played by guitarists, marches by the local scout brass band, Arabic music performed on *darbuka* (goblet drum, an Arabic percussion instrument.) and Israeli pop. Sometimes these various tunes overlap, but the cacophony does not disturb listeners wandering from stage to stage. Noteworthy, the person responsible for the music is Professor Amos Lanir, a retired chemist of one of the Haifa hospitals involved in the festival organization along with other

volunteers.

During the festival one of the buildings of *Beit Hagefen* accommodates a fair of antiquities. As usual for such places, most people come to have a look at curious and exotic things without intentions of buying, but those who wish can acquire objects ranging from cheap trinkets to expensive collectors' items. Like everything else during the festival, the fair is multicultural displaying Passover dishes and crosses, Stars of David and rosaries, antique European dolls and carved oriental boxes and pieces of furniture. In 2011 we visited the fair several times and did not hear Arabic spoken nor did we see visitors wearing traditional Druze and Moslem attire. This made a contrast with open-air events where Moslems and the Druze were both acoustically and visually represented.

As mentioned earlier, the Holiday of Holidays attracts craftsmen and caterers offering products for people with different means. Hand-made chocolate, colored glassware and candlesticks, ethnic dresses, jewelry and various other goods are examined, touched, tasted or tried on. One can eat in gourmet restaurants located in the German colony, but most relish Hanukkah *sufganiot* (doughnuts), Druze *pita*, Middle-Eastern *falafel* with *humus* and *tehina*, or Chinese ravioli sold on the streets and served on plastic plates. Advertisers also take advantage of the amicable atmosphere of the festival, and young girls wearing stylized Santa dresses and Santa-caps distribute fliers of cell phone companies, galleries and restaurants. Although we did not find any reports about the economic impact of Holiday of Holidays, the festivalization of consumption seems to be an additional factor attracting audiences.



*Druze pitas baked on a street of Wadi Nisnas are tasty to eat and fun to watch.*

### **Participation and Self-Exclusion**

According to various scholarly publications, one of the most important criteria of festivals' success is growing participation of local residents and outsiders, although all admit that hard data on the numbers is difficult to obtain (see e.g., Quinn 2005, 932; Lin, and Hsing 2009, 1321). The article devoted to Holiday of Holidays which is posted on the site of Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs cites the following numbers: approximately 200,000 visitors across Israel and abroad, with over 40% of festival goers being out-of-towners (<http://www.altawasul.com/MFAAR/israel+beyond+politics/society+co-existence+and+peace/Holiday-of-Holidays-Festival-celebrated-in-Haifa-13122011>).

[htm](#), last accessed on 20/01/2012). As mentioned earlier, festivals attract diverse audiences and some groups are more noticeable than others. Like in other societies, in Israel members of different groups are identified by the elements of clothes such as skull caps, wigs and head dresses of religious Jews, black dresses and white scarves of Druze women, *sherwal* and *tarboush* of Druze men, and Hijabs of Moslem women. In addition, members of different groups may be recognized by symbols worn on the neck, such as the cross and the star-of-David pendants. In a divided society like Israel, people are used to taking notice of such distinguishing artifacts in order to identify members of one's own group and "others". At the same time, there are secular individuals in all ethnic groups who do not wear any of these identification signs. Then it is the language they speak or their accent in Hebrew that serves as an identifier (Cf., description of the language as the marker of group belonging in Janev 2011, 15). Against this background we could see very few religious Jews at the popular culture events in Arab quarters. The prevailing languages spoken by festival goers were Arabic, Hebrew and Russian. One could also see and hear multilingual Asian tourists and guest workers. Judging from the abundance of Russian speakers and the detailed coverage of the festival events on Israeli Russian-language web sites, it attracts members of this group, which is numerically almost as large as the group of Arab citizens of Israel, and makes up approximately one sixth of the total population. For secular Russian speakers, whether they are Jews or non-Jews, this festival is associated not only

with Hanukkah but also with New Year celebrations, much loved in their country of origin. While on the whole the attitude to New Year celebrations by Jews is negative in Israeli society and is often critically discussed in the media, the attachment to it by Russian Jews is gradually making government institutions and individuals more tolerant of it:

В этом году в фестивале принимает активное участие Управление абсорбции города Хайфа. Ханука - это близкий нам по духу праздник: мы с детства праздновали Новый Год. И этот фестиваль предоставит возможность нашим соотечественникам устроить праздник для всей семьи - пообщаться с клоунами, известными "русскими" артистами, великолепным ансамблем клейзмеров "Калинка" (Заместитель мэра Хайфы Юлия Штрайм).

This year the Haifa Division of the Ministry of Absorption will take an active part in the festival. We closely identify with the holiday of Hanukkah because we have been celebrating the New Year since childhood. And this festival will enable our compatriots to make a holiday for the entire family: to meet clowns, famous "Russian" artists, and the Klezmer ensemble "Kalinka", (Yulia Shtraim, Deputy Mayor of Haifa<sup>□</sup>, <http://ru.local.co.il/EventPage.asp?nav=4,50,7,6,28678>, last accessed 31/01/2012)

This statement is interesting in the way a government official is mixing up two traditions. While it is ideologically "correct" to celebrate the Jewish Hanukkah, Shtraim inadvertently admits that it is the New Year that the

“Russians” are attached to. Another amusing detail pointing to the hybridity of Russian-speaking Israelis is the name of the ensemble mentioned by Shtraim. Founded by immigrants in the early 1990s, it is a frequent participant in Haifa public events. Although today the musicians position themselves as performers of traditional Klezmer music of the shtetl, they have preserved the name “Kalinka” – the title of a famous Russian folk song.

Clearly, members of the public show their attitude to the festival by either attending its events or avoiding them. In addition, popular attitudes to it can be traced in web talk-backs. Holiday of the Holidays festival triggers narratives evaluating inter-ethnic relations as part of the urban culture. According to our observations, the discussion about the festival was livelier in Russian than in Hebrew. The attitudes of the commentators range from extremely positive to negative and angry, and it is the latter that prevail on the Hebrew sites we found. The contrast in the assessment of the festival can be summarized as dichotomies of “our own” vs. “their” holiday, interesting vs. a waste of time and public money. The nicknames of the commentators are sometimes first names, but others are ethnonyms or phrases expressing political statements.<sup>10</sup>

#### Hebrew comments:

בנוסף לדברים הנפלאים הקימו בקניון חיפה עזריאלי משטח החלקה על הקרח למשוגעים לעניין ומי שאף פעם לא ניסה. מחיר לדעתי 39 ש"ח. היה אחלה (שרון, 20.12.11)

Among other wonderful things, they built a skating rink in the Azrieli mall, for

the crazy guys, to tempt those who have never tried it before. As far as I know, the price is 39 shekels. It was cool (Sharon, 20/12/2011).

הלוואי וכל השנה היה חג לכל הדתות: הלוואי ונלמד לחיות יחד (אז יגיע משיח, 21.12.11)

I wish there were holidays of all the religions all year round. I wish we could learn to live together. (And then the Messiah will come, 21/12/2011)

לא מעניין. לא המקום ולא האירועים. בזבוז כספי ארנונה (יהודה ישראלי, 01.12.11)

It's of no interest. Neither the place nor the event. It's a waste of land-tax money. (Yehuda Israeli, 01/12/2011)

איפה בתי הכנסת? איפה חנוכה? למה לא חוגגים את חנוכה בחיפה? (טשטוש זהות לאומית, 01.12.11)

Where is the synagogue? Where is Hanukkah? Why don't we celebrate Hanukkah in Haifa? (Erosion of national identity, 01/12/1/2011)

ערבי חיפה שמפגינים נגד המדינה ובעד אויבינו? (גולשת, 02.12.11)

Haifa Arabs who demonstrate against the state and support our enemies? (Browser, 02/12/2011) (<http://www.ynet.co.il/Ext/App/TalkBack/CdaViewOpenTalkBack/0,11382,L-4155636,00.html> last accessed 30/01/2012)

#### Russian comments:

не понимаю-какое отношение имеет сильвестр к евреям- русским-русским евреям- арабам.и с какой стати весь израиль его празднует. чей это праздник и что он означает. если его празднует католическая европа- какое отношение это имеет к израилю. или арабы-католики.

так значит это арабский праздник. а что он означает (еврей, 21/12/2011). I cannot understand what Sylvester has to do with Jews-Russians-Russian Jews-Arabs. Why on earth would the whole of Israel celebrate it? Whose holiday is it and what does it mean if it is celebrated by Catholic Europe? What does it have to do with Israel? Or if Christian Arabs celebrate it, then it is an Arab holiday. This is what it means (Jew, 21/12/2011).

Чем спорить давайте будем праздновать все праздники еврейские, христианские, мусульманские, буддийские. Это лучше чем букой смотреть друг на друга. Всех с праздником. УРАААААА (влади, 19/12/2011)  
Instead of arguing, let's celebrate all the holidays, Jewish, Christian, Moslem, Buddhist. It's better than to look surly at each other. Happy Holiday to all. HURRAYYYYYY (vladi, 21/12/2011), (<http://haifa.israelinfo.ru/comments/?id=7799>, last accessed 02/02/2012).

Было очень красиво, все улицы украшены елками, сантами и всякими праздничными украшениями. Первый раз за 12 лет в стране, мне передалась атмосфера праздника:)))) (Алена, 24/12/2011)  
It was very beautiful, all the streets were adorned with fir-trees, Santas and various festive decorations. For the first time in the 12 years I've lived in this country I was overwhelmed with festive atmosphere☺))))), (Aliona, 24/12/2011, <http://www.babyblog.ru/community/post/izrael/1691521#comments>, last accessed 02/02/2011).

The organizers of the Holiday of Holidays festival make their best to make the festival all inclusive. The reaction of the residents differs: some embrace the possibility to have fun, whatever motives are behind it; others militantly reject the very idea of combining holidays of the three religions, still others remain completely indifferent and are not even aware of the festivities.<sup>11</sup>

### Conclusions

In Israeli context, the Holiday of Holidays is a unique attempt to bring Arabs and Jews together in terms of the scope of the events and the involvement of both governmental institutions and NGOs. It is not accidental that the festival emerged in Haifa boasting peaceful coexistence of ethnic groups. The celebration of “unity in diversity”—the catch phrase used in scholarly discussions of multicultural urban festivals and in the official discourse of festival organizers serves to boost the political image of Israel as a whole, and Haifa in particular. The festival also contributes to the upgrading of the city image. During the Holiday of Holidays it is no longer perceived as a “sleepy” provincial city that is only good for work, but turns into a boisterous and vivacious center of recreation.<sup>12</sup> Notably, one of the singers addressed his audience in the German colony in exhilaration: “Look around! This is no longer Haifa, it's Champs-Élisées”. Even though the comparison of the German Colony with the celebrated Parisian avenue is preposterous, it reflected the pride of some residents in their city. Yet for those who prefer the city space to be predominantly Jewish this was hardly a compliment.

According to our observations and informal discussions with residents of Haifa belonging to different ethnic groups, political agenda of the festival does not really concern those who attend its events. People come to enjoy the festive atmosphere of the carnival. Among those who avoid the festival, however, the rejection or skepticism towards the political agenda of the festival is more pronounced.

In the last two years the scope of the festival and its popularity among Israelis and international tourists has clearly increased, which makes the organizers think of how to expand its territory to the rest of the city. Indeed, the events of high culture take place in a variety of districts where concert halls and museums are located. But is it possible today to place Hanukkah candlesticks side by side with Christmas trees not only on the streets of mixed districts, but also in the Jewish ones?

According to Bakhtin, the carnival and similar marketplace festivals are "the second life of the people, who for a time entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality and abundance" (Bakhtin 1984, 9). Although the long-term benefits of the festival in terms of politics and economy remain unresearched, the presence of numerous children exhilarated by the cultural mix gives hope.

#### Notes

1 The research reported here is a joint project. The authors alternate priority of authorship in their publications.

2 Although not specified by the authors of this document, the Arab population, apparently, includes not only Christians and Muslims

but also the Druze. We can also infer that "Jews and others" primarily refers to non-Jewish members of mixed families perceived as members of the Jewish sector.

3 In 2005 the Jewish-Arab Center at the University of Haifa began implementing the program "Into the Future - Towards Bilingual Education in Israel" sponsored by the ZEIT foundation (Mor-Sommerfeld et al. 2007, 16).

4 One of the reasons why Holiday of Holidays has been advertised on the sites of Russian and Ukrainian travel agencies is that Israel is one of the few countries which citizens of Russia and Ukraine can visit without a visa. Moreover, many of potential tourists have friends and family among Russian-speaking Israelis, which makes visits easier and more attractive.

5 Paradoxically, the image of the city has improved thanks to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Lebanon war, when the city suffered from heavy shelling. The government allocated money to renovate the city's infrastructure and build roads. Among the projects aimed at attracting the young was construction of a new campus in the area adjacent to the port. Buildings that stayed empty for years were renovated and the new ones constructed. The "Port Campus", as the project was dubbed, provided universities and colleges with new buildings where teaching is conducted, and opened the doors of new dorms to out-of-town students. Moreover, it breathed new life into a previously rundown area. In the last several years the municipality has also undertaken various projects to develop tourism in the city which did not use its potential of a coastal town with sandy beaches and picturesque terrace streets on the green slopes of Mount Carmel.

6 A good example of hierarchical and sectoral approach to festivals of different ethnic and religious groups in Israel is the university system. There are no classes during Jewish holidays, while on the days of Christian, Moslem and Druze festivals classes are not cancelled. However, professors do not

penalize students for absences and avoid holding exams and tests on these days.

7 *Wadi* is Arabic for a dried-up river bed.

8 Chabad-Lubavitch is a branch of Hasidic Judaism.

9 Fear of fire may have been exacerbated by the fresh memories of a devastating forest fire in the suburbs of Haifa in December 2010.

10 Like her predecessor, Yulia Shtraim is an immigrant from the former Soviet Union and settled in Israel in the 1990s.

11 The style and spelling of the comments has not been edited.

12 From time to time the local media reports incidents of interethnic clashes and damage to property in mixed districts. Most of them are classified as petty crime, but on December 24, 2011, there was one that had clear political background. All four tires were punctured in a car parked in the German Colony because the owner put a scarf colored as a Palestinian flag and having the inscription in English "Palestine" on the windshield (Cf. Janev 2011, 9-10 about the incident with the Albanian flag). Note that this happened during Holiday of Holidays. The article reporting the incident on the portal Israel.info was headlined "Who punctured the tires of the car with Palestinian accessories?" (<http://haifa.israelinfo.ru/news/7818>, last accessed 03/02/2012).

13 In common parlance, each of the three biggest cities of Israel is assigned its own role: Jerusalem prays, Tel Aviv entertains itself and Haifa works.

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## Reviews

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*Branding Cities: Cosmopolitanism, Parochialism, and Social Change*. Edited by Stephanie Hemelryk Donald, Eleonore Kofman, and Catherine Kevin. London/ New York: Routledge, 2009. xiii+232 pp, filmography, bibliography, index. ISBN 10:0-415-96526-8 (hbk) ISBN 10: 0-203-88429-9 (ebk).

Let it be said at the outset: this collection of thirteen articles on how cities are branded was a kind of 'fun' read once I got past my initial astonishment and accepted the editors' claim that "the most prominent 'brand guru' on the circuit," Simon Anholt, may have gotten on to a useful bandwagon (7). As the founder of Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands, Anholt holds that a "brand image" of a country or a city is important to "its national reputation" to "future prosperity and progress" (see Anholt, 21 September, 2011. Current Affairs Podcast, the Business Radio Station, retrieved, 13 February, 2012). Also serving as policy adviser to governments, Anholt has institutionalized the branding of places as a necessary strategy for boosting their economic, political, and cultural charm to appeal to tourists, migrants, and international corporations. From this point of view, the humanitarian concern with the pain caused to cattle by branding, in addition to the critique of branding as a device for exploitation publicized by Naomi Klein in *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies* (New York, 2000), appears to be outmoded.

The thirteen chapters of this book are divided into five parts: An Introductory section with three chapters is followed by "Branding the City: Selling Contradiction

for Global Advantage" (Part I), "Idea of the City: Cinematic Futures and the Grounds of the Present" (Part II), and "Family Histories: The Remembered City" (Part. III), and a philosophical Coda (Part IV).

In the introduction, the editors explore "Processes of Cosmopolitanism and Parochialism" in an attempt to lay out a framework for the remaining chapters. The central issue articulated by the editors is whether branding cities advances cosmopolitanism or parochialism. They, along with all the contributors, assume that branding cities is both necessary and beneficial. In descriptions that vary from quasi-ethnography to historical narratives, most of the writers do refer to cosmopolitanism and parochialism and show that they are far from being opposites. While most places work on how to define their 'brand' with an eye to the cosmopolitan (in the sense of round-the-world) acceptance and appreciation, they do this by highlighting parochial attractions and values. Consequently, branding may often lead to conflicts of interest.

The three chapters on branding London neatly illustrate alternative possibilities and potential conflicts. Two were written by social policy experts whose research focuses on issues of migration. In the one, included for an unclear reason in the cluster of the three introductory chapters, Hatziprokopiou (14-27) focuses on new migrants and the diverse ways in which they remain strangers while attempting to learn to belong. "London's Chinatown" by Sales, d'Angelo, Liang, and Montagna (Part I, 45-58) describe how Chinatown confronts a three-pronged dilemma.

First, it is in London but shares only partially in what can be called an English lifestyle. Second, it is a kind of showcase that serves as an attraction to visiting tourists. Yet at the same time, the Chinese immigrants who live in Chinatown by choice are attempting to carry on their lives in a congenial community. In contrast to these chapters, Christopher Lindner's "London Undead" analyzes uncanny overviews of the city in poetry (Wordsworth from Westminster Bridge), in the 2002 film, *28 Days Later*, and in the tourist attraction, The London Eye. As a professor of English literature, Lindner shows that "the voyeuristic fantasy of the empty [of people] city exerts a powerful hold over the cultural imagination .... a fascination derived not only from the oddly compelling experience of estrangement, but also from the perception of beauty involved in that aesthetic encounter ... a strange yet beautiful vision of the everyday metropolis caught between the living and the dead" (103-4).

Most of the chapters describe the diverse elements that influence the branding of a city. Kosick's study on Berlin stresses the opportunities for mobility that are available to tourists and migrants alike because it is such a culturally diverse city. As Roodhouse ('Understanding Cultural Quarters in Branded Cities', 75-88), explains, however, branding often involves the actual creation *de nihilo* of cultural quarters that emphasize the openness of given locations to strangers of all kinds and thus supply opportunities for clashes. The revival of a cultural quarter that recalls the past of Jewish communities and their revival that emphasizes cosmopolitanism in Shanghai

today is described as the outcome of a rather complex historical narrative by Jakubowicz ('Cosmopolitanism with Roots: The Jewish Presence in Shanghai before the Communist Revolution and as Brand in the New Metropolis', 156-171). Dealing more generally with branding in China, Yi Zheng ('A la Mode: the Cosmopolitan and the Provincial', 172-186) shows that cosmopolitanism and parochialism meet in the contradictory approach to fashion that prevails. Fashion is a field with a strong tradition, but there is also a curiosity and even a longing for acquiring everything contemporary. Looking at textiles, Donald writes about stripes and their significance in remembering her elitist textile-producing family in a cosmopolitan Liverpool and defining the low status of 'convicts' in Australia.

The remaining chapters in Part II discuss post-World War II films and the branding of Rome (Shiel, 'Branding the Modernist Metropolis', 105-122) and Nantes' struggle with its search for effective branding (Marshall, 'Nantes's Atlantic Problem', 123-136).

All told, the book is well written and, as I note above, entertaining. However, even when I reread the introduction and the 'Coda' by the philosopher Jeff Malpas, I must admit that I was still puzzled as to the theoretical basis for putting these chapters together in this way and what the term "branding" adds to the mixture. Although the book is listed as the second volume in Routledge's series entitled "Advances in Geography," none of the chapters deal seriously with any geographical issues. And there is good reason. Among the contributors, there are students of the media, sociologists,

social policy experts, an English literary scholar, and a cultural anthropologist; not one is identified with geography as a discipline. Perhaps it is all to the good that from this book one cannot conclude that marketing cities is anything more than trying to make money on tourism. Since there is no convincing theorizing of 'branding' offered, it is possible to read the book as advice for urban policy-makers (like a how-to manual), and the rest of us can enjoy the read, while learning implicitly about the potential negativity of neo-liberal trends in local policies.

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*Cultural Diversity in Russian Cities. The Urban Landscape in the Post-Soviet Era.* Edited by Cordula Gdaniec. Space and Place Series, vol. 2. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010. Pp. x+185. Illustrations, references and index. ISBN 978-1-84545-665-8.

This edited volume explores the themes of multiculturalism and competing claims to urban spaces in Russian cities. Published as part of Berghahn Books' Anthropology of Space and Place series, the collection is a welcome addition to existing literature on post-Soviet Russian cities, which has tended to focus on macro-level issues of regional development and capital accumulation, rather than on social divisions, spatial segregation and individual negotiations of city space (see for example the collection edited by Axenov, Brade and Bondarchuk, *The Transformation of Urban Space in Post-Soviet Russia*, London 2006).

The volume includes contributions from researchers from different disciplinary backgrounds, including human geography, sociology and anthropology; each of the nine case studies featured is based on empirical qualitative research and focuses on "a group, a phenomenon or a space that is a constituent part of cultural diversity" in Russian cities (13). The aim of the book, as stated in the introductory chapter, is to explore two dimensions: first, how city authorities manage cultural diversity, and how this diversity is reflected (or not) in the image of the city they promote; second, how different cultures are inscribed in urban space, and what strategies are used to navigate, inhabit

and claim urban space by different marginalized or subaltern groups, including migrants from China, Africa and the former Soviet Union, lesbian women, youth subcultures and street beggars (3). In fact, most of the case studies privilege the second dimension, focusing on the 'everyday' social and cultural practices used collectively and individually to navigate and appropriate urban space.

The preface and introduction chart the evolution of the book, which originated as one offspring of a broader research project on urban cultures in Berlin and Moscow at Humboldt University, Berlin. A workshop organized in Moscow in 2005 at the Russian State Institution for the Humanities brought together researchers from Russia, Germany and nations further afield, and one of the collection's undoubted contribution is that it makes available to an English-speaking global audience valuable new research on urban Russia. The introduction effectively introduces the aims and scope of the book; however, I would have liked to have seen more in-depth discussion of current debates on global cities, multiculturalism, and cosmopolitanism. While Gdaniec argues that multiculturalism is ultimately a Western concept, and therefore not a useful paradigm to explore cultural diversity in Russian cities, she nevertheless emphasises the difference between 'Western' cities, where cultural diversity is valued and marketed as cultural capital, and Russian cities, which fail to implement multicultural policies and merely tolerate diversity. Gdaniec does not acknowledge well-rehearsed critiques of multiculturalism,

such as Žižek's famous reading of multiculturalism as 'the cultural logic of multinational capitalism' that co-opts and commodifies difference without fundamentally challenging social exclusion (see *New Left Review* no I/225, Sept/Oct 1997); a more critical discussion of multiculturalism, however, would have been useful here to fracture rigid juxtaposition between Russia and 'the West'.

The book makes for an enjoyable read, and the case studies offer unique insights into how cultural difference is negotiated in the cities of Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Novosibirsk, and Sochi. The case studies illustrate the construction of urban space as racialised, gendered and sexualised, competing claims over urban space, different entitlements to public visibility, and the strategies used to navigate the city landscape, or collectively carve out subcultural spaces.

Interesting themes cut across different contributions: for example, Dixon's chapter on Chinese space in Saint Petersburg highlights how Chinese restaurants reproduce the commodification of the ethnic 'Other' in the gentrified city centre, while also embodying the threat of new immigration for many Russians (28-45); similarly, Kosygina points out that migrants from the former Soviet Union are racialised as 'non-Russian' and 'Oriental,' but that racialisation may result in both exclusion, through discriminatory practices by law enforcement agencies and inclusion, through racial stereotyping that facilitate migrant employment in 'Oriental' restaurants (54-60). Brednikova and Tkatch's chapter explores concept of 'home' for migrants from the former

Soviet Union, highlighting how limited economic resources, overcrowding, and long working hours mean that home is understood not as a private and safe space that is worth investing and spending time in, but rather as a shelter chosen on the basis of functionality and convenience (70-93). Sarajeva's contribution addresses the themes of private and public, and safety and comfort through lesbian appropriations of Moscow's urban spaces. She points out that lesbian space remains largely invisible in the city landscape, but that it is precisely this ambiguous in/visibility which allows lesbians to socialise in and appropriate very public spaces; conversely, overt and politicised claims to urban space exemplified by the Moscow Pride are met with violence from law enforcement agencies and hostile right-wing groups, but also with resistance from within the gay and lesbian community, as increased visibility results in risks of unwanted exposure and homophobic violence (138-163). Like Sarajeva, Kosterina and Andreeva also consider competing claims to public space in their investigation of the Fun Box, a meeting place for an informal youth group (*tusovka*) in central Sochi. The chapter discusses, among other things, the construction of symbolic boundaries between the *tusovka*'s 'insiders' and 'outsiders' along ethnic, class, and gender divisions: indeed, members of the *tusovka* identify as ethnic Russian, whereas Armenians, Georgians, and Abkhazians are portrayed as aggressive working-class thugs who might be physically or verbally violent towards members of the 'progressive' Fun Box *tusovka* (124-133).

The volume is a well-integrated collection of chapters, which explore

new perspectives on urban life in post-Soviet Russian cities, addressing the themes of multiculturalism, socio-spatial divisions and competing claims to urban space. It will be of interest to Russian studies scholars, as well as to urban studies researchers within the disciplines of anthropology, sociology and human geography.

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*Штетл XXI век. Полевые исследования.* (Сост. В.А. Дымшиц, А.Л. Львов, А.В. Соколова. Спб.: Издательство Европейского университета в Санкт-Петербурге. *Studia Ethnologica*, 5). Санкт-Петербург, 2008, 292 стр. Аннотация на английском языке. Введение, сноски, библиография, списки цитируемых интервью, информантов и упомянутых населенных пунктов, иллюстрации.

*Shtetl. XXI Cent. Fields studies*, Collection of Articles, in Russian). ED. by V.A. Dymshits, A.L.L'vov, A.V.Sokolova, St-Petersburg, *Evropeiskij Universitet v Moskve*, 2008, 292 p., introduction, notes, bibliography, lists of quoted interviews, interviewees and of locations mentioned, illustrations. ISBN 978-5-94380-076-4.

As pointed out by Alla Sokolova in her article "Evrejskie mestechki pamjati: lokalizacija shtetla" (Jewish lieux de mémoire: localization of Shtetl, 29-64), for the children, the grandchildren, and now the great-grandchildren of those who left the traditional Jewish world of villages from "Russia" and emigrated to the United States, France or Israel, the shtetl is a mythical place on an imaginary map. To a large extent, the idealized representation of shtetl life on a wide territory corresponding to the former Pale of Settlement at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century was encouraged by Jewish populists driven by Rousseauist and Tolstoian conceptions of "the good wild man" and the necessity of going back to nature to find the mysterious energy of the Jewish people, its culture and its folklore. The most famous representative of this movement was the writer, journalist and

ethnologist S. An-Sky, who, between 1911 and the beginning of the First World War, made ethnographic expeditions in Podolya and Volhynia. At the same time, for the assimilating German and French Jews, the shtetl on the boundaries of Ukraine symbolized the refusal of the ephemeral and the active preservation of Judaism and Jewish values. After the Shoah, the shtetl was apparently nothing more than a still place, a dead place which only remained in Chagall's paintings or in musicals like "Fiddler on the Roof."

The rehabilitation of shtetls as authentic places to live began in the 1970s with the publication of Shmuel Gordon's writings, generally considered as the pioneer of neo-shtetl literature. The stories and essays about Jewish families who returned to their shtetls in the Podolian part of Ukraine and continued to preserve the pre-Holocaust way of life have widely contributed to the rediscovery of the traditional Jewish world. However, the main books about the way of life and the dwellings of the Jews in the small villages of Podolya and Volhynia were published in the 1990s and at the beginning of the twenty-first century with, for example, L.V. Sholokhova's books (*Phonoarchive of Jewish Musical Heritage*, Kiev, National Library of Ukraine, 2001), about the Jewish tunes and songs collected by the musicologist Julii Engel during the expeditions organized by An-Sky. Research has continued with the publication of two important studies: Arkadii Zel'cer's *Evrei sovetskoi provincii: Vitebsk i mestechki, 1917-1941* (*Jews in the Soviet countryside, Vitebsk and Shtetls*, Moscow, ROSSPEN: 2006], and A. Shternshis' book, *Soviet and Kosher: Jewish Popular Culture in the*

*Soviet Union* (Bloomington-Indianapolis, Indiana University Press: 2006 ).

Compared to these recent books, *Shtetl XXI cent* has a much more optimistic approach, which is illustrated by the surprising, oxymoronic association of the two words “shtetl” and “XXI.” For everybody, including the scholars who participated in the writing, the shtetl did not belong to the present time any longer, and even less to the future. It was a dead place, a place of memory. But during expeditions made between 2004 and 2007 in the areas of Balta, Tulchin, and Mogilev-Podolski, the contributing historians and ethnographers to *Shtetl. XXI century* witnessed the vitality of a Jewish life that had been miraculously preserved. If the quality of a book is to be judged by its ability to surprise and fascinate the reader, then *Shtetl. XXI century* is indeed an excellent book. The title and the content of the articles succeed in deconstructing preconceived, and often inaccurate, ideas. This revisionism is particularly true with A. L’vov’s article on “Mezhetnicheskie otnosheniya...” (Interethnic relationships), which convincingly resituates rumors on the Jewish use of Christian blood for the preparation of matsa (azym bread) for Pessah within a wider context of relationships between Jewish and non-Jewish neighbors. Likewise, two articles give a new light on some familiar topics: V. Dymshits explains why Jewish graveyards usually look derelict in “Evrejskoe kladbishche, mesto, kuda ne khodjat” (Jewish Cemeteries, Places Not to Be Visited) (135-159) and M. Khakkarajnen’s essay “Mestechko vspominaet o proshlom” (*Shtetel Remembers the Past*, 159-177) shows how

the small Jewish craftsmen who, during the Soviet period were considered as asocial elements, became its emblematic representatives by an irony of history, despite the prestige of knowledge and education in Jewish culture.

The other articles deal with other engaging topics, like V. Fedchenko and A. L’vov’s chapter on Jewish birth rites, origin and nobility (*ikhes*), or the socio-economic importance of wedding and engagement rites in (226-261). Others focus more on the folklore, be it traditional, like the legends about the bad eye and the curses (M. Kaspina, 219-226), the songs in Yiddish (D. Gidon and V. Fedchenko, 261-279), or an unstudied field like urban folklore “Slovar’ lokal’nogo teksta (Dictionary of a particular text, 186-219). This article is related to A. Sokolova’s essay, which presents very clearly the lexical, geographical and historical differences between the words shtetl, village (selo), town (gorod) and mestechko (the Russian “equivalent” of shtetl).

However, in spite of the quality of each article, the book as a whole is disappointing on account of the discrepancy between the title and the content of the articles. The reader expects a description of a Jewish Atlantis, a territory where the Jewish population would have kept its culture despite the sovietization and passing of time. But the book concerns at most fifty or one hundred families, many of them elderly women and men, who recollect the maranisation of Spanish and Portuguese Jews and their subsequent loss of all links with Judaism. Of particular note are inhabitants’ references to literary works rather than to a reality of daily life

in the shtetl. Some of the scholars who have collaborated in this book quote Jewish writers, particularly Sholem Aleychem and Isaac Babel, qualified as a “mystificator” by V. Dymshits a few years ago ( *Narod knigi v mire knig*, Peterburg, 2002, p. 1-6). If literature is a kind of mystification--and what else can we expect from literature?--then I do not understand the necessity to confront reality and literary creation, which is what is done in some articles.

Despite my remarks and criticisms, I enjoyed reading the anthology. I have been surprised, puzzled, seduced as well by the photographs and the maps enabling time travel. Maybe the trip is not to a twenty-first century shtetl, but to one of the nineteenth or twentieth century; still, it is a beautiful trip.

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