

The changing Lake Peipsi Border and its influences on local fishermen

Master Thesis Human Geography by Jonathan Stoop



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Overview Estonia's past

8000 BC	The first known settlement in Pulli Village near Pärnu
1030	Tartu is conquered by Russian Prince Jaroslav
1154	Tallinn is placed on the world map by Arabian geographer al-Idrisi
1193	Crusade announced by Pope Celestine III to support the missionary work of Bishop Meinhard in Livonia
1208-27	Ancient Estonian fight for freedom from the Germans and Danes
15.06.1219	Danish King Valdemar II wins the battle fought with Estonians near Tallinn
1219-1346	Northern Estonia belongs to Denmark
1238-1561	The rule of the Teutonic Order in Estonia
23.04.1343	St. George's Night Uprising against foreign power
1346	Denmark sells its territories to the Teutonic Order
1524	Lutheran reformation in Estonia
1525	The first known printed material in the Estonian language is published
1558-1583	Livonian War; Russia declares war on the Teutonic Order; Denmark, Sweden and Poland interfere
1559-1645	Saaremaa Island belongs to Denmark
1582-1629	Southern Estonia belongs to Poland
1632	The University of Tartu is founded – at the time it is the second university of the Kingdom of Sweden
1645	Brömsebro Peace Treaty: Saaremaa Island goes to the king of Sweden
1561-1710	Era of Swedish power; different areas of Estonia are united
1710-21	Northern War between Russia and Sweden
1710-1917	Russian czarist rule in Estonia
1739	The first Bible is published in the Estonian language
1816-1819	Dissolution of serfdom
1857	Estonian national epic Kalevipoeg is published
1869	The First Song Festival; people sing themselves into one nation
1917-1918	The occupation of imperial Germany in Estonia
24.02.1918	Estonian Independence Manifesto is adopted
1918-1920	War of Independence between Estonia and Soviet Russia
02.02.1920	Tartu Peace Treaty between Estonia and Soviet Russia
1918-1940	The first Republic of Estonia
23.08.1939	The Secret Additional Protocol of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact is signed
1939	Baltic Germans resettle in German territories
1940-1941	The first Soviet occupation
14.06.1941	Mass deportation: over 10,000 people are deported to Siberia
1941-1944	Nazi occupation
1944-1991	The second Soviet occupation
1947	Beginning of collectivization: property is nationalized
25.03.1949	Mass deportation: over 20,000 people are deported to Siberia in animal carriages
1980	Tallinn Olympic Yachting Regatta
1988	The Singing Revolution: Estonians sing themselves free
23.08.1989	Joint demonstration of the three countries – the Baltic Chain
20.08.1991	Proclamation of the Republic of Estonia on the basis of legal succession
1994	Russian troops leave Estonia
01.05.2004	Accession to the European Union

From the book 'Estonia land, people, culture 2005'

The wandering Border

The east-west Border is always wandering,
Sometimes eastward, sometimes west,
and we do not know exactly where it is just now:
In Gaugamela, in the Urals, or maybe in ourselves,
so that one ear, one eye, one nostril, one hand, one foot
one lung and one testicle or one ovary
is on the one, another on the other side.
Only the heart, only the heart is always on one side:
if we are looking northward, in the West;
if we are looking southward, in the East;
and the mouth doesn't know on behalf of which or both
it has to speak.

By Jaan Kaplinski¹

¹ Jaan Kaplinski is a former inhabitant of Tartu and the son of a Russian father and an Estonian mother. In the extra chapter, the interesting poem 'I am the spring in Tartu' of Jaan Kaplinski, is to be found.

Voorwoord

In de voor u liggende scriptie staat de grens tussen Estland en Rusland en dan specifiek dat deel van de grens in het Peipsi meer centraal. Ik hoop dat mijn scriptie een aanvulling is op het wetenschappelijke debat omtrent grensoverschrijdende samenwerking, Europese uitbreiding en de invloed van geopolitieke besluitvorming op lokale levensomstandigheden. Mijn thesis vormt hopelijk een aanzet tot verder en meer onderzoek in het grensgebied tussen Estland en Rusland.

Van september tot en met november 2006 was ik in Estland. Tijdens dit verblijf had ik de kans mijn onderzoek concreet te maken, informatie te verzamelen en me te verdiepen in het land, de mensen en haar gebruiken. Het werd een tijd om nooit te vergeten. Het was overweldigend hoeveel medewerking ik van de lokale bevolking kreeg bij het zoeken naar informatie. Zowel op de universiteit van Tartu als in het ‘gewone’ veld was haast iedereen positief ten opzichte van mijn onderzoek. Mensen vonden het wel wat apart dat ik als Nederlander dit thema had gekozen maar dat weerhield ze er zeker niet van enthousiast mee te werken.

Door in een internationaal studentencomplex te wonen had ik naast een leerzame ook een erg leuke tijd, waaraan ik enkele contacten overgehouden heb en erg goede herinneringen. Vooraf had ik er rekening mee gehouden dat ik soms eenzaam zou kunnen zijn maar alles behalve dat was het geval. Na drie maanden Estland en in het bijzonder in de oude stad Tartu te hebben gewoond voelde ik me met de plaats en veel mensen verbonden en zou ik zo weer terug willen.

De hulp van Triin Roostveldt was in het bijzonder opmerkelijk. Deze Estse studente heeft mij belangeloos geholpen bij het afnemen van mijn interviews. Ze reed met me het hele land door en was naast chauffeur ook een inspirerende en bekwame vertaalster. Ze was een goede schakel tussen mij en de respondenten. Ook andere studenten waaronder Inga, Vladimir en Christoph hebben mij fantastisch geholpen, zowel inhoudelijk als op het gebied van de ontspanning. Ook tijdens momenten dat ik er geen rekening mee hield heb ik informatie kunnen verzamelen. Juist ook deze onverwachte momenten waarop ik tegen zaken aanliep gaven mij veel voldoening.

Dat ik twee nachten op het haast verlaten grenseiland Piirissaare in een ‘Russisch’ houten huis mocht overnachten, op traditionele wijze op het Peipsi kon vissen alleen al waren de tijd en reis meer dan waard.

Ik kijk terug op een leuke en leerzame tijd in Estland, waarin ik veel internationale contacten heb ongedaan. Het heeft geresulteerd in het voor u liggende werk maar daarnaast ook in tal van andere zaken waaronder vriendschappen, ervaringen die je niet zo een twee drie in een boekwerk kwijt kan maar die daardoor voor mij niet minder waardevol zijn!

Mijn onderzoek zou zich, mede door het antropologische karakter ervan, prima lenen voor een fotoreportage en voor een lezing. Het afstemmen van relevante en minder relevant materiaal tijdens het schrijven aan mijn scriptie bleek een lastige strijd maar ik kan tevreden zijn over het resultaat. Het is een goede aanzet geworden en het zal hopelijk een inspiratie zijn voor verder onderzoek.

Ik wens u veel leesplezier!

Jonathan Stoop

Preface

Before you lies my master thesis. This thesis is about the changing Lake Peipsi Border, a special part of the Estonian-Russian border in the huge lake Peipsi. Changes of this border through the years and especially their impact on local fishermen will get attention. Estonian-Russian geopolitical relations and the situation in the region are also viewed to place the thesis in the current time.

From September till November 2006 I did research in Tartu and along lake Peipsi in order to find information, search for literature and conduct several interviews. My time in Estonia was great. It was a good combination of making international contacts and finding interesting information for my thesis. Back in the Netherlands, the writing process started. This part of the project was hard sometimes since it was easy for me to make my theme too broad, as much of what I read was so interesting; and sometimes, little relevant information was available.

Finally I am satisfied with the product and the whole process around it. Many people have been helpful to me during the whole project and I can look back on an interesting time and experiences I will never forget. The help of the Estonian student Triin Roostveldt was especially amazing. She helped me conduct my interviews and was helpful with the practical elements without getting any financial compensation! Many local people cooperated and they made it possible for me do things most foreign people cannot do in Estonia. I will cherish having had the opportunity to visit Piiressaare and sleeping in a traditional wooden house; also, experiencing what it is like to live there and also what it is like to go fishing on lake Peipsi. These moments were unique for me as a sort of tourist.

Finally this work is the result of one year's worth of preparing, researching and writing. It is a good start in telling the story of this border and its impact on local fishermen. I hope this work will lead to more research and will help to point out the fact that border regions are not just the places where border constructions work; they are populated by people who have to deal with these changes in their everyday lives...

Enjoy!

Jonathan Stoop

Kokkuvõte

Käesolev magistritöö on riigipiirist, mis läbib Peipsi järve. See töö on samuti sellest, kuidas see oluline Eesti-Vene piir on aja jooksul muutunud. Samuti on tähelepanu alla võetud kalamehed, keda need muutused eriti on mõjutanud ning Eesti-Vene geopoliitilised suhted ja situatsioon regioonis laiemas plaanis.

Septembrist novembrini 2006.aastal tegin ma uurimistööd Tartus ning samuti Peipsi järve ümbruses, leidmaks informatsiooni, uurida teooriaid ning viia läbi mitmeid intervjuusid. Kogu see aeg Eestis oli oluline ja väga produktiivne. See oli hea kombinatsioon sõlmimaks rahvusvahelisi kontakte ning leidmaks huvitavat informatsiooni oma magistritöö tarvis.

Kirjutamisprotsess algas siis, kui jõudsin tagasi Hollandisse. See osa projektist oli raskeim kuna teema kiskus kohati liiga laiaks ning raske oli teha valikut olulise ja mitteolulise informatsiooni vahel, kuna kõik tundus väga huvitav.

Kokkuvõtteks olen tulemusega rahul. Väga paljud inimesed on olnud väga abivalmid kogu selle projekti jooksul. Ma saan vaadata tagasi huvitavatele aegadele ja kogemustele, mida ma kunagi ei unusta. Eesti tudengi Triin Roostfeldti abi oli selle juures eriti hämmastav. Ta aitas mul koostada küsimustikke intervjuude jaoks ning samuti mitmete praktiliste elementide juures oli ta samuti abiks. Kõike seda ilma rahalist kompensatsiooni saamata. Väga paljud kohalikud aitasid samuti ning olid väga koostöövalmid ja tegid võimalikuks selle, mida enamik välismaalt tulnud tudengid ei suudaks saavutada.

Ma väärtustan eriti seda võimalust, et sain külastada Piirissaart ning ka kogemust ööbida tõelises puust majas kohalike juures. Samuti sain käia kohalike kaluritega Peipsi järve peal kala püüdmast, mis kindlasti on kogemus kogu eluks.

Kogu käesoleva magistritöö kirjutamiseks ning ettevalmistusteks kulus terve aasta. See töö on hea algus seletamiseks Eesti-Vene piiri olemust Peipsi järvel ning selle mõju kohalikele kaluritele.

Ma loodan samuti, et see töö on abiks järgmistele teadustöödele, mis puudutavad riigi piiri mõju kohalikule elanikkonnale.

Abstract

Lake Peipsi is located on both sides of the state border between Estonia and Russia. The part of the border that is important in this work, the lake Peipsi Border, runs through the huge lake and is very unique. After having been a meaningless border between two Soviet states for more than 50 years, in a short time the border situation changed tremendously. Since 1991 the lake Peipsi Border forms the border between Russia, on the eastern side of the border, and Estonian on the west. In 2004 the lake Peipsi Border became the border between Russia and EU territories.

In this work we look at the changes in the border situation, but especially the influences the border changes had on local Estonian fishermen. To give a concrete view on the changing life of these fishermen through the last years, two different cases and categories of fishermen were chosen. First, the situation on the small island in lake Peipsi, 'Piiressaare,' where, as I call them, 'individual fishermen' work and live, is viewed. Secondly, fishermen who work for 'companies' are the point of interest. These fishermen live and work near the town of Kallaste along the lake Peipsi shore. For individual fishermen political changes and changes in the fish volume et cetera were even harder to bear than for those working for companies. In recent years, some fishermen have decided to quit their business. Currently a special program is being organized for those fishermen who want to quit their work, since having fewer fishermen in this area of Estonia aids the environment. They can get financial support from the government and so they are able to start afresh in a new profession. It is likely that more fishermen will make a move although fishing is still the most important source of income and a tradition in the lake Peipsi area.

I placed the lake Peipsi Border in a model to show its changing status in the last few years. This model shows how open or closed and how visible or invisible the border has been through time. Also the future is viewed.

The relations between Estonians and Russians in Estonia as well as contacts between Estonia and Russia on state level have an influence on the Estonian-Russian border situation, and therefore on the lake Peipsi Border. Sentiments from the past, which have their origin in the common USSR, are making the relationship hard in international meetings. The recent fights between ethnic Russians and Estonians, after the replacement of the statue of a Soviet soldier in Tallinn, demonstrated that many problems are still embedded in the Estonian society. But it seems that now, the relations are getting better. It seems that both groups realize that economic prosperity and a stable political atmosphere can only be reached when they cooperate. Statesmen can influence the relations and politicians have huge impact too, so they should think long and hard before they make any statements.

The Estonian-Russian border is not ratified yet and it seems that this will take longer but for the people near the border this unofficial status of the border does not make much difference. The location of the border, which is most of the time invisible as a result of the lack of symbols on the water, is clear to those who come close to it; fishermen and border guards. Cross-border cooperation is not very popular in the Estonian Russian border area but, as a research-group of the Tartu University found out, more local initiatives can be possible. Programs as Interegg and ENP as well as support by the CTC can help to increase small local initiatives that can contribute to a better understanding between both sides of the border and more economic prosperity in the periphery of both countries.

The expansion of the EU and NATO in this part of Europe is at the end. It seems that this border will form the external border between the EU and Russia for rather a long time since membership of Russia to the EU is unrealistic. It is unlikely in the light of today's politics that Russia would join NATO. The changes in the region are insecure but Russia, as an important gas and fuel supplier, will also have a huge impact on the region in the near future. Good contact between Estonia and Russia and the EU are important for all parties on a local or larger scale.

As an example of an area where much is going on, the lake Peipsi region has never been totally investigated. Also in the near future this work can contribute to getting a better understanding of the impact political changes can have on those who are involved; the local people/ fishermen. However, more specific research is probably needed.

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Chapter one: Introduction

Are we living in a world where state borders have almost disappeared? Particularly in the European Union (EU), this may already be the case. Agreements such as Schengen render state borders vague if not seemingly obsolete altogether, while during traveling across borders it is rapidly becoming less distinct that a different country has been entered.

In contrast, relations between states in Eastern Europe are changing in areas where borders were the same for years during the Soviet era. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, those states had to deal with changes, including the creation of new borders with their neighboring states. Some of those states also recently joined the European Union, showing that the nature and status of borders can be subjected to change.

A mere 16 years ago, until 1991, Estonia and Russia were member states of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Within common USSR territory, including all member states, the population was mobile. These inner USSR frontiers were not experienced as obvious borders in everyday life. The real borders were the shared outer borders that encompassed the whole of the immense USSR.

The transition in the 1990s had huge influences on the lives of people in some cases, especially on those who were used to crossing the border in their every day life, the people living at the border. After the new border was established in 1991, these 'border people' were no longer permitted to visit market places, relatives, property et cetera on the other side of the border, since these were not part of the same country anymore. The soft frontier with Russia had become a hard border.

Estonia started to focus its attention on the western world regarding economical, social and political policies. In May 2004, Estonia became member of the EU and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization).

The Estonian - Russian borderline does not only cross landmass. Two thirds of the border between the two former soviet republics is located in the water basin of lake Peipsi. This lake, on the Eastern border of Estonia and the Western border of Russia is the largest transboundary lake in Europe. The border situation in lake Peipsi is special since it is a shared lake, split between the EU member state of Estonia and Russia which is an important partner of the EU, but not an EU member now or in the nearby future. The state-border line is drawn within the lake itself. About 60 percent of the lake is Russian, the remainder is Estonian. The lake is important for fishing, electricity purposes and recreation for both countries.

Although the entire border between the two countries is interesting I have decided to concentrate this work on the part of the Estonian-Russian border that is situated within lake Peipsi², which will be referred to as the lake Peipsi border.

When Estonia became independent from the Soviet Union in 1991, the position of the Estonian - Russian border remained unaltered, yet the status of this border changed with respect to the years before independence. It became an outer border instead of an inner border. However, treaties and decisions made by central government always influence the inhabitants of the border region. Studies on the territorial and human consequences of decisions made by statesmen, on the map, are relatively few as W.R. Mead argues in the foreword of Paasi's work *Territories, Boundaries and Consciousness, 1996*. With this

²

Suggested further reading: J. Stoop 2007; Life of the Setus: Potential of a cultural phenomenon in a shared and contested border area, Dreams of its own territory 'Setomaa' This work gives a concrete view on the land border situation and changes in the south east border area of Estonia.

work I want to contribute to this more anthropological way of seeing and investigating borders.

This thesis studies the influences the changing border has on the life of fishermen, aiming to make the human situation concrete. Fishermen have been living along the lake Peipsi shores for centuries and fishing is still the main source of income in this area. Fishermen can be used as a concrete example of a group of people who's life changed because of changes.

By focusing on these changes two cases will be discussed.

First is the Piiressaare case, a small Estonian island in the lake near the border, where a few individual fishermen live.

Second is the fishing area on the western shore of the lake near the small town of Kallaste.

The border situation after transition in this area allows us to study similar areas along the edge of Europe, for example, Georgia. I agree with Martin van der Velde and Henk van Houtum who state in the *Journal of Borderland Studies*, 2003: 'it is our conviction that borderland situations are too complex to be able to formulate one grand theory to grasp the political, social, cultural and economical environment.' Although it will be difficult to apply the newly found insights of this border to other situations, it will surely contribute in a more general manner.

I went to Estonia for three months, to meet people, to speak with organizations and to go fishing in the lake, in order to accomplish my research. In fact visiting Estonia was paramount to getting a better view on the situation and finding material. It was a gratifying experience, which I will never forget and which also allowed me to make many personal contacts.

This work will focus on the Estonian side of the border; all fieldwork was conducted on Estonian land and water. Traveling this border region proved not only to be difficult for the inhabitants but also for me: visa requirements restricted me to only one visit to the Russian side of this border.

Research questions

The central question in this work:

How has the geographical condition of the lake Peipsi border changed because of (geo) political changes in 1991, Estonian independence of the USSR, and in 2004, the Estonian joining of the EU and NATO, and in what way did this had his impact on the life and work of local fishermen?

This central question contains different sub-questions. Questions related to lake Peipsi, about the fishermen and the two categories of fishermen, about relations between Estonia- Russia and the EU and future perspectives. I used, aiming to answer the central question of this thesis, the following additional research questions:

Lake Peipsi

- What kind of lake is lake Peipsi?
- What are functions of this lake?

The border

- What 'kind' of border was /is the Peipsi border before 1991, after 1991 and since 2004?
- What is the 'status' of this border?

Life of fishermen

- How is it like to live as fishermen at lake Peipsi?
- How has life and work of the Peipsi fishermen changed over the past approximately 15 years?
- In what way differs the current border, for traditional fishermen at the Peipsi lake with the border before 1991 and May 2004?

Individual fishermen

- How do they life with the border?
- What changed the last 15 years in life and work of individual fisherman?

Fishermen working for Fishing companies

- What changed after 1991 and 2004 for the firms and its workers?

Estonian-Russian relations

- How are the Estonian relations with the EU and Russia?
- What are the influences of Estonia's membership of EU and NATO on Estonian-Russian relations?

Post 2004: The future of the lake Peipsi border

- In what way will the border situation in lake Peipsi change in the (near) future?
- Will the lake Peipsi border form a part of the border between the EU and the rest of the world for a very long time?
- Will the lake Peipsi border change in the future?
- In what way will life of fishermen change in the upcoming years?
- Does the EU expansion stop?
- What are the influences of the Schengen agreement on this border?

Scientific relevance

Talking about borders in general and not focusing on one part of a concrete border in particular is a mistake much researcher make. This work is not about the theories behind the way life is in the field, it is about this life itself! The lake Peipsi border is interesting from a historical, geographical and social view and all aspects get attention. This thesis contributes to previous work about borders, the impact of these borders on people. I hope this work will let to further research. The rather broad research focus in my work can form a foundation for more specific border research. It is in the line of seeing and investigating the border in a more anthropological way. The way this thesis is written makes a difference with many scientific works, which are mostly written in words only scholars understand. This work is also approachable for people from the 'field.' Those who are involved by geopolitical change, in my case the fishermen along lake Peipsi, should be able to understand much of its message.

Social Relevance

In the year 2007 the EU celebrates its 50th anniversary, yet several issues such as expansion of the European Union and its influence on member states are under discussion in the European society. Especially since France and The Netherlands rejected the European constitution, fundamental questions were raised on the nature of the EU and how much influence the nation states retain. Although people in countries like The Netherlands and France were able to vote in referenda about the EU's future and its developments, many people used the referendum to

vote against the national administration. The 'no' to the constitution was partly based on issues beside the constitution, such as the possible joining of Turkey, which shows that there was confusion, media spin and a lack of knowledge about the EU. This work is about one of the newest EU countries, Estonia, and its relation with the EU 's largest neighbour, Russia. The findings in this thesis will improve people's awareness of the true European situation. Knowing more about the border on the edge of the EU can give more faith in the EU as an entity. As stressed in several articles, the geographical centre of Europe is in Lithuania, very close situated to Estonia. From the erroneous western European perspective, Estonia is located on the edge rather than in the centre of Europe's geographical territory.

Why this topic?

Since I was young, borders and frontiers have been a fascination to me. Borders are not always drawn along physical barriers. There is always a history and a story connected to borders but this is often not obvious. Why is the border located precisely there and what does it separate? Borders often have huge impacts on the lives of people but it is rather a new tendency to look at the anthropological influences of borders. By writing this thesis I hope to give some valuable insights into borders changes and the specific situation of lake Peipsi in particular.

One of the first moments I had to deal with the phenomenon of borders was in my childhood. It concerned the border between my former hometown of Zutphen and the neighboring village of Warnsveld, which I approached during local cycling tours. Traffic signs of a local border could be found at the border of the two municipalities but this border appeared so atone in the landscape without a real physical change. This caused me to pose the question why the border was there instead of on a physical marker in the landscape like a river. Nowadays, Warnsveld as a municipality does not exist anymore, and neither does this border. After the amalgamation of the local government in 2004, Warnsveld became part of Zutphen's territory. In this case, on a municipality level, the border was changeable with the result that the situation changed for the people involved. Border situations can also change on a larger scale. In such a situation, more people are affected and the changes can have a huge geopolitical impact on their lives. This thesis will focus on these larger (geopolitical) changes at the lake Peipsi border.

Why focus on this region?

The immense lake between Estonia and Russia, lake Peipsi, has fascinated me for years. Looking in my atlas and on maps, I noticed that it was easy to find this huge lake but often the border was not drawn in the lake. I asked myself simple questions such as: Is this lake part of Russia or Estonia? Where is the actual border?

After visiting the partner city of my hometown of Nijmegen, he city of Pskov in Russia, I have had very good experiences with Eastern Europe. I went there in April 2004 to do fieldwork related to my bachelor thesis at the University of Arnhem and Nijmegen (HAN). After an interesting stay I drove back to the Netherlands by car. Even then mere weeks after the EU accession of the Baltic States, crossing the border was easier than before. No passport control was needed, but I was curious what really would change at this border because of this EU participation. It was obvious to me that for locals, this situation would be different than for me as a sort of tourist. With this work I would like to give more openness in the changes for Estonians in this border area.

When I had the opportunity to go to Estonia (Tartu) for three months and to get support from the Estonian professor Eiki Berg I was very excited, so I decided to go.

Theoretical framework

This study is related to the field of cultural and political geography, since human aspects of borders are more important than technical aspects. The meaning of borders, the influences of these borders on people and on their identity, the anthropological side of borders, are important elements. I will look at the border situation using several scholars who have theories about borders and the influences of these borders on people in their everyday lives.

What are borders, how hard can they be and what can be said about the part of the Estonian Russian border I am dealing with? These theoretical questions form the basis of my theoretical framework.

I will place the lake Peipsi border in a figure I made myself after reading several articles. I will take a look at the closeness and openness of the lake Peipsi border and will show how visible or invisible the border was through the years. By doing this I determine whether the status of the lake Peipsi border has changed in the recent years since Estonia became independent of the USSR in 1991 and later a EU and NATO member in 2004.

The Nijmegen centre for border research at the Radboud University of Nijmegen is working on issues related to my theme. My supervisors Freerk Boedeltje and Henk van Houtum are both doing research for this research centre. Many scholars have already written about borders but my work will focus on one concrete ‘new’ border, one on the edge of the EU. It is realistic to presume that this border will be the northeast edge of the EU for a rather long time.

The centre for border research at the Radboud University is involved in the programs called EU dimensions, which involves a study of the European neighborhood program. The University of Tartu is also joining this program. Eiki Berg, as an Estonian expert in border studies, wrote several books about borders and identities and their impact at the lives of people, especially in the Estonian –Russian border area. I had some discussions with Eiki Berg about his work and my goals. Projects of the Centre for transboundary cooperation in Tartu (CTC) were interesting to me. Unfortunately during my time in Estonia this centre was not working on any projects, directly related to my thesis.

Methodological framework

When I started my fieldwork in Estonia I knew my theme: the changing lake Peipsi border, and I asked myself several related research questions. Fortunately during my fieldwork, I could still be flexible and partly if necessary change my research. In the Netherlands, it was difficult to presume what I could expect in Estonia. After a while my research became more and more concrete and I could make decisions.

I decided to collect my data and information, which I needed to answer the research questions I stressed out above, mainly by doing interviews and by having conversations with people. During an interview it is easy to ask the respondent more detailed questions about an important subject. Interviews and accidental conversations were the best ways for me to get valuable information. Books were not much help since personal stories are not usually written down and the period of interest was very recent. This meant that much interesting data were not available.

I did not use questionnaires to collect information from the fishermen and fishing companies. I had doubts about this decision since languages problems may be easier to avoid by working with questionnaires; however, I wanted to capture the story of the fishermen and not only simple facts. Asking more open questions in the questionnaires would mean that I needed translators. Also people’s responses in interviews are often more genuine, as I experienced in earlier fieldwork in Liechtenstein and in Russia.

I collected much material and data during my three-month stay in Estonia through participation, searching for life stories, Ethnographical studies. I searched for useful literature too and I took three interesting classes at the university of Tartu, which were related to post-communist transformation processes.

When I started my research it was difficult to determine how many interviews I would need to get enough useful information. In the end, I found several interesting respondents and I had approximately 15 useful interviews.

This thesis contains besides this introduction episode the following chapters: The fishermen of lake Peipsi (chapter 2), the (changing) lake Peipsi border (chapter 3), (Geopolitical) relations Estonia-Russia-EU (chapter 4), the current situation and near future (chapter 5) and the conclusion of the main question (chapter 6).

Before focusing on these chapters it is functional to have some background information about my place of research, lake Peipsi.

Lake Peipsi

Lake Peipsi, pronounced in Estonian as ‘Papesee’ covers 3,555 square kilometers and has an average depth of 7, 1 and a maximum depth of 15.3 meters. Therefore the lake is rather shallow.

This large water basin is situated on the edge of current EU- space in the east of Estonia and very west of Russia. This is also the very western part of the former Soviet Union, which included the republics of Estonia and Russia until 1991.

Lake Peipsi is the largest border lake and the fourth largest lake in Europe, behind Lake Ladoga and Lake Onega in Russia and Lake Vänern in Sweden (Brochure Peipsi Museum Kallaste, 2006). The Russian name of the lake is Chudskoe Ozero. In this work the Estonian name Peipsi will be used.

The lake is connected with lake Pskov in the south and in the north the water exit the lake via the Narva river, which also forms a part of the physical boundary between Estonia and Russia, and flows into the Gulf of Finland (see map 1). The whole river basin; 237 rivers, streams and ditches including larger ones such as the Emajõgi, the main river of Estonia; connecting lake Peipsi and lake Võrtsjärv and the Valikaja river in the oblast Pskov, form the lake Peipsi basin, marked by the red dotted line on the map. The Peipsi basin borders the countries Estonia, Russia, Latvia and Belarus. It is a large and important ecological area that has to deal with multilateral circumstances. It would be a rather large and complex task to include the whole basin in my field research, so the focus will be on the main lake in the area, lake Peipsi. The lake and its shores have been the habitat of animals and people for centuries. Many species of birds, fish and other water animals can be found along the Peipsi shores and in the water. Lake Peipsi is considered one of the best fishing lakes in Europe. Thirty- seven species of fish live in the lake. Perch, Pike, Pikeperch, Bream, Burbot, White Bream, Peipus Whitefish, Lake smelt, Vendace, Rudd and Roach are the most well-known inhabitants of the lake. The lake is also important for the region from an ecological and economical perspective. The lake influences the (continental) climate in the region, as a result of its size the weather in autumn is for a longer time warm and spring arrives two weeks later³.

³ I found this information about lake Peipsi in several ‘unofficial’ articles produced by the Peipsi Centre for Transboundary Cooperation in Tartu. So giving correct data-sources is not possible.



Figure 1.1: Lake Peipsi and the Lake Peipsi Basin. Located in the border area of Estonia, Russia, Latvia and Belarus. Map prepared for the World Water Assessment Program by AFDEC.

The inhabitants of the shores of lake Peipsi, I call the entire lake and its shores the Peipsi region for the purpose of brevity, are a mix of ethnic origins and cultures. Estonians, Russians, Setu and Old Believers are all represented.

Lake Peipsi is a *transboundary* basin; the lake is divided in two by an international state border. As the yellow line in figure 1.1 shows, approximately 56 percent of the lake is part of Russia's territory and 44 percent is part of Estonia.

When I saw lake Peipsi for the first time, along the harbor of Kallaste, for just a second I thought it was a sea. Birds were flying around and swinging in the water, waves were breaking on the shore, there was some sort of beach and the red sandstone gave the whole 'view the illusion of a sea coastline. I was not able to see the other (Russian) side of the lake, even through the sky was clear. Near Kallaste the lake is more than 40 kilometers wide.

Figure 1.2 is a good illustration of what I call the sea feeling of lake Peipsi.

The lake is so big that local people sometimes call it lake Pepsi, named after the big brand Pepsi cola. But the lake isn't such a marketing product as Pepsi. Although small enterprises focusing on tourism activities are coming up in the area, tourism is not well developed yet (Taivo Tali, 2006).

In winter the lake is covered by ice. Recently the ice is too thin for activities on it. As in other regions with a rather continental climate, events such as car racing and ice fishing are often organized. Especially in winter Latvian people visit the lake to catch fish under the ice. In summer you can swim in the lake, do water sports, or fish.

The city of Tartu houses the Peipsi center for Transboundary cooperation, abbreviated in this work as CTC. The CTC helped me make contacts and search for literature during my fieldwork. As shown on their website, www.CTC.ee, the Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation is an international non-profit institute, which works to promote balanced development of border areas, especially in lake Peipsi/Chudskoe⁴ region.



Figure 1.2: The lake Peipsi area. Peaceful landscape and the barrenness of the lake Peipsi near Kallaste. Photo by J. Stoop, September 2006.

⁴ The name of lake Peipsi in Russian language.

Chapter two: The fishermen of lake Peipsi

In this chapter the main group of interest, the fishermen in the Estonian Peipsi area, is discussed. First we look at how the fishermen work and live, and in what way this lifestyle changed in the recent years because of political changes in Estonian-Russian relations. Taking the fishermen as the group of interest makes the research more concrete. All fishermen have to deal with lake Peipsi as their work and living territory. They also have to deal with restrictions caused by the borderline and the related governments. Besides that, fishing has been one of the main sources of income in the Peipsi area for centuries; changes will have a rather large impact on the whole region, socially, politically and economically.

For as long as the Peipsi shores have been used as a living space, these inhabitants have used the natural resources from the lake. Through the years, the fishermen have utilized different techniques to catch fish, but they all had the same goal: getting the fish out of the water and use it for consumption or for sale. Fishing was and will probably always be a difficult profession but there was a time, just after re-independence of Estonia in 1991, when fishermen in the lake Peipsi region earned 10-15 times more than university professors. However, this isn't the case anymore (Yuka Kaneda, 2003). The relation between the fish and the fishermen has always been there and will always exist.

Also, in a world where things are changing rapidly some things are manifest. The ethical question whether or not people have the right to catch the free fish is only a matter of discussion when a situation of prosperity is reached. Through the ages, the people living near the lake simply needed the fish, to survive. Nowadays too, the people at the Estonian side of the lake need fish⁵. Although Estonia as a whole has a national economic growth of approximately 12 percent, the eastern part of the young republic is relatively poor (Tartu University, 2006). Even in 2006 fishing and farming are the ways to earn money. The Peipsi lake is still very important, as it is *the* place to catch fish in eastern Estonia.

I was careful to avoid the pitfall of only writing about the life and work of the fisherman, without exploring this life. During my stay in Estonia I wanted to see and feel what it is like to be a fisherman. In the extra chapter, at the end of this work, you can find the answers to my research question 'how is the work of individual fishermen changed by the changing border?'

Two categories

During conversations with Eiki Berg and Margit Säre, an employee of the CTC in Tartu, and others I found out that two 'categories' of fishermen work and live near the Peipsi lake. The first category is that of the individual fishermen: working on their own, for their own benefits. They catch the fish and bring it to the market to sell, as well as using the fish for their own consumption. They work on a small scale and most of the individual fishermen have no official business plan. Sometimes they do not even have official fishing licenses.

The latter category is that of fishermen who work for companies. Some of the companies have headquarters close to the lake. There are also companies who operate from far, like the company Priit and Aivo work for⁶. These companies hire temporary seasonal workers to catch the fish for them. The fishermen bring the fresh fish to the factories where they are made ready for consumption, for example as fillet.

⁵ As mentioned before, the focus in this thesis is on the Estonian side of the lake. For Russian fishermen the lake is also important, although it seems that fishery is currently less popular in this part of the Russian federation.

⁶ See the Extra chapter part 'What is it like to be a fisherman on lake Peipsi?'

How is it like to live as fishermen at lake Peipsi?

How has life of the Peipsi fishermen changed over the past approximately 15 years?

To answer these two questions I have decided to use two different cases, in which the two categories of fishermen of lake Peipsi can be viewed specifically.

The first case study on the island of Piirissaare will focus on the story of the first category of fishermen, those working individually (2.1) One inhabitant on this island, fisherman Fjodor Korotkov, gets special attention. The second case, concerning Kallaste and surroundings (2.2) will be used to get a better view on developments in the area around the western shore of lake Peipsi and the fishermen who work for companies.

After these two cases, the general developments concerning fishermen in lake Peipsi are discussed.

Case 1: Piirissaare



Figure 2.1: Piirissaare viewed from the border guard tower. The village of Toni in the foreground, trees, and swamp on the edge of the island. Photo by J.Stoop, September 2006.

In Estonian, 'piiri' means border and 'saare' means island. In the past the island was divided into two different parts, resulting in the name 'border island.' However the name is still very useful in modern times, since Piirissaare is only 800 meters from the border with Russia. The island is located in the southern part of lake Peipsi. It is part of the county of Tartumaa. The island size is only 7,8 km² and of this total, 2/3 is classified as swamp, and therefore not useful for human activities. The island forms the second smallest independent local government of Estonia. The community is called Piirissaare vald. The location and the attitude of the local government does not make regional planning in the region any easier. Taivo Tali, head of the department of regional planning and development of the Tartu county government, says that it would be more effective if Piirissaare would be less conservative and would form a government together with another municipality, located on the main land. Although 106 of the 112 inhabitants speak the Russian language, Piirissaare is defiantly Estonian territory.

Before I went to Estonia I had decided that Piirissaare would form a case study in my master's thesis. It is very close to the border and a unique place. In Tartu I really started to search for information about the island and on how to go there as a foreigner. There were two issues, firstly there was not much information in English or German, and secondly in the Tourist information center of Tartu an employee told me the island was not easy to reach. It is not a real tourist destination. The water level of lake Peipsi was too low, during that time of the year, so boats from Tartu did not go to Piirissaare. Normally there are two ferry connections but in autumn 2006 there was only one ferry going to the island... I only visited Piirissaare twice because of the difficulties in getting there from Tartu.

Ain Vellak, a state nature-reserve specialist in the Jõgeva-Tartu region, had planned a visit to Piirissaare for his work. I was able to join him to the island.

We went from Tartu to Laaksaare by his car. When we arrived at the harbor of Laaksaare, I was surprised. There was nothing there but a bridge and the ferry, surrounded by forest, with no further infrastructure at all. The ferry from the *Tartu Sadam AS* company makes five trips back and forth to the island each week (website *Tartu Sadam AS*, 2006). The ferry brings passengers, food, fuel and other products, that are needed but not otherwise available on the small island.



Figure 2.2: Piirissaare from a distance. From the cultivated part of Piirissaare you can only see the border guard tower. Photo by J.Stoop, October 2006.

The boarder guard tower, located in the middle of Piirissaare is the only object which can be seen from a distance. This tower is visible from every part of the island and the other way around. To me the tower was a sort of control tower, enabling me to see what the inhabitants of Piirissaare were doing I climbed this tower. I am sure that the inhabitants of Piirissaare sometimes too ‘feel’ the existence of this tower. For me this iron border guard tower was an example of Foucault’s Panopticon, embedded in a concrete field.

The institute Ain Vellak works for wanted to create a ‘natural road’ on the island. The local government of Piirissaare vald was not exactly fond of this idea, arguing that it could change the peaceful, silent character of the island and could become a tourist attraction (Ain Vellak, 2006). The project had already started and the EU would pay most of the costs, but the local government still would not cooperate. Although Piirissaare is very close to the eastern border of the EU, several projects like the European neighborhood program are willing to invest in these areas. However, so far no EU money has reached the island.

One of the reasons for the lack of money reaching the island, frustrating those responsible like the chairwoman of Piirissaare Maria Kortokova⁷, is the fact that Piirissaare does not have a local document of planning (a strategic plan). Ain Vellak’s opinion is that most of the members of the local government are rather conservative. Making plans for the near future with this local government is very hard, as Taivo Tali confirms. The typical ‘island mentality’ is also dominant on Piirissaare, he argued. Even in Soviet time, the island was in many ways a separated entity and was able to work with some of its own policies in the centralistic structure of the USSR. Trough the years, people probably identified themselves firstly as inhabitants of Piirissaare and secondly as Russians or Estonians. I asked Fjodor and ‘babushka’ Ivanov about their identity twice. The first time they said to feel Estonian because

⁷ The CTC advised me to interview Maria Korotkova, but unfortunately our meeting did not succeeded while she spoke no English at all. She did not give any response on my Russian written (digital) questions.

they live in Estonia and have an Estonian passport. The second time we spoke about their identity they gave arguments showing that they were Russian; they speak Russian, their family is Russian, their roots are in Russia and they share many traditions with the Russians. Most of the people on Piiressaare first and foremost seem to be ethnically Russian, but their connection with Estonia make them a little bit hybrid. However, they are citizens of Piiressaare, an unique phenomenon in the border region.

Piiressaare is very peaceful, with little infrastructure and little use for it. People lives in colored old wooden houses with gardens were they grow own vegetables. Walking around the island you see many fishing nets and boats in addition to the professional fishermen who use these boats I presume many people fish in their spare time for recreation.

The average age of the population is high. The inhabitants were curious about me, being a stranger. I was the news of the day. Some people tried to talk to me but it was very difficult to communicate with those locals who only spoke Russian⁸

The island is not homogenous. There are three separate communities, those consisting of Old believers⁹, Orthodox and Lutheran people. Each community is represented in each of the three small villages, Piiri, Toni and Saare. Toni is the central village with the border guard tower, two shops and a library.

Nature-reserve specialist Ain Vellak introduced me to one of the local government officials, Fjodor Korotkov. Besides his part-time work for the local government he is a professional fisherman. Ain Vellak translated for me so I could ask Fjodor several questions about his work and about the island. The conversation was so interesting and illustrative for Piiressaare's fishermen that I decided to use Fjodor as my example of an individually working fisherman.

Fjodor Korotkov

Fjodor Korotkov (23-02-1959) was born on Piiressaare. His mother tongue is Russian but he can read and understand Estonian a little bit. This is typical for many 'Russian Estonians'. He has worked as a fisherman his whole life, but only for the last 15 years he has worked as a professional. Ever since, he lives on Piiressaare all year round. He is his own boss. He brings his catch to a fish factory near the small village of Mehikoorma. He uses a traditional old 7,5 meter long boat. He uses several fishing techniques, but most of the time he uses small nets, like the other individual fishermen on Piiressaare. He is allowed to fish on the whole Estonian part of the lake, specially marked parts used by organized companies excluded, but his ideal area is 3,5 kilometers from the island. He uses GPS and a compass for his orientation on the water.

No one is allowed to cross the border; when you are too close to the border, the border guards come and pick you up from the lake (F.Korotkov, 2006).

Fifteen fishermen work on Piiressaare currently as professional. A small number of people have side activities on the mainland to earn money but most of the population is retired.

The small number of traffic signs on the island are in Estonian language. Piiressaare as part of the republic of Estonia must follow the official Estonian legislation so all information must be in the only official language of the country Estonian. However, after finding some notes with

⁸ I was very happy with the support of the students who were my translators. Sometimes it was really frustrating that I needed them so much. In the future I want to spend more time improving my language skills, which probably gives you more chance to react more spontaneously to respondents and to get more information.

⁹ Old Believers: Descendants of people who escaped from Russia, in the 17th century because of religion related problems and who settled themselves mainly on the west coast of lake Peipsi.

reference to a new ferry timetable, which were only written in Russian, I might conclude that in everyday life practice Russian is the Lingua Franca on Piiressaare.

In recent years the population has shrunk caused by natural reduction of the population and fewer newcomers finding their way to the island. The same people have had the power on the island for years (Fjodor Korotkov, 2006). This makes Piiressaare vald rather conservative as an administrative power (Ain Vellak, 2006).

What has changed the last 15 years in the life and work of the individual fisherman on Piiressaare?

Before 1991, when the border had a total different status than it has today, it was open and there were sometimes checks by border guards and policemen. The fishermen from Piiressaare caught most of their fish in the part of the lake that is now Russian territory. They crossed the internal Soviet frontier without being aware of this line at all (Fjodor, 2006). The lake is deeper in the Russian part and the dominant wind direction brings the fish to the eastern side of lake Peipsi, making it a good place to fish. The establishment of a harder borderline in the lake in the years after independence had many influences on the fishermen's work and life. There was less space to fish, so their territory decreased and there was a loss of fish volume. Fishermen are more aware than before that there is a border in the lake, but it came clear to me that in their everyday life practice this does not have that much influence. The fishermen know they are not allowed to fish in the Russian side of the lake, this is embedded in their system and they must accept it. It is a 'new' situation for all fishermen and companies and all feel the effects, and so this has no direct influence on the competition between firms although surviving of the fittest is probably more than ever the way it goes.

It is impossible to say how much money fishermen and companies have lost since the border on the lake was 'closed'. The market system changed in the same time. Estonia was trying to switch from a planned market to a free market system, so the whole new situation had negative and positive results. But most of the fishermen I interviewed told me that their life is not better than some years ago, it is in many respects harder these days to be an individual fisherman.

When the state border between Estonia and Russia was also becoming an EU external border, the border guards started to be more alert on who was entering the already existing no-go area of 200 meters from the real border (Raul Mälik, 2006). In many places near this border fishermen used to fish for years and the border guards permitted them to do their work as long as they did not cross the actual line. But in the years since 1991, the control of this no-go area became stricter. Fishermen do not get permission to fish there anymore. As a result, the fishermen lost parts of their fishing territory. And it was in a time when more restrictions were intensified. A lot of restrictions from the EU made it harder for the individual fishermen. They had to buy new boats, the use of unofficial materials was not allowed and the control on correct fishing licenses was intensified. And also they were forced to take more care of their hygiene. The environmental police was also controlling in areas where mostly individual fishermen were active. The uncontrolled, free life of the fisherman was not so free anymore (Ain Vellak, 2006).

When people leave the island in their own boats they must phone the border guard on duty to say where he or she is going. It is easy and it is becoming a sort of routine, you state your name, your boat number, you say how many people are on your boat and where you are going. When you get back you tell them you returned to the island (F. Korotkov, 2006). This control has some influence on their lives. I would say one is not totally free in one's actions.

Changes on Piirissaare

After a long period of stability, life on Piirissaare changed at the end of Soviet time. Changes were not sudden; the developments were slow but continuous.

Fjodor has lived on Piirissaare his whole life. Proskovja Teiman Ivanov has lived on the island for 22 years. They have a lot of knowledge about the last decades on Piirissaare. In 1940 1.250 people lived on Piirissaare, so some facilities were needed. For product and services, which were occasionally needed, people went to the main land, to the western side of the lake Rapina and Tartu or to the eastern and currently Russian towns Gdov and Pskov. In Soviet time's the island was equipped with a cinema, a doctor, several grocery shops and even a small airport, where a plane for one injured person could land with a frequency of five flights a week. The contrast between 1966 and today is huge. There were 142 school-aged children on the island so facilities like schools were profitable. Currently, a total of 112 persons live on the island and only three of them visit a primary school; this school is not located on the island. The community has lost several facilities through the last years. Today two food-shops, a small library and two churches are on the island. The other facilities were no longer profitable when the population shrunk. In the past, the island had more boat connections with the main land as well as the airplane (F. Korotkov, 2006). Since the border in the lake closed, traffic and products are only transported to Russia by road, so like before, there are no boat services that visit Piirissaare. Only small amounts of visitors, foremost relatives, come to the island. Piirissaare is more and more to be found in the periphery of Estonia. Almost all Estonians I encountered in Tartu were very surprised that I went to a part of Estonia they never visited.

Like respondent Proskovja Teiman Ivanov, most of the people on the island can only watch TV-Pskov, a Russian channel. So close to Russia, people without an advanced network, can only see broadcast's from Russia. It takes more time for the news to reach the island because of the natural boundaries, however the fact that no Estonian channel is widely available for the islanders isolates Piirissaare even more from the main land of Estonia. Many of the old people on Piirissaare do not leave the island at all. Their situation makes it hard for them to feel connected with Estonia. Only the pensions they get from the Estonian government tie them to the country they belong to.



Figure 2.3: Fjodor Koratkov in his fisherman's outfit on a small tower in the middle of the island. The rural character of Piirissaare can be seen in the background. Photo by J.Stoop, October 2006.



Figure 2.4: Fjodor shows my translator (in the middle) the former 'airport' of Piirissaare. Today it is an open field and a place to dry fishing materials. Photo by J.Stoop, October 2006.



Figure 2.5: Typical view on Piirissaare: Wooden houses in the central village of Toni. The red building is the local grocery shop. Photo by J.Stoop, October 2006.

Piirissaare and the EU

After years of being one of the republics in the Soviet Union, the Estonian citizens were asked in a referendum on 14 September 2003, whether or not they wanted their country to join another union, the EU, in May 2004. On the 14th of September 2003 the inhabitants of Piirissaare vald had the chance to vote. Out of 101 people who had the chance to vote, 82 people really voted. 40 were positive, 43 negative in their opinion concerning the following referendum: do you support joining the EU and changing the constitution? (Estonian National Electoral committee, 2003) So the people of Piirissaare rejected the referendum with 48,19 % yes- and 51,81 percent no-votes. The majority of Piirissaare was against joining the EU and, as a pre-condition of joining the EU, against changing some sentences in the Estonian constitution.

Many people told me they feared that the relationship between the Russians and the Estonians would become even more problematic when Estonia would join the EU and probably later NATO. Life is changing already very fast and being in the EU would definitely not stop this was the conservative attitude of many people. But almost one in two Piirissaare-inhabitants voted in favor of the EU in the referendum. With reference to its very 'Russian' and conservative inhabitants, the result of the referendum on Piirissaare is surprising.

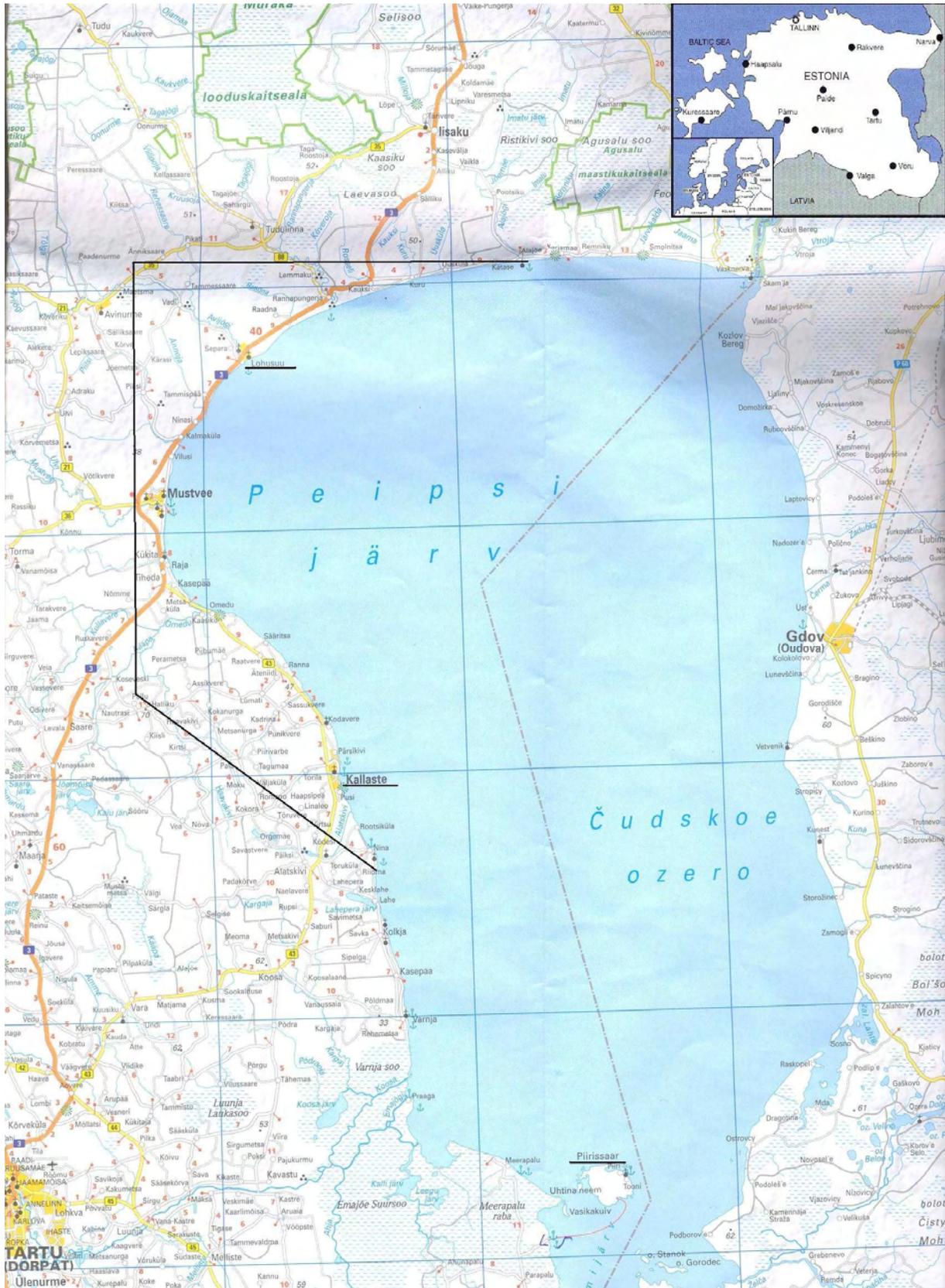


Figure 2.6: The lake Peipsi area and overview of Estonia and Europe. In the middle the area of Kallaste and surroundings, marked with the black line. Constructed map by J. Stoop, 2007.

Case 2: Kallaste and surroundings

The area around Kallaste, see figure 2.6, is sparsely populated. The ‘towns’ Kallaste and Mustvee, which have both fewer than 3000 inhabitants, are the biggest concentrations of people. In this area the economic situation is not good, with a high unemployment rate and little industry.

Kallaste and surroundings is defined here as the part of eastern Estonia at lake Peipsi from Kasepää in the south to Lohusuu in the north. On the map, this area is marked with a black line¹⁰. I have defined this area as a sort of region because there are many similarities between the villages and places. There are fewer people, the lake is a dominant factor in the landscape close to the villages with wooden houses, there are small fishing ports where small boats wait for the catch. Some fish factories are situated a few kilometers inland.

The people have lived of catching fish and growing vegetables in their gardens since the 15th century.



Figure 2.7: The small harbor of Kallaste. Fishing boats are waiting for the catch. Photo by J.Stoop, September 2006.

The majority of the inhabitants of the West coast of this part of lake Peipsi speak Russian. There are whole communities where Estonian is not spoken at all. I had the chance to travel around the area. I really felt like I was in Russia. Not only is Russian the dominant language, one can also find the symbols on the street and in the society. The people speak Russian; and drive own typical Russian cars. In Kallaste I even found streets where the street signs are still in Cyrillic. The students from the local school live in the villages around Kallaste. The language in the school is Russian, what is very remarkable since in the national constitution says Estonian is the only official state language. Students who want to be educated in Estonian have to travel to the nearby village of Alaskivi.

¹⁰ The black line on the map that marks the area is not a hard line. It has no official meaning; it should simply give an impression of the approximate area of interest.

The non- Estonian atmosphere was strange to me, but in this part of the country 70 percent of the inhabitants are Old Believers, as mentioned before, so this is not so strange after all. Still in this area too, much has changed in recent years.

What changed for the fishing companies and its fishermen in the last 15 years?

The area of Kallaste and surroundings has six fish factories (M. Sumnikov, 2006).

I visited three of these six fish companies to get answers to my questions and to get a good view of the situation:

AS Peipsi Trade:

Main activities: producing fish fillet and freezing quality fish.

This company, located in the small village of Lohusuu, is important for the local economy.

The firm has 70 employees. Ninety percent of these fishermen and factory workers live in the nearby town of Mustvee. Workers have temporary contracts. In 1992, the company was transformed from a Kolchoz to a free market company (O. Kritt, sales manager AS Peipsi Trade, 2006).

Kallaste Kalur Ltd:

Main activities: producing fish fillet and keeping the fish well preserved.

The company was founded in March 1992 and provides work to 75 local people.

It is located in Kallaste, near the harbor. The firm is important for the local economy in the region.

Profit Plus:

Main activities: producing fish fillet.

Located in the very small village of Kalina. Fishermen get year contracts. The company was founded five years ago, fifty local employees work here. The company is important for the local economy.

The three companies share many characteristics.

The declining fish volume is the most negative development for the companies. Everything is about fish quantity; 'it is all about that,' says chairman Profit Plus, M. Sumnikov.

When the fish volume shrinks people lose their jobs. Recently many Peipsi lake fishermen had to switch to different jobs because of the increasingly hard situation and lack of future perspectives. Those fishermen start working in the building industry or search for other jobs in the EU and leave the region (H. Tuus, 2006). As a result, the region's population decreases even further and is also less educated since especially those who are more educated move away.

The years after 1991 were hard for the fish companies. The closure of the border in the lake is destructive for the fishing industry. The area in which the fish may be caught is reduced, and so the fish capacity and the benefits. The reason for the declining numbers of fish is not only the loss of territory. Natural problems concerning the fish populations in lake Peipsi and the extra restrictions on the fish catch, fish quotas, also made life difficult for the fishermen (H. Tuus, 2006).

For the companies, the accession of Estonia to the EU is positive. The first years, their administration had to be reorganized but now that the forms are signed there is less paperwork.

The lake Peipsi is seen as a national lake so international restrictions from the EU do not have impact on these who catch their fish in lake Peipsi, so those negative elements of EU

accession are not affecting the companies. Firms with good business plans can get EU-subsidies for projects and money for materials such as boats.

EU accession had no direct influence on the number of foreign clients. The fish factories have brought their products to countries in Western Europe like Germany and The Netherlands, Canada and the US since 1991. This has not changed.

For the companies, the present conditions are not too bad. It is hard work but it is a profitable business for those companies that survived the transition years after 1991 (Chairman Kallaste Kalur Ltd, F. Plešankov, 2006).

For Profit Plus, which also has a factory in Russia, more open borders with Russia would have positive effects on the company. Profit Plus imports much of its fish from Russia, also from the Russian part of lake Peipsi. The tax on the transport, via the land border, is 5 % of the total price, so an open border would be very profitable for Profit Plus but this is not realistic (M. Sumnikov, 2006).

Recently, a new policy was introduced by the Estonian government and with support from the EU, to reduce the large number of fishermen at lake Peipsi (H. Tuus, 2006). Fishermen can receive grants from a special fund if they quit working as fishermen and find other work. According to H. Tuus, some fishermen used this grant to start other businesses, for example in the tourist industry.

For those who decide to continue fishing, the best part of the year to catch a lot of fish is between September 5th and October 5th of. In summer, large boats and nets are banned on lake Peipsi but during the peak fishing period, all fishing materials are allowed. The management of the three fishing companies gave the same reasons why no fisherman could be found on the land: 'the fishermen are all at the lake now, as they have the chance to catch a lot in a short time.'

Kallaste and surroundings and the EU

On the 14th of September 2003 the people living at the western shore of Lake Peipsi also had the chance to vote in the referendum.

In this part of Estonia, the results of the referendum were as follows:

In Kallaste 63,07 % voted no, in Lohusuu 47,56 % no and in Kalina (municipality of Mäetaguse 35 % voted no. In Mustvee 54,57 % voted no in the referendum (Estonian National Electoral committee, 2003).

The western shore of lake Peipsi in total was neither positive (50 %) nor negative (50%) in the referendum. The strange conclusion is that while the larger municipalities Kallaste and Mustvee rejected the referendum, the more rural municipalities voted in favor. In 2003, many people were skeptical about the EU because they did not know the result would be. If a new referendum would be organized today, 90 percent would vote yes (M. Sumnikov, 2006).

This meaning of mister Sumnikov is logical from his point of view as the chairman of Profit Plus, but it is not representative and not very realistic for all people in the region.

Changes for all fishermen

Some changes were and are specifically influencing the individual fisherman. Other changes have their influences on those who work for companies. But there were changes that had their influence on all fishermen. Some of the most important changes:

From a planned economy to a free market system:

Until the break-up of the Soviet Union (1991) the fisheries of Estonia were a part of the Soviet-type planned economy. Fish resources belonged to the state. In newly independent Estonia the fisheries were rapidly privatized. The early nineties saw the appearance of the possibility to export fish to the European market. The opening of this new and highly profitable market outlet resulted in rapidly increasing pressure on the fish numbers (Markus Vetemaa, 2002). More restrictions on fishing were needed so quotas were more strictly used.¹¹

On the free market unprofitable fishing firms went bankrupt. It is hard to say how many fishermen lost their jobs in this transition time but this process is still going on. The current fund that makes quitting more lucrative can be an extra stimulus, but this has not been investigated yet.

Environmental changes:

At the end of the last century environmental issues got a more important place on the international calendar. The quality of water, flora and fauna received more and more attention.

I visited a conference of large lakes, which was organized in Tartu in September 2006. Several symposia and speeches were organized during this conference and themes like climate change, global warming and loss of natural resources were well represented. In the last decade, there has been more control on the quality of life of the fish species and their volume. Some species almost disappeared out of the Peipsi lake so fish quotas are in place. This has an impact on those who are dependent on how much fish they can catch; the fishermen.

EU accession:

Another huge change for the Estonians; joining the 'western alliance' of the EU was not easily accepted in the whole country, as maintained before. In the bigger towns a majority was reached so in the end 66,83 percent voted yes and 33.17 percent voted no.

The referendum was therefore accepted (Estonian National Electoral committee, 2003).

Looking at the results, the impact on the fishermen was not so big, but it was certainly a real fear for many of them.

Ecology versus economy

A huge dilemma and one that has direct influences on the work of all fishermen is whether to choose ecological over economical development.

Every year new quotas for each of the fish-species are set¹². To accomplish a good policy regarding ecological and economical perspectives in the region, there are meetings with the Russians. Several agreements were signed. The Peipsi center for transboundary cooperation (CTC) made several reports and organized meetings with the aim to get better understanding and better cooperation across the border (Kärt Leppik, 2006).

¹¹ Unfortunately I cannot give a correct overview of the restrictions throughout the years.

¹² I got some quota numbers from the Ministry of Environment of Estonia but not enough to make a good comparison.

For the fishermen it is necessary that lake Peipsi will also be a good fishing resource in the future. But the current situation is interesting. What does a fisherman choose when his business is problematic? Will he choose long-term- or short-term-planning? Will he choose sustainable economic growth or just grow without looking to the future?

During the Soviet era the restrictions were not so rigid, which is maybe one of the reasons some species have now almost disappeared from the lake. During that era there was often a distinct lack of long-term-planning.

A fisherman wants his boat to be full of fish at the end of the day so long-term-planning is not always easy in that respect.

The lives of fishermen will change constantly as they work in variable circumstances, with variable numbers of fish and even the (ethical) permission to catch them can change through time...

Chapter three: The (changing) lake Peipsi Border

The previous chapters contain information about the lake and about the people who live and work along lake Peipsi. In this chapter the lake Peipsi border itself is the point of focus. Firstly the uniqueness of this border is viewed; secondly the changes of the border since 1991 and the influences of the changes on the area get attention. Finally the current border situation, which explained further in chapter 4, is point of concern. To get a good overview, at the end of this chapter the lake Peipsi border is placed in a self-constructed model.

A border is a line or an area that separates territory, constructed by people or by nature. Borders are meaningless until we give them meaning (Newman, 1996). A border is a human construction. Geopolitical changes in Estonia gave new meaning to the border. The Narva River, for example now forms the border between Estonia and Russia. Although this natural border is maybe a logical place to create a border from a physical perspective, for years the border was placed further to the East. The Russian city of Ivangorod was Estonian territory and formed one united city together with Narva, as written down in the Tartu Treaty of 1920. In the Treaty of 1940, the USSR claimed this territory to be Russian ground. The result is that since this Treaty the 'new' border, the river, separates Narva and Ivangorod again. Since both cities are not in the same country anymore (1991), the two cities are really separated from each other. This had obvious his impact on livelihood, as researcher Eiki Berg (1999) concluded in his work; 'Through time borders can change'. In 'Borders in a changing Europe: Dynamics of Openness and Closure, 2006' he writes: 'as societies change, so too does the border'.

What kind of border is the lake Peipsi border?

The total length of the border between Estonia and Russia is about 338 km. Approximately two-thirds of the border passes through Lake Peipsi/Chudskoe and the Narva river (Margit Säre, 2003). The Peipsi borderline is for the most part situated in the middle of the lake. The lake is generally more than 30 kilometers wide, so it is difficult for people to come close to the borderline. There are few symbols to be found on the water, which you normally find near (land) border crossing points. State flags, international traffic signs, gates and so on are absent most of the time¹³. People in this part of Estonia know there is a border somewhere in the lake, but the majority never comes close to it. Also people who work on the water, like fishermen, the police and border guards usually have no real border-signs which they can use to determine their locations. The width of the lake makes it a physical obstacle one cannot easily cross. Still, it is illegal to cross the border in the lake. The nearest land border crossings are in Narva, at the north of the lake and near Koidola, in the south.

In winter, the border guards make the border more key areas of the lake. 'We use pine trees to mark the border' (Tanal Allas, 2006). To let people know they are close to the international border, a free zone is marked 200 meter from the real borderline, on both sides. On several parts of the lake, also in winter, no border or free zone is marked at all. 'It is much work to mark the whole border and it is not necessary since only a few people really come there and they all know where the border is' (Tanal Allas, 2006).

In summer, some parts of the lake are covered with buoys. Near Piirissaare, flags are used to mark the border. In this part of the lake the border is more obvious to the people since Estonian and Russian territory come close to each other. The Estonian board of border guards

¹³ The extra chapter (pg. X) shows the water border on a small scale with symbols.

has a special control department in the border guard tower on Piirissaare. From this tower the border guards control the border, which is only 800 meters away from the island. In Smolnitsa, northern part of lake Peipsi, and in Alatskivi, at the middle of the lake, two extra border towers are located. A former border guard compares working on this lake with working on the land: 'Speaking from my own experience, checking the lake Peipsi border is easier than observing a land border where there are more hiding places (Olev Juursalu, 2006). While border symbols are most of the time absent the way to locate the border is the use of radar and GPS (Global Positioning System). The board of border guards uses radar and GPS to search for unwelcome persons, ships etc. Fishermen on boats and other water workers use GPS. With the border coordinates they can activate the GPS. The GPS-system warns them if they are too close to the border. If you cross the border without permission and the border guards come to pick you up from the lake you get a fine (Olev Juursalu, 2006).



Picture 3.1: Flags on the horizon. At the north-eastern side of Piirissaare, flags, the only elements in the emptiness of water mark the border. Photo by J. Stoop, October 2006

What is the status of this border?

The Estonian Russian border, and so the lake Peipsi border too, is officially a control line. A border agreement between Estonia and Russia hasn't been ratified yet. When I started my research I had the idea that there was an official border agreement. During fieldwork I told a man that I was investigating the border between Estonia and Russia. As a reaction to my words the man started to look angry and told me, frustrated,: 'it is not *the* border, it is just a control line!' It was an emotional issue for him, and possibly for more people in the border region.

Negotiations between Estonia and Russia have not brought a manifest solution so far. The situation for the Estonians in everyday life is clear. Fishermen and others on the lake know where the border is. For them it is just the border, nothing more or less. But the status of this border on paper is not 'normal' when you compare the border agreement with agreements between other countries. Former Estonian minister of foreign affairs, Raul Mälik points out this dilemma: 'There are some problems, especially related to historical sentiments between Estonia and Russia'. From a Russian point of view, Estonia was a free member of the USSR.

Since 1994 the Estonian government made an official statement that Estonia sees the USSR era as a phase when Estonia had no free will. The dominant feeling under Estonians is that they were forced to join the USSR. Still today sentiments play an important role; it influences the mood of the negotiators and the atmosphere of international meetings.

Besides this historical struggle between the two states, there are problems about contested territory. These problems also have a historical foundation. In the Tartu Treaty of 2 February 1920, a Treaty after the first independence of the republic of Estonia in 1918, the territories of Estonia and Russia were officially mapped. Estonians claim that the Tartu Treaty should form the basis of current border policy between the two countries but Russians argue that the Treaty from 1944, one in which the Tartu Treaty was changed, should be used. Estonian Russian border specialist Edgar Mattisen wrote about this Treaty of 1944 in the chapter with the expressive title 'Unlawful changes of the border by the USSR' (1944-1957), "It is obvious that there was no legal justification to unilaterally alter the border line between Estonia and Russia then, nor is there any today" (Searching for a Dignified Compromise, The Estonian-Russian Border 1000 years pg. 71). In the Tartu Treaty Estonia and Russia both agreed that Estonia had more on the east located territory (Russian territory in the agreement of 1944 and also in reality today). Especially in the southeast region of Estonia, in the region of Setomaa, the border situation changed tremendously when the Russians forced the weaker Estonians to accept the Treaty of 1944 when both parties were in the USSR. When in 1991 the border was established the impact of the Treaty of 1944 was really clear to the people in the border regions. In Setomaa, a southeastern region that is divided by the border, the local impact is still observable.¹⁴

The two other Baltic states, Latvia and Lithuania, have similar problems with Russia. Lithuania has, like Estonia, no official border agreements with Russia. Latvia signed on the 27th of March 2007, after years of disagreement, a border agreement with Russia. Will this Latvian-Russian breakthrough affects the tendency in the region?

The Estonian-Russian border agreement was almost signed numerous times, but historical sentiments came in to block the deal. As a result no Russian-Estonian border agreement has been ratified yet.

A positive turn in the negotiations was the fact that the Estonian parliament decided not to claim their 'old land' anymore. It was clear that the Kremlin would not give this land to the small neighbour.

Former Russian president Boris Yeltsin made this clear on 8 September 1995 by emphasizing that 'he regards Estonia's insistence on raising the border issue as unpleasant'. The border is unchangeable. We don't need foreign land, but we can't give away (a) single

meter of our own land either.' (Citizenship and Borders: Legacies of Soviet Empire in Estonia, 1998 pg.109) The contested area was a sparsely populated area without any important economical resources, so the Estonian government dropped the territorial claims.¹⁵

Mälik's answers on many questions were quite objective. However, his words about the unsigned border agreement were not without frustration. During many conversations in the field people pointed at these historically related problems too. In the present Estonian society wounds from the communist time are still visible. They can be found in people, buildings and systems and in the whole society. For the Estonian parliament, to speak for the Estonian

¹⁴ For insights in this matter see the paper by J. Stoop, 2007: Life of the Setus: A cultural phenomenon in a shared and contested border area; Dreams of its own territory 'Setomaa.'

¹⁵ On many maps the former (more eastern) border is still marked with a dotted line. My Estonian diary for 2007, for example contains a small map of Estonia. On this map the old territory is marked. Although the loss of former territory to Russia is officially accepted, not everywhere in the society the claims were dropped.

people, a sentence in the agreement text in which Russia declares that it occupied Estonia in USSR time *involuntarily* it essential for opening new negotiations. Taking a critical look at the Russian electorate, it is not realistic to assume that the Russian government will declare that Estonia was forced to be part of the USSR after the Second World War. The Kremlin will not apologize for the USSR years. In chapter 4 the geopolitical interaction between Estonia and Russia gets more specific attention.

Does the 'status' of the border have its influences on the everyday life of the people in the region?

In everyday life the people do not 'feel' the differences between a fixed border and the now existing control line. For 'normal' people the situation in theory is not important. The line that splits Russian and Estonian territory is the only one that counts and this line is clear for all. When you have a look at an international map this borderline is not different than other borders. That the border will be in the same place for years is unmistakable¹⁶. The 'status' has some influences on negotiations and on the mood between certain people but other than that the everyday situation is clear and normal.

What 'kind' of border was /is the Peipsi border before 1991, after 1991 and since 2004?

Soviet time < 1991

On the outskirts of the immense USSR a hard border was established, but the inner-USSR borders, better named frontiers, were rather vague. The lake Peipsi border, as a inner-USSR frontier those days, was almost invisible to the people in everyday life. Fishermen, and others who wanted to cross the lake, could do so without any problems. However like the current situation, also those days the lake was a physical barrier for the people. Research, by Eiki Berg and his colleagues at the political department of the University of Tartu, made clear that in Soviet time people did not have much contact with the other side of the lake. People without relatives and economic interest did not often cross the lake, despite the fact that the border as an institution did not exist (Negotiating Borders of Multiple meanings, pg. 112).

Those days, roads and railway connections over land were mainly used to come from Estonia to Russia and visa versa. But there was a ferry connection across lake Peipsi, which was especially popular in summer. Ain Vellak told me: 'when he was young he took this ferry from Kallaste to Pskov.' The boat connection was a sort of tourist attraction. The boat made a stop on Piirissaare too.

In policy the frontier had meaning those days but for fishermen and others on the water, the border was 'absent' so they were not limited by it.

Post soviet time > 1991

With Estonia's independence the vague frontier became the new border between two independent states; Estonia and Russia. The line changed from an inner-USSR frontier to the external border of Russia and also of Estonia. For both governments it was important to intensify border checks. Border guards and border police were placed on both sides of the 'new' border, and international symbols occurred on parts where this was needed. The lake Peipsi border was checked, customs services were organized, new border guards were trained, towers were built and in some parts of the lake the border was really visualized by symbols (Olev Juursalu, 2006). Still even after 1991 the border was not visible for many people.

¹⁶ An exception forms a mistake by Google Earth. See the extra chapter.

As mentioned in chapter 2, the establishment of the border in the lake was negative for the fishermen's activities. Estonian fishermen complain that the border hampers their fishing because the main fish stocks are on the Russian side of the lake (Negotiating Borders of Multiple meanings, pg. 60). But it had more effects. At the western shores of lake Peipsi many people, fishermen included, used to grow vegetables in their gardens for own consumption and for trade. Nearby a metropolis, the markets of Saint Petersburg were an important outlet market for the lake Peipsi region (Eiki Berg, 1999). When the border closed after 1991, it became harder to visit Russia. Piret Palkakand and Piret Ehin, both related to the Department of Political Science of the Tartu University, did some interview-research related to this matter. They conclude the following: Most of the interviewees agreed that the options to market crops have declined during the last 10 years; only 5 out of 120 said they have improved (Common borders shared problems, the Estonian-Russian border, pg. 82, 1999). The new political situation, the closure of the border between Estonia and Russia and high tariff barriers almost finished this profitable business (Eiki Berg, 1999). The establishment of the border between Estonia and Russia led to the ruptures of family, cultural, social and economic relations (Negotiating Borders of Multiple meanings, pg. 11).

May 2004

The negotiations between Estonia and the EU started years before Estonian joined the union officially on the first of May 2004.

In chapter 2 the influences of the stricter border control since 2004 were discussed. It is hard to say whether only the EU caused this new policy since bilateral border policy was also implemented in the same years from the Russian side. The assumption that the EU forced Estonia to be stricter at the border with Russia is a conclusion one cannot easily draw (Raul Mälk, 2006). EU member states can make their own considerations with respect to common rules within EU territory.

The control on the maintenance of fish quotas in lake Peipsi has also not changed since 2004. The Estonian part of lake Peipsi is an inland water body so international law has no direct impact on it. Still as a member of the EU, Estonia is more engaged with other European states, which can also influence national policy (H. Tuus, 2006).

Border Schedule

The Estonian-Russian frontier and later border did not have the same meaning for the people after independence as before. Its hardness and softness changed through history. Figure 3.1 contains a visual image of the lake Peipsi border through the years. This model is constructed largely inspired by the works of political scientists, Eiki Berg (2006), who largely works in the tradition of social constructivism. Particularly, I am elaborating his model 'The dimensions of European borders.'

The model (figure 3.1) contains a cross in which the years of interest can be placed. To create a good overview of the lake Peipsi border the following years are used as 'markers':

<1991: The time the border was an inner-USSR frontier.

>1991: The years after the year 1991 when the border between Estonia, as an independent state, and Russia was established.

2004: The border since Estonia became part of EU space.

2007: The implementation of Schengen policy.

2020: Idea of the nearby future.

The horizontal line represents on the left **Open** (an open border) and on the right **Closed** (a closed border). The vertical line on the top **Visible** (a visible border) and under **Invisible** (an invisible border). It is not easy to place the border in the schedule, but by

looking at the different years one can see that the border was not manifest through time. The status of the border changed through years of political change. The border 'walks' through the model.

It depends on the person you are talking to, how hard, open, visible or invisible the border is. It is a mental construction. So the model below is not the only possible model. It is possible to make some general notes but the feeling about the border is and will be largely subjective, at most intersubjective. The vagueness of border is in current debates often discussed. Border situation are often not black or white and many people like to now exactly what the status of borders is. Are they open for smuggling, terrorist etc or are the totally closed/ secure, are dominant understandable question?

As the model in figure 3.1 shows, a less vague conclusion can be made: The current lake Peipsi border is more closed than before and is becoming more visible (in the near future).

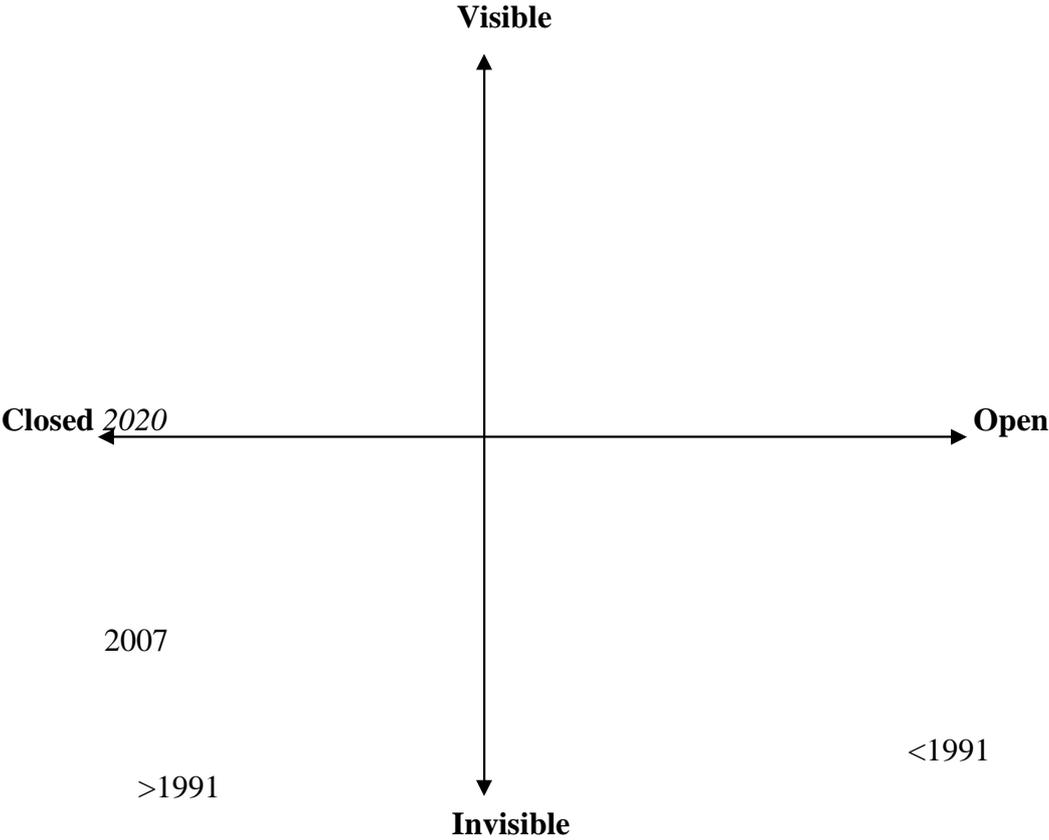


Figure 3.1: Status of the lake Peipsi border through years

The invisible border

The fact that most of the time the border is to be found somewhere in the lake and is not visible, makes the Peipsi lake border an interesting phenomenon. You cannot see the line because symbols are absent. But this invisible line has a lot of influence on life of people; its most direct influence is that it barricades people; you are not permitted to cross a line you cannot see. As a social and anthropological construction the border it is not invisible at all. The lake Peipsi border was not an open and a visible border in the last decades (see figure 3.1), a rather logical conclusion for a water border. When the political situation meant an open border it would be ridiculous to make the border more visible at the same time. The unique situation, a border in the middle of a lake that has an average width of 30 kilometers, has a lot of impact on the status of the border. Lately the border seems to become more visible, as more symbols appear, but still it is difficult to see the line and in many places symbols are still totally absent. In the future, in 2020 for example as the figure shows, the water borderline is probably more visible, but this part of the border will never be as visible as a land border. In our heads the border is there so we only need some symbols and knowledge of electronic systems to mark the border. As long as people live dominantly on the land along lake Peipsi instead of the water itself, creating a sort of 'land border', in the lake, is not necessary.

The influences of borders on livelihood have been a popular research theme the last years. In their work scholars made general conclusions. I'd like to take a look on some of these conclusions related to my research:

Borders are both symbols and manifestations of power relations and social institutions, and they become part of daily life in diverging institutional practices' (Newman and Paasi, 1998)

The lake Peipsi border is really a manifestation of power relations. The border situation changed several times, there were fluctuations in these power relations. Symbols of the border are often absent but it has an influence on the people on both sides of the lake, which it separates.

Borders do not only separate groups and communities from each other but also mediate contacts between them (Wilson and Donnan, 1998).

At the land border this is the case but on the Peipsi lake there is no contact at all. Making contact across the water border is not permitted. The fear of illegal migration and smuggling has resulted in this policy. The lake Peipsi border, as a construction in the water, makes it different from a land border.

Boundaries make a difference in space, and as far as their cartographic representations are concerned they also make a difference in time (Paasi, 1996).

This boundary is making a difference in water space. At the eastern side of the line it is one hour later (Russian time) but in development it may be more than only one hour. So the line does make a difference in time.

It is clear that 'all frontiers have a psychological component' (Anderson, 1996).

The lake Peipsi border is almost only psychological; it is as a created line in a lake, not a natural line. Its meaning is constructed by people, and the width of the lake gives it a

The lake Peipsi border, and the Estonian Russian border as a whole, separates two cultural worlds. Russia, being an enormous country, is not a western state. Areas that border China and Mongolia for example are different from the regions near Moscow and Saint Petersburg, which are rather western. One could say, the border splits a western state, Estonia, from the melting pot state of Russia. Speaking of Estonia's border with Russia, Estonian former president Meri said in 1993 that, 'Estonia has been the eastern border of the European judicial system for centuries and will remain so (Borders of Security in Estonia, pg. 42, 2003). Meri is focusing on the court system, but in the USSR era, Estonia was possibly rather western, Moscow was, in terms of law, making Estonia's policy.

It seems that Estonia is trying to become a modern western state in EU space. In the future will Estonia maybe have more similarities with a country like The Netherlands than with its neighbor Russia? It may be said that it is important that Estonia does not denied its socialist past. The country will change but still many old (Soviet) structures are embedded

in society. In the words of Anthony Giddens, although Estonia is changing very rapidly, it needs these old structures and systems from the Soviet era to reach economic prosperity. Estonia and its mixed population have a long history. It would be a pity if the tendency is completely towards the West so that the past and all that is currently in the society from that time is forgotten.¹⁷ Sentiments will continue to play a role in everyday life and ‘Othering’ processes like thinking in terms of Wallman’s four-part social boundary matrix (Wallman 1978: 207) in which the ‘Us versus ‘Them’ distinction was placed, can make the relation between the two ethnic groups problematic. The government must create an atmosphere where Estonians and Russians can live together. Improving Estonian-Russian relations on a state level can contribute in a more normal coexistence within society. The governments of both countries can show the way by signing the border agreement. Stable borders exist where the representatives of states have signed and honored treaties recognizing their sovereignty and where various parties agree on the location, delimitation and demarcation of a common boundary. And where the (geo) political situation is less stable, the boundaries and their locations are typically potential sources of territorial conflicts (Brunn 1991, pg 269). Estonia’s membership of the EU and NATO, worked out in chapter 4, has its current influence on the (border) situation.

But should statesman not be progressive instead of conservative? From my political point of view this is the case. Like fishermen, they must accept the new situation and try to make the best of it. The upcoming chapters will show that this is not often easy.

¹⁷ In the extra chapter (at the end of this work) I have added the story ‘De culinaire ontwikkeling’, written in Dutch, which is related to this topic.

Chapter four: (Geopolitical) relations Estonia-Russia-EU

In this chapter I would like to lift the local micro focus, which was dominant in the previous chapters, to a macro level.

The traditional fisherman lives most of his life on the lake and near the lake. But he has to deal with policy plans made by governments that act on a broader scale. Decisions made on a higher level have their influences on local circumstances. It is valuable to have a look at geopolitical relations between Estonian, Russian and the EU relations that affect life on a small scale. At the end of the chapter the regional component will get attention too.

How are the Estonian relations with the EU and Russia?

The years when Estonia and Russia were both republics in the Soviet Union are not far behind. Only the youngest generation did not experience the time when both states were in the same country. Frustration about the USSR era, anger, jealousy, and for some, a longing for the past are captured in today's Estonia. There is not one feeling about the big neighbor but the majority of Estonians are negative about the common past. Several Estonians and Russian are positive about each other, others just live their lives without making much contact and still others really feel a hatred for the other.

The recent history and the quarrels through many centuries between the two nations form the basis for the complicated relationship between the two states and ethnic groups today¹⁸.

Although both nations interacted with each other many times through history, they did not easily assimilate. There are similarities but also many differences between Estonians and Russians, as professor Peeter Vihalemm made clear in his course 'Post communist transformations, October 2006' which I took at Tartu University. Language and religion are probably the key elements in the ideology of nation building (cf. Glassner and the Blij 1980). In this case the two languages are totally different and so are the religions. All over the world, these factors create a breeding ground for problems.

Estonia as a small country with 1.4 million citizens has to deal with ethnic problems (see figure 4.1). Besides the fact that there are difficulties between Russians and Estonians over the land borders, also in Estonia there are problems between ethnic Estonians and Russians. Only 68,6 percent of the total population are Estonian. A huge minority group, almost 1/3 of Estonia's population, is Russian. Many theses, such as Sergei Ivanov's paper 'National minorities and new challenges of the Estonian Society' (1997), were written about the Russian minority in Estonia and related problems. For more information I would like to refer to this thesis.

Percentage of ethnicities in Estonia (2006)	
Estonians	68,6 %
Russians	25,7 %
Ukrainians	2,1 %
Belarusians	1,2 %
Finnish	0,8 %
Others	1,7 %

Figure 4.1: Ethnicity in Estonia. Populstat, 2007

¹⁸ In the extra chapter a short overview concerning Estonia's past is given.

From one union into another

The young republic of Estonia is proud of its new sovereignty from Russia. For me as a foreigner in Estonia it was clear that the Estonians are trying very hard to give you a real 'Estonian feeling'. Many people asked me 'what do you think about Estonia, what do you think about Estonian hospitality' etc. This is the behavior of a young nation that is searching for its special identity. Whenever I made a (positive) distinction between Russians and Estonians, a smile came to people's face. The hard process of losing Russia's pressure is embedded still in society.

Integration with the EU and NATO has been Estonia's paramount policy priority since the re-establishment of the country's independence in 1991 (Borders of Security in Estonia, Merje Kuus 2003). The ironic situation was that after being in the Soviet Union for years, another new Union was 'waiting.' Although Estonia was free to choose whether or not it wanted to join the European institutions, this choice could have much influence on the future of the young nation. Would Estonia have the opportunity to be itself in the EU, to show its Estonian identity abroad were important questions. From the beginning, all political parties were positive about EU membership, NATO accession was less popular from the start (Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2006).

The premise of this nearly monolithic elite support for international integration is that EU and NATO memberships unequivocally locate Estonia in the West and thus protect Estonia's statehood in a geopolitical volatile region. A failure to clearly demarcate Estonia's location in the West would place Estonia in the geopolitical gray zone between the West and Russia and inevitably lead to falling back into the Russian sphere of influence (Borders of Security in Estonia, Merje Kuus 2003). So Estonia's position wasn't easy, in all situations it had to give up certain choices. The 'Estonian feeling' is well represented by: we are on the border, and therefore only a small push is needed to make us fall one side or rise into the other' (Eesti Päevaleht, 1999).

The referendum held on September the 14th 2003 made clear that the majority of the Estonian population wanted their state to join the EU and indirectly NATO on the first of May 2004.

By joining NATO Estonia was *voluntarily* part of a military alliance for the first time in history (Raul Mälik, 2006).

Estonian Russian relations

The Estonian Russian relations can be compared to the relations between the Dutch and the Germans after World War II. It took time for relations to improve and even nowadays, more than 60 years after the World War II, the war still has its influences. For the Estonians it is only 16 years ago that the domination of the Russians started to decrease, so it will take time for current problems to be solved.

The young republic is pushing away the influences of the old 'occupier' Russia.

The feeling in Estonia sometimes is that Russia still sees Estonia as being part of Russia. In the years after Estonia gained independence for the first time (1918-1940), the 'big brother' forgot to be specific about Estonia's status. For example, in an important source like the *Atlas Istorii SSSR 1990*, the Baltic States were represented as if they had been part of the SU during the period of their independence. The author neglected to be specific about this for Estonians important time without Soviet rule over Estonia. Because of the past it is very important for its inhabitants that Estonia is now seen as an independent country that can make free choices without Russia.

The Estonian contacts with the EU and with the US are very tight. Estonia is seen internationally as a good friend of US president Bush. Estonia has joined the US in its war against terrorism and was active in the war in Iraq. It seems that Estonia is searching openly for new friends that can help them in their quest of independence from Russia.

Estonia's EU accession and especially the accession to NATO did not positively influence the Estonian-Russian relations. Russia is losing its power over Estonia and Estonia is becoming more and more a real western neighbor (Raul Mälik, 2006).

Mälik: 'if you ask the Russians: How are your relations with USA? They say: 'good'; how is your relation with Germany and UK? Good, and with NATO? They say: 'NATO is bad!' But NATO is all those countries together, so it is strange. Russia is in some ways still a country at the end of 19th beginning of 20th century. They think in terms of balance of power and military categories' (Mälik, 2006).

From this rather traditional point of view it is logical that Russia is not positive about developments in the Baltic region. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as former USSR states, are now NATO countries and Russia will not join these alliances soon. After being part of the same alliance Estonia is now part of the other alliance, one that is Russia's competitor.

Embedded in Russian society are fears from the Cold War. Russian president Vladimir Putin can possibly use those sentiments in the near future to justify certain actions. In chapter five this is made clear by a concrete example concerning Estonian Russian relations.

According to the website of the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Estonian-Russian relations are stable. Estonia is open to co-operation with Russia within the framework of its foreign policy priorities. Estonia wants to see Russia as a democratic and strong country with which it has good-neighborly relations. Estonian membership of NATO (joined on 29 March 2004) and the European Union (joined on 1 May 2004) will definitely contribute in strengthening co-operation with Russia while creating more stability in Estonian-Russian relations.*

All governmental websites give positive and very diplomatic information about Estonian Russian relations. Nothing negative is ever written in the sites.

Although the relations between Estonia and the countries in the world are good, as demonstrated on the websites of the Estonian government, before reading the text I presumed the Estonian government viewed the Estonian-Russian relationship more realistically. Only the part 'Estonia wants to see Russia as a democratic and strong country' contains some hidden criticism. *Or am I now overacting in a critical geopolitical way?*

The way relations will develop depends on several changes, the mood of the main players in the negotiations, the prime ministers, the president's etcetera.

The flag in figure 4.2 (page 45) in which the flags of both countries are combined into one, gives an extremely positive view on Estonian Russian relations. It symbolizes a very tight relationship. I am curious if the relationship in the future once will be like the flag is showing us? Or is that an Utopia?



Figure 4.2: Estonian-Russian relations symbolized by one flag, Utopia?

It seems that the relation between Estonians and Russians in Estonia is less problematic these last years. ‘The attitude toward Russia and the US and European countries is changing in Estonia. The young generation doesn't have so strong an alienation toward Moscow and has become more critical of Europe and the US’ (interview by Olesya Vartanyan of Estonian president Toomas Ilves, *Axcess news Washington* 2007).

According to figure 4.3 in terms of total volume, Russia was Estonia’s second largest trading partner in 2006. In terms of export, Russia was Estonia’s 4th largest partner in 2006 and in import, it was Estonia’s second largest supplier (www.stat.ee). Good economic relations are important for both sides.

Year	Exports	Imports
1995	199.0	256.1
1996	192.6	250.3
1997	184.5	273.8
1998	132.7	275.6
1999	275.6	258.5
2000	81.7	391.3
2001	101.4	389.6
2002	121.5	375.1
2003	155.9	491.3
2004	268.4	619.8
2005	396.3	715.8
2006	607.2	1386.9

Figure 4.3: Estonian-Russian trade 1995-2006 (millions of EUR)
All economic figures originate from the Statistical Office of Estonia

The double customs tariffs imposed on Estonia by the Russian Federation in 1995 hindered the development of Estonian-Russian economic relations until they were removed on 1 May 2004 (www.stat.ee). Since that day, economic cooperation is easier as the numbers in the figure make clear. This will probably continue in the (near) future.

Russia- EU relations

For Russia and for the EU, a good relationship is important. Both are big powers bordering each other so social and political cooperation is needed. Especially on an economic level, each has an interest in each other referring to the website: (<http://ec.europa.eu>) *Russia is an*

important partner with which there is considerable interest to engage and build a strategic partnership. Russia is the EU's largest neighbour, brought even closer to the EU by the 2004 enlargement. The 2003 European Security Strategy correctly situates Russia as a key player on geo-political and security issues at global and regional level. Russia is a key actor in the UN Security Council and has significant influence in our common European neighborhood and in Central Asia. In addition, Russia is also a major supplier of energy products to the EU. Despite its relatively small economy, Russia is a large market for EU goods and services, with considerable potential for growth. Russia is a key ally in EU efforts to combat new threats to security, including from terrorism, pollution, crime, illegal migration and trafficking.

For Russia, the EU is a 'door' to the Estonian society. When there are problems with the position of the Russian minority in Estonia, which is the case currently (see chapter five), the Russian government is able to use the EU to get support for their Russian brothers. From the start of Estonia's preparation for EU membership the EU pointed to human rights issues in Estonia. One of the preconditions for joining the EU was improving human rights in the Baltic country. The situation for the Russian minorities is better now but the living conditions for Russians are still worse than those of ethnic Estonians.¹⁹

The council of Schengen countries

Estonia became part of the council of Schengen countries from the moment it joined the EU. EU member states such as Great Britain and Ireland had a free choice whether or not they wanted to join the Schengen acquis when they joined the EU. The ten countries that joined the EU in May 2004, accepted by accepting the EU rules also automatically Schengen. The 'Schengen Action Plan of July 2001' was made to structure changes in the legislation and to make the implantation of Schengen a success. 'Estonia is in the process of reforming its legislation, to harmonize it with the Schengen *acquis*. Several legislative reforms are carried out by the accession to the European Union' (Schengen Action Plan, July 2001).

The following was to be found in the strategy: The implementation of the Schengen acquis is a two-step process: firstly, implementation of Schengen *acquis* upon joining the European Union and secondly, joining the Schengen visa area and abolition of internal border control (Schengen Action Plan 2001). Many changes were needed, like changes in the Estonian organization of border control. Big changes in the system were not necessary (Tanal Allas, 2006).

Schengen goals such as free travel of persons, goods and money between the Schengen countries, also named Schengenland, are only successful when a closed border at the external borders of Schengen-space is guaranteed. Estonia, like other outer states of the EU, must consider how hard and manifest it wants to make its border. Making a really hard border means that creating sustainable good contact with the Russian side is difficult. The CTC in this region is the main actor in promoting accommodating and facilitating cross-border cooperation in the Estonian Russian border area and it gets support from several governments. On the website of the ministry of Foreign Affairs, the willingness to cooperate with the Russians, in terms of good neighbour ship, is shown. This poses a dilemma. The closed borders of Schengen countries are not good for cross-border cooperation (see further in this chapter)

¹⁹ See The Integration of Non-Estonians into Estonian Society: History, Problems and Trends by Aksel Kirch. Estonian Academy Publishers, Tallinn, 1997.

This is the discrepancy within Schengen. It is very difficult to have a border that is closed and also open. Placing the lake Peipsi border in schedule 3.1 by taking into consideration the Schengen acquis and the idea of ENP is difficult. In this case, the border is implacable, but this is the current reality.

The regional impact of Schengen is interesting for this work.

Eiki Berg and Piret Ehin wrote four reports concerning influences of Schengen on the Estonian-Russian border area and its people. In this case the fourth report; *Estonian-Russian border regime and the impact of Schengen: Local reactions and perspectives (2002)* is interesting. It is based on fieldwork in June 2002. This work contains personal stories and interviews so it forms a good addition to this work in an anthropological sense. It is beyond the scope of this work to focus further on this topic so I would like to refer to their work.

The contra reaction and feeling on closing borders and making a sort of EU world was discussed. The idea that it is important to have good contacts with the neighboring states of Schengenland and the EU was on the rise. Creating of a 'ring of friends', good neighbor ship et cetera were implemented in programs as Interegg and the The European Neighborhood Policy. According to the website: (<http://www.enpi-programming.eu>)

The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) was developed in 2004 with the aim "to avoid drawing new dividing lines in Europe and to promote stability and prosperity within and beyond the new borders of the Union". It provides the framework for closer cooperation with the neighboring countries of the newly enlarged European Union, namely Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Russia, Syria, Tunisia, Ukraine.

To make the idea more clear: The ENP encourages cooperation; not isolation, exclusion or *realpolitik*. When the ENP is successful in promoting democracy and interdependence in the European neighborhood, the EU would be able to construct a 'ring of countries, sharing the EU's fundamental values and objectives, drawn into an increasingly close relationship, going beyond co-operation to involve a significant measure of economic and political integration' (European Neighborhood Policy, p. 5)

Cross-border cooperation

A concrete demonstration of ENP activities is cross-border cooperation.²⁰ At the outskirts of Estonia and Russia the border, as an obstacle can also be seen as an opportunity. Organizations are created to develop a positive atmosphere for cross-border cooperation. On the Estonian side, the CTC in Tartu is one of the main institutions. It is supporting several initiatives for cross-border cooperation in the Estonian Russian borderland. Besides that it is involved in projects all over the world and works together with institutions like the Center of Borderland Studies at the Radboud University of Nijmegen. In the Estonian-Russian border regions there is cross-border cooperation on a small-scale. Schools, local governments firms have small-scale initiatives. Eiki Berg and Julia Boman from the Tartu University wrote an interesting work in 2005 'Cross-Border Cooperation in Focus: What are the Lessons to be learned in the Estonian-Russian and Romanian-Moldavian Borderland?' Personal stories and interviews of people living near the border formed the basis of this work. The authors conclude that cross-border cooperation is not well developed yet in the Estonian Russian borderland. Often there is no willingness to cooperate at all and a strategy plan is missing. The first Estonian-Russian program for cross-border cooperation is to be prepared only by 2007 (Cross-Border Cooperation in Focus: What are the Lessons to be learned in the Estonian-Russian and Romanian-Moldavian Borderland? Pg.15). Therefore, a lot can improve and some suggestions are given in this work on how to do so. The cold

²⁰ See: Karen E. Smith, 'The Outsiders: The European Neighbourhood Policy', *International Affairs*, 81 (2005): 757-773, p. 760.

political relations between the Estonians and the Russians are also in this case one of the main obstacles for good cooperation²¹.

This way of ‘seeing’ the border is more like Wilson and Donnan (1998) describe it; ‘Borders do not only separate groups and communities from each other but also mediate contacts between them.’

There are social and political reasons for cross-border cooperation but mostly they are economical.

Estonia: East or West?

What is the geographical location of Estonia?²² And could there be a new role for Estonia as a country between East and West? These questions are interesting from an economic and political perspective. On the 5th and the 6th of May 2006, a conference was organized at the Euro College of the University of Tartu, titled: ‘*Promoting democratic values in the enlarging Europe: The Changing Role of the Baltic States from Importers to Exporters.*’

Several interesting papers were presented during this international conference and it was a good place to discuss Estonia’s and the other two Baltic States’ position in the present time and in the future.

An interesting paper at the conference was: ‘Bastion, Beacon or Bridge? The Role of the Baltic States in the EU’s Relationship with the Eastern ‘Neighbors,’ written by David J. Galbreath and Jeremy W. Lamoreaux from the Department of Politics and International Relations of the University of Aberdeen. They conclude the following in their work: Whether as a ‘bastion, beacon or bridge’, the Baltic States will play a key role in the West’s relationship with the East. Although it is difficult to predict, the role of Estonia in the nearby future is discussed in further detail in chapter 5. With respect to its history, as a country that was never for a long time in the same alliance and was occupied by several powers, I would predict that this role will change through time.

²¹ For more information I’d like to refer to Cross-Border Cooperation in Focus: What are the Lessons to be learned in the Estonian-Russian and Romanian-Moldavian Borderland? Tartu (2005).

²² In the extra chapter (at the end of this work) you will find more about Estonia’s geographical location and its role in the region.

Chapter five: The current situation and near future

In the previous episodes, the past and the present situation in the lake Peipsi area was discussed. This chapter focuses on developments in the present time and on the near future. The current relationship between Estonia and Russia and the position of the lake Peipsi fishermen gets attention. This chapter gives a view on the nearby future, although some developments are insecure, others are easier to predict.

Will life of the fishermen change again?

The life of the fishermen is changing constantly since they have to deal with natural changes in the lake Peipsi region. The last decades their life changed and it seems that also in the future no single day will be the same as the day before. Although an individual fisherman works on his own and so do those who work for companies, in many situations, social and political fluctuations in the lake Peipsi region, will also continue to play a role in the fishermen lives. The fish quotas on the lake, for example, are not manifest. This volume can change through time and this will have its influence on the economic life of the fishermen. For companies and the fishermen who work for them fluctuations have less impact. In the future, firms can overcome changes better than individual fishermen. Instead of individual fishermen these people have companies that can give help and advice and in some case maybe even (financial) support. For the individual fishermen fishing will become harder and harder but this is the situation all over the world. The situation was already hard for the fishermen and still many will continue working. Fishermen like Fjodor will find a way to do what they do best, fishing free, and independent, in the area they belong to.

Will the lake Peipsi border change in the future?

The lake Peipsi border status is unlikely to change much in the upcoming years. Fluctuations- a more open or more closed border system will continue but (new) state borders are not going to exist in the near future in the lake Peipsi region. Whether or not the border agreement will be signed soon does not matter. The border regime can change a little, but when looking at the last few years, after 2004, huge changes are unlikely. Russia will not join the EU or NATO as long as both institutes have the goals of today so this too will not cause changes.

Will the lake Peipsi border form a part of the border between the EU and the rest of the world for a very long time?

It seems that this border will form the EU external the upcoming years, unless other political entities besides the EU and NATO become powerful. The position of Russia as an important gas and oil provider can lead to new political changes. Energy as a political tool will probably get more and more meaning in the future. Russia is already improving its geopolitical position through fuel and can use this in international alliances and negotiations. This can have its influences on the regional position of Russia. Socio-economic relations between Russia and its neighboring countries like Estonia can change when Russia is more and more the only energy provide. The current Estonian attitude to Russia can change in the future as the small neighbor, without natural resources, is dependent on Russia. In such a situation Estonia is dependent again but now because of natural resources. The developments are difficult to predict but such a situation is not unlikely. It is certain that energy will play an important role in the future, but its impact is unsure.

Cross-border cooperation can become a valuable tool to improve economic prosperity in the border regions. A stable border is positive for cross-border cooperation and this seems to be

the case in the Estonian Russian borderland. EU plans for good partnership and for improving contact with Russia can help to improve regional relations. The CTC continues to stimulate cross-border cooperation and cross-border understanding. So the possibilities are there, but it is hard to say how successful regional businesses will be. Sentiments also play an important role in this perspective and internal developments also have its influences. In Russia, Moscow still controls many regional plans and initiatives. A more regional structure instead of a centralistic structure can help to make cross-border cooperation more successful, but this will not soon be available.

Good contacts on state level will make it for border people easier to get visa for their cross-border activities. Good visa policy will contribute in 'seeing' the border not only as an obstacle but also in the way that borders do not only separate groups and communities from each other but also mediate contacts between them (Wilson and Donnan, 1998).

Current developments in Estonian-Russian relations

Estonia, as mentioned, is as a relatively small and young state, which is not often an important issue in world news. When Estonia is regularly in the news, it is there together with the two other Baltic States or with the other nine new EU-member States. But the last months, Estonia has been in the news a lot. An example of Post-communist sentiments and the related struggle, to be found in many Eastern Europe areas, was exposed in Estonia.

The start of what would become a geopolitical conflict between Estonia and Russia, was the idea of the Estonian parliament to replace a monument of an USSR soldier (a bronze statue) that was located in the center of the Estonian capital of Tallinn. This statue symbolized the victory by the Soviets over Nazi-Germany. But indirectly this was the start of 50 years of Soviet rule in Estonia. Many Estonians had mixed feelings about this statue. When the statue was finally replaced, with support of the Estonian parliament, Russian diplomats and Russian citizens in Estonia and in Russia were furious. The mood between the two countries changed. The Estonian ambassador Marina Kaljurand in Moscow was threatened by 200 young people according to the article '200 jongeren belagen ambassade' (De Volkskrant 04-05-07). The Estonian-Russians and those Russians who wanted to show their solidarity used this replacement of a monument of Soviet glory by Estonians, as the reason to show their anger. Violence broke out in Tallinn, climaxing in a man's death and in fights between Estonians and Russians. In Moscow Marina Kaljurand's photograph was decorated with a moustache, like Adolf Hitler, to make all Estonians seen like fascists. Around the Estonian embassy in Moscow, many young pro-Kremlin Russians showed their anger towards Estonia. Russian president Putin was not amused with the Estonian action. Estonian president Ilves was giving a contra-reaction and so the whole situation almost got out of hand. Now the situation is normal again but it was a demonstration of sentiments that are most of the time covert, but near the surface on both sides. In Estonia as well as in Russia, much anger about the past is still hidden and it takes time to heal this.

These problems had an impact in several locations and on different scales. The good relations with the Russians-Estonian border guard officer Tanel Allas normally experienced during his work were different after the problems occurred. '*Contacts with Russians are harder lately in customs work. The recent problems have their influences on contacts across the border. Fewer less meetings are organized with my Russian colleagues*' (Tanel Allas, June 2007). Probably this is a temporary atmosphere in the Estonian-Russian relations but the impact of such an escalation of sentiments is obvious.

This also had its influences on the relations between the EU as a whole and Russia. At the same time Russians refused to let Polish meat cross the Russian border and it was not happy about American plans to place rocket shields near the Russian border. These conflicts had

their impact on EU-Russia relations. The yearly meeting in Samara (Russia) between Russia and the EU was not well planned from this perspective. The mood was not good for this meeting about further cooperation. The article written with the title '*Echec dreigt op top EU met Russen*' translated: meeting EU-Russia probably unsuccessful (De Gelderlander, 15-05-07) just before the meeting illustrated the atmosphere. The EU is an institution but still it is a conglomerate of several countries that have besides, common EU point of views their own bilateral relations with Russia. So also in EU space it is useful that Russia and Estonia continue making their relationship better. It can also affect Russian-EU negotiations and agreements.

The recently signed border agreement between Latvia and Russia will not soon lead to a break through between Estonian and Russian negotiators. In words of the Estonian president Meri, the situations are not the same, so it has no impact on the Estonian-Russian situation. Also today frustration and pressure from outside, EU & NATO, is not enough for the small state to forget the past and only think about the common future. For such a radical change in political Estonia the wounds are too fresh. Once there is an agreement, it won't make much difference on everyday life for the people living near the border. But a real agreement can help to attain sustainable relations and can make the contacts less embedded with sentiments.

The parliaments that were established in Estonia since 1991 differ in their attitude towards the Russian minorities. Some were more positive to Estonian-Russians than others. It seems that the current Estonian parliament is not pro-Russian. But after the elections the representatives have to deal with the mixed population to rule Estonia. The dominant feeling is that the Russian minority is often not treated as an important part of the society although it is almost one third of the total. Also president Toomas Hendrik Ilves (in office since 9 October 2006) made a statement in his first speech that was in favor of ethnic Estonians. This has led to new problems in society. A positive distinction, and in this work even more important, was made by prime minister Andrus Ansip (in office since 12 April 2005). Ansip visited Piiressaare in spring 2007. It was very important for the 'Russian' islanders that someone from the Estonian government visited the island, after years of no attention at all. It can really help them to feel part of the Republic of Estonia and for other Estonian Russians it was probably positive too. This visit will be the main subject on the island for a long time. Small personal initiatives, like this visit to Piiressaare, can help to make a minority feel connected to Estonia and to improve its citizenship. It really depends on small initiatives like that whether relations will improve or not. Hopefully the Estonian parliament learned its lesson after the problems with the Bronze soldier. In a melting pot it is not easy to satisfy everyone but it is not recommendable to forget that emotions play a part in society.

It is hard to say how the state Estonia will develop in the near future. More research on this specific topic is needed to answer this question but it seems that the young country has many positive challenges. As the Euro College of the University of Tartu describes it in its course material, Estonia can try to be a sort of gateway between Russia and the rest of the EU? Good relations with Russians are important in the country itself to create an atmosphere that can work towards a good future for all Estonians. Good relations with Russia are valuable too when Estonia wants to use its geographical positive location.

Russia's attitude to Estonia will play a role in the developments of the relationship between the countries. But Estonia's position is easier since it is member of the EU and NATO. I am sure, in the light of this work and after being in Estonia for three months, that Estonia as a state that wants to be western, will continue to improve its prosperity and democratic values. If the eastern part will form a more coherent part with the rest of Estonia in the future is not

easy to say. In the lake Peipsi area the rural character will continue to dominate in the near future. But some small initiatives have already been started like creating small tourist infrastructure. The upcoming years will show how the region will develop and whether EU money will find its way to this part of Estonia. Initiatives by local people will be important, as well as the willingness of the Estonian government and the EU to support these initiatives. It is a nice area and people are willing to work, so much is possible although a precondition is stability in the region.

The EU in the future

Recent debates about EU enlargement and EU partnership contain interesting questions as: What is the end of the EU-landscape and what is the position of the EU member states in this debate? Such questions are very important and will remain so.

One of the most difficult themes the last years is the position of Turkey in EU negotiations. This is a discussion, which will not stop soon, and recently European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso has said that he is against having a debate on the geographic borders of the EU²³. This is probably since the discussion about Turkey can damage the whole EU-process since it is not good for stability all over Europe.

Many conferences are organized to create a better understanding and to work on problems that occur in the EU. The CTC, as the key actor in Baltic region in organizing conferences, and as being part of the BEN (Baltic Euro-regional Network) is coordinating an email list, which informs interested people about conferences which will be organized.²⁴

In respect to this work an interesting question comes up: Will Russia join the EU in the future? Looking to the current political situation, this scenario it is not realistic. From Russia's and from the EU side it seems that both parties are not thinking about cooperation in one common union. Both agree that good membership and political/ economic relations are important. But the future will show the way the cooperation will develop and what its impact will be.

As an example of tensions at the external border of the EU and in the debate of EU enlargement, this thesis is very up to date. The result of the fact this work fits in the current debate is that this work will never be totally completed. Further research is constantly needed to get a better understanding of the changes at this border and the EU borders in general. It is obvious that researching the border situation means, in the light of this work, looking to the influences of the new border on those you live there...

²³ Source of information: Euobserver.com; 30.08.2007 - 09:22 CET | By Honor Mahony

²⁴ www.benproject.org

Chapter six: Conclusion and further research

Conclusion:

In this thesis much is discussed but all is connected to the following main question:

How has the geographical condition of the lake Peipsi border changed because of (geo) political changes in 1991, Estonian independence of the USSR, and in 2004, the Estonian joining of the EU and NATO, and in what way did this have an impact on the life and work of local fishermen?

In the Estonian Russian border area, a lot has changed in recent years. The border conditions in lake Peipsi changed, although much was not visible as a result of a lack of symbols.

For more than 50 years the lake Peipsi border was an inner-frontier in the Soviet Union and therefore almost meaningless. When Estonia became independent and when the young state became member of the EU and NATO the border between Estonia and Russia became more meaningful. The political changes since 1991 have had their impact on the border area. The border, which used to be an open border in the immense Soviet Union, was closed. New border policy was made and restrictions came into being. These political changes had an impact on the people. Since 1991 the people on both sides of the border live separated from each other and can only reach the other over land. For those who had to deal with the border much changed. So for fishermen the impact was obvious. Those fishermen working as individuals and those who work for companies had to deal with the new border situation. A huge impact was the fact that their fishing territory decreased. Besides that, at the same time, less fish was to be found in the water because of natural changes. Fish quotas restrict the amount of fish individual fishermen are allowed to catch. Although not all the changes to their work can be linked directly to border changes, the changing border conditions had an impact and still have. For individual fishermen the changes were harder than for those working for companies. Individual fishermen must do everything alone, which can be nice, but this also means they cannot ask a company for (financial) support and so on.

Some fishermen, individual ones and those who worked for companies, quit their business and found other work. In the near future more fishermen will probably quit, since a special program, to decrease the amount of fishermen on the lake, is organized by the Estonian government with EU support. But although fishing is a hard profession the job will survive along lake Peipsi. It is still the most important source of income and people cherish the old fishing traditions.

The relations between Estonians and Russians are sometimes difficult since they have a common history in the Soviet Union. During Soviet time Estonia was forced to be part of the Union. Estonians still feels anger as a result, while Russians claims Estonia was not forced at all. Sentiments between the two parties have an impact in international meetings and on treaties. The border between the two countries is officially not ratified and it is hard to say when it will be ratified. After a rather difficult time, climaxing in the death of a man in Tallinn during demonstrations, Estonian-Russian relations seem to be stable now. Many problems between the two ethnic groups are still there and it will take much time until these sentiments lose their power. The EU can, as it did recently, negotiate between Estonians and Russians in times when the sentiments between the two ethnic groups escalate.

Border research by the University of Tartu shows that cross-border cooperation in the Estonian-Russian borderland is not that important but much can be improved now the first steps to this small bilateral cooperation were made. Programs like Interregg and organizations like the CTC can help to make cross border-cooperation initiatives more workable.

The status of Russia as an international fuel and gas supplier will have an influence on the relation between Estonia and Russia and Russia's position in the region as a whole. Estonia wants to be an independent state but still the big neighbor is important. The EU and NATO can help make the relations better and programs like ENP (European Neighborhood Program) and Interregg can help to improve relations too. But also here sentiments are relevant since Russia is not fond of NATO. Also on a bilateral level Estonia and Russia must create an atmosphere of willingness to cooperate.

The future will show how life at this border will develop and how geopolitical relations will develop. As long as people work hard and do their best as fishermen to be flexible in the system of that day, many problems can be solved also between the so-called east and the west...

Further research:

Although I made several choices during this project and much succeeded, further and more specific research is needed. With respect to the results of this work it is useful:

- To construct a more specific model, in which the border through the years can be placed.
- To do research on the Russian side of the border, to be able to make a comparison and to give a closer look on the border situation from a Russian perspective.
- To choose some parts of my broad work and go into depth. This will give this thesis a more scientific body.
- To use more sources and different methods. Working with questionnaires (quantitative research) in combination with more interviews can help to get more information from this specific group.
- To shine a light on this research from one theoretical point of view. This can make it more concrete; although the broader scope has some positives aspects too, a hard theoretical framework can give more body to this research.

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- Diederik Willemsen
- Christoph Lamy
- Inga Manzos
- The Peipsi Centre for Transboundary Cooperation in Tartu
- All respondents of my interviews
- My student-colleagues at the Radboud University
- My flat and roommates in Estonia and in the Netherlands
- My family and friends
- The SNUF (Student fund of the Radboud University of Nijmegen)

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Extra Chapter / Attachments

The lake Peipsi Border near Piirissaare

For me it is really strange that the border in lake Peipsi is a real obstacle and a hard border without having real, visible, symbols.

In the lake Peipsi museum of Kallaste, a museum mostly about the different fish species in the lake, a model of lake Peipsi was shown. On the picture one can see the southern part of the lake where Piirissaare is located in the middle. The border, 0.8 km from the east of Piirissaare, is a real line and the flag on the border gives you the information needed. These symbols are not available in real life. The blue-black-white (Estonian) flag on the west side and the white-blue-red (Russian) flag on the eastern side. It was the only moment I could really see the border, although it was on a small scale and in a museum...

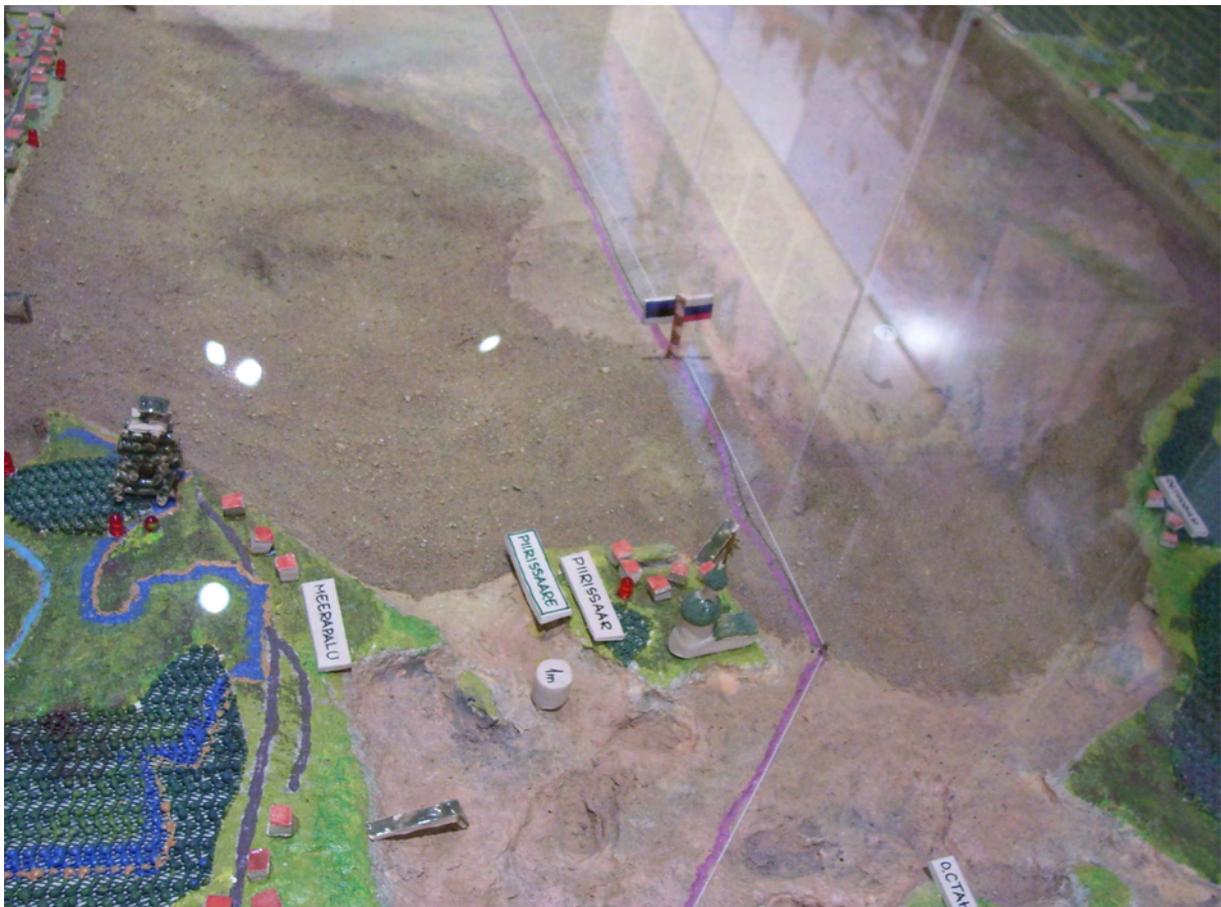


Figure 1: Model of the lake Peipsi border with symbols. Part of the exhibition of the Lake Peipsi museum of Kallaste. Photo by J.Stoop, October 2006.

Mistake Google Earth

The next page contains the map from *Google Earth*, as I printed it during my stay in Estonia. On this map the border in lake Peipsi is located west of Piirissaare but in real life the border is further to the east; Piirissaare is Estonian territory. For Google it is just another mistake, but for me as a researcher of this area the mistake has more meaning. Although Piirissaare, as Estonian territory is rather 'Russian', (see chapter 2.1), it would have a lot of influence on the daily lives of the inhabitants if Piirissaare was not Estonian anymore, but Russian territory. In the information society we live, Google Earth is an important tool for those checking the Internet quickly to attain information. I have my doubts if most users of Google Earth are critical enough to re-check the information. So giving correct information is important.²⁵

²⁵ I informed Google Earth by email about their mistake; so far no reaction, and the mistake is still in the program. I hope it will soon be fixed.

Unfortunately this map is not digital available. Please ask the author for a hard copy to see the 'wrong' border.

What is it like to be a fisherman on lake Peipsi?

Things are sometimes unpredictable in Estonia, like meeting fisherman Priit, during an interview Triin Roostveldt and I had with Taivo Tali, in the harbor of Kallaste. Priit, one of the employees of chief Taivo Tali, was listening to the interview; he was interested in my theme. I asked him if it was possible to join him and his colleagues during their activities on the water. Priit was very enthusiastic and it was no problem, so we planned that I could experience what it is like to be a fisherman on lake Peipsi.

Priit had worked in Ireland for years so his English was good; this was very useful because no interpreter was on my side at that time.

Priit and his friend and colleague Aivo, another fishermen who would join us on the boat, worked for a fish company in Pärnu. Normally they were lived in the southern Estonian town of Viljandi, but they were hired temporary to catch fish in lake Peipsi. During the months they worked at lake Peipsi they lived in a temporary residence. This life was sometimes lonely and boring, so they were happy that someone from the Netherlands asked them for a favor.

On 12 October 2006 I met Priit and Aivo, in the morning at the harbor of Kallaste. We drove to their temporary residence in a rural area between the 'towns' Kallaste and Mustvee. They gave me a fishing-suit and high boots, they prepared fishing materials and still in the morning we drove to the lake in a very old Jeep. This was already a big adventure. At the lake a small boat of about 5 meters was lay in a shallow part of the water. As shown on the picture we used the old Jeep to bring the boat deeper in to the water, a very clever solution. It was really an unique moment.



Picture 1: Priit and Aivo bringing the fishing boat into the water of lake Peipsi using an old Jeep, Photo by J. Stoop, 12 October 2006.

As long as the water was shallow we did not go very fast, as they didn't want to damage the boat, which was owned by the company and not that old. Priit told me that recently many new boats were bought using money from the EU. He informed me that a company with a good business plan could get funding from the EU.

We went to the open water of the lake where several empty bottles were floating on the water. We stopped the boat and pulled one of the empty bottles out of the water. A net was connected to the bottle. We pulled the net into the boat and after meters of empty net the parts of the net full of fish appeared. We took the fish out of the net. The two men also gave me the opportunity to do this myself as you can see on the picture, and continued pulling this long net into the boat. I think the net was more than 50 meters long! When we had inspected the whole net they threw it back into the water. It would float in this part of the lake until the next time one of the fishermen came to check it, this was not always the same time but it could take several days.

In comparison with other techniques to get the fish out of the water this method is one of the easiest ways to catch the fish. Many other fishermen are using this technique too, I saw several empty bottles floating in the water at the horizon. Priit told me all the fishermen know exactly where their nets are to be found; the empty bottles help to recognize the different fishing areas. This popular fishing technique has a risk: Other people can come and steal your fish. This happened for the last time years ago. It is a sort of un-written rule that fishermen do not take fish from one another. Fish in the net is considered the property of the one who owns the net.

The very small fishes, less than 5 centimetres long, are too small to get paid for from the factory. Most of these small fishes disappeared in the mouths of (sea) gulls when we threw them back in the water.

We put the good fish in buckets; some of the fish were still alive and kicking for two hours. It wasn't such a nice view to see the fish suffer but the two men told me this was the way they did it, and it is presumably the method most Peipsi fishermen use.



Picture 2: My first Peipsi fish, a really good one, caught in the net.
Photo by Priit, 12 October 2006.

We tried to catch some especially large fish on several parts of the lake by using fishing rods, but unfortunately we did not succeed. Priit told me this was not a unique situation, fishing by fishing rods is not very efficient. Whenever they had some extra time, and in this situation this was the case, they gave it a try. A fishing rod can be useful to catch the big fish and those with good prices. In the net fishes sometimes get damaged. Damaged or old fish do not bring in much money.

With respect to the fish volume, this wasn't a good day for the fishermen. For me, the catch was huge but they told me it was nothing compared to some days. Sometimes the whole net is full of fish, but lately the daily catch had not always been good. It is important what the quality of the fish is, rather than the quantity. On the picture you can see the good fishes we caught. After a day of fishing the catch is brought to a freezer near their residence. Once a week they bring all the fish to Pärnu, to a fillet factory. For some species the price per kilogram is high, for other species it is very low. It was an interesting day I will never forget!



Figure 3: The good fish we caught. Not all the fish has the same price; the huge fish in the middle for example is not the most expensive one in this bucket. Photo by, J. Stoop, 12 October 2006.

Estonia's history

Estonia was during history seldom independent. Sweden, Denmark Prussia and the Russian/ the Soviet Union occupied the country several times. Especially German landowners had a lot of power in the country through years. High positions were not for the Estonians most of the times.

The first independent period of the Estonian republic was from 1920 till 1940 when the country won the war against the Balts and the czarist officials (1918-1920). Shortly after the start of World War II Estonia was occupied by the Russians and in 1940 it 'joined' the USSR as the 16th republic. Germany occupied Estonia from 1941 till 1944. After that the USSR retake Estonia. The international community never accepted the 'joining' of Estonia and the 'joining' of the two other Baltic States by the USSR.

Many Estonians were happy when their country became part of the German territory in 1941. In their opinion joining Germany was better than being part of the USSR. Some of the Estonians fought against the red army in the war. The Russian punished those betrayers after 1944 and deported many of them to 'Siberia'.

One of the policy plans of the Soviets was mixing the hybrid USSR population. So many Russians came to Estonia to work there. Many Estonians emigrated, voluntary and involuntary to other regions in the immense USSR. As a result, the percentage Russians is increasing by day. The dominant language in Estonia in USSR time was Russian so there was no need for the 'new' Russians to learn Estonian.

Estonia declared itself independence from the Soviet Union in March 1990. Soviet resistance ensued, but after recognition by European and other countries, the Soviet Union acknowledged Estonian nationhood on the 6th of September 1991.

A lot of anger from those days is still alive in the society. It is only 16 years ago. Many Estonians want those Russians that came after 1940 to leave Estonia²⁶. The Russians are congested in Tallinn, Tartu and in the industry district around the city Narva in the northeast of Estonia. Old Russians do not speak Estonian because it was not needed before. It is also a quiet difficult language to learn. The Russians and Estonians do not interact much. The percentage of Russians in Estonia is decreasing but still it is a big group. The Russians blame the Estonians to oppress the Russian minority. The situation seems to be better the last years, but still both groups do not easily interact and on state level Russia and Estonia have discussions about the Russian minority group in Estonia. It is for Russia one of the main international pressure tools on Estonia.

Estonia and its relation with his neighbors

Estonia sometimes claims to be a central located European country but the map shows you that Estonia is not quite a central located country.

Like the Netherlands is in many perspectives focused on Germany, its big neighbour and trade partner, Estonia has Finland. Although Estonia forms together with Latvia and Lithuania the Baltic States this geographical connection is together with their common USSR past the only connector. Language with the Finns is a connector too, both are related Finno-Ugrian Languages. With Latvian and Lithuanians Estonians can't share a lot. Their language is not Baltic and their Lutheran religion is more connected to Protestants Finland than Latvia and especially Lithuania, which is Catholic.

Estonia tried during its first years of independence to be more welfare than Finland. Today the economy is blooming, and this dream to be as strong as Finland is re-alive.

²⁶ In Lithuania and Latvia are also problems related to the Russian minority who still lives there. Especially in Latvia this is the case. There was the situation between Latvians and Russians sometimes even violent.

Some people call Estonia, small Finland, because of the landscape which is flat, has many lakes, much of wood and a lot of emptiness.

The Estonians feel themselves more connected to the Finns but a very good relationship with the Finns is not reached yet. The struggle to be more welfare, Finns who come to Tallinn to buy cheap alcohol and make often trouble, rich Finns buying relative cheap land in Estonia and so on is making the relationship not only successful.

After the years of domination by Russians in the USSR, Estonians do not feel themselves very connected to the Russians. As a young nation they are proud and happy to be sovereign. Even the Russians who live in Russia most of the time prefer to stay in Estonia instead of Russia. In Estonia they find more economic security and a more stable political climate.

Most of the Russians living in Estonia agree with the dominant Russian view on the USSR era. According to questioners; the majority of the Estonian-Russians considers that Estonia was voluntary member of the USSR. So the opinion between Estonians and Russians about the common past differs. This contrast in thinking is not making the interaction between both ethnic groups easier in the current Estonian society.

I Am the Spring in Tartu

Fatherland homeland
Fatherland homeland
words become meaningless
in the Western world
in modern poetry

Words losing their
(eco) logical niche as fish
as suffocating fish from some
used up lake
some waterless body of water

I am fish too
a fish from a lake called
Estonia
perhaps you know where
it-is somewhere
not far from Thule
on the other side of
the Iron Curtain
somewhere
in the colourless
voiceless void

far far from everything
civilized
Homeland
where our spirits
have been living for two
thousand years
on the same place
in the same tree

Could I have thought they
would drive them out
would chop me down
chop down my old
sacred home-tree
dry up my sacred home-like
my roots, my old roots
lie naked in the
voiceless void left
of my homeland
home-wood
home-lake

I have little voice
little voice left
to talk in Polish
or in any
other foreign language
used up dried up

suffocating
in the bottom
of some foreign city
they call Warsaw or Cracow
somewhere
beyond the edge of the world
full of elegant
multicoloured fish
poets artist
souvenir shops jewellers
and good Catholics
whom I never rely on

They asked me
do I feel myself
at least a bit Polish
what could I answer them
what did I answer them
an Estonian non-Catholic
non-Protestant
a fish from a far-off lake
looking upon them
through these multicoloured
reefs and waves
what words have they
heard from my mouth
grown up in another language
in another world

Yes I think talked with Tadeusz Rozewicz
in a dream in a coffee-house
at the sea bottom
where there was a Mickiewicz
and many doves white gray and blue
he drank beer and probably
asked me about something
but I am sure he didn't hear
what I was trying to answer
through the salty sparkling water
I a fish from Estonia

Of course I am not mute nor dumb
fishes have their speech
their languages
but to listen to them you must
have very expensive microphones and
tape recorders
and much patience
and it may take a long time to wait
for a fish to come out of water
and speak
Indo-European
to foreign writers and correspondents

His father was Polish indeed

dead in Russia long long ago
and his brothers and sisters have
become fish in an unknown sea
and are dead or gone or lost
In a midday dream I swam over the
sunlit warm bottom of the sea of Cracow
there were many nice colourful fish
with sparkling scales and voices
I tried to speak to them
it made no sense
they had beautiful voices
as they talked Indo-European
swimming over multicoloured corals

Then I awoke here
in a dried up ancient salt lake
called Tallinn
with some foreign books and papers in my hands
"est-ce qu'il fait très froid
en Pologne ... en Estonie?"
asked Wislawa Szymborska
or someone else

Light comes in through the windows
cyclones come across Scandinavia
fish we buy and cook are caught somewhere
very far from here in the Antarctic seas.

By Jaan kaplinski

Source:

Personal website Jaan kaplinski www.jaan.kaplinski.com

Updated December 2006

De culinaire ‘ontwikkeling’

In veel landen en regio's vind je dezelfde soort maaltijden. Ze hebben overeenkomsten met elkaar maar zijn door de eigen specerijen weer net even iets anders van smaak. Zo is het ook met de landen zelf. Aan de grens lijkt er niet veel te veranderen maar de smaak is er net even anders dan aan de andere kant van de grens. Er zijn andere ingrediënten gebruikt en je treft er andere symbolen en eigenheden aan. Naarmate je meer naar het centrum van de landen gaat wordt er een grotere hoeveelheid specerijen toegevoegd, waardoor de eigen smaak nadrukkelijker te onderscheiden valt.

Gooi je echter deze verschillende maaltijden bij elkaar in een grote, alles omvattende pan, dan verdwijnen de verschillen en krijg je één en dezelfde stoofpot. De pepers worden overstemd door de kummel, deze op haar beurt door het saffraan et cetera. Met moeite en wanneer je je bewust bent van het dreigende pluriforme kan je de verschillen blijven proeven, zelfs als de deze niet zo duidelijk zijn. Echter, als je erg veel honger hebt en het liefst alles wat je vinden kan in die pan erbij zou gooien, zodat je de grootste pan op aarde krijgt, heb je op een gegeven moment één brei. De Sovjet Unie was zo'n grote samengestelde brei. De chef-kok koos voor een overheersende smaak en als je daar behoefte aan had kon je zelf wat extra maggi toevoegen, als hij er maar niet achter kwam... Op den duur ontstonden er verschillende variaties. Ook het huidige Estland heeft te maken met de oude maaltijdsoep traditie. Zo wordt de ‘Russische’ Seljanka nog veel geserveerd, maar dan met eigen Estse smaaktoevoegingen. Estland moet er echter voor waken niet te veel ingrediënten uit het Westen te willen halen. Oosterse oriëntale kruiden worden vervangen door Westerse ingrediënten maar deze kunnen niet in alle gevallen uitkomst bieden. Op den duur verlies de soep zijn smaak. Heb je dan nog wel je eigen soep voor je staan, of één die je op een net iets andere wijze bereid aan de andere kant van de wereld kunt aantreffen?

Zolang het kan nog maar goed genieten van soepen als de Seljanka, voor je het weet is hij op een dag verdampt of in een andere soep opgegaan, die je misschien wel met ‘stokjes’ moet eten.

Ik zou, bij een bezoek aan Estland deze traditionele soep missen mocht hij verkoren gaan. Maar het is niet onbegrijpelijk dat men er, na 51 jaar verplichte kost, de buik van vol heeft!

Jonathan Stoop, najaar 2006.