



In-Between- Ness

Identity Construction at the Border
of two “New Empires”

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Karin Smeekens, s0308307

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Thesis Supervisor: Dr. O.T. Kramsch

Radboud University Nijmegen

Radboud University Nijmegen



To my parents

“On two sides this country is surrounded by a shallow, rocky sea, which during winters is covered with a tight lid, just like a keg of fermenting sauerkraut. Lighthouses send out warning signals in the fog, but ships still run aground. They succumb to temptations of the death, which are very powerful there. On the third side the border is closed by a great lake from which large, red-bearded fishermen catch tiny, silvery fish as their primary sustenance. The fourth side, the sunny side (the route by which I escaped), adjoins a series of impoverished, dark countries that helplessly bemoan their stillborn histories.”

“I once saw the words ‘border state’ in a newspaper. That was how they labelled the country from which I came. It was a political term. Very appropriate, by the way. A border state is nonexistent. There is something on one side and something on the other side of the border, but there is no border. There is a highway, and a field of grain with a farmhouse under tall, thirsty trees, but where is the border between them? It’s invisible. And if you should happened to stand on the border, then you too are invisible, from either side.”

Fragments from *Border State, writings from an unbound Europe* Tõnu Õnnepalu (originaly published in Estonian in 1993, translated into English in 2000). Illinois: Northwestern University Press.

Summary

Estonia might be considered a remote country at the border of the European Union. On the contrary, as this thesis will point out, the country is far from remote and is a fascinating place for geographers researching the borders of Europe. The borderland Estonia has been invaded many times and gained independence for the first time in 1918, though being occupied again in 1939. Nevertheless the Estonians have continued to strive to independence and in 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed they took their chances. However during the Soviet times immense demographical changes had taken place and by the year 1991 over 30 percent of Estonia's population consisted of person's with roots in other countries of the former Soviet Union, especially from Russia. The fresh Estonian government decided in 1992 to deny citizenship to those who had moved to Estonia after 1939 what led to statelessness amongst a third of Estonia's population. This statelessness and other measurements taken by the Estonian government directed the Russian-speakers, as the group is referred to, into a very delicate position.

This thesis is the result of a five month field research in Estonia including 28 in-depth interviews, participant observation and literature research. In this thesis, with the help of the data gathered during my fieldwork period I make an attempt to answer the following research question and test subsequent hypothesis. Research question: *"The empire-like behaviour of both Russia and the EU causes the problematic (re)production of borders between Russian-speakers and ethnic Estonians in Estonia."* Hypothesis: *"Has the "Russian-speaking population" of Estonia created a new identity, an identity which is different from 'us' and 'them', somewhere 'in-between' the 'inside' and the 'outside', beyond being either Russian or Estonian?"*

During the accession process, in which Estonia was enrolled before joining the EU in 2004, it became clear the EU wanted the future members to incorporate their ideas on fundamental rights and values. Only than the countries had the ability to access the EU. And, as I argue, it is also after accession Estonia is expected to apply to the image of a Western European countries to be considered "European". On the other hand Estonia, with many Russian-speaking inhabitants, remains a country which Russia perceives as their "near abroad", the former Soviet region which continuous to be important for Russia's self-portrait as international power. Both the EU and Russia have features which equate the behaviour of empires, because of their sphere of influence reaching beyond its borders. Estonia, as a fairly short independent country, is constant subject to influences from both the EU and Russia while at the same time trying to establish its own identity in Europe.

Within this ambivalent situation of Estonia's identity construction the Russian-speakers in Estonia take a very precarious position. On the one hand they life in Estonia now for generations and they foresee their future as inhabitant of this EU member. Though on the other hand they continue to be under Russia's influence since they watch Russian television and,

importantly, commemorate the end of WWII similarly to Russia where it is presented as the moment in recent history where Russia's greatness in Europe was shown. Estonians on the contrary perceive the end of WWII as the moment they were occupied again, this time by the Soviet army. In this thesis I explore the difficulties Russian-speakers in Estonia meet "in-between" those two spheres of influence. What will become clear is their unstable identity in a country where they do not feel welcomed, but do live. They linger to have a troubled identity which does not fit the Estonian idea of a national identity, neither a Russian identity nor a European identity. Finally I argue how the identity of Russian-speakers in Estonia is another identity, different from being Estonian or Russian, somewhere "in-between" the inside and the outside, "in-between" "us" or "them".

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“Today I arrived in Tallinn somewhere around midday. During one of my first walks through town, with my freshly-bought Estonian groceries at hand, I remarked something in the streets of Tallinn; namely the flagging of Estonian flags. Estonian flags are dispersed everywhere, on ministry or government buildings, on houses, on restaurants etc.”

(Diary fragment 14-03-2009)

“Already after a week in Estonia it seems to me that the identity problem is deeply rooted in society. For example an Estonian guy, who is living in the same house as me, after I just met him immediately started to tell me about the long existing "European history" of Estonia. When I met some Russians during a walk along the sea yesterday they expressed their feelings about Estonian language and literally told me: "We hate Estonian language". In the shops cashiers refuse to speak Russian, even though they are proficient in it.”

(Diary fragment 25-03-2009)

“I must say this is how it feels like: while most tourists won't see it from the outside, the Estonian society is a split society, even the cemetery has two separate parts, one for Russians and one for Estonians, even after their dead they won't be united. People don't interact, refuse to speak each other's language, don't agree on historical 'facts', don't agree on the Russian-speakers being either an immigrant minority or a national minority, etc.”

(Diary fragment 20-04-2009)

Some quotes of the first notes in the diary I kept during my fieldwork in Estonia. These quotes show how I felt when arriving in Estonia, the start of an intensive, fascinating fieldwork term in one of Europe's borderlands. Estonia, the stage of my master research is a country which is rather unknown, a country which is imagined as grey, dull and empty by persons who have never been there and think of the 'greyness' of the Soviet times have brought to these countries, imaginations that date back more than 20 years. But what has happened to it after the collapse of the totalitarian regime? What changes can be observed after almost 20 years of independence? Can these 'greyness' even be applied to a country as Estonia, finding itself at the very North-East of the European Union bordering Russia, Latvia and Finland across the gulf?

"What do you want to go and do there"? was an often questioned remark from my friends and family. And to be honest, when sitting in the airplane somewhere in March, looking through the airplane window to the snow-white Estonian landscape, I asked myself the same question: "What am I going to do here"? A country with less than one and a half million inhabitants, with lots of nature and an ambiguous history. After one and a half year of studying Human Geography, the time to do my master research had come and had brought me to this country; a country I had visited before, a country inspiring to me, a country where I was going to spend the next five months of my life.

That my time in Estonia was not going to be grey, dull or empty became clear in the very beginning of the fieldwork, as you can read in the quotes above. On the contrary, Estonia appeared to be more fascinating than I could have ever imagined. The wounds, or 'challenges', as political representatives rather prefer to call them, of the past were obviously visible in the everyday life in Estonia. Wounds that are still open in the sense that they play a significant role in the life of many inhabitants of Estonia. Wounds that require not only internal adaptations in order to be healed, but even so international attention should be paid to them. Although the size and inhabitant number would presume it to be a non-vibrant country, a place where conflicts are not in the everyday life, where life is satisfactory for anyone and perhaps a continuation of the Soviet times. On the contrary, the first weeks of my stay there taught me many problems occur in the Estonian society and although they might be hidden for tourists visiting the country, they are definitely sensible on the surface.

I was, in my eyes, the 'lucky' one who had the ability to talk to a small number of Estonian inhabitants about their feelings, ideas, emotions about the 'here and there, now and then' of Estonia. With my background as anthropologist and newly achieved knowledge on the borders of Europe, those five months became the most interesting ones of my academic life. The combination of all knowledge I gained prior to the fieldwork, the people I met in Estonia, the people I lived with residing there, the two internships and finally the summer school I followed there, made this research an intensive journey, this thesis being the result of it.

Introduction

Geographers have striven to understand and explain the intertwined relation between the social and the spatial (Paasi 1996: 7). The study of borders has given them the opportunity to study the fundamental basis of the organisation of society and human psychology (Kolossoff 2005: 606). The idea of borders is, within this study, not understood from the perspective of a static 'territorial line' but rather from a broader, socioculturally grounded perspective. Such an approach stresses the production and reproduction of the ideas of territories and boundaries and their symbolic meanings in various institutional practices (Paasi 1996: 27). One of the major social boundaries in people's life is the boundary of the 'imagined community', a community which is imagined by the people who perceive themselves to be part of it (Anderson 1983). This implies a continuing differentiation between who is part of the community and, maybe even more important, who is not.

The 'imagined community' was predominantly understood in the form of a nation state, where people have a sense of belonging to the territory which is shaped by the national borders. Though in the study of borders the idea that the 'self' and the 'other' are not only (re)produced accordingly to the nation state, but at all spatial scales and between various groupings (Newman & Paasi 1998: 195), is common ground. The social construction of people's identity is therefore continuously subject to an interplay of social consciousness at different spatial scales, be it global, national, regional or local (Kolossoff 2005: 614). The construction of boundaries at all scales and dimensions takes place through narrativity (Newman & Paasi 1998: 195). By 'narrating' a common history, present and future a sense of belonging can be created; identification with a particular social group and portion of land (Paasi 1996: 46). Borders unite the spatial and the social, when in fact their interrelationship is complex (Anderson, O'Dowd and Wilson 2003: 7).

An example of narrating a common present, past and future is the activity of the EU countries aimed at the creation or strengthening of a common 'European' political identity. This integration in Europe may lead to the strengthening of macro-regional identity (Kolossoff 2005: 616). However, as Kolossoff (*ibid.*) puts it, national identity is exposed to erosion not only from 'above' but especially from 'below' – from inside. In most states of the contemporary world the population is culturally diverse and often national identity fails to match ethnic/regional identities (*ibid.*: 617). More people have complicated identities, associating themselves with two or several ethnocultural groups. Migrants and refugees arrive in places whose social and spatial boundaries have already been formed, are antecedent and are thus subject to pressures aimed at making them conform to existing patterns of sociospatial identity, rather than perserving the existing cultural identity within a different spatial milieu (Newman & Paasi 1998:190).

The European borderland might be seen as the remote Eastern Europe, though as Balibar (2004: 2) argues, zones called peripheral constitute the melting pot for the formation of a people without which there is no citizenship in the sense that this term has acquired since antiquity in the democratic tradition. Border areas are not marginal but rather the centre of social academic studies. Rather than a linear border, it is a spatial borderland: a zone where people and their identities mingle and where insularity is replaced by openness (Potemkina in DeBardeleben 2005: 166). Borderlands are among the best places to study the implementation of, and resistance to, state-sponsored identities. Those excluded from a nation-state usually include citizens of other countries; but full citizenship can also be refused to those within the nation or those otherwise deemed unworthy of or alien to the national community (Flynn in Hurd 2006: 14-15). Borderlands are sites where political, cultural and social identities converge, coexist, and sometimes conflict and provide unique insights into the ways in which identities are constructions" (*ibid.*: 13). As Kramsch (lecture 12-02-2009) has put it: border areas are laboratories of integration.

Anderson and O'Dowd (1999: 597) argue that rather than concentrating only on internal characteristics, it is generally more fruitful to study a border region in terms of its comparisons and relations with other regions and institutions. State borders are becoming more differentiated for different processes, but in addition political borders per se may also become more differentiated. A multiplication of other types of political entity suggests a corresponding multiplication of types of borders and an increase in their complexities and contradictions (*ibid.*: 602). By suggesting this, Anderson and O'Dowd are referring to the borders of the European Union before its enlargement.

After the collapse of communism 20.000 kilometres of new international borders arose within Europe which created the prospect for European Union enlargement to the East (Anderson & Bort 2001: 2). The 'new' Europe after the 2004 enlargement gave rise to a whole new understanding of Europe; the original meaning of preventing another conflict on the European continent had moved over to the ideology of a 'Europe without frontiers' (*ibid.*: 6). With the enlargements of 2004 and 2007 a whole new range of visions and ideas entered the European political level which consequently asked the former EU countries to revise their geopolitical insights. The post 1989 borders that emerged in Europe were treated only in the literature along with the political consensus that existing borders should be maintained, and that internal boundaries should become the international frontiers when a state disintegrated (Anderson 2008: 11).

After enlargement the complexities and contradictions of the borders of Europe became even more complicated. A strong outside border is desirable in order to protect the 'welfare' and 'security' of its own citizens, while simultaneously cross-border cooperation and an 'openness' of borders is promoted. This dual nature of the borders of the EU has many implications, especially for those living in the border areas. Because where borders were before more easily

crossed, because of Schengen, strict visa regimes are put up, requiring financial input, for some it has even causing the inability to visit their relatives across the border. On the other hand, since the EU is also promoting cross-border cooperation, increasing cross-border contact is envisioned in order to establish regional development. Though since this is often not in line with the national political agenda problems arise (Berg in Berg & Ehin 2009: 149-150 and Roll 2009: 6).

Anderson (2008: 11) argues minority problems should become managed within the framework of existing boundaries was, for the most part, maintained in the scholarly literature as well as the political debate. This reticence was based on an anxiety that if one minority was granted a revision of borders, this would open a Pandora's Box of hitherto dormant minority claims. In addition, detailed study of the distribution of minorities showed that revision of borders would, in many cases, create new minorities (*ibid.*: 12). To gain a full understanding of European frontiers, ethnographic studies of border communities is essential (*ibid.*: 20). In Europe, with open internal borders, there has been some integration of economic activities, but as Anderson (*ibid.*: 23) asks himself, to what extent are these considered by the populations concerned to have a political meaning and impact on national identity, cultural distinctiveness and national competition?

It is against this background of border studies and the special position of borderlands in it, that I write this thesis on Estonian borders. Estonia has always been a borderland, in the sense that it is squeezed between more powerful neighbours, having a complicated history. Borderlands are the object of a tug-of-war between their neighbours, and an easy trophy. Being moved back and forth from the power zone of one foreign authority to that of another, such ethnic groups have had to adjust ever new political, social, and cultural conditions (Skvortsova in Kolstø 2002: 160). As in the introducing fragment of Tõnu Õnnepalu we can see Estonia is a borderland in many ways. Not only it has been invaded most of the time, gaining its first independence in 1918 and regaining it in 1991, it has also frequently been moved between various foreign authorities bringing next to new political, social and cultural conditions, also persons to the Estonian territory. After the revision of borders those persons became new minorities in Estonia.

The most recent minority that has emerged within Estonia's territorial borders consists of persons who moved to Estonia during Soviet times. People from all over the Soviet Union were moving to Estonia because of divergent reasons; some because the ethnical make-up of the Soviet Union was being mixed up, other because of the industrial strong position of Estonia in the USSR. When moving to Estonia between 1940 and 1980 they only crossed an administrative border, not an official state border. After the collapse of the USSR those persons were 'suddenly' living in another country. And when Estonia became EU member in 2004, and even before in the process towards accession, and the Eastern border became a Schengen border arriving with a strict visa regime, this 'new minority's' contact with their families across the new border became more problematic. Though, because of positive economic prosperities most of them decided to

stay in Estonia. In the mean time, despite of many attempts to regulate their integration, there are still severe problems within the Estonian society, between Estonians and the “Russian-speakers”.

The Estonian borderland has proven to be a fascinating research environment. Within my fieldwork, resulting in this thesis, I have tested the following hypothesis regarding the identity question in Estonia:

“The empire-like behaviour of both Russia and the EU causes the problematic (re)production of borders between Russian-speakers and ethnic Estonians in Estonia.”

My research question, derived from the insights I will present in the theoretical chapter, is a rather delicate question in recent border studies. It is a topic which only recently is being questioned by academics in this field of research. Few researchers have also touched upon this part in border studies regarding the situation in Estonia. This is my central research question:

“Has the “Russian-speaking population” of Estonia created a new identity, an identity which is different from ‘us’ and ‘them’, somewhere ‘in-between’ the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’, beyond being either Russian or Estonian?”

This thesis will start with a chapter containing the theories that are the fundamentals for this thesis. The theoretical insights are primarily composed of literature read along the preceding year, including the literature I read during my fieldwork, and is completed with theoretical insights I met during my former years of academic studies. The first paragraph of the theoretical framework argues the European Union could be seen as a new kind of empire, spreading its influence further than its territorial limits. To imagine the current situation of Estonia within the EU, this paragraph will deepen the accession process, focused on the Eastern accession countries and questions if the Western countries are treating the Eastern accession countries as equal partners. The second paragraph will deepen the role of Russia in the “near abroad”. Russia is still very actively influencing its “near abroad”, especially when it concerns the “Russian-speaking populations”. The political situation in Russia is highlighted in order to explain this “imperial” behaviour of Russia. In the next paragraph I am arguing, with the help of Kramsch and Kuus, the 2004 accession countries, of course aimed at Estonia’s position, are the frontier of two competing “empires”, the EU and Russia. In the fourth paragraph I describe the “us”-“them” dichotomy and how “us” and “them” interact in Estonia, followed by a paragraph on what is “in-between” “us” and “them”. The chapter continues with a paragraph on the two dominant discourses in Estonia concerning WWII. Naturally a paragraph on the Bronze Soldier crisis will follow to highlight the urgency of the identity problems in Estonia.

The next chapter will sketch the historical and current internal and external social political situation of Estonia. In my eyes, in order to understand the contemporary affairs of the

multi-national borderland, it is necessary to know some of its history, current ethnic composition, its position in Europe and the dominant discourses in society. In the background chapter on Estonia you will find a rather detailed description of those matters. The chapter is largely based on literature though completed with the knowledge of the Estonian society I gathered during my fieldwork. Of course it is impossible to position myself as a neutral researcher, I have aimed to defining the situation as neutral as possible.

The following chapter is the first empirical chapter. There I will outline the opinions of my respondents about the situation of Estonia. The first paragraph will deepen the question on the imperialistic behaviour of Estonia, whether or not this can be identified in Estonia and in what ways. The second paragraph will question the same, only then focused on the Russian influence across the border. Here I will highlight how Russian-speakers in Estonia remain dependent from the Russian discourse from the other side of the border. In the next paragraph I will use the example of cross-border cooperation to show how the imperialistic behaviour of both the EU and Russia culminate and results in an “empty” meaning of cross-border cooperation between Estonia and Russia. The last paragraph of the first empirical chapter describes in what way linguistic and cultural differences play a role in the identity (re)production in contemporary Estonia. The issues discussed in this paragraph were all accentuated during the interviews and therefore needed to be elaborated on. Overall in this empirical chapters the conclusions that are being presented are all based on combining the insights I gathered from the literature described in the theoretical chapter, my experiences from the field and, most important, the information I got from my respondents.

The second empirical chapter will deepen the identity question of Russian-speakers in Estonia. The first paragraph will deepen the question of homeland and simultaneously the question on the possibility for Russian-speakers to identify with Estonia and if yes, in what ways this is being done. The second paragraph will elaborate on my interviewees’ opinions on the Bronze Soldier crisis. The Bronze Soldier crisis is widely discussed by, mainly Estonian, academics, though as it became clear during my fieldwork, this crisis has indeed influenced the identity question of my Russian-speaking interviewees and should therefore be discussed. This paragraph shows how Russian-speakers are ‘in-between’ two histories, two discourses which they both understand and relate to. In the third paragraph I will describe how Russian-speakers identified themselves in the interviews I had with them, whether they feel themselves Estonian, Russian or something else. This paragraph will show the difficulties Russian-speakers in Estonia meet when (re)producing their identity and all influences they are subject to. I will end the second empirical chapter by elaborating on the identity question of the Russian-speakers in Estonia with the help of some additional literature and pose some discussion for future research. The conclusion will finish up this thesis by repeating the results from the empirical paragraphs and answering my research question and hypothesis.

Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

1.1 EU as an Empire

How can we see the happenings at the border of the EU linked with the ideas and thoughts on modern imperialism and the consequences of former imperialistic activities? As Hardt and Negri (2000) argue in “Empire” a new form of sovereignty has emerged that governs the world. Hardt and Negri spread the idea that they live in a new world, a new space and time. A series of national and supranational organisms are the new form of global sovereignty what Hardt and Negri (*ibid.*: xii) call empire. In line with Fukuyama, Hardt and Negri (*ibid.*: 189) say that sovereign power will no longer confront its “other” and no longer face its outside, but rather will progressively expand its boundaries to develop the entire globe as its proper domain, with that the binaries that defined modern conflict have become blurred and there is not one single, unified enemy anymore, but minor and elusive enemies everywhere.

Hardt and Negri (*ibid.*: 201) emphasize that it is not the empire that creates division, rather it recognizes existing or potential differences, celebrates them, and manages them within a general economy of command. “*Therefore the most important task for Empire is controlling differences; instead of contributing to social integration, imperial administration rather acts as a disseminating and differentiating mechanism*” (*ibid.*: 340). Empire presents its order as permanent, eternal and necessary (*ibid.*: 11). In empire there is peace and the guarantee of justice for all peoples (*ibid.*: 10). Empire formed the basis of the capacity to present force as being in the service of right and peace; the expansion of empire is rooted in the internal trajectory of the conflicts it is meant to resolve. The first task of empire, then, is to enlarge the realm of the consensuses that support its own power (*ibid.*: 15).

When Hardt and Negri take a closer look at the process of imperial constitution, they identify that it is not only the transformations of international law that we should pay attention to, but also by the changes it effects in the administrative law of individual societies of nation-states, or really in the administrative law of cosmopolitical society (*ibid.*: 17). Who will decide on the definitions of justice and order across the expanse of this totality in the course of its process of constitution? Who will be able to define the concept of peace? Who will be able to unify the process of suspending history and call this suspension just? These questions are, according to Hardt and Negri, open in the problematic of empire (*ibid.*: 19). In empire, they argue, ethics, morality, and justice are cast into new dimensions (*ibid.*: 20). As Balibar (2004: 85) argues, after the dissolution of the creation of meaning in the two existing blocs before 1989, an emptiness in politics could be witnessed: it is empty of errors, crimes and manipulations, empty of organizations, disciplines and revolts, but also empty of stakes and problems.

The understandings of empire can be integrated in the concept of colonialism, where colonialism understood difference and made it spatial, today we rather encounter a form of neo-colonialism which is more subtle and enhances the administrative and economic control over a territory (lecture O. Kramsch: 19-02-2009). As Hooper and Kramsch (2007: 527) argue in their article on post-colonising Europe; there is also another Europe than the one of social democracy and good governance, namely a Europe unreflexive about its own imperialisms, past and present, as well as its contemporary less than enlightened attitude towards 'strangers'. Hooper and Kramsch argue (*ibid.*: 528) a broader geopolitical contextualization for contemporary Europe, one which suggests the way in which Europe's imperial and colonial practices are rooted in the past but also have continued to evolve, mutate and adapt across space and time is needed. Given the continental Europe's past (war, empires, genocide, and so forth) and the EU's new positioning as a morally superior 'soft' power, perhaps there is an understandable reticence to stir the imperial/colonial waters (*ibid.*: 532).

Empire and neo-colonialism, two concepts which the EU rather ignores and definitely does not want to be attached to, though as some have argued these are exactly the concepts that should be studied more closely when considering the eastern expansion of the European Union. As Böröcz (in Böröcz & Kovács 2001: 5) states: "the absence of any theoretical absorption of the notions of empire and colonality in the mainstream historical sociology of west European state making and statehood – logically a possible source of conceptual tools for the study of the European Union today – is one aspect of this normalcy I seek to unsettle". At the moment of Böröcz's statements the EU has fifteen members, mostly in western Europe and is foreseeing an eastern enlargement. In the words of Böröcz, "the EU has been the focus and centre of dependence for important social, cultural and economic and political processes at places outside of western Europe" (*ibid.*: 6).

Balibar (in Cheah & Robbins 1998: 222) even suggests that each fraction of Europe, however restricted it may be, still contains, actually or potentially, as the result of history and the subjective choices it has occasioned, the same diversity and divisions as the world considered in its totality. Balibar (*ibid.*: 225) argues Europe should not be seen as made up of separate regions, but rather of overlapping layers, and that its specificity is this overlapping itself: to be precise, an East, a West and a South. And, as Balibar continues, this is even more the case today, when – European nations having conquered the world and then having had to officially withdraw, but without burning their bridges – it is from this whole world that the discourse, capitals, labour powers, and sometimes the weapons of Europe come back to us, as an aftershock. Balibar alerts us to the significations that are at work in every tracing of a border, beyond the immediate determinations of language, religion, ideology, and power relations. One cannot but feel that it is an idea, an image, and a fantasy of Europe that, under our eyes, are producing their deadly effects in the "partition" and "ethnic cleansing" of Yugoslavia generally and of Bosnia in particular, and that Europe is in the course of committing suicide by allowing the suicide in its

name of these fragments of a single “people”, whose whole history is constituted by the repercussions of its own divisions (*ibid.*: 225-226).

The term “Europe”, which is claimed by the EU-members, is, according to Böröcz both falsely inclusive and falsely exclusive. In his opinion even the official term “eastern enlargement” is suggestive, where Eastern means either inferior or non-Europe (in Böröcz & Kovács 2001: 6). By using the term “Europe” the European Union is in a way self-universalizing its behaviour; the identity discourse promoted by the EU is constructed by way of a complete, acquired-assertive obliviousness to the world outside of its territorial boundaries (*ibid.*: 7). The signifier “Europe” appears to be latched, even more tightly, on the signified European Union, what consequences a manipulating of boundaries, excluding and occluding “the rest”, when the EU claims the term “Europe”, this part stands for the whole and successively ignores the rest (*ibid.*: 8). So by using the term “Europe”, the European Union is both falsely inclusive, of its own territories to be “the only real” Europe, and falsely exclusive, simultaneously suggesting ‘the others’ do not belong to Europe.

With regard to the eastern enlargement, as the 2004 and 2007 expansions of the Union are being referred to, Böröcz (*ibid.*) argues this is both a matter of self-universalisation and other-exclusion. Enlargement implies a process of simple augmentation, reducing a daunting amount of social, cultural, moral and administrative complexity (*ibid.*: 6). This ‘simple’ re-division of Europe’s geopolitical map can be seen as a tool in naturalizing power (*ibid.*: 8). As Böröcz, in 2001, reviews the list of EU member states, he concludes (*ibid.*: 11) that this list reads as a catalogue of the major colonial powers of the period of world capitalism. He names two significant arguments for his statement that the colonial history is a crucial component of the social imaginaries of the societies of the EU (as in the form of 2001): the sustained centrality of western Europe in the international system known as the colonial order of imperialism and the lasting, pivotal significance of the experience of colonial empire in the histories of those societies which constitute the EU (*ibid.*: 12-13).

The specific histories of colonialism and empire are reflected in a deep and systematic form in the socio-cultural patterns of the governmentality of the EU (*ibid.*: 14). Where wealth, power, centrality and privilege appear to be the main reason for the “eastern enlargement”, it turns out that sharing those features is one of the most difficult issues in the enlargement process (*ibid.*: 15-16). Böröcz was not the only academic who foresaw the difficulties the redefinition of “the borders of Europe” brought along. As Virkkunen (2001: 141) identifies the process of enlargement may end up ignoring some of the basic elements of the post-socialist development and identity politics and therefore act against the initial goals of increased welfare and security. The eastern enlargement is very much positioned as a ‘return to the western world’, which set up the everyday context for identity political discourses, within which both national or cultural territories and ethnic ‘others’ are negotiated (*ibid.*: 143).

Virkkunen (*ibid.*: 145) argues that despite the ambitious outlined by the EU socio-spatial cohesion politics, the EU conception of cohesion does not necessarily capture the social impacts of, or the local meanings and emotions emerging from, post-socialist reality. He continues by saying that it remains to be seen whether, and to what extent, European cohesion politics is de facto able to manage threats relating to socio-economic disparities and, significantly, to culturally and historically based prejudices between majority and minority populations as well as between centres and peripheral border regions (*ibid.*: 147). Though the enlargement process might implement such a development, the number of ordered and bordered identities has not diminished (van Houtum & Kramsch, 2005: 1). After the fall of the Berlin wall issues of territory, identity, culture and history became more prominent identity markers next to economic rationality and efficiency which were dominant before 1989 (Kramsch, 2007: 1591).

As Kramsch (*ibid.*: 1592) suggests, in the run-up to eastward enlargement, the EU concurrently developed a panoply of cross-border regional instruments designed to stimulate pan-European values and modes of administrative governmentality across the borders of the new accession countries. And it is precisely in the policy domain of transboundary regionalism, according to Kramsch, that Europe confronts, for the first time since the era of decolonization, struggles of the definition of politics transcending the borders of its member states. And it is perhaps here more than anywhere else that the unresolved condition of Europe's relationship towards its former colonial borderlands acquires its full geohistorical weight. The struggle over the definition of politics transcending the borders of its member states can be interpreted with regard to the unresolved relationship of the EU member states with their former colonies.

In line with Böröcz's ideas on the self-universalisation of the European Union, Kramsch (*ibid.*: 1593) argues that those who live across the border are virtually "off earth". Border objects are not relevant in themselves, as are the objectification processes of bounded spaces informing people's everyday spatial practices; the border is a social reality (van Houtum & Kramsch, 2005: 3). According to Balibar (2004: 3-5) we must privilege the issue of the border when discussing the questions of the European people and the state in Europe because it crystallizes the stakes of political-economic power and the symbolic stakes at work in the collective imagination: relations of force and material interest on the one hand, representations of identity on the other. The representation of the border, territory and sovereignty and the very possibility of representing the border and territory, have become the object of an irreversible historical "forcing". The representation of the border is nevertheless profoundly inadequate, as Balibar continues, for an account of the complexity of real situation, of the typology underlying the mutual relations between the identities constitutive of European history.

The European Union positions itself to be the heir of modernity, the age of enlightenment within the historical identity of Christianity. This positioning allows the EU to construct social and political meaning through spatial socialization and the territorialisation of meaning, taking place in education, politics, administration and governance (Paasi in van Houtum & Kramsch

2005: 20). Paasi (*ibid.*) argues that it is through these practices and discourses that people become identified with bounded spaces and their (historical) symbolism. It is essential for nations as well as the EU to configure time by instituting the connection between generations. The generations are more or less unified by sentiments, collective memories, political ideologies and structures, administration, economic interests and other elements that have their “historicity” (Balibar 2004: 17). Every national ideology produces its own symbols, fictions and myths in its own way and has a ‘unique’ mode of investing in the ‘sites of memory’ that help it to become an ‘imagined community’ capable of developing its own model for the regulation of social conflicts (*ibid.*: 23).

The national institution rests upon the formulation of a rule of exclusion, of visible and invisible “borders”, materialized in laws and practices. Exclusion, as Balibar argues, is thus the very essence of the nation form (*ibid.*). In times of the well-known historical empires, whenever problems came into being either in the peripheral borderlands or the colonies, the *invention of tradition* resolved the problem of historical legitimacy (Said 1994: 16). In a way the same thing is being done with the eastern enlargement of the EU, the socio-historical and geo-historical ideology is being reinvented in such a way it is inclusive of Eastern European countries. The process of “Europeanisation” redirected the geopolitical interests of these countries towards the West and made them reinvent their roots with the eye on their new historiographic position on the European continent. The process of Europeanisation does nevertheless not only concern the countries of Eastern Europe, the former EU members also had to reconsider their imagines of their former counterparts in the East.

Some have been arguing this is not an equal process where both adapt their visions, but rather a one-way process where Western Europe continuous to position itself as the “true Europe”. As Kuus (2004: 472) exemplifies, with the enlargement of the EU towards the East it is said to finally make Europe ‘whole and free’, while these same accounts betray a tacit distinction between “Europe” and “Eastern Europe”. Successively Kuus (*ibid.*: 473-475) perceives the ongoing practices of constituting Eastern Europe as “not yet fully European” as a form of postcoloniality whereby the West is conceived as a model that the EU accession countries ought to follow. The reified contrast of Eastern and Western Europe makes the EU accession becoming a kind of relation from Europe’s East to “Europe proper”. Or, as Mignolo (2000: 51) in his ideas on the coloniality of power, exemplifies; there cannot be an orient, as the other, without the occident as the same.

The coloniality of power which manages the colonial difference invites Mignolo (*ibid.*: 53-54) to link capitalism, through coloniality, to labour and race as well as to knowledge. In the words of Quijano (1997: 117): *Coloniality of power and historio-structural dependency: both imply the hegemony of eurocentrism as epistemological perspective... In the context of coloniality of power, the dominated population, in their new, assigned identities, were also subjected to the Eurocentric hegemony as a way of knowing.* We can identify the same for the

process of enlargement of the EU, where eastern European countries were firstly dominated by the USSR, the new, assigned, identities are directed towards to West, subjected to a Eurocentric way of knowing. As Böröcz (2001: 19) further exemplifies, it is not just that various elements of empire are relevant here, it is rather the creation of new institutions that effect the peculiar combinations of control with respect to the “eastern” applicants appears to be quite close to, and might indeed constitute, the core of the current European order.

EU’s objective to develop an area of freedom, security and justice, or as Böröcz (*ibid.*: 25) calls it, the ABC of the European Union, simultaneously creates an image of the world outside the EU that is, by counter conceptual implication, an area of unfreedom and/or insecurity and/or injustice. By spreading values as human rights, good governance and so on the EU implies European countries that are not part of the Union to lack these “fundamental issues”. But what are exactly human rights and what is exactly good governance? There are some international agreements on these theoretically difficult to define terms, but it principally falls back to personal interpretation. When the EU personifies itself as a guardian of the values freedom, security and justice, these terms are fulfilled with their interpretation and these interpretations are disseminated as the only just interpretations possible. Accession countries, which are due to incorporate EU’s values in the form of accepting the *aquis communautaire*, automatically integrate these interpretations as being their own. Where no question about the content of values is possible and the incorporation is unquestionable as well, we can ascertain some important features of empire and definitely the peculiar combinations of control that make EU’s order accepted as a natural one.

Another topic, which Böröcz perceives as being significant in the “unification” of Europe, is the diverse historical experience of the Western and Eastern part of the continent, the two halves of Europe have a true gap in their historical experiences (*ibid.*: 28). First of all the eastern European countries have never benefited from the original influx of the value from the colonies and the pressures for enlargement coming from the societies and states of the poorer half of Europe end up being a continuation of the centuries long uneven development and dependency, in contemporary inter- and suprastate politics in Europe. Secondly, when the societies of Western Europe were experiencing the collapse of their detached empires after World War II, the eastern half of the continent was absorbed in another rather different process of large-scale social change: the construction of an alternative, state-socialist modernity (*ibid.*: 28-29). Böröcz (*ibid.*: 30) argues that the political process of “eastern enlargement” provides a new opportunity to show the moral superiority in Europe, where the former EU countries try to “discipline” the “brats” from the East. In spite of the clearly “western” content of the patterns of exclusionary politics in central and Eastern Europe, the “enlargement process” is, according to Böröcz, perceived as being an effecting civilising and disciplining process in the EU’s “eastern” geopolitics.

Ultimately acceptance vs postponement for accession to the EU is read as reinforcement or rejection of *Europeanness* (*ibid.*: 32). All societies of the EU are faced with various historical legacies of recent imperial rule in both ways: all the national imaginaries of the societies have parallel, often unreconciled collective memories of empire both as rulers and subjects, and the power of the existing arrangements of borders is often seen as radically diminished. The interfering of historical identity-memory has produced mental schemes of exclusion and inferiorisation. The moral positions, taken by western European former colonial powers vis-à-vis the “third world”, are much wider than the range of moral positions taken regarding their poor European counterparts. What Böröcz identifies as most remarkable about the period that followed the collapse of the USSR was the power with which the economic dependence and unequal exchange were re-established, EU governmentality imposed and the explicit coloniality of the “Eastern” applicants as disparaged, inferior strangers has been produced in the European Union (*ibid.*: 34-35).

1.2 Russia in the “Near Abroad”

As O’Loughlin (2001: 17) establishes, the nature of post-Soviet geopolitics in Russia is relatively unexamined in geopolitical study, mostly it has been stated that the geopolitical relations between Russia and its neighbouring regions are still in flux. Geopolitics are in Russia mainly a matter of the elite, the average Russian is only interested in events inside the Russian Federation, in the ‘near abroad’ and the fate of ethnic Russians outside Russia’s borders (*ibid.*: 18). In the first half of the 1990s it seemed that Russia was willing to co-operate with western European countries regarding their foreign policy, nevertheless this shifted toward a cautious and distant position after 1995, because of conflicts concerning the ethnic war in Yugoslavia. The expansion of the NATO along their southern and western margins threatened the Russian Federation and positioned Russia as a state whose bark is worse than its bite (*ibid.*: 21-22). By choosing the road of “sovereign democracy” which goes hand in hand with Poetin’s political ambitions, Russia has directed their geopolitics further away from that of the EU.

Assuming that the EU-Russia relation is one-way is therefore ungrounded and not accurate, rather the EU-Russia relations can develop only as inter-subjective ones. The inter-subjectivity of the EU-Russia relations identifies recognition of the inevitable subjectivity of each other (Makarychev e.a., 2006: 16). Makarychev (*ibid.*: 18) presumes that one of the major sources that influences the discursive asymmetry between Russia and the EU is grounded in the different interpretations of the very idea of neighbourhood. In line with Böröcz Makarychev argues that the EU basically adheres to a rationalistic approach which ultimately reduces the other-neighbour to a mirror-image, or a step along the path of self-realization. Russia, by contrast, shares, according to Makarychev, a quite different view of the essence and meaning of the neighbourhood. The ‘conceptual character’ of neighbour, in the Russian interpretation, seems to be rather close to the following concept: the neighbour as equivalent of a “traumatic thing”, a figure who “remains inert, impenetrable, enigmatic presence and that hystericizes”, who is a source of annoyance, uncertainty and menace.

As Makarychev (*ibid.*) states, this seemingly theoretical observation translates into a major source of disconnections in the communications between Moscow and Brussels. Unlike the EU, Russia feels adjusted to a type of conflictual relations with adjacent countries. A good example of this discursive situation is the Russian-German gas pipeline deal which could be interpreted as Moscow’s reluctance to accept any meaningful role for the countries that were eager to position themselves as East-West ‘intermediaries’. This reads in fact that Russia no longer needs any ‘assistants’ or ‘facilitators’ in its dialogue with major European powers (*ibid.*:

19). The relationship between Germany and Russia bypasses the interests of the Baltic States and Poland by projecting the Nord Stream from Russia to Germany without involving these countries (Berg in Berg & Ehin 2009: 149).

As Eiki Berg (*ibid.*: 147) states; Russia often stresses that state control over the nation's oil and natural gas pipelines will be a key tool for maintaining its economic and political influence beyond its borders, thus establishing itself as a great energy power in compensation for the blow it suffered to its international status when the Soviet Union collapsed. Berg continues by asking himself if it is due to energy dependency and western business lobby that preferential treatment towards Russia is granted in order to buy into attractive assets in Russia? Though, as Berg argues, it is the broader underlying conflict that has to do with the incompatibility of the dominant self-conceptions and historically based identity-narratives in Russia and the Baltic States which causes the Baltic States are often perceived as a bottleneck rather than a transit corridor (*ibid.*: 149-150). Despite their potential role as a gateway in the EU-Russia energy link, each Baltic state in its own way seems to have lost faith with EU solidarity when geopolitical issues such as safety of energy supplies are at stake (*ibid.*: 155).

There are a variety of Russian discourses questioning Europe's ability to act as a political subject and speculating about Europe's alleged degradation. In these discourses, Europe features, by and large, as a vague and ambiguous entity with uncertain and unspecified traits, a kind of collection of spaces with neither a clearly identifiable core nor stable borders (Makarychev 2006: 21-22). A significant part of Russia's elites tend to suspect 'New Europe' countries as seeking to undermine Russia's positions, which resonates quite well with the opinions of some European policy analysis that "the three Baltic republics and Poland will definitely turn into a complicating factor in the EU-Russia relations, while on the other hand political elites of France and Germany, willing to keep working with Russia, won't allow the small countries to significantly spoil the work done before" (*ibid.*: 25). What complicates the situation even further is that the EU does not seem to speak with a single language while dealing with Russia. The cohabitation is nicely reflected in the very title of the "Partnership and Cooperation Agreement" between the EU and Russia. As Makarychev (*ibid.*: 31-32) suggests, the title itself contains a sort of uncertainty incarnated in a tacit and alleged opposition between the two key words: Partnership and Cooperation. As soon as one logically admits that cooperation is simply a particular case of partnership, the simultaneous usage of the two terms would turn into a mere tautology.

For nearly all post-communist societies, the disassociation of communism from national identity has been facilitated by a background understanding that communism had never been "our" doing in the first place. Ultimate responsibility for the crimes inflicted and the damage done in its name belongs not to the nation itself but to those who had forcibly imposed it: another nation, Russia. Russia does not enjoy the luxury of disassociation. There, a discourse of identity forfeits from the outset possibility of constructing some other nation onto which might be loaded

the negative moment in the recreation of a national community (Urban, 1994: 733). Within the “liberal-democratic” perspective, arising in the first years after the collapse of the USSR, the nation, it would seem, can overcome this trauma by re-examining its (false) identification with empire and building a (true) identity for itself in consonance with the precepts followed by any “normal,” “civilized” country. However, their political opponents view this entire way of thinking about the Russian nation as nothing less than treason (*ibid.*: 741).

It is based, according to this “patriotic orientation, on the importation of foreign concepts that would corrode the very core of Russian culture. Rather than attempting the copy what is “not ours,” these voices insist, we need to retrieve what is true and unique in Russian civilization – “the Russian idea”. This “Russian idea” is within various circles aimed at the revival of national greatness via the route of empire (*ibid.*). Doing this would naturally imply Russians to overcome the negative associations with the former forms their state took, that of empires. Necessary in order to do so is the attempt to reproduce the past in such a way the cruelties that these regimes have caused can be acceptable in the eyes of the Russian population. Or as Urban (*ibid.*: 747) exemplifies; for one’s own association with the discredited past, one’s own responsibility for the calamity that has befallen Russia, can be cancelled via the projection of past/discarded identity onto the other. In the case of the ‘near abroad’ this is increasingly being done, the “new” governments of the neighbouring states are often pictured as inexperienced and discriminatory.

In the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia saw itself and was seen by its opponents as a world power, the national identity of the successor states was an open question. In 14 republics of the former Soviet Union, identity was quickly reduced to that of the titular national group and to markers of inclusion/exclusion of that character. Foreign policy in the 14 former republics was devoted mostly to setting the nature and extent of relations with Russia. For the fifteenth republic, Russia, the identity turn was not only about ‘who or what is Russian’ but it was also about what kind of power and what kind of geopolitics that Russia would pursue. Since the 17th century, Russia has been a continental power of vast range and with multiple and diverse neighbours. Within its borders are many ethnicities and religions, and divergent national aspirations. The idea of the Soviet citizen was designed in part to raise the identity profile from nation to state, and with its disappearance, little of a sustained identity characteristic has emerged to replace it (O’Loughlin 2001: 22).

Until the end of the Soviet Union, a fear of encirclement pervaded the geopolitical mind-set that formed the basis for Soviet foreign military interventions. As evident from post-1991 governmental statements, this perception persists for the foreign policy of the Russian Federation. Since the days of *perestroika* in the mid 1980s, the main division in Russian geopolitics has separated the Westernisers and Eurasianists, not only in geopolitical theories and codes but also in their views of the nature of Russian civil society and social organisation. While the Westernisers believe that Russia can become a European democracy because Western values of pluralism and democracy are universal and thus extend to Russia, Eurasianists, often closely

linked to the nationalist-patriotic causes, believe that Russia is interwoven by a particularist geographical, historical and cultural independence that has shaped its continental identity and territorial being, rendering it neither East nor West (*ibid.*: 23). Within the Eurasian tradition a 'strong Russian state' is considered to contribute to the revival of the 'Russian national spirit' (*ibid.*: 24).

Within this same tradition MacKinder's Heartland theory is used to indicate the special role for Russia as the inheritor of the land-power tradition and the theory thus provides a justification of the opposition to the Western sea powers (*ibid.*: 25). Putin, according to O'Loughlin (*ibid.*: 26), stresses the communitarianist tradition in Russia that promotes a communist orientation and helps to define Russian identity. By resisting capitalist globalisation and asserting its 'natural hegemonic position as a Eurasian continental power', Russia can build on its communist past and Eurasian heritage to promote its interests. Important to control the 'heartland' is to secure the security of the Russian state. Within the Eurasianist tradition this should be accomplished by filling the geopolitical vacuum that has appeared (in their view) in the Eurasian political space since the end of the Soviet Union. They therefore focus on the 'near abroad' as central to Russian security and want to build alliances, use military forces and economic relations, and strategic pressure on these territories to achieve their goals (*ibid.*: 27).

Kolossov has criticised Eurasianist thinking, O'Loughlin (*ibid.*) argues. In his view, the 'consensual' geopolitical model of Russian government elites and intellectuals that has emerged to dominate the centre combines political independence for Russia with pragmatic opportunities for global influence. Occupying the same territorial space as the former Soviet Union, Eurasia acts as a geographical metaphor for a lost empire and garners adherents across the ideological spectrum in Russia (*ibid.*: 28). While there is general agreement about the need to protect ethnic Russians in the former Soviet republics using non-military means and to prevent the splitting-off of any ethnic region from Russia, as most Russians accept that Russia has a great power tradition that should be maintained, the boundaries or thresholds of any Russian actions are not so clear (*ibid.*: 35). So, although non-military action is considered to be the best option in negotiating with the 'near abroad', the use of military means is not ruled out totally. Meanwhile we have experienced more than one embodiment of these words, of which the war in Georgia is the most obvious example where Russia warned NATO to remain outside the territory of the former Soviet Union.

As O'Loughlin (*ibid.*: 39) in 2001 establishes; further encroachment by NATO and US forces into the regions demarcated as areas of special interest in the 'near abroad' is likely to generate a response as the one about the Kosovo actions in Spring 1999, when Russia was strongly affected by the fact that the decision to use force was taken in spite of its objections (Baranovsky, 2000: 455). In fact, as Baranovsky (*ibid.*: 454) claims, the Kosovo phenomenon has influenced Russia's ideas on its relation with the outside world in a more fundamental way than most other events during the past decade. It contributed to the consolidation of Russia's

anti-NATO stance. After EU and NATO enlargement in 2004 this relationship was expected to change, though old issues, such as the status of the Russian-speaking minorities have not disappeared from the agenda and EU membership of for example the Baltic States appears to have added new conflict dimensions and expanded the arenas of contestation (Ehin and Berg, 2009: 1).

Within Russian patriotic groups both strands for nationalism and imperialism are intertwined, and both of them distinct from the Westernizer branch of the Slavophile (late Soviet nationalist debate) debate (Laitin, 1998: 309). Laitin (*ibid.*: 301) argues that the idea of Russian nationalism goes beyond the Slavophile/Westernizer controversy. He states that “though tsarist Russia succeeded in building a state, it succeeded too well in building an empire and failed to create a ‘Russian nation’ within that empire” (*ibid.*: 302). The Russian “national character” required mixing “Russian patriotism” with mysticism. Russian patriotism is inevitable xenophobic; Russian thinking separates everything into “ours” and “the other” (*ibid.*: 303). Late 19th- and 20th century state development in Russia compelled a distinction between a Russian as a subject of a political entity and a person of the nationality that is at the core of the Russian state, but not the sole nationality of the state. In this way Russians were both ethnic Russians and subjects of a state that was Russia, in which Russians were “elder brothers” to a wide variety of nationality groups that were not Russians but only inhabitants of the Russian state (*ibid.*: 308). Consequently the “Russian-speaking population” in Estonia, either being ethnic Russian or not, falls outside the category of “elder brother”, and established the disconnection of their identity with the state Russia.

This identity as an “elder brother” within a continental Russian state is nearly placeless. There is a strand of Russian nationalism that sees nearly the entire Eurasian continent as its natural home. Russians, in this frame, are part of an internationalist nationality; often phrased in terms of empire-consciousness (*ibid.*). Russian nationalism has a strong exclusivist strain in Russia while in the near abroad it has a more inclusive strain (*ibid.*: 312). In contrast to the inward nationalism of Russians in Russia for whom “Soviet” no longer has meaning, the nationalism of Russians in the ‘near abroad’ reflects internationalist light (*ibid.*: 315). It is in this way the Russian identity comes into play even so across its borders, for example in Estonia where Russian-speakers are continuously subject to influences from neighbouring Russia. Russian nationalism in the ‘near abroad’ can be thought of as being consumed by the debate over what category of minority they belong to. Or, as for example in Estonia, where they are positioned as immigrants, rather not refer to themselves as a minority. In Russia itself, the identity not of the group but of the state drives national debates. The idea that the Russian state has a historic role as a superpower still lives (*ibid.*: 317).

1.3 Frontier of Competing Empires

As argued in the former paragraph not only Russia is interfering in the 'near abroad', 'protecting' Russians living in the former USSR republics, also the EU is spreading its influence further than the contemporary territorial boundaries. In this paragraph I will argue that it is exactly this empire-like behaviour of both Russia and the EU which problematizes the position of countries in the 'near abroad', who are subject to the diverging complex relationship with both political bodies. As we have seen in the first paragraph it was especially during the accession process of the EU enlargement to the East the former Soviet countries willing to access the EU were being challenged to succeed in applying to the *aquis communautaire* of the European Union in order to become a member state. After becoming members, the 'new' countries were considered to be 'fully European'. Though, as we can observe in many internal as well as external events in those 'accession countries', Russia's influence has not disappeared and still acts upon the geopolitical choices of those countries.

Consequently, and reflecting the subject of my research, in this paragraph I will, instead of focusing on countries which have still, in political realist terms, not made a choice between EU and Russia, deepen the position of countries who have become EU members, but who are equally continuously considered to be Russia's 'near abroad'. The position of for example the Baltic States is interpreted as a definite position within the EU, nevertheless the presence of significant "Russian-speaking" minorities in these states unceasingly questions their definite position in (inter)national politics. Balibar (2004: 79) also identifies the idea that in the 1980s the future for Eastern Europe was pictured to be bright and contained three key words: market, democracy and Europe. Though, as he continues, from admiration for the anti totalitarian revolutions that return "Europe" to "us" (in Western Europe), we pass imperceptibly into anxiety, if not distrust.

In Balibar's words, the struggle between the two "blocs" and its simplistic logic produced meaning which was easy accessible for everyone. Today the dissolution of this leaves an emptiness in politics: it is empty of errors, crimes and manipulations, empty of organisations, disciplines and revolts, but also empty of stakes and problems. Following the disappearance of two blocks, the struggle itself is vanishing, which in fact constitutes a great trial of truth: now or never is the moment for the dream to materialize for Europe to rise up, renewed or revitalized. The most widespread idea at the moment, fed by all sorts of memories from history textbooks, is that the end of state communism is a pure and simple 'liberation' of a mass of border disputes and ethnic and religious conflicts from out of the past of Eastern "empires", fundamentally linked to the absence of true nation-states or a delay in their construction (*ibid.*: 85-94).

Since the state today has become the very condition of individual existence, the collapse of the state inevitably implies the launching of a mass “panic” over questions of identity. The establishment of freedom of speech and the rediscovery of European peoples, authoritarianism and xenophobia are now the order of the day in the former “socialist bloc”. More than ever, Eastern Europe thus appears to be on the *border* of democracy. But, as Balibar stresses, it would once again be a mistake to conceive of this border as a separation. The true question is whether “we” in the West are seeking to invent new forms of European solidarity or whether “we” will continue to treat the problems of “European equilibrium” by means of force, market logic, propaganda and formal diplomacy (*ibid.*: 99). It is exactly this *border* in which I am interested, a border between inclusion and exclusion, a border which goes beyond the current divisions, a place ‘in-between’.

Kuus (2004: 475) argues that the reified contrast of Eastern and Western Europe, within which EU accession became a kind of relocation from Europe’s East to Europe proper, has perpetuated two seemingly opposite types of accounts on East-Central Europe: one of linear transition to the West and the other of ‘old’ patterns of geopolitics. Both conceive the agency of the accession countries in terms of following Europe or failing to do so, and both pervade not only Western but also local accounts of East-Central Europe. By emphasizing nation building and the restarting of history, this scholarship reinforces the cliché that East European countries are embroiled in nationalist fantasies that must be kept in check by the West. The framework of the incompetent immature East is based not on a clear-cut dichotomy of Europe and the East, but on a gradation or a scale of Europeanness and Eastness, maturity and immaturity; it frames social change in terms of a gradation of Europeanness and a movement toward it (*ibid.*: 476). Neither Eastern Europe nor the Orient are conceived simply as backward or simplistic. Rather, the implication of inferiority stems from construing Eastern Europe as essentially different from Europe and not yet fully European. It is this double conception of East-Central Europe – at once both steeped in history and also a blank sheet onto which Europeanness can be inscribed – that makes the discourse of Eastern Europe similar to orientalism (*ibid.*: 483).

While traditional geopolitics has received rigorous critique in the Western context, the notions of buffer zone and shatterbelt have indeed made a comeback in studies of East-Central Europe, with little reflection on their genealogies and political effects. Analyses routinely start from the premise that people in the accession countries naturally mistrust Russia and Russians because of given deep-seated identities. East-Central Europe is in this framework still in the grip of old entrenched animosities, which could still resurface unless Europe offers its stabilizing influence. As a result East-Central Europe is still framed in terms of distance from an idealized Europe. East Europeans are framed victims of the ‘father-state’ - naïve, immature, in need of overcoming the ‘mental straightjacket’ of communist society (*ibid.*: 477). As Kuus argues (*ibid.*: 478) although some specific groups in the accession countries are neglected from the particular agenda’s, they are of pivotal importance of existing institutions and social relationships in

framing and enabling societal transformations in East-Central Europe. The Russian-speaking diaspora, dispersed over many Eastern and Central European countries can be seen as an example of such groups.

Kuus (*ibid.*: 479) argues that the orientalist assumptions about East-Central Europe persist not simply because they are imposed on the accession countries but also because they are actively used by these countries against their particular Easts. This reinscription works not as an absolute dichotomy of self and other, but as a more complex and contingent pattern of degrees and shades of “otherness”. This gradation makes the concepts of Europe and Eastern Europe more flexible and hence more durable. Identity narratives in virtually all Eastern European states frame the eastern border of that particular state as the eastern border of Europe. By emphasizing their European credentials, the accession countries seek to shift the discursive border between Europe and Eastern Europe further east and to thereby move themselves into Europe. This practice can be defined as *nesting orientalism*: a pattern of representation which reproduces the dichotomy of Europe and the East but introduces a gradation between these two poles (*ibid.*).

‘Nested orientalism’ encapsulates the flexibility of the Europe/non-Europe framework: not a single monolith but a malleable set of various internal Europes and Easts which fit into and reinforce the discourse of Eastern Europe. For example Estonian and Latvian intellectuals have been casting Russia as inherently un-European. The discourse of the Russian other was dominant in the enlargement process (*ibid.*: 480) and continued to exist after the expansion of the EU in 2004. Nationalist elites in the East-Central European countries have been especially keen on framing these countries’ relations with Russia in terms of the threat of ‘potential Russian imperial reconstruction’ (*ibid.*: 482). The more Europe is eulogized as a site of values, the more Eastern Europe is tacitly marked as lacking these values. This framework encourages the candidates not to challenge the East/West dichotomy but to align themselves with the ‘right’ side. It thereby feeds into Eurocentrism and xenophobia in East-Central Europe and perpetuates the dichotomy of Europe and Russia. Kuus (*ibid.*: 484) concludes that constructions of Europe from the margins of Europe could indeed provide a particularly useful mirror of the exclusion and division that still form an integral part of the idea of Europe.

As we have seen both the EU and Russia are reinventing universal elite norms, values and scripts (lecture O. Kramsch, 24-09-2008) after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Old hierarchies of power are being destabilized and former Soviet Union states who now regained their independence searching for their space and time in this “new world order”. The new imperialism, where Hardt and Negri write on legitimates power without any centre, boundaries and time. Hardt and Negri give you the feeling that “empire is everywhere”, in the sense that it establishes no territorial centre of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries and barriers, but it incorporates the entire global realm in within its frontiers. Here they should be nuanced, since in line with Kuus and Böröcz who argue it is the continuous tension between various empires that reproduce borders and boundaries. The U.S. oriented vision of Hardt and Negri ignores the

empires of Europe, where the EU can be perceived as a new kind of empire. The empire-like behaviour of the EU as well as Russia persistently reproduces the borders and boundaries Europe.

The idea of European values that can be exported to other countries consternates the idea that was being spread in colonial times (lecture O. Kramsch, 19-02-2009) and the exact phrase of spreading peace, security and safety among its citizens was used by the Soviet Union when it invaded Estonia. The EU ignores these histories and re-invents its own norms, values and scripts. The same can be said for Russia, that after the break down of the Soviet Union searched for a common sense, unable to rely on many glorious events from the past and rebuilding its new nationalism around the longstanding idea of the Russian state as being a protector, a referee and guarantor of social peace and continuously aspires to become a 'great power' in Europe and Asia (O'Loughlin, Ó Tuathail and Kolossov, 2005: 331). Estonia, inhabited by borderland people and being invaded for many times in their history, regained its independence after the Soviet break up in 1991 and even so had to re-invent its own history, scripts and norms. When nationalists gained power in the first years of independence, Russians who moved to Estonia during Soviet times, became alienated.

I would like to follow Kramsch (2009: 3) who invites us to gain insights into the workings of European frontiers in our lived present through the prism of the two "faces" of the Rabelaisian border". The first face of the Rabelaisian border is, according to Kramsch, "refracted through the territorial fixations of politicians, diplomats and geo-political strategists, while "reality" is re-appropriated for "people filled with substance and life"". As shown in the preceding paragraphs, Estonian and EU perceptions on territoriality are impossible to reshape and end at respectively the nation state or the Eastern outer border of the EU. Meanwhile hegemonic knowledge is being re-ordered and made meaningful in people's lives. The second face of the Rabelaisian border involves, as Kramsch puts it: "a nationalizing borderland is consistently enfolded within a more worldly and imperial sphere", which "acts both as a medium and presupposition to European bordering practices in our day, whereby internal state borders and external frontiers are co-produced in complex dialectical tension". With regard to the first part of the part of the second face of the Rabelaisian border we can see that Estonia, being a nationalizing borderland, is continuously dependent on global geopolitical relations and positions itself in the condition where making a choice between belonging to the one or the other imperial power is inevitable. The conditions of their nation building process and the identification of the Russian speaking minority is continuously subjected to multilateral liaisons in the worldly and imperial sphere surrounding Estonia.

As a result of these conditions, Kramsch says, internal state borders and external frontiers are co-produced in complex dialectical tension. In Estonia borders between the bi-national borderland population are permanently reframed and co-interpreted along the identification of external frontiers; when Russia became 'the enemy' after regaining independence in 1991, the

Russian speaking population became successively an internal enemy and when membership with the EU became more important when establishing external frontiers, Russian speakers were granted more legal rights in line with European norms and values. Nevertheless, even when Russian speakers are offered all legal rights, internal state borders between ethnic Estonians and Russian speakers remain dependent and are co-produced in a complex dialectical tension with external frontiers.

1.4 “Us” and “Them”

Ethnicity emerges and is made relevant through social situations and encounters and through people's ways of coping with the demands and challenges of life (Erkisen, 2002: 1). Social identities are subject to negotiations and being member of an ethnic group suggests contact and interrelationship (*ibid.*: 10). Group membership and loyalties are confirmed and strengthened through stereotyping and the articulation of conflict and competition. This mutual demarcation process can be called 'dichotomisation', which is in essence the 'us'-'them' relationship (*ibid.*: 28). Ethnic membership, in order to be socially effective, must be acknowledged by the agents themselves. The ethnic group is defined through its relationship to others, highlighted through the boundary, and the boundary itself is a social product which may have variable importance and which may change in time. Ethnic boundaries are not necessarily territorial boundaries, but social ones. There is a continuous flow of information, interaction, exchange and sometimes even people across them. It is exactly on the boundaries, which delimit the group, where the focus of research ought to be (*ibid.*: 37-39).

These anthropological perspectives on ethnicity give us a first idea on what the 'us'-'them' dichotomy exists off. It is a social process in which group membership is being established. The social process includes a continuous exchange of information which helps to (re)define and the boundary between the ethnic groups. The ethnic groups are thus far from isolated from each other, rather they interacting on a daily basis as well in the public as the private life of persons. Social life, like everyday activity, is essentially a practice of demarcation, of continually making social and cultural distinctions (Paasi, 1996: 20-21). Though ethnic groups are not necessarily tight to a territory, it is often the boundaries and their locations are potential sources of territorial conflicts (*ibid.*: 3). The idea of the 'other' has become pivotal to modern social history. The 'other' has to be labelled, these labels have to be legitimated and the 'other' has to be mythologized. If the 'other' lives at the same territory, 'we' are in any case different from 'you' (*ibid.*: 13).

A struggle over the redefinition of space is always an expression of the restructuring of economic, political and administrative practices, and also of the restructuring of the contents of social consciousness, inasmuch as one obvious aim of various ethnoregional groups is to establish a territorial counterpart for social boundaries. These practices are never abstract processes which take place somewhere above the heads of human beings, but unfailingly manifest themselves on local, regional or national scales and are in fact produced, contested and reproduced in the local everyday life of human beings (*ibid.*). In the social construction of ethnic groups, by Paasi referred to as socio-spatial communities, language and discourse are important

for the spatial demarcations and boundaries. And, according to Paasi, (*ibid.*: 7) it is a question of how political and cultural processes become part of the social and symbolic construction and reproduction of communities, and of how landscapes, heritage, cultural products and rhetoric, metaphors and images are exploited in the process.

The ideas of ‘otherness’ are significant in producing certain metaphysical conceptions and ideological structures, and how the ‘other’ provides a useful way of illuminating the categories of space and time, which confer a fundamental structure on the discourses of social and political theory (*ibid.*: 9). The idea of demarcation and delimitation – or spatialization – is, as Paasi (*ibid.*: 11) argues, in any case present in all social practices, particularly those through which the local discourse ‘stretches’ itself to other spatial scales, for through regionalistic and nationalistic argumentation and inherent territorial identities. Identity construction and nation building, in the same sense as group demarcation, always occurs against the background of an external other. The role of language cannot be unmentioned concerning this process; it is language which is employed to construct or reconstruct social and political reality while at the same time it serves as the medium of social action and communication (*ibid.*: 12).

In Europe, the old ideological boundary between East and West is, after the fall of the Berlin wall, losing its traditional political and cultural role. Boundaries and borders no longer play the same role in distinguishing space and place as they did. After the rapid changes in Europe, questions of nation, state and territory have in fact returned to the top of world’s political agenda (*ibid.*: 6). The recent developments in regional transformation in Europe pressures for change in territorial structures emerge from social, economic and political action, new representations and the struggle to create new stories, new significations for social communities (*ibid.*: 23). As Billig (in Petersoo, 2007: 118) puts it, if ‘nationalism is an ideology of the first person plural, which tells ‘us’ who ‘we’ are, then it is also an ideology of the third person. There can be no ‘us’ without ‘them’’. Ethnic and national identities are constantly transforming, and are continually being renewed, reinterpreted and renegotiated according to changing circumstances and, interests. The role of the ‘other(s)’ is not constant either, and the intensity of the other’s influence on ‘us’ varies (*ibid.*).

As Petersoo (*ibid.*) exemplifies, in the field of collective identities, the most dramatic and important moments of identification are wars and the breakdown of a given state order. Often the ‘old’ identity is no longer suitable, and it is then that the significant ‘other’ becomes more salient and powerful. It is the ‘other’ that serves in overcoming the crisis it unites the people in front of a common enemy, it reminds them “who we are” and emphasizes that “we are different and unique”. If the ‘other’ is represented as threatening then an enemy-based rhetoric may lead to xenophobia and racism (*ibid.*: 119). This ‘other’ does not have to be necessarily outside, but may be ‘internal’, belonging to the same political space (*ibid.*: 121). The ‘function’ of the internal ‘other’ is, as Petersoo follows Hobsbawm’s (1992) insights (*ibid.*: 123), to homogenize and unify the ‘majority’ nation, there is no more effective way of bonding together the disparate sections of

restless peoples than to unite them against outsiders, and these 'outsiders' do not have to be spatially outside.

In the case of Estonia, as we have seen in the preliminary chapter, demarcating the 'other' after the break-up of the Soviet Union has been done in line with the process of "Europeanisation". The process of "Europeanisation" highlighted the 'choice' of Estonia to re-invent their position in Europe. Within the process of "Europeanization" the separation from the East is being accentuated, with the East being represented by Russia. In order to "returning to Europe" the break with their "Eastern past" was inevitable which as a result framed Russia as a non-European country. The so-called 'Return to Europe' narratives has been central to Estonian political and cultural discourse since the 1980s. Although the EU accession was by no means met with universal approval and support in Estonia, the prevalent national historiography is very pro-European, mostly disseminated by the direct contact with Scandinavian countries (*ibid.*: 127) and by the use of Estonian language, which has a Finno-Urgic origin (*ibid.*: 124).

In order to restore Estonia's national imagination it was necessary to contrive the 'other' in order to contain their identity and ideological nation state in the first years of independence. And who could, in line with the process of becoming 'more European', could better be the new 'other' than Russia? Being the last invader of the country and being the brain behind the gulag's, where thousands of Estonians were expelled to, Russia as being the initiator of the communist state, was an easy enemy to point at. Russians, who came to Estonia after WWII as a result of measures taken by the Soviet regime, were in the first years after independence considered to be illegitimate and thus functioned as the internal other against whom Estonians asserted their nationness. Because of the demographic changes that had taken in Estonia since the Second World War, it was widely believed, among Estonians, the titular population would soon be reduced to a minority within its own administratively recognised ethnic homeland. This fear of extinction fuelled the negative perception of Russian settlers as a 'threat' and resulted in a hostile nationalistic discourse (*ibid.*).

As Paasi (1996: 46-47) points out "many of the moral conflicts and dilemmas facing individuals have their origins in the fact that people identify themselves with several territorial communities, stories and discourses at the same time. People identify themselves with a number of groups distinguished by more or less visible social, cultural and spatial boundaries. Group identity always involves a notion of otherness attached to those not in the group and those who do not share the same situations and stories with a specific group". Thus we can conclude that boundaries both create identities and are created through identity (Newman & Paasi, 1998: 194). Identities are therefore continuously subject to changes and vary from person to person and from situation to situation. Kolossov (1999: 71) states that identities are multiple and 'negotiable' and the same individual or group may privilege one identity over another according to the situation and the moment. Identities therefore are not static but are always subject to internal and external influences and therefore an individual or group may chose to encompass various identities at

different moments. For the Russian-speakers in Estonia this is something which is often been done. It is important to note that there are differences regarding their 'Estonian identity' between Russian-speakers living in Estonia due to for example geographical dispersal, mixed ethnic backgrounds and the participation with Estonians in their social life. In the North-East of Estonia the population consists of over 80 percent of Russian-speakers, in Narva, the main border crossing city, this is even higher, approximately 95 percent of the population is Russian-speaking there. Although learning Estonian language is obligatory as well for people who want to naturalize as in all schools, Russian is the only spoken language on the streets. People live in an Estonian village but they are still very close to their Russian neighbours. In Estonia the North-Eastern region and especially the city of Narva are also referred to as 'different' from Estonia.



International border between Estonia (left) and Russia (right). The bridge being 'no-mans-land'. (Picture taken at 22-06-2009).



Two fortresses of Narva, Estonia (right) and Ivangorod, Russia (left). Historically they have been connected and separated on and off. Now both representing the end or beginning of a territorial body. (Picture taken at 22-06-2009).

1.5 “In-between” “us” and “them”

In this paragraph I would like to explore, with the help of the analysis of the above paragraphs, what is in between the ‘us’ and ‘them’. I would like to know if and how we can look beyond the categories “Russian” and “Estonian” and exemplify Laitin’s theory on a new identity among Russian-speakers in Estonia. With the help of van Houtum, Kramsch and Zierhofer (2005) I will first make an attempt to specify what this ‘in-between’ and ‘beyond’ means and how we are able to make it visible. As van Houtum, Kramsch and Zierhofer (2005: 3) state, border objects are not relevant in themselves, as are the objectification processes of bounded spaces informing people’s everyday spatial practices. A territorial b/order is a normative idea, a belief in the existence and continuity of a territoriality binding and differentiated power that only becomes concrete, objectified and real in our own everyday social practices. Interpreted along these lines, a border is not so much an object or a material artefact as a belief, an imagination that creates and shapes a world, a social reality. Borders create a membrane or buffer zone separating the inside from an outside, while linking both in a particular way. B/ordering creates and represents an exclusive knowledge. It decides what is to be included and excluded.

Given the apparently contradictory spatialities of borders, reflected in their capacity to articulate both transcendent closure and immanent openness, we may assert that bordered spatialities are inherently partial, selective, and opportunistic, both in their representation as in the interests that they serve. And, according to van Houtum, Kramsch and Zierhofer (*ibid.*) it is precisely in the unfamiliarity of this in-between and beyond-space that we are challenged to unbound our thinking and practices. In the same volume Paasi (*ibid.*: 21-27) argues that where political theorists continually reproduce definitions of the state which are based on an idea of a clearly demarcated territory and many authors point to the links between boundaries and identity, and hence the cultural meanings of the distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’, a major challenge for the existing state-centred views on boundaries is the changing link between state and nation; the major challenge is to develop critical approaches to understand the changing meaning of boundaries in the current globalizing world. Or as Soja (*ibid.*: 39) shows, borderlines where two nationalities meet have traditionally functioned to separate cultures, to maintain and regulate their apartness. In many parts of the world today however, the border serves to draw people together, to intensify border crossings and interactivity even to create distinctive border cultures and transnational regionalisms. This is, according to Soja, what is in-between the ‘inside’ and the ‘outside’.

Whilst Russia has occupied a more traditional position of a clearly carved-out Eastern ‘other’ in the European predicament, its own ambivalent relation to the West combining recognition-seeking from the latter with advances for autonomy, nonetheless places it in the comparative scale of ‘borderline Europeans’ (Lotman 1999, Kuus 2007 in Berg & Ehin 2009: 65). The Baltic States also aim to function as bilingual ‘interpretative filters’ for ‘translating’

Russia to Western Europe (*ibid.*: 66), although it has been argued by many that the Baltics' depiction of Russia as a country of lower civilisation and as an economic, political and military threat to them, they rather can be perceived as a border between Russia and Western Europe than the bridge or 'interpretative filter' they aim to be (*ibid.* & Berg & Oras 2000), even so with respect to the 'new' Schengen border (Berg & Ehin 2006 & Roll 2008).

In 1998 Laitin has identified this problematic identity among Russian-speakers in Estonia. As he argues (1998: 263), identification as a member of the "Russian-speaking population" is in some way an alternative to assimilation (being Estonian), and mobilization (being Russian). Laitin states that the "Russian-speaking population" is a new identity category that has emerged in Estonia; a conglomerate identity which includes Russians, Belarusian's, Ukrainians, Poles and Jews. For the Russian-speaking population in Estonia to transmogrify into a Russian-speaking nationality would require emergent claims of group autonomy, to cultural nationhood and eventually to the right of statehood (*ibid.*: 296). The rhetoric of the Estonian government fed the feeling of anger and distrust (*ibid.*: 106). When faced with the prospect of closed labor markets, monolingual Russians changed their minds about learning Estonian (*ibid.*: 116). Under post-Soviet conditions, learning the titular language provides better opportunities for higher education, qualification for a larger set of professional jobs, citizenship, and opportunities in a new sector of the economy (*ibid.*: 118).

The citizenship laws of Estonia demanded cultural concessions. Linguistic assimilation is not the only integrating process taking place in Estonia. Russians are becoming more like titulars in other ways as well. This non-linguistic integration process, especially when coupled with citizenship, is yielding a new form of national identity that blurs the divide between titulars and non-titulars (*ibid.*: 158). The (non-linguistic) cultural divide separating Russians and Estonians is eroding and for most Russians emigrating to Russia was not, in the aftermath of the collapse of the USSR, a feasible option. Public discourse among Russians in Estonia is not over the question of when to leave, but on how to stay. They blame the titulars in general and the nationalistic leaders in particular for the uncertainty they are facing in the 1990s (*ibid.*: 177). The notion that Russians in Estonia feel themselves closer in basic values to Estonians than to Russians in Russia, while on the other hand by nationalistic political rhetoric they are continuously positioned as "occupiers" and "colonizers". In the 1990s these known facts fostered Laitin to argue for the originating of a new identity among Russians in Estonia, the "Russian-speaking population", a new form of identity that blurs the divide between titulars and non-titulars.

1.6 Two Discourses

Since achieving independence in 1991 for Estonia the main challenges to nation-building have been the management of cultural and ethnic diversity and especially the regulation of the position of the Russian-speakers. Estonia had to re-establish her state institutions, while Russian-speakers constitute almost a third of the population. The definition of the legal position of Estonia's Russian-speakers derives from the idea of restoring the pre-war Estonian statehood that had been interrupted by the Soviet occupation; hence the denial of automatic citizenship to other than pre-1940 Estonian inhabitants and their descendents (Korhonen in Alapuro e.a. 2004: 191). In the early years of independence, decisions on the legal status of Soviet-era settlers were conditioned by Estonians' insecurity over the survival of their culture and language, and even their restored statehood (*ibid.*: 192). The status of the Russian-speakers in Estonia has the Russian Federation often portrayed as being in need of its protection (*ibid.*: 193). These circumstances made Estonia, since the early 1990s one of the focuses of the renewed international attention on minority protection (*ibid.*: 194).

The Russian-speakers in Estonia constitute a heterogeneous group. Though, there is one point, which is shared nearly unanimously; the impression that without the pressure from abroad, and particularly from international organisations, the negative political attitude of the early 1990s towards the Russian-speakers would not have started to change (*ibid.*: 198). From the point of view of the Russian-speakers, the international organisations have been important in negotiating a new post-socialist Estonian space and in defining the position of the Russian-speakers in it (*ibid.*: 200). Agarín (2009) argues that despite these important task for international organisations, the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) active on minority rights in Estonia, created and supported by international organisations have a rather marginal position in the landscape of NGOs consulted in the process of policy-making. Instead of influencing national politics, Agarín argues, those NGOs are predominantly influencing public opinions on the topic of integration (Agarín 2009: 7).

So while working on human rights issues, minority NGOs in Estonia gain only marginal acceptance and acknowledgement by their respective government (*ibid.*: 8). The lack of political will to accommodate the claims advanced in the civic networks by the non-titular population, who have otherwise no opportunity to interfere in political processes reduces the engagement in criticising and advising policy-makers, weakening the overall role of civil society in Estonia (*ibid.*: 15). The weakness of political participation of the Russian-speakers and the strong national feeling in Estonia, started immediately after independence and only been reduced slightly in the almost twenty years following this independence continued the insecure feeling among Russian-speakers in Estonia. To demonstrate their 'different' identity from Estonians, they continued to practice their 'own' traditions and remembered the, for them, significant events from the past. One event, remembered intensely by Russian-speakers is the end of World War II,

when Nazi Germany was defeated by the allies and where the Red Army of the Soviet Union lost many of its men. Estonians experience this historical event on a quite opposing manner, which I will explore more in depth shortly.

First we must look if the continuing of rather national politics in Estonia combined with the weak political participation of the Russian-speakers could be the source of a conflict between ethnic Estonians and Russian-speakers in Estonia. When regaining independence in 1991, Estonia was praised by the international community for its non-violent transition. As opposed to Latvia and Lithuania where some were killed in the process, in Estonia not one person was wounded. This fostered positive prosperities with regard to the period to come. Though as I will explain more explicitly in the next chapter, by choosing to “alienate” the Russian-speakers from the Estonian territory, it seemed it would only be waiting for some ethnic conflict to happen. During the 1990s it was considered to be rather unavoidable. For example both Laitin and Kolossov in 1998 and 1999 agreed that territory will be the ‘battlefield’ between Estonians and Russian-speakers in Estonia. The Russian-speakers claiming autonomy would only be a matter of time.

This was something the international community was also unable to avoid. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe decided to a mission in 1992. Zaagman (1999: 1) analysing this mission, argues that concerning to the OSCE mission initially minority issues were framed in terms of individual human rights, whereas after the break-up of the Soviet Union minority issues now are mainly seen from the angle of conflict prevention. Zaagman (*ibid.*) identifies the minority situation in Estonia in the 1990s as totally different from other minority situations at the end of the twentieth century. First of all, he argues, in Estonia there are domestic tensions between a large minority of mainly Russians without citizenship who had to get used to post-Soviet realities and of who the majority is determined to preserve and strengthen its own identity. Besides we can speak of increasing international tensions because of the active interest which neighbouring Russia takes in the condition of its kinfolk in Estonia.

As Ehala (2009: 139) exemplifies “there have been severe shifts and changes in ethnic identities in Estonia, which are a response to the transition of Estonia from a post-Soviet country to a EU member state as well as to the growing prominence of Russia in world affairs during the last eight years”. As Fofanova and Morozov (in Berg & Ehin 2009: 16) argue, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation was structurally driven towards establishing itself as a successor of both the Russian empire and the USSR. This meant that its foundational historic narrative clashed with those of the Baltic states at many crucial points. The overall feeling of insecurity about identities on both sides made the conflict almost inevitable.

Both Kolossov and Laitin foresaw some kind of ethnic conflict. As Laitin observes (1998: 296) “the question at hand is whether those who now represent themselves as Russian speakers will sharpen the boundaries that separate them from others, and make claims for political/territorial autonomy based on the cultural distinctiveness of the group within those

boundaries. There is no evidence that such efforts are now taking place, but there are reasons for holding that the groundwork has been laid for such a project". Kolossov clearly observes this could be the result of the manipulation of historical representations. "The role of the territorial factor in the formation of self-images is clearly salient. As the history of the people settling the post-Soviet space is deeply interrelated, the 'battle for history' not only intensifies ethnic distinctions, but potentially aggravates the risk of ethnic conflict. In cases where the elites manipulate historical representations in an instrumentalist fashion to promote ethnic or national identity, spatial cultural and political borders tend to become more solidified" (Kolossov, 1999: 79).

These words, written by Kolossov in 1999, became reality in Estonia in 2007. The Reform Party, a centre-right liberal party, made the promise to move the Bronze Soldier to the outskirts of Tallinn after it had won the elections. The Reform Party became the largest party in Estonia after March 2007 elections in which, as always, stateless were not able to vote. Then they had to comply with their election promise and remove the Bronze Soldier from its location at the city centre from Tallinn. Why this is was such a big problem it caused strong internal reactions and ultimately sharpened the tensions between ethnic Estonians and Russian-speakers is closely related to the symbolic meaning of the statue and the reinvention of historiographical thought, traditions and national feelings in Estonia. Right after regaining independence all historiographical thought was redirected in order to be the last country of Western Europe, different from the last invaders, the Russians (being the initiators of the USSR).

Along this line traditions had to be reinvented, history books had to be rewritten and time and space had to be re-classified. Naturally, since the Soviet membership was regarded as illegal, the moment of the occupation became one of the indicators for the new history writings. The 1991 restoration of the Estonian state became a succession of the way it was before 1940 when the red army for the first time occupied the country. Estonian collective memory in relation to Russia is fundamentally determined by the notion of lost statehood and Soviet-Russian occupation since the pact between Hitler and Stalin in 1939 and the subsequent invasion by the Red Army. The idea of legal continuity of statehood has, over the past decades, but in particular in the last 19 years, been the central historical notion for Estonians. The 'mass personal memory' of the nations' sufferings and losses under this occupation is still infrequently evoked by public commemoration days, and in newspaper articles and speeches. It is the lost national independence and continued occupations that has become a constitutive element of national identity (Onken, 2007: 38).

Russian collective memory concerning the Baltic States is equally connected to this period. As Putin answered to an Estonian journalist when he in 2005 asked him about the occupation of Estonia, in Russia's view Estonia only developed its statehood because of an conspiracy between Germany and Russia where Estonian territory was under Germany's de facto control and in 1939 Estonia freely joined the Soviet Union (*ibid.*). Positioned as heir of the

USSR and Russia's ambitions of being a geopolitical power in Eurasia it is virtually impossible to recognize the occupation of the Baltic States during the Soviet times.

After the invasion of the red army in 1940, in 1941, Hitler incorporated Estonia in the "Third Reich" territory. This occupation ended in 1944 when the red army freed Estonia from the Nazi's and successively did not leave the country. In 1991 Estonia regained its independence and succeeded the state along the lines where it was called to halt in 1940. Soviet Union's war against Nazi Germany in 1941-1945 is in Russia referred to as "the Great Patriotic War" and surrounded by heroic narratives. These heroic narratives are particularly important for the new Russia's identity construction since it links Russia with Europe and/or civilisation (Fofanova & Morozov in Berg & Ehin 2009: 26).

Whereas Russia often is positioned as at best a peripheral European country, the history of the Second World War can be told in such a manner that the Soviet Union will appear at the centre of the struggle for the genuine European values against a barbarian force (*ibid.*). As Fofanova and Morozov (*ibid.*: 27) identify, given the foundational significance of the Great Patriotic War narrative, any recognition of the negative role played by the Soviet Union in the history of the Second World War would involve reconfiguring the whole groundwork of Russian national identity construction. The memory of the Great Patriotic War most explicitly links Russian and European identities, and therefore any encroachment on this memory is interpreted as a sign of outright hostility, as a violent negation of Russia's self (*ibid.*: 30). The crucial importance of the Great Patriotic War narrative is best illustrated by the scale of the celebrations commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of victory over Nazi Germany in 2005 (*ibid.*: 27).

In everyday Estonian life two narratives or discourses are dominant, one which frames the freeing of Estonia from the Nazi's as a time in which the country was incorporated within the Soviet Union again, while the other discourse frames the same time as a time in which many soldiers lost their lives while freeing Europe from the most cruel dictatorship of the last century. So in the first discourse the red army is perceived as being another occupying force, while in the second they are seen as the liberators of Europe and European civilisation. Or as in the report of the LICHR (2007: 15) is stated: the 22nd of September 1944 is either the "liberation of the fascists" or the "beginning of a second Soviet occupation".

Though it is not only the 1944 liberation of Nazi Germany that knows two opposing discourses, many events around the Second World War are being explained in various ways. One major example is the pact that Hitler and Stalin made just before the outbreak of WWII, the so-called Molotov-Ribbentrop pact to its both ministers of foreign affairs at the moment. Within this secret pact, agreed upon in 1939, Hitler and Stalin divided Europe between their totalitarian regimes. Estonia, which was part of "Stalin's half", was invaded by the Soviet army in 1940. For Estonians this is the moment they lost their independency and Estonia became occupied territory. In the Soviet Union the existence of the pact was denied until 1989 the pact is positioned as the only possible way for Stalin to "buy time" in order to prepare the war with Nazi Germany, it is

perceived as an “enforced emergency measure”. The Baltic States harp the importance of the pact for their history, since it is framed as the moment they lost their independency, and they aim at international recognition for their “lost”. In Russia, the pact is rather ignored since it does not fit the idea of “The Great Patriotic War” and the great sacrifices the Soviet Union had made during WWII (De Volkskrant, 17-08-2009).

Another major example on the opposing discourses, playing an important part in the Bronze Soldier events, between Estonians and Russians is the way in which the occupation of Nazi Germany is explained. Although Hitler and Stalin had agreed on dividing Europe, Hitler did occupy large parts of Eastern Europe by defeating the army of the Soviet Union. Within the Russian discourse it was stated that the Germans were welcomed by Estonians, because of historical ties with Germany. Estonia was long ruled by a German elite and many inhabitants still speak German. Instead of condemning the Nazi regime, Russian discourse positions Estonians as collaborators of the Nazi’s. The discourse successively narrates that when the Nazi’s invaded Estonia, Estonians were voluntarily joining the Nazi army in order to disperse the Soviet soldiers. In the Russian narrative, the Estonians who joined the Nazi’s in this time were considered to be “freedom fighters”, they fought side by side with the Germans for independent statehood (LICHR, 2007: 14). Naturally Russian discourse frames this “freedom fighters” as the helpers of the Nazi’s who have committed many cruelties in the name of Hitler. This discourse is today feed by activities of “neo-Nazi’s”, who have yearly gatherings in Estonia.

In the Estonian discourse the occupation by Nazi Germany is something which can’t be seen as something positive in their history, but the occupation by the Soviet Union is perceived more harsh, severe and cruel than the German one. Equally it was not them, but the Russians who have committed most war crimes. Estonians were said to have fought on “both sides”, newspaper articles publish stories of Estonian woman of whom one son fought in the red army while another son fought on the side of the Nazi’s. Where Russians position the Estonian collaboration with the Nazi’s as voluntary, Estonians narrate that besides a few exceptions, Estonians were forced by both regimes to fight in their names. The framing of the Soviet crimes as more cruel than those of the Germans is widely recognised among Estonians and of course triggers the above mentioned discussion by Fovana and Morozov, on the recognition of the Soviet crimes in Europe. Estonian discourse tells the red army to have ‘freed’ Estonia from Nazi Germany by raping their woman, killing their man and harming their society. Afterwards the Soviets deported an estimated 200.000 Estonians primarily towards Siberia, of whom only half returned to their homeland.

On top of this Russia perseveres the idea of Estonia having freely joint the Soviet Union, something which, in their idea, is never legally contested by other European states and thus can be perceived as a legal historical event. In this regard something which by Estonians is seen as occupation, Russians rather refer to it as voluntary participation or annexation. Where Estonia is seeking for recognition of the Soviet occupation, Russia has never officially declared it being an

occupation and ignored Estonia's request of compensation for the population being cut severely under Soviet regime. As Berg & Oras (2000: 606) exemplify "it was essential for Estonia to prove that Estonia did not gain independence for the first time as one of the 15 Soviet successor states, rather restored its statehood after a 51 year illegal occupation". For Estonian nationalists this "freeing of Nazi Germany" is used to show the invalidity of the Soviet Union of which Russia was the initiator and legislator. In the Estonian discourse Russia is thus positioned as a threat, a country which is unpredictable and geopolitically interested in the Baltic States.

Today, not only is Russia commemorating the "Great Patriotic War" on a large scale, inviting prominent European politicians to Moscow on the 9th of May, Estonia is also continuing the "battle on history". An example of this is the new monument which has been erected in July 2009 in the centre of Tallinn, in order to remember the Estonian War of Independence 1918-1920. This war was directed against Russia, whose tsarist empire was falling apart and successively lost its key position in Europe. Since Germany, at the end of WWI also became less powerful, countries as Estonia were able to proclaim their independence. The battle that followed this claim of independence is remembered as the Estonian War of Independence and followed by the Tartu Peace Treaty, signed in 1920 between Russia and Estonia, and is perceived as the beginning of the Estonian statehood. Erecting this monument in the city centre of Tallinn in the summer of 2009, remembering the Estonian War of Independence 1918-1920, exemplifies the Estonian statehood is considered to be commemorated and preserved. That the War of Independence was against Russians, whom now form part of the Estonian society is not taken into account when placing the monument, equally as the perhaps variable understanding of the war amongst Estonian inhabitants.



The new monument erected in Tallinn remembering the Estonian War of Independence 1918-1920. (Picture taken at 15-07-2009).

1.7 The Bronze Soldier

In 2007 Estonian national elections took place. In the process towards the elections, the Reform Party promised, in case they would win the elections, to replace the monument of a Bronze Soldier. Towards the replacement of the monument historical discourses concerning the 1944 invasion of the Soviet Army occupying Estonian area was ultimately used by Estonian nationalists. The Bronze Soldier embodied those who had fallen during the liberation of Nazi Germany and, because of the special meaning of this affair for Russians, the monument was actively visited on commemoration days of which May the 9th, when Russia commemorates “The Great Patriotic War” is the most prominent. The Bronze Soldier was unveiled in September 1947 and dedicated to the Liberators of Tallinn, commemorating the Red Army soldiers who conquered the city three years earlier. The soldier himself is anonymous but has a specific and recognizable uniform, a Soviet uniform. Re-burying of soldiers at the site also made the statue a memorial, and an eternal flame further added to the sacredness of the place. In the Soviet era the monument legitimized Soviet rule and obligated the citizens to build up the new Soviet Estonia for which these glorious dead had sacrificed their lives (Lehti, Jutila & Jokisipilä 2008: 398).

When the Soviet army left Estonia in 1994 the eternal flame was removed, the central position of the monument was reduced by replacing the direct access paths to the monument and the commemorative text on the statue was replaced by a more neutral one in order to reduce its ideological weight. There were also several suggestions to redesign the entire memorial, but these plans never materialized (Ehala, 2009: 140-141). In 2004 another monument, the Lihula monument, devoted to the men who fought against Bolshevism from 1940-1945 and to the restoration of Estonian independence, portrayed as an armed soldier in Nazi uniform, was erected in Lihula and stood for two weeks before it was removed by the Estonian government because of obvious Nazi resemblance. After this removal the parallel with the Bronze Soldier in a Soviet uniform became salient and an increasing number of people started to see its presence in the centre of Tallinn as an injustice. On the eve of 9 May 2005 red paint was thrown over the Bronze Soldier. From then until its relocation the monument became the focal point for identity battles in Estonia (*ibid.*: 142).

As Onken (2007: 23) exemplifies, commemoration days are facilitating social mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. For politicians they provide the opportunity to demonstrate political positions and to discuss different perceptive standpoints. Onken (*ibid.*: 24) argues today European politics are closely linked to questions of collective memory, history and culture. Onken (*ibid.*: 30) argues that within the ‘discourse competition’ on the European stage, the understanding that the crimes of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe were equally barbaric to those committed by the Nazis, clearly challenges the paradigm of the singularity of the Holocaust against which Europe has been defined so far. The monument of the Bronze Soldier and the discussion around its replacement embodies this ‘discourse competition’ on what

regime was most barbaric. After the Reform Party became the largest party after elections they had to fulfil their election promise and ascertain the monument to be removed from the city centre of Tallinn. In a way the Bronze Soldier had become a symbol opposed to the Estonian Republic, a symbol of occupation and not a monument to war victims (LICHR 2007: 14).

The announcement of the replacement by the government triggered a lot of emotional reactions among Russian-speakers in Estonia. And because many Russian-speakers in Estonia watch Russian television and news concerning the replacement was broadcasted only in Estonian, Russian-speakers were poorly informed about the movement of the statue. The Russian media did refer to the replacement as a removal of the monument and the Estonian government did not make any attempts to change this image. Then, when the first dig actions of the government had started at the site of the monument, a Russian-speaking radical youth organization decided to guard the statue 24 hours a day. Ultimately this triggered reactions from the Estonian government and it positioned a police force at the site where the Bronze Soldier was still situated at that moment. Since the statue was being covered under a large tent and the immediate surroundings were being fenced off while at the same time there was no clear statement from the government about what was going to happen to the Soldier, insecurity among Russian demonstrators rose and riots between them and the police broke out in the night of 25-26 April and continued the next day. Shop windows were smashed and many were arrested.

According to official state figures, contested by the Russian-speaking youth organization, during clashes at the demonstration site one person died, more than 40 people were injured and 300 arrested as police used tear gas to disperse mainly ethnic Russian demonstrators. According to figures compiled by the Legal Information Centre for Human Rights, who initiated to administer the declarations of human rights violence of the “Bronze Night”, 494 citizens of Estonia were arrested, 85 citizens of the Russian Federation and 308 stateless persons (LICHR 2007: 19). The Russian foreign ministry immediately reacted to these violations by stating that “the actions of the Estonian authorities are disappointing and cannot be justified” (BBC news 27-04-2007). Various Russian Federation officials and organizations voiced their concern about the activities of the Estonian government in homeland nationalistic form.

Even so the Helsinki Federation for Human Rights called on the Estonian authorities to “investigate in a thorough and impartial manner allegations of the police brutality during the recent wave of riots in the country and to ensure that any further riots are dealt with strictly in accordance with international standards” (LICHR 2007: 19). The Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov sent a letter to the ‘Western partners of Estonia’, where he accused Estonia of rewriting history and downplaying the role of Russia in liberating the world from fascism. The Estonian government reacted to ‘the siege to the Estonian embassy in Moscow’ – the participants in which were, according to the government, paid by the Kremlin – by demanding a concerted European response (*ibid.*: 401). As Haukkala (2009: 205) presents the concerns of Russian officials had a two-fold objective: “there was a direct political pressure put on the Estonian

government and secondly the event became internationalized, seeking to isolate Estonia from its Western partners in the EU and NATO”.

Estonia, threatened by a “cyber war” origin from Russia according to Estonian sources, blamed Russia for preparing the event as a special operation against Estonia (LICHHR 2007: 20). The Estonian media published “proof” of Russian-speakers being moved from all over Estonia to Tallinn accompanied by free alcohol on the road. Both Estonian and Russian representatives used hard rhetoric, accusing each other of violations of European values (Lehti, Jutila & Jokisipilä, 2008: 402). As also Ehala (2009: 152) argues, “the Bronze soldier chain of events was an ethnic counter-reaction to forceful Europeanization in the last decade, when Estonia struggled to meet European standards in multiculturalism and political correctness in order to achieve EU membership”. The discourse of ‘return to Europe’ defines not only where Estonia is, but also, what and where it is not. The narrative proclaims that due to the European character of Estonia, there exists a cultural barrier between Estonia and Russia, the latter being neither European nor Western (Petersoo, 2007: 129).

As Ehala (2009: 153-154) shows, the ethnic opposition between Estonians and Russian-speakers has been sharpened and the role of international institutions is being questioned by both groups. The incident that shattered the prevalent image of the peaceful integration of Estonia unveiled the sore spots in Estonian–Russian relations, within Estonian society and in Estonian national discourse. As challenging the dominant interpretations of the past was presented as a threat and the neighbour as an enemy, the Bronze Soldier became securitized (Lehti, Jutila & Jokisipilä, 2008: 394). The fact that a large part of Estonia’s population identifies with a particular view of the past that differs from that of the majority population, yet that has to be taken seriously if Estonia wants to be seen as a democratic and pluralist society. The predominant attitude of political leaders is however to ignore or avoid, rather than deal with the diverse memories that exist among the countries’ citizenry (Onken 2007: 37).

The Bronze Soldier crisis crystallizes the moment where imperial forces met and can be seen as the material outcome of the discursive shifts at the frontier. The existing discourses and the invention of history, re-interpreting historiographic thought combined with the consciousness of two ‘empires’, the Bronze Soldier ‘embodied’ the site where two imperial forces ultimately used their own versions and interpretations and consequently became the site where both empires confronted each other in a hostile way. Russian speakers in Estonia were relative easy to mobilize by Russian extremists since negative political rhetoric and miscommunication concerning the statue were widespread. Therefore, instead of applying to European values and incorporating “Europeanness” the Russian speakers felt more save with pulling out to their ‘own’ history, closely connected to the Russian one, while Estonians were, in run towards the “Bronze Night”, not able to include the Russian speakers in their process of nation building.

Chapter 2: Background of Estonia

2.1 Composition

Estonia is a small country in many senses, consisting of 1,34 million inhabitants over a total surface of approximately 45.000 square kilometres makes it, after Finland and Sweden, one of the most sparsely populated countries in the European Union. Besides Estonia has for a couple of years, for the first time after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a positive fertility rate. The population is, with the help of some measurements of the government, rising in numbers as it has not been since 1991. Though is the country equally flourishing as its fertility rate? The so-called economical 'shock-therapy', which was applied in the 1990s has had a positive outcome and consequently Estonia became, among all of the Eastern European EU accession countries of 2004, the most successful one in managing the transition towards EU standards.

But what was the impact on Estonian society of this economic transitional success? During the Soviet times, when Estonia belonged to the USSR, the 'Russification' of all USSR states was one of the main measures taken by Soviet rulers. This meant that the national currencies were being replaced by the rouble and large estates, housing facilities and most industries and transportation were subjected to intensive nationalisation. Russian was implemented to be the first language in all countries, in public as well as private life. However not only the language was forced upon all inhabitants of the Soviet Union, people were also obliged to follow Russian traditions and accompanying holidays while ignoring their own nation's traditions (Virkkunen, 1999: 84).

Another feature of this Russification during the Soviet times, which has had significant impact on all republics of the USSR, was the replacement of people. This meant that lots of Ukrainians, Armenians, Latvians etc. were sent to Siberia or other places in Russia from where they mostly never returned. It has been estimated that approximately 10 percent of the Baltic inhabitants were deported from their places of origin in order to weaken the existing non-state activism, to promote the Soviet territorial ideology and to speed up the social reconstruction and nationalisation of the Soviet state. The deported people were replaced by 'more reliable' workers from other parts of the Soviet Union. The newcomers mainly came from areas close to the Baltic States and were of Russian origin (*ibid.*). This replacement of people already started during the Second World War and lasted until the 1980s.

In Estonia, this resulted in a catastrofalic change in demographics. Before the Soviet occupation, according to the 1934 census, Estonians composed 88 percent, Russians 8 percent and other nationalities 4 percent of the population of Estonia. In 1945 Soviet authorities changed the border; giving regions of Estonia mostly inhabited by native Russians to the Russian Soviet Republic. During the Soviet period the number of non-Estonians increased from 23.000 in 1945 to 602.000 in 1989, while at the same time the number of Estonians decreased by 35.000, due to

migration, fertility rates and Soviet political and military measures (Vetik in Kolstø, 2002: 74). When Estonia regained its independence in 1991 the number of Estonians has fallen to 61.5 percent¹. Where earlier immigrants had come from neighbouring Russian areas, in later periods more immigrants came from far eastern and southern regions of the Soviet Union (*ibid.*: 75).

The demographic changes Estonia had gone through during the Soviet times made the situation that came into existence in 1991 a rather difficult one. When the Soviet Union collapsed, not only Estonia became independent, but successively the ‘homeland’ of many who moved to Estonia after 1944 disappeared. In 1991 some migrants were living in Estonia for a few generations, a country where they were used to be the dominant ethnic group, where they were used to their language being the official state language, where they were guaranteed of housing and work, at least, they were during USSR-times. When the USSR fall apart the three Baltic States saw their chance to regain independence with the help of Gorbatsjev’s political re-conceptualisation and the mobilisation of their national feelings in the form of the ‘Singing Revolution’.

Despite of intensive state building initiatives of the Soviet state, the already exiting national imagination in the Baltic States was not replaced by the values of ‘the great Soviet motherland’ when regaining independence in 1991. On the contrary, instead of depoliticising the Baltic identities, the Soviet state building politicised the feeling of inferiority among Estonians and created a social ground for anti-state politics and nationalism. Within the Soviet period, the already existing Estonian national imagination was not replaced by the values of ‘the great Soviet motherland’ (Virkkunen 1999: 83). The underground Estonian nationalistic movement became more and more active towards the end of the 1980s and started to openly show their power when the new policy reforms *glasnost* and *perestroika* were introduced. In the former Soviet Union, Russian had become the main marker of the ‘Soviet’ and Russian political identities. The Estonian language was very important for the survival of Estonian national identity during the Soviet times, which indicates the significance of the Estonian language in nation-building and the demarcation of identity (Berg & Oras 2000: 604).

An example of the continuity of the Estonian language during Soviet times and its meaning for the national feeling among Estonians was the annual returning Song Festival or, in Estonian, *Laulupidu*. The meaning of this Song Festival has proven its significance for the Estonian national feeling during the “Singing Revolution”, which triggered spontaneous demonstrations in 1988 after one of the annual Song Festivals and heralded the beginning of more mass demonstrations with as peak the “Baltic Way” or “Baltic chain”, when approximately two million persons formed a human chain from Tallinn to Vilnius in order to point out their situation as an occupied people. Through singing in the Estonian language Estonians were able

¹ http://www.vm.ee/estonia/kat_399/pea_172/4305.html

to preserve their national feelings and their Estonian identity. Even today in Estonia many persons sing in choirs and the annual Song Festival is the largest event of the year, with over 100.000 persons participating or being spectators. Singing in a choir is for Estonians a way to express their national feeling, the 2009 Song Festival I have visited proved this.



In the front: people visiting the Estonian Songfestival. In the back: thousands of Estonians participating in an immense choir. (Picture taken at 04-07-2009).

Reinventing their national feeling of belonging was a natural part of the process towards independence in Estonia, though consequently a nationalistic feeling gained place; the idea that Estonia belonged exclusively to Estonians. Shortly after restoring its independence an Estonian nationalistic movement came into power. This, of course, had great impact on the status of the Soviet migrants, who were, after the collapse of the Union insecure about their future positions and civil rights in the newly independent republic. The new constitution of Estonia, adopted in 1992, was, some adaption besides, a full restoration of the constitution as Estonia knew during its first period of independence, between 1918 and 1940 (lecture Eiki Berg, 13-08-2009). A part of

this new constitution was the law on citizenship which only granted citizenship to persons who were living in Estonia before 1940 or could prove that their ancestors were ethnic Estonian. Accordingly, a large part of the population, those who moved to Estonia between 1940 and 1991, as well as their descendants, did not automatically receive Estonian citizenship and became non-citizens.

Whereas the Swedish, the Baltic Germans and the ‘old’ Russian minorities were seen as sufficiently similar to Estonians and therefore as a legitimate part of ‘us’, the Russian incomers were seen as culturally alien and inherently different to ‘us’ (*ibid.*: 125). As Laitin (1998: 296) argues, the “Russian-speaking population” was formed amidst a political cataclysm; the shock of national independence of the titular republics for Russians was sudden. Closely related to this is the intensity of the nationalist rhetoric in the titular republics that accompanied the break-up of the Soviet-Union. This rhetoric went even further toward convincing Russian-speakers that they would likely be deported, or lose all rights to pensions and medical care. They were called “colonizers” and “occupiers” (*ibid.*: 297). Naturally all titular populations equated Soviet rule with Russian rule (*ibid.*: 85). The view that Russian speakers in Estonia are not wanted by Estonians is articulated by Estonian leaders on all sides of the political spectrum. Russians are positioned not as a minority but an “occupying force” or are “refugees” since they have no historic roots in Estonia (*ibid.*: 166).

Although many Estonian nationalists in those years openly voiced the wish the Russians would leave Estonia and return to their motherland, the reality was that the great majority remained in Estonia. So where in the first half of the 1990s Estonian politics were directed on repatriating and the expectation that the Russians would return to Russia and it was only in the second half of the 1990s it was realized that the Russian speaking population of Estonia shall not leave the country. It was only in 1997-1998 that the government took significant steps to revise its national policy. Under pressure of the European Commission the need to speed up the integration of non-citizens was highlighted. Estonia was required to enact a series of amendments to its citizenship legislation which grant automatic citizenship to all children born to non-citizens parents after February 1992 (Smith, 2003: 25) and started granting permanent residence permits (Vetik in Kolstø 2002: 89).

As a result of the law on citizenship a large part of the inhabitants of Estonia remained stateless for many years. Where in 1992 the percentage of persons with undetermined citizenship, as they are referred to in the official realm, was 32 percent, in 2003 this percentage had decreased to 12 percent of the overall population. Today 7.5 percent of the Estonian inhabitants is stateless and 8.5 percent has another nationality than the Estonian one, mostly Russian. These figures mean that over 100.000 persons in Estonia have no citizenship of any country and 116.000 inhabitants have another nationality than the Estonian one². This makes

² http://veebik.vm.ee/estonia/kat_399/pea_172/4518.html

Estonia, after Latvia, the country with the highest percentage of people with undetermined citizenship in the European Union. Although the number of non-citizens is considered to decrease only slowly, there is not much discussion about it, neither in Estonia nor the European Union. Various reasons for the slow process of naturalisation are given, for example the limited Estonian language knowledge among persons with undetermined citizenship, but overall the presumption is that most persons without citizenship are reluctant to naturalize.

During the accession process towards becoming a EU member, Estonia had to comply with a diverse range of measures concerning their Russian-speakers and especially with regard to the persons with undetermined citizenship. Besides this resulting in an increase of persons who naturalized, these measures ensured the rights of every inhabitant of Estonia, regardless their citizenship. So contrary to the period right after Estonia regained its independence, human rights of the Russian-speakers were now officially outlined in international documents. But this was not the only advantage the minority enjoyed from the EU accession procedure, under pressure of the EU and OSCE stateless persons were given practically all the rights as being citizens of Estonia, for example the right on medical care, social security, etc. In regional elections they are entitled to vote, though in national elections they are not allowed to vote.

On top of these measures, which perhaps have stirred the reluctance to naturalize amongst Russian-speakers, it is important to identify the fact that persons with a stateless status are nevertheless able to travel within the European Union. During the accession process the EU has assessed the position of the stateless and decided they have the right to travel free through the Schengen area equally to each EU citizen. The right to work in each member state is more restricted and is possible only under specific conditions. Then, most of the 1990s stateless persons were able to travel freely to Russia, without visa. This changed when Estonia accessed the EU and NATO, but after the Bronze Soldier event in 2007 Russia again changed its policy towards stateless. Now undetermined citizens of Estonia are competent to travel within the EU as well as to Russia not possessing any visa. In the case of Russia this is of course a great advantage since many “non-citizens” have family living across the border. It is presumed in Estonia these travel opportunities do feed the reluctance to apply for citizenship.

And although a significant part of the Russians, moved to Estonia between 1940 and 1991, applied for Estonian citizenship, the question remains whether the acquirement of Estonian citizenship actually changed the Russians’ attitude towards the Estonian state. Naturalisation in Estonia is a process which requires applicants to fulfil a five year residence qualification, swear an oath of loyalty to the state and demonstrate a working knowledge of the national language (Smith 2003: 1). As it was estimated, many Russians acquired Estonian citizenship out of practical reasons, since the Estonian job market required people to be Estonian citizen and to have a workable knowledge of the Estonian language. There were many jobs open only to citizens, and for most Russian speakers, citizenship required developing considerable facility in

Estonian (Laitin 1998: 115). To learn Estonian language, in order to integrate, can therefore be considered rather as assimilation instead of integration.

Especially in the North-Eastern region there is hardly any chance for Russian-speakers to talk Estonian, let alone socialize with Estonians. Contrasting is the situation in Tartu, the main university city of Estonia, where the population consists over 90 percent of Estonians, where Russian is hardly heard in the streets. This is the place many politicians live and have studies, the place Estonian youngsters want to go and study, though it is also the place my Russian-speaking colleagues of the Legal Information Centre for Human Rights “warned” me when I was moving to Tartu for my second internship period. “Tartu is where all those “Estonian thoughts” come from”, aiming at the nationalistic politicians of the past who has their roots in the Tartu region and their education from Tartu University. Tartu, being almost totally inhabited by Estonians apparently gave them the idea to “warn” me about this place.

In other regions the ethnic composition is different. For example in the capital, Tallinn, the ethnical make-up is about 50 percent ethnic Estonian and 50 percent Russian-speaking. As a result there is also an identifiable mix in the everyday life in Tallinn. In the streets you hear both Estonian and Russian language and you can notice many different appearances, from white blond blue eyed persons to black hair dark eyes. Though it is not only the language and looks that show the ethnical mix of Tallinn, as I have learned during my fieldwork, there is also a tangible difference between people who are integrated. Some Russian-speakers are socializing with Estonians in their daily life’s and vice versa. One of my key informants participated since her childhood in a choir. In this choir my key informant made Estonian friends, though this was not always easy. Whether this key informant is an exception or not, the everyday life in Tallinn can be perceived as separated. As I learned from my stay in Tallinn the public space is more or less separated by places where Estonians hang out and places where you can find Russian-speakers. Many of Russian-speaking informants, when arranging a place for the interview, invited me to the “Moskva bar”, naturally a very “Russian-speaking” place. When meeting with the, earlier mentioned, key informant in another bar she told me that it was a very “Estonian place”, one where not many Russian-speakers would feel comfortable. Not only the public life in Tallinn made an important contrast visible, it was also the cemetery that astonished me. There, Estonians and Russian-speakers are buried separately, each on one side of a large wall.

The rise of the Estonian nation in 1991 was associated with the imposing of a standardized form of the Estonian language. The use of Russian is interpreted as a major threat to national identity and as a tool of ‘Russian imperialism’ (Kolossoff 1999: 75). Refusing to fund Russian higher education and the implementation of Russian as a second state language results in the creation of new political identities. Estonian language proficiency is considered to be an essential component of human capital in post-Soviet Estonia (HDR Estonia 2008: 95). These developments caused the use of language rights as discriminating towards Russians, to close them access to higher and often even to secondary education in their tongue, to eliminate their

participation in privatization and to ignore their cultural needs and traditions (Kolossoff 1999: 75). Russian has become a majorized minority language, whereas Estonian is a minorized majority language (Ozolin 2003: 229). Though large sections of Russian speakers accept the language policy of Estonia, Russian is still widely spoken and understood (*ibid.*: 230).

Integration of the Russian speaking population of Estonia went, during the first years after (re)independence, in line with the naturalization figures, slow. Laitin (1998: 7) emphasizes the situation of the Russian-speaking population in Estonia was uncertain, on the one hand political leaders insisted that race or civilization had nothing to do with citizenship; it was only natural for a country to require immigrants to learn the language of the country before they could receive citizenship. On the other hand, many leading Estonian nationalists in these days claimed that the percentage of Russians in Estonia was so high that they would never assimilate. If two-thirds of them would “return” to Russia (though many of them had been born in Estonia), these nationalists claimed, Estonian culture would survive. With the law on “aliens” accepted in 1993 which required noncitizens to register with the state or to face deportation frightened the Russian speakers (Laitin 1998: 84, Semjonov in Kolstø 2002: 121).

When it was realized the Russian-speakers were not leaving Estonia, the first official integration programme was created, and put into work between 2000 and 2007. The idea of an integration programme had originated under pressure of the European Union and the desire to successfully meet the standards of the *aquis communautaire*, which covers the total body of the EU with its rules and regulations that all candidate states have to comply with in order to become full member. This first integration programme is widely criticized because of its lack of recognition of cultural differences; the programme was directed to quickly integrate the Russian speakers and focused on educating the Estonian language. Learning Estonian was presented as pivotal to integrate in Estonian society. The second integration programme between 2008 and 2013, thus workable at this very moment, has the following as main strategy: “Integration of Estonian society means the involvement of Estonian inhabitants into social life based on equal opportunities and mutual tolerance, irrespective of nationality. The most important result of successful integration is a rapid reduction of persons with undetermined citizenship and the strengthening of shared state identity among the residents of Estonia based on the principles of a democratic state and rule of law, protection of Estonian language as the official and main language of communication in society and protection of minority cultures” (“Estonian Integration Strategy 2008-2013”: 10).

As the “Estonian Integration Strategy 2008-2013” (*ibid.*: 11) describes, a major difference with the former integration programme, active between 2000-2007 is the attempt to more clearly define what it is that all people living in Estonia have in common, the keyword is the Estonian state identity. In order to increase the value of Estonian citizenship as a symbol, it is necessary to improve the knowledge of Estonian history and the state, and increase contacts and joint activities between Estonians and non-Estonians (*ibid.*: 12). So nevertheless there is still a

focus in the Integration Strategy on the knowledge of Estonian language, history and state, there is more space for essential involvement of as well Estonians as Russian-speakers in the integration process. But although this is being done many Russian-speakers remain rather sceptical concerning the Integration Programme referring to it as “nice words but we want to see practical results”.

The 2008 Human Development Report on Estonia also estimated that ethnicity and citizenship are strongly associated with life satisfaction. Even so it was estimated that the Russian speaking population who identifies with Estonian people has significantly decreased during the last year, the ‘crisis of trust’ turned out to be deeper and longer than expected and there is no belief, under non-Estonians, in equal opportunities. Moreover, as the report concludes, Estonia remains a tense area in inter-ethnic relations (HDR, 2008, Ch.4). These non-disguising words of the Estonian Human Development Report illustrate the societal situation of the country. Politics, history and society go hand in hand and are highly under influence of many various groups which makes Estonian society a fragile society, one which is continuously challenged by its own composition.

2.2 Russian-speaking Population

From the first year of independence there was a sensible tension between Estonians and Russian-speakers. The terms ‘immigrant’, ‘colonizer’ and ‘occupier’, to name the group Russian speakers, were part of social de-legitimization on the popular level. Later the legal terms “non-Estonian”, “noncitizen”, used in the Estonian Integration Programme 2008-2013 and “alien” were added (*ibid.*: 128). As also Semjonov (in Kolstø 2002: 113) has pointed out the rhetoric and general approach towards interethnic issues has gone from descriptive neutral terms, such as “non-Estonians” and “other language population” to words with negative connotations: “aliens”, “colonizers” and “invaders”. Also social researchers in Estonia argue that Estonians have not yet formed a common pattern of naming the other ethnicities residing in the country. Therefore a number of different designations are used: “local Russians”, “non-Estonians”, “other ethnicities”, “the Russian speaking population”, “Russian-linguistics”, “Russian speakers” or “Euro-Russians” (Proos & Pettai, 2008: 3 & van Elsuwege 2004: 25). Naturally the usage of these terms did not help to overcome the already sensible relationship between Estonians and Russian speakers.

Since the group Russian speakers contains a conglomerate of identities including Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Poles and Jews, all of whom speak Russian as their first language (Laitin 1998: x), the term “Russians-speaking population” is the most appropriate one when trying to grasp the whole group in order to do research. From the point of view of the titular population the difference between Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians and Jews were not very important (*ibid.*: 265). To identify this conglomerate by their mother tongue had for this group no negative connotations and can be used by both Estonians and Russian speakers in Estonia. Besides titular populations in the ‘near abroad’ equated Soviet rule with Russian rule (*ibid.*: 85). The basic identity categories that guided Russians in the past became eroded. Russians, with varying degrees of self-consciousness inventing new categories of identity to help them make sense of the who they are (*ibid.*: 190). The term “Russian-speaking population” appears to have a “naturalness” about it that gives it social power (*ibid.*: 191).

Importantly it is to note that in Russia “Russian-speaking population” refers to non-Russians and non-titulars. First of all the Russian-speaking population comprises not only Russians, but also Ukrainians, Belarusian’s and even people from the Asiatic parts of the former Soviet Union. On top of that, during Soviet times, there was a large ethnical mix up, not only because of the movement of people, but successively because of mixed marriages. This resulted in the very fact that many Estonian inhabitants are of mixed ethnic background, for example having a Lithuanian father and a Ukrainian mother. Accordingly, when their first language is Russian, they are considered to be a “Russian-speaker”, nevertheless their mixed ethnical backgrounds, though they would identify with various groups at different places and times. People, having one Estonian parent, might more often than people without any Estonian parent,

identify with ethnic Estonians. Finally, concerning the participation in their social life with Estonians, there are significant differences between Russian-speakers.

In Russia, as opposed to the near abroad, “Russian-speaking population” is a derogatory term, and “pure” Russians use it only to refer to ethnic others. So there is a difference in the meaning of “Russian-speaking population” for Estonia and Russia. In my fieldwork I have followed Laitin in using this term to referring to the group of Estonian inhabitants whose ethnicity is other than Estonian, thus applying the Estonian interpretation of the term. Also I would like to emphasize the heterogeneity of the Russian-speakers in Estonia. Because, as I encountered during my five month stay. In this I do not only want to refer to gender, age and physical characteristics, also the degree of integration or assimilation into the Estonian society is important here. This character of the Russian-speaking population in Estonia will be deepened in the first paragraph of the next chapter.

2.3 *Europe or Not?*

“We are on the border”, words spoken by former president of Estonia, Lennart Meri, in 1999 exemplify Estonia’s imagery of being on the frontier of on one side Europe and on the other Russia. Within this imagery Estonian identity is conceived as that of a frontier of Western civilization (Kuus, 2002: 97). The Estonian-Russian border is perceived as being one of separation, while the western borders are virtually not discussed and therefore mentally not exist (Berg, 2000: 604). Under the influence of Samuel Huntington’s (1996) essay about the clash of civilizations in a world after the Cold War, which is among the most cited and revered scholarly works in Estonia, many Estonian academics have been arguing that Estonia, together with Finland, Latvia and Lithuania represent the last resort of the West-European civilization (Kuus, 2002: 97 & Berg, 2000: 615).

This argument fosters the idea of Estonia as being an integral part of Western Europe’s economic, political and cultural life at least since the Middle Ages and its location has been conceived as being on the border of the West European Roman (Catholic and Protestant) cultural tradition and that of the Slavic Byzantine (Orthodox). Estonian scholars and political prominents have been identifying Estonia as belonging to the West and as Berg (2000: 616) indicates, this was recognized by other Soviet nations who regarded the Baltic countries as the “Soviet West”. Thus living on the border of Western civilization has been a significant factor determining Estonia’s identity within the international realm, defining its friends and enemies in the past, present and future. The discourse of representing Estonia as a European country can be conceived in the countries struggle of returning to Europe and separating from the East.

Being framed as a European country has far reaching implementations for its relation with EU and NATO on the one hand and Russia on the other. As Kuus (2002: 97) shows in her article on identity narratives in Estonia, this was the result of a situation where Estonia’s foreign and domestic policies were moulded in a binary framework in which Estonia either rapidly integrates into the EU or falls back to the Russian sphere of influence. In Estonia, as a post-Soviet space, identities are changing rapidly: national or ethnic identity is being strengthened, political elites are establishing distinctions between ‘titular’ groups and ‘others’ and nationalism amongst ‘titular’ ethnic groups and the counter-reaction of the minority and Russia leads to an open conflict on national identity (Kolossoff, 1999: 72). In Estonia the conception of Russia as a threat to Estonian independence and with that a threat to Estonian identity is wide spread: in 2000 80 percent of the ethnic Estonians considered Russia as a threat (Kuus, 2002: 97). The lines of this civilizational conflict go not only between Estonia and Russia, but also within Estonia, between the country’s Estonian and Russian speaking population (*ibid.*: 98).

The stateless part of the population, when it became clear they were not going to get automatic citizenship any time soon, either decided to naturalise, acquiring the necessary skills and familiarised with the Estonian society, either decided to get Russian citizenship, something

that was offered by Russia to all who became stateless after 1991, either to not actively change the situation they were in because of various reasons. Most mentioned reasons for not applying for any citizenship are the inability to learn the Estonian language, since it is far away from Russian, the idea of not feeling the necessity to acquire citizenship, since, under international pressure, human rights of the stateless were fixed and because of those rights there was no urge to become Estonian citizen anymore. Finally the reason of ignorance is mentioned, which is more or less a combination of the former two reasons mentioned, people can, in most parts of Estonia, communicate in Russian, their rights are being protected, they got permanent residence permits, so they did not see a reason to naturalise anymore.

The question: “What colour passport(s) do you have?” is a frequently asked question in the daily life of Estonians (Alapuro, Liikanen & Lonkila (edt.) 2004: 133). After the persons who moved to Estonia during Soviet times in 1991 there were four options to choose from: the blue passport from Estonia, the red passport from Russia or the grey passport, which is the passport for persons with ‘undetermined citizenship’, according to the official state announcing. These passports are, in the daily life called after their colour, grey, but actually pronounce a rather doubtful term on the front: “alien passport”. To name persons with undetermined citizenship alien is something which is done by Estonian politicians and which can be seen in the light of ‘othering’. By calling these persons “alien” they are positioned to be unwanted and as if they do not belong to the country Estonia. But the term “alien” has more; it presumes they don’t belong anywhere. Finally the forth option was to get two passports what was possible in some border areas, though, as Berg (2001: 91) explains “such a situation is rather exclusive since officially Estonia does not permit one to have dual citizenship”.

Non-Estonians, or persons possessing a grey passport, are represented as an overt security problem, because they are allegedly expected to be friendly toward Russia. As we have seen in the preliminary paragraph the discussion between Russia and Estonia does not make their situation more easy. As Berg (2001: 97-98) exemplifies: “Russians do not trust Estonians because of the double game: friendly relations with Russia and orientation towards NATO do not belong together. Estonia, on the other hand, tend to think that Russia does not take Estonia as an equal partner to deal with”. When the EU referendum was held in Estonia the general mood among Estonians was one of making an uncertain choice between bad (EU-membership) and worse (staying outside the EU) rather than expressing a clearly positive stance. This shows that joining the EU was considered as inevitable (Raik in Alapuro e.a. 2004: 226). The ideas of Estonia as ‘Europe but not Europe’ or ‘Europe but not quite Europe’ continued to exist after EU accession (Mälksoo, 2006: 276). The hope of losing tensions in relations with Russia after accession with the EU and NATO have indeed not been fulfilled (*ibid.*: 279).

Importantly, within the process of becoming an EU member state, the idea of “Europeanness” had to be inscribed upon Estonia, which for example is being done by increased economic and social ties with the Scandinavian countries in general and Finland in

particular (Berg, 2002: 109). Within the process of “Europeanization” the separation from the East is being accentuated, with the East being represented by Russia. Though it was not only Estonia that redirected their geopolitical interests; as many scholars have pointed out, Russia as a state has never existed in its present shape, what means that it also had to be “invented” as a nation, being initially just an accidental remainder left behind after the break-up of the Soviet Union (Fofanova & Morozov in Berg & Ehin, 2009: 22). Immediately after the collapse of the USSR the Russian Federation positioned itself as the heir of the USSR (*ibid.*: 23). “Current political party in power, United Russia, plays on memories about the real and supposed glory years of the Soviet Union when its superpower enjoyed political prestige and geopolitical respect” (O’Loughlin, Ó Tuathail and Kolossov, 2005: 331).

Just as Russia is constructed as a threat not only to Estonia but to the whole of Europe, Estonia is presented as guardian of European as much as of its own identity and security (Kuus, 2002: 98). As Berg and Ehin (2009: 11) argue, “Estonia is striving for the recognition and acceptance of a particular notion of self on the European arena. Both Estonia and Russia are asserting “Europeanness” upon them-selves while denying the “Europeanness” of the other”. As Berg and Ehin continue (*ibid.*: 12) “both Russia and the Baltic states seek to construct a European Union compatible with and advantageous to their conceptions of self”. Estonia is underlining its Europeanness by strengthening its ties with Scandinavian countries, with Finland at the first place. Secondly Estonia is emphasizing the Finno-urgic nature of their language, which resembles mostly with Finnish and somewhat further with Hungarian. Finally Estonia is emphasizing its position as ‘last country’ of the West European Roman cultural tradition.

Russia, on the contrary, emphasizes its Byzantine heritage and claims to be the “last protector” of the “real European” identity. By doing so, as Prozorov (in Berg & Ehin, 2009: 134) argues, Russia is putting itself “out of Europe” through a policy of “self-exclusion” from the European political and normative space. The self-exclusion is, according to Prozorov (*ibid.*: 135) “grounded in the renewed affirmation of sovereignty that forms the background of the reconstitution of Russian politics during the Putin presidency”. Though, as he argues later (*ibid.*: 143) “it is the very desire of Russia to maintain its Europeanness despite its exclusion by the EU that ultimately enables and reinvigorates these very practices of exclusion, which paradoxically legitimized by Russia’s own unwavering commitment to the rhetoric of integration”. “The strategy of seeking EU accession is ultimately self-defeating for Russia, as it would subject Russian policy-making to the excessive bureaucratic regulations and the contestable norms of “good governance” (*ibid.*: 145).

With both emphasizing their “Europeanness”, using their own national narratives and especially their own narrative of the war, the invention of history becomes one of the most important features in the daily life in Eastern Europe, which changes the dominant historical narrative in Europe. Where Western Europe commemorates those who died in World War II, Estonia commemorates those who have fallen under the communist regime. Morozov (in Berg &

Ehin 2009: 160) argues that the Soviet Union will appear at the centre of the struggle for genuine European values. “The Baltic States are attempting to integrate their troubled past into a common European historical consciousness, as well as to gain EU support for the Soviet occupation and the crimes of the communist regime in the Baltic States, appears as a necessary phase in their politics of becoming European” (Mälksoo, 2006: 283). It is the invention of history, or more explicitly, the diverse interpretations are the key topic of fifth paragraph of the subsequent theoretical framework.

Another main dispute which cannot be left out when discussing EU-Russia relations and the position of Estonia within this is the fact that the official border agreement between Estonia and Russia is not yet signed. Although there is consensus on a *de facto* border, but the treaty is never officially signed by both parties. Gaining independence in 1918 Estonia encompassed certain areas that never belonged to the borderland before. Those areas were inhabited mostly by Russians and when Estonia became Soviet Union, the regime decided to return those areas to the administrative area of Russia. After the independence declaration in 1991 these areas were not returned to Estonia and became the source of misunderstandings during negotiations on an official border agreement. The existing discourses and Russia’s denial on Estonia’s occupation make the border agreement something that might not be reached in the near future. As a consequence it is not only Russia and Estonia that have no official border, it is also the Schengen border of the European Union which is not *de jure* confirmed.

Chapter 3: Methods

3.1 *Ethnographic Research*

Identities in Estonia are, as we can see from these geographical, biological and social differences, continuously produced and reproduced along the specific place and time. Identities are constructed in the everyday life and are confirmed by people's environments. How people produce and reproduce their identities cannot be grasped in a questionnaire, but needs more in-depth research methods. People's thoughts, feelings and understandings need to be studied and therefore I have chosen to mainly use qualitative research methods in order to gather the necessary data to answer my research question. In combination with my five months of fieldwork in Estonia, this can be perceived as ethnographic research. Historically, ethnographic research has developed out of a concern to understand the world-views and ways of life of actual people in the contexts of their everyday lived experiences (Crang & Cook 2007: 37). To gain a full understanding of European frontiers, ethnographic studies of border communities is essential (Anderson 2008: 20).

Participant observation is the core means by which ethnographers have tried to understand these world-views and ways of life. To be a participant in a 'culture' implies an immersion of the researcher's self into the everyday rhythms and routines of the community, a development of relationships with people who can show and tell the researcher what is "going on" there, though striving to maintain some form of dispassionate, 'scientific' objectivity. Participant observation can be seen as a means of developing intersubjective understandings between researcher and researched (*ibid.*). For me, living in Tallinn and Tartu successively and meeting with Estonian inhabitants every day of my research term, definitely made me an participant observer. As stated earlier in this thesis from the first moment I arrived in Tallinn I sensed the sensitive issues that were vividly felt in Estonian society, I encountered people on the street and in bars who spoke to me about Estonians and Russian-speakers in their city. Especially the everyday experience of the internships, first at the Legal Information Centre for Human Rights (LICHR) in Tallinn and secondly at the Peipsi Centre for Transboundary Cooperation (Peipsi CTC) in Tartu made me meet the daily working life of Estonians.

With most of my new colleagues I had a friendly relationship right away. At the LICHR some were somewhat anxious about the 'Dutch girl' moving in into their office, speaking to them in English, a language that some of them has some troubles with. Though soon they became open and in some English language 'lessons' I came to know about their families, friends, hobbies and so on. It also taught me a great deal about their life's as Estonian inhabitants, how they felt as Russians living in Estonia. Some even let me come very close to them and invited me at their home, to meet some of their family members and stay over when I visited Tallinn when living in Tartu. In Tartu, my colleagues were faster to get used to a Dutch

intern, they showed me their working activities and gave me the opportunity to closely encounter the practices of the NGO. I participated in writing project proposals, various seminars and weekly returning meetings with all employees. At work there were also some more informal meetings where we had a drink together and had some banal conversations.

Above all, with regard to participant observation, I think what made me encounter the life in Estonia most closely was living together with an Estonian woman of 33 in Tartu for three months. I was happily surprised when I heard from my supervisor from Peipsi CTC, Gulnara Roll, that I was given the opportunity to live with someone during my internship period in Tartu. Because I loved to live with someone not only because of the insights it would give me into the daily life of an Estonian, it would also give me the opportunity to social contacts and fun. And this was definitely the case. Kristi, my 'flatmate' (of course it was her flat in which we resided) and I became good friends. We spent our free time together, she invited me to her sister's place and above all she taught me so much about Estonia. Already on the first day she showed her astonishment about my research topic, a topic which she never thought of a lot before, but after I left she had spoken widely with me about it. Each time there was an Estonian media message about the topic she told me the content and discussed it with me. Especially these daily activities made me immerse into the everyday rhythms and routines in Estonia.

But can we see these experiences as 'true' participant observation? I would like to go back to Crang and Cook to discuss some of the difficulties I met being a 'participant' in Estonian daily life. As Crang and Cook (*ibid.*: 42) argue, taking on the role of 'the researcher' means that you will very likely behave in ways that might feel and be seen under certain circumstances as quite odd. However long they spend living and working in their subject community, most researchers will simultaneously feel that they are like and unlike the people they are working with, that they belong 'inside' and 'outside' that community (*ibid.*: 43). For participant observers, the core data they generate is that which fills their field diary or notebook (*ibid.*: 50). Research on social relations is made out of social relations, and these are as much created as they are found through the research process (*ibid.*: 59). Crang and Cook here ultimately touch upon the feelings I had during my fieldwork in Estonia; am I now part of the Estonian society? By presenting myself as a researcher do I attract certain reactions of people? Can I become friends with my interviewees?

These, sometimes contradictory feelings, made me insecure about the validity of my research, because not every moment being a participant observer you can be 'objective' and often people asked my opinion on the situation between ethnic Estonians and Russian-speakers. With the help of Bernard I would like to argue that participant observation is very much a valid research method, especially when spending five months in the field. First of all participant observation makes it possible to collect all kinds of data on all kinds of moments (Bernard 2002: 333). In my view, this was definitely the case when researching in Estonia. Sometimes when I was just making a promenade through town or hanging out in the local pub people started talking

to me about their lives and with or without introducing myself as a Dutch student they told me personal experiences living in Estonian society. These conversations and observations I noted in my field diary.

Second participant observation reduces the problem of reactivity – of people changing their behaviour when they know they are being studied. Presence builds trust and trust lowers reactivity. Of course some persons I interviewed I only spoke to once, though some of them I developed something as a friendship with and as explained above there were more persons I saw daily. This built a trust that went beyond the social standard of answers and reduced the reactivity. Finally participant observation gives you an intuitive understanding of what's going on in a culture and allows you to speak with confidence about the meaning of data. Therefore it extends both the internal and external validity of what you learn from interviewing and watching people (*ibid.*: 334). After five months of fieldwork I definitely have the feeling to 'know' Estonian society much more in depth than for example a tourist. In my interview opinions on my research topic range from very mild and positive to rather aggressive and negative. This makes me having gathered quite a broad range of information and allows me to think I intuitively 'understand' Estonian society.

Keeping a diary throughout my fieldwork term offered me to put my thought, feelings and personal ideas on paper, it helped me to deal with my emotions. A diary chronicles how you feel and how you perceive your relations with others around you (*ibid.*: 369). By keeping the diary separate from interview elaborations and reflexive memo's it gives me the opportunity to review the circumstances and emotional state in which I did the interviews, conversations and observations. The reflexive memo's I wrote after each interview will add to that the description of the circumstances the interview took place in, my relationship with the interviewee and how that developed along the interview and everything that had attract my attention during the interview. In this way I will be able to assess the quality of each interview in its own context and it allows me to review why certain answers are being given at specific moments. Contextualizing the interviews allows me to 'understand' the interviewees more and the relationship I had with them. Following Paasi I assume that reality is constructed uniquely by each person and *understanding* these unique realities will be the main aim of my research. Since borders are being perceived as social constructs, for me the assignment to analyze the social constructs in Estonian society with the help of discourse analysis of my interviews.

3.2 Interviews

Along with participant observation, interviewing has been a primary means through which ethnographic researchers have attempted to get to grips with the contexts and contents of different people's everyday social, cultural and economic lives (Crang & Cook 2007: 60). Integral to my research question and hypothesis is the usage of qualitative research methods during my five month period of data gathering in Estonia. Interviewing has long been a useful data-gathering method in various types of qualitative research, it permits an in-depth exploration of a particular topic or experience. The in-depth nature of an intensive interview fosters eliciting each participant's interpretation of his or her experience (Charmaz 2006: 25). An interview goes beneath the surface of ordinary conversation and examines earlier events, views and feelings (*ibid.*: 26). Since interviewing is the main source of data collection within my research, I will here spend one paragraph on this topic to explain why and how I did my interviews, whom I interviewed, how I transcribed the interviews and in which way they will be coded in this thesis. Because as Brednikova and Siin (in Berg 2001: 29) teach us, discourse analysis of the transcription of interviews can be treated as an everyday border discourse which not reflects, but also projects social reality.

The concept of "interviewing" covers a lot of ground. Interviews can range from the highly structured with the questions in a specific order, through the semi-structured where the researcher and participant(s) set some broad parameters to a discussion, to the relatively unstructured, akin to a friendly conversation with no predetermined focus (Crang & Cook 2007: 60). Semi-structured, or in-depth, interviewing is a scheduled activity. A semi-structured interview is open ended, but follows a general script and covers a list of topics (Bernard 2002: 203). Semi-structured interviewing is based on the use of an interview guide, a written list of questions and topics that need to be covered in a particular order. The interviewer maintains discretion to follow leads, but the interview guide sets forth clear instructions. It allows you to be fully in control of what you want from an interview but leaves both you and your respondent free to allow new leads. It shows that you are prepared and competent but that you are not trying to exercise excessive control. In fully structured interviews people are asked to respond to as nearly identical set of questions as possible. Instead of a 'guide' the interviewer uses an interview schedule, an explicit set of instructions (*ibid.*: 205).

The interviews I conducted in Estonia range from unstructured conversations which I elaborated on in my fieldwork diary to practically structured interviews where interviewees answered the questions on my interview guide in the exact same structure. Most interviews were somewhere in between unstructured conversations and structured interviewing. For all "official" interviews, for which I had made an appointment with persons I wanted to talk to, I had made an interview guide which comprised a list of topics accompanied with specific questions that I wanted to ask during the interview. Though, and as I explained to the interviewees at the very

start of each interview, it was not my purpose to have a structured interview, but rather a more open, semi-structured interview in which the interviewees could exaggerate on whenever they thought this was necessary. This way it happened quite often that although we started conversing on a certain topic, the interviewee switched to another topic and we elaborated on that topic before switching back to the original one or, when the interviewee guided the conversation as such, to yet another topic. Importantly in each interview I attempted to guarantee all topics on the interview guide were covered by the end of the conversation.

Though, naturally it was not always as easy as described above, a conversation in which the interviewee led me through my interview guide according to his or her insights on the topics. The quantity and quality of the interview was, in my opinion, dependent on the interviewees self. First of all there was a significant difference in persons who were eager to talk about their ideas, feelings and knowledge about my research, while others were more reserved and had a waiting attitude. In the first case the conversation mostly resulted in an open conversation in which the topics on my interview guide were covered extensively and in which I could rather effortlessly conclude at the end of the interview what opinion the concerning interviewee had regarding each topic. These conversations were comfortable for me because besides making sure all the topics were covered I did not push the interviewee in a certain direction, since he or she directed the conversation, of course to a certain limit. The more reserved and waiting interviewees were harder for me to “see through” and sometimes a conversation included silent minutes or was ended quite abrupt. These interviews were often more structured than the first example, since it was only when a new question was posed the interviewee did give me his or her ideas on the specific matter. But again, in between these two examples there were many variations.

Secondly I would like to discuss here the more peculiarities of my interview guide, because this guide has changed continuously during my fieldwork. Nevertheless the main topics on the guide did not change and guided me through the five months in Estonia. After asking some personal information I questioned my interviewees on the following topics, in any hierarchy possible: *Russian-speaking population, Identity, Membership EU, Relations with Russia, History of Estonia, April 2007 events, Language, Naturalization, Discrimination and Integration*. The specific questions relating to these topics did vary, especially seen from the first phase of my fieldwork to the last. The questions I had formulated in the “pre-fieldwork” phase in Nijmegen, I adapted already before the first interview started, based on literature I read in the first week in Tallinn and conversations with my internship supervisor of the LICHR as other more random conversations with Estonian inhabitants. The interview guide I used for my first two interviews was approved both by my supervisor in Tallinn and Nijmegen and successively by the director of the LICHR.

The questions changed according to the insights I got while interviewing. Sometimes interviewees told me specific terms were interpreted differently by Estonians or Russian-speakers. Also, I have adapted the questions in line with the professional function of my

interviewees. To give an example when interviewing one of the consultants of the Estonian *Minister of Integration* I posed more questions regarding her specific work field, the integration of Russian-speakers in Estonian society, related to the *Estonian Integration Programme 2008-2013* and the latest United Nations report on National Minorities. Then, when moving to Tartu and starting my second internship at the Peipsi CTC, again in consultation with my university supervisor and internship supervisor I changed the directions of my research since I had done an extensive amount of interviews in Tallinn which had provided me the necessary insights until so far. Since Peipsi CTC is mainly working on cross-border cooperation in the region, I decided to redirect my research towards cross-border cooperation, but still focusing on Estonian Russian-speaking issues.

The topic Gulnara, my Peipsi CTC internship supervisor, and me agreed on for me to research was the difference in CSO's participation between Estonian CSO's and Russian-speaking CSO's. Then, with the help of Gulnara's interview guide of an earlier research on this topic and my own present knowledge, I adapted my interview guide. Though, despite of many contact details of possible respondents provided by the Peipsi CTC, I was not able to conduct as many interviews on this topic as I had envisioned. Nevertheless it was the time of the year, June and July are holiday months in Estonia, the busy time of the year for many CSO's, because of new deadlines for project proposals, or it was my own "fatigue" regarding the research, it were only a few CSO representatives that were available for an interview. Naturally other assignments, weekly meetings, seminars and extra literature research did allow me to learn more about Peipsi CTC's activities as well as to acquire extra information on the topics of my research.

In total, after five months in Estonia, I had done 28 in-depth interviews. The interviews took place on different locations varying from offices to public places as a cafe or restaurant. Interviewing people in locations of work and leisure may enable interviewer and interviewee to feel more at ease in each other's company (Cook and Crang 2007: 65). This is why I have not chosen to invite interviewees in the office of my internship places. One interview is done by e-mail, since the interviewee was home because of maternity leave. Of course when done by e-mail it is hard to ascertain the quality of an interview, since I was not able to explain or clarify the questions when necessary. The other interviews were all conducted face to face and elaborated shortly after. In most cases I have chosen not to use my tape recorder because I did not want to scare off my interviewees and wanted to make them feel comfortable in my presence. Therefore in most cases I have chosen to write down the answers of my interviewees in the empty space I had left open after each question of my interview guide. Of course this sometimes became quite messy with a lot of stripes and arrows, though, since I elaborated the interviews almost immediately, I was able to reproduce the conversation accurately. In each case I did use the tape recorder I transcribed the interviews. Besides after each interview I wrote an methodological reflecting memo which enables me to redefine the situation and own feelings

regarding the interview and interviewee. As Crang and Cook (*ibid.*: 133) argue, throughout the research process, writing and analysis are inseparable, I would like to argue that while writing down the transcriptions of my interviews and the memo's, I indirectly analyzed the interview for myself.

I also have to note that some interviews were done in company of another researcher, researching in the same field as I did. In Tartu, my second internship period, in the case of two interviews I was accompanied by another Dutch researcher attached to the University of Groningen. Although her research was directed on the integration question in Estonia, our interests had very much in common and this gave us the opportunity to help each other by finding potential informants. It was also my supervisor of the Peipsi CTC, Gulnara Roll, who accompanied me when going to Narva, the border region with Russia, to conduct interviews. In this case we did not only interview the persons together in that we both had our own questions, it was also Gulnara who translated the answers, given in Russian, to me. All other interviews did not require the presence of a translator and were mostly conducted in English. Though since one interviewee was more comfortable with German, I have, after translating my interview guide into German, conducted one interview in German. Although my German is not very strong I can easily understand it so sometimes I could pose the question in English and it was answered in German.

Of the 28 in-depth interviews, two were suddenly adjourned because in one case the person had to leave and in the other case the interviewee had another appointment. In one case an interview was interrupted before the end two times, though each time me and the interviewee made a new appointment to finish the interview. One interview was done with two persons at the same time, one being a Russian-speakers in Estonia, the other a Russian who was visiting Estonia. This did end in an interesting conversation, in which the one in some cases translated for the other and then translated the answer to me. In another case when I was interviewing someone in a local cafe, I found it hindering there was loud music and I think it did influence the quality of the interview. In most cases the interview lasted for about one hour and a half, though in some cases it took us longer and sometimes it was done in about one hour. One of my first interviews, which was done while having dinner together, lasted for over three hours and then I had to ask to continue the conversation another time, since I noticed my concentration had drastically decreased because of exhaustion. We did meet again and finally this interviewee became a friend during my stay in Estonia and I consider her as my main informant. In my thesis I will treat all interviewees anonymously, referring to them regarding their initials or in particular cases where this is necessary to my opinion, with respect to their profession.

3.3 Literature Research

Synchronous with conducting in-depth interviews and doing participant observation in the Estonian society, I have done literature research while residing in Estonia. First of all I have read quite some reports published by both the LICHR and Peipsi CTC. Some reports were supplied to me by my supervisors, while others I downloaded from their website. These reports I have made notes about and in some particular cases I have analyzed them more in-depth resulting in a word document in which I depict the report and my thoughts on it. By coding these documents by date and time I could, with the help of my diary, interpret these analysis as a part of my research. Of course these reports represent the lines of thought on various topics of my internship places and are not representative for the Estonian society, though since these reports are based on valid data and written by persons who live in Estonia, they can be used as analyzable data.

The topics of the reports I have read during my internships were diverse. At the LICHR the reports concerned the minority situation in which the Bronze Soldier event predominated. The additional literature provided to me by my supervisor Vadim Poleshchuk, also commented on the Bronze Soldier crisis and opposing historical discourses within Estonia. The Peipsi CTC, on the other hand, did supply me with very different literature, in general concerning cross-border cooperation in the Estonian borderland and in particular on the problems of this cross-border cooperation. Besides, because I sat about two days a week at Gulnara's university office, I was able to review a lot more literature and although I was, because of time-consuming reasons, not in the possibility to read a lot, I have gained extra information on researches done on the border between Estonia and Russia, the INTERREG III project and the EUdimensions project equally reviewing the practical border-crossings between Estonia and Russia as well as the policy and interpretations that lay behind these practical matters.

Then, next to the reports of the LICHR and Peipsi CTC and the additional literature offered by my supervisors in Estonia, I have read the literature that was advised to me by Olivier Kramsch, my general supervisor from the Radboud University Nijmegen. He had, after a couple of weeks, advised me to read Laitin and since it was available in the central library of Tallinn it was easy accessible to me. Besides of course he also advised me in other choices I made during my fieldwork term. Finally, concerning the literature research, when participating in the EIRSS summer school in Tartu at the end of my fieldwork, I was expected to read 24 articles and the projects of other participants on contemporary EU-Russia relations chosen by the lecturers of the summer school. Naturally this expanded my knowledge on the broader EU-Russia relations and went beyond my academic knowledge on the EU-Russia relations by representing an insight-view from Russia and for example discussing the North-Stream pipeline between Russia and Germany. Nevertheless most lecturers were from another discipline than the one in which I am schooled, participating in the summer school increased my background knowledge on

contemporary EU-Russia relations and invited me to see the case of the Russian-speakers in Estonia in an even broader perspective.

Using a triangulation of methods, participant observation, in-depth interviewing and literature research respectively, these methods are able to complete each other whenever necessary and can fill up gaps that for example are left in the literature. By being a participant observer in Estonia and reading various literature, I have been able to verify the answers of my informants and control their accuracy. On the other hand the interviewees have refined my own perception of the Estonian society and often have suggested interesting details which consequently influenced my research. Because of the large amount of interviews I have done, a five month fieldwork with close relations with Estonians and Russian-speakers and the research process from preparations until analysis, I would argue my research is a rather representative one, though I do not intent to generalize. On the contrary, I would like to show the feelings, ideas and emotions of my interviewees and the way they can be interpreted in the realm of the wider EU-Russia relationship. The ideas on the Russian-speaking identity which I will present in the following chapters represents my thoughts and ideas throughout the research period, I do not want to generalize or claim its urgency for all Russian-speakers in Estonia, though as it seems from my research insights it is definitely something which Russian-speakers apprehend, either aware or unaware.

Chapter 4: Empirical data

4.1 *European values in Estonia*

Estonia, member of the EU since 2004 has in many ways worked hard to achieve this membership. The EU presented becoming a member is something which would support the country to be prosperous and, what is maybe even more important, to be 'European'. Though, does the EU actually bring this "Europeanness" to the citizens of Estonia? How is it perceived by them? In what way can they relate to the EU? In this paragraph I will clarify the thoughts on Estonian EU membership with the help of my interviews conceptions of it and from the experiences I got in the field. As we have seen in the theoretical chapter the activities of the EU can be seen as empire-like behaviour and I would like to explore if and how this behaviour can be met in Estonia. As we have seen in the first and second chapter of this thesis becoming an EU member was for Estonia perceived as choosing for the West in order to avoid falling back into the Russian sphere of influence. Since the choice towards EU membership was made, Estonian politicians are actively rewriting Estonian history accordingly to its "European history", with a special role for its Scandinavian ties. By using quotes from the interviews and other material I gathered during fieldwork I will make an attempt to show in what way we can indeed see the EU as a kind of new empire, promising to bring prosperity and stability but actually ignoring differences and closing their eyes for severe societal problems.

The European Union rewards people for following their example, convincing them, with the help of various stimuli and the prosperity of a wealthy and save future, of the necessity of incorporating the same values. This is what makes the EU a soft, normative power and is at the same time what makes the EU activities problematic. Where the EU is putting up hard measures towards the outside, internally they are quite weak (Lecture J. Scott, 23-09-09), without any resolute form of decision-making. As Russia criticizes, the nation-building process collapses with EU's ideas of post-national citizenship – you can be German or French it doesn't matter as long as you are European (*ibid.*). This is supported by the idea that unless many other forms of identity are increasingly gaining stage, the national identity is foremost considered to be the most important. Also national interests are still elevated above the collective goal, as being estimated by many EU critics. How is the EU membership perceived in Estonia, where national identity is solely directed towards the Estonians? Can Russian-speakers, instead not belonging to the Estonian national identity, rather refer to the EU as territorial identity? And in what way, according to Estonian inhabitants, does the EU influence the internal Estonian situation regarding "us"- "them" relationship between Estonians and Russian-speakers?

As we have seen in the theoretical chapter, Estonia was, economically seen, one of the 2004 accession countries that performed the best. And after some pressure from the EU and Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe regarding the minority situation, the

accession was only a formality. Reports on Estonia meeting the *aquis communautaire* called the political adaptations excellent and up to “European standards”. That Estonian politicians in the 1990s were rather nationalistic and on a daily basis fed the nationalistic feelings among Estonians was perceived as “internal affair”. Since Estonian political measures after the regained independence in 1991 were meeting “European standards” in a rapid tempo towards to outside, internal matters were more or less neglected. The European Union aims to bring stability, security and welfare to all its citizens, but how is this possible when detracting nationalistic politics, obviously directed to one specific group in society, as an “internal matter”. Is it only by creating human rights centres the EU is satisfied on the human rights situation? Though as we have seen in one of the preceding chapters, those human rights centres are often closed off from the very political arena and they are, as a result, determined to find the media in order to highlight their political input. So is the EU in this sense indeed administratively controlling Estonia, while simultaneously silencing the internal conflictual titular-non-titular situation, what metaphorically refers to the behaviour of a modern empire?

Two of my informants responding on the question if the situation of the Russian-speaking population has changed after EU accession:

“Well, first of all now they are able to address the European courts. Second there is more money for integration, but the system of NGO’s is very weak in Estonia, people don’t know how to use it. EU money, in that regard, might be wasted. Even now there can be money coming from the EU for specific topics, but there is no one to implement a proper project. This is the point: all this money first of all goes through governmental institutions and already there originate conflicts. The government states that these projects have to fulfil certain criteria and those are most of the time just points to back their (the Estonian government red.) side of the integration question, so for Russian NGO’s it is difficult to get money from the EU this way (...) someone who takes the Russian side in this is immediately seen as a friend of the Kremlin, which is of course exaggerated” (Interview JT 08-04-2009 Tallinn).

This fragment where JT expresses her ideas concerning the EU membership of Estonia. The ambivalence of the membership comes to the foreground very clear; where JT says that on the one hand the EU will bring a system of justice to Estonia, where Russian-speakers are able to address the European courts and not remain dependent on national juridical procedures. However simultaneously money coming from the EU to support civil society organisations is poorly used since the Russian-speaking civil society is weak in Estonia and cross-border cooperation with Russia even more. So on the one hand JT contemplates EU membership offering the opportunity to bring changes to Estonia, but because of internal regulations those changes are hardly to be met. Here the dualistic character of the EU is clear to observe, on the one hand spreading the idea

everyone will profit by its membership, while on the other hand changes that supposed to be made cannot be realised since the national government takes the final decision.

“I agree it is being treated by the EU as an internal affair, but if we see all the problems, we made a survey, we need more positive examples; we have to destroy the glass ceiling; Russian speakers have their own problems and the problem of integration” (Interview AD 27-05-2009 Tallinn).

AD comments on the EU's membership of Estonia and the Russian-speakers' situation being treated as an internal affair as something he could agree upon. The contradictory logic of the EU regarding the Russian-speakers' situation in Estonia as something that should be considered an internal affair is here incorporated by a Russian-speaker living in Estonia. Instead of disagreeing with the method of 'Europe' to ignore national problems, which perhaps could destroy the 'glass ceiling' he talks about, he agrees with the EU interpretation. Though again this explains the contradictory logic of the EU, bringing justice to Estonia, but simultaneously considering situations fundamental in people's life's as internal affairs, while having the knowledge the government is not anxious to take nationalistic measures and explaining Estonia to be solely for ethnic Estonians. As also interviewees KH explains:

“The EU taught us from the starting of '92-'93 on, but the aim of Estonian nationalists was that Russians should not participate in developing the democracy, but they didn't think about the future” (Interview KH 13-05-2009 Tallinn).

Furthermore KH tells me while the EU is attempting from the beginning of the 1990s on to develop democracy, one of the primary focus points the EU is pretending to “spread” across its member states, in Estonia, they have overlooked the role Russian-speakers should have played in this process. So when the EU feigns Estonia to be a democracy and it suffices everything that comes with being a ‘true’ democracy, otherwise it could not have become a member, interviewee KH argues with that the EU undervalues the role of the Russian-speakers in this process. For them the political situation in Estonia can still not always be considered a democracy. This demonstrates the empire-like behaviour of the EU, where it silences the problems within its borders and attempts to create stability at the cost of the acceptance of this democracy by 30 percent of the Estonian population.

The values rule of law, freedom of people and democracy are, according to some Russian-speakers in Estonia, perhaps nicely drew up by European bureaucrats, in practice these values are not felt in their daily life's. As one of my informants explains the current situation:

“Democracy now is the same as during the Soviet times, they talk about democracy, but in fact it is a totally different situation” (Interview MK 22-04-2009 Tallinn).

This fragment encompasses the vision of many Russian-speakers I have met in Estonia, while Estonia is considered to be a democracy on paper and in legal terms, in real life people do not feel this democracy tripling down into their everyday practices. The existence of human rights organisations in the country and the verification of these values by for example the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe does in a way confirm the existence of the rule of law, democracy and freedom of people, though the way it is presented by the Estonian government triggers a opposing reaction among Russian-speakers. The European Union therefore becomes something similar to the Soviet Union; a lot of nice words, but a different situation in reality.

“In the accession progress the EU had a role in making some progress in the naturalization process. (...) There was pressure, but only on minor issues, not on the basic thing, only on cases which were marginal in the Russian discourse” (Interview RV 17-04-2009 Tallinn).

So where the EU was presuming to address certain topics concerning the Russian-speakers, in Estonia it was already in the first years of the accession process clear specific vital problems on integration and participation of the Russian-speaking population were addressed marginally or not at all. Real problems were considered to be ‘internal problems’ and as long as everything ‘on the outside’, which means in statistical data, seemed to be fine, the EU only occasionally interfered with measurements taken by the Estonian government. In this way the EU ignores the ‘differences’ in Estonia. And ignoring differences is supposed to develop towards a more stable environment, a ‘Europe’ as one, with ‘one’ people. The outer borders of the EU have a kind of mirror effect on the EU, only countries that mirror the former EU countries are accepted, differences, other visions and opinions are silenced or ignored. If the EU checks its mirror on the outer border it will show a smile, since Estonia has practised very well in the way the EU expects it to do. Though under this smile there is a hidden emotion of fear, fear of disorder. Having fear for disorder is something which support the idea of the EU as an empire-like territorial body. Because of this fear it cannot accept differences from themselves, anything which is different from them is something to be afraid of. As long as the mirror tells them the border countries are mirroring their behaviour and the population accepts widespread, border crossing problems are being perceived as internal problems, the image in the mirror will not change and differences in borderlands cannot be accepted.

To keep the mirror image the way it is the EU has accepted some rather questionable measurements regarding the possibility to travel freely within the EU borders. Since in December 2007 the Schengen regulations were implemented in Estonia, citizens of Estonia are free to travel

and work in each EU member state equally part of the Schengen area. People with grey passports, the non-citizens, are from the accession of Estonia to the EU in 2004, also certified to be an EU citizen and can therefore travel around the Schengen area freely, though the possibility to work is absent. Many of those I have spoken in Estonia noticed the possibility to freely travel around the Schengen countries as one of the main benefits of EU membership. Young people therefore mostly related to the EU membership in terms of career possibilities and economic advantages.

“I think it is really positive for people having the opportunity to study and work abroad and what is also advantageous of our membership of the EU is the free information we get, they provide us chances and success in discovering your own world” (Interview KI 12-05-2009 Tallinn).

Providing the opportunity to freely travel and work around Europe for ethnic Estonians, those who have naturalised and to travel in Europe for those not possessing any citizenship could be seen as a way the EU uses to silence the internal problems of Estonia. Since the possibility to work and travel around Europe is, as the above fragment shows, in most cases perceived as advantageous for someone's self-actualisation, the step towards naturalisation is more easy to make. And with an ongoing naturalisation process and positive statistical figures concerning the naturalisation of the Russian-speakers in Estonia, it is the Estonian government that satisfies the requirements of the European Union. Besides travelling and working across the EU it is hard for Estonian inhabitants to grasp the other values the EU is aiming to spread among its citizens. Because of internal political rhetoric on Estonia being exclusively for Estonians and Russian-speakers who do not feel a significant difference in their human rights situation apart from the ability to legally address their feelings of discrimination and travel around the Schengen area, it is virtually impossible for Russian-speakers to identify with the EU on another level than accordingly the practical advantages the EU membership offers them. This does not lead to identification with the EU as alternative for to an Estonian national identity, in some cases it rather leads to a disinterest in the EU's activities.

As also Aleksei Semjonov, the director of the Legal Information Centre for Human Rights where I had my first internship, argued in one of the conversations I had with him, the EU is just a legal status for Estonia, it is not a feeling. The human rights were never on the top of the agenda of EU leaders, this is only the rhetoric, he states. What is furthermore interesting in the EU's policy towards Estonia is the Russian-speakers are considered and treated as a minority, something which according to them is challengeable. Russian-speakers do not consider themselves to be an ethnic minority, since they have moved to Estonia when it was part of the Soviet Union and in their discourse it was not them, but the border that moved across them. And, as I argued earlier in this thesis, since they are not a homogenous group, but originating from various ethnic backgrounds they do not consider themselves to be an ethnic minority. The

discussion on Russian-speakers should be considered a national minority or not is flared up every once and a while, as my interviewees endorse. The idea that the Russian-speakers are considered as immigrants, what the term national minority includes in the hegemonic discourse, is not agreed upon by them. As interviewee RV states:

“Nevertheless the Russians here still feel unjust, they do not regard themselves as immigrants, so they think the policy is not just” (Interview RV 17-04-2009 Tallinn).

The discourse adopted by the Estonian government, after it became clear most of the Russian-speakers remained in Estonia in the middle of the 1990s, to see the group as immigrants is unacceptable for the Russian-speakers. The EU incorporated the Estonian discourse and even so calls the Russian-speakers a minority in Estonia. To accept the discourse of a minority the EU ignores the Russian-speaking discourse and again is not able to accept differences. In each EU country there are minorities, to treat the Russian-speakers in Estonia that way again mirrors the situation in other countries and can successively be seen as the example of empire-like behaviour. The way an empire silences its differences and marginalizes the groups who are ‘on the border’, the EU is behaving towards the Russian-speakers at its Eastern outer border.

The European Union representatives I was able to interview in Estonia considered Estonia to be a European country, a country that belongs in the EU, having a historical geopolitical Western orientation. Of course this is something what Estonia, after 1991, has been trying to underline in their foreign relations and national discourse. Although the membership of the EU is by the inhabitants not necessarily seen as something positive and necessary, it was, during the accession period, situated as something unavoidable by Estonian politicians. As we have seen in the background chapter, during this process, the ties with European countries in general and Scandinavian countries in particular, were tightened and the country was continuously positioned as Western and close to countries as Finland, for example because of linguistic similarities. For the EU the Estonian political re-orientations towards the West were welcomed and approached with the prospect of membership. In this line one of the EU representatives I interviewed told me:

“Estonia feels itself European, they have a high living standard and a European orientation, in former times they were always directed towards especially the Scandinavian countries, only later, during the Soviet period, is the Eastern European direction added, which caused their feeling of attachment with countries as Ukraine (Interview HZ 31-03-2009 Tallinn, own translation).

In this fragment we can see that not only Estonian politicians exemplified the historical ties of Estonia to European countries, but also EU representatives use these historical closeness to

conceal the EU membership of Estonia. Where in Soviet times all ties with Western European countries were cut off, the period preceding communism was, after the new independence of the country, highlighted as main geopolitical orientation period. This time characterizes itself of various invasions by Danes, Swedes and so on. Estonia then was a country which had never been independent and always under the rule of an empire. Most prominent was the presence of a German elite who 'ruled' the country for a couple of centuries. Another EU representative refers to this German elite as some kind of 'ancestors' of the Estonians when talking about the position of Estonia in the European Union:

"What unites the European Union is the attachment to certain values, as democracy, rule of law and freedom of people and I think Estonia is being an advocate of these different values. For centuries the country is governed by a German elite, so perhaps Estonians are a kind of Germans who speak Estonian. They stress their European mentality, especially their "Nordic" mentality, they would like to be considered a Scandinavian country" (Interview NB 30-03-2009 Tallinn, own translation).

In this fragment the EU representative refers to Estonians as "a kind of Germans who speak Estonian" and Estonia as a country that "would like to be considered a Scandinavian country". These statements are, to put it mildly, rather unprofessional for an EU representative on duty in Estonia. Considering Estonians as "a kind of Germans" is definitely something which will forester strong reactions among Estonians, especially regarding the ambiguous and heavily discussed past with Nazi Germany. And of course being governed by a German elite does not mean that they have become Germans themselves, on the contrary as I have heard during my fieldwork there was a distance between the German elite and the Estonians mostly living on the country site and having only occasionally contact with the Germans in their country. The comparison between ethnic Estonians and Germans once again validates the idea of the EU using its outer border countries as a mirror, where it rather meets similarities than differences. Considering Estonians as "a kind of Germans" simplifies the approach of the EU towards Estonia and with it, again, ignores the differences in its borderland. It is a way of naturalising and normalising the East. Where the culture of the East is unknown and the Eastern expansion of the EU can be perceived as a form of self-universalisation (Böröcz in Böröcz & Kovács 2001: 8) signifying Estonians as "a kind of Germans" explains a way of normalising the East, making it familiar and moving past the variety countries as such have to offer.

Concluding I would like to argue the role of the EU can, in many ways, be conceived as one of empire-like behaviour. The EU marginally addressed the internal situation regarding the Russian-speakers only during the accession process and problems concerning their integration are considered to be "internal affairs". This contradictory logic, on the one hand offering a system of justice while on the other hand treating most cases as internal affairs, is what makes

the EU mirroring itself on its border. Differences are being ignored while similarities with EU countries are accentuated. It seems like the EU cannot accept difference if it is different from them and their ideas. Bringing democracy is one of the focus points of the EU and of course when Estonia became a member in 2004 it was considered to be a democracy, nevertheless what is overlooked is that 30 percent of its population does not consider Estonia to be a democracy, almost 10 percent of its population is, because of non-citizenship, not able to vote in national elections and other Russian-speakers do, by political rhetoric, not agree Estonia being a democracy. Even so the idea that Russian-speakers are an immigrant minority, adopted by the Estonian government in the 1990s, is incorporated by the EU, though not agreed upon by the Russian-speakers themselves. They do not consider themselves to be a minority because of historical issues and therefore to be approached as a minority is according to them not appropriate. These two examples show in what way the EU is normalising its East and ignores the differences it comes with. To call Estonians “a kind of Germans” a EU representative in Estonia definitely underlines this idea. With regard to the civil society it is remarked the EU has good intentions, reserving money for civil society organisations, Estonian as well as Russian-speaking, though there seems to be no efficient use of this money, which is problematic. In the light of the empire-like behaviour of the EU I would like to argue this can be seen as an example since it is obvious that the EU has no idea about what is going on at its border. The Estonian borderland is normalised and naturalised and in Brussels they consider, according to the statistics, everything is fine, though in reality it is a different story. It is the dual nature of the EU policies in Estonia what makes the identity question of Russian-speakers a difficult one. On the one hand, by becoming a European citizen advantages as studying and working abroad have become available, while on the other hand as demonstrated by the empirical data, it is hard for Russian-speakers in Estonia to feel themselves European, since they consider themselves to be treated in a unjust way. As the EU incorporates the official statement of the Estonian government on the status of the Russian-speakers, their immigrant status becomes more widespread acknowledged. Their arguments they are not an immigrant minority are therefore not heard by other EU countries and resulting it is felt as if their identity is being ignored by the EU. And as I have verified the EU’s good intentions to support the Russian-speaking civil society is hardly having any positive outcome and therefore hinders the identity construction of Russian-speakers because their position in Estonia remains to be questioned and lobbying for their rights is not to be supported by the EU, except for funding.

4.2 Russia's influence on Estonia

In this paragraph I will deepen the thoughts in Estonia regarding its relations with Russia. As we have seen in the theoretical chapter Russia has a different understanding of the term “neighbourhood” than the European Union. Russia feels adjusted to a type of conflictual relations with adjacent countries as Makarychev (2006:18) explains. Where countries as Estonia have in a resolute way abandoned everything that was connected to communism and adapted to the *aquis communautaire* of the EU in a small period of time, Russia, on the contrary, chose to follow another path. In the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union the national identity was an open question and where in the first years of the 1990s it appeared Russia was approaching the West in its foreign relations, in the second half of the decennium it directed its foreign politics further away from the EU (O’Loughlin 2001: 21-22). With Vladimir Putin’s politics of “sovereign democracy” they have definitely chosen another route to follow.

In line with the politics of “sovereign democracy” the Russian national identity had to be redefined and since there were not many heroic parts in the recent history of Russia the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1944 by the red army was used as a major national identifier. Besides the occupation of neighbouring countries during Soviet times was not recognized and in some occasions even the “greatness” of communist leaders as Lenin and Stalin were praised. Most Russians accept that Russia has a great power tradition that should be maintained (*ibid.*: 35). Therefore in the new national identity nationalism and imperialism are intertwined (Laitin 1998: 309) and the “near abroad” is considered to be central to Russian security. Especially the Russians living in the “near abroad” are positioned as “compatriots” those need to be protected from the discriminating measurements of the governments of the neighbouring countries.

Estonia, when abandoning anything in relation with communism and redirecting their geopolitical interests towards Western Europe, consequently perceived Russia as the main ‘other’, the successor of communism and their “occupier”. During the accession process and currently being a member of the European Union Estonia has tried to ascertain a role as “bridge” between Russia and Western Europe, though, as many have demonstrated, because of very diverse historiographic thought in both countries this has never been accomplished. In this paragraph I will highlight the opinion of my interviewees regarding Estonia’s relations with Russia, whether they think Russia is influencing Estonia’s Russian-speakers situation and if they think Estonia-Russia relations have changed after Estonia has joined the EU. Naturally I will replenish the quotes of the interviewees with other material I gathered during fieldwork.

Remarkable for me was that nearly all interviewees, when being asked about the current relations between Russia and Estonia, answered they were bad. Some nuanced their answers by saying the relations had been worse two years ago, right after the Bronze Soldier crisis and now they are more neutral. Few interviewees cite the unresolved border treaty between Estonia and

Russia as one of the major challenges towards a more normal relation. One of the consultants of the minister of Integration in Estonia gave me the following answer:

“I think on an everyday level it is fine, on a cultural level I think we are fine. Political relations is a different story, but this has had a long tradition. The largest Estonian community living abroad lives in Russia. But since the border treaty and other things unresolved tensions remain”
(Interview EA 21-04-2009 Tallinn).

Rather strange is the answer of the Estonian ministry representative that she regards relations between Estonia and Russia are fine on the cultural level. It is clear that Estonia has taken a totally different direction considering their cultural heritage than Russia has done. Culture and traditions go hand in hand, it is tradition that fosters the continuation of a culture and it is obvious that traditions in Russia are far away from traditions in Estonia. Then the consultant of the minister of Integration refers to Estonians who live in Russia perhaps in a way those Estonians have chosen to live in Russia and this represents the relationship between Estonia and Russia. The Estonians who live in Russia were mostly brought there during Soviet times to work in Siberian hard labour camps. After the collapse of the Soviet Union those persons decided to stay in Siberia or did not see a chance to return to Estonia. Estonians who currently leave the country will mostly not chose to go to Russia, rather to the European Union countries where they have the ability to work and live. Therefore the comment that the Estonian community living in Russia is representative for the ‘fine’ relationship with Russia is out of place.

Another representative of the Estonian ministry of foreign affairs this time has answered my question on Estonia’s relations with Russia as follow:

“Putin and his party are just really difficult, their attitude is not special towards Estonia, but towards the whole of Europe. In Estonia there exists the idea of Russia always being able to come up with something, as for example they have done in Georgia. When Ojuland (Kriistina Ojuland, member of the European Parliament red.) is at the European Court most petitions against Estonia are from Russia, Russia finds conflicts in our eyes” (Interview KE 12-05-2009 Tallinn).

This quote shows within the ministry of Estonia the relationship with Russia is still perceived as something tense, maybe annoying or even dangerous. As she says Estonians are convinced Russia is “always able to come up with something”, something “to find conflicts”. Perhaps indirectly KE is here referring to the Bronze Soldier crisis, where Russia has also fuelled to conflict to a climax, according to Estonian politicians. During the Russia-Georgia conflict on South-Ossetia and Abkhazia in 2008 Russia has shown its expansionist character which naturally is seen as imperialistic behaviour by Estonians. Also this representative expresses her concerns

regarding the role of the European Court, when saying in the court most petitions directed towards Estonia are originating from Russia. This indicates the relationship between Estonia and Russia is far from good and is continuously played out even so on an international scale in the European Court. Russia is protecting its “compatriots” in the near abroad by blaming Estonia of discrimination and a scarcity of “proper European values”. In this way Russia is not making itself popular for Estonian politicians who have, next to a lot of work on proving their non-discriminatory character and “Europeanness”, the feeling that a continuous discord with Russia is preventing them from being considered a full-fledged member of the European community. The internal Estonian political situation is in this way easy to manipulate by external factors and Russia is thankfully taking use of it. Russia is using the ‘soft power’ of the EU, in the form of its human rights courts, to question the genuineness of the Estonian democracy. It is a way to influence a country across its own territorial borders, similar to the EU, representing empire-like behaviour.

Though Russia is not only using all kinds of soft power to undermine the political authenticity of the Estonian state, in the existing discourse in Estonia, Russia would also not hesitate to use hard power when necessary to protect its compatriots in the near abroad. Example as the Georgian War nourish this discourse and made one of my interviewees state the following:

“Russia is influencing Estonia negatively and western people do not understand this. Once there were people from the USA here and they thought they were in Russia instead of Estonia”
(Interview RV 17-04-2009 Tallinn).

Here a major statement is being made, namely the incomprehension of persons West from the former Iron Curtain to understand the relationship between Estonia and Russia. What RV here puts forward is something very tense in Estonia, people from the West visiting the country and assume they are in Russia is by Estonians perceived as an offence on their identity and it might even feel as a loss of their identity. And in the eyes of Estonia this is exactly what Russia tries to accomplish using imperialistic behaviour, trying to undermine the existence of the Estonian state as an independent territory. When visitors express their idea of being in Russia while in Estonia, Estonians would feel offended and possibly frustrated by the idea that the Russian discourse on the near abroad is still recent. At such a moment for Estonians it still feels like they are part of a larger Russian empire. Many Estonians therefore perceive the relations with Russia in the light of security for that matter and use the suppressing attitude of Russia to explain Estonia’s geopolitical choices:

“The EU wants more relations, but Estonians do not like the EU very much, it is another Union and with it their sovereignty is zero again. Nevertheless the feeling of the American protectorate is the only option they have to create a save situation” (Interview SI 21-04-2009 Tallinn).

SI even goes further by arguing membership of the European Union is not what most Estonians want, because then they again lose their sovereignty and become dependent of a Union again. Simultaneously he admits it is for Estonia the only opportunity to create a save situation, referring to the security discourse that exists on Russia in which Russia is perceived to be the main enemy of Estonia.

Russia, as explained in the second paragraph of the theoretical chapter, often stresses its pivotal role for Europe concerning their oil and gas provision, while questioning the decisiveness of the European Union on important political issues. Russian identity, equally explained in the theoretical chapter, is far and foremost based on nationality and to 'prove' the greatness of Russian nationality it is hard to avoid the imperial times when Russia was perceived to be a world power. The continuation of a strong national state was, after the collapse of communism, expected to be the only opportunity for a basis of national identity which could preserve a country of such geographical size and encompassing a wide range of inhabitants with different cultures, religions, etc. Important for the continuation of a strong national state is securing this continuation for its inhabitants. Putin and his successor Medvedev both have been ruling the country on an authoritarian way, taking the main decisions, and act fiercely against separatist regions as Chechnya where a continuous conflict between militias of the separatist party and the militaries of the government is going on. But as shortly touched upon in the beginning of this paragraph it is not only inside the territorial borders of Russia that people are governed by a rather authoritarian rule, it is also in its direct neighbourhood or the 'near abroad' where Russia remains influential. Interviewee JT remembers the period of the war between Georgia and Russia and the way the Estonian government reacted on that:

"In international affairs Estonia is always the first one to be negative about Russia. The Georgia crisis is an excellent example of this; immediately the side of Georgia was being chosen, but no one knew the exact history of the country. Estonia therefore looks like a little country trying to protect the western values, but they did not even consider the truth. The Estonians were the first ones to reject the war, they immediately blamed Russia for beginning the war and of course Russia lost the information war. Estonia must try to listen to more than only one source, the Russians in the country are really disappointed by this" (Interview JT 08-04-2009, Tallinn).

On many occasions I was talking to Russian-speakers in Estonia the case of the conflict between Russia and Georgia was used in order to on the one hand show Russia's expansionist character but simultaneously, in their opinion, the more or less hysteric reaction of Estonian politicians on this conflict. In the Estonian political discourse Russia is always portrayed as the enemy of the 'near abroad' and for Russian-speakers living in Estonia this is an offensive way of relating to Russia. Although they may not identify themselves as Russians, but rather as Estonian Russians

or something else, the Russian culture is for many of them still considered to be their culture. This is for example seen in the consternation arising every time the Estonian government decides to cut in Russian-speaking schools and orthodox holidays. The way Estonian politicians react on actions of Russia is, as JT exemplifies, disappointing for many Russian-speakers, since they would like to see the relationship between both countries to be more adult, Estonia not behaving in this 'teenage' way they are doing since the regaining of independence, as JT tells me.

Russian-speakers who related to the Estonian state as 'teenage' I met a couple of times in conversation with them. It is their feeling when Estonian politicians react on Russia's use of hard and soft power in the near abroad. Though it is not only the discourse among Russian-speakers in Estonia establishing this idea, it is especially Russia that tries to justify its approach towards Estonia as an immature country, a country that is still in development, a country where basic rights are still in question and a country that still has to 'earn' its place in international politics. This discourse of an immature Estonia is not only spread by the Russian media, but also on the international arena. The Estonian and Russian media who subjectively represent the other to be the enemy or the immature neighbour. The media gives a distorted picture of the intentions of politicians and simultaneously contribute to the existing discourses. Though it became clear to me that many Russian-speakers and Estonians are aware of the influential behaviour of the media and political statements. KM, the Estonian woman I lived with for three months, often translated some of the Estonian news broadcasting we watched together and sometimes showed me 'important' Estonian documentaries. As we discussed the content of these broadcasting and documentaries afterwards, it became clear to me she was well aware of the 'message' of these media programmes. Only the fact that many persons whom I met during my stay pointed at the subjectiveness of the media shows a lot of the Estonian inhabitants are aware of the influence and perhaps take the broadcasting into account, but will develop their own opinion with the help of other sources.

On the international arena Estonia is by Russia, as well as the other Baltic States, often presented as an immature partner in negotiations, referring to the short period of (re)independence, the cases they went to the European Court with and the small number of inhabitants. And it is in this international arena the Russian-speakers in Estonia, as I encountered, second the discourse of Estonian immaturity. The following fragment is an example of this:

"Estonia is for example also trying to get Russia away from the G8, etc. which is absurd, because how can a small country as this fight to a big Russia? By all this, the Russians living in Estonia feel the need to protect the Russian side of the story all the time, so the Russians are in a big dilemma!" (Interview JT 08-04-2009, Tallinn).

By referring to the attempts of Estonia to question the position of Russia in the G8 and positioning this as a never succeeding mission because of the small size of the country, it can be assumed JT does rely on the Russian discourse of “greatness” in comparison to their “smaller” neighbours. Russia in many cases tries to show countries of the ‘near abroad’ are too small to politically act against Russia and it has even proven to use force in order to establish this image. Russia positions Estonia as a small country with that few inhabitants that it is worthless to take them seriously. For Estonia this feeling of not being conceived as a fully-fledged partner in international affairs contributes to the negative portraying of Russia. Another quote of an Estonian interviewee confirms the attachment to the Russian discourse of “greatness” in terms of political issues:

“From a political perspective Estonia is a really tiny state and nation” (Interview KH 13-05-2009, Tallinn).

So where Russia is spreading its character as a political heavyweight in the region, Estonians and Russian-speakers in Estonia are incorporating this image and apply to it each in their own way.

As a result I would argue it is therefore not only the EU accession process that positioned the East as immature and only able to become mature accordingly to their example, obtaining the necessary basic norms and values, it is equally Russia that positions the “near abroad” as immature and not able to grasp the importance of a good relationship with its big neighbour. Hence it is both Russia and the EU who profit by the image of an immature East, since in that way they can both ascertain their maturity and their feeling of “greatness”. It are countries like Estonia that continuously are being proven to be immature and unequally approached. The Russian-speakers in Estonia are even more ‘in-between’ these influences, since on the one hand they feel attracted to Europe, they live in a EU country while simultaneously they endorse the immaturity of the country they live in. On the one hand, they live, work in Estonia, their children are being raised there, but on the other hand they continue to practice Russian language, traditions and so on. It is a very delicate situation they are in and it continues to that way. This troublesome ‘in-between’ position has also internal effects. In Estonia itself there are conflicts on a daily basis between Russian-speakers and Estonians which are constituted by the difficult Estonia-Russia relationship. One of my interviewees tells me:

“Russian speakers have a positive attitude towards Russia, while the most of Estonians mistrust Russia. This of course leads to conflict. For example when we look at the internet there is really a polemic battle going on about internet space, which is mostly anonymous” (Interview SeS 17-04-2009, Tallinn).

The internet is, as my interviewee argues, one of the new places of conflict between Russia and Estonia. Right after the Bronze Soldier conflict there was a cyber attack on the Estonian internet space, websites of Estonian organizations, the Estonian parliament, banks and ministries were blocked and in some cases spam was distributed. Estonian politicians accused Russian authorities of direct involvement with the cyber attacks. Though as well NATO as the European Commission was not able to find any prove of this. This, naturally holds the image of an immature country as Russia would like to position Estonia, a country which directly points to Russia to be the villain though not having any hard proof for it. Until today, the web remains an outstanding, and as my interviewee says, anonymous place to for a battle.

Concluding we could say that in foreign relations the relationship between Estonia and Russia is by my informants interpreted as a difficult one. It appears that both Estonia and Russia are waiting to blame each other for the involvement of various conflicts, something which does offend persons living in Estonia. Russia is continuously positioning Estonia to be an immature country which cannot handle internal circumstances and is too small to be considered an equal partner in international negotiations. The Russian-speakers are on a daily basis influenced by this discourse and are permanently swing to and fro between their “Estonianness” and “Russianness”. Estonia’s politicians reaction on Russia’s activities in the near abroad made JT feel herself offended and she felt the need to defend ‘the Russian side of the story’. It can therefore be concluded the identity of the Russian-speakers in Estonia is continuously subject to influences from abroad, where Russian-speakers cross the identity borders of being Estonian and being Russian. Their identity therefore becomes more problematic what is worsened by the political relationship between Estonia and Russia. Besides my interviewees pointed to the idea that in Western Europe their tiring relationship with Russia is not understood and often the pivotal questions are passed too easily, which worsens the reliability of the sovereignty and independence of their country. This underlines the positioning of Estonia as immature from as well the EU and Russia and it are especially the inhabitants of Estonia who are woven within this dialectic tension and see the web around them rather increase than fading away.

4.3 The “Emptiness” of Cross-Border Cooperation between Estonia and Russia

Cross-border cooperation is one of the fields which is aimed at bringing Estonia and Russia more close with the possibility to recover the relationship between both countries. Moreover it should re-invent commonalities between people living in the border regions and contribute to better economic circumstances on both sides of the border. Though, in spite of these advantages described regarding cross-border cooperation, its functionality is often debated (Berg & Ehin 2009, Kramsch & Dimitrova 2008, Roll 2009). It turns out it is rather hard to establish cross-border cooperation between two countries with such a heavily discussed common past and present as Estonia and Russia have. Though it is the EU that persists on the continuation of the cooperation and each time invents new projects to be implemented. The EU-sponsored projects, perhaps not even in the interest of both countries, can be perceived as another example of the empire-like behaviour of the EU towards Estonia and even across the EU border. Influencing people across its own borders is what an empire tries to accomplish, it tries to ascertain a stable and secure neighbourhood. Anyhow, in the case of Estonia and Russia, Russia is concurrently trying to influence its near abroad and to ascertain a secure and stable neighbourhood. Both opposing discourses on a secure and stable neighbourhood and both the EU and Russia behaving like new empires in Europe, will evidently not assist cross-border cooperation. It is Russia that refers to Estonia as an immature and unequal partner and the EU, by ignoring this statement, disregards the position of Estonia. Resulting it are the identities of people living in the borderland are questioned all the time and put into a problematic position.

Cross-border cooperation is something which, in a natural way, always occurred between Estonia and Russia, in the Soviet time the border was only an administrative border, so then there was a continuous flood of goods and information. Later, when Estonia was in the accession process of becoming EU member it had to apply the *aquis communautaire* of the Union, including the participation in Schengen and accompanying border control. From the end of 2007 the Schengen regulations were activated and a strict border control applied. But although the stricter border controls carried out at the Estonia-Russia border, the EU stimulates cross-border cooperation between both countries by funding various cross-border projects. I have been able to interview some civil society representatives involved in such projects and I asked them about the current status of the cross-border cooperation and in which way they think it is influential on the internal Estonian society with Russian-speakers and Estonians. Cross-border cooperation is a widely supported measure to increase regional cooperation and to include peripheral regions in programmes of development. Though, as explained in the theoretical chapter, the dual nature of the Schengen border, on the one hand stimulating increased cross-border cooperation, while on the other hand putting up a strict border control, does not simplify the situation. In this paragraph I would show how the empire-like behaviour of both the EU and Russia make cross-border cooperation between Estonia and Russia an utopia.

One of the cross-border initiatives across the whole EU and beyond is the establishment of so-called Euroregions. In Estonia I interviewed the director of the “Estonia-Pskov” Euroregion, which was legally established in 2003, before Estonia joined the European Union. This Euroregion encompasses regions of three countries; Estonia, Latvia and Russia and aims at regional development and the increased awareness of national politicians for their region. This awareness is rather low, although AJ tells me Estonian politicians support the activities of the Euroregion when he personally meets with them, but it is hard to get an official statement, let alone national funding. The difficult relationship between Russia and Estonia is said to be the reason of this:

“One of the aims of the Pskov-Livonia Euroregion is to be a contact point and we are exactly doing this work, but as we speak about the governmental level, they don’t want us to be this contact zone, to me it looks like they don’t want to communicate with Russia. I think it is not a good idea, I think we have to have contact with Russia” (Interview AJ 15-06-2009, Tartu).

In this fragment AJ clearly expresses his discontent with the way the Estonian governmental level is unsupportive of the cross-border cooperation between Estonia and Russia. He states that they don’t want to be a contact zone, they even prefer to not communicate with Russia if not necessary. This is contradicting with the original goal of the cross-border cooperation, to establish an improved contact between both countries. Estonian politicians are, because of reasons described in the preceding chapters of this thesis, not very keen to develop an improved contact with their eastern neighbour. Though, on the other hand, in Russia it is also hard to establish contact, because, as my interviewees assured me, in Russia everything goes through Moscow. This top-down politics can once again be seen as part of the larger empire-like behaviour of Russia towards the near abroad, since by doing so they are able to control all information that is coming from the border and in any occasion they have the ability to put pressure on the near abroad. The centralistic character of the government is a way empires work, although it is hard to control what happens at the border, it tries to supervise it.

“I have to say that it is different, for example between Estonia and Latvia there is no problem and pretty good contacts, but with Russia it is different, it is more difficult of course, I would say that the people in the border regions they want the contacts and they want to act, but the problem are with visa’s and political problems, but in everyday life people are interested in contacts over the border” (Interview AJ 15-06-2009, Tartu).

AJ here touches upon quite a delicate issue, he states persons living in the border areas on both sides of the Schengen border want cross-border contacts, though the problems that arise restrain a thorough establishment of such contacts. AJ sees not only the political problems between

Russia and Estonia as restraints for cross-border cooperation, but also the contemporary visa regime between both countries. He tells me that it is difficult for their partners in Russia to get visas to travel to Estonia and vice versa. Visa restrictions are a threshold for increased cooperation and will not be eliminated in the near future. This is something cross-border policy-makers are well aware of. This dual nature of on the one hand aiming for increased cooperation while on the other hand this is restricted by the visa regime of both countries demonstrates the problematic input of the European Union. Its contradictory logic makes its policies more complicated and, what is more important, redundant in many ways. If you want to establish a good cross-border relationship you need to relax the visa regime, though because of fear about what is across the border this is unthinkable. Another civil society representative explains his difficulties in cross-border cooperation with Russia:

“For us it is easier to do projects with countries as Ukraine and Moldova instead of Russia, since for those countries we don’t need a visa and for Russia we do. Cooperation with Russia has many difficulties on the institutional level; there are no financial institutions in Russia who support cross-border cooperation. Then, if Russia wants to cooperate, it prefers to cooperate with Germany or France, we are too small” (Interview DT 11-06-2009, Tallinn).

Again the discourse which imagines Estonia to be ‘too small’ for cooperation and equal partnership for Russia is deeply rooted among Estonian inhabitants and prevents the development of cross-border contacts. The cross-border cooperation, as DT says, is currently rather accidental instead of on a regular basis.

This accidental character of cross-border cooperation is of course not in line with the EU perspectives and definitely not envisioned by those developing the cross-border policy. Though it appears to be rather difficult for countries as Estonia to establish good cooperation across the border, not only because of practical reasons as the visa regime and a lack of financial support, but also because of more deeply rooted insuperable contrasting historical interpretations. As explained in the background chapter the contradictory discourses between Estonia and Russia differ to such an extent they are hard to overcome on the political level. And, for example during the Bronze Soldier crisis in Estonia, it is ultimately being used by both sides to assist in substantiating their side of the story. After the relocation of the Bronze Soldier the relationship between Estonia and Russia found itself in a deep crisis and I asked my interviewees what the effect of these events were on the cross-border cooperation they had established:

“It influenced cross-border cooperation indeed, because it was sensitive and very politicalized, cooperation is now more complicated than it was before, from both sides on the state level, more actions are needed to establish cross-border cooperation. On the individual level there was no change, but cross-border cooperation lies on the political level, so yes it influences it. It should

be policies, not politics. In Estonia-Russia relations the state level ideas are the main obstacles for establishing cross-border cooperation, for example we do cross-border cooperation with Moldova, unless all political ambiguities in that country, but not with Russia... ” (Interview DT 11-06-2009, Tallinn).

DT here clearly puts his finger on the painful spot by saying in Estonian-Russian relations the state level ideas are the main obstacles for establishing cross-border cooperation and by the example of cooperation with politically unstable Moldova, DT simultaneously expresses his incomprehension of this behaviour. Although, as he argues in line with interviewee AJ, there is a need for cross-border cooperation on the personal level in the specific regions, it is very sensitive on the national political level and therefore more than just interest and need is acquired in order to establish cooperation across the Schengen border. ‘It should be policies, not politics’, says DT. He thinks the politics are forming a threshold for the establishment of solid cross-border cooperation, it should rather be policies that determine the content of the cooperation and the sustainability. But, as he recognizes, this is far from the reality, because after the Bronze Soldier events the existing cross-border cooperation took a severe knock. And since the crisis the cooperation is more complicated than before. This shows that it is not only the historical issues that play an important role, but ongoing empire-like behaviour of both the EU and Russia continue to affect the personal life of people inhabiting the border region. It is hard for them to establish a certain representative position since they are feeling identified with same parts of both sides, on the one hand their own historical roots lay at the other side of the border, while on the other hand they live in Estonia now, where they are under pressure of all kinds of influences. This “in-betweenness” of the Russian-speakers in Estonia is what makes their identity problematic.

SaS, whose organization is situated in the Ida-Virumaa district in the North-East of Estonia, bordering Russia and inhabited by over 80 percent of Russian-speakers, can confirm this idea of “in-betweenness”. For this region, as we have seen in the background chapter, it would be as well cultural and economical advantageous to have good cross-border contacts. SaS works with young people in his organization and he underlines the cultural connection between Russia and Russian-speakers in Estonia. Though as he frequently urges in the interview, youngster, even in the Ida-Virumaa region, do not feel so much attached to Russia anymore:

“Youngsters here don’t visit Russia often, sometimes they do for cultural reinforcement, some have relatives, but they are not the same; not more attracted by Russia; they see by their own eyes how it is in Russia, they relativate it for themselves and compare it with living in Estonia” (Interview SaS, 27-05-2009, Jõhvi).

Here SaS makes an important remark concerning the closeness of Russia and the knowledge of the country attached to it. As we have seen earlier in this chapter, Estonia blames other countries for not knowing Russia as they do and even mistaking Estonia for being Russia. SaS points out that Russian-speakers in the region close to Russia see Russians who cross the border more often and are aware of the circumstances of the country across the water border, separating both countries. In his opinion, the youngsters see with their own eyes, life across this border is not better than in Estonia and therefore they are not so much attracted by Russia, although they might still perceive it to be their ‘motherland’. This again stresses the problems Russian-speakers encounter in terms of their identity. As I remark, although Russia is perceived as ‘motherland’ and relatives are living there, Russian-speakers concurrently meet the differences between their life and life on the other side of the border. Resultantly they are continuously attracted and pushed away by both sides, what gives their identity a conflictual nature and difficult to pin down as being either Russian or Estonian.

Russia has another size and much larger population than Estonia and since the decision-making always goes top-down instead of bottom-up as in Estonia, there are many contradictions between the two countries in establishing or continuing cross-border cooperation. Cross-border cooperation would help to develop a secure and stable region as the European Union has envisioned, though because of empire-like behaviour of both the EU and Russian side, it is for local players hard to establish such cooperation. Russia portrays Estonia as being too small to cooperate with and the national governmental level eventually decides to cooperate or not. Estonia, for this matter, receives money from the EU, though because the national Estonian government is not dividing the money equally among Estonian civil society organisations, it is said a lot of money does not find its ultimate goal. Russian-speakers, who were foreseen to benefit from the cross-border cooperation between Estonia and Russia, are, because of diverse messages from Russia as well as Estonia being attracted and pushed “in-between” both sides. Where good and regular cross-border contact could help them to find a central path in between their past and present, the irregularity of it and its “empty” meaning do not offer this ability and the identity of the Russian-speakers remains problematic and open for discussion.

4.4 Language and Culture of Russian-speakers in Estonia

In paragraph 1.3 I have operationalized the EU and Russia reinventing of universal elite norms, values and scripts (lecture O. Kramsch, 24-09-2008) after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Old hierarchies of power are being destabilized and former Soviet Union states who now regained their independence searching for their space and time in this “new world order”. Estonian and EU perceptions on territoriality are impossible to reshape and end at respectively the nation state or the Eastern outer border of the EU. Meanwhile hegemonic knowledge is being re-ordered and made meaningful in people’s lives. Estonia, being a nationalizing borderland, is continuously dependent on global geopolitical relations and positions itself in the condition where making a choice between belonging to the one or the other imperial power is inevitable. The conditions of their nation building process and the identification of the Russian speaking minority is continuously subjected to multilateral liaisons in the worldly and imperial sphere surrounding Estonia. Nevertheless, as we have seen in the preceding paragraphs, the inhabitants of Estonia do not always apply to the reshaping and re-ordering of their country as it is done accordingly to the political elite. Membership of the EU might be represented as an unavoidable necessity and advantageous for every inhabitant, as demonstrated in the first paragraph, EU membership is not always welcomed by Russian-speakers in Estonia and perceived to be another challenge to the newly (re)gained sovereignty of Estonia. Regarding the Russian-speakers the EU is perhaps offering the tools in order to question their situation in the light of human rights and equal rights, effectively this measure does not change the non-welcome feeling of Russian-speakers in Estonia and with regard to the ‘real problem’, according to my interviewees, the EU closes its eyes and refers to it as an ‘internal affair’. In the opinion of my interviewees this undermines their problematic situation in Estonia and the democracy Estonia is calling itself. Political relations with Russia on the other hand are mentioned to be difficult and in a bad condition. Estonians mistrust Russia and vice versa. Because Estonia is always negatively representing Russia’s political and military actions, as for example in Georgia, my Russian-speaking interviewees think this offends their position in Estonia and they have the feeling of protecting ‘their side of the story’, perhaps not being identical to the Russian version, but a position which is more nuanced and somewhere ‘in-between’. There is a continuous dialectical tension between the external frontiers of the EU, Russia and Estonia, Russian-speakers in Estonia remain dependent of these tensions and reproduce their identity according to it. On this identity I will elaborate further in the next chapter. First, in this final paragraph of the first empirical chapter, I will exemplify how the relations between the EU and Russia described above influence identity problems of Russian-speakers in Estonia. Taking a closer look to the understandings of my interviewees with regard to their past, present and future I will be able to provide a solid background for the next chapter in which I will pose the question what identity Russian-speakers in Estonia are having or developing. As I encountered during my fieldwork in Estonia, especially

questions around language use, naturalisation and integration were considered to be important in people's daily life's. Naturally to make these issues more profound includes touching upon the historical discussion between Estonians and Russian-speakers in Estonia. At the end of this paragraph I will make a start with this and this will run over in the first paragraph of the following chapter.

As explained before, language is in Estonia considered to be the basis of integration and the number one requirement for naturalization. It is along the line of their language Estonians identify themselves with Scandinavia in general and Finland in particular. Estonian language differs in many ways from the Russian language, in the first place because of the different alphabets being used, respectively the Latin alphabet by Estonians and the Cyrillic alphabet by Russians. From the first moment of (re)independence in 1991 and the non-recognition of Russian-speakers as citizens in 1992 there is a battle going on about the maintenance of Russian language education in Estonia. That Russian-speakers are only to be educated in their mother tongue at the basic educational level and that even 60 percent of the education should be given in Estonian language is for many incomprehensible. There is scarcely access to Russian language higher education, but this is seen as marginal in Estonian society. Perhaps the consideration that people who want to integrate should learn the language of the country they are living in is in place here. Though one of the arguments which is made by my interviewees to invalidate this point of view is the reserved position of the Estonian government concerning educating Russian-speakers the Estonian language. For many years it was not for free to take Estonian language lessons and there was only a limited amount of places. Besides people, when not being active in an official position in the country, did not have the need to speak Estonian. They could manage to live in Estonia without knowing the official state language. Language is a very important marker of one's identity; it is through language that people communicate their identity to each other and it are specific features of a language that people can diversify. Important here is to note the big difference between Estonian and Russian language, where people could not easily understand each other when not understanding the other language. The following fragment of my interview with TM, an integration expert in Estonia, emphasizes the idea that language integration is problematic for both Russian-speakers and Estonians when relating to the continuation of their identity:

“There exists a highly segregated education system, Estonians cannot imagine their child studies together with Russians. Teachers say Russian children are emotional and it is better to not have them in class. Russians on the other hand also fear to lose their identity when they send their children to Estonian schools” (Interview TM 15-05-2009, Tallinn).

Measures of the government taken in order to decrease the number of Russian-speaking schools are received with emotional reactions among the Russian-speaking population and the

educational system remains a battlefield for the establishment of national discourses. For example, during my fieldwork period, there was tumult because of “language inspectors”, a governmental organized commission that tested the Estonian language skills of teachers on Russian-speaking schools. The members of this commission without announcement checked the Estonian language level of teachers which caused emotional reactions of some Russian-speaking interviewees as well as my colleagues at the Legal Information Centre for Human Rights. Especially the occasion when a Russian-speaking girl spoke Russian during the break at her primary school and her teacher caught her doing that and punished her for it. In the office of my internship my colleagues were arguing about it, but the reaction of the government, to make the teacher offer her apologies toward the child, was seen as the correct reaction. Nevertheless the reaction of the government such events do influence or even inflame the conflicting ideas on Russian-language use in Estonian schools. For example interviewee AT referred to this situation as follow:

“Not too long ago there was the case with a Russian speaking girl in an Estonian school who spoke Russian in the break and she was not allowed by the teachers, that I think is abnormal, so that can be seen as an example of discrimination” (Interview AT 29-04-2009, Tallinn).

AT refers to the occasion where a Russian girl was not allowed to use her mother tongue during a break at school an example of discrimination. Not allowing the use of Russian language at school is often connected to discrimination among Russian-speakers in Estonia. Language is one of the main indicators for someone’s identity and seen as a marker for one’s culture. Because the Estonian and Russian language do differ a lot it is easy to recognize when someone is using one of each languages. And although approximately 30 percent of Estonia’s population has Russian as their primary custom language, the Estonian government seems to attempt to abandon the existence and creation of Russian-speaking schools. Testing the teachers’ ability to speak Estonian on an irregular unannounced way does contribute to the feeling of “unwantedness” among Russian-speakers in Estonia and even reminds one of my interviewees at Soviet times:

“It is almost the same as the KGB in Soviet times, they also controlled the loyalty of people towards the Estonian state” (Interview MK 22-04-2009, Tallinn).

Only now it are the Russian-speakers who are tested on their loyalty towards the Estonian state.

“It must be possible for Russians to have their own schools, because now step by step they are closing all Russian schools, because schools represent Russian culture, identity and mentality, there are Russian teachers, there is intelligence and maybe also some protest, therefore they already made Russian higher education impossible; “nobody needs a Russian

academically elite”. So no Russian schools, no teacher and no Russian identity and mentality” (Interview MK 22-04-2009, Tallinn).

Interviewee MK obviously connects the existence of Russian-speaking schools to the Estonian perception of the school being a place to continue or a breeding ground for “Russian culture, identity and mentality”. So Russian-speakers in Estonia as MK do not only see the measures taken by the national government in order to decline the number of Russian schools at all levels as a discriminatory measurement, but also as a limitation in the expression of their own culture. “Nobody needs a Russian academic elite”, are according to MK words spoken by Estonian politicians when officially closing down all Russian-speaking high schools and exemplify the idea of Russian schools being a breeding ground for Russian ideas and Russian culture. Although this is possible not the way it is, as interviewee MK suggests, the idea it is being done offends his feelings. Perhaps it is the idea that a Russian-speaking academic elite is undesirable and a Russian identity and mentality should be abandoned, that makes the Russian identity more attractive among Russian-speakers. As long as the Estonian national government would have spread the idea the Russian-speakers are welcome as well as their intellect maybe even in their own language, it would have been easy for Russian-speakers to ascertain their identity in the 1990s and slowly integrate into Estonia’s society.

But it is not only Russian-speaking schools are more and more impeded in their existence, which Russian-speakers experience as an assault on their identity, there is more in the everyday life’s of Russian-speakers in Estonia that they are feeling insecure about their position within the Estonian society. MK tells me:

“In everyday political rhetoric’s, speeches etc. it is being said that Russians don’t like Estonia, this is what politicians want to show. The Russians feel that if they assimilate in the Estonian society they are wanted, but otherwise we don’t need you!” (Interview MK 22-04-2009, Tallinn)

In this fragment MK exemplifies something what many Russian-speaking interviewees told me, that they continue to have the general feeling of not being welcomed by Estonians. MK tells me that in everyday political rhetoric and speeches it is being showed that Russians do not like Estonia, which gives them the idea they are not wanted by Estonians. Although perhaps under the inhabitants of Estonia the general feeling about Russian-speakers living in the country might be different, it is the everyday political rhetoric’s that impute the integrity of their life in Estonia, their presence in a country they are living now for more than one generation. It exactly this feeling of “unwantedness” what makes them reconsider and reproduce their identity over and over again. This “unwantedness” origins according to many of them in historical disputes between Russia and Estonia. From the moment of re-independence the Estonian national elite

has positioned the Russian-speakers as heirs from the Soviet army who invaded them in 1939 and annexed the country in 1944.

But people in Estonia they are not so eager to discuss the historical disputes as it is being done by many academics, because according to my interviewees there will never be a common ground between the two political sides, the discussion will be endless. One of my Russian-speaking interviewees she tells me the following:

“The discussion will last for generations, the deportations in Soviet times, there were people being deported and this is still in people’s minds. The thing that is unfair is that the wrong doings of the Soviet times are automatically inherited by the Soviet people, no matter what their ethnic roots are, they are all being equalized. It is the same as that Germans today should still be blamed for WWII. When people talk about the deportations in Estonia they forget that there were also many many Russians being deported to the gulags” (Interview MD 13-04-2009, Tallinn).

Here we can interpret her words as on the one hand understanding the Estonian standpoint and their remembrance of the past, though simultaneously she wants to show it is not herself who is to blame for that what happened in the past and that it were not only the Estonians that suffered under the totalitarian regime of the Soviets, it were also Russians and many other ethnic groups that were deported to gulag camps. Obviously MD, a Russian-speaker herself, is therefore continuously pushed between two sides of the story, she understands where the historical disputes are about and their endless character, though it is simultaneously what produces her identity and as long as there is no end in this discussion it will again be the Russian-speakers who are “in-between”. Therefore, in my interviewee’s opinion, it should be preferable to stop discussing the historical dispute, but rather act in a way that should be advantageous for both parties and what will turn out to be positive for integration in Estonia. AT expresses this feeling very obvious:

“We need to stop talking about history, we have to understand each other: Russians should learn Estonian and Estonians should learn some Russian language, culture and history too. Now integration is from too far” (Interview AT 29-04-2009, Tallinn).

He stresses the current integration in Estonia is “from too far”, it is imposed from above and not felt by the people themselves. Important is the statement that is not only Russian-speakers that should learn the Estonian language, he thinks Estonians should also learn some Russian language, culture and history.

In the 1990s, when Estonia just regained its independence, everything that was connected with Russia was positioned as something bad and as I experienced myself, this image is among some younger Estonians still alive. A fragment with a younger Estonian man:

“Too many things are Russian, therefore Estonians can lose their own culture to Russians with big mouths crying out to preserve their own culture” (Interview RK 07-04-2009, Tallinn).

Further along in the interview he refers to people with grey passports as being lazy and Russian-speakers not being interested in the Estonian culture and country. Although this is perhaps one of the few persons I spoke who were expressing their negative feelings towards Russian-speakers, it was not the only one and thus it shows the political rhetoric does influence persons in the Estonian society, at least upon to a certain level. And perhaps the group that expresses those feelings is proven to be small, it is a rather prominent group within the Estonian society. When this prominent group uses historical disputes to influence voting and the outcome show this works, I would like to argue Estonians are still to be caught by these historical disputes and this shows the prominence of it in the Estonian society. Because it is proven over and over and Russian-speakers, after twenty years of independence, feel they are still not wanted in Estonian society, it is hard for them to ascertain their identity as being Estonian. Estonians don't want their language, don't want their identity and mentality. Since this message is being sent and emotionally reacted upon by Russian-speakers their identity remains as one being “in-between”, not inside, but also not outside, since they consider themselves to be different from Russians in Russia.

Nevertheless the country might now be torn apart by different historical discourses and everyone agrees there will not soon be found a middle way in this discussion between Russia and Estonia most of my interviewees recognized the need to open up and overcome the most important issues in order to relax the controversies within society. As one of the representatives of the Estonian minister of Integration told me:

“I think in Estonia official history writing is not yet solved. The end of WWII is not being celebrated as it is in almost all other countries, because it tears the country apart. I think a possible solution would be to address different aspects of history in education. We can speak of occupation, but we cannot see the people today as occupants. The ones who occupied us were the militaries and they left the country. I think it is preferable to broaden the role of the Russian speaking population in the history of Estonia, they are now left out too much” (Interview EA 21-04-2009, Tallinn).

Naturally it would be preferable to include Russian-speakers in the discussion on historical disputes, especially when it, as EA tells me, tears the country apart. This will be deepened in the following chapter. What I would like to remark here is that although there EA expresses the aim to include Russian-speakers in the historical discussion, it is clear there are some understandings of the Estonian government that are not open for discussion, which of course makes an open

discussion quite hard. To see the occupation as only being done by militaries that left the country is short sighted, because perhaps Russian-speakers do feel identified with this group. At least in Russia the “greatness” of the Soviet Union is today represented as a positive feature of the history of Russia.

Concluding I would argue because of the continuous dialectical tension between the external frontiers of the EU and Russia, Estonia struggles to position itself as a European country and simultaneously emphasizing its own unique character, opposing to the character Russia is trying to encapsulate. Therefore measures as the abandoning of Russian language higher education, the impeding of Russian language schools and the exertion of “language inspectors” are perceived as being necessary to tackle the development of a Russian identity, mentality and so on. This way of dealing with the presence of Russian language in Estonia can be perceived as one with an imperialistic character. It is difficult for Estonian politicians to accede the differences of Russian language education and therefore the idea exists this has to be kept small. The existence of Russian language in Estonia does not fit Estonia’s imagination of being a European country, a small quite country without problems at the border of the EU. The development of a “Russian mentality” therefore is considered to be, in an imperial kind of way, suppressed. Though, what they forget here is that the Russian-speakers in Estonia do not have a Russian identity or mentality anymore, it are only certain features of Russia where they feel identified with, and because of the Estonian governmental measures the Russian-speakers continue to feel “unwanted”. Whereas language and culture are of course significant for the production of one’s identity, in Estonia it is especially history and the commemoration of it what influences the reproduction of identities. In the next chapter I will deepen my interviewees understandings on Estonian history and how this forms part of their identity as an Estonian citizen.

Chapter 5: Empirical data

5.1 People without Homeland

Described in the preceding chapters of this thesis the Russian-speaking population of Estonia takes a rather delicate position in the country and because of historical and geographical ongoing disputes between Estonia and Russia this delicate position is being reproduced constantly in daily life activities. Russian-speakers in Estonia are somewhere on the threshold of “us” and “them”, not knowing where to belong and where to feel at home. They redefine their identity along the images others have of them. Though since the group of Russian-speakers in Estonia is heterogeneous to such a degree it is impossible to imagine them as being ‘one’. Living in a country where the main ‘other’ is being territorialized by the country which some Russian-speakers regard to be their motherland, there is a continuous struggle about their identity going on in Estonia. In the process of Europeanisation, which Estonia went through during the accession process towards becoming an EU member, Estonia was actively presented as a historical part of ‘Europe’. In this process ties with other ‘European’ countries were tightened while Russia was positioned as the heir of the Soviet Union and all cruelties that accompanied the communist years. At the same time in Russia there was successively a process of redefining people’s identity going on. But in this case it was impossible to avoid the role of Russia as the legislator of the Soviet Union and it is, among other things, in line with this past Russia is reproducing its historiography. Urging its greatness and geopolitical pivotal role in the recent history of Eurasia, the process of redefining Russia’s identity went contradicting to the process in Estonia. And where the Estonian process of Europeanisation went along the lines of ‘soft power’ of the EU, the process in Russia went along by showing their ongoing political interest in their neighbours sometimes with the help of military measures. By using soft as well as hard power in the ‘near abroad’, representing all countries that once belonged to the Soviet empire, Russia shows its geopolitical interest in this region, accompanied with the idea these regions are still under their influence. In this way Russia’s historiographic thought is redefined considering the greatness of the country in the region.

These contradicting characters of the redefined historiography of Estonia and Russia make the delicate position of Russian-speakers in Estonia a complicated one. Because when relating to their motherland or land where they relate to because of historical and linguistic roots, Russia, they feel the discrepancy with the historical and linguistic roots being emphasized in the country they are living. And otherwise, when relating to Estonia because of habits and living circumstances, they can meet another discrepancy with the lifestyle on the other side of the border. The EU Schengen border, separating Estonia and Russia including a strict visa regime as well as free travel towards other countries of the European Union, has made also Russian-speakers redefine their geographical position. Those possessing an EU passport now see their

opportunities to travel and work in other countries of Europe, where they, at the same time, meet more restrictions in order to visit or work in Russia. In this paragraph I would like to show how my Russian-speaking interviewees are handling this delicate situation they are living in. In their everyday life they are confronted with the contradicting discourses within Estonia. Difficult historical issues which are politicized do not make their situation more easy, this will be deepened in the following paragraph.

In this paragraph I will show with the help of quotes and other experiences I got from the field how Russian-speakers in Estonia are dealing in their everyday life's with the delicate position they have in the country. As I have emphasized, because of the heterogeneous character of the group in combination with their geographical spread in the country, the answers I got represent the heterogeneous character, though as we will see a certain pattern of identity production can be identified. The dual cataclysmic shock David Laitin is referring to in his research on Russian-speakers in Estonia, is also mentioned by social researchers in Estonia:

“After gaining independence a lot of Russian people got a trauma, everything they had collapsed, they were thrown out of the working life and suddenly had to start selling vegetables at the market. It was a politically selective process” (Interview KH 13-05-2009, Tallinn).

Though, as Laitin's research was done in the early 1990s, as KH exemplifies, the cataclysmic shock has not been overcome totally. As she states, Russian-speakers were during communism the leading figures in the Estonian based industry. They were secured of having a job, while after the collapse of the Soviet Union and not being recognized as fully-fledged citizens of the 'new' country Estonia, they were dedicated to start selling products on the markets. And although many, especially younger people, have now found their way in the Estonian society in terms of economical opportunities, it are still Russian-speakers who sell their products on the market in Tallinn. Older people, having a small pension, are dependent on these markets, where you can hardly find an Estonian.

Identification differs between the Russian-speakers especially because of their heterogeneous background. A woman with Belarusian roots tells me:

“Being regarded as a Russian-speakers to me is incorrect, because I am a Belarusian speaker. Russian is a foreign language for me. During Soviet times there was no interest for cultural symbols of our community, they had no value then” (Interview representative Belarusian community 01-07-2009, Jõhvi, translated by Gulnara Roll).

This statement shows the complex nature of seeing Russian-speakers in Estonia as being one group. As I have been arguing before and what is said to me many times by Russian-speakers themselves for them the heterogeneity of the group is not to be ignored. Though, as explained in

the preceding chapter it is the Estonian government and especially the EU that try to pin them down, try to grasp their identity. For example this is being done by calling them a Russian minority. Consequently they are pushed in the direction of being one group and simultaneously as being 'different' than being Estonian.

"I came here in 1962, I like Belorussia, I like to visit it, but I would not like to live there. I don't feel myself a stranger here. I feel supported by the state and municipality" (Interview representative Belarusian community 01-07-2009, Jõhvi, translated by Gulnara Roll).

Again this statement supports the heterogeneity of the Russian-speakers in Estonia, where some point their dissatisfaction with the current Estonian government and question themselves Estonia is a true democracy, others say they feel supported by the state and municipality. Though for someone who lives in a country for 47 years at the time of the interview it might be considered remarkable she feels the urge to convince the interviewer she does not feel herself a stranger in Estonia. Although she might not identify herself as a Belarusian, the statement makes clear she still struggles with defining her identity although living in Estonia for 47 years. She "does not feel herself a stranger" is, in my opinion, a sentence that illustrates her being not yet perceived as Estonian, even after all these years of living there. "Not feeling herself a stranger" can therefore be seen as a kind of alternative for being a Belarusian, Estonian or perhaps Russian-speaker. An identity that contains characteristics of all these groups, but is not easy to pin down.

Another woman I spoke had Finnish roots. It was because most Finnish people came to Estonia right after WWII and they couldn't get back to their motherland after the Soviet border was closed off, Estonia became their homeland, she explains.

"We do not live in our own country, so we have to know all languages" (Interview representative Finnish society, 01-07-2009, Jõhvi, translated by Gulnara Roll).

Determining Estonia as her homeland while successively not seeing it as her own country shows the complicated position persons with Finnish roots find themselves in. Naturally the Finnish have a different relationship with Estonia, since Estonia tries to approach this country instead of avoiding it, as in the case of Russia. Nevertheless since all Finnish who moved to Estonia after WWII were educated in Russian during communism and were not naturalised after independence, they are mostly perceived being in the same group as Russian-speakers. And, represented by the above fragment of this Finnish woman, it appears they have the same complexities to deal with as their Russian-speaking counterparts. The statement "we do not live in our own country" marks their struggle to identify themselves as Estonians, although perhaps Finnish are more easily accepted in Estonian society, since Finland is increasingly seen as an example and partner, their origins remain to be important no matter they are living in Estonia for

generations now. By having to know all languages, not preserving Finnish as their only language shows the identity of the Finnish in Estonia is continuously reproduced in every part of their daily life and they easily redefine their identity accordingly to the environment.

The feeling of not living in their own country is widespread not only among Finnish people in Estonia, but especially by Russian-speakers. Naturally then the question raises what would they call their homeland? Fascinating was the interpretation of many younger Russian-speakers I spoke to of having no homeland. Explaining to me why they had the feeling of having no homeland, they told me because they are born in Estonia but this country was not felt as 'their own' it feels as having no homeland. Others told me they were Estonian citizen, but Russia or Ukraine was their motherland. It is clear this complicated identification with none or more than one country makes it difficult for Russian-speakers to determine where they belong, who they are and where they are going. As any other identity theirs is continuously subject to all influences around them, though which is different from people having a natural relation to the country they were born, the Russian-speakers were born in Estonia but do not regard it as their homeland and because of internal as well as external impacts it remains to be questioned all the time. And hence it remains an insecurity for them, an insecurity that can even lead to the development of conflict as with the Bronze Soldier crisis, which I will elaborate on in the following paragraph.

Though it are not only the Russian-speakers in Estonia who struggle to define their identity, also the Estonians themselves sometimes meet difficulties in reproducing the identity which is promoted after independence. Returning to the Ida Virumaa district inhabited by 80 percent of Russian-speakers, it was interesting to talk to an Estonian woman living in there. T has her own small business in Sillimäe, a small town inhabited by 90 percent of Russian-speakers, with various different cultural backgrounds. Sillimäe was closed off during Soviet times, since it was a military base and it is directly bordering the Baltic Sea, used by the Soviets as marine port. T tells that she is born in an Estonian family, though speaking Russian as their first language. When T first started her business in Sillimäe it was a hard period she tells me:

"The first year I opened my hairdresser's salon people did not want to come, because I am Estonian. I have many local clients and it was very very very hard in the beginning" (Interview T, 01-07-2009, Sillimäe).

The people T hired to work in her hairdresser's salon are all Russian-speakers and T has, in her own opinion, many Russian-speaking friends. She tells me that because of all Russian-speakers in Sillimäe mostly are influenced by Russian media, she feels a discrepancy with her colleagues concerning the information they receive. T says many people know Estonian language, because for example they are naturalized, though, as she continues, they do not learn it at home. That this

region in an exception related to the identity question in Estonia is clearly shown in the following fragment of my interview with T:

“In Sillimäe I do not feel like an Estonian, 90 percent is Russian-speaking and I speak only Russian. But in other towns I feel Estonian, our town is special” (Interview T, 01-07-2009, Sillimäe).

The identity of T is shaped by her daily living in the border region Ida Virumaa district, working and socializing with almost exclusive Russian-speakers, makes her identity more close to that of a Russian-speakers, she does not feel Estonian anymore living there. Though if she leaves town and meets more Estonians she feels Estonian. This marks the complex nature of living in a borderland, a borderland where identities are always questioned and reproduced accordingly to its surrounding at the very moment. T's identity changes when she is in Sillimäe or when she is in Tallinn. So although living in Estonia, being an Estonian, she does not feel her national identity, it changes at the border, she feels more close to Russian-speakers at that moment. The “in-between” feeling therefore perhaps should not only be applied to Russian-speakers in Estonia, also Estonians living in border regions.

Later at the same day when I spoke to T, I met another, Russian-speaking woman living and working in Sillimäe. In the local bar we drunk something together and the conversation moved to the topic of my research. After she gave me some insights on her life in Estonia and her job in Sillimäe she was definitely non-reluctant to tell me about her ideas on Russian-speaking identity. Something what had become clear to me during my fieldwork period was literally confirmed when she told me that she did not feel Estonian, neither Russian. Though, what surprised me that, when she moved closer to me and pointed with her finger towards Russia, told me that “they” were nevertheless more closer to “them” than Estonians. The identification of Russian-speakers with Russians on the other side of the border had not been that strong to me before than it was at that moment and on a certain way it struck me to notice the influence of Russia across the border. However talking about Russians across the border as “them” does imply a “us” “them” relationship and therefore Russian-speakers on the other side of the border are not perceived as “us”. The distance to Estonians, nevertheless, is presented by this woman as broader than to Russians on the other side of the border. It becomes clear there is a very broad range of “in-between”.

But what are difficulties people meet who feel themselves belonging in this “in-between” group? JT, who interestingly told me about her feeling to protect the “Russian side” of the story concerning the Georgian-Russia war in 2008, but who also feels her connection to Estonia for example because of her being fluently in Estonian and having Estonian friends, tells me about her difficulties being a Russian-speaker in Estonia:

“That is the thing about Estonia, if I leave I will remember more what I like about Estonia. Last year I was really thinking of leaving and then this one thing happened and then I thought yes, that’s it, now I am really packing my things. Once I was in the metro on the train and I think people in Russia and Moscow have really strong stereotypes, I think people have that here as well, but I was used to people here being more open. In Moscow it really bothered me and then I was on this train and there were not so many people, I don’t even remember what I was thinking, but then I physically felt how all these people were stereotyping me, I don’t know what I felt, but I felt like, ok I know my stop is next, but I am feeling so heavy I cannot get up and go. I felt so wrong at that moment, but it is not like if I go there now I will feel this way, but for me on the whole every place has something like that. (...) In Estonia for me it is also like that, I can’t tell people here that I suppose this country is unprofessional, you cannot tell this to people who have never left the country and in places where people really work professionally. You can’t blame them for working the way the society demands them to work. As how I feel it development here is very restricted. If you stay here, if you have education, you know language and if you are smart and good in communication person you will get quite high quite soon, basically if you want to you can actually get very high. On the one hand it can be good, but on the other hand it turns out that people starting to think ‘ooh wauw, do you see how much I managed to do’, but actually you didn’t do anything, if you go to countries where if you want to go to the same position it actually takes hard work” (Interview JT 30-04-2009, Tallinn).

JT very personally tells me about her feelings to leave Estonia and how she, when she is gone on a very natural way, then remembers the good things about Estonia. Albeit leaving for Moscow to get her university degree made her not leaving Estonia permanently, she came back and started working in Estonia. When returning to Moscow quite recently she had the feeling she describes in the fragment above, the feeling of being stereotyped by people, being stereotyped as different, the “other”, stroke her so hard that she even physically felt the consequences. What is even more remarkable about the above quotation is the perception of JT having this same feeling actually everywhere she goes. For example when in the second half of the fragment she speaks about Estonia in her eyes being a unprofessional country, she simultaneously tells me her idea of not being able to express those feelings in Estonia. To me when she was telling me her life story, of which the above quotation is just a small fragment, it touched me that there was no place where she really felt ‘home’. Of course maybe Estonia came the most close to ‘home’, every once in a while she felt the urge to leave the country and find her way somewhere else. The feeling of leaving all places you are living and nowhere being really ‘at home’ gives JT a restless feeling and the mental persistence of being stereotyped wherever she goes combined with her interpretation of the Estonian society as one where development is very restricted clearly shows her being caught in a complex identity web in which she tries to redefine her identity in relation to the world around her.

The following fragment explains her struggles with the complex identity question more closer:

“But that is exactly the point, you know, name Russians.. you know that’s what I mean I never think myself Russian you know, you can say Russian Estonian, basically. But for example if you go to France, basically nobody is French, not because their mother tongue is not French, but because the nation is made into a nation. For me, as I discovered, many people who come here and they know that someone is pure Estonian and then they end up with somebody Russian and for me I cannot say I like it because I am Russian Estonian and on the whole I mean people are talking here as well that we are always dividing between Estonians and Russians, I mean when are we finally going to reach the point when for example that Estonia is not the roots. In the end the word Estonian doesn’t mean belonging the country, but to the nation” (Interview JT 30-04-2009, Tallinn).

JT, although having an Estonian father and Russian mother, here clearly defines her feelings on her identity, she says not to be Russian, but not ‘purely’ Estonian either. She thinks of herself as a Russian Estonian, having similarities and loyalties with both groups. Though, as she states, people in Estonia are always dividing between Estonians and Russians, the category Russian Estonian, as she refers to herself, is not taken into account, you are perceived to be either Russian or Estonian. But being either Russian or Estonian is not an option for persons like JT, who feel themselves different from both Russians and Estonians. In Estonia, being Estonian is presented as belonging to the nation instead of to the country, as JT tells me. And since the nation is referred to as for ethnic Estonians only there is nothing for people as JT to identify with. Not being Russian or Estonian makes life in Estonia complicated and not easy to disseminate to others.

Concluding I would argue the heterogeneity of the Russian-speakers makes it hard to consider them as one group. Nevertheless they do have the same identity question they struggle with, be it ranging from one persons who still considers himself to be mostly Russian, while another cannot decide whether to feel more Estonian or Russian. What has been clarified is the Russian-speakers in Estonia do mostly not refer to any country as their ‘homeland’, rather they argue they have no homeland. Having no territory to identify with is what makes their identity problematic. Estonian national identity is presented as belonging to the nation, the nation being one of ethnic Estonians, without space for Russian-speakers to position themselves. Therefore it is hard for my Russian-speaking interviewees to refer to Estonia as ‘home’, as well as it is to refer to Russia as their homeland. On top of that as JT has remarked there is always a continuous division being made between Estonian and Russian, while it is rather something in-between she feels identified with. Referring to herself as Russian Estonian gives her the opportunity to position herself somewhere in between Estonian and Russian, used as an alternative for

belonging to one of both groups. So while always having the feeling of being 'out of place' in Estonia, Russian-speakers try to determine their identity other from being Estonian or Russian.

5.2 In-between “Two Histories”

In today's Estonia, according to some social researchers, there is a 'War of the Monuments' going on between monuments that represent the 'Russian way' of remembering WWII and the way Estonians do this. Old Soviet monuments are being replaced and new ones are being erased in the city centre of Tallinn. One of the Soviet monuments, resembling an 'unknown' Soviet soldier and representing those who have fallen during the liberation from Nazi Germany in 1944, was only replaced in 2007. Since the remembrance of the liberation of WWII has a conflicting character in Estonia, where Estonians see this moment as the start of another occupation of their territory by the red army of the Soviet Union and Russians see this as a glorious moment of their past where they, in cooperation with transatlantic partners, defeated the horrible dictatorship of Hitler, in which they lost many of their men. In Russia the liberation of Nazi Germany is remembered on a grandiose way and represented as the one thing of the recent past where Russians can be proud of. In Estonia, the same moment is represented in a negative way addressing the occupation of the Soviet Union after Estonia was freed from the Nazi's. In some cases it is even represented as those years occupied by the Nazi regime was supposedly less horrible and fearful than the almost fifty years of Soviet occupation that followed. Consequently, in the Russian discourse, Estonians are positioned to have been friendly with the Nazi's, with those who have joined the Nazi army presented as 'freedom fighters'. Estonians, on the other hand, position Russians as people who said to have freed their country by raping their women and killing their men.

The Bronze Soldier crisis or events, on many various ways, was frequently referred to during the interviews. It was obvious that for many Russian-speakers I interviewed it was a turning point in their life in Estonia. For many, as they explained to me, it became clear how ethnic Estonians were afraid of them. The Bronze Soldier events are widespread discussed in such a way that some interviewees even referred to them as 'it' or 'then', me expecting to understand the reference. Some started talking about the events right after the start of the interview, while others were more reluctant and waited for me to ask them about it. Likewise when doing fieldwork in Estonia for me it was remarkable to notice the way historical events are referred to on a daily basis. Not only the media frequently reports about it, people make jokes about it in their daily life's and what was especially interesting to see they visit the remembering gatherings in great numbers. When on the ninth of May the liberation of Nazi Germany was remembered in Estonia by its Russian-speakers I spent one of my last days in Tallinn visiting the Bronze Soldier at its new place outside the city centre at the military cemetery. Every year on the ninth of May Russian-speakers from all over Estonia gathered at the Bronze Soldier and laid flowers for those who have fallen. It is their site to remember the death. On the ninth of May 2009 I followed the many Russian-speakers who were approaching the monument and definitely was surprised and impressed by the volume of persons attending the remembrance day, the

various ages I saw there and last but not least the demure temper of those who remembered. While the site was packed with people silence reigned and people putted their flowers at the feet of the Bronze Soldier. When I arrived at the site somewhere in the afternoon, the feet of the Soldier were already packed with flowers, so many flowers I had never seen before at any remembrance in the Netherlands before.



Woman standing in front of the Bronze Soldier remembering those who have fallen during the “Great Patriotic War”. This is also what the flag on her chest means; orange and black represent the remembrance of those who have fallen in 1944. In the back one of the “soldiers” who guard the monument, sometimes waving a red flag. (Picture taking at 09-05-2009).



Woman laying flowers in front of the Bronze Soldier at the 9th of May. (Picture taken at 09-05-2009).

As I have explained in the preceding empirical chapter, the historical dispute between Estonia and Russia, is something my interviewees do not easily see disappearing, on the contrary, most of them think it is something which will never be overcome, at least not in the current political atmosphere in Europe. Though, as many recognize, history is playing an important part in the daily life of Estonians and while some of my interviewees urged the ‘unwantedness’ of the continuous arguing about historical ‘facts’. Some Russian-speaking

interviewees were able to interpret the significance of the period of first independence of Estonia between 1918 and 1939. One interviewee tells me:

“Estonians value this period immensely, but it is a hard thing for them to keep this period of independence as important and at the same time not calling the occupation on every corner ” (Interview MD 13-04-2009, Tallinn).

Here MD touches upon a very delicate matter in the history writing of Estonia; whenever they are accentuating their independence they simultaneously refer to the occupation. And since the independence is celebrated widely and on many occasions, the occupation is called 'on every corner', as MD exemplifies. And meeting the occupation on every corner, while knowing that in the past Russians were seen as the heirs of those occupants, makes it hard for the Russian-speakers to carry out their Russian roots as they perhaps would have wanted to. Being perceived as occupants is perhaps something what happened in the past, because of the extraordinary way Estonians remember their (re)gaining of independence as if time before had stood still for Estonia, as if the country was asleep during Soviet times, Russian-speakers are constantly reminded their ancestors being those who occupied Estonia.

And whenever Russia would not recognize the communistic period as one which involved the occupation of many neighbouring countries, Estonia will never accept the Russian version of this historical period. As one of the EU representatives I interviewed explains:

“Russia persists that countries as Czech-Slovakia ranged themselves voluntary by the Soviet Union. The most important in this situation is therefore that Russia has to admit the accession of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union was not voluntary and that the vote, which is according to them won with 98 percent, was invalid and therefore cannot be considered legitimate. As long as Russia does not take this step nothing will change in the existing situation and the ‘different histories’ will not come closer” (Interview HZ 31-03-2009, Tallinn, own translation).

This EU representative estimates that it is Russia that has to change its opinion regarding the ambiguous period when the Baltic States became part of the Soviet Union. I would say that of course certain steps need to be taken in order to approach each other, but this EU representative only urges Russia to modify their point of view. Since the historical dispute between Estonia and Russia involves both sides of political interaction, I would argue it is not only Russia which has to modify their ideas, it is also Estonia that could interact with their neighbour in maybe a more grown up way, realizing the importance of the liberation of Nazi Germany for Russia's national identity. Without doubt this will be hard in the current nationalizing developments where Estonia is positioned as a nation that proudly protects its (re)gained independence and where all countries that question this regained sovereignty are imagined to be enemies. Though, by admitting the

importance of WWII with regard to the Soviet regime would be conform the “European remembrance” in which WWII is represented as the worst period of the recent European history. By remembering this in the same way as Western Europe would perhaps give Estonia the opportunity to become a more fully fledged member of the EU, where the difference with those who live at the border are decreasing.

It appeared to me during the interviews that not only many of my interviewees urge to remember the historical events on a different, less hostile and more tolerant way, some interviewees even so referred to a thorough discussion about history in order to come to a more equally acceptable image of the past. In the theoretical chapter of this thesis I have argued, in line with Onken (2007), that within the ‘discourse competition’ on the European stage, the understanding that the crimes of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe were equally barbaric to those committed by the Nazis, clearly challenges the paradigm of the singularity of the Holocaust against which Europe has been defined so far. The monument of the Bronze Soldier and the discussion around its replacement embodies this ‘discourse competition’ on what regime was most barbaric (Onken 2007: 30). In Estonia communism is explained to be more barbaric than the Nazi regime, since it was, in their opinion, more cruel and lasted longer. While in the rest of Europe the Hitler’s Third Reich is represented to be the worst period in recent history with regard to ethnic cleansing. In one case, a Russian-speaking interviewee, used this to explain why communism had a strong ideological power and should therefore never be compared to the Nazi regime:

“The factual (de jure) continuation of the last annexation of the Soviet Union was recognized in Helsinki, but the Soviet Union had changed during the years, there are important differences recognizable between the Stalin time, the Brezjnev time and we must not forget about the “Perestroika” during Gorbatsjov, this was also the Soviet system. The NSDAP power only lasted for 12 years, from which 6 years were the war, the Soviet Union lasted for 73 years and 6 months. This is immanent to its ideological power, which was widespread also in Western Europe. It was a very strong ideology and it has influenced many people, while the “rassenlehre” immanent primitive was” (Interview SeS 06-04-2009, Tallinn).

This fragment can be considered ambivalent since it ultimately stresses the “greatness” of the Soviet ideology. SeS argues that since the Soviet Union existed for 73 years its ideological power was widespread and unique. Moreover SeS refers to the invasion of the Baltic States as being an annexation, recognized by most European countries. These understandings of Estonia’s existence of the period after the liberation of Nazi Germany mirror those understandings alive in the Russian discourse. SeS, possessing a Russian passport and identifying himself as 70 percent Russian as we have seen before, feels communality with this Russian discourse and tries to explain to me why communism cannot be observed in the same way as the Nazi regime. The

denial of this by the Estonian discourse and especially the disregard the Soviet period is referred to by the Estonians contributes to the complexity of the identity of Russian-speakers in Estonia. It are them who are “in-between” both discourses, having the feeling of consensus with the one version while living amongst persons who agree with the other. On top of that the EU even so carries out the message of WWII being the most cruel period of recent European history while the character of communism is not yet fully defined. This supports the Russian discourse and makes the Estonians look like they are screaming while no one hears them.

Other Russian-speaking interviewees were explicitly aware of the ‘discourse competition’ and it was obvious that some of them struggled to find the right version of history. For example JT tells me:

“Estonia looks at that time (Soviet times red.) as if it is the same today. It is easy now for them to say communism was bad, I would condemn Stalinism as well, but as an ideology I think communism is still open for discussion (...) It is exactly about how Estonia frames it; why are they not saying US is occupying Iraq, the Kosovo issue, etc. This is very difficult to see for the Russian population. Communism was said to bring stability, prosperity etc. which is exactly the same as what the EU is ‘bringing’ nowadays” (Interview JT 08-04-2009, Tallinn).

JT is not only opening the discussion on the role of communism in history, in which way it could also be seen as something positive, without referring to the totalitarian regime of Stalin and its successors, she is also pointing at the way recent international conflicts are being framed in a favourite way for Estonia. The example she uses is that when the USA invaded Iraq it is not called an occupation and I think more importantly she notices that there is not even a discussion going on about that. It is the way it is being framed in the States and Europe and therefore it is the ‘truth’. This is exactly the way how it was when the red army invaded Estonia 70 years ago, what Russia now refers to as ‘annexation’. Again as she explained me earlier, such ‘truth’ discourses are hard to accept for Russian-speakers and Russians, since it opposed the Russian discourse in which the USA activities in the Middle East are questioned. These totally different visions again make it hard for Russian-speakers as JT to reproduce their identity; do they agree with the one or the other? Or do they position themselves as somewhere in between both sides? Fascinating is the comparison JT makes at the end of this fragment of the interview between European Union and communism. As she says, both these ‘bodies’ were said to spread stability and prosperity and although the historical context is very different and way of governing especially, JT thinks this is not so different from each other. Why should the current body that brings stability, prosperity and so on, be so different from the last one, since, as covered in the preceding chapter, this is definitely not always felt by the inhabitants of the EU? The empire the Soviet Union was in Estonia’s discourse is now replaced by the EU with its empire-like behaviour and Russia’s influence in the near abroad.

It was during the Bronze Soldier events all these influences on Estonia were cumulated and led to riots. For many of my interviewees it was said to be a defining time in their life in Estonia. The Bronze Soldier events, as the riots and political circus around the replacement of the Bronze Soldier monument are referred to in Estonia, have, as I have explained in the theoretical chapter, evoked quite some emotional reactions amongst both ethnic Estonians and Russian-speakers. Many of whom I spoke about these events were, to put it mildly, displeased about the political rhetoric from governmental officials. The whole set up from the start when the Bronze Soldier became a symbol for winning votes in the coming elections to the way in which the eventual replacement took place upset most of my interviewees more than the actual replacement of the Soldier towards the military cemetery at the outskirts of Tallinn. It is the way the replacement was ultimately used as a political tool to win the national elections and the way in which the replacement was poorly communicated with, especially, the Russian-speaking inhabitants, what made people's reaction still one which was angry and incomprehensible towards the national politicians' actions. This is what one Russian-speaking adolescent told me about his feelings on the Bronze Soldier events:

“Yes, many people have different relations, but in head and in hearts something changed in that moment. Russians felt that there were people who want to hurt them. The government wanted to show to Estonians that the Russians wanted to hurt them, but it was not about Estonia, but about the replacement of the soldier and the government. Russian speakers felt it was directed against them, it was a big provocation and in the end the Russians were the enemies. Now this feeling remains, but it was a provocation. Nevertheless the government will support this feeling of difference, in their outside political relations they always state that “Russia is our enemy” and that Russia is also here, Russians in Estonia are seen as a fifth column” (Interview MK 22-04-2009, Tallinn).

In this fragment we can, very clearly, identify the reaction of one Russian-speaker in Estonia when the government decided to replace the monument of the Bronze Soldier. For him it felt that the government, and in many Russian-speakers eyes representing the ethnic Estonians instead of the whole population, wanted to hurt the Russian-speakers in the country. And not only to hurt them, but even to show that Russians were the enemies of Estonia at that moment. And although maybe many Russian-speakers in Estonia have Estonian passports, are born in the borderland and maybe did not even visit Russia in their whole life's, it felt the political discouse was directed against them. They, who are different from Estonians, but successively feel at home in Estonia, they who were in the process towards the replacement poorly informed about the reasons and circumstances of the replacement and they who, within their own culture, remember the history of Estonia in a different way from the Estonians, they felt to be hurt when this whole

spectacle was finished. MK here explains that in his eyes it was the government's intention to show that Russia is the enemy of Estonia and that the Russians living in Estonia represent this enemy, are even worse; they are the same enemy. He even states that Russian-speakers are by Estonians perceived to be a kind of "fifth column", which comes down to an "enemy from within, supported by an external enemy". Of course I would agree with the reaction of MK being an emotional strong reaction against the Estonian government, nevertheless I would argue the feeling he described was the common feeling among Russian-speakers at the moment of the Bronze Soldier events. Russian-speakers felt damaged in their presence in Estonia and once again they were positioned as the enemy. And although many of them could understand most political actions were just provocations, the emotional obligation towards their "being in Estonia" and their historical commemorations made them react the way they did.

As we have seen in the preceding chapter although the membership of the European Union was not considered to be a great break-through in the minority situation of the Russian-speakers in Estonia, though the ability to bring their (discriminatory) cases to the European courts was generally perceived as something positive. With the Bronze Soldier events the European rights of the Russian-speakers were challenged and according to many the international human right to bring charges towards those who have imputed your human rights was not exported at the moment many Russian-speakers were arrested by the Estonian police after orders of the government. SeS explains to me:

"What was worse than the police reaction was that the people who were openly treated in a violent way were not able to defend their rights in court, because their charges were not being accepted, of course this was only for the Russian speaking part of the community. Although this is a constitutional state and people were being tortured, no defence was taking place. This is of course something unthinkable" (Interview SeS 06-04-2009, Tallinn).

SeS here states that people who were arrested were being tortured and ended up without any possibility of charging the Estonian police and government for these activities. Naturally the accusation of people being tortured at the night the Bronze Soldier was being moved towards the outskirts of Tallinn and riots broke out in the city centre, is an accusation that the national Estonian government denies until today. Nevertheless there is no direct prove it has happened, there are some eyewitnesses of the cruelties. The government, after peace had returned to the streets of Tallinn, decided to erase the ability for those who were arrested at the riots to put charges against the police. Here again Russian-speakers felt hurt and once again put down as 'unwanted', something which had happened more often in the past. Those who perhaps hoped the EU membership would have helped them in a situation as such now got to hear the excuse this was considered to be an internal affair.

The EU statement that those riots should be dealt with internally is out of date and incomprehensible for everyone who has the tiniest idea about what is going on at the eastern border of the EU. The replacement had an international character, not only because Russia was actively involved, but even so because the discourses surrounding the Bronze Soldier are discourses that seek an international approach, as argued by many, made explicit in the sixth paragraph of the theoretical chapter. Some of my interviewees even regarded the Bronze Soldier events as something that should be understood in the current “post-Cold War” geopolitical world. It was SaS who told me this:

“During the bronze soldier events there were provocations, with big influence from America, it was a broader geopolitical game between Russia and America to be played here in Estonia” (Interview SI 27-05-2009, Tallinn).

According to SI, a former Estonian politician, it is not the discourses that are being ultimately used by Estonian and Russian governmental officials, he argues the Bronze Soldier events should rather be seen in a broader spectrum in which he also includes the United States. He brought our discussion to the specific identity question Russia is struggling with as I have argued in the theoretical chapter. Russia, perceiving itself to be the heir of the “true Europe”, the descendants of the Byzantines, now prevailing the more authentic way of European politics, sovereign democracy. But it is not only the EU that within this discourse is represented as immature and doomed to fall apart, it are also the United States that in this regard even precede the EU as a cooperation. The United States are of course the founder of the democracy which is shaped in a different way in Europe, but still has the same elementary values. It were the United States who were the main enemy during the years of the Cold War and nevertheless the Soviet Union has collapsed, at the moment Russia is being positioned as the only heir of the Soviet Union, including the glorification of certain events in this period of time, concurrently the USA are again represented rather to be an opposing power than a friendly state for the new Russia.

These understandings, along with the meaning of the Bronze Soldier and the controversial historical discourses surrounding the replacement, made some of my interviewees see the Bronze Soldier events as something that should be approached and analysed within a broader geopolitical perspective. It is the near abroad of Russia which some social researchers in Estonia consider to be the new “playground” for international conflicts on social contradictions between Russia and “the West”. And it are the people living in the near abroad who are used for this purpose. One of the social researchers I spoke to in Estonia told me when asking to the possibility of future escalation of the ethnic Estonian-Russian-speaking situation in the country:

“It is not excluded, you can see these events as a model for coming ones, it is easier for Russia as well as Estonian nationalistic parties to mobilise people now. The Estonian nationalistic

parties had the feeling of victory and the idea of easy manipulation afterwards. Though I think the EU process and USA-Russia relations should be considered as central to a possible future escalation” (Interview RV 17-04-2009, Tallinn).

As RV concludes from the Bronze Soldier events, it is easier for both Russian and Estonian politicians to mobilize people in order to make their point of view visible in a practical conflicting way. After such an event in which the emotions from both sides were used in the most broad sense and reactions from both governments were triggered, it is, according to RV, easy to address these feelings again. Especially with regard to the Russian-speakers this is the case, since they, as we have seen in preceding fragments, felt hurt and alienated afterwards, and as RV adds it was the Estonian government that spread a feeling of victory after the event, which together with the inability to make charges against police officers of course is felt as a big loss amongst the Russian-speakers. Not only at the very moment of the replacement they were being ignored in their opinions, rights and values, also after the crisis, as a result of the governmental disseminations on the riots, again they were hurt and alienated.

It is because of these reasons and the strong reactions among Estonians who condemned the riots, according to the media initiated by the Russian-speaking demonstrators, that social researcher RV concludes it is easier to mobilize people now for both discourse propagators. Though, again, also RV notifies that the possibility of a future escalation should first and foremost be seen in the development of the EU/USA – Russia relationship. These both imperialistic behaving entities are influencing the Estonian borderland and trigger reactions on the local scale. Whenever the social contradicting understandings of democracy, citizenship and European identity remain the possibility of a comparable conflict in the future cannot be excluded. It are the Russian-speakers who are somehow caught in this web of international relations, in a country where they are alienated while simultaneously their future is depending on the country. The historical contradictions that are being played out on the international political arena have real-life consequence for them living on the border, on the border of a geopolitical entity and on the border of a history.

For me it was remarkable to discover the political statement regarding the Bronze Soldier events of the contemporary Estonian government. It was with one of the representatives of the minister of Integration whom I spoke about the Bronze Soldier replacement:

“I think there could also a positive effect be seen from these events and that is the way the Estonians think about integration, because until that time they saw it more as something from the Russians, but then they realized it is something for them as well, how the Russian speakers feel also depends on what I do” (Interview EA 21-04-2009, Tallinn).

Of course it is hard for everyone with whom I spoke in Estonia to see something positive coming out of the events, since it was an ultimate sign the Estonian society has some severe problems which are almost untouched and stew just under the surface of a small beautiful country in the North-East of Europe. Especially a minister of Integration should here agree this was a black moment in history, instead the 'positive outcome' was mentioned. This 'positive outcome' is the awareness of the ethnic Estonians regarding the integration of the Russian-speakers. In line with their new Estonian Integration Programme, EA tells me it was this moment that made the ethnic Estonians aware integration is not only something up to the Russian-speakers, but considers the whole Estonian society. Nevertheless the emotional reactions of both sides and the unsatisfied feeling of both sides after the Bronze Soldier was replaced, it was a good thing for integration, according to this representative of the minister of Integration. Perhaps this illustrates the wide gap between opinions the people I interviewed and the official approach of the crisis of the government.

The Bronze Soldier event, Mälksoo argues, can be examined as an exemplary clash of competitive Russian and Baltic claims for 'proper European remembrance' of the meaning and legacy of WWII, and their respective identities' Europeanness thereof (Mälksoo in Berg & Ehin 2009: 66). Russia's and Estonia's competitive claims of their respective narratives of WWII to be accepted as part of the mainstream European remembrance of the war also signifies their respective quests to be recognised as 'clean' parts of 'Europe proper' (*ibid.*: 69). The contestations over the Bronze Soldier have therefore simultaneously been the debates about Estonian identity, about its relationship to its immediate past, and its self-establishment against the contradictory narratives of Russia as well as the generally lukewarm Western willingness to take trouble with the 'actual' course of historical events in Estonia (*ibid.*: 74). The Bronze Soldier crisis revealed not only a deep scare carefully hidden under the surface of the past fifteen years' integration rhetoric in Estonian society, but a renewed fault line in European politics, over the essence of 'European values' and who had the power to define them (*ibid.*: 78). The Bronze Soldier crises hence emerged as a ritual clarification of boundaries between the 'inside' and 'outside' of the Estonian and Russian-Estonian 'selfhood' – an event that both parties interpreted as essentially an offence by the other (*ibid.*: 75). But was it exactly the crisis had sharpened the boundaries between titulars and non-titulars, or could it rather be seen as a result of the uncertain situation the Russian-speakers in Estonia continued to find themselves. And where Mälksoo argues the boundaries between 'inside' and 'outside' have been sharpened by the Bronze Soldier riots, I would argue it only leads to a more problematic situation for Russian-speakers in Estonia, in which the situation of the Russian-speakers is far from 'inside' or 'outside', rather their position is somewhere 'in-between'. They obviously don't resemble with Russians anymore after living in Estonia for many years now and their children being born there, though equally they do not resemble with Estonians either, since they ignore important events in their history and continuously being 'othered' by daily political rhetoric and news articles.

The Bronze Soldier crisis at the end of April 2007 became a black page in the history of Estonia, it was the moment when the world saw borderlands remain to have the same problems as they had in history. For my Russian-speaking interviewees it was emotional to elaborate on this time, it was for them a time that made clear they are still “unwanted” by Estonians. It is especially the meaning of the Bronze Soldier, which remembers those who have fallen during the liberation of Nazi Germany, that many Russian-speakers reacted the way they did when the new elected Estonian government replaced the monument towards a military cemetery at the outskirts of Tallinn. The historical dispute between Estonia and Russia on this period, perceived by Estonians as one in which they were being occupied by the Soviet army and by Russians as a period in which they have lost many men and one in which the loyalty of the Soviet Union towards the rest of Europe was shown. The discrepancy between both discourses is felt by the Russian-speakers in Estonia, it are them who are able to interpret both conceptions and them who have the feeling of being somewhere in-between those conceptions. They can image the importance of the historical narrating from both sides, it is though because of Russia’s attempt to maintain its influence in the near abroad and Estonia’s miscommunication as regards to the replacement of the Bronze Soldier what made them feel the action was directed against them, emotions run up high and riots originated. Russian-speakers are continuously in-between defending the Russian discourse and attempting to identify themselves with the Estonian discourse and as long as both sides prolong their conflicts on historical matters this will problematize the development of the identity of Russian-speakers.

5.3 Being neither Russian nor Estonian

As Laitin argues, the changed boundaries of the post-Soviet world might affect national identification on today's "Russians". The reversal of tides in Estonia, manifesting itself in a shift in the identity – from Russian to an inchoate conception that includes an Estonian cultural component – all in the space of a few years, belies the notion that boundaries and social meaning of the Russian nationality are fixed (Laitin 1998: 11). Identification as a member of the "Russian-speaking population" is, according to Laitin (*ibid.*: 263), in some way an alternative to assimilation (as titulars), and mobilization (as Russians). Since it was nearly impossible for Russian nationalists to find common symbols in late Soviet-Russia, this was even much more difficult for Russians in the near abroad after the break-up of the Soviet Union. While Estonians used their ethnicity and belonging to the territory of Estonia as a strong identification marker, Russian-speakers in Estonia had no such identity marker to claim. Simultaneously with denying Estonian citizenship to the Russian-speakers in 1992, the Estonian political elite prevented them from incorporating a more Estonian aligned identity. And while in the following years the border with Russia became more closed and a new generation Russian-speakers was born in Estonia, the identification with Russia did not disappear. Though, because of different aspects as economic development and the acquirement of Estonian citizenship made the identification with Russia for some become more diffuse, not as straightforward as their parents.

Laitin (*ibid.*: 296) argues that a primary consideration here is that the Russian speaking population was formed amidst a political cataclysm; the shock of national independence of the titular republic for Russians was sudden. The Russian speakers could not easily accept that they were now living "abroad", since it was, in their eyes, not them who moved, but the borders that moved and what caused them residing in another country (Conversation V. Poleshchuk 16-04-2009, Tallinn). Although my Russian-speaking interviewees all emphasized they are not a homogeneous group, but originating from dispersed backgrounds and having found various paths of integration in Estonia, the factor that unites them is their mother tongue: Russian. Therefore being identified as Russian-speakers has no negative connotations for this group and can be used by both Estonians and Russian speakers in Estonia. Though being identified solely according to their common language is also something not satisfying for most of my interviewees. Although there is no discriminatory factor in the usage of "Russian-speaking population" for them, the connotation with Russia is strong and most of them do feel, more or less, connected to Estonia. Therefore in most conversations I had with Russian-speakers in Estonia they preferred to be called Russian Estonian or any equivalent of that.

In this it can be called remarkable that none of the people I spoke to, nevertheless except for one or two they were all born in Estonia, identified themselves being Estonian and in most cases they did not see this happening in the future unless some significant changes would take place not only in the Estonian political landscape but even so in the broader relationship with

Russia. In the following fragments from the interviews I conducted in Estonia I would like to show this complicated relationship Russian-speakers in Estonia have with on the one hand their belonging to Estonia and on the other hand their Russian, Ukrainian or other roots. By doing this I would like to show how the Russian-speakers in Estonia are more or less trapped in-between the dialectic tension of the broader EU and Russian empirical suggestive actions. In Estonia there is no doubt that the Russian-speaking population is still taking into account Russian news and Russian culture. Interviewee AD sees different factors explaining “their heads are towards Russia”:

“Yes, unfortunately; their heads are towards Russia, this is caused by a combination of factors: mistakes made by the government and pressure from Russia, there is no positive message from Estonian politicians” (Interview AD 27-05-2009, Tallinn).

It is clear that Russia is continuously influencing Russian-speakers living in the near abroad, though the statement that Russia is pressuring Russian Estonians to turn their heads towards Russia is hard to prove, since it are still the Russian-speakers themselves who make this decision and it would rather be the internal Estonian circumstances that make them do so.

The obvious discrepancy between the ideas, values, etc. coming from the Russian side of the border and the national Estonian discourse makes it more difficult for Russian-speakers to identify what is important for them. As integration expert TM analyses:

“Local Russians take into account Russian ideas, Estonia is telling something totally different” (Interview TM 15-05-2009, Tallinn).

It is not easy to chose between black and white while you feel yourself to be somewhere in the grey area. And it is exactly this grey area in which my Russian-speaking interviewees found themselves when talking about their identity. Most emphasized the Russian culture being important for them and of course their language, but never the Russian nation itself or its political culture was named as something that they could relate to.

“Of course it is important for me to stay Russian: I have a daughter and I think for her it is important to learn Russian language and culture, because I think Russian culture is more rich and interesting, but you must understand me correctly, this does not mean I don’t like Estonian culture at all” (Interview AT 29-04-2009, Tallinn).

AT, in this fragment, emphasizes the significance of the Russian language and culture in his life, he aims at learning his daughter about these values in his life. Remarkable is the sentence he opens the fragment with: “Of course it is important for me to stay Russian”. This would

implement he sees himself now as a Russian while he told me at the beginning of our interview although he was born in St. Petersburg, Russia, his mother is Estonian and his father is Latvian. It is because of his first years as a child living in Russia and perceiving Russian as his first language which make him identify himself as Russian when currently living in Estonia. The discourse spread by Estonian politicians in the 1990s that anyone who speaks Russian without taking in consideration their true ethnical background, should be seen as a Russian, has therefore become a kind of self-fulfilling ideology, where it are not only the Estonians who note all Russian-speakers to be Russians, but also the Russian-speakers themselves who incorporate this imprint.

This understanding could perhaps be supported by the fact that after the collapse of the Soviet Union many Russian-speakers remained in Estonia, while originally coming from all over the region. Naturally the idea that their children were born there and Estonia was an economical prospering region in the Soviet Union could have contributed to them mostly staying in the 'new' Estonian country, though the measurements taken by the Estonian government in the first years after (re)independence could also have frightened them, something which Laitin who did research in Estonia after 1991 underlines. Nevertheless the measures that were taken and resulted for the Russian-speakers in not possessing any citizenship among other things, did not make them decide to cross the new international border and return to their origins (for example Russia offered them free citizenship), at least this counts for most of them. One of my interviewees tells me:

"They rather live in Estonia despite being ethnic Russian, they live here and were born here" (Interview AD 27-05-2009, Tallinn).

So does this mean that people who moved maybe twenty years ago do not want to go back to the place where they were born and grown? Or is it the Russian-speakers who envisioned a "better life" if they remained at the Estonian side of the border? Or did they not believe in a long existence of the new Estonian territory? Many reasons can be thought off, though what counts is that they did remain and chose to live in Estonia. This had many implications for their life. As social researcher KH tells me about those first years after Estonia regained its independence:

"Russians are treated horrible, they are created into a people who are lower educated now, because before, just before Estonia got its independence they were not lower educated than Estonians, maybe even a bit higher, but politics created it to be this way now" (Interview KH 13-05-2009, Tallinn).

KH here not even solely refers to the first years of independence but simultaneously addresses the current situation concerning the difference in education between Russian-speakers

and Estonians. As she says, “Russians are created into a people who are lower educated” and “politics created it to be this way now”. In a couple of my interviews, especially with persons who deal with integration of Russian-speakers in their everyday work, it was stated that the relationship between Estonia and Russian-speakers as it is today will only degrading the capabilities of the Russian-speaking population in Estonia. For example the director of the MEIS Integration Foundation, TM, told me:

“Everyone will stay to be tolerant, but it is about concrete cases, how to respond to them, it is crucial for Estonians I think to mix everything, to be put in a multicultural environment, Russians don’t have the practical need at this moment to integrated, therefore segregation exists because of personal eases. In times of the Soviet Union Estonians were trying to keep the Russians away, protective behavior, designed situation; the Soviet Union allowed a segregated education system, those habits are still alive. (...) In politics now there exists this old fashioned idea about integration: learning Estonian language in Russian schools and language skills are enough for integration, but in the government they do not understand that you also need a social network to be integrated; people have to be put together. (...) People take segregation as a normal thing, in Estonia even ministers think it is normal. The consequence of segregated education is the creation of another way of thinking” (Interview TM 15-05-2009, Tallinn).

TM considers education to be the main feature for integration, where at this moment, according to TM people in Estonia take segregation as a normal thing, education should be integrated and would broaden the social network of both ethnic Estonians and Russian speakers. TM even so refers to the Soviet times when he speaks about the segregated educational system in Estonia. In Soviet times Estonians were allowed to continue their own language education for example in Sunday schools, in contemporary independent Estonia Russian-speakers living there as a result of the Soviet Union measurements are equally allowed to have their own language and cultural education within certain limits, so for example in Sunday schools. TM, director of the Integration Foundation, at the end of the interview I had with him made explicit that in his opinion, because of the existing segregated educational system in Estonia, there is a “loss of brains”. This “loss of brains”, by which TM means that a lot of knowledge in Estonia is lost by the political system, is mainly identifiable within the Russian-speaking population, he explains me. Since all high schools and universities solely teach in Estonian and students thesis’s and dissertations have to be written in English they lose the way they can express their knowledge in their own language. Because Estonian language is far different from Russian language it is not easy for people with Russian as their mother tongue to easily embrace the details of the Estonian language. Therefore, TM continues, many Russian-speaking youngsters chose to either stop their education after they finished primary and secondary school or continue their studies in another country in the EU or Russia. As a result Estonia “loses the brains” of these young people in either way. The

integration of the education system would, according to TM, be the solution for this “loss of brains”.

The use of the Russian among the Russian-speaking population in Estonia has developed in a different way than the Russian language on the other side of the border. Many Russian-speakers, but even so Estonians told me the Russian language used by Russian-speakers in Estonia has diverse features from their counterparts in Russia. Again, TM, commenting on this:

“Yes, they are different; their language has other features, but also many are EU members, they travel and incorporate the liberal democratic mindset in Europe” (Interview TM 15-05-2009, Tallinn).

TM agrees their language having other features makes Russian-speakers in Estonia to be different from Russians in Russia, though, as he emphasized it is also the European liberal democratic mindset that differs between them and the Russians in Russia. And although we have seen in the preceding empirical chapter the EU does not successfully offer an alternative for their identity to Russian-speakers, it is hard to avoid the influence of Europe on the mindset of the Russian-speakers in Estonia. As HB explains:

“They feel Europeanized now. They feel more connected to Europe than to Estonia at this moment” (Interview HB).

HB thinks Russian-speakers even feel more close to Europe than to Estonia at this moment. One interviewee, having Hungarian roots, even states:

“I am not Russian, I am not Estonian, I feel like a European citizen. I know Russian language” (Interview SaS 27-05-2009, Jõhvi).

Those who have Estonian or grey passports and have the opportunity to travel could become aware of the life in other countries of the EU. And as some of my interviewees underline, it is this what attracts Russian-speaking youngsters more than living in Estonia or Russia. Though, would this not problematize the (re)production of their identity even more when relating to Europe in such a way it is hard to grasp exactly and their own national identity is not clear. As one of my Russian-speaking interviewees tells me about his identification with Estonia:

“Yes, if I go abroad, maybe I say I am Russian, but I will always say I am from Estonia” (Interview AT 29-04-2009, Tallinn).

So, despite identifying himself as a Russian in Estonia, AT will always say he is from Estonia when he is abroad. And nevertheless not specifying this 'abroad' he implies this could be Russia as well. By using the words 'maybe' and 'always' it is clear it is for AT in a conversation with someone in another country important to carry out the message he is from Estonia. Although he would identify himself to be Russian, successively he would spread that he is living in Estonia. Though, distracting from this fragment, it is even so important to notice AT would not identify himself as an Estonian being abroad.

The feeling of being more close to Estonia when being abroad was expressed by many of my Russian-speaking interviewees. Although they would specify their ethnic identity by using a phrase like: "I am a Russian Estonian", they obviously feel connected to the country they are living, rather than the country their ancestors were born. Nevertheless this feeling of belonging to Estonia when being abroad disappears when returning to the country and being 'othered' once again. As my Russian-speaking interviewee EA tells me:

"Estonians tend more to stay in their own country, this does not mean that Russians do not feel Estonian, in fact when Russians go abroad they feel more Estonian then when they are in Estonia" (Interview EA 21-04-2009, Tallinn).

EA states that whenever Russian-speakers go abroad they feel more Estonian then when they are in Estonia. This shows in what way the identity problems come in. Although Russian-speakers do not disagree on being identified as an Estonian when being abroad, they even specify this, it is impossible to identify as Estonian when being at home. Despite of attempts of both sides to integrate in society, their current situation being pushed in various directions, it is hard for them to concretise their feeling of belonging.

Another fragment, this time from my interviewee MK, underlines this understanding:

"Russian speakers have Russian nationality, but in their heart they feel Estonian country, they are patriots of the Estonian country. For example in sports, when we organize big international events, for example in 2007 there was an event which was a big success, the European Cup Tae Kwan do was held here and a national Estonian team participated, although it mostly consisted of non-Estonians they represented the country in international games, for example when they go abroad to international games, the Estonian anthem is played and the Estonian flag is raised for them, so they represent their country internationally. But if they come back in Estonia, nobody interests for them, because they are Russians here, so there is no media attention, they can feel in one day that Estonians don't need us" (Interview MK 22-04-2009, Tallinn).

The understanding that sports is a successfully way to announce one's national identity is widespread. As Van Houtum (2002) argues it is a way to reproduce the 'national imagination',

the idea of belonging to the same nation and being 'one'. The one's who embody this national imagination are the sportsmen themselves, being it football players or Tae Kwan do-ers, when winning an event they are welcomed as real champions in their home country. In those moments of winning the event the country imagines themselves to be one, without differences, sports unites. This is also felt by the Tae Kwan do-ers MK tells me about, they feel themselves 'patriots of the Estonian country' when playing for the national Estonian team. For them the Estonian anthem is played and the Estonian flag is raised. Those ultimate symbols of the nation are by those players incorporated to be theirs, when they are playing at the field it is in the name of this flag, anthem and thus the Estonian nation. As MK says, they represent Estonia internationally, while many of them were Russian-speaker of even having the Russian nationality. But what is extremely contradictory for them is that when they won an important international tournament, they were not being welcomed as real champions. The national Estonian media does not pay attention to their victory and they become Russian-speakers in Estonia at the very moment they set foot on the territory of their nation. This very feeling of being Estonian in an international environment and being Russian-speakers in Estonia is what problematizes the identity of the Russian-speaking population in Estonia.

Russia, as I have shown in the preceding chapter, is influencing Russian-speakers in the 'near abroad'. Though Russia does not only influence the Russian-speakers in Estonia by the media, but simultaneously in every case they have the possibility to communicate their position as a power in the region they will take this opportunity. Therefore in the last decennia they have been able to show their ambition having the power to influence the near abroad, it was not only the Georgian War in which this became visible, but also the Bronze Soldier events showed they had the opportunity to mobilize people for their case. Though would this have been possible whenever the Russian-speakers were not dealing with such identity problems as they are doing right now? As KH, resided social researcher in Tallinn tells me:

"Yes, they are Russians (having Russian citizenship) or Estonian Russians, so they are in between two pressures and it is not easy for them to make choices" (Interview KH 13-05-2009, Tallinn).

It is even after almost 30 years after Estonia regained its independence that those who moved to the country in the Soviet times are still not able to indicate their identity, they remain in between two pressures as KH names the Russian influence on the one hand and the European and Estonian influence on the other. Laitin spoke in 1998 about the identification as Russian-speakers as an alternative to assimilation to Estonians or mobilization as Russians. And in a way, this comment for that time was a very clear view into the future, since perhaps now they rather identify themselves as Estonian Russians and many of them are living in Estonia for whole their life, we have witnessed, with the Bronze Soldier crisis, it is possible to mobilize them as one

being one group, although of course many would disagree on the use of violence, most of the Russian-speakers would agree on the manipulation of the Estonian government on the replacement of the monument.

Laitin foresaw the Russian-speakers in Estonia to incorporate a different identity from being Russian or being Estonian, in his eyes it was the “Russian-speakingness” that would bind this group and made identification with this group easier. Though, naturally, all individuals differ in their identification with either Estonia or Russia, it is clear that indeed being somewhere ‘in-between’ is by many Russian-speakers accepted as their new identity. For example the following statement shows that for Russian-speakers it is even possible to shift in this ‘in-between’ space, to shift from feeling more identified with Russians to feeling more close to Estonians:

“Russian speakers in Estonia, because they have the feeling of being unwanted, they increasingly identify themselves with Russia” (Interview MK 22-04-2009, Tallinn).

Russian-speakers MK exemplifies that it is Russia which attracts Russian-speakers because they have the feeling of being unwanted in Estonia. As argued earlier this is being caused by political everyday rhetoric and historical issues that are being opposed to each other. However MK says Russian-speakers are increasingly identifying themselves with Russia, EA, representative for the minister of integration in Estonia, emphasizes the difference between Russian-speakers in Estonia and Russians:

“Increasingly, even people with Russian citizenship, they differ in accent, manners, the way they walk at the market, how close they stand to other persons at the escalator, etc.” (Interview EA 21-04-2009, Tallinn).

EA notices differences between Russian-speakers in Estonia and Russian inhabitants. She says it is not only that they differ in accent, but also in their manners, the way they walk and stand to other persons at the escalator. With this EA is giving me an overview of what behaviour according to her is more ‘civilized’ or more ‘European’. Although it is not said, you can read through that the incorporation of more ‘Estonian’ or ‘European’ manners, in the eyes of EA, is something better, something she and the Estonian government wants to be identified with. By extricating these characteristics, which are of course not always clear to observe and very subjective, EA tries to show how the Russian-speakers are already adapted or adapting to the Estonian environment they are living in.

This is practically identical to what an EU-representative in Estonia told me:

“It seems to me the Russians here are not so easy to manipulate, they have different reflexes, it wouldn’t be appropriate to call it more civilized... For example, people here are very neat in

traffic, they stop for pedestrian crossings. In St. Petersburg and other Russian cities this is quite different. I think the Russian inhabitants of Estonia have possibly unintentionally adapted themselves to the Estonian way of living” (Interview NB, 30-03-2009, Tallinn, own translation)

It is striking to hear the EU and governmental representatives talk about the more ‘neat’ and ‘adapted’ way of life of the Russian-speakers in Estonia. Because, although as the EU representative does not want to call it a “more civilized way of life” it becomes clear from the rest of the fragment that he thinks it is more civilized and better way of life. For these two representatives seeing the Russian-speakers in Estonia as more civilized and adapted to Estonian manner is a way to express their idea of integration. It would be preferably for the Estonian government if Russian-speakers agree on those adaptations or this way of assimilation to Estonians. In this way they could ‘prove’ the identification with Estonians is stronger than with Russians and integration is on its way. Nevertheless they are forgetting some very important issue, the cultural identification of Russian-speakers with Russia. As for example one of my Russian-speaking interviewees, possessing a Russian passport tells me:

“I think 70 percent of my identity is defined by Russia, for example the sports and science there are important for me” (Interview SeS 17-04-2009, Tallinn).

Thus, however working, living and having a social life in Estonia, SeS still thinks his identity is for 70 percent determined by Russia. As I have shown earlier in this chapter especially sports and other cultural affairs were mentioned by my interviewees to have influence on their identity (re)production.

Perhaps SeS is a rather extreme example since he also possesses Russian nationality, something what many Russian-speakers in Estonia do not have. Though in all my conversation with Russian-speakers it became clear the understanding of their identity is something they struggle with, they are somewhere in between being Russian or being Estonian. One of my interviewees verbalizes her feeling being a Russian-speaker in Estonia as follow:

“Well, I actually have had a big change in my perception of where I stand in society; I see myself different from both communities; I have two bloods. On the one hand I have an Estonian father, friends, etc. But my Russian side, from my mother and studies, so it is really from two sides. Though since I am back in Tallinn I am more on the side of the Russian minority, I have the feeling that I have to try to explain their position” (Interview JT 08-04-2009, Tallinn).

And as many Russian-speakers with her it is hard for her to decide which of the two sides, Estonian or Russian, is of greater influence on her identity. “It is really from two sides” is what she says. The national developments of the recent years have not improved the situation of the

Russian-speakers and after the Bronze Soldier crisis it became clear the 'in-between' identity is more alive than ever before. Perhaps here the EU and national representatives should reconsider their ideas about the Russian-speakers in Estonia are unintentionally adapted to the Estonian way of life, since it was at that moment the emotions were raised around specific issues concerning their identity that they chose otherwise, chose another direction than being adapted to the Estonian society. And as became clear from my interviews after the Bronze Soldier events the discourse on historical events and on Russia in general has not changed and will therefore always remain a fragile issue in identity related issues amongst Russian-speakers in Estonia.

As also social researcher in Estonia RV recognizes:

"Yes, they have lived all their lives in Estonia when they go to Russia they see that they are different from them, they are aliens in Russia. On the other hand they are also not accepted in Estonia, therefore you can see them as an in-between group, and this of course causes the identity problems" (Interview RV 17-04-2009, Tallinn).

It is the 'in-between-ness' of the Russian-speakers that causes the problems, according to social researcher RV. Russian-speakers cannot be considered Estonians or Russian, they cannot be considered 'us' or 'them', they are in-between, some more close to being Russian, some more close to being Estonia, but feel not being accepted as an Estonian and all feel the difference with their Russian neighbours. Their identity does not fit the Russian empirical ambitions that want to influence Russian-speakers in the near abroad directly and successively it does also not fit the Estonian national imagination being a European or Scandinavian country. The Russian-speaker's identity is not fixed and always open for negotiations and as I have shown with the interview fragments these negotiations among Russian-speakers are continuing without any end. In relation to the international developments Russian-speakers in Estonia will find their way in the identity construction, but it is hard to imagine they will assimilate to the Estonians or becoming more close to Russians.

Conclusion

As I have argued in the introduction, the idea of borders is in this thesis not understood from the perspective of a static 'territorial line' but rather from a broader, socioculturally grounded perspective. A border can be much more than an international separation of one country and another, while simultaneously it functions the same way when dividing people in a socioculturally way. Borderlands are sites where political, cultural and social identities converge, coexist, and sometimes conflict and provide unique insights into the ways in which identities are constructions, border areas are laboratories of integration. As Anderson (2008) has argued, to gain a full understanding of European frontiers, ethnographic studies of border communities is essential. These academic insights I encountered during my studies Human Geography are exactly what brought me to Estonia. Estonia, a borderland, inhabited by 1,34 million inhabitants among whom 30 percent with roots from other regions of the former Soviet Union. This 30 percent of the population lived, in the first years after the collapse of communism, stateless, having no passport of any country. It is this group, in relation to Estonians as well as in the wider perspective of EU-Russia relations, I have done research on. Although my research might be considered an attempt to a real ethnographic study, the theoretical insights touch upon a rather new idea within Human Geography studies, namely the question on "in-betweenness", is there something in-between "us" and "them"?

In this conclusion I will answer my research question and hypothesis based on the five month fieldwork, data I have gathered and the insights presented in this thesis all with the help of the theories I have elaborated on in the theoretical chapter. The central research question in my thesis was:

"Has the 'Russian-speaking population' of Estonia created a new identity, an identity which is different from 'us' and 'them', somewhere 'in-between' the 'inside' and the 'outside', beyond being either Russian or Estonian?"

The hypothesis I have tested accordingly to this central research question was:

"The empire-like behaviour of both Russia and the EU causes the problematic (re)production of borders between Russian-speakers and ethnic Estonians in Estonia."

To answer my research question and hypothesis I will now firstly present the conclusions I have drawn after each empirical paragraph. These conclusions have been achieved through combining my own insights from the field with the theoretical insights from the theoretical chapter. Then I will be able to answer my research question and hypothesis.

I argued the role of the EU can, in many ways, be conceived as an territorial body practising empire-like behaviour. The EU marginally addressed the internal situation regarding

the Russian-speakers only during the accession process and problems concerning their integration are considered to be “internal affairs”. This contradictory logic, on the one hand offering a system of justice while on the other hand treating most cases as internal affairs, is what makes the EU mirroring itself on its border. Differences are being ignored while similarities with EU countries are accentuated. It seems like the EU cannot accept difference if it is different from them and their ideas. The EU is normalising its East and ignores the differences it comes with. The fragment where a EU representative called Estonians “a kind of Germans” underlines this idea. With regard to the civil society it is remarked the EU has good intentions, reserving money for civil society organisations, Estonian as well as Russian-speaking, though there seems to be no efficient use of this money, which is problematic. In the light of the empire-like behaviour of the EU therefore I have argued this can be seen as an example since it is obvious that the EU has no idea about what is going on at its border. The Estonian borderland is normalised and naturalised and in Brussels they consider, according to the statistics, everything is fine, though in reality it is a different story.

The relationship between Estonia and Russia is interpreted as a difficult one. It appears that both Estonia and Russia are waiting to blame each other for the involvement of various conflicts, something which does offend persons living in Estonia. Russia is continuously positioning Estonia to be an immature country which cannot handle internal circumstances and is too small to be considered an equal partner in international negotiations. The Russian-speakers are on a daily basis influenced by this discourse and are permanently swing to and fro between their “Estonianness” and “Russianness”. Estonia’s politicians reaction on Russia’s activities in the near abroad made one of my interviewees feel herself offended and she felt the need to defend ‘the Russian side of the story’. Besides my interviewees pointed to the idea that in Western Europe their tiring relationship with Russia is not understood and often the pivotal questions are passed too easily, which worsens the reliability of the sovereignty and independence of their country. This underlines the positioning of Estonia as immature from as well the EU and Russia and it are especially the inhabitants of Estonia who are woven within this dialectic tension and see the web around them rather increase than fading away.

While cross-border cooperation is envisioned to create a more integrated borderland it became clear it is even difficult to establish cross-border contacts. Because of empire-like behaviour of both the EU and Russian side, it is for local players hard to establish such cooperation. Russia portrays Estonia as being too small to cooperate with and the national governmental level eventually decides to cooperate or not. Estonia, for this matter, receives money from the EU, though because the national Estonian government is not dividing the money equally among Estonian civil society organisations, it is said a lot of money does not find its ultimate goal. Russian-speakers, who were foreseen to benefit from the cross-border cooperation between Estonia and Russia, are, because of diverse messages from Russia as well as Estonia being attracted and pushed “in-between” both sides. Where good and regular cross-border

contact could help them to find a central path in between their past and present, the irregularity of it and its “empty” meaning do not offer this ability and the identity of the Russian-speakers remains problematic and open for discussion.

Because of the continuous dialectical tension between the external frontiers of the EU and Russia, Estonia struggles to position itself as a European country and simultaneously emphasizes its own unique character, opposing to the character Russia is trying to encapsulate. Therefore measures as the abandoning of Russian language higher education, the impeding of Russian language schools and the exertion of “language inspectors” are perceived as being necessary to tackle the development of a Russian identity, mentality and so on. Though, what they forget here is that the Russian-speakers in Estonia do not have a Russian identity or mentality anymore, it are only certain features of Russia where they feel identified with, and because of the Estonian governmental measures the Russian-speakers continue to feel “unwanted”. Whereas language and culture are of course significant for the production of one’s identity, in Estonia it is especially history and the commemoration of it what influences the reproduction of identities.

The heterogeneity of the Russian-speakers makes it hard to consider them as one group. Nevertheless they do have the same identity question they struggle with, be it ranging from one persons who still considers himself to be mostly Russian, while another cannot decide whether to feel more Estonian or Russian. What has been clarified is the Russian-speakers in Estonia do mostly not refer to any country as their ‘homeland’, rather they argue they have no homeland. Having no territory to identify with is what makes their identity problematic. Estonian national identity is presented as belonging to the nation, the nation being one of ethnic Estonians, without space for Russian-speakers to position themselves. Therefore it is hard for my Russian-speaking interviewees to refer to Estonia as ‘home’, as well as it is to refer to Russia as their homeland. On top of that as one of my interviewees remarked there is always a continuous division being made between Estonian and Russian, while it is rather something in-between she feels identified with. Referring to herself as Russian Estonian gives her the opportunity to position herself somewhere in between Estonian and Russian, used as an alternative for belonging to one of both groups. So while always having the feeling of being ‘out of place’ in Estonia, Russian-speakers try to determine their identity other from being Estonian or Russian.

The Bronze Soldier crisis at the end of April 2007 became a black page in the history of Estonia, it was the moment when the world saw the borderlands remain to have the same problems as they have done in history. For my Russian-speaking interviewees it was emotional to elaborate on this time, it was for them a time that made clear they are still “unwanted” by Estonians. It is especially the meaning of the Bronze Soldier, which remembers those who have fallen during the liberation of Nazi Germany, that many Russian-speakers reacted the way they did when the new elected Estonian government replaced the monument towards a military cemetery at the outskirts of Tallinn. The historical dispute between Estonia and Russia on this

period, perceived by Estonians as one in which they were being occupied by the Soviet army and by Russians as a period in which they have lost many men and one in which the loyalty of the Soviet Union towards the rest of Europe was shown. The discrepancy between both discourses is felt by the Russian-speakers in Estonia, it are them who are able to interpret both conceptions and them who have the feeling of being somewhere in-between those conceptions. They can image the importance of the historical narrating from both sides, it is though because of Russia's attempt to maintain its influence in the near abroad and Estonia's miscommunication as regards to the replacement of the Bronze Soldier what made them feel the action was directed against them, emotions run up high and riots originated. Russian-speakers are continuously in-between defending the Russian discourse and attempting to identify themselves with the Estonian discourse and as long as both sides prolong their conflicts on historical matters this will problematize the development of the identity of Russian-speakers.

Russian-speakers cannot be considered Estonian or Russian, they cannot be considered 'us' or 'them', they are in-between, some more close to being Russian, some more close to being Estonian, but feel not being accepted as an Estonian and all feel the difference with their Russian neighbours. Their identity does not fit the Russian imperial ambitions that want to influence Russian-speakers in the near abroad directly and successively it does also not fit the Estonian national imagination being a European or Scandinavian country. The Russian-speaker's identity is not fixed and always open for negotiations and as I have shown with the interview fragments these negotiations among Russian-speakers are continuing without end. In relation to the international developments Russian-speakers in Estonia will find their way in the identity construction, but it is hard to imagine they will assimilate to the Estonians or becoming more close to Russians.

Nevertheless Laitin has initiated the idea of a new identity among Russian-speakers in Estonia already in 1998, his insights on the relationship between titulars and non-titulars are in contemporary Estonia still very much alive and under daily discussion. It is exactly this new form of identity, different from an Estonian or Russian identity, which goes beyond the labels Estonian or Russian and contains features of both identities. This identity category fits in the space in-between the 'inside' and the 'outside'. It is a result of the lack of distinction between the 'inside' and the 'outside', which results in a 'fuzzyness' or blurring of the borders in Europe (Rumford, 2008: 54). Empire-like behaviour of both the EU and Russia that problematizes the identity of Russian-speakers in Estonia. While the EU is ignoring the most fundamental problems of the Russian-speakers, for example whether or not they should be considered a minority and spreading "empty" values, Russia is continuously influencing the 'near abroad' by negatively positioning Estonia, for example by arguing Estonia is not a democracy and discriminates people without citizenship. It is therefore the 'fuzzyness' of Europe's contemporary borders that creates space in-between the 'inside' and the 'outside', in the case of the Russian-speakers being neither Russian nor Estonian, though identifying themselves

somewhere “in-between”, beyond being Russian or Estonia. Nevertheless the question either the Russian-speakers in Estonia have developed a unique identity (Haukkala), are finding themselves in a liminal phase (Mäliksoo) or created a new identity (Laitin) or maybe even something else, will remain unanswered.

So finally to answer my central research question, I would argue, yes there is some kind of new identity created among Russian-speakers in Estonia, going beyond being “us” or “them”, beyond being Russian or Estonian, though as I would argue it is hard to predict the development of this identity, whether it is a liminal phase towards being Estonian or whether it will continue into a unique identity is to be seen. To answer my hypothesis again I would argue, yes it is indeed the empire-like behaviour of the EU and Russia that problematize the (re)production of borders between Russian-speakers and ethnic Estonians in Estonia, since it are the competing discourses as well on human rights as on historical issues which persistently produce opposing discourses whether or not to be incorporated by ethnic Estonians as well as Russian-speakers. Nevertheless it are those competing discourses that continue to problematize for Russian-speakers to establish their place in Estonian society, they cross the border of both discourses constantly and feel connected to both of them or either of them. Because of the inability to ascertain their place in Estonian society the (re)production of borders between ethnic Estonians and Russian-speakers remains problematic.

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