*Chapter 8*

# The Spatial Articulation of Identity and Social Problems: Estonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan Through Focus Groups[1]

Michael D. Kennedy

## 1. Introduction

Social problems have figured prominently in social change over the last ten years in the lands of the former Soviet Union. To some extent, the end of Soviet rule was a story of social problems.[2] Soviet rule was assigned responsibility for a variety of problems, from assaults on national cultural survival to crises of economic rationality to endangerment of the environment. The promise of post-Soviet society was a promise of normalcy,[3] an end to some social

1 This paper has been presented in a number of sites, most recently at the international symposium entitled "Regions - a prism to view the Slavic-Eurasian World," at the Hokkaido University, Slavic Research Center, Japan, July 22-25, 1998. I wish to thank my discussants - A. Ishikawa and S. Minamizuka - for their thoughtful commentaries. I also wish to thank the entire range of conference participants, and most especially the conference organizer - K. Matsuzato - for an enormously stimulating set of discussions. An earlier version of this paper was discussed at the Workshop on Identity Formation and Social Issues in Global Perspective, May 11-15, 1998 organized by the Center for Russian and East European Studies at the University of Michigan as part of the International Institute's grant from the Ford Foundation for "Crossing Borders." This research has been generously supported by both the Ford Foundation (Ford Foundation Grant No. 950-1163) and the National Council for Soviet and East European Research (NCSEER) (Research Contract 812-11). I wish to thank my colleagues from the University of Michigan, Estonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan who worked with me on this project, for without their considerable work, I could not have written this paper. Lisa Fein's expertise in Ethnograph and collaboration with me in coding the transcripts is especially important to this paper's final form. I also wish to thank the May workshop participants, especially John Knodel, Mira Marody, Morgan Liu, Ted Hopf, J. Dickinson, Vesna Pusic, Alisher Ilkhamov, Naomi Galtz, Nilufer Gole, Victor Susak, Rein Voorman, Jussi Simpura, Lisa Fein, Barbara Anderson and Ron Suny for their comments on this paper. I very much appreciate what each of my colleagues from Estonia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Japan, Poland, Croatia, Turkey, Finland, Russia and North America had to say, and wish I could have incorporated their wisdom more fully in this paper's revision.

2 I have elaborated this in Michael D. Kennedy, "The End of Soviet-type Societies and the Future of Post-Communism" in Craig Calhoun and George Ritzer, eds., *Sociology* (New York, 1993).

3 Daina Stukuls, "Imagining the Nation: Campaign Posters of the First Postcommunist Elections in Latvia," *East European Politics and Societies* 11: 1 (1997), pp. 131-154.

problems and perhaps the acquisition of new ones. Social problems also have figured prominently in post-Soviet conditions. The number of social problems potentially identified by inhabitants of the former Soviet Union is enormous, from increasing rates of mortality to ethnic strife to poverty.

Although social problems might be discussed as if they exist independently of social perceptions and power relations, most analysts of social problems recognize that problems cannot be properly interpreted unless their social construction is analyzed too.[4] In particular, analysts recommend that the making and resolution of problems be understood from various points of view. For instance, when assessing social policy, one should consider whether actors speak from the point of view of clients or of policy makers.[5] To a considerable extent, the analysis of social problems in Soviet-type and post-Soviet societies have been conducted from the point of view of policy makers endowed with superior technical competencies, typically embedded in a larger narrative that I have identified as "transition culture."[6] In this paper, I seek to offer an alternative viewpoint for the recognition of social problems, one that begins from the point of view of everyday perceptions rather than expert opinions.[7]

Interpretations of problems do not differ, however, only between expert and lay communities. To understand abortion's status as a social problem, for instance, one must interpret it through its location in various constructions of motherhood.[8] Likewise, many analysts of post-Soviet transition emphasize that social problems and social change in post-Soviet society must be understood from different national points of view,[9] and secondarily from different class points of view.[10] Although this is certainly reasonable, it tends to reinforce the durability and salience of national difference. Class, too, tends to be lodged in extra-local terms rather than the more localized formations that realize particu-

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4 M. Spector and J.I. Kitsuse, *Constructing Social Problems* (Hawthorne, NY, 1987). James A. Holstein and Gale Miller, eds., *Reconsidering Social Constructionism: Debates in Social Problems Theory* (New York, 1993).

5 Pekka Sulkunen, *White Collar Vernacular: Individuality and Tribalism of the New Middle Class* (Aldershot, 1992).

6 For an expression of this, see *From Plan to Market: World Development Report, 1996*, published for the World Bank (Washington, D.C., 1996) or Jeffery Sachs, *Poland's Jump to the Market Economy* (Cambridge: Mass., 1995). For commentary, see my paper, "A Cultural Analysis of Homosocial Reproduction and Contesting Claims to Competence in Transitional Firms," in Daniel R. Denison, ed., *Organizational Change in Transitional Economies* (Mahwah: NJ, forthcoming).

7 By no means is this meant to diminish the value of such expert interpretations. For one particularly valuable account of expert opinions, see Raomo Blom, ed., *Expert Interviews from the Baltic States* (Tampere: Department of Sociology and Social Psychology, Working Papers, B:37, 1997).

8 Kristin Luker, *Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood* (Berkeley, 1984).

9 Jeff Chinn and Robert Kaiser, *Russians as the New Minority: Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Soviet Successor States* (Boulder, 1996).

10 Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Daniel J. Walkowitz, *Workers of the Donbass Speak: Survival and Identity in the New Ukraine, 1989-1992* (Albany, 1995).

lar mobilizations.[11] Rather than interrogate under what conditions it is significant and under what conditions it is less important, beginning from the standpoint of class or nationality can distract us from recognizing other dimensions of identity and difference that influence the perception of social problems.

In this paper, I suggest that one profoundly important, if variably explicit, dimension of difference has to do with the articulation of space in the perception of social problems. Individuals and social groups differ dramatically in their imagination of space and the significance of regional differentiation in their discussion of social problems. I offer a provisional account of the spatial articulation of identity and social problems in post-Soviet society. I draw upon interpretations of social problems and of social change in 1996-97 by 36 focus groups from Estonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

## 2. TRANSITION, NATIONALISM AND SPACE

When social problems are discussed by analysts,[12] they are typically embedded in larger stories of social transformation, each with their own spatial imagination. Sometimes these problems are embedded in "transition culture."[13]

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11 One valuable exception to this is Steven Crowley, *Hot Coal, Cold Steel* (Ann Arbor, 1997), with his comparison of mobilization in the Donbass and in Western Siberia.

12 Western analysts have, of course, also identified a set of social problems in post-communist Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. See, for example: Ann-Mari S. Ahlander, *Environmental Problems in the Shortage Economy: The Legacy of Soviet Environmental Policy* (E. Elgar, 1994); Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras, eds., *Nations and Politics in the Soviet Successor States* (Cambridge University Press, 1993); Mark Beissinger, "How Nationalisms Spread: Eastern Europe Adrift the Tides and Cycles of Nationalist Contention," *Social Research* (Spring 1996), pp. 1-50; Ke-Young Chu and Sanjeev Gupta, "Protecting the Poor: Social Safety Nets During Transition," *Finance and Development* 30 (1993), pp. 24-27; Michael Ellman, "The Increase in Death and Disease under 'Katastroika'," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 18 (1994), pp. 329-355; Murray Feshbach, *Ecological Disaster: Cleaning Up the Hidden Legacy of the Soviet Regime* (The Twentieth Century Fund, 1995); Murray Feshbach and Alfred Friendly, Jr., *Ecocide in the USSR: Health and Nature under Siege* (Basic Books, 1992); Rensselaer W. Lee III and Scott B. MacDonald, "Drugs in the East," *Foreign Policy* (Spring 1993), pp. 89-107; Richard F. Kaufman and John P. Hardt, *The Former Soviet Union in Transition* (edited for the Joint Economic Committee, U.S. Congress) (M.E. Sharpe, 1993); RFE/RL, "Health Care Crisis," *RFE/RL Research Reports* 2 (October 8, 1993), pp. 31-62; Iliana Zloch-Christy, *Eastern Europe in a Time of Change: Economic and Political Dimensions* (Praeger, 1994); Jeff Chinn and Robert Kaiser, *Russians as the New Minority: Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Soviet Successor States* (Westview, 1996); James R. Millar, *Social Legacies of Communism* (Cambridge: UK, 1994); Richard Lotspeich, "Crime in the Transition Economies," *Europe-Asia Studies* 47:4 (1995), pp. 555-589; Mikko Lagerspetz, "Social Problems in the Estonian Mass Media 1975-1991," *Acta Sociologica* 36 (1993), pp. 357-369.

13 Here, I invoke the concept of "knowledge culture" elaborated by Margaret R. Somers in "Where is Sociology after the Historic Turn?" in Terrence J. McDonald, ed., *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences* (Ann Arbor, 1996). Knowledge cultures are akin to discursive formations, which Foucalt characterizes by "the different possibilities that it opens of reani-

This community of discourse[14] is especially populated by analysts within financial international organizations, ministers of national finance and scholars whose work is animated by the opposition between plan and market. Its principal explicit concerns are to create a market economy and democratic political stabilization. Its rhetoric emphasizes the importance of global transformations and the comparative study of interventions in making social change. Its normative rhetoric emphasizes freedom and opportunity. It focuses on the inadequacies of communist rule and its possible remedy through proper external intervention when combined with indigenous elite and state support. Its typical protagonists are entrepreneurs, consumers and citizens, and its typical villains are those with a socialist or statist mindset.

Social problems can also be interpreted within a nationalist framework. According to Ernest Gellner,[15] nationalism is simple: there should be an overlap between the ethnic nation and an independent state. The justification for this overlap must be elaborated, but in any case, nationalist narratives emphasize how political sovereignty enables the fulfillment of a people's destiny and allows their identities to develop as they should. Those of the nation are the typical protagonists of the story, while their ethnic others, whether within or beyond the nation, can be the source of problems themselves.[16] For that reason, several scholars have focused on the formation of new national identities, for instance around language and citizenship.[17]

Although these larger stories of transition and nationalism can structure the analytical and transnational discourse on the character of postcommunist social problems, it is far less clear how important they are for structuring the

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mating already existing themes, of arousing opposed strategies, of giving way to irreconcilable interests, of making it possible, with a particular set of concepts, to play different games. Rather than seeking the permanence of themes, imaginations and opinions through time, rather than retracing the dialectic of their conflicts in order to individualize groups of statements, could one not rather mark out the dispersion of the points of choice, and define prior to any options, to any thematic preference, a field of strategic possibilities?" in Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York, 1972), pp. 36-37.

14 A "community of discourse" emphasizes much more the practice and actors of culture, than it does the symbolic system characteristic of Somers and Foucault. Robert Wuthnow, *Communities of Discourse: Ideology and Social Structure in the Reformation, the Enlightenment and European Socialism* (Cambridge: Mass., 1989) identifies a community of discourse as "communities of competing producers, of interpreters and critics, of audiences and consumers, and of patrons and other significant actors who becomes the subjects of discourse itself" (p. 16).

15 Gellner says that the "key idea is in any case so very simple and easy that anyone can make it up almost at any time" (*Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford, 1983, p. 126).

16 Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: UK, 1996) illustrates how social problems are structured within nationalist narratives.

17 David Laitin, *Identity in Formation: The Russian-Speaking Populations in the Near Abroad* (Ithaca, 1998). See also Rogers Brubaker's more programmatic work in *Reframing Nationalism*.

discussion of social problems in the everyday life of post-communist societies. To be sure, ethnographies have warned us that the categories and concepts of narratives offered by elites and analysts may serve us poorly in understanding local politics and the articulation of social problems.[18] Rather than interpret social problems with the plots and characters of transition or nationalist cultures, we might approach those narratives to look for how identity and social problems are mutually constitutive within more particular problem sets,[19] that may or may not articulate obviously with larger, and more familiar, narratives. We then can reconsider how they articulate with those larger narratives of social transformation in which they find broader resonance. How, for instance, might an emphasis on regional identities structure the larger story of post-communist social change, and how might the privileging of region in the discussion of change, rather than the citizen, entrepreneur, consumer or nation, alter the framework within which organizations and states influence postcommunist social transformations?[20]

Nationalist and transition culture narratives both articulate space. Nations and nation states are one of the central, if not the central, actor or arena of transformation in each case. Nationalist narratives are likely to discuss regional distinctions in terms of threats or problems, as barriers to the consolidation of nationalism's homogenizing and integrating vision.[21] The regions themselves

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18 Katherine Verdery, *What Was Socialism and What Comes Next?* (Princeton, 1996); David Stark, "Recombinant Property in East European Capitalism," *American Journal of Sociology* 101 (?), pp. 993-1027; Michael Burawoy and Pawel Krotov, "The Soviet Transition from Socialism to Capitalism: Worker Control and Economic Bargaining in the Wood Industry," *American Sociological Review* 57 (1992), pp. 16-38. For the significance of the local, see Jan Kubik, "The Role of Decentralization and Cultural Revival in Post-Communist Transformations: The Case of Cieszyn Silesia, Poland," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 27 (1994), pp. 331-355. For a discussion of how ideologies of language do, and don't, map onto everyday language practices in Ukraine, see Laada M. Bilaniuk, "The Politics of Language and Identity in Post-Soviet Ukraine." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation in anthropology (The University of Michigan, 1998).

19 According to Craig Calhoun, identity and topical debate ought to be considered in tandem. Identity formation, he argues, occurs through public spheres, much as the discourse of public spheres is shaped by the identities that are formed in other such spaces. See *Critical Social Theory: Culture, History, and the Challenge of Difference* (Oxford: UK; Cambridge: Mass., 1995), p. 247.

20 This argument builds on the programmatic argument and invitation made in Michael D. Kennedy, "An Introduction ot East European Ideology and Identity in Transformation" in Michael D. Kennedy, ed., *Envisioning Eastern Europe: Postcommunist Cultural Studies* (Ann Arbor, 1994).

21 Gellner, 1983 has made this point most clearly. Recent examples of region's treatment in this form appear in Andrew Wilson, *Ukrainian Nationalism in the 1990s: A Minority Faith* (Cambridge: UK, 1997); Dominque Arel and Valeri Khmelko, "The Russian Factor and Territorial Polarization in Ukraine," *Harriman Review* (1995), pp. 81-91. For a critical engagement of how region influences perceptions of politics, with a special emphasis on the L'viv/Donetsk comparison, see Oksana Malanchuk, "Regional Influences in Ukrainian Politics"

tend to be discussed with adjectives denoting their relationship to the nationalist project itself, including such appelations in Ukraine as "separatist" Russians in Crimea or nationalists in the West. Regions are interpreted through a lens which marks what was done by one nation to another rather than in the heterogeneous terms of a region's constitution and trajectory.

Transition culture deploys a different sense of space, here marked far more by its undergirding comparative logic. Transition culture begins with a founding assumption of the difference, and hierarchical ranking, of West over East, and within that problematic, considers nation states as places with exemplary experiences for ill or good.[22] Other regional emphases are certainly possible within this culture, however. Recently, for example, Jeffery Sachs has emphasized the significance of coastal locations in inspiring the rapidity of transition.[23] But like inequality in general, transition culture appears to treat regional differences as a secondary concern that successful transition, and a market not only in goods but also capital, labor and services, will ameliorate.[24] Another reason that spatial articulations are difficult to center in analytical discussion derives from their analytical looseness.

Of course analytical imprecision has not stopped us from talking about nations. As Eve Sedgewick[25] reminds us,

> [N]ation-ness of Canada, the different nation-ness of Mexico, of the Phillipines, of the Navajo Nation (within the US), of the Six Nations (across the US-Canada border), the nationalism of the non-nation Quebec, the non-nationalism of the non-nation Hawaii... and so forth (thus) ... there exists

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in J. Dickinson, Lisa Fein and Michael D. Kennedy, eds., *Working Out Transition: Identity and Social Issues in Estonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan*, ms. in preparation.

22 *From Plan to Market, World Development Report, 1996* (see fn. 6) spends very little time, if any, on regional distinctions. They of course acknowledge that history and geography shape what leaders can accomplish, and what they can try to accomplish (p. 5). Nevertheless, and here the interventionist identity of the World Bank becomes clear, "firm and persistent application of good policy yields large benefits" (p. 5). Great leaders, as in Mongolia or Kyrgyz Republic, can make a mark in places where institutional legacies are not conducive to reform. Bad leadership also makes a difference. In Ukraine, the leadership's preoccupation with national identity distracted from reform (p. 11). Here, then, the premise of agency in transition culture's structure is apparent: it depends on the quality of leadership, from the level of the firm to the county's president or finance minister, and its proper focus on economic reform. Regional distinctions apparently matter, but to focus on them might distract from the national focus on leadership and institutional change.

23 Lecture at the William Davidson Institute, Fall 1997.

24 For discussion along these lines, see Priit Jarve, Katrin Toomel and Linnar Viik, eds., *Estonian Human Development Report, 1996* (UNDP, 1996), pp. 43-46, and more extended discussion in another postcommunist case, see Grzegorz Weclawowicz, *Contemporary Poland: Space and Society* (London, 1996) as well as and my review of it in *Europe-Asia Studies* 49:2 (March 1997), pp. 335-336.

25 Eve Sedgewick, "Nationalism and Sexuality" in Andrew Parker et al., *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (London, 1992), p. 241.

> for nations ... simply no normal way to partake of the categorical definitiveness of the national, no single kind of other of what a nation is to which all can be by the same structuration be definitely opposed.

Regions also can be distinguished from each other along any number of lines. But unlike nations, regions do not have an institutional form that claims to resolve conceptual ambiguity with juridical sense. We have administratively defined regions like provinces. Historically defined regions can be distinguished, for instance, by which empire they belonged to in the nineteenth century. Economically defined regions might be demarcated by trade networks. Energy grids can also distinguish regions from one another. Civilizational regions can be marked by religious or cultural referents that transcend nations as Baltic, Western or Islamic civilization referents do. Spatial articulations move even further beyond these regional variations. Urban/rural distinctions are clearly an important part of the spatial imagination of some actors, although that might not be expressed in such general terms. We "tutajsi," we locals, might be the everyday reference for distinguishing us from those in other communities or in the capital city. Places with particular localized problems are also likely to emphasize the distinction of their community from others. Residents of primate cities might not articulate the rural/urban distinction, or even emphasize the significance of their place, but their articulation of space might emphasize international comparisons far more than conditions in their own hinterland.

Despite these different references, I believe that a focus on variations in the spatial articulation of identity and problems is important to liberate our imagination of identities in transformation from the hegemonies of nations and nation states. After all, nations may either be too large, or too small, to capture the references people want to invoke to explain their experiences in an era in which the decline of the nation state is putatively accompanied by the elevation of the global and the local.[26] It might just be that we need a looser identity referent than nation to capture the transformations wrought not only by the end to communism but also those posed by various globalizations.[27] In order to explore the potential of refiguring the spatial reference for identity, we can draw on data collected during 1996-97.

We[28] have collected and analyzed 36 focus groups conducted in 15 sites in Estonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan in order to investigate identity formation and

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26 For one evocative intervention in this global/local literature, see Arjun Appadurai, "The Production of Locality" in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, 1996).

27 For an elaboration of this point, see John Guidry, Michael D. Kennedy and Mayer Zald, "An Introduction to Globalizations and Social Movements" in Guidry, Kennedy and Zald, eds., *Globalizations and Social Movements* (forthcoming from University of Michigan Press).

28 They include Rein Voorman, Marika Kirch, Jelena Hellamae and Aleksander Plotkin from Estonia; Viktor Susak, Nataliya Salabai and Yuliya Yakubova from Ukraine; and Alisher Ilkhamov and Lyudmila Hafizova of Uzbekistan. Without their multiple contributions, our subsequent analysis of these data would, of course, not have been imaginable.

the articulation of social issues.[29] Although one could pursue these questions in a single republic, we have pursued this exploration of identity formation and social problems in a comparative framework across radically different sites of post-Soviet change.[30] This comparative framework allows us to go beyond national or otherwise localized frameworks that structure most qualitative social research in postcommunist society. By crossing such radically different civilizational contexts in the former Soviet Union, we explore the potential for different but convergent narratives of identity formation and social problems. In particular, this project allows us to learn how the articulation of social problems and identity might be configured similarly across post-Soviet space. We can assess the extent to which alternative narratives of post-Soviet transition and its problems are shaped by the common exigencies of central planning's reconstruction and the making of sovereign states out of a republican Soviet form. We can also examine whether particular issues, like regional distinctions, produce their own stories that cross civilizational differences. Indeed, we can also consider whether there may be more similarity across nations, as among capital cities or among Russian diasporas, than within nations, for instance across the urban/rural divide.

Specifically, we conducted thirty-six focus groups in fifteen sites, with a total of 12 focus groups per country. We broke these groups by gender, nationality, and education, in order to ensure relatively egalitarian discussion conditions (See Table 1). A range of possible participants was identified using informal networks in each of the sites. Information collected in a pre-interview questionnaire and interview helped on-site investigators decide the most appropriate combination of actual participants, assuring that they were both willing to talk in moderation and sufficiently diverse in terms of place of residence and occupation.[31] These groups did not aspire to be statistically representative; there-

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29 To limit the length of this paper, I don't discuss how I understand social problems and identities. Nor do I explain how focus group methods can facilitate our analysis of identity formation and social problems. For a discussion of that, see the earlier version of this paper available from the Working Paper Series of the University of Michigan's Center for Research on Social Organization.

30 Focus groups are typically conducted within a single language, or at least within a single society, and have rarely been used for cross cultural research. For one of the earliest uses of this methodology in cross-cultural research, see John Knodel, "Focus Groups as a Qualitative Method for Cross-Cultural Research in Social Gerontology," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 10 (April 1995), pp. 7-20; "Conducting Comparative Focus Group Research: Cautionary Comments from a Coordinator," *Health Transition Review* 4:1 (Winter, 1993), pp. 99-104 .

31 This was not always successful, but for the most part, this method worked. For instance, in Uzbekistan, the only way in which the Ferghana group could be assembled was by visiting the market square and finding willing participants.

fore random sampling techniques were not necessary. We recorded, transcribed and translated all texts into English.[32]

**Table 1: Focus Groups in Estonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan[33]**

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32 Not every transcript could be transcribed verbatim, and few could be transcribed perfectly well. Moynak men, for instance, had to be treated entirely non-verbatim, while L'viv men was rendered nearly perfectly from tape to paper.

33 The following are our codes:

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| ESTAMEME | Estonian speaking men from Tamsalu |
| ESTAMEWE | Estonian speaking women from Tamsalu |
| ESNARRME | Russian speaking men from Narva |
| ESNARRWE | Russian speaking women from Narva |
| ESTAREWE | Estonian speaking women from Tartu |
| ESTAREME | Estonian speaking men from Tartu |
| ESSILRME | Russian speaking men from Sillamae |
| ESSILRWE | Russian speaking women from Sillamae |
| ESTALRWE | Russian speaking women from Tallinn |
| ESTALRME | Russian speaking women from Tallinn |
| ESTALEME | Estonian speaking men from Tallinn |
| ESTALEWE | Estonian speaking women from Tallinn |
| UZBUKUWE | Uzbek speaking women from Bukhara |
| UZBUKUME | Uzbek speaking men from Bukhara |
| UZBUKTWE | Tajik speaking women from Bukhara |
| UZBUKTME | Tajik speaking men from Bukhara |
| UZTASRWE | Russian speaking women from Tashkent |
| UZTASRME | Russian speaking men from Tashkent |
| UZMUIKWE | Karakalpak women from Moynak |
| UZMUIKME | Karakalpak men from Moynak |
| UZFERUME | Uzbek speaking men from Ferghana city |
| UZFERUWE | Uzbek speaking women from Ferghana city |
| UZTASUME | Uzbek speaking men from Tashkent |
| UZTASUWE | Uzbek speaking women from Tashkent |
| UKDONRWE | Russian speaking women from Donetsk |
| UKDONRME | Russian speaking men from Donetsk |
| UKVINUWE | Ukrainian women from Oleksandrivka, Oleksandrivka |
| UKVINUME | Ukrainian men from Oleksandrivka, Oleksandrivka |
| UKLVIUME | Ukrainian speaking men from L'viv |
| UKLVIUWE | Ukrainian speaking women from L'viv |
| UKKYIRME | Russian speaking men from Kyiv |
| UKKYIRWE | Russian speaking women from Kyiv |
| UKKYIUWE | Ukrainian speaking women from Kyiv |
| UKKYIUME | Ukrainian speaking men from Kyiv |
| UKIVAUWE | Ukrainian women from Ivankiv |
| UKIVAUME | Ukrainian men from Ivankiv |

Estonia

- Tallinn (the Estonian capital, mixed ethnicity/nationality)

Two groups of Russians, one all male and one all female, with at least some higher education;
Two groups of Estonians, one all male and one all female, with at least some higher education;

- Narva (a provincial city in eastern Estonia; primarily ethnic Russians)

Two groups of Russians, one all male and one all female, with no more than secondary education;

- Tartu (a provincial city in southern Estonia, primarily ethnic Estonian)

Two groups of Estonians, one all male and one all female, with no more than secondary education;

- Tamsalu (a rural village in southern Estonia, primarily ethnic Estonian)

Two groups of Estonians, one all male and one all female, with no more than secondary education.

- Sillamae (a Baltic coast city, primarily Russian)

Two groups of Russians, one all male, and one all female, with no more than secondary education.

Ukraine

- Kyiv (the Ukrainian capital, mixed ethnicity/nationality)

Two groups of Russians, one all male and one all female, with at least some higher education;
Two groups of Ukrainians, one all male and one all female, with at least some higher education;

- Donetsk (a provincial city in southeastern Ukraine, primarily ethnic Russian)

Two groups of Russians, one all male and one all female, with no more than secondary education;

- L'viv (a provincial city in western Ukraine, primarily ethnic Ukrainian)

Two groups of Ukrainians, one all male and one all female, with no more than secondary education;

- Oleksandrivka (a rural village in Vinnytsya, in southwestern Ukraine, primarily ethnic Ukrainian)

Two groups, one all male and one all female, with no more than secondary education.

- Ivankiv (a city just outside the Chernobyl' zone), mixed nationalities

Uzbekistan

- Tashkent (the Uzbek capital, mixed ethnicity/nationality)

Two groups of Uzbeks, one all male and one all female, with at least some higher education;
Two groups of Europeans (primarily Russians), one all male and one all female, with at least some higher education;

• Bukhara (a provincial city in western Uzbekistan, mixed ethnicity/nationality)
Two groups of rural Uzbeks, one all male and one all female, with no more than secondary education;
Two groups of urban Tajiks, one all male and one all female, with no more than secondary education;
• Ferghana (a provincial city in eastern Uzbekistan)
Two groups, one all male and one all female, with no more than secondary education.
• Moynak (a provincial city formerly on the Aral Sea, mostly Karakalpak)
Two groups, one all male and one all female, with no more than secondary education.

We chose our focus groups with these four broad comparisons in mind:
a) We sought to compare highly educated men and women in capital cities (Tashkent, Tallinn and Kyiv). In each city, focus groups were conducted for both native Russian speakers and the titular nationality.
b) We sought to compare those with secondary education in provincial cities with different "ethnic" markers: one set known for its devotion to the national cause (Tartu, L'viv and Ferghana city) and the other being more Soviet (Narva and Donetsk) or multinational (Tajik/Uzbek Bukhara).
c) We sought to compare rural sites: Tamsalu, Oleksandrivka and rural Bukhara, and assess how those men and women of titular nationalities, with no more than secondary education, discussed the issues.
d) We chose three sites particularly known for their environmental problems: Sillamae in Estonia, Ivankiv in Ukraine, and Moynak in Karakalpakstan, Uzbekistan.

## 3. COMPARING FOCUS GROUP THEMATICS

We sought to use the same methods and interview schedule for all focus groups in order to facilitate comparison.[34] One basis for comparison is to consider how much each group talked about any particular issue. One might pre-

34 After recording these sessions, the tapes were transcribed and translated on site and subsequently checked for quality at the University of Michigan. The analysis of these transcripts has been sorted through a program called The Ethnograph. This program allows for the coding of qualitative data fragments across thousands of pages of text. Codes can overlap. A data fragment discussing an ethnic division of labor in one particular area might be coded simultaneously as employment, region, ethnicity and gender. Thus the sum total of codes do not add up to 100%. Some of the codes appeared in each transcript. For instance, we asked each group to address whether women and men suffered equally through the problems of post-Soviet transition. There were other topics, however, which were not introduced by the moderators, and which could only emerge if the focus groups themselves thought it an important problem, virtue, or solution. For instance, only a few groups iden-

sume that if a group spent a lot of time talking about an issue, it was important to them.[35] This is not necessarily the case, of course. For example, men from Narva said that they had almost forgotten about corruption because it is so obvious. As one man stated, "The policemen are just pure corruption," to which another replied, "We just couldn't remember it because it is something that goes without saying" (4409-4412).[36]

Despite the caveat, I find the explicit enumeration of issues to be a useful guide. The unspoken problem is a naturalized problem. For instance, although Narvan men resented the corruption of their policemen, their focus on other issues suggests that corruption, while potentially important, is either less objectionable or more difficult to change or challenge than other issues. One way to explore the relative salience of any problem is to compare the amount of explicit attention they win in focus group discussions. At the very least, it allows us to be less speculative about the relative prominence of issues, and allows us to recognize patterns in the data that might not otherwise be apparent. The counts, of course, only set the stage for more refined interpretations of what the numbers mean.[37]

In Table 2, I indicate the percentage of focus group discussion devoted to coding areas we have chosen. In this framework, corruption is less of a problem than their standard of living. And of all identity referents, spatial references are easily the most frequently invoked in discussion; they occupy an average of 24% of the transcripts. One might argue, therefore, that the variable spatial articulation of identity and social issues is insufficiently appreciated in analysis, while it is centrally important in everyday life. Although I am inclined to believe that space is thus more important in popular culture than transition culture or nationalist problematics are likely to recognize, the frequency's interpretation is not so simple.

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tified values as either a problem or a potential solution to the problems that they faced. But even if a code had to be addressed, the amount of time each group spent talking about the issue varied considerably.

35 As John Knodel noted in his commentary on this paper, one cannot say whether attention to an issue denotes importance, salience or even comfort for discussing that issue. I do not mean to skirt the issue, but it is sufficiently enormous to merit extended discussion elsewhere.

36 The numbers following quotations indicate the line numbers in the Ethnograph-coded transcript from which the quotation was taken.

37 For a discussion of the various strategies to interpret focus group data, and especially the utility of such counting procedures for relatively large numbers of focus groups, see Richard A. Krueger, *Analyzing and Reporting Focus Group Results* (Thousand Oaks: CA, 1998), especially David Morgan, "Computerized Analysis", pp. 89-93. For a specific critique of this work attending to the particular problem associated with variable moderator influence, see Marianne Kamp, "Voluntary and Elicited Discourses: Comparing Moderator Influence on Focus Groups" <http://www.umich.edu/~iinet/crees/fsugrant/>

First, "region" refers to line segments in which articulations of space and place are made explicitly, in which conditions of specific regions within the country or abroad are considered and potentially compared. This includes references to other nations or to general regions like "The West." It also captures discussion of tourism, travel and emigration. It involves general urban/rural comparisons and explicit distinctions made between the capital city and other places. Of course this means that, as we have coded it, the notion of "region" is heterogeneous. In comparison to concepts like nationality or language, region refers to a much less consistent concept. Its variation does not, however, mean that it is not useful for everyday narratives, nor even for analysis, as the rest of this paper will suggest.

Secondly, other problem sets also carry identities that are intrinsic to them. For instance, in discussions of declining standards of living, an overwhelmingly important identity in that narrative is that of victim. In discussions of freedom, an important identity is based on those who can be responsible in their freedom, and those who are dependent on others. In this paper, however, I discuss these questions only insofar as region articulates their problem. Nevertheless, I find it useful to present these other problem sets to indicate just how pervasive the spatial articulation of identities and issues is. Most who study post-Soviet societies would not be surprised to find that standard of living and other economic issues are discussed quite widely. They might be surprised to find spatial references so prominent.

Thirdly, this spatial emphasis does not mean that alternative identities are irrelevant. For instance, national identity is important, for references to ethnic or national issues occupied on average 12% of the manuscripts. The importance of a nation state's independence is also invoked across 8% of the transcripts. Gender is discussed 7% of the time. Language issues are invoked 5% of the time. Class, or relational senses of inequality based on means of production or social status, is explicitly marked across 3% of the transcripts. Religion is discussed across 1% of the transcripts. Spatial references can be articulated with all of these identity references, however. One region might claim a privileged understanding of the nation, or role in leading the struggle for national independence, as L'viv men did. Regional identity might aggravate state practices that discriminate against Russians and their language, as Narvan men argued. Gender and class too might be linked to space, as the women of Ferghana did when they stressed the importance of rural women's unemployment. Religion is discussed infrequently, but for the women of Sillamae, their concern for religion was clearly linked to their perception of their region as a "swamp."

Fourthly, the moderators privileged three dimensions of identity in the focus group discussions. At the conclusion of each focus group, discussants were asked how the issues they discussed previously affected people of different genders, nationalities and regions. One should expect, therefore, that gender, nationality and region should obtain more extended discussion, *ceteris paribus*. That also means, however, that they can be compared nicely to one an-

other to suggest how each of them figures into the articulation of social issues. Region was far more prominent than nationality, and gender was less pervasive than nationality. Of course this also varies significantly by group; Russian women from Kyiv were quite emphatic about gender's significance, and the men from Narva used nationality almost as much as region to discuss their problems, and more than any other group to frame their assessment of the last ten years.

**Table 2: Percentage of Focus Group Discussion Devoted to Each Coding Area**

| | |
|---|---|
| Regional and International Issues | 24% |
| Standard of Living | 24% |
| Employment | 13% |
| Ethnic or National Issues | 12% |
| References to the Soviet Past | 12% |
| Monetary, macroeconomic Issues | 10% |
| Education | 9% |
| Salary | 8% |
| Freedom, Democracy, etc. | 8% |
| Independence, New Constitution, etc. | 8% |
| Gender | 7% |
| Health | 7% |
| Values, Civility, Spirituality, etc. | 7% |
| Ecology | 5% |
| Language | 5% |
| Stratification, Inequality | 3% |
| Trade, Bazaar Activities, Commerce | 3% |
| Corruption | 2% |
| Crime | 2% |
| Military Service, Peace | 1% |
| Religion | 1% |

Beyond exploring the variation in thematics across all focus groups, one should explore how the thematic structure of focus groups themselves vary. We can thus investigate the narrative formations of identity and social problems directly, by asking in what social conditions, and in articulation with what other narratives of social transformation, space is highlighted. One might begin by comparing the relative prominence of spatial articulations across focus group discussions (Table 3).

Russian speaking men from Narva and Sillamae were the most likely of all of our focus groups to discuss issues and identities in spatial terms. Ukrainian men and women from Oleksandrivka and Ivankiv were the next group most likely to discuss region. Akin to the men from the other ecologically devasted regions of Sillamae and Ivankiv, the men from Moynak and the women of Sillamae were also likely to discuss matters with a spatial inflection. One

might surmise from this distribution of attention that space is especially important for those from those places known as economically and ecologically devasted (Sillamae, Ivankiv and Moynak), and some places, while not known for their ecological problems, that could be (Oleksandrivka).[38] In the first substantive section which follows this, I discuss how space figures into the narratives of these economically and ecologically devastated places. In the next section, I discuss one "deviant case," Narvan men. For while their region is not ecologically or economically devasted, in comparative terms, they led the way in invoking the reference to explain changes in their conditions of life over the last ten years.

Beyond the significance of place, it also appears that men are more likely to use regional terms than are women. Of those 18 focus groups above the median, 11 were male, and 7 female. Of those seven female groups, one was from a rural site of particular economic problems (Oleksandrivka) and three were from sites of ecological and economic distress (Sillamae, Ivankiv and Moynak). The men and women of Ivankiv and of Oleksandrivka were relatively similar in their degree of attention devoted to spatial matters, but otherwise, men were more likely than women to focus on these issues. In Sillamae, men spoke of spatial matters for 44% of the manuscript, and women 33%. In Moynak, men spoke in these terms for 36% of the manuscript, and women, 28%.

Those other female focus groups focusing on space were unusual. The women of L'viv and the women of Ferghana discussed matters in spatial terms more often than their male counterparts (31% vs. 21% and 25% vs. 12% respectively). In the third substantive section of this paper, I consider how spatial narratives are gendered in L'viv and Ferghana. What about the women's narratives in L'viv and Ferghana lead them to become so attentive to region?

The Estonian women of Tallinn were also unusual in their spatial articulations, but they were consistent with the general gender patterns. They spoke less of region than the men did (26% vs. 34%). Both Estonian men and women of Tallinn, along with Russian men, were unusual for their spatial emphasis given that they came from the capital cities. Only four focus groups from capital cities discussed space in greater depth than the median: Estonian and Russian speaking men from Tallinn, Estonian speaking women from Tallinn, and Uzbek speaking men from Tashkent.

It may very well be that the view from the capital city and/or from the highly educated tends to discourage a view of social issues and identities in spatially explicit terms. It is more likely, one could argue, that the view from the capital city and the highly educated is likely to produce a focus on the na-

38 See Janice Brummond, "Environmental Identities and Issues in Ukraine: Liquidators, Chornobylets and Masonic Ecologists" in J. Dickinson, Lisa Fein and Michael D. Kennedy, eds., *Working Out Transition: Identity and Social Issues in Estonia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan*, ms. in preparation.

**Table 3: Percentage of Each Focus Group Devoted to Region and Nationality**

| File Name | Total Lines | Region | | Ethnicity/Nationality | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Lines | % of File | Lines | % of File |
| Narva Men | 5036 | 2710 | 54% | 2580 | 51% |
| Sillamae Men | 3324 | 1479 | 44% | 207 | 6% |
| Oleksandrivka Men | 3076 | 1233 | 40% | 356 | 12% |
| Ivankiv Women | 3298 | 1301 | 39% | 260 | 8% |
| Ivankiv Men | 4283 | 1682 | 39% | 711 | 17% |
| Oleksandrivka Women | 1909 | 714 | 37% | 115 | 5% |
| Moynak Men | 1538 | 549 | 36% | 41 | 3% |
| Tallinn Men Estonian | 2590 | 869 | 34% | 206 | 8% |
| Sillamae Women | 4203 | 1370 | 33% | 428 | 10% |
| Tallinn Men Russian | 3762 | 1190 | 32% | 1291 | 34% |
| L'viv Women | 3132 | 972 | 31% | 347 | 11% |
| Moynak Women | 2095 | 584 | 28% | 115 | 5% |
| Tallinn Women Estonian | 2706 | 717 | 26% | 266 | 10% |
| Donetsk Men | 3009 | 783 | 26% | 196 | 7% |
| Tartu Men | 2838 | 725 | 26% | 549 | 19% |
| Ferghana Women | 3454 | 869 | 25% | 50 | 1% |
| Tashkent Men Uzbek | 4127 | 982 | 24% | 182 | 4% |
| L'viv Men | 3544 | 730 | 21% | 296 | 8% |
| Donetsk Women | 3829 | 768 | 20% | 223 | 6% |
| Kyiv Men Ukrainian | 3136 | 614 | 20% | 229 | 7% |
| Tamsalu Women | 1982 | 383 | 19% | 67 | 3% |
| Tashkent Women Russian | 2904 | 550 | 19% | 292 | 24% |
| Narva Women | 3691 | 697 | 19% | 764 | 21% |
| Tallinn Women Russian | 3704 | 634 | 17% | 767 | 21% |
| Kyiv Men Russian | 2289 | 391 | 17% | 420 | 18% |
| Tartu Women | 2466 | 358 | 15% | 209 | 8% |
| Tamsalu Men | 1843 | 255 | 14% | 121 | 7% |
| Bukhara Men Uzbek | 4405 | 546 | 12% | 203 | 5% |
| Kyiv Women Ukrainian | 1856 | 230 | 12% | 296 | 16% |
| Ferghana Uzbek Men | 3371 | 401 | 12% | 182 | 5% |
| Taszkent Uzbek Women | 4300 | 456 | 11% | 253 | 6% |
| Bukhara Men Tajik | 3596 | 255 | 7% | 227 | 6% |
| Bukhara Women Tajik | 2058 | 121 | 6% | 93 | 5% |
| Tashkent Men Russian | 2390 | 105 | 4% | 186 | 8% |
| Bukhara Women Uzbek | 3917 | 140 | 4% | 126 | 3% |
| Kyiv Women Russian | 2161 | 45 | 2% | 387 | 18% |

tion, or ethnicity, rather than an emphasis on place. If we compare the amount of attention devoted to nationality and to space across focus groups, we do indeed find that the Russian speaking men of Tallinn, Tashkent and Kyiv and the Russian speaking women of Tashkent, Narva, Tallinn and Kyiv were more likely to talk in national terms than in spatial ones. The Russian speaking men of Narva were nearly as likely. The only titular nationality to devote more time to questions of the nation than of space were the Ukrainian women of Kyiv.

One might be tempted to argue that this is a feature of the Russian diaspora, but it appears rather to be a feature of the Russian diaspora in capital cities, with Narva being a partial exception. The Russian speakers of Sillamae and Donetsk were all much more likely to speak in spatial terms. In the final substantive section of the paper, I shall consider the patterning of space in the capital cities, concentrating especially on the substance of emphasis in those two male focus groups from Tallinn which used spatial references so much.

The frequency with which space is articulated is important to establish. It enables us to appreciate its relative salience in the narratives of social transformation. But for us to use these focus group data fully, we need not only to know the frequency and conditions when spatial references are invoked, but also how it is implicated in the stories people tell. I begin with how space is implicated in tales of economic and ecological distress, the places where place is most likely to structure the tale of social transformation.

## 4. THE SPATIAL IMAGINATION THROUGH ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL DISTRESS

Spatial matters were the leading identity reference for both men and women in Ivankiv. On the one hand, they emphasized the localized character of the crisis and the effect of the reactor's explosion on their home region and their very own conditions of life. For example, Maryna noted that prices appeared to be higher in Ivankiv than in Kyiv, because "they think we have a lot of Chernobyl' money so they illegally raise the prices" (1020-24). Vira went on to say, "The people who haven't visited us here, they think, that here in the "zone" we are being paid, so they can rip us off. But now they practically give us nothing" (1026-1030).

As in other transcripts, spatial references were not limited to local places. A significant part of the men's discussion also involved much larger categories of imagination, questioning, for instance, what the West could and should do with regard to the nuclear crisis (3556-3590). In this sense, therefore, region figures importantly as both the site of crisis and a site from which one might imagine, and argue about, the generation of solutions.

Both spatial senses also structure the discussions in Moynak, but here, the cause of problems becomes more important in the spatial articulation. The cause and consequence of environmental crisis are not located in the same space, as they are in Ivankiv. In Moynak, local actors are not at all responsible for their environmental plight. Although the hakims are criticized for other problems,

notably for monetary and economic problems, they are not the principal villain in the ecological story. The source lies upstream. There is, nonetheless, an important similarity to Ivankiv in the assignment of responsibility.

In both Ivankiv and Moynak, there is a common awareness that Soviet-era leaders are responsible for the plight their region faces. As Jupargul said,

> The reason for the ecology being bad is that the water has been pulled out from the Aral Sea... The people who used to work before in our higher government bodies are responsible for that. Before sending water to the Aral, one should have filtered out its chemicals/silt. The water does not reach the Aral.... Because the water was drawn away... Oblasts in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, which border the rivers and are upriver from us, take the water in order to irrigate cotton, rice and some other things. They just pump and take away the water from the road. For that reason water does not come to the Aral (1161-1196).

This criticism of Soviet times, as in Ivankiv, is however laced with an appreciation of that era and a criticism of independence. As Aiparsha said,

> On the one hand we said that independence was good. But we have another opinion inside. It was not good that we were split apart. Before, when we were like the fingers on one hand, there was unity of opinion. .... Even if we are all Muslims, now we are divided... If we come to the problem of the Aral, Uzbeks, Turkmens, they take the water they need, and we who live at the end of the rivers have no water left for us. ... Our previous life was good indeed... (1267-1290).

Aiparsha later said, "We have fed and saved so many people (from 1917 onwards), but have we ended up coming to the point where we ourselves are no longer capable of surviving?" (1741-45). Although Soviet times were clearly responsible for generating the crisis, there is nothing in the transcript that suggests independence is a solution for that crisis. There is also a great deal of skepticism regarding the West.

Neither Moynak nor Ivankiv have much confidence about the value of Western interventions. The West clearly has demonstrated a lot of concern, but with limited results. The people of Moynak discussed quite openly how much attention their ecological plight has received from "developed countries." But they plainly asked, "Where is their help?" (1116-9; see also 1807-83). The West has even contributed to the sense of hopelessness in Ukraine as well. One man from Ivankiv said,

> The West gives nothing but rhetoric. If they would help us, good. Then we would close one of the nuclear power stations and we would construct another on the basis of what is there. They don't help us because they don't need a strong Ukraine. They only want a territory (3909-3916).

Sillamae, by contrast, has a very different imagination of the West. The men in particular could identify several international actors who have expressed concern and interest in the region. The blame for failing to take advantage of this international interest lies rather in the populace which is too passive about

elections. Local authorities also are to blame, for the Sillamae authorities don't know how to take steps to deal with the issue as those in another region of Estonia, in Kohtle-Jarve, do.

It may be surprising to see that region is so important for identity among Sillamae's focus groups, especially its men. Nationality tensions have typically dominated the imagination of identity studies in Estonia,[39] and to be sure, they are important in Sillamae, where Estonians constitute only 1-2% of the local population. The focus group participants from Sillamae certainly had an awareness of their Russian-ness. This was evident even in the Russian-Estonian moderator's introduction, in which he invited the participants to identify themselves, not only in terms of their work or family, as in other places, but also in terms of where they were born. They responded to the invitation with clear markers of whether they were born in Estonia, or in Russia. Most were born in Estonia, and some of them had citizenship. Their identity is not, however, simply as Russians, or as Estonian citizens, but very much as Russians of the North East. As Viktor L. said,

> Estonia has abandoned the Russians who live here in the North-East. There are practically no jobs here, no salaries, nothing. You live as you can. And you can fix the situation yourselves.... (speaking as he would imagine "Estonia" to speak) You, Russians, live here as you want. In other words, die out. It's your problem how much you earn. Or you can leave for Russia. (The moderator asked then if he didn't feel any support from the state, to which he replied) There essentially is none (1690-1709).

A subsequent exchange indicated the depth of the suspicion regarding the Estonian authorities. The men suspected that the authorities were trying to undermine their local firms on purpose. Pavel noted that Tondi Elektroonika had a branch in Tallinn and one in Sillamae, and while it doesn't work at all in Sillamae, it at least works, if poorly, in Tallinn (1738-42). They can't understand, other than for these ethnic reasons, why their microelectronics firm is not better supported given that Hong Kong was built up around this industry (1765-80). Economic conditions are clearly terrible, but the authorities, they say, are to blame for ignoring their region. Thus, while nationality is clearly important, it is especially important because of how their Russian-ness is rooted in a particular place.

Oleksandrivka, a Ukrainian village in the province of Vinnytsya, was in many ways very much like Sillamae. In both cases, region was the overwhelming source of identification and their own region was seen as underprivileged in relation to other places, especially the capital city. For instance, one man complained about how his region has not been paid wages for a year and a half, but people in Kyiv and the miners rebelled after only three months of waiting and got their wages (1141-50). Another man complained that local government

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39 See for example Aksel Kirch, ed., *The Integration of Non-Estonians into Estonian Society: History, Problems, and Trends* (Tallinn, 1997).

in Dnipropetrovs'k extorted money from him so that he could sell apples in that region (2012-18). Regions compete with regions, and their poor Oleksandrivka has poor chances in the new economy. Even a discussion of Chernobyl', prompted by the moderator, (2301-2678), was turned into a discussion specific to their locale. Vasyl' 1 said:

> They created the Chernobyl' fund and they put some of our money in that fund, but we don't have anything against that. But we have also suffered. Our village is situated in the polluted zone and we live off the land. We pay into this fund, but we don't get anything from it. But that is the way things are. Chernobyl' is a general tragedy and we will pay. But there are a lot of instances where it ought not to be necessary to pay.... They take a lot of money for that fund but where does it go? What do they do with it? No one knows ... (2355-71)

Right out of this discussion of Chernobyl' and the regional inequalities associated with it, the men turned their discussion of the environment directly to local concerns.

Change over the last ten years has produced terrific regional inequalities, and those places economically and ecologically damaged by the change are quite likely to invoke regional distinctions to frame their interpretation of the last ten years. While certainly nationality differences may exist, it would be a mistake to overlook the identities generated from belonging to a particular place of economic and ecological devastation. Men and women from Ivankiv, Oleksandrivka, Sillamae and Moynak were all quite emphatic about the significance of their place. And in those places known for their ecological problems, they are quite attuned to the "Western" actor, if with different forms of appreciation.

Narva's male focus group is in some ways like those noted above, given that it too has come on regionally specific economic hard times. But because it has not had an ecological crisis, the West hardly figures at all as an actor that intervenes. It does, however, appear as a cultural category with which the Narvan men identify and with which they criticize Estonian practices. Indeed, this very character of criticism suggests a sense of social injustice and possible change that those in ecologically devastated areas don't articulate. Narvan men speak with a measure of empowerment that a combination of ecological and economic devastation in other places appears to destroy.

These Narvan men also suggest a measure of integration into Estonian society that one might not expect. Narva's men lead all focus groups in their use of nationality to frame discussions. While they are extremely critical of Estonian nationalism, they also identify with the Estonian way of life. While extremely critical of Estonian authorities, they spend a good deal of time discussing how things could be otherwise, *within* Estonia. Spatial identities are extremely helpful for clarifying these apparent oppositions. Indeed, it is not only heuristically useful, but it is powerfully important for these Narvans. Narvan men after all lead the way in the use of region to articulate problems.

## 5. The Distinction of Narvan Men

As in Sillamae, the group's introduction begins with a discussion of where people were born, and to what extent they might, then, feel as if they were a "native." Within this context, Estonia has a positive connotation. Sergei, for instance, worked in Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, after his graduation from school, but,

> In 1985, when perestroika began, I felt the political situation in Tajikistan - an attitude toward the Russian speaking population in Tajikistan - because I spent all my life there. So I decided to make a change and to move closer to Europe, to civilization, to move to the West, to Estonia (224-34).

Although they complain about how much of a problem Estonian independence has made for their relationship to family and friends who still live in Russia (1482-1519), the Narvans also emphasize their distinction from other Russians. They are more "Western" in their "culture, mentality and way of life." Andrei 1 points out that "they are Russians, but they became more civilized in Estonia..." Andrei 2 amplifies this by saying "it's a general approach to problem-solving. Not just to grab an axe and a sword but to try to solve (problems) somehow..." (2528-2555). They are also aware that Russians in Russia don't consider them to be Russian at all, and that they themselves, after living in Estonia for some time, cannot manage to live somewhere else (2561-69). Indeed, they seem to appreciate Estonian rather than Russian border guards much more (2857-3032). After a discussion of how one-fourth of the Narvan Russians supported Estonia's independence initially, Sergei emphasized just how Estonian, how realistic, Estonian Russians have become, and why there is no conflict here as there is in Karabakh.

> Because of the turn of character, because of the high cultural level of the Estonian people, because of their national specificities, such as staying calm, being reasonable, being cautious in actions... and those Russians who were either born here or who live here for a long time - they already have these typical Estonian features... (2617-2630).

There are other ways, too, in which this group is different from those in ecologically devastated areas. Like those in capital cities, they often invoke international examples, comparing what kinds of living conditions are available in the West and in their home, and what kinds of quality goods are made there and in Estonia (687-1045). They are, however, different from those in the capital cities with their emphasis on borders. They even identify as a border city, and identify the problems of their youth gangs, smuggling, arms and violence with that location (2685-2750).

Like the ecologically devastated groups, however, they focus their critique on the capital city and the central government. When asked about regional distinctions, they say that all in the capital city, Russians included, have much better conditions. They have more investment, an Estonian language environment, less crime and less corrupt police (3557-3986). Like the people of Sillamae,

they accuse the central government of intentionally destroying industry in their region in order to drive out the Russians (3137-3201). But while they make that accusation, they also note that the government also fails to take into account the needs of all Estonia (1599 -1656). The nationalist critique thus can be softened by recognizing a center/periphery tension in post-Soviet governance generally, where Estonians as well as Russians suffer for the ignorance by the center of its ethnically differentiated peripheries.

Of course these Narvans are critical of Estonian nationalism. Sergei called it "the euphoria of a small state" (1873-74). Vladimir 2 was especially critical of one party and its leader, Mart Laar, who "wanted to turn everything upside down without considering the fact that we lived in one room for seventy years (someone corrected him by saying forty years) and ate from one table and spoke one language. He wanted to turn it all around and create an Estonia for Estonians" (1896-1905).

One might suggest that this Freudian slip - where he "forgot" that Estonia was part of the Soviet Union only since World War II - suggests that measure of Soviet identity Estonians find so objectionable in depictions of history and justice. But here I want to emphasize that this Soviet-ness is also regioned. Consider what Vladimir I said.

> Me, for example, I studied in Estonia in two Estonian institutions. Nowhere was I taught Estonian. As you know, the percentage of the native nation in Ida-Virumaa, the percentage in Narva. It has always been 3-5 per cent. It wasn't needed for daily life in Narva. I am sorry, but in Narva the Estonian language is, unfortunately, a dead language. Now the percentage of the native nation is being artificially raised. Specialists and leaders are invited to Narva. Though I think that the Narvans must lead Narva, and not somebody coming from Tartu or from somewhere else. But it does not solve the problem. Let's say that as to the language - our generation has already been lost. If there is no loving conversation, this language cannot be learned. And the Estonians do not understand that (1746-1800)

Sergei even lamented that although he learned Estonian after leaving Tajikistan (where he learned Tajik), he has forgotten most of what he learned because he does not use Estonian in Narva (1819-48). The Narvans use the experiences of other countries - of Canada, of the USA, of Germany and of others, to suggest that the Estonians could provide language study or legislate language policy better than they do, and by implication, in a more Western (read civilized) way. Sergei suggested the idea of a "language reservation" where everybody will be placed for" three months in a far-off forgotten Estonian village, then over three months one will sing and speak in Estonian," but this did not, in the end, provide most appealing. One participant said that it sounded like a "Negro Ghetto" (2327-2356). At the same time, of course, they also invoke the example of the the Soviet past and how things were bilingual then. As they say that, however, they "forget" that they did not learn Estonian at that time either (2241-54).

Narvan men are indeed resentful of Estonian nationalism, but it is important to keep in mind that they apparently (if insufficiently as Freudian slips suggest) identify with Estonia. They want it simply to perform like other Western states which either recognize multiculturalism in their language policy or create the conditions for linguistic integration. They say that such integration is impossible in their city. Their Russian-ness is not the problem, in other words. The problem rests in their spatial distinction as a nearly mono-lingual region.

While Narva is thus distinctive, it also exemplifies a larger pattern that crosses most of the focus groups. Men are much more likely to talk in regional terms than are women. In the section that follows, I discuss the two sites, L'viv and Ferghana, where women speak more about region than men do in order to explore how spatial narratives are gendered. How do these different thematic emphases come about?

## 6. THE GENDERING OF PLACE: MEN AND WOMEN IN L'VIV AND FERGHANA

In general, men use explicit spatial references much more than women, but the women of Ferghana and L'viv invoke space more than their male counterparts. If one compares Ferghana men and women, several important differences emerge beyond this unusual distribution of spatial emphases. The men have two points in their emphasis: international relations and environmental problems.

The men of Ferghana have a brief discussion of Ferghana's relative condition to other provinces, but apart from the density of the population, don't come to any firm conclusions about Ferghana's special plight within Uzbekistan. They do, however, emphasize that the village population suffers the most during transition: "The merchants/traders never suffer. The people who sit in easy chairs don't suffer. We come to it again—the collective farmers suffer" (2137-40). They also assert the improvement independence has brought in international relations for Uzbekistan, and the relative peace it enjoys in comparison to Chechnya and Tajikistan (536-580, 1626-51). Even in a discussion of environmental problems, the improved access to international comparison is seen as a benefit. For instance, Abduquodir finds that one must study the experience of other countries in order to address environmental problems (2475-91).

Environmental problems structure the men's spatial sense. The Ferghana Valley itself shapes the narrative, and fact, of environmental problems. One man described how the circulation of air in the Ferghana Valley worsens the air pollution issued from chemical plants (844-50). Factories should not be built in these locations, they noted, for it has clear implications for the size of grapes and specific health problems, notably lung disease (1208-1230). In another critique of the authorities' practices, one man complains about the continued construction of factories in the places of greatest air pollution, despite the end of Soviet rule (1900-1933).

This environmental emphasis in the discussion of region is substantially different from the women's emphasis. As in the other focus groups, men are more attentive to environmental themes; 10% of the men's focus group focus on environmental themes, while the women don't mention it at all. The women discussed space in other terms and with greater difference of opinion.

Firstly, they celebrate some of the changes made under Karimov. Families are now getting financial assistance and gas is piped to the village itself (526-43). Cotton no longer dominates the fields, and the villagers can now eat the bread they themselves have baked with the wheat they have grown (451-65). Indeed, given the foodstuffs, they even compare the plight of villagers favorably with those of townspeople, in contrast to the men's sense of privilege (491-97). More consistent with the men's approach, some women complain later in the transcript that presidential decrees fail to reach the local areas in their impact (1120-41) and that prices and conditions of life are more difficult for the villagers (1307-27). Later, they became quite critical of the local authorities, the hakims, and their "indifference" regarding a particular issue.

There is some disagreement in the group about who suffers most, but these women are in agreement with one another and entirely different than the men in one emphasis: the gendering of disadvantage. They devote 18% of their manuscript to gendered discussion, while the men only refer to gender about 2% of their time. The most important problem for some of these women is the fact that rural women have a hard time finding factory work (908-1010; 1168-1202). Gulchehra[40] said,

> There are no jobs for rural women. It's very difficult for them. If they have many children, then they experience even more difficulties. To earn money they go to the fields, but that work isn't paid well. They leave early in the morning and return in the evening. If rural women were recruited to work at factories, unemployment among them would decrease quite a bit. In the cities, women are willing to work at factories. In villages those women who are capable are engaged in buying and selling. I think that the authorities should create conditions for women to work... (1707-24).

This analysis produces a subsequent discussion of who was to blame. For these women, the hakims appear indifferent. In the past, at least, women's committees in the mahallas took care about women's concerns and could bring work to women's homes (1762-1777). The women are extremely critical of local leaders and their indifference, arguing that this was an effect of Soviet times (2724-2786). Local authorities are responsible, they argue, for the plight they face. Men, while also critical, are less focused on the limitations of the local authorities generally.

In sum, the women are focused on spatial issues very much in terms of the urban/rural difference. When attached to the special disadvantages women have suffered under the new system and the irresponsibility of local leaders, it

40 [Non-verbatim, summarized]

makes for a compelling and elaborated discussion. Men also note the rural disadvantage, but used their spatial imagination much more to discuss the environmental problem and international conditions. For women to discuss space, it has to connect to local everyday life, and they connect it by finding a basis for discrimination along spatial and gender lines.

As in both Ferghana focus groups, the L'viv men mention the urban rural distinction, but here, it is those with access to the countryside that have the advantage. Russians might be having a more difficult time in transition to the market not only because of their "communal" mentality, they say, but also because they live in cities and don't have non-market access to foodstuffs (2749-2851). The women don't mention this urban/rural difference. Urban/rural differences, while important in Ferghana, are hardly mentioned in L'viv. But the gender distinction is similar to that which we see in Ferghana.

As in Ferghana, the L'viv men focus on international comparison to make statements about macro political economy. They used the experience of other regions as the basis for understanding their own condition. Poland becomes a particularly important point of comparison to show the value of private property. It enhances, they say, the proper disposition toward work. Poland also has technical equipment like tractors which Ukraine does not. In short, people have the opportunity to work in Poland; in L'viv, they say, "we aren't given this opportunity" (671-72). They also talk about other countries in terms of international trade (1515-41, 2522-2533), and the example of Poland once again in terms of economic reform (2021-2036). The women also speak about international comparisons, but much less as example. Instead, they debate the relative merits of going abroad to work and earn money (445-586; 684-710).[41] Lyudmyla also mentions the value of Ukrainian independence in that military draftees no longer must serve outside of Ukraine (445-58).

The men discuss the politics of regional integration at some length. They mention why it was important for the L'viv based leader of the Rukh movement, V. Chornovil, to go to Kyiv to try to integrate the East into the West (1978-2013; 2070-82). Although it is important to integrate Ukraine, the men's focus group also is resentful of the capital city's policies. Zenoviy notes that L'viv produces more for the national budget than it receives from Kyiv. He speaks with approval of a piece of legislation that would keep 70% of input in the region that produced it. This produces a discussion about who benefits from this regional transfer of value - whether Kyiv or Crimea (3180-3199).

Within this discussion of regional differences and questions of who benefits and who suffers most during transition is a rather keen sense of the distinction of L'viv. There is, on the one hand, a source of pride for L'viv's leading political role and its historical role as a center of trade.

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41 For a discussion of the importance of temporary work abroad in Ukraine, see J. Dickinson, "Gender, Work and Economic Restructuring in a Zakarpattja Village" in Dickinson, Fein and Kennedy, *Working Out Transition...*

> Stepan: Politically, we were the first, I mean our region (in an anti-Communist and pro-independence effort (ed.)). Still, why can't our region be made a kind of (economic) independent zone, like they have in Poland, in Europe? For example, when we had the New Economic Policy, it was in the Odessa region. And now in Odessa, they want to make this economic zone, you see? Volodymyr: the Galician zone. Stepan: And economically, the L'viv region hasn't even made a step toward an economic (zone). Zenoviy: Kyiv won't allow it. Stepan: Yes, in theory that's the way it is. Mykhailo: I can add something about L'viv. Well, L'viv always, as we can recall from the ancient history, was a trade center. Moderator: In the present. Mykhailo: And also now. Moderator: L'viv is a trade center, right? Mykhailo: Well, I mean, there were trading places here. Slavik: It was a transit place; all (trade) routes went via L'viv. Mykhailo: Besides the fact that we used to have private property owners here, now people also want to get involved in the economy. Here we have owners, and we can have owners who want to have their own economic activity. It is my opinion. ... Myron: I have the same opinion. I just want to add one thing: L'viv could be in a better position, but our people don't want to produce anything, they are used to buying everything abroad, bringing everything from there. Even so, they could produce something now, disregarding the difficult situation, but they don't want to. They say it is easier to bring it from abroad. They have lost the habit of work, they don't want to think (2943-3006).

Zenovii also notes later that the region has a different psychology.

> I think we are more adaptable, our psychology is not as corrupted in comparison with the central and eastern regions. We are more adaptable to such difficult conditions. We Ukrainians, all our lives, have been individualists. Therefore we are in a better position, because, I repeat, our psychology is not so corrupted. Let's take for example the Baltic states. They have moved more quickly to the market economy (3269-81).

Summing it up: the men deploy their spatial imagination in a familiar way: to highlight international comparisons and to highlight the particular conditions of their locale. But here, region takes on a very different meaning from all other places: L'viv is a site of political leadership for what it means to be Ukrainian, and it is also a site of trade, which ought to have greater economic autonomy from the center. In L'viv, therefore, men use a spatial framework to discuss policy questions and political economy, in a way similar to how the Ferghana men discussed questions of investment and environmental policies.

Like the Ferghana women, the L'viv women discussed regional distinctions more in terms of everyday life. They also signal that Western Ukraine is more Ukrainian than the East, but here it is more in terms of the Russification of language and of their lifestyle (2463-556). Indeed, even questions of regional integration were put into more personal terms. As Lyudmyla said,

> What I like personally is that during winter vacation many children from Eastern Ukraine... They see all these holidays, they didn't see them before, they don't have them where they come from. They come and stay with

> families, regular families, this year we had some stay with us. And they go caroling, all that.... I reckon, that this ... well it is a renewal, a rebirth. We got everything out of our grandmother's boxes, and show them what it used to be like. I think that is a great plus (2123-2136).

The L'viv women are not as likely as the men to introduce regional issues until the very end when they are asked to identify problems and improvements for their region. Here, they speak at great length about the changing infrastructure in L'viv and the introduction of finer shops with more expensive prices. They also discuss problems with banditry, worry for their children and even declines in everyday civility. Although they suggest that things are like this across Ukraine, they emphasize how bad it is in L'viv proper. Tetyana recalls her work as a tram driver,

> You arrive at a tram stop and someone gets on... I mean like this: someone says a little bit in Russian, then they attack this person immediately. They almost start fighting... I work there, so I know. You can see it in the shops, at your job... One can say that there is no respect for each other in the last few years... People, regardless of their age, whether they are 30, 15, or 60 years old, they have become, if I may say it without being rude, like animals. Precisely this has become very very very very bad here in L'viv. (part of her commentary uses Russian words) (2170-2203).

Ohla adds more to this negative portrait of L'viv:

> I think that people live the worst in L'viv oblast The people here... Here there is a very widespread… I can't even express it. Look at the Khmel'nyts'kyi oblast, there is nothing like that there, look at Vinnytsya oblast, there is nothing like that. And here, here is the worst depravity, here we have the biggest racket. It is horrible. L'viv oblast is the worst. I think so (2346-56).

Olya confirms this with her portrait of Ternopil':

> Let us take the Ternopil' oblast... If you go in a tram there or in trolleys, everybody is addressed in a very human way, from the soul. It is very pleasant for you if someone says "Sorry" or "Welcome," or "Let me pass through," or whatever. And here, we don't have that, because if you get on the tram they bark at you, "Are you getting out?" So you don't want to speak to them ever again.. Just that kind of purely human responsibility isn't to be found here right now (2376-2390)

Mariya defends L'viv, but not by disagreeing. She simply says why L'viv is so rude.

> It is the L'viv oblast where people live best. Look at the way people dress, what kinds of houses they are building. They are living better here than people in Eastern Ukraine. There they build houses like "a boot" (simple and unpretentious)... If we look at this from a different point of view... The ore a person possesses the more malicious he or she becomes. Why are they kind? Because they have little they are not striving for money, they live according to what they have. And here everyone is competing with each other, not to be worse than he is (2398-2414).

In sum, it appears that L'viv follows the general pattern in terms of how spatial imaginations inflect the narrative of social transformation. For the men, region is significant because it is implicated in how to envision economic reform (by considering example of other countries and thinking about international trade). For women, region is significant for it powerfully affects their daily lives - most spontaneously and obviously in terms of work abroad. Surprisingly, however, the discussion of locale led the women to focus on changes in manners and conditions of life. Perhaps Mariya is right to say that this decline in civility is a consequence of economic ambition, and perhaps this is why the women fail to raise it earlier in their conversation. It might be seen as an inevitable accompaniment to transition. But clearly, when they look across Ukraine, they see alternatives of civility. They don't look to Poland as the men do, however. Civility and economic dynamism apparently lie in different places.

The spatial imagination thus functions in three different forms. First, it becomes a foundation for explaining the particularity of one's own place, most typically in terms of its suffering, as in the ecologically and economically distressed regions, but not only. Ferghana's men could focus on Ferghana's particular environmental problems and L'viv's women focused on their city's declines in civility. Sometimes, a region's particularity can become a source of pride and accomplishment, but this is only apparent among the men of L'viv.

Second, the spatial imagination can also be comparative and international in its reference. Men are especially likely to talk about the experience of other regions in terms of examples for their own place. Men are also likely to discuss international agencies and trade. Both men and women may talk about travelling abroad, and the value that brings. They can also discuss the frustration that is yielded when travel abroad is denied, as the Russian minority in Estonia suggests.

Lastly, the spatial imagination can also be invoked in terms of comparisons within the country. Although men and women may have impressions about whose prices are higher, and who lives better, these discussions don't typically issue forth much discussion. Where discussion does become more heated, it appears in a discussion of the relationship between the center and the periphery, or in other instances where regional distinctions are made along circuits of power. The men of Oleksandrivka and L'viv targeted their criticism on Kyiv, as the men of Narva and Sillamae did with regard to Tallinn. Ferghana did not have as much criticism of the center, and in fact, most of the blame was leveled at local hakims. Moynak too had criticisms of local authorities, but there they also leveled charges against the President himself. Tashkent, however, did not figure as a source of blame.

Despite the partial exception of Uzbekistan, the capital city tends to be the common object of criticism when regional distinctions are made within a country. This may help to explain why those in the capital city are unlikely to articulate social problems and social change with much of a spatial inflection. We do have some exceptions in our focus groups, however, and we can use them to

clarify the relationship of those highly educated people living in the capital city to the spatial imagination in reflections on the last ten years. The best place to answer that question is Tallinn, where Estonian and Russian men led the list of capital city inhabitants in the articulation of regional issues.

## 7. THE SPATIAL VIEW FROM THE CAPITAL: MEN IN TALLINN

Overall, those from capital cities are less likely to speak of region than are those who live outside the capital and have less education. The Estonian and Russian men of Tallinn were by far the most likely of all of the focus groups from the capital cities to discuss region. The Estonian women and Uzbek men of their capital cities devoted similar amounts of explicit attention to region in their transcripts. These were the only four groups in capital cities to devote at least the average amount of time to region. Ukrainian and Russian men from Kyiv and Russian women from Tashkent and Tallinn were similarly attentive to region, but all were well below the mean degree of attention. Ukrainian and Uzbek women of Kyiv and Tashkent were similarly inattentive, while the Russian men and Russian women of Tashkent and of Kyiv hardly discussed region at all.

The gendered pattern we have observed above remains. Three out of four of the most attentive to spatial variations were male focus groups, and three of the four least attentive were female. In each site and nationality pairing, the men were more likely to discuss region than were the women, except in the case of the Russians of Tashkent. Contrary to nationality expectations, the smallest country - Estonia - is the most attentive to region. This could be an artifact of our coding scheme of course, where international comparisons are understood in regional terms. A closer examination suggests, however, that this is only partly true. The Estonian and Russian men of Tallinn were indeed focused on international questions, if with very different regional imaginations. They also attended to regional differences within the nation to very different degrees.

The Estonian men were extremely sensitive to regional inequalities within Estonia. For instance, right from the start of the discussion, life in the small towns was identified as very difficult (261-64). Toomas L. said,

> You shouldn't even go to Voru. You drive a little ways out of the city and this poverty and hopelessness will start as soon as you're past the jurisdiction of the Vahi government. I'm very critical. Estonia is falling into pieces and is full of senseless poverty and unemployment. Even though it doesn't affect me personally, I don't think that Estonia is only Tallinn (265-275).

This statement produces a very sophisticated discussion about the relationship between individual initiative and its ecological possibilities. Some argue that opportunity depends on initiative and finding each region's particular advantage, or going to regions where economic activity is sufficient. Others argue that regions produce advantage for their inhabitants. One region might simply enjoy greater circulation of goods and people, or enjoys other advantages from

the Soviet era. Finally, those most likely to criticize regional inequalities were also most likely to criticize the government for inaction and irresponsibility around these issues. They debated the measure and source of inequality in the Soviet era, but clearly the reference was the contemporary Estonian government and what lessons it could learn from other parts of the world (265-623; 1061-1534).

By contrast, the Russian men devote hardly any time to a discussion of regional inequalities within Estonia. There was brief discussion of the ruin of agriculture, but for the most part, this was in a context of a discussion of Estonia's relationship to the former Soviet Union in a context of international trade. The Russian men discussed regional differentiation within Estonia for the Russian minority only when pressed by the moderator at the end of the discussion. Even here, they failed to speak of economic inequalities or differences, and addressed the question rather in terms of different political interests (2809-2906).

Very much as transition culture seeks to cultivate, the Estonian men were also quite oriented toward international affairs and comparisons. For instance, one of the very clear gains of the last ten years was the radical improvement in information from all parts of the world and the opportunity to travel to those parts. As Toomas K. said,

> In my circle of work, this communication with foreign countries is essential, considering we've lived for so long like lonely mice in a cage and seen just a remnant of the world. We haven't been able to compare ourselves with others. Comparison is very important. If we don't see what others are doing, it's like a sack race (813-22).

This communication then realizes one of the traits transition culture implies: the reduction of national difference. Ain points out that a new logic has emerged in Estonia, because "we have the same system as most of the world now," and "conditions start to assimilate because of similar traits in the systems" (1036-1045).

Russian men also used the comparative method to assess Estonia's state of affairs, but for them, the distance between Europe and Estonia was perceived as far greater. After mentioning that he too has traveled, Alexander 2 said,

> I haven't seen anything like this anywhere. Such sharp contrast between those who are absolutely supposed to carry the main burden of taxation. There are rich and there are poor. If you stumbled in this life, you are done with, you are poor! That is the problem! Thus, I think that the main problem is sharp inequality in society, inequality that should not exist in a European state (622-634).

Typically, the Estonians used the advanced countries as positive lessons for Estonia. Sometimes, however, they used the experiences of these other countries to relativize the problems of Estonia. The loss of security, for instance, is perceived as a problem all countries are facing (1727-41). The loss of time and increased stress is something that Japan and America suffer too (1794-1810). The comparative method with advanced countries was even turned back to the

discussion of regional inequalities within Estonia. Hannes said this is common, and uses Finland's experience as an example to argue that the state must intervene in regional inequalities because international investments flow much more obviously into Tallinn because of its relative ease of communication (1092-1103). International comparison is also used in reference to other post-Soviet countries, but here, not for lessons but for appreciation for what has not happened. Things are much worse, they note, in Lithuania, Latvia, Belarus and Ukraine (1604-20).

The Russians have a much different attitude toward the post-Soviet world and its former clients. For example, Stanislav said, "For me, the worst of all in this whole story of the collapse of the empire is that I lost access to Eastern markets" (739-42). Indeed, he accuses the Estonian government authorities not only of ignorance in matters of trade (one should not put up boundaries to discourage trade) but also of setting up a racket (862-900). Basically, the Estonian government ruined a great deal of industry because they destroyed the market - whether in the East or the military market in Iran and Iraq - that formerly made the Estonian-Russians' businesses so successful (1081-1164). This policy is not even sensible from an economic point of view, they argue, since there are so many Estonian businessmen who work with Russia, which leads to an interesting debate about the appropriate role of Russia in forcing this opening of trade (2126-2195). The role of the West in affecting their lives is also discussed at some length.

Unlike the Estonian men, the breakup of the Soviet Union is something to debate. Rather than treat Soviet rule as somehow abnormal, and therefore deserving of extinction, the Russian men suggest a conspiracy of the US and the West more generally in bringing down the USSR (1177-1276). The West doesn't fare much better even when it provides investment. Alexander 1's successful firm is managed by an American company, but he is quite critical. All they produce goes to the West and nothing to Estonia. And in five years, he warns, the advantage Estonia has in lower wages will be lost, at which time the company will relocate and seek cheaper conditions of production elsewhere. Alexei lamented that all is governed by economic expediency (1799-1848). Their attitude toward the European Union is also very critical and skeptical (2569-2583).

Although there are radically different approaches to region, both Estonian and Russian men are critical of the Estonian government, and speak sympathetically about each other's populations from time to time. The Estonian men, for instance, note that Estonians have more opportunities than Russians to travel (697-711). Too, the Estonians also find improvements in ethnic relations generally over the last few years. Toomas K. again says,

> Russian leaders don't represent anyone now. The Russian who earns well here, puts his/her children in an Estonian school, s/he doesn't want to leave.... S/he earns well, s/he can go abroad, his/her children can get an education. What of it? It all solves this tension. (935-55).

The Russian men seem to harbor the most antipathy for the government, and not for Estonians at large. For instance, they also portray the Estonians as having been manipulated. Indeed, they took the low levels of participation in recent local elections as evidence that Estonians are "wise" and now aware of their having been manipulated (1759-62). They too find hope in the future, exemplified by new customs agreements with Ukraine and Kazakhstan (2345-48).

More generally, one might say that transition culture itself produces a focus on international attention, and given Tallinn's relative success among post-Soviet countries in making that transition, it is likely to encourage such international comparison, especially among the highly educated. The Russian men, however, point out just how skewed that international reference of transition culture is. It appears to be driven not so much by neutral economic questions as by politically motivated pro-Western and anti-Russian practice.

Nevertheless, the Russian men confirm one of our expectations: that those of the capital city are unlikely to attend to regional differences within the nation to the same degree that those connected to rural life, or those residents of secondary cities, do. The Estonian men, however, are quite different. To some degree, this attention to regional inequality is connected to criticism for the Estonian government itself. It also reflects the common emphasis on inequality among Estonian and Russian men. The Russians, however, focus on class inequalities, while the Estonians focused on regional inequalities. Estonians are also much less likely to focus on ethnic or nationality questions than are the Russians.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

Given the growing significance of locales in global transformations, and the particular significance of regions in the development of European Union policies, research strategies and theoretical frameworks should be open and attentive to the significance of regional variation within post-Soviet space. And one cannot be so attentive to that variation if one remains within the place or imagination of capital cities.

The spatial imagination is more important to a discussion of social change over the last ten years than we expected. One reason it is important is because we have attended to the interpretation of social change from outside the capital city. To the extent our interpretations of social change are shaped by the highly educated in the capital cities, regional distinctions within a country are less likely to enter as a narrative shaping change. To the extent our narratives are shaped by those in the countryside or in the provincial cities, region is likely to become more important. In the capital cities, other divisions in the social imaginary - by gender, by class, and especially by nationality — are likely to become more significant.

Of course spatial variations can be articulated with each of these other dimensions of identity. The Estonian Russians in Sillamae and especially Narva are likely to link region and nationality. To the extent their economic status is determined by a nationalizing state, they link their region to class too. The women of Ferghana linked gender and class very closely to region, as the status of rural women's unemployment looms large in their discussion. Even majority nations can be articulated with regional identities, as the men of L'viv assert their privilege in defining the "individualism" of the Ukrainian nation.

There are several different ways to articulate space in the narrative of the last ten years of social transformations in the former Soviet Union. It can become the basis for an identity, and here we find it most resonant and powerful where region is articulated in a narrative of economic or ecological devastation as in Ivankiv, Moynak, Sillamae and Oleksandrivka. And in these conditions, it is more gender neutral, for these conditions of crisis enable spatial expressions to be equally articulated with both everyday life and with state policy and political economy.

Where crisis is not discursively rendered as local, but general, spatial variations are much less likely to enter the story of social change explicitly. Then it is also more likely to be offered by men than by women. The initially apparent exceptions to that rule - in L'viv and in Ferghana - nevertheless reinforce the generalization. Women are more likely to articulate the spatial meaning of economic crisis only in so far as it might be discussed in the terms of everyday life: in Ferghana in the form of rural women's unemployment, and in L'viv's relative loss of civility. The women of Ferghana offer the problem of unemployment relatively spontaneously, while in L'viv, they are prompted to raise it as a problem only when asked about L'viv's distinctive problems. Civility is clearly subordinated to larger economic problems. One woman was ready to say that the loss of civility is the price of economic dynamism.

To be sure, economic dynamism, a keyword in transition culture, might be associated with a concern for regional distinctions within a country. It is much more likely to be associated with international comparisons, however. Those two groups most clearly associated with a discourse celebrating initiative, risk, opportunity, and freedom - L'viv men and Tallinn's Estonian men - are also quite oriented toward international comparison. They also are attendant to regional distinctions, but international referents typically guide their imagination of alternatives. Poland is important for the men of L'viv, and the West generally is important for the Estonian men of Tallinn.

The Russian men of Tallinn also pursue these international comparisons, but in a much more critical way. They complain about the loss of Eastern markets and are skeptical that such extensive involvement with Western actors - the US and the European Union in particular - would produce value. At the same time, they pay relatively little attention to the regional differences within Estonia itself, despite the fact that their male counterparts in Narva and in Sillamae were quite emphatic about the distinctive conditions facing Russians

in the Northeast. When the Russian men of Tallinn discussed the inequalities of post-communist capitalism, they focused on class.

In sum, the spatial articulation of identity and social problems is a critically important issue for future research on social transformations in post-Soviet society. I would like to conclude this essay with three major points.

Firstly, one should be attentive to how different imaginations of space shape the articulation of social problems and identities. Most research tends to discuss problems and identities in national terms, or in other terms that hardly reflect the regional variation within societies. While this point of view is relatively consonant with the interpretation of change by those highly educated focus groups in the capital cities, it is not at all consistent with the interpretations of change we have collected in the countryside or the more provincial cities. *Research and policy should be designed in such a way as to attend more directly to spatial variations in identity formation and social problems*.

Secondly, one should be more attentive to how spatial imaginations articulate with other narratives of identity and social problems. One conclusion to be made with this research is that those who live in economically and ecologically devastated sites are more likely, whether male or female, ethnic majority or minority, to interpret change from a more localized point of view. This is not surprising, but it is suggestive of a larger analytical point. *Regional distinctions within a country become important to the extent they can be articulated with other narratives of change. These narratives are themselves differently linked to various social statuses*. One does not find the significance of space simply by going outside the capital city. Space becomes important only when particular articulations of problems are open to, or are opened by, specific interventions that allow spatial variation to be introduced.

For instance, men rarely if at all elaborate problems that are specific to women; women are also relatively unlikely to gender their interpretation of problems. Nevertheless, in two circumstances women identified particular problems they suffered in their locales - unemployment and declines in civility. The former is not hard to articulate within a larger narrative of victimization through economic change, but it is unusual to depart from the typical emphasis on family strategies for coping to emphasize the particularity of rural women's unemployment. The conditions under which such a move is made deserves further attention.[42] Sometimes, too, a subject may not be raised at all in discussions of social change because it is perceived as a necessary cost of transition. What empowers women to elevate the particular suffering of their locale in terms of civility's decline? It was not raised spontaneously, but once issued, it became one of the most animated parts of the entire focus group discussion. These two

42 See Rein Voorman, "Gender Identity and Social Problems in Estonia," Lisa Fein, "Gendered Narratives and Narratives of Gender in Ukraine" and Marianne Kamp, "Expressing Gender in Uzbekistan: Data from Oral Histories and Focus Groups" in Dickinson, Fein and Kennedy, *Working Out Transition...*

examples can remind us that we should be attentive to how spatial variations might be associated with suppressed discourses of social transformation, made illegitimate by the terms of reigning hegemonies of nationalism or transition. Indeed, this may be one reason why men appear to use a spatial imagination more frequently, given that transition culture invites international comparisons to formulate prescriptions for social change and diagnoses of social problems. And men are more likely to speak in such abstract categories that facilitate the global references. This raises the third and final point about the spatial articulation of identity and problems.

*Spatial imaginations are not only about regional distinctions within a country, but also about the relationship of one's place to other places in the world*. International references are quite variably invoked, and cannot be predicted by nationality. Rather, it appears to be patterned by the degree to which a place is implicated in transition culture. Rural places are generally less likely to invoke international comparisons, but Estonian rural sites are more likely than Ukrainian or Uzbek communities. Border communities are more likely to invoke international questions too, of course, but whether they discuss the significance of boundaries in terms of barriers to their own movement, or whether the experience of other countries informs the assessment of their own is itself quite variable. Narvan men were quite likely to invoke the experience of other countries to critique the Estonian government's language policy. In this, they participate in transition culture's spatial imagination, but apparently in a different way than Estonians use it. Estonians use the West to normalize their own conditions, while Russians see the West as a much more complicated reference point. It is, potentially, a source of abnormality, a political intrigue that destroys the economic integration that ought to exist between Russia and Estonia. Ethnic Estonians apparently see the move away from Russian markets as itself a sign of accomplishment.[43]

Clearly the global imagination varies significantly in terms of an ethnic group's relationship to the Soviet past and a global/Western future. While the direction of this relationship may appear historically determined, with Estonians and Western Ukrainians being profoundly anti-Soviet and relatively pro-Western, and the Russian minority in all three sites being relatively pro-Soviet and suspicious of Western intentions, there is much more ambivalence about the global imagination than a nationalist framework would suggest. Indeed, to the extent we might integrate the global imagination with regional variations, we could attend to how space structures interpretations of the past with anticipations of the future. We might thereby find a way to limit the significance of nationalism in framing regional difference. Could the terms of transition culture be expanded so that it is less focused on the role of states and capital cities in structuring nations to enter globalized markets, and more resonant with local articulations?

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43 Mart Laar, "Estonia's Success Story," *Journal of Democracy* 7:1 (January 1996), pp. 96-99.

To illustrate this point, let us consider how the regional emphasis of Tallinn's Estonian men articulates more clearly than Tallinn's Russian men with the regional concerns of Narva and Sillamae. In the end, of course, the concerns of Tallinn's Estonian men do not attend to the plight of the Russian areas, but the Russians from Sillamae and Narva are aware of the problems for Estonians from poorer regions of the country. A greater focus on the commonalities of Russian speaking areas and southeast Estonian areas in the face of Tallinn's relative privilege, or of L'viv's and Donetsk's common problems in comparison to Kyiv's relative advantages, might reduce the salience of the national tensions. It might also expand the potentials of transition culture to implicate a wider variety of places into the global set of references that are the hallmark of transition talk. Further, to the extent that the regionally disadvantaged find reliable partners in the global network of transition culture, as the men of Sillamae have, the disadvantages of regional inequalities attending the departure from Soviet times might fade. But to the extent the West fails to win that respect, as in Moynak and Ivankiv, the desire and appeal of the Soviet past becomes ever greater. Local mobilization can be oriented toward a reincarnation of empire rather than the global integration that transition culture proclaims.

There are other regional differences that are hardly embedded in transition culture. Ferghana and Oleksandrivka face particular local problems and find little support for their efforts in local governmental officials. They are also not very likely to see global partners as important. The capital city is either corrupt or ineffective. In neither place, however, were practices of nationalist antagonism apparent. Solutions were not forthcoming, but neither were threats. Where local problems are ignored by global transition culture, nationalizing states or imperial memories, the outcome might very well be despondence.

Ferghana and Oleksandrivka were not yet despondent, at least in comparison to the women of Sillamae. The people of Ferghana and Oleksandrivka retained a critical capacity, perhaps because their sense of time and place was still, somehow, in between Soviet and post-Soviet times. For the women of Sillamae, however, the past is clearly gone, and the future is hardly apparent. In their depression, their locale is but a swamp. As they said,

> Elena: And even if we've written "unemployment" and all these other problems — they are problems, but just for us, personally. And my personal problems no longer interest me at all. I have stopped living as a human being. I only think what I must do for my children. My personal interests have died.... (later) I'm 33, and I have no life. Helen: I agree with Elena, we are just lying in a swamp. Nina: We have already outlived ourselves. Elena: Yes. We are only victims, now. Only through... We'll be like bridges to carry our children into the figure. That is, we are the sacrifice, we are practically not people. (3058-78; 3103-19).

The research agenda on space and region should thus not only attend to politically defined regions within countries, urban rural differences, urban networks or international comparisons. There should also be, I would suggest, a critical

element that seeks to cultivate transition culture's capacity to listen to those who are marginalized from the post-Soviet discussion of transition's course.[44] The information revolution so critical to the vision of a post-Soviet and global identity will realize its potential best when the localized despair, exemplified by the women of Sillamae, is part of the critical reformulation of transition culture's imagined future. The spatial articulation of identity and social issues is thus not only about when region inflects debate, but also about how the debate might be shifted by pluralizing our vision of the places in transformation.

44 For this theoretical emphasis, see Stephen K. White, *Political Theory and Postmodernism* (Cambridge: UK, 1991) and my review of it in *Critical Sociology* 19:2 (1992), pp.124-128.