Borderland spaces of identification and dis/location: Multiscalar narratives and enactments of Seto identity and place in the Estonian-Russian borderlands

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Abstract
This article explores the cultural politics of memory and the reconfiguration of commemorative landscapes as one of the principal arenas within which the interiority and exteriority of place and identity are being re-narrated, contested, and re-enacted by actors and institutions representing a wide range of scalar stances. We treat place and identity as mutually constituted, dynamically interactive discursive and practical categories of becoming, and identify borderlands as multiscalar sites of imminence, where the interiority and exteriority of place and identity are re-narrated and re-enacted. Using a multiscalar network approach, we focus on the actors engaged in the cultural politics of memory in the southern Russian-Estonian borderlands. We conclude that borderlands are central multiscalar nodes where power, place and identity intersect, where the interior and exterior not only of Setomaa and Seto-ness, but also of Estonia and Estonian-ness, Russia and Russian-ness, and Europe and European-ness are reconfigured.

Keywords: Place; identity; borderland; scale; memory; cultural politics.

Introduction: Beauty is in the eye of the beholder
In December 2004, Estonia’s new Euro coin was unveiled. Not surprisingly, the winning design featured the outline of the state (Figure 1). In explaining the choice, the designer commented that ‘There are only a few countries in Europe that have such an attractive and memorable contour as Estonia’ (Eesti Pank Press Release, 15 December 2004). In January 2005, however, Ilmar Vananum, a member of the Seto Congress Assembly of Elders, launched a
protest against the design, stating that ‘Petseri District (Pechory Rayon) should also be depicted on the Euro coin. The current border between Estonia and Russia is the border from soviet times. This is a crying injustice’ (informpskov.ru/neighbours/18347.html, 26 January 2005).

Narratives and enactments of Seto identity and place (Setomaa) have been centrally featured in Estonian-Russian borderland contestations over the interiority and exteriority of place and identity. Estonia’s nationalizing elites claim the borderlands currently incorporated into Russia as Pechory Rayon primarily on the basis of the 1920 Tartu Treaty and the political border delimited between Estonia and Russia at that time (Figure 2). This legal argument has been reinforced with an ethno-national claim: that the Treaty of Tartu border also delimited the eastern boundary of Setomaa, the homeland of the Seto people, who in turn are claimed as an integral part (an ethno-regional component) of the Estonian nation. On the other hand, nationalizing elites representing Russia claim Pechory Rayon as an integral part of ‘mother Russia’, and point to the Pechory Orthodox Monastery and Izborsk Fortress in particular as evidence both of the long-standing presence of Slavs in the area, and also of this region’s importance to understandings of Russia and Russian-ness. For their part, ‘Seto’ activists seek to construct a sociospatial imaginary of Setomaa and Seto-ness as a pre-historic, even primordial ethno-national homeland and identity in order to contest the current political border, which has had a devastating effect on the lives of self-identifying Setos living in the borderlands, especially those living on the Russian side of the border. Non-activist Setos living in the borderlands also engage in re-narrating and re-enacting their place and identity as they live out their
daily lives. Finally, actors and institutions representing a wide variety of transnational stances, particularly those associated with the European Union, have also been intimately involved in re-imagining the Estonian-Russian borderlands – both as the new line of defence in ‘Fortress Europe’, as the European gateway to Russia and ‘the East’, and as a new region of touristic consumption.

As the recent Estonian Euro coin decision and contestation indicate, the cultural politics of memory associated with the Estonian-Russian borderlands affects not only local everyday life, but also state and interstate socio-economic, political and cultural discourses and practices. This article explores the cultural politics of memory and the reconfiguration of commemorative landscapes in the Estonian-Russian borderlands as one of the principal arenas within which the interiority and exteriority of place and identity are being re-narrated and re-enacted by actors and institutions representing a wide range of scalar stances. Following from a discussion of place and identity as categories of discourse and practice, the power embedded within and working through sites of memory and commemoration, and the reconceptualization of borderlands as sites of imminence, we develop a multiscalar network approach in order to study the narratives and enactments of place and identity in the borderlands of post-socialist space. In the second part of the article, we employ this approach to study changes in the discourses and practices associated with interiorizing and exteriorizing ‘identity’ and ‘place’ (i.e. identification and dis/location processes) in the southern transborder region between Estonia and Russia, which have been reconfigured as Seto-ness and Setomaa since independence.

Reconceptualizing power, place and identity in the post-socialist borderlands

Most broadly, the present article engages with recent literature on the intersectionality of power, place and identity. Along with much of the latest work in sociology, geography and anthropology, we treat place and identity as mutually constituted, dynamically interactive, discursive and practical categories of becoming, which are (re)narrated, (re)configured, contested and re-enacted across a multiplicity of geographical scales (Massey 1994; Somers 1994; Billig 1995; Brah 1996; Brubaker 1996; Eley and Suny 1996; Hage 1996; Paasi 1996, 2002, 2003; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Cheah and Robbins 1998; Smith 1998, 1999; Wilson and Donnan 1998; Kaiser 2001, 2002; Edensor 2002; Balibar 2004; Nikiforova 2004;). Focusing attention on place and identity as mutually constituted discursive and practical categories of becoming offers a number of advantages over more traditional definitions.
First, and most generally, it rejects more essentialized, static, reified ways of thinking about both place and identity. The pitfalls associated with treating identity as a reified ‘category of analysis’ were recently made clear by Brubaker and Cooper (2000), who argue against the usage of ‘identity’ altogether in favour of ‘identification’, in order to highlight the process as opposed to the bounded construct, and also to direct attention towards the identifiers responsible for ‘identity-talk’ and ‘identity politics’. A similar reframing of the meaning of ‘place’ has occurred in geography (Pred 1984; Agnew 1987; Agnew and Duncan 1989; Massey 1994, 1995; Rose 1995; McDowell 1997, 1999; Paasi 2002, 2003; Staeheli 2003) and in anthropology (e.g., Gupta and Ferguson 1997), which has de-essentialized place, directing attention away from static, bounded land areas and towards the more dynamic ‘historically contingent processes’, relational networks of social interaction, and the sense of place, habitus, and structure of feeling that comprise the place-making, displacing and relocating processes associated with ‘place-ness’.

Second, this reconceptualization highlights the interactive relational setting through which identification and dis/location are narrated and enacted, and argues that the two are mutually constitutive and cannot be disentangled or uncoupled. Much of the literature on identity politics, and particularly nationalism, even if it now rejects the traditional binary framing of ‘western-territorial’ vs. ‘eastern-ethnic’, continues to conceive of ‘cultural’ and ‘territorial’ social identities as separable categories. At best, ‘place’ is incorporated as one more independent variable in a multivariate equation with ‘culture’ or ‘identity’ as the dependent variable (Kaiser 2001, 2002). Viewing both as mutually constitutive, dynamically interactive discursive and practical categories of becoming brings geography more completely back into the study of identification processes and identity politics. This accords much more fully with the way that both activists and non-activists narrate and perform their everyday social lives (Billig 1995; Paasi 1996; Edensor 2002). Indeed, it would be more accurate to speak of the ‘place-identities’ that constitute our social lives, and to study the processes of their reconfiguration (i.e., the reterritorialization of the social and the resocialization of the territorial) through timespace.

Third, this definition has the advantage of rejecting place and identity as reified categories of analysis without replacing them with equally reductive ‘categories of discourse’ or ‘categories of practice’. Discourses are understood here as sets of understandings, beliefs and bodies of knowledge about the way the world works, that determine what is true, what is good, what is real. Discourses are thus power-laden: they may be used by people to make sense of the world and their place in it; but they are also constructed to impose meaning on social
life, to bring the world into existence in a meaningful way. Brubaker and Cooper (2000, p. 4) follow Bourdieu in defining ‘categories of practice’ as ‘categories of everyday social experience, developed and deployed by ordinary social actors, as distinguished from the experience-distant categories used by social analysts’.

Much of the recent literature on identity and identity politics tends to follow either Foucault (1972, 1981), and privilege discourse over practice, or to follow Bourdieu (1977), and privilege practice over discourse. This is somewhat curious, since Foucault himself emphasised the sets of rules, procedures and practices that define, delimits and constrain discourse, rather than in the signs, symbols and codes of discourse themselves. Similarly, Bourdieu’s work has not been inattentive to discourse. As one of the most well-known examples of this, Brubaker’s advocacy of a shift towards viewing nations as ‘categories of practice’ plays down the role of discourse, and in the end undermines his ability to explain broad-based nationalistic behaviour. For example, in trying to explain why nationalism swept through Sarajevo, a city characterized as an ‘internationalized’ place whose population did not define itself in nationalistic terms, Brubaker concludes that violently contested ethno-nationalism is an ‘event’ that just happens, sweeping everyone up into the movement when the ‘right conditions’ converge (1996, pp. 20–21). Approaching nationalism in this way, one is left seeking to elaborate on ‘the conditions’ that will create ‘the happening’, rather than being able to say something more meaningful and direct about social contexts, identification processes and political mobilization and the behaviour of the actors themselves.

Viewing discourse and practice as mutually constitutive aspects of place and identity provides a much more satisfactory theoretical model for explaining why people act as they do. While Billig (1995) highlights the more institutionalized ways in which nationalism is subtly narrated or ‘flagged’ and enacted in our everyday lives, Edensor (2002) focuses more attention on popular culture and the more de-centred ways in which national identity is narrated and performed in daily discourses and practices. In his critique of resistance studies, Rose (2002) brings ‘text’ and ‘enactment’ together in a ‘performative style of systems’, which states that while all social life is fundamentally textual, texts only become meaningful through ‘enactment’, defined as ‘the material acts and gestures that make texts recognizable features of social life. Thus, enactment is the engine of a performative system. By actively determining texts, enactments continually endeavour to define the meanings, rules, and values that circulate in the unfolding potential of social life’ (Rose 2002, p. 391).

In her work to bring narrative analysis and social science research on identity together, Somers (1994) provides perhaps the best
explication of a narrative approach to identification processes, and the mutually constitutive relationship between identity narratives and behaviour.

The approach builds from the premise that narrativity and relationality are conditions of social being, social consciousness, social action, institutions, structures, even society itself ... While a social identity or categorical approach presumes internal stable concepts, such that under normal conditions entities within that category will act uniformly and predictably, the narrative identity approach embeds the actor within relationships and stories that shift over time and space (Somers 1994, p. 621, emphasis in original).

Somers relates social action, or how social identity is enacted, directly to the narrativity of identity itself, which provides the relational setting that tells people how to act.

A narrative identity approach assumes that social action can only be intelligible if we recognize that people are guided to act by the structural and cultural relationships in which they are embedded and by the stories through which they constitute their identities – and less because of the interests we impute to them. Whereas an interest approach assumes people act on the basis of rational means-end preferences or by internalizing a set of values, a narrative identity approach assumes people act in particular ways because not to do so would fundamentally violate their sense of being at that particular time and place (Somers 1994, p. 624, emphasis in original).

Our study investigates changes in the narratives and enactments used to configure the interiority and exteriority of ‘place’ and ‘identity’ in the borderlands of post-socialist space, and particularly in the southern transborder region between Estonia and Russia, where place and identity have been discursively and practically reconfigured as Setomaa and Seto. In order to do this, we focus attention on the cultural politics of memory, and the reconfiguration of the commemorative landscape that is narrated and performed by actors and institutions representing a wide range of scalar stances. A brief discussion of the cultural politics of memory and the meaning of borderlands follows.

The cultural politics of memory

The cultural politics of memory has become one of the most publicly contested battlegrounds on which the struggle over the interiority and
exteriority of place and identity is being waged in post-socialist space. By the cultural politics of memory, we refer to the power embedded and inscribed in the cultural discourses and practices of ‘memory work’. This includes the re-narration and re-enactment of the past through the reconfiguration of commemorative landscapes, encompassing new and reconstituted (or reinterpreted) monuments and museums; new constellations of cultural events and festivals; new presentations of the past in maps, school textbooks, tourist guidebooks, and other ‘texts’ such as official documents and speeches; new exhibits in museums; discourses of ‘authenticity’ regarding the architectural transformation of places (including architectural styles represented in and through museum sites); official and unofficial uses of sites of memory; and the local populations’ narrative emplotment and performance of identity in and through these sites of memory in everyday life (Cosgrove and Daniels 1988; Nora 1989; Duncan and Ley 1993; Johnson 1995; Kong and Yeo 1997; Cosgrove and Atkinson 1998; Azaryahu and Kellerman 1999; Bell 1999; Graham et al. 2000; Khazanov 2000; Crampton 2001; Edensor 2002; Forest and Johnson 2002; Luke 2002; Till 2003).7

The cultural politics of memory and the critical role it plays in re-narrations and re-enactments of place and identity are readily apparent throughout post-socialist space. As just one example of the power embedded in the cultural discourses and practices of ‘memory work’, the border conference at which this article was initially presented was held at a particular moment in timespace: in Tartu, Estonia on 2–3 February 2005, in order to commemorate the 85th anniversary of the Tartu Peace Treaty.8 The fact that Arnold Ruutel, the President of Estonia, deemed it important enough to come to Tartu and address the conference – and perhaps the equally important fact that no representative ‘Russian’ voices were present – reinforces the point that ‘memory work’ is a discursive and performative field of cultural politics. In addition, the firestorm created when Estonian nationalists erected a World War II monument in Lihula in 2004 depicting an Estonian soldier in German SS uniform, as well as the ongoing public debates over the Soviet Union’s ‘liberation’ and/or ‘occupation’ of the Baltic states and much of the rest of formerly Eastern Europe, waged not only in the press but also in and through war memorials and museums, serve as another clear contemporary reminder of the power working through the commemorative landscape to renarrate and re-enact place and identity in post-socialist space.9

The specific site for our investigation of the cultural politics of memory is the post-socialist borderlands, and more precisely the Estonian-Russian borderlands.10 Borderlands in general are conceived as ‘diaspora space’, which Brah defines as:
the intersectionality of diaspora, border, and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural and psychic processes... where multiple subject positions are juxtaposed, contested, proclaimed or disavowed... Diaspora space is the point at which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, or belonging and otherness, of “us” and “them” are contested... (D)iaspora space... is “inhabited” not only by those who have migrated and their descendants, but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous (Brah 1996, pp. 208–9).

Borderlands as diaspora space encompass all sites where the interior and exterior of place and identity are re-narrated, contested, and re-enacted. While for the purposes of this article, we develop a case study in the political borderlands between Russia and Estonia, the re-conceptualization of borderlands as diaspora space opens up a potentially wide array of alternative sites quite remote from literal political border spaces to comparable explorations of the intersectionality of power, place and identity.11

In addition, borderlands are not only zones of contestation where the interiority and exteriority of place and identity between ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘ours’ and ‘theirs’ are reconfigured. They are also spaces of becoming or zones of conjuncture, where self-identification and otherness are in dialogue with one another, where ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘ours’ and ‘theirs’ get challenged and jumbled up, where other-ness is mapped onto self, and self onto other-ness.

The border itself is of critical importance in these ongoing processes of identification and dis/location, since borders are narratives delimiting the parameters of place and identity (Newman and Paasi 1998). Borders are

arbitrary dividing lines that are simultaneously social, cultural and psychic; territories to be patrolled against those whom they construct as outsiders, aliens, the Others; forms of demarcation where the very act of prohibition inscribes transgression; zones where fear of the Other is the fear of the self; places where claims to ownership – claims to ‘mine’, ‘yours’ and ‘theirs’ – are staked out, contested, defended, and fought over (Brah 1996, p. 198).

While on the one hand borders may be seen as narratives and enactments used to stabilize the dividing line between the interior and exterior of place and identity, they are also the sites of resistance and contestation that continually destabilize and upend the established meanings and limits of place and identity (Balibar 2004). Beyond this, and in line with the view of borderlands as zones of conjuncture, borders are not only lines of division. They become the points of
imminence at which such conjunctures ‘take place’, where de- and re-territorialization of places and identities as conceived by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) continually occur.

Borderlands are the most logical sites in which to explore the cultural politics of memory and the reconfiguration of commemorative landscapes as an arena where the interior and exterior of place and identity are continually subjected to re-narration, contestation and re-enactment. And, as Balibar makes clear, borderlands are not only spaces in which the interiority and exteriority of localized ‘border identities’ are reconstituted; they are also where the interior and exterior of place and identity at state and interstate scales are re-narrated, re-enacted and reconfigured. Borderlands are not marginalized spaces in this regard, but rather are central nodes of power where place and identity across a multiplicity of geographical scales are made and unmade (Balibar 1998, 2004). The flip side of this is that all identity narratives and enactments are ‘border identities’.

This multiscalar reconfiguration of place and identity is especially visible in the case of the Estonian-Russian borderlands, since this is the site through which Estonia and Estonian-ness are narrated and delimited against Russia and Russian-ness, Estonia’s pre-eminent Other (Feldman 2001; Kuus 2002). The Estonian-Russian borderland derives added significance from the fact that transborder place-identity networks in Narva-Ivangorod in the north and Setomaa in the south have been dismantled by the creation of the political border. The reterritorialization and rescaling of place and identity narratives and enactments on both sides of the Estonian-Russian border since independence have created dramatic new place-identity disjunctures, dislocating borderlanders from the places that they perceive as home. Estonia’s accession to the EU, and the Europeanization of commemorative landscapes in the Estonian-Russian borderlands, has also contributed to the post-soviet interiorizing and exteriorizing discourses and practices of place and identity in Narva and Setomaa. New narratives of place and identity are also being created ‘from below’ by populations living in the Estonian-Russian borderlands, as they contest interiorizing and exteriorizing discourses and practices ‘from above’, and seek to re-emplot themselves into the reconfigured story lines of place. This borderland is therefore a particularly rich site in which to examine the new cultural politics of memory and the re-narration and re-enactment of place and identity in post-socialist space. However, it is by no means unique in this regard, and the processes so overtly on display in the Estonian-Russian borderlands are happening more subtly in every borderland, every ‘diaspora space’.
Modelling borderlands as contested zones of interiority and exteriority

Several conceptual models have appeared in recent years to analyse identity politics in post-socialist space. In this section, we highlight Brubaker’s triadic relational model of ‘nationalizing state’, ‘national minority’, and ‘external national homeland’, Smith’s ‘institutional arena of diaspora politics’ model, and then offer our own multiscalar network approach.\(^{12}\)

Brubaker’s effort during the 1990s to ‘reframe’ the study of nationalism hinged on reconceptualizing ‘nation’ not as a real entity to be analysed, but as a ‘category of practice’. This insight contributed greatly towards shifting nationalism studies away from ‘the nation’ and towards practices of institutionalizing nationhood, and also towards seeing ‘nation-ness’ as a contingent event that happens when the right conditions converge (Brubaker 1996, pp. 1–22).

In seeking to understand the new ‘national questions’ emerging in post-socialist space, Brubaker also developed a triadic relational model consisting of ‘national minorities, nationalizing states, and external national homelands’ (1996, pp. 55–76). In keeping with his reframing of nationalism, the three components of this model were conceived ‘not (as) fixed entities but (as) variably configured and continuously contested political fields’ that interact with and affect each other (Brubaker 1996, p. 60). National minority is defined as ‘a family of related yet mutually competing stances’ that features open claims to membership in a subordinate ethnic nation, public demands for official recognition, and pronouncements of collective ethnocultural and ethnopolitical rights. Nationalizing state is also defined as a set of stances that includes the goal of creating a nation-state for a particular ethnocultural nation where one does not yet exist, by promoting the state-nation to a position of cultural, economic, political and demographic primacy (Brubaker 1996, p. 63). Finally, external national homeland ‘stances’ emphasize ‘shared nationhood across the boundaries of state and citizenship and the idea that this shared nationhood makes the state responsible for ethnic co-nationals who live in other states and possess other citizenships’ (Brubaker 1996, pp. 66–67).\(^{13}\)

This more dynamic and interactive framework provides a clear advance over previous models for understanding and predicting reconfigurations of power, place and identity in the borderlands of post-socialist states. However, in applying his model to the breakup of Yugoslavia, Brubaker himself slips back into using essentialized identity categories such as ‘the Croatian Serbs’ with little effort to probe the internal, more localized sociospatial networks through which place, power and identity were being re-narrated and re-enacted in Croatia during the 1990s. One of the major drawbacks with the
model is its use of the category ‘national minority’, which is frequently a construct of actors and institutions representing the ‘nationalizing state’ and ‘external national homeland’, rather than a ‘political field’ or set of political stances developed by and made resonant among the population supposedly bounded by such identifiers. In the Estonian context, this is particularly problematic in the case of ‘the Russians’ or ‘Russian-speakers’, but also in the case of ‘the Setos’ examined below.\textsuperscript{14} The model’s inclination to essentialize is not limited to the category ‘national minority’. Categorizing a state as either a ‘nationalizing state’ or an ‘external national homeland’ instead of exploring the variety of actors and institutions representing ‘the state’ in their discourses and practices related to reconfiguring the interiority and exteriority of place and identity in the end limits the utility of the triadic model.

Additionally, the triadic relational model ignores the impact that interstate actors and institutions have on the relationship between ‘national minorities’, ‘nationalizing states’ and ‘external national homelands’ (Smith and Wilson 1997; Smith 1999; Korhonen 2004). Representatives of the OSCE, the EU, NATO and the UN have all been especially engaged in issues such as ‘minority’ rights, citizenship laws, ethnic migration and the treatment accorded refugees and forced migrants. So, while Brubaker’s reframing of nationalism and his triadic relational model are significant improvements over previous conceptual frameworks that tended to treat nations as essentialized ‘categories of analysis’ and that also tended to view ‘interethnic relations’ as constituted only through the interaction between ‘nationalizing state’ practices and ‘national minorities’, the triadic model is nonetheless limited in scope and provides unsatisfactory explanations for why nationalist mobilizations occur when and where they do.\textsuperscript{15}

In his research investigating the meaning of the category ‘Russian diaspora’ and the potential for socio-political mobilization among members of this community, Smith provides a refinement of Brubaker’s triadic model that addresses several of the concerns noted above (Smith and Wilson 1997; Smith 1999). Smith begins by problematizing the ‘Russian diaspora’ as a singular category, questioning not only the existence of a unified Russian identity, but also the use of the term ‘diaspora’ to describe those labelled as Russians living outside the Russian Federation.\textsuperscript{16} Utilizing Brah’s concept of ‘diaspora space’ discussed above, he explores the changing sociospatial contours in which ‘Russian’ and titular national identities are constructed and contested. Smith extends Brubaker’s model to include not only ‘the nationalizing state’ and ‘external national homeland’, but also ‘transnational political actors’. 
These relational dimensions of “diasporic space” are encapsulated, in turn, in the subject positions or homeland stances of the political institutions of “the ethnic patron”, “the nationalizing regime” and “the West”. Such positions, it is suggested, are formed out of what Bourdieu calls habitus, that is, a system of embedded dispositions, anticipations and expectations that help structure the way in which political institutions construe the socio-cultural and political reality that they confront (Smith 1999, p. 504).

In addition, Smith’s ‘institutional arena of diasporic politics’ provides a much more refined and contextualized analysis of Russian ethno-national identity, which he examines in particular geographic settings. Although an improvement on Brubaker, there are limitations to Smith’s model. First, like Brubaker, each of the ‘actors’ in the arena becomes reified or trapped within a one-dimensional political stance (e.g., states are treated either as ‘ethnic patron’ or ‘nationalizing regime’). The most serious drawback is his emphasis on the power of political actors and institutions operating at the state and interstate scales to construct diaspora spaces. This model plays down the role of political, cultural and social activists representing subaltern groups in narrating and enacting identities and in mobilizing popular support for these sociocultural and political subject positions or stances. When he does examine elites that present themselves as spokespersons for marginalized communities, Smith looks only at political actors and their engagement with nationalizing regimes, ethnic patron states, and transnational actors. In the end, explaining and predicting the potential for social, cultural and political mobilization around diaspora political stances is hampered by the limited degree to which place and identity narratives and enactments of the population to be mobilized are incorporated into the ‘institutional arena of diasporic politics’.

Borderland spaces of identification and dis/location: A multiscalar network approach

Our approach to studying borderland spaces of identification and dis/location treats borderlands as multiscalar sites of imminence, as zones of contestation and spaces of becoming where actors representing a multiplicity of scalar stances engage in the re-narration and re-enactment of place and identity. This multiscalar network approach offers a further refinement to Smith, in that it expands the ‘institutional arena’ to include not only state-scale and transnational actors, but also local-scale social actors engaged in the narration and enactment of place and identity. We look not only at how political elites interact with one another, but examine the ways in which
political, social and cultural activists and the non-activist population in borderlands narrate and perform their place-identities in dialogue with actors representing a wide variety of scalar stances. In addition, most of the research on ‘national minorities’ in post-socialist space has emphasized political movements, political stances, and membership in or voting for particular political parties to the exclusion of how everyday socio-cultural life is narrated, constituted, and lived. We privilege the cultural politics of memory and the reconfiguration of commemorative landscapes in part as a way of redressing this imbalance.

Our multiscalar network approach is informed not only by the narrative identity and relational setting framework developed by Somers (1994), but also by Brah’s (1996) treatment of diaspora space as a point of imminence where border, diaspora and dis/location intersect. Following Brubaker and Cooper (2000), this approach also stresses the social processes associated with identification, rather than the more problematic ‘identity-making’ constructivist models that all too easily slip into the reification of identity categories. Our emphasis on the cultural politics of memory also fits well with more recent understandings of national identification as constituted through banal, everyday life (Billig 1995) and as founded on not only the spectacular performances of reflexive, officially staged high culture, but also, and more importantly, grounded in the mundane, unreflexive enactments of popular culture that comprise our daily lives (Edensor 2002).

Sites of commemoration, as places that draw together both the official discourses and practices of national identity, popular cultural narratives and enactments of everyday life, and transnational interests, have themselves become highly visible symbolic multiscalar networks through which the interiority and exteriority of place and identity are interactively renarrated and re-enacted. In the remainder of this article, we explore the cultural politics of memory in Setomaa, and contestations over the interiority and exteriority of place and identity that are re-narrated and re-enacted in and through reconfigurations of the commemorative landscape in this post-soviet borderland.

**Setomaa**

‘Estonia’ as ‘nationalizing state’ and ‘external national homeland’

As noted above, narratives and enactments of Seto identity and place (i.e., **Setomaa**) have been centrally featured in Estonian-Russian borderland contestations over the interiority and exteriority of state-scale place and identity. Estonia’s nationalizing elites claim the borderlands currently incorporated into Russia on the basis of the
1920 Treaty of Tartu (Figure 2), and also on an ethno-territorial claim to all of Setomaa, whose eastern boundary is narrated as the Tartu Treaty border. Along with maps and atlases produced in Estonia showing both the soviet-era border and the Tartu Treaty line (e.g., *Eesti Atlas 1996*), maps of Setomaa were also published in Tallinn and Tartu that included ‘Petserimaa’ as the eastern half of Setomaa (e.g., *Setomaa-Petserimaa 1998; Setomaa Setoland 2002*). Maps of Setomaa, with place names written in Seto, with cultural and archaeological monuments, churches, and museums clearly marked, and with historical texts, lists of cultural folk heroes, and photos of cultural landscapes juxtaposed with photos of the border, serve to further not only the political and geopolitical stances of Estonia’s nationalizing elites vis-à-vis the political border with Russia, but also the cultural and political stances of Seto activists seeking to construct a socio-spatial imaginary of Setomaa and Seto-ness as a pre-historic, even primordial ethno-national homeland and identity. Seto activists do this to challenge and undermine the current political border between Estonia and Russia, which has had a dramatically disruptive effect on the lives of self-identifying Setos – particularly those living on the Russian side of the border. As such, this political narrative and enactment of Seto identity aligns well with Estonian geopolitical interests, and in this regard actors and institutions representing Estonia are narrating and enacting the state in the role of ‘external national homeland/ethnic patron’ (Brubaker 1996, pp. 66–67; Smith 1999). Through their cultural and political stance in support of Setos in Russia and claims to Petseri district as part of Estonia, those enacting the ethnic patron role seek to interiorize not only the land of Petserimaa, but also Seto-ness within Estonia and Estonian-ness.

From the vantage point of the dual roles played by ‘Estonia’ as both ‘external national homeland/ethnic patron’ and ‘nationalizing state’, Setomaa and Seto-ness exist as both the interior and exterior of Estonia and Estonian-ness. On the one hand, a strong rhetorical, symbolic claim to all of Setomaa and ‘the Setos’ as integral parts of Estonia and Estonian-ness is being made. This is done not only through geopolitical and cartographic border narratives, but also through a wide variety of socio-economic and cultural programmes that support Seto enactments of identity not only on the Estonian side of the border, but also throughout Petseri district. Direct financial support through a pension fund for self-identifying Setos living on the Russian side of the border, as well as support for Seto cultural exhibits, Seto cultural events, and financial support for the Estonian language school in Petseri all work to interiorize Seto-ness and Seto places on the Russian side of the border. Not surprisingly, most of these programmes and support are run by Estonia’s Interior Ministry, institutionally interiorizing Setos and Petserimaa as well.
Estonia has also extended citizenship to residents of Petserimaa who were citizens of interwar Estonia (and their descendants), including not only self-identifying Setos but also ethnic Russians and others who lived in the region when it was part of independent Estonia. Beyond this, Estonia’s state-scale officials and border guards turn a blind eye to the fact that most self-identifying Setos in Petserimaa hold dual citizenship both in Russia and in Estonia, even though this is technically illegal. Estonia’s support for Seto narratives and enactments of identity in Estonian Setomaa, including funding for cultural museums, community cultural centres, cultural festivals “support” for the Setomaa newspaper and numerous additional elements in the Seto commemorative landscape also reinforce Estonia’s role as ethnic patron of Setos in Russia, since many of these sites of memory and identity narratives and enactments are designed to interiorize ‘the Setos’ of Petserimaa in a unified sociospatial network with Estonian Setomaa and Estonia.

On the other hand, Estonia’s political stance as ‘nationalizing state’ has tended to foreground the security threat posed by Russia and Russians living across the border as the Other against which Estonia and Estonian-ness are defined (Feldman 2001; Kuus 2004). This has worked to materially exteriorize the place of Petserimaa, particularly through the hardening of the political border which has made transborder connections much more difficult. Most of the younger generation of self-identifying Setos from Petserimaa live and work in Estonia, but in the past were able to return to their parents’ home on a regular basis to help out on the family farm. Most of those who remain in Russia are elderly, and can no longer run the farms on their own. The border and visa requirements make it much more difficult for the younger generation to return, forcing many self-identifying Setos to leave the farm when they can no longer keep it going, and to move to Estonia. As a consequence, Petserimaa has been depopulated of its Seto population. The Estonian government created the Seto Program mainly to provide a fund for the resettlement of Setos ‘caught on the wrong side of the border’, a clear institutional statement regarding the way in which Petserimaa has been exteriorized from Estonia, even while self-identifying Setos living there continue to be treated as part of the interior of Estonia and Estonian-ness. The contradictory interiorizing/exteriorizing stances are not lost on those in Estonia’s Interior Ministry attempting to administer the Seto Program. According to one spokesperson,

A sense of identity is very important; it is the focus of the Seto Program through support for folk festivals, special days, passing traditions on to children. The Education Ministry is also involved in this . . .
The Interior Ministry shouldn’t be spending money in Russia, but the Foreign Ministry doesn’t want to take this Program on. The money is being spent on inappropriate things such as bribes at the border, and there is little accountability for the funds (Interview conducted in Tallinn, summer 2002).

Actors representing Estonia’s political stance as ‘nationalizing state’ have worked primarily to interiorize Setomaa and Seto-ness as they are narrated and enacted on the Estonian side of the border. Prior to the mid-1980s, Seto-ness was treated derisively in Estonian popular culture, as pre-modern, backward, rural, unintelligent and lazy. As a consequence of this, those so labelled felt ashamed, and many tried to hide their Seto-ness when they went to more nationalized Estonian places like Tartu and Tallinn. In this sense, before the 1980s Setomaa and Seto-ness were viewed as external to Estonia and Estonian-ness.

Beginning with perestroika, and shifting decisively after 1991, Seto-ness was re-narrated within Estonian-ness – both through official channels and within popular Estonian national culture – as something to be proud of. Since independence, Estonian political and cultural elites have increasingly worked to interiorize Setomaa and Seto-ness within Estonian popular culture. Currently, as noted above, the Estonian state has actively promoted the reconfiguration of the commemorative landscape in southeastern Estonia to highlight the Seto-ness of place and identity. Border signs of Setomaa have been placed alongside district boundaries throughout the region to demarcate a Seto homeland. Seto cultural museums and community centres have been built or expanded throughout the region. Images of Seto leelo folksingers are prominently featured in Estonian tourism brochures, and Estonians make up by far the largest tourist market for Seto culture.

The Estonian national interiorizing of Seto-ness has taken characteristics that were once looked down upon, and converted them into positive values. Now, Estonians come to rural Setomaa to get away from the ‘artificiality’ of urban life and get back in touch with ‘their roots’. Setomaa and Setos are now imagined in archaic terms as ‘the way Estonia and Estonians used to be’, and nostalgic tourists come to return to the Estonian past, to a simpler time and a simpler place. In this sense, Setomaa and Seto-ness have not only been relocated to the interior of Estonia and Estonian-ness, they have been placed at the core of narratives defining what it truly means to be Estonian. Nevertheless, both Setomaa and Seto-ness have been dislocated temporally, exteriorized from ‘modern’ Estonia and consigned to narrate and perform a place and identity imagined from the pre-modern past.
Narratives and enactments of Seto place and identity

Cultural and political activism among self-identifying Setos increased dramatically during the 1990s, largely in response to the disruptive impact of the political border and the exteriorizing of Petserimaa. Seto political activists in Estonia formed the Seto Congress, which declared Setos a nation, narratively exteriorizing Seto identity from Estonian-ness by rhetorically placing it on a co-equal ‘national’ plane (V Seto Kongress 2000, p. 79). Nonetheless, the same Seto political activists continued to narrate Seto identity and Setomaa as part of the interior of Estonia-ness (at least in a civic national sense) and Estonia, and pressed for the removal of the interstate ‘boundary control line’ and the return of Petserimaa to Estonia (Kolmas Seto Kongress 1994, pp. 121–122). They were effective in lobbying actors representing Estonia for the creation of the Seto Program, which as noted above provided funding both for cultural projects promoting Seto identity, and for the resettlement of Setos from Petserimaa to Estonia. Seto political and cultural activists also worked in concert with Estonian government officials to reconfigure the borderlands as a Seto commemorative landscape (i.e., as Setomaa), and secured funding for cultural museums and community centres, cultural festivals, the production of tourism booklets, brochures, and maps, the Setomaa newspaper, Setomaa border signs, etc.

Within the self-identifying Seto community, activists and non-activists have contested the meaning of Seto place and identity. As just one example of this, at one level Seto cultural museums throughout the region narrate Seto everyday life (social, cultural, economic, architectural) as it is imagined to have been during the interwar period of Estonian independence. Among the different museums, however, contested representations of Seto-ness are evident, with Obinitsa presenting Seto village life in Obinitsa (i.e., a more localized image of Seto-ness), while Varska Farm Museum was designed explicitly to present Seto architectural styles, cultural and socio-economic artifacts and practices from throughout Setomaa, in order to create a museum that represents one overarching sociospatial imaginary of Seto-ness (i.e., a nationalizing project). On the Russian side of the border, the Seto museum in Sigova is also a farm museum, created with funding from Izborsk fortress museum (and indirectly from the Russian state), which owns the Seto museum. This museum, by way of contrast to the one in Varska, was a working farm until it was donated to Izborsk during the 1990s, and the material possessions of the farm family were put on display, as an ‘authentic’ representation of how ‘Setos really lived’. The museum staff in Sigova contrast the ‘authenticity’ of their museum with the recently constructed, artificially contrived, and therefore ‘inauthentic’ farm museum in Varska.
In turn, the staff at each of these three museums all agree that the Seto Tourist Farm recently built in Meremae is truly ‘inauthentic’. Similarly, the cultural activists in each centre of Seto identity create their own sets of Seto cultural enactments that express both the distinctiveness of the locality, and also more geographically expansive notions of Seto-ness. Many centres have their own leelo folk-singing choirs, and these compete with one another at cultural events, and perhaps more importantly compete for cultural tourists as well. At the Varska Farm Museum, Seto arts and crafts from all over Setomaa are collected, studied and taught to a younger generation of Seto activists. While some cultural events are celebrated locally, others, and especially Seto Kingdom Days, are designed to travel around Setomaa and are staged annually in different locations in order to help stitch the entire homeland and identity together. All these sites of memory, and several others as well, work together to reconfigure the commemorative landscape of the borderlands as a place of Seto-ness, filling in the space of Setomaa with Seto cultural narratives and enactments, even while each site contests the others’ narratives and enactments of what it truly means to be Seto.

Activist and non-activist self-identifying Setos with farms on the Russian side of the border narrate and perform their place and identity in highly localized terms. Most of those that we interviewed rejected the idea that their homeland is all of Setomaa, and instead spoke about their Seto-ness as constituted within the boundaries of the villages and the old collectives on which their farms were located. Most of these self-identifying Setos narrate their social and cultural identity networks in terms that are inclusive of local ‘Russians’, and so present a highly complex image of the interior and exterior of place and identity. Most of those that we interviewed spoke of this localized sense of place and identity in highly emotional terms, and claimed that their place-identity as Setos had been destroyed by the political border, which cut them off from relatives, churches, and the gravesites of ancestors now located on the other side of the border. Yet few expressed a desire to leave for Estonia, even for other parts of Setomaa, even to be reunited with their children, since their place-identity is emplotted in the *habitus* of their localized homelands.

During these interviews on the Russian side of the border, we frequently heard stories of migration and death. In the words of one Seto farmer interviewed in summer 2002, ‘Some of the elderly Setos have tried to move to Estonia to be with their kids. But they’ve had a very hard time adjusting to life in Estonia, because they’re leaving the only place they’ve ever known. Many who’ve tried to resettle have died’. The story that most told was of a Seto friend or neighbour who recently moved to Estonia, and who died almost immediately after resettling. This narrative of migration and death is also a story self-
identifying Setos in Russia tell each other, in order to discourage further migration, which is eroding the Seto sociocultural networks through which everyday life and self-identification are enacted. According to this interpretation, when Setos leave, the Seto-ness of Petserimaa dies with them. With fewer and fewer of the older generation of self-identifying Setos remaining on the Russian side of the border, a more pronounced sense of Seto dislocation is expressed by those left behind, such that Seto-ness itself has been exteriorized from half of the Seto homeland, even while Seto cultural narratives and enactments are increasingly a part of the reconfigured commemorative landscape in Petserimaa. The displays of Seto-ness found in museums in Pechory and Pskov are collected not to re-narrate and re-enact Seto-ness as a living place-identity as they are on the Estonian side of the border, but rather to preserve and exhibit artifacts from a lost ethno-cultural community.

'Russia' as 'nationalizing state' and 'ethnic patron'

As in the case of Estonia, the actors and institutions representing Russia, and their role in interiorizing and exteriorizing place and identity in the southern part of the Estonian-Russian borderlands have been complex. As part of a geopolitical stance of interiorizing Pechory Rayon as an integral part of the Russian homeland, political and cultural elites presenting ‘Russia’ as a ‘nationalizing state’ have also reconfigured the commemorative landscape as part of a cultural politics of memory, in an effort to highlight the Russian-ness of the contested borderlands. The primary sites of memory in this regard are Izborsk Fortress, which dates to 862 and so marks an early Slavic presence in Pechory, and Pechory Monastery which is re-narrated as a symbolic node demarcating the political and cultural boundary of Russian-ness and Orthodoxy.

Yet Russia has also promoted Seto-ness and Setomaa in a number of ways, and interiorizing/Russianizing Pechory Rayon has not simultaneously led to an exteriorizing of Seto place-identity narratives and enactments. First, as mentioned above, Russian funding through the Izborsk Fortress Museum was used to help create the Seto museum in Sigova, and funds have continued to support the purchase of Seto artifacts for the museum, to pay the staff, and to help pay for the construction of additional buildings at the site. In addition, as part of the geopolitical struggle with Estonia over the discursive interiorizing and exteriorizing of Pechory/Petserimaa and Seto-ness, Russian state officials commissioned an ethnographic study of ‘the Setos’, and concluded that they are a separate and distinct nationality, and so are deserving of their own census category. Of course, this was done primarily to blunt Estonia’s claims to the contested border zone as
part of Estonia and to Seto-ness as an integral part of the Estonian ethnic nation. It was also done to demonstrate Russia’s tolerance and support for ethnic pluralism, at a time when Estonia was undergoing serious scrutiny in the West over its exclusionary treatment of Russian-ness. In this sense, Russian officials narrated and enacted Russia as ‘ethnic patron’ not only of ‘the Setos’ but also and perhaps more significantly of ‘the Russians’ living in Estonia. As a result, self-identifying Setos for the first time were able to declare and have their identity recorded as ‘Seto’ during Russia’s last population census. Thus, while Seto identity is narrated as exterior to Russian-ness, it is treated as an identity ‘in place’, i.e., one that belongs within multicultural Rossiya.

Even with these interiorizing discourses and practices, many self-identifying Setos have left the borderlands of Russia, as we noted above. Homes have been left vacant, with owners or their children returning only on rare occasions in an effort to maintain the family property. Those that remain on farms in Russia’s borderlands are elderly, and it was not uncommon to interview farm households that consisted of a woman in her sixties, and her mother in her eighties. Not surprisingly, mortality rates among this population are quite high.

As those narrating and enacting a Seto sense of place and identity disappear from the border regions of Pechory Rayon, the borderlands are being repopulated, in part, by self-identifying Cossacks, who come to enact their symbolic and socio-historic border identity in a place that is narrated as ‘insecure’ (Nikiforova 2005). In the words of one Cossack farmer interviewed during the summer of 2003, ‘If there is a border, there should be Cossacks. To stand on the border is a duty of every Orthodox Cossack … We appeared here when borders appeared. We came here not to scare Estonians, but to live on the border. In the unlikely event that this border no longer exists, we will move to another border, maybe to the border with China.’ The growing ‘Cossack’ presence in this and other borderlands of the Russian Federation is only partially supported by the Russian government itself, and represents part of an internally contested set of interiorizing and exteriorizing discourses and practices of Russian-ness in Russia’s borderlands.

Transnational actors and institutions

Transnational actors and institutions have also actively engaged in the reconfiguration of Setomaa as a commemorative landscape, and have been involved in the contested discourses of interiority and exteriority of place and identity in this southern part of the Estonian-Russian borderlands. This involvement is clearly interactive, with transnational actors drawn into the region both by political elites representing
Estonia, and also by Seto political activists seeking to ‘jump up scale’ and use transnational connections and status in order to empower themselves in their negotiations with the state over the political border with Russia and the fate of Seto-ness in Petserimaa. Seto political activists joining the Congress of Finno-Ugric Peoples, seeking to attain the official status of an ‘unrepresented people’ at the UN, and their efforts to bring members of the European Commission on Minority Rights out to the border in order to gain political leverage in their negotiation with the Estonian state, are clear examples of Seto scale jumping. However, they have had little success in ‘softening’ the political border and re-interiorizing Petserimaa and the self-identifying Setos living there as part of a unified Seto place and identity.

Of the transnational actors and institutions, the EU has been particularly active in border questions and the reconfiguration of cultural narratives and enactments in Setomaa, reflecting the fact that this is also the EU’s new borderland, where the interior and exterior of Europe and European-ness are also being constructed and contested (Balibar 2004). Primarily, the EU has played a major role in reconfiguring Setomaa as a commemorative landscape of Seto-ness through PHARE and more recently through the EU structural funds, which serve as important sources of investment capital. Since the political border devastated the main economic practices in the region, logging and agriculture, by severing producer from consumer markets, the local economy has ‘mined’ its other main resource base: Seto culture. Both PHARE and now the EU structural funds have been involved in helping to fund a number of Seto cultural development projects, from tourist books, brochures and films of local Seto enactments of identity, to cultural museums, to the infrastructure needed in order to help bring tourists to the region. Cultural tourism has become the number one ranked economic activity throughout Estonian Setomaa, and the region is narrated and marketed primarily as a place in which to consume Seto-ness. In this sense, the reconfiguration of the Estonian borderlands as a Seto commemorative landscape, as Setomaa, is in part at least a reflection of the Europeanization of the Estonian-Russian borderlands.

However, this is not a top-down reconfiguration originating in Brussels or even in Tallinn. Most of the projects supported by the EU are initiatives launched by Seto political and cultural activists themselves. One example is the tea house that recently opened at the Varska Farm Museum. During the period of construction, a sign was posted at the site stating that the tea house was being built with EU support. These signs are found throughout Estonia and the accession states, and are one visual element in the Europeanization of these new borderlands of the EU; narrating these sites/sights as part of the EU’s interior. In Varska, there was quite a bit of resentment expressed over
this sign, since locals felt that they had done all the hard work of coming up with the idea for the tea house, writing the proposal, identifying partners, and lobbying for support, yet the EU through its sign was claiming all the credit.37 In this case, the locals continued to place themselves and Varska outside the EU, and narrated an ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ relationship, even though they had received EU funding for their project. This specific exteriorizing stance was repeated throughout the region, as political and cultural activists spoke about applying for EU funding, their fears of not knowing what ‘they’ (the EU) would support, and their concerns about the transition from PHARE to EU structural funds, which is also a transition from the exterior to the interior of the EU. The fact that Setomaa is now in the interior of the EU, a part of Europe, has done little to allay these exterior sentiments and fears.

Two additional concerns about the Europeanization of Setomaa were expressed during interviews conducted among activists and non-activist publics in the region. First, and of greatest concern, was the impact that the coming of the EU was having on the political border with Russia. Most viewed the fact that this was the border of the EU, ‘the border of Europe’, in negative terms, and saw the Europeanization of the border as a process that would make it even more difficult to sustain Seto identity in Petserimaa. The shift from visa-less border crossing to visa requirements, and concerns about the continued availability of free visas are at least partially viewed as the consequence of the Europeanization of the borderlands. For their part, Estonian political elites seeking to shift the blame for the hardening of the border ‘up scale’ have narrated this as a requirement of membership in the EU. The EU’s use of the political border between Estonia and Russia to help fix and stabilize the meaning of Europe and European-ness has worked more in concert with Estonia in its role as ‘nationalizing state’ seeking to seal the border against Russia as Other, than it has been aligned with Seto narratives and enactments of place and identity that seek to interiorize Petserimaa and so ‘soften’ or erase the political border (Berg and Ehin 2002, pp. 1–2).

The second concern relates to narrating and performing Seto identity for external audiences, and the impact that the increasingly Europeanized touristic marketing of Seto-ness and Setomaa will have on culture, place and identity. In the words of one resident from the region, ‘Setomaa is becoming a fairyland where tourists can come to see the quaint Setos and the way things used to be. Is there any sense in preserving it (Setomaa) anymore? Can it, should it only exist as a tourist fairyland?’38 However, our questions about the impact of the Europeanized and Estonianized ‘tourist gaze’ (Urry 1990) on Seto narrations and enactments of place and identity were met for the most part with ambivalence. Political and cultural activists were more
concerned with the fact that they wanted particular cultural events, performances, and sites of memory funded because of their importance to Seto identity, and complained that the EU would only fund projects that were economically sound, projects that were explicitly geared towards an external tourist market. There was also some concern voiced by Seto political activists that Estonian state officials were marketing images of Seto-ness in tourist brochures for their own economic benefit, without asking for permission. And there were even more vocal concerns expressed about the limited amount of money from cultural tourism that actually ended up staying in Setomaa.

But beyond this, there was little explicit concern voiced about the impact of tourist expectations on local enactments of cultural identity. Instead, there was a great deal of enthusiasm throughout the region for promoting images of Seto-ness to wider audiences, happiness that others were interested in Seto culture, and high status – even among members of the younger generation – attached to enacting a Seto identity. During a hot summer afternoon, we interviewed a group of young leelo folksingers in Obinitsa. They had just performed for one busload of tourists and were waiting for the next group to arrive from Tallinn. They were clearly enjoying this moment in the spotlight. I asked them what they would be doing if there weren’t tourists coming, if they didn’t have to be in Seto folk costumes performing for outsiders. Some said that they would be down at the lake swimming with friends, or engaged in other typical summer activities. However, others said that they would be practising their folksongs and dances, and one young woman responded that she would be at the community centre ‘waiting for the next bus’ to arrive.

Conclusions

The interiority and exteriority of place and identity in the southern part of the Estonian-Russian borderland have been narrated and enacted by Estonian officials presenting the state as both ‘external national homeland/ethnic patron’ and ‘nationalizing state’, by Russian officials presenting Russia as ‘nationalizing state’, but also as supporter and promoter of Seto-ness, by transnational actors and institutions, and particularly the EU, by Seto activists enacting Seto-ness and Setomaa as a transborder national minority and homeland, and by self-identifying Seto (as well as self-identifying local Russian, Cossack and Estonian) non-activists living their everyday lives in the borderlands. The borderland serves as a multiscalar site of imminence – a zone of contestation and a space of becoming or conjuncture – where the interiority and exteriority of place and identity are interactively and iteratively re-narrated and re-enacted. Within this
borderland space of identification and dis/location, actors representing a multiplicity of scalar stances are reconfiguring the interior and exterior not only of Setomaa and Seto-ness, but also of Estonia and Estonian-ness, Russia and Russian-ness, and Europe and European-ness. Borderlands are central nodes where the intersections of power, place and identity are made visible. As both zones of contestation and spaces of becoming, borderlands are fundamental sites in the multi-scalar reconfiguration of the sociospatial imaginary, and far from disappearing in a borderless world, their number and significance are increasing markedly, not only throughout post-socialist space but in the increasingly fragmented, ruptured place-identities of contemporary timespace.

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Notes

1. While Russia uses Pechory to identify the border region and city, Estonia uses Petseri—the Estonian name used during the interwar period. Petserimaa refers to the border zone currently in Russia that was part of southeastern Estonia during the interwar period of independence. The term Setomaa has been used to refer both to ‘the Seto’ border districts in Estonia and to Petserimaa as a whole (all of the shaded area in Figure 2), or alternatively just to the border districts currently in Estonia. The political border established between the Estonian and Russian union republics during the soviet era, with minor revisions, is the political border that Russian and Estonian foreign ministers agreed to in a treaty signed 18 May 2005. At the time of writing, the revisions made to the language of the treaty by Estonia’s parliament – which included the incorporation of the Tartu Peace Treaty as a foundational document – have been rejected by Russia.

2. Brubaker and Cooper add ‘self-representation, commonality, connectedness and groupness’ as the self-referential and relational aspects normally also associated with identity, and argue for unpacking these different categories of practice in order to come to a

3. On the concept of *habitus*, see Pierre Bourdieu (1977). Agnew's *Place and Politics* (1987) most fully explores this aspect of "sense of place," which he also relates to Raymond Williams's highly evocative notion of 'structure of feeling.'

4. There is no agreement on the definition of discourse within the social sciences, nor any clearly delineated border between 'discourse' and 'narrative'. For example, the hierarchy of narratives deployed by Somers (1994) is comparable to the hierarchy of discourses discussed in Foucault (1981). Nonetheless, narrative is generally used to refer to the story-form a discourse may take, a particularly powerful form in that most history—from the grand narratives of great leaders and events to the personal life histories that people use to tell themselves who they are and where they belong—is conceived in narrative form, with plot line, beginning, middle and end. See White (1987).


6. See Brubaker and Cooper (2000, pp. 11–12) for a critique of Somers's use of 'identity'. In our work, we prefer to explore the narratives and enactments of identity, rather than treat identity as something that is constituted through narratives and enactments.

7. This is truly a vast literature, and we have done no more than provide a sampling of recent literature to give the reader a sense of the topical and geographical range covered in the research on memory and commemoration.


9. The cultural politics of memory associated with the occupation and liberation discourses and practices in Estonia and Russia is the subject of a forthcoming paper.

10. Our broader study includes both Narva-Ivangorod and Setomaa, but in this article we focus attention on Setomaa. This is the second in a series of articles, and a book planned from this research. See also Nikiforova (2005).

11. Paasi (2002, p. 807) treats boundaries similarly as 'not only at the edges of regions, but . . . found everywhere within them, in innumerable practices and discourses . . .'

12. Many additional approaches exist, but tend to incorporate static, reified and essentialized understandings of identity, place, border and/or scale from the outset, and so are fundamentally flawed. For example, although Laitin (1998) emphasizes a constructivist process of 'identity in formation', he tends to essentialize identity as a category of analysis (e.g., 'the Russian-speakers'), fails to incorporate place, scale or border as interactive, relational sociospatial fields into the model (instead, for example, treating the Estonian-Russian border as a reified 'civilizational divide'), and emphasizes language learning rather than narrativity and performativity in his analysis of how identities change. Much of the literature on 'the Russian' or 'the Russian-speaking' diaspora published in the mid-1990s tends to deal with place and identity in even more static and essentialized ways.

13. Brubaker (1996, p. 58) also notes that homeland does not necessarily refer to 'the actual homeland of the minority, in the sense that they or their ancestors once lived there...Nor need the ethnic minority even think of the external state, or the territory of the state, as its homeland. External national homelands are constructed through political action, not given by the facts of ethnic demography. A state becomes an external national “homeland” for “its” ethnic diaspora when political or cultural elites define ethnonational kin in other states as members of one and the same nation . . .’

14. Of course, this is not to suggest that under certain circumstances, ‘national minority’ as a discourse and practice cannot be taken up by activists and made to resonate.
15. Macro-level conceptual frameworks cannot satisfactorily explain and predict micro-level practices, which require more fine-grained contextualized approaches. Macro-level studies using quantitative methodologies can, nonetheless, explain and predict society-wide socio-economic, cultural and political trends. See, for example, Kaiser 1994.

16. Brubaker (2005) has also recently provided a useful critical analysis of the term ‘diaspora’ and the growing literature that deploys it.

17. Interview with Seto political activist, July 2003. Of course, maps such as the one described above serve other purposes as well, not least of which is the promotion of cultural tourism, which has become the number one ranked economic activity in Estonian Setomaa.

18. Interview with Seto political activist, June 2003.


20. This issue came up during several interviews with Seto residents in Petseri district, many of whom acknowledged using both passports in order to facilitate border crossing.

21. The purpose behind the Seto Program, which was also funded and run through Estonia’s Interior Ministry, was discussed with Seto activists in southeastern Estonia, as well as with Interior Ministry officials, during the summers of 2002 and 2003.

22. This exteriorizing of Seto-ness was reported consistently by nearly every Seto interviewed, activists and non-activists alike, on both sides of the border during interviews conducted during the summers of 2002 and 2003.


24. Seto political activists narrate the Seto Congress as a reconstituted body that has its origins in Estonia’s first period of independence following WW I. Consequently, the first post-soviet assembly was labelled the 3rd Seto Congress, following the first and second congresses that occurred during the interwar period.

25. A number of Seto activists now consider their support for Seto resettlement funds to have been a mistake, since self-identifying Setos are disappearing from the Russian side of the border. Interviews conducted during summer 2002 and 2003.

26. The selection of this time period is not coincidental. The choice of the interwar period—narrated as the high-water mark of Seto-ness—reinforces Estonian interiorizing discourses. It is not so much that Estonian national interests determine the content of Seto narratives and performances of place and identity, as it is that Estonian national discourses and Seto narratives and enactments produce an interactive effect that synchronizes the sociospatial imaginary in the borderlands.

27. Interviews with Obinitsa and Varska museum directors, June 2002 and July 2003.


29. Most of the farm families interviewed consisted of elderly women only, since the children and grandchildren lived in Estonia and most of the men had died. It was typically the case that the family present on the farm was a woman in her 50s or 60s, and her mother who was in her 70s or 80s.


31. Interview with Sigova museum director, July 2003.


33. In previous censuses during the soviet era, people could identify themselves as Setos to census takers, but they were registered in the published census results as Estonians. During interviews conducted in Pechory Rayon, most of those who narrate their identity as Seto stated that they nonetheless self-identified as Estonians to census takers, because ‘we knew that’s what “they” wanted’. The ability to have their Seto-ness officially acknowledged by the state was met with a good deal of ambivalence during interviews conducted in summer 2002, and according to official results only 172 people in Pskov Oblast identified themselves as
‘Estontsy-Setus’ in the Russian census conducted later that year (‘Vserossiyskaya Perepis’ Naseleniya 2002 goda’ 2005).

34. ‘Scale jumping’ refers to the use of the politics of scale by activists to resist, contest and renegotiate the power position and place of the group they represent in society, by presenting their group or interests in ways that gain them the attention and assistance of more powerful scalar actors and institutions. For example, local environmental activists protesting the site selection of a waste disposal facility or a polluting industry frequently present their cause in more generic, globalized terms in order to attract the attention of global environmental NGOs such as Greenpeace to their cause (e.g., Towers 2000). Similarly, a local labour dispute or strike is frequently renarrated in more globalized class terms as a struggle of workers against global capital, TNCs or the WTO in an effort to gain the attention and assistance of international labour movements, and so change the balance of power (Kelly 1997; Herod 2001). On the other hand, politicians running for state-scale office frequently portray themselves as locals in order to win the hearts and minds—and, more importantly, votes of the electorate.

35. As stated on the official website (http://kongress.ugri.info/), the aims of the Congress are: ‘to develop and protect the ethnic identities, cultures and languages of Finno-Ugric peoples; to promote the co-operation between Finno-Ugric peoples; to discuss and find solutions to their most urgent problems; and to promote the implementation of their right to self-determination in accordance with the norms and principles of the international law’. The latest Congress was held in Tallinn in 2004.


37. This feeling was expressed during several interviews conducted in Varska in July 2003.


39. Interviews with Seto political and cultural activists, summer 2002 –03.

40. Interviews with Seto political activists and Estonian Tourist Board officials, July 2003.

41. Interviews with Seto political and cultural activists, including museum directors, summer 2002 and 2003.

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