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Communities and Others: Young Peoples' Constructions of Identities and Citizenship in the Baltic Countries

This article explores how young people (aged 12-18) in the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are constructing their identities, particularly their sense of attachment to their country and to Europe. This generation is of particular significance, in that they are the first generation for many years to have been born and socialised in independent states that are in a relatively peaceful and stable state. Data was collected through 22 focus groups, conducted in 10 different locations in the different states, and were analysed in terms of the degree of enthusiasm expressed for civic institutions and cultural practices related to the country and to Europe. Two particular areas were identified: the sense of generational difference and the ways in which different groups created 'other' communities, within and without their country's borders. These parameters allow us to distinguish the significant communities that these young people are creating in order to make sense of their social and political worlds.

Keywords
Identity, community, young people, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, social construction

1 Background

Citizenship and civic identity have been traditionally associated with a defined, limited and exclusive area or territory (Mackenzie 1978). Over the past sixty years, this conception has become gradually and partially eroded, through processes such as globalisation, large scale migration, and the development of dual citizenship (Joppke, 2010: vi-viii). The development of the European Union (EU) has contributed another layer of complexity. Citizens of the countries that are members of the Union are now also citizens of the EU, and this second citizenship gives them rights that are superior to those rights given by their country's citizenship (Joppke 2010). As the EU has expanded, this citizenship–and these rights–have been extended to include an increasing number of Europeans. The border of the EU has moved between its inception in 1956 and its most recent expansion in 2007 with further border movements planned in coming years.[1]

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1 In 2004 the Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia joined the Eurpean Union. In 2007 Bulgaria and Romania also joined. A number of countries are now (February 2012) formally candidate countries, that is, countries that have been accepted into formal negotiations: Croatia*, Iceland*, Macedonia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and Turkey* (negotiations are underway for asterisked countries). Serbia has been recommended as an official candidate country, but talks have yet to open. Albania has applied for membership, but not yet been recommended. Bosnia and Herzogovina has a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU, normally a precursor to applying for EU membership. Kosovo aspires to membership, and a joint EU-Kosovan Stabilisation Tracking Mechanism is exploring issues around this.

This article describes part of a small-scale qualitative investigation into how young people – aged between 11 and 18 - are constructing their identities and becoming aware of their actual or potential European identity in the three Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.[2] These countries are all engaged in a process of change, having become members of the European Union in May 2004. However, there was an additional prior change to the status of the three countries in mid 1991, when they all became independent of the USSR (Judt 2005, 646, 655). They had been independent states between 1920 and 1940, but between August 1940 and 1991 each had been formally incorporated into the Soviet Union as a Soviet Socialist Republic (and had also been occupied by Nazi forces, and claimed as part of the *Reichskommissariat Ostland*, between 1941 and 1945).

These events mean that in 2010 people under 19 in these three countries have some particular characteristics. Other than those over 70 years of age, this is the first generation to be born in the three independent states, and to have been wholly socialised into these self-governing communities. They will have no personal memories of the Soviet period, or of the events leading to the establishment of the independent countries. Parents and various histories will have mediated any narratives they construct of the events before 1991. They will also have become aware, over the past six years, of their country's membership of the EU. Although they will all have this in common, these young people are by no means an homogeneous group (see Table 1). During the Soviet period[3] there was considerable migration into the three territories from other Soviet Socialist Republics, particularly in Estonia and Latvia (Hiden, Salmon 1994). In Lithuania, there were also some longstanding communities of Polish or Belarus origin, and the creation of the Polish-Lithuanian border in 1945 paid scant respect to the ethnic origin of any residents. There was also migration out of the territories–many of the immigrants were transient, and a number of the indigenous population moved to other parts of the USSR, not always of their own free will. A number of the migrants into the territory married local people, and settled permanently. Since independence, some people of migrant origin living in the three countries have taken up citizenship of one of the three countries, and others have not. Many of those of migrant origin have adopted the language of the country in which they now live, but a proportion has not done so to a significant degree (Judt 2005, 644-645). Some, but not all, of these people may refer to themselves as being of Russian origin (russkiye, русские) and speak Russian: in this context, the term russkiye is used to refer to members of one of a number of ethnic groups, not to citizenship of Russia (rossiyanin, россиянин). As will be seen, the term 'Russian' is used to include those of Ukrainian, Cossack, Belarusian and other origins, as well as those of ethnic Russian origin.

3 The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), or Soviet Union (often wrongly referred to in the 1917-1991 period as 'Russia'), was officially a Union of sub-national states, of which Russia was the largest and dominant. The three Baltic states were incorporated into the USSR in August 1940 as the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic, the Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic. This was regarded as a Soviet Union occupation.

Table 1. Ethnic composition of the populations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, 2010

	Estonia		Latvia		Lithuania	
	N	%	n	%	n	%
Estonians	924,100	69.0	2,359	0.1	**	
Latvian	2,177	0.2	1,327,129	59.5	2,400	0.1
Lithuanian	2,046	0.2	29,376	1.3	2,721,500	83.9
Russian	341,450	25.5	610,297	27.4	174,900	5.4
Polish	1,993	0.1	51,397	2.3	212,800	6.6
Belorussian	15,315	1.1	78,556	3.5	41,100	1.3
Ukrainian	27,530	2.1	54,425	2.4	21,100	0.6
Finns	10,494	0.8	**		**	
Jewish	1,770	0.1	9,529	0.4	3,400	0.1
Tartar	2,428	0.2	**		3,100	0.1
German	1,918	0.1	4,548	0.2	3,000	0.1
Romany	**	0.0	8,536	0.4	2,900	0.1
Others	8,973	0.7	53,489	2.5	8,000	0.2
Not known	**	0.0	**		50,400	1.5
Total	1,340,194	100.0	2,236,910	100.0	3,244,600	100.0

** data not classified in this category in this country

Sources: Estimates made by the various statistical offices of each country:

Statistics Estonia (website of the Government of Estonia statistics office) http://pub.stat.ee/px-web.2001/Dialog/statfile1.asp, accessed November 2, 2011; Latvia: Citizenship & Migration Affairs www.pmp.gov.lv/lv/statistika/dokuments/2011/21SVP_Latvija_pec_VPD.pff, accessed November 2, 2011; Lithuania: Statistikos Departmentas http://db1.stat.gov.lt/statbank/default.asp?w=1920, accessed November 2, 2011; the Lithuanian data is rounded to the nearest 100, the Estonian and Latvian data is not

The young people with whom this study is concerned – 12 to 18 year olds – therefore include those who have both parents of Estonian/Latvian/Lithuanian origin, speaking the respective language; some who have two russkiye parents (possibly with Russian as the home language, and possibly attending a Russophone school, in which Russian is the medium of instruction);[4] some with one parent is russkiye and the other Estonian/Latvian/ Lithuanian; and some with one or more grandparent of russkiye origin (and some of these last two groups are also possibly in Russophone schools). The sample is discussed in detail below in Issues of methodology and Table 2.

2 Identities and Attachments: A Brief Discussion

Identities are increasingly recognised as being both multiple and constructed contingently and, for some, in a context that includes Europe. Such identities may include a range of intersecting dimensions, including gender, age and region. It appears that a growing number of young people in parts of the EU are acknowledging at least a partial sense of European identity alongside their national identity: the degree to which this is

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4 Russophone schools teach most subjects in Russian: they are state-funded, but cater for students of Russian-origin families who wish their children to be educated in Russian. They also teach Latvian or Estonian, and public examinations for University entrance are conducted in these languages, respectively.

acknowledged varies by nationality, gender and social class, as well as by age (Lutz et al 2006). European and national identities are not alternatives, but potentially complementary feelings that can be held in parallel (Licata 2000). But what does this multiplicity mean for the young people involved? In these three countries, particular contrasts between the various 'national' or 'ethnic' communities allow the possibility of exploring constructions of not just identity and citizenship, but also of community and generation in these particular countries in the early 21st Century.

I draw on two particular writers in framing this analysis of what a sense of European identity might mean. Michael Bruter (2005), analysing the emergence of mass European identity, describes the identities of citizens as having a civic and a cultural component. Individual have differing balances of the 'civic' (identification with "the set of institutions, rights and rules that preside over the political life of the community") and the 'cultural' ("identification with a certain culture, social similarities, values" (Bruter 2005, 12)). Lynn Jamieson, writing with Sue Grundy describes the different processes by which some young people "come to present themselves as passionate utopian Europeans, while for many being European remains emotionally insignificant and devoid of imagined community or steps towards global citizenship" (Grundy, Jamieson 2007, 663).

My research questions were derived from these frameworks. Do these young people identify with a mixture of cultural and civic aspects of Europe, and how does this relate to the presence of the same two components in their identification with their country? To what extent are young people passionate or indifferent about each? In Estonia and Latvia in particular, do russkiye young people see themselves as an identity community, and are they perceived as such by their Estonian and Latvian contemporaries? Do young people acknowledge their multiplicity of identities, and how much to they insist that their identity is singular, essentialist and immovable? Does their sense of their own identity require the construction of 'the Other,' a contrasting outside or alien identity to be held in juxtaposition to their own identity? This question is of particular significance to the subjects of this study: their eastern borders were created just twenty years ago, and as the borders of the European Union continue to demonstrate their flexibility, even an ambiguity, are there (in the minds of these young people) limits to Europe: where does the frontier lie?

The generational identity may also be significant in this context: the experiences of this generation are markedly different to those of their parents and grandparents. In a recent study of generational identities in 20th Century Germany, Fulbrook (2011) notes the 'construction of a collective identity on the basis of generationally defined common experiences' (11). Age, she suggest, is 'crucial at times of transition, with respect to the ways in which people can become involved in new regimes and societies' (488). Do these young people perceive themselves as a generation differently available for political and social mobilisation than their parents or grandparents?

The complexities and diversities of these societies, coupled with their particular recent history, make them particularly interesting locations in which to investigate the construction of identities. It is unlikely that simple dichotomies of Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft ('community' and

'society/association') Tönnies (1887, reprint 2001) will be useful: the community identities in these countries will not simple contrast the associative process of a 'natural' communitarian will with a rational individualistic will (Adair-Toteff 1995). The critical communitarianism analysis of Barzilai (2003) suggests that communities excluded from the processes of ruling – such as, arguably, the russkiye communities in Estonia and perhaps Latvia – might construct legal cultures that interact with aspects of political power: the identities constructed in such a process constitute communities protected by law and boundaries against other communities. Is such a process recognised and described by the young members of these communities?

3 Issues of Methodology

These are big and complex questions, and putting them directly to young people will not, I argue, lead to coherent or meaningful answers. They may not have considered them, and feel obliged by the interview context to provide 'an answer'; they may feel constrained by how they reply to a direct question; they will almost inevitably use the language and constructions of the questioner in making any response. The focuses of this study is on how these young peoples' ideas are *socially* constructed. Social constructions are created through social interaction, in a social context, so my methodology has been to conduct focus groups with small groups of five to six pupils, all about the same age. In a focus group, the researcher introduces a few open-ended questions, and encourages the pupils to discuss these between them so that they are interacting with each other, rather than with the researcher. As an example of this, here is a group of Latvians discussing what makes them 'Latvian:'

Reines F[5] (♂15¾)	I'm not a total Latvian, I'm only partial. On my mother's side, everyone was Latvian, but on my father's side there is a very mixed line: there are Russian, Belarusians, and even Polish descent. I kind of respect both – I am a patriot of more than just one country.
Nellija G (♂14 ¾)	It's not the blood that makes your nationality. If you have a Russian mother and a Russian father, and you were born in Latvia and you learn the Latvian language, and you do everything as a Latvian would do – it doesn't make a difference –
Monta A[6] (♂15½)	– it's more what's in your head –
Agnese K (♂16.0)	– and what you see every day. If you are Russian, but you live in Latvia, you don't know how the Russians live in Russia, so – so you become Latvian. It's really not a lot!
Monta A	Also friends do some stuff to you. If you are Russian,

5 All names have been changed so that individuals remain anonymous. They are identified by the country in which they were interviewed, their gender and their age. The cities of Riga and Tallinn have not been anonomised.
6 Monta had earlier said she had 'there's someone from Russia in the family tree.'

	but your friends are Latvians, it's possible that you'll go more Latvian than Russian – because you'll speak Latvian all the time, and the jokes, and all that stuff …
Agnese K	… The way you think is different …
Reines F	It depends on what society you grow up in, what part of the country, even in what part of the town.

They are using ideas, language, and vocabulary of their own choosing, rather than responding to the interviewer. The researcher is non-directive – elucidating, guiding, but not focusing or constraining. Thus I might in an interview ask how they think Europe affects their lives, but if they collectively chose to discuss other aspects of their lives, my attempts to 'get an answer' are limited.

The discussion points I put were broad, and the result of extensive discussions and trials. The following broad areas were covered, the form of words varying slightly from conversation to conversation, as the context required.

- How would you describe your identity? (if necessary, prompting with 'What do you all have in common?', or, when [Latvian] was suggested, 'What does being [Latvian] mean to you?')
- Do you ever describe yourselves in other ways, or feel you have difficulties always using this identity?
- Do you think your parents feel the same way about this as you?
- Do you think everyone in Latvia feels the same way?
- How does being in Europe affect the way you think about your identity, and about your future?
- What is particular or different about Europeans?
- Can you imagine [Russia/Belarus/appropriate neighbour] becoming part of the European Union?

In the three countries covered in this article, all the focus groups took place in March 2010. Nine locations were visited, in each case to some schools in the capital city, some to schools in the vicinity of the capital, and some to schools in a provincial town, ensuring a fairly wide geographical spread.

Table 2. Number and distribution of focus groups

Country	*locations*	*number of schools*	*number of classes*	*number of pupils*
Estonia	2	4	6	44
Latvia	3	6	8	50
Lithuania	3	6	8	40
	9	16	22	134

One Russophone school was selected in Estonia and one in Latvia: all other schools used the national language as the medium of instruction)

In each location, one to three schools, each with different social mixes were selected, and in each school focus groups were usually conducted with one or two groups of pupils – about five or six 12-14 year olds, and a similar group of 15 to 17 year olds. Locations were selected in which I had colleagues who were willing to collaborate with me (selected to cover the capital city and one or two regional locations). Each colleague (see footnote 2) was asked to identify two schools, one in a middle class area, the other in a working class area. Schools were asked to select six to eight pupils from a class, choosing an equal number of males and females willing to take part in a discussion, without regard to ability within the class. Permission was sought from all the young people to participate in the focus groups, and, for those under 16, also from their parents or guardians. It should be emphasised that I am not attempting to achieve a representative sample, but to identify the diversity of views expressed. The study is not concerned with legal nationality or status, but young people whose home is now in the country (so if there are significant minorities or migrants, these may have been included).

The project would not have been possible without help and assistance from a large number of people, to whom I am indebted (see footnote 2). Schools and parents have been recruited, arrangements made for visits and, critically, help given in translating many of the transcripts into English. The analysis that follows covers firstly the major themes and then moves towards some tentative conclusions.

4 Major Themes: Europe and Nation as a Focus for Identity European Culture and Civic Institutions

The culture of Europe was less apparent in the young people's talk than was their reference to the civic practices of Europe. In particular, there were many references to the possibility of travel to other European states and of studying and working there. Many of them, particularly the older students, said that they had considered higher education outside their own country, very often in other European Union states. They seemed well aware of the possibilities and options, as they were of the issues concerning work in other, generally western, European countries. As will be seen, not all were in favour of taking up such opportunities, for example:

> There are advantages and disadvantages in working here and also abroad. The advantages of working abroad are that it's easier to find a job, and you are well paid abroad. Everyone tells me this. The disadvantages – you can't meet [ie see] your family, but you don't have a good salary if you work here (Karlis M, Latvian ♂ 11½).

But there was also widespread appreciation that these opportunities were now available. Looking first at those of Lithuanian/Latvian Estonian descent, the sense of European unity and solidarity was evident in many comments. Lithuanians were generally more positive about identifying with European culture, for example:

> The European Union has changed people's opinions about Lithuania. Now people don't think that we are beviltiškas [hopeless], and we can achieve something, we can give something to others. Now we feel that we are necessary, we are needed… (Kristina K, ♂ 16¾).

Some cited European-wide rights and freedoms:

> We are free from Russia, and Russian has censorship – they are not as free as we are – and it's a difference (Migle J, Lithuanian ♂ 15½).

On the other hand, some Latvians were sometimes suspicious, and made comments such as:

> Many Europeans are interested in having our workers, as they are cheaper than their own … there are more drawbacks than advantages (Julia A, ♂ 14 ¾).

Though others were much more positive:

> It kind of unifies us. We are all together, in one place, all Europeans, and we can feel that we're kind of united (Reinis F, ♂ 15¾).

In Estonia, the older students were very positive about the European Union, for a wide variety of reasons – its emphasis of human rights and democracy, the ability to participate in European-wide decision making process, economic support, and, of course, the mobility rights associated with membership.

> We have more right to express our own opinion, more to say than we used to have (Helle K, ♂ 15¾).

> I think Europe is democratic because it controls all the members of the Union to make sure that Human Rights are protected, and that people have a good life and … that's it (Imre T, ♂ 15¾).

> I think the Europeans are calm and friendly, and very civilised (Lada D, Estonian ♂16¾).

Some younger voices were less enthusiastic:

> I don't see it as European – we belong to the Baltic area (Kristiin T, ♂ 12¾).

The students in the Russophone schools in Latvia tended to adopt a more distant, even critical standpoint: Europe undermined Latvian independence.

> I think that we have more disadvantages. Latvia in future will be a suburb of the European Union (Dmitri Y, ♂ 15½).

> … I think Europeans people are culturally educated, most of them, I presume. Though when it comes to creativity, innovations, and

unconventional ways of thinking, I think Europeans are on the weaker side (Dmitrij P, ♂, 16½).

The students in Russophone schools in Estonia were broadly positive about their European identity, for example for travel and for economic support.

I think Europe is important in my life, because it's open to travel a lot, and I do a lot of travelling, and we don't have to have a visa (Zhenya K, ♂ 16 ¾).

Though there were also some sceptical voices:

It is not good, but in between – it hasn't made much difference (Gennady S, ♂ 14¾).

But students who had some Russian ancestry and were in national language schools were notably more positive, in all three countries.

There are differences between Europe and Russia. In Russia, people can live without documents but this seldom occurs in Europe, Also, the police are rather corrupt in Russia – you if you give a little bribe, they accept it, and that's how the system works (Kristjan T, Estonian ♂ 15).

I think the European Union is a very good thing, because we're not so [confined] to our own country. We can move and the Union can help us do something. We can start some new things – we can study abroad. For example, in the USSR our parents couldn't leave their country, and they didn't know what was abroad. And this European Union helps us to know what is happening in the world. So we're connected in the world (Lada D, Estonian ♂ 16¾).

European identity thus appears to be largely associated more towards the institutional end of Bruter's (2005) spectrum, rather than the cultural. There was generally some enthusiasm for a European identity, but it was in many ways around instrumental ends – access to travel and study in other European states in particular – rather than about deeper feelings of belonging, although there is some evidence that the democratic and rights-based freedoms associated with the EU were valued.

5 National Culture and Civic Institutions

Generally, most young people were more talkative about their own country, rather than Europe. There were many references to the national language, which for many was one of the defining facets of their unique cultural identity: it was spoken by very few other people in the world. As Vaiva S (Lithuanian ♂ 17) put it: 'Our language is one of the oldest languages in Europe, and it's hard to learn it – so in languages we are different from other countries.' 'We speak in Estonian,' said Anett L (Estonian ♂ 13¼) said when asked what defined her group. Anton Z (Latvian ♂ 15) explained that,

though his parents were of Russian origin, 'but I use the Latvian language, and follow Latvian traditions and customs, I know Latvian history,' and this made him 'sometimes feel Latvian.'

It was generally the Lithuanian students who were more positive (though not uncritically) about their national culture than young people in Estonia and Latvia. For example, Brigita K (♂ 15¾), discusses how her pride in her country compares to that of her parents, and the dilemmas of emigration:

> I like this country, I'm proud of it, everything is close and homely. … My dad, he's a real patriot, he has no plans to leave our country, but my mum, she's like me, and she has a wider perspective – sometimes she discusses, as I do, the possibility of leaving … the people who are leaving are running away from the problems … of course they love our country, but they leave … all the problems for someone else to sort out. They're not trying to do anything to solve it themselves.

There were widespread fears about the decline in population, from a falling birthrate and emigration. (This was also true in the other Baltic countries.) Vaiva S (♂ 17) sees aspects of national pride even in this:

> We were the first in Europe to have our own constitution – it was in the second world war. …When we were trying to get our freedom and independence, and there was more fighting for our freedom, we talked about it more – now we are talking less and less about our citizenship. We don't feel patriotic, because we emigrate to other countries, and live and work there – but we send the money for our families. There are some communities in other countries, and they don't forget Lithuania – they always remember it and try to show to foreigners who Lithuanians are.

But many young people also expressed a sense of change in the meaning of being Lithuanian. They were less patriotic than their parents, and saw that globalisation and EU membership were changing aspects of the culture.

> Other cultures are coming to Lithuania and … our cultures and traditions are getting a little less important to people (Edgaras F, ♂ 15½).

Some thought Lithuanians had a negative image in Europe, and that many people did not know where the country was.

> If other countries hear anything about Lithuania, they hear bad things, not good ones (Migle A, ♂ 15 ¾).

> Other countries really don't know where Lithuania is (Grinvydas A, ♂ 15¼).

Pride in Lithuanian national identity was not confined only to those of pure Lithuanian descent. Tadas (♂ 16) explains:

> Well, I wouldn't identify myself as a 100% Lithuanian, because I'm not.

> Only one-fifth of my blood is Lithuanian. The other parts are from Poland, Russia, Ukraine and even Georgia. So I couldn't say that I'm absolutely Lithuanian. But, because I'm living here, and I'm feeling a little patriotic, I think I could identify myself as a Lithuanian. Yes.

Andrius A (♂ 12½) began by talking about his feelings of being Lithuanian, only later in the conversation revealing that he was of partly German descent.

> I like to be Lithuanian. … It's a unique country, it has its own achievements, her own language. It's a great country – but now the times are not very good. … My grandmother is from Germany, she's my father's mother, but we feel really Lithuanian. We talk in Lithuanian. My dad feels real Lithuanian – he doesn't even speak German. My parents have lots of plans to go on living in Lithuania.

> Half of my blood is from Russia – well my dad is from Russia, and his father is from Russia, obviously, but my mother is Lithuanian and I was born here in Elektrenai, so that I can say that I'm Lithuanian, for sure (Edgaras F, Lithuanian ♂ 15½).

Estonia also had young people who were positive about their cultural identity, but others who were less articulate or more critical references. For example, Mikk N (♂ 13¼) was broadly positive about his Estonian heritage, but less able to identify its characteristics:

> Estonians like singing and dancing. We have dance festivals and song festivals… Bread – we have black bread, and I think that it's the world's best bread. … Last year we had Olympic wins and medals, and I think Estonia has good athletes. … I think my parents like it that Estonia is free. I see them happy when they talk about Estonia when it's a free country, and they think it's good.

Other young Estonians were even less articulate: asked 'What does Estonia as a state mean to you?' Anet K (Estonian ♂ 13) can only respond 'I just don't know.' Taavi S (♂ 13) defines Estonia as 'a small country,' and recognises that 'I don't think my parents understand things the same way: … they know the history much better'. Kaija M (♂ 16) is ambivalent: to her, Estonians are

> depressed or something … when I go to somewhere else, and meet people on the street, they smile always, they say hello, even if they don't know you … but in Estonia, people are so… It's a small country, it's nice … we should try and find something positive! … My parents don't mind being Estonians, but they hate living in Estonia.

Estonian students also held their national civic institutions and practices in low esteem. There were many complaints about national politics, for example, Liisi N (♂ 13¼) was articulate about her concerns:

> I don't like politics. Politics and politicians, both. They're terrible. They're not doing this for their country [laughs] … I don't know. I think, maybe 15 years ago, politics was more normal than now. Sometimes I look at the news and read the paper, and I get this bad impression. The election commercials say 'Oh, it will be so good! We are making it all great!' And smarter people than them are saying that it's not possible, and they are lying, and they are just trying to sell themselves.

> Bad politics – they fight each other. They don't agree on important decisions – they are like … children [laughter]. Always fighting … (Hillar S, ♂ 16¾).

There was a similar range from the positive to the negative in Latvia: on the affirmative side, Anna K (♂ 13½) saw her personal commitment as positive and active:

> I think that we are the future of Latvia, and we must keep the language and do everything we need to save our language – so that Latvia can be as it is. … I am proud of Latvia. We are such a small country, but we have Olympic champions – I'm proud of it, and I think we need to do something to make the others think the same way.

Žanete D (♂13¼) saw the problems on the cultural and the demographic side, but linked this to her pride in the country's freedom and independence:

> We have to try to save Latvian traditions, we have to speak Latvian, and we have to make the population grow – get more babies born. …– I am a patriotic Latvian, but my dad has got a different view – He wasn't working here, so he found a job in England, and he went away. … My mother told me than when she was little kids couldn't have their own opinion – but now we can think for ourselves, we are free – we aren't under oppression.

On the other hand, some young Latvians felt disempowered. Klinta C (♂ 15) said 'I feel satisfied with my country – I like the place' but went on 'we cannot change what is happening. We cannot change the future of Latvia.' Nellija G (♂ 14¾) was more critical of Estonian politics and social behaviour:

> I don't see myself as a true patriot, because I think there's a lot of things that are wrong in our country, and I understand some people might think that it's wrong for me to say so, but that's just the open mind I have – I read about the politicians in our country, I don't think that I should be proud about that ….there's a lot of people on the street that are technically Latvians, but I am so not proud to count them as Latvians, because of all of the bad things they do.

For these students of 'national' origin – 84% of Lithuanians, 69% of

Estonians, and just under 60% of Latvians (see Table 1 above) – the concept of affinity to the nation and the national community was centred more on the cultural aspects identified by Bruter, rather than the institutions, and was very largely positive. There was often a tension between this sense of national identity and the need to create an independent and economically viable future.

A number of the students in the Russophone schools in Estonia and Latvia were particularly more negative than students in national language schools.[7] For example, Zhenya K (Estonian ♂ 16¾) described herself in distinctly non-Estonian terms:

> I think am European – I have a European passport, but I have Russian traditions in my family – both of my parents have Russian nationality. If my mother tongue was Estonian, I could say I am Estonian by nationality – but my native language is Russian, and I can't say I'm Estonian. …I'm going to study in Scotland … I want to study, there, work there, and maybe take my parents there too – because they too have no future here, they have no job and the skills needed to develop in the future.

In the same school, Bogdan H (♂ 16¾) said:

> I don't think I'm a real Estonian, but I have an Estonian passport. Yes, I was born in Estonia, but my parents are Russian, and my grandfather and grandmother are Russian too. So I think that I'm Russian, even if I go to England, for example, or Germany, I will be Russian. I think that I'm Russian, but I live in Estonia.

> I think I'm Russian, because I always speak the Russian language …. My parents want my future to be living in Estonia, but I don't want to live in Estonia, I don't see my future here (Gennady S, ♂ 14¾).

Some of these Russophone Estonians were learning the Estonian language, but for strictly instrumental, rather than cultural reasons. To achieve sufficiently well to gain a University place, they needed good Estonian, but after this:

> In my future I will use English, I think. Estonian – it's now to talk with people on the street and know friends, but I don't want to live here later, and … we learn Estonian because we have to pass the examination in the twelfth form (Zhenya K, ♂ 16¾).

> I learn Estonian because I have to do it at school. I want to have good marks. In future I hope that I will study and work abroad and I think I won't need Estonian (Tatyana O, ♂ 16¼).

Pinja K (♂14) also complained of being ostracised by native Estonians: 'Many people don't understand me when I say that I am Russian: Estonian

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7 As in Latvia, the term 'Russian' was sometimes used as a convenience, and contingently: 'I was in Croatia, and someone asked me where I was from – and I said in Estonia, and I saw from their eyes 'Where is that?' So it's quite easy to say that you are from Russia, and they will understand quicker and there'll be no problems with explanations. So I say I'm from Russia to avoid geographical explanations that 'Estonian is situated west of Russia …' (Zhenya K, ♂ 16¾)

people don't like Russian so much – and it is a problem.' [*They don't like the Russian language?*] 'Mmm – they don't like Russian *people*. …If the [Estonian] government could be friendly with Russia.'

> I feel like I am a Russian in Estonia. … Sometimes I want to talk with Estonian boys and girls, but they just look at me like I'm not a normal girl, and don't want to speak with me. … Someone Estonian told me that I'm Russian and they don't want to speak to me. … It's a really difficult situation, because we want to have friends here, but we have only to speak with Russians, because only Russians can understand us, and it's very difficult (Dina B, ♀14 ¾).

A substantial number of the ethnic Estonian young people I spoke with had some reservations about Russians in Estonia, expressed with various degrees of caution.

> They have this kind of temperament. It's already in their blood. They are very brave and courageous, and they can't do anything about it (Merilin T, ♀ 12½).

> They are arrogant (Daniel V, ♂ 12¼).

> Most do learn the language, and they live here as Estonians: they don't think of themselves as Russians. But of course, there are others (Jaagkup K, ♂ 16½).

In **Latvia**, most students in a provincial Russophone school were similarly critical of national institutions, asserting they saw no future for themselves as Latvians.

> We can't see our futures in Latvia. I often talk to my parents about this, and my economic future, and my parents have decided that after finishing school, I should go abroad, because Latvia does not have a future (Anton Z, ♂15).

> I belong to the Russian nation. Sometimes I feel that I'm Latvian, because I know Latvian. I learned it well, and one part of my family are Russians, and one part is Latvians – that's why sometimes I feel Latvian. …Our politicians are not professional people [so] we have decisions that destroy our economy, our political life and our society (Dimitri Y, ♂ 15½).

In a Russophone school in Riga, the students were more sophisticated and nuanced in their criticisms.

> I am neither Russian nor Latvian. With my soul I am here in Latvia, but at the same time I like Russian culture and Cossack culture very much. I respect the Latvian culture. My father believes that he is a true Russian, though sometimes he lives and works in different countries. My mum has both Polish and Ukrainian roots, but she respects both Latvian and Russian cultures (Anastasija Z, ♀ 13½).

> I consider myself Russian. I respect Latvian and Russian cultures the same. I watch TV and listen to music in Russian. We all live in Latvia, we follow Latvian traditions, but at the same time we are different (Stanislav M, ♂ 13½).

Many of these young people, with Latvian passports, but not Latvian nationality, felt under threat and oppressed by the Latvian state, and identified themselves as Russian almost as a 'flag of convenience,' as a label that identifies them as being the other.

Engagement in different cultural activities and traditions also helped define national identity. Two Russian-origin pupils in the same town gave differing accounts: 'we celebrate Russian holidays, Russian traditions, and that's why I feel myself as Russian' (Marina M, ♀ 12¾), and 'we've lived in Latvia for so long we have taken up Latvian traditions – nearly all Russian people who live here celebrate Leiga … so sometimes I feel myself to be Latvian' (Anton Z, ♂ 15).

For these students of Russian origin in Estonia and Latvia, the cultural identity of being russkiye was particularly strong, but was coupled with a desire to distance themselves from the possibility of being considered institutionally Russian, or being identified with the Russian state, sometimes verging on antipathy. In terms of their formal civic status, there was a clear ambivalence: many felt 'othered' by their national Estonian and Latvian peers, and a desire to respond by constructing their own community centred on the Russian language and culture, but at the same time a clear sense of valuing their Estonian and Latvian citizenship, because this gave them a European Citizen status, and thus literally a passport to escape the social exclusion they faced in these countries.

But, interestingly, it was some of the students who had partial Russian ancestry, studying in the national language schools, who were most positive about the national culture. Those in Lithuania have already been quoted. In Latvia, Matiss K (♂ 13¼) claimed to be proud to be Latvian.

> I am Russian – I am born in Latvia, and I feel like a Latvian. I speak pretty good Latvian, my friends are Latvian, and my dad is Latvian. … I don't feel I am Russian. Because I don't speak Russian in the street – I only speak Russian at home with my mum, and in Russian lessons in school. .. I am really proud that I'm Latvian. I want to grow up to go to America and to be an NBA player, and to let everyone know that Latvia is great like the basketball players Mārtins Kravčenko and Andris Biedriņš. I want to play like the heroes.

Monta A (♀ 15½) demonstrated similar ambivalences, professing a love for the country, but a firm sense of her own priorities and needs.

> I don't think I'm Russian, but I also don't count myself Latvian. I don't know why, I couldn't say … it's more what's in your head. Also friends do some stuff to you. If you are Russian, but your friends are Latvians, it's possible that you'll go more Latvian than Russian – because you'll speak Latvian all the time, and the jokes, and all that stuff …[But] I

think more about myself, not about the country. If we speak honestly, I think more about what *I* am going to do, what *I* need, and what *I* want – not about what the country needs, what will happen to our country.

6 Multiple Identities and Acceptance of Diversity: The Frontier

While most students in all three countries saw themselves as having multiple identities, there were differences in the way that this was expressed. Very broadly, while many of the young people of Latvian/ Lithuanian/ Estonian decent were prepared to identify with their own country and with, to an extent, being European, these groups seemed less happy with the young people of Russian origin professing to be both Russian and European. Many of the Russian descent group also indicated some level of identification with the local state–but very notably not so in a number of cases, particularly in Estonia. Language was seen as important – many complained at Russophones not learning the national language, or not learning it sufficiently well. Brigita K (Lithuanian ♂ 15¾) complained '…in our capital, where most of the people should be Lithuanians, there are a lot of Russians – even some of the names on the shops are in Russian.'

In Estonia, the students in Russophone schools saw themselves as Russians and Europeans who were 'living in Estonia;' students in similar schools in Latvia were more inclined to describe themselves as Russian with Latvian citizenship. In Estonia, it was also evident that females and younger students were more likely to see themselves with multiple identities, while in Latvia older students were more so inclined.

Assessing perceptions of tolerance towards such differences was not easy. It might be tentatively suggested that the Estonian students were less tolerant than the Latvian and Lithuanians. More interesting was the difference in perceptions of those with Russian ancestry in national language schools in the three countries – the Lithuanians were far more accepting of diversity than the Estonians, with the Latvians somewhere in between.

The attitude towards 'the other' appeared to be most apparent in the ways in which русские, russkiye, and the country, Россия, were described. In some situations, young people distinguished between Russians and those of their own country, or 'Europeans.'

What was striking in most comments was the dichotomies that were drawn between Russia and Russians and the Baltic states and the Europeans.

Table 3. Estonian student comments about Russians and Estonians

	Russians/Russia	Estonia/Europeans
Estonian by descent	• living in the past • big and rich, doesn't need help • not democratic • does not respect human rights • police are corrupt/take bribes • too aggressive (attacked Georgia)	• look forward to the future • little counties need help • democratic • protects human rights • corruption seldom in Europe • now free from Russia
Russophone schools in Estonia (Russian by descent)	• have their own Union • rich and powerful • has terrorism • implements its own rules	• – • less powerful, less rich • peaceful, little terrorism • common rules

Table 4. Latvian student comments about Russians and Latvians

	Russians/Russia	Latvia/Europeans
Latvia by descent	• living in the past • dangerous • too powerful, aggressive • selfish • big • strong enough to solve problems by itself	• forward looking • peaceful • – • try to help each other • small • needs to unite
Part Latvian, part *russkiye*	• a big country • powerful • civil wars and riots • Russia could develop Latvia	• small countries • – • peacefuldependent on Russian resources • squander resources
Russophone schools in Latvia (Russian by descent)	• rich resources • good industrial & IT development • produces goods and exports	• economy is going downhill • does not produce anything • poor political decisions

Table 5. Lithuanian student comments about Russians and Lithuanians

	Russians/Russia	Lithuania/Europeans
Lithuanian by descent	• rough, not friendly	• sensitive and kind
	• brave, active and emotional	• calm
	• stuck in the old ages -	• forward looking
	• conservative	• -
	• don't like sharing with others: want to take everything	• friendly, sharing, collaborative
	• crude *grubus* and abrasive *įžūlus*	• peaceful
	• oppressive, occupiers	• -
	• some are hospitable *svetingas*	• -
part Lithuanian, part *russkiye*	• Some are friendly some unfriendly – many opinions are from long ago	
	• A big civilised country	
	• Kind and friendly when you get to know them	

This suggests that, to many of these young people of Estonian, Latvian or Lithuanian descent, 'the Russians' are perceived as outsiders: partly through memories (and history lessons) about relationships in earlier times, but also through perceptions of current behaviour. There were two groups that I identified who had alternative discourses. The Russian-origin young people in the Latvian provincial town – strongly supported by the teaching staff – saw Russia not just as a supporter for their position, but as an alternative and a better protector for Latvia than the European Union. By way of contrast, the Lithuanians who were of part-Russian descent in the Lithuanian language schools were sufficiently confident to counter their colleagues stereotypical views of Russians with examples drawn from their experience of visiting family members in the Russia, Belarus and the Ukraine. Their assertions were accepted courteously, and acknowledged by some as valid observations on the tendency to generalise.

To provoke discussion on where they thought the eventual 'frontier' of Europe might lie, groups were asked whether they thought Russia or Belarus might ever become members of the EU. The reaction of almost all those surveyed was strongly against Russian membership. When asked why, various explanations were offered, including the geographical reason that most of Russia was outside Europe, but most demonstrated a concern of possible Russian dominance, even aggression. It was socially different, unlikely to cooperate and support smaller countries, was undemocratic and autocratic, and likely to allow potential terrorists into Europe.[8] It would also

8 The focus groups were conducted shortly after the 2010 Moscow Metro bombings, when two suicide bombs were set of on the Metro (March 29, 2010). At least 40 people were killed, and over 100 injured, and this was widely reported at the time. Rogoża, Jadwiga and Żochowski, Piotr (31 March 2010) 'Attacks in the Moscow Metro', Eastweek, Centre for Eastern Studies (Poland):

allow further Russian migration into the Baltic countries. Such cautionary resistance was also shown by the Russian-descent young people in Riga and Tallinn: they did not see Russian membership either potentially likely or desirable. Even the Russian-origin young people in the Latvian provincial town were against the idea, on the grounds that Russia did not need to be propped up by the EU, and indeed, it would be better for Latvia to be in some form of association with Russia than with the EU.

Belarus was less discussed. Most informants saw no reason for not including it in the EU: it was another small state, with a narrative of having been oppressed by the Soviet Union. One Estonian was very much against it, saying that it was a dictatorship and that the European Union countries were all democracies upholding human rights. Belarus could not join until it was reformed.

There was a clear impression that, for the time being at least, these young people saw themselves as being on the frontier of Europe. Their country was now on the desirable side of the border, and the border had the function of keeping those beyond at arms length.

7 Conclusions

I have tried in the analysis above to largely let these young people describe their identities – as members of countries, as members of communities within these, as 'Europeans'– in their own words. They describe themselves contextually and contingently of various ancestries and language groups, in countries that have had chequered histories, in which their ancestors may have had very different roles. But these young people were able to construct explanations of who they were that were contingent on their current circumstances. They could, where necessary, begin to cut loose from their parents' (and their teachers') preoccupations. They were, to an extent, aware of the past, but their concerns were for the future. Their country was more prominent in most of their discourses, more so than Europe. They seemed more proud and appreciative of their country's culture, its language, and sometimes its sport than they did of its politicians and civic structures, although a number were clearly aware of and proud of their independence, freedoms and rights.

There were differences in attitudes towards the Russian minority communities, and in the responses of those minorities to the majority. In Lithuania, the majority group of Lithuanian descent appeared to be most relaxed towards the minority. Although there were references to parents being involved in the struggle over the television station in 1991, there was much evidence of an easy relationship between young people from the two groups, that was reciprocal and appeared to result in a relaxed atmosphere in which both groups could discuss cultures, histories, feelings and identities in an open manner that tolerated diversity and flexibility. The expression of multiple identities was easy, common and appeared to be found as useful (Hall 1992; Sen 2006).

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http://www.osw.waw.pl/en/publikacje/eastweek/2010-03-31/attacks-moscow-metro

The situation in Latvia was more complex. In one of the Russophone schools I visited, the young people were careful to position themselves midway between a Russian and a Latvian identity, with firm references also to a European dimension. In the other school, less sophisticated young people were more irritably positioning themselves as Russian, not European or Latvian (both of whose policies and practices they disparaged). The Latvian-origin young people were, in turn, more critical of what they perceived of as some Russian-original people adopting an isolationist position (particularly in terms of language use): but they were also still very willing to interact positively with those of Russian, or part-Russian origin who they saw as accepting a part-Latvian identity. Where there were relationships between Latvian origin and Russian origin students in schools, they appeared to me to be as cordial and relaxed as those I saw in Lithuania.

In Estonia, relationships generally seemed more tense. Many of the Russian-origin students cited examples of ostracism and isolation, and pointedly described themselves as being Russian and European, merely living in Estonia (and with Estonian citizenship). They were described to me as 'sitting on their suitcases,' waiting to qualify for university, get a degree, and avail themselves of the European Union's free labour market. The Estonian-origin young people were critical of what they described as Russian isolationism.

The greater the tension between groups in a plural society, the more likely it seems that the majority and the minority will adopt singular and rigid identities, accentuating difference and 'othering' (Schöpflin 2010). In contrast, where tensions are lower, both minority and majority are able to adopt multiple identities that enable individuals to flexibly situate themselves with several descriptors, each of which can come contingently to the fore as circumstances require (Ross 2008). This allows for distinctions to become less evident and for the stress on commonalities rather than differences. The adoption and acceptance of multiple identities allows for the recognition and acceptance of diversity, which in turn supports identities to be contingent and multiple is a society (Power 2000).

The impact of Europe, and particularly the European Union, was significant for most of these young people. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the principal way in which they say it impacts on their futures was instrumental. Current labour and demographic trends in all three countries mean that many young people are considering seeking either further and higher education in western Europe, possibly followed by a period of employment. Although some think that they will reject this possibility – citing their love of their national culture, for example – the point is that they are aware of the possibility. For some of the Russian-origin minority in Estonia, this possibility was becoming a very real plan of action. The only group that did not see the European Union's mobility policies as a potential advantage were some of the provincial Russian-origin Latvians, living near the Russian border. A number of these spurned the Europe Union as an irrelevant to their lives, and were considering futures in Russia, Belarus and the Ukraine. But the European Union was not only seen in terms of individual mobility. There were references to the economic security and support the Union brought; to the security and defence brought by NATO membership (eg . Mölder 2006; Molis 2008).

For these young people, the European Union was important. Many expressed

feelings of affinity with Europe, of being European – perhaps not as much as being Latvian or Estonian, perhaps, but nevertheless, of having a European identity. The significant borders had shifted – they had been created by the actions of their parents' generation in 1991, and had been consolidated by accession to the Union in 2004. The first event, just before they were born, established a new and important eastern boundary: the second event dissolved the boundaries with western Europe. There were still threats to their nation-states: internal divisions in the population diversity, economic viability, the significant loss of population through emigration, and concern about a powerful eastern neighbour. But the opportunity to embrace multiple identities that was afforded by the new context was welcomed by the great majority, of whatever origin, offering a way of constructing difference and change in the context of globalisation.

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