

on political tensions stemming from their redesignated geopolitical status (Smith 1999:500–501). Significant in this respect is the vagueness of the terminology denoting those who do not belong to a titular nationality in the post-Soviet borderland states. Depending on the objectives and academic discipline, or on the political goal of the interlocutor, Russian-speakers have been called a *minority*, a *diaspora*, *immigrants*, *occupants*, and *compatriots*, among other things. These categories have one feature in common: they consider Estonia's Russian-speakers in the framework of the nation-state, either emphasising their estranged position in relation to the host society or referring to their extraterritorial characteristics and existing ties with Russia.

Even if the state still remains the main unit of political organisation, the influence of other entities operating beyond the borders of nation-states is constantly increasing. The accessibility of modern "space and time compressing technologies" (Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999) is changing the perceptions and plans of individuals' lives, making transnational social relations a mass phenomenon and a daily practice for a growing number of people (see, for example, Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt 1999; Pries 2001a; Pries 2001b; Faist 2000). In a globalising world, however, *locality* also seems to become more valued and loaded with new meanings and resources. In addition to the geographic space of the nation-state, local and transnational spaces are starting to play an increasingly important role in people's lives.

Among the wealth of theoretical work on globalisation, the notion of pluri-local/transnational social space by Ludger Pries (2001a; 2001b) appears to be most appropriate in the case of Narva. Based on the example of the dense social networks that Mexican immigrants maintain across the US-Mexico border, he argues for the growing importance of both the transnational and the local as well as the weakening of the nation-state, indicating a general shift in relationships between the spatial and the social. Pries understands social space as "a specific and concentrated complexity of social practices, systems of symbols and artefacts with a certain extension in time and (geographic) space" (Pries 2001a:71). He believes that "the nation-state has increasingly been projected and accepted as the *mutual embeddedness of geographic space and social space*" (Pries 2001b:4). The boundaries of the nation (social space) are seen as coinciding with the borders of the state (geographic space). In the modern globalising world, states as socio-spatial "containers" become "more and more 'perforated' and 'punctured' – both empirically and as a matter of perception" (Pries 2001b). As a result, this inclusive embeddedness of geographic and social space is changing in two directions. On the one hand, "very different social spaces with no relationship to one another and which previously excluded each other in geographical terms can become stacked within one and the same geographical space" (Pries 2001a:57). On the other hand, a social

8 The Disruption of Social and Geographic Space in Narva

Elena Nikiforova

The Problem

When Estonia regained its independence in 1991, the Russian-speaking Soviet industrial town of Narva was transformed into a border town of the nationalising state of Estonia.¹ Using the notion of pluri-local/transnational social space as elaborated by Ludger Pries, I consider how Narva inhabitants reacted to this change.

After presenting the theoretical starting points, I describe the formation of Narva's social and geographic space during the Soviet era. This contextualisation is followed by an account of the changes which took place after 1991. The current situation is analysed first through an examination of the breadth of contemporary Narvans' personal networks and, second, through a portrayal of their life strategies as these appear in their choices of citizenship.

The data come primarily from interviews carried out within the project "Civic Culture and Nationality in North-West Russia and Estonia" (see Appendix).² I also use in-depth interviews and observations I have collected during my fieldwork trips in northeastern Estonia since 1995.

Transnational Social Space

In the last decade, the issues of the Russian-speaking population in Estonia have received a great deal of attention in scholarly literature and political debates both domestically (in Estonia and Russia) and internationally. Most research on Russian-speakers in the former Soviet republics focuses

space can also expand over several distinct geographic areas or over multiple national entities. Therefore, we can speak about the emergence of transnational social spaces as "dense, stable, pluri-local and institutionalised frameworks composed of material artefacts, the social practices of everyday life, as well as systems of symbolic representation that are structured by and structure human life", which exist above and beyond national social spaces (Pries 2001b:8).

The border regions of nationalising states represent an especially interesting case of the multiplicity of relationships between the spatial and the social. The nation-state declares its presence in the borderland by various border industries such as customs, border posts, and by marking the territory with its symbols. Simultaneously, the borderland is penetrated by the other country's "representatives" – people, goods and information. Moreover, due to the distance from the capital, producing and disseminating the ideas and symbols of nationhood is difficult. Thus, the borderland becomes an incubator for new communities, "where political and territorial nationalization projects may be most easily resisted, and where the formation of alternative, marginal, non-national, or transnational identities may be most easily constructed" (Kaiser 2001:326).

Narva's Socio-Historical Background before 1991

Throughout its history Narva has experienced both the merits and disadvantages of being a border settlement at a crossroads of cultures, a market place and a battlefield. Situated on the margins of European powers, Narva has been conquered by Denmark, the Knights of the Germanic Order, Sweden and Russia. The days of past glory are manifested in the two fortresses standing on opposite sides of the River Narva, which today divide both the towns of Narva and Ivangorod as well as the states of Estonia and Russia (see Map 1.1, p. 10).

In 1944, the old town of Narva was devastated by Soviet bombardments and fires set by retreating German troops. By the end of the war, the population in the ruined city totalled only 6,600 people, in comparison to 22,400 in 1939 (Table 8.1). After the war, the Soviet government started reconstructing the city and its industry. The state shifted thousands of people to Narva from all over the USSR to restore the city and to build two of the largest hydro-electric plants in Estonia. As a result, Narva became a major industrial centre in the northwestern region of the USSR stretching across the administrative boundaries of the Russian and Estonian Socialist Republics and covering the urban part of Estonia's province Ida-Virumaa as well as a few towns in the Leningrad region. By the end of the 1980s Narva was a rather typical Soviet industrial town with a predominantly

Table 8.1 Population in Narva, in Selected Years

1939	1945	1959	1970	1980	1990
22,400	6,600	30,400	57,900	73,500	82,200

Sources: *Narva in Figures* (2002:8); Gorokhov 1997:23.

Russian population, mostly formed by migrants and their descendants from other parts of the Soviet Union.

Migration Routes of the Narvans

Though politically united, the Soviet Union was culturally and economically a heterogeneous state. The differences in living standards and availability of consumer goods, for example, were compensated through the means of social networks in which goods were transported from one region to another. These differences were clearly visible in the high status of the Baltic republics in the USSR. The privileges in Estonia – such as a good supply of products, the special status of the West, high living standards and the demand for labour – made the republic a very attractive site for migration. Particularly after the 1960s, the social networks and ties of family and kin appeared to be among the main facilitators of the migration process.

Narva's rapidly developing industries attracted people from far away as well as neighbouring regions. Reflecting this division, our respondents can be divided into three groups by their place of birth: those who were born in Narva, those who came from other places in Estonia or neighbouring regions across the present border, and those who arrived from other parts of the USSR (see Table 8.2).

Twenty-eight of the 79 respondents were born in Narva. Eight were born in the neighbouring town of Ivangorod and another eight in Leningrad, Pskov and Novgorod or their surrounding regions. They were brought by their parents to Narva, where they have lived ever since. Thirty-two people moved to Narva from other parts of the USSR. Twenty-three migrated alone, whereas nine were brought to the town in their childhood by parents. A total of 47 out of our 79 respondents were either Narvans by birth or migrants from the neighbouring regions in Russia or Estonia.³

Table 8.2 Respondents' Birthplaces

Birthplace	N	%
Narva	28	35
Ivangorod	8	10
Leningrad, Pskov, Novgorod or their surrounding regions	8	10
Estonia, outside Narva	3	4
Remote parts of Russian Federation such as Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan*	32	41
Total	79	100

* These respondents arrived in Narva between 1957 and 1986.

The first wave of migration to Narva after the war was caused largely by structural factors, such as the economic necessity to rebuild the local industry, and the political need to strengthen the Soviet presence in the periphery. However, as illustrated in our respondents' life stories, since the 1960s the reasons for migration changed. In the accounts of these later migrants the state is not depicted as pushing people out of their previous places of residence. Rather, Narva started pulling people in, attracting them with economic benefits such as high living standard, the constant demand for labour and better chances of obtaining an apartment than, for instance, in Leningrad. The initiative for migration often came from friends or relatives already living in Narva. The nature of this "chain migration" is described in the following two quotations:

N[arvan]205: I was born in Russia, in Sverdlovsk, in 1958. ... We passed through a few cities on the way from Sverdlovsk to Narva, but did not stay too long anywhere. When I was seven we came to Narva, and since then I have been living here, except for the five years I studied in Tallinn. ... My mother initiated our move, as she was looking for better living conditions. She wanted to find not only a good job, but a nice town with a good food supply and so on. Once an acquaintance invited my mother to visit her in Narva and there happened to be a job for a doctor. ... We were promised an apartment and we got it in a year. The first year we lived in the hospital, on the second floor, in a storeroom near the kitchen.

N303: I was born in Leningrad in 1959. My father was a mining engineer and he was offered a job in Slantsy [a settlement in the Leningrad region, close to the Estonian border]. I finished school in Slantsy and went to study in an institute in Leningrad in 1976. After graduation I was assigned a job in Orel [central Russia], where I moved with my wife. From Orel I went into the army. ... After the army, in 1985, we moved to Narva. Actually, my wife brought me here because her parents lived in Narva.

Social and Economic Ties between Narva and Ivangorod

In addition to the migrants from distant places in the Soviet Union, Narva attracted migrants from neighbouring villages and small towns. Many contemporary Narvans were born in the regions of Leningrad, Pskov and Novgorod. Due to the specific profile of Narva industries, this migration stream had a predominantly feminine face – young women from villages arrived in Narva to work for the textile factory. For some of them Ivangorod, the town on the other side of the Narva river, was the first place of residence on their way to Narva.

Though separated by the river and the administrative boundary between the two republics, during the Soviet era Narva and Ivangorod in fact formed one social space which was functionally united through a common infrastructure and labour market. Narva was the obvious leader in this alliance: it was bigger than Ivangorod and had better supplies since it belonged administratively to more prosperous Estonia. According to the Narva inhabitants, the town always bore the markings of the West, being "cleaner, greener, cosier and more cultural" than the settlements on the other side of the bridge. In the words of one of my respondents (a woman, born in 1952, interviewed in 1999): "[though] there were no borders, Ivangorod was just a small peripheral Russian town, whereas Narva ... was the third biggest industrial city in Estonia."

Ivangorod, however, was also a necessary part of the daily life of Narvans. Many people who worked in Narva lived in Ivangorod and many had dachas on the other side of the bridge. In addition, these two towns were literally sewn together because of the textile vocational school in Ivangorod which trained employees for Narva's Kreenholm textile factory.

The life story of Liudmila (N309) represents the typical life pattern of a female Kreenholm worker. Liudmila was born in a small village in the Leningrad region in 1946. In 1962, after ninth grade, she came to Ivangorod and entered the textile vocational school. Initially, she lived and studied in Ivangorod and worked at the Kreenholm plant in Narva, going to work daily across the bridge: "There were no borders, and almost no

differences, we thought of Narva and Ivangorod as one city." Later, she got an apartment in Narva and moved there.

As evident from the quotation above, during the Soviet era it did not matter on which side of the river people lived, since they simply resided where they could find an apartment. It was only after Estonia's independence and the introduction of the border regime in the early 1990s that one's place of residence became crucially important. In terms of Pries's definition of social space as "a relatively dense and durable configuration of social practices, symbols and artefacts" (Pries 2001b:5), Ivangorod and Narva formed a spatial reservoir for an intensive social space characterised by dense social networks and regular social interactions. The importance of this routinised social space was not realised until it was disrupted by the establishment of the Russian-Estonian border.

The social networks of the Narvans were naturally not limited to Ivangorod. Narva was located on a busy transport artery connecting Leningrad and Tallinn, within a roughly three-hour drive to both cities. Yet the Narvans considered Leningrad to be the much closer city. Indeed, its proximity was seen by some as one of the main advantages of Narva. According to one of the respondents (a woman, born in 1956, interviewed in 1999) the "desire to live in a Russian city and to be closer to Leningrad" was among the main reasons to move from Tallinn to Narva. Although it is unlikely that there were Narvans who, say, went to work daily in Leningrad, Leningrad can also be included in their intensive social space since it repeatedly appears in the majority of life stories either as place of birth, study, work or relatives' residence:

N209: I was born in Leningrad at the end of the siege. In 1946, my parents came here to work at the reconstruction of Kreenholm. ... Then I went to study in an institute in Leningrad where I worked for three years after graduation. But in Leningrad it was very difficult to find a place to live and in 1969 I returned to Narva and started to work at the "Baltiets" engineering plant.

Soviet Narva grew up as a community of migrants. Their social networks stretched from Narva and its surroundings not only to Ivangorod and Leningrad, but also to their places of birth, the places of residence of their family and friends and so on. If their intensive social space was maintained and reproduced by regular daily contacts, their geographically extended social space functioned through mail, telephone and regular visits to different parts of the Soviet Union.

In summary, Soviet Narva can be considered as a centre of a pluri-local social space, different from Tallinn or any other city or town in Estonia or northwestern Russia. The specificity of this space was due, first, to Narva's frontier location and, second, to the migrant history of its population.

Redefining Narva's Status since 1991

The establishment of the Estonian-Russian border had a particularly impact on the social space of Narva inhabitants. First, the previously profitable location of Narva between Tallinn, the capital of the republic, and Leningrad, the second largest city of the USSR, became a peripheral position in independent Estonia. During the first years of independence new investment flows and Western subsidies were directed to support the nationalising Baltic states but bypassed Russian-speaking enclaves. At the same time, the disruption of the Soviet networks and de-industrialisation of the region undermined the local economies, causing shutdowns of industrial enterprises in the Estonian Northeast. As a result, the unemployment rate in the Northeast has today reached 20 per cent, which is twice the average level of unemployment in Estonia (Znobishcheva 2002).

Under Estonia's nationalisation project, Narva and the Northeast as a whole were marginalised politically and socially due to the prevalence of Russian-speakers in this region. Among the population of Narva (70,200 people), Estonians make up only 4.2 per cent while 86 per cent are Russians. For other groups (mainly Ukrainians and Belarusians, 2.9 per cent and 2.5 per cent, respectively), the language of daily communication is Russian, and they follow either the Russian media or the Estonian media in Russian (Narva in Figures 2002:10). Consequently, until recently Narva has been presented in the Estonian-language mass media and speeches of top Estonian politicians as "a left-wing, Soviet-minded town, dominated by monolingual Russian-speaking Soviet activists, mafia and other sources of instability" (Virkkunen 2002:6).

Estonia's firm political shift away from Russia has had a serious impact on the lives of the borderland population. On the one hand, the Narvans' established network ties with neighbouring Ivangorod and other parts of Russia have become transborder and transnational, subjected to the border policies of Estonia and Russia and hence rather difficult to maintain. On the other hand, Estonia's move towards Europe has opened a new direction for people's migration and provided space for establishing new, westward reaching social networks.

In the next sections I describe the social space of Narvans in the new context and, on the basis of our data, demonstrate how this social space is being simultaneously localised and transnationalised.

Local and Transborder Loci of the Narvans' Social Networks

In order to determine the most central geographic loci of the Narvans' social networks, I analysed the places of residence of the network members (alters) of our respondents (egos). Since many of the questions through which the egos' networks were constructed concerned the interaction and social support conducted on a daily or weekly basis, our data contains an overrepresentation of geographically close alters.⁴ They included, among others, family members and friends living in Narva or in the resort town Narva-Joesuu (20 kilometres from Narva), and closest neighbours or members of the work collective. As Table 8.3 shows, 1128 of the 1291 alters (87.4 per cent of all alters) lived in Narva or Narva-Joesuu.

The broader geographic scope of the egos' social networks was revealed in the answers to two more general questions, "Does somebody influence your important decisions?" and "Did you forget to mention any important person?" The number of geographically distant alters is not particularly high, but their quality is. The questions obviously gather up the significant others of our respondents, largely their closest relatives: parents, brothers, sisters, and adult children.

A closer look at the social networks stretching outside Narva and Narva-Joesuu (Table 8.4) reveals interesting findings. 163 alters (13 per cent of the total) live outside these two towns. While the number of connections to other places in Estonia accounts for a third of all "outside of Narva" links, the number of ties with Russia is higher and comprises more than half of all outgoing connections. Together with alters residing in Western countries and other countries of the former Soviet Union, the contacts crossing the Estonian borders make up about 67 per cent of all social links located outside of Narva or Narva-Joesuu.

Along with transnationalisation, the localisation of social networks is another feature of the Narvans' social space.⁵ Many of the Narvans' alters live in Ivangorod on the Russian side of the border (13 per cent of all "outside of Narva" social connections) while some (10 per cent) live in other towns in northeastern Estonia: Jõhvi, Kohtla-Järve and Sillamäe, of which the two latter ones are predominantly Russian-speaking localities (Table 8.5). In total, Ivangorod, the Leningrad region, St. Petersburg and Pskov have 30 per cent of the Narvans' outgoing connections, slightly surpassing Tallinn and Narva's neighbouring towns in Estonia.

Table 8.3 Alters' Places of Residence

Place of residence	N	%
Estonia	1182	91.5
Narva and Narva-Joesuu	1128	
Tallinn	31	
Kohtla-Järve	10	
Jõhvi	3	
Sillamäe	3	
Tartu	3	
Other localities	4	
Russia	90	7.0
Ivangorod	22	
St. Petersburg, Leningrad region, Pskov	27	
Other places in northwestern Russia	7	
Volga region, Central Russia	17	
Moscow	5	
Siberia	5	
Other localities	7	
Other countries of the former Soviet Union	10	0.8
Ukraine	7	
Moldova	1	
Kazakhstan	1	
Bashkortostan	1	
Western countries	9	0.7
Germany	2	
Finland	2	
Sweden	2	
Norway	2	
Canada	1	
Total	1291	100

Table 8.4 Countries of Residence of Alters Living Outside Narva and Narva-Jõesuu

Place of residence	N	%
Estonia	54	33
Russia	90	55
Other countries of the former Soviet Union	10	6
Western countries	9	6
Total	163	100

Table 8.5 provides a revealing picture of the Narvans' social networks, stretching along the road between the two magnets of Tallinn and St. Petersburg with Narva and Ivangorod as the central loci. More than half of the alters outside of Narva (59 per cent) live in this area, indicating that this social space, established in Soviet times, continues to function although in a new, transnational pattern.

Table 8.5 Places of Residence of Alters Living Outside Narva and Narva-Jõesuu

Place of residence	N	%
Tallinn	31	19
Jõhvi, Kohtla-Järve, Sillamäe	16	10
Ivangorod	22	13
Leningrad region, St. Petersburg, Pskov	27	17
Other places of residence outside Narva and Narva-Jõesuu	67	41
Total	163	100

Though the border made social communication between Estonia and Russia much more difficult than before, the Narvans' connections still seem to be localised in the border area as well as in Tallinn and St. Petersburg. The amount of connections across the national borders to the East and West allows us to talk simultaneously about the localisation and transnationalisation of Narvans' social space. This transnationalisation is developing in two directions. While the dense social networks with the neighbouring regions in Russia are reminiscent of the Soviet heritage, the much less numerous connections to Western Europe indicate recently established opportunities and avenues for the movement of people.

Blue, Red or Grey? The Narvans' Life Strategies and Transnational State Policies

For many Narvans the choice of citizenship seems to be connected with new life strategies rather than with an established political position (Brednikova and Voronkov 1999). In this section I describe the decision on citizenship as an element in eastward- or westward-oriented life strategies.

In terms of citizenship the population of Narva may currently be divided into three groups: 36 per cent of the population are Estonian citizens, 35 per cent hold aliens' passports or the grey documents of non-citizens, and 29 per cent are citizens of Russia.⁶

Two different life strategies, transcending the borders of Estonia, emerged from the interviews. The first is oriented towards post-Soviet Russia (or other regions of the former Soviet Union) and is largely based on the social capital acquired in the Soviet period. It is based on many components, such as knowledge of the Russian language, social networks stretching over the border and knowledge of "how things worked" in the USSR. Russian citizenship (a red Russian passport) obviously provides the best legal support for the Russia-oriented strategy since it gives its holder the right to travel freely to CIS countries for any reason. In Narva this right became a special resource for many respondents, providing them access to cheap Russian products, such as vodka, cigarettes, and petrol, which they imported to Estonia using their personal networks.

From the time the border was established in 1992 until September 2000, Narva and Ivangorod inhabitants enjoyed a simplified border crossing regime. Those who either worked or had close relatives or real estate on the other side could obtain a special pass (*propusk*) for regular border crossing. Officially, this pass only allowed staying in the border zone, not travelling further into the country. The simplified border-crossing regime and the system of border passes was abolished in

