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The Role of Regions in Transforming Post-communist Societies: The Cases of Belarus, Georgia, Russia and the Ukraine Compared

Reports and summaries of the second meeting in Tbilisi from the 23rd – 27th of May 2002



Settlement in the old town of Tbilisi

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Editorial

Our network discussions changed during the period from the first meeting at the Lake of Constance 1999 to Georgia 2002 in the Caucasus. The moving in time and space influenced our agenda of discussions as well as the results. We finished the conference with new outlooks to further work and to a project proposal summarised in Newsletter 4. Let us have a look to some essential points for this change. At the first meeting we started with a passage through „900 years of future“, the history of time and space in the context of Western European countries. The Swiss, German and Austrian experts referred to the rich traditions of federalist politics. Strategies promoting the macro regional integration and coordination leading to the model of Euro region „Bodensee“ was presented. The feeling of success was unavoidable in two respects: satisfaction about the „longue durée“ of a regional and federal tradition as well as expectations for innovations modernising the performance and efficiency of regions in the future.

During the period 1999 – 2002 the events of 11th September occurred. We had to postpone our meeting planned for October 2001 to May 2002. The change of place to Tbilisi and the change of time had crucial impacts on our discussions. Which? Let me start by describing some impressions.

Georgia is a dramatic case where the opposite situation to the Western countries becomes evident. The Georgian regions are confronted by divergent interests from outside, those of global players. Simultaneously within the country historical cleavages, religious and ethnic differences are still stressing and working against a stable integra-

tion. Georgians experience the ruptures from Soviet to post-communist period as dramatic. Our colleagues from the other NIS-countries were shocked by the poverty and urgent problems in the former Southern paradise of Russia and Soviet-Union.



A holy place: the walls of the fortress with the reconstructed church

The conference meetings were embedded into a lecture of Tbilisi as a „text“ telling us the history mirrored in actual situations and pictures. We walked through the „holy“ roots of Tbilisi on the hills where priests told about the beginning of Georgia and the experiences of Georgians to the actual situation: the integration as a unity against the interests and powers from outside has never been reached but periodically and under pressure. Most impressing was the visit to the Pantheon on Sunday. The life of arts and its artists is a dramatic script of the social and cultural tensions in Georgia. The dead writers, painters, musicians play the major role in a small country which tried to be and to remain a voice of an autonomous culture. Some graves were opened and “freed” from false heroes of previous periods and waiting for the figures displaced before, but now rehabilitated. The Pantheon is really not a museum world, it seems like a text in change. Georgian visitors of the Pantheon have been listening attentively the lecture of the different grave stories told by our pilot Tsesana.



The Pantheon of Tbilisi

Down the hills, the text of the town is like a labyrinth. The old districts of the historical town founded outside the fortress are crowded with people. They are celebrating the birthday of a famous Armenian writer by folkloristic traditional music. The mystic atmosphere in the church nearby is not opposing but complementary to the celebration outside.



A writer's birthday on a Sunday afternoon in the old town of Tbilisi

The architecture of the old town is living history in the present. An invited architect from Tbilisi explained us the problems. People will stay here and live in the old-beautiful houses and settlements. But the buildings are often in a very bad state and decaying. Speculation projects are a danger for this museum, which is – in opposition to many old towns in Western Europe – vivid and full of life. The protection and reconstruction of this text is a primordial issue for the next years.

A further contrast is the ethnographic museum. On a side of the valley surrounding the town the historical houses of all Georgian regions have been collected. The feeling to walk through history is exciting. How is it feasible that the living text of the old town of Tbilisi seems like the translation of the museum into the actual life contexts of a metropolis? How can the past continue in the present or in the future? Nostalgia and utopia are sisters when you walk through Tbilisi.



The ethnographic museum over Tbilisi used for a lunch

Tbilisi is a masterpiece for reading the last period of Soviet influence. Around the plateaus the socialist agglomerations are visible. The old pathos of the communist utopia, habitation blocs and towers, gives the skyline. The settlements are also in a bad state. People are managing their home territories – expansion of place in the verandas, protecting the rooms of the flats against the fate of their front walls that seem to ask, “how long will we still stay here?”



Holy places dominate the picture from everywhere.



The settlements of soviet era of expansion and modernisation of Tbilisi

The official buildings of the Soviet period are less dominating in Tbilisi than in other towns. Is this because the churches on the hills have never lost their mystic and silent power? But from time to time the police forces are concentrated on some roads and streets. If one follows these lines, the buildings of political and autocratic power are obvious; the president is on the way from one palace to another or to his home.

Business Tbilisi is a text in the background. Modern prestige towers or shopping centres are rare. The national symbol of global ambitions in architecture, the airport of Tbilisi, is like a railway station compared to the glass palace of Istanbul overfilled with all modern consumer products.

The more evident and impressing is the text of life during the day in Tbilisi. Everywhere people are on the streets. They do not read but live the text. Small market facilities fill the corners and places before the houses. Leisure activities, communication, presentation of arts are played on the streets. Even during the night lights are indicating small kiosks with drink and food facilities. We feel that this social live in the architectural chapter of Tbilisi is the essential lecture.



Streets and places are places of life.

A walk through a district touched by an earthquake showed the self help of

people: They blocked the roads and streets near their houses and buildings. Avoiding the vibrations by car traffic helps to defend the houses so these shouldn't collapse totally. Self help starts by defending itself and by protecting the primordial infrastructure of the territorial identity, the houses.

Our colleagues from Georgia introduced us into the country's situation in an extraordinary way – helping to read the text of Tbilisi. The conference programme was embedded into these insights and outlooks.



The group of the network after a workshop



Edward Kodua, Professor of Sociology at the University, a stakeholder of the memory for the grand European sociologists and Therese Walter, cultur prospectiv, during a break.

I am sure that these walks through the town have influenced our scientific workshops:

(1) The presentations and discussions during the working sessions started

with the specific contexts of the four NIS countries. The questions and outlooks became much more concrete as it was possible at the first meeting at the Lake of Constance 1999.

(2) The insights into the situation of Georgia stimulated the comparative discussions between the partners of the countries. The monologs about the own country changed into more dialogic discussions between the countries. The use of Russian language as informal and (additionally to English) as formal communication facilitated the efficiency and depth of exchange.

(3) The contacts and strengthening of exchange since 1999 contributed substantially to the level und intensity of the exchange. So Tatjana Vorozheikina was invited by the World Society Foundation in Zurich as a guest professor allowing to present and discuss problems of the former SU-States in comparison to Western States. Preliminary papers of the INTAS teams have been integrated and published in a reader about transformation-problems to civic society.

http://www.novapublishers.com/detailed_search.asp?id=1-59033-138-9

(4) The role of regions and of state-decentralisation is a central topic for future democratisation of NIS societies. Thank of the project “How view Georgians Democracy?” funded by the SCOPE (Switzerland) a positive outlook to further cooperation as a network is probable. So the conference ended with the formulation of an outline for a proposal and a further programme. – It will be published in Newsletter 4.



Are regions stratified like stones of a monument? “We should prepare a common proposal for the next period!” (Mr Mikolay Churilov, Ukraine).

In the following summaries of papers and contributions are published. They provided inputs for the discussions. But it was aimed to transcend the papers during discussions and to seek for new horizons.

Our walks through Tbilisi made it understandable why the Georgian team focuses on the historical traces of regions in Georgia. It was clear that the memory of how to become a regional as well as an integrated society remains the main topic. The Belarus team concentrated in the discussions on three questions. The regional system of Belarus, the role of religious differentiation and the problem of re-orientation after the break down of communist eschatology. The latter aspect is very important and interesting in future. Also the question was posed how in Belarus situation the legitimacy of power is guaranteed although democratic norms are diffusing among urban and well educated trend groups.

The Russian team contributed to the question of regionalisation and democratisation. Explanations of the inter-connection between decentralisation and democratic or autocratic patterns in Russia and in the case of the region

of Perm have been looked for. How does the symbolic use of “region” contradict to values of equality and democracy – the question is approached in a more theoretical paper.

In the Ukraine the interplay between regional and national power on the background of the political geography is revisited by analysing the data of recent elections.

One good precondition of the network is that we combine the capacities of different sectors and disciplines of social science. Since Universities in Eastern Europe are still in a precarious situation, we profit from the involvement of private institutions like GORBI. The institute is capable to carry out complex empirical research projects in a rather difficult context. By these capacities the continuity of research is guaranteed. Scholars in Universities can profit by the image of social science and by the offer of working places for students. Our mixed structure of the network (University teams and private institutes) contributes to a combination of research that will be strongly demanded in future. So we discussed also methodological and organisational issues promoting the social science in the different countries.

First of all I would like to thank the GORBI institute, Merab Pachulia and his team, for the excellent organisation, and for their hospitality unforgettable to all participants.

Hans-Peter Meier-Dallach
Therese Walter

Zurich, July 2002

Country specific Reports

1) Regionalism in Georgia

The words “Regions, Districts, Parts, Counties” have a special meaning. It all has a flavor of history and traditions. Georgia – one of the ancient countries experienced lots of changes in terms of territorial and administrative planning. If we trace the history, it was only a short period to be a unified state. Kartvelian tribes residing in the Southern Part determined the history of the country. That may have been one of the reasons either of its regional planning or its division into counties. In order to analyze the “regionalism” phenomena we should divide the history into four parts:

1. The founding of the state till 19th century – before joining Russia;
2. Georgia as part of Russia;
3. Georgia as a part of the Soviet Union;
4. Independent Georgia till present.

Georgia up until 19th century – before joining Russia

In 13 BC two Georgian states were established in Caucasus: one was Eastern Iberia or Kartli, and the other was Egrisi or Kolkheti in Western part.

In IV-III BC it was the first time when Eastern and Western Georgia united under the ruling of Parnavaz, the period when Georgian alphabet was established. The unified Georgia was split into ruling districts, so called “Saeristavo”. That was the earliest case of administrative planning in Georgia.

By concurring Georgia the foreign forces mainly focused on invading different geographical parts of it. Internal and external enemies separated Georgia into regions.

In the 5th century AC, under the rule of the King Vakhtang Gorgasali, the whole of Georgia unified for the first time. One of the factors for unification was common faith, common language and writing. Although being a unitary state, Georgia bared signs of decentralization.

From 5th up to 10th century Georgia was divided into separated kingdoms. During the 10th century a unification process started. By the beginning of the 11th century Kartli, Western Georgia, Tao-Klarjeti, Kakheti, Hereti united into one Georgian state. The king was ruling the country, though imposing governing of different parts to royals. During the feudalistic period – feudal lords governed parts of the country – Eristavi often generated separatist tendencies. With the help of external forces feudal lords managed to separate Kakheti and Hereti from Georgia.

Kings of Georgia often had to battle rebel “Saeristavo’s”. By the end of the 11th century the king won the battle and unified Georgia once again. During the reign of David Agmashenebeli and Tamar the King Georgia was one of the strongest reigns in the East, being unitary in terms of administrative – territorial planning. Alongside with Georgian parts, it consisted of Armenian and ex-Muslim states. Some of them were completely under the Georgian government, but they all preserved cultural autonomy. They have directly been binded to the King of Georgia. Those units not being under Georgian government, but dependent on Georgia, had to pay tributes, and didn’t have the competence to solve staffing issues independently. Vassal countries were ruled by Vassals of the King of Georgia. By that time the

country was still divided into “Saeristavos”, that possessed a certain amount of autonomy. That model can be characterized as an asymmetric federation model.

After Mongol invasion, in the mid centuries, Georgia was split into separate independent kingdoms – Kartli, Kakheti, Imereti. Samtske County was dissolved among them. Again Georgia was united by King George Brtskinvale in the XIVth century. A special attention was drawn to Mtianeti settlements, the mountainous parts of Georgia. Each settlement was headed by a “Khevisberi”. The mountain area had traditions vastly differed from the rest of Georgia. There was a separate legal book written especially for Mtianeti, describing region planning, the relationship with the King, economic relations, relations among the settlement etc.

In the 15th century the country was again on the edge of splitting. Abkhazia and Samegrelo made up one county, Guria was separated as well as Samtske. The leaders of Kutaisi district rebelled against the King. Despite the rule of obedience to the King, the separatist tendencies were still very strong. Separate counties have been established. For e.g. during the Bagrati reign Kakheti and Hereti were out of the country borders. In Western Georgia there was Sabediano county that consisted of Abkhazia, Samegrelo, Guria, and other main countries – now named Sukhumu, Batumi and Poti. Despite of the fact that the governor of the county was subordinated to the King it was not included to the center. At that period Samtske-Saatabago was established as a separate unit disobeying the King of Georgia. In early 16th century Saatabago concurred King’s lands, after having concurred the whole area of Javakheti. Samtskhe – the leader of

Saatabago preferred negotiating with foreign invaders rather than being under the Kings of Georgia and Imereti. This policy brought very bad results to that county, Iran and Turks intruded the area. The county was divided into two parts. Internal feudal wars devastated and weakened the county further. From the 16th century Samtskhe-Saatabago was left to the Turks, that was the beginning of the process of Southern Georgians to become Muslims. All above mentioned was followed by deterioration of Georgian cultural heritage.

Iran and Turks divided Georgia between themselves. The Eastern part went to Iran, the Western part to the Turks. At that time Eastern and Western parts were subdivided into kingdoms or counties, which had either its own dialects or languages (e.g. Megrelian, Svanetian), traditions and history.

During this period feudal rivalries continued inside the country. The governors of Samegrelo and Guria Dadiani’s and Gurieli’s very often counted on the help of Turks when striking against the King of Imereti. Odishi (Samegrelo) became especially strong among the other counties. The governor Levan the Second Dadiani (1611-1657) was claiming kingship and trying to unify the whole western Georgia under his rule. There were constant disagreements and fights among the counties, which weakened them and made them easy to reach for the enemy. At the beginning of the 17th century the governors of Abkhazia, Guria, Samegrelo and the King of Imereti started to pay tributes to the Turks.

In the 18th century King Erekle the Second established a unified kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti. The King of Imereti made peace with the governors of Guria and Samegrelo and unified the Imereti kingdom. In the middle of the

18th century Imereti and Kartl-Kakheti kingdoms made a military treaty with mutual obligations to stand against enemies with unified forces. The kingdoms of Kartl-Kakheti and Imereti agreed with Russia to battle against the Turks together.

Conclusion: Although the administrative-territorial division of the unified Georgia of that time was unitary, it consisted of large separate territorial units. The division was based on cultural factors like language, dialect, customs and traditions, tribal differences (Megrelians, Imeretians, Svans, Gurians, Rachians, Kakhetians etc.), geographic location, communications etc. Despite the unitary regiment, districts, parts, Saeristavo's of that time more or less were economically independent and had the opportunity to solve economic problems by themselves.

Georgia as a part of Russia

In 1801 Kartl-Kakheti kingdom joined Russia, that started to think of joining other parts of Georgia as well. Some of the territories were independent kingdoms, others were under the Turkish reign.

By that time Western Georgia – Imereti kingdom, counties of Guria, Samegrelo, Abkhazia and Svaneti have been continuously fighting. The weakened Turks still managed to maintain ruling over Western Georgia. The kingdom of Imereti happened to be the most successful part of Georgia by that time. The king of Imereti Solomon the II energetically strived for the unification of Western Georgia, he refused to recognize the Turkish government and was getting prepared to drive it away from the country. Unfortunately he was not supported by his royals, who tried to preserve their independence by the use of external forces.

In 1803 the Russian government and the royals of Samegrelo signed up a treaty with the obligation to protect Samegrelo and to confront against the King of Imereti. Ever since Samegrelo became a polygon for Russia in Western Georgia. The king of Imereti tried to maintain domestic independence and suggested to Russia only external-policy reigning, but Russia wanted far more and was demanding absolute obedience. In 1804 Russia concurred part of Azerbaijan and entered Imereti. Since 1804 the king of Imereti became the servant and the executive power of the Russian government. Despite this fact, the king of Imereti, Solomon II was continuing his struggle for independence.

Based on the above mentioned decree the Russian reign was spread over the Guria county as well. Russian troops entered even Imereti. The relationship between the king of Imereti and Russia worsened.

In 1810 Russians captured the king of Imereti who managed to escape from imprisonment and led the rebellion in Imereti.

The rebellion might have brought serious problems to Russia. With the help of the troops of the royals of Samegrelo and Gurian Russia suppressed the rebellion in Imereti. Russia cancelled Imereti kingdom and declared limited power of separate counties in the Western Georgia. An independent treaty of protection was made with the royals of Guria, a similar treaty was made with the royals of Abkhazia. The process was sequential, Russia withdrew the independence from the counties and made final annexations.

In 1828 Guria county was revoked, in 1857 Samegrelo, in 1859 Svaneti and in 1864 Abkhazia county were revoked.

Russia introduced a new type of division - the Mazras. The whole territory was separated into two provinces –

Tbilisi and Kutaisi and these were subdivided in Mazras. It was crucial for Russia to maintain the same type of management in the provinces. The whole process did yet not envisage traditions and customs peculiar to Georgia.

The process of colonization started with military occupancy. The colonial policy gradually aimed at the demolishing of Georgian traditions and culture and tried to replace it by Russian culture; another aim was the loosening of the national spirit of Georgian people.

At this time the Georgian Church lost its independence.

That historical epoch was bearing one positive impact for Georgia – the Russian invasion determined the unification of the Georgian territory.

Some territories captured by the Turks were returned to Georgia. In opposition to the colonial interests of Tsarizm several parts of Georgia unified and a national consolidation took place.

Almost all parts of Georgia stood up for their rights and against the Russian colonial regiment. Several rebellions took place in Mtianeti, Kakheti, Imereti and Guria. But all of them failed at the end. The social-economic conditions drastically changed during that period. Capitalist relations gradually replaced feudalistic ones.

In the early 20th century several political parties were established in Georgia. Their main creed was mostly to establish socialist or communist ideology in Georgia rather than fight for independence. Some parties believed that Georgia should have stayed within Russian federation. The National Democrats was the only party stating its will to struggle for independence. The population supported the Social Democrats rather than the Bolsheviks. But the

further developments show that Georgia finally got its independence.

Georgia as a part of the Soviet Union

Before the Soviet Era Georgia had got three years of independence. The country was ruled by the party of Mensheviks. The Mensheviks didn't change the administrative-territorial structure of Georgia. The division into the Mazras was preserved. The election of self-governing bodies was held on the second year of independence. A few peculiarities of parts of Georgia and Kartvelian tribes were envisaged in there.

The Soviet System changed the administrative planning. The territories were segmented down to districts and have remained to the present. Districts were essentially established around the bigger or smaller towns. Georgia seems to be a unitary state nowadays, but this estimation is not correct, as far as it used to have and still has autonomies inside.

Abkhazia, Adjara, South Osetia are still autonomies. All these administrative units used to have their own constitutions. They were divided by the same principle as the rest of Georgia. Adjara, Abkhazia and South Osetia (Samachablo) have their own traditions but they always were constituent parts of Georgia.

The historical unifier was the ethnic factor – that means that the population historically belonged to Kartvelian tribes, they had the same religion – Georgian-Orthodox, the same language, the same traditions – established by centuries of civilization. The difference had its roots back to 18th and 19th centuries. Russia and the Soviet regime have artificially intensified the process, managed from Moscow.

Despite strongly centralized management, there were signs of separatist

tendencies within Abkhazia and South Osetia and efforts to get in distance from Tbilisi. The requirements raised by the authorities and the population of the autonomous area were sustained by the Kremlin. Moscow facilitated the process of deepening the pit between Tbilisi and autonomies.

By that time Georgia was a part of the Soviet Union, but actually it remained an unitary state, with the signs of Federation.

The process was kept centralized, but different positions towards autonomies enabled Kremlin to maintain power over Tbilisi.

Independent Georgia

In the first years of independence the issue of the administrative-territorial division of the country was raised. To the armed conflict with South Osetia battles started on the territory of the autonomous Republic of Abkhazia.

During former Soviet Union period there were two autonomous republics Abkhazia and Adjara and one autonomous area of South Osetia. The rest of Georgia was subdivided into regions. The structure is preserved even today, though the regional planning was once addressed some 10 years ago. Georgia was divided into administrative districts and the representatives of the Head of the State were appointed. This institute is still being operational and is called Presidents Authorized person.

The infrastructure is pretty well established on the regional level – policy, prosecutor's office, court, and the relevant structure for all other spheres.

Presently the administrative districts represent historical parts of Georgia, that previously were called “Saeristavo” or “Counties”.

Administrative districts do not have their own budget and are subsidized by the central budget.

Although, it is already 10 years that Georgia is independent, there is no administrative-territorial planning, based on the Constitution and legal basis. Political forces are rejecting regional planning in Georgia. Their consideration is to maintain the system implemented by the former Soviet Union system by revoking the Presidents' Authorized Persons.

The second trend endorses the history of Georgia, traditions, ethnical and other factors. They think that the country should rather be unitary, but being decentralized coming out of the same Constitution.

There is a serious support for federal planning of Georgia. Former counties or kingdoms – Kakheti, Imereti, Kartli, Samegrelo are presented as bodies of a federation having own constitution and other tools for federal management.

1) There are supporters for an asymmetrical federation (mostly government circles): while Abkhazia, Adjara and Tskinali administrative district have a status of the federation body, the rest of the state will be divided into regions, but with less rights and without Constitution. There is a serious tendency to reject region-based division.

2) According to those against regionalism, there is a real threat of upcoming disintegration of the country, as the separatist tendencies in history during uncertain times have revealed.

3) The supporters of the regionalism have lots of arguments – high level of additional economic self-government that can build up a basis for economic and political forces of the country.

GORBI, Tbilisi, May 2002

2.) Regional Peculiarities of Ethnic, Cultural and Confessional Relations in the Republic of Belarus

Nowadays representatives of a range of nationalities and nations live in the Republic of Belarus, but they are mostly present in small communities. In accordance with the data of the national census of 1999 the population of Belarus is composed by 81 % Belarusians; 11 % Russians; 4 % Poles; 2 % Ukrainians; 0,5 % are adherent to the Jewish religion.

Their territorial concentration is the following: the Poles, the Lithuanians, the Tatars reside in the Western regions of the republic (Grodno and Brest districts); the Ukrainians live in the South (Gomel district). The Russians are stationed over the whole territory of the republic, mostly in big cities.

The representatives of any nationality, residing at the territory of the republic are free to become citizens as the liberal character of the laws in the sphere of national politics secures this right. Thus, the reason of national conflict is eliminated, unlike in other countries (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Moldova etc.). The representatives of almost all national minorities (except

for the Russians) display their positive attitude to the fact of the national Belarusian state's creation, believing that both the national minorities and the title nation benefit from it. The Russians, in their turn, held just the opposite opinion. The state of the national relations in Belarus is not determined by the regional factor directly, but by the territorial concentration of the national minorities and is characterized with their ethnic and cultural peculiarities.

The Russians in Belarus, being an ethnic minority, have lost their historical and cultural connections with Russia to a certain extent. Only the Russian language unites them with the other Russians. The language problem is one of the most important, owing to the fact, that they are not good at Belarusian. Thus, the agreement is weak in the sphere of the language situation: the Russians are scared with the consequences of Belarusisation of education and labour relations what will lead to a lowering of their professional status; the Belarusians are worried about the high importance of the Russian language in the sphere of culture. The prevailing inclination among the Russians to get higher education and increase their professional level might be the reason of the potential conflict.

Religion performs the role of an ethnic consolidating factor mainly among: a) the Poles who preserve their language, customs and religion (Roman Catholicism) and b) the Tatars who completely lost their native language and Islam is their main significant identifying marker.

In general, the representatives of the national minorities acknowledge themselves as the citizens of Belarus, and identify themselves predominantly with Belarus as a territorial and country community. All this lays the foundation of their integration in the Belarusian society, however, being surrounded with the numerically superior Belarusian nation, they start to be conscious of their ethnicity, activating their national self-conscience.

Further deterioration of the economic situation in Belarus might provoke the increase of ethnic tension, which is of social-economic but not of the ethnic and cultural character in its essence.

These concerns the Russians and the Poles who are not satisfied with the economic situation most of all. However, having quite a high economic status, they think that they will manage to find the way out of the situation. Secondly it concerns the majority of the Tatars. They live in a relatively small regional center (Ivje, Grodno district). Owing to low educational level (1,5 times lower than the average in the republic), compact residence in the town – every tenth Tatar is unemployed. The same reasons are at the basis for their low social mobility. Consequently, the worsening economic situation can act as a potential catalyst for the conflict inside the Tatar ethnicity.

Concerning the role of the ethnic-religious factor in the regional politics, our conclusions can be divided into two groups: the one that defines the specific character of Belarus and its particular regions, and the wider one, that, in our opinion, determines the specific character of the Eastern Slavonic cultural region.

1. The analysis of the specific character of the religious relations in Belarus tells, that very complicated processes are taking place in the Orthodox and Catholic Churches traditional for Belarus. In particular, the geographic prevalence of the main Christian Churches: we used to talk about religious and mainly Catholic West (as a result of its long stay as a part of Poland) and atheistic (as a result of sovietisation) and simultaneously Orthodox (from the historical and cultural points of view) East of the country – Today, the situation has significantly changed. Nowadays the Western regions (Brest and Grodno) have become not only the base of the Catholicism but also of the Orthodoxy – there are twice as many Orthodox parishes in

comparison with the number of the Catholic ones.

In addition the Greek-Catholic branch of the Roman Catholic Church with the non-polish orientation is widely spread in the Eastern regions (Mogilev, Vitebsk), the change of the significant number of the Orthodox believers to Catholicism is getting more and more vivid. It will, firstly, cause the growth of internal tensions between the Roman Catholics and Greek-Catholics inside the Catholic Church, secondly, between the members the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. In its turn, the Russian Orthodox Church in Belarus is in a rather difficult situation: in contrast to the Catholic Church which receives significant assistance from Poland, the Russian Orthodox Church can not count on such an assistance from Russia. Its resources in the struggle for the believers are rather limited.

The other serious problem, that might cause the increase of interregional tension, is a powerful wave of Protestantism overflowing the country. This wave is threatening to move the accents and to break the co-existence of the Orthodox and Catholic Churches established during centuries. Today the Protestants have hundreds of cultural buildings and Sunday schools, great editions of their religious magazines. The Pentecosts and Christians Baptists (the strongest among 12 confessions of the Protestant type) have spread their influence all over the country (especially in Brest and Minsk districts). Belarusian Protestants depend on the foreign financial centers in a certain degree, that is why their activity is in many respects determined from there. The specific character of the situation in Belarus lies in the fact, that, for instance, the protestants, having a clearly expressed strive for sacralisation, religious estrangement from the public

life at the core of their doctrine, in reality are remarkable for their social activity and inciting their adherents to the careers in power bodies.

2. The change of the role and place of religion in the life of the society was the consequence of the radical shakes in the country at the beginning of the nineties. Religion was objectively claimed by the majority of the society as a kind of compensation for the collapsed buttresses of the communist worldview, moral principles, established forms of communication.

Nowadays the level of expectations towards religion is quite high and, first of all, for its moral, regulatory and integrating opportunities – in fact, non-specific functions, performed by any ideology. And the point is not that it is an attempt of the mass conscience to replace one ideology with the theologically close one. The reason is, that peculiar traits of Slavonic mentality are eschatologism and inverse thinking. Eschatologism is in general inherent in Christianity, and in the depths of the East European civilization it is connected with inversion as a way of operating with dual oppositions that block mediation.

It is not hard to see that the eschatological component has happened to be the prevailing one both in Christian and Communist ideologies, where the other world of God was substituted for the future paradise at earth, which is inaccessible for the people today, it will accept only the 'just' ones and will come some-when at the end of times.

Inverse conscience easily accepted such a substitution twice. Thus, since the twenties the eschatological component became the basis for the soviet identity which neutralized all the other ones: national, religious, regional. When the communist ideology was

destroyed, the corresponding eschatological component collapsed as well, the suppressed alternative identities became the dominant ones in an instant. In the ideological framework, it was natural for the inverse conscience, searching for a new and simultaneously old, usual identity, to address the opposite element of the dual opposition 'Christianity – Communism'. However, the eschatological myth is disappearing as it doesn't fit the new reality. Incompatibility of these identities is one of the sources of regional conflicts at the territory of the former USSR.

In the way of the research we tried to find out the influence of the regional peculiarities in the political preferences of the population. The attempt happened to be not very successful as Belarus is a small country concerning its territory. Only some differences (a stronger degree of opposition forces support) was found out in the capital – the city of Minsk, it can be explained by a higher level of education and material well-being of people.

Rotman, Minsk, May 2002

3. Regions and the prospects for democracy in the Russian Federation.

The Russian part of the project was concentrated on a problem of how regional development correlates with the strengthening of democracy and the empowerment of civil society. At the beginning of the 1990s there was a widespread hope among the academics and democratic intellectuals that political decentralization would have led to democratization and disintegration of the state-centered model of development that was characteristic of Russia and the Soviet Union. Regional development was expected to be conducive to plurality of political and social life, which would have compensated for the traditional uniformity imposed by the state on Russian society. In other words, decentralization was considered a means of reverting the "top down" model of development, in which a region was not a historical and cultural, but mainly an administrative construction. Regionalization, building of civil society and political democratization were considered not only non-contradictory but also mutually reinforcing processes.

By mid-1990s it became clear that it was not decentralization, understood as a gradual shift of decision-making towards regional and local levels, but rather disintegration of the centralized state and weakening of central authority that took place in the previous decade. This made mostly for the formation of authoritarian regimes in the Russian regions. These regimes reproduced the "top down" model of state society relations in their corresponding regions, eliminating consistently all alternative centers of political power and social activity. Regional executives concentrated political and economic power at the expense of regional legislatures and local authorities. This often led to implicit or open conflicts with mayors of regional centers con-

sidered the most serious rivals of regional bosses. Regional media, especially electronic ones, fell under the control of regional executives in mid-1990s, much earlier than this happened at the federal level in 2000-2002. Although regional administrations sometimes patronized civic associations, they tried to control these associations and adapted them for their own political needs, eliminating independent initiatives. This was characteristic for the majority of Russian regions, both national republics, as Tatarstan, and ethnically Russian regions, as Moscow or Krasnodar region. There is no correlation between the level of social and economic development and the character of regional political regimes: the most developed and the richest region, Moscow, has essentially the same kind of authoritarian regime as one of the most underdeveloped and poorest, Kalmyk Republic. The only person with real authority is elected in both regions in a formally democratic but actually plebiscitarian election. There were some interesting, although short-lived exceptions from this authoritarian practice as, for example, Perm region, where vertical and horizontal divisions of power was maintained during 1990s. (See Nadezhda Borisova's presentation on "Regional Identity and Regime Formation: the Case of Perm Region in this edition).

The process of restructuring of a formerly super-centralized political system coincided with the collapse of the previous Soviet identity that gave to the population, albeit formally, a sense of belonging to a big country, which the Russian Federation was the core of. All the attempts to substitute it with a Russian identity failed until now, because Russian identity is constructed according to ethnic cultural patterns that is definitely opposed by the non-

Russian population, on the one hand, and by the westernized cosmopolitan public opinion with influence in some big cities, on the other. In this situation, a rise of regional and local identities compensates for the waning sense of belonging to a whole. The question is whether the rise of regional identities favors the growth of democratic and pluralistic attitudes. According to Ivan Gololobov, regional discourse, especially directed from above by regional authorities, is very destructive for the democratic perspective in Russia. As the evidence from Moscow and Krasnodar region shows, the regional discourse exacerbates undemocratic, uncivil modes of representation, dangerous for maintaining indivisible political and social space. (See Ivan Gololobov's presentation "Regionalism and Perspectives of Democracy in the Post-Soviet Russia" in this edition). The deriving theoretical and practical problem is how to separate the authoritarian regional discourse from the democratic "bottom up" trends intrinsic to regional and local identities. Thus, regional development, far from being a positive move towards democracy and civil society, turned to be a multidimensional problem. It is composed of several contradictions, arranged along different axes: a) decentralization vs. centralization or disintegration, b) democracy vs. authoritarian trends, c) regional identity as opposed to or integrated into some all-Russian identity. From the beginning of 2000, the administration of president Putin tries to resolve these contradictions by reconstructing the traditional, state-centered matrix of development, introducing the so called "vertical of authority" into the relations of federal powers with the regional ones. As a matter of fact, it means a virtual subordination of elected regional authorities to central powers, incompatible with a federal system, which stipulates sepa-

rate sources of legitimacy for different levels of authority. This policy is officially justified by the urgent need to counteract the anti-democratic trends in the regions, to guarantee equal political, civil and judicial protection for all the citizens, and to unify constitutional arrangements all over the Russian federation. This logic was basically supported by the democratic political parties and organizations that in the 1990s demanded to put an end to the abuse of power by regional bosses. In 2000, Putin's administration carried out a federal reform that introduced seven federal regions, each of them including several of the 89 subjects of the Russian Federation, with a representative of the president as a head of it. The reform canceled the direct representation of the regional executives and the heads of regional legislatures in the upper chamber of the Russian parliament, the Council of Federation. However, the result of this reform was far from strengthening democratic institutions at the federal and regional level. The members of the Council of Federation are nominated, but not elected by regional executives and legislatures, the majority of them are representatives of regional and federal bureaucracies, big business and security bodies. On the other hand, the reelection of regional executives for the third and sometimes even the fourth term was legalized. Both measures did not stop regional authorities from abuse of power, on the contrary, they deprived regional elections of any uncertainty of result. In 2001-2002, the federal administration made further steps in securing desirable results in a series of regional elections. In Yakutia, North Osetia, Dagestan, Ingushetia unwanted candidates with chances to win were taken off the electoral competition violating the spirit, if not the letter of the law.

The main trend in the regional policy now is therefore re-centralization that reinforces the most negative characteristics of power both on the federal and regional levels, exacerbating its private, non-public character and the unity, the intertwining of power and property. What happens to the society in this situation? How does this policy affect the identity formation both on the regional and federal levels? These questions are the agenda for further research. It could be organized, in our point of view, around several problems:

1. State-society relations: Why in Russia are they not translated into state-society synergy?
2. The regional and local dimension: If and how are the safety nets formed in Russia; if and how are they translated into more durable institutions of civil society?
3. The following questions refer to the new countries that emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union and to the "internal" - geographical and social - periphery of the Russian Federation: How can new societies, which emerged after the collapse of big, overwhelming states be transformed to integrated societies?

Tatiana Vorozheikina, Moscow, May 2002

Presentation on “Regional Identity as Factor of Regional Regime's Formation: the case of Perm Region”

The subject of my presentation is the problems of regional regime formation and the role of regional identity in this process. The case study is Perm region. My report includes 2 parts. In the first part I will talk about problems of regional identity in Post Soviet Russia and it's place in the contemporary Russian identity's matrix. Then in the second part I'd like to give you an overview of Perm politics and I'm going to illustrate the role of regional identity factor in the process of regime formation.

The main challenge facing contemporary Russia is the rise of regionalism. We can interpret this process both as an obstacle to democratic transition, and as positive condition, which makes democracy possible. The role of regionalism depends on its character.

The term “regionalism” came from West European political studies and European politics. It has several components. The ideological component refers to how people from different regions identify and perceive themselves within a national state. Political regionalism is a process and strategy of regional development; and it includes regional identity, traditions and activity devoted to the creation of regional political institutions. Basically regional identity is the corner stone of regionalism. Regional identity is also part of the larger identity matrix, which consists of personal, regional, and national identities.

How is regional identity formed and why has it become so important? A group of European and Russian political scientists considers that the people of Post Communist Russia have lost old Soviet identity, which cemented Soviet society; but it was very difficult to accept the new Russian identity, especially for those who were non-Russians¹.

¹ Rukavishnikov V., Halman L., Aster P. Political Cultures and Social Changes. M., 1998, P. 273

The process of federalization, which began in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union, furthered regionalization and strengthened preexisting regional identities. These identities were formed on the basis of ethnicity and/or regional cultures; the latter depended on economic and historic traditions of a region. Moreover in the Russian case the factor of regional identity is a result of internal “colonialism”, which we can interpret as “coexistence of hierarchies of cultural division of labor. This coexistence furthers reactive regional groups' formation”.² It means that the central Russian state has traditionally exploited and continues to exploit its territories and peripheries. But given the diversity of the Russian regions, the character of exploitation varied. And this factor saved ethnic and regional identity in territories in spite of the center attempts to impose universal Soviet cultural values and attitudes upon the regions. This imposed Soviet identity was more artificial than regional and local identities that became significant in 1990s.

In its essence, regional identity in Russia is a territorial one, and is formed at several levels. At the smallest scale, an individual identifies with his place of residence (city, district, etc.). The 2nd level is the identification with the larger region (oblast, ethnic republic, etc.), and the last one is identification with the mega-region, economic-geographical territory such as Siberia, the Ural region, South, etc.). Regional identity is the steadiest part of the Russian identity's matrix, is tied to the place where an individual is born, raised and has social ties.

So “the regional” sector is a constant part of the matrix. The problem is in the correlation between different parts of the matrix. The increased importance of the regional sector

² Oracheva O. Regional Identity: Myth or Reality? In: Regional Consciousness as a Factor of the Russian Political Culture's Formation. Moscow, 1999. P. 37.

within the identity matrix is a mark of change of traditional relationship between center and regions especially in the political and social spheres.

Truly regional politics became possible because of Post-Soviet federalization, by which I mean the creation of local and regional administration and legislatures. In Perm region this general process reveals specific features in formation of both the new economic system and political regime.

The most important factor of the regional regime formation was Perm's soviet heritage.³ From the beginning Perm region has been developing as an industrial territory. It was part of the Soviet Union's "industrial and military shield", where VPK (military industrial complex) and extracting enterprises have been situated. The main characteristic of Perm economy was the diversity of its industry, it meant an existence of several powerful and relatively equal economic actors. Moreover the regional industry played a very important role in national economy, so top-managers were subordinate not to the regional, but to the central party committee (obcom). I consider (and the series of interviews and expert opinions confirm it) that the role of perm obcom was that of a coordinator only, the obcom secretary was not the region's boss.

Traditionally in the soviet times perm region was in the shadow of "revolutionary Sverdlovsk", and the party elite was recruited in Sverdlovsk, not in Perm. It was unusual for center to select cadres from two neighboring regions. Therefore, rather than trying to get promoted from regional offices to Moscow, Perm party functioneers strengthened their positions in the region. To be successful meant being an effective coordinator, who knew how to balance the interests between the region and the center, and the interests within the region.

³ In this case I use the Gelman V. and Ryzenkov S. methodology. More information see in: *Russia of Regions: the transformation of Political Regimes*. Moscow, 2000.

The collapse of USSR and economic liberalization in the Perm case meant the displacement of resources. The dominant role of oil-, gas-, and salt extracting and processing industries ensured surplus budget. The weak center could not intervene in regional politics. Regional business elite selected the 1st perm governor Kuznetsov B., and Moscow endorsed this choice. The second one, Igumnov, was selected in the same way, which was subsequently legitimized by popular elections. His candidacy was a result of an elite pact, in which oil and salt "oligarchy" played a special role. The governor was forced to distribute important administrative appointments among representatives of the business elite. It was a prolongation of the Soviet polycentric model of government based on elite pact. In this period the regional regime was also constituted. The regional charter, legislature's and administration's regulations were accepted. So the character of regional regime was and stays hybrid. It means that the formal political institutions are only a facade, and the institution of elections has a legitimising role for elite choice. The regional assembly plays an important role (as a chamber where economic and political interests are negotiated among the representatives of big business). But this fact does not result in a parliamentary form of government. This status quo was reconfirmed in the year 2000, when the 3rd governor was elected.

The last 10 – 12 years showed that the regional elite learned to play according to coordinated political rules. It stabilizes the political situation during the transition. If we take the political culture of the regional elite in terms of behavior codex, it will be relevant to mention that a low level of political conflicts and a tradition of compromise characterize it.⁴ Also it is very important to mention that regional authority and elite expresse and preserve regional interests and values. For example, 82 % of de-

⁴ There are some results of master thesis of Starkova M. on "The Political Culture of Perm Regional Elite, 1990-s: qualitative analysis." (Perm State Technical University, 2000).

puties of perm legislature consider that the region has its own interests different from national and others regions. They explain it by economic, geographical, historical and cultural factors. These factors include the peculiarity of the region's geographical position and administrative division of Russian Federation. The Ural mountains serve as a "natural" wall between Sverdlovsk and Perm. The status of a republic for Udmurtia and Bashkortostan, Komi (beginning from the Soviet time) psychologically divides the inhabitants of the regions. The same is true of Komi-Permyatsky autonomous district. Besides, the claims of Ekaterinburg to the status of "the capital of the Urals" does not promote "friendship" between Perm and Sverdlovsk regions either. However, there are no conflicts between the neighboring regions, nor have there been any before. On the contrary, both cultural and economic cooperation between the subjects of RF in the region of the Urals and Povolzhje has been developing. But Perm elite has only recently opened the region to external economic actors. They try to "conquer" other regions themselves.

The strategy of regional authority is focused on the development of regional industry and on increasing the regional potential. So regional authorities use regionalism as a strategy to encourage the public trust to local and regional powers. On one hand, the elite are the agents of regional identity's formation; on the other hand, they have used and continue to use regionalism as strategy and policy that allows them to protect the regime and to articulate and aggregate regional interests to the center.

In the modern period when regionalism became a global phenomenon in politics, the study of political processes, social and economic specific features, mass political conscience taken from a regional aspect gains a special importance. However, today we can observe a decline or sometimes absence of an interest to this problem.

In this presentation, an attempt was made to analyze political processes in Prikamye.

The character of the territorial development, possession of rich natural resources and, as a result, the growth of industry and large cities, have determined the specific relationship between authority and business. Regionalism is a stable policy and strategy of the elite and regional regime's formation depends on regional identity. But a comprehensive study of the specific character of the region is impossible without considering the national Russian context. In such a research comparative analysis method may possibly be applied to get a more complete picture of a state of conscience of Perm citizens for the recent ten years. These researches will help enhance the idea that building democracy in modern Russia is impossible without taking into account the variety of cultures.

Nadeshda Borisova, Perm, May 2002

Regionalism and perspectives of democracy in the post-Soviet Russia

*It is even strange to think that before
Each of us walked as he wanted but now
The train like messiah is taking us forward
On the way from Kalinin to Tver*⁵
Boris Grebenshikov, "From Kalinin to Tver"

1. Introduction: some basic conventions

1.1. This essay aims at investigating relations between regionalism and democracy in Russia. I believe that in the last decade of the 20th century Russia lived through the period of sharp regionalisation touching upon numerous spheres of social and political life and that this separation of society into geographical segments became a crucial factor influencing development of democracy in the biggest of the former Soviet republics.

Before going into a detailed research let me conventionalise some basic notions that will be used in the essay. This conventionalisation assists to establish a common conceptual language among the presumably interdisciplinary audience of this presentation.

The first basic notion to be conventionalised is "society" as it is assumed to be the domain of studies in both regionalism and democracy.

1.2. The most general definition of society states that society is, first of all, a group of people. However, a closer look at actual usage of this word indicates that not any group of people can be called "society". A community of men called Peter, for instance, can be hardly regarded as a society but employees of an enterprise, or a class of students can be qualified as societies quite easily. The main difference between community of men called Peter and a class of students or a commercial company is that members of the latter are placed in systematic relations with each other, unlike

members of the former. Therefore, concretising our general definition, society is recognised as a group of people united on a systematic basis.

This definition implies that society is, first of all, a system. The question arises next is what we call a system? System is regarded as an ensemble of elements situated in certain relations with each other. To make clear the particular meaning of the term "system" one needs to be aware of difference between this notion and the notion of "structure" - the terms that are often mixed together. The difference is that "system" is a composition of elements relations of which depends from identities of interacting elements while "structure" is, as if to say, "pure relations" which in their regularities, are not derived from identities of elements placed in structure.

For instance, a commercial enterprise will be a system as far as relations between its members will depend from members themselves, from individuals comprising these enterprises. When these relations will be completely authorised by, for example, external law or a decree of higher-standing official, and actual stuff of this enterprise will have no power to influence these relations - the system turns into structure. One can change elements, substitute one by another etc. - structural relations will not change as a result of this rotation. In the light of the aforementioned assumptions systematic nature of society means that society is recognised as an ensemble of elements situated in a certain relations with each other where these relations depends upon the elements involved.

Going further in the theoretical excursion it is important to address the question of whether only individuals can form a society. It is enough to refer to such terms as "communist", "capitalist" or "primitive societies" to see not only systematic relations between individuals comprise societies. In these "societies" elements of system cannot be placed in any relations with each other as individuals but only as representatives of groups. In a "socialist society" a professor from Saint Petersburg can live through his

⁵ "Kalinin" and "Tver" are two names of one Russian town. Kalinin is the name given to Tver' in the 1920s after the death of the Soviet minister of people education M.I. Kalinin. The name "Tver" was returned to the town after the perestroika.

life not even knowing about an existence of a collective farmer in Siberia. As individuals they do not interact with each other whatsoever and, coherently, as individuals they do not establish any systematic relations between themselves. But if the professor will occasionally visit with a public lecture the village where the collective farmer lives, during their direct meeting the farmer will normally sit among the audience and the professor will teach as a lecturer from a chair in the local club. Relations between the two individuals become systematic despite the fact that they never saw each other before and, consequently, never established any relations between themselves. The systematicity of these relations between the professor and the farmer in the village club is set not by relations between concrete individuals but by relations between groups they belong to: the “scientific workers” and the “collective farmers”.

In such a way it appears possible to assume that society as a system can include not only individuals as elements of established relations, but also, and I believe that mostly, - groups.

1.3. On the basis of these conventions the problem of regionalism and development of democracy in Russia is regarded as complex process involving two directions of social research.

Regionalism, generally recognised as an *identification* of a social group with a geographical area resulting in genesis of regional identities, requires a focus on issues of how social groups representing elements of social system, become to be specified on the basis of regional differences.

Democracy, understood as a practice of maximal political representation of social groups, on the contrary becomes intelligible in frames of *relations* between elements of society interacting with each other during the process of representation.

Thus the question of regionalism and perspectives of democracy in Russia becomes the question of how a society organised by elements demarcated on the geographical terrain is able to process an equal political representation of its segments.

1.4. As far as the nature of society is recognised as system, *relations* between its sectors are assumed to be linked to *identities* they have. Therefore, to understand perspectives of democratic transition in the situation of rapid regionalisation of Russian society means to focus on issues of how these regional identities are constituted.

2. How regional identities are created: some basic assumptions

2.1. The issue of identity formation, which appears to be in the main focus of the research, leads to a brief reflection on some profound theoretical reflections on the nature of social organisation. I believe that there are no primordially existing social identities and each social group becomes itself only as a result of a certain human activity. The anti-essentialist attack widely represented in contemporary social sciences gives more than reasonable critique of primordialist approaches towards the ground of social identities.

2.2. In the non-essentialist perspective a discursive articulation that provides an certain entity with its meaning (makes it what it is) and by this transfers indiscrete outside reality into realm of intelligible and thinkable objects is regarded as a main kind of activity constituting group identity.

Meaning does not stand in opposition to nature as it is supposed in the naturalistic opposition mind/nature. In contrast, meaning includes the realms of the latter. For example, working class in Marxist theory is a group of people identity of which is defined by precise relations of means and forces of production. Post-marxist assume that articulation of these relations constitutes a meaning of the notion “working class” and delimits it from other social groups with which a number of individuals are associated. Radicalising the Marxist thesis “workers” are not “workers” until they are not told that, or unless they constitute a certain meaning for themselves. The social nature of “workers” as a group is its meaning in the language of Marxist political economy.

2.3. Assuming the primacy of the discursive in constitution of social identities an excursion into basic principle of discourse theory constructs a conceptual framework used in the following study in regional identities.

3. Emancipation of geographical signifier: social and political connotations of geographical objects

3.1. Meaning, constructing an identity of any object, is an essentially language phenomenon. I believe that there is no meaning if there is no language relation. Therefore to approach the nature of meaningfulness it appears necessary to touch upon some key issues of language theory.

3.2. Basic material of language is *sign* which is understood as a particular relations between *signifier*, which is a verbal, graphical, any artistic or other image and *signified*, which is a concept designated by a certain image.

Each signifier and signified become what they are on the basis of their difference with other identical elements. In Saussurean terms this identity is produced in the *logic of difference*, which is a basic logic of any language.⁶

3.3. Further studies in theory of communication indicated that in realities languages are different not only as English differs from French but also in a more complicated way. Semioticians detect there categories of languages.

The first is *natural languages* like Russian, English, French, German and any other language conventions which are *sedimented*,⁷ i.e. there are no open logic of relations between signified and signifiers. For instance, “ground” in a phrase constructed in natural language – “put an apple on the ground” does not require to understand why particular sound image [ground] is attached to a particular concept which is identified in

relations of differences with a “chair”, “sofa”, “table” and other surfaces where the apple should not be put.

The second is *artificial languages* that differ from natural by material used at the level of expression. For instance this is a language of road lights or road signs.

The third language in terms of Roland Barthes can be called as a *semiotic system of secondary order*⁸ and in terms of Yurii Lotman – *secondary modelling system*.⁹ In languages of the secondary order the meaning provided to an object is different from the one specified in the natural language. For instance, in the idiom “he has his feet on the ground” the term “ground” does not mean the same “ground” mentioned in the previous example with an apple. In fact there are very few situations when one has his feet off the ground to pay attention to such a usual fact. The “ground” here obtains its identity in difference to the word “clouds” from the other part of the proverb – “he has his head in the clouds”. In opposition “ground” vs. “clouds” the “ground” means normal, ordinary and inner position of the one who has his feet there. Signification capacities of secondary modelling systems allow extending meaningful affiliations of any object specified in natural languages and supply it with potentially, any connotation.

3.4. Geographical objects originally exist as specified in the natural language. In this logic in natural language geographical units obtain their identity in relations of difference to other geographical units. Saying “I am going to St. Petersburg” or “I live in Tambov” one first of all means under “St. Petersburg” a specific place different from Moscow, Petrozavodsk etc. as well as “Tambov” is conceived as something different from Voronezh, Saratov, Lipetsk etc. The language convention providing a particular geographical space that one may point on the map with a particular specific

⁶ Saussure, F. de. *Course in General Linguistics*, London: Duckworth, 1983.

⁷ The term of Husserl, opposed to activated signs – where the logic of relations between image and concept is visible.

⁸ Barthes, R. “Myth today” in *Mythologies*, London: J. Cape, 1972.

⁹ Lotman, Yu. *The Structure of the Artistic Text*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977.

sound image is unquestionable, it is taken as it is.

Diagram 1: Meaning of geographical identities in natural language

Moscow – Lipetsk – Tambov – Perm’ - ...

3.5. In natural language geographical units do not have any political connotation. If one tries to erase any political, demographical and economic information from the map of Russia there will be no qualitative differences between Smolensk, Vladivostok or Anadyr’.

However, actual social communication is never limited by the sphere of natural language. In fact, scientific, artistic and ideological re-conceptualisations and re-thinking of meaningfulness always present in society. These kinds of practices

construct a meaningful system, which is a language of the secondary order or secondary modelling systems.

3.6. It is this language of the secondary order which provides a geographical unit with additional connotation that makes possible to designate not a geographical place but a social group. Articulation of regional identity out of the social indeterminacy is regarded as a transformation of a natural language territorial signifier into position of an element of secondary modelling system. As a result of this articulation a concept of a certain social group emerges as a signified. As an example, one may refer to the language of mass media. Very often in journalist language this rhetorical move aims at designating the entire country by the name of its capital.

Diagram 2: The structure of the secondary modelling system in the passage from TV-news with the text: “position of Moscow on the issues of international security”.

Signifier	Moscow (Geo Sr)	USA (Political Sr)
	Certain place (Geo Sd)	
Signified	Russia as a country (Political Sd)	USA as a country (Political Sd)

Reflections on meaningful transformations allow to conclude that signifying potential of secondary modelling systems allows creating of social identity on the basis of geographical difference.

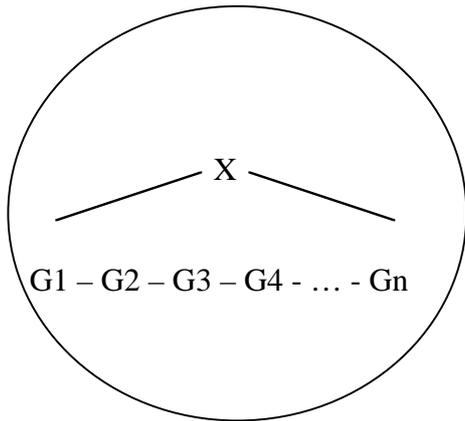
4. Geography socialised and perspectives of democracy

4.1. In the next part of the research I argue that the “society of regions”, many authors detect in the post-Soviet Russia, in a particular way constitutes the mode of political representation of its segment, as its elements, identified on the basis of

geographical difference perform a distinct capacities to enter democratic relations.

4.2. Recapitulating the notion of democracy it appears necessary to mention that democratic relations between social sectors will be those where the latter are equally represented at the political level. The model of this representation in a society demarcated on geographical basis will look in the following way.

Diagram 3: Democratic representation of geographical segments of society



4.3. The crucial feature of this representation is that geographical elements, represented at the political level are equal, or, in other words, their identity is specified in the same meaningful area and has a common ground. Only on the basis of this common ground X can equally refer to any of Gs.

However, being transformed into secondary modelling system where geographical particularity becomes a signifier of an element specified in another meaningful domain this equality breaks.

4.4. In secondary modelling system geographical elements obtain their identity through the difference with elements of other meaningful areas. To demonstrate this peculiarity let me refer to one example, presented by *Komsomol'skaya Pravda* – one of the biggest Russian newspapers. The matter of the discussion is the influence of *Detsl*, a Russian rap singer, on Russian youth culture. And the arguments presented by the reader is more than explicitly demonstrate how geographical particularity obtains its identity in the language of the secondary order.

Did you look beyond the MKAD [Moscow ring road]? “New generation choose Detsl. Who told you this rubbish? Among you [*U vas*], in Moscow this down is may be an example for “new generation”, but not among us, in Russia [*no tol'ko ne u nas v Rossii*]. For this ones can punch your face. The real new generation lives its own life, with its own interests, and they do not need

someone’s help. Because they are free and independent. But Detsl – it is not ours, not Russian [*ne nashe, ne Rossiiskoye*]. It is nasty when they try to stick the rubbish [*otstoy*] under the label of “progressive” how MTV men would say.¹⁰

In this text geographical notions like “Moscow”, “beyond the MKAD” [G 1], participate in meaning-generation of other objects: “new generation”, various aesthetics issues etc. The logic of difference actualised here can be generally presented in the following form: “Freedom is not what in Moscow”, “Detsl” is not what beyond the MKAD” etc.

4.5. This representation of a universal social identity of “Russia” and “freedom loving people” by the “area behind MKAD”, and prescribing the identity of “fans of Detsl” to “Moscow” transforms the system of geographical difference into a hegemonic project where particular geographical area becomes to be a representative of social group that in fact may not necessarily belong to a particular territory. Indeed, in reality to be a fan of Dets does not necessarily mean to live in Moscow as well as to consider oneself as a “free Russian from new generation” does not mean to live outside the MKAD.

4. 6. This type of representation where geographical particularity emancipates from its pure territorial meaning and becomes a universal representative leads to the substitution of logic of difference in identification of territorial sector on *logic of equivalence*¹¹ where Moscow becomes Moscow not as far as it differs from Tambov, Voronezh etc. but when it demonstrates some links to rap culture of Detsl. The same happens with other geographical signifiers. “Beyond the MKAD” obtains its identity not in relations of difference with “inside the MKAD” but in relations of equivalence with “new generation”, “real Russia” etc.

¹⁰ *Komsomol'skaya Pravda*, Moscow, July 11, 2000.

¹¹ Another term of Ferdinand de Saussure.

4.7. I argue that this model of construction of regional identities is relevant not only to artistic debates but to recent legal and political discussions in Russia as well.

As an example one may refer to the debates over the Moscow legislation policy in 1990s. Justifying some of their actions the Moscow authorities directly connected political priorities with the 'rights of Moscovites'. Restricting internal immigration the Moscow Mayor's office limited mobility of Russian citizens in the capital, which is a violation of the Federal law about residence registration (decree No 1030-43, 26th of December 1995). Mayor Luzhkov advocating this violation declared that "it is not necessary to speak about human rights" because for him "the rights of the Moscovites more important".¹² Another representative of the Moscow authorities, the head of the passport service of the Moscow Department of Internal Affairs (UVD) commented the re-registration after the bombings in Moscow in the following way: '[t]error acts committed in Moscow [...] invoked numerous demands of citizens [...] to stop the outrages which are often committed by the *visitants*' (italics added).¹³ This precedent clearly demonstrates how regional dimension entered the understanding of legal priorities and the human rights application conducted by the Moscow leaders. In many others Russian regions the 27th article of the Russian Constitution declaring the freedom of movement was also violated under the same advocating cover of regional interests protection. The logic of equivalence activated in the aforementioned debates can be depicted in the way as shown in diagram 5.

4.8. Interpellation of social identity through geographical particularity, described above, leads to an impossibility of any equal representation of these social groups. This

impossibility relies on the fact that in the presence of other geographical objects, eliminations of which seems absolutely impossible; no emancipation of a particular regional image can represent other territorial creations. In the secondary modelling system where geographical signifier represents something more than a pure territorial space other territorial identities, constituted on the same basis, become conflicting.

In other words a discourse where "behind the MKAD" represents a community of "real Russia" and "rubbish-free new generation" will be unable to incorporate a discourse where the same demands are represented by "Moscow" located in relations of difference with "behind the MKAD". As well as other geographical images like "Siberia", "Kuban" etc. representing the same demands will conflict with the mode of representation by "behind the MKAD" because Siberia, "Kuban", "Don" etc. exist as such as differential positions which merge into an indiscrete space under the signifier "behind the MKAD" as in fact they all situated are behind the Moscow ring road.

¹² *Novoye vremya*, Moscow, No 10-11, 1996.

¹³ Oryahova, Z. "Terror protiv Rossiyan" (The terror against the Russians) in *Ekspress khronika*, September 27, 1999, (<<http://win.www.online.ru/sp/chronicle/27-Sep-99/103.html>>).

Diagram 4: Relations of equivalence in “geography socialised” -1.

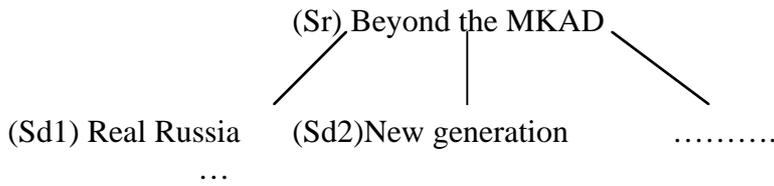
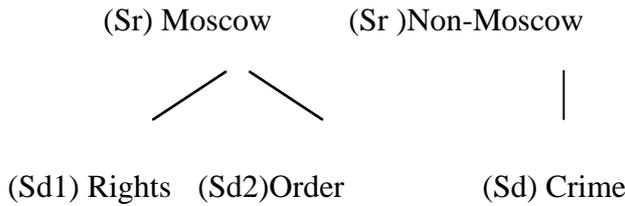


Diagram 5: The logic of equivalence in “geography socialised” -2.



4.9. I believe that particular regional identity always “ignores” other regional social identities and this creates an *effect of exclusion* where other regional discourse become “invisible” for a given one. This erects an unavoidable obstacle on the way to an equal democratic representation of “regionalities” at the political level as interests of one will very likely confront interests of others not on the basis of their instrumental differences but grounded by the profound discursive diversity in perceiving the others.

This conclusion can explain the relative fiasco of all inter-regional political projects like “Siberian agreement”, “Great Volga” etc. in Russia of 1990-s. Particular regional ideologies constructed around geographical particularities are “untranslatable” to the language of another geographical socio- and politico-centrism. Discussions of universal issues like “prosperity”, “security”, “democracy” from the positions of representation based on the geographical particularity seem to be a-priori conducted in different “languages” and, therefore, unlikely to lead to the real democratic transition.

Apart from the effect of exclusion, incompatible with the democratic practice, “society of regions” conceals another destructive effects damaging development of democratic society.

4.10. “Geography socialised” not only makes the particular geographical element universal but at the same time it disintegrates universal categories into particularities. In other words, aesthetic issues, represented by the geographical notion of “behind the MKAD” cannot be directly applied to “Moscow” or any other geographical sites within a given discourse anymore. “Freedom”, “artistic taste”, as well as “human rights” or any other categories, that suppose to be universal, become particular in the format of regional discourse. This *“mirror effect”* explains inability to complete other hegemonic project in areas where regional discourse is dominant. The phenomenon of Kondratenko – the national-patriotic leader and governor of Krasnodar *krai* clearly demonstrates this inability to establish the dialog with “commensurable” political forces because of the disintegrating power of regional discourse. Kondratenko, with all his extreme nationalistic and at the same time extreme communist views did not manage to find the common language with the communist and nationalistic leaders of the whole-national scale, because he had his own separate understanding of “being Russian” or “being communist” that confronted the “central” versions of these meanings. This misunderstanding led him to the construction of his own regional

institutions (like the regional political movement “Fatherland” (“*Otechestvo*”) parallel to the local department of KPRF (Communist Party of Russian Federation), Cossack Army, Patriotic Union of Youth etc.) based on his particular understanding of universal categories.

4.11. Concluding this concise excursion into perspectives of Russian democracy under the circumstances of rapid regionalisation of social and political fabric it is possible to say that in the framework of proliferation of regional hegemonic projects fixing social identities, political and cultural

meanings this perspective seems to be rather illusive. Radicalising this point I argue that regionalism as a political ideology is dangerous not only for the future of democratic changes in Russia but also for the establishment of a common political and social space and, consequently, - dangerous for the future of Russia as an undividable state as each regional discourse defines regional social identity by drawing sharp frontiers inside the presumably homogeneous and united society.

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POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY, NATIONAL ELITE AND PARLIAMENT ELECTION IN UKRAINE 2002

A lot of social scientists have presented polarized ideological interpretations of Ukraine's history and its nation in the limits of the existing political architecture of the Ukraine. For some of them Ukrainian history shows an exceptionally «national way», connected with Western region's mentality; others see Ukrainian national traditions in connection with the neighbour Russia (in Soviet period –the USSR, in the earlier historical epoch –Kiev Rus). However, these positions are neglecting the fact, that both poles have formed the versatility in parts of different regions and social sections of the population, which represent the Ukraine's nation at present.

Plorizations between «West-East», «Soviet traditionalism–Nationalism» and so on, are a limited and hypertrophied way to represent the verges of different cultures of the Ukrainian nation.

The second presidential election in 1994 (opposition L. Kravchuk – L. Kuchma) has revealed political watersheds and transformations. First of all, because of their preferences – Durkheim would say “by their way of political action” – the population has drawn new parallels and meridians, expressing its attitude towards the past and present situation, and connecting its hopes with a particular candidate. The results of the voting gave a contrasting picture of rather homogeneous poles/points, combined with areas where none of the candidates had a real preference. These areas are spaces of peculiar political ambivalence.

Voters determined by their elections of the candidates the political geography of the Ukraine, which has been constituted by the candidates. Not only historical-cultural differences, but also differences in the ability to overcome the economic crisis have been articulated by the candidates in the pre-election competition. These two issues have been paid special attention, and both have been used intensively in order to receive the maximum political benefits. It became clear that candidates mainly appealed to their

own electors, definitely localized in geographical areas. The struggle for votes took place in a space of political ambivalence, but not on the territory of the competitor. The structure of the political space forced the candidates to stress differences between “we” and “they”, between eastern Ukraine and western Ukraine.

The high level of voters' identification with a candidate has shown that the goal to appear in the role of high-level state power, was achieved by means of rooting into people's consciousness an image of quite different political aspirations and insistent pretensions. Thus, political geography has been created not only by means of the population's activities, but also by the activities of competitive candidates. The latter gave legitimacy to existing differences and were the base for planning the campaigns by using these contradictions. In contrast to these campaigns the political capital in the Ukraine is currently achieved by the intensive use and exploitation of regional differences. This matter has the consequence that the support in one part of the country can lead to a complete negation in another part. Pointing to differences have become an instrument of any politician's draft work, an instrument of his everyday troubles and cares. And regions itself, voting for their candidates, to Parliament and high government offices, have competed for domination in the politically, culturally and socially heterogeneous Ukraine.

At the parliamentary election of 2002 the fact of political geography with a rather strong central elite downgrading to the local elite in the electoral space could be noticed. Since the moment of the independence, Kyiv has become the place, where the arrived representatives of different regions were fighting for power. The competition of different regional groups is influenced by the competition of different types of leaders, aimed to own the center of political space. The resident representatives of the

capital – elite, social groups, clans and dynasties, – have evenly been marginalized. Regional elite having penetrated to the higher political unit, was attempting to force out the representatives of other regions even at a time, when there was no political necessity.

The elite world of Ukraine is toughly divided into “natives” and “strangers”. The association of countrymen is playing the important role in that division. It is necessary to emphasize that politicians who stress specific Southern matters have not found their place in the general schedule, especially those ones from the Crimea-Odessa zone. In this region primarily new value orientations are located like personal success, cosmopolitanism, the primacy of privateness over statehood.

In the parliamentary election of 2002 national democratic forces have been supported by the electorate in Western Ukraine (block “Our Ukraine”). At the first time after the state independence it was this block and not the Communist Party of the Ukraine, which occupied the first range in the parliamentary election. Its success was a result of the high level of the electorate’s trust to Victor Yutschenko (leader of “Our Ukraine”).

The special influence of the central elite in the parliamentary election of 2002 showed up in the Donbass region. There more voters elected the political block “For Unitarian Ukraine” than the Communist Party of the Ukraine, although the political orientations of the voters hadn’t changed. But the interest of the center to this region had increased, and as a result, succeeded in most electoral districts in Donbass.

To summarize the codification of functions of the central political elite at the parliamentary election of 2002 does not make great difficulties. More interesting is the question how these functions work within the abilities of today’s political administrative layer with the aim to proceed its general political possibilities.

Direct administrative function. This function means the direct influence on and control over the basic economical, political and social spheres in different regions

through the systems of laws, directions, instructions, and staff selection. Today’s dominating type of a politician–administrator or a politician–manager is prepared quite well for this function, though with the accent on the administrative model of the state bureaucratic orientation.

Coordinative and integrative functions. They represent the optimal joining up of different establishments’ attempts to solve the primary state problems, the accumulating of resources and providing access structures for most perspectives to the economical and political regions. The first intra-elite sociological investigations in the Ukraine detected the essential differences in the points of view of various types of elite on the key political problems: the Ukrainian-Russian relations, the Crimea situation, the Black Sea Navy etc. That’s why, it’s difficult to coordinate and integrate actions in the policy of the elite, being most heterogeneous in their viewpoints. Secondly Ukrainian politician’s mentality hasn’t been formed coordinative and integrative, but mostly confrontational. The rebuilding of a coordinative and integrative mentality will be a long and painful process.

Policy supports. This means the influencing of the social environment with the aim to create a favorable social-psychological and economical climate for the preferable political strategies.

The modern central elite is realizing these two functions quite adequate (cf. its last success in the parliamentary election of 2002 in Donbass). It has been the most skillful success by the encirclement of Leonid Kuchma in comparison to the elections of 1994 and 1999.

Staff training. Professional staff training, being responsible for the science–training departments, which prepare the staff for the state management and Administration.

The present elite fulfills this latter function not satisfactory, in fact, not at all. Today’s politicians improve their status not by improving professional skills and knowledge, but by reacting on and fulfilling the particularistic demands of their regional or

guild peculiarities. They don't pay attention to their professional training.

Summing up we can prognose the changing of persons in the superior echelons of power, the changing of elite representative's types, and the changing of the quality of the power's opposition.

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