

## Changes in personal social space in a transition society

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## Abstract

The article aims to analyse socio-cultural transition in Estonia, offering a theoretical framework for empirical analysis. Using the approaches of communication geography, phenomenology, and structuration, a three-dimensional framework for analysing personal social space is introduced: distanciation (accommodation of individual interactions with spatial constraints and opportunities), appropriation (territorially bounded forms of social solidarities), and domination of space (material and symbolic resources used to achieve some control over spatial distances). The representative survey data collected in a transition society, Estonia, are used to empirically analyse the relationships between these dimensions. Variables of cultural contacts, perceived cultural distances and individual resources (socio-demographic background, estimated economic wealth, knowledge and usage of languages, media using habits) are empirically analysed. The results of the analysis indicate that the accessibility of space for Estonian inhabitants has been increasing during the transition process. The 'friction of distance' is less negotiable in inter-cultural communication within the national territory. The appropriation of space is characterised by territorial forms of solidarities in the case of minority ethnic groups or is based on the geographical-historical links for the ethnic majority. The domination of space indicates that Estonian society is differentiated in terms of cultural openness due to a variety of cultural, economic and social resources.

**Keywords:** personal social space, time-space compression, social transition, quantitative analysis of survey data.

## 1. Introduction

The present article aims to contribute to the analysis of socio-cultural transition through the prism of social space. Transition societies have been under the double pressure of spatial change processes – the macro-level spatial changes of recent decades (for instance a change in the state borders, joining international organisations, e.g. EU, NATO, etc.), on the one hand, and technological and cultural globalisation tendencies (for example the accessibility of media and communication technologies), on the other. It is assumed that the individual's ability to react to the changes in social space may be manifested in the form of certain individual accelerations, or decelerations, and thus personal response to spatial changes may be one possible way to study social transition.

The transition processes in Central and Eastern European countries were often analysed from the perspective of economic transition (see for example Saar 2011; Trumm 2011; Masso et al., 2013), showing the variation of inequality, as one result of transition, across countries and time periods. Although the importance to pay attention to the socio-cultural transition were often indicated (Lyon 2001), and some focus in empirical analysis taken (see for example Velikonja 2009), empirically applicable theoretical conceptualisations are rather rare in this field. This paper departs from the premise that the globalisation and intensification of worldwide social relations that link distant localities (Giddens 1991) has not only blurred the clear boundaries between dimensions that constitute social space but also the interrelation between social space and time (Janelle 1969), and thereby also challenged the existing approaches that explain the complexity of social changes. Various authors pointed out the fragmentation tendencies of the formerly dominant grand narratives (Blute, Armstrong, 2011) and the growing potential of approaches with a narrow focus (McIntosh, Newton, 2013). Due to the growing role of communicative processes in explaining and managing the growing degree of social complexity and increasing speed of social change, communication theoretical approaches were offered as one solution (see for example Kōuts-Klemm 2013). However, particular conceptualisations, for example interpersonal communication that concentrate on interactions between individuals rather than taking into consideration spatio-temporal peculiarities (e.g. the growing need for cultural translation, etc.) are under pressure for reconsideration.

This article analyses socio-cultural transition from the perspective of social space. It is assumed that individuals in transition societies have been under the double pressures of socio-economic and geo-political change, and the processes of time-space compression inherent to cultural globalisation. Time-space compression (Harvey 1989), being both an individual and social process - the (re)construction of relational geographies as systems of interconnectedness does not benefit everyone equally (Massey 1993) - binds people and locations unevenly together in ever-changing manifolds of power and interaction. In this article, time-space compression and social changes are analysed by offering a theoretical concept of

personal social space. This personal social space is understood through individuals' relationships to the world and by their operationalising through trans-territorial contacts, perceptions of space and resources that support the change in spatial contacts and perceptions. Earlier studies shown that personal social space is heterogeneously spread between social groups in Estonia, this type of division being more inherent to transition countries (Masso 2008a, b). Other studies indicated difficulties in appropriating the perception of space with changed geopolitical and economic realities and ideologies (Masso 2011). As suggested in previous empirical (Masso, Soll, *in print*) and theoretical studies (Adams 2009, 2010), attention in this article shifts from spatial issues of social transition to the intersections of space and time that theoretically originate from communication geography (Falkheimer, Jansson, 2006).

The first part of the article explains the theoretical framework for analysing the socio-cultural transition through the concept of personal social space. The second part offers the empirical operationalisation of the theoretical model in order to test the applicability of the theoretical model. In the analysis of transition, an empirical analysis is performed using survey data conducted in a transition country, Estonia. More particularly, the empirical study aims to answer the following questions: (1) what are the characteristics of the distancing and accessibility of personal social space in a transition society? (2) how are spatial changes expressed in the appropriation of personal social space in a recently geo-culturally opened up society? (3) which material and symbolic resources shape the domination of space in the context of the spatial opening up of a society and the (re)structuring of geo-cultural solidarities?

## **2. Theoretical framework**

### **2.1. Time-space compression**

This article begins with the on-going changes in spatial and temporal social structures that were often referred to as time-space compression. According to D. Harvey (1989), space and time are basic categories of human existences; it is tended herein to take them for granted as something that cannot change or affect.

According to Barney Warf, 'the "meanings" of time and space are the subjective significance that they hold for people who experience and construct them in daily life, the daily rhythms of existence in which people engage as they construct their biographies' (Warf 2008: 2). B. Warf sees time as always dependent on space, but adds that although they can never be divorced, they are not identical. Space and time *are* different, and simply combining them into one space-time does not acknowledge their variations: they are measured and given meanings to differently (Warf 2008: 18).

Donald G. Janelle (1968) first explicitly introduced the concept of time-space 'convergence', which he explained as a result of transport innovations. 'Time-space convergence describes the rate at which the travel time between places declines in response to transport and communication innovation and investment' (Janelle, Gillespie, 2004: 666). Later David Harvey introduced the concept of 'time-space compression' indicating the 'processes that so revolutionize the objective qualities of space and time that we are forced to alter [...] how we represent the world to ourselves' (Harvey 1989: 240). Later Barney Warf, summarising the aforementioned approaches (2008), exemplified the process of folding space and time as simultaneously conceptual and material, mental and physical, located between meaning and matter. The essence of time-space compression is the multitude of ways in which human beings have attempted to conquer space, to cross distances more rapidly, to exchange goods and information more efficiently. The term's emphasis lies on the connections and interactions among places rather than individual places *per se* (Warf 2008: 5-6; Warf 2011: 144). Compression means that time and space loop around one another, fold in upon themselves and twist and turn in complex, contingent ways (Warf 2011: 145). Unlike D. Harvey, A. Giddens (1989) uses the term 'time-space distancing', but refers to similar tendencies of travel time shortening and disappearance of spatial restrictions in the course of modernisation. In the context of this article, time-space compression is understood similarly to B. Warf's approach (2008), according to which it is a way to describe the change in people's understandings of the world and their interactions over the earth's surface, not simply one of measuring time or conquering distance.

Comparing various authors, it is possible to see there is some common understanding regarding the character of time space-compression. B. Warf has summarised this as follows: time-space compression tends to make places and peoples once thought of as remote and exotic closer and more familiar, although reduced spatial distance does not inevitably lead to reduced social distance or expanded intellectual horizons (Warf 2008: 23). However, there is no consensus understanding regarding the activating forces behind the time-space compression process. Some authors indicated that several macro-level processes, for example capitalism (Harvey 2006), modernisation and industrialisation (Cresswell 2005), militarisation (Virilio 1995), colonialism or building of nation states, development of transport, information and communication technologies (Anderson 1991; Castells 2001; Couldry, McCarthy, 2004) are the main activators of time-space compression processes. In this paper, the authors work from the understanding (Massey 2012) that the time-space compression is not just macro-level material, but symbolic and discursive process of reshaping the individual perceptions about time and space.

The individual's role in the process of time-space compression was often understood through the concept of 'extensibility'. Donald Janelle (1973) argues that human extensibility describes how individuals and institutions use technology to project their presence and ideas beyond their immediate locales. This means that human extensibility is considered as a person's ability to overcome the friction of distance through space by adapting technologies. Human extensibility measures the increased opportunities for interaction among people and places (Janelle 1973). P. C. Adams elaborated this concept further (2005), emphasising that the personal extensibility is an inherent feature to the agency in late modernity, being characterised by certain personality elements (trust, love, altruism and creativity). In the pre-modern media period, the actors needed to be in the same space in order to communicate in real time. In the globalised world, social interactions no longer have to be face-to-face or based on proximity. These new meanings of space and time are related to the rapid changes in media and communication.

While for Anthony Giddens (1991) globalisation was an intensification of social relations, a globalisation and communications theorist, Marshall McLuhan

(1967), highlighted the connection between the media and globalisation more concretely by combining the concepts of 'the medium is the message' and that of the 'global village'. Many years later a Finnish professor of global media and communications, Terhi Rantanen (2005), takes one step further, comparing the relationship between the media and globalisation with the relationship between a horse and carriage or a computer and screen. This means the two are not just related with each other, but inseparable. She defines globalisation as 'a process in which worldwide economic, political, cultural and social relations have become increasingly mediated across time and space' (ibidem: 8). Similarly, the author of *Globalization and Media: Global Village of Babel*, Jack Lule (2011), affirms that globalisation could not have occurred without the media, claiming that the media have made the world progressively 'smaller' as nations and cultures come into increasing contact. Hence there is no doubt that media played an important role in globalisation and globalisation, in turn, has had an impact on the media and communication.

The fact that people, goods, ideas, etc., can travel around the world from one place to another is nothing new. What is remarkable is the speed with which these movements in modern society occur. Put simply, time has become more important in our society. According to a German philosopher and social theorist, Hartmut Rosa (2005), the speed and acceleration of time is the core element and key concept of modernisation. H. Rosa analyses the change in temporal structures in modernity and sees the modernisation process as a three-dimensional social acceleration. According to him, these three dimensions are technological acceleration, social change and the general pace of life. The acceleration of technological change is easily measurable in the processes of transport, communication and economic production. For example, communication that used to take months now happens in seconds. H. Rosa defines social change as 'the transformation of existing forms of knowledge and practice as well as of associational patterns' (Rosa 2005: 447). So it relates to the rate of the circulation and change of fashions, lifestyles, attitudes and associational networks. Our life is changing rapidly: we need to spot, for example, emerging trends in fashion and know that what is fashionable today may not be fashionable next month.

Acceleration of the pace of life is probably the most subjective of these three dimensions. It relates to feelings of being rushed and to time pressure. In other words, individuals as well as organisations live and operate under the impression they are running out of time (ibidem).

Thus, unlike David Harvey, the authors do not believe that the time-space compression is a revolutionary process, being inherent to limited places and time periods. It is rather a permanent process, lasting centuries, but of different character or speed in various places, and being perceived unevenly by individuals in the same place and during the same period. However, in cases of fast social change as in the transition country, Estonia, the spatio-temporal changes could be monitored more clearly, and the spatio-temporal transformations and foremost the ways in which individuals perceive these changes could be one indicator and also the means with which to study social changes in general.

## 2.2. Constitution of social space

This paper offers a theoretical framework of personal social space for empirically analysis of the time-space compression processes in a transition country. To explain the substance of personal social space, first the constitutional character of social space is explained.

In previous approaches, the concept of social space was initially used to signify the objective and mental or subjective contradistinction<sup>1</sup> (Soja 1995) in the social theory; objective space referring to the factual circumstances related to space (for example, a state border and subjective space embracing mental constructions, e.g. imagined distances to different cultures). The problem of this opposition consists in seeing the objective and subjective spatial processes as being relatively independent from each other (see for example Soja 1989)<sup>2</sup>. One solution that different authors within the perspective of historical materialism suggested is the idea of a triple division of space. For example, Henri Lefebvre has drawn a distinction

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<sup>1</sup> Subjective space is often also labelled as abstract or cognitive, and objective space – as concrete or real.

<sup>2</sup> Although Edward Soja also tried to unite this dual approach using the term *Thirdspace*, his theory was often criticised (Merrifield 1999; Price 1999; Shields 1999) due to the moderate contribution to the analysed theories of M. Foucault and H. Lefebvre.



between spatial practices (e.g. cultural contacts), representations of space (e.g. political regulations for mobility), and representational space (e.g. individual meanings ascribed to space)<sup>3</sup> - (Lefebvre 1991). The main contribution of Henri Lefebvre is the idea that different spatial dimensions cannot be treated as independent, i.e. conceptions about different regions (representational space) are always based on individual experiences and contacts (spatial practices), but also on prevailing ideologies (representations of space). Or, on the contrary, destinations of mobility over state borders (spatial practices) are based on the attractiveness of a particular country (representational space).

While Henri Lefebvre concentrates on experiences of the individual, David Harvey concentrates on the spatial event as a certain act of communication, unlike to Henri Lefebvre who concentrated on experiences of the individual (Harvey 2006a; 2006b)<sup>4</sup>. David Harvey distinguished between absolute, relative, and relational space, absolute space being fixed and referring to the context in which the communication takes place (e.g. Scandinavia). Relative space is related to the reception of space by individuals (e.g. Sweden could be perceived as close or distant). According to the relational view of space, external influences on the context are internalised and expressed (e.g. Nordic identity). Generally therefore, it is not argued in this paper for a total dissolution of the objective-subjective distinction of space, but the multiplicity of the objective qualities is assumed which social space can express. Hence, social space may constitute several spatial practices that may carry several meanings at the same time and place, and for different individuals. Therefore social space is understood not only as a context for communication, or the expression of it, but as a way of communicating social changes.

Similarly to the concepts of social space, authors were understood their constitutive processes diversely. Materialist geographers explicitly relate the constitution of social space with the processes

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<sup>3</sup> Spatial practices are also referred to as perceived space, representations of space as conceived space, and representational spaces as lived space.

<sup>4</sup> D. Harvey was not consistent when interpreting H. Lefebvre's concepts. In later works he preferred the term *conceptualised* space instead of the initial *perception* (meaning H. Lefebvre's representations of space) and *lived* space instead of the previous *imagination* (meaning H. Lefebvre's spaces of representation). Compare these terms with D. Harvey (1990; 2006). Still, in both cases D. Harvey neglected the initial idea of H. Lefebvre that all dimensions of the triad should be related to the individual's experience.

of spatial *production*, especially in the case of Henri Lefebvre's work. H. Lefebvre's notion was often interpreted as the economic production of objects (Elden 2004); he emphasises, however, the importance of moving from *products* (material artefacts) to *production* as a certain mental process (creation of meanings, knowledge or institutions). According to H. Lefebvre, in order to understand spatial production, all aspects of social space, e.g. relations of production (representations of space), social formations characteristic to particular spatial settings (spatial practice), and complex symbolisms of social life (representational spaces) should be taken into consideration. Unlike Henri Lefebvre, Edward Soja and David Harvey connected the production of space with macro-level processes in society. David Harvey (2006a) sees the disappearance of spatial restrictions as necessary to survive capitalism in a crisis, hence solving problems related to the capital accumulation. According to Edward Soja (1995), space does not function as a distinct structure with its own laws of (re)production, but represents social relationships as a certain component of relations of production. These ideas were developed by Manuel Castells (2001), for whom space is a society, and not the reflection of it. However, according to Edward Soja, such a relationship is not so simple since spatiality is both the results and the means of society, or both the result of social relations and the structure.

Generally, the aforementioned approaches formulated the result of spatial production as a communicative process, the emergence of new meanings. In the context of this article, the advantage of these definitions in analysing social space in a transition society is the clear definition of the process of production and its components. However, there are arguments using relatively abstract components of social space (see for example H. Lefebvre) that have questionable Marxist connections, which do not explain according to some critiques (e.g. Elden 2004) how particular social spaces (e.g. in Estonia or Poland) are produced. Similarly, these approaches do not show how social (re)production becomes a social change. Piotr Sztompka (1994) is more precise in this context, defining social change as differences in conditions within the same system at various moments. Similarly to Henri Lefebvre, Piotr Sztompka insists that changes in space always touch the core of the social reality, including both quantitative (e.g. state border) and qualitative changes (e.g. spatial perceptions). For these reasons, Henri Lefebvre (1991) called such spatial changes transition<sup>5</sup> a process in which the reproduction of former spatial structures does not happen but the production of specific new space or spatial innovations does occur.

Most authors agreed (e.g. Lefebvre 1991; Harvey 2002; Sztompka 1994) that it is the individual who is the main source of social change. For example, according to David Harvey (2002), social change begins and ends with the individual, since individuals are endowed with certain powers and skills that enable them to change their surroundings. However, in order to make changes, individuals need to learn not only how to bridge the micro-scale of the body and the personal and the macro-scale of the global political economy, but also the meso-scale of national planning. Thus, the constitution of

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<sup>5</sup> H. Lefebvre used the concepts of *transition* and *transformation* as synonyms.

social space is understood herein as an inter-subjective process that leads to the creation of certain meanings, knowledge, or institutions that should support the communicative comprehensibility between individuals. However, the described approaches do not give unambiguous explanations to how the particular social spaces are constituted and how the constitution occurs over the spatial transitions.

The next sub-section explains one possible framework for analysing spatial transitions through the concept of personal social space.

### 2.3. Personal social space

The previous sub-sections of this article gave an overview of conceptual approaches to social space and concluded with the importance of processes on the individual level when explaining social changes. The next step is to develop a conceptual model of personal social space and to analyse social transition empirically.

In this article, a conceptualisation of personal social space as a process is provided, in which a spatially and temporally situated active individual uses the material and symbolic resources, based on their relation to the world, for the constitution of a meaningfully structured world (see also Masso 2008). This conception is based on the approach of David Harvey. D. Harvey, in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (2006), distinguished three aspects of spatial practices: *accessibility and distanciation*, the *appropriation and use*, and the *domination and control* of space. However, the present authors aim to put these spatial aspects into a broader theoretical context combining David Harvey's approach with spatial aspects essential when analysing the time-space compression processes in transition societies. This explains more accurately, on the basis of previous empirical studies, the relationships between these spatial dimensions and test the relationships and changes between these spatial aspects using the transition country, Estonia, as an example.

The first dimension of the personal social space used in this article - *accessibility and distanciation* - is the measure of the degree to which individual interactions have to accommodate spatial constraints and opportunities. According to D. Harvey, this dimension includes material practices, for example individual mobility, as well as conceptual qualities, for example psychological measures of distance. In the context of this empirical analysis, this aspect determines an individual's inter-subjective relationship to the world. The second aspect, the *appropriation and use* of space, examines the ways in which space is occupied by individuals. Systematised appropriation may entail the production of territorially bounded forms of social solidarity. It indicates a meaningfully structured world, in the form of material practices, e.g. social networks of communication or conceivable mental maps. The third aspect, *domination and control* of space, reflects how individuals manage organisation and production of space. Individuals strive to achieve some control over the

distances or over the manner in which space is appropriated. In the context of the empirical analysis, the control is attained through both material and symbolic resources<sup>6</sup>.

The contribution of this article is to load this theoretical model with empirically analysable content. The first aspect of spatial practices, *accessibility and distanciation* of space, is here put into operation by means of the readiness for cultural contact within and over territories, geo-cultural mobility, and interest in media news about different countries. These indicators express individuals' activity in crossing spatial barriers and developing interactions over territories. An 'open' personal social space – the skills of operating in different lifeworlds – can be seen as an important resource today, due to the emergence of new (e.g. inter- and trans-cultural) communication patterns no longer restricted by a particular territory (see Welsch 1999). Closed political systems, e.g. the Soviet Union, could impede the reproduction of this resource. Since the rapid socio-cultural transitions of the early 1990s could have caused a decline in the wellbeing of individuals in Central and Eastern Europe (Goodwin et al., 2001), geo-cultural mobility (virtual or real) could be one way in which to ensure access to higher levels of social status, income (see for example Verwiebe 2004), or the feeling of being 'returned to the west', as stated in earlier studies (see for example Lauristin 2004). Empirical studies shown that cross-border mobility could be a significant resource especially for inhabitants of the former Eastern Block countries (for comparison see Jamieson, Grundy, 2002; Macháček, Lášticová, 2002).

The second aspect, *appropriation and use* of space, here means analysing the perception of particular countries or cultures as close/distant; it is assumed here that the perception of a country is used as a starting point for individual orientation in space, and to construct geo-cultural identities. The main emphasis is on the structural analysis in contrast to the instance of *accessibility and distanciation*, in which general tendencies in the form of quantitative frequencies are analysed. Different authors referred to these phenomena as expressions of spatial change in the (re)structuring of geo-cultural identities. According to Wolfgang Natter and John P. Jones (1997), since identity is a result of categorisation rather than its raw material, every identity has its own space, both geographically and historically. For example, the empirical analysis by David Morley (1996) shown that due to the geo-political transformations in Europe, new conditions of mobility make local attachments not a matter of ascribed and determined identity but increasingly a question of choice, decision and variability. In the context of this empirical study, the greater accessibility of particular cultures or countries should not always lead to a (re)structuring of solidarities; i.e. the rapid geo-cultural opening up of society constitutes the danger that the individual could lose their reflexive self-awareness in communication. For example, empirical analyses in post-communist countries shown

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<sup>6</sup> Henri Lefebvre (1991) previously used similar dimensions. H. Lefebvre argues that the domination of space refers to control over technological means by political power, the appropriation as opposite is a concrete spatial structure created by individuals or groups of individuals. Here, the more emancipatory approach by David Harvey is preferred, in which individuals have more access to means of domination and control.

the unresolved question of national identity (see for example Rorlich 2003; Korostelina 2007), or feeling of nostalgia (Kennedy 2002; Vogt 2005) as defences against the dissolution of spatial barriers and reflection of the need for spiritual encouragement.

The third aspect, *domination and control* of space, here means the resources that could facilitate the geo-cultural opening up process. Herein several resources are comparatively analysed. Previous studies (Masso 2008a) indicated that personal social space and the individual's ability to adjust to changes in surrounding social space in Estonia are distinguished by various individual-level structures, similarly to other post-Soviet countries. The present empirical analysis enables the estimation of whether such an adaptation ability dependent on individual structural indicators may change in the course of the transition. One of the essential socio-demographic structural variables analysed in this paper is the ethnic affiliation. The previous study (Masso 2011) indicated that ethnic distinctions in perception of space could be explained by spatial rupture which may, in the course of generational change, be even deepened. Apart from the ethnic affiliation, the role of knowledge and usage of foreign languages was referred to as being one essential factor explaining both the perception of social space (Masso, Tender, 2008) and the formation of geo-cultural mobility patterns (Masso, Tender, 2007). Other studies reveal (Masso 2008b) that in the course of the transition the role of foreign languages in the spatial distancing and appropriation processes may change, being, at the beginning of the transition, a resource supporting trans-cultural contacts, but functioning by the end of the transition as bearer of perceived cultural distances. Similarly to foreign languages, another cultural resource - interest in foreign news - is analysed herein. Studies indicated (Masso 2007) that Estonian personal spatiality is being shaped during the transition foremost by institutional factors (e.g. the media and economy), unlike a stable society, Sweden, where the constitution of personal social space is based on diverse sources and therefore is to some degree less dependent on the media. Because of the economic transition and on-going economic instability (e.g. the economic crisis) the individual's economic wealth is also analysed in this article as one of the possible factors explaining distancing and appropriation in a transition society (see also Masso 2011).

The present authors assume that personal social space could be one indicator of the analysis of the socio-cultural transition. Some studies dealt with spatial issues in East-Central Europe, for example post-communist migration patterns (Radu 1995), the role of internationalisation (Zaborowski 2002/2003), and the reinvention of Europe (Moisio 2002). The Estonian example is unique because economic, political, and cultural changes occurred in parallel and during a relatively short period. Several empirical studies emphasised that the success of the transition in post-communist Estonia is due to the post-independence reform programme, reorientation of trade in goods with the European Union, etc. (Panagiotou 2001). On the other hand, the promotion of Estonia as an open country was also regarded as one key for the Estonian transition success (see for example Feldman 2001), a promotion that may have its roots in the Soviet past. For example, the access to Western media channels during the Soviet period enabled the acquisition of ideas about democratic cultures and the

Western way of life. Estonia's geographic position, bordered by water and the physical proximity to Finland and Sweden, made the country a Soviet borderland. The cultural closeness to Finland, as well as the historical memory of having positive contacts with Sweden, could have also supported the process of transition. Previous empirical surveys shown (see for example Zaborowski 2002/2003), that a country's size could also play an important role in managing the transition processes; i.e. small countries could have some advantages in conducting political reforms, but also small nations are fated to be multilingual, etc.

Generally, for understanding personal social space, three aspects are essential: *how* the space is constituted (medium of interaction), *where* the space is situated (the partners of interaction), and *what* is the general structure of the constituted space (meaningful result of interaction). Because of the rapid and parallel socio-economic changes, Estonia serves as a good example to empirically study both the constitution and the changing of personal social space. Through empirical analysis of personal social space, operationalised herein through a three-dimensional set of indicators, the general time-space compression processes in transition societies can be analysed.

### **3. Methodological considerations**

#### **3.1. Method and data**

To test the adaptability of the theoretical model proposed, and to analyse the spatio-temporal changes, this section is an overview of the operationalisation of the theoretical model of personal social space. The empirical analysis is based on data from a representative population survey called Me. The World. The Media (MWM), carried out by the Institute of Journalism and Communication, University of Tartu, in cooperation with the market research companies Emor and Saar Poll in 2003, 2005, 2008, and 2011. In addition, comparisons with previous studies conducted in 1991 and 1994 within the Balticom project are presented. The original MWM surveys covered the Estonian population aged between 15 and 74, with a total sample size of ca 1,500 (2/3 respondents completed the questionnaire in Estonian and 1/3 in Russian). A proportional model of the general population and multi-step probability random sampling was used. In order to alleviate the differences between the representativeness of the sample model (based on demographic statistics data) and the survey outcome, the collected data were weighted by the main socio-

demographic attributes (gender, age, ethnicity, education, place of residence). A self-administered questionnaire, combined with an interview, was used.

The present study mainly uses three groups of variables to analyse three dimensions of personal social space – personal contacts with various countries (the accessibility and distancing), the perceived distances between different countries (appropriation and use), and background variables to analyse the spatial opening and restructuring processes (domination and control). To analyse personal contacts over territories, both single visits and longer stays are taken into consideration in this article, both of which are measured in the questionnaire by ordinal frequency scale. The ordinal opinion scale was used to measure the perceived distances. The background variables used in the study include both socio-demographic variables (gender, language used to answer the questionnaire, age, education), and various economic and cultural resources (knowledge and usage of foreign languages, interest in following news from abroad, economic wealth, perceived social layer). The choice of background variables in the analysis was based on the previous empirical studies (Masso 2008), indicating both the role of individual structural resources in spatial opening, and also, based on theoretical approaches (Harvey 1994; Jameson 1999), indicating the role of system structures in spatial restructuring processes.

To analyse the spatio-temporal changes during the transition, data from four years are used. Regarding some spatial dimensions, for example distancing, the comparable data are available for all four years, while in other cases, for example in the case of appropriation, the comparison is limited to three years. To analyse the personal contacts and perceived distances, ten comparable countries across study years are used in the analysis, including both geographically and culturally (including linguistic, historical proximities) close and distant countries.

### 3.2. Methods of the analysis

Three groups of methods are used across the analysis of the three dimensions of personal social space – ordered frequency distributions (to analyse spatial accessibility and distancing), the structure of associations based on

multidimensional scaling (to analyse spatial appropriation and use) and the analysis of associations between calculated indices and background variables (to analyse domination and control of social space). For the initial analysis of frequency distribution, some minor scale variations across studied years, including both the formulation of questions and scales and length of measurement scales, were taken into consideration. To make the variables comparable across the studied years, only comparable scale points were used in the analysis. The ordered frequencies of contacts with geographical spaces were used as well as frequency distributions of percentages in order to eliminate scale and formulation variations.

A multi-dimensional scaling method (MDS) is used to analyse the structure of the perception of space. MDS represents the data as a geometric picture on a coordinate grid. Variables with higher correlation are located closer to each other and variables with lower correlations are located farther from each other. Key criticisms of MDS are the arbitrary nature of distances and dimensions on the grid, and consequently the difficulty in comparing two or more results of the analysis. The present paper employs some elements of the Glaserian version of quantitative grounded theory (Glaser 2008) – (e.g. constant comparison of items) to interpret the results of MDS. In this article, the Glaserian approach is preferred to the Straussian version (Strauss, Corbin, 1998), which defines the grounded theory as a ‘tool of analysis’ rather than a research method strictly limited to the field of qualitative data. The inclusion of the interpretative approach in the quantitative analysis is innovative but quintessentially inherent to media and communication studies.

The index analysis is used as the third group of methods here. To analyse the associations of spatial contacts and perceptions (distanciation and appropriation) the index variables are calculated on the basis of initial country variables. Although the index calculation method is rather rarely used in the field of media and communication studies, it offers an opportunity to analyse the complexities related to spatial relations in transition. In the present study, two index variables were calculated – the index of cultural contacts and the index of cultural openness – based on single variables measuring, respectively, the contacts and perceived distances



from various countries. To analyse the associations between index variables and background variables Cramér's  $V$  association coefficient is used.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Accessibility and distanciation

#### 4.1.1. General remarks

As described in the theoretical part of this article, the first part of the analysis concentrates on spatial *accessibility* and *distanciation* issues, focusing on three expressions/manifestations of spatial distribution: (1) interest in media news about various countries and regions (across all main media channels), (2) contacts created while travelling (short and one-time visits as well as longer stays in various countries), (3) personal (family and friendship) and business contacts, covering business and other professional contacts outside Estonia. The following are the results of the two-dimensional analysis of the survey data collected between 1991 and 2011 across the above topics (Table 1).

In order to interpret the results, it is important to understand the status of Estonia as a transitional society and its situation since 1991, when after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the half-a-century totalitarian state order – which, among other things, imposed strict censorship on the media and limited any ties with the outside world as well as mobility rights – free circulation of information became again possible in Estonia and other former Soviet republics. Furthermore, from the perspective of the past decade of the Estonian social development, it is essential to note Estonia's accession to the European Union (2004) and the Euro zone (2011). The peak of the EU media representation applied to the pre-accession period, when an emphasis was put on systematic information. Studies focused on analyses of the EU representation (e.g. Tammpuu, Pullerits, 2006) found that the media were expected to report on the EU issues that 'matter to Estonia and Estonians'; otherwise the EU and its structures were not a priority field for the Estonian media. Nevertheless, the perception of Europe (whether defined through the EU or not) is an important source of discussion in the present context.

#### 4.1.2. Interest in news about world events

To study the individual's interest in news from various countries, respondents were asked to assess their interest on a scale of 1 to 3 (1 - not interested at all, 2 - somewhat interested, 3 - very interested). The list contained 21 countries and regions; in the analysis, variants 2 and 3 were summed up (a more exact list of the countries and summarised results are presented in Table 1).

As expected, a comparison of the survey results on interest in news over 14 years reveals overarching interest among Estonian inhabitants in the neighbouring countries (Latvia and Lithuania). Interest in news from Russia is especially prominent and persistent, with over 80% of respondents interested in events in and relating to Russia. One reason of this is the complicated recent history between Estonia and Russia<sup>7</sup>, which is why many historically sensitive events and issues still bear a strong emotional charge for Estonian people (e.g. the state border treaty, etc.), not to mention the fact that the on-going political and military issues between Russia and Ukraine occupy the front pages and headlines of internationally focused news in the Estonian media and are hotly debated in public arenas. The previous analysis of the representation of international social space in the Estonian media (Vihalemm 2005, 2007) also demonstrates a clear dominance of political affairs in international news and reflect the increasing political importance of Russia for Estonia. The level of attention paid by Estonian society to reports and news about Russia also indicates the general trends of economic relations, especially trade relations. In particular, in the new millennium Russia is Estonia's third largest trade and export partner and the fifth largest destination of Estonia's direct foreign investment. Over time, contacts between Estonian and Russian authorities have increased, including customs, state audit, judicial bodies and local governments.

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<sup>7</sup> The Soviet occupation of Estonia lasted from 1940 till 1941 and from 1944 till 1991.

Table 1. Contacts over territories by countries (rank of countries in bold, percentages in brackets)\*

Indicator	Interested in getting news from individual countries				Have been at least once					Visited several times, been there longer		Relatives and friends in individual countries				Work and business contacts in individual countries	
	1991	1994	2003	2005	1994	2003	2005	2008	2011	2003	2011	2002	2005	2008	2011	2002	2011
Russia	<b>1</b> (82)	<b>1</b> (80)	<b>1</b> (88)	<b>1</b> (88)	<b>1</b> (70)	<b>2</b> (56)	<b>2</b> (61)	<b>2</b> (75)	<b>5</b> (33)	<b>1</b> (28)	<b>1</b> (17)	<b>1</b> (31)	<b>1</b> (33)	<b>1</b> (35)	<b>1</b> (24)	<b>2</b> (4)	<b>4</b> (2)
Finland	<b>6</b> (50)	<b>4</b> (58)	<b>2</b> (82)	<b>2</b> (84)	<b>5</b> (20)	<b>4</b> (39)	<b>4</b> (46)	<b>4</b> (59)	<b>4</b> (35)	<b>3</b> (12)	<b>2</b> (16)	<b>2</b> (15)	<b>2</b> (29)	<b>2</b> (33)	<b>2</b> (17)	<b>1</b> (5)	<b>1</b> (4)
Latvia	<b>7</b> (75)	<b>7</b> (68)	<b>5</b> (77)	<b>5</b> (78)	<b>2</b> (63)	<b>1</b> (65)	<b>1</b> (67)	<b>1</b> (79)	<b>1</b> (52)	<b>2</b> (17)	<b>3</b> (14)	<b>7</b> (8)	<b>7</b> (13)	<b>9</b> (12)	<b>10</b> (4)	<b>3</b> (3)	<b>3</b> (2)
Lithuania	<b>2</b> (76)	<b>3</b> (67)	<b>7</b> (75)	<b>7</b> (75)	<b>3</b> (53)	<b>3</b> (52)	<b>3</b> (52)	<b>3</b> (64)	<b>3</b> (48)	<b>4</b> (11)	<b>5</b> (7)	<b>11</b> (4)	<b>10</b> (7)	<b>12</b> (7)	<b>12</b> (2)	<b>6</b> (2)	<b>6</b> (2)
Sweden	<b>8</b> (41)	<b>6</b> (52)	<b>4</b> (77)	<b>3</b> (79)	<b>8</b> (11)	<b>6</b> (28)	<b>5</b> (35)	<b>5</b> (42)	<b>2</b> (50)	<b>6</b> (6)	<b>4</b> (7)	<b>6</b> (9)	<b>5</b> (16)	<b>4</b> (18)	<b>6</b> (9)	<b>4</b> (3)	<b>2</b> (2)
Germany	<b>7</b> (45)	<b>7</b> (51)	<b>5</b> (77)	<b>5</b> (78)	<b>7</b> (12)	<b>7</b> (24)	<b>7</b> (26)	<b>7</b> (27)	<b>7</b> (21)	<b>7</b> (5)	<b>6</b> (5)	<b>5</b> (11)	<b>3</b> (17)	<b>3</b> (22)	<b>7</b> (8)	<b>5</b> (3)	<b>5</b> (2)
Ukraine, Belarus	<b>4</b> (57)	<b>8</b> (42)	<b>13</b> (55)	<b>12</b> (59)	<b>4</b> (39)	<b>5</b> (31)	<b>6</b> (33)	<b>6</b> (38)	<b>9</b> (17)	<b>5</b> (8)	<b>7</b> (4)	<b>4</b> (13)	<b>6</b> (15)	<b>5</b> (17)	<b>4</b> (11)	<b>14</b> (0.9)	<b>11</b> (1.1)
Mediterranean countries			<b>11</b> (58)	<b>11</b> 862)		<b>11</b> (9)	<b>9</b> (17)	<b>9</b> (21)	<b>8</b> (18)	<b>11-15</b> (1)	<b>8</b> (4)	<b>16</b> (1)	<b>14</b> (4)	<b>6</b> (16)	<b>11</b> (4)	<b>12</b> (1.2)	<b>12</b> (1)
Spain, Portugal										<b>11-15</b> (1)	<b>9</b> (4)						
Denmark, Norway	<b>10</b> (26)	<b>10</b> (32)	<b>8</b> (68)	<b>9</b> (70)	<b>9</b> (5)	<b>9</b> (14)	<b>10</b> (16)	<b>10</b> (19)	<b>10</b> (15)	<b>8</b> (3)	<b>10-13</b> (3)	<b>9</b> (4)	<b>9</b> (8)	<b>11</b> (8)	<b>8</b> (7)	<b>7</b> (1.7)	<b>7</b> (1.3)
France			<b>10</b> (62)	<b>10</b> (68)		<b>10</b> (9)	<b>11</b> (12)	<b>11</b> (13)	<b>11</b> (12)	<b>9-10</b> (2)	<b>10-13</b> (3)	<b>12</b> (2)	<b>15</b> (4)	<b>16</b> (4)	<b>13-15</b> (2)	<b>13</b> (1)	<b>13</b> (1)
Netherlands, Belgium			<b>14</b> (55)	<b>14</b> (58)		<b>12</b> (8)	<b>12</b> (10)	<b>13</b> (11)	<b>12-13</b> (11)	<b>11-15</b> (1)	<b>10-13</b> (3)	<b>14</b> (2)	<b>16</b> (4)	<b>14</b> (5)	<b>13-15</b> (2)	<b>9</b> (1.6)	<b>9</b> (1.2)
Britain, Ireland	<b>9</b> (33)	<b>9</b> (35)	<b>9</b> (66)	<b>8</b> (71)	<b>10</b> (2)	<b>13</b> (7)	<b>13</b> (9)	<b>12</b> (12)	<b>12-13</b> (11)	<b>11-15</b> (1)	<b>10-13</b> (3)	<b>8</b> (5)	<b>8</b> (12)	<b>7</b> (15)	<b>3</b> (11)	<b>8</b> (1.7)	<b>8</b> (1.3)
Poland, Hungary, Czechia	<b>11</b> (26)	<b>11</b> (22)	<b>17</b> (51)	<b>17</b> (52)	<b>6</b> (16)	<b>8</b> (22)	<b>8</b> (23)	<b>8</b> (25)	<b>6</b> (22)	<b>9-10</b> (2)	<b>14-15</b> (2)	<b>13</b> (2)	<b>13</b> (4)	<b>15</b> (4)	<b>16</b> (1.3)	<b>11</b> (1)	<b>10</b> (1)
USA, Canada	<b>5</b> (55)	<b>5</b> (57)	<b>6</b> (76)	<b>6</b> (75)	<b>11</b> (1)	<b>14</b> (5)	<b>14</b> (5)	<b>14-15</b> (5)	<b>15-17</b> (3)	<b>11-15</b> (1)	<b>14-15</b> (2)	<b>3</b> (13)	<b>4</b> (17)	<b>8</b> (14)	<b>5</b> (10)	<b>10</b> (1.4)	<b>16</b> (0.6)
Middle East			<b>15</b> (55)	<b>15</b> (56)		<b>16-17</b> (2)	<b>16-17</b> (2)	<b>16-17</b> (3)	<b>15-17</b> (3)			<b>15</b> (1)	<b>17-19</b> (2)	<b>17</b> (3)	<b>18</b> (0.6)	<b>17</b> (0.6)	<b>18</b> (0.5)
Africa			<b>20</b> (42)	<b>20</b> (42)		<b>15</b> (3)	<b>15</b> (4)	<b>14-15</b> (5)	<b>14</b> (5)			<b>20</b> (0.4)	<b>21</b> (0.6)	<b>20</b> (1)	<b>20</b> (0.6)	<b>21</b> (0.3)	<b>19</b> (0.5)
Latin America			<b>18</b> (48)	<b>18</b> (46)		<b>18-19</b> (1)	<b>18-19</b> (1)	<b>18-19</b> (1)	<b>18-19</b> (1)			<b>19</b> (0.8)	<b>20</b> (1)	<b>21</b> (1)	<b>21</b> (0.4)	<b>18</b> (0.6)	<b>21</b> (0.2)
Asia			<b>12</b> (57)	<b>13</b> (58)		<b>16-17</b> (2)	<b>16-17</b> (2)	<b>16-17</b> (3)	<b>15-17</b> (3)			<b>17</b> (1)	<b>17-19</b> (2)	<b>19</b> (1)	<b>19</b> (0.6)	<b>15</b> (0.7)	<b>17</b> (0.6)
Australia, New Zealand			<b>16</b> (53)	<b>16</b> (52)		<b>18-19</b> (1)	<b>18-19</b> (1)	<b>18-19</b> (1)	<b>18-19</b> (1)			<b>10</b> (4)	<b>11</b> (6)	<b>13</b> (5)	<b>9</b> (6)	<b>20</b> (0.4)	<b>20</b> (0.3)
Former Soviet Union												<b>18</b> (1)	<b>12</b> (5)	<b>10</b> (9)	<b>13-15</b> (2)	<b>19</b> (0.6)	<b>14</b> (0.8)
Balkan states			<b>19</b> (46)	<b>19</b> (43)								<b>21</b> (0.3)	<b>17-19</b> (2)	<b>18</b> (2)	<b>17</b> (0.9)	<b>16</b> (0.6)	<b>15</b> (0.7)

\* Empty fields in the table indicate that a country was not included in the survey in a particular year

Source: Authors

During the years under observation, interest grew remarkably with respect to Finland and Sweden, which now rank 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>, respectively; Estonian media consumers now have a roughly equal interest with Russia; one possible reason being the image of Finland and Sweden as well-known and easily accessible travel destinations. Other ties with Finland and Sweden relate to labour migration. According to various surveys, about 40,000 Estonian inhabitants have gone to Finland over the past 20 years (Tammaru 2011).<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, England, Ireland, the USA and Canada have also acquired remarkably stable rankings as regards news media interest, while the number of people interested in these countries sharply increased in the 2000s. The enhanced media interest is apparently partly related to the intensification of professional contacts, as mentioned above. These countries are also interesting in terms of politics (especially the USA) and their influence on the world economy. Other important countries as regards media interest are the leading European countries, Germany and France, which are covered by the Estonian media mainly in the context of the EU issues.

Estonian media users are the least interested in geographically and culturally distant regions (e.g. Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America). In order to explain the news prominence of more remote countries, one could agree with those researchers (Wu 2000; Segev 2014) who suggest that the significance of a foreign country in the news is attributed, among other variables, to relatedness (i.e. proximity to that foreign country) and unexpected events (e.g. disasters and catastrophes, conflicts, war, etc.). Hence, it is explicit that the news flow in the Estonian media that focuses on more remote countries is remarkably smaller when compared to the closest and to a larger extent culturally and geographically related neighbours and European countries. At the end of the media interest list are the Balkan countries, in which less than half of the respondents have an interest.

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<sup>8</sup> According to the national statistical agency of Finland, ca 44,000 Estonians were living in Finland in the beginning of 2014; they probably formed the largest immigrant community in Finland. Migration has been the greatest in recent years; during 2010–2012 nearly 13,500 Estonian inhabitants migrated to Finland. Most of them are working age (20–24) people.

#### 4.1.3. Personal and professional contacts with foreign countries

The second half of this subsection focuses on the analysis of more immediate contacts with countries and regions, i.e. those created by personal experience rather than via the media. In Table 1, a summary of survey results across the following categories is presented: one-time visit or longer stay in foreign countries and the existence of friends and relatives, and finally having professional (including academic) contacts in the countries covered by the survey.

As the collected data show, on average more than half of Estonian inhabitants have at least once in their lives visited the neighbouring countries: Latvia, Lithuania and Russia, followed by the nearer Scandinavian countries ; Finland and Sweden, while Denmark and Norway appear less accessible in terms of travel contacts. The number of short visits to Russia significantly decreased over time, however long-term (business and family) contacts are maintained. The share of respondents who had visited Sweden did, on the other hand, increase by ca 40% during the observed decade. The countries mentioned (specifically Finland, Latvia and Russia) are also the highest ranked for repeat visits and longer stays. The results confirm the tourism report by Statistics Estonia.

On average, about every third respondent has visited former Soviet republics – Ukraine and Belarus – at least once; a slightly smaller percentage has contacts with former Eastern Block countries – Hungary, Poland and Czechia. Equally important is the culturally close Germany, which an average of nearly a quarter of the population has visited. Much less frequent are (both short- and long-term) contacts with other European countries (Britain, Ireland, France), including Mediterranean countries. Estonian inhabitants have infrequent travel contacts with geographically more distant regions: the USA, Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, etc. Various resources – finance, time, language skills, etc. – restrict travel to these parts of the world.

Finally, the results from Table 1 for personal and professional contacts with foreign countries are summarised. In this context, Finland is the most important destination, where more than a third of the respondents have both friends and

family; 5% of the population has had professional contacts with this country. This indicator can be at least partly attributable to the extensive emigration. Various studies refer to Estonia as a high emigration country among the new EU member states (Pungas et al., 2012). Job seeking, which is also the main reason for the current emigration, is responsible for Estonian emigration most frequently to Finland, Sweden and Norway.

As regards personal contacts, Russia is still at the top of the list owing to the considerable share of Russian speakers in Estonia<sup>9</sup>. At the same time, professional contacts (including business relationships) with Russia decreased during the 2000s. According to Statistics Estonia, the Estonian and Russian economies have been interrelated to the extent of ca 10%. One factor cooling the relations between the two countries (especially in the field of transit) was the Bronze Night, in April 2007<sup>10</sup>, as a result of which Russian trade flows via Estonia decreased sharply in 2008/2009 and were redirected via Latvia during the boycott. The Bronze Night also had the short-term effect of inhibiting tourism and other fields by about 30%. Political relations were in the greatest need of restoration after the tumult, and have improved since.

English speaking countries (the UK, Ireland, USA, etc.) are also meaningful in the current context. These countries become considerable educational, cultural and business destinations during the observed period. According to Statistics Estonia, over 3,000 younger Estonian inhabitants left for the UK and Ireland between 2010 and 2012, pointing to the accessibility of this geographically rather near region. The English skills of Estonians was indicated in an international survey to represent a relatively high level, which mitigates in favour of the UK and Ireland<sup>11</sup>. In addition, the UK and Ireland were the first 'old' EU member states that opened their labour

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<sup>9</sup> According to Statistics Estonia, the total population of 1,300,000 includes ca 400,000 (30.8%) people of other ethnic backgrounds, including ca 300,000 (23.1%) Russians.

<sup>10</sup> The Bronze Night refers to the controversy and riots in Estonia on 24-28 April 2007 caused by the Estonian government's decision to relocate a Soviet memorial of the Second World War, the so-called Bronze Soldier, from its previous site in central Tallinn to the cemetery of the defense forces in the suburbs of the city. The removal of the monument was accompanied by protest and violent clashes between police and ethnic Russian protesters, involving over 3,000 participants. Rioting also occurred in the other parts of Estonia where a large part of the Russian-speaking population is living: Jõhvi, Kohtla-Järve and Narva. Russian government officials reacted angrily to the removal of the monument in the international media.

<sup>11</sup> See the recent report by EF English Proficiency Index: <http://www.ef.se/epi/>.

markets to the new member states, and Estonian working-age people and entrepreneurs (especially in the financial and creative sectors) took this opportunity. Estonian inhabitants also have numerous personal contacts in somewhat more distant countries – the USA, Canada and Australia, while effective business or professional contacts with these countries are not so frequent. This indicator probably reflects the Estonians' great diaspora, which originates from the Second World War years 1939–1944. On the other hand, statistics show (Statistics Estonia) that since 2005, a considerable number of young people aged 18–30 have gone to work in Australia and, since 2010, Canada.

Table 1 also indicates that Estonian inhabitants have numerous personal, and fewer professional, contacts with Latvia and Lithuania, and also Germany and Belgium. The latter is relevant mainly in the EU context, as a fair number of people have taken up jobs in Brussels and elsewhere in Belgium since 2004. According to the Estonian Embassy in Brussels, about 2,000 Estonians live in Belgium, and this figure is increasing. Estonian inhabitants have very few personal and professional contacts with the Balkan countries as well as the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

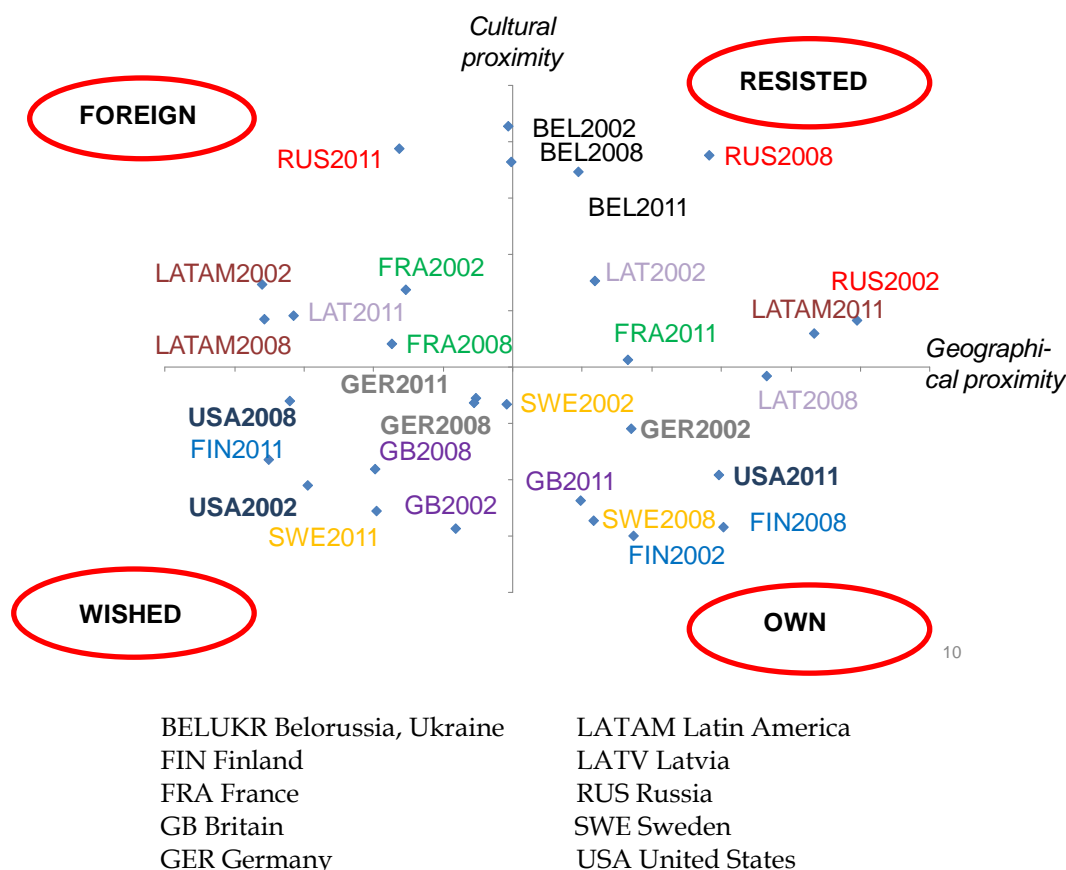
#### **4.2. Appropriation and use**

The second dimension of personal social space analysed in this paper includes appropriation and use of space that is here operationalised through the structure of perceived distances with various geographical spaces. The structure of perceived distances is analysed using the MDS approach and the results are presented in Figure 1.

In this figure, three years of available and comparable data are analysed – the perception of various countries in 2002, 2008 and 2011. The MDS approach enables an analysis of the structure of individuals' spatial perception, on the one hand. The proximities between countries in the figure indicate the perception similarities and dissimilarities so that countries located close together in the figure are perceived in similar way (correlations between these variables is higher), and vice versa, countries located distant from each other are perceived diversely. The change in the position in the multidimensional space regarding a particular country in various studied years

may indicate the changes in spatial perception. On the other hand, underlying spatial dimensions distinguishing the structure of countries in the multidimensional space can be analysed here.

Figure 1. Structure of perceived cultural proximities (MDS)



Source: Authors

On the basis of country structure, the underlying spatial dimensions were categorised as *cultural* and *ideological* proximity. These nominations used here are grounded on both theoretical and empirical considerations. Theoretically, according to the approach of Henri Lefebvre (1991), the territorial proximity does not coincide with perceptions of space as seen by individuals. Therefore 'geographical' spatial dimension is distinguished here, indicating the perceived geographical proximity of a particular country. The term 'ideological' is used here on the basis of Henri Lefebvre's theoretical assumption (ibidem) that spatial interactions have always



a particular inner hierarchy of power. In this way, ideology is distinguished from knowledge, or individual outlook, outlook having rather neutral connotations and ideology referring to the power ascribed to the countries. The individual's understanding of the ideological position of countries, always relative and changeable, is under focus here. In addition, qualitative studies (Masso, Tender, 2008) indicate issues of power (e.g. economic or political authority, colonial connections between countries, authoritarian national movements, etc.) as an essential basis for the specification of the perceived proximities, or distances to particular countries.

When analysing the structure of spatial perception in 2002-2011, both changes and stable positions could be seen. The most stable countries according to the perception during the transition period were Ukraine and Belarus, which individuals failed to locate geographically (a position close to zero on the X axis), probably due to the lack of personal (travel) contacts. However, Ukraine and Belarus were seen steadily as ideologically distant over the last ten years. On the other hand, post-communist Russia belongs to countries that have undergone major changes in mental perception, becoming even more distant on the ideological and geographical scales from 2002 to 2008 and 2011. This change in position in the figure was interpreted as a shift from the 'resisted' to 'foreign' mental section, since the geographical and ideological perception changed to congruent. The change in the case of Russia can be explained by the shift from an Eastern mental space to a western space, and through narrowing spatial practices (e.g. contacts, visa restrictions, etc.) with this country. It can be supposed that the growing perceived distances in the case of Russia may lead to certain 'disruption' in the development of regional cooperation and mental geopolitical affiliations in situations in which a tight cooperation with neighbouring countries is needed, or when, for the two main Estonian national groups - Estonians and Russian speakers - intersections are looked for on the basis of common territorial affiliations.

The figure also indicates a mental restructuring in the case of Western countries, both neighbouring and geographically distant. In the case of neighbouring countries, Finland and Latvia, the structure of perception significantly changed. The

Finish case is ideologically understandable (due to the cultural and language connections) to Estonians, but the perceived geographical distance grew in the course of the transition (similarly to Sweden). This increase could be explained by the fact that when, at the beginning of the 1990s, Finland was attractive as the first access to the Western world in the form of the shopping, work and destination, while in the course of the transition other Western countries emerged in the personal social space. One explanation for Finland's decline as a part of personal space can also be methodological because the increasing emigration of Finnophiles means these people were no longer in Estonia to participate in the latest round of the survey. The geographically perceived marginal position also grew to include Latvia during the 2002-2011 period because of its relative lack of mediated and close personal contacts through relative and friendship ties. The ideologically stable neutral perception of Latvia (a position close to zero on the Y axis) may indicate the marginality of the contemporary Baltic solidarity, an identity that was communicated actively in public during the 1990s based on a common past and the social issues of the day (Masso 2002).

In the case of geographically distant countries, formerly geographically inaccessible Latin American countries were perceived in 2011 as geographically relatively closer, although they had an ideologically rather neutral meaning for Estonians (a position close to zero on the Y axis). Tourism practices, both personal and mediated through the media, may play a role here. Similar changes in the geographical perception also apply to the USA. The considerably distinguishable ideological closeness of the USA and its change from a desirable space to an understandable entity similar to Estonia indicates the Estonian official political and liberal-economic preferences represented in the Estonian media. To some degree similar changes in the geographical closeness can be seen in the case of Britain, although the shift is rather marginal compared to the USA. Other European countries – for example Germany and France – are seen as ideologically and geographically rather neutral (positions close to the intersection of X and Y axes). Some minor changes in the geographical distance can be explained by changes in spatial practices

in these countries (for example, Germany was an attractive travel destination at the beginning of transition).

#### 4.3. Domination and control

The third dimension of personal social space analysed in this paper concentrates on domination and control, here operationalised through the analysis of the relationship between the two main spatial dimensions analysed previously – the diversity of contacts and perceived cultural proximities – and various background variables that function as individual resources supporting the spatial opening processes, both in the form of a decrease in spatial distances and in the form of restructuring the former spatial affiliations. To analyse the associations between these dimensions of personal social space, two summation indices are calculated on the basis of initial variables, one measuring the diversity of contacts (individuals' contacts with 10 countries that over time were comparable, analysed in the previous section, are aggregated) and perception of cultural proximity (individuals' perceptions of the proximities of 10 countries are summarised). To analyse the relationships between indices and background variables, Cramers' V association coefficient is used<sup>12</sup>. To interpret the relationships, both the statistical significance and strength of association is taken into consideration here (the higher coefficient indicating a stronger relationship between the variables).

The background indicators in Table 2 include at first socio-demographic structural variables, aimed at analysing whether there are any changes in the structural division during the transition. For example, previous studies indicated (Masso 2008), that personal social space in Estonia is divided across the agent-level structures (education, age, gender, ethnic background), this type of division being more inherent to the post-Soviet countries and former colonial metropolises. The

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<sup>12</sup> Similarly to association coefficient chi-square, Cramers' V enables to calculate the statistical significance of the associations in the crosstabs. Both mentioned coefficients are suitable in the cases of  $n \times n$  tables and not pretentious regarding the measurement scale; however, in the cases of large tables, and large number of degrees of freedom, there is higher probability to have small expected counts; when any expected cell frequency is less than 1 or more than 20% of cells have expected counts less than 5, chi square and Cramers' V approximation may not be reliable (e.g. coefficient cannot be calculated). The advantage of association coefficient Cramers' V is that the comparability of coefficients in various crosstabs (coefficient reaching between 0...1, unlike in the case of chi-square where the size of coefficient depends on the degrees of freedom, sample size).

results in Table 2 indicate that during the transition period there were some structural changes in spatial accessibility via personal contacts and appropriation, with changed spatial proximities. Out of the socio-demographic structural indicators, ethno-linguistic affiliation (here measured by the language of the questionnaire) was statistically significant in the case of both analysed index variables; however, in 2008 the ethno-linguistic division in cultural perception increases while the diversity of contacts decreased. Such results may reflect the response to the Bronze Soldier crisis in Estonia in 2007, in which the clash between the historical memories of the two different language groups was expressed after the government decided to relocate the Bronze Soldier. Previous studies explained such ethnic differences as spatial disruption that is even increasing from generation to generation (Masso 2011). On the other hand, such results may also indicate the growing importance of economic resources, also among Russian speakers, in the course of the transition in creating contacts over territories; Estonia's progress in catching up was slowed again because of the economic decline following the problems of 2008.

Table 2. Indices of contacts and perceived proximity by background variables (Cramer's V)

Indicator	Index variable: Contacts with various countries			Index variable: Perceived proximity to various cultures		
	2002	2008	2011	2002	2008	2011
Year						
Language of questionnaire	.277***	.144***	.242***	.239***	.246***	.226***
Gender	.094	.095	.078	.098	.083	.039
Age	.103**	.141***	.125***	.095	.092	.093
Education	.207***	.290***	.239***	.198***	.111**	.114**
Economic wealth	.158***	.152***	.175***	.158***	.107**	.098*
Social layer	.135***	.143***	.132***	.121***	.102***	.086
Knowledge of languages	.172***	.189***	.211***	.197***	.148***	.112***
Usage of languages	.147***	.171***	.172***	.191***	.136***	.111***
Interest in news from abroad	.147***	.236***	.169***	.242***	.179***	.141***

\*\*\* p≤.001, \*\* p≤.01, \* p≤.05

Source: Authors

Regarding other socio-demographic variables, gender does not distinguish the accessibility and appropriation of social space (statistically insignificant relationships both in the case of contacts and perceived proximity). When the age does not

differentiate the perception of social space (perceived proximity index), the generational differences in the accessibility of various countries deepens in the course of the transition (an increasing relationship on the contacts index). The younger generation's higher activity and the older generation's more moderate activity in creating contacts over territories points to a divide in transition society into 'globalised' groups and groups that feel uncertainty about globalisation and geo-cultural changes. Previous studies indicated that apart from face-to-face contacts, media habits play an essential role in shaping the personal globalisation divide (Kalmus et al., 2013).

Previous studies shown (Masso 2011) that the perception of space correlates significantly with individual economic wealth. The results of the present analysis indicate that in the course of the transition and because of economic instability the role of economic wealth in supporting trans-territorial contacts were unstable, being lower during periods of low economic activity (i.e. due to the economic crisis). Self-estimated location in the structure of social layers has an opposite relationship with contacts over territories (in a similarly way to education) in that prior to perceptible economic decline trans-territorial contacts are a part of the higher layers' social practices. Weakening relationships in the course of the transition between perceived cultural openness and economic wealth, on the one hand, and with social layer, on the other, indicate that alternative sources for the formation of spatial perceptions play in increasing role, as well as economic sources enabling cross-border contacts. Thus, an open-minded perception of culture is becoming more widespread and is no longer limited to the elite.

From the possible cultural resources supporting the spatial accessibility and appropriation processes both the role of foreign languages and media are here used as background indicators in the analyses. Previous studies proved the essential role of foreign languages both in the production of spatial perceptions (Masso, Tender, 2008) and in shaping the patterns of the geo-cultural mobility (Masso, Tender, 2007). However, studies indicate (Masso 2008) that in the course of advancement in the transition processes, foreign languages could change from operating as a medium loaded with spatial meanings, to meanings requiring media for communication. The

present study enables an analysis of the associations between foreign languages and personal spatial indicators over the longer period. The analysis indicates that when the role of foreign languages as cultural resources, both in the form of self-estimated knowledge and practical usage, increases when supporting spatial accessibility (i.e. contacts), in the case of appropriation (i.e. spatial perception) the relationship is decreasing.

Somewhat similar tendencies can be seen in the case of another cultural resource included here in the analysis – the interest in news from abroad. Previous studies (Masso 2007) indicate that in Estonia as a transition country personal spatiality is shaped primarily by institutional factors (e.g. the media, the economy), unlike in stable Swedish society, where the formation of personal spatiality is based on versatile sources and is more autonomous with regard to the media. This study shows some fading marks of this tendency, at least when considering the spatial perceptions. Thus it can be concluded that in the course of the transition and because of the economic instability, the role of institutional (e.g. language, media) and economic factors may even increase the support for the spatial accessibility, but the spatial appropriation is based on a growing number of sources apart from face-to-face spatial contacts and an increased autonomy from individual structural and institutional characteristics.

## 5. Conclusions

This article aimed to contribute to the analysis of socio-cultural transition from the prism of social space. The theoretical model of personal social space was offered herein in order to empirically analyse socio-cultural transition. The conceptual model developed within this paper includes three dimensions: distanciation and accessibility (e.g. contacts over territories), appropriation and use (e.g. perception of cultural distances), and domination and control of social space (individual and institutional resources supporting spatial accessibility and appropriation).

The empirical analysis indicated that all constitutional features are necessary in order to analyse personal social space. On the basis of empirical analysis, it is assumed that at any particular moment some dimensions could be prevalent. In the

course of the transition, the accessibility of secondary zones of relevance would increase and distancing decrease in different ways (e.g. contacts, the media), at least when empirically analysing the personal social space in Estonia as a transition country. Similarly, some tendencies show that in the course of the transition process, the factor of domination decreases, at least on the level of personal social space. For example, the roles of other institutional factors apart from foreign languages, e.g. tourism, increase in order to gain accessibility to space. The decrease in domination can be seen foremost in the case of appropriation (i.e. spatial perceptions). Spatial accessibility (i.e. spatial contacts) is to some degree more dependent on various resources, since those resources did not grow linearly during the transition process (e.g. due to economic instability).

Spatial appropriation (the perception of space) retained its rather hierarchical character in Estonia, being divided by certain ideological and power influences, a distinctness that could even deepen in the course of generational change. According to Henri Lefebvre (1991), the transition should entail the change from production of things in the space to the constitution of meaningful space (i.e. based on meaningful spatial structures, knowledge or institutions). The present analysis shows that consumerist meanings ascribed to languages and space (originating from material objects) can also act as a unique fixed point to be used for an orientation and adaptation in the space. In this way, the process of appropriation could become more prevalent. Thus, the results of the analysis show the emergence of the symbolic production of space that Göran Bolin (2006) referred to as a shift from techno-industrial modernisation to techno-cultural modernisation. However, the relationship between appropriation and distancing is not always so simple since a higher accessibility (due to individuals using collective spatial strategies) not always lead to appropriation (the result in the form of global openness being different).

In conclusion, the broad potential of personal social space continues to be a valuable source for social scientists for further research because of its enduring social transformations and infinite variations in the dimensions of personal social space, which individuals face when searching for foundations of mutual

comprehensibility.

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