

HEIDI ANN ERBSEN

The making of
'Imagined Global Communities':
the 'orientation' and 'orientalization'
of Russian speaking audiences



DISSERTATIONES DE MEDIIS ET COMMUNICATIONIBUS
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Study I. Erbsen, H. (2020). Orientalism and Russian speaking minority regions in Europe: representing Narva. *National Identities*, 22(2), 151–172.

Study II. Erbsen, H. (2019). A parallel yet divided information space: testing the overlap of Yandex Russian language news media discourses in Estonia, Latvia, and Russia. *Russian Journal of Communication*, 11(3), 217–239.

Study III. Erbsen, H and Siim Põldre. (2022) Is all Russian News the Same? Framing in Russian News Media generated by the Yandex News Algorithm for the United States, Estonia, and Russia. *Journalism*, 1468849211069237.

Conference Presentation of Findings. A Common Russian Information Space: Imagination vs. Reality of Connectivity (Case study of Russian Speakers in Estonia). Boston University Center for the Study of Europe: Russian Media Influence in the US & Europe, May 22, 2020 <https://www.bu.edu/european/2020/05/24/event-highlights-russian-media-influence-in-the-us-europe/>

Conference Presentation of Findings. International Media From Below: Assessing ‘Relevance’ in Online News For Russian Speakers in Estonia (New Frames in Online media): Fifth Annual Tartu Conference on Russian and East European Studies, June 5–8, 2021: https://sisu.ut.ee/sites/default/files/tartuconference/files/schedule_of_panel_sessions_7_june.pdf

AUTHOR’S CONTRIBUTION

The author conceived the ideas and designed the methodologies for the two datasets and fieldworks, established the theoretical framework for this research project, and organized the paper structure for all three studies. In the third study, the author worked together with a data specialist to conduct a rigorous statistical analysis for the multiple variables in the study. While the multiple variable testing was conducted by the co-author, the design of the study, variables to be tested, analysis of data, and written explanation of the methodology and findings were designed by the author.

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1. INTRODUCTION

For better or worse, in the last few decades it has become possible for anyone with internet access to search for and find information from every corner of the globe within seconds. We can learn about places we might never visit and communicate with people we may never meet in person; despite physical barriers, this gives us the feeling of being connected to a larger global community. Already in the 1960's, philosopher and communications theorist Marshall McLuhan identified the advent of the radio and television as "the new electronic interdependence that recreates the world in the image of a 'global village'" (McLuhan, 1962). In his theory on communications, he defined radio, television, and other electronically mediated communication channels which "do not leave much to be filled in or completed by the audience" as 'hot' communications (McLuhan, 1964). Unlike 'cool' communications such as a dialogue or telephone call where the user is given a limited amount of information and expected to reciprocate, hot communications share larger amounts of information and require less participation. Fast forward to 2023 and we have 24/7 access to virtually limitless sources of online news, entertainment, and social networks which may appear 'cool' in engaging us to interact but remain very 'hot' in terms of the speed of information.

60 years ago, McLuhan warned that this speeding up of information, despite offering more diverse voices, could "restore a tribal pattern of intense voices" (ibid, 1964). In the 21st century, we have experienced the polarization of societies (the UK under Brexit, the US during the Trump elections and administration) and the persistence of divergent world views. Most recently, diverging world views have been propagated by the Kremlin to justify the full-scale invasion of Ukraine (on February 24th, 2022) to the Russian public and (arguably to a lesser extent) the global community. The use of international English and Russian language news media and the Yandex News algorithm in this dissertation exemplifies how the availability and automatic filtering of vast amounts of information for diverse audiences creates a misleading impression that audiences have quick and easy access to *all* the information available for them. In reality, algorithms have an 'invisible hand' in suggesting news content and reconfiguring physical boundaries to shape audience understanding of their (imagined) 'global communities'. This 'invisible hand' is influenced by various actors. In the case of the Yandex News algorithm, Russian government regulations on the IT companies have a significant effect unbeknown to audiences using the algorithm. Polarization and divergent opinions are not new; rather, they are a basic function in communities of belonging. What is new, and still needs further investigation is understanding the relationship between increasingly globalized media and minority audiences. These audiences usually do not have the loudest and most 'intense' collective voices to shape this media, especially when it comes to algorithm generated content in online news spaces.

Considering the last decades of international relations between Russian and the west, intensifying with the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, and cumulating with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the larger research problem of this dissertation considers how international news media (in English and Russian) depicts minority audiences, such as Russian speakers living abroad. In turn, I ask how respective audiences (such as Russian speaking audiences in Estonia) orient themselves in relation to these depictions. Because the theoretical framework, methodology and data for this dissertation were established and collected *before 2022*, this research helps build on the understanding of how these relationships work leading up to (unforeseen) global events. The overarching aim of this dissertation is therefore to build on the understanding of how communication between international news media and increasingly diverse audiences continues to operate.

In this cover article I consider how dynamic audience and media relationships facilitate 'imagined global communities' that are similar in many ways to small town communities. Anyone who has lived in a close-knit community knows that there are several advantages and disadvantages to living in a small town where "everybody knows everybody". No time is wasted with introductions and small talk, and discussing the latest news is much easier since there is no need to tell the backstory. These types of communication, where everyone knows the people, places, and history involved, gives a sense of being understood and ultimately leads to feelings of trust, belonging, and shared norms which are defining features of any community (Bradshaw, 2008). On the one hand, this is an extremely quick, efficient, and arguably reliable way of sharing information. On the other hand, the fact that your community knows about every embarrassing moment, short-term hobby, period of experimental fashion sense, and failed relationship could keep you stuck in a stereotyped version of yourself you have long outgrown or never really identified with in the first place. It may take devotion, persistence, and time to change your reputation in a small community, and in the end, you are still one individual working against the perceptions of the many other individuals in your small, yet closely knit, networked community.

What happens however, when the local community isn't the one where you live or grew up, but a global community replicating local communication styles and emanating the same feeling of understanding, trust, and belonging? In many ways, this is similar to communications between news media and geographically distant audiences. Just as in a physical small town, individuals belonging to a virtual 'imagined community' may also find themselves confronted with fixated depictions; rather than being based on an individual history (as is more the case in a small town), in a virtual 'imagined community', these fixated depictions are often based on a conglomeration of histories or cultures. Regardless of whether an individual previously identified with these representations, their participation in the community means that they too must either work to facilitate a change in this representation or, if impossible, orient themselves in relation to it. This phenomena of fixated depictions of individuals in international media builds on the traditional notion of 'orientalism' in this study.

Orientalized depictions are those which focus on the ‘otherness’, highlight normative divergence (specifically from the ‘west’), and present a generalized or fixed image of the subject (Brown, 2010 drawing on Said, 1978/2003). Rather than being intentional, these depictions are “a natural consequence of the lack of real knowledge about the area” (ibid, 2010; 151) and occur in international media due to growing pressures on content producers to reach increasingly diverse and distant audiences (Sylvie, 2018). In lieu of being able to write for each individual, content producers write for their perceived or ‘imagined audience’ (Matthews, 2008; Marwick and Boyd, 2011; Litt, 2012). ‘Imagined Audiences’ include “the people with whom they [content producers] believe they are communicating” (Ferrucci, et al., 2020; 1587) and is “a mental model [which] adjusts in relation to one’s apparent knowledge about the audience” (Coddington et al., 2021; 1030). In order to create a sense of unity for increasingly diverse audiences, international media rely on media events (Dayan and Katz, 1992) which in the modern sense are planned or unplanned events around which content producers and audiences orient or connect regardless of physical location or interaction (see page 37). Content producers and their various influences (see page 28) also compete to establish dominant or ‘hegemonic’ meanings (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Wojczewski, 2018), which are projected to be fixed and broadly accepted truths about a place, group of people, or event (see page 34), to send a clear, yet arguably over-simplistic or ‘orientalized’ messages. Rather than identifying or even contributing to these messages, respective audiences, in turn must ‘orient’ themselves into ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson, 1983/2006) in which, although “members do not know (and cannot) all their ‘countrymen’¹, they nevertheless feel like a kind of finite family” (Castelló, 2016; 61).

‘Orientation’ (Camaj and Weaver, 2013) therefore considers how *individuals* position themselves in relation to the more general information provided to a much larger ‘imagined audience’ in order to perceive their own identity within this community. Due to the way content producers create news for increasingly broad ‘imagined audiences’, individuals navigate limited choices. Through the limited choices in international media, individuals position which stories, or parts of stories, they agree with, which they counter, and which exist in parallel to their views (Erbsen, 2020). Despite the power of audiences to interpret broad messages in a more personal context, dominant discourses still exist in which individuals have little say in the discourse but must position themselves as part of the ‘imagined community’. As pointed out in Manuel Castells’ “The Network Society” “there is a structured break between production and reception which allows spectators to determine messages in their own context. Although the relationship is not equal, the audience brings specific preferences to the viewing setting” (Castells, 2004; 403). This cover article therefore investigates the content and discourses of international online media to better understand how these compare across

¹ Quote added by the author to highlight that the original meaning of imagined communities by Anderson referred to national communities. This concept will be revisited in the theoretical section.

borders. Then, considering the generalizations which are inherent of international news media portrayals, it shows how individual audience members orient themselves in relation to these portrayals in navigating their own identity within their physical communities.

Often times, as this PhD dissertation shows through the case of Russian speaking minorities in Estonia, the way diverse, international audiences are portrayed in international news (hoping to reach broad imagined audiences) reproduces cliché or ‘orientalized’ versions of group identities. Yet, just as in a physical community, stereotypes and (mis)representations in media communications still play a large role in how audiences, particularly minority audiences, orient themselves in relation to media portrayals (or see themselves within an imagined community). So, whereas growing up in a small town once meant that an individual may struggle to escape their local reputation, growing up in a global village means that individuals associated with particular cultures, histories, or countries may find it challenging to escape being identified with simplified representations in global media. The ‘Imagined Global Community’ of Russian speaking audiences represented in this dissertation therefore builds on the traditional concepts of ‘imagined’ audiences (as perceived by content producers), imagined ‘communities’ (as perceived by audiences themselves belonging to a community), and the ‘global’ village as the larger space within which both interact via media content.

The aim of this dissertation is to build on the understanding of how communication between international news media and increasingly diverse audiences continues to operate. The terms orientation and orientalization help show how audiences identify themselves with or ‘orient’ themselves into communities based on *simplified or fixed depictions of local groups* (orientalism) and limited content provided for ‘imagined audiences’. The main imagined audience in this investigation are Russian speaking minority groups in Estonia. Although Russian speaking minorities encompass many distinct small communities² (Vihalemm et al, 2019; Cheskin and Kachuyevski, 2019), decades of fluctuating tensions between Russia and the ‘west’ have influenced how international news media reports on and to Russian speakers. Until recently, it could have been said that these tensions reached their climax with the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and continuing occupation of parts of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine (Chaban et al, 2017; Hahn, 2018; Kuzio, 2018; Nedozhogina, 2019) and resurfaced intermittently with allegations of Russian interference in the US 2016 presidential elections (Ziegler, 2018; Tsygankov, 2021) or speculation about

² While some literature branches refer to a ‘Russian speaking diaspora’ this PhD dissertation maintains that the diverseness of Russian speaking communities in Europe do not merit the term diaspora, which traditionally refers to a 1) dispersed group with 2) a common identity and 3) claims to a homeland. This is based on Brubaker’s 2005 review of the concept “The ‘diaspora’, diaspora” which notes that the term diaspora “has been stretched to accommodate the various intellectual, cultural and political agendas”. I agree that “We should not, as analysts, prejudge the outcome of such struggles by imposing groupness through definitional fiat. We should seek, rather, to bring the struggles themselves into focus, without presupposing that they will eventuate in bounded groups.” (Brubaker, 2005; 13).

Russian misinformation campaigns (Levinger, 2018; Kuznetsova and Makhortykh, 2021). In December 2021, international attention to the build-up of Russian military forces along the Ukrainian border once again brought attention to regions with large Russian speaking minorities (Minzarari, 2021). This suggests that such international political tensions and polarized media coverage surrounding them are not likely to disappear any time soon. Furthermore, the most recent turn of events with Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 followed by international sanctions, shifting military alliances, and an increase in media controls in the Russian Federation (and of Russian Federation media in Estonia and other countries) means that the polarization of international relations and subsequent media coverage of these relations are likely to continue to worsen.

This doctoral dissertation therefore addresses two important gaps in research concerning international media and Russian speaking audiences. The first is understanding whether and how international English language media discourses about Russian speaking audiences or regions influence how Russian speaking audiences orient themselves in relation to these discourses. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union and subsequent expansion of the European Union (EU), there have been several studies on the identity of Russian speaking minority groups in terms of nationalization processes (see Kuus, 2002; Galbreath, 2003/2006, Muiznieks et al., 2013; Kuczyńska-Zonik, 2017), the implications of Russian compatriot initiatives (Smith and Wilson, 1997; Ingram, 2001; Suslov, 2018), and the loyalty of Russian speakers living abroad to the Russian state or their country of residence (Barrington et al., 2003; Simons, 2015; Birka, 2016).

More recently, in the context of ongoing tensions between Russian and the 'west', which have been played out vividly in the headlines of English language media even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (Erbsen, 2019; Erbsen, 2020), studies had focused on identifying disinformation attempts in Russian media (Aro, 2016; Baumann, 2020; Nisbet and Kamenchuk, 2021) and considered how Russian state narratives could influence Russian speakers. Research in this area has also contributed significantly to the reception side by considering how Russian speakers in the Baltic states read or filter media content (Juzefovičs and Vihalemm, 2020; Vihalemm and Juzefovičs, 2021). While it might be assumed that the 'imagined audience' of English language media would not initially be a Russian speaking audience, the interconnectedness of our global village means that the orientation of Russian speakers may still be influenced by English language media discourses. To my knowledge, however, no studies have thus far considered how Russian speaking audiences position themselves in relation to English language media discourses. By comparing English language headlines about Narva, Estonia (which is located on the border with Russia) with representations by local Russian speaking audiences (Study I), this dissertation helps to fill this gap.

The second gap considers how Russian language media compares across borders. While a range of topics have considered the role Russian media plays abroad and internally, few have compared how Russian media content, regardless of whether it be produced by the Russian state or another actor, and for audiences

in the Russian Federation or abroad, differs depending on the country it is generated for. Considering the scaling up of Russian media censorship in the Russian Federation following the Russian invasion of Ukraine (McMahon, 2022; Human Rights Watch, 2022), this has arguably changed since the period of my analysis (2018–2019); I still argue however, that the differences in media across borders is essential to understanding audiences. Understanding the changes in media overlap will become even more important in the coming years, and this study provides a pre-Covid-19 pre-2022 baseline for measuring these changes.

A key difference in these two gaps is that when it comes to English news media, Russian speaking audiences *would not* initially be considered the target audience, whereas the same cannot be said about Russian language media, especially that generated by the Yandex News algorithm. English news media depictions of Russian speaking regions might contain more recognizably ‘orientalized’ depictions which highlight the uniqueness of these regions to international English language media audiences (for whom Russian speaking regions such as the city of Narva might be quite distant). Meanwhile, international media in Russian (largely influenced by the Russian Federation) aiming to reach increasingly diverse Russian speaking audiences cater to the localized ‘needs’ of Russian speaking audiences. Both can lead to inaccurate depictions of objects of reporting (such as the city of Narva in English language media) and target audiences (such as Russian speaking audiences in the case of Russian language media). In both cases, as will be demonstrated through the studies and additional interviews with Russians speakers in Estonia, Russian speaking individuals position or *orient* themselves in relation to this reporting. In response to international news media in English, this orientation involves addressing distant depictions that are not written *for* but *about* their region. Conversely, in response to international news media in Russian, this orientation involves positioning themselves in relation to media which, despite targeting them as imagined audiences, may still be relatively distant.

Prior to 2022, several studies had investigated the effects that Russian state sponsored media could have on Russian (Yablokov, 2015; Lupion, 2018) and non-Russian speaking (Bolton, 2020) audiences alike. Particular attention has been paid to the Russian Federation’s development and use of international media outlets such as RT (formerly known as Russia Today) to promote the Russian image and brand (Kuznetsova, 2018) and facilitate ‘Information Warfare’ (Zelenkauskaiti and Balduccini, 2017; Mölder and Sazonov, 2018; Baumann, 2020; Bolton, 2020) abroad. Investigations into the functioning of Russian media *within* the Russian Federation are also prominent and find that this media is influenced by a media culture specific to the Russian Federation (see Vartanova, 2019; Yablokov and Schimpfössl, 2020; Bodrunova et al., 2020). At the same time, analyses of Russian state media coverage of international events claim that due to the international nature of information spaces, attempts by the Russian government to control the narratives of Russian media are still limited by competing international narratives (Hutchings and Tolz, 2015; Venger, 2019; Tolz, et al., 2021).

There is some research into how search engines provide information (Nielsen, 2016; Makhortyka, et al., 2021) and how algorithms filter information (Kravets and Toepfl, 2021) or compare in their content generation mechanisms (Vaughan and Chen, 2015; Zavadski and Toepfl, 2019). There are also several studies comparing news coverage of specific events across borders; however, to my knowledge no studies have considered which information is presented from the same algorithm based on the country setting. By comparing the discourses found in Russian headlines generated by the Yandex News algorithm for Estonia, Latvia, and Russia, this dissertation shows whether there are areas of overlap in the coverage of ‘Europe’ and ‘Russia’ in Russian headlines generated for these countries (Study II). Then statistical testing of differences in framing for Estonia, Russia, and The United States for the same data (Study III), sheds light on which topics and frames are common in the content generated in all countries and which are more unique to country specific context. Interviews with local Russian speakers in Estonia further work to show how individuals navigate and understand news in Russian from different countries and sources.

Moreover, considering the turn of events in Russian international relations since the invasion of Ukraine on February 24th, 2022, this study provides invaluable information about the state of Russian information and media narratives across borders prior to these events. Future research comparing information from within and outside of the Russian Federation and analysis of English language media coverage of Russian speaking regions abroad will benefit from the concrete findings of this analysis.

The larger research problem of this dissertation therefore considers how international news media (in English and Russian) depicts specific minority audiences, such as Russian speakers, and, in turn, how respective audiences orient themselves in relation to these depictions. The smaller research questions work to address this problem:

- 1) How does international media in English depict Russian speaking audiences?
 - a. How have the discourses in these depictions changed over time? (Study I and dataset 1)
 - b. Are there Orientalized portrayals in these depictions? (Study I and dataset 1)
- 2) How do Russian speaking individuals in Estonia orient themselves in relation to these depictions? (Study I and fieldwork 1)
- 3) How does international Russian media generated by the Yandex News algorithm compare across borders?
 - a. How do the topics covered and traditional frames compare? (Study II, III, and dataset 2)
 - b. How do the discourses concerning ‘Europe’ and ‘Russia’ compare? (Study II)
- 4) How do individual Russian speakers in Estonia orient themselves towards Russian media generated for different countries? (dataset 2, fieldwork 2)

This dissertation starts broadly with the first and second questions to address the first research gap pertaining to international news media in English and Russian speaking audiences. By using international English news media, we first gain a bird's-eye view of how Russian speaking regions are depicted by relatively distant actors who are arguably not producing content for Russian speaking audiences (research question 1). Through interviews with local Russian speakers, we then see how local Russian speaking individuals orient themselves towards these (arguably distant) depictions (research question 2).

Then, the third and fourth research questions focus on Russian media, for whom Russian speaking audiences could be the target, to address research gap 2. The use of the Russian controlled Yandex News algorithm helps narrow in on how Russian media compares across borders (research question 3). Finally, through interviews with local Russian speakers in Estonia, I show how Russian speakers themselves connect with or orient towards Russian news generated by the Yandex News algorithm in different countries.

This structure, moving from the broad and distant to the local, and then understanding how local connections are made helps contribute to the overall aim of the paper: to build on the understanding of how communication between international news media and increasingly diverse audiences continues to operate. More specifically, applying the case of Russian speaking audiences in Estonia helps to understand how international news media (in English and Russian) depicts Russian speaking regions and audiences, and how these specific audiences orient themselves in relation to these depictions.

In what follows, in Chapter II *Case Study*, I introduce the context of Russian speaking audiences in Estonia and in 2.1 give an overview of how Russian speaking groups had been studied at the time of this dissertation (prior to 2022). Then in 2.2, I provide an overview of the media diets of Russian speakers in Estonia. This section also explains the background and importance of the Yandex News algorithm as the source of data collection for answering the main research questions and sub questions of this work. In Chapter III *Theoretical Background*, I first draw on previous studies into the modern "Hierarchies of Influence" affecting media content production and audience 'connection' with this content to consider the socio-economic pressures and mechanisms driving our modern media discourses. Section 3.1 demonstrates how our global community influences the way content producers and audiences 'connect with' and 'orient toward' different discourses and information. Section 3.2 then shows how algorithms play a part in the creation of increasingly large 'imagined audiences'. Finally, section 3.3 draws on the traditional concepts of 'imagined audience' (audiences as media producers expect them to be), 'imagined communities' (audience perceptions of belonging to a virtual community), and 'discursive hegemony' (the dominate representation associated with various events, groups, places, etc.) to show how these mechanisms work in tandem with social processes of self and social identity formation. This 'tug of war' between modern pressures on the media and traditional yet stable facets of communication results in the findings of this empirical

analysis: That even though media portrayals often ‘miss their mark’ and ‘orientalize’ minority groups, and often fail to connect with increasingly diverse imagined audiences, audiences still orient themselves into imagined communities in relations to these depictions and communications.

Chapter IV then explains the methodology in gathering the data for two datasets and conducting two fieldworks to answer the research questions and produce the respective studies included in this dissertation before moving to the Findings (Chapter V). The Discussion (Chapter VI) then contextualizes the findings to show the contribution of this dissertation in filling the two larger research gaps and identifying future areas to apply the findings of this work. Finally, the Conclusions (Chapter VII) revisit the concept of ‘imagined community’ by providing concise answers to the research questions.

2. CASE STUDY

The data collection and analysis for this current thesis was conducted from 2018 to 2021. This was prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24th, 2022. At that time, international discourses related to Russian speaking populations were preoccupied with the Russian annexation of Crimea and subsequent sanctions, and a resurgence in right wing nationalism accompanied by a conservative turn in European and American politics. Even within this pre-2022 context, a great deal of time and research had been dedicated to understanding the role that new media information sources played in influencing populations. Russian media, which even prior to 2022 was assumed to be under the strong influence of the Russian government, had already been the center of attention for many studies interested in the media's role in influencing global populations. With the events of 2022, the research and context of this dissertation have become even more important since they present data and analysis showing insights into the state of international news coverage of Russian speaking populations and the overlap in Russian language news across borders. In the case of Estonia, the focus of the empirical research of this dissertation, the topic of Russian speaking minorities has been a long one.

As a country formerly occupied by the Soviet Union from 1940–1941 and 1944–1991, Estonia was one of several titular nations³ that experienced a human redistribution and subsequent 'russification' processes. By 2019 (during the period of analysis for this dissertation) 25% of Estonia's population consisted of ethnic Russians and various other minority groups added to the number of native Russian speakers living in Estonia (stat.ee, 2019). When Estonia regained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, several policies and security measures had been put in place to ensure the Russian Federation could not continue to exert influence in independent Estonian territory. Thus, prior to and within the context of Russian aggression in the European neighborhood (Georgia in 2008, Crimea in 2013) national and regional securitization policies and international coverage of borderland regions brought up old questions about the possible threat of Russian influence on Russian speaking minorities living in 'near abroad' countries such as Estonia. This case study first considers the traditional paradigm of Brubaker's Triadic Nexus to explain the developments in research on Russian speaking minorities living in Estonia and then expands on this model to incorporate the newer models concerning the integration of ethnic or linguistic minority groups.

³ Titular nation is the term in post-soviet studies for "constructing national territories as the policies of and for ethno-cultural nations, classifying and categorizing people by 'nationality' and giving preferential treatment to members of national groups in 'their own' territories fostered and legitimated by the habit of distinguishing between the core, state-bearing nation and the total population of the republic" (Brubaker, 2014; 1787). Not being ethnically or culturally considered part of the 'Russian Titular Nation', the human redistribution that took place during the Soviet rule changed the economic and demographic structures of Estonia (see Mettam and Williams, 2001) significantly.

2.1 Previous Studies of Russian Speaking Minority Groups: Triadic Nexus, Transnationalism, Trans-localism

Each point of Brubaker's Triadic Nexus, which focuses on relations between the 'ethnic minority', 'nationalizing states', and the 'external homeland' can be used as a categorical lens through which Russian speakers in Estonia and other countries in the European and/or post-soviet space have been traditionally analyzed. The identity of Russian speaking minorities has been studied in relation to the nationalization processes (Kuus, 2002; Galbreath, 2003; Muiznieks et al., 2013; Kuchynska-Zonik, 2017), the Russian Federation's compatriot policies (Smith and Wilson, 1997; Ingram, 2001; Suslov, 2018), and individual 'attachment; to a nationalizing state or Russia (Barrington et al., 2003; Simons, 2014; Birka, 2016). The main foci of the studies focusing on the identity of Russian speakers within the paradigm of the triadic nexus is the influence on or loyalty of Russian speakers to a 'nationalizing state' such as Estonia or a 'homeland' perceived to be Russia.

The main criticism of this model is that it is state centered and, as the theoretical framework of this dissertation has shown, the state is only one actor influencing communication processes. One common theme of studies focusing on the identity of Russian speakers is that the idea of a Russian 'diaspora' is a construction by states, be they Russia as the 'external homeland' or 'residential' or 'nationalizing' states. Due to the fact that Russian speaking communities in the post-soviet space and beyond vary extensively from state to state and even within state boundaries, this dissertation maintains that Russian speakers in Estonia are a linguistic minority with many distinct communities rather than a diaspora (see Brubaker, 2005). By considering the trans-local identity of linguistic minorities rather than diasporic or transnational one, this dissertation shifts the focus from the national to the individual lens.

This dissertation agrees that "the influence of Russia should not be ignored but also not overestimated in the identity-formation processes of Russian-speakers in the Baltic states" (see Cheskin, 2012 qtd in. Vihalemm et al, 2019; 49). Likewise, the influence of the local or nationalizing state in this process, in the case of this paper Estonia, should be balanced. Therefore, rather than focusing on the state, trans-localism emphasizes a certain ambiguity of both physical-national and imagined-cultural borders. Whereas transnationalism is an intended or unintended result of state participation in global networks or receiving immigrant populations (Berglez and Olausson, 2011), trans-localism as a concept almost excludes the state lens or ideas of citizenship and focuses on the individual level of analysis. Trans-localism involves "a sense of connectedness between locals where both the local and global are meaningful and there is a fluid understanding of culture in relation to identification" (Kytölä, 2016). The "infinite capacity for hybridization" of culture is a key element for trans-localism as it allows for meaning to be generated based not only on routine actions but also on location. In this sense, it is "a process that situates diverse spaces and practices within different locales" (Brickell and Datta, 2016). Minority groups, whether recent migrants or those considered to belong to an 'external homeland', interact with local spaces and populations to generate understandings of the close 'domestic world'. At the same

time, worlds that are further away or ones that exist in media and information streams are considered to be ‘elsewhere’ or ‘somewhere’ (Hepp, referenced in Kytölä, 2016) and are not relevant for local reality.

The trend to investigate the identity of Russian speaking minority groups through a trans-local or ‘cosmopolitan’ lens as an alternative to the state based triadic nexus has been present in research as early as Barrington et. al, 2003. As previously mentioned, Barrington’s focus on ‘state of residence’ has long been neglected in favor of ‘nationalizing state’, ‘external homeland’, or ‘mixed’ ideas of belonging (Barrington et al., 2003). In response to the politicization of state-to-state relations, Russian speaking populations have become more skeptical of news, prioritize local news sources over international ones, and yet, value international cultural identities over national ideas of culture (Dougherty and Kalju- rand; 2015; Cheskin, 2013).

In the context of the countries studied by Barrington et. al, (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, and Ukraine) cosmopolitan or outward orientations tended towards Russia as the ‘external homeland’; however, this context differs significantly from that of Estonia, Latvia, and arguably other EU states. More recent case studies investigating the identity of Russian speakers in Latvia by Ammon Cheskin found that, on the one hand Russian speakers were “an economic, cultural, and political bridge between East (Russia) and West (Latvia/Europe)”; on the other hand, “Russian speakers were neither Russian nor Latvian, and that they were a group of people stranded without a culture to call their own” (Cheskin, 2013; 304). In contrast to Barrington et al’s findings (which focus on Russian speaking populations in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, and Ukraine), case studies of Russian speakers in Estonia and Latvia have tended to conclude that higher levels of education, which are linked to higher levels of social integration, lead to stronger feelings of attachment if not to Estonia (Dougherty and Kalju- rand, 2015) or Latvia (Birka, 2016), then to feelings of ‘Europeanness’ (Cheskin, 2015).

Feelings of ‘Europeanness’ or trust in European institutions do not automatically translate into feelings of nationalism by Russian speakers. In a study on the trust Russian speaking minorities place in European institutions in Estonia and Latvia, Cianetti and Nakai found that, while members of the Russian speaking minority do not believe international organizations such as the EU will ‘do something’ to protect minority rights, they provide a valuable tool domestically “to put pressure on their own governments, not least by trying to ‘shame’ them internationally” (Cianetti and Nakai, 2017; 276). Media spaces increasingly provide a platform for minority groups to circumnavigate unfavorable national or even hegemonic international narratives to inform national and global leaders of their preferences. Despite the notion that the information in online sources tends to reproduce dominant national narratives (Barzilai-Nahon, K, 2008; Szostek, 2018), a study on the relationship between internet usage and denationalization of Russian speaking minority in the ‘near abroad’ by Robert A. Saunders found that “unless one enters cyberspace with an ideological commitment to nation-building, the very structure of the web tends to subtly but steadily weaken pre-existing nationalist orientations (Saunders, 2006; 62). This supports that mass media is a tool

which reflects basic human needs (Couldry, 2012). Sentiments of a national, trans-national, translocal, or cosmopolitan identity by Russian speaking minority reflect the needs of individuals in this group to accept or circumnavigate pressures from above.

Studies comparing the feelings of attachment of Russian speaking minority groups to Russians living in Russia have also shown some similarities and distinctions between the two groups that move beyond traditional state boundaries. On the one hand, Alena Pfoser's investigations of Russian speakers living in Narva, Estonia and Russians living in Ivangorod, Russia found three narratives present in both cities: becoming 'peripheral/Eastern', becoming 'European', and 'contesting the East-West hierarchy'. Despite the fact that these two cities, which used to be one during the Soviet Union, exist on opposite sides of the Estonian-Russian border, Russian speakers living on both sides participate in "the meaning making of symbolic borders and adopt appropriate meta-geographical categories like 'Europe', 'West', and 'East' and underlying hierarchical understandings of space in their everyday lives" (Pfoser, 2017; 28). On the other hand, Anu Toots and Tõnu Idnurm's investigation of 'Cosmopolitanism Among Russian Speakers in Estonia, Latvia, and Russia' found a clear distinction between Russian speaking minority groups in Estonia and Latvia compared with Russians in Russia. In the four identity clusters that emerged in their study, including multiculturalists, modest nationalists, cosmopolitans, and nationalists, "more than 60% of minority students in the Baltic States belong to the cosmopolitan cluster, which is about three times more than in Russia" (Toots and Indrum, 2012; 129). While the authors claim that Russian speaking adolescents in Estonia and Latvia have more in common with each-other than their counterparts in Russia, they maintain that clear distinctions also exist between Estonians and Latvians. This supports the findings in the previously cited studies mentioning the cosmopolitan identity of Russian speakers (Barrington, et. al., 2003; Cheskin, 2015) and reconfirms just how nuanced and multi-faceted the individual and group identities of Russians speaking minorities are.

Vihalemm et al, have suggested that "before the onset of the political crisis in Ukraine (in 2014), there were four basic patterns of identify development among the Russian-speaking populations of Estonia and Latvia: an ethno-cultural (minority) identity [resonant of Brubaker's theoretical concept of *national minorities*], an emerging civic identity [which could be theoretically conceptualized as the influence of a *nationalizing state*], a diaspora identity [those identifying with the *external national homeland* or compatriots abroad], and a cosmopolitan identity [in line with Cheskin and Barrington's work]" (Vihalemm et al., 2019; 52). In the specific case of Estonia, the authors cite how the self-indentation of local Russian speakers had changed from 2003 to 2014. The number of those identifying as 'Russians' grew from 56% to 75%, the number identifying as 'Estonian Russians' did not change (52%), the number identifying with 'all inhabitants of Estonia' decreased slightly (42% to 41%), and the number of those identifying with cosmopolitan or European identities grew from 18% to 28% (ibid, 2019). As demonstrated in the previous literature, in times of international political crises, the media, and more specifically media use practices, play a role in the identity

of minority groups, particularly linguistic minorities, such as Russian speakers, who tend to consume media in their own language more regularly.

Previous studies on Russian speaking populations (prior to 2022) had taken three main focuses which are inextricably linked, yet often, as this study shows, inaccurately conflated in international media discourses: how Russian media gains support among domestic audiences, how Russian media appeals to Russian speaking audiences in the ‘near abroad’, and how international Russian media attempts to influence various audiences. Based on this previous research, the current case study also moves beyond the traditional lens of the triadic nexus in understanding how Russian information crosses borders and how trans-local Russian speaking audiences in Estonia connect with information.

2.2 Use Media and strategies by Russian speakers in Estonia

The previously mentioned debates about and investigations into how Russian speaking audiences are influenced by Russian media, particularly that sponsored by the Russian Federation, have been consistently addressed in research into the Estonian case. Until 2015, when the Estonian Public Broadcasting Service ERR (Eesti Rahvusringhääling) launched its Russian language programming (ETV+), public TV content produced in Russian *in Estonia* was rather limited. This ‘deficiency of the audiovisual media services’ and other Estonian media service (particularly private) in Russian results from ‘challenges of the small market’, namely that: “the limited size of the target audience, around 350,000 people, makes broadcasting in the Russian language an unprofitable activity for commercial broadcasters” (Jõesaar, 2015; 46). This meant that until this time, Russian speaking audiences in Estonia were consuming content produced in Russia which was already under increasing influence by the Russian government. Limited resources for Estonian produced content in Russian combined with the findings from integration monitoring in Estonia that “50 per cent of Russian speakers cannot follow media (print, online, radio and television) in Estonia because of insufficient knowledge of language (Vihalemm, 2011 qtd in. Jõesaar, 2015) meant that “in Estonia two radically different information fields exist” (ibid, 48). In recent years, integration strategies in Estonia have worked to improve this situation, but the market factors (addressed in the following sub-section 2.3) and politicized media situation between Russia and the west continue to pose challenges.

Considering the challenge to provide local, Estonian content in Russian which competes with the larger media industry of the Russian Federation, various studies have inquired about the ‘media diets’ (Juzefovičs and Vihalemm, 2020; Vihalemm and Juzefovičs, 2021; Vihalemm and Juzefovičs, 2022) and ‘media use strategies’ (Vihalemm et al., 2019; Vihalemm and Juzefovičs, 2021b) of Russian speaking audiences in Estonia⁴. These studies of the media diets of

⁴ The Estonian Research Council Grant: *Put 1624 (2018–2020), Civic identity and trans-national media practices of the Baltic Russian-speaking populations in the context of political crisis* considers not only Estonian but also Latvian Russian speakers.

Russian speaking audiences in Estonia support that there is growing scepticism towards media organizations that ‘serve the interest of their owners’. Various influences on linguistic and market factors mean that Russian speakers in Estonia (and Latvia) will logically have a cross-border media diet (ibid, 2022). As a response to the politicization and polarization of media coverage of international conflicts between Russia and the ‘west’ (i.e. the Russian Eurovision contestant Yulia Samoilova being labeled as persona non grata for visiting Crimea in 2017, the Skripal poisoning in 2018, the Kerch Strait incident in 2018, and the ongoing war in Eastern Ukraine until full war in 2022), Russian speaking audiences have developed various strategies of being “‘self-responsible’ for discovering the ‘truth’ in-between complex and contradictory media texts” (ibid, 2022; 432). These different strategies involve keeping diverse channels open or screening out politically motivated content (Juzefovičs and Vihalemm, 2020). Screening out does not necessarily mean avoiding one type of Russian, local, or western content; rather, it specifies avoiding political content in general. A significantly small portion of Russian speakers in Estonia and Latvia consume only one type of media. As the authors point out, 46% consume Russian *and local* (in Russian, Estonian, or Latvian) media and 42% consume Russian, *local, and Western* (BBC, CNN, Euronews, etc.) media.

Moreover, Russian speaking audiences (in Estonia and Latvia) are aware of and reject “the popular image among local political leaders and the ethno-linguistic majority that conceives of Russian speakers as a uniform, passive mass, susceptible to Russia’s propagandistic messages” (ibid, 2021). While Russian speakers in Estonia may share a common language and even consume more Russian media, the previous research has shown that researching “news media diet alone does not give a comprehensive picture of the possibilities to the deliberative media citizenship” (ibid, 2022; 427). In other words, just because an individual consumes or views media from a particular source, does not mean they trust or agree with that source. The Russian speaking minority in Estonia is no exception in that they are rather heterogeneous in media consumption and geopolitical allegiances. These previous studies show how individuals with both dynamic and partisan geopolitical standings use various strategies to ‘outmanoeuvre’ increasingly politicized media discourses (ibid, 2021b). The current study builds on these previous findings to consider what Western (represented here by English language media) and Russian (as generated by the Yandex News algorithm for Estonia) media say about and/or to Russian speakers in Estonia (research questions 1 and 3) and how individual Russian speakers in Estonia ‘orient’ themselves towards or ‘connect’ with this content (research questions 2 and 4). After elaborating on the sources of information and the role of algorithms in providing information to Russian speaking audiences (section 2.3 here), I further explain what it means to orient or connect with information in the broader context of the Theoretical Background chapter.

2.3 Use of the Yandex News Algorithm for Data Collection

Deeper investigations into different types of algorithms, such as Yandex News, which is used in the current study, show that algorithms “most commonly act as gatekeepers within platforms that redistribute already-published news items” (Wallace, 2018; 282). Over the past three decades innumerable studies have been conducted to conceptualize how these algorithms operate in producing output based on search queries or filters. There has been fundamental agreement that “algorithms as technological artifacts are never neutral and that, therefore, some form of search bias is inevitable” (Kravets and Toepfl, 2021 citing Granka, 2010; Haim et al., 2017); there is an argument however, that authoritarian political control over domestic media spaces can influence this bias to a greater degree (Jiang, 2014; Vaughan and Chen, 2015). While the Yandex News algorithm is not entirely unique in the way it operates to deliver content, until recently it was considered that the algorithm was influenced by “Russia’s slightly more open authoritarian media system” (Kravets and Toepfl, 2021). Since 2017 with implementation of the Russian federal law (208-FZ) “On Information, Information Technologies, and Information Security” which holds owners and legal representatives of IT companies responsible for ‘spreading fake news’, the Yandex News algorithm has received a great deal of attention to its content. By holding IT companies responsible for the content produced by algorithms, the Russian government essentially ensured that only content produced by outlets licensed in the Russian Federation could appear in the content generated (Daucé and Loveluck, 2021) causing the omission of content that contradicted Russian narratives. Most notably, on March 26, 2017, the large political protests in Russia were not displayed in the algorithm (A phenomena researched by Kovalev, 2020; Wijermars, 2021; Kravets and Toepfl, 2021). Following criticism, Yandex noticeably worked to balance coverage; however, the algorithm still displayed particularly high levels of ‘reference’ and ‘source’ bias which “offered particularly biased results to individuals who had less or no prior knowledge about the ongoing protests, and thus were not able to deploy specific search terms” (Kravets and Toepfl, 2021).

In this dissertation’s investigations into the communication between international news media and increasingly diverse audiences it is important to understand that algorithms and their various influence are often silent intermediaries between content and audiences. Although algorithms are generally hard to manipulate and control, Russian laws that hold IT companies responsible for the content of their algorithms indirectly push the algorithm to include only outlets which are officially licensed by the Russian Federation, and thus supportive to Russian narratives. Despite the previously mentioned research findings of clear bias and omitted information from the Yandex News algorithm in particular, everyday audiences are often uninformed of these influences and unaware of how content is filtered to reach them. As Marielle Wijermars points out in “Russia’s law ‘On news aggregators’: Control the feed, control the news?”:

“If you control what sources go in, you are also able to prevent particular sources from being recommended to users....the indirect regulation mechanism works almost imperceptibly; unlike website blocking, where users are aware of the fact they are being denied access to a particular news site, the absence of sources and news items in the news feed is much more difficult to discern” (Wijermars, 2021; 2945)

Thus, without obvious signs of what is being over-represented or what is being omitted, audiences using the Yandex News algorithm interact with content that has been indirectly and increasingly influenced by the Russian government. Without knowing how and what information is filtered, audiences using the algorithm interact with the specific narratives recommended to them based on the filtered input. For the audiences consuming the content, this creates the façade that they have ‘global’ access to information which is still limited by local factors and forces.

Within the context of political conflict between Russia and ‘the West’, a vast amount of literature has been dedicated to understanding how Russian media: 1) uses strategic narratives in domestic and foreign policy “that seeks to reinforce Russia’s global prestige and authority” (Miskimmon and O’Loughlin, 2017; 111), 2) coordinates disinformation “to defend the Russian state by emphasizing the negative side of the West” (Elsawah and Howard, 2020; 641), and 3) employs influence operations to generally “manipulate attitudes and behaviors across state borders” (Wagnsson, 2022; 1). Within the context of persistent political conflict between Russian and “the West” and considering the increasing role the Yandex News algorithm in restricting and prioritizing information, the Yandex News algorithm is a useful tool for analyzing Russian media content across borders. Moreover, the features of the Yandex News algorithm (discussed in more detail in the Methodology) that include the option to select a region of news (i.e. ‘Estonia’, ‘Latvia’, or ‘Russia’ as were used in this study) or even ‘world’ give the impression to users that they can themselves filter content.

The uniqueness of the media systems in the Russian Federation (see Erbsen and Pöldre, 2022; Bodrunova, et al., 2021; Yablokov and Schimpfössl, 2021; Vartanova, 2019) also plays a role in the content generated by the algorithm across borders. Even though the Russian Federation is not the only place where Russian language media content is produced, it is the largest content producer. Therefore, in using the Yandex News algorithm in the current study to test how the information is displayed across borders and how Russian speaking audiences in Estonia orient themselves towards this information, this study also contributes to the understanding of which type of content the Yandex News algorithm displayed from 2018–2019. This can be valuable information not only for answering the current research questions of this dissertation, but for mapping the development and control of news algorithms overtime alongside global political events such as the Covid-19 pandemic and Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Ultimately, analyzing information produced from this algorithm shows concretely which discourses are present and how they compare across borders, and further tests how local Russian speaking populations connect with media filtered by the Russian media system and the Russian state.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: THE TEXT CONNECTING 'IMAGINED AUDIENCES' AND 'IMAGINED COMMUNITIES'

This thesis uses text produced in online media to understand the 'nodes' (Castells, 2004), connecting imagined audiences (in this case of media about or for Russian speaking audiences) with imagined communities (in this case Russian speakers who orient themselves toward media in English or connect with media in Russian). As will be discussed further in the methodology, although *text*, such as the text in the headlines and articles analyzed in this thesis, is objective, the way text is used by authors and interpreted by readers to interact indirectly gives text subjectivity. *Discourse* then includes the patterns in the relationship between content producers and audiences: "discourse implies patterns of communication of knowledge and structures whereas text is a specific and unique realization of a discourse" (Reisigl and Wodak, 2009; 39). The theoretical framework of this thesis therefore considers the influences from the production side and reception side in this relationship to demonstrate the multiple layers of discourses working to connect imagined audiences (from the production side) and imagined communities (from the reception side). By focusing on the text, this paper does not assume independent journalists or outlets play the main role in the production of content; rather, I refer to 'content producers' as the various influences on news media content. Since the empirical focus of this paper is online international news media, which is extremely diverse in terms of production structures, I do not claim that my findings speak to the work of individual journalists or media outlets, but rather focus on the texts that receive the most salience. Yet, the theoretical understanding of these multi-faceted structures from both the content production and reception side are essential for the background of this dissertation.

The way in which media producers are influenced by various factors or 'Hierarchies of Influence' (Shoemaker and Reese, 2013; Alanso, 2016) and have differing *intentions* to 'inform' or 'engage' (Sylvie, 2018; Ferrucci, et al., 2020) may influence how content is produced for imagined audiences. At the same time, audiences also have diverse motivations for including or avoiding content in their media diets (Cavalcante, 2018; Vraga, 2019; Juzefovičs and Vihalemm, 2020; Villi et al., 2022). According to Manuel Castells in "The Network Society", networks, whether traditional or enabled by modern technology, consist of 'inter-connected nodes' which increase in size based on their importance and 'reconfigure themselves, deleting some nodes, and adding new ones' when made irrelevant (Castells, 2004; 3). Like McLuhan decades prior, Castells assesses the impact technology can have on communications networks. He finds that modern communication networks, which previously had material limitations, should ideally become more efficient due to the flexibility, scalability, and survivability made possible by a new technological environment (Castells, 2004). An efficient 'network' would adapt to changing circumstances (be flexible), have the capacity to continue to grow by incorporating new resources or shrink when resources are

redundant (be scalable), and be able to withstand shocks and crisis (to survive). He notes that “networks work on a binary logic: inclusion/exclusion” and yet, that “information technologies can be more properly labeled as communication technologies, since information that is not communicated ceases to be relevant”. Therefore, while attempts to reach increasingly diverse imagined audiences may reproduce stereotyped or orientalised depictions of minority groups, such as Russian speakers in Estonia, the *mere fact this information is communicated* and the way in which audiences react *includes them* in the network. Thus, even stereotypes and orientalised depictions seen in media texts play a role in community formation, and this role is not exclusive to media technologies; rather it is a fundamental communication mechanism of networked society.

What *is* influenced by the media technologies are the changing socio-economic pressures placed on both content producers (to reach their target audience) and audiences (to find their ideal community). The dynamic relationship between content producers and audiences, growing mistrust in media (Andersen et al., 2021) and lack of financial stability have created challenges for international news media to reach its full potential in terms of flexibility (Sylvie, 2018; Ferrucci, et al., 2020; Nelson, 2021). The theoretical foundation for this cover article considers that the increasing need for international media to compete for audiences and international political struggles for discursive hegemony (Neumann, 2018; Kovalev, 2020; Tyshkaya, 2021) have created relatively fixed modes of communication with imagined audiences (Litt, 2012). These modes of communication may resonate with audiences without necessarily ‘connecting’ (Swart, et al., 2017) with them in a direct and measurable way.

While investigations into both the media production side of communications and the audience reception are rich, this cover article builds on these previous fields to establish a theoretical framework to understand the relationship between international media and audiences via text produced in international headlines and media content.

This theoretical chapter starts by considering previous studies on factors influencing media production. Then it builds on this to demonstrate how the technological boom Castells suggests should increase the flexibility, scalability, and survivability of modern networks has pressured media institutions to produce more content across multiple platforms more quickly and obliged audiences to engage with content in different ways (Swart, et al., 2017; Camaj and Weaver, 2013). Considering these pressures, I revisit traditional concepts of ‘imagined audience’, ‘imagined community’, ‘discursive hegemony’, ‘media events’, and ‘orientalism’ in the context of international news media. Finally, the juxtaposition of the modern pressures and practices is applied to the specific audience considered in this dissertation: The ‘imagined’ Russian speaking audience. Rather than international media becoming more flexible, the mechanisms of international media combined with traditional facets of media structures and cultures, risk portraying *fixed* rather than more flexible depictions of their audiences. Combining the current context with historical legacies, I refer to this trend towards inflexibility as “imagined global communities” which are similar to the identity problems presented in our small-town metaphor from the introduction, exacerbated by a global setting.

3.1 Expanding influences on and roles of content producers and audiences

McLuhan's tagline "the media is the message" (McLuhan, 1962) has long served as a metaphor for competing new media technologies. Rather than conveying the superiority of one media over another however, he emphasized that the modern media we use consists of layers upon layers built through the evolution of communication networks, from cave paintings and the renaissance to the modern day: "Today we live on the frontier between five centuries of mechanism and the new electronics, between the homogeneous and the simultaneous" (ibid, 141). Similarly, the platforms, browsers, or algorithms we use today largely determine how the information we receive is mediated. This creates what McLuhan originally referred to as a 'global village' which is "a single constricted space resonant with tribal drums" (ibid, 31). Even though communication technology continues to connect diverse audiences and media outlets, the notions of networks and communities elaborated by Castells have not ceased to exist but rather have continued to evolve. Shoemaker and Reese propose a modern rendition of the layers influencing this evolution in their Hierarchy of Influences Model which is applied as a referential model for understanding organizational influences on media creation here. Whereas the original model consisted of five layers in a centric circle (Figure 3.1), critiques of this model (including by the original authors themselves) consider that these "gatekeeping" influences still exist, albeit "in different times and sequences" (Reese and Shoemaker, 2016; 397).

Inspired by McLuhan, I elaborate on the complexity of understanding and assessing the role of organizational structures in modern news media creation. There are several factors that media scholars can see and have studied, and there are several more that, while they still play a role, are difficult to see and understand due to our temporal and situational limitations. These unseen influences are referred to as "known-unknowns" and "unknown-unknowns" (Varol, 2020), the former of which we can define as unknowns and account for as 'variables for future studies', and the latter of which we have not yet and cannot even consider because we simply do not know they exist. Figure 3.2 represents the author's original theoretical re-interpretation of the organizational structures influencing news media. Rather than being concentric circles, the organizational structures are more intertwined branches, and each medium (or tree) is part of a forest making up a unique media ecosystem. Just as McLuhan noted and Reese and Shoemaker point out in their original model, the roots of these ecosystems run deep and consist of various historical, cultural, and linguistic factors which continue to influence the interaction of these ecosystems with or without our ability to define and measure them.

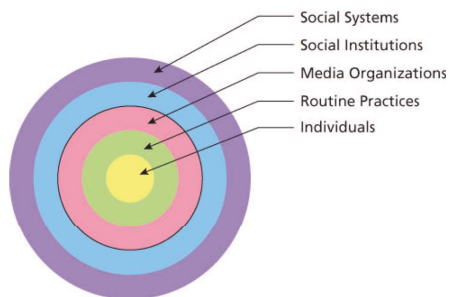


Figure 3.1: The Hierarchy of Influences Model uses five levels of analysis (From Shoemaker and Reese, 2013; 9)

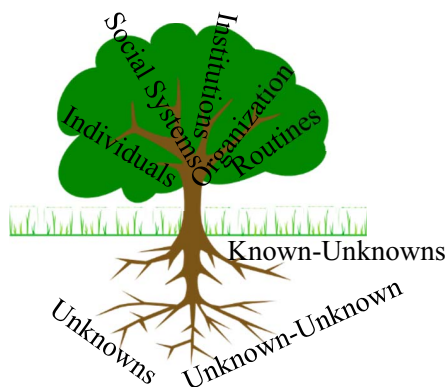


Figure 3.2: The 'unknowns' and 'unknown-unknowns' of the Hierarchy of Influences Model

Since the empirical evidence of this dissertation focuses on the content of the media produced rather than the organizational structures themselves, I acknowledge that there are still several unknown factors influencing the outcomes; however, in line with McLuhan's mantra "the media is the message" I contend that there are some aspects of media which we are able to understand more easily through the content produced than through the modes of production. With this in mind, we turn to the five interacting 'branches' which make up the organizational structures influencing content creation: individuals, routine practices, media organizations, social institutions, and social systems. While this dissertation is not the first to reconsider the hierarchy of influences through the 'tree model' (see Alonso, 2016), it is the first to account for the unknown factors in this model and attempt to understand more about the medium (in this case English news media and the Yandex News algorithm) through content produced rather than the structures of outlets themselves.

As George Sylvie demonstrates in *Reshaping the News*, the news environment has become overall more competitive. Globalization has facilitated the shift in news values distinguishing 'the normal' from what's 'new' and redefined notions of proximity, timeliness, and more generally, 'news-worthiness' (Sylvie, 2018). A whole generation now has never experienced a world where news and information come from one or a limited number of sources constrained by geographical location and technological reach. What was once novel, exotic, and foreign in a small town for example, may now seem mundane since inhabitants can access information from all around the world in just a few clicks, taps, or voice commands. The increase in user accessibility of multiple sources, and technological capabilities to create new sources means that media outlets no longer compete merely amongst themselves but are competing with individual content producers across platforms and throughout archives to have their content viewed. The blurred lines between traditional media outlets as content producers and the public as audience 'receivers' have increased the competition and forced media outlets to

adapt or close (ibid, 2019). Rather than facilitating networks to expand infinitely and making communication more efficient, technological advancement has come with socio-economic pressures that create more responsibilities for individuals and news producers alike.

Audiences now live in a world where rather than just receiving the limited amount of information, they too can and in fact *need to* choose, filter, and even create their own media. On the social level, this has accompanied a shift from audiences as ‘dutiful’ and ‘informed’ receivers of the news, to ‘participatory’, ‘self-actualizing’, ‘engaged’, and ‘critical’ (Kligler-Vilenchik, 2017). Camaj and Weaver describe audience ‘Need for Orientation’ as a combination of the audience’s cognitive mapping of the ‘*relevance*’, or “a person’s interest in the subject matter” and ‘*uncertainty*’, “when people do not feel they have all the information they need about a topic” (Camaj and Weaver, 2013).

In addition to how audiences orient themselves with information, scholars also consider how audiences *connect* with information. In “Repositioning news and public connection in everyday life”, Swart, et al. (2017) also consider relevance as one of four forms of connectivity of media audiences along with inclusiveness, engagement, and constructiveness. Based on Camaj and Weaver’s previously mentioned notion of ‘relevance’ I support that uncertainty plays a large role in the relevance aspect of audience connectivity; if there is nothing new to be gained from the information communicated between the audience and the media producer, it means the information has become a part of the identity of each, and new information must be created to evolve this relationship (recall Castells, 2004). *Relevance* and the other three forms of connectivity by Swart, et al. (2017) are applied as the framework for conceptualizing how individuals connect with rather than just obtain or ‘click’ on information. *Inclusiveness* refers to “what issues people connect over and who they are connecting with”, *engagement* is the “avenues” and “practices” of media users, and *constructiveness* means the value of connecting with different information and individuals (Swart, et al., 2017; 905). These four forms of connectivity help to show not only how media users orient themselves, but how they connect with different nodal points (media outlets and individuals alike) thorough information and thus orient themselves within the modern global village.

3.2 Using the metrics to ‘make the algorithm’ and ‘connect’ with ‘imagined audiences’

As seen in the previous section, news media outlets must constantly work to find new ways to survive. The way in which capacity is increasingly driven by market structures has increased the need for outlets to compete to reach and engage audiences. While in some media ecosystems this may be supported by a state actor or institutional structure, in others it could be individual journalists, or private media organizations or foundations (Ferrucci and Nelson, 2019) with or without physical locations. Journalists and editors alike are expected to wear

many hats and work simultaneously to gather news from online sources, write news, and share news convergently across multiple platforms (Sylvie, 2018).

Rather than ‘informing the public of what they *ought to know*’ media outlets are moving towards facilitative roles to *include the public* in discussions surrounding *what it deems ‘relevant’*. When it comes to international, digital communication content, producers are operating on a delicate and fluctuating balance between traditional ‘elitist’ journalist practices focused on ‘informing’ or ‘including’ the public, and the need to ‘engage’ the public. The former considers that the public “does not have the qualifications to evaluate his or her information need” (Sylvie, 2018; 9) and in the case of ‘public journalism’ works to “better incorporate the audience into news-making practices” (Ferrucci, et al., 2020; 1586) and the latter seeks to measure and assess what audiences want, and deliver the content needed to maintain audiences. Either way, the role content producers take largely determines who their ‘imagined audience’ is and how they are reached.

Eden Litt (2012) defines ‘imagined audiences’ as “the mental conceptualization of the people with whom we are communicating”. Her work and similar theorizations of ‘imagined audience’ (see Marwick and Boyd, 2011; Oolo and Siibak, 2013; Litt and Hargittai, 2016) have more recently been applied to communication exchange in social media and considered that individuals conceptualize and prioritize their audience when creating their content. When it comes to international news media, it is not so easy to make the same assumption. As has previously been introduced, while there are pressures on media outlets to ‘engage’ audiences, media institutions and their multiple layers are not so easy to change uniformly (Hanusch, 2017; Belair-Gagnon and Holton, 2018). Litt and other scholars investigating the production side of audiences ask the question: “Who do people envision as their public or audiences as they perform in these spaces?” (Litt, 2012; 330). When it comes to international news, despite increasing socio-economic pressures, the theoretical foundation for this cover article *does not presume* that all international news media producers *do* equally consider the people with whom they are communicating as a first priority in selecting which stories to use or how to cover them. This consideration is based on the ongoing debates surrounding ‘public journalism’ (‘including’ as a means to inform) and ‘engagement journalism’ (learning about audiences to meet demand) (Ferrucci, et al., 2020). While the empirical work of this study shows how international media often paints a limited picture of groups in reporting, audiences are still ‘connecting’ with or ‘orienting’ themselves within this picture; if they were not, the network of communication would have long ago ceased to exist or ‘reconfigured themselves’ (Castells, 2004).

Unlike media paradigms of the past where information spaces were limited, the virtually limitless sources of information provided through various metrics and algorithms play an increasing role in determining what we see in the news, and subsequently, in creating imagined audiences. Automatically generated news content and algorithmic formulas affect the relationship between the media and the audience from *both* sides and are simultaneously being used as tools and influencing this relationship. Audience metrics and engagement have long been

vital to media producers (Sylvie, 2018; Nelson, 2021) and have become ubiquitous practices by users (Haider and Sundin, 2019). While the traditional boundaries of audiences based on geographic location once meant that producers had to pay less attention to audience preferences, the increasing number of content producers in online spaces means producers must pay more attention to what audiences ‘actually want’ to increase their credibility and visibility.

Yet, whether information sources ‘give their audience what they want’ by re-framing the same stories in a way that is more appealing to audiences or by changing the news agenda entirely, metrics and analytics play an increasing role in this process. Unlike traditional engagement which was one directional, online engagement offers more opportunities and challenges for content producers to reach and include audiences in content production. Audience metrics measure not only the more traditional one-directional or ‘reception-oriented’ engagement (including social media shares and time spent reading), but also the multi-directional ‘production-oriented’ approaches (enabling audience produced content and encouraging audiences to share stories and ideas) (Nelson, 2021).

To improve these metrics, content producers at all stages have had to adapt their content to reach audiences and increasingly work to ‘make the algorithms’ that online platforms use to organize and prioritize content for users (see Brake, 2017; Svensson, 2021). Investigations into how this competition influences media production have found that pressures to compete for audiences influence news production at the individual, routine, organizational and even social/state levels (Kovalev, 2020; Milosavljević and Vobič, 2021). At the individual, routine and organizational levels, the need to make the algorithm requires tweaking headlines or prioritizing certain stories over others. At the social institutional and state level, there are also several mechanisms, such as privacy and governmental regulations or restrictions, which influence the output of algorithms in different sequences (Wijermars, 2021). These examples are few of many which exemplify how algorithms and metrics are still influenced on various individual and social levels, not least of which including the ongoing debate between the media as an information ‘provider’ or ‘server’.

From the production side, the mere existence of analytics, metrics, and algorithms, still does not give a clear picture of how these are used in producing media. Content producers must still ‘orient’ themselves within their role to provide public information or to engage and serve audiences. In “Role Orientations and Audience Metrics in the Newsroom” Belair-Gagnon, et al. find that although newswriters perceived their role ‘informing’ as more important than ‘serving’⁵, “how newswriters think about their work is not always reflected in how they actually do their work” (Belair-Gagnon, et al., 2020; 2). In other words, how individual newswriters orient themselves as information ‘providers’ or engagement ‘servers’ does not automatically translate into the production of one type of information or another.

⁵ The authors refer to ‘citizen-oriented role’ considered as ‘providing’ and ‘consumer-oriented role’ considered as ‘serving’ (Belair-Gagnon, et. al, 2020).

Audiences, at the same time, are also working to ‘orient’ themselves in the increasingly complex world of algorithms, and at the end of the day, metrics measuring how audiences do this are rather limited. While they can tell interested media producers ‘who’ is clicking, viewing, or engaging, they do not give the full picture of how individual engagement with online content is integrated in non-virtual practices. Audiences also use metrics and algorithms (knowingly and unknowingly) to filter information and, often times information is automatically filtered based on input. This means that when it comes to algorithmically generated content there is an extra layer of uncertainty behind ‘where’ the information comes from and ‘how’ it reaches audiences. While much attention is paid to how many ‘clicks’ a story receives, clicks “capture a limited range of users’ interests or preferences” (Kormelink and Meijer, 2018; 681).

Considering the various ways individuals orient themselves toward information and how they connect, we return to the concept of the imagined audience from the beginning of this sub-section. I argue that in navigating the pressures to ‘inform’ and ‘engage’ audiences, media producers provide content to be visible and credible; how audiences receiving the information, orient themselves towards, and connect with it individually is a different matter entirely. As noted by Hollway and Jefferson, “when we aggregate people, treating diversity as a variable error, in search of what is common to all, we often learn about what is true of no one in particular” (qtd. in Hollway and Jefferson, 2012; 7). In a similar vein, although I do not take for granted that media outlets work unanimously to visualize their ‘imagined audiences’, the globalization of information spaces does create a picture of this audience. Rather than being simply the product of media production strategies however, the diverse ways individuals connect with information and the technological tools mediating and quantifying these connections work in tandem to create imagined audiences.

3.3 When ‘Imagined Audiences’ become ‘Imagined Communities’ and compete for ‘Discursive Hegemony’

In an ideal world, the relationship between outlets and audiences would be balanced, and each individual would have just as much say in creating their own role in the ‘imagined audience’. As we see from our small-town metaphor however, an individual working to change their reputation in a community takes time. In global communication networks, where media producers ‘see’ and ‘recognize’ diverse audiences through metrics which cannot entirely quantify individual orientation or connectivity, not only does change take time, but there may even be certain groups which have not had a role in creating the vision of the imagined community to which they belong. I argue that the struggle for ‘discursive hegemony’ and the subsequent fixation of meaning between communities is one key reason individuals find it difficult to change their image in an ‘imagined community’.

Originally the concept of ‘imagined community’ was described by Benedict Anderson as a process of media reproducing culture to facilitate the idea of a nation as part of a common ‘imagined political community’ ‘being imagined both as limited and sovereign’ (Anderson, 1983/2006; Castelló, 2016). Not only did Anderson highlight the role of the media in reproducing ideas of nationalism, but he showed how members of this community, despite not possibly being able to know everyone in the same community, feel a sense of kinship and belonging. The social pressure on audiences in international global communities to stay informed and be connected means that they may orient themselves towards information that speaks to their virtual or imagined community, regardless of physical borders. Imagined communities are as diverse as the individual audiences and content producers of which they are comprised, yet as previously noted, these communities may not represent individuals equally.

This is because within each community and between communities, there exists a ‘discursive struggle’ to fixate particular meanings and ideas of identity (Wojczewski, 2018). This struggle and the subsequent ‘fixation’ of meaning, be it by states or international organizations such as the media, is ‘discursive hegemony’. Whereas a community itself (such as ‘Russia’ or ‘Europe’) is a singular unit connected by a common narrative, identity, and history (Neumann, 2018), discourse refers to forms of communication (in the case of the empirical research here-textual communication) that work across multiple levels and *between* communities to generate meaning behind the community identity. In *Russia and the Idea of Europe* for example, Ivar B. Neumann demonstrates how historical and political discourses continue to be driving factors in shaping how Russia sees Europe as a community, and at the same time, how the country defines itself in relation to Europe. Whereas *discourses* can be considered as ‘utterances’ that occur via text, dialogue, gestures, and so on, *discursive hegemony* then, is the ability to use these interactions to establish ‘truth’ and ‘claims’ about a community identity (Wojczewski, 2018). Just as the traditional role of states in Anderson’s ‘imagined community’ was to establish political hegemony, which was based more on physical borders and hard power influence, modern communities are also interacting to achieve a less geographically bound and more ideologically embedded discursive hegemony. This dissertation demonstrates the use of discursive hegemony in the English language media coverage of ‘Russian speaking regions’ in Europe such as the city of Narva (Study I). As the findings show, although locals do not identify with depictions in international English news media, they do still orient or position themselves towards the discourses which due to their broader, fixed nature can be considered as hegemonic.

Rather than being ‘political’ or ‘geographical’ communities, per se, ‘imagined communities’ are the perceived intersection of various audience members and content producers. Like Anderson’s original ‘imagined community’, in the new emerging media paradigm, members of imagined communities feel a bond over shared interests, values, or circumstances with the *idea* of individuals they have never met. The ‘discourse’ *between* and *within* communities, rather than media producers themselves, are the driving force in creating the image of a community.

While admittedly there are some attempts to manufacture such communities to meet the previously discussed socio-economic pressures to inform, engage, or connect, there are also needs of real audiences to orient themselves within communities, real and virtual alike. Imagined communities are not by any means limited to online spaces, but interact across multiple realms (political, cultural, social, entertainment) and in various on and offline spaces.

The term ‘hegemony’ like the original concept of ‘imagined communities’ has been traditionally linked to processes by states and institutions to establish political or cultural legitimacy over other actors (Gramsci, 1971; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). ‘Legitimacy’ is a combination of ‘credibility’ and ‘visibility’, which recall from the previous section are necessary for the ‘survivability’ of networks. Innovations in communications technology and an increasing number of state and non-state actors competing for credibility and visibility means that imagined communities, be they states, institutions, minority groups, civil society actors, etc., engage in a competition to achieve discursive hegemony and thus the internal and external recognition of the community identity. Therefore, just as individual newsmakers and audiences ‘orient’ themselves and ‘connect’ to create the idea of an ‘imagined audience’ on the individual level, communities must work to ‘orient’ themselves in relation to other communities at the social level.

Essentially, all communities are, to some extent, subjective, moldable, and thus, imagined communities. That is not to say that communities do not have ‘real’ members or spaces (be they physical or virtual), but that the essence and role of each community is constantly being negotiated (Wodak and Boukala, 2015; Hutchings and Tolz, 2015; Neumann, 2018) along with networks of communication and interactions (recall Castells, 2004). If we compare the traditional ‘imagined communities’ of the nation state with modern networked communities, both are dependent on the interaction of content producers (be it the state or independent journalists) and audiences (be they physically close and homogeneous or geographically and generally diverse) in discursive interactions. As Ming Liu points out in “Representational Pattern of Discursive Hegemony”, discursive hegemony can be found in all processes at the societal level, in social institutions, and in daily conversation. For example, it is found “between parents and children... teachers and students, doctors and students, interviewers and interviewees”, or any situation where one interaction dominates the other as more ‘credible’ (Liu, 2013).

While there has been a plethora of research on the identity formation of nation states (recall Anderson, 1983/2006; Wendt, 1994) and international communities (Entrikin, 1999; Greenhill, 2008), I extend the same logic that communities are discursively constructed to the theoretical basis for my empirical research here. Neumann’s historical-political mapping of Russia and Europe shows how these discursive relationships operate between two geographically, legally, and historically different ‘communities’, and Liu’s examples demonstrate how they appear at the social level. I maintain that similar discursive relationships also occur between content producers (in their perception of imagined audiences) and audiences (in forming imagined communities) in the new developing media

paradigm where state borders and international institutions are not unanimously supreme. In addition to nation state and international institutions, cross-border, cross-cultural, transnational, and trans-local communities (as discussed in case specific portion of the theoretical framework in the previous section) are all working to establish themselves and compete for discursive hegemony.

By ‘competition’ to fixate meanings, I do not mean to suggest that this competition is always strategic and intentional, but rather that it is increasingly the result of repeated and technologically ‘mediated’ interactions. As Stephen Hutchings and Vera Tolz note in their discourse analysis of *Nation Ethnicity and Race on Russian Television*, “a consensus as complex as that relating to inter-ethnic relations cannot be merely ‘communicated’, no matter how sophisticated the medium” (Hutchings and Tolz, 2015; 12). Although the authors refer specifically to the limited ability of the Russian Federation to influence specific issues through television discourses (which is relevant to the empirical research of this dissertation), I argue that when we consider information in online spaces, this ability is even more limited. Yet, state, institutional, and cultural structures that are already in place *do* have an effect (intentional and strategic or not) on discourses that emerge in defining modern imagined communities. Rather than being purely manufactured and targeted, discursive hegemony occurs due to the way “language is actively constituting social processes and rearticulating social events” and “social agents do what they are expected to do or carry out specific discourses” (Liu, 2013; 139). Just as content producers balance between informing audiences and serving audiences, individual actors must also orient their communications to the current discourse and expectations of audiences and communities.

In the beginning of the theoretical framework for this dissertation, I introduced Castell’s idea that advancements in communication technologies should ideally encourage the flexibility, scalability, and survivability of networks. In this section, I show how institutionalized competition for discursive hegemony, with which both content producers and audiences interact, continues to limit the flexibility of communication networks. These limitations can be seen through two media phenomena in the form of ‘media events’, which attempt to *connect* (recall Swart, et al., 2017) and *orient* (Camaj and Weaver, 2013; Belair-Gagnon, et al., 2020) audiences, and ‘orientalism’ which attempts to *depict* the people or places being reported on. Although both concepts have been used more broadly, and in the case of the later in a very different context, I use them here as points of reference to open discussions about the problems of inflexibility reproduced in modern media. In the case of international news media in English, reporting on Russian speaking regions is *about* the communities or events where Russian speaking populations live *for* primarily English speaking audiences. Meanwhile, when it comes to international Russian media, reporting is *for* Russian speaking audiences; however, attempts to localize and reach increasingly diverse Russian speaking audiences creates equally distant depictions of these ‘imagined audiences’. Although both are forms of ‘orientalism’ in the way they create fixated depictions about what a group is or what information is relevant, the former is recognizable

in how media reports about a region or group and the later in how media attempts to report to and connect with part of an imagined audience.

'Media events' just as 'imagined communities' and 'hegemony' originally referred to a state centric, and often assumed to be orchestrated, process. Since the original authors Dayan and Katz coined the term in their book *Media Events* in 1992, the structures of both content producers and audiences, and relationship *between* the two has changed significantly. A 'media events' traditionally referred to a televised event which was "a carefully planned, ritualized event as an official occasion of national-building value" (Hutchings and Tolz, 2015; 16); however, the contemporary complexity of media/structures and relations as discussed in the previous sections here, means that media events nowadays take place beyond borders, across outlets, and "are thus able to bind people from different social and cultural backgrounds into a complex process of communication" (Couldry and Hepp, 2018; 116). While traditional attempts to orchestrate media events, such as national holidays or remembrance days, still exist, they compete alongside other media events which result from the dynamic relationships between producers and audiences, and the previously discussed socio-economic pressures to inform, engage, and connect. Furthermore, these events are no longer considered to be pre-planned, but increasingly include unplanned events or disruptions which receive ample media and public attention.

Taking these disruptions into account, Hutchings and Tolz (2015) identify three sub-genres of media events (in addition to those traditionally constructed) summarized here as 1) collaborated responses by the state and media to unplanned events, 2) media incorporation and inflation of unanticipated major events, and 3) media coverage which 'endogenously' creates the event (idib, 2015). To these different 'types' of media events, I add that the nature of media events no longer results only from the state or media institutions, but that it is increasingly influenced by audience participation and algorithm generated information. Moreover, in addition to the difficulty in reporting real numbers of viewers for media events (Fürst, 2020), understanding the mechanisms operating behind production factors and audience connectivity with these events is even more difficult. I therefore include the idea of media events in this dissertation as the result of the discursive exchange between and within various imagined communities which emerges in the communicative relationship between content producers and audiences.

In their comparison of how the Yandex and Google search engines produce search results for four media events in Russia, Zavadski and Toepfl (2019) found that despite different ownership and influencing factors on the search engines, 'pro-regime mass media' dominated the search results of both Yandex and Google. The authors concluded that not only did search engines tend to reinforce dominant narratives (suggesting that the larger narratives of state and media actors play a role) but also that "search results are largely predicated upon how users phrase their queries" (Zavadski and Toepfl, 2019; 33). Thus, it is possible for diverse, imagined communities to see different types of a 'media event' for the same real event. As an example, the authors cite the outcomes of searches for 'Annexation

of Crimea' vs. 'Incorporation of Crimea', both of which refer to the same 'event', but which yield different results that depict specific state and value-centered discourses. Building on these findings and considering tensions between Russia and Europe or the 'West', the current dissertation considers how different types of media events might play a role in the struggle for discursive hegemony or for content producers to reach their imagined audiences more easily around one event.

Whether media events are pre- or un-planned, and regardless of how they became media events, they have a unique role in uniting and dividing imagined audiences to create imagined communities. The discourses used to refer to a media events have become a way for media producers and audiences to orient themselves in relation to the event. Any event is influenced by multiple factors to become a 'media event'. Even though content producers and audiences alike may be rather distant from the original influencing factors, socio-economic pressures work to reinforce an attachment to the event and thus reaffirm an affiliation in an imagined community. Keeping this in mind, let's return for one moment to the small-town metaphor from the introduction. In the original story of a small town, everyone knows everything about what goes on in the town because they have witnessed it firsthand or know the places and actors involved from their own experiences. Media events tend to reproduce the same feeling of 'knowing the whole story' without firsthand experience.

'Orientalism' is used as a concept here to consider how non-firsthand depictions in media and through media events create fixed ideas of the identities of imagined communities, even if the audience members of the community play little or no part in the depiction of this identity. Edward Said originally used the term to refer to the creation of a cultural identity, society or history, which should naturally change over time, yet remains confined to a fixed and stereotyped structure. He claimed that it was possible and in fact often happened that identities "became so saturated with meaning, and so overdetermined by history, religion, and politics...that no one today can use them without some attention to the formidable polemical medications that screen the object, if they exist at all, that the labels designate" (Said, 1985; 93). Although Said's work originally focused on 'Eastern' cultures, this PhD project is not the first to borrow the term 'orientalism' to refer to a fixation of features of identity.

In her work on identity in former Yugoslavia, Milica Bakić-Hayden first defined 'nesting orientalism' as "a tendency for each region to view cultures and religions to the south and east of it as more conservative or primitive" (Bakić-Hayden and Hayden, 1992; 4). Through this definition, Bakić-Hayden helped redefine orientalism as layers or orientations rather than fixed notions and re-emphasized the role of 'orientation' in 'orientalism' (see also Bakić-Hayden, 1995). In nested orientalism, the order and manner in which individual identities or orientations are depicted by media outlets or expressed by audiences can change depending on the form of communication and actors involved. From the side of international news media, minority groups or regions may be depicted in relation to a 'country of origin', 'home country', a particular region within a state,

or a larger geographical region such as ‘Europe’. Meanwhile, individual members of the minority audience being depicted (such as Russian speakers in Estonia) may identify with all or some of these depictions in vastly different ways and sequences from which they are represented. Thus, while nesting orientalism in an ideological sense provides a form of communicative flexibility, in practice, the hegemonic struggles in the background of media production and communicative relations limits the flexibility for certain groups not involved in content production. On a national scale, newsrooms are becoming more diverse, but not quickly enough, and according to George Sylvie in *Reshaping the News* (2018), diversity in news staff does not automatically translate into diversity in coverage. The globalized nature of media further limits the flexibility in coverage; national minority groups in countries which have an established hegemonic discourse may receive greater representation on a global scale than minorities in less powerful discursive actors. The latter may be depicted inaccurately or missing from the picture entirely.

Several later studies, including Wolff’s study of ‘Eastern Europe’ (Wolff, 1994), Todorova’s focus on the Balkans (Todorova, 1997), Buchowski’s work in Poland (Buchowski, 2006), and Brown’s considerations of Russia (Brown, 2010) have continued to apply the concept of ‘Orientalism’ as one where borders “now run mostly across societies whereas, still by the end of the 1980s, it was charted, first and foremost, only on the geographic map” (Buchowski, 2006; 470). The current PhD cover article continues to build on these works and consider how nested orientalism becomes apparent in international news media coverage across borders and in different languages (English and Russian).

In Conclusion, rather than viewing ‘engagement’ as a unilateral effort of media outlets, the first part of this theoretical framework exemplified how social-economic pressures have influenced both media producers and audiences. While technological advancements have created new opportunities, these pressures have prevented communications networks from reaching their full potential in terms of flexibility. The second portion of this theoretical section elaborated on the traditional field of media research: from media production to audience perception. This dissertation works backwards by investigating the content produced by the online news in the form of *text* to understand the relationship between media representation of imagined audiences and audience reception and interaction with imagined communities. Finally, the third section juxtaposed the traditional concepts of ‘imagined audiences’ and ‘imagined communities’ to demonstrate how ‘media events’ and ‘orientalizations’ are used as tools to achieve ‘discursive hegemony’. The next section combines the case study and theoretical framework to establish the methodology for answering the research questions of this dissertation.

4. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

This research includes two data sets and two periods of field work to answer the main research questions. The analysis of the data sets and field work results are based on quantitative analysis in the form of content analysis and testing for statistical relevance, and qualitative analysis in the form of discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews. Table 4.1 displays the research methods, data, studies, and supplemental findings used to answer each of the research questions established in the framework of this PhD.

I was careful to conduct the interviews separately from the discourse and content analyses of headlines to prevent me as an interviewer from projecting the results in the interview process. Thus, for research questions one and two (concerning international news media in English), and three and four (considering international news media in Russian), the headlines were collected, the coding for content analysis was established, interviews conducted, and then headlines and articles were analyzed according to the pre-established frame. Content and discourse analyses of international news media in English (research questions 1) and Russian (research question 3) and two periods of fieldwork in Narva (research question 2) and Tartu/Tallinn (research question 4) are used to answer the overarching research questions of this dissertation: How does international news media depict minority groups? How do these groups orient themselves in relation to these depictions? Since the specific minority groups considered in this dissertation are Russian speaking audiences living in Estonia, the specified data collection and interpretation methods are used to answer the larger and smaller research questions:

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1) How does international media in English depict Russian speaking audiences?
a. How have the discourses in these depictions changed over time?
b. Are there orientalized portrayals found in these depictions? | } | Study I
(fieldwork 1,
dataset 1) |
| 2) How do Russian speaking individuals in Estonia orient themselves in relation to these depictions? | | |
| 3) How does international Russian media compare across borders?
a. How do the topics covered and traditional frames compare?
b. How do the discourses concerning 'Europe' and 'Russia' compare? | } | Studies
II and III
(dataset 2) |
| 4) How do individual Russian speakers in Estonia orient themselves towards Russian media generated for different countries? | | |

Table 4.1: Data, Methodology, and Studies Used

	Data	Methods	Study/ Findings
R1: How does international media in English depict Russian speaking audiences?	19 headlines from top online international news headlines in English 2015–2018 (dataset 1). 8 Interviews with media experts in Estonia and Latvia.	Content and discourse analysis of headlines, articles, and images from the online news outlets.	Study I
R2: How do local Russian speaking individuals in Estonia orient themselves to these depictions?	Interviews with 15 local Russian speakers in Narva, Estonia (fieldwork 1). 4 interviews with Estonian journalist professionals (2 Russian speaking/2 Estonian speaking) to gather political background information. 19 headlines and articles from top online international news headlines in English 2015–2018 (dataset 1).	Interviewees found through recommendation and suggestions after pilot interviews. Questions to locals not aimed to provoke political ideas but open ended to see if these emerge. Interview questions to journalists asked the political questions that were not used with locals. Emergent coding (Stemler, 2001) and discourse analysis (Dunn and Neuman, 2016) used to compare media with interview responses.	Study I
R3: How does Russian media compare across borders?	1,060 headlines collected from the Yandex news algorithm generator for Estonia, Latvia, Russia, and the United States from November 19, 2018-March 23, 2019 (dataset 2).	Emergent coding of topics in headlines. Content analysis of traditional media frames (Iyenger and Simon, 1993; Smetko and Valkenburg, 2000). Discourse Analysis using the Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl and Wodak, 2016). Statistical analysis of coding using Chi Squared Testing and Pearson Residuals.	Study II/III Analysis of dataset 2
R4: How do individual Russian speakers in Estonia orient themselves to Russian media generated for different countries?	Interview with 15 local Russian speakers in Tallinn and Tartu (fieldwork 2). Headlines from Yandex News Algorithm for Estonian and Russian country generator (dataset 2).	Two stage interview process aimed at incorporating respondents into interview design. Stage 1: 15 interviewees selected two news stories: 1 that is interesting for themselves and 1 they would share with others. Interview questions about the individuals’ hometown and what international audiences know about their hometown (Annex 1) Stage 2: 12 Interviewees from stage one review 58 headlines from the Yandex News Algorithm (Estonia and Russia) and those suggested in the first stage of interviews. Respondents read and comment on 6 randomly selected articles and view and comment on all 58 articles in a simulated a Padlet wall. Respondents’ orientation towards Estonian, Russian, or peer suggested media were measured using descriptive analysis of these steps.	Analysis of fieldwork 2 and dataset 2

4.1 Data Collection and Sources: News Headlines and Interviews

The datasets are used to answer the first overarching research questions and dissect how international news media depicts (in the case of English language media) and imagines (in the case of Russian language media) Russian speaking audiences. International media headlines to answer research question 1 (How does international media in English depict Russian speaking audiences?) were collected in English from the 2015–2018 online archives of well know international outlets (BBC, New York Times, Al Jazeera, DW, etc.) with the help of the Google search news filter. To start, I searched ‘Narva’ results in English from Google search using the ‘news’ filter. Then, upon finding the headline, I compared this with the online news source archives to find the same story. The small number of headlines in this analysis reflects the small number of stories focusing on the city of Narva in the headlines and content of the full articles (Study I; dataset 1). In total nineteen headlines were collected in 2018 (4–5 from each year of analysis).

To better understand how international Russian media compares across borders (and answer research question 3), international media headlines were collected in Russian from November 19th, 2018 to March 23rd, 2019 from the Russian language Yandex algorithm news generator for Estonia, Latvia, Russia, the United States and Finland (Study II/III; dataset 2), the latter was not used in the current dissertation. Originally, I also collected the headlines from the ‘world’ filter, but since these were the same as the headlines generated for ‘Russia’ I analyzed the latter as representative of international news in Russian. The collection of headlines from different country settings shows how the Russian news generated by the Yandex News algorithm imagines the differences between Russian speaking audiences in different countries. Then, through interviews I worked to understand how Russian speakers in Estonia orient themselves in relation to this news. The top headlines were collected from the algorithm country page systematically at 10:30 AM on Monday, Thursday, and Saturday. These headlines were stored in a spreadsheet with the links to the full stories until the analysis in Studies II and III. In total 1,060 headlines (and of these 800 full articles) from the news generated by the Yandex algorithm for Estonia, Russia, Latvia, and United States were coded and analyzed for the findings in this dissertation. The analysis of dataset II shows how Russian language media content generated in different countries covers different issues and frames them differently to reach diverse Russian speaking ‘audiences’.

Since the Yandex News algorithm by in large generates only content produced by Russian Federation licensed news outlets, it can be assumed that much of the content, even if generated for different countries, is Russia centric and follows Russian narratives. Yet, since the Yandex News platform presents itself as an international news source (with a ‘world’ filter and country-based filters), audiences reading the news may not initially perceive this. At the same time, in

using the Yandex News generated content, this study does not assume that international Russian speaking audiences, and in particular respondents in Estonia, regularly read or use Yandex News. Similarly, the use of international news media sources in English about the city of Narva (Study I) (collected via Google search and thus relying on Google algorithm suggestions) does not assume residents of Narva have read this media. Yet, in both cases, interviews work to compliment the content and statistical analyses and help understand how international news reaches and communicates with diverse audiences (as is the larger aim of this dissertation), even if individuals are not directly consuming the media.

The overarching aim of all the interviews was to compare how local Russian speakers connect with and orient themselves toward international English language news media (for whom they may not be the target audience) and Russian language news media (for whom they may be included in the target audience) (research questions 2 and 4). To answer research question 2 (how do Russian speaking individuals in Estonia orient themselves in relation to these depictions [in international news media in English]?), I looked at the local, national, and international levels. The local level consisted of 15 interviews with locals in the city of Narva (fieldwork 1) (a predominately Russian speaking city on Estonia's border with Russia). I aimed to understand how locals would themselves describe their home city to international audiences to compare this with actual international news headlines in English. Thus, questions to locals for this study did not provoke political topics, but rather asked about how they would describe their hometown, what they would like foreigners to know about their hometown, and how they would represent their hometown in international media. These interviews were short, and responses were recorded with the verbal consent of respondents. All 15 respondents were locals to the city of Narva (1 respondent had moved there from another city) and were between the ages of 19 and 45. 8 were men and 7 were women, 4 were found through personal recommendations, 6 working at a public facility (such as the information point, local museums, or restaurants), and 5 from inquires at public places where people gather. All were informed of the purpose of the interview as much as was possible without prefacing their responses, and they were given free will to decline to participate at any time. In the publication using this data only first names were used, and in the final dissertation respondents are not named.

Interviews with 8 journalists (4 from Estonia and 4 from Latvia) were to provide a local expert/national perspective from practitioners on the state of international news coverage of Russian speaking regions. Although only the 4 interviews with Estonian journalists were used in Study I, these journalists from both Estonia and Latvia provided valuable insight as interlocuters between the Russian speaking populations in the respective countries and international news media coverage of Russian speaking minorities and predominately Russian speaking regions. The Estonian journalists were named in Study I with their consent and had the chance to view the article proof before it was published to confirm their consent.

The aim of fieldwork 2 was to understand how more ‘trans-local’ Russian speakers in Tallinn and Tartu (predominately Estonian-speaking cities) ‘connect with’ and ‘orient’ themselves toward the discourses in international news media in Russian (research question 4). The analysis of dataset 2 shows the level of overlap in international news media in Russian across borders (Studies II and III). These interviews further show the overlap in how trans-local Russian speaking audiences connect with international news media in Russian from Russia and Estonia (generated by the Yandex news algorithm for each country) and news suggested by their peers. These interviews were thus taken in two parts. 15 participants took part in the first stage, and 12 of the 15 took part in the second stage. Of respondents 6 were from Tallinn, 3 were from Northeastern Estonia (but 1 lived in Tallinn and 2 in Tartu), 2 were from Mustvee, and 4 were from Tartu (1 from a town near Tartu). All respondents were students or young professionals 18–40 years old, with the exception of one respondent who was 65 and not included in the second stage because they were not an active media user. Another respondent who agreed to participate as a Russian speaker in Estonia was from Minsk, and although they planned to live in Estonia for a longer period, was not included in the analysis. Prior to participating in the interview, all respondents were sent and agreed to the informed consent form explaining the aims of the project and their anonymity (see Annex III). The first stage of the interviews was conducted from November 28th to December 21st, 2018, to correspond with the collection of headlines for dataset 2. In this stage respondents were asked the same first four questions from fieldwork 1 (Annex I) to understand how they identify themselves and would represent their hometown, region, or country. Then they were asked to find two pieces information: the first one which would be relevant for their own personal use (engagement and relevance) and the second which they would share (inclusiveness). The first aim of this task was to gain insight into how users generally ‘engage’ with information (how they search for information and what they look for) and consider whether there is a difference between information which is ‘relevant’ for individual use and that which is used to ‘include’ others (that which they would share). While respondents were looking for information to share, I observed how they found information by considering: whether they have an app on their phone or computer to find news easily, where they go for information, if they share their screen openly in searching or if they are more secretive of their content, etc. This observation was used to determine whether the respondents were active media using individuals (as was a requirement for participation) and understand usage patterns and strategies among respondents.

The headlines proposed by respondents in the first stage of interviews were then saved, combined with random headlines taken from the Yandex News algorithms generated for Estonia and Russia in Russian, and used in the second stage of interviews. The second stage of interviews took place from December 22nd, 2018 to January 19th, 2019 with 12 of the 15 participants who took part in the first

stage⁶. This was immediately after all first stage interviews were completed. The interviews were planned close together to ensure that the news included in the interviews from the data collected and first stage of interviews would be timely and ‘relevant’ (recall Swart et al., 2017). To keep respondents engaged in finding information between interviews, they were tasked with finding one additional piece of information they found generally important. After discussing this topic in the second stage, respondents had three tasks (see Annex 2). In *task 1*, they were given a list of 58 headlines which included a mix of those proposed by their peers and those generated from the Yandex News filtered content and instructed to mark pluses and minus next to headlines that may or may not be interesting to them. The goal of this exercise was to determine how respondents ‘construct’ and determine which information is or is not interesting and useful for them.

In *task 2*, respondents were given six news articles (from the same sample) which did not include the headline and asked to determine which of these full texts was useful to them. After discussing which full articles were and were not useful, respondents were asked to propose their own title for the article. The aim of this step was to see how respondents might relate differently to headlines compared to the full texts. Finally, in *task 3* users were invited to view the same headlines with links to the full stories and automatically generated images in a simulated wall like forum via the Padlet platform. The aim here was to compare more generally how individuals might relate differently to information when they are given headlines or images and have the possibility to click on the link to the full story. These different tasks helped to understanding how respondents connected with the text of headlines (task 1), the text of articles (task 2), and the content of headlines, images, and hyperlinks in a simulated online environment (task 3). These strategies help to answer research question 4 from multiple angles and identify differences in how individuals orient to text in different forms (i.e. headlines, articles, news forums).

4.2 Methods Used in Interpreting the Data to answer the Research Questions

This PhD dissertation combines content analysis at individual and national (through interviews), and international (through international news media headlines) levels with discourses identified by previous research and based on analysis of the strategies of Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl and Wodak, 2016). The use of content analysis in all three studies shows the topics and frames

⁶ Two respondents from the first round of interviews were intentionally not included in the second round of interviews because one was not an active media user, and the other did not identify as a local Russian speaker in Estonia. A third was simply unable to participate in the second round of interviews within the timeframe and after the given time the media headlines became irrelevant because they were outdated.

represented in online news and algorithmically generated news. Topics or issues were selected based on emergent content analysis (Stelmer, 2001) based not on previous studies of what ‘has been’ or ‘should be’ in the news, but rather on which topics repeat across headlines and articles analyzed. The goal in using emergent content analysis for the analysis of topics is to move away from normative notions of what topics media *should* cover, how these are expected to be covered, or where they might be accessible, and focus instead on discovering how international news media reports on different topics across borders in English and Russian.

For the analysis of datasets 1 and 2 (to answer research questions 1 and 3), I used discourse analysis techniques from Dunn and Neumann’s (2016) *Undertaking Discourse Analysis for Social Research*. In line with these techniques, I first aimed to identify the discourses (through the analysis of datasets 1 and 2), then analyze how these discourses interact (through fieldwork 1 and 2), and finally tests whether the discourses change over time (are elastic), remain the same (plastic), or experience drastic change (rupture) (Dunn and Neumann, 2016) (analysis of dataset 1 in Study I).

The combined analysis of dataset 1 and fieldwork 1 to answer research question 2 considers patterns of identity narratives created by ‘nested orientalism’. This shows how discourses of Russian speaking regions interact at the individual (Russian speaking Estonian), national (Estonian Media), and international level (International News media about Narva and Russian speakers in Estonia in English) (Study I). Analyzing how international media discourses in English from 2015–2018 change over time helps answer the smaller research questions: How do discourses in depictions of Russian speaking populations change over time? Are there orientalized portrayals found in these depictions (or what discourses DO NOT CHANGE in this reporting)? Then, a comparison of these findings with finding from interviews with locals sheds light on the second research question considering how individuals orient themselves in relation to these fixed depictions.

The content and discourse analysis of 780 headlines from Estonia, Latvia and Russia, shows how news discourses in Russia interact across borders (research question 3; Study II). This study applies the discourses of Russian relations with Europe from Ivar B. Neuman’s “Russia and the idea of Europe: A study in identity and international relations” (Neumann, 2018) to analyze how media generated by the same algorithm for three different countries reports on Russian-European relations. Considering the historical dimension of the tense relations between European and Russia, the specific discourses related to ‘Europe’ and ‘Russia’ were used to highlight discourses across borders (Study II) and answer research question 3 within this concrete topic. Articles containing the pre-selected variables of “Europe” and “Russia” in the headlines, were coded based on Wodak (2015) and Reisigl’s (Reisigl, 2017) discursive strategies of ‘predication’ and

‘perspectivization’ of actors, topics, and events⁷. Predication considers how the subject (in this case the subject of news headlines) is characterized by the linguistic structure or negative/positive suggestions in the text and denotes ‘in’ and ‘out’ groups. Perspectivization is the point of view from which the actors, topics, or events are depicted and shows the legitimacy of the speaker. These coding strategies help to identify the discourses in Russian language media on the ideas of Europe and Russia and highlight the areas in which these discourses interact across borders or in all three countries (research question 3). Furthermore, it gives a topical basis (Europe-Russian relations) for understanding how these particular discourses construct the ‘imagined audience’ (Litt, 2012) and compete for discursive hegemony (recall Wojczewski, 2018) by legitimating the actor. It further considers how interviewees (in fieldwork 2) connect (Swart et al., 2017) with information from different sources. Therefore, by comparing the coverage from the same algorithm with content filtered for three different countries, the analysis of dataset 2 helps answer the third large research questions and shows that there is in fact little overlap in the Russian language news discourses as generated for Estonia, Latvia, and Russia.

In addition to comparing the discourses across borders (Study II), I analyzed 800 headlines from Estonia, Russia, and the United States (from dataset 2) to further understand how Russian language media content compares across borders (Study III). Rather than using the key search words of “Europe” and “Russia”, I used emergent coding (Stelmer, 2001) to identify the topics and actors represented in the headlines and articles in each country. Here, I, together with my research partner (and co-author of Study III), conducted content analysis and statistical testing using Chi square testing and Pearson residuals. I coded all of the headlines according to the coding framework seen in Figure 4.1 which applied the traditional media frames proposed by Iyenger (Iyenger and Simon, 1993) and further tested by Smetko and Valkenburg (Smetko and Valkenburg, 2000) to show how traditional framing compares in Russian language media across borders. The analysis of dataset 2 also shows which *new frames* are present in international news media in Russian using emergent content analysis (from analysis for Study III).

⁷ Wodak and Reisigl identify 5 strategies: nomination (naming and labeling of social actors), predication (defined above), perspectivization (defined above), argumentation (justification of positive or negative attributes), and intensification/mitigation (the modification of the epistemic meaning of a proposition). The current paper focuses on nomination, predication and perspectivization to hone in on the understanding of “in-groups and out-groups” and the position of the speaker to better understand how the text constructs the imagine audience’s relationship to the discourses. Moreover, the media framing used for analysis fulfils the purpose of argumentation (in connecting a specific topic with a particular frame) and the new frames introduced address how these discourses are intensified or mitigated. Although they do not follow the exact framework from Wodak and Reisigl, they build on their strategies with mixed methods of analysis. Further considerations of these topics across different media (i.e. more than just online news media) could also include argumentation and intensification to show how discourses surrounding these topics interact.

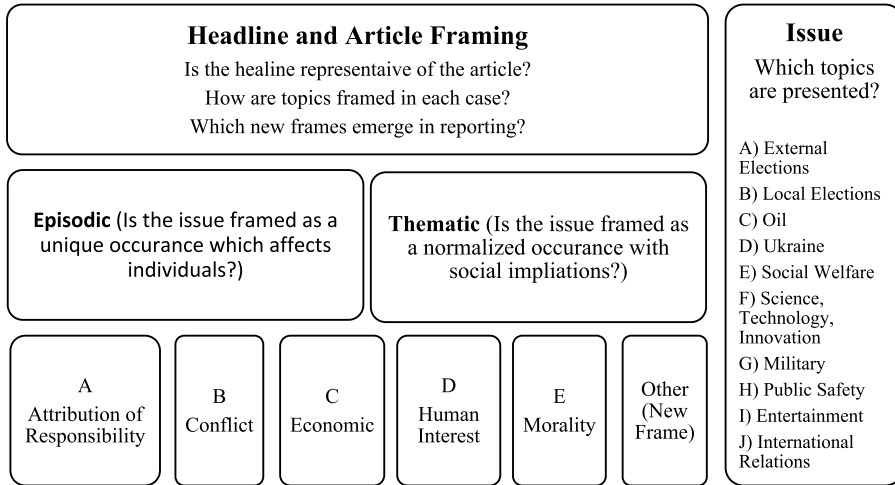


Figure 4.1: Coding framework for headlines and articles based on Iyengar (1993) and Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) (from Study III)

Swart et al's four forms of connectivity (inclusiveness, engagement, relevance, and constructiveness) were applied in the analysis of fieldwork II to demonstrate how individual Russian speakers in Estonia connect with Russian language media originating from three different sources: their Russian speaking peers in Estonia, the Russian headlines generated by Yandex News for Estonia, and the Russian headlines generated by Yandex News for Russia. In the first stage of the two-stage interview process, 15 respondents participated in selecting the headlines for the second stage of interviews. Observing participants' selection of news helped show how respondents find and connect with different media for themselves and for others. This demonstrated what individuals found 'relevant' for their own use or 'inclusive' in sharing with others and identified how they 'engage' with the media and 'construct' the value of connecting with a certain topic or sharing it with someone else. In the second stage, 30 articles selected by respondents were combined with articles from headlines generated for Estonia and Russia (dataset II) in a co-participant research design. This helped to show how individuals *engage* with media in different formats: headline texts, article texts, and news forums. Further discussing why individuals found certain information interesting or not interesting was telling about how they *construct* value and find *relevance* in different information. Applying this methodological framework to the interviews in fieldwork 2 helped to answer research question 4.

5. FINDINGS

The findings shared in this cover article help fill the existing research gaps mentioned in the introduction by showing how discourses in international news media in English *do in fact* influence how Russian speaking individuals in Estonia orient themselves. Furthermore, the findings exemplify that the Russian media and information space *is fragmented* across borders.

5.1 English media depictions of Russian Speaking Audiences

When it comes to international English language news media reporting of Russian speaking areas such as the city of Narva, Estonia, Study I found that coverage oscillates between three main discourses: 1) the securitization of the Estonian-Russian border region in the context of the Russian annexation of Crimea and ongoing conflict in the East of Ukraine (February 2015–July 2016), 2) the role of international politics (notably the US election of Donald Trump) in stirring up international conflict and security concerns from abroad (July 2016–April 2017), and 3) shared culture between Europe and Russia and the integration of Russian speaking populations in Estonia coinciding with Estonia’s preparations for its 100 year independence celebration on February 24, 2018 (November 2017–March 2018) (Figure 5.1). Although these findings come from the analysis of headlines and articles in the short timeframe of 4 years (see Study I), the transition of the coverage of the same city with international events show the flexibility of coverage to respond to and incorporate international events into the reporting over time.

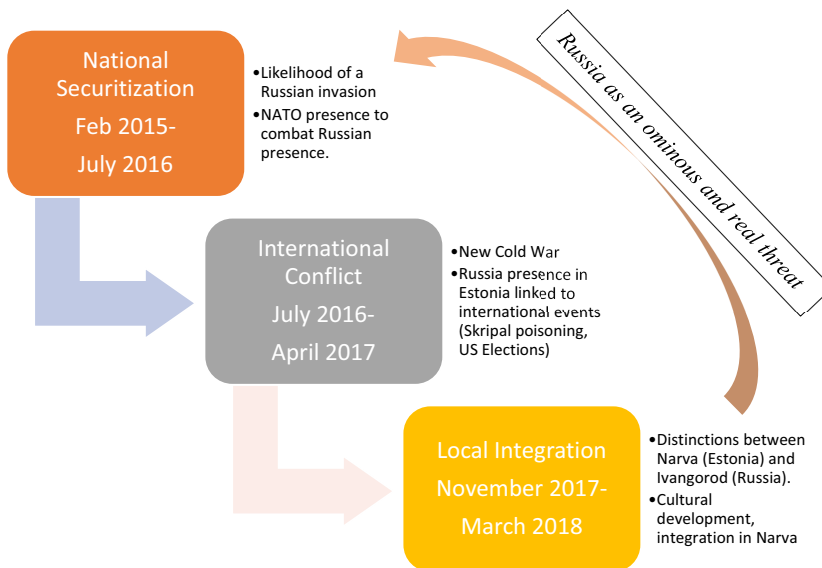


Figure 5.1 Evolution of Discourses in Reporting period from National to Local

At the same time, this study showed how flexibility was bounded by a common theme. Even though the focus of coverage shifted from national, international, and local, the discourse competing for hegemony in English news media of “Russia as an ominous and real threat which is not welcome in Estonia and Europe” remained consistent throughout reporting (Study I). Moreover, rather than coverage about the city of Narva itself, the city’s position on the Russian boarder and largely Russian speaking population was used as a starting point for addressing relations between the east and west in terms of national security, international conflict, or local integration. This discourse of *Russia as an unwelcome threat* was seen in common references to Eastern Estonia’s regional ties with Russia (specifically Saint Petersburg) and fixed images used in reporting (such as images of Russian president Putin, Narva’s Lenin statue, which is not in the center of the city, the border castles between Narva and the Russian city of Ivangorod, and other relics of the Soviet past such as the old Kreenholm factory or Russian nesting dolls which can be seen in Annex IV. These fixed depictions of the city of Narva to a historical past tied to Saint Petersburg (the castles and references of close ties as formerly part of the same oblast/Russian region), communism (the Kreenholm factory and statues of Lenin), Russian culture (nesting dolls), and Russia politics (images of Putin and references to local support for him from residents of Narva) are what I referred to as orientalized depictions in Study I and revisit in this dissertation as evidence about the fixation of meanings. Almost all articles about Narva in English language news media use the city, these depictions, and the previously mentioned discourses as a new angle or point of reference to connect audiences to the broader conflicts between Russia and the West (see Table 5.2 for headlines). At the same time, interviews with locals point to the statues of lions around the city (on the boardwalk and in a park along the river) as a symbol of the city’s *Swedish* past. Yet these statues were not once used or referenced in the context of international reporting in English, showing a mismatch and fixation in the external depictions of the city. Thus, these orientalized depictions (often related to the city’s soviet past and ties with Russia) facilitate the development of broader reaching ‘media events’ in the ongoing international struggle. While articles focusing on the Eastern Estonian city of Narva’s relation to Estonia and Europe rarely mentioned international conflict, the articles which focused on Narva’s position in ‘The Baltics’ or ‘Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania’ did. This shows that when the city is positioned as part of Estonia or Europe it is part of a cooperative process whereas when it is positioned on the border region with Russia it is a historical area of international conflict.

Rather than being entirely stable in representing the city of Narva, international news media in English depicted the city differently depending on the context of international “media events” (recall Dayan and Katz, 1992; Hutchings and Tolz, 2015). On the one hand, in its relation to Europe or Estonia, the city was portrayed as the setting for peaceful developments (particularly in the case of Estonian’s 100-year independence celebration in 2018, see Study I).

– Estonia gets creative about integrating local Russian-speakers
(The Economist, 2018)

– President: Narva could become Estonia’s next success story
(The Baltic Times, 2018)

On the other hand, when portrayed as being a ‘Baltic’ or ‘regional’ city on the border with Russia (in the case of post-Crimea or US elections) the city was identified as the location of conflict or potential conflict between Russia and the “West”.

“Narva is a vulnerable border city separated by a river from Russia. It has often been cited as a potential target for the Kremlin...The anger grew especially passionate after the Baltic states joined [NATO] in 2004”
– U.S. military vehicles paraded 300 yards from the Russian Border
(Birnbaum, 2015)

“Earlier that week, a group of 150 Russian special forces — bearing no insignia and disguised like the “little green men” who had occupied the Crimean peninsula eight years prior — had slipped into the tiny neighboring Baltic state of Estonia”
– The plot against Europe (Kirchick, 2017)

In international news media, the coverage of the city of Narva is dependent on the discourses competing to establish themselves as hegemonic. As demonstrated by this finding, these discourses are often focused on defining the relationships between “Europe” and “Russia” (recall Neumann, 2018). **This shows how international media in English, which is arguably not intended for native Russian speakers, reaches or informs ‘imagined audiences’ about events in Narva by contextualizing them within larger competing hegemonic discourses.**

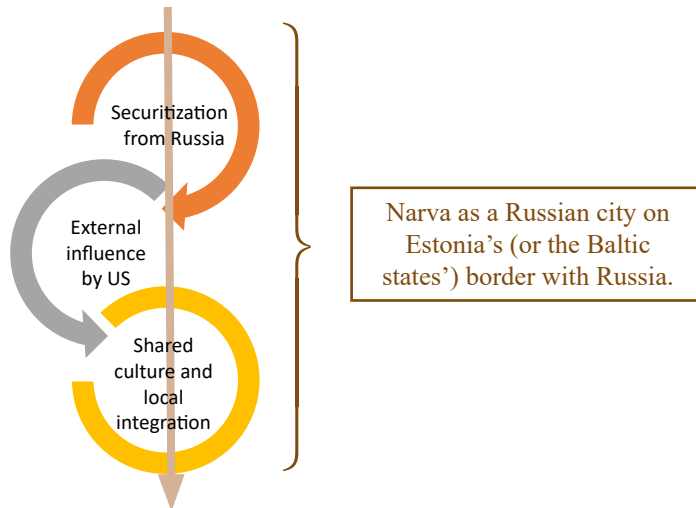


Figure 5.2 competing hegemonic and orienting discourse in English media reporting

Moreover, the analysis of headlines and interviews from Study I tended to depict Russian speakers as part of a larger community and largely ignored the geographical, cultural, and ideological distinctions of different Russian speaking communities (such as the city of Narva itself not just as an entry point to discuss international relations). As an interview with a Russian speaking Estonian journalist notes, this is nothing new, but it is not representative of the communities being depicted:

*We have tried to make comparisons to Daugavpils (Latvia) but it is absolutely different. The situation in Narva and Lasnamäe (in Tallinn) in Estonia is absolutely different because they are different Russians.
(Interview by the author from Study I)*

5.2 Russian speaking audience orientation to English media depictions

Comparing how locals from the city of Narva, Estonia described their own city with the English news media headlines from the previous years, shows that the international attention the city receives *does* contain orientalized depictions in this coverage. These depictions *do in turn influence* how individual Russian speakers in the city of Narva orient themselves. When asked “How would you describe your hometown to foreigners who had never visited?” and “what do you think foreigners know about your hometown?” (for the full list of questions in Study I see Annex II Stage 1, questions 1–5) answers differed greatly. According to locals, Narva is a safe, beautiful, and multicultural city with a strong history connected more with Swedish, Danish, and Hanseatic rule than with Russia. It was emphasized that while foreigners may know Narva as a “Russian City” because 88% of the population speaks Russian, the locals of Narva are a mix of *Russian-speaking ethnic minorities*. From interviews with locals and journalists alike, there is the feeling that foreign audiences have a limited understanding of Narva. The city is seen by “transit tourists who make only a photo stop in Narva or they come to learn Russian” and often depicted to the outside world through “news media [which] presents Narva as a kind of Russian city that just belongs to Estonia” (*Interviews by the author, Study I*).

Although the local depictions of Narva and the international English language news media coverage of the city differed, Study I found that they did not exist in entirely parallel (or separate) information spaces; rather, there was an attempt by locals to position or orient themselves to the international depictions. This orientation was not in direct opposition (or divergent) to the English language media coverage, but rather worked towards a mild ‘correction and addition’ to what the international coverage missed (see Table 5.1 from Study I). Locals in Narva acknowledged that their city is known for being on the border between Europe and Russia. Rather than highlighting the uniqueness of the city’s Russian culture and conflicting political position, as was embedded in the discourses of

much of the English language news media, locals emphasized the opportunity for the city to be a leader in brokering peace and change for the better in Europe and Russia. In answering research question 2, we can see that even though the “imagined audience” for news media in English may not be Russian speakers, the use of ‘media events’ and ‘orientalized depictions’ to contextualize the city include the local inhabitants in an “imagined global community”. In turn, locals in the city of Narva enact ‘nested orientalism’ (recall Buchowski, 2006), in their relationship to these depictions by positioning themselves within the various local, national, and international discourses that remained rather fixed. This connection will be further elaborated on in the discussion section.

Table 5.1: Orientation of Russian speakers in Narva to international news discourses in English (Study I)

International News Discourse		Orientation of Russian speakers	
	Divergent	Parallel	Nested
Continuity (Plastic)	Us vs. Them identification	Separate information spheres. Orientalized but excluded.	Nested Orientalism Narva as (Estonian? Russian-City? Eastern European?)
Change (Elastic)	Further analysis about what direction the change has taken and why	Consider variables that account for change in reporting or representation	Does this change reflect or is it affected by local attitudes?
Genealogically (Rupture)	Has this rupture been reflected in the divergent representations by locals?	Where does the rupture in reporting come from if not locals' representations?	How has this rupture shifted the nesting representation of the region?

Whereas international headlines in English focused on Narva’s position ‘on the border between Europe and Russia’, locals suggested it to be “the pearl of the Baltics” or a “city of beautiful historical and modern views”. When news media in English showed Narva as “NATO’s Russian City”, locals proposed it as “the place for a handshake between the East and the West”. For each of the discursive shifts (national-international-local) in English language media headlines, there was a response from the suggested headlines of the locals (see Table 5.2 based on data collected in Study I). This interaction between international news media headlines in English and local Russian speaking audiences in the city of Narva shows how media interacts with a much larger audience than the original target. In this case, whereas English language news media can be assumed to be for English speaking audiences, local Russian speaking audiences were aware of these discourses and even proposed their alternate variations to more accurately represent their city. This interaction with international news media in English includes individuals in an ‘imagined global community’, even when the individuals interacting are neither part of the ‘imagined audience’ nor agree with the depictions.

Table 5.2 Headline representations and interaction with local suggested headlines

	English news media headlines	Headlines suggested by locals
Securitization	<p>Estonia's elections: on the border (The Economist, 2015)</p> <p>Why Narva is probably not next on Russia's list (Coffey, 2015)</p>	<p>Narva: City of beautiful historical and modern views</p> <p>Narva: The pearl of the Baltics</p> <p>#Narvaisnext</p>
	<p>NATO's Russian city (Razzell, 2015)</p> <p>Estonia welcomes NATO troops as deterrent against Russia (McLaughlin, 2016)</p> <p>U.S. military vehicles paraded 300 yards from the Russian border (Birnbaum, 2015)</p> <p>NATO's most sensitive border is more sensitive than ever (Schiffrin and Fannin, 2016)</p> <p>Fearing it could be Putin's next target, Estonia prepares for guerilla warfare that could usher WWII (The National Post, 2016)</p>	<p>Narva: The place for a handshake (or even a hug) between the East and the West</p>
External Influence	<p>In Estonia, caution but surprising cheers for Trump's victory (Higgins, 2016)</p> <p>Donald Trump is sucking up and selling out to Putin (Weiss, 2016)</p> <p>As Putin looms and Trump withdraws, Estonia is training civilians to fight (O'Leary, 2017)</p> <p>Does Trump's NATO frostiness point to a new Cold War? (Miller, 2017)</p> <p>The plot against Europe (Kirchick, 2017)</p> <p>Two border cities share Russian history- and a sharp European divide (Higgins, 2017)</p> <p>Fears of Russian aggression increasing in Estonia following Salisbury nerve agent attack (Smith, 2018)</p>	<p>Narva: A window to Europe</p>
Shared Culture/ Local Integration	<p>Estonia reaches out to its very own Russians at long last (de Pommereau, 2018)</p> <p>Estonia gets creative about integrating local Russian-speakers (The Economist, 2018)</p> <p>President: Narva could become Estonia's next success story (The Baltic Times, 2018)</p> <p>NE Estonia's development hindered by stagnated politicians (The Baltic Times, 2018)</p>	<p>Narva: With hope for the future</p>

5.3 Russian Media Across Borders

Since Russian speakers *would* be presumed to be the audience for international news media in Russian, this dissertation now shifts focus to how Russian speakers orient themselves toward Russian media. Before delving into the orientations of trans-local Russian speaking audiences in Estonia, the results from Study II (comparing the topics, discourses, and framing in Russian language news media as it appears in the Yandex News algorithm generated news for Estonia, Latvia, and Russia) and Study III (comparing that generated for Estonia, Russia, and the United States) help to answer research question 3. Considering that the English language news headlines and local interactions with them operated within the larger discourse of Russia seen in opposition to Europe, I considered how topics related to ‘Europe’ and ‘Russia’ compare discursively in Russian language news media across borders (Study II). This analysis also demonstrates how Russia is seen in its cooperation with, opposition to, or exclusion from/superiority to Europe (see Neumann, 2018; Erbsen, 2019). Then, statistical analysis of the same data set (Study III) considering headlines generated for Estonia, Russia, and the United States help to show how international media headlines in Russian compare statistically in terms of their topics and frames. Rather than focusing on a specific topic (as was the case in investigating English language news media) the analysis of headlines in Russian generated by Yandex news help to understand what topics are deemed to be relevant for the ‘imagined Russian speaking audience’. Further interviews with Russian speaking individuals in Estonia (Section 5.4) helped demonstrate how locals oriented to these topics to understand how Russian media generated by a tool largely influenced by the Russian Federation also creates a fixed image of what is relevant for their imagined Russian speaking audiences.

5.3.1 Russian media discourses of ‘Russia’ and ‘Europe’ in bordering countries

Through the discursive analysis of headlines and articles generated by the Yandex News algorithm for Estonia, Latvia, and Russia in Study II, I found that the articles relating directly to Russia or Europe differed discursively by countries, and that there were limited areas of overlap (see Figure 5.3 from Study II). This suggests that differences are being made based on the country filter for different audiences. Mentions of ‘Russia’ were, as to be expected, much more prominent in headlines filtered for the Russian Federation than those for the other countries, and mentions of ‘Europe’ were slightly higher in headlines filtered for Latvia. *The fact that these differences exist despite the headlines coming from the same aggregator (Yandex News) and in the same language (Russian) shows that national borders and location do still matter.* The main topics reported in headlines depicting the relations between Europe and Russia were related to politics, economics, and culture.

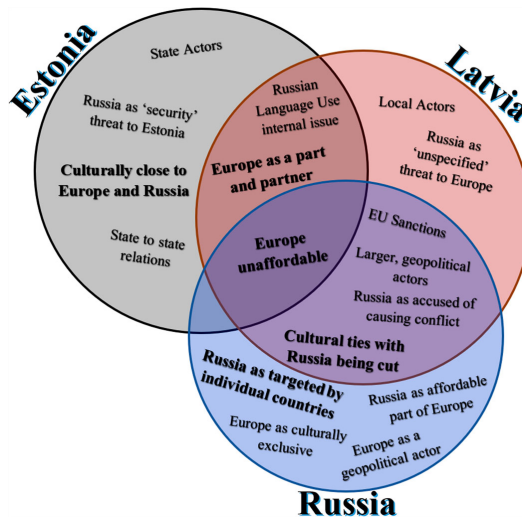


Figure 5.3 Intersecting discourses in Russian news media in Estonia, Latvia and Russia (from Study II)

Within these topics, I found three discursive pairs interacting across the articles generated for the three countries (see Figure 5.4): Russia as a threat (headlines generated for Estonia and Latvia) vs. Russia as a scapegoat (headlines generated for Russia), Europe as expensive (and unequal) (headlines generated for Russia, Latvia, and Estonia) vs. Russia as cheap (and inclusive) (headlines generated for Russia), and security and culture as mutual (headlines generated for Russia and Latvia) vs. security and culture as exclusive threats (headlines generated for Estonia). Whereas there was consensus among all cases that economically Europe is more unaffordable than Russia and that this creates inequality in Europe (in Narva or Ukraine for example), reporting of cultural and political relations between Russia and Europe were much more discursively divided among the headlines generated for different countries. Like international news media headlines in English (recall Study I), Russian headlines collected from the Yandex News algorithm all emphasized the paradigm of Russia’s position in relation to specific countries or regions and addressed the emerging discourse of speculating Russia as a threat (see Study II). The three discursive pairs described here help show how the differing discourses interact with ‘imagined audiences’ in their positioning Russia’s relationship with Europe.



Figure 5.4 Discursive pairs in Russian news media content related to ‘Russia’ and ‘Europe’ (applied from Study II)

Culturally, headlines generated for Estonia and Latvia shared a specific overlap in differentiating between Russian as an adjective to discuss the topics of Russian language schools, Russian language media content, and the use of everyday Russian in society which were simply not a topic in headlines generated for Russia. Whereas headlines generated for Estonia appeared to *introduce* the debates surrounding Russian language schools and media outlets to the reader, those generated for Latvia reported on similar topics as issues which the reader *should be well informed and have an opinion* about (see headlines below from Study II).

Estonian President announced the banning of education in school in Russian
(Headline generated for Estonia, January 5, 2019)

A large flash-mob is coming: The Russian schools that Latvia lost
(Headline generated for Latvia: November 19, 2018)

These distinctions suggest the imagined audience for the text generated for Estonia and Latvia differ from the imagined audience in Russia, and from each other due to distinct demographic (Russian speaking minority) and political (public discussions of Russian language in public spaces) characteristics. Moreover, in headlines filtered for Estonia and Latvia, the countries’ cultural relations with the Russian Federation were linked with securitization (in the case of Estonia) and exclusion of Russian participants (in the Latvian case) from cultural sporting events. As seen from the example headlines below, cultural events in Estonia highlighted the relation of these events with Russian officials as points to be skeptical or cautious of. In the Latvian case, the headline suggests that the reader knows the significance of the actors Zubkov and Dainis Dukurs and the city of Sigulde and understands that the ‘Russians to train’ are denied access because they are citizens of the Russian Federation (headlines from Study II).

*Ex-assistant to the Russian president opens a chess tournament in Tallinn
(Headline generated for Estonia, January 12, 2019)*

*Zubkov: Dainis Dukurs doesn't allow Russians to train in Sigulde
(Headline generated for Latvia, December 10, 2018)*

The former headline, generated for Estonia, promotes the idea that cultural cooperation could be a way to overcome or prepare for security challenges. This suggests that for imagined audiences in Estonia, culture and security are exclusive in that cultural events can be promoted despite perceived security threats. The latter headline, generated for Latvia, shows that security challenges are being acted upon defensively and suggests imagined audiences in Latvia understand that there are mutual security and culture-related threats.

Study II showed how headlines generated for Russia also emphasized the severing of cultural ties between Ukraine and 'European' countries. Furthermore, whereas headlines generated for Estonia prioritized the state relations between Estonia and Russia, headlines generated for Latvia and Russia skipped state to state relations and focused instead on either the personal relations of individuals or more broadly on European relations with Russia (see examples below). Working backwards, it seems that imagined audiences in Russia are envisioned to be aware of cultural ties being cut, in Estonia they are interested more in state relations, and in Latvia they are concerned with broader European or international relations.

*The EU blocks Ukraine from joining its market
(Headline generated for Russia, December 17, 2018)*

*Russia is accused of wanting to create chaos in the European Parliament
(Headline generated for Latvia, January 17, 2019)*

*Estonia will erect a tower with a camera and radar on the border with Russia
(Headline generated for Estonia, February 9, 2019)*

Politically Russia was depicted as an ongoing threat at the individual/group (headlines generated for Latvia), national (headlines generated for Estonia and Russia), and international (headline generated for Latvia and Russia) levels. Whereas headline generated for Estonia and Latvia shared what each group or nation is or should be doing to detour Russian threats (thus supporting the discourse that Russia poses a real and known threat to various actors), those generated for Russia focused on which countries were making *claims* about Russia or working against Russia suggesting that Russia is unfairly targeted and labeled as a threat by specific European countries or actors.

*Estonia proposes taking out a loan to buy weapons because of Russia
(Headline generated for Estonia, January 12, 2019)*

*The President of Latvia urged Europe to unite against Russia
(Headline generated for Latvia, March 11, 2019)*

*The ex-ambassador announced the desire of the United States to deprive
Russia of a strong army (Headline generated for Russia, December 15, 2018)*

*WP: US conducted a cyber operation against the “Russian troll factory”
(Headline generated for Russia, February 26, 2019)*

Overall, this analysis helps answer research question 3 by showing that while there are some general discursive overlaps, the interactions of these discourses differ across borders based on cultural, economic, and political factors.

5.3.2 Significant similarities and differences in Russian media reporting in headlines generated for Estonia, Russia, and the US

To further test how international news media headlines generated by the Yandex News algorithm in Russian compare across borders, I worked with my co-author of Study III to conduct a statistical analysis of the topics and framing of news headlines generated for Estonia, Russia, and the United States. This analysis revealed some important statistical differences in the headline representativeness of articles, issues reported, and framing of issues in reporting across borders; there was no statistical difference in the traditional framing of issue across countries. Four new frames also emerged in the analysis of international news media which could be further researched to understand how these frames work to interact with online audiences. Overall, these statistical differences in the topics and framing and variations in the use of new frames demonstrate how the algorithmically generated media content ‘imagines’ different Russian speaking audiences.

Representativeness of the headlines means the headline matches the content of the full article. The first significant finding was that headlines generated by the Russian country algorithm were *much less likely* to match the headline of the article itself (see Table 5.3 from Study III). Moreover, the framing of topics in the headlines of Russian generated articles were statistically less representative of the content of the article itself. Considering the larger competition for Russian news media content to ‘make’ the Russian algorithm (see Study III), these findings that headlines generated for Russia were changed more often and significantly less representative was not surprising. What was surprising was that headlines generated for the United States were also significantly less representative (although less significantly than those generated for Russia), and headlines generated for Estonian were highly statistically relevant in their representation (see Figure 5.5).

Table 5.3 Different headlines for the same article from Study III

	Russia	United States	Estonia
Headline the same as clicked headline	59 (21.45%)	108 (40.75%)	209 (80.38%)
Headline different from clicked headline	216 (78.55%)	157 (59.25%)	51 (19.62%)

Country	Representativeness		Total
	Not representative	Representative	
est	27	231	258
	42	216	258
	10.5 %	89.5 %	100 %
	21.3 %	35.2 %	32.9 %
	-2.29	1.01	
rus	52	215	267
	43	224	267
	19.5 %	80.5 %	100 %
	40.9 %	32.7 %	34.1 %
	1.33	-0.59	
us	48	211	259
	42	217	259
	18.5 %	81.5 %	100 %
	37.8 %	32.1 %	33 %
	0.93	-0.41	
Total	127	657	784
	127	657	784
	16.2 %	83.8 %	100 %
	100 %	100 %	100 %

$$\chi^2=9.399 \cdot df=2 \cdot p=0.009$$

observed values
 expected values
 % within Country
 % within Representativeness
 standardised residual

Figure 5.5 Headline representative of article content from Study III

The second key finding was that issues are statistically dependent on the country news is generated for (see Figure 5.6). This was also not overly shocking, but the difference in issues found (for example that Ukraine was reported significantly more in news generated for Russia, social welfare and local elections more in stories generated for Estonia, and international relations more in the content generated for the US) leave food for thought which will be revisited in the discussion. Then, it was found that framing (or how topics are framed according to the traditional frames (recall Figure 4.1) *was not* statistically different depending on which country the content was generated for (see Figure 5.7). This suggests that despite statistical differences in topics and the framing of these topics filtered for each country, there are larger discourses competing for hegemony or media structures at play dictating how certain issues are framed and communicated to imagined audiences. This will also be revisited in the discussion.



Figure 5.6: % of reporting on topic by country (Data from Study III)

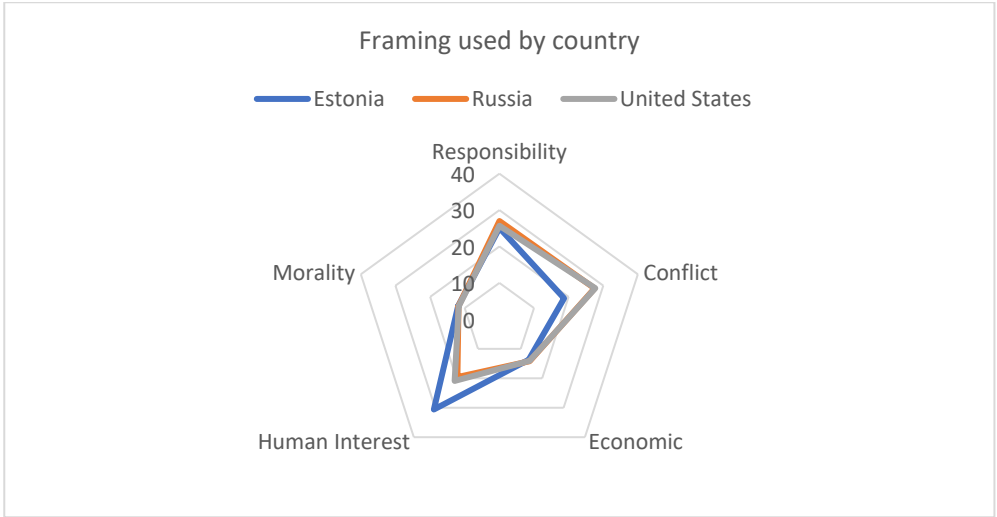


Figure 5.7: % of the use of framing by country (Data from Study III)

Finally, in the process of coding the headlines in Russian for Study III, common patterns were noticed in the framing which did not match with the traditional models (based on television and print sources) by Iyengar (1993) and Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). These frames included: ‘invitation for discussion’, ‘raise awareness’, ‘reassurance of action’, and ‘addressing inadequacy’. Rather than simply lumping these new frames into the same category as the traditional ones used for the analysis here, I suggest considering a new brand of frames which

negotiate between those engaging the ‘imagined audience’ (content producers) and expanding the ‘imagined community’ (content audiences). Although this finding did not fit into the published article for Study III, it certainly can help explain the differences in reporting which were identified discursively (in Study II) and statistically (in Study III). On the one hand, these frames engage the ‘imagined audience’ by suggesting their opinion is needed on the matter, or that they should know, feel reassured, or protest about certain events. On the other hand, they expand the ‘imagined community’ by leaving a level of ambiguity in the content which can be used or interpreted with a different lens by increasingly diverse audiences. Even though these frames may not be entirely new, they do seem to have become more prominent in an online media environment where journalists compete for attention and audiences work to orient themselves to an increasing amount of information. These “reader targeting frames” therefore not only present an issue in a specific way, but they guide the reader further in how they should use the information they gain in the process. The frames cannot guide the reader however without the creation of and writing for an imagined audience, which according to the findings of this study does differ based on the country for which information is produced.

The “**invitation for discussion**” lens represents reporting where one article presents contradicting opinions and sources on the same issue. This was common for controversial topics related to Ukraine, social welfare, military, and public safety. For example, almost 30% of articles generated for Russia related to Ukraine presented strongly contradicting positions. This appeared to leave the side-taking open to the reader. One such article from Gazeta.Ru on January 14th, 2019, titled “According to the Lugansk People’s Republic, Ukrainian armed forces refuse to participate in hostilities” ended with the caveat:

“Kiev regularly accuses Russia of “invading” Ukraine, but no evidence of Moscow’s involvement in the hostilities in Donbas has been provided. At the same time, Russia emphasizes that it is not a party to the internal Ukrainian conflict”

In other examples where this frame was used, articles indirectly pose a question about “what could or should have been done?”. The article titled “A prisoner in the US committed suicide without waiting for the death penalty” (Newinform, January 7, 2019) demonstrates how the prisoner’s death sentence had repeatedly been pushed back and that the prisoner had “previously stated that being in prison is just survival”. Without explicitly soliciting expert opinions on the case, the article invites readers to fill in the gaps and question whether something should be done in this and similar cases concerning criminal justice.

The second frame, “**raise awareness**”, takes a more passive and informative approach that simply makes readers aware of their or others’ rights in a situation. This frame was used mainly in the topics of local elections, social welfare, and public safety and was most common in content filtered for Estonia. It was used to inform readers about rallies or rights supported by political initiatives. For

example, an article on December 6th, 2018, titled “Every person has the right to study in their native language” read: “in a democratic country, which includes Estonia, any resident has the right to study in his native language”. This article quoted members from the Estonian Central party and used normalizing language to raise awareness about the use of Russian in Estonia.

In a similar vein, another article, “A new mass rally against the migration pact will take place in Tallinn” from December 8th, 2018 used international agreements and local arguments to shed light on the debate of migration in Estonia. The article states “The consent of the Estonian government to the country’s accession to the UN Global Migration Agreement continues to displease part of its population”. While some of the topics covered by the ‘raise awareness’ frame might be considered controversial, this framing seems to *neutralize* and almost normalize the debates by presenting stated facts and acknowledging public grievances.

For similar issues related to social welfare, articles generated for Russia tended to emphasize how government actions would positively impact social welfare. These articles were coded “**reassurance of actions**” since they added explanations and support for actions which attempt to calm and reassure readers. For example, one article from RIA Novosti from December 17th, 2018 titled “Russians spend almost 1/3 of their income on food” compared statistic in the headline with other European countries to paint a picture of normalcy and reassure readers that Russians are better off than Ukraine (where Ukrainians spend over 50% of their income on food) and equal to Lithuania and Montenegro. Similarly, an article naming alcohol consumption as “The main cause of death in Russian men” from NCN on February 7th, 2019, explains the Russian Ministry of Health’s initiative to reduce the number of alcohol related deaths in both men and women. These types of articles are aimed at reassuring and calming readers while also showing who they should turn to for solutions.

Finally, the frame of “**addressing inadequacy**”, which was the least common of the four new frames, was found in reporting on topics related to military or international relations. This frame suggests that a country or actor is unequipped to face challenges and invites the reader to criticize the faults of another. In the case of US generated articles, it was the US military’s inability to compete with Russian military developments:

“Die Welt reports that the Russian development of the Avangard hypersonic missile system has made the US military nervous. At the moment, the United States does not have an air defense system to intercept such missiles”
(Generated for the US, Gazeta.ru, December 29, 2018)

Almost as if in response, articles generated for Russia tended to ‘reassure’ readers of developments in Russian and military technology and operations:

“National Interest praised the Russian anti-submarine package system”
(Generated for Russia, PBK, November 11, 2018)

*“Russia lifted two Su-27s into the air because of a U.S. Air Force Bomber”
(Generated for Russia, Gazeta.ru, March 21, 2019)*

In addition to the content and statistical analysis of the traditional frames used in the articles collected in Study III, these new frames help answer the broader question of this article: How united or fractured is the Russian information space across borders? While this thesis cannot hope to fully assess these frames, it proposes them to exemplify that **the Russian information space is in fact nuanced, and these nuances continue to evolve with modern media** such as online news media generated by the Yandex News algorithm.

5.4 Orientation towards Russian language media content

The same dataset used for the analysis of Russian language news media across borders (dataset 2 used in Study II and Study III) was used in the two-stage, participant-based interviews with trans-local Russian speakers in Estonia. By combining dataset II with the design including participant based suggested headlines, this analysis considers how representative the algorithmically generated headlines are to respondents through how they connect and interact with them (recall Swart, et al., 2017). While admittedly the sample size of respondents is small (12 participants for both parts of the process) and does not claim to represent all Russian speaking minority groups in Estonia, let alone internationally, the findings hope to hypothesize about the final research question considering how individual Russian speakers in Estonia orient themselves towards Russian media generated for different countries. It thus combines the same dataset used in the previous sub sections (dataset 2) with participant-based interviews (fieldwork 2).

Through the interviews and discussions or explanations of why articles were or were not interesting, a deeper understanding about why individuals connected with certain content and avoided other content (recall Swart, et al., 2017) emerged. Recall that respondents were asked to find two headlines: one that was interesting for themselves and one that they would share. In terms of inclusiveness, individuals connected with issues related to their place of work or everyday life (gas prices, new social innovations, etc.). They were also more likely to share their selected headlines in a personal message or in direct communication with a close friend or relative rather than publicly. When it came to engagement, many respondents generally avoided news, and some found news on Facebook and even claimed that any desperately important information will reach them via the social network.

“I very consciously limit the amount of information I get, so I don’t watch TV and I don’t read news. My only channel is the radio, and I usually listen in my car in the morning just to have some morning program on. If I’m interested in something, I get some information from acquaintances or search the internet.” (Respondent 8, 2018)

As shown by the previous response, almost all respondents relied on and trust information from personal contacts over formal information sources. The information that respondents noted as interesting for themselves was found quite quickly and was rarely something they would share; thus, we see a distinction in how individuals find information for their personal use and which information they share. Vice versa, the information they would share took more time or was difficult to find and the majority of respondents reflected that they would share in a direct message rather than repost anywhere:

*“It’s complicated because I actually do not share anything with anyone...
I don’t even know where to look for something I would like to share.”*
(Respondent 6, 2018)

*“If it’s something that I have already shared it would be much easier, but
if it’s about something that I would share, it will take some time to find.”*
(Respondent 11, 2018)

In the second stage of the interview, respondents were asked to do three tasks. In the first task they were asked to read a list of headlines and simply place pluses and minuses (for content that was interesting or not interesting) and comment on their decision. Based on the respondents’ marking and commenting of the random selection of headlines generated by the Yandex News algorithm for Russia (denoted here as ‘World Headlines’ in purple) and Estonia (shown in Green) combined with headlines suggested by participants, this task also supported that Russian speakers in Estonia connected most (or were ‘interested in’) with headlines proposed by their peers, secondly with articles generation for Estonia, and were more likely ‘not interested’ in articles generated by the algorithm for Russia.

In the second task, six articles were randomly selected from these headlines and participants were presented with the full article without the headline. Respondents were then asked to comment on the articles and select which one, based only on the text without any pictures or headlines, was most relevant for them. In many cases, there was a disconnect in how the respondents related to the headline (without the article) and the full article. For example, the title of the third article: “Pseudoscience: Does Estonia want to stay in this top?” (Original Title: Псевдонаука: хочет ли Эстония оставаться в таком топе?) was not interesting for many participants, but the full article which was about literacy in Estonia was discussed to be more relevant. This exercise exemplified how individuals connect with and navigate different types of text (such as headlines or full articles).

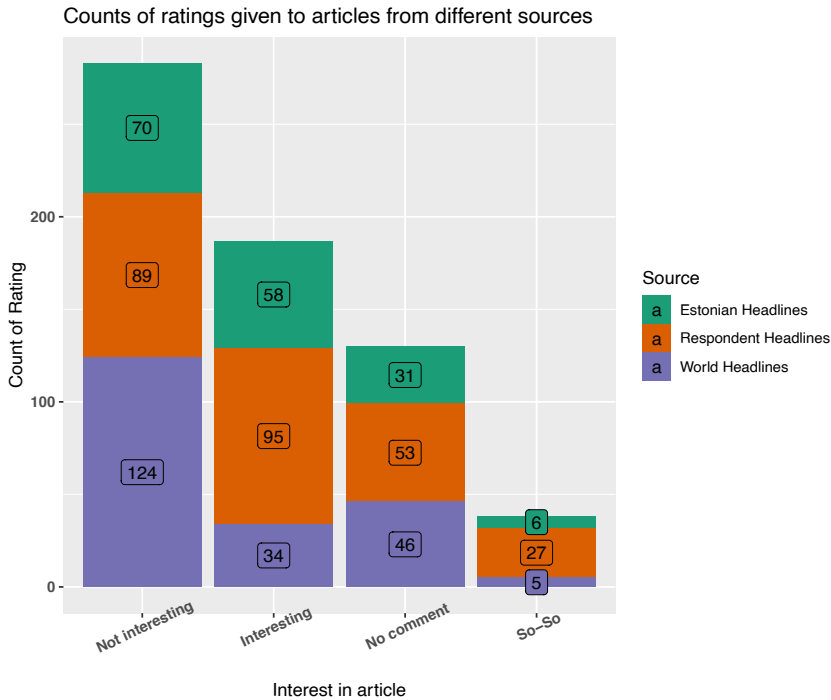


Figure 5.8 Interest in article by origin among Russian speaking audience members

Finally, when individuals were granted access to an online portal (task 3) where they could see the pictures and article descriptions or click to the full article some differences also emerged. There were some cases where respondents were interested in a headline but then disliked the article itself and vice versa. Through the process of reflecting on their interest in different articles it became apparent that some techniques used to determine whether the article would be useful to them included: deciding whether it was related to their personal/work life, assessing whether the story was local for them, and matching the headline with the images and content. Several respondents noted that the headline and articles not matching was confusing and that the mixed messages of the information meant that it was not something they connected with in general. Furthermore, some respondents commented that the news which was “too obvious” or already known to them was not interesting or relevant. In task 1, half of the respondents did not mark the article *they themselves* had shared in the first interview as either interesting or not interesting. When one respondent was asked why, he responded simply that, “I already know what it is about, there is nothing new to learn” (Respondent 3, 2018).

Thus, in terms of how Russian speaking audiences orient themselves towards Russian media, the analysis from fieldwork 2 suggests that Russian speakers in Estonia are oriented primarily toward information in Russian shared by their

peers and that which adds something new (relevant) or adds value to their personal, social, or professional life (construction). They were more likely to *not be interested* in the content generated by the Russian country algorithm even without knowing where this content came from. As one respondent noted, “this is something very geographically and mentally distant for me, it is something going on in the Urals (headline 29 of headlines for respondents to mark interested (+) or not interested (-) in Annex II) in another country and is not relevant for me, so it is a bit weird that it is even here” (respondent 12, 2019).

6. DISCUSSION

This dissertation started off considering how ‘Imagined Global Communities’ are made through various processes of orientation (Camaj and Weaver, 2013) and connection (Swart, et al., 2017) by content producers and audiences alike. Although new technological capabilities should arguably make our globalized media environment infinitely flexible in incorporating new information (Castells, 2004), the mediums through which we communicate (recall McLuhan, 1962) remain constrained by socio-economic pressures (Sylvie, 2018; Klinger-Vilenchik, 2017) and the hierarchies of influence under which they operate (Shoemaker and Reese, 2013). As we have seen through the case of Russian speaking minority groups in Estonia, the socio-economic pressures on both content producers and audiences are often influenced by conflicting political discourse which compete for discursive hegemony (Wojczewski, 2018; Lui, 2013; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). In this discursive struggle, fixated, or orientalized, representations (such as those seen in Annex IV from Study I) emerge. At the same time, media aimed at large, diverse groups, such as Russian speaking audiences, is often equally distant for these audiences (as shown through fieldwork II). Rather than being renegotiated and incorporating new nodes, these orientalized depictions and narrow channels of communication in international news media are fixated points around which imagined audiences and imagined communities are formed by relatively positioning themselves (or orienting) towards these depictions. As previous research has shown and this thesis supports, rather than completely separating themselves from these depictions, Russian speaking audiences in Estonia use diverse strategies to adapt to changing political environments (Vihalemm and Juzefovičs, 2021). However, as Castells points out, if these nodes were not relevant, they would have ceased to exist. Even if Russian speaking audiences do not fully connect with orientalized depictions in English media or the relatively distant content of a large portion of Russian media, these depictions maintain relevance as nodes of communication through group orientations.

By analyzing the text in international news headlines (in the case of this dissertation in English and Russian), it is possible to see how international ‘imagined’ audiences are presented with information and at the same time understand the different discourses audiences connect with or orient towards to identify with an ‘imagined’ community. The text in this case is a bridge in the communication between content producers seeking to reach increasingly diverse imagined audiences and audiences experiencing pressure to connect with or orient themselves within increasingly global imagined communities. This research investigated how international news media depicts minority audiences, such as Russian speakers, and how these audiences orient themselves in relation to these depictions. Within the context of growing tensions between Russia and the West, which have only continued to worsen in the time this dissertation was written, these findings help show how international news media networks operate across languages (research gap 1) and national borders (research gap 2).

In answering the four main research questions, the findings of this thesis contribute to two larger research gaps more specifically by: 1) understanding how English language media discourses about Russian speaking audiences or regions (such as the city of Narva, Estonia) influence local Russian speakers and 2) comparing Russian media across borders. The smaller research questions investigate more closely how local Russian speaking audiences orient themselves towards English media discourses (research questions 1 and 2, dataset 1, fieldwork 1, Study I) and different discourses found in Russian media (research questions 3 and 4, dataset 2, fieldwork 2, Studies II and III).

To address the first research gap, let's return to the 'small town life' metaphor from the beginning of this cover article. Just as in a small town, where 'everybody knows everybody' and it is difficult to escape one's own reputation, in our 'global village' with an infinitely expanding 'imagined audience', individuals depicted as belonging to certain groups or regions may find it equally difficult to escape this reputation. The difference between small village life and our global village is that members of a physical community can simply leave, whereas members of the global village are tied to the international representations regardless of physical location. A lot of time is saved in small town communication networks because there is no need to repeat the history, give context, or introduce those involved. As the theoretical framework and empirical findings here show, when this type of 'community-based' communication is replicated at the international media level, it reproduces fixed meanings and enables discursive hegemony. The analysis of news media in English in this dissertation exemplified how the limited space for repeating the full history and giving the local context of physically distant places (such as the city of Narva for the 'imagined audience' of English language speakers) in international news media can result in fixated depictions which do not entirely connect with locals.

The aim of this research was not to paint a grim picture of globalization. On the contrary, the opportunities that infinitely expanding networks provide cannot be understated. At the same time, the trends in international news media to attempt to connect with 'imagined global communities' replicate the limitations of discursive flexibility often found in small towns. As Castells states:

"The Global network society is a dynamic structure, it is highly malleable to social forces, to culture, to politics, to economic strategies. But what remains in all instances is its dominances over activities and people who are external to the networks" (Castells, 2004; 23)

In the case of locals to the city of Narva, although it is their city and often them as individual subjects at the center of English news media discourses, they are arguably external to the 'imagined audience' of international English news media networks. Even though international media depictions do not match the depiction of locals, English language news (and more international media) discourses maintained a certain dominance over how locals positioned themselves in relation to information about their city. Better understanding media depictions seeking to

reach increasingly diverse imagined audiences and audience orientations to these representations can help to improve the overall flexibility of our global community.

In the case of international news media in English, fixated references to Narva as a linguistically and culturally, or even politically Russian city suggest that the discourse that Russia is an ominous and real threat on the border of Estonia, Europe, and the West has become hegemonic (Study I and II). Rather than including the local narratives from the city of Narva, international news in English incorporated short snapshots of local life into the larger discourses of the city as an area of national securitization, international conflict, and the focus of local integration in Estonia (Study I). At the same time, even though more Russian speakers live in Tallinn⁸ than in Narva, or all Northeastern Estonia (Ida-Virumaa) for that matter, mentions of other Russian speaking minority groups living in Estonia were entirely ignored in international English coverage.

Although there were shifts in the reporting on the city from a national, international, and local focus to coincide with international and national events, the orientalized representations of the city remained fixed. Rather than fully connecting with these unchanging depictions, local Russian speaking audiences have oriented themselves through a ‘slight correction’ of these headlines. While the first analysis of English language media headlines shows how the city of Narva is depicted, the second analysis showed how Russian news media compares when generated by the same algorithm (Yandex News). Not only did the discursive (Study II) and statistical (Study III) analyses show limited similarities in content across borders, but fieldwork II also supported that trans-local Russian speaking audiences in Estonia do not connect equally with news generated for ‘Russia’ and that generated for ‘Estonia’.

The findings comparing the overlap in discourses (research gap 2) in Russian language media generated for Estonia, Latvia, and Russia, and topics (Study II) and framing from content generated for Estonia, the US, and Russia (Study III) indicate the uniqueness of the Estonian case. Although all headlines were taken from the Yandex News algorithm which is a Russian owned and operated company subjected to Russian laws, there was limited discursive overlap in content generated for Estonia and Russia (Figure 5.3). In the statistical analysis, headlines generated for Estonia were also unique (compared with those generated for Russia and the US) in their accurate headline representations of the article content and coverage of social welfare as key topic in reporting. Content generated for Russia shared more common discursive areas with that generated for Latvia (Study II) and more common topics and framing with content generated for the US (Study III) than with articles generated for Estonia. Whereas US and Russia

⁸ According to stat.ee, in 2021 there were 156,670 ethnic Russians living in Tallinn; however, this number does not include native Russian speakers of other nationalities or consider whether individuals speak Estonian. Meanwhile the entire population of Narva is only 57,650 and all Ida-Virumaa (North-East Estonia) is only 131,913 (of which 23,551 are ethnic Estonian).

generated articles almost seemed to interact in their use of new frames “reassurance of action” and “addressing inadequacy” (see page 61), those generated for Estonia were unique in their tendency to reference public authorities and draw attention to potential conflict by informative statements of facts. By introducing topics as though they are new events of which the reader should merely be informed about, Estonia generated content appeared to ‘raise awareness’ of new topics rather than suggest ongoing conflict (as was the case in Russian, US, and Latvian generated content).

On the other hand, Russian and US generated headlines framed topics (particularly topics related to international relations, military, and in the case of Russia Ukraine) as ongoing debates which the public should be aware of and have an opinion about. This type of coverage (referred to as ‘invitation for discussion’) works to create media events within the sub-genres described by Hutchings and Tolz (Hutchings and Tolz, 2015) as either ‘incorporation and inflation of unanticipated major events’ and ‘media coverage which ‘endogenously’ creates the event’. In the case of reporting in articles generated for Russia, the coverage of Ukraine was particularly interesting. Even though all headlines were generated by the Yandex News algorithm and thus subjected to Russian law, it was only the headlines generated for Russia that paid significant attention to Ukraine as a topic (17.45% of articles compared with 0.76/0.77% in US and Estonia filtered content). Moreover, the way in which articles about Ukraine referenced contradicting stories to invite readers for discussion not only suggests the incorporation of the ongoing event in Ukraine, but also attempts to create and inflame this topic in reporting. US generated articles related to social welfare covered topics related to the justice system in a similar fashion (see page 62, Figures 5.6 and 5.7). Although headlines generated from Latvia were not included in the framing analysis (Study III), the way in which these headlines presented issues of Russian language use in Latvian society (in the analysis of dataset II for Study II) also resonates with the ‘invitation for discussion’ frame. “Whereas Estonian headlines seem to open the debate, Latvian headlines represent the issue as one in full swing” (Erbsen, 2019; 228).

The difference between how Estonian headlines seemed generally more disconnected and aimed at informing, whereas Russian, US, and Latvian headlines attempted to connect with audiences by presenting topics as ongoing and conflictual suggest different influences on the content generated across borders. Recalling the Hierarchy of Influences model (Shoemaker and Reese, 2013) and refiguration to account for known-unknowns and unknown-unknowns in media production (Figure 2.1), this finding suggests that unique factors are at play in the content being generated for these four countries. In the case of Russia, the coverage of Ukraine (recall this data and analysis took place before the events of 2022) points to media incorporation of old discourses surrounding Ukraine and possible endogenous creation of new discussions or ‘Media Events’ surrounding this topic. In light of the recent Russian invasion of Ukraine and ongoing war between the two countries, the fact that these differences existed already in 2018 and 2019 shows the uniqueness of the Russian media space. This should be considered in

future research concerning Russian influence operations, strategic narratives, or disinformation campaigns (recall page 25). It is similarly unique and should not go unaddressed that the headlines generated for the US focused on social welfare issues and those generated for Latvia focused on Russian language issues. These differences represent a node of communication between content producers and ‘imagined audiences’. How respective audiences in the US and Latvia, and even in Estonia and Russia connect with these specific frames is a key area for future study.

Even though the target audience of Russian media headlines are arguably not Americans themselves, it does not mean that the discourses about the US from Russian media do not influence how Americans orient themselves towards these discussions in our global community (just as local Russian speakers in Narva orient themselves towards English news media). In the case of Latvia, where there is a significant Russian speaking minority, it is possible that local Russian speakers in Latvia *are* the target audience of these headlines. However, as we see through the analysis of how Russian speaker in Estonia connect with or orient towards Russian media generated in different countries, it cannot be taken for granted that just because information is presented in the same language from the same algorithm, it is connected with equally by local Russian speaking audiences. Nevertheless, this thesis has identified these two issues as potential areas of conflict: social welfare in the US and Russian language use in Latvia. While it is beyond the reach of the current paper to analyze how Americans or even Russian speaking individuals in Latvia connect with or orient towards these topics, the Estonian case can provide some insight to the general connectivity and orientation of individuals to information in another language (English) or in the same language (Russian) but from a different country.

Although the description of the city of Narva by locals differed discursively from the English language news media headlines, these depictions did not exist in entirely separate communicative spaces. Rather than directly connecting with English language news media headlines (recall Swart, et al., 2017), individuals connected with the other individuals in their community in their orientation towards the larger news narratives in English. Recall that the four forms of connectivity are inclusiveness (what people connect over), engagement (how people connect), relevance (what new information can be learned), and construction (the value of connecting). Also important is that measuring connectivity, even for larger media events, is far more complicated than counting the number of viewers of an event (Fürst, 2020). Therefore, through the discursive analysis of news media headlines in English about Narva and interviews with locals inquiring about their home city, I investigated the connectivity and orientations of local Russian speakers towards English news media discourses about their hometown and region. In the case of local Russian speakers in Narva, individuals appeared to connect with *each other* in their orientations of ‘slight corrections’ of news depictions in English. In terms of relevance, the interviews also revealed that there was a common belief among locals that there was nothing new (or relevant) to be learned from news media depictions in English since, in their opinion, much

of what foreign audiences know about Narva is misrepresentative and unchanging. Moreover, the common belief that ‘foreigners know little’ or ‘that Narva is a Russian speaking city’ suggests little value in connecting with English language news media discourses for locals (constructiveness). The one way in which locals did connect with English language news media headlines is by the way they ‘engaged’ in proposing small corrections about their city, such as: ‘Narva is historically more Swedish and Danish than Russian’ and ‘there are no ethnic Russians in Narva’. Thus, although there is not a high level of connectivity, this suggests that local Russian speaking audiences are still included in the network of communication under which international English language news media operates. Rather than connecting at all levels with these discourses, locals connected more in their orientation towards what they thought international audiences know about their city (which were consistent with the analysis of the headlines from English language news media) and engagement with these depictions.

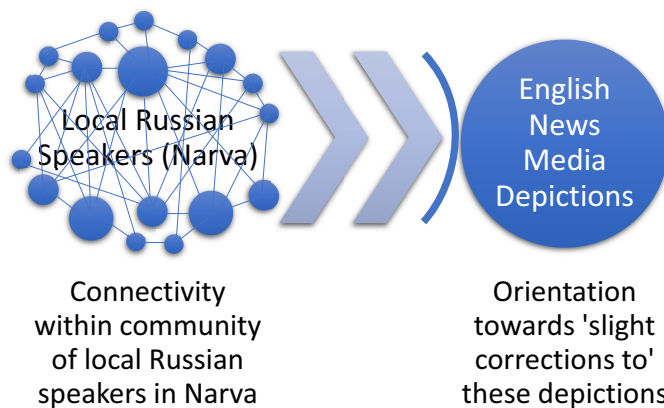


Figure 6.1 Local network orientation towards English language news media depictions

Similarly, the findings from the two stage interviews in fieldwork II showed how individual Russian speakers in Estonia connected with news headlines and articles in Russian. In doing so, these individuals oriented themselves in relation to the different information sources and the discourses represented by these sources. Although the makeup of the headlines (respondent generated, and Yandex News algorithm generated for Estonia and Russia) was unknown to the respondents, the way individuals interacted with headlines and commented on their interest or disinterest in certain content was telling of how they connected and oriented themselves. Even though these respondents were not from the same city (as was the case with respondents from Narva), and the trans-local identity of these individuals (as those who have moved cities or work/study in predominantly Estonian language environments) was much more prominent, there was a common orientation of distance from content generated for Russia and connection with content shared by their peers. Comments by respondents, when asked why particular Russian generated articles were not interesting, showed that

this information was ‘distant’ for them or had no ‘value’ to their work, education, or social life. Thus, in terms of connectivity, these interviews showed that trans-local Russian speaking audiences in Estonia did not connect with content in Russian which was generated by the Yandex News algorithm for the Russian Federation in terms of inclusiveness, relevance, or constructiveness. Just as respondents from Narva engaged with English language news media through ‘slight corrections’ however, respondents in fieldwork II engaged with content generated for Russia by marking ‘not interested’ more often than for content generated for Estonia or provided by other respondents. This ‘engagement’ in the case of local Russian speakers in Narva proposing ‘slight corrections’ and trans-local Russian speaking respondents commenting on ‘disinterest’ shows that although these two local Russian speaking ‘audiences’ do not entirely connect with either English language news media or that generated by the Yandex News algorithm, they do engage with it in order to position or orient themselves.

In setting out to answer the research questions of this dissertation, I admittedly did not expect to discover that Russian media headlines generated for Estonia were significantly different from those generated for Latvia and the US. On the contrary, the expectation was that headlines generated for Russia would differ from all other countries of analysis due to the unique media landscape in the Russian Federation and semi authoritarian control over media content. The discovery that headlines generated for the US and Russia share common reporting techniques and seem to interact (through reassurance of action and addressing inadequacy framing) suggests that the historically contested relations between the two larger countries (and social systems, institutions, and routines which continue to operate under these relations) continues to be reproduced in the topics reported and subsequent discourse. The similarities between headlines generated for Latvia and Russia (which recall discursively focused on larger geopolitical actors and worsening relations between Russia and the West) were also surprising in comparison to the lack of overlap in Russian-Estonian generated headlines (Study II, Figure 5.3, page 56). While more testing is needed to understand how local Russian speaking audiences in Latvia connect with or orient themselves towards these discourses and depictions, the finding of this study suggest media generated for Russia and Latvia have some similar influences at play which do not exist in the Estonian case.

With the ongoing war in Ukraine, which has even further divided Russia and the west, future investigations comparing how Russian news media compares across borders will be needed. Based on the findings here that highlight the media frames used to connect with audiences, future research into media coverage which seems to ‘invite’ audiences for discussion, ‘raise awareness’ of specific topics, or interact by ‘reassuring of actions’ (locally), and ‘addressing inadequacies’ (elsewhere) could help us understand potential areas for further schisms. Moreover, considering how many similarities existed between headlines generated for the Russian Federation and those generated for the United States, future studies could also consider how Americans connect with or orient towards the discourses presented in Russian news media. Although the Yandex News algorithm is arguably

under the influence of Russian systems and institutions, this dissertation demonstrates that, as of 2018/2019 significant differences in topics, frames, and discourses displayed for different country filters did exist. It will be interesting to see after 2022 whether or how these differences have shifted and if the way individuals connect with or orient towards these shifts has evolved as well.

When it comes to the source of headlines, the use of the news easily accessible from Google (to determine the discourses in English language news headlines, Study I) and those generated by the Yandex News algorithm (to compare the discourses in Russian media across borders, Study II and III) have several limitations. Although a great deal of care was taken to ensure that location settings were disabled and a separate browser was used to collect information (in this case Firefox whereas the author used Chrome daily), these are still just two sources of online information, and this dissertation cannot make a broad claim about English or Russian language news media. What the analysis of these sources can do, is give specific findings about the discourses in news media in English and Russian as prioritized in the hierarchy of influences of production (including algorithm preferences). Considering the increasing regulation on the Yandex News algorithm by the Russian Federation, it can also speculate about the role the Russian state plays in the content, but these speculations remain open to further investigation into the production of Russian media content inside the Russian Federation. Furthermore, Yandex may not be the most common source of information for Russian speaking populations outside of Russia. In fact, the findings here that Russian speaking respondents in Estonia were least interested in news generated for Russia and only slightly more interested in that generated for Estonia could be affected by individual use of Yandex. This remains to be further tested on the side of media reception.

Moreover, the difference in the number and type of articles analyzed from English and Russian language news media is something that cannot be overlooked. In the case of this dissertation, the analysis of international news media in English and Russian was used differently. The former was used to understand how international news media for whom Russian speaking audiences *are not* the initial imagined audiences (English news media) reports *about* Russian speaking regions. The latter considered how media for which Russian speaking audiences *are the imagined audiences* (Russian news media) reports *to* these audiences. In both cases, interviews helped to shed light on how individual Russian speakers oriented themselves to the larger discourses in these outlets whether or not they were the target audience. Still, future studies could consider different methodological approaches that could balance the sample size and apply interactive interviewing methods for both.

Considering the increase in political tension and subsequent struggle for discursive hegemony in international news media, future research designs should seek to tackle these and similar challenges with research frameworks that include participant design and interview structures that do not provoke or reproduce saturated discourses. This dissertation has aimed to do this by using interview designs that indirectly ask participants what the international community knows rather

than what is in the news (fieldwork 1). It has also used participant design for the collection of data which allowed participants to present what information is relevant for them from their communication space rather than presenting them with the limited information pre-selected by a single or even group of researchers. One of the key strengths of this dissertation is the unique design which can be replicated and developed further to understand the challenges of modern communication while reducing the chance of replicating or projecting hegemonic discourses in the process.

At the same time, by not provoking political topics in the interviews, such as asking how much Russian or Russian language media an individual consumes (and if they use Yandex), what type of citizenship they have, or what their views are on relations between Estonia and Russia, it is possible that informative information could have been missed; however, the method of observing practices and encouraging respondent participation was not possible with more provoking questions that could have guided interviews in a certain way due to the saturated discourses on these topics in Estonia. Future studies could compare these two methods to understand the methodological challenges of and solutions to researching politically charged topics.

As a final note for this discussion, I would like to remind the reader that in 2018 the city of Narva, Estonia was depicted by locals as ‘a place for a handshake (or even a hug) between Europe and Russia’ and even in English language news reporting on the city there was a discourse of the city as an “East-West Bridge”. Within the context of the war in Ukraine, future studies will tell how this discourse has evolved or shifted and discover where the new East-West bridge and place for a handshake/hug exists. Currently, it seems as though there has been a relative shift on the border region. While some international news in English still covers the city as a Russian City and the Baltic region in general as home to “The most Dangerous Place on Earth” (Karnitschnig, 2022), recent coverage has also shifted to show the conflicted discourses of locals in the city.

How these shifts play out among more trans-local Russian speakers (or even just local) in different cities is not so easy to assess; however, considering that since the beginning of the War in Ukraine in February of 2022 over 50,000 Ukrainian refugees have come to Estonia, understanding the competing discourses in Russian language media across borders will become even more essential. Particularly since news from the Russian Federation has been blocked in Estonia, although satellite reception has not been disrupted in Narva, and filtered strongly in other countries. Meanwhile the Russian Federation has strengthened and expanded censorship, and since many western countries have also cut ties with Russia, it can be expected that the gap between competing discourse will only continue to grow and more concretely divide. Future studies analyzing the discourses in Russian language media content will have to pay even more attention to media from the Russian Federation. It will have to consider that media content is filtered even more strongly within Russia and across borders and accessible information outside of Russia may differ significantly from information within.

7. CONCLUSION

To conclude this thesis, I reintroduce the research questions and present the main findings for future application.

1) How does international media in English depict Russian speaking audiences?

International news media depictions in English of Russian speaking audiences are arguably created for English speaking audiences, and often produced by media content creators with relative distance from the local Russian speaking communities themselves. In English language news media coverage of the city of Narva, Estonia from 2015–2018 (Study I), Russian speakers were often described briefly as having close linguistic, cultural, and often political ties with Russia. These depictions of Russian speaking minority groups were not the focus of the media coverage, but rather an entry point for a larger story on relations between Narva/Estonia/the ‘West’/NATO/ the U.S. and Russia. Thus, rather than ‘depicting’ Russians speaking audiences, English news media makes assumptions about these audiences to create a comprehensive narrative of international relations. These media depictions of the city of Narva were not limited to Russian speaking regions, but often made larger sweeping parallels with Estonia as a whole, ‘The Baltics’, or ‘Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania’. These connections showed how the city was contextualized within larger discourses competing for hegemony among international imagined audiences.

While this study did not analyze headlines related to other Russian speaking regions, it found a tendency in reporting of Narva to depict Russian speakers as part of a larger community and ignore the geographical, cultural, and ideological distinctions of different Russian speaking communities.

a. How have the discourses in these depictions changed over time?

Although the lens of coverage shifted from national, international, and local, the fundamental themes and underlying questions suggested in reporting remained consistent (Study I). The three lenses of analysis found in reporting focuses on national securitization, international conflict, and local integration of Russian speaking communities. While these lenses did signify shift in coverage, they remained embedded in the discourse that “Russia is an ominous and real threat” and emphasize that Russian speaking regions are vulnerable to this threat. The shifts in the focus of this vulnerability occurred simultaneously with international events. From 2015–2016 the focus was on national tensions on the border following Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014 and Russian elections in 2016. Then from 2016–2017 this lens shifted towards an international one during the US elections and in the aftermath of the election of Donald Trump. Finally, from 2017–2018, as Estonia celebrated its 100-year anniversary (February 24, 2018), the focus was on local Russian speaking populations and their integration, and

the economic and cultural development of border regions and cities such as Narva. While these lenses changed overtime, the common discourse did not deviate from the common narrative of Russia as a threat. This pattern of shifting lenses to portray the same discourse over time is one which is expected to continue and could be analyzed further in future studies.

b. Are there orientalized portrayals found in these depictions?

Despite shifts identified in Study I from national (securitized), international (external influence), to local (integration), all time periods in reporting used seemingly recycled images from the city of Narva even when the larger story was about international relations between Russia and the West. Repeated images of the statue of Lenin in Narva (which is not even in the city center), the Russian President, the border between Narva and Ivangorod (the neighboring Russian city), and the Kreenholm factory or Russian nesting dolls all link the city with Russian history, politics, geography, and culture. Although there were arguably attempts to change the narrative of the city in the 2017–2018 timeframe, the dominant discourse was placed on Estonia’s initiatives (and underlying need) to integrate Russian speakers to oppose Russian influence. Thus, the depictions of Russian speaking minority groups did not change but were simply reframed in how they were linked with larger national and international relations.

2) How do Russian speaking individuals in Estonia orient themselves in relation to these depictions?

The comparison of interviews with local Russian speakers in Narva (fieldwork I) with the English news media headlines (dataset I) found that individual Russian speakers orient themselves in response to, rather than connection with, English language news media discourses. While locals were aware of the international reputation of their city as a “Russian city” which could potentially be ‘next’ on Russia’s list (after the annexation of Crimea), they countered these representations in their depictions of the city. At the national level, locals depicted Narva as ‘The Pearl of the Baltics’ and a ‘city of historical and modern views’. Internationally it is ‘a place for a handshake between the East and the West’ and even ‘a window to Europe’. Locally, the city is a hopeful one which *will be* ‘next’ in culture, innovation, and development in Estonia. Thus, even though Russian speaking audiences would not be considered to be the imagined audience of international news media in English, individual Russian speakers are still interacting with and seemingly cannot avoid the orientalized depictions in English language news media. Rather than positioning themselves in complete opposition to these depictions, local Russian speakers connect with this information by offering slight corrections and additions to the generalizations about their city (Study I). Future studies could continue to address these fixed images and how individuals orient towards them using innovative methodologies which limit the provocation of hegemonic discourses.

3) How does international Russian media compare across borders?

The overall findings from the analysis of Russian media generated by the Yandex News algorithm for different countries (dataset II) was that there are few overlaps in Russian language media content across borders. Moreover, there was a significant difference in how headlines represented articles across borders. Media generated for the Russian Federation was much more likely to display headlines which did not represent the overall topic and framing of the article. The same was true for articles generated for the US. Articles generated for Estonia on the other hand were much more likely to have headlines which accurately represented the topic and framing of the article. Thus, there is a difference in how headlines represent information based on the country for which the headline is generated.

Just as Russian speaking audiences are diverse, the Russian news media created for these audiences also varies. The limited overlap in Russian language media was shown discursively (Study II) and statistically (Study III). Despite the limited overlap in content, this study did find a general tendency for online Russian media to prioritize traditional frames of ‘human interest’ and employ newer ‘reader targeting’ frames that ‘invite’ the reader for discussion, ‘raise awareness’ for the reader, ‘reassure [the reader] of action’, and ‘address inadequacies’ (dataset II) the reader may or may not have been aware of. Future research testing framing in online media and considering ‘reader targeting’ frames will continue to show how content producers and audiences are adapting to and orienting themselves within imagined global communities.

a. How do the topics covered and traditional frames compare?

Study III showed that there is a statistical difference in topics covered and traditional framing based on country. While this dissertation does is not able to assess the precise cause of these differences, it can theorize that the hierarchies of influence existing in media creation across borders could have some effect on these differences. Most notably, in the period of analysis (2018–2019) Ukraine was reported on significantly more in headlines generated for Russia and was almost a non-issue in those generated for Estonian and the US. Meanwhile, social welfare and local elections were significant issues in the Estonia generated headlines and international relations was reported significantly more in the US generated headlines. In terms of framing, while there was no overall statistical difference in which traditional frames were used in each country, there were statistical variations in how different issues were framed. For example, the issue of military was framed more thematically in headlines generated for the US and Russia (suggesting the theme is more embedded in an ongoing discourse) and more episodic in those generated for Estonia (indicating it is a ‘new’ topic readers should be informed about). On the other hand, local elections and international relations were thematic in Estonia generated headlines and more episodic in Russian and US generated headlines. These comparisons suggest that there is more overlap in topics and framing between headlines generated for Russia and the US than Russia and Estonia, despite the common references to Estonia’s large Russian speaking

population. One common overlap in the framing in headlines from all countries was the significance of ‘human interest’ as a common frame regardless of issues reported on. Considering that previous research on traditional frames found that ‘attribution of responsibility’ and ‘conflict’ frames were the most common in print journalism, further testing of the framing in online media is needed.

b. How do the discourses concerning ‘Europe’ and ‘Russia’ compare?

Study II also found a limited overlap in the discourses of reporting on ‘Europe’ and ‘Russia’ in headlines generated for Estonia, Latvia, and Russia. While there were some common themes and interactions between different discourse, these interactions were based not on shared linguistic or cultural references but tied more to national events. The only common area of overlap among all three was that Europe is generally more unaffordable than Russia. Headlines generated for Latvia and Russia, and those generated for Estonia and Latvia had many more areas of discursive overlap than headlines generated for Estonia and Russia. Whereas Estonia generated headlines focused on state actors (the president or other government officials) discussing Estonian relations with Russia, Latvia generated headlines referred to local actors discussing broader European-Russian relations. Meanwhile, Russia generated headlines focused on actions taken by European or ‘western’ countries (most notably Sweden and the US) which were worsening relations with Russia.

The analysis of dataset II for Study II found three discursive pairs in the reporting of Europe and Russia: Russia as a threat vs. Russia as a scapegoat, Europe as expensive vs. Russia as cheap, and security and culture as mutual threats vs. security and culture as exclusive threats. A closer look at these discursive pairs in content filtered for each country shows how the debates concerning European-Russian relations are portrayed as ongoing local issues (in the cases of Latvia generated headlines), relatively new issues being addressed by national authorities (in the case of Estonia generated headlines), or issues between specific countries and Russia (Russia generated headlines). Rather than existing in isolation however, the discourses on ‘Europe’ and ‘Russia’ seemed to interact across borders. Overall, this analysis showed that in the analysis of headlines generated for all countries, Russia was not considered as a part of Europe but was still relevant to relations within Europe and between individual countries and Russia.

4) How do individual Russian speakers in Estonia orient themselves towards Russian media generated for different countries?

Finally, this study combined the analysis of dataset II and fieldwork II to show how trans-local Russian speaking audiences connect with and orient toward media in Russian generated in Estonia and Russia and that proposed by their peers. Although all respondents were found from different sources and did not know each other personally, respondents connected more with articles suggested by their peers than articles generated for Estonia. There was a strong disinterest in

articles generated for Russia and several respondents commented that this information was ‘too far away for them’, ‘irrelevant to their everyday life’, or even ‘recognizably influenced by political biases’. There was a noticeable difference in the ways individuals found information which they deemed interesting for themselves and that which they would share with others. Most respondents also mentioned that they were not likely to repost information on public social media but preferred personal messages to share relevant information. Overall, this experimental study finds that trans-local Russian speakers in Estonia are more likely to connect with media content which is produced locally or generated for local audiences.

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ANNEXES

Annex I. Interview questions, structure, and notes (Fieldwork I, Narva, 2017)

Questions for media representatives (Study I):

- (1) *How did you get into your current profession?*
- (2) *What is your impression of the way international news outlets, particularly those in English, report on Narva or Estonia?*
- (3) *What do you think the population in Narva thinks about the way they are represented in International News media? Do you think they feel accurately represented? Do you think they do not consider how they are represented?*
- (4) *Is Narva comparable to other largely Russian Speaking Regions? For example Lasnemäe in Tallinn or the Latgale region in Latvia?*
- (5) *And what is the hot news topic that Narvians themselves would like to represent by in international news?*
- (6) *For the past few years the number of tourists or students from the US for example who come to Narva seems to have increased. What information would you like or what do you think the people from Narva would like for these individuals to take back with them?*
- (7) *And do you see a difference in how Estonia is represented in International News Media vs. How Narva is represented?*
- (8) *What is the local media's role in representing issues that are important to citizens of Narva? How does this local media compare with National Estonian Media or International Media?*

Questions to local residents (Fieldwork I):

- (1) *What is home to you?*
- (2) *How would you describe your home town to foreigners who have never visited? (in three sentences)*
- (3) *What do think foreigners know about your home town or region?*
- (4) *What would you like them to know?*
- (5) *Do you know of tourists or groups who have visited your city? Where do they usually come from and why do you think they visit?*
- (6) *If you made a headline about your city for an international news outlet, what would it read?*

Annex II. Interview questions, structure, and notes (Fieldwork II, Tallinn/Tartu 2018/19)

Stage 1 Questions

1. *Can you please find a piece of news or information that is interesting for you? (Найдите информацию или новости, которые вам интересны. Вы можете использовать любое устройство.)*
2. *What do you consider home? (Что такое (что значит) дом для вас?)*
3. *How would you describe your hometown, region, or country to foreigners who have never visited (in three sentences)? (Как бы вы описали свой родной город иностранцам, которые здесь никогда не были. (В трех предложениях))*
4. *What do you think foreigners know about your hometown, region, or country? (Что, как вам кажется, иностранцы думают о вашем родном городе или регионе?)*
5. *What would you like them to know? (Что бы вы хотели, чтобы они знали?)*
6. *Can you take 10 minutes to look up a piece of news or information that you might read, like, comment on or share (SPECIFY WITH WHOM). Who would you share this with? Where would you post it? (Можете ли вы найти информацию или новости, которыми вы поделились бы с кем-нибудь? Чтобы вы сделали с этой информацией? Вы бы прочитали и суммировали или прокомментировали и поделились ей? И если бы поделились, то с кем и где?)*

(Вы не можете найти информацию или новости которые Вы показали бы иностранцам, которые очень мало знают о вашем родном городе?)

Stage 2 Questions and Process

1: Questions

Share and discuss headline found by them in between (Вы нашли еще информацию или новости которые вам кажется важным? Вы можете это показать и об этом говорить?)

Why is this piece relevant? (Почему эта информация актуальна?)

Where-How would they use it? (Как и где вы бы использовали эти? Ставали бы на Фейсбуке или ставала бы лайк? Отправили бы кому нибудь или рассказали на личном?)

2. List of headlines (Список заголовков)

Look through and see if there are any which are or might be interesting from the title. What would you do with this information? Does the information seem useful? (Посмотрите и прокомментируйте, есть ли что-нибудь интересное из названия? Каких из них кажется релевантный и полезный а почему? Что бы вы сделали с этой информацией?)

3. Articles without headlines (Статьи без заголовков)

Take a look at the articles

Which if any seem interesting or useful (Посмотрите эти статьи и скажите пожалуйста, каких из них кажутся интересно и полезно а почему?)

Can you give these ones that seem useful a headline-name? (Можете ли Вы предлагать заголовок одну?)

What might you do with this information?

4. Padlet simulation

Scroll through and discuss the different articles there. (Пролистайте и обсудите различные статьи там.)

Are there any articles you would read? Any you would not read? (Есть ли какие-нибудь статьи, которые вы бы прочитали? А Которые ты бы не прочитал?)

Would you share the information there? (Вы бы поделились информацией там?)

Which articles would you support others reading which would you personally dislike or disapprove. (Какие статьи вы бы поддержали, читая другие, которые вы лично не любите или не одобряете.)

Materials for Stage two of Interview

Article 1

Банки разъяснили условия блокировки

Как правильно встретить зиму, чтобы она прошла удачно: советы для знаков зодиака

Kaks päeva varem juhiloa saanud noor juht alahindas libedaid teeolusid

FOTOD SÜNDMUSKOHALT | Ülemistes hukkus rongilt löögi saanud noormees

Otse Postimehest: Kaia Ivaga pensionireformist

В преддверии Рождества люди чаще обращаются за экспресс-кредитами

Õpetajal läheb raskeks, kui klassis on liiga palju erinevusi

Austraalia tunnistas Lääne-Jerusalemma Iisraeli pealinnana

Richard Branson: viiepäevane töönädal sureb varsti välja
“Меня три часа держали в наручниках, а их отпустили сразу”. Дальнобойщику из Эстонии во Франции “подбросили” 12 нелегалов
Tervisliku toitumise põhitõed: MIS BASEERUVAD PÕHJAMAADE JA EESTI UUTEL TOITUMISSOOVITUSTEL, ON TÄISKASVANUTE JA LASTE JAOKS SARNASED
Noortekohtumised “Loodus, Sport, Tervis”
The Technology of N-Words
Какие дни являются в этом году нерабочими, какие — сокращенными и что нужно знать о работе на праздниках

Article 2

В Таллинне существенно подешевел бензин
Передумали: Европа не отменит перевод часов в 2019 году
Analüüs: Euroopa vastus Kertsi väina konfliktil näitab täielikku saatatust, olukorda kontrollib Putin
Jõulukingid kätte 0€ eest!
High-Dose Antipsychotics Raise Kids' Risk of Unexpected Death
Арендатор-клец для хозяина квартиры хуже пожара
Mängu- Ja Õppevahendid Kingega Jagatud: Hariduse Tugiteenuste Keskus Kogud
Peredele Koje Kaasa Andmiseks
Kuidas Momo teemat lastele seletada?
Uuenenud Tark Tee portaali kasutamine muutub kasutajate jaoks lihtsamaks
Псевдонаука: хочет ли Эстония оставаться в таком тоне?
Üliõpilaste teadustööde konkursi parimad on Karin Hanga ja Katre Juganson
Body language, the power is in the palm of your hands | Allan Pease | TEDx-MacquarieUniversity
Semioculus
ФОТО: Самая красивая елка Европы? Рождественская красавица Вильнюса с высоты птичьего полета

Randomly selected headlines generated for Estonia

В Эстонии стартует международный музыкальный фестиваль «IdeeJazz»
В Таллинне презентуют спецавтобус для наркоманов
В Эстонии появились две новые политические партии
Зачем Силы обороны Эстонии потребовали право на тайную слежку
Истребители НАТО продолжают осваивать небо Эстонии
Эстонский бизнесмен подарит сотрудникам по 50 тысяч евро
Эстонцы продолжают платить дань «Кресту Свободы»
Торговые центры в Эстонии проверяют на пожарную безопасность
Тигру Боцману из Таллиннского зоопарка нашли зарубежную невесту
Великобритания решила усилить военное присутствие в Эстонии
В центре Таллинна протестовали против миграционного пакта ООН
Железные нервы: как Ратас продавил в Рийгигогу бюджет на 2019 год
Храм или музей: кому досталась таллиннская церковь Нигулисте
Жителей Эстонии отучают получать пенсии на дому — как это делается
По делу об отмывании денег в Danske Bank задержаны десять человек

Randomly selected headlines generated for Russia-World

*МЧС опубликовало видео пожара в гипермаркете в Санкт-Петербурге
«РИА Новости» опубликовало фотографии новых плацкартных вагонов РЖД
В ГИБДД планируют приравнять ряд лекарств к алкоголю и наркотикам
Розозин предложил проверить подлинность высадки американцев на Луну
Проход через Керченский пролив открыли после провокации Украины
Зурабишвили победила на выборах президента Грузии
Минобороны показало испытания новой ракеты системы ПРО
Порошенко внес в Раду проект о расторжении договора о дружбе с Россией
Конституционный суд признал соглашение о границе Чечни и Ингушетии
ФСБ назвала Крымский мост главной целью провокаций Украины
На Урале ликвидировали департамент, которым руководила Глацких
Суд постановил выдворить украинскую журналистку из России
Неизвестные захватили винницкий собор канонической УПЦ
В подмосковном Дзержинском частично обрушилось здание
Б: водителей предложили проверять на знание ПДД при замене прав*

Headlines for respondents to mark not interested (-) or interested (+)

- 1 *Банки разъяснили условия блокировки*
- 2 *The Technology of N-Words*
- 3 *Üliõpilaste teadustööde konkursi parimad on Karin Hanga ja Katre Juganson*
- 4 *Тигру Боцману из Таллиннского зоопарка нашли зарубежную невесту*
- 5 *Как правильно встретить зиму, чтобы она прошла удачно: советы для знаков зодиака*
- 6 *Какие дни являются в этом году нерабочими, какие — сокращенными и что нужно знать о работе на праздниках*
- 7 *Body language, the power is in the palm of your hands | Allan Pease | TEDx-MacquarieUniversity*
- 8 *Великобритания решила усилить военное присутствие в Эстонии*
- 9 *Минобороны показало испытания новой ракеты системы ПРО*
- 10 *Зурабишвили победила на выборах президента Грузии*
- 11 *Kaks päeva varem juhiloa saanud noor juht alahindas libedaid teeolusid*
- 12 *В Таллинне существенно подешевел бензин*
- 13 *Semioculus*
- 14 *В центре Таллинна протестовали против миграционного пакта ООН*
- 15 *FOTOD SÜNDMUSKOHALT | Ülemistes hukkus rongilt lõõgi saanud noortees*
- 16 *Передумали: Европа не отменит перевод часов в 2019 году*
- 17 *ФОТО: Самая красивая елка Европы? Рождественская красавица Вильнюса с высоты птичьего полета*
- 18 *Железные нервы: как Ратас продал в Рийгикогу бюджет на 2019 год*
- 19 *Конституционный суд признал соглашение о границе Чечни и Ингушетии*
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- 23 *В Эстонии стартует международный музыкальный фестиваль «IdeeJazz»*
- 24 *Храм или музей: кому досталась таллиннская церковь Нигулисте*
- 25 *В преддверии Рождества люди чаще обращаются за экспресс-кредитами*

- 26 *Jõulukingid kätte 0€ eest!*
- 27 *В Таллине презентуют спецавтобус для наркоманов*
- 28 *Жителей Эстонии отучают получать пенсии на дому — как это делается*
- 29 *На Урале ликвидировали департамент, которым руководила Глацких*
- 30 *ФСБ назвала Крымский мост главной целью провокаций Украины*
- 31 *Õpetajal läheb raskeks, kui klassis on liiga palju erinevusi*
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- 37 *Зачем Силы обороны Эстонии потребовали право на тайную слежку*
- 38 *МЧС опубликовало видео пожара в гипермаркете в Санкт-Петербурге*
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- 41 *Richard Branson: viiepäevane töönädal sureb varsti välja*
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- 43 *Истребители НАТО продолжают осваивать небо Эстонии*
- 44 *«РИА Новости» опубликовало фотографии новых плацкартных вагонов РЖД*
- 45 *“Меня три часа держали в наручниках, а их отпустили сразу”. Дальнобойщику из Эстонии во Франции “подбросили” 12 нелегалов*
- 46 *Kuidas Moto teemat lastele seletada?*
- 47 *Эстонский бизнесмен подарит сотрудникам по 50 тысяч евро*
- 48 *В ГИБДД планируют приравнять ряд лекарств к алкоголю и наркотикам*
- 49 *Ъ: водителей предложили проверять на знание ПДД при замене прав*
- 50 *В подмосковном Дзержинском частично обрушилось здание*
- 51 *Tervisliku toitumise põhitõed: MIS BASEERUVAD PÕHJAMAAD JA EESTI UUTEL TOITUMISSOOVITUSTEL, ON TÄISKASVANUTE JA LASTE JAOKS SARNASED*
- 52 *Uuenenud Tark Tee portaali kasutamine muutub kasutajate jaoks lihtsamaks*
- 53 *Эстонцы продолжают платить дань «Кресту Свободы»*
- 54 *Рогозин предложил проверить подлинность высадки американцев на Луну*
- 55 *Noortekohtumised “Loodus, Sport, Tervis”*
- 56 *Псевдонаука: хочет ли Эстония оставаться в таком тоне?*
- 57 *Торговые центры в Эстонии проверяют на пожарную безопасность*
- 58 *Проход через Керченский пролив открыли после провокации Украины*

Full articles without headlines for respondents to comment on and select in terms of relevance

Article 1

Услуга доставки пенсии на дом подорожает в Эстонии более чем на 600% — с нынешних 1 евро и 10 центов до 7,70 евро. Нововведение затронет около 5000 пенсионеров, сообщает ERR. Повышение затрагивает и около 600 жителей страны, которые получают пособия от Кассы страхования по безработице.

Доходность пенсионных фондов Эстонии находится в минусе
В Департаменте социального страхования пояснили, что стоимость услуги не менялась уже два года, а необходимость её повышения связана, в частности, с постоянным повышением в стране минимальной заработной платы. То есть постоянные расходы, связанные с доставкой пенсий на дом, с нового года возрастут.

По словам финансового директора Департамента социального страхования Сигне Уустал, в связи с повышением стоимости услуги получателям пенсии было бы правильнее открыть банковский счет.

Дольше живешь — больше работаешь: в Эстонии изменили пенсионный закон
Как писал Sputnik Эстония, ранее эстонский парламент принял закон, изменяющий пенсионный возраст и формулу расчета пенсии в зависимости от средней продолжительности жизни в стране. Авторы закона утверждают, что теперь у эстоноземельцев есть возможность присоединиться ко второй ступени пенсионного страхования таким образом, чтобы самостоятельно решать, когда именно ему выходить на пенсию. Нововведения в основном затронут тех, кто родился не ранее 1962 года и достигнет пенсионного возраста после 2026 года.

А с 2027 года изменение пенсионного возраста будет зависеть от изменений средней ожидаемой продолжительности жизни людей в возрасте от 65 лет. В настоящий момент пенсионный возраст в Эстонии установлен в зависимости от года рождения и составляет 63 года и 6 месяцев.

Скоряк: вторая ступень пенсионной системы лишает людей обеспеченной старости

Если ожидаемая продолжительность жизни увеличится, пенсионный возраст тоже увеличится, и наоборот. Пенсионный возраст может повышаться не более чем на 3 месяца за календарный год.

Article 2

Вследствие частичного обрушения производственного здания в подмосковном городе Дзержинском пострадало четверо человек, три человека погибли, сообщает пресс-служба МЧС России 17 декабря, передает ТАСС.

Представитель МЧС сообщил, что извлечены тела трех погибших. Четверо пострадавших госпитализированы. Источник также уточнил, что разбор завалов продолжается, однако «по предварительным данным, из-под завалов извлечены все, кто мог под ними находиться».

По данным МЧС, в одноэтажном производственном здании при проведении ремонтных работ обрушилось бетонное перекрытие. По предварительным данным, обрушение произошло из-за нарушения «техники безопасности и технологии при проведении ремонтно-строительных работ».

Здание, в котором произошел инцидент, принадлежит ООО «Техногрупп», производителю оборудования для систем вентиляции. Площадь обрушения составила 130 кв. м.

В ликвидации последствий обрушения участвуют 116 человек и 35 единиц техники.

Напомним, что в сентябре прошлого года в городе Балашихе (Московская область) обрушилась стена кинотеатра «Союз» из-за ремонтных работ, ведущихся в здании. Пострадали 10 человек, в том числе один ребенок.

Article 3

Эстония, однозначно, в топе. Она знаменита на весь мир как стартапами, так и государственными проектами. Действительно, очень приятно ощущать то, что маленькая страна известна многим. В моей сфере достаточно сказать, что ты из Эстонии, как тут же можно услышать, что «Вау, Эстония, ребята, вы делаете потрясающую работу, ваш биобанк, ваша система э-здоровья, в целом классная система здравоохранения, внедрение персональной медицины маситабами, о которых другие страны только начинают задумываться». И ты улыбаешься в ответ, тебе действительно приятно понимать, что твоя страна находится в топе. А потом ты возвращаешься в Эстонию и понимаешь еще одну вещь, об еще одном лидерстве, о котором ты бы хотел забыть и не знать – это проблема засилья псевдонауки.

Раньше было очень почетным говорить, что мы – читающая нация. Теперь нужно обязательно уточнять: а что именно читают наши граждане? Не так давно выяснилось, что топовая литература в Эстонии – это книги от магов, чародеев и людей с якобы медицинскими знаниями. Это книги, в которых пишут, как лечить рак при помощи самовнушения, книги, которые рассказывают о том, что врач не поможет при болезнях, нужно просто думать позитивно. Есть еще все-таки книги и для тех, кто все-таки заболел, тогда литература предлагает лечиться содой, уксусом, лимонным соком и керосином. Рецептов в этих книгах море, выбор огромный, научных знаний – ровно ноль, да разве же они нужны? Научные знания скучные – не универсальные, не обещают чудес и моментального выздоровления. То ли дело сода – упаковка стоит дешево, а лечить можно все, от аллергии у детей, молочницы у женщин до раковой опухоли у соседа. И не важно, что женщины содой наносят себе ожоги и потом долго не могут восстановиться, это же детали, кого они волнуют.

И авторы этих книг живут счастливо, ведь они получают хвалебные и восторженные отзывы от потребителей. Ошибку выжившего они не учитывают, а может и не хотят учитывать, чтобы не рушить свой мир грез, построенный из розовых стекол. А нам, сторонним наблюдателям, остается видеть, что те люди, которые не болели серьезными заболеваниями или же делали рекомендуемое псевдолечение на фоне официального лечения, рассказывают о чудесных свойствах и исцелениях. Те из них, кому стало хуже, все-таки обратились в официальную клинику и хвалебный отзыв не оставили. А те люди, у которых, к сожалению, был неизлечимый диагноз, умерли и хвалебного отзыва тоже не оставили. Эта тенденция относится не только к авторам с якобы научной литературой, но и ко многим экстрасенсам и колдуньям, которые также обещают исцелить людей камнями, кристаллами, свечами, запахами и заклинаниями.

Article 4



Вильнюсская елка в этом году украшена стилизованным часовым механизмом. Композиция в авангардном стиле получила название “Время”. Она должна напомнить нам о том, что самый дорогой подарок — проведенное вместе время. Рождественская елка в Вильнюсе в этом году претендует на титул самой красивой елки в Европе.

Article 5

Согласно предложению Австрии, воздействие отказа от перевода часов будет оцениваться через пять лет после прекращения перевода часов, то есть в 2026 году.

Первоначально планировалось прекратить переводить часы уже в следующем году, но несколько стран ЕС, включая Португалию, Грецию и Нидерланды, поддерживают перевод часов дважды в год или требуют дополнительной информации, чтобы оправдать отказ на национальном уровне.

Большая часть стран пока так и не решила, отказаться от летнего или зимнего времени, но согласно проведенному в Евросоюзе опросу, большинство людей поддерживает прекращение перевода часов. В опросе приняли участие 4,6 млн людей.

По данным Politico, страны должны сегодня сообщить, что поддерживают предложение Австрии и вопрос перевода часов будет обсуждаться в понедельник на заседании министров транспорта ЕС.

Article 6

В Риге, Вильнюсе и Таллинне на минувшей рабочей неделе значительно подешевел бензин 95-й марки, свидетельствуют данные агентства BNS.

Самый дорогой бензин 95-й марки и самое дорогое дизельное топливо на этой неделе был в Таллинне, самые дешевые – в Вильнюсе.

В Риге на АЗС Circle K бензин 95-й марки подешевел на 4,7% и стоил 1,289 евро за литр, дизельное горючее подешевело на 4% до 1,279 евро за литр.

В Вильнюсе бензин 95-й марки подешевел на 5,9% до 1,124 евро, дизельное топливо – на 5,1% до 1,124 евро за литр.

В Таллинне на АЗС Circle K бензин 95-й марки подешевел на 2,5% и стоил 1,344 евро за литр, дизельное топливо подорожало на 0,4% до 1,384 евро за литр.

Цены автогаза не менялись на этой неделе в Таллинне и Риге и составили соответственно 0,629 евро и 0,605 евро за литр. В Вильнюсе автогаз подешевел на 6,5% до 0,573 евро за литр.

Annex III. Informed Consent Form (In Russian)

ФОРМА СОГЛАСИЯ УЧАСТНИКА

Interactive Narratives and Transnational Identity in Estonia

Вы приглашены принять участие в исследовательском проекте докторанта Университета Тарту, Института Социальных Исследований, Heidi Erbsen. Прежде чем выразить свое согласие/несогласие, важно, чтобы вы поняли тему исследования и условия участия.

Цель проекта

Целью проекта является исследование (онлайн) медиа практик и способов самовыражения представителей разных групп населения в Эстонии. Ваше участие поможет пролить свет на то, как люди используют различные каналы интернета для самоутверждения своей идентичности.

Ваши права и анонимность

Участие в исследовании (интервью) является анонимным и добровольным, и может быть прекращено в любой момент интервью.

Конфиденциальность и анонимность гарантируются на всех стадиях исследования.

Проект подчиняется международным стандартам, которые гарантируют анонимность. Записи, сделанные в процессе интервью, будут храниться в защищенных паролем папках на сервере университета. Запасные копии будут храниться в оффлайн режиме. Доступ ко всем файлам будет принадлежать только исследователю. Записи будут архивированы на сервере университета только на время проведения проекта, и будут уничтожены в течение 12 месяцев после его окончания.

Вся информация будет анонимизирована. Это означает, что для защиты ваших прав, ни ваше имя, ни имена ваших знакомых/друзей/упомянутых вами людей не будут опубликованы. Вместо этого, псевдонимы будут использованы, любая чувствительная информация будет заменена на X, скриншоты не будут использоваться.

Этические принципы, описанные выше, соответствуют международным стандартам.

Анонимизированная информация будет использована для написания различных публикаций. Если вы хотите получить копии, обратитесь к исследователю.

Что от вас требуется:

1. интервью из двух частей (1ая 0,5 часа, 2ая 0,5 часа)
1. При согласии, исследователь может попросить вас продемонстрировать некоторые медиа практики, напр. показать обычную рутину использования социальных сетей, активности в группах, либо чтения новостей в интернете. В процессе демонстрации, исследователь может только делать пометки и записи, но не скриншоты. Впоследствии данная информация может быть использована только в обобщенном/измененном виде.

Подпись

Чтобы подтвердить, что вы согласны на участие в проект и осведомлены о своих правах и обязанностях, подпишите ниже.

Имя и подпись:

Имя интервьюера:

Дата:

Спасибо!

При наличии любых вопросов обращайтесь к исследователю:

Главный исследователь

Heidi Erbsen, Doctoral Student

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Annex IV. Images from International News in English (2015–2017) From Erbsen, 2020

Why Narva is probably not next on Russia's list

Estonian city might look like low hanging fruit for Russia but there are four very good reasons why Russia won't invade.

by  Luke Coffey 20 Apr 2015  



Narva fortress from the 13th century, with the statue of Vladimir Lenin in the foreground [Getty]

Located in northeastern Europe the three Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are thought to be prime targets for Russia's next military move in the region. All three share land borders with

MORE ON WAR & CONFLICT
Venezuela in crisis: All the latest updates

Estonia reaches out to its very own Russians at long last

Estonia's large Russian-speaking minority has long felt marginalized by Tallinn politicians, but as the country celebrates its centenary, change appears to be afoot. Isabelle de Pommereau reports from Narva.



On Wednesday Marina Kossolapova felt doubly honored. That day Estonian President Kersti Kaljulaid awarded the school choir director a prestigious medal to honor her contribution to Estonian culture. And the president came to her, to her town, a neglected Russian enclave on Estonia's eastern border

Figure A1. (Coffey, 2015; de Pommereau, 2018): Articles projecting stability and progress towards inclusion. (Left) Al Jazeera 'Why Narva is probably not next on Russia's list' 20 April 2015. (Right) DW 'Estonia reaches out to its very own Russians at long last' 24 February 2018.

Russian President Vladimir Putin meets with Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim in the Kremlin in Moscow, Russia. Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2016.

Magazine
Nato's Russian city
By Neal Razzell
BBC World Service
© 25 June 2015

Figure A2. (Razzell, 2015; The National Post, 2016): Parallels to Russia via leadership. (Right) The National Post, 8 December 2016; (Left) BBC, 25 June 2015.

But Narva's people are almost entirely - and often resolutely - Russian.



Figure A3. (O’Leary, 2017; Razzell, 2015): Blurring the border. (Top Row) Huffington Post ‘As Putin Looms and Trump Withdraws Estonia is Training Civilians to Fight’ 10 February 2017. (Bottom) BBC ‘Nato’s Russian City’ 25 June 2015.

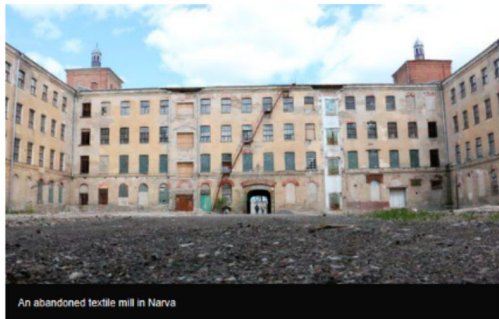
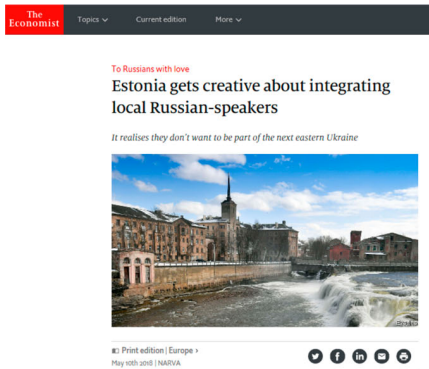


Figure A4. (Razzell, 2015; The Economist, 2018): Kreenholm factory. (Left) The Economist, 10 May 2018; (Right) BBC, 25 June 2015.

SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Kujuteldavate globaalsete kogukondade loomine. Venekeelse auditooriumi orientaliseerimine rahvusvahelises meedias ja auditooriumi enesepositsioneerimine selle suhtes

Käesoleva doktoritöö eesmärk on selgitada, kuidas toimib vastastikmõju rahvusvahelise venekeelse uudismeedia ja eripalgelise venekeelse auditooriumi vahel eri riikides: millist uudissisu auditooriumile pakutakse ning kuidas auditoorium seda vastu võtab? Töö keskendub Eesti venekeelsele auditooriumile.

Teoreetilises peatükis selgitatakse, kuidas nn mõjude hierarhia ning majanduslik ja sotsiaalne surve uudiste tootmist kujundavad, kutsudes esile orientaliseeritud, st püsivaid stereotüüpe loova sisutootmise ühetaolisele kujuteldavale publikule, vaatamata selle publiku tegelikele eripalgelistele huvidele.

Empiiriline analüüs keskendub neljale küsimusele:

- 1) Kuidas inglisekeelne rahvusvaheline meedia kujutab vene keelt kõnelevat publikut?
- 2) Kuidas kohalikud vene keelt kõnelevad inimesed end selle kujutluspildi suhtes positsioneerivad?
- 3) Millist uudissisu pakutakse erinevate riikide venekeelsetele auditooriumidele Venemaa kontrollitud algoritmide poolt ?
- 4) Kuidas vene keelt kõnelevad inimesed Eestis positsioneerivad end erinevate riikide venekeelsele auditooriumile pakutava Venemaa uudissisu suhtes ?

Uuritud on rahvusvahelise meedia inglise- ja venekeelseid uudistekste, selgitamaks, millised diskursused on meedias erinevates keeltes ja erinevates riikides nähtavad ning kuidas inimesed nende diskursustega suhestuvad. Inglisekeelsed pealkirjad ja artiklid koguti Google-i algoritmi abil ja venekeelsed pealkirjad ja artiklid koguti Eesti, Läti, Venemaa ja USA jaoks Yandex News algoritmi abil. Mõlemad algoritmid filtreerivad sisu kujuteldava publiku jaoks. Yandex News algoritm on sisuliselt Venemaa riikliku kontrolli all, kuna Venemaa föderaal-seaduse kohaselt saab võtta IT ettevõtteid vastutusele algoritmide poolt pakutava sisu eest.

Samuti on autor teinud intervjuusid Eesti venekeelse auditooriumi liikmetega: Narva linnas ja teistes linnades elavate vene keelt kõnelevate inimestega.

Esimesele kahele uurimisküsimusele vastamiseks on analüüsitud rahvusvahelises inglisekeelses meedias avaldatud uudiseid Narva linna ja elanike kohta aastatel 2015–2018. Artiklite diskursuseanalüüs näitab, et kuvand, mis uudistega Narva linnast loodi, asetas Narva vaheldumisi lokaalsesse, riigi tasandi ja rahvusvahelisse konteksti, kuid samal ajal jäi peamine Venemaa ohu diskursus samaks.

Uudised taaslõid püsivalt stereotüüpset e. orientaliseeritud pilti Narvast kui Venemaaga ja nõukogude minevikuga tugevasti seotud linnast, mida väljendavad ka illustratsioonidena kasutatud pildid Putinist, matrhoškadest ning Lenini kujust.

Narva venekeelsete elanikega läbi viidud intervjuudes küsis autor, kuidas narvakad ise kirjeldaks oma linna rahvusvahelisele publikule ning mida kohalike arvaes välismaalased teavad nende linnast? Võrreldes rahvusvaheliste uudiste pilti intervjuude vastustega, järeldeb, et rahvusvahelised uudised Narva linna kohta taastoodavad orientaliseeritud kuvandit, samas kui kohalikud vene keelt kõnelevad inimesed oma kirjeldustes positsioneerivad end pigem selle vastu või seda korrigeerivalt, rääkides oma kodulinnast kui ajalooliselt Rootsi ja Hansalinnast, tänasest Ida ja Lääne kohtumiskohast. Kuigi vene keelt kõnelevad Narva elanikud pole ehk rahvusvahelise inglise keelse meedia 'kujuteldav publik', mõjutab loodud kujutluspilt nende suhtumist nii meediasse kui iseendasse.

Et vastata uurimistöo kolmandale küsimusele, analüüsi 1600 pealkirja, mida Yandex algoritm pakkus Eesti, Läti, Venemaa ja USA publikule, kasutades sisu-, diskursuse- ja statistilist analüüsi. Esmalt (Uuring II) võrreldi Eesti, Läti ja Venemaa publiku jaoks pakutud pealkirju ja teises uuringus (Uuring III) Eesti, Venemaa ja USA publiku jaoks pakutud pealkirju. Analüüsi käigus selgus olulisi diskursiivseid ja statistilisi erinevusi kõigi riikide vahel. Eesti, Läti ja Venemaa lugejate jaoks pakutud uudistest, mis rääkisid „Venemaast“ ja „Euroopast“, leidis autor diskursuse analüüsi tulemusel kolm diskursiivset paari: 1) Venemaa kui oht vs Venemaa kui patuoinas; 2) Kallis Euroopa vs odav Venemaa; 3) Julgeolek ja kultuur kui ühised ohud vs julgeolek ja kultuur kui eristavad ohud. Need diskursused erinesid olenevalt sellest, millise riigi lugejate jaoks uudiseid pakuti. Statistiliseks uudiste pealkirjade teemade raamistamise analüüsiks kasutati Iyengari 1993. aastal ja Smetko ja Valkenburgi 2020. aastal välja pakutud kodeerimise lahendust. Analüüs näitab samuti teemade ja raamistamiste olulist erinevust olenevalt sellest, mis riigi jaoks informatsiooni filtreeriti.

Vaatamata sellele, et ilmnisid olulised riikidevahelised erinevused diskursuses, teemades ja raamistamises, oli sarnane 'publikut jahtiv' raamistus ja 'avaliku huvi' raamistus kõigis riikides. See näitab, et kuigi venekeelne meediaraum oli 2021. aasta seisuga üsna killustunud, mõjutavad toodetud sisu sarnased faktorid, olenevata publikust, kellele seda toodetakse.

Vastamaks neljandale uurimisküsimusele intervjuueriti erinevates Eesti linnades elavaid vene keelt kõnelevaid inimesi. Kahe-etapilises intervjuuerimisprotsessis paluti osalistel esialgu otsida informatsiooni, mis neid huvitas ja mida nad edasi jagaks. Seejärel paluti osalejatel kommenteerida juhuslikult valitud osa sisust, mis oli eelnevalt välja valitud osalejate endi poolt või pakutud Yandexi algoritmi poolt. Tuli välja, et Eesti kohalik vene keelt kõnelev publik suhestus palju rohkem kohaliku informatsiooniga ja suutis hõpsalt tuvastada sisu, mis on loodud muus riigis, näiteks Venemaal elava publiku jaoks. Venemaa publikule loodud sisu Eesti venekeelse auditoriumi liikmeid ei huvitanud. See tähendab, et kuigi vene keelt kõnelevaid inimesi Eestis võikski käsitleda Yandexi Eesti jaoks uudiseid pakkuva algoritmi „kujuteldava publikuna“ ei suhestu vastajad pakutava sisuga.

Käesolev doktoritöö näitab, et rahvusvahelise uudismeedia toodetud hegemooniline diskursus ei väljenda ajalooliselt, poliitiliselt või kultuuriliselt aktuaalseid teemasid kohalike auditooriumide jaoks piisava nüansirikkusega. Infovoogude lugejale pakkumist filtreerivad algoritmid (näiteks töös analüüsitud Yandexi uudiste algoritm) tekitavad konkurentsi sisuloojate vahel. Nii survestab meedia auditooriumit positsioneerima end aina suurema infohulga ja kujuteldava orientaliseeritud ja ühetaolise kogukonna suhtes. Seega rahvusvaheline meedia, mis peaks ideaalis olema väga paindlik, seda tegelikult ei ole. Vene keelt kõnelevate vähemusgruppidele eri riikides pakutakse domineerivat diskursust, mis ei kujuta tõepäraselt inimesi (inglisekeelne sisu) ega kõneta neid (venekeelne sisu).

Pärast Venemaa 2022. aasta veebruari täiemahulist sissetungi Ukrainasse võib inglisekeelne ja venekeelne rahvusvaheline meediasisu olla paljuski muutunud. Tulevased uuringud saavad siit edasi minna ning mõtestada seda, kuidas kohalik vene keelne publik suhestub rahvusvahelise venekeelse informatsiooniga praegu toimuva konflikti tingimustes.

PUBLICATIONS

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