

SPACE AND POLITICS OF IDENTITY: National Landscapes in a Finnish Film and how they were portrayed by the Media

MORING, Inka

RESUMO

The autor advances a critical concept about cultural identity, through his own national perspective. The work puts forward a construction of collective memories of the nation and the people, from inside the author's national landscape. The paper explores the relationship between two poles. On the one hand, he looks at how the nation was portrayed in the visual form of popular culture during a time of economic recession. On the other hand, he explores how the history of the nation had been organized in order to serve the purpose of mobilization and unity of the nation in this new situation.

Palavras-chave: Imaginary past. Concrete spaces. Mental Space. National identity. Journalistic discourse.

1 INTRODUCTION

Nation state and its imaginary past are an endless source for filmmakers when the great narratives of late modernity show signs of fragmentation. Concrete spaces, in this case places (i.e. localities) provide visual representations as ground for a common mental space, which we in this case could call Finnishness as well. This could be called the construction of collective memories of the nation and the people. In the re-molding process of this narrative the images of the past, the future and the goals of the nation are increasingly mediated to people via mass media and cultural products. (Fairclough, 1997; Jensen 1995; Stevenson 1994; Silverstone 1994). Media and domestic film industry are staying in a central position both in giving material for the construction of national identities and at the same time (with Hollywood counterparts) blurring geographical borders in a global sense.

According to MacCabe (1992), since the mid-seventies there has been no attempt to theorize relations between politics and film. While there is always the production of local ideological readings that are fueled by identity politics, these do not engage with film as national history. Jameson (1992) for example has suggested that we should analyze films comparatively and in relation to nation's history. Our understanding of films could be successful only when we place it both in its local political context and its global context as a film, as any film will inevitably reflect on what one might call its place in the global distribution of cultural power. Inspired by this idea, I have located the concepts of place and space right at the center of this paper. How could these concepts help us towards a deeper understanding of the transformations in our time? Could they perhaps even shake elitist master narratives of sociology?

In this paper, the construction of the space of 'Finnishness' is explored through the relationship between two poles. On one hand I look at how the nation was constructed as portrayed in the visual form of popular culture during a time of

economic recession. On the other hand I explore how the history of the nation had been organized in order to serve the purpose of mobilization and unity of the nation in this new situation.

The latter question is explored by studying created environments in journalistic discourses in mass media. Spatial and political dimensions in journalistic interpretations are borders of the framework of space we could call the national identity as well. As a heuristic device I am using Henri Lefebvre's work "The Production of Space" (1991) . This paper is also a programmatic introduction or a tentative suggestion for spatial analysis of cultural forms -- mass media and film. Contextualising cultural forms in other words is giving them spatial dimensions in cognitive, emotional and geographical sense.

My main question leads to a series of more specific questions. How may the space(s) and their representations be recognized as active constitutive components of national identity? How may the symbolic role of landscape be analyzed when telling the story of the past? What kind of representational spaces is journalism able to create for the 'space of Finnishness'? At least the illusion of realism representing space as a neutral and passive geometry has to be unmasked. The space is produced and reproduced textually in the film and in newspapers and it represents the site and outcome of social, political and economic struggle.

I am by training a social scientist and my point of departure is in the question of cultural (re)production of national identity, politics of representation and space of the real political situation in certain time-space. I am not trying to respond to the smallest variations of the meaning in the role of a film critic or a literary analyst -- I am rather trying to call out larger entities of discursive practices. In this process of social objectification and categorization, I believe, human beings are given social, political and personal identity.

2 THE LAST WEDDING - THE PRODUCTION OF IMAGINARY SPACE

My empirical material consists of on one particular Finnish film that was produced during the steepest recession period in Finland (1991-95) and a comprehensive collection of newspaper articles about this film. Imaginary time and place in this film are closely related to the fact that the whole nation was paralyzed and unable to look towards the future. In real life 1994 both Finnish film industry and the national economy were literally in a deep ditch. The amount of unemployed reached its peak in 1994, at the time when the film was produced. The province of North Carelia (the location of the film) was among the poorest regions in Finland.

The Last Wedding is a comedy by director Markku Pölönen. It was released in February 24, 1995. Literally, the Finnish name 'Kivenpyörittäjän kylä' translates to 'The Village of the Stone-Mover' or 'The Homeland of the Boulder-Pusher'. Symbolically this title refers to the myth of Sisyphus (and also to the myth of Finnish working mentality). Sisyphus was a tragic figure in the Greek mythology. As a punishment by the Gods he was obligated to every day push a huge boulder up to the top of a hill. Every evening the boulder rolled back, and Sisyphus had to start again. In this film, the boulder pusher is portrayed as a retarded giant working his way with his boulder through the fields and country side roads of a Finnish rural locality, as a punishment for having been too weak to prevent the boulder from rolling over and kill his smaller brother.

The Last Wedding is an epic portrayal of an August day in the small and remote Finnish village of Jerusalem. It is beginning of the 70s. The village has lost its younger generations; they have moved into the towns or to the affluent Sweden in search of jobs. The film tells the story of the last wedding in the village.

Pekka, the hero, has traveled to the wedding from Sweden together with his family. His secret dream is to be able to move back to his native village. Meeri, his wife, has fully embraced the Swedish way of life. She does not share her husband's dream. As their relations grow cooler, Pekka seeks the company of Ritva, the love of his younger days. Alongside the triangular drama we follow a comic story of Urho, the last bachelor in the village. A mysterious stranger rows to his lady friend Kerttu. The hands of the clock sweep around. In the early morning hours both dramas reach their justified finale. The third story in the film is the level of legends conjured up by Eljas, the storyteller who tells tales of the village's past.

The printed material portraying the film, its production and reception, consists of articles, feature stories, criticisms and interviews. It was collected by the press surveillance service in Finland (SITA), which provides a total surveillance of print media. This sample covers a period of somewhat more than one year, starting nine months before the film was released, and ending about half a year after the release. The articles are from 135 different local newspapers, but also from magazines, periodicals and film journals. A total of 391 articles from 164 newspapers, magazines, periodicals and other publications were collected.

Why am I choosing this particular film and its wide publicity in newspapers? Is it representative of the TV-serials and films produced during 90s? Yes, in a way it is -- many of the TV-serials produced during this time also reached back to history. The importance of The Last Wedding, however, lies in the form and intensity of the audience reception. Not only did it reach a wide audience among the Finns

(approximately 300,000 cinema-visitors) but the reactions of the audience and the critique the film received were, taken at a surface, surprisingly strong and emotional (at least in relation to the thematic of the film, which could be regarded quite marginal for many of those who saw the film). My argument is that the film had a particularly strong symbolic power through its reproduction of the space of national identity. At the time, this was a need broadly felt by the audience. The success of this film leaned on intensive cooperation with the mass media as well. It could be argued that the film also served the needs of political elites, although unconsciously, especially in its search for national unity.

Different spaces and places in mediascape - How and why to analyze spatial dimensions in/as (con)texts?

Analyzing the film as a part of the nation's past, the lines between some theoretical dichotomies (text-context, micro-macro, actors-relations, etc.) has to be crossed. The film becomes a part of the representational practice and the geopolitical discourse of our imaginary space as members of the nation. That's why its sociopolitical and temporal dimensions of the film have to be taken into critical scrutiny.

The (post)modern dissemination of cultural forms has in many ways restructured the parameters of space and, of course, time. This radical restructuring of time-space has been capable of relocating symbolic impressions globally and also within nation-states at an ever-quickening rate. Consequently, present (post)modern cultural forms do indeed signify, although perhaps differently, when comparing with earlier modernist culture. Yet, following Lash (1990: 174) modernist culture signified in a largely discursive way -- whereas postmodernist signification is importantly 'figural'. This figural sensibility for example (1) is visual rather than literal, (2) devalues formalism and juxtaposes signifiers taken from the banalities of everyday life and (3) contests rationalist and/or 'didactic' views of culture 4) asks not what cultural text means, but what it does.

Paradoxically, cultural texts of the nations and a body of research is claiming a strong (political) position of the nation state in today's world, - and at the same time there is theorization claiming that fragmentation undermines the nation-state and those symbolic narratives upholding the ideas of the 'nation'. The paradox may be only apparent, hiding a more sublime power structure based on differences that are instrumental in forming parts of a totality, thus allowing power-structures to lean on metanarratives underpinned by fragmented and internally opposite sub-narratives. Besides concerning the nature of the nation, the question concerns the theoretical background - or lack of it - for analyzing narratives of 'nation or understanding present

changes in cultural signification is evident. Interpretations of cultural forms, like mass media and films need a point of departure in which the concept of space could be taken more seriously. The above mentioned changes in globalized 'space' have shaken the edifice of discursive readings whether approached by a Marxist, liberalist or postmodernist point of view. The nature of state functions, cultural practices, and time-space dimensions that relate to how people assess their places in society are under reconsideration. Globally we are in the situation where a series of cultural flows oblivious of national boundaries produces cultural homogeneity and cultural disorder, linking together previously isolated pockets of relatively homogeneous cultures, which in turn are producing more complex images of 'the other' as well as generating identity-reinforcing reactions of 'us'. (Featherstone 1990: 06). When borders are more and more permeable, subversive pleasures and readings according to the inner maps of people re-contextualize information, images and their symbolic contents in the context of nation-states.

Following Harvey (1989), some aspects should be taken seriously into account when theorizing present cultural forms. Firstly, a recognition that the production of images and discourses is an important facet of activity that has to be analyzed as part and parcel of the reproduction and transformation of any symbolic order. Aesthetic and cultural practice matter and the conditions of their production deserve the closest attention. Secondly, as particularly relevant to this paper, the dimensions of time and space matter. Harvey writes:

"There are real geographies of social action, real as well as metaphorical territories and spaces of power that became vital as organizing forces in the geopolitics of capitalism, at the same time as they are sites of innumerable differences and othernesses that have to be understood both in their own right and within overall logic of capitalist development. Historical materialism is finally beginning to take its geography seriously."(Harvey, 1989: 355)

Following Lefebvre (1991: 64), from a practical point of view the reconstruction of spatial code for analyzing cultural texts may be considered to be an immediate task. This code would recapture the unity of dissociated elements and bring together levels and terms that are isolated by existing spatial practice and by ideologies underpinning it. The code would therefore comprise significant oppositions (i.e. paradigmatic elements) bridge seemingly disparate paradigmatic terms, and link them to syntagmatic elements of politically controlled space.

3 ROMANCING THE GEOGRAPHY - A CONCEPTUAL MATRIX FOR SPATIAL ANALYSIS

The conceptual base for this analysis of a film is taken from Henri Lefebvre's work *The Production of Space*. The conceptual framework has been further developed by Harvey (1989: 220-21). The framework facilitates a simultaneous analysis of three (paradigmatic) levels of discourses on space (material, representational and imaginary) in four (syntagmatic) dimensions (controlling, producing, accessing and appropriating the space). The paradigmatic levels and the syntagmatic dimensions may be represented as a matrix .

Geopolitical politics in films and media, space and (national) identity are bound to each other in many ways (see [Meyrowitz](#) 1986; Jameson 1992). In order to keep the analysis within reasonable limits, I focus on those items coming out from a systematic reading of the visual representations of the film and the journalistic discourses that are explicitly addressing issues of nation formation and commodification of its culture. These items are fundamental in forming the dominant discourses that have the hegemonic or ordering function in the visual presentation and the journalistic texts.

Accordingly, the analysis will lean solely on those parts of the matrix which address items that are chosen for analysis. As is often the case in functional structural analysis, my analysis is exposed to the fallacies coming from tautological induction (or even worse, deduction). The risk with this methodological solution is, however, reduced as the selection of the material is independent of the model, which is used mainly to systematize, and thus to allow for an analyze within a model that has more general ambitions.

To what extent may a social space of journalistic and cultural texts then be read or decoded? Following Lefebvre (1991: 17) a satisfactory answer to this question is certainly not just around the corner. The question he raises concerns the language. Does language -- logically, epistemologically or genetically speaking -- precede, accompany or follow social space? Is it a precondition to social space or merely a formulation of it? The solution to this problem could be in the logic of language itself. The logic intrinsic to articulated language holds the capacity to formulate spatiality in a way, which makes us capable to bring order in the qualitative chaos presented by the perception of things.

Not so long ago, the word 'space' had only a geometrical meaning. To speak of 'social space' therefore would have sounded strange. Discussions around the concept of 'globalization' have brought this concept into political and scientific discourse. Social space could be defined as a space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including the products of imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and utopias. (Lefebvre 1991:11). Aesthetic and cultural practices are peculiarly

susceptible to the changing experience of (political) space and time precisely because they entail the construction of spatial representations and artifacts out of the flow of human experience. (Harvey 1989: 327).

An analysis of sociocultural practice of communication and communicative events always involves spatial dimensions. Spatial dimensions could at least be seen as (1) an immediate situational context, (2) a wider context of institutional practices, or (3) the yet wider frame of the society and the culture. Fairclough (1995:62) differentiates three dimensions: economic, political (concerned with issues of power and ideology), and cultural (concerned with questions of value and identity).

Fairclough claims that the language of media allows us to arrive at logical conclusions about how the world is represented. We may also make conclusions about the identities that are set up for those involved in a particular story (article, program, etc.) and what relationships are set up between those involved. In the analysis of discourses we may refer to representations, identities and relations (Fairclough 1995:05) Fairclough does not exactly speak of spatial dimensions of the language. As a linguist he is more concerned with the structures of language, the orders of these structures, and institutions where the discursive practices and structures are given their orders and in that process also their place in the matrix of ideology and power.

Certain problems arise with linguistics and their universal claim of discursive practice. Following the criticism by Lefebvre (1991:132); " Every language is located in a space. Every discourse says something about a space (places or sets of places); and every discourse is emitted from a space. Distinctions must be drawn between discourse in space, discourse about space and the discourse of space.... ..Apart from what it 're-marks' in relation to space, discourse is nothing more than a lethal void - mere verbiage... The theory of space describes and analyses textures." Language is a system that is located to a certain culture. It is a device for mapping this culture, its cultural, political and ideological configurations. As a certain device it contains characteristics of a map - language is a mapping practice. I am using language as a mapping practice in a certain time-space, and I am not having any claims whatsoever that this textual analysis would have universal features or could be imported to another culture.

In the three following short chapters I will discuss certain points in discourses about space(s). Mostly my articles and samples of texts concentrate on the commodification of the film as a product. What was left over were discourses telling something about the space(s) of Finnishness - its position, displacement, field, territory, domain, soil, horizon, geopolitics, region, landscape. The following three

discourses were strikingly the most fundamental. They infused the texts and answered questions like: 'Who are we?' 'Where are we?' and 'Where do we come from?'

These were:

- (1) The material preconditions and practices of the 'space of Finnishness'. That discourse has been labeled the 'Geopolitical Discourse of a Borderland Position'.
- (2) The representations of 'space of Finnishness'. That discourse has been labeled the 'Discourse on Resistance of Peripheral Nationalism'.
- (3) The spaces of representation (imaginary Finnishness). That discourse has been named the 'Discourse on Metonymic Home'.

I am concentrating mainly on the two paradigmatic levels of spaces of representation and representations of space, and their relations. In order to clarify the outset, a brief introduction to the material practices in Finland are presented, which crudely describes some lines of historical and recent experiences, which were basic to the characterization of the film by the media. Of course, concepts, experiences or created spaces do not always fall neatly into categories, and also in my paper classification is only a heuristic device for clarifying space-place, space-discourse, and space-representation relationships.

Table I A 'grid' of spatial practices (by Lefebvre 1964 in Harvey 1989, 220-221)

I- Private Accessibility and distancing:

I.1. Appropriation and use of space:

- domination and control of space-production of space-material spatial practices (experience);
- flows of goods, money, people, labour power, information etc.; transports and
- communications systems: market and urban hierarchies;
- agglomeration, land uses and built environments; social spaces and other 'turf' designations; social networks of communication and mutual aid-private property in land;
- state and administrative divisions of space; exclusive communities and neighborhoods-production of physical infrastructures (transport and communications; built environments; land clearance, etc.);
- territorial organization of social infrastructures (formal and informal)-representations of space (perception); social, psychological, physical measures of distance; map-making; theories of the 'friction of distance'-personal space; mental maps of occupied space; spatial hierarchies; symbolic representation of spaces; spatial 'discourses'-forbidden spaces; 'territorial' imperatives; community; regional culture, nationalism;

geopolitics; hierarchies new systems of mapping, visual representation, communication, etc.; new artistic and architectural discourses; semiotics

II. Spaces of representation

- (imagination)attraction/repulsion; distance/desire; access/denial; transcendence 'medium is the message'-familiarity; heart and home; open places; places of popular spectacle (streets, squares, markets); iconography and graffiti; advertising; unfamiliarity; spaces of fear, property and possession; monumentality and constructed spaces of ritual; symbolic barriers and symbolic capital; construction of 'tradition'; spaces of repression-utopian plans; imaginary landscapes; science fiction ontologies and space; artists' sketches; mythologies of space and place; poetics of space spaces of desire-

III. Material spatial practices

Material spatial practices refer to the physical and material flows, transfers and interactions that occur in and across space in such a way as to assure production and social reproduction. Spatial practice, as the process of producing the material form of social spatiality, is thus both a mediated presentation and an outcome of human activity, behavior and experience. Lefebvre also links modern spatial practice under capitalism to the repetitive routines of everyday life and to the routes, networks, workplaces, private life and enjoyments of the urban people.

III.1. Private accessibility and distancing

- Appropriation and use of space=Domination and control of space-Production of space;
 - Material spatial practices (experience)=flows of goods, money, people, labour power, information etc.; transports and communications systems: market and urban hierarchies; agglomeration-land uses and built environments; social spaces and other 'turf' designations; social networks of communication and mutual aid-private property in land; state and administrative divisions of space; exclusive communities and neighbourhoods=production of physical infrastructures (transport and communications; built environments; land clearance, etc.) territorial organization of social infrastructures (formal and informal)

It may not seem surprising that films and TV-series from the '90s in Finland had one common feature: traumatic transformations (in material practices) of the nation are documented in film and also in TV-series. At the same time they describe spaces of Finnishness (geographical, mental and social), looking at the golden past. This past may not have been so golden, after all. In this particular case, the actual political situations of the early '70s and late '90s create interesting tensions. These are underpinning a

reading of the film as history and as an interpretation of those spatial practices that constructed past experiences.

Finland in the seventies developed a particular form of borderland position that was built on the country's earlier history. Having lost considerable territories in the East to the Soviet Union in the wars, and having to pay reparations to its former enemy, Finland's economy was in a poor state. The population structure was also heavily effected, as an amount of 409 000 settlers from the lost eastern territories had to be placed in small farms around the country. By the late 1960's and early 1970's, the relative poverty of Finland and the expansive economy in Sweden created a migration stream from Finland to Sweden. (Still today, the Finnish population in Sweden amounts to more than half a million, which is more than 10 per cent of the Finnish population. Most of these are emigrants and descendants of emigrants who during the post war period have moved to Sweden in hope of better job-opportunities and higher incomes.) The film can clearly be interpreted as a mapping of representational practices of the Finnish politico-historical identity of the past. Director Markku Pölönen himself explicated this feature of his film in a comment, which was cited in numerous articles: The psychological setting of the film was already sealed when the war ended: the war-weary men returning from the front were allotted small pieces of the fatherland as a 'reward'. In some instances, the reward was endless work, clearing rocks in the wasteland. The fields that were to be their livelihood were never completely cleared. It's as if the spiteful earth was producing new rocks every spring to crush the hopeful farmers. And this work was the dream of a generation. Then suddenly, it had no meaning. The children did not want the settlers' land, and Finland swept it under the carpet, in shame. This created enough national traumas for several films. As was later seen, when the children of the settlers moved into the cities, neither form life benefited.

In the beginning of the 90s, Finland faced new political and economic transformations that were combined with a steep economic recession (called the 'crisis'), and new geopolitical configurations due to the EC-membership. The concept of work became important because actual work opportunities disappeared. The value of the work is one of the basic elements of Finnish cultural identity – and the film was calling out its most sensitive parts.

After joining the European Union, border between the urban (South) and the rural (North) was re-politicized and subjected to political debate. During the recession, the relatively better employed people of the South of Finland nourished the rural Northern and Eastern parts, where structural changes and a retarding wood industry

had caused huge unemployment. The geographical cleavage grew wider, the crisis did not treat different parts of the country equally. No political upheaval followed, but the governments (be they based on the Center Party with its agrarian links, or the Social Democratic Party, with its base in the crisis-worn industry) in their rhetoric called for the spirit of the unifying Winter War. A National Consolidation Project was needed.

The relationships between the '70s and the '90s could thus be summarized in three concepts describing material practices in experiencing the past and the present. They were (1) Politics, (2) Poverty and (3) a Borderland position. In journalistic discourses the transformations were connected to this particular film. The Borderland Finland of the '70s was an entity between the East and the West. In the '90s, this geopolitical border grew into the country, tearing it to parts. Journalistic discourse portrayed the economically retarded countryside in terms of arguments about the Finnish capability to join the EC. The vast wastelands of North Carelia and SouthEast Lapland should not be allowed to keep Finland from becoming fit for the Common Market. Finland had to prove its fitness for Europe, as it had had to prove its fitness to the Soviet Union in earlier decades.

In this situation, the representation of Finland that was provided by 'The Last Wedding' served as a remainder of past, national borders and the country's political location between East and West. Some journalists even portrayed the film as an explicit critical comment to the Finnish EC-memberships.

This particular case provides support to a remark by Barbara Hooper (1994: 80): "in times of social crisis -- when centers and peripheries will not hold -- collective and individual anxiety rise and the politics of difference become especially significant. The instability of the borders heightens and the concern with either their transgression or maintenance is magnified. When borders are crossed, disturbed, contested, and so become a threat to order, hegemonic power acts to reinforce them, the boundaries around territory, nation, ethnicity, race, gender, sex, class, erotic practice are trotted out and vigorously disciplined."

Apart from the basic conceptualizations, which largely were similar, some interesting differences pertaining to geography occurred in the writings of the newspapers. The political division between the country-side and the city and their respective means of livelihood was mostly present in radical left wing newspapers and rurally oriented newspapers close to the Center Party. In these writings, references were usually made to the impoverishment of both rural people and rural areas. At the same time, referring to the film, a harsh critique was directed against the EU.

The big newspapers from Southern Finland usually described the film as a museum monument of a vanishing landscape, an exotic part of Finnishness that it tried to conserve and prevail. The film was, at the same time, considered to be a national project and a flagship of Finnish film industry. In this case, the film was commodified as part of 'Finnishness'.

This feature was also politicized in newspapers. The film was successfully marketed through media, and its audience success was portrayed as part of a new arousal of Finnish film industry, which would give hope for new economic growth for the entire country.

All in all, the borders were reassured by dividing Finland -- and the space of Finnishness -- from the outside, be it Europe, Russia, or an undefined outer world. Borders were affirmed both in the articles and in the film. Despite its position as a Borderland, Finland was Finland, and Finnishness was clearly distinguishable. It was as distinguishable as the national landscape, the beauty of which was praised almost as a metaphysical experience.

4 REPRESENTATIONS OF SPACE

The representations of the 'space of Finnishness' are labeled the 'Discourse on Resistance of Peripheral Nationalism'. They mostly contained elements of community and regional culture that were the backbones of nationalism or the nationalistic rhetoric:

- Private Accessibility and distancing; Appropriation and use of space; Domination and control of space; Production of space; Representations of space (perception) social, psychological, physical measures of distance; map-making; theories of the 'friction of distance'; personal space; mental maps of occupied space; spatial hierarchies; symbolic representation of spaces; spatial 'discourses'; forbidden spaces; 'territorial' imperatives; community; regional culture, nationalism; geopolitics; hierarchies; new systems of mapping, visual representation, communication, etc.; new artistic and architectural discourses; semiotics

- Representations of space encompass all of the signs and significations, codes and knowledge, that allow such a material practice to be talked about and understood. This concept defines a conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers - all of who identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived. Representations of space are tied to the relations of production and

to the 'order' that those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to frontal relations (Lefebvre 1991: 33).

Nationalism, for instance, is a temporally and spatially biased code. It is usually thought of as articulating a historical bond between past and present members of the nation-state, while also providing a sense of spatial connection through certain places, rituals and traditions. This argument is further complicated if we consider that the transmission of national culture has historically been dependent upon a variety of media including cinema - and also magazines, newspapers, radio and, of course, television. (Stevenson 1995: 116). According to John Breilly (1982: 343) nationalist ideology is neither an expression of national identity (at least, there is no rational way of showing that to be the case) nor the arbitrary invention of nationalism for political purposes. It arises out of the need to make sense of complex social and political arrangements. The nation-state extends its rule over a territory and claims the obedience of people. This obedience has different forms in different localities. (Bauman 1990: 153).

The emergence of nationalism in the form of a description of the life of common people was part of a commodification of Finnishness. Under the conditions of a borderland position, both in the '70s and the '90s, the Finnish nationalism was problematic. Finnishness was something to be ashamed of, and to hide. In the '70s, Finnish emigrants felt inferiority in Sweden. In the '90s, they felt inferiority among the European civilized countries.

Notions of nativeness and native places -- where this code of nationalism could be understood -- had become even more complex. There had also emerged new awareness of the global social fact that people are chronically mobile and routinely displaced, and that they invent -- or have a continuous urge to invent -- homes and homelands in the absence of territorial and national bases (Malkki 1992; Appadurai 1990; Hannertz 1987; Robertson 1988). In the core of this particular film, and also in discourses about it, was found a broad concern of 'cultural displacement' that concerned people, things, values and cultural products.

In the discourses on nationalism, found in the writings about the film by journalists, deeply territorializing concepts were used to portray the identity of those categories of people classified as displaced and uprooted. Out of these portrayals grew a particular nationalistic discourse within a frame of the political economy of the Borderland: We are not Swedish, we do not want to be Russian (paraphrasing a proverb that was part of the Finnish nationalist movement of the 19th and early 20th century).

The nationalistic ethos gained power from the resistance of the villagers, and the way in which they positioned themselves with respect to the changes. In spite of the perspectives threatening their life style and outcome, the life in Jerusalem was genuine. Journalism took part in this construction of the 'genuine Finnishness'. This Finnishness became a brand mark, which served as a means of romanticizing such features of the national character that were perceived of as non-qualifying in the context of the European Union. As an identity construction, this 'Genuine Finnishness' had a capability of combining features of both shame and pride that traditionally have been part of portrayals of Finnish national characteristics.

In Finland, the nationalism was born comparatively late. But since its birth in the nineteenth century, nationalism as a myth can be regarded almost as a civil region. The symbolic element represents the enduring expressive aspect of culture, transmitting its values from individual to individual, and from generation to generation. Being a periphery in the new cultural order, Finland has however had severe problems with its patriotism. A great share of the people in rural areas (like in Northern Carelia) at the time of Finland's joining the EU felt as if the Finnish elite dissociated themselves from a common project. This brought about one clear division in how the press wrote about the film. Newspapers in Carelia, Savo and NorthEast Lapland stressed the place and the province, which the film made famous. The film was partly considered to be a homage to one part of Finnishness that could be geographically positioned to the place where the film was made.

As a commodity within the Finnish cultural market place, the 'Imagined community of Finland', as portrayed by 'The Last Wedding', became a success. The economical success of this commodity was also closely followed and reported by the press. Also its international success (the film was given some international awards) was subjected to close surveillance. 'Finnishness' was thus given the status of an export product. Through this market metaphor, 'Finnishness' could be conceptualized, and its lines of demarcation could be constructed in a European and global context.

In a broader perspective, the imagined space that most frequently was constructed by the journalistic discourse springing off The Last Wedding was the discourse of a 'Mythic Home'. The whole film was portrayed as a metonym of 'Home', or alternatively, 'Return-to-Home'. This would seem natural, as the narrative of the film itself was arranged around the themes of homecoming and departure. In the journalistic representation of these themes, the 'Return-to-the-Roots' was lifted to the forefront.

The metaphorical concept of having roots involves intimated linkages between people and places. Quoting Simone Weil (Malkki 1992: 24), "To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of human soul." Home in its profound form is an attachment to a particular setting, a particular environment, in comparison with which all other associations with places are only of limited significance. It is the point of departure from which we orient ourselves and take possession of the world. Heidegger writes of home in past tense: "Home nowadays is a distorted and perverted phenomena. It is identical to a house; it can be anywhere. It is subordinate to us; easily measurable and expressible in numbers of money value."(in [Relph](#) 1976: 40).

In the discourse of 'Mythic Home', there was a mix of experience, emotion, memory, imagination, present situation and intentions. In the process of this discourse, the village of Jerusalem was conceptualized as the identification of the concept of place itself. Rather than developing out of particular group or individual experiences, the mass identity formed around 'Jerusalem' was a given, as constructed by the mass media and by advertising. This identity was provided 'ready made' for the people. Mass media conveniently provided a simplified and selective identity to this place. And hence the mass media tended to fabricate a pseudo-Finland of pseudo-places. Somehow it well served the needs of the people who longed to return back to home. [Foucault](#) (1986, 23) has added the following defining 'external space':

The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our times and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also in itself, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live inside a void, inside which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another. (in [Soja](#) 1996: 157).

The identity of this place called Jerusalem (location of the film) was constituted through somehow alien but quite beautiful imagery. The distinct organization of space and time formed a framework within which individual identities could be formed. The images of divided spaces were particularly powerful, and they were superimposed upon each other in the fashion of montage and collage. The nomadic anti-hero-Pekka returns to his roots, but the home is destroyed. 'Home' becomes imaginary time-space: the nature, the fields, the forest and the flashbacks from the childhood. This imagery developed an 'external space' of Finnishness, which was created by filmic visual representations and journalistic discourses in intensive cooperation. The main goal of this cooperation was to build publicity for the film.

Among different rural communities, the viewpoint according to which this imagery of 'Jerusalem' was seen differed. Depending on their distance from the actual sites of the film the communities took different approaches. Local newspapers close to the sites directly stressed their homeland. Local newspapers in regions further away (the SouthWest archipelago, Western Finland) looked mainly for connections to the landscape and to the national character.

5 DISCUSSION: Happy End in the Homeland of the Boulder-Pusher

In the same way as in textual composition, also in time-space construction, typical to film dramaturgy, one can go forwards and backwards in order to grasp the past and to construct roots. Forgetting the future and memorizing the past are both political actions. Where does this difference between the representations of past and future come from? Why do we remember the past but not the future? When mapping our past, are we at the same time charting our future?

Through the journalistic representations of *The Last Wedding*, mass communication took the function of a mediator of fateful events of the nation's history (see Stevenson 1995) and symbolic ceremonies (Dyan & Katz 1992). Mass communication also facilitated a socialization process within culture (Carbaugh 1989; Grodin & Lindlof 1996), offering discourses that were suitable in reconstructing different imagined communities (Anderson 1983). Finnish media reconstructed local political readings of the film.

In the vein of Lefebvre this paper calls for a development of the theoretical approach to integrate the spatial practices and the commodification of culture. Contextualising cultural forms are giving them spatial and political dimensions. To analyze cultural forms is to take spatial dimensions (political, mental, cultural) into account. Psycho-geographics and geographics of late capitalism are not written in the context of social master narratives -- more likely they have been constructed within nation-states that are under heavy transformation both as nations and members of larger geopolitical entities. An understanding of these processes calls not only for a revision of critical theories that try to explain changed circumstances of 'political economy', but also for a knowledge of differences; sociopolitical, historical and mythical.

I have tried to demonstrate some possibilities inherent in such an analytical enterprise by reconceptualising public sphere as public spaces, which are geographically located. Using a matrix provided by Lefebvre (and Harvey) I have

analyzed visual representations of film and journalistic discourses, tying them into political and social practices operative in a certain phase of the history of one particular nation.

In this analysis, we meet a juxtaposition of Wasteland and Disneyland as part of the self-identification of a peripheral culture in the middle of a crisis. The discursive practices portrayed are highly political to their nature. Following Jameson, it could be argued that it is in the nature of capitalist economy to commodify culture, and it is in the nature of the commodified culture to form (to some little extent) the capitalism. The political character of this enterprise is, however, still not fully grasped. Could, as a matter of fact, commodified culture, giving voice to discourses of resistance, form a threat to the dominant discourse of society, thus transgressing its political limits?

These ponderings are nurtured by the fact that modern forms of communications make it easier for audiences to -- physically and mentally -- travel through time and space. Bachelard has written (1964) about the space of imagination -- 'poetic' space. Perhaps this poetic space can be seen as the foundation for collective memory, for all that place-bound nostalgia that infects our images of country, locality and community? But not even poetic space can replace political economy in its deepest sense. Or, as expressed by the prologue of *Last Wedding*:

Long ago, the Carelians built a tower to Heaven on a hill. Using ropes, pulleys and the labor of their naked bodies they piled rocks to support the canopy of heaven. But God descended and with his blazing staff destroyed the tower, thus creating the rocky soil, which will pester man forever.

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