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# Swedish Stories of the Neighbour Across the Baltic Sea:

A Narrative Media Analysis of Swedish Reporting on Lithuania

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## **Abstract**

This thesis identifies ten main narratives related to Lithuania in the reporting of five major Swedish newspapers between 2010-2012, and investigates how these narratives have been discursively constructed and why they might have been chosen to serve as a frame of reference for Swedish readers. Through narrative analysis and a theoretical framework including the concepts of ‘narrative’, ‘collective identity’, ‘national stereotypes’ and ‘othering’, main narratives are identified and analysed. The identified narratives can be summarized into master narratives related to Lithuania’s position on the mental map of Europe as perceived by Swedish media.

The study shows that the identified narratives often present Lithuania as a “surprisingly favourable country” and negative stereotypes are confronted (both to be dismissed and confirmed). Common bonds between Sweden and Lithuania are stressed. Lithuania’s EU- and Baltic identity is mostly emphasised, but when Lithuania is depicted as failing to distance itself from what is perceived as values connected to Europe’s temporal ‘other’, its past, Lithuania’s identity as an Eastern European ‘demi-other’ is discursively constructed. Elements conveying closeness to Sweden is however also then present. Media narratives are shaped according to what Swedish readers might find viable and important. Narratives on Lithuania thus in some sense mirror (and reproduce) Swedish culture and fulfils the role of challenging or confirming values and norms connected to the Swedish national self-image.

*Key words:* narrative, story, media, image of Lithuania, Lithuania, Swedish media, Sweden, stereotypes, collective identity, othering, national image.

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## 1. Introduction

“Vilnius..? Wait, is that a supermarket? Or no, it is a Baltic city, right?” My friend’s comment on my internship in Vilnius made me curious to discover what Swedes actually associate and know about Lithuania. More than two decades have passed since the restoration of Lithuania’s independence and the positioning of the country as a democratic, sovereign state on the mental map of Europe began. Sweden and Lithuania are neighbouring countries, separated (or united) by the Baltic Sea, with prominent economic and political ties. But what is actually told about Lithuania? What do Swedes find interesting to know about the country and why?

Even if we have never visited a place we can still imagine it. Mass media is an important factor in the complex process that constitutes a national image. Many scholars, such as Fairclough<sup>1</sup>, have emphasized the important role of mass media in shaping our perceptions of the world. Through media reporting we are provided with narratives that help us make sense of events by linking them together and evaluating them. By exploring Swedish media narratives connected to Lithuania it may be possible to examine what issues related to Lithuania are considered of interest for Swedish readers and to identify instances where shared belongings are established between the two countries.

### 1.1 Research Background, Problem and Purpose

It is not very often that Lithuania hits the headlines in the international press. But when it does, the news is almost invariably bad. Despite the fact that the country boasts the highest economic growth in Europe and has become a fully paid-up member of the EU and NATO, the international image of Lithuania seems to have become even bleaker in 2004.<sup>2</sup>

This is the introduction of a news article on the media image of Lithuania published in the Baltic Times nearly ten years ago. Like other post-Soviet states, Lithuania faced a difficult task after the restoration of its sovereignty to position itself on the

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<sup>1</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Media discourse* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995)

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Hviid, “Why does Lithuania attract so much bad press?” *The Baltic Times*, October 20, 2004. <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/11169/>

geographical and mental map as a democratic, politically stable market economy.<sup>3</sup> An additional challenge that emerged for the Baltic States was to be seen as separate countries, not constantly being mixed together.<sup>4</sup>

In the 1990s the country's reputation was, as stated by the scholar Ausra Park: "the biggest but most backward of the three Baltic states".<sup>5</sup> Policy makers' lack of concrete actions in branding Lithuania was according to Park not helped by the biased and somewhat prejudicial media coverage of Lithuania which appeared in the foreign press during the 1990s.<sup>6</sup> National image is important for, among other things, attracting tourism and foreign investment and since this image is influenced by media, news stories are of importance for relations between countries. The direct or indirect influence of media on bilateral relations is one reason for why the topic of this study is of relevance.

Sweden and Lithuania are both Baltic Sea states. The historical ties between Sweden and Lithuania, which was united with Poland 1385 – 1795 under the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, are marked by their geographical proximity. The countries' relations include both series of wars as well as a few years of a personal union in the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>7</sup> When illustrating the modern relationship between the two countries, it is often mentioned from Swedish government's perspective how Sweden was engaged in Lithuania's reform process<sup>8</sup> and became the first state to open an embassy in Lithuania in the 1990s.<sup>9</sup> Sweden is also presented as the biggest foreign investor in Lithuania.<sup>10</sup> Both countries are full members of the European Union (EU) and Lithuania holds the presidency of the Council of the EU throughout the second half of 2013. Furthermore, Lithuania and Sweden can also be

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<sup>3</sup> Györgi Szondi, "The role and challenges of country branding in transition countries: The Central and Eastern European experience." *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 3(2007): 8-20.

<sup>4</sup> Miglė Mockutė, "The Images of the Baltic States in the International Media upon the Accession to NATO and the EU" in *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, 21(2008): 11.

<sup>5</sup> Ausra Park, "'Selling' a small state to the world: Lithuania's struggle in building its national image." *Place Branding & Public Diplomacy* 5,1(2009): 75.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Klas-Göran Karlsson, "Litauen – historia," *Nationalencyklopedin*, accessed March 18, 2013.  
<http://www.ne.se.ludwig.lub.lu.se/lang/litauen>

<sup>8</sup> "Litauen," Government Offices of Sweden, accessed February 15, 2013.  
<http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/5472/a/42495>

<sup>9</sup> "Ambassaden," Embassy of Sweden in Lithuania, accessed February 15, 2013.  
<http://www.swedenabroad.com/sv-SE/Ambassador/Vilnius/Om-oss/Ambassaden/>

<sup>10</sup> "Litauen," Government Offices of Sweden, accessed February 15, 2013.  
<http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/5472/a/42495>

considered part of two regional communities in Northern Europe, the Baltic Sea Region and the Nordic-Baltic Region.

My thesis aims to identify and examine main narratives connected to Lithuania in recent reporting by Swedish mass media. Since the 1990s, there has been an increasing interest in the role of the media shaping a country's national image. However, no previous research has posed the same questions that I plan to pursue in my investigation of material from Swedish sources. Recently published news articles will also be analysed to present up-to-date findings of the reporting on Lithuania.

## 1.2 Research Questions

My three research questions are:

*What* main narratives connected to Lithuania can be identified in the Swedish media reporting, in this thesis represented by five big Swedish newspapers, over the last three years i.e. between 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2012?

*How* have these narratives been discursively constructed?

*Why* might these narratives have been used in Swedish newspapers to serve as a frame of reference for Swedish readers?

## 1.3 Previous Research

Since I do not speak Lithuanian, my research is dependent on the literature available in Swedish or English. With regard to this limitation, little scientific attention has been given to identify media narratives about Lithuania. To my knowledge, no previous published study has focussed specifically on narratives linked to Lithuania in Swedish media.

Lithuania's international image is discussed in Ausra Park's research article: *Selling a small state to the world: Lithuania's struggle in building its national image*.<sup>11</sup> Based on her observations of Lithuania's ineffective state branding campaigns she presents several lessons. In contrast to my thesis, the perspective of Park's article is that of

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<sup>11</sup> Ausra Park, "Selling a small state to the world: Lithuania's struggle in building its national image." *Place Branding & Public Diplomacy* 5,1(2009).

nation branding, emphasising the active role of government institutions in image building.

A comparison between the images of the Baltic States in the in the *Financial Times* and the *Economist* is conducted by Miglė Mockutė in her research: *The Images of the Baltic States in the International media upon accession to NATO and the EU*.<sup>12</sup> She uses a qualitative and quantitative content analysis to analyse the differences and similarities between the countries within thematic and evaluative categories. Her findings include what she calls “key discourses” linked to the Baltic region, such as political and economic transformation success stories. The “key discourses” are however not the main focus of her research and relate to all three Baltic States. My belief is also that a narrative media analysis, instead of a traditional content analysis, will nuance the debate on Lithuania’s national image by clearing the way for new possible interpretations.

Several narrative media analyses that do not focus on Lithuania have also inspired this research. One of these analysis is Magdalena Żmuda-Trzebiatowska’s *Bilden av Polen i svensk dagspress 1989-1999*<sup>13</sup>. In her research she presents what she calls ”favourite themes” linked to Poland in Swedish media. Another source of inspiration is Mi Lennhag’s *Föredömligt folk förvandlar Gränsländ till Europaländ*,<sup>14</sup> a narrative media analysis of six Swedish newspapers’ reporting on Ukraine between January 2004 and March 2006. The narrative approach in my thesis is mainly based on Alexa Robertson’s writing on narrative media analysis in: *Textens Mening och Makt: Metodbok i Samhällsvetenskaplig Text- och Diskursanalys*<sup>15</sup> and *Identitetsstudier i Praktiken*<sup>16</sup>. Other influential scholars relevant for this thesis will be presented in the theoretical framework.

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<sup>12</sup> Miglė Mockutė, “The Images of the Baltic States in the International Media upon the Accession to NATO and the EU” in *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, 21(2008)

<sup>13</sup> Magdalena Żmuda-Trzebiatowska, ”Bilden av Polen i svensk dagspress 1989- 1999” in *Sverige och Polen. Nationer och stereotype*, edited by Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, (Lund: Slavica Lundensia, 2000)

<sup>14</sup> Mi Lennhag, ”Föredömligt Folk Förvandlar Gränsländ till Europaländ –Bilden av Ukraina i Svensk Press Januari 2004 till Mars 2006” in *Working Papers*, 40 (Lund: Centre for European Studies, Lund University, 2009)

<sup>15</sup> Alexa Robertson, “Narrativanalys,” in *Textens Mening och Makt: Metodbok i Samhällsvetenskaplig Text- och Diskursanalys*, ed. Göran Bergström and Kristina Boréus K. (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2012)

<sup>16</sup> Alexa Robertson, ”Narrativ Analys, Medietexter och Identitetsforskning,” in *Identitetsstudier i Praktiken* ed. Bo Petersson and Alexa Robertson (Malmö: Liber ekonomi, 2003)

#### **1.4 Theoretical Standpoints and My Role as a Researcher**

The research questions are formulated out of sincere curiosity, since I found it unclear what issues Swedish newspapers today link to Lithuania. No hypothesis or pre-decided categories were thus formulated before approaching the material.

Even if my main aim is not to confirm or reject a theory, I inevitably view the data according to my basic theoretical presumptions. I thus acknowledge that I have an active role as a researcher in identifying narratives. It is not my ontological or epistemological understanding that fixed, rigid narratives exist in the texts waiting simply to be discovered. Instead my own pre-understanding, theoretical standpoints and analytical objectives will inevitably influence the process.

One key theory underlying my thesis is *social constructivism*, which is the foundation for the concepts on *narratives*, *stereotypes* and *identity construction* that is outlined in the theoretical framework. According to social constructivism social reality is constantly constructed and reproduced through social interactions; mainly through communicative and discursive practices.<sup>17</sup>

My native language is Swedish, which is an advantage when analysing Swedish articles and their inherent language structure. Besides Sweden, I have also lived in Lithuania. My personal experience of Lithuanian and Swedish culture and society may facilitate my understanding and analysis of the material.

#### **1.5 Story, Narrative and Master Narrative - Definitions**

Narratives are often described as a form of storytelling. Riessman defines a *narrative* as: “sequence and consequence: events are selected, organized, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience.”<sup>18</sup>

The precise distinction between ‘narrative’ and ‘story’ is obscure, and there exists several different interpretations of it. The two are often used synonymously, and

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<sup>17</sup> Thomas Risse, “Social Constructivism and European Integration,” in *European Integration Theory*, ed. Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 145, 149.

<sup>18</sup> Cathrine Kohler Riessman, “Narrative Analysis” in *Narrative, Memory & Everyday Life*. (Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield, 2003), 1.



Polkinghorne and others use them as equivalents.<sup>19</sup> Others, such as Jeffry R. Halverson consider narratives to be composed of multiple stories that relate to one another.<sup>20</sup>

In this thesis *story* simply refers to the news story of a news article. Even if a news story can be considered a narrative in itself according to Riessman's definition, in my findings and analysis a *narrative* is composed out of multiple news stories that relate to one another. This is because my material is extensive and the narratives presented in this thesis are thus crystallized out of several articles. This thesis vantage point is based on the assumption that several news articles present similar stories that can be melted together into coherent narratives. By identifying these main narratives, it is possible to address understandings that are repeatedly, in different articles, connected to Lithuania in Swedish media.

A *master narrative* (also called grand narrative or meta narrative) is described by John Stephens as: "a global or totalizing cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience."<sup>21</sup> It is often described as a universal theory or all-embracing narrative that explains and encompasses smaller narratives or stories. According to Halverson master narratives are narratives that have shown resilience and become deeply embedded in the culture.<sup>22</sup> In my thesis, this means that news stories can be organized into narratives, and these narratives can be organized into extensive predominant master narratives.

A debated question regarding the definition of narrative is its relation to discourse. *Discourse* in this thesis refers to the coherent expressions and other linguistic practises carried out in a specific social context.<sup>23</sup> I subscribe to the view that narratives may be seen as an example of a discourse.<sup>24</sup> When I ask how a narrative is *discursively constructed* I refer to what means, e.g. language, is used to convey the

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<sup>19</sup> Donald E. Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 13.

<sup>20</sup> Jeffry R. Halverson, "Why Story is Not Narrative" published December 8, 2011, March 12, 2013, <http://csc.asu.edu/2011/12/08/why-story-is-not-narrative/>

<sup>21</sup> John Stephens, *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture: Traditional Story and Metanarratives in Children's Literature* (New York: Garland, 1998), 6.

<sup>22</sup> Halverson, "Why Story Is Not Narrative" on webiste ASU Centre for Strategic Communication.

<sup>23</sup> Alexa Robertson, "Narrativanalys," in *Textens Mening och Makt: Metodbok i Samhällsvetenskaplig Text- och Diskursanalys*, ed. Göran Bergström and Kristina Boréus K. (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2012), 229.

<sup>24</sup> Robertson, "Narrativanalys," 230.

content of the narrative and how the narrator relates and evaluates the content. In line with Russian formalism<sup>25</sup>, Chatman makes a distinction between ‘story’ (the ‘what’ of the narrative: the content, storyline, characters) and the ‘discourse’ (the ‘how’ of the narrative, the tools by which the content of the narrative is communicated)<sup>26</sup>. Even if the terms ‘discourse’ and ‘story’ are interpreted in a different way within this thesis, the distinction between the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of the narrative is useful in relation to the aim of the study.

## 2. Methodology and Material

### 2.1 Selecting the Newspapers

My research material consists of printed newspaper articles derived from two of the major Swedish daily papers: Dagens Nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet, two of the biggest evening papers: Expressen och Aftonbladet, and Scandinavia’s leading business paper: Dagens Industri.

The selection of newspapers was based on their readership and geographical coverage. All chosen newspapers have a nationwide coverage, which was a selection criterion in order to analyse a national media discourse. The newspapers are also among the most popular newspapers issued on a daily basis.<sup>27</sup> The selected newspapers represent different genres, i.e. both morning newspapers and the more sensation-based evening papers. Since Sweden has close business relations with Lithuania, I have included Sweden’s leading business paper. The political affiliations of the newspapers were also taken in account. Newspapers from the whole political spectrum were desirable. However, most daily papers in Sweden are considered to have a liberal profile.

*Dagens Nyheter* defines itself as a politically independent liberal paper.<sup>28</sup> The printed daily paper 2012 had 785 000 readers on weekdays.<sup>29</sup> The stated position of its

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<sup>25</sup> Introduced by Shklovsky in 1921, Russian formalists such as Boris Tomashevski made a distinction between fabula (story) and syuzhet (narrative ordering). See for instance Hans Bertens, *Literary Theory: The basics* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 28.

<sup>26</sup> Seymour Chatman, *Story and discourse: narrative structure in fiction and film*, (Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1978): 19.

<sup>27</sup> Dagens Industri is printed on Mondays – Saturdays.

<sup>28</sup> “Om oss,” *Dagens Nyheter*, accessed February 22, 2013. <http://info.dn.se/info/om-oss/>

<sup>29</sup> TNS Sifo, *OVERSTO konsument helårsrapport 2012: Helår Uppräknade Tal (1000-tal)* [http://www.tns-sifo.se/media/452346/uppr\\_knat\\_1000\\_tal\\_2012\\_hel\\_r.pdf](http://www.tns-sifo.se/media/452346/uppr_knat_1000_tal_2012_hel_r.pdf)

editorial page of *Svenska Dagbladet* is independently moderate, while the rest of the paper is stated to be without political affiliation.<sup>30</sup> The newspaper had 443 000 readers on weekdays and 461 000 readers on Sundays.<sup>31</sup> *Aftonbladet* defines itself as independent social democratic<sup>32</sup> and the printed version has 896 000 readers on weekdays, and 898 000 readers on Sundays.<sup>33</sup> The printed version of *Expressen* has 826 readers on weekdays and 932 readers on Sundays<sup>34</sup> and declares itself as a liberal newspaper.<sup>35</sup> *Dagens Industri* is one of Scandinavia's leading business newspaper with 357 000 readers per day.<sup>36</sup> The focus is on financial issues and issues that engage the country's business minds.<sup>37</sup> *Dagens Nyheter*, *Expressen* and *Dagens Industri* are owned by the Bonnier Group.<sup>38</sup>

## 2.2 Sampling

The digital print archive *Retriever Mediearkivet* was used to find the articles. Using the same search engine to retrieve articles from different newspapers ensured consistency in the results. I found the search word best fitted for my research to simply be "Litauen" i.e. *Lithuania*.

The exact period of time for the published articles was not fixed when the research began. Instead the size of the sample depended on the amount of relevant articles that existed and if their content was pertinent enough for drawing conclusions. It was however clear from the start that the aim was to research the recent reporting, and thereby contribute to the understanding of the present media climate. I thus began analysing articles, one year at a time, starting from 31<sup>st</sup> December 2012 and continuing chronologically backwards through the published dates. Eventually I limited my research to include articles published the last three years, since this

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<sup>30</sup>"Välkommen till SvD – du också," *Svenska Dagbladet*, accessed February 22, 2013.

[http://www.svd.se/special/svd\\_info/valkommen-till-svd-information-och-kontaktadresser\\_275057.svd](http://www.svd.se/special/svd_info/valkommen-till-svd-information-och-kontaktadresser_275057.svd)

<sup>31</sup> TNS Sifo, *OVERSTO konsument helårsrapport 2012*

<sup>32</sup> "Från Lars Johan Hierta till Våra Dagar," *Aftonbladet*, accessed February 22, 2013

<http://www.aftonbladet.se/amc/stefan/hist.html>

<sup>33</sup> TNS Sifo, *OVERSTO konsument helårsrapport 2012*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> "Frågor och Svar om Expressen," *Expressen*, accessed February 22, 2013.

<http://www.expressen.se/om-expressen/fragor-och-svar-om-expressen/>

<sup>36</sup> TNS Sifo, *OVERSTO konsument helårsrapport 2012*

<sup>37</sup> "Om oss," *Dagens Nyheter*, accessed February 22, 2013. <http://info.dn.se/info/om-oss/>

<sup>38</sup>"Alla Företag & Varumärken," *Bonnier*, accessed February 25, 2013. <http://www.bonnier.se/foretag-varumarken/>

material was rich on narratives. I would probably have had to stretch around ten years back before finding significant changes in the image of Lithuania. Since I decided to analyse the up-to date image of Lithuania, the material published during the recent three years was considered adequate.

A pattern, noticeable upon simply skimming through the search hits, was that Lithuania mostly was mentioned in passing, as for instance a part of a list of EU-members or a mentioned in a table of sports results. Even though this might say something about Lithuania (it is part of the EU and Lithuanian teams participate in international sports events) the articles have too little substantive content for my thesis purpose. However, to merely include articles where Lithuania is the lead item seemed to limit the scope of the research too much.

Inspired by Mi Lennhag's list to determine the relevance of the articles used in her analysis on Ukraine<sup>39</sup>, I borrowed her criteria to define *relevant articles for my research*. They can be defined as articles including the word Lithuania and where Lithuania is either: 1) the main topic of the article 2) mentioned in the headline 3) mentioned in a decisive and significant way for the article's message or 4) mentioned as a reference in a way that says something substantial and interesting (related to my research questions) about the country.

The relevance criteria resulted in the exclusion of many sports results and lists, such as the line-up for Eurovision contest. Articles of the type where a short question of the type "What do you think of this picture on Facebook?" was posed to people on the street and one interviewee happened to be a Lithuanian student in Sweden, was consequentially also excluded. For every search hit an individual assessment was conducted in the light of the relevance-requirements I had set up. A grey-zone did exist, and I made it a rule to include rather than exclude.

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<sup>39</sup> Mi Lennhag, "Föredömligt Folk Förvandlar Gränsland till Europaland –Bilden av Ukraina i Svensk Press Januari 2004 till Mars 2006" in *Working Papers*, 40 (Lund: Centre for European Studies, Lund University, 2009), 5.

My research material consists of *506 articles* selected out of *1 386 hits* on the word *Litauen* (Lithuania).<sup>40</sup> The delimitation of articles show that the word Lithuania was in the vast majority of the cases merely mentioned in passing.

All analysed material is in Swedish and the quotes presented in English are my own, personal translations.

## 2.4 Narrative Method with Influences from Content Analysis

The main method I utilised in answering my research questions is narrative analysis and my finding will be presented as narratives. In the earliest stage I was inspired by content analysis in order to organize my data and find topics and elements of narratives.

My research focuses on identifying narratives. *Narrative analysis* will be used both as a form of method and as an analysis tool. I consider narrative analysis an appropriate approach to news material, mainly because stories are an essential part of media reporting. Through narratives and by repeating historical and cultural themes, journalists aim to create clarity for the reader when addressing turbulent and complex situations.<sup>41</sup> The scientific rewards of studying narratives will be further elaborated under my theoretical framework.

Narrative analysis is an inherently interdisciplinary and thus relatively disparate field with multiple approaches and no single method of analysis exists.<sup>42</sup> My approach is close to what Riessman distinguishes as *thematic analysis*, which is a content-oriented type of narrative analysis.<sup>43</sup> Riessman highlights how thematic narrative analysis is useful for theorizing across a number of cases, i.e. for finding common thematic elements across different texts.<sup>44</sup> This fits the thesis well since it deals with a large sample of texts. My main focus is thus the ‘what’ of the narrative. As an example, some of my first questions to my material were: What is the topic of this news story linked to Lithuania? Can these elements be found in other stories? What events are

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<sup>40</sup> See Appendix.

<sup>41</sup> Alexa Robertson, "Narrativ Analys, Medietexter och Identitetsforskning," in *Identitetsstudier i Praktiken* ed. Bo Petersson and Alexa Robertson (Malmö: Liber ekonomi, 2003), 92.

<sup>42</sup> Robertson, "Narrativanalys," 229. A common approach is the structuralist one based on firstly Propp's and later Labov's and Waletzky's work.

<sup>43</sup> Riessman, "Narrative Analysis," 3.

<sup>44</sup> Riessman, "Narrative Analysis," 4.

linked together/what is the main plot? In what context is Lithuania mentioned?

In the earliest stage of finding common narrative elements within different articles, I was inspired by the systematic classification process of the research method *qualitative content analysis*. One way to perform content analysis is to firstly read the texts to obtain sense of the whole. Next, the researcher approaches the text by making first impressions and labels for codes emerge. These codes are then sorted into different categories.<sup>45</sup> In this case, all articles were initially organized and coded in an Excel-sheet at the same time as notes were taken. Later I reread the articles thoroughly, and sorted the codes into categories and distinguished the narratives. I thus used a mainly inductive approach to my material.

Even if the emphasis is on the ‘what’, the ‘how’ of the narrative was explored by paying attention to the narrative’s constitutive discursive tools. How is the language used in order to communicate the content of the narrative? How is the content evaluated and linked to other narratives or concepts? Here I was especially interested in the epithets applied to Lithuania and the usage of metaphors and value-laden words.

## **2.5 Limitations and Challenges with Narrative Analysis as a Method**

Narrative analysis is according to Lieblich et al. suitable for scholars who are: “to a certain degree, comfortable with ambiguity”.<sup>46</sup> As an interpretive qualitative method it does not produce “numbers and figures” in the same way as systems for gauging frequency and intensity within a quantitative approach do.

A defining feature of analysis based on quantitative and statistical methods is the advantage presented by large data sets. In contrast, textual analysis often requires limiting the dataset and presenting a few texts for deeper analysis.<sup>47</sup> This thesis deals with a large volume of written material and a quantitative analysis would probably have proven an effective way to approach it, especially if my research was not

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<sup>45</sup> Hsiu-Fang Hsieh and Sarah E. Shannon, “Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis,” *Qualitative Health Research* 15 (November 2005): 1279.

<sup>46</sup> Amia Lieblich, Rivka Tuval-Mashiach and Tamar Zilber, *Narrative research: reading, analysis, and interpretation* (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage, 1998),10.

<sup>47</sup> Eleonora Narvselius, *The nation's brightest and noblest: narrative identity and empowering accounts of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in post-1991 Lviv*, (Linköping: Linköping University, Diss., Department of Social and Welfare Studies, 2009):27. David Silverman, *Interpreting qualitative data: methods for analyzing talk, text and interaction* (London: SAGE, 2001):152.

concentrated on identifying narratives. However, counting frequency can simply not capture overall impressions and the essence of narratives. One of the strengths of narrative analysis as an interpretive, qualitative method is that it offers a potential to address ambiguity, complexity and the system of beliefs of an individual or community. By going through my material thoroughly, and taking overall impressions into consideration, I present several articles that are considered representative for the narrative. This means that more articles than the ones cited in the findings support the identified narrative.

To represent, interpret and do justice to different journalists' thoughts and ideas was not a simple task in many regards. Since my material is in Swedish and the quotes are presented in English, a challenge has been to adequately translate the meaning of the Swedish expressions. I am also aware of my own influence in determining and identifying narratives, and by putting together news stories I as a researcher also function as a kind of narrator re-telling stories I have read. One challenge was the question on how to draw the lines between narratives, since they are often intertwined and dependent upon each other. The narratives should thus not be seen as an example of mutual exclusivity, discrete and separate from one another. Logically, they should also not be seen as the only narratives possible to analyse within the selected material, but rather narratives I have determined most relevant to elaborate upon within the scope of this thesis. In line with Lieblich, Narvselius argues that: "... even very limited textual material can be analyzed in plenty of ways, and thereby reaching alternative readings is not an indication of deficient scholarship, but a manifestation of the wealth of the material and the interpretive sensitivity of the scholar."<sup>48</sup> Intersubjectivity can be attained by transparency and well-founded arguments. Interpretations are thus supported with quotes and references from the analysed articles. The quotes are carefully chosen to represent an identified narrative.

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<sup>48</sup> Narvselius, *The nation's brightest and noblest: narrative identity and empowering accounts of the Ukrainian intelligentsia in post-1991 Lviv*, 27.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework will serve as a guide in analysing the identified narratives. As stated in the introduction, *social constructivism* is the foundation for the main concepts that constitute the theoretical framework that will be outlined in this chapter.

#### 3.1 Narratives and Media

Why study narratives in the first place? Robertson accounts for how scholars choose to examine narratives in order to increase the knowledge on how individuals, and thus the collective, make sense of experiences and thus the world.<sup>49</sup> Since narratives are a fundamental human way to organize experiences and ideas, the study of them can facilitate a better understanding of human culture and society as well as identification processes.<sup>50</sup> By analysing narratives we can also gain insights on phenomena in society constructed in a way that they easily are taken for granted and perceived 'natural', they have become what Hall calls "naturalized".<sup>51</sup>

Narrative analysis is useful when approaching media texts, since an essential part of media reporting is presenting versions of the world through the packaging of events into stories. As stated in the introduction many scholars, such as Fairclough<sup>52</sup>, have emphasized the important role of mass media in shaping our perception of the world. Media is seen both as reflecting existing culture and society as well as acting as agenda-setters, actively influencing the public opinion and public agenda.<sup>53</sup>

*Media framing* is a central concept within media studies that refers to the selecting process where the journalist, as described by Entman, organizes and picks out: "aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in the communicating text."<sup>54</sup> In the gatekeeping approach the journalist is seen as a gatekeeper that selects

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<sup>49</sup> Robertson, "Narrativanalys," 224ff.

<sup>50</sup> Robertson, "Narrativanalys," 224-226.

<sup>51</sup> Stuart Hall, "Encoding/decoding," in *Culture, media, language: working papers in cultural studies, 1972-79*, ed. Stuart Hall (London: Hutchinson in association with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, University of Birmingham, 1980) 128-138.

<sup>52</sup> Fairclough, *Media Discourse*, 1995.

<sup>53</sup> "Agenda-setting," Nationalencyklopedin, accessed April 14, 2013.

<http://www.ne.se.ludwig.lub.lu.se/lang/agenda-setting>

<sup>54</sup> Robert M Entman, "Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, 4 (1993): 52.



topics and events to be published as news and thereby ignores others.<sup>55</sup> According to the narrative approach one should be careful not to imply that journalists merely pick out the most juicy news from an assortment of news, instead journalists actively make the news and through discursive practices shape our perception of reality.<sup>56</sup> Besides the selection process the journalist also determines the content of the news by emphasizing specific values, facts and other considerations. Robertson concludes that in many media analyses, ‘framing’ and ‘narratives’ are often exchangeable terms. However, she argues that while framing makes one think of something static framing a picture, the narrative implies that there is a storyteller actively telling a story, creating a plot.<sup>57</sup>

Both Robertson and Źmuda-Trzebiatowska argue that news stories are selected and presented in such a way as to be interesting and understandable for a specific audience, which in this thesis translates to Swedish readers in Sweden.<sup>58</sup> News articles thus fit with the cultural, social or historical conditions of the society that the article is produced within. Börjesson concludes that news are never completely new, but need to relate to the reader’s previous knowledge, established thinking patterns and cultural context to seem relevant at all.<sup>59</sup> By studying news stories we therefore do not merely gain insights into individual journalist’s values or preferences, but also into intrinsic collective perceptions, stereotypes and understandings.

By exploring narratives in Swedish media connected to Lithuania it becomes possible to observe what stereotypes and understandings that are linked to Lithuania in Sweden. We may thus also gain insights on Swedish culture and society.

### **3.2 Narratives and Their Insight Into Collective Identity Building**

Scholars inspired by the ‘the narrative turn’ within social sciences view narratives as vital for identity formation. Identity is fundamentally built on our understanding of

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<sup>55</sup> Pamela J. Shoemaker, *Gatekeeping*, Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1991.

<sup>56</sup> Robertson, ”Narrativ Analys, Medietexter och Identitetsforskning,” 96.

<sup>57</sup> Robertson, ”Narrativ Analys, Medietexter och Identitetsforskning,” 92.

<sup>58</sup> Robertson, ”Narrativ Analys, Medietexter och Identitetsforskning,” 92.

Magdalena Źmuda-Trzebiatowska, ”Bildn av Polen i svensk dagspress 1989- 1999” in *Sverige och Polen. Nationer och stereotype*, edited by Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, (Lund: Slavica Lundensia, 2000), 97.

<sup>59</sup> Mats Börjesson, *Diskurser och konstruktioner: en sorts metodbok*, (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2003), 70.

the world, how meaning is constructed in a specific social context.<sup>60</sup> Humans may according to Fisher be seen as “narrative creatures” with identities shaped in a specific social, political and cultural context.<sup>61</sup> According to Levin, the most important tools to reproduce and construct collective identities are discursive, that is language is seen a constitutive tool and emphasis is put on the constitutive powers of a narrative.<sup>62</sup>

This view is in line with the presuppositions of social constructivism, as is Gora’s and Mach’s definition of identity. Identity is according to them: ”a process, and not a fixed structure. It is perceived as a dynamic construction of images in relation to others”<sup>63</sup> In addition to Gora’s and Mach’s definition I find Checkel and Katzenstein definition of collective identities useful. They describe them as: “shared representations of a collective self as reflected in public debate, political symbols, collective memories, and elite competition for power. They consist also of collective beliefs about the group and its membership that are shared by most group members.”<sup>64</sup>

National identity is as an example of a collective identity. In nationalism theory, Anderson has been influential in suggesting all nations being imagined.<sup>65</sup> Not only nations, but also all large human communities are necessarily imagined since they do not build on face-to-face interactions but have to be created and constantly reproduced.<sup>66</sup> This reproduction of the community (such as nationhood) is done on a daily basis through routines and practises in everyday life.<sup>67</sup> For example, newspapers with a national coverage address members of a specific nation as their readers, and thus contribute to the daily reproduction of nationhood. The Swedish

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<sup>60</sup> Roberston, ”Narrativ Analys, Medietexter och Identitetsforskning,” 93.

<sup>61</sup> Walter R. Fisher, ”Narration as a human communication paradigm: The case of public moral argument”, 51 *Communication Monographs* (1984): 6.

<sup>62</sup> Paul T. Levin, *Turkey and the European Union: Christian and Secular Images of Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 2.

<sup>63</sup> Magdalena Góra and Zdzisław Mach, “Identity formation, democracy and European integration,” in *Collective Identity and Democracy The Impact of EU Enlargement* ed. Magdalena Góra & Zdzisław Mach, 7-28, ARENA Report No 4/10 RECON Report No 12, 2010.

<http://www.reconproject.eu/main.php/RECONReport1210.pdf?fileitem=4472889>

<sup>64</sup> Jeffrey T Checkel and Peter J. Katzenstein, “The Politicization of European Identities” in *European Identity* ed. by Jeffrey T. Checkel and Peter J. Katzenstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4.

<sup>65</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Rev. and extended ed, (London: Verso, 1991)

<sup>66</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

<sup>67</sup> Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995)

newspaper Dagens Nyheter for instance state how it: “wishes to contribute in making Swedes a reading and thinking people”.<sup>68</sup>

By repeating well-known themes and presenting collective understandings Robertson argues that journalists serve as narrators that cultivate the readers’ social and cultural identity.<sup>69</sup> Robertson questions the role of the media to merely inform citizens, and argue that media functions as a source for the images, the resources, we use to maintain and confirm our identities and that news stories are socially constructed products that make sure the reader can identify with the dominating political community. The study of narratives in media may thus tell us something about how media makes us feel we belong to certain communities.<sup>70</sup> The relation between narratives and collective identity formation may be a helpful perspective when analysing why certain narratives are shaped and serve as a frame of reference for Swedish readers on Lithuania.

### **3.3 National Images and Stereotypes – What Can They Teach Us?**

Narratives are, as concluded by now, a vital part of identity formation and the construction of a nation image i.e. the attitudes or perception of a nation.

The concept of a nation image is closely related to the concept of *national stereotypes*. Stereotypes are persistent typifications of people into familiar roles, where they are seen to have certain characteristics in common with all members of a particular group.<sup>71</sup> National stereotypes are the collective ideas and notions about foreign nations as well as the own nation.<sup>72</sup>

Often stereotypes might be viewed as generating negative affective associations towards a certain group, but as Törnquist illustrates, stereotypes can be both positive (Polish people are brave) and neutral (Swedes are tall and blonde).<sup>73</sup> Stereotypes are

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<sup>68</sup> “Om Dagens Nyheter,” *Dagens Nyheter*, accessed April 15, 2013.  
<http://www.dn.se/diverse/diverse-hem/om-dagens-nyheter/>

<sup>69</sup> Robertson, “Narrativ Analys, Medietexter och Identitetsforskning,” 92.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Paul Levin, *Turkey and the European Union: Christian and Secular Images of Islam*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 10.

<sup>72</sup> Barbara Törnquist, ”Speglar vi oss i varandra? Några funderingar kring de nationella stereotypernas beskaffenhet” in *Sverige och Polen. Nationer och stereotyper* ed. Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, (Lund: Slavica Lundensia, 2000), 7.

<sup>73</sup> Törnquist, ”Speglar vi oss i varandra?” 2.

discursively constructed, and often embedded in narratives. They have various cognitive, social, political and communicative functions.<sup>74</sup> Stereotypes can for instance function to simplify the understanding of a complex situation that the journalist tries to account for within limited space, as well as function as frames of references to confirm the own group's norms and roles. Stereotypes have proven to be tenacious and resistant towards change. Media, due to its influential role in today's society, however have the possibility of altering stereotypes.<sup>75</sup>

Scholars studying nation images and stereotypes tend to find it completely meaningless to discuss the objective information value or the degree of veracity of the representation. It is emphasised that one must avoid treating stereotypes as facts, both since they are gross oversimplifications that cannot be verified and because of the discrimination and scapegoating of certain groups that negative stereotypes have contributed to throughout history.<sup>76</sup>

Even if stereotypes are not items of reality, they have "real" social or political consequences. Thus, rather than trying to determine if a stereotype is true, most scholars are interested in how stereotypes are constructed, produced, used within different contexts and how they become what Joep Leerssen call "recognizable" i.e. evoke a sense of familiarity by constantly being reproduced (something the reader sometimes confuses as sense of validity).<sup>77</sup> This is also the focus within this thesis regarding the narratives connected to Lithuania and their embedded stereotypes.

One basic assumption in this research is the idea that we cannot properly analyse representations of a foreign nation without taking into account the cultural values and attitudes of the spectator. If you wish to understand your own nation's self-image then Törnquist suggests that even more rewarding than studying stereotypes portraying your nation is to examine the stereotypes produced about others within your own culture. We are ourselves the point of reference from which we judge others, she continues, and behind our ideas of other countries and their place in the world we find an understanding of our own.<sup>78</sup> An overall central function of stereotypes lies thus in

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<sup>74</sup> Törnquist, "Speglar vi oss i varandra?" 5-7.

<sup>75</sup> Törnquist, "Speglar vi oss i varandra?" 8.

<sup>76</sup> Joep Leerssen, "Images – Information – National Identity and National Stereotype," *Images*, accessed April 29, 2012 <http://www.imagologica.eu/leerssen>

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Törnquist, "Speglar vi oss i varandra?" 11-12.

identification, in the sense that one's own identity is highlighted by the portrayal of the difference of an 'other'.

### 3.4 The Concept of 'Othering' – the Dichotomy between West and East

The concept of an 'other' is central for international relations, and essentially means that identities are constructed against the differences of an 'other'.<sup>79</sup> The relational aspect of identity constructions is highlighted, also in Gora's and Mach's definition of identity as a "construction of images in relation to others".<sup>80</sup> Our identity is thus not always or only defined in what we are but in what we are not. Different forms of 'othering' exist depending on how the 'other' is perceived, and some types of othering can thus be seen as more problematic than others. Edward Said's influential book *Orientalism*, gives an account for how the Western culture has used the East (by Said referred to as the Occident and the Orient), as an exotic and inferior 'other' to define the West.<sup>81</sup> The West and the East (or as Hall calls it: The West and the Rest<sup>82</sup>) have, despite being perceived as geographical in nature, no fixed geographical borders and rather relate to cultural, political and social notions. There has been a western tradition of identifying West with values such as democracy, progress, secularism and modernism. The East logically became the antonymous to the West, and was considered barbaric, uncivilized, stagnating and backward.<sup>83</sup>

The conceptual division of Europe into two halves is referred to by Wolff as a: "intellectual project of demi-orientalism" carried out by Western Europe.<sup>84</sup> According to this theory, the concept of Eastern Europe was invented during the Enlightenment by Western Europe as its other half, in order to contrast the West's "civilisation" against "the shadowed lands of backwardness" within the same continent.<sup>85</sup> At the same time, Eastern Europe was made to mediate with the Orient. According to Wolff, Eastern Europe's ambiguous location made it a part of Europe but not fully European,

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<sup>79</sup> Thomas Diez, "Europe's Others and the Return of Geopolitics," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 17, no 2 (2004): 321

<sup>80</sup> Gora and Mach, "Identity Formation, Democracy and European Integration," 9.

<sup>81</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (Stockholm: Ordfronts förlag, 1993)

<sup>82</sup> Stuart Hall, "The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power" in *Formations of Modernity* ed. Stuart Hall and Bram Gieben (Cambridge: Polity Press in association with the Open Univ, 1992)

<sup>83</sup> Hall, "The West and the Rest."

<sup>84</sup> Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: the map of civilization on the mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford Univ. Press, 1994), 7.

<sup>85</sup> Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 4.

which allowed: “backwardness and development to mediate between the poles of civilization and barbarism.”<sup>86</sup>

The Cold War’s demarcation line between a Western and Eastern Europe, referred to by Churchill as the Iron Curtain, was thus enforced by a division drawn two centuries back. Just like the disunion between Western and Eastern Europe was not invented by the Cold War, it was not completely erased when the Cold War ended.<sup>87</sup>

Many current debates on Europe include the notion of a perceived pair of opposites within Europe, the East and the West dressed up in different words. In 2003 Donald Rumsfeldt spoke of France and Germany being “old” Europe, implying the existence of a “new” Europe.<sup>88</sup> Other dividing markers have been “Core” and “Non-core”.<sup>89</sup> It can be argued that the division between Eastern and Western Europe often is a false dichotomy, where the Eastern Europe is supposed to integrate into “Europe”. As observed by Case, this results in the implicit understanding that there is an: “already existing static entity called “Europe”, that can be joined by assimilating to its ideals.”<sup>90</sup>

Despite the type of othering that is perceived geographical in nature, another influential othering is temporal in nature. An important other for Europe is according to Diez thus Europe’s own past.<sup>91</sup> Numerous arguments for European integration for instance are based on a Europe that seeks to distance itself from its own history of war, repression and genocide.<sup>92</sup>

Diez describes how geographical notion can be added to the “discursive logic of the past as an other”.<sup>93</sup> As accounted for above, Eastern Europe became associated with a sense of backwardness and underdevelopment. Diez observes that after the end of the Cold War: “Central and Eastern Europe now became the incarnation of Europe’s past,

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<sup>86</sup> Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 9.

<sup>87</sup> Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 4.

<sup>88</sup> Holly Case, “Being European: East and West” in *European Identity* ed. Jeffrey T. Checkel and Peter J. Katzenstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 112.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Case, “Being European: East and West”, 130.

<sup>91</sup> Diez, “Europe’s Others and the Return of Geopolitics,” 325.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

Jeffrey T. Checkel and Peter J. Katzenstein, “Conclusion – European identity in context” in *European Identity* ed. Jeffrey T. Checkel and Peter J. Katzenstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 225.

<sup>93</sup> Diez, “Europe’s Others and the Return of Geopolitics,” 326.

a past that the West had overcome, and a zone of war and nationalism that was stuck in history”.<sup>94</sup>

The concept of othering may help to highlight where Lithuania is positioned on the mental map in different narratives. When are common bonds constructed between Swedes and Lithuanians? This perspective can be useful if used in conjunction with narrative analysis, and may help to identify the content of the narratives, as well as how the narratives are discursively constructed.

## 4. Narratives on Lithuania - Findings and Analysis

I have identified ten main narratives that will be presented in this section.

### 4.1. Liberal Sweden Meets Conservative, Homophobic Lithuania

One of the key narratives connected with Lithuania in the last three years of news reporting is related to *homophobia*.

Two specific events serve as the most common background for the articles and become an essential part of the narrative related to homophobia and Lithuania. In 2009 Lithuania’s parliament approved a bill for banning ”positive information” on homosexuality accessible by young people. The law was sharply criticized in Swedish media. By examining the selected sample of articles (from 2010 to 2012), it is noticeable that Lithuania’s legislation on homosexuality has become an established reference. The second influential event is the attempt to ban Baltic Pride in Vilnius 2010. A court in Lithuania withdrew the permission for the Gay Pride event, but one day before the planned march Lithuania’s Supreme Administrative Court overturned the earlier ruling.

In this narrative Lithuania’s spatial context is highlighted. Sometimes the articles’ orientation includes a world perspective and Lithuania is placed in the same category as Uganda as a result of its legislation on homosexuality.<sup>95</sup> More often, the setting of the story is Eastern Europe. Lithuania is also frequently referred to as ”the EU-

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<sup>94</sup> Diez, ”Europe’s Others and the Return of Geopolitics,” 326.

<sup>95</sup> Jeanette Gentele, ”Hur Firas Kobra Ikväll?” *Svenska Dagbladet*, March 10, 2011.

Karin Lenke, ”Födromsfullt, Alstadt!” *Aftonbladet*, January 26, 2011.

Åsa Ragnér, ”Hon Riskerar Döden - för sin Sexualitet”, *Aftonbladet*, July 28, 2010.

country Lithuania”<sup>96</sup> and a country geographically close to Sweden. The geographical proximity is used to highlight the strangeness of the cultural and mental distance between the countries so close to each other. By emphasising Lithuania’s EU-identity, it is also obvious how Lithuania and Sweden belong the same political community, which heightens the impetus for Swedes to react.

Journalists and debaters describe how homophobia is increasing<sup>97</sup>, how the development in the former Eastern European bloc is heading in the wrong direction<sup>98</sup> and how alarming extreme right winds are blowing in (Eastern) Europe<sup>99</sup>. Journalists conclude: “Sweden is following the development in Lithuania closely”.<sup>100</sup> The development in Lithuania is depicted as a serious threat against Sweden’s and EU’s core values: human rights, democracy, liberty, the rule of law and rights of minorities. The angle of the narrative is safeguarding LGBT-rights that without a doubt equals safeguarding basic human rights.

Swedish Minister of EU affairs, Birgitta Ohlsson, takes on a high profile in the debate, both writing own debate contributions and figuring in the reporting as the opening speaker of the Baltic Pride. When Baltic Pride regained its permission, Ohlsson declared in Dagens Nyheter: ”This was a victory not only for the liberty in Lithuania, but for human rights in the whole European Union.”<sup>101</sup>

The protagonists of the narrative are consequently advocates of fundamental democratic rights. The explicit heroes of the story are the brave LGBT-rights activists. The Lithuanian LGBT-movement’s fight for democratic rights, such as the freedom of assembly and expression, qualifies them for presentation as one of ”us”. This is illustrated with the epithet “colleges”<sup>102</sup> and headlines such as: ”Eastern Europe’s LGBT-activists battle for all our sakes”,<sup>103</sup> and ”A pride fight for democracy”<sup>104</sup>.

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<sup>96</sup> Tobias Brandel, ”FP Vill Stärka Minoritetens Rättigheter inom EU,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, July 29, 2010.

Editorial, ”Maj- en Månad av Demokratikamper,” *Aftonbladet*, May 30, 2010.

”Ohlsson i Litauisk Prideparad”, *Dagens Nyheter*, May 9, 2010.

<sup>97</sup> Teresa Kuchler, ”EU Delat i Hbt-frågor,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, December 8, 2010.

<sup>98</sup> Åsa Ragnér, ”Hon Riskerar Döden - för sin Sexualitet”, *Aftonbladet*, July 28, 2010.

<sup>99</sup> Michaela Möller, ”Revoltens som Blev en Folklig Glitterfest,” *Expressen*, August 7, 2011.

<sup>100</sup> ”Litauen Stöppar Pridefestival”, *Svenska Dagbladet*, May 6, 2010.

<sup>101</sup> ”Ohlsson i Litauisk Prideparad”, *Dagens Nyheter*, May 9, 2010.

<sup>102</sup> Karin Lenke, ”Födromsfullt, Alstadt!” *Aftonbladet*, January 26, 2011.

<sup>103</sup> Editorial, ”Maj- en Månad av Demokratikamper,” *Aftonbladet*, May 30, 2010.

<sup>104</sup> Editorial, ”En Stolt Kamp för Demokrati,” *Aftonbladet*, July 26, 2010.



Indirectly the democracy-loving and human rights-supporting Swedes, are also heroes of the narratives. The narrative on homophobia thus serves an important purpose to strengthen the Swedes' identity as a peace-loving, democratic and tolerant people. In that sense it confirms fundamental values of the Swedish national identity. These values are also portrayed as the base for EU. This interpretation consequently supports Robertson's claim that media's role is to guarantee the reader's identification with the dominating political structure.<sup>105</sup> The conclusion is also in line with Żmuda-Trzebiatowska's<sup>106</sup> and Lennhag's<sup>107</sup> observations on how narratives can mirror the culture it is produced within.

Gay Pride is throughout the articles portrayed as a treasured helper in pursuing a more democratic, open and tolerant society. The Gay Pride Parade is referred to as: "the engine driving the whole LGBT-society forward"<sup>108</sup> as well as: "an international peace movement"<sup>109</sup> with the goal of "democracy and human dignity".<sup>110</sup> An editorial of *Aftonbladet* establishes that: "Attacks on Pride Parades are an attack on the whole democracy".<sup>111</sup>

The opponents are those presented as discriminating on the grounds of sexual orientation, such as limiting freedom of assembly and expression. The Lithuanian parliament banning "promotion of homosexuality" and the Lithuanian court withdrawing the permission of the Pride Parade thus constitutes a negative image of Lithuania in Swedish press. "Lithuania distinguishes itself in an extremely negative sense"<sup>112</sup> is also Ohlsson's comment in *Expressen* on the decision to ban Pride.

Two other stereotypes of Pride-antagonists are found in Ohlsson's description: "Everything from neo-Nazis and religious fundamentalists are mobilizing".<sup>113</sup> Again in a different article she states: "There were Nazis and religious fundamentalists there and we were attacked".<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Robertson, "Narrativ Analys, Medietexter och Identitetsforskning," 92.

<sup>106</sup> Żmuda-Trzebiatowska, "Bilderna av Polen i svensk dagspress 1989- 1999," 97.

<sup>107</sup> Lennhag, "Föredömligt Folk Förvandlar Gränsland till Europaland"

<sup>108</sup> Michaela Möller, "Revoltens som Blev en Folklig Glitterfest," *Expressen*, August 7, 2011.

<sup>109</sup> Editorial, "En Stolt Kamp för Demokrati," *Aftonbladet*, July 26, 2010.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>111</sup> Editorial, "En Stolt Kamp för Demokrati," *Aftonbladet*, July 26, 2010.

<sup>112</sup> Catarina Håkansson, "Inget Pridetåg i Vilnius," *Expressen*, 6 May, 2010.

<sup>113</sup> "Ohlsson tar med skydd till Pride", *Expressen*, June 5, 2010.

<sup>114</sup> Karl-Johan Karlsson, "Stolthet & Fördom", *Expressen*, June 7, 2012.

The *extreme right* is a recurring element in the articles related to homosexuality. The extreme-right is presented as the real threat against our democratic society, not homosexuality as some Eastern European politicians imply. As an example, an article in Aftonbladet describes how the Norwegian ambassador in Lithuania was shocked to note that no Lithuanian politicians reacted on a recent protest march carried out by Lithuania's extreme-right, but fifty Lithuanian parliamentarians signed a petition to stop the Pride event.<sup>115</sup>

Europe's own history of oppression and genocide is a crucial inexplicit or explicit aspect of the narrative. It helps us understand the relevance of the European dimension and why safeguarding human rights is considered of such importance. Europe's historical experience has led to the political and ethical principle of "never again". This is a central principle of Sweden's governmental information campaign launched in the 90s on the Holocaust and the establishment of the public authority "Living history Forum,"<sup>116</sup> which distributed a free book on the destruction of the Jews called "Tell ye yer children" published in 1998.<sup>117</sup> The underlying principle behind this initiative was not to let the past of intolerance and violence repeat itself. In line with this principle the articles urge the readers to *remember*. In her debate article regarding the banned Pride event Birgitta Ohlsson declares: "Nazism, fascism and communism was born in Europe. It is our duty to remember that two disastrous wars started in Europe."<sup>118</sup> Another article states that we must: "demand respect for history and be vigilant for contemporary dark currents".<sup>119</sup> Also the Soviet history of oppression is mentioned in an article from Aftonbladet: "Particularly tragic is the fact that this is a country that not too long ago got out of a repression that struck especially hard on everything LGBT stands for. [...] How woefully short the memory can be."<sup>120</sup> The historical remarks demonstrate the concept of Europe's own past as an 'other', something that needs distancing from as shown by Diez.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Torsten Kävlemark, "Norsk Attack mot Baltikums Extremhöger," *Aftonbladet*, April 7, 2010.

<sup>116</sup> In Swedish: Forum för levande historia. Today they also produce educational campaigns on e.g. crimes against humanity under communist regimes. <http://www.levandehistoria.se>

<sup>117</sup> "Om detta må ni berätta", *Forum för Levande Historia*, accessed March 18, 2013.

<http://www.levandehistoria.se/material/om-detta-ma-ni-beratta>

<sup>118</sup> Birgitta Ohlsson, "EU-länder Måste Leva som De Lär," *Svenska Dagbladet*, May 7, 2010.

<sup>119</sup> Torsten Kävlemark, "Norsk Attack mot Baltikums Extremhöger," *Aftonbladet*, April 7, 2010.

<sup>120</sup> Rayman, Sanna. "Moln över Baltstaternas Regnbågsrörelser," *Svenska Dagbladet*, May 9, 2010.

<sup>121</sup> Diez, "Europe's Others and the Return of Geopolitics," 325.

Lithuania is in this narrative considered a part of Eastern Europe, a backward and conservative regional unity that in some articles serve to contrast Sweden's tolerant and progressive society against. As an example, *Aftonbladet* writes how in Sweden Pride has become a national celebration – while in Eastern Europe the manifestations have been forbidden and clamped down upon.<sup>122</sup>

The temporal aspect in relation with geography, that Diez mentions<sup>123</sup>, is also noticeable. The development is defined as a form of “backwardness”. In one article the journalist first account for inhumane, terrible crimes against homosexuals throughout history. However the journalist continues, there still exists a “witch-hunt” (another historical reference) on homosexuals and “it is enough to glance over the Baltic Sea to find examples of societies where being homosexual equals a great personal risk”<sup>124</sup>.

Not many articles include deeper descriptions on the Lithuanian political or cultural context of the ‘traditional values’ that are contrasted against human rights. Out of the around thirty articles on homosexuality, one article mentions that Lithuania is a country dominated by Roman Catholicism.<sup>125</sup> The reference is found in the same sentence as the reference to the disputed LGBT- rights in Lithuania, which implies a connection of relevance between the two facts, but without explicit stated causality. Few religious references might be explained by Sweden's secular society and the dominating civil rights discourse in Sweden on LGBT-matters. “Religious fundamentalists”<sup>126</sup> are in few cases the depicted opponents of Baltic Pride, and in Sweden evoke negative connotations of backwardness and irrationality.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Editorial, “En Stolt Kamp för Demokrati,” *Aftonbladet*, July 26, 2010.

<sup>123</sup> Diez, “Europe's Others and the Return of Geopolitics,” 326.

<sup>124</sup> Michaela Möller, “Revoltens som Blev en Folklig Glitterfest,” *Expressen*, August 7, 2011.

<sup>125</sup> “Ohlsson i Litauisk Prideparad”, *Dagens Nyheter*, May 9, 2010.

<sup>126</sup> “Ohlsson tar med skydd till Pride”, *Expressen*, June 5, 2010.

Karl-Johan Karlsson, “Stolthet & Fördom”, *Expressen*, June 7, 2012.

<sup>127</sup> Secularisation has long been perceived as the dominant trend in modernisation and religion has been described as Europe's paradoxical ‘other’, which for instance is discussed and questioned by Jose Casanova, “Religion, European secular identities, and European integration,” in *Religion in an Expanding Europe* ed. Timothy A. Byrnes and Peter J. Katzenstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 66.

## 4.2 The Responsible Example - Northern Europe's Way of Tackling Crisis

Through the newspaper articles published 2010-2012 we see how the Baltic republics were referred to as the 'Baltic Economic Tigers' in the beginning of the 2000s, and were later the fastest shrinking economies in the EU, and now again the fastest growing economies. In the Swedish newspapers the main narrative connected to Lithuania between 2010-2012 is closely related to Lithuania's *responsible financial crisis management* as well as Lithuania's *rapid economic growth*.

Lithuania is mostly mentioned as a part of the Baltic region. The main foundation of the narrative is that Lithuania, like the other Baltic Republics, coped with the deepest recession in 2008-2009 by choosing internal devaluation instead of traditional currency devaluation, i.e. choosing to lower costs internally in the country by reducing public spending, cutting official salaries, lowering pensions etc.

At the beginning of 2010 there is a concerned tone towards Lithuania's financial situation. Lithuania is mentioned as a part of the (generally accepted to be poor) Eastern Europe that has been affected hardest by the crisis. One headline for instance reads: "Eastern Europe's crisis is not over".<sup>128</sup> At the same time the Baltic countries are perceived as the Swedish banks' *home market*, which produces a sense of belonging between the countries but also an extra reason for Sweden to worry. The articles though more often express a concern and fellow feeling towards Lithuanians. Lithuania's problems are in focus: *high unemployment, emigration* and how the *drastic austerity measures* can deepen the crisis.<sup>129</sup> This relates to a different narrative about Lithuania that will be elaborated in section 4.10.

However, very soon the articles portray a much brighter image, and "light" is also a term frequently used. In contrast to the dark recession, now the headlines read: "It is lighting up also in the East".<sup>130</sup> By the end of 2010 and during 2011 the Baltic countries are depicted as "the best in class"<sup>131</sup> and as one of Europe's fastest growing economies.<sup>132</sup> The country's economic growth and increased export is praised in

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<sup>128</sup> Martin Kragh, "Östeuropas Kris är Inte Över," *Dagens Industri*, October 11, 2010.

<sup>129</sup> Johan Schüick, "Utvandring Litauens Problem" *Dagens Nyheter*, August 25, 2010.

<sup>130</sup> Leif Petersen, "Ljusning på Väg Även i Öst," *Svenska Dagbladet*, March 25, 2010.

<sup>131</sup> Mattias Mauritzon, "Baltikum bäst i klassen," *Dagens Industri*, September 9, 2011

<sup>132</sup> Therese Larsson, "Kallt Prestigebygge," *Svenska Dagbladet*, July 9, 2011.

several articles, Lithuania's fast recovery is portrayed as "spectacular".<sup>133</sup> The roused astonishment also exposes preconceived, stereotypical ideas of Lithuania, like when Staffan Heimer in his column in *Aftonbladet* exclaims: "Lithuania has the highest growth of all. Lithuania?! So it is actually more than sugar beet fields?"<sup>134</sup>

"Path" and its synonyms is a common expression. Lithuania chose the "difficult path"<sup>135</sup>, "the Baltics show the way"<sup>136</sup>, "Lithuania is on the right track"<sup>137</sup> and "Lithuania chooses a different path to Greece".<sup>138</sup>

What is then the "right way"? The success story of Lithuania is presented as proving that it is austerity. This belief is built on the assumption that governments' main task in the crisis is to reduce the budget deficit as fast as possible.

The statement that "Lithuania chooses a different path to Greece"<sup>139</sup> is just one example of how Lithuania, mostly packaged together with the other Baltic Republics as one unity, is constantly contrasted against Southern Europe. In the compass of the crisis the decisive dividing line is thus not mainly between Eastern and Western Europe. Åslund Petterson even writes in *Dagens Nyheter* that: "Western Europe will be forced to learn from the Baltic States, and thus, the current division between first and second class members will vanish."<sup>140</sup> Instead Southern Europe serves as an inferior 'other' to Northern Europe. Lithuania, just like Sweden, is placed in the Northern category. In *Svenska Dagbladet* we can read: "... for our Baltic Sea neighbours that has managed to overcome the crisis – something the countries in Southern Europe not have succeeded with so far."<sup>141</sup> The word choice of "our neighbours" further signals unity between Sweden and the Baltics.

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<sup>133</sup> Mattias Mauritzon, "Baltikum bäst i klassen," *Dagens Industri*, September 9, 2011. Mikael Johansson, head of Eastern European research at SEB describes the development as "spectacular" and "the result of an export boom."

<sup>134</sup> Staffan Heimerson, "Jönssonligans plan hjälper inte ett Europa i skärselden," *Aftonbladet*, December 19, 2011.

<sup>135</sup> Henrik Mitelman, "En Födelsedag Värd att Fira," *Dagens Industri*, July 28, 2011.

<sup>136</sup> Anders Åslund Petterson, "Baltikum Visar Vägen i Skuld-krisens Europa," *Dagens Nyheter*, June 30, 2011.

<sup>137</sup> Claes Arvidsson, "Visst Kan det Löna sig att Spara sig ur Krisen," *Svenska Dagbladet*, October 16, 2012.

<sup>138</sup> Mattias Mauritzon, "Litauen Klär upp de Statliga Bolagen," *Dagens Industri*, April 8, 2013.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Anders Åslund Petterson, "Baltikum Visar Vägen i Skuld-krisens Europa," *Dagens Nyheter*, June 30, 2011.

<sup>141</sup> Leif Petersen, "Baltiska Tigrar Klarade Krisen," *Svenska Dagbladet*, November 11, 2011.

Through the success story of the Baltic republics, the Baltic republics are not only contrasted against Southern Europe, but also portrayed as a *model*. The message that Lithuania is a good example for crisis countries is presented in the news articles as the opinions of the then Lithuanian politicians, for instance the then Prime Minister Kubilius<sup>142</sup>, and Swedish professors of economics.<sup>143</sup> Journalists themselves also embrace Lithuania as tackling the crisis in an exemplary matter. In the Dagens Nyheter we can read “Greece and other debt crisis countries have much to learn from how the Baltic States handled the financial crisis.”<sup>144</sup> and an article in Dagens Industri express: “Too many seem to think it is someone else who will pay the bill after years of excesses. They ought to go on educational visits to the Baltics who have succeeded where the Greeks seem to have failed”.<sup>145</sup>

National stereotypes highlight the perceived differences between North and South. Reporting about Greece in international press has been biased, and also in Swedish media we find some undertones implying that Greeks are shiftless, irresponsible and whining, while the hardworking Lithuanians are praised according to the motto that self-control should be rewarded while laziness and self-indulgence should not.

Two factors are often put forth as decisive for the described success of Lithuania’s austerity policy: *the political will* and the *will of the people*.

When illustrating the will of the people, stereotypes are frequent. Despite the Prime Minister Kubilius’ utterance that they did have some protests to the austerity measures<sup>146</sup>, Lithuanians are in the beginning of the narrative mostly described as an understanding and stoic people, withstanding austerity. Åslund Petterson in Dagens Nyheter describes the difference between the Greek and Lithuanian people with the words: “Instead of just throwing rocks and whining, the vast majority showed willingness to withstand austerity.”<sup>147</sup> This explicit and what might be considered harsh language is however used by few journalists, especially in the morning papers. The differences between the nationals are instead mostly formulated similar to this

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<sup>142</sup> Henrik Mitelman, ”Rätt Medicin för Grekland,” *Dagens Industri*, February 2, 2012.

<sup>143</sup> Anders Åslund Petterson, ”Baltikum Visar Vägen i Skuldkrisens Europa,” *Dagens Nyheter*, June 30, 2011.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Henrik Mitelman, ”Rätt Medicin för Grekland,” *Dagens Industri*, February 2, 2012.

<sup>146</sup> Johan Schück, ”Litauens väg ur krisen,” *Dagens Nyheter*, February 2, 2012.

<sup>147</sup> Wolfgang Hansson, ”De Bär Krisen,” *Aftonbladet*, June 18, 2011.

quote from Dagens Industri: “In contrast to the Baltic countries, insight and the will of the people is lacking in Greece.”<sup>148</sup>

The Baltic countries’ *Soviet past* is an important factor in explaining the ‘will’ of the people or the acceptance of austerity policies. This is the explanation given by both politicians as well as by journalists, who also actively ask about the impact of the Soviet heritage. An economist interviewed in Dagens Nyheter explains that the Balts are used to do what the authority tells them to do.<sup>149</sup> Another more common explanation is that Lithuanians are used to tough times. In an article in Svenska Dagbladet the then Minister of Financial Affairs, Ingrida Simonyte, argues: “Our populations remember real crises, when people were sent to Siberia. That is how it used to be. So this we can handle.”<sup>150</sup> The then Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius expresses a similar view in an interview for Dagens Industri: “We have a different mentality and history. In the Baltics we are not yet used to luxury and stability. We remember how it was during the Soviet occupation.”<sup>151</sup>

In an editorial of Dagens Nyheter we can read: “The Balts did not consider re-introducing socialism even in the depths of the recent financial crisis. Instead, they worked harder and saved more. In questionnaires you could read then a common answer was: It’s at least better now than during the war and the Soviet era.”<sup>152</sup> Besides the Soviet reference, the stereotype of Lithuanians as hardworking people is again noticeable.

In Aftonbladet a section named “Modern Swedish dictionary” (Nusvensk Ordlista) summarizes the narrative with: “As role- models for the frivolous and work-shy southern Europeans the EU leadership wants to praise the inhabitants of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which have had to learn discipline and self-restraint in another Union.”<sup>153</sup>

The image of the ‘supportive people’ however becomes slightly problematic in relation to the parliament elections of autumn 2012. The reporting on the elections

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<sup>148</sup> Henrik Mitelman, ”En Födelsedag Värd att Fira,” *Dagens Industri*, July 28, 2011.

<sup>149</sup> Marianne Björklund, ”Lettland Sparade sig ur Krisen,” *Dagens Nyheter*, June 18, 2011.

<sup>150</sup> Leif Petersen, ”Baltiska Tigrar Klarade Krisen,” *Svenska dagbladet*, November 11, 2011.

<sup>151</sup> Henrik Mitelman, ”Rätt Medicin för Grekland,” *Dagens Industri*, February 2, 2012.

<sup>152</sup> Editorial, ”Nostalgi: Offren Saknar Inte Kommunismen,” *Dagens Nyheter*, August 27, 2011.

<sup>153</sup> Palmaer, Carsten. ”NO Nusvensk Ordlista – Grisländer, -na,” *Aftonbladet*, October 2, 2011.

consists of short articles explaining the regime change with the Lithuanian people being tired of crisis<sup>154</sup> and “kristrött” (tired of crisis) is also Lithuania’s epithet.<sup>155</sup>

The described success of the strict fiscal discipline is mainly depicted as a matter of *political will*. The Lithuanian government is presented as choosing a pioneering way to tackle the crisis<sup>156</sup> (being brave and innovative) and even more importantly showing determination (being exemplary and responsible). An article published in *Dagens Nyheter* 2012 on Lithuania’s way out of the crisis for instance begins with: “The Euro crisis can be solved, if everyone shows enough determination.”<sup>157</sup> Lithuania’s national currency is since 2002 pegged to the euro. Despite Kubilius’ comment of “there was no alternative”<sup>158</sup> in *Dagens Nyheter*, the frequent expression is that Lithuania actively “chooses” a path and chooses to keep their currency linked to the euro, which is considered to exemplify a political will to curb the deficit.<sup>159</sup> The aim to join the Euro-zone is presented as a helpful and disciplinary factor. In articles from 2012 it is clear that Lithuania, despite aiming to meet the entry requirements, have no rush to join the Euro-zone, but will wait to see how the Euro-countries tackle the crisis.<sup>160</sup> There is thus again a questioning of the power roles between “new Europe” and “old Europe”. The journalist Henrik Mitelman in *Dagens Industri* writes: “For the Euro-countries’ leaders it must seem strange that Lithuania now waits for the EMU to get its act together, instead of the other way around.”<sup>161</sup>

The close business relations between Lithuania and Sweden becomes clear when analysing the material for this thesis, and could perhaps also have been identified as an own narrative. The information that production is carried out or moved from Sweden to Lithuania is frequently found in different articles about Swedish companies<sup>162</sup>. In regards to the economic growth and the bright future ahead, one article writes that: “Now the ambition is to take the next step and not only be

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<sup>154</sup> ”Troligt Maktskifte i Krisens Litauen,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, October 29, 2012.

<sup>155</sup> ”Omval Väntas i Kriströtta Litauen,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, October 15, 2012.

<sup>156</sup> See for instance: Mattias Mauritzon, ”Litauen Klär upp de Statliga Bolagen,” *Dagens Industri*, April 8, 2012.

<sup>157</sup> Johan Schück, ”Litauens väg ur krisen,” *Dagens Nyheter*, February 2, 2012.

<sup>158</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> Henrik Mitelman, ”Baltiska Länder Tvekar om Euron,” *Dagens Industri*, October 3, 2012.

<sup>160</sup> Johan Schück, ”Litauens väg ur krisen,” *Dagens Nyheter*, February 2, 2012.

<sup>161</sup> Henrik Mitelman, ”Baltiska Länder Tvekar om Euron,” *Dagens Industri*, October 3, 2012.

<sup>162</sup> See for instance: *Dagens Industri*, “Sjuttio Varslas vid Diab i Laholm.” September 14, 2012.

Anders Hägerstrand, “Bra Drag för Svenska Underleverantörer,” *Dagens Industri*, October 10, 2012.

Ylva Edenhall, “Vad Betyder Priset för er?” *Svenska Dagbladet*, August 19, 2011.



perceived as a Eastern European factory with cheap production.”<sup>163</sup> The lead item of another article is the then on-going construction of an indoor ski arena in Lithuania, which is depicted as a way for Lithuania to manifest its rapid economic growth.<sup>164</sup> In the same article a box explains that this establishment is financed by the bank Snoras, a bank known in Sweden due to its major shareholder and chairman at the time, Vladimir Antonov, expressed interest in buying the Swedish company Saab. Lithuania is mentioned in around fifty articles related to the controversial businessman Vladimir Antonov, which make headlines in Sweden due to Lithuanian embezzlement charges. He is depicted as the reason for a bank crisis that threatens Lithuania’s economic and political stability.<sup>165</sup> He is essentially also main news in the reporting due to his interest in a company and an industry very important to Sweden.

A Swedish perspective in the reporting on the development in Lithuania is especially evident due to the focus on the situation for Swedish companies, consultants<sup>166</sup>, and banks in Lithuania. The banks own research reports (such as the Baltic Sea Report by Swedbank, Eastern European Outlook by SEB, The Baltic Rim Outlook by Nordea) constitute as the main source of information for news articles in all newspapers on the situation in Lithuania.

The development in Lithuania is seen as interesting for the Swedish industry, and thus also frequently presented from the angle of the industry. The development in the Baltics, in my material from 2010-2012, are often by the business journalists presented as a crisis for the banks, rather than the other way around.<sup>167</sup> The financial crash in the Baltics “hits hard on Swedbank and SEB”<sup>168</sup> and: “The Baltic basically shook the whole banking sector last year [...] Only Handelsbanken is completely shielded from Eastern exposure”.<sup>169</sup> One article includes the sentence construction

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<sup>163</sup> Henrik Mitelman, ”Baltiska Länder Tvekar om Euron,” *Dagens Industri*, October 3, 2012

<sup>164</sup> Therese Larsson, ”Kallt Prestigebygge,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, July 9, 2011.

<sup>165</sup> See for instance: Hans Bolander, ”Vägrar att utlämnas till Litauen,” *Dagens Industri*, November 26, 2011. Tomas Nordenskiöld, ”Bankkollaps efter Misstänkt Bedrägeri – Skakar Baltikum,” *Dagens Industri*, November 26, 2011.

Thorbjörn Spängs, ”Saab kan bli Skyldigt att Betala Tillbaka,” *Dagens Nyheter*, November 26, 2011.

Richard Aschberg, ”Brotten Förföljer Saabs Frälsare,” *Aftonbladet*, April 17, 2011.

<sup>166</sup> Mattias Mauritzon, ”Litauen Klär upp de Statliga Bolagen,” *Dagens Industri*, April 8, 2013.

National perspective. Article on “Mr State”, Dag Deter, founder of a Swedish consulting firm that develops state commercial assets in Lithuania, among other countries.

<sup>167</sup> See for instance: Johanna Petersson and Patricia Hedelius, ”Miljardförluster för Swedbank,” *Dagens Nyheter*, January 23, 2010.

<sup>168</sup> ”Finanskrisen 2008 Slog Hårt Mot Swedbank och SEB,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, September 16, 2011.

<sup>169</sup> Carolina Neurath, ”Fem Viktiga för de Fyra Stora,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, April 27, 2010.

“the Baltic crushed their profit”, but also emphasises that Swedbank put themselves in their own nightmare.<sup>170</sup> Some articles do thus mention the banks’ own share of blame in the recession due to their extensive lending.<sup>171</sup> However, sometimes it is in guarded terms, one article mentions that Swedish banks have been “identified as the guilty parties”<sup>172</sup> and another that they have been “targeted for disapproval.”<sup>173</sup> The banks are passive objects in these sentences, like victims they are affected by actions rather than acting themselves.

The narrative on the Baltics and the financial crisis is constructed with a terminology borrowed from the discourse on natural disasters or medicine. The financial crisis “hits the Baltics with full force”<sup>174</sup>, the Baltic takes the “bitter medicine”<sup>175</sup> it needs and the “cure succeeded”<sup>176</sup> even if Lithuania’s unemployment is still a “headache.”<sup>177</sup> The Greek “go directly from the health centre to the tobacco store”<sup>178</sup> when they should listen to the doctor and look at Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.<sup>179</sup> The natural disaster analogies add up to the perception of no one being responsible, the crisis just happened. The medicine analogy supports the austerity rhetoric- a cure, unappetizing or not, is necessary. A sickness might hit you, but you choose whether or not to take the medicine. The Lithuanian government and Lithuanian people act responsibly and set a good example and by taking the cure. There are of course other ways of viewing this complex situation but stereotypes, word choice, selection and structure of events build up the main narrative described in this chapter.

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<sup>170</sup> Jan Almgren, ”Tufft Bokslut,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, February 14, 2010.

<sup>171</sup> See for instance: ”Finanskrisen 2008 Slog Hårt Mot Swedbank och SEB,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, September 16, 2011.

<sup>172</sup> Therese Larsson, ”Kallt Prestigebygge,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, July 9, 2011.

<sup>173</sup> Tomas Lundin, ”Ilskan Växer när Krisen När Östra Europa,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, January 2, 2012.

<sup>174</sup> Mosse Wallén, ”Billiga Hus i Baltikum Lockar,” *Dagens Industri*, February 22, 2011.

<sup>175</sup> Henrik Mitelman, ”Baltiska Länder Tvekar om Euron,” *Dagens Industri*, October 3, 2012.

<sup>176</sup> Therese Larsson, ”Ökar Trycket på Mario Draghi,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, June 5, 2012.

<sup>177</sup> Sara L. Brännström, ”Arbetslösheten Stör Baltikum på Tillväxt,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, October 7, 2010.

<sup>178</sup> Wolfgang Hansson, ”De Bär Krisen,” *Aftonbladet*, June 18, 2011.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*

### 4.3 Lithuania and Criminality – Police Cooperation Over State Borders

The opinion that: “Lithuania steals a lot of foreign headlines in connection with crime, especially in Scandinavia”<sup>180</sup> is found in an article from Baltic Times published nearly ten years ago. In Parks article from 2009, she also states that in relation to the massive emigration from Lithuania in the beginning of the new millennium, stories appeared in foreign media that frequently associated Lithuania with crime.<sup>181</sup> How is it then today? Are news stories on Lithuania related to criminality? The short answer after reading hundreds of articles is yes, Lithuania is. But what is the narrative - who is the villain and victim and how is he or she described?

First of all, even if criminality is identified as a main narrative related to Lithuania it is not the most dominant narrative. Lithuanians also are given several roles in the news stories related to crime. The role mentioned above in Park’s article and the article in Baltic times refer to Lithuanians as ‘the criminal’. This role is one among others found in the analysed articles. The newspaper reader is now and then confronted with the face of a Lithuanian criminal on the lists of Europe’s most wanted that is regularly published in the tabloids.<sup>182</sup> It is noticeable how elements such as geographic closeness between Sweden and Lithuania is emphasised – criminals move quickly across state borders. One term in the articles that refers to criminals with Lithuanian origin (and sometimes together with criminals from other countries) is “gangs from Eastern Europe.”<sup>183</sup> The interviewed police describe “burglary gangs”<sup>184</sup> that consists of citizens who travel from ‘Eastern Europe’ and arrive in Sweden with the main aim of committing crimes during, what two journalists call “burglary tours”<sup>185</sup> or “stealing tours.”<sup>186</sup> This corresponds with Park’s observation that crimes committed by Lithuanians in Scandinavia tend to be described as robberies and burglaries.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Thomas Hviid, “Why does Lithuania attract so much bad press?” in The Baltic Times, October 20, 2004. <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/11169>

<sup>181</sup> Park, “‘Selling’ a small state to the world”, 75.

<sup>182</sup> See for instance: ”Här är Några av De Mest Jagade,” *Aftonbladet*, October 20, 2012.

<sup>183</sup> Oskar Forsberg, “Ligan Slår Till När Du är på Fest,” *Aftonbladet* December 13, 2012.

Katarina Lagerwall, ”Ny Satsning Minskar Inbrott,” *Dagens Nyheter*, July 14, 2012.

<sup>184</sup> Katarina Lagerwall, ”Ny Satsning Minskar Inbrott,” *Dagens Nyheter*, July 14, 2012.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Oskar Forsberg, “Ligan Slår Till När du är på Fest,” *Aftonbladet* December 13, 2012.

<sup>187</sup> Park, ”Selling a Small State to the World,” 75.

Another type of crime linked to Lithuania is the drug situation in Sweden. The news articles write how basically all amount of the illegal synthetic drug methamphetamine, also called the “killing drug,”<sup>188</sup> in Sweden is produced in Lithuania and smuggled into Sweden.<sup>189</sup>

Lithuanian criminals also feature as traffickers, brothel owners or in any other way part of organized pimping controlled by criminal networks. This image of Lithuania seems quite well established. An evidence of this is when a police officer, in an article on trafficking, gives advice on what to think when sub-letting your apartment and says: “If there comes a young couple from a country like Lithuania or Estonia and hands over 20 000 in cash, then perhaps you should think a little. A normal monthly wage in Lithuania is perhaps 1500 to 2000 Swedish crowns. How can a young couple pay so much money in cash? At that moment warning bells should ring.”<sup>190</sup>

The news stories on trafficking related to Lithuania include very little or no information at all on the sex buyers in Sweden, who just like the traffickers or pimps are considered criminals according to Swedish law. Sweden’s legislation on prostitution criminalizes the sex buyer and persons benefitting financially from someone else selling sexual services, but decriminalizes the person selling sex. Swedish law is formed in order to reflect the view that prostitution is an institution of power inequality, in which the prostitute (whether being a victim of human trafficking or not) is being exploited.<sup>191</sup>

Lithuanians are not only depicted as criminals, but also portrayed as the *victims* of sexual trafficking. This story is present in articles reporting on for instance police arrests and include sentences such as: “arrested in Stockholm, suspected of having sold Lithuanian women as sex slaves”.<sup>192</sup> In another articles we can read how: “...women were taken from Lithuania and later sold in hotels, apartments or at the sex

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<sup>188</sup> Andreas Victorzon, “Dödsknarket – Nu i Sverige,” *Aftonbladet*, August 7, 2010.

<sup>189</sup> Stefan Lisinski, “Det Mesta av Metamfetaminet kommer från Litauen,” *Dagens Nyheter*, June 28, 2011.

Kalle Sandhammar, “Ny Partydrog Har Fått Fäste i Sverige,” *Dagens Nyheter*, May 26, 2010.

<sup>190</sup> Eva-Lisa Wallin, “Bostaden Hyrdes Ut – Blev en Bordell,” *Expressen*, October 28, 2012.

<sup>191</sup> “Sweden Battles Human Trafficking”, *Sweden's Official Website*, accessed May 12, 2013.

[http://www.sweden.se/eng/Home/Society/Equality/Reading/Sweden-targets-demand-in-the-battle-against-human-trafficking/#idx\\_7](http://www.sweden.se/eng/Home/Society/Equality/Reading/Sweden-targets-demand-in-the-battle-against-human-trafficking/#idx_7)

<sup>192</sup> Eric Tagesson and Richard Aschberg, “Här Slår De Till Mot Sexligan,” *Aftonbladet*, August 25, 2011.

buyers' residences."<sup>193</sup> Articles tell similar stories on how young Lithuanian women are forced to sell sex, held captive and get tricked out of money. The women are almost always mentioned in relation to the arrest of Lithuanian pimps and human traffickers.<sup>194</sup>

An exception is *Aftonbladet* that dedicates an article to remember that 2010 it is ten years since the 16-year old Lithuanian girl Dangoule Rasalaite, who was sold as a sex slave, committed suicide by jumping off a bridge in the Swedish city Malmö.<sup>195</sup> To journalist in *Aftonbladet* Dangoule's friend in Sweden Melita tells the tragic story about Dangoule, a brave, young girl who was subjected to extreme physical and mental abuse, including rape, violence and imprisonment. In the article the reader gets to follow her life in Sweden and how: "She left Lithuania with dreams. Only to end up in hell in an apartment in Arlöv".<sup>196</sup> The story of Dangoule Rasalaite is the inspiration of the Swedish film "Lilja 4-ever", by Lukas Moodysson. This movie created a huge debate in Sweden on human trafficking when it was released in 2002. Lithuania is not mentioned in the film, but is mentioned in news articles related to the movie.

The majority of the articles on crimes linked to the search-hit "Lithuania" are connected to the suspected crimes, such as fraud and extortion, of the (mostly referred to as Russian) businessman Vladimir Antonov who is known to Swedish readers due to his interest in buying the Swedish company SAAB.<sup>197</sup> In the many news stories on this topic, Lithuania is the victim and the one who presses charges. Antonov's suspected theft in the collapsed Lithuanian bank Snoras, threatens the country's stability and "hits the shaky baltic economies."<sup>198</sup> In one article, an interviewed representative from the Swedish Economic Crime Authority says: "If the Baltic Authorities request help to track assets in Sweden, we will offer our help."<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Marijana Dragic, "Männen Misstänks ha Sålt Unga Tjejer," *Dagens Nyheter*, April 5, 2012.

<sup>194</sup> See for instance: Magnus Hellberg, "Koppleriliga Döms Efter Nätspaning," *Expressen*, June 13, 2012.

Marijana Dragic, "Männen Misstänks ha Sålt Unga Tjejer," *Dagens Nyheter*, April 5, 2012.

<sup>195</sup> "Filmen Lilja 4-ever Chockade Sverige och Förändrade för Alltid vår Bild," *Aftonbladet*, January 7, 2010.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> See for instance: Richard Aschberg, "Brotten Förföljer Saabs Frälsare," *Aftonbladet*, April 17, 2011.

<sup>198</sup> Tomas Nordenskiöld, "Bankkollaps efter Misstänkt Bedrägeri – Skakar Baltikum," *Dagens Industri*, November 26, 2011.

<sup>199</sup> Thorbjörn Spängs, "Saab kan bli Skyldigt att Betala Tillbaka," *Dagens Nyheter*, November 26, 2011.

My research shows that Lithuanians are not merely presented as the ‘the criminals’ or ‘victims’ of the narrative, instead *cooperation between Swedish and Lithuanian authorities* is often stressed in the news stories. The Swedish national perspective is in some articles visible in the language and sentence construction, where it is the Swedish police that actively cooperate over state borders (with exactly whom is not always defined or presented later in the article).<sup>200</sup>

However, the dimension of cooperation between Lithuanian and Swedish police is mostly emphasised and constitutes the main topic of several articles. Cooperation over state borders is presented as a new police operation that decreases burglary.<sup>201</sup> One headline reads: “Cooperation broke up the mob”<sup>202</sup>, and we can read how: “A Lithuanian drug cartel was smashed thanks to a new cooperation between the Swedish and the Lithuanian custom enforcement”<sup>203</sup> and Swedish customs officers: “praise their cooperation with their colleagues in Lithuania.”<sup>204</sup>

The news stories on crime related to Lithuania thus do *not* merely lead to a form of ‘othering’ or negative expressions related to Lithuania. Instead common bonds between Sweden and Lithuania are emphasised.

#### **4.4 The Brave Freedom Fighters and the Successful Transition into Europe**

One main narrative in the media is linked to the Baltic countries’ independence. All newspapers mark the twentieth anniversary of the Baltic States’ independence from the Soviet Union. 2011 was proclaimed ‘year of the Baltics’ by the Swedish government, as part of Nordic-Baltic cooperation.<sup>205</sup> Swedish journalists also reported on events arranged by the government in order to commemorate the restoration of the Baltic States’ independence and the resumption of Sweden’s diplomatic relations with them.

The characteristic and general (thus stereotypical) traits depicting the Balts (Lithuanians naturally included) as brave, freedom fighting people who over the last

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<sup>200</sup> Katarina Lagerwall, ”Ny Satsning Minskar Inbrott,” *Dagens Nyheter*, July 14, 2012.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Stefan Lisinski, ”Samarbete Knäckte Ligan,” *Dagens Nyheter*, June 28, 2011.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> “The Baltic Year 2011,” Government Offices of Sweden, accessed April 8, 2013.  
<http://www.government.se/sb/d/14644>

twenty years impressively, despite the financial crisis in 2008-2009, have built up full-fledged democratic market economies. It is a success story of the economic and political transition into “Europe”. This corresponds with Case’s observation on how “Europe” is seen as fixed entity defined by the West that Eastern Europe should integrate into by adapting to its ideals.<sup>206</sup> In a debate article in *Aftonbladet* the Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt writes: “Democracy and state ruled by law has replaced dictatorship, market economy has been introduced and the progress has been great for both welfare and environment. Europe has returned to the Baltics and the Baltics to Europe.”<sup>207</sup>

The horrors of the totalitarian Soviet Union are emphasized, as well as the Baltic countries’ closeness to Sweden. This is done in order to stress the importance of the independence and the incomprehensibility of something so horrible taking place so geographically close to Sweden. A politician writes in *Svenska Dagbladet*: “Dictatorship, deportation and genocide also describe the history of Europe. The end of the Second World War gave democracy another chance. But in Eastern and Central Europe the lack of freedom was extended by almost fifty years. Our close neighbours Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were not even allowed to formally retain their independence.”<sup>208</sup>

The collaboration between the Baltic States is fundamental for the news stories on independence. The human chain stretching from Tallinn to Vilnius and the song festivals that led to the name “The Singing Revolution”, is used to highlight the peacefulness and dignity of the Baltic freedom struggle.<sup>209</sup>

The “brave people”, the Balts, are without doubt the heroes of the narrative. Emphasis is also put on Sweden’s involvement in the Baltic republics’ independence. A central role is given to the Monday meetings, a spontaneous peoples’ movement where thousands of Swedes gathered on Mondays in 1990 and 1991 in support for the Balts’ fight for independence. The Baltic Year is also introduced by the recreation of a Monday meeting with between the Swedish Prime Minister and the three Baltic Prime

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<sup>206</sup> Case, “Being European: East and West”, 130.

<sup>207</sup> Fredrik Reinfeldt, ”Sverige Skyldigt Hjälpa Baltikum,” *Aftonbladet*, August 15, 2011.

<sup>208</sup> ”Enskild Människa Kan Göra Skillnad,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, August 15, 2011.

<sup>209</sup> Editorial, “Baltikums Frihetskamp ett Minne Vårt att Hedra,” *Dagens Industri*, August 16, 2012.  
Fredrik Reinfeldt, ”Sverige Skyldigt Hjälpa Baltikum,” *Aftonbladet*, August 15, 2011.

Ministers. Both journalists and the Baltic States' Prime Ministers argue that Sweden's support for the Baltic States should not be underestimated.<sup>210</sup>

The emphasis on Sweden's involvement is however not limited to the country's positive influence. The narrative also includes Sweden's guilt, the debt of honour towards the Baltic States. The Swedish extradition of Baltic soldiers in 1945-1946 to the Soviet Union has not been forgotten. It is depicted in relation to the narrative on the Baltics' independence as a "shameful episode"<sup>211</sup> or a "dark moment"<sup>212</sup> in Swedish after-war history.<sup>213</sup>

Many articles on Lithuania's independence struggle refer to Sten Andersson, Sweden's former Minister of Foreign Affairs, and how he did not acknowledge Estonia as occupied by Soviet and thereby not the other Baltic States either.<sup>214</sup> The narrative include shame for Sweden's lack of action and ignorance during several decades regarding the events taking place across the Baltic Sea.<sup>215</sup> In this sense the purpose of the narrative on the democratic, independent Baltic States, also becomes a discussion on national Swedish politics.

The evaluation of the events embedded in the narrative constitute a moral lesson referred to in some articles as the "Baltic lesson"<sup>216</sup>, which means not to be passive due to fear, but stand up for one's values. The tragic events at Vilnius tower in 1991, when fourteen armless people were killed by Soviet tanks<sup>217</sup>, is described as crucial

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<sup>210</sup> Claes Arvidsson, "Vi Fick Kraft Ur Måndagsrörelsen," *Svenska Dagbladet*, August 14, 2011.  
Mikael Holmström, "Måndagsmöte för Baltikum," *Svenska Dagbladet*, August 15, 2011.  
Mikael Holmström, "Balter tackade För Stödet," *Svenska Dagbladet*, August 16, 2011.  
Benjamin Katzeff Silberstein, "Vi Ses på måndag – Om 20 År Igen!" *Svenska Dagbladet*, August 16, 2011.

<sup>211</sup> Daniel Swedin, "Det Handlar Om att Ta Ställning," *Aftonbladet*, August 16, 2011.

<sup>212</sup> Fredrik Reinfeldt, "Sverige Skyldigt Hjälpa Baltikum," *Aftonbladet*, August 15, 2011.

<sup>213</sup> Arvidsson, Claes. "Ärren Syns Inte På Utsidan," *Svenska Dagbladet*, April 3, 2011.

"Enskild Människa Kan Göra Skillnad," *Svenska Dagbladet*, August 15, 2011.

<sup>214</sup> Karin Petterson, "Carl Bildt Har Fel – och Sviker Frihetskampen," *Aftonbladet*, February 25, 2011.

Erik Ohlsson, "Lika -Men Ändå Olika," *Dagens Nyheter*, February 28, 2011.

Editorial, "Den Baltiska Läxan," *Dagens Nyheter*, August 15, 2011.

Daniel Swedin, "Det Handlar Om att Ta Ställning," *Aftonbladet*, August 16, 2011.

Benjamin Katzeff Silberstein, "Vi Ses På Måndag – Om 20 År Igen!" *Svenska Dagbladet*, August 16, 2011.

<sup>215</sup> See for instance: Pål Ruin, "Baltikum Har Rest Sig Från Förtrycket," *Svenska Dagbladet*, September 10, 2012.

<sup>216</sup> See for instance: Editorial, "Den Baltiska Läxan," *Dagens Nyheter*, August 15, 2011.

<sup>217</sup> Detailed article on the event: Örjan Berner, "Blodbad i Vilnius början till Slutet för Sovjetväldet," *Svenska Dagbladet*, January 12, 2011.



for the dissolution of the “empire of evil”<sup>218</sup> and is used to illustrate the importance of standing up for democracy. An editorial in Svenska Dagbladet states: “Independence became possible thanks to leading figures [...] and the freedom movement, but ultimately because ordinary people dared to stand up.”<sup>219</sup>

The “Baltic lesson” is used as a domestic political stick to criticize Swedish politics. Many of the articles on Baltic independence include references to the political situation in Northern Africa, i.e. the “Arab Spring.”<sup>220</sup> The Baltic lesson implies that (peaceful) resistance against dictatorship in order to achieve democracy should be politically supported by Sweden. Several articles present sharp critique towards Sweden’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Carl Bildt, presented as an early supporter for Baltic independence, for his statement that it is not about “supporting one or the other side” when the Syrian regime is bombing people demonstrating against Gaddafi.<sup>221</sup> Rather, taking a stance for democracy and picking side is exactly what it is all about and: “the experience from both the Baltics and the Arab world proves this.”<sup>222</sup>

The narrative on the Baltic State’s fight for democracy and independence thus also contains a general narrative on the importance of democracy. It also deals with Sweden’s after-war politics as well as Sweden’s current stands within foreign affairs. The narrative confirms fundamental values for Sweden’s self-image<sup>223</sup>, such as democracy and human rights, and at the same time it partly challenges the neutrality principle that for long time has dominated Swedish political sphere.

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<sup>218</sup> Claes Arvisson, ”Frihetslängtan Förblir Okuvlig,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, January 13, 2011.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Erik Ohlsson, ”Lika -Men Ändå Olika,” *Dagens Nyheter*, February 28, 2011.

Daniel Swedin, ”Det Handlar Om att Ta Ställning,” *Aftonbladet*, August 16, 2011.

Karin Petterson, ”Carl Bildt Har Fel – och Sviker Frihetskampen,” *Aftonbladet*, February 25, 2011.

Editorial, ”Den Baltiska Låxan,” *Dagens Nyheter*, August 15, 2011.

<sup>221</sup> Karin Petterson, ”Carl Bildt Har Fel – och Sviker Frihetskampen,” *Aftonbladet*, February 25, 2011.

Erik Ohlsson, ”Lika -Men Ändå Olika,” *Dagens Nyheter*, February 28, 2011.

Daniel Swedin, ”Det Handlar Om att Ta Ställning,” *Aftonbladet*, August 16, 2011.

<sup>222</sup> Daniel Swedin, ”Det Handlar Om att Ta Ställning,” *Aftonbladet*, August 16, 2011.

<sup>223</sup> This is inline with the conclusions of: Żmuda-Trzebiatowska, ”Bilderna av Polen i svensk dagspress 1989- 1999,” and Lennhag, ”Föredömligt Folk Förvandlar Gränsland till Europaland”

#### 4.5 Lithuania as the Democratic and European Neighbour of Belarus

Lithuania is repeatedly mentioned in relation to its border to Belarus. In 2012 Belarus is main news in Swedish media. In July 2012 a Swedish public relations firm entered Belarusian airspace without permission with a light aircraft and dropped several hundred teddy bears with pro-democracy messages. In August the same year Belarus expelled Sweden's ambassador. Lithuania is mentioned in these articles partly since the aircraft involved in the airdrop crossed the Belarusian border from Lithuania.<sup>224</sup>

Lithuania is presented as the democratic and European EU-member neighbouring to Belarus. Belarus is in this narrative a 'other' within the same continent, similar to the role (if not even more stressed as a isolated 'other') that Eastern Europe has had in the past as outlined by Wolff and its inclusion in Europe is frequently questioned.<sup>225</sup> Belarus is in an article from Expressen described as "a blot on Europe's map – a dark reminder of how it once looked everywhere in Eastern Europe."<sup>226</sup> Belarus is what Eastern Europe used to be. This quote corresponds with Diez' ideas on how Central and Eastern Europe after the Cold war became "the incarnation of Europe's past, a past the West had overcome."<sup>227</sup> Unlike Belarus, Lithuania is in this context perceived as having conquered its past and is now well integrated into the European community.

Lithuania thus functions as a part of (western) Europe as a contrast to Belarus. However, Lithuania is not alone in its role as the democratic European neighbour. Other countries such as Poland and Latvia are also described in similar terms.

The surprise and unlikelihood of a totalitarian country in the middle of Europe surrounded by democratic EU-members is present in several articles and highlighted with comments such as: "Does it really border to both Latvia and Lithuania as well as Poland?"<sup>228</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> See for instance: Maria Calleberg, "Lukasjenko: Ambassadören var Inblandad," *Expressen*, August 10, 2012. "De Skräms till Tystnad," *Aftonbladet*, August 23, 2012. Therese Rosenvinge, "KGB Vill Veta Mer om "Nallebjörnsaktion,"" *Dagens Nyheter*, August 12, 2012.

<sup>225</sup> Wolff, "Inventing Eastern Europe,"

<sup>226</sup> Mattias Larsson, "Svaret på Vitrysslands Örfil: Tilltänkte Sverigeambassadören Inte Välkommen," *Expressen*, August 4, 2012.

<sup>227</sup> Diez, "Europe's Others and the Return of Geopolitics," 326.

<sup>228</sup> Björn Lindahl, "Europa har fått en ny järnridå", *Svenska Dagbladet*, March 3, 2012.

Lithuania is referred to within the context of “we EU-members” and is also described as setting an example that other EU-members consider following.<sup>229</sup> Lithuania is praised or referred to regarding their reduced visa fees for Belarusians and their ideas on sloping the fee completely while putting a travel ban on Belarus’ dictator Lukashenko.<sup>230</sup> In this way Lithuania is presented as a possible sanctuary for Belarusian democracy and freedom fighters. The Belarusian University, European Humanities University, also managed to survive despite pressure from Belarusian authorities by moving to Lithuania in 2005. Sweden is presented as one of the university’s funders, and Lithuania as the biggest funder.<sup>231</sup>

In sum the narrative on Belarus and Lithuania proves how Lithuania without doubt in some contexts is seen as a full-fledged democracy, well integrated in Europe.

#### **4.6 Cheap and “Surprisingly” Nice – A New Tourist Destination?**

“Already been in Tallinn and Riga? Then it is time to look south and discover Vilnius, the most underestimated capital of the Baltics.”<sup>232</sup> This is the introduction of a news article wishing to attract Swedish tourists to Vilnius. Like in many other narratives, there is a constant comparison to the Baltics. Here, however, we explicitly see an internal ranking of their perceived familiarity to Swedish readers– Vilnius is the place to go after visiting the more well-known capitals Tallinn and Riga.

The notion of Lithuania as the most *anonymous* country of the three Baltic States is noticeable in several articles. In travelling articles it is used as an advantage to stress the possibility to explore an almost undiscovered tourist destination. As an example, Aftonbladet’s article sells the city as: “Europe’s most secret capital.”<sup>233</sup>

As an undiscovered travel destination, elements of difference and thus exoticism can be found. One headline in Dagens Nyheter reads: “The Baltics. Visit our exotic

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<sup>229</sup> Henrik Brors, “Reseförbud till EU för vitryska ledare”, *Dagens Nyheter*, January 1, 2011.

<sup>230</sup> Henrik Brors, “Reseförbud till EU för vitryska ledare”, *Dagens Nyheter*, January 1, 2011.  
Annika Ström Melin, “Håll Honom Ute,” *Dagens Nyheter*, January 14, 2011.

<sup>231</sup> Claes Arvidsson, “Rätt är Alltid Fel i Lukasjenkoland”, *Svenska Dagbladet*, November 11, 2011.

<sup>232</sup> Annika Goldhammer, “Våga Välja Vackra Vilnius,” *Aftonbladet*, April 6, 2011.

<sup>233</sup> Terri Herrera Eriksson, “Europas Hemliga Huvudstad,” *Aftonbladet*, September 22, 2010.

neighbours”<sup>234</sup> and in the article it is stated: “We feel that we are abroad in a way that you rarely experience being this relatively close to Sweden.”<sup>235</sup>

Travel writing has its own particular style and it is common for this genre to highlight cultural and national differences and similarities in order to create an understanding or fascination for the depicted place. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, the aim of travel writing was to discover the world outside the West and Europe and depict this for a predominately Western audience. In “Inventing Eastern Europe” Larry Wolff accounts for how Eastern Europe, “the less known lands”, was entered, possessed, mapped and imagined by Western European travellers (some, like Voltaire, only travellers in their imagination) from “the cultivated part of Europe”.<sup>236</sup> As Wolff’s and Said’s work show, accounts of the “foreign cultures” were marked by the writers own life experiences and the “foreign” people were often harshly judged (mostly as something inferior) according to the values and standards of the writer’s own culture.<sup>237</sup> In this sense, the travel accounts were narratives on the writer’s own identity processes constructed through a cultural demarcation between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’.

In some articles we find a mild form of exotification and romanticization of Lithuania and the other Baltic countries as an exotic ‘other’, a poor post-soviet country that, despite shabby towns on the countryside, has a surprisingly beautiful, renovated, historical capitals and “shouldn’t be ashamed”.<sup>238</sup>

Many articles are filled with an element of *positive surprise*, which implicit or explicit expose negative stereotypes before overturning them. One example is: “Vilnius - grey, poor and criminal? No, nothing could be more wrong!”<sup>239</sup> In this slogan we explicitly find negative stereotypes linked to Vilnius: a “criminal”, “poor” and “grey” city. The depiction of Lithuania as an “underestimated city,”<sup>240</sup> also implies that Vilnius is generally (wrongly) perceived as an uninteresting travel destination.

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<sup>234</sup> Mats Holmberg, “Baltikum. Besök Våra Exotiska Grannar,” *Dagens Nyheter*, May 9, 2010.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Wolff, “Inventing Eastern Europe,” 173. The terms “the less known lands” and the “cultivated part of Europe” are quotes from the travel journal of Ruggiero Giuseppe Boscovitch presented by Wolff.

<sup>237</sup> Wolff, “Inventing Eastern Europe,”

Said, “Orientalism.”

<sup>238</sup> Mats Holmberg, “Baltikum. Besök Våra Exotiska Grannar,” *Dagens Nyheter*, May 9, 2010.

<sup>239</sup> Terri Herrera Eriksson, “Europas Hemliga Huvudstad,” *Aftonbladet*, September 22, 2010.

<sup>240</sup> Annika Goldhammer, “Våga Välja Vackra Vilnius,” *Aftonbladet*, April 6, 2011.

Other out-dated stereotypes that are confronted are the perceptions of Vilnius as an "old" and "old-fashioned" town. One travel guide article in Svenska Dagbladet states that: "The decrepit houses have been renovated and the worn-down establishments have been replaced by casinos and shops."<sup>241</sup> In one article the author addresses a question posed by acquaintances, on the possibility of travelling by car through the Baltics and Poland. The author reply is: "It is as easy as doing a driving tour in for instance Norway, Denmark and Germany. As tourist destinations Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have nothing to be ashamed of in comparison to their competitors in the West."<sup>242</sup> The article presents positive experiences from the countries and praises the quality of the Lithuanian roads. At the same time the praise is necessarily based on negative preconceptions that appear throughout the article, illustrated by worries regarding the infrastructure and the need to stress that the (implicit: Eastern European) countries actually have "nothing to be ashamed of"<sup>243</sup>.

Lithuania, we can read, has the potential to become a "new" travel destination.<sup>244</sup> One article explains that we should "dare to choose the beautiful Vilnius" (which is an alliteration in Swedish: "Våga välja vackra Vilnius").<sup>245</sup> An article in Expressen show that Swedes are increasingly visiting Lithuania.<sup>246</sup> What is it then that attracts Swedish tourists? Lithuania is, like many other travel destinations, described as an interesting place for culture, history and food. Two other factors are presented as reasons to visit Lithuania. In Lithuania we find the most beautiful coastlines in northern Europe and, more often stressed, one of the lowest price levels in Europe.<sup>247</sup>

The tourist experiences of Lithuania are overwhelmingly positive and negative stereotypes are exposed and confronted. Altering stereotypes, such as Lithuanians being criminals, however takes time.<sup>248</sup> A comment from Aftonbladet illustrates this: "And this weekend I am going to find myself in Lithuania. My colleagues have

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<sup>241</sup> Anna Wahlgren, "Hitta Nya Helgfavoriter," *Svenska Dagbladet*, April 3, 2011.

<sup>242</sup> Mats Holmberg, "Baltikum. Besök Våra Exotiska Grannar," *Dagens Nyheter*, May 9, 2010.

<sup>243</sup> Mats Holmberg, "Baltikum. Besök Våra Exotiska Grannar," *Dagens Nyheter*, May 9, 2010.

<sup>244</sup> Anna. Wahlgren, "Hitta Nya Helgfavoriter," *Svenska Dagbladet*, April 3, 2011.

<sup>245</sup> Annika Goldhammer, "Våga Välja Vackra Vilnius," *Aftonbladet*, April 6, 2011.

<sup>246</sup> "Kris – Då är Turisterna På Gång," *Expressen*, January 30, 2010.

<sup>247</sup> "Dyrare Shoppa i Stockholm," *Dagens Nyheter*, December 9, 2010.

"Att Resa Lönar Sig," *Aftonbladet*, March 9, 2011.

"Östersjöns Hela Kust Kantas av Vita Sandstränder," *Svenska Dagbladet*, June 26, 2011.

Elisabeth Axås, "Var Får Vi en Lagom Varm Semester?" *Expressen*, February 11, 2012.

Magdalena Mecweld, "Den Långa Jakten på mina Drömmars Strand," *Svenska Dagbladet*, October 14, 2012.

<sup>248</sup> Törnquist, "Speglar vi oss i varandra?" 8.

already started nagging about that I should not go. That I will be locked up in a truck, crammed with vodka and 100 aspirins and then pushed out on some "catwalk" along with other confused women in dirty white lingerie and sold to the highest bidding Balt. But no. Really. I'm just buying amber."<sup>249</sup>

#### **4.7 Lithuania's Ambition of Energy Independence – An Environmental Issue?**

One narrative about Lithuania is related to energy and environment. The newspapers depict how Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant (Ignalina), due to safety reasons, was shut down the night between 31 December 2009 and 1 January 2010 in accordance with the entry requirements of a Lithuanian EU-membership. In the beginning of 2010 the focus is on consequences of the shut-down regarding unemployment and energy prices in Lithuania.<sup>250</sup> In several articles it is stressed how Lithuania considers it of great security and political importance to not be dependent of energy supply from Russia, their former occupying power. This is illustrated by a quote from the Lithuanian president Dalia Grybauskaitė in Svenska Dagbladet: "Our freedom is not more than 20 years old. In principle we still rely on Russia for 100% of our energy support. It creates a sense of insecurity. [...] We are well aware that Russia often uses energy to inflict political pressure on other countries."<sup>251</sup> Newspapers also report on how EU has launched an anti-trust probe against the Russian energy giant Gazprom in "eight new Eastern EU-countries"<sup>252</sup> (Lithuania being one of them) for among other things, being suspected of imposing unfair prices.<sup>253</sup> Lithuania is presented as exploring three possible new energy supply sources: electricity from Nordbalt, a new nuclear power plant in Visaginas and shale gas.

*Nordbalt* (also referred to as Swedlit), a planned power cable that will connect Lithuanian and Swedish electricity systems, is by journalists presented as an alternative channel for importing and exporting electricity that will help Lithuania avoid "energy dependence" towards Russia.<sup>254</sup> The advantages of Nordbalt are also depicted from the perspective of the Swedish industry's interests.<sup>255</sup> In addition, the

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<sup>249</sup> Zandra Lundberg, "Saxat Från Bloggen," *Aftonbladet*, August 13, 2011.

<sup>250</sup> "Ignalina Stängdes Ner i Natt." *Expressen*, January 1, 2010.

<sup>251</sup> Tomas Lundin, "Östeuropa på Kärnkraftoffensiv," *Svenska Dagbladet*, July 11, 2011.

<sup>252</sup> Anders Åslund, "Skiffergasrevolutionen ett Hot mot Putins Makt," *Dagens Nyheter*, October 6, 2012.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>254</sup> "Ministrar Pratade Energi," *Svenska Dagbladet*, October 30, 2012.

<sup>255</sup> Robert Österlind, "Stora Kraftorder Lyfter ABB-aktien," *Dagens Industri*, February 19, 2010.

Nordbalt project also becomes a demonstration in media of the political cooperation between Scandinavia and the Baltics.<sup>256</sup>

Lithuania also continues to be linked to the debate on *nuclear power*. Lithuania's longing for energy independence from Russia is accompanied in the narrative by the emphasis on the *health and environmental impacts* of different types of energy production. We can read about "Eastern Europe's nuclear offensive"<sup>257</sup>, and the planned<sup>258</sup> new nuclear plant in Visaginas near the old power plant Ignalina. Ignalina is then presented as: "a power plant of the same type as Chernobyl," which naturally evokes negative connotations on nuclear energy. Several Eastern European countries are according to the newspapers also planning to develop their nuclear power capacity.<sup>259</sup> Nuclear power is described as a matter that "divides Europe"<sup>260</sup>, and the experiences of Soviet occupation – now manifested by the perceived importance to become "energy independent" from Russia – creates a fine dividing line between the states of 'Eastern Europe' and other European countries. Swedish media also includes the view that Lithuania is not only dependent on Russia, Russia is dependent on European gas prices. If Gazprom is forced to give up its high export prices, Russia could be forced to reform.<sup>261</sup>

*Shale gas* is described as a new source of extractable energy with the possibility to change the current geopolitics of Europe. Lithuania is presented as possibly having considerable shale deposits, which constitutes a hope of securing its energy independence from Russia. Shale gas is however mostly not described as a positive game-changer. The *environmental dangers* of 'fracking' (a process to extract shale gas), such as water contamination and other healthy and safety concerns are emphasised. One newspaper publishes an interview with a Swedish politician who argues that fracking should be prohibited and the journalist reminds the reader of the significant anti-fracking reactions in Sweden during the exploration of shale gas in

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<sup>256</sup> "Ministrar Pratade Energi," *Svenska Dagbladet*, October 30, 2012.

<sup>257</sup> Tomas Lundin, "Östeuropa på Kärnkraftoffensiv," *Svenska Dagbladet*, July 11, 2011.

<sup>258</sup> In a (merely consultative) referendum held on the Visaginas power plant the Lithuanians voted against it and the reason for this is explained as its expected high cost. Tomas Lundin, "Väljarna Sviker Kubilius," *Svenska Dagbladet*, October 12, 2012.

<sup>259</sup> Martin Blomgren, "Kraften Lyfter ÅF," *Dagens Industri*, January 14, 2012.

<sup>260</sup> Björn Lundin, "Frågan Splittrar Europa," *Svenska Dagbladet*, April 26, 2011.

<sup>261</sup> Anders Åslund, "Skiffergasrevolutionen ett Hot mot Putins Makt," *Dagens Nyheter*, October 6, 2012.

Southern Sweden 2009.<sup>262</sup>

The newspapers show willingness from Sweden to support Lithuania and portray the energy situation from their perspective. At the same time environment and safety concerns are considered of significant importance. Żmuda-Trzebiatowska writes in her research how the Swedish reporting on Polish environmental issues can be linked to: "the perception of the feeling for the environment as an significant trait of the Swedish character"<sup>263</sup> (my translation). This narrative on Lithuania thus to some degree illustrates aspects important for Swedish national identification.

#### 4.8 The Extraordinary Nation of Basket Heroes

Ausra Park has written: "If basketball were the most popular sport in the world, Lithuania would have no problem with its national image".<sup>264</sup> I can only support Park's statement. It is under the sports section of Swedish newspapers that we find nearly solely positive news stories linked to "Lithuania", mostly a metonymy for Lithuanian basketball players.

Lithuania and Lithuanians are portrayed as *successful* and *competent*. Some phrases to illustrate the positive word use linked to Lithuania are: "great performance"<sup>265</sup>, "What impresses most is..."<sup>266</sup> and "fantastic defence play."<sup>267</sup> Lithuania is also depicted as *strong*, journalists write how they crush their opponents and use a lion, a symbol of strength, as a metaphor for Lithuania's basket team.<sup>268</sup>

Lithuanian basketball is perceived as something *extraordinary* and even "Lithuanianess" itself becomes a success factor. One article states: "In Lithuania you are born a basketball player. They have it in their genes."<sup>269</sup> Another reportage partly explains the success of a basketball player with: "she is from Lithuania. Born and raised with a different, tougher attitude".<sup>270</sup> Even if American basketball overshadows

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<sup>262</sup> Josefin Jakobsson, "Växande kritik mot gasutvinning," *Svenska Dagbladet*, December 4, 2012.

<sup>263</sup> Żmuda-Trzebiatowska, "Bilderna av Polen i svensk dagspress 1989- 1999.", 97

<sup>264</sup> Park, "'Selling' a small state to the world", 67.

<sup>265</sup> Per Stümer, "Analysen Sport," *Expressen*, September 13, 2010.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> Per Stümer, "Nyckeln till Utklassningen: Litauen tog Bort Scola Helt," *Expressen*, September 10, 2010.

<sup>268</sup> Mats Bråstedt, "Skrällgänget Litauen Hoppas Slå Till Igen - mot Storfavoriten USA," *Expressen*, September 11, 2010.

<sup>269</sup> Linus Schröder, "Bosnics Importer Lyfter Södertälje," *Svenska Dagbladet*, November 25, 2010.

<sup>270</sup> Anders Lindblad, "Kaxigare Solna Vill Ha Sin Revansch" *Svenska Dagbladet*, October 9, 2011.



Lithuanian in the articles, it does not compromise the description of Lithuania in *Expressen* as the: “the cradle of basketball in Europe”<sup>271</sup>.

Basketball is the number one sport linked to Lithuania, but it does not have exclusive rights to the success narrative on Lithuanians as winning, strong and competent athletes. When the only 15-year old Ruta Meilutyte took the Olympic gold in swimming, the Swedish journalists shared the joy of Ruta and Lithuania. *Aftonbladet* quoted the Lithuanian sports commentator: “Thank you, Ruta, he said, for letting us be proud over being Lithuanians, for letting us forget all crises and hardships”.<sup>272</sup> In the same article however the adjective Lithuanian (*litauisk*) is mixed up with the word for Latvian (*lettisk*).

The narrative about the strong, competent and extraordinary Lithuanians, stand out against most other main narratives that often include some unfavourable aspect associated with Lithuania.

#### **4.9 The Undigested Past – Jews and Anti-Semitism in Lithuania**

Lithuanian Jewry is mentioned on the cultural section and in relation to newly published books, writers and thinkers, such as the philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas.<sup>273</sup> In the article on Lévinas, the Lithuanian Jews is presented as: “the most educated and cultivated people in Europe before the war”.<sup>274</sup>

The narrative on Lithuania and its Jewish population is however mainly a narrative on the murder of about 95 % of the Lithuanian Jewish community (around 200 000 people) by Nazi-Germans and their Lithuanian collaborators during the Second World War.<sup>275</sup>

The genocide of Lithuanian Jews is not merely presented as a narrative on the disaster to Lithuanian or European Jewry, it is foremost a narrative on how Lithuania refuses to take sufficient responsibility for their participation in the Holocaust. This main

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<sup>271</sup> Per Stümer, “Dirk Nowitzki är Största Stjärnan i EM,” *Expressen*, August 31, 2011.

<sup>272</sup> Simon Bank, ”Förlorade Sin Mamma- Vann Landets Kärlek,” *Aftonbladet*, July 31, 2012.

<sup>273</sup> Nina Katiala, ”Därför Måste vi Lära oss Störas av den Andre,” *Dagens Nyheter*, March 18, 2011.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>275</sup> See for instance: “Nazikollaboratör Begravd,” *Dagens Nyheter*, May 21, 2012.

point is often explicit and Aftonbladet writes: “The Baltic countries refuses to come to terms with their Nazi-past and their anti-Semitism.”<sup>276</sup>

Reported events connected to Lithuania’s Jewish community support this narrative on Lithuania’s controversial legacy. The press articles include comments on the distastefulness of the juridical inquiry in 2008 against Jewish Holocaust-survivors, suspected for committing war crimes because they organized themselves against the Nazis.<sup>277</sup> Another reported event is the reburial of Juozas Brazaitis, head of the country's provisional 1941 government. Swedish media reports on how the Jewish community (naturally) has taken offence of the honouring since Brazaitis is perceived as a former Nazi-collaborator.<sup>278</sup> One article in Expressen includes the passing reference: “...Hungary, Lithuania and Ukraine, where regimes often choose to protect old Nazis and want to simply brush aside the fact that many of the countries’ own citizens did the Germans’ dirty work and enthusiastically participated in the killing of Jews and others during the Holocaust”.<sup>279</sup>

The Genocide Museum in Vilnius is in one article criticized for mostly dedicating the the museum to the victims of the Soviet regime while the victims of the mass persecution of Jews in Vilnius “are pushed aside”.<sup>280</sup> Comparisons between Nazi crimes and Soviet crimes, and the meaningfulness of it, is a debated topic in academics as well as in the Swedish media. In relation to the release of Timothy Snyder’s book “Bloodlands”, it is discussed how Snyder offers a context for both the victims of Stalin and Hitler by adding a geopolitical perspective that illustrates how both tyrannies planned to execute more people in Eastern Europe than anywhere else.<sup>281</sup> One article emphasises the idea of the Holocaust as unique, a *sui generis*, due to its ideological aspects, an anti-Semitism deeply rooted in the whole continent.<sup>282</sup>

In an detailed report on the Baltic countries in Svenska Dagbladet Pål Ruin writes “Many Balts consider the suffering of the Jews to have gained an disproportionate amount of space, when at the same time their suffering under Soviet’s occupation has

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<sup>276</sup> Inga-Lina Lindqvist, “Osmaklig Jakt på Judiska Partisaner,” *Aftonbladet*, April 21, 2010

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> “Nazikollaboratör Begravd,” *Dagens Nyheter*, May 21, 2012.

<sup>279</sup> Arne Lapidus, “Förintelsens Förbrytare Ännu Fria,” *Expressen*, June 26, 2012.

<sup>280</sup> Ola Larsmo, “Med Rätt att Folkmörda,” *Dagens Nyheter*, March 30, 2010.

<sup>281</sup> Lennart Samuelson, “Förintelsens Förändrade Geografi” *Svenska Dagbladet*, May 27, 2011.

Henrik Berggren, “Skymningen Föll Även i Öst,” *Dagens Nyheter*, May 27, 2011.

<sup>282</sup> Henrik Berggren, “Skymningen Föll Även i Öst,” *Dagens Nyheter*, May 27, 2011.

not received sufficient attention.”<sup>283</sup> The observation that Lithuanians, often with good reasons, consider that too little attention has been paid to Soviet crimes is supported in several articles, but is nowhere seen as a valid excuse not to sufficiently commemorate the Holocaust.

The narrative on Lithuania urges the country to deal with its undigested past. The Swedish articles convey the general opinion in Sweden of the importance of sufficiently remembering the Holocaust in order to prevent future tragedies, to provide redress to Holocaust victims and fight anti-Semitism.

Lammers outline in his research article how the Holocaust for many years was nationally interpreted in Sweden<sup>284</sup> and, like Holmila and Kvist Geverts also conclude, incorporated in the dominant master narrative of ‘the good Sweden’ a country that rescued Jews and was not “infected” by anti-Semitism.<sup>285</sup> The questioning of the ‘the good Sweden’ begun in 1990s and national commissions and research centres were established in order to deal with questions of guilt and compensation. Lammers describes how Sweden had a pioneer role in putting the Holocaust into the centre of European public consciousness during the 1990s.<sup>286</sup> The Holocaust together with the lessons from it on the importance of tolerance, democracy and human rights, is considered crucial for Europe’s historical legacy. How European countries such as Lithuania relate to the Holocaust, and thereby values such as human rights and democracy is seen of great importance in order for the country to be fully accepted within a European community.

The image of the ‘good Sweden’ is also questioned in relation to Lithuania and the Holocaust. Two articles, in connection to Mats Deland’s then newly released book “Purgatorium”, discuss how Sweden played a role as a sanctuary to (Baltic) war criminals and omitted putting them on trial.<sup>287</sup> In his article in *Aftonbladet*, Torsten

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<sup>283</sup> Pål Ruin, ”Baltikum Har Rest Sig Från Förtrycket,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, September 10, 2012.

<sup>284</sup> Karl Christian Lammers, “The Holocaust and Collective Memory in Scandinavia,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 36 no. 5 (2011): 570–586.

<sup>285</sup> Antero Holmila and Karin Kvist Geverts, “On Forgetting and Rediscovering the Holocaust in Scandinavia” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 36 no. 5 (2011): 526.

<sup>286</sup> Karl Christian Lammers, “The Holocaust and Collective Memory in Scandinavia,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 36 no. 5 (2011): 570–586.

<sup>287</sup> Ola Larsmo, “Med Rätt att Folkmörda,” *Dagens Nyheter*, March 30, 2010.  
Torsten Kävmärk, “Sveriges Svek Mot Judarna,” *Aftonbladet*, April 14, 2010.

Kävlemark also highlights the importance of “Purgatorium” since it lets a “false Swedish self-image crack”.<sup>288</sup>

The narrative on Lithuania’s controversial past also becomes a way to discuss Sweden’s guilt and at the same time confirm and question Sweden’s self-image as an advocate of tolerance and democracy.

#### 4.10 The Eastern Neighbour and Social Deprivation

Parallel with the dominant narrative of Lithuania as a political and economic success outlined in section 4.2 another type of narrative looms in the background. Lithuania is also presented as a country defined by high unemployment, corruption, huge emigration (presented as a risk for ‘brain drain’<sup>289</sup>) and widespread poverty. In this section I have chosen to present two articles that span across several pages for a deeper analysis.

*Emigration* receives a face and context in the news story on Andrej, which is summarized in the article as: “Guest worker Andrej Jakovlev came to Sweden to make money. It was the only way to support his family back home in Lithuania. He was 37 years old when he died on a building site in Stenungsund. On the other side of the Baltic Sea his wife Lina is left as well as two children without a father.”<sup>290</sup>

The journalists drink coffee with Andrej’s wife Lina in Kaunas in Lithuania. The love between Lina and her husband and the children’s Skype-conversations with their father are selected events that shape the story of a family life that Swedish readers can picture and relate to. The reader is encouraged to identify with the Lithuanian family, but also to step into a very different world. The journalists write: “To leave the cozy apartment on the second floor is like stepping into another world. The shabby houses are ill-concealed behind a new facades.”<sup>291</sup> Elements of backwardness are also found in the description of how “hits from the 80’s are playing” when driving through Kaunas, a city depicted as grey, foggy and rainy.<sup>292</sup> Lina explains that Andrej planned to work abroad until the financial crisis passed and that many Lithuanians work

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<sup>288</sup> Torsten Kävlemark, “Sveriges Svek Mot Judarna,” *Aftonbladet*, April 14, 2010.

<sup>289</sup> Sara L. Brännström, “Arbetslösheten Stör Baltikum på Tillväxt,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, October 7, 2010.

<sup>290</sup> Negra Efendić and Yvonne Åsell, “Andrejs Sista Jobb,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, December 5, 2010.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

abroad to support their families. She says: “What should you otherwise do? Half of the population is poor.”<sup>293</sup>

But the setting described as the worst is found in Sweden. It is stressed that guest workers in Sweden have more dangerous working conditions than Swedes do. Critique is in place, but who is to blame? In the article on Andrej, the Swedish unions are presented as trying to defend the workers’ rights. The main contractor of the construction where Andrej worked and other construction workers from ‘Eastern European countries’ is described as Italian with many sub-contractors. Sweden is not explicitly critiqued, although the inhumane (and in Andrej’s case fatal) situation for guest workers in Sweden is stressed and elaborated upon with statistics and investigation results.

The narrative on Lithuanian and social deprivation is also linked to *children’s vulnerability*. Besides references in passing to this subject, some articles make the children’s situation, adoptions or donations to Lithuanian orphanages or schools, the main topic.<sup>294</sup>

In the article “Adopted Inga's journey to a new life” the reader follows a Swedish couple’s adoption process.<sup>295</sup> The author succeeds in constructing a compelling story through different narrative techniques; one of them being the contrast between Lithuania and Sweden – the starting and finishing point of the child’s journey.

At the beginning of the narrative Lithuania is referred to as a part of (assumed to be poor) “Eastern Europe”, and it is to and within this conception that comparisons and evaluations are made. Institutionalized children in Eastern Europe seem to be an established concept in this context. As a reader you are informed that Lithuania comes in second place when UNICEF compares the number of children in institutional childcare in Eastern and Central Europe. A Swedish physician also rejects the severe diagnosis that Inga has received: ”According to him [the doctor] Inga seems to follow

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<sup>293</sup> Negra Efendić and Yvonne Åsell, “Andrejs Sista Jobb,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, December 5, 2010.

<sup>294</sup> See for instance: Liisa Aus, “Elly gör Livet Enklare för De Allra Fattigaste,” *Aftonbladet*, February 25, 2012. In this news story the reader is introduced to the life of Elly, a person who heroically spends her time helping poor, disabled and under stimulated children in Lithuania.

<sup>295</sup> Anna Bodin, “Adopterade Ingas Resa till ett Nytt Liv,” *Dagens Nyheter*, December 23, 2012.

the normal development of institutionalized children in Eastern Europe - they are about a year behind in their development due to under-stimulation.”<sup>296</sup>

The perceived distance between Sweden and Lithuania is highlighted. In the article on Inga the journalist writes: “The family knows nothing about what is happening on the other side of the Baltic Sea.”<sup>297</sup> The sentence expresses an uncertainty and perceived powerlessness in relation to the adoption procedure. The phrase also expresses the vacuum of knowledge, or perhaps differences, that exists between the countries despite their geographical proximity. The paragraph continues by comparing Inga’s life to the Swedish three-year-old prospective cousin and how the lives of the children: “could not be more different.”<sup>298</sup>

Lithuania’s Soviet past is used to illustrate one of the greatest differences between Sweden and Lithuania. In the article on Inga it is mentioned right after a paragraph on Lithuania’s social difficulties. Despite being independent for twenty years, the author writes, much of the routines and attitudes from the Soviet time are still present.<sup>299</sup>

Within this narrative the financial recession of 2008-2009 and the following austerity measures play a different role than within the dominant narrative that portrays Lithuania as a shining example of finical crisis management. The extreme economic difficulties and harsh reforms are described as causing a severe social situation in Lithuania, in which pensions are lowered, schools and hospitals are closed<sup>300</sup> and: “infants are found in trashcans”.<sup>301</sup>

The adopted child’s journey becomes a journey from the poor Eastern Europe to Western Europe, from foreign to familiar – but not only for the child. The article also implies a transformation of Lithuania. The journey from “them” to “us” is thus not strictly limited to an actual spatial transfer between two geographical unities. The turning point in the news story on Inga occurs the moment the couple hugs Inga at the Lithuanian orphanage. The Lithuanian orphanage is now depicted as “surprisingly”

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<sup>296</sup> Anna Bodin, “Adopterade Ingas Resa till ett Nytt Liv,” *Dagens Nyheter*, December 23, 2012.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

<sup>300</sup> Leif Petersen, ”Baltiska Tigrar Klarade Krisen,” *Svenska dagbladet*, November 11, 2011.

<sup>301</sup> Anna Bodin, “Adopterade Ingas Resa Till Ett Nytt Liv,” *Dagens Nyheter*, December 23, 2012.

fresh and nice.<sup>302</sup> When the Swedish couple is in the country Lithuania is perceived more familiar and the Lithuanian child, which now definitely has become their child, is perceived as a part of ‘us’. However, Swedish national symbols also used to further highlight the transformation from a foreign setting to a familiar one. In ending of the article on Inga, the cousins (who were described as having so different lives) now bake typical Swedish Christmas cookies together.

The news stories on social deprivation appeal to the reader’s compassion and encourage empathy with Lithuanians. Even if the starting point is that Lithuania is perceived as different and in some sense also inferior, there is a willingness to approach the differences as well as willingness to question the validity of the perceived dissimilarities.

## 5. Concluding Discussion

### 5.1 Lithuania - A “Surprisingly” Modern and Favourable Country?

Lithuania takes on different shapes through the eye of Swedish media. By applying narrative analysis I have identified ten main narratives in the reporting on Lithuania between 2010-2012. Some of the identified narratives correspond with each other, while others present contradicting images of the country. Several narratives include elements of “surprise” over Lithuania being a “modern” country, which thereby uncover out-dated stereotypes of Lithuania as an economically and socially peripheral country. A majority of the narratives present an overwhelmingly positive image on Lithuania. The Lithuanians are presented as *brave, freedom-fighters, basket-heroes, responsible, self-disciplined* and *hard-working*. Negative stereotypes are however also implicitly and explicitly confronted such Lithuanians being *homophobic, anti-Semites, poor* and *criminal*. Negative stereotype of Lithuanian’s as either the victim or the villain in the narrative on criminality is challenged by the inclusion of *cooperation* between Lithuanian and Swedish police authorities. However, stereotypes have, as outlined by Törnquist-Plewa, proven to be relatively resistant towards change, and some narratives rather confirm than dismiss them.<sup>303</sup> Stereotypes

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<sup>302</sup> Anna Bodin, “Adopterade Ingas Resa Till Ett Nytt Liv,” *Dagens Nyheter*, December 23, 2012.

<sup>303</sup> Törnquist, ”Speglar vi oss i varandra?” 8.

are thus used to construct the narratives, and at the same time narratives reproduce stereotypes.

My research also confirms how the language usage is vital for the construction of a narrative, for instance how terms related to medicine and natural disasters are used in the narrative on the financial crisis in order to create the perception that austerity is the right way to handle the recession when of course other understandings of the economical situation exists, such as the narrative about social deprivation. Epithets attached to Lithuania, such as *EU-member*, *Baltic* and *Eastern European*, are in some cases also significant for the construction of the narrative.

## 5.2 Master Narratives Regarding Lithuania's Place on the Mental Map

Common bonds between Sweden and Lithuania are often emphasized. Differences are highlighted, but there is mostly a willingness to approach these differences or question their validity. Even if Lithuania is dominantly perceived as a part of the same community as Sweden, different sub regional identities are highlighted in different contexts. Lithuania therefore occasionally occupies the ambiguous space between inclusion and exclusion typical for Eastern European countries<sup>304</sup>, even if a complete otherness never exists.

The narratives of Lithuania are thus partly coloured by the old invented, conceptual division between an Eastern and Western Europe. Lithuania's way of *dealing with Europe's past* becomes a crucial dividing point for how Lithuania is perceived. I will sum up the main conclusions from the identified narratives by organizing them within overall *master narratives* on Lithuania's place on the mental map of Europe.

### 5.2.1 Lithuania as a Part of (Western or Northern) Europe

Even if connections with Sweden are stressed in all narratives about Lithuania, common bonds are most often emphasized in narratives that are positively associated with ideas traditionally (by the West) assigned to Western Europe such as democracy and progress.<sup>305</sup> Lithuania represents these ideas when it is contrasted against its *neighbour Belarus* that is perceived as an 'other' and what Eastern Europe used to be.

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<sup>304</sup> Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 7.

<sup>305</sup> Hall, "The West and the Rest."



The narratives on the *financial crisis management* and *independence* portray Lithuania as a political and economic success. Lithuania has gone from being a poor, oppressed Soviet republic to an exemplary democratic European market economy with rapid economic growth, a model for debt crisis countries in Southern Europe. Sweden is eager to show its admiration and close support. The narratives also manifest a close relationship, both political and economic, between Sweden and Lithuania. Within the narrative on the financial crisis, ideas traditionally attached to the concept of Western Europe have moved geographically North, and Lithuania is without a doubt included in this community.

Lithuania is, within this master narrative, perceived as having distanced itself from Europe's dark past of oppression and depression, a past that for the post-war West was incarnated by Eastern Europe.<sup>306</sup> Lithuania's Soviet past functions to highlight what horrors Lithuania has been liberated from and to define Lithuanians positive features, such as being brave and accepting austerity measures. The Soviet past also functions to legitimize and underline the advantages of the current European political and economic order.

Lithuania's European identity is not only stressed when Lithuania's values are seen as compatible with the value system traditionally assigned to Western Europe. By emphasising Lithuania's EU-identity, it is highlighted how Lithuania belongs to the same political community as Sweden, which heightens the impetus for Swedes to react.

### **5.2.2 Lithuania as a Part of Post-Soviet Eastern Europe**

*Eastern European* and *post-Soviet* are also two frequent epithets. 'Eastern European' does not per se relate to the concept of Western Europe's other. As an example, in the narrative of the responsible financial crisis management, the epithet 'Eastern European' is used, but the South instead fills the role of an 'other' within Europe.

At the same time, my research shows that Lithuania is still associated with the concept of 'Eastern Europe' that evokes negative connotations such as backwardness and inferiority. This is manifested in narratives linked to *intolerance*, *poverty* and *criminality*, in which Lithuania's Eastern European identity generally is stressed. In

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<sup>306</sup> Diez, "Europe's Others and the Return of Geopolitics," 326.

order to describe what is perceived as positive changes or opportunities, negative associations to Lithuania are exposed. For instance, the described ambition of Lithuania to: “take the next step and not only be perceived as an Eastern European factory with cheap production”<sup>307</sup> implies that Lithuania in some sense is perceived like this now and that is something negative.

Lithuania does thus occasionally represent a type of ‘otherness’, but there is seldom a complete distancing from Sweden towards Lithuania. Narratives on social deprivation include solidarity and empathy. Lithuania is also perceived not only as inferior (or threatening), but also as an appreciated partner that Sweden cooperates with on these issues.

Within this master narrative Lithuania is seen as not fully having “won” over its dark history yet. The Soviet past is a present ghost, evoking negative connotations on poverty and backwardness. The narratives on intolerance show how Lithuania is perceived as failing to distance itself from what is perceived as Europe’s’ temporal other, Europe’s own past of discrimination and genocide, a past that the West is perceived as having progressed from and defined itself culturally and morally by remembering.<sup>308</sup>

It is thus not enough for Lithuania to only distance itself from its Soviet past to be perceived as fully ‘European’. Lithuania is sharply criticized for not coming to terms with its: “Nazi-past and anti-Semitism.”<sup>309</sup> The narrative on homophobia, also illustrates how Lithuania is perceived as backward by not respecting the lessons from Europe’s totalitarian past on tolerance, democracy and human rights.

### **5.2.3 Lithuania as a part of the Baltics or Baltic Sea Region**

Lithuania’s key regional identification remains the Baltics. Many identified narratives on Lithuania are not unique for Lithuania but refer to the entire Baltic Region, which is seen as an individual region or a unity within greater communities such as the Eastern Europe or the EU.<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> Henrik Mitelman, ”Baltiska Länder Tvekar om Euron,” *Dagens Industri*, October 3, 2012.

<sup>308</sup> Case, “Being European: East and West”, 126f.

<sup>309</sup> Inga-Lina Lindqvist, “Osmaklig Jakt på Judiska Partisaner,” *Aftonbladet*, April 21, 2010

<sup>310</sup> Compare Miglè Mockutè, “The Images of the Baltic States in the International Media upon the Accession to NATO and the EU”, 29.

Lithuania is presented as the most anonymous of the Baltic States in several narratives. Lithuania is in a few cases mixed up with its Baltic neighbours and an uncertainty exists on how to conjugate words that stem from the word “Lithuania”, such as a Lithuanian national (“Litauer”). The adjective Lithuanian (“litauisk”) is also mixed up with Latvian (“lettisk”). Articles often do not expect much previous knowledge on Lithuania and often have an information box on the country.

It is not uncommon that the outside world group together small states, a familiar phenomenon to Sweden due to its Scandinavian identity. However, Pål Ruin states in his article in Svenska Dagbladet that few things actually seem to unite the Baltic region (language, culture and religion does not), besides the historical threat from Germany and Russia.<sup>311</sup> The identified narratives with references to the Soviet Union do also constantly reproduce perception of the Baltics as one region.

My analysis also shows how economic conditions, such as the financial crisis, have strengthened the image of the Baltics as one unity. The Baltics are defined as one market region for Swedish banks and companies. National differences between the Baltics in handling the crisis are also not often thoroughly elaborated upon.

*The Baltic Sea Region* is found as reference point in Swedish media, but the term does not relate to an imagined community comparable to that of the ‘Baltic’, ‘Eastern Europe,’ or ‘the EU.’ It is mostly mentioned in contexts that relate to the geographical conditions or a geopolitical position related to the Baltic Sea, such as environmental issues. An exception is how Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia in a few within an economic context also are referred to as: “our Baltic Sea Neighbours.” A political cooperation within the region on other matters than energy and environment is not too salient in the media.

The phrase “across the Baltic Sea” is however frequently used in news stories to emphasize the bonds between Sweden and Lithuania. The geographical proximity between the countries is also often used to highlight the surprising nature of the historical, cultural or mental distances between the countries – such as the modern experience of a totalitarian regime.

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<sup>311</sup> Pål Ruin, ”Baltikum Har Rest Sig Från Förtrycket,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, September 10, 2012.

### 5.3 Sweden Through the Narratives on Lithuania

Lithuania's image in Swedish media is like a great, sometimes paradoxical, puzzle. It includes traces for more narratives than the scope of this thesis allows a presentation of while at the same time a sense of pieces missing is present. The newspapers do include articles related to for instance culture, but these news stories have relatively low salience in the image of Lithuania in Swedish media. History is an important element for the identified narratives, but few articles refer to Lithuania's past further back than several decades, little attention is e.g. given to the Lithuanian-Polish commonwealth. Another shortcoming in the image of Lithuania is the lack of attention paid to religion. Lithuania is also frequently mentioned in relation to other countries, often its Baltic neighbours, with limited focus on the Lithuanian case. The presented narratives have been crystalized by close reading of detailed articles. A considerable amount of articles on the situation in Lithuania are however short and quite shallow.

The narratives on Lithuania in Swedish media are picked and shaped much according to what Swedish readers might find viable and important,<sup>312</sup> not necessarily according to what issues that would best represent Lithuania's self-image or internal political, cultural or economic climate. The narratives on Lithuania are partly selected and shaped in order to confirm values and norms, such as democracy, tolerance and human rights, which are connected to the Swedish national self-image.<sup>313</sup> This is one reason why the narrative on LGBT-persons rights is one of the most dominant narratives linked to Lithuania. Lithuania is also logically seen positively or negatively according to how well these values are respected. Sweden is mostly presented in a favourable light. The identified narratives do however not only confirm Sweden's self-image but also question it and process Sweden's own past and guilt.

Narratives are powerful in shaping our perceptions, and by identifying narratives about Lithuania and how they are constructed it becomes evident that the reality presented in newspapers is the result of discursive practices. The discursive practises

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<sup>312</sup> Compare with: Cathrine Kohler Riessman, "Narrative Analysis" in *Narrative, Memory & Everyday Life*. (Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield, 2003), 1.

<sup>313</sup> This is in line with the idea of the role of media to guarantee identification with the dominant political and cultural community, as presented in Robertson, "Narrativ Analys, Medietexter och Identitetsforskning," 92. Lennhag, "Föredömligt Folk Förvandlar Gränsland till Europaland". Żmuda-Trzebiatowska, "Bildn av Polen i svensk dagspress 1989-1999."

also have a role in shaping the country's nation image, and thus may influence the bilateral relations between Sweden and Lithuania. By approaching what and how narratives are produced, it is also possible to draw conclusion regarding why they are shaped the way they are. Writing this thesis has helped me better understand the Swedish national identity and the role of media in reproducing and maintaining imagined communities, such as nationhood and transnational communities. By analysing narratives linked to Lithuania we see how Lithuania is presented in order for Swedish readers to make sense of the world, not only Lithuania's place in it but also their own.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for Future Studies**

It would be interesting to examine the image of Lithuania in Sweden from the perspective of nation branding. How do the identified narratives correspond with the image of Lithuania found in Lithuania's governmental information campaigns in Sweden? Another suggestion for future research is to include material from a longer time span, preferably before Lithuania's accession to the EU, in order to analyse possible alterations in the national image. A comparison between the narratives linked to different Baltic States could also be of interest, since Lithuania's Baltic identity often is stressed. It would also be interesting to investigate how these narratives are received and interpreted by readers. Other aspects of narratives linked to Lithuania could be explored by limiting the research focus to e.g. gender stereotypes or the environmental dimension. The method utilized in this thesis could also be an inspiration for studies on media narratives linked to other nations than specifically Lithuania.

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## Appendix – Relevant Articles

Source of analysis. 506 relevant articles, published between 2010-2012, selected from 1 386 hits on the search word *Litauen* (Lithuania), retrieved from the database Mediearkivet.

Title	Newspaper	Date
Ignalina stängdes ner i natt	Expressen	2010-01-01
Filmen Lilja 4-ever chockade Sverige och förändrade för alltid vår bild	Aftonbladet	2010-01-07
Ängeln i Groznyj har gripits	Dagens Nyheter	2010-01-08
Groznyjs ängel gripen	Svenska Dagbladet	2010-01-08
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