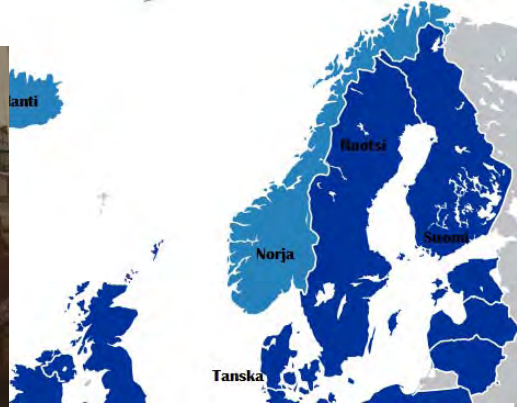


# Multilayered bordering at a vertical border

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# Context: BORDER AREA

## Public perceptions

- Media
- Interviews



- Private Images / perceptions
- Perceptions of Russian in Finnish Russian border area -project



- Interview data: Russian speaking, Finnish speaking, expert interviews
- How "ordinary" people see Russia, feelings & emotions, everyday interaction
- Media data: provincial newspaper & web forum

# Perceptions of Russia and Russians:

## In Finland

- Gendered image
- Tourists
- Migration



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## Border



## In Russia

- Historical
- Political
- Everyday level



# 'Us and them': Mobility, migration and economy

- Russians form the biggest foreign born population in Finland
- About 70 000 Russian speakers in Finland
- The stable situation at the border – the amount of border crossing stable ~1 milj. for several years in Niirala-Värtsilä
- Intermarriages common
- ❖ The municipality of Tohmajärvi in Eastern Finland Russian speaking population has become "us"
- ❖ Local people in Tohmajärvi do not make difference between Finnish and Russian speakers
- ❖ In official level local "experts" politicians and decision makers see Russia as advantage for Finnish economy
- ❖ In local level the Post 2014 era has not changed the common people's attitudes towards Russia, but people who are connected to Russia trough their work feel the relationship with Russia porous

➔ 'You never know what is happening, namely at the border-crossing point'



# Border news and public discussion:

- Portrayed with images of gates, people and goods
- The 'geopolitical Russia' is relatively absent – optimism, empowerment and more critique towards Finnish border policies than towards Russians

Selected text messages (SMS) from "Karjalainen":

*If the eastern border needs to be closed for the night, then in the name of equality all the borders of Finland should also be closed every night as well definitely*

*Who in the government figured out that you can bring cigarettes from the eastern border by staying in Russia for 24 hours? Lets take more euros there. Good food and drinks [sic]*



# Russians in Finland: Shared experiences

- Previous research on Finnish main media: little visibility of Russians living or visiting in Finland
- Representatives of themselves rather than their communities
- ❖ A way of being accepted/becoming 'one of us'



# What are other Finns expected to think of Russia?

- Previous research: Expectancy of fear and prejudice, interested
- ❖ Not relevant question in the conducted interviews
- Critique towards news imbalance between Russia and others
- The news content is less criticized



# Russophobia

- Previous research: bases historically ideology politics and war trauma, later suppressed public discourse
- ❖ Encounters in childhood, raised in the atmosphere of 'Ryssä-hatred'
- ❖ Reduced with everyday contacts, closer to us also through the 'new others' of refugees
- Fear of war or prejudice of people?
  - > Feared, accused and denied
- ✓ Common: No first hand declaring of hatred, but Putin was considered unpredictable & the ability and interest of the Finnish political leadership were questioned





# The Russia close BY: What is *behind the border*

- ❖ *Academic perspective* – the image of Karelia
  - For local dwellers the Karelia has not significant meaning
- ❖ *Common image, the image of local people* – the different parts of Russia are different, the nearby areas are most familiar
  - Petty trade, gasoline, food, everyday life together with Russian friends
- ❖ *Russian speakers in Finland* – Russia is seen as the mother land, Russia vs. USSR, the everyday problems

- ‘One border less separated from Finland’



# Kremlin

## – The dominant differentiator and separator?

- Finland has shifted its geopolitical positioning away
- ❖ Some Finnish speakers are angry for governmental policy makers, because in remote areas people have so many social problems
- ❖ The "Kremlin" has not a significant meaning for everyday life of ordinary people in remote area
- ❖ The rural problems, which are familiar for people in the Finnish side of the border too
- Articles in "Karjalainen" highlight power politics, Finland disempowered
- Non-transparency of the 'distant from the ordinary people' cabinets

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# Concluding remarks on bordering

## Top-down:

- Geopolitical international relations
- Political systems
- 'Controlling/defensive borders'
- Citizenship
- Cooperation promoted under the state-level

## Bottom-up- and meso-level:

- ❖ Habits/everyday routines
- ❖ Migration, border-crossing
- ❖ Acquaintances
- Geopolitics
- Government politics