

Region-Building, Boundaries and Identities in a Globalizing World

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Professor Anssi Paasi
Department of Geography
University of Oulu, Finland

Outline

- Introduction
- New interest in/contested narratives on regions, borders, identities
- Boundary producing practices
- 1. The Finnish-Russian border as an example
- 2. Finnish regions/regionalism
- Conclusions

Premises

- Ph.D-course – concept of theory: conceptualization
- Region, boundaries and identities are spatially and historically contingent processes: The need for an historical approach
- Results of broader social and cultural processes
- Boundaries are not merely lines between spatial units: they are sedimented in broader and 'smaller' processes all over the 'region' (education, politics, economy, governance) and spatialized symbolisms (cf. relational approach)

- "Put simply, in terms of real flows of economic activity, nation states have *already* lost their role as meaningful units of participation in the global economy of today's borderless world" (Kenichi Ohmae 1995)

Performing the border: nationalist-masculine territorial practices in India-Pakistan border as an example



Border-related literature is mushrooming



- “Contemporary frontiers are not simply lines on maps, the unproblematic givens of political life, where one jurisdiction or political authority ends and another begins; they are central to understanding political life. Examining the justifications of frontiers raises crucial, often dramatic, questions concerning citizenship, identity, political loyalty, exclusion, inclusion and of the ends of the state” (Anderson 1996:1)
- “Borders and boundaries, identities and difference construct and determine to a large extent the space of agency, the mode of participation in which we act as citizens in the multilayered polities to which we belong” (Yuval-Davis 1997:17)

SOME BACKGROUNDS FOR THE RECENT INTEREST IN BOUNDARIES

- Discussions about 'postmodern condition' (the socially constructed and contested nature of identities, societal knowledge and 'truths')
- Current neo-liberal socio-economic condition
- Emerging 'flow'-rhetoric, which is linked with various forms of globalization
- Global environmental problems/ecopolitics (e.g. global warming)
- Risk society: border-crossing catastrophes (Tshernobyl, Asian Tsunami)
- Debates on changing forms of communication e.g. cyperspace
- Displacement, dislocation and the rise of nationalism, regionalism and ethno-territorial identities.

POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

- state, nation, sovereignty and territoriality
- nationalism
- ecopolitics
- critical geopolitics
- territorial trap
- de/re-territorialization
- cross-border regionalization

ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

- space of flows/space of places
- disappearance of borders/state
- cross-border interaction
- regionalization/regionalism
- annihilation of space

BOUNDARIES AT VARIOUS SCALES

CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY

- politics of identity
- national culture
- ethnicity, "race"
- gender, sexuality
- hybrid-identities
- supranational identities
- (peace, environmental, women's movements)
- refugees, immigrants
- "otherness"
- cyberspace

REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

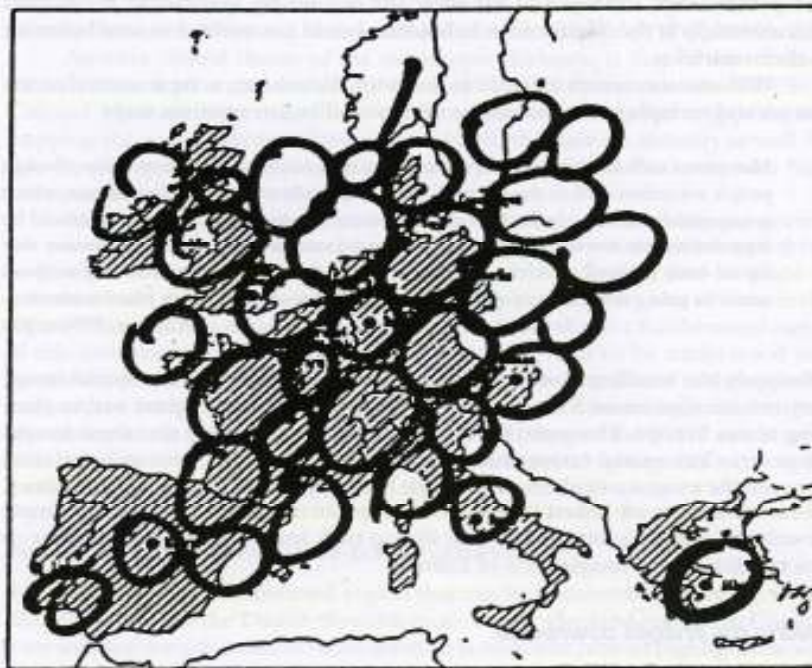
- demarcation of regions
- regions as social constructs
- regions as historical processes
- regional identity

- Examples of the recent ideas of border in various subareas of human geography

Backgrounds for current debates on regions

- Resurgence of regions since WW II and particularly since the 1990s
- New global divisions of space (economy, culture...)
- Europe: debates on the hollowing out of the state, integration, dependencies, regulation, Europe of regions, regional identity as an EU strategy
- re-organization of regional governance and questions of devolution (e.g. Nordic countries, UK)
- Regionalization process (e.g. Baltic Sea, Barents)
- Place marketing, place promotion
- Not to "put regions back" but to "put them in their place" (Jessop)

Region building process: discourse, map, action



Map 5.3 The Europe of Grapes.

Source: Kunzmann and Wegener, 1991. Reproduced by kind permission of Kunzmann.

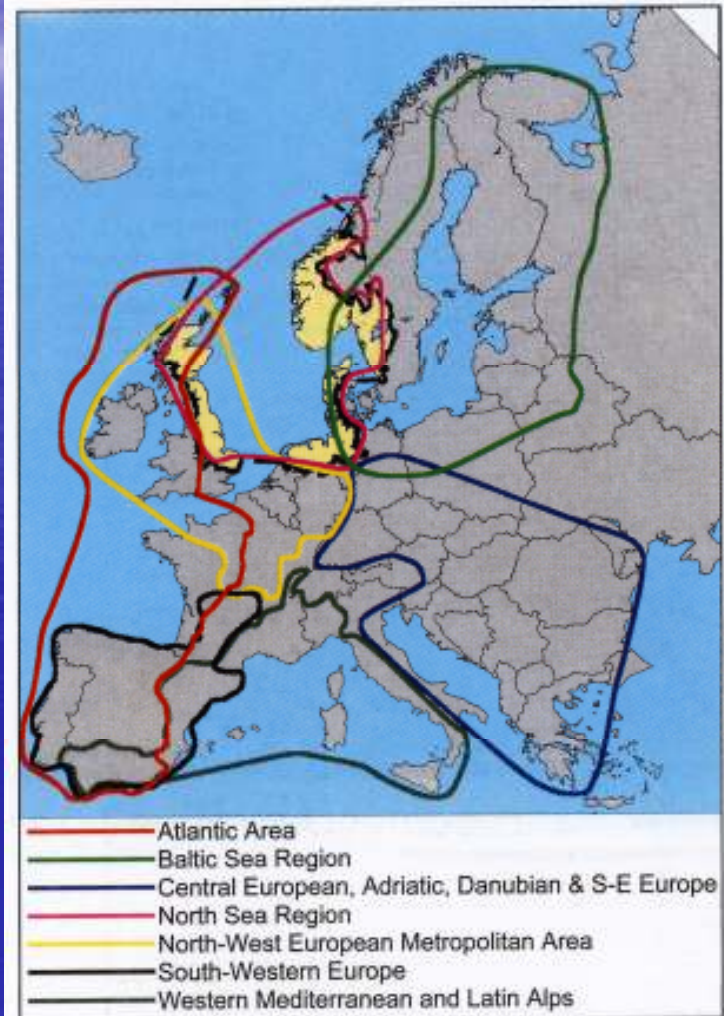
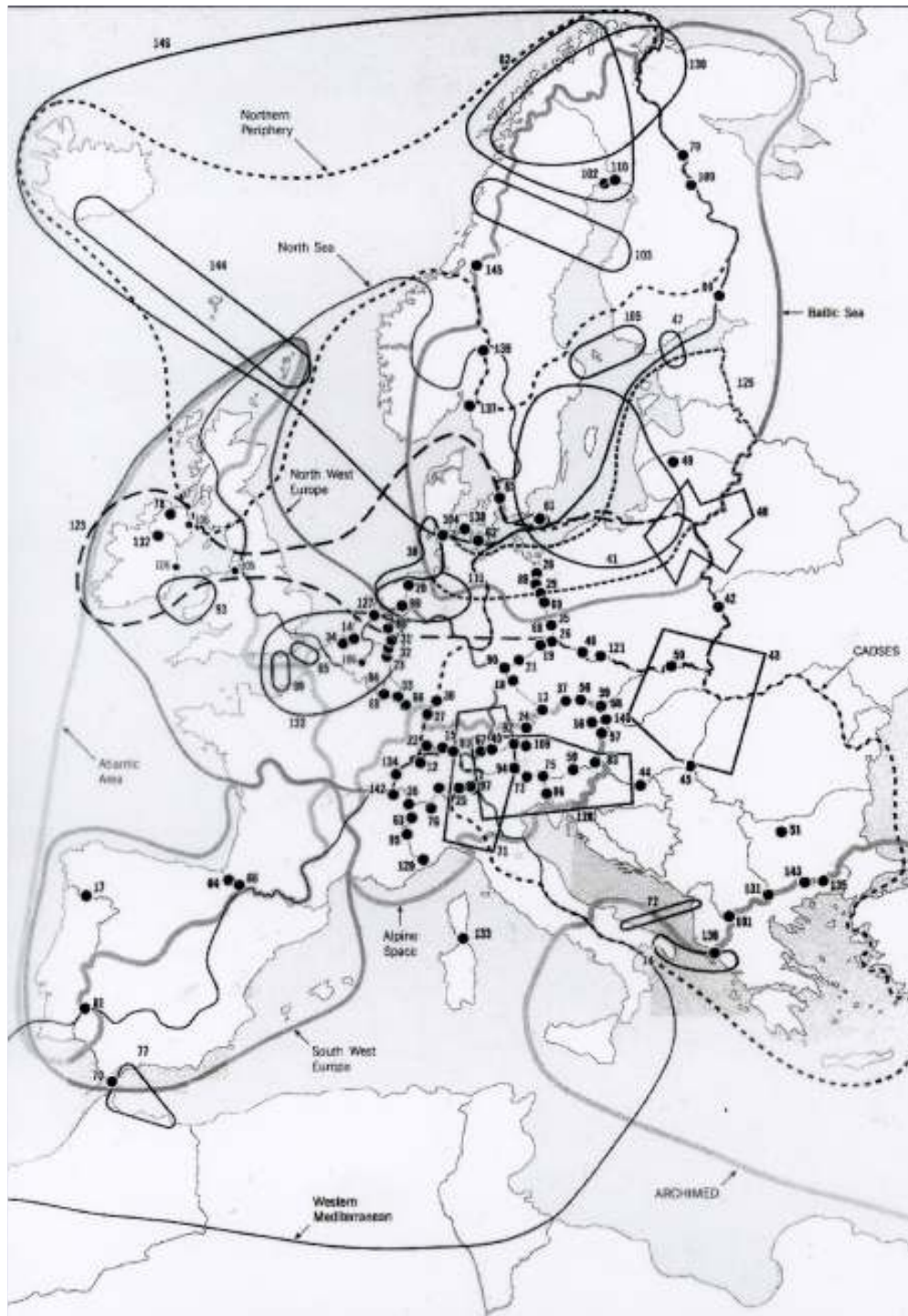


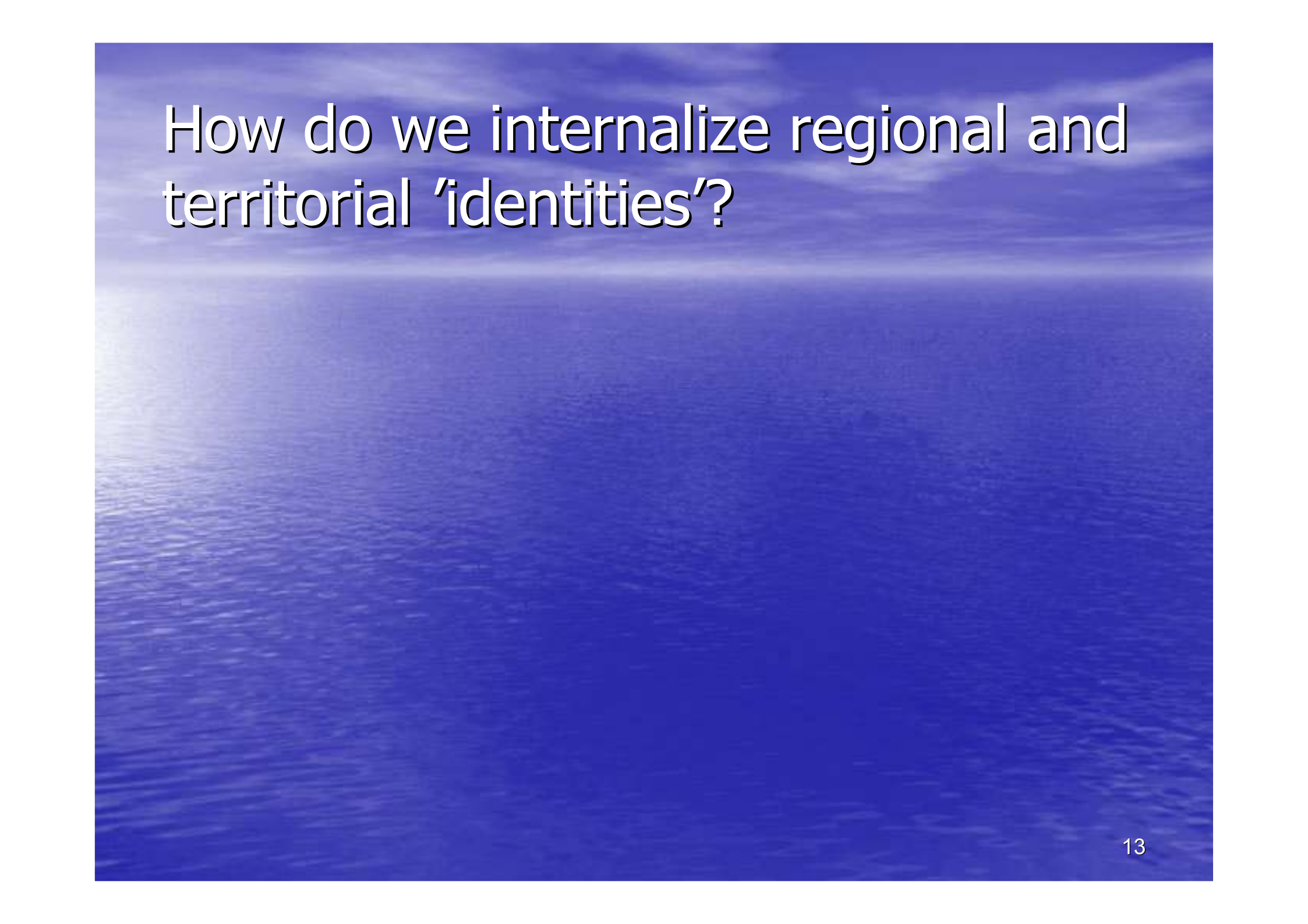
Plate 4 The North Sea INTERREG Region: part of a new transnational layer of vision-making.

Source: VWG, 2000b: 1.



New regionalism in Europe (Source: Deas & Lord 2006)

- About 150 'new unusual or non-standard regions'

The background of the slide is a photograph of a vast blue ocean meeting a clear blue sky at a distant horizon. The water is a deep, textured blue, and the sky is a lighter, clear blue. The text is overlaid on the upper portion of the image.

How do we internalize regional and territorial 'identities'?

Social spatialization (Rob Shields)

- The process during which a society produces its relevant ideas about spaces, region, place, i.e. spatiality
- "I use the term *social spatialisation* to designate the ongoing social construction of the spatial at the level of the social imaginary (collective mythologies, presuppositions) as well as interventions in the landscape (for example, the built environment). This term allows us to name an object of study which encompasses both the cultural logic of the spatial and its expression and elaboration in language and more concrete actions, constructions and institutional arrangements" (Rob Shields: Places on the Margin, p. 31)

Spatial socialization

- Spatial socialization is institution-based process through which individual actors and collectivities are socialized as members of specific territorially bounded spatial entities and through which they more or less actively internalize collective territorial identities and shared traditions and spatial imaginaries (= a contested process)
- Helps to understand the forms of territorialization of the society in various social practices and discourses: historically contingent
- Cartographic anxiety: inside/outside, us/them, lines of power, map-making

Spatial socialization in practice: symbolic violence --- education



Figure 5.8 'Shaping the disposition favourable for Greater Finland': a geography lesson in the occupied area of Eastern Karelia in 1943. Source: SA-kuva. Reproduced by permission

- Geography lesson (1943) in the Soviet territory that Finland occupied in 1941
- 'Facts', stereotypes, Othering
- Neglected area in nationalism studies
- Produces languages of integration and distinction
- In the EU a national question

Spatial socialization in practice: physical violence



- Military service
- E.g. in Finland organized on a regional basis

Institutionalization of regions

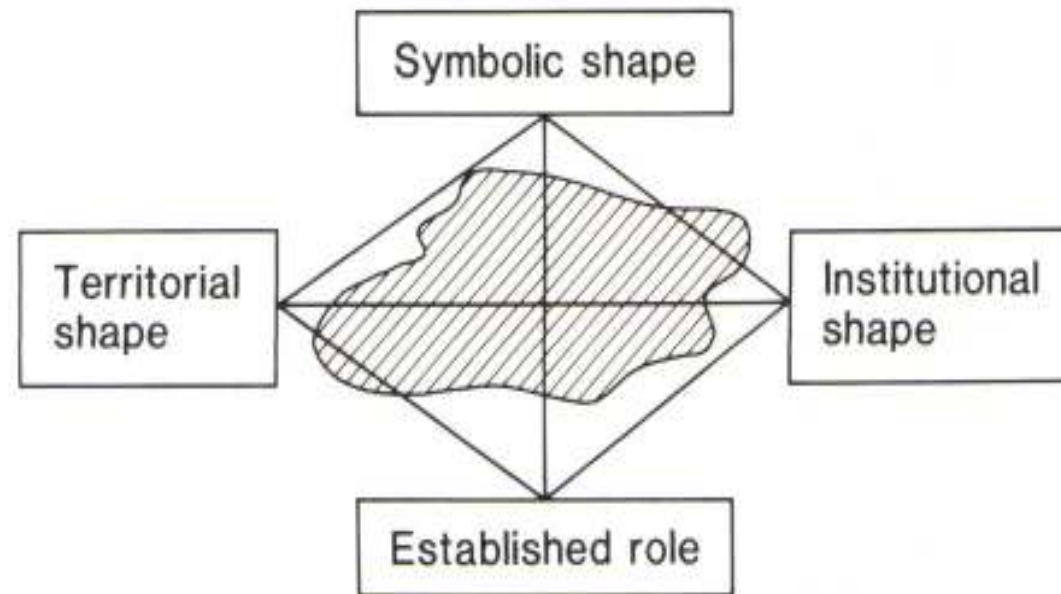


Figure 2.2 A conceptualization of the process of the institutionalization of regions

The territorial shaping of Finland

- Historical continuity

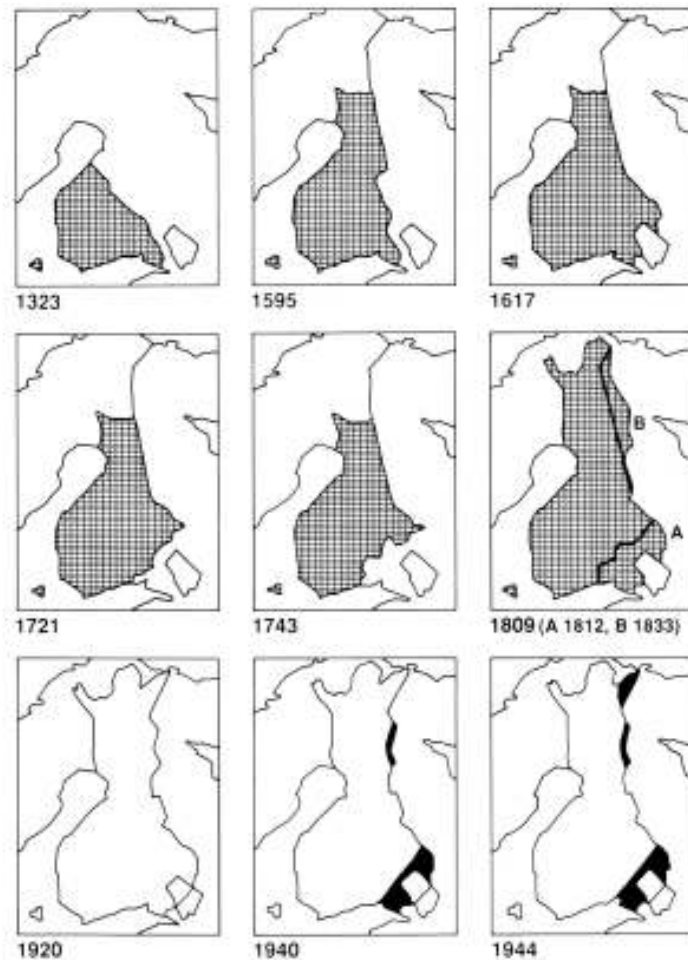


Figure 5.3 The areal shape of Finland since 1323

Territorial shaping: Making the state visible

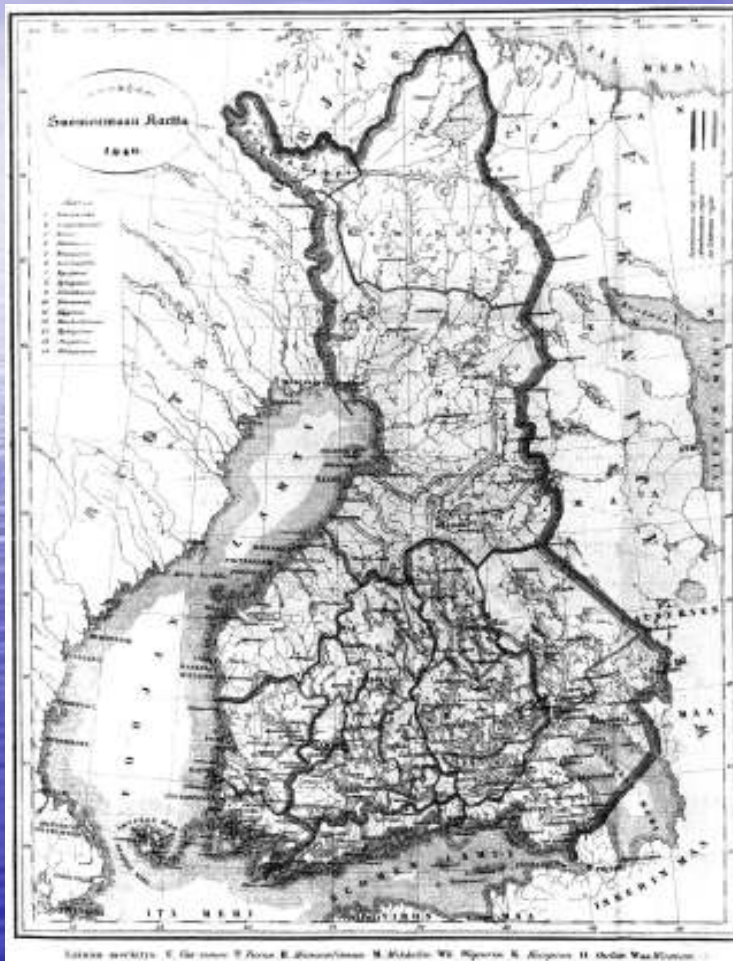


Figure 5.2 The first map of Finland to be published in Finnish (1846). Source: Appendix in *Lukemisia Suomen kansan hyödyksi*, 1846

- The power of maps
- The first map of Finland as a bounded territory in Finnish
- Made by the student Union (nation) of Savo-Karjala in 1846
- School atlases in education

Making national/symbolic landscape



Figure 6.1 'Metsälampi' (Forest Lake) by Lennart Forsten: A prototype of a stereotypic Finnish landscape in Topelius' *Finland framställt i teckningar*. Source: Republished in Topelius 1981, 178. Reproduced by permission of Werner Söderström Osakeyhtiö, Helsinki

Every mature (??) nation has its symbolic landscapes..these landscapes are usually an essential part of the iconography of nationhood

Donald Meinig 1979

Symbolizing confrontation: national iconographies



Figure 5.4 A symbolic representation of the confrontation between West and East: the coat of arms of the province of Karelia, dating from 1562. Source: Rancken and Pirinen 1949, 61. Reproduced by permission of Werner Söderström Osakeyhtiö, Helsinki

The power of allegories: symbolic struggle over national space



- The Maid of Finland fighting with Russia (Eetu Isto: The Attack 1899)

Topelianic identity narrative: The book of our land

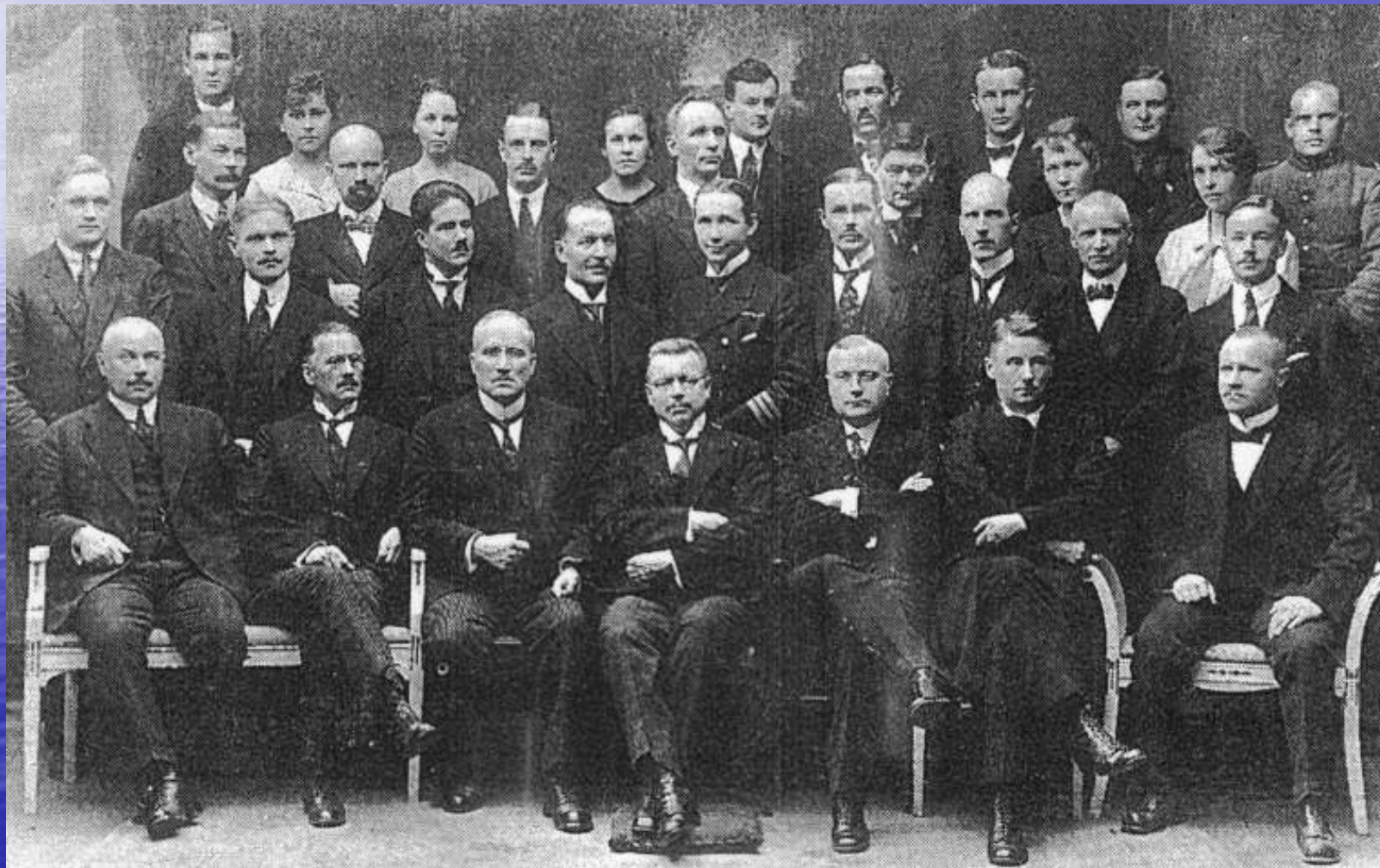
"This nation has grown up as one, like many trees form a large forest. Pines, spruces and birches are different timber species, but together they are a forest. The people in one province differ from those in another province as regards their appearance, clothing, character, habits and standard of living. We can easily distinguish a person from Häme from a Karelian, a person from Uusimaa from an Ostro-Bothnian; we can even distinguish the inhabitants of one parish from those from neighbouring parishes. But when we travel abroad and meet our fellow countrymen from other parts of our country, we will find out that in many respects they are similar. And when a foreigner travels to Finland, he finds that the inhabitants of this country have much in common as regards their character. For those who have lived in the same country since their childhood, subordinated to the same laws and living conditions, must have, with all their differences, much in common...Such a sense of belonging or quality (*national character*) is much easier to feel than to explain. It is the stamp that God has impressed on all nations by letting their inhabitants live together for a long time" Zacharis Topelius the end of the 19th century.

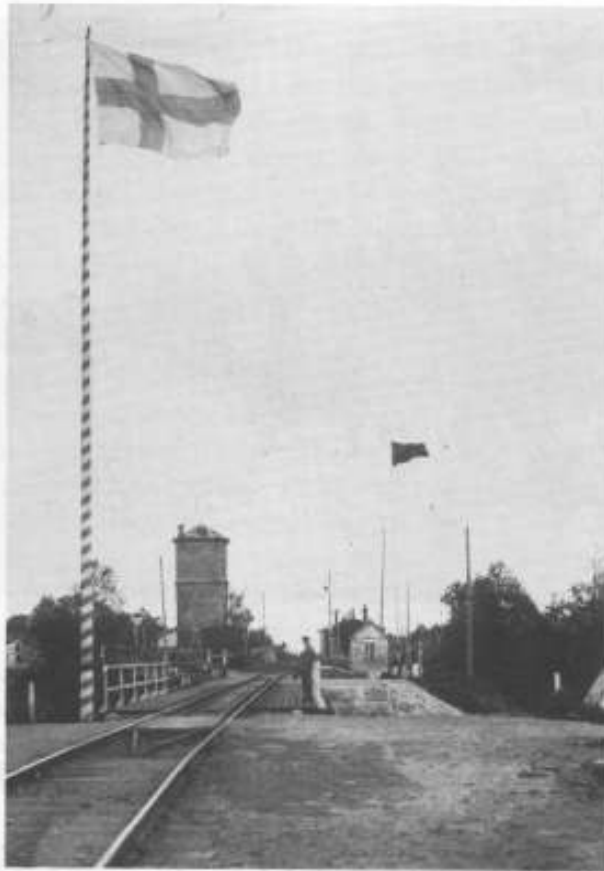
The Finnish-Russian border was open during the autonomy period (1809-1917)



Figure 7.1 The Finnish-Russian border was open during the autonomy period. The well-known Finnish photographer and ethnographer Samuli Paulaharju (second from left) and his colleagues resting at the border post on their way to the Dvina in 1910. Source: National Museum of Finland. Reproduced by permission

Border drawing – a masculinist project? The Finnish delegation in the Tartu peace negotiations (1920)





- The emergence of political symbolism at the border area after gaining the independence
- Soviet ideological landscape emerged

Boundaries on the move

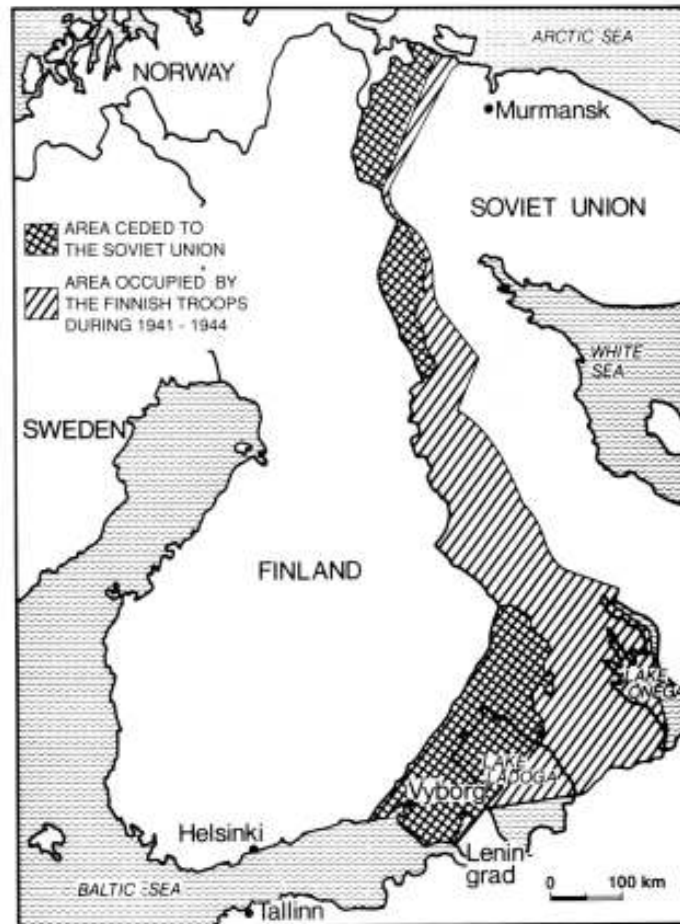


Figure 5.7 Map of the present boundaries of Finland, the area occupied by the Finnish troops in 1941–44 (and by German troops in Northern Finland) and the area ceded to the Soviet Union as a consequence of World War II

- Winter war 1939-40
- Continuation War 1941-1944
- Area occupied by the Finnish troops 1941-44
- The ceded areas

Geographers making geopolitics: "The forests of the forthcoming Finland"

- Väinö Auer (1941) in the journal Terra

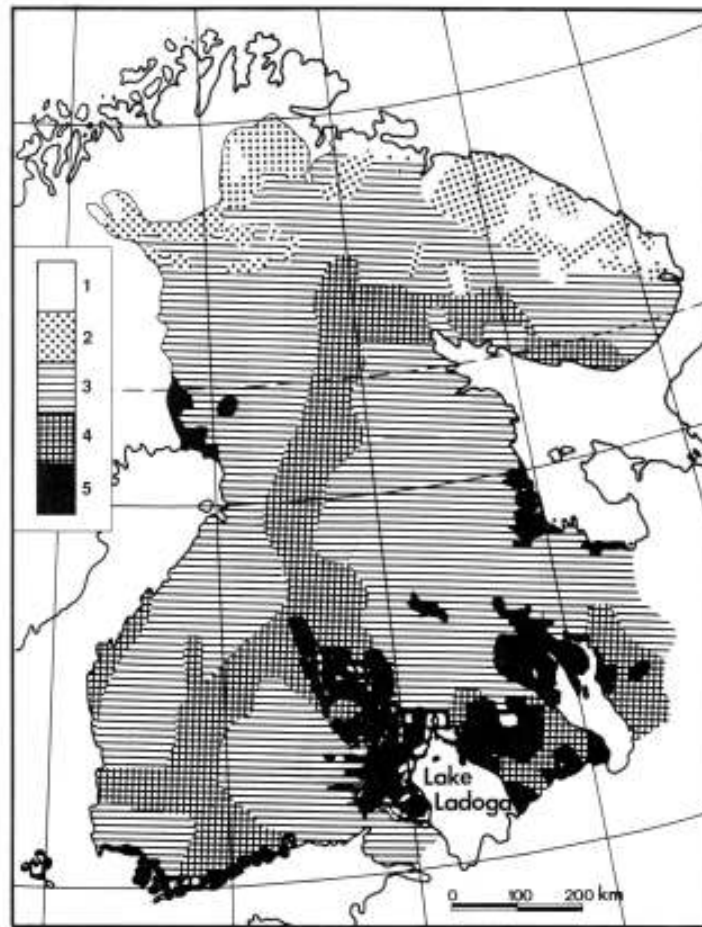


Figure 7.6 An example of Finnish war propaganda maps: the forest types of the 'forthcoming Finland' as outlined by Professor Väinö Auer (1941). Key: 1=bare mountain top; 2=mountain birch; 3=pine forests; 4=spruce forests; 5=forests with broadleaf trees. Source: Auer 1941. Reproduced by permission of the Geographical Society of Finland



Soviet ideological landscape in the former Finnish city Vyborg



Figure 6.2 Two views depicting the socialist ideological landscape in Vyborg, the city ceded by Finland to the Soviet Union as a consequence of World War II (photographed by the author in 1983)

Broader politics: Finlandization?



- The Prime minister of Norway apologised the cartoon published in the newspaper 'Nationen' in 1977

Making global geopolitics: North American vision of Finland as part of Eastern Europe (Saul B Cohen 1964)

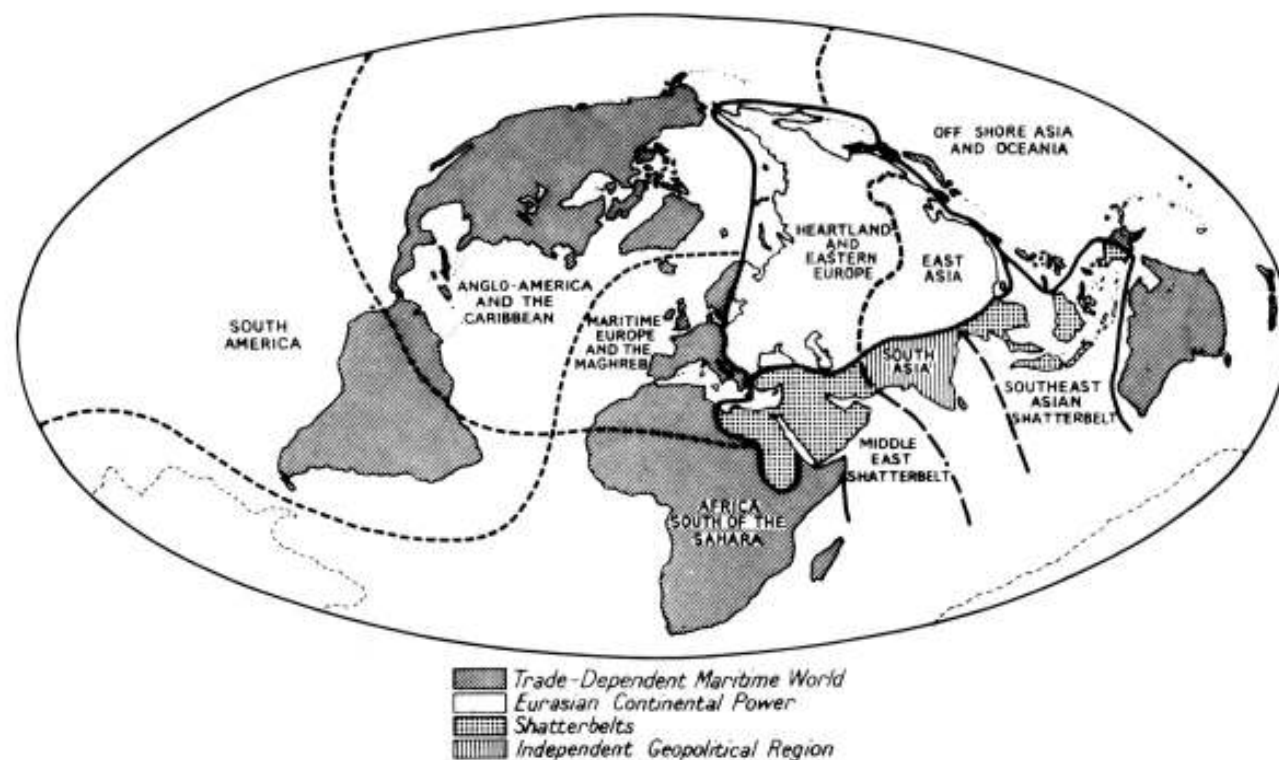


Figure 5.9 Finland represented as part of Eastern Europe: geostrategic regions and their geopolitical subdivisions. Source: Cohen 1964, 63. Reproduced by permission of Methuen, London

Re-locating the lost cultural space of Karelia

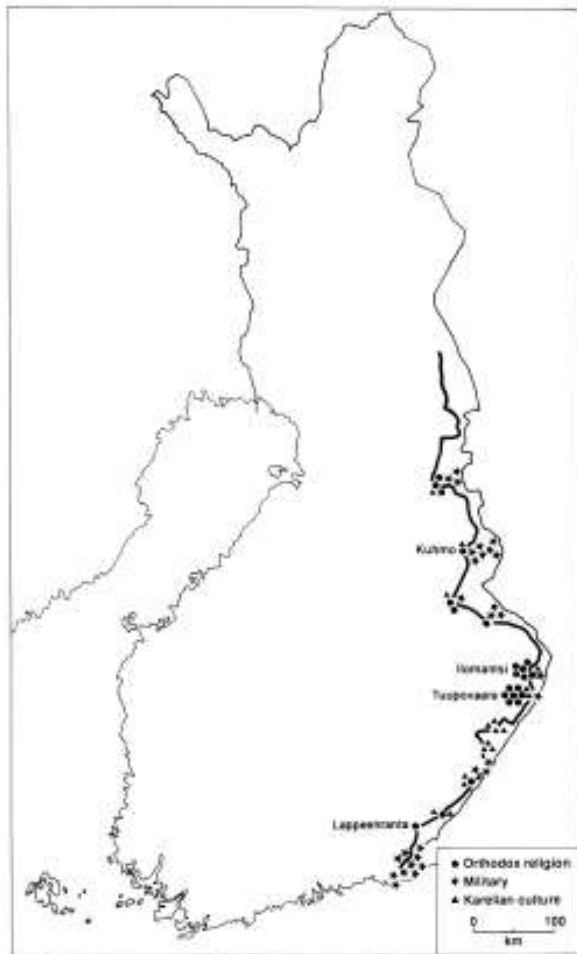


Figure 5.10. Reconstructing the Karelian socio-cultural space in Eastern Finland. The Road of the Bard and Boundary and the numbers of military, Orthodox and Karelian memorials and events featured in the various Finnish border communes in 1992. Source: Based on information in *Ramon ja rajan tie* 1992.

- After WW II, especially since the 1970s a new symbolic space emerged along the border area: "the Road of Bard and Poem"
- Various generations have different experiences

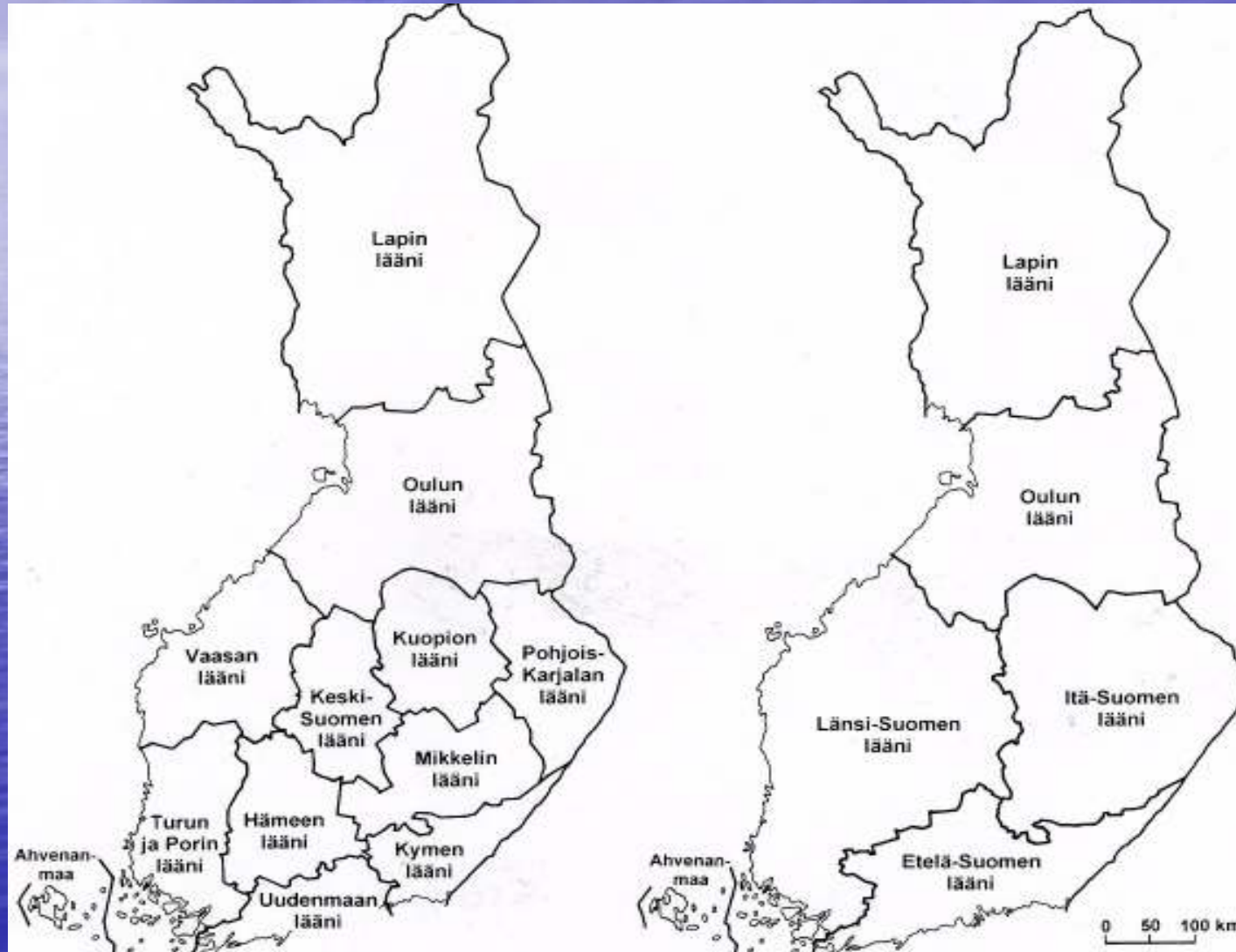
Current crossing points on the Finnish-Russian border



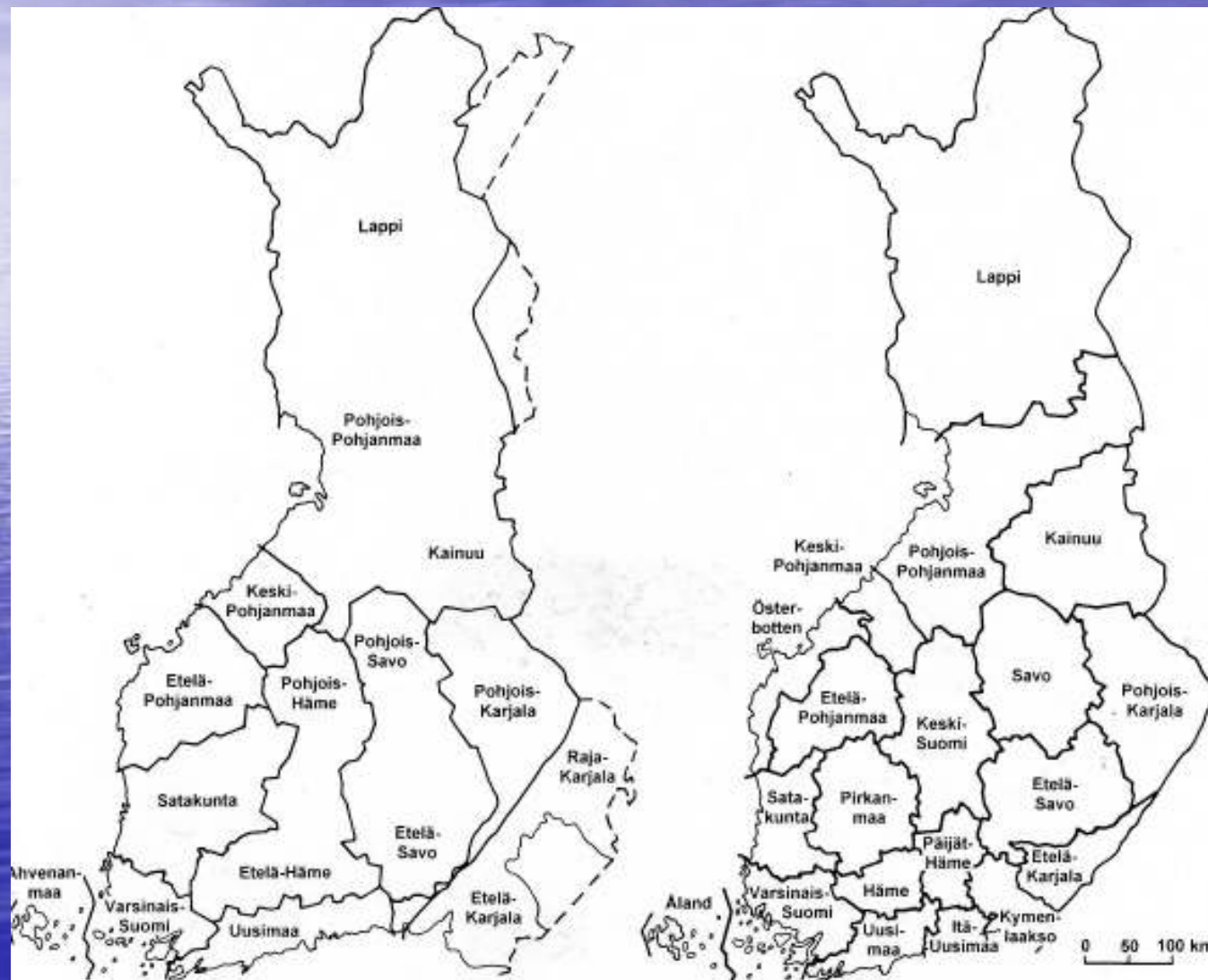
Fig. 1. Crossing points on the Finnish-Russian border

- During the Soviet period the border was closed and border relations were decided between the two states
- During post-Soviet time the number of international crossing points has increased perpetually
- EU projects

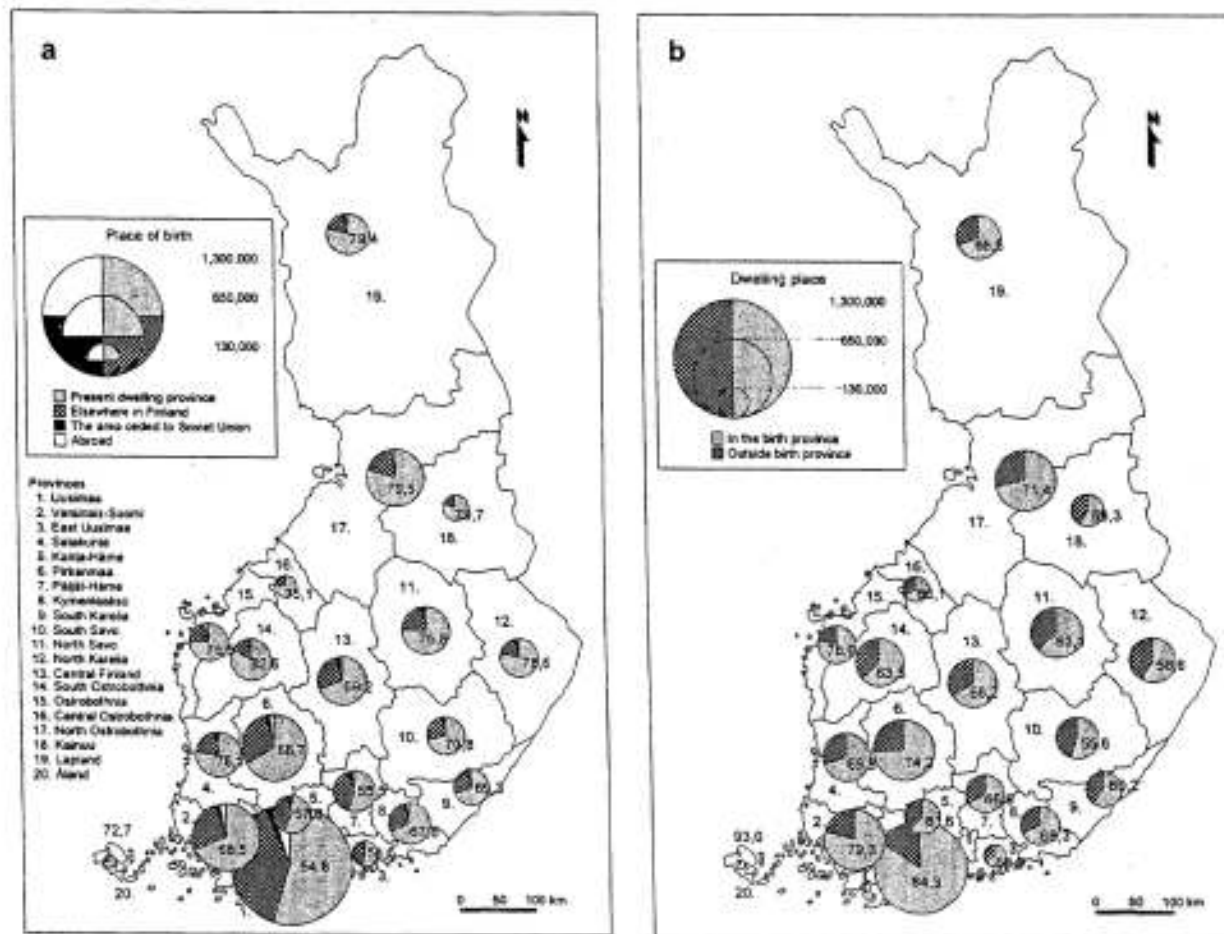
De-institutionalization of regions: Finnish counties (lääni) in 1996 and 1997



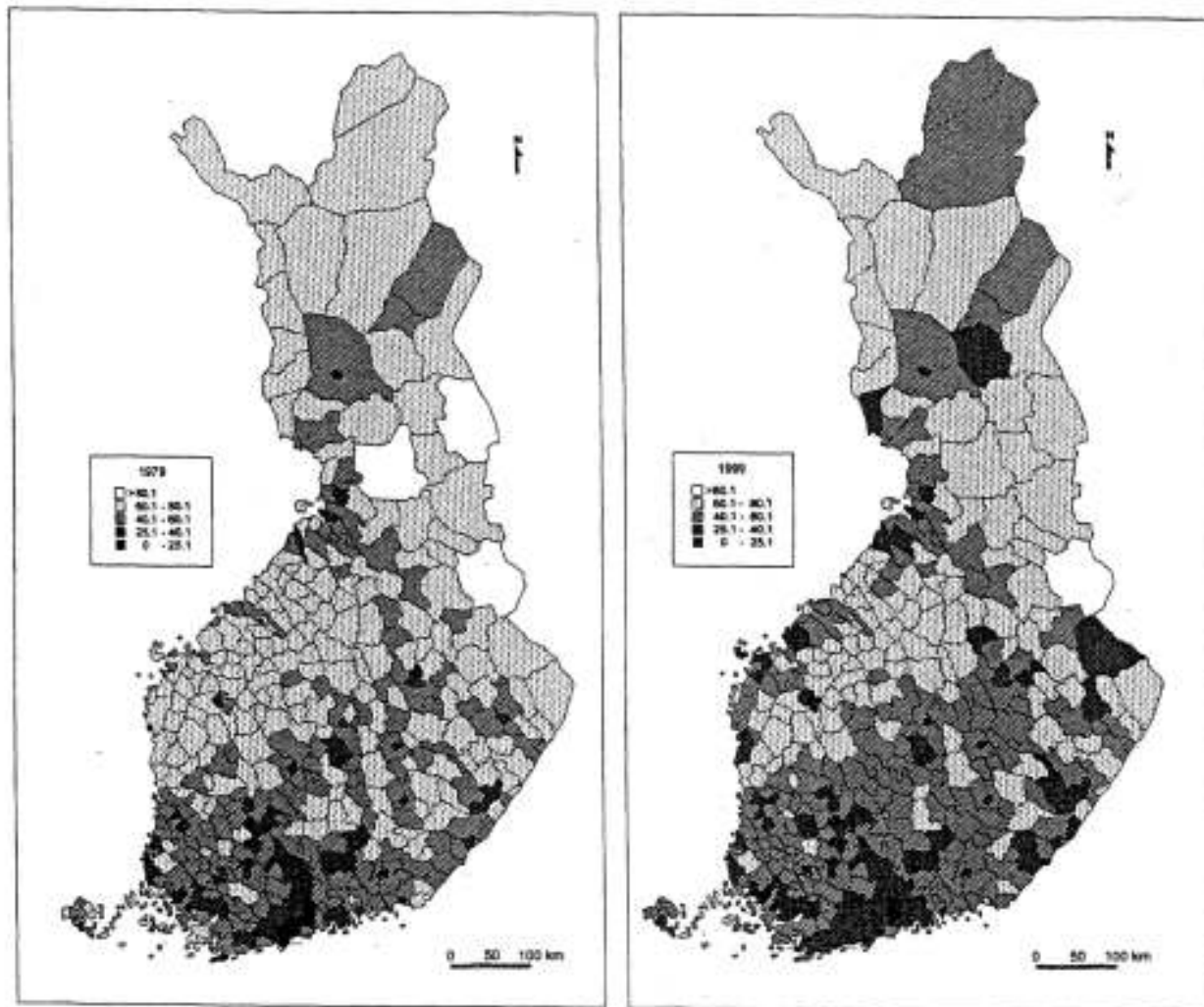
Traditional Finnish provinces and the change in 1994 – going to the 'Europe of regions'



Provinces in proper: people on the move



Municipal scale: people on the move - making granular spaces (personal collections of spatial experiences = "place" ?)



Regional councils

- Important regional planning bodies
- Important actors in the "Europe of regions"
- No democratic (elected) political representation
- Create (academic) narratives on identity that seem to be globalizing as far as their rhetorical content is concerned (creativity, learning regions, region as a source of innovation)

Normative identity narratives

- “Regional identity means inhabitant’s strong commitment with the home region. It is the image that people hold of the home area, this image has to be taken into consideration in development activities and to encourage people’s creativity and entrepreneurship. Identity is greatly modified by how people feel they are esteemed. A strong identity and a positive image are remarkable resources in regional development. Both of them can be influenced by positive communication (Lapin liitto 2002:43)
- “(The province of) Kainuu has the need and capacity – based on its identity, distinctiveness of nature and culture – to develop its competitiveness by investing on the development of the resources of the local people, that is on human, educational and social capital” (Kainuun liitto 2003:40)

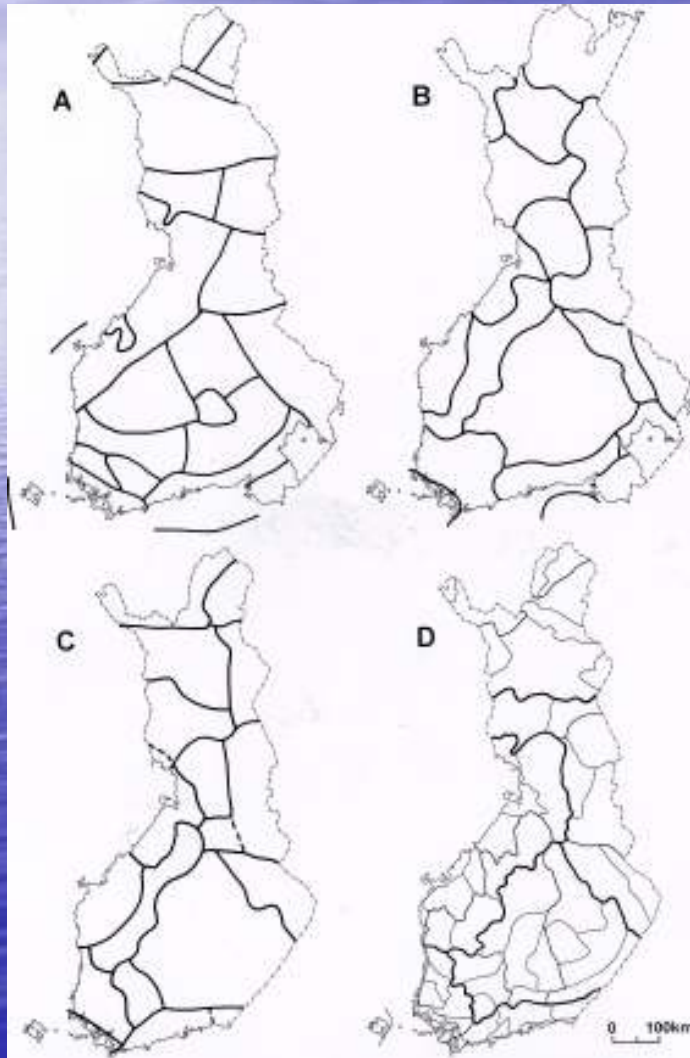
The narratives can at times be flavoured by a vision of a dynamic pluralistic and internationalizing world...

- “A person from Häme is deliberate, capable and participatory...A new kind of feeling of community will be created through participation, which will add the attraction of the region in the uncertain and shattering global economy (p.24)...The provincial plan has provided a vision of the values of the neo-tribe of Häme: a feeling of neo-communality based on plurality, tolerance, participation that can become concrete in catalyzing village action (p. 30)”(Hämeen maakunta...2003).
- “Eastern Uusimaa is a good-quality, capable and vital bilingual cultural area. The province is a strong international actor in the Baltic area” (p. 7)... The identity of Eastern Uusimaa has to be exploited by using materials depicting this identity in various occasions, especially in education, in strengthening skills and in events linked with Eastern Uusimaa” (p.8)

Regions as academic constructs: Finnish geographers at work

- various scholars have come into very different conclusions when mapping the regions of Finland.
- Ryden (1993) reminds that maps are 'segments of the professional autobiographies of their makers'.
- The evaluation of the regional divisions made by geographers suggests that the production of maps and regional divisions may be understood partly on the basis of Bourdieu's (1985) theories of distinction and symbolic capital in a scientific field.
- Regional divisions are not merely results of pure objectifying academic effort to create order on the earth or to construct identity but maps/regional divisions are also instruments of academic distinction and prestige.

Examples of 'regions' made by Finnish Scientists



A. Ragnar Hult (1895)

B. J.G.Granö (1930)

C. Leo Aario (1949)

D. Atlas of Finland
(1994)

Regionalism

- Political regionalism has been a weak phenomenon and no real separatist movements have existed in Finland
- Mainly linked with literature: regionalism emerged during the 19th century in the form of realistic stories of folk life.
- In the 1970s a renaissance: the social context for this was the rapid change that took place in the socio-economic structures
- A more specific background was the declining role of the traditional agrarian culture – one of the key constituents of Finnish national identity -, rapid urbanization and the increased spatial and social polarization.
- Most Finnish provinces have had their own novelists that have been linked with the regional life in cultural publicity.

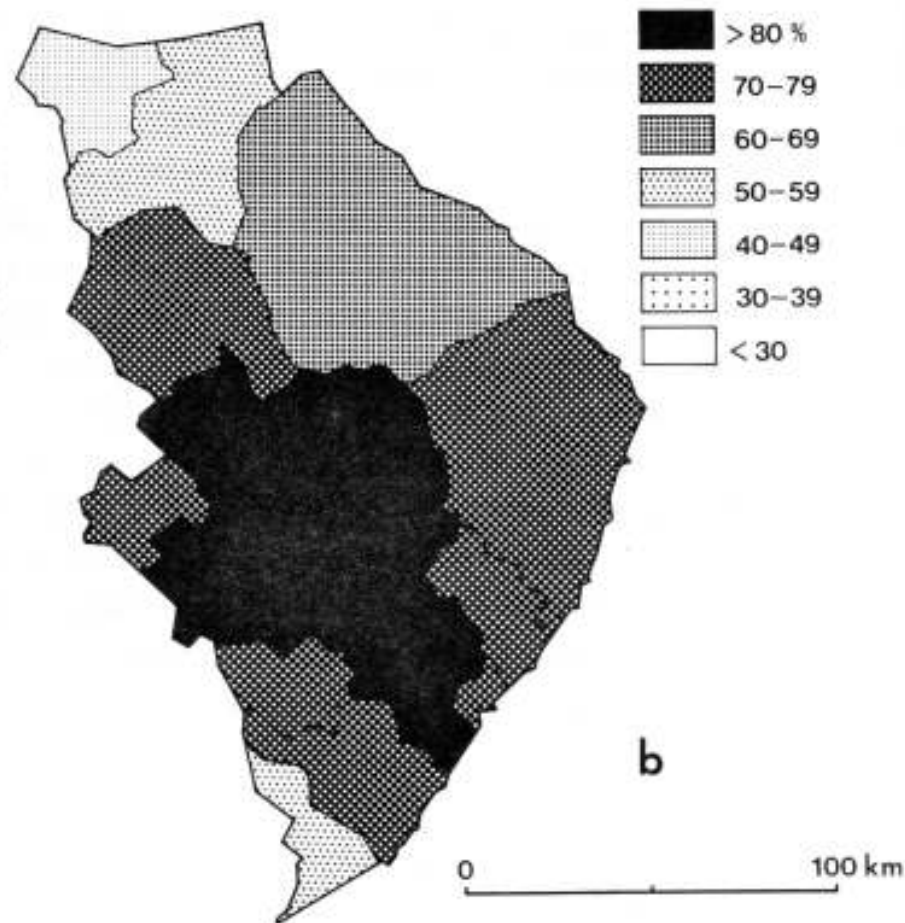
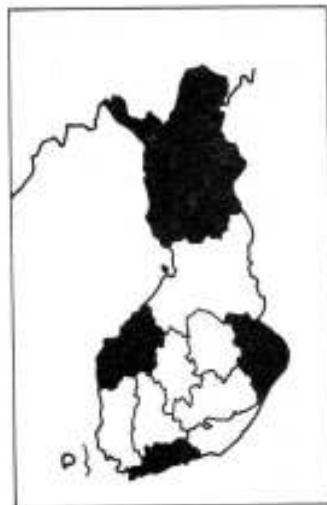
Regionalism in media

- the role of media and – in the case of provinces - the role of newspapers has been crucial in exploiting regionalist ideas.
- Provincial newspapers in the peripheral areas have in many cases been active promoters of 'regional identity' and 'self-consciousness'.
- Internet, new (satellite) TV channels, smaller household sizes, etc. may challenge the pattern

Making the province of Northern Karelia: the role of regional media

Kuva 7. Tutkimusalueiden yksiköslehtien kunnittainen peittoprosentti (a. Ilkka, b. Karjalainen, c. Lapin Kansa, d. Helsingin Sanomat).

Fig. 7. Coverage of the most important newspapers read in the areas studied in 1983.



CONCLUSIONS: CHALLENGES IN BOUNDARY/REGION STUDIES

- Reinsertion of space and spatial dimension: region is not only a static setting for social life; boundaries are not merely exclusive lines; both are social constructs, institutions and symbols and are impregnated with power
- Awareness of the multidimensional nature of boundaries: political, social, cultural, personal meanings
- Multicultural perspective – new alternative narratives: how various social groupings organize and shape their social and cultural life, how do they recognize themselves and construct the other; what are the individual and institutional elements in this construction
- Historical approach: the roles of boundaries as part of dynamic territory construction/region-building and deinstitutionalization
- The physical, environmental and ideological meanings of nature in connection with boundaries
- The study of boundary narratives and discourses as part of identity building: whose narratives?

Both relational and territorial thinking are needed...

- Regions are not bounded but networked (especially in terms of economy) (=“flat ontology”)
- ... but territory still matters (especially in terms of culture, politics and ethnicity)

As far as regions and boundaries are concerned, it may be asked...

'Whose regions, boundaries and identities' and 'for what purpose'?