Youth Culture - a matter of taste

Media consumption and style in Estonia and Sweden

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**Introduction**

Youth culture is a fast changing cultural form in modern society. Trends and styles replace each other and new habits are established, this can be seen as a sign of an increasingly commercialised youth culture or as a healthy exploration into identity. Whatever opinion you hold in this matter it can be concluded that the youth is a period in life that perhaps more than any other is marked by development and change. In some countries, like Sweden, these changes take place in an otherwise stable societal context, in others the surrounding society goes through similar turbulent transitions. For young people growing up in Estonia life has been full of remarkable changes, they were born in the socialist Soviet Union and today live in one of the most market liberal countries in the world, the independent Estonia. Born in a country with a thoroughly state-controlled media system they today live in a country where the cultural development is highly characterized by deregulation and expansion. From being organized by the state stipulating what is regarded good, and ideologically correct, culture they today live in a society where the youth culture is instead characterized by commercial markets and target group thinking. To some degree the state and older generations remain important, but most certainly other actors also play important roles in defining what is regarded good culture. This promotes intriguing questions regarding the valuation of mediated culture and different taste systems within Estonia. Especially in comparison to traditional western democracies like Sweden where the mediated culture has a stable - but still disputed and ever changing - position in society.

The study presented here aim to analyse and compare cultural values and hierarchies of taste among university students in Estonia (Tartu University) and Sweden (Södertörns Högskola). *In this paper will we discuss theoretical issues regarding comparative studies of youth cultures and also, with the comparative perspective in mind, the different contextual vantage points when studying mediated culture in Estonia and Sweden.* Even though the analytical focus of the study lies within the youth culture it has a more general approach. We argue that the youth culture can be seen as an indicator of cultural change, especially in societies going through wide-ranging transitions within many different areas. We like to think of this project as a comparative study of cultural values and taste patterns in regions of change.

The comparative outset also calls for some considerations; the societal context in Estonia and Sweden differs fundamentally in many ways and are quite similar in others. These differences and similarities will be highlighted in what follows, but before that we would like to point out some general remarks regarding media research in societies undergoing a widespread transition. Traditionally media research has developed within the western democracies, the usual subjects under study are to be found in Western Europe or the United States. This result in a very biased view upon mediated culture, and this is often criticised since it is only applicable on these exact premises. What is often forgotten is that Western Europe and USA by no means are typical societies from a global perspective. A typical society in a global sense would instead be characterised by far reaching transitions in the field of media as well as politics, economics, culture etc. The states and nations that display these kinds of transitions are found all over the world; the countries in post-socialist Eastern Europe is one example, South Korea, China, Cuba, South Africa and many countries in Latin and South America are others (see for example Downing 1996).
This critique is of course not valid only within traditional media research. When studying youth cultures and taste patterns among university students we need to draw attention to the fact that taste hierarchies and cultural values are closely integrated with society at large, for example the economy, politics and culture in a more general sense.

**University students as cultural indicators**

As our study is mainly interested in changes in values and cultural patterns we need to consider the problems afflicted with studying changes in values and cultural patterns through studying university students. Traditionally, students at higher levels of education has been a rare minority, privileged and from certain higher levels of society. They are in that sense, not a wise choice when looking for representatives for youth, that Mitterauer, among others has pointed out (Mitterauer 1988:7). However, in our study, that is not a problem. The overall aim of our study is to, in a comparative way, analyse cultural values and taste patterns in two different, but in some ways similar, geographical regions. We are not interested in patterns in youth culture in particular, or in differences between certain sub cultures among young people. Instead we regard University students as cultural indicators of the society at large; therefore they are a very suitable group for our purpose.

The first reason for this is the changing cultural significance of higher education. When looking historically at the position of university students in society, we have, during the last three of four decades, seen an educational revolution (ibid:288). Students that used to be a small and privileged group in society, has through this educational revolution grown into a much larger group of young people. Even if there still is a biased recruitment to higher education, the overall amount of university students has grown, from a rare minority in the early 20th century to 35% in the 1970th (ibid:96ff) and in the Södertörn region, more than 50% of the young people begin a higher education today.

The second reason is the essential part university students have always taken in wide-spread changes of societies, from the French revolution to the student uprisings in the 1960s (Mitterauer 1988:288, Jamison & Eyerman 1994). Mitterauer (1988:286) argues that students are the group of young people that has had the opportunity to take an oppositional position to the norms of society, as they are positioned between childhood and adulthood and not yet that dependent on society. When studying international cultural fields, this interregional, mobile group of youth is particularly important and also easier to compare as they can be assumed to be more homogenous in the two countries than for example less mobile working class youth.

It must however be pointed out that there are important differences between the two regions in our study, and the two schools we are examining. Södertörns University College is a brand new school, founded in 1996 and located in a disadvantaged suburban part of Stockholm, Sweden, formerly known mostly for its social problems: criminality, unemployment, lots of immigrants and people with a low level of education. As part of a political project to raise the unprivileged area from its former low-status reputation, the University College was founded and constituted with a particular goal to attract students from the Södertörn region. This short and ideologically tinged history must be related to the much longer, but just as ideologically tinged history of Tartu University in Tartu, Estonia. Tartu University was
founded in 1632 by the Swedish king Gustav II Adolf, as the second university in the Swedish Kingdom, which is proudly declared at the University website (http://www.ut.ee/english/general/history/php020613). As Estonia today is a self-governed nation, liberated from its Swedish, as well as other foreign, oppressors the university is the oldest in the country.

These historical differences also point to other, more contextual, differences between the universities: Tartu University is located in an old and very beautiful city with a long and famous history of higher education and Södertörn University College is located in an suburban area of which the most significant appearance is the large areas of apartment houses from the 1960s and 1970s. There are also other differences concerning age, geographical belonging, and social background of the students. Tartu University being the oldest and most famous university, not only in Estonia but also in all of the Baltic States, has a much longer academic history and therefore other kinds of academic traditions and connotations. As it is one of two universities in Estonia, it also gathers students from the whole country. Several of the students at Tartu University are living far away from family and friends, and therefore more likely to engage in the social life of the university and student milieu. The Södertörn students are not away from home to the same extent as the Estonian students: most of them have grown up in the urban region of Stockholm, surrounding the capital of Sweden. As these students stay in their home region they are not dependent on the social life of the University to the same extent as the Estonians. The earlier mentioned political project of the University College has also managed to create a social structure of students that differs from the traditional. The students of Tartu University are hence from other social layers of society than the students at Södertörn University College.

Being young: different meanings

These differences between the student groups, and between the university environments that form the context of the study, indicate that the concept of youth needs to be discussed. Discussing youth, four different dimensions are central: the biological dimension, the psychological dimension, the social dimension and the cultural dimension. These dimensions point to different aspects of being young. The biological aspects concern the physiological and bodily aspects of growing up. The biological transition of the young person often starts in the early teens, and is finished with the sexual maturity in the early twentieth. The biological dimension might seem as the more static of the four, but looking historically at the youth concept Mitterauer (1988) has shown that the length and extension of youth has been changing both socially and biologically. The psychological dimension studies youth as a specific process, a period in life in between childhood and adult life (see e.g. Hall 1904 or Erikson 1968). This transitory period is seen as a phase where experimenting with ones identity is highlighted. Today that phase can be extended even in postadolecense (Johansson 1995). The social dimension of youth sees youth mostly as a sociological phase, i.e. a phase constructed out of age cohorts and theories of generations. Changing societies and life forms widens the gaps between generations, which turn youth into a particularly interesting group in society to place in focus (e.g. Inglehart 1990, Oscarsson 2002), due to the developing consumption society, increased economy and leisure time. The view upon youth has also changed
The cultural dimension of youth can be understood as the different meanings that are created out of the concept of youth. Today youth as a concept has come to be related to ideas of freshness, fitness, happiness and lots of other positive connotations (Ziehe 1986).

In our study the social dimension of youth is the most interesting. It is of course important to keep the biological dimension in mind, especially as there are some differences between our two groups of students. In Estonia most teenagers start their university studies as soon as they have finished senior high school (the gymnasium). They are, hence, around 18-22 years during their university years. In Sweden, all teenagers have to stay in school (the gymnasium) until they are 19 years old, and lots of them wait for a year or two, to work, travel or do their civil service, before entering university. In a biological sense the Swedish students, hence, are maturer than the Estonian students. That is followed by some social differences: a larger number of them has moved away from their parents and have also had more time to widen their experiences before studying. The biological differences between the two groups are still too small to play any fundamental role here. From a social point of view, all students belong to the same phase in life, which is more important to us.

**Students in Estonia and Sweden: steps of growing up**

As we have seen the social differences of the two student groups, as the contextual differences between the countries, are, in some aspects, important. The social significance of youth has always been dependent on the economic and political position of the (biologically) young. Young men in the 19th century, for example, often had to accept being looked upon as youngsters until they were in their forties, as they did not have the economic position to get married and create a family of their own. Today, tendencies point to a social extension of youth compared to the early 20th century. In Italy, for example, men and women are considered young until they are in their mid-thirties, as most of them still live with their parents until that age, and therefore stay unmarried and without children (Leccardi 2002). These trends, however, seem to be general to all western countries, due to for example prolongation of education. Eastern Europe differs from Western Europe in that way. The economic situation in Eastern Europe forces young people to take responsibility of their own - and their families - lives and economy earlier than for example Swedish students. These social differences between students in Estonia and Sweden need to be discussed.

Mitterauer (1988) points at some important steps, caesuras, in a young persons life, that are all, traditionally as well as today, levels in the process of growing. These steps are: occupation, freedom to come and go wherever and whenever you like, responsibility of your own future, being able and allowed to travel, being able to make and take responsibility of buying things, education and getting married. All of these point at similarities as well as differences between the Swedish and the Estonian students, some of which are very important to discuss.

The occupational dimension of being an adult might seem meaningless to discuss in relation to university students. Still, working and earning money is necessary for the Estonian students even though most students try to work during their spare time in Sweden as well. The most important difference between the Swedish and Estonian students concerns their economic situation. Even though, as pointed
out before, the Estonian students come from more privileged social strata than Swedish students in general and particularly the students at Södertörn University College, the economic situation of students in Sweden are much better. As a student in Sweden, it is easy to take a very advantageous loan from the government which is not a fortune but definitively enough to live on. The Swedish students therefore are not forced to work during their student period, even though most of them prefer to at least during summers, to increase their economic situation. The Estonian students, though, are much more dependent on working besides university. In Estonia, most people, not only students have to have lots of parallel jobs to get on economically. For university students, there are governmental scholarships but that is far less than needed. Being a university students in Estonia, getting a (or several) job is much more a matter of surviving and being able to study at all, than just getting more money to travel during the summer or buying more expensive clothes. And in that way, when in comes to matters of identity, working means other things in Estonia than in Sweden.

Mitterauers second caesura of growing up is taking responsibility of when and where to come and go. Here the geographical dimension is important as most of the Swedish students stay in the region where they were born and has grown up, which means that some of them still live with their parents during the first years of their student period. Quite few of the Swedish students, however, stay together with their parents for all of their student years. Most of the Estonian students, on the other side, have to leave their hometown and family to study at Tartu University. They, at a rather young age, are forced to get a home of their own, and at the same time have to be able to take responsibility of their own time and life. On the other hand many students in Estonia are forced to live with their parents during their student years due to the economic situation. If given the opportunity to stay with the parents many Estonians do so, which is rather the opposite than in Sweden where most students tend to move out of their parents home as soon as possible.\textsuperscript{iii}

The third caesura is the responsibility to take care of your own future. The role of the future of the Estonian and Swedish students are different in at least two ways: the future of the Estonian students is much brighter than that of the Swedish students and the future of the Swedish students is much brighter than that of the Estonian students. The future of the Estonian students is much brighter than that of the Swedish students in relation to the importance of higher education in the Estonian society. As Estonia, as a self-governed nation, is so much younger than Sweden there are still lots of possibilities for well-educated young people to make fast careers. Such a young nation lacks on the other hand fastened structures in society, which makes the direction of society less predictable - something that also makes the future of the students less predictable. The Swedish students cannot be sure that their university education will save them from unemployment and economic insecurity. They can, though, be rather sure that living in Sweden will save them from the worst state of poverty. In that sense, the Swedish students can stay young for a longer period of time and is less forced to worry of their future.

The fourth step of the young person's progress that Mitterauer discuss is travelling. Travelling can be seen in the light of the traditional cultivation trip, made by the noble youth in the early days, or the journeys of the journeymen in the old bourgeois class society (Mitterauer 1988:169). Studying at the university often includes a journey in itself, as discussed above. Leaving your home moving to another
city or part of the country can be seen as that kind cultivation trip, and as an important step in the life of the young person. But students are also particularly mobile in other ways. Today as always, all these cultivating journeys of the young are mostly made by the well-educated middle class youth - the ones studying at the university. In the more economically well established countries in Europe and in the United States, the month-long trip in South East Asia or around the world is almost compulsory in the evolution of the middle-class youngsters. In Estonia, that kind of journeys is reserved to a privileged few. With an average monthly salary in the country that correspond to a tenth of the average salary in ex Sweden, travelling abroad for months is not a pleasure for everyone. The Estonian students still make their travels, with small means. Besides scholarships and student exchange programmes lots of them ex hitchhike in Europe during their summer vacation, and take cheap trips by boat to the neighbouring countries around the Baltic Sea.

Making your own purchases is another step, which is not the most central step for university students in any country. Even though the Swedish students have a more favourable economic position than the Estonian students do most of them are not in a position to make any larger purchases at all. The differences in economic position between the Swedish and the Estonian students have been discussed above and are of course applicable to this situation too.

Education is the last of the caesuras Mitterauer discuss in relation to the concept of youth. Comparing university students from certain similar departments at two universities in two different countries of course draws attention to the importance of education in a young person's life. In this study, being a student leaves all of the above discussed caesuras, as it creates frames for the economic situation -purchases and travelling-, the geographical situation - where and how to live-, the need or opportunity to leave home and also the level of autonomy in relation to parents.

Besides the caesuras, but still an important step in the process of growing up, Mitterauer discusses getting married. Marriage has a rather different meaning and role in the two societies. In Estonia getting married while studying is not very unusual, at the same time as living together unmarried is very unusual. In Sweden it is just the opposite. It is very rare to get married without living together for years first, and most students stay unmarried until they have finished studying and grown older. Forming a family with your boy- or girlfriend, hence, is something that Swedish students do to a higher extent than their Estonian fellow students. Still, in the Swedish students lives marriage has not the symbolically important role in growing up that it used to have some three or four decades ago.

Finally, summing up the discussion above, the Swedish students in our study seem to be socially and culturally "younger" than the Estonian students. The Estonian students are forced to work more, travel less and are economically more restrained, and at a younger age. That also leads to the conclusion that the concept of youth in youth culture theory today is well funded in the western idea of being young and also in the western life style of the young. That makes it even more interesting to make comparative studies of the two universities.
Youth culture, taste and style

Discussing youth today is closely associated with matters of style, consumption and life style, rather than the biological or even social dimensions. These matters make the comparison between the two countries even more interesting, as Western European sociology of youth culture have based its theories on youth with lots of money and spare time.

These economic and time oriented dimensions are also important for us. How do the structuration of time differ between a student group that has to have four different jobs besides their university studies, and another group that hardly has to work at all? Estonian students are historically used to a highly structured spare time, since their childhood were characterized by the Soviet system and the youth organisations that gathered lots of the young (especially those who intended to continue to study at a higher level (Pilkington 1994). Organized spare time for students also concerns things as “Nations”: student gatherings that some of the students at Tartu University are involved in. In Sweden, “Nations” are a very fundamental part of the of the students social life at the classical Swedish seats of learning; Uppsala University and Lund University. Tartu University have the same kinds of “Nations” but here they seem to be of less importance. At Södertörn University College there are no “Nations” in the traditional meaning. There are, still, other student gatherings and associations for students to engage in. It is not surprising that a new school as Södertörn University College lacks “Nations” as these traditionally had a geographical meaning. When students had to leave their hometown to study at the University, joining the fellowship of the nation was a way to meet others from your own geographical region and to feel a little like home (Mitterauer 1988:232ff). It is symptomatic for the development of youth culture that “Nations” today have completely lost their geographical significance, and is solely a place for students to meet their equals when it comes to style and taste of music and other cultural signs. This is also symptomatic for the development of youth culture today.

This disintegration of the meaning of geographical belonging in youth culture can also be seen through the internationalisation of the juvenile styles of which internationalisation of the media market is an important explanation. In the republics of the Soviet Union, for example, western youth culture has had influence on the national cultures since the 1950th, in defiance of the wish of the authorities (Pilkington 1994). This discussion leads over to the central discussion in youth culture theory today: that of the individualization and differentiation of youth culture, and the concept of reflexivity (Mitterauer 1988:280, Ziehe1986).

Reflexivity is a sociocultural phenomenon that is central in discussions of identity formations today; inside as well as outside youth culture theory (for example Ziehe 1986, Giddens 1991, Beck et al 1994, Jansson 2001). This concept concerns the de-traditionalisation of societies and cultures that leaves people with more open opportunities to choose where and how to live than in traditional society, and also how to format an identity. The use of the concept has been criticized for being too closely associated with the rich western way of life and of little use outside the western world. Reflexive identity is much associated with the possibility to reflect upon ones own life, and the alternatives to ones traditional life style. In modern society, the availability to travel and meet other cultures is central, as well as the media in the possibility to think about alternative ways of life. In our study, the material difference between the
two countries creates different opportunities for the two student groups to travel and in that respect widen their perspectives. The internationalised media structure of modern society today with its globally homogenous content nevertheless reduces the importance of physical travelling, since the possibility to mentally or virtually transplant oneself is extended by modern media technology.

Reflexivity is about looking at yourself from a meta-perspective, and turning and being aware of what and who you are. It also leads to questioning your identity and playing with other selves, styles and expressions. This process is particularly important in youth culture. Still, there are indications that the differing historical contexts and lives of the students in the two countries might affect the extent of reflexivity. Hence, it is important and interesting to study taste hierarchies and style patterns in youth culture among the students.

The discussion above puts focus on the contextual differences between the students in the two countries. As youth culture, and other cultures, is highly dependent on its cultural surroundings, the contextual differences must be considered as well. Below, we are going to discuss the widespread changes in the Estonian media landscape, in relation to its Swedish and Western European neighbours.

**Changing media landscapes**

During the last 25 years of Soviet occupation the Estonian society experienced a gradual change. First and foremost one can identify four different lines of development, ongoing tendencies regarding: 1) urbanization, 2) increased material standards, 3) increased level of education and 4) changing forms of human interaction (Hion et al 1988:9-34). Within the fourth of these tendencies one can certainly find changes in the field of mediated communication and questions of media structure in Estonia. From a global perspective this is of course not exclusively an Estonian affair, the media has undergone a massive change on all areas, from the economical and political organisation to the everyday use of media (Herman & McChesney 1997, McChesney 1999, McQuail 2000, Thussu 2000).

Estonia earned its long wished for independence on the 17th September 1991 when it finally gained membership in the United Nations, less than a month after Estonia declared its independence towards the Soviet Union (Lauristin & Vihalemm 2002:27, Life in Estonia 2001:17). But the transition from state socialism to capitalism started already in the last half of the 1980s during Gorbachev’s rule when protests against the Soviet Union grew strong. In 1987 environmentalists protested against Soviet plans to establish phosphate mines in the northern parts of Estonia. The great success of these protests fused opposition within many other societal areas such as economy, jurisdiction and politics (Lauristin & Vihalemm 2002).

This overarching process started in the mid and late 1980s, had a great impact on the Estonian media landscape, prompting changes in as well the structuring of the media as it affected the content and the consumption. One of the most apparent features of this process was the rapid privatisation of the media, resulting in a sharp turn from political towards economical regulations (Lauristin & Vihalemm 2002:31). The transition of the media in Estonia is often compared to other post-communist countries in the former eastern bloc (see e.g., Downing 1996, Sparks 1997, Lauristin & Vihalemm 2002). But this
process is not unparalleled in the western world in general or Scandinavia in particular. In the following we will touch upon some of the parallel conditions in Sweden. Of course there are many examples of great differences between the two countries given their history, but both countries has in various degrees gone through processes of privatisation, deregulation, internationalisation etc. in the field of media. The main focus though will be on the turbulent situation in the Estonian media during and after the breakdown of the Soviet Union.

During the first years of independence the privatisation of Estonian media was a primarily local affair, the international conglomerates did not seem very interested in a market consisting of less than 1.5 million people. This situation changed in the around 1996 when Swedish media companies Kinnevik and Marieberg came into business in both the press and the broadcasting market (Vihalemm et al 1997:236). And this is one of the more general developments in the Estonian media market; Russian interests and investments are playing a less important part while Scandinavian (primarily Swedish and Finnish) investments have increased significantly, especially since 1998 (Lauristin & Vihalemm 2002:33ff).

Another important consequence of the privatisation is that advertising has become the most important source of income for most media. The total media advertising expenditure has increased from 9 million USD in 1994 to 40 million USD in 2000. It is not only the amount of revenue that has increased, advertising also make up a majority of the means available, in 1992 the ad revenues was about 6.8% for the TV broadcasters, in 2000 that figure has rose to 55.1% (Lauristin & Vihalemm 2002:140, 194). The same development can be seen in the newspaper market, in 1996 the share of advertising made up almost 50% of the total revenue for Estonian newspapers. This can be compared to the Swedish market where advertising makes up approximately 60% of the total revenue (Hadenius & Weibull 1999:87).

The shift from a political and cultural sphere towards an economically biased media market has met substantial critique in Estonia. Some argue that the commercial interests have become too strong and that these interests have too much influence on the development of Estonian media (Vihalemm et al 1997:229ff). Below we will describe the media development in Estonia, primarily focusing on the changing structures but also highlighting some of the consequences for media content and consumption.

**Media structure – expansion and deregulation**

One of the most striking consequences of the above mentioned process was the virtual explosion of printed media. The press played an important part in the ongoing transition and the interest among the Estonian people grew accordingly, already in 1990 the printed press reached a peak regarding the circulation of dailies, weeklies and magazines. In just three years - from 1987 to 1991 - the circulation doubled, but this huge expansion of the printed press was not to last long, already in 1991 the circulation decreased remarkably for all types of periodicals. Even though this decrease in circulation affected all types of periodicals the greatest loss was within the culturally oriented magazines. Between 1990 and 1993 magazines like *Looming*, *Vikerkaar* (literary magazines) and *Teater. Musika. Kino.* (cultural magazine) almost disappeared (Lauristin & Vihalemm 2002:26, Lauristin & Vihalemm 1993:263ff, 343-347). This decrease in circulation, for both newspapers and magazines, is of course not an absolute measure of the actual number of readers. In the first half of the 1990s the prices of newspapers and
magazines rose considerably. Marju Lauristin and Peeter Vihalemm argue that as a result of the rise in prices reading newspapers became a elitist habit (Lauristin & Vihalemm 2002:33).

The privatisation of the media and establishing of an almost completely free press in the beginning of the 1990s also resulted in a considerable growth in the number of published periodicals, from 434 titles in 1990 to 930 in 1999 (Baltic Media Book 2001:49) something that of course promoted a greater diversity than during the Soviet rule. Among the new titles one could find titles within business and economy, entertainment, pornographic and specialist magazines, areas formerly unseen in the Soviet media landscape. Other newcomers to the Estonian media landscapes are the tabloid press and other publications rarely accused of serious journalistic work.

Another important aspect of the transition towards a free media is questions of regulations. During Soviet rule the media was completely state controlled, a system that was to be replaced by a more liberal view upon the relationship between for example the protection of individual privacy and the freedom of expression. Not very surprising the first years of independence were characterised by a tendency to interpret the freedom of expression as an absolute freedom (Harro 2002:224). After a series of defamation cases the “Estonian press learned that press freedom is a limited right” (ibid:227). By late 2001 a number of legal texts had been written, but according to Halliki Harro the legal protection of individuals and the freedom of the press is still defective due to the strong impact of commercial.

It seems like the Estonian people abandoned the printed press due to the rising costs and instead turned to television, another area that has experienced a great growth. Up until 1992 Estonia had no private broadcasters, but just as in the field of printed press the broadcasting media expanded tremendously in the beginning of the 1990s. In 1992 the first private television station was established and already in 1993 seven private stations operated in the Estonian media landscape. Over the years a few stations has merged or disappeared and in 2000 Estonia had four private stations (Shein 2002:137). This expansion of broadcasting stations is paralleled by an expansion of broadcasting hours in Estonia, from 3,315 hours in 1993 to 32,463 hours in 2000, almost a tenfold growth. But the increased number of actors on the Estonian television field is not the only noticeable change. Estonian Television (ETV) is experiencing an ongoing change from being the single broadcaster in a state-controlled system towards being the single public station surrounded by a number of private stations.

Starting in 1990 ETV has experienced a relative fast change from state television towards a public broadcasting system, in 1992 ETV became a associate member of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and in 1994 the first Broadcasting Act passed (Harro 2002:226, Shein 2002:143). The movement from state television towards a public broadcaster was pursued by implementation of the standards set by EBU, for example “the support of local languages, cultures and identities, and openness” (Shein 2002:137). But becoming a public broadcaster also meant that ETV had to oblige to other requirements such as accessibility, quality and variety in programming, objectivity and a large enough share of in house productions. Just as any other public broadcaster in Europe these obligations cause some problems, something which was even more acute due to the weak financial situation of the ETV.
The relationships between the public broadcaster (ETV) and the private stations have not been entirely unproblematic, especially regarding the funding and ETVs place in the advertising market. Due to the strained financial situation the funding has been a source of controversy:

The lack of necessary financial means, and, the need, whatever it took, to hold on to a majority audience, and to move ahead the emerging private television that appealed first of all to mass tastes, coupled with an insufficient understanding of the nature of TV-programming, created insecurity and forced commercial tendencies in public broadcasting (Shein 2002:137).

One of the commercial tendencies disputed has been advertising as a funding of public television. According to the Broadcasting Act of 1994 ETV is allowed to sell advertising time as a mean to finance the station, a maximum of 12 minutes per hour and 5% of the total programming time per day. Between 1995 and 1997 seven stations competed for the advertising market. Since ETV received 35% of the total amount spend on television advertisement in 1997 the situation was of course very problematic. ETV was heavily dependent of advertisements making up 25-40% of the stations’ total income between 1995 and 1997 and at the same time the private stations found it very hard to compete in a market dominated by one very large actor and a number of smaller actors competing for the scraps.

In late 1997 an agreement was met between the private stations and ETV and from January 1 1998 ETV abandoned the advertising market and received 38 million EEK in return from the private channels. Unfortunately this agreement was not to last very long since the compensation paid by the private channels was not enough to cover the loss of advertising revenue. In mid 1999 ETV returned to the advertising market and in hindsight it could be concluded that the agreement “did not significantly improve the private channels’ economic positions but resulted in a deep crisis for ETV” (Shein 2002:162). After a period of financial and organisational crisis the Broadcasting Act was amended on the 19 December 2001, resulting in a new decision to leave the advertising market from 1 July 2002. Another founding model was formed; the private stations still contribute to the budget but this time it is also complemented with subsidies from the state budget. The idea behind this is to create a more stable financial situation for the public broadcaster and avoid financial problems like the ones experienced after the last abandonment of advertising in 1999.

Just as in the case of the press the radio played an important role in the restructuring of Estonia. The late 1980s and early 1990s are often considered a “prime-time for Estonian radio-journalism” (Lõhmus 2002:174). As seen above the number of television stations peaked in the early to mid 1990s, with nine stations in 1995 and by the end of 2001 only four. The radio has experienced a more steady growth from one to four public stations between 1993 and 2000 (among which one is broadcasted in Russian), during the same period the number of private stations has increased from 8 to 29 (Lõhmus 2002:175, Baltic Media Book 2001:103). Three out of four public stations are among the largest stations in Estonia (Vikerraadio, Raadio 2 and Radio 4) with the private station Raadio Elmar squeezing in as number two when it comes to weekly reach and audience share (Baltic Media Book 2001:115). During the 1990s Sweden also experienced a similar increase in the broadcast media as a result of deregulations (Hadenius & Weibull 1999:176ff). But the private broadcast media in Estonia has expanded substantially more in comparison to the Swedish, maybe because of the lack of regulations.
To sum up then; from 1987 and up until today there has been a serious expansion in the field of printed media as well as in broadcast and the media played an important part in the first steps towards a independent and democratic Estonia. But the rapid expansion of for example newspapers also meant drops in circulation and a very competitive market, and the same development was found within the field of television field. When it comes to radio stations, with lower production costs, the expansion has been more long lasting with 33 stations in operation today. When gaining independence in 1991 Estonia was relatively inexperienced regarding media regulations and during the last ten years there has been various discussions regarding the shape of public service television and other public media. At the same time some problems has aroused regarding the relation between the free press and the individuals right of privacy and other issues related to the regulations of private and public information. The overarching tendency of Estonian media is a shift from state control and ownership towards private ownership, resulting in economic rather than political regulations of the media.

**Content and consumption - internationalisation, popularisation and ‘deculturalisation’**

The structural change of the Estonian society and media has also given rise to some changes in media content and consumption. The most important tendencies are internationalisation, popularisation and something probably best described as a cultural polarisation. The internationalisation is not something exclusively Estonian, the emerging presence of media conglomerates and the spread of new technologies such as for example the internet, satellite and cable TV has made the Estonian media landscape more international when it comes to content. In 1997 more than 50% of the programming on commercial TV stations consisted of movies and serials from USA, Australia and Latin America (Vihalemm et al 1997:238). This also gives an index of the other tendency – popularisation. The changes on the media market have resulted in an increase of movies, serials, tabloid press and entertainment magazines, something that can be understood as an increased cultural polarisation of media content. The formerly more homogenic content with its focus on political and cultural matters has widened with a range of media from both traditional high culture to what is usually regarded low or popular culture.

This position as a ‘private alternative’ to the formerly dominating politically regulated content - but also genre wise new in content – gives the popular oriented media an interesting role in the Estonian media field. Compared to Sweden where popular culture and popular media traditionally earned a low status position it is possible to imagine a stronger position of the Estonian popular culture and popular media. Not the least in areas previously heavily regulated by the state, such as the youth culture where organisations like Komsomol have had a great impact up until the early 1990s (Pilkington 1994:79ff).

It is not hard to see that the changes regarding structure and content of Estonian media has a corresponding development when it comes to changes in the media use. The most apparent tendencies are an increased diversity, ‘deculturalisation’ and a move from the printed media to television. The increased diversity of the media content is accompanied by a diversity of media use, the Estonian people no longer share a few homogenous state media, instead the relatively small population is spread out on a large
number of periodicals, television and radio stations. The new commercial structure also tend to focus on certain parts of the population:

"Rejecting the national democratic tradition of the Estonia Press, the new print media, especially the leading newspapers and magazines of special interest, overtly address their content to the New Establishment – young and successful audience, whereas gutter papers, popular magazines, commercial radio and television programs are targeted towards the “mass public”. In this way, the growing social polarization of the audience is matched with the growing cultural polarization of the media content.” (Vihalemm et al 1997:238)

This is also an indication of how the Estonian youth has conquered new positions within the cultural field. The commercialised media take more interest in the youth market and consequently the position of youth and youth culture has been strengthened at the expense of the state sponsored culture and the nomenclature. The defining powers of what is culturally and aesthetically valuable have undergone a thorough change.

As seen above the printed press has expanded substantially the last ten years. But this expansion is also accompanied by a decrease in circulation. But the decrease in circulation is not completely matched by the same decrease in reading. This is due to the growing habit of borrowing papers and magazines from friends and reading in libraries or work places. In 1993 the largest daily (Postimees), weekly (Eesti Express) and magazine (Eesti Naine) had a circulation that was five times less than the actual readers. (Estonian Media Book 1994). In 2000 the proportion between printed copies and readership was almost identical (Baltic Media Book 2001). During the same period the overall circulation of periodicals fell from 26.2 million to 19.5 millions, but these figures are of course very hard to interpret in terms of media consumption since the actual reading also is dependent of factors like borrowing from friends and neighbours as seen above.

In 2000 the average viewing time in Estonia was 4h 10m a day in 2000 which is quite high compared to the Swedish population that spend on average 1h 45m a day in 2000 (Baltic Media Book 2001:71, Carlsson & Facht 2002:272). The Estonian viewers have increased their television viewing considerably, in 1994 the average viewing time was 3h 17m, almost an hour less than in 2000 (Baltic Media Book 1995:112). In Sweden the same increase is about seven minutes a day, which is remarkably less, especially since the Swedish television market has undergone similar changes as the Estonian when it comes to the introduction of commercial stations.ix

**Final discussion**

This discussion has concerned changes in media landscapes and in culture and values. Both the Södertörn region and the nation-state Estonia have during the last ten years been going through a period of large and extensive change. Estonia has gone from being a republic in the socialistic Soviet Union into
one of the most liberal-capitalistic countries in the world (http://www.heritage.org/index/020628). The Södertörn region has gone from being a very low-status region with lots of social problems into a far more positive and expansive area, thanks to, among other things, the University College. Even though these changes are different in many ways, they however have some things in common. When talking about the media in the 1990s, Eastern Europe is often emphasized as a region that has gone from a state regulated media system and into capitalist privatised media. Few discussions have concerned the development in the Western European countries that in very few ways differs from the East European. Even in these countries, perhaps particularly in Sweden, the same tendencies can be seen on the media market. Here as well, deregulation, popularisation and expansion are important trends. One large difference though, is the extension of these changes. The Estonian media landscape has gone through a complete restructuration. Changes in the Swedish media landscape, on the other side, mostly concerns broadcast media. In Sweden the printed media has been organized privately, and the broadcast media has been harder regulated by the state, not least concerning ownership. When the Swedish broadcast media was deregulated in the beginning of the 1990s, the radio and television saw the same changes as the Estonian media: the amount of channels and programmes exploded, and the content was popularised and tabloized. Most important here are the differences between the historical context and economic position of the Eastern versus Western Europe. These differences make it interesting to relate to each other.

In our study, the intention is to examine the changes in the Swedish and the Estonian media landscape and how these changes interrelate with changes in society at large. The empirical materials we have chosen consist of university students, for reasons discussed above. As values are always deeply culturally connected, we need to take a wide grip of society. We have let Pierre Bourdieu and his sociology of taste inspire our theoretical perspective. In Bourdieus’ discussion of fields of power and their relation to each other, he points at different fields of power, some of which are the economic field, the cultural field, the political field and the field of education (Bourdieu 1979/1984, 1992/1996). We also argue that society of today also content another important field: that of the media. To study the value changes in the two regions we are conducting a survey study. The sample of respondents is chosen out of the five fields of power mentioned above. We have hence distributed our questionnaire to students at five different departments at Tartu University and Södertörn University College: Economics, Political science, Philosophy, Education and Media Studies. The survey contents questions regarding cultural habits, media use, cultural preferences, value structures and concepts of ‘good’ culture. The survey is in many ways a reproduction of the original survey conducted by Bourdieu (1979/1984: 512ff) in the 1960s, but also contains questions designed for the modern media system. Also, Jostein Gripsrud and Jan Fredrik Hovden carried out a similar study among university students in Bergen, Norway, with a much wider sample of university subjects but without the interregional dimension (Gripsrud & Hovden 2000).

According to Bourdieu (1992/1996), the higher arts must always show its independence to the market capitalist rules, and to economic values to be accepted. This as the economic field is dominant in a capitalist state. As we have seen above, Estonia has very quickly turned its back to its former socialist rule, and is today structured out of a market capitalist logic that is more thoroughly realized than in most Western European countries. This means that the structures of taste, according to Bourdieus´ theories
would be similar to the ones in for example Sweden. Regarding the past of the Estonian society, the
differences in significance of state-owned cultures and institutions can be assumed to be deep. Its for
example interesting to notice that the commercial, and Swedish-owned, TV-channel TV3 is the channel in
Estonia with the largest audience (especially among the young) (www.tv3.ee/english). In Sweden TV3
has rather few viewers (even though most of their viewers in Sweden are young as well) and is by most
people concerned as low culture. University students have traditionally, and still are today, a kind of elite
among the young, both by means of their social background and their assumed future. Still, we suggest
that the taste structures in the two student groups we are studying will differ, according to the ideological
differences in the past of the two countries. As one girl we spoke to in Estonia put it: “We’re really
longing to watch good movies. We have been brought up with Indian and Chinese films, and now we want
to see good movies. American movies.”

The most important empirical questions of the survey are interregional: what are the differences
between the students in the two countries, and intereducational: what are the differences between students
studying at different departments? Here the differences in the youth concept discussed above will be
central and also the relation between the fields of power in the light of the different historical contexts and
media systems. As both regions are in a period of change, repeating the study a few years later would be
more than interesting. How will the Swedish and Estonian value structure change in the coming years?
**Notes:**

i According to the Heritage Foundation Estonia is the fourth freest nation when it comes to economic terms and regulations (http://www.heritage.org/index_020701).

ii In Sweden, during the 1960th and 1970th, a large amount of housing estates were constructed as satellites in certain areas outside the larger cities. The Södertörn region is one of these areas.

iii Something which is many times delayed, but usually not out of economic restraints but difficulties of finding a flat in many student cities.

iv On January 1, 1993 ETV became a full member of the EBU.

v With 1995 as an exception when Estonia had nine broadcasters in total (eight private and one public station).


vii According to the Estonian Statistical office there where five public stations and only 28 private in 2000 (www.stat.ee 020628).

viii In the Soviet Union the control over youth based cultures was pretty harsh. During the 1980s there was a regulation that said that at least 80% of all music performed on concerts must be composed by representatives of the National Union of Composers. This was probably due to fear of subversive messages supposed to influence the youth “the narcotic of mass culture” (Pilkington 1994:79ff).

ix The figures from before the introduction of commercial television in Sweden actually shows a decrease in viewing time (Carlsson & Facht 2002:272).

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