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Edgar Kant and Balto-Skandia: *Heimatkunde* and Regional Identity

Anne Buttmer

Geography has never flowered alone; it has always been tied in with the general advances of science, trade, and technology; it literally has no history separate from the intellectual and cultural currents of the time.

F. Lukermann

Issues of national prestige and identity stirred among the sponsors and audiences of geography during its early years as an academic field. For the first two generations of disciplinary effort in Europe at least, imaginations continued to fly towards exploration of the few remaining *terrae incognitae*, but they also turned to the local environments of the homeland, where landscapes were read as indices of cultural belonging, as 'medals struck in the image of civilization', tangible evidence of historical relationships between human cultures and milieux. *Heimatkunde* (literally, knowledge of home areas), which became a required item in the apprenticeship of young recruits, was a style of practice intimately linked with questions of local, national and regional identity. It held a special appeal in the lands of Norden.

The term *Heimatkunde* had, literally and metaphorically, diverse connotations, ranging from school exercises and field excursions designed to promote a sense of patriotism, on the one hand, to training in map-making techniques and the delimitation of local, regional and national boundaries, on the other. At one end of the spectrum it might connote a Weimar-style *Bildung*, including studies of history, biology, culture, folk traditions and sense of place; at the other end it could refer to hard-nosed empirical inventories of land use, resources and landscape morphology. The goals and conceptual design of home area studies also varied widely among schools: imperial nations apparently keen to bolster their particular self-images, world views and expansionary geopolitics, emerging or colonized nations keen to affirm the integrity of their own Lebensräume.
Philosophical underpinnings for home area studies can be traced to Pestalozzi who believed that schoolchildren should gain some comprehension, at a very early age, both of planetary systems and of the immediate environment of their own homes. Home area studies formed part of primary and secondary school curricula throughout the lands of Norden, but their status and rationale varied. *Hembygdsforskning* in Denmark and Sweden, for example, was conducted at Folkhögskoler (folk highschools), founded by the Danish clergyman Gruntvig to provide education particularly for rural adults in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In Sweden also the folk highschools addressed the interests of rural areas, but ecclesiastical connections were not so explicit. Helge Nelson, once Rector in a Swedish folk highschool, and later Chairman of Lund University’s geography department regarded *hembygdsforskning* as direct heir to the Linnaean topographic surveys, and key promoter of patriotism: knowledge of home areas was seen as a precondition for love of the fatherland:

For one likes to know what it is one ought to care for. And as one has got to know it, then it has usually grown in value, it has received a richer content and greater importance, for oneself. Thus the increased knowledge of the home-area will strengthen the feeling for it and make it warmer and richer. But the increased knowledge will also widen the eyes and let the home-area emerge as the small part in the big whole, in fatherland.

Then the love of home area can grow to include all our land and people.

(Nelson, 1913)

To the east, in Finland and in the Baltic countries, *Heimatkunde* was an integral part of university curricula, and its civic importance was explicitly affirmed. Scientific knowledge and understanding of home areas could foster a sense of local and national identity, just at times when the homeland’s cultural and territorial integrity was being questioned geopolitically.

Apprenticeship in geography in the early twentieth century must have inevitably involved tensions between the ‘home-making’ interests of place and regional identity on the emotional and pedagogical side, versus the ‘bread-winning’ interests of economic and administrative rationality on the other. In the language of Alfred Schütz, one might suggest that horizons for ‘home’ and ‘breadwinning/husbandry’ were situated within very different zones of reach and relevance: their conceivable maps of restorable and attainable reach scarcely isomorphic (Schütz and Luckman, 1973, pp. 36–40). Competing claims on space, resources and territory thus gave wings to the field of geopolitics. Geography, and specifically *Heimatkunde*, contributed towards the elucidation of such questions. There were substantial differences, of course, among models inspired from German, French or British sources; questions of scale, contextual relevance, cognitive style and ideological implications varied too. Scandinavian geographers tended to follow German precedents, but there were fascinating exceptions, especially on the periphery. In fact, one might claim that the most intimate links between geography and regional identity were forged in the peripheral lands of Eurasia from the Balkans to Catalonia, the Celtic fringe to Karelia.
Balto-Skandia offers an ideal arena in which to observe connections between the practice of *Heimatkunde* and issues of national and regional identity. Despite the diversity of physiographic base and the dramatic record of its geopolitical history, this region may appear to be, relatively speaking, more culturally homogeneous than others in the twentieth century. The term itself, Balto-Skandia, has something of a geo-poetic ring, appealing perhaps more to teachers of world geography or definers of cultural regions than to realists in political geography. For the historian of ideas it might well be considered as a flight of geographical imagination, evoking memories of the Greek sailor Pytheas who travelled to the North during Alexandrian times (Pliny the Elder, 4: 94–5; 37: 35–6). It also evokes images of the Roman (and later Christian) province of Dacia, of the Al-Idrisi (twelfth-century) map, or late mediaeval networks of Hansa ports. Closer to memory might be the royal family connections between Sweden and Poland, the holy wars of Gustav II Adolph during Sweden’s golden era in the seventeenth century, and Oxenstierna’s geopolitical strategies which included, *inter alia*, the strategic location chosen for building or taking over universities on the fringes of the empire: Turku, Riga, Tartu, Greifswald and Lund. The appeal of a unified Balto-Skandia has obviously had different meanings for folk at central and peripheral locations. And here, as in other regions, historical attempts to create a unified geo-political region stretching from the North Sea to the Baltic have generally been initiated by imperial interests from within or from without. Most complex, historically, has been the identity of people residing on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea.

It is to the ideas and career history of one notable pioneer on this frontier, Edgar Kant (1902–78), that this paper is addressed. Born into a merchant family in the Baltic port of Tallinn, Estonia, Kant’s early career coincided with his native land’s short-lived autonomy as a nation state (1920–40) (see figure 10.1). Staunchly patriotic yet liberal in politics, the atmosphere of his childhood was one which encouraged study of international affairs, science, a rational attitude toward economic and social matters and a strong love of nature, folk traditions, and culture (Buttimer, 1987). Having volunteered for military service at the Russian front at the age of sixteen he returned to Tallinn and witnessed the Tartu (1920) treaty which established the independence of his native land. He studied botany, chemistry and climatology at the University of Tartu and was an eager reader of philosophy, history and social science. Quite early he became a disciple of the famous Finnish scholar Johannes G. Granö, whose *Reine Geographie* seemed indeed appealing. Conceptually, this showed that research on the human dimensions of geographic enquiry could be conducted with a rigour and precision comparable to that of physical geography; methodologically, it opened doors for detailed empirical observations at various scales; and, practically, it offered an integrated perspective on population and milieu and an ideal framework for *Heimatkunde*.

It may indeed have been *Heimatkunde* which initially inspired Kant’s choice of geography as a university subject. Herein lay a practice with great potential for promoting the educational goals of his country. The horizons of his research interests were eventually to transcend those of local neighbourhoods, territorial niches, and even Estonia itself. At the peak of his early career, in the mid-
1930s, few issues occupied his attention as compellingly as that of Baltoskandia, the vision of a cultural-political unit surrounding the Baltic Sea. In the context of his career as a whole, of course, curiosities about the relationships between geography and national or regional identity and those associated with Heimatkunde should be regarded as the preoccupations of youth; they would lose their salience after his involuntary emigration to Sweden in 1944. Anthropogeographical interests, and issues of culture and local identity would thereafter yield place to more functional and theoretically based research on urban-economic systems and the grand promises of regional science. His creativity would find ample challenge and support in the Lund School during the 1950s and 1960s.
HEIMATKINDE, REINE GEOGRAPHIE AND ANTHROPOGEOGRAPHIE

It was Kropotkin, one of Kant’s favourite authors, who claimed:

the purpose of geography ... is to teach us ... that we are all brethren, whatever our nationality. It must show that each nationality brings its own precious building stone for the general development of the commonwealth ... (Kropotkin, 1885, p. 942)

Heimatkunde offered an ideal course for someone committed to promoting the educational interests of the fatherland. Students would volunteer for summer projects all over the country: mapping physiographic, historical, bio-ecological and ethnic features of Estonia’s diverse local areas (Granõ, 1922; Rumnu, 1925). Kant was placed in charge of field-work in towns and cities, and his first thesis on Tartu (Kant, 1926), with its graphic illustrations of everyday life, rhythms of light and dark, warm and cold, circulation in and out of the city, was a masterpiece. From 1927 to 1936 Kant was editor-in-chief for the entire collection of Heimat studies, Esiti; from 1938 to 1940 he was chief editor of the Esiti Atlas (Atlas of Estonia).

In the broader context of this interwar period, the goals and academic status of Heimatkunde were not uncontroversial. Geography’s concern about its own identity as an academic discipline was not always compatible with the multidisciplinary concerns of national and cultural identity. Relationships between anthropogeography, Reine Geographie and Heimatkunde thus posed a number of conceptual and methodological problems. While remaining an admirer and life-long friend of Granõ, Kant dared to disagree with his mentor on a number of points (Kant, 1932), such as geography’s relationship to biology and social science, regional identity and appropriate relationships between pure and applied science.

A key tension within early twentieth-century regional geography was that between chorological and ecological orientations, in other words between the contrasting claims of formism and organicism. While Reine Geographie was methodologically more akin to the former, Kant was sympathetic to the latter. He was, of course, a brilliant cartographer and always an advocate of empirical field research; he also appreciated the analytical and communicative value of maps. But he wished to complement the predominantly formistic (Hettnerian) approaches of the day with at least three further research directions: temporal, social and ecological. Ecological insight seemed imperative for him in studies of population and resources, agriculture and rural life; he even used organic analogies in describing the Lebensräume of towns and cities. His summary presentation of the Tartu study was built around organicist metaphors: (a) the heart (centre); (b) the lungs (green areas, hospitals, sanatoria); (c) the limbs (suburbs); (d) the torso (basic ground plan); and (e)–(h) the extremities (Kant, 1926, pp. 261–2).

Granõ was cautious about human ecology. The integrity of geography as an academic discipline demanded an avoidance of such environmental determinism
as had been associated with anthropogeography. While open to exploring humanist aspects of landscape aesthetics and environmental experience, he felt that geography should define a specific core for its own research domain and also be clear about the boundaries separating it from other fields (Granö, 1929). Human ecology, in Granö’s view, was simply part of sociology, admissible perhaps in Heimat studies, but not an integral part of geography. Kant, on the other hand, impressed with the writings of Kropotkin, Le Play, Fleure, Geddes and Mukerjee, argued that ecological and social dimensions should be an integral part of geographic enquiry (Kant, 1932, 1948a). His linguistic versatility (he spoke at least eight European languages and could read fifteen of them), coupled with his extensive travels, encouraged him to position Estonian work within the wider framework of international scientific endeavour. Reviewing debates about ecological and social facets of geographic enquiry as articulated by Schützer, Hassinger and Klute in the German literature, and debates between advocates of sociografie and social geografie in Holland (Kant, 1948a), he developed his own style of practice, one which was to ascribe a much more important place to history. It was a style far closer in spirit to the French school than to any of his nearer neighbours. He was especially fond of Maximilian Sorre’s bio-geography, and was a life-long friend of Demangeon.

Questions of disciplinary boundaries were never really a major concern for Kant. But he was concerned about the integrity of knowledge and was keenly aware of the vacuum which had been created by the conceptual war between anthropogeography and spatial or chorological science. Schools himself in diverse fields of natural and social science he strove towards more comprehensive and logically defensible modes of disciplinary practice. On matters of ecology, for instance, he drew a critical distinction between what he called auto-ecology, or study of the direct effects of climate or any element of the physical environment on human feelings, health and spiritual life, and syn-ecology (ecology of communities) which would seek macro and general patterns of mutual adaptations between groups and their milieux (Kant, 1932, 1934a).

In this he took Vidal de la Blache’s map of world population as a paradigmatic illustration.

It must be remembered, however, that the significance of environment and its influence on man and population changes with the force of collective achievements over nature. This is not so well accomplished by the individual, as by a social entity. Even where man seems to act as an individual he is really utilizing spiritual and material social aid. (Kant, 1934, p. 3)

Anthro-po-ecology was the term he used to describe his own conceptual approach to the study of population and Lebensräum. It would enable him to observe and document the complex drama of people and localities, society and space, bearing in mind both the bio-physical contexts and historical experiences. Fully aware of the hazards of environmental determinism on the one hand, and those of ceteris paribus science on the other, he was always a firm advocate of empirical field research as well as attunement to history.
Anthropo-ecology thus offered a valuable framework for the multidisciplinary efforts of *Heimatkunde*, opened windows on to the French tradition of geography and social history, and eventually afforded possibilities for the extension of curiosity beyond the boundaries of Estonia to include the whole of Balto-Skandia.

**HORIZONS OF HOME: ESTONIA AND BALTO-SKANDIA**

It was from an anthropo-ecological perspective that Kant approached questions of national and regional identity. In typically organicist fashion, he sought to position his own land, and all of its components, within a broader regional and global setting. Hence his fascination with Balto-Skandia, a cultural-political unit including Scandinavian and Baltic lands, a region characterized by a certain internal homogeneity of geophysical, biotic and cultural-historical features.

Ideas about a Northern European 'natural region' were expressed already in the nineteenth century. In 1871 the Finnish botanist Nörrell published a thesis on the 'Limits of Finland and Scandinavia from the Viewpoint of Natural History' based on exhaustive field observations in the Onega-Karelia region (Nörrell, 1871). It was a Finnish geologist, Ramsay, who defined Fennoscandia as the 'well-defined region which is attached to the rest of Europe only through the isthmic land connections between the Gulf of Finland, Ladoga, Onega and the White Sea' (Ramsay, 1898). While the Swedish geographer Högbom and foreign geologists such as Suess preferred to confine the term Fennoscandia to the Archaean shield of crystalline rock (Suess, 1901; Högbom, 1913), Nordic geographers generally preferred to use the term in a geographical sense (Sederholm, 1928; Slimme, ed., 1960, p. 14). What seems to have appealed especially to Kant, however, were the ideas of Rudolf Kjellén and Sten de Geer, both of whom attempted a scientific exploration of the physical and cultural geography of the area, and had seriously entertained the notion of a region called Balto-Skandia.

The main criteria on which de Geer's delimitation of the Northern European region was based (De Geer, 1928) included (a) the Fennoskandian bedrock itself; (b) the outer limits of Quaternary glaciation; (c) post-glacial landscape phenomena (erosion and deposition); (d) distribution of the Nordic race; (e) distribution of Scandinavian and Baltic languages; (f) distribution of 'Protestant Christianity'; and (g) territorial extent of 2000-year old Nordic states. Superimposing the boundaries of nine distinct distributions, de Geer had proposed a synthetic line which, in his view, would circumscribe the 'natural region' of Northern Europe, or Balto-Skandia. Kant eagerly adopted this thesis and proceeded to elaborate on these criteria for regional identity, emphasizing their implications for Estonian identity.

(a) The Fennoskandian bedrock itself, a crystalline shield constituted the core of the Scandinavian peninsula. Strata deposited around this shield have been subjected to massive folding, erosion and deposition. Throughout
the Tertiary era this heartland of Scandinavia remained above sea level but the Baltic and Danish coastlines were frequently inundated. Fossils recorded in the Linnaean surveys of the eighteenth century afford evidence of the extent of marine deposits in Southern and Central Scandinavia (fig. 10.2)

(b) At the approach of Quaternary times the climate became colder and the entire area was covered by a continental ice sheet within a dome-like formation (*Inlandnis*) which extended eastwards across the Baltic into Russia and southwards to cover Denmark, North Germany and Poland. Subsequent glaciation, separated by interglacial phases, left cirques, valleys covered with glacial till and eskers. Lines of moraines mark the retreat
of glaciation. The beds of Lakes Ladoga and Onega were formed by glacial erosion; Lakes Ilmen, Peipos and Beloye were all partially formed by morainic dams. Retreat of the ice sheet led to substantial uplift of the land mass, exposing it to erosion especially on the north-western (Scandinavian) side and deposition on the south-eastern (Baltic) surfaces. Northern Sweden is now 12,000 feet higher than it was at the time of glacial retreat and uplift continues today at a rate of 20 inches per century in the Stockholm area, and even 36 inches in the Gulf of Bothnia where presumably the Würm glaciation reached its maximum thickness.

(c) On physiographic criteria, the natural region of Fenno-Skandia could be defined in terms of the outer limits of Quaternary glaciation. Post-glacial events and processes had obviously carved out roughly similar horizons of opportunity for human occupancy. Within this region, too, there was a relatively similar climate: with the exceptions of Denmark, Skåne and western Norway, the entire region belongs to the (Köppen) Boreal Forest climatic zone. The distribution of potential resources for agriculture, forestry, energy and industrial development, of course, showed wide differences between Western and Eastern zones. Scandinavia had vast mineral reserves but lacked substantial deposits of coal; the Baltic area benefited from post-glacial soil deposition, but it lacked the ‘white coal’ of hydro-power afforded by the Fall line in Scandinavia. There were shale-oil reserves in north-eastern Estonia which, as Kant noted, could provide a valuable resource for industrial development (and which indeed has been exploited since then), but basically the Eastern Baltic was a region best devoted to forestry, fishing and agriculture.

(d) Over this glacially differentiated physiographic base successive migration streams had passed, so the actual landscape was regarded as the historical outcome ofsequent occupancy by people of highly contrasting backgrounds: Stone Age, Roman, Slavic, Teuton and Scandinavian. The same physical environment had held different meanings for these successive groups, depending on their skills, goals, and ways of life. Throughout, however, the fundamental divisions of Estonian national space were those defined by the ‘Baltic boundary’, or highest marine traces left after the final retreat of Quaternary glaciation (figure 10.3).

Above this line were the fertile landscapes of Central and Southern Estonia, a region once covered with Arctic vegetation and in later times more highly favoured for agriculture and eventually industrial development. Surrounding it on western, north-western and eastern sides, were stretches which had lain under the continental ice-sheet and were later inundated by Baltic waters. These zones showed records of older habitation but younger vegetation; here were the domains of fishing and forestry, domains which eventually suffered population decline and rural to urban migration from the end of the nineteenth century. Ways of life, habitat style and landscape morphology differed strikingly between these two regions:
Undoubtedly, the two regions indicated, differing in genetical, morphological and ecological background, are Estonia's most essential and chief natural geographical divisional foundation, in the limits of which a more detailed geographical or environmental subdivision can be made. (Kant, 1934a, p. 6)

Historically speaking, the critical distinction between 'superaquatic' and 'subaquatic' regions of Estonia had only become salient at the end of the Iron Age (c. 11–12c AD); evidence of previous occupations (such as during Roman and Stone Age) showed a more even distribution. Throughout all successive occupations, and especially with the development of technologically more sophisticated modes of livelihood, the distinction between these two regions could be documented.

On Huntingtonian criteria of civilization and climate, of course, Estonia and the eastern shores of the Baltic could scarcely fare well; and yet, in historical perspective, a remarkable level of civilization had been
achieved. Like de Geer, Kant sought cultural explanations. Far more important than the conditions of environment was the quality of the Nordic race, a subject regarded as quite legitimate in those days (Lundborg and Linders, 1926). In the region as a whole de Geer had distinguished between the Scandinavian and East Baltic racial types, and Kant emphasized Estonia’s greater affinity with Finland rather than with its southern neighbours (figure 10.4).

(c) In terms of language also, de Geer identified three groups: (i) Scandinavian (Danish, Swedish, Norwegian); (ii) Finnish and Estonian; and (iii) Latvian–Lithuanian. For a number of economic and geopolitical
reasons Kant showed the extent of interaction which had actually taken place among people of these three language groups and argued on these grounds for their complementariness.

(f) On criteria of 'civilization', Kant had no hesitation in adopting de Geer's criterion of religious affiliation as a potential common denominator. The spread of 'Protestant Christianity' afforded an unequivocal delineator (figure 10.5). He took pains to document the enormous importance of Swedish influence on Estonia's intellectual and economic life ever since the time of Vasa.
(g) Geopolitically, over 2000 years there really had been only three major Nordic states which at one time or another had held sway over the Balto-Skandian area; of these, he claimed, the era of Swedish occupation had been the most favourable from an Eastern Baltic point of view (figures 10.6 and 10.7).

Superimposing the boundaries defined by these separate criteria, physical as well as cultural, de Geer produced his final synthetic map, and identified
the 'mean' geographic surface which, in his opinion, could be regarded as 'Baltic-Skandia'. Kant agreed enthusiastically with this judgment (Kant, 1934b, 1935b). On historic as well as on social and ecological grounds, he argued, the interests of all three Baltic states might best be served from participation in such a region. Each state had its own potential contribution to make to Balti-Skanian civilization; his own research therefore was the clarification and promotion of Estonia's economy and society within this region.

**REGIONAL PLANS FOR ESTONIA**

Anthropo-ecology and *Heimatkunde* thus held more than intellectual appeal for Kant: they afforded a means of rendering the fruits of scholarly research available for societal needs. And Estonian society, in the wake of independence, offered several challenges, all the way from writing a State Constitution to the housekeeping of its domestic economy. Freedom had fostered the proliferation of political parties and folk movements, and Kant joined some of his fellow veterans from the 1918–20 war in an effort to restore some rationality to the political landscape. A growing conservatism among other veterans prompted...
Edgar Kant and Balto-Shandia

Kant and others to initiate the Eesti Rahvuslaste Klubi (Estonian Patriotic Club) in 1930. He also helped launch a newspaper Vaba Sona (Free Word) in 1933 and a successor Uus Sona (Our Word) in 1934. In assuming such editorial responsibilities, particularly with ERK, Kant hoped to create a forum for more rational debate about the political challenges facing Estonian society at the time.

To introduce more rationality to the functional organization of Estonia’s landscapes and economic life would be Kant’s own special contribution. In his doctoral dissertation on ‘Problems of Environment and Population in Estonia’ (1934a) he had argued that each advance in the technological mastery of space and resources had involved new interpretations of milieu (Kant, 1934a, 1934b, 1935a). Through an exhaustive inventory of population, agriculture and levels of living, he came up with a proposal for reform of administrative regions.

The fundamental divisions of Estonian Lebensraum were, of course, those of ‘subaquatic’ and ‘superaquatic’ zones. Superimposing this on Granö’s original regionalization of the country (Granö, 1922), Kant endeavoured to harmonize economic and ecological perspectives (figure 10.8). Granö’s system was based on chorographic analyses of material elements, combinations of which were used to discern ‘landscape unities’ (Granö, 1922, 1929). The three-element system seemed most appropriate for Estonia, in Kant’s view, and it also allowed for more detailed statistical analysis based on communal statistics. To this formal pattern Kant also wished to add a more functional perspective (figure 10.9).
His own field surveys had not only included in-depth mappings of population, agriculture and variations in quality of life throughout the land, but also analyses of migration flows, industrial and commercial activities, the origins of all settlements, their size, structure and functions. His most striking innovation consisted in the definition of urban hinterlands and fields of influence (figure 10.10).

Who discovered the notion of 'Central Place Hierarchies'? Kant identified one Carl Brunckman, a Swedish economic historian, who published the idea in 1756. His own discovery actually preceded Christaller's but, in his typically self-effacing manner, he celebrated his Bavarian colleague's *chef d'œuvre* and introduced him to the Swedes later.

Far more significant than questions of *site*, morphology or history, were those of *situation*, and he noted several instances of the cardinal importance of transportation and accessibility. For a country so dependent on primary production, lacking resources for industrial development, Estonia should invest in trade and commerce: hence the importance of belonging to a Balto-Skandian unit with the access westwards which it afforded. No doubt this was a conviction deeply engrained from childhood.

Quite soon after the defence of his dissertation, Kant became Associate Professor, later Ordinary Professor of Economic Geography at the University of Tartu (1936). One of his first practical applications of his exhaustive field research on population and *Lebensräume* was a plan for the rationalization of administrative units in the land. In a formal presentation to the Ministry of the Interior on 10 September 1935, 'Territorial reform of communes: considerations of economic geography and central place organization', Kant argued that the highest possible degree of rationality in spatial organization would strengthen the nation. Already in this document one could sense the burgeoning of more functionalist attitudes toward spatial organization. He laid out certain imperatives for rationality in the reform of communal boundaries, for example:

- that administrative structures should reflect the optimal hierarchical ordering of central places;
- that taxation should promote rather than hinder rational development of that hierarchy;
- that the development of transportation facilities should be harmonious with the central place system;
- that time should be allowed for research and the acquisition of necessary empirical data; and
- that change should begin with the larger units and only after the overall size and number of regions had been decided should one begin to unify the smaller ones. (*Us Sona*, 11 September 1935)

The inductive, grass-roots approach of earlier *Heimatkunde* had by now yielded place to a more normative and hypothetico-deductive approach to the func-
Figure 10.10 Urban hinterlands in Estonia: polycentric isochrones of time–distance to Estonian cities
(Source: Kant, 1934a)
tional organization of space. Throughout the 1930s one could sense that economics rivalled both sociology and biology as a key source of insight into matters of population and Lebensraum. And he also assumed a more active role in national economic affairs. He chaired the Society for Economic Sciences (1936–9), directed the Tartu Regional Industrial Inventory (1937), led the government-sponsored Labour Market Survey (1940) and served on the Advisory Boards of the Estonian Institute for Economic Forecasting and the Estonian Institute for Natural Resources (1938–40). In 1938 he was appointed Pro-Rector of the University of Tartu and president of the Humanities Section of the Estonian Academy of Sciences. Between 1938 and 1940 he was a member of the Collegium of the Estonian Cultural Foundation.

Many of Kant’s ideas on functionalist approaches to the management of economic and urban life found fertile soil at Lund where, surrounded by an eager cadre of young graduate students, he could play a creative role in promoting applied and quantitative geography. On questions of Heimat and national identity, however, he remained rather silent. Housekeeping replaced home making, organicism shrunk to mechanism as the characteristic style of his Lund period. But the old penchant for formal classification and mapping could also find expression, as indeed could his genius for conceptual and methodological speculation. Most significant perhaps, was his monumental attempt to produce a Lexicon of geographical terms in 13 different languages: a task which alas remained incomplete when he died in 1978.

ANTHROPO-ECOLOGY, NATIONAL IDENTITY AND BALTO-SKANDIA

More than a decade has passed since the death of Edgar Kant. It is tempting to speculate on how he might construe the events in Estonia and Balto-Skandia today. The Baltic region certainly claimed prominence in the Scandinavian press during the 1980s. While formal political boundaries of states have remained stable since the 1940s, there have been many dramatic conflicts and unresolved tensions over functional boundaries within the area. Nordic states have reached a high level of standardization and compromise on matters of economic and social policy, but they still differ considerably in their attitudes toward continental Europe, the Baltic countries, and those of the former USSR. Denmark joined the European Economic Community in 1973 and Sweden is still considering membership; what this may mean for their stances on EFTA and NATO is still not clear. During the 1980s 20 per cent of Finland’s foreign trade was still with the USSR. Perestroika, however, sent fresh breezes blowing throughout that vast territory, opening up prospects for livelier contacts between western and eastern shores of the Baltic Sea. Finnish television programmes were viewed in Northern Estonian homes, and Eastern Baltic destinations were flaunted as favoured attractions in Swedish tourist ferry-line brochures. Green parties grew in the late 1980s and concern mounted about nuclear matters; differences of opinion certainly not coincident with those of national territories.

The Baltic Sea itself became an arena for other kinds of drama during the 1980s. The 'whiskey-on-the-rocks' episode at Karlskrona in 1981 opened a
decade of submarine hide-and-seek all along Sweden's coastline and archipelago, and protracted legal debates about the criteria on which transgression of territorial waters should be defined. As in other marine settings, issues of military technology and those of fishing territories often become conflated. The (1958) Geneva Convention, it was assumed, had 'solved' the question once and for all with its median line between the coastlines of autonomous riparian states; in the case of the Baltic, this is not easy to harmonize with the 12-mile limit of territorial waters on the continental shelf. There in the middle lies Gotland, officially part of Swedish national territory. In 1988 a compromise was reached between Sweden and the USSR on how the 'white zone' might be shared: an agreement highly favourable to Sweden, but one which would have been inconceivable if, for example, Gotland and Estonia had been independent countries (Utrikespolitiska Institutet, 1984, 1988). Ecological problems, too, transcend those of national territories, and worries about pollution which have reached virtually panic proportions. On 14 February 1988 Sveriges Dagbladet featured a cartoon on the Baltic as 'Sewer for Seven Nations', illustrating the annual dumping of noxious materials recorded by the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (Helsinki, 1980).

Such ecological conditions may not interfere with submarines, but they were obviously lethal for fish. Alarming signs of malformation and disease among pike and other species were recorded and a viral epidemic in 1988 threatened virtually to exterminate the seal populations of the Baltic. In May 1988 a Greenpeace bus set out from Copenhagen on a Baltic expedition, equipped with advanced laboratory equipment for analysing air and water pollution. It headed northwards through Sweden to Finland and then southwards across the eastern Baltic countries to participate in a marine science exhibition at Leningrad, ending the tour in Berlin.

And Estonia? Issues of national identity for all republics within the former Soviet Union became major news items during the late 1980s. Thoughts turn to Kant and speculations about his potential comments are unavoidable. One might suspect, indeed, that he would be thinking European rather than Baltic-Skandian on subjects of geography and national identity. On the strength of recent developments, the relatively freer circulation of people and ideas which air travel and the relaxation of frontier protocol on personal identity, currency and language have allowed, he might have seen the EC as fulfillment of a dream for a more rational organization of the European economy as a whole. Where exactly the easterly boundaries of Europe should be defined would perhaps still pose an enigma for him. On ecological questions Kant would deliberate, but on Green Party politics he might well have misgivings. On questions of political geography one could safely guess that Kant would strongly advocate a functional rather than a geopolitical approach to the spaces of Europe: far more important than the container-spaces of morphologically defined political territories were the dynamics of functional systems and the nodal organization of accessibility surfaces. Kant's Europe might have been one such as Kropotkin, Réclus or even Weber (or Delors) dreamed about: a Europe of identifiable national cultures, co-responsibly creating and re-creating sociality and economic vitality in the wider continental and global context of the late twentieth century.
Connections between geography and human identity were indeed intimate during the opening years of the twentieth century. This is attested in career histories, in texts and in many of the discipline’s ’applied’ endeavours, for better or worse. In the radically different and constantly changing contexts of the late twentieth century, some reassessment of traditional notions are surely in order. Identity, after all, is only one of the many constellations of human interest which are associated with the environment: humans also seek order, niche and horizons for life (Buttimer, 1983, 1993). The priorities assigned to these human interests in geographic research has changed dramatically over the century, and the postwar generation has tended to place primary emphasis on order. Its preferred cognitive styles, too, such as those of formism and mechanism, have been best suited for the elucidation of order in space, time and social activities. The latter years of the twentieth century have witnessed at least two major objections to these inherited practices: first, they failed to accommodate the growing environmental crises (tensions between order and niche) and, secondly, they could scarcely handle emerging patterns of regional and national identity, particularly in the so-called ‘developing’ world.

Kant’s Balti-Skandian work occupies a unique position in that perennial challenge of negotiating the distinct interests of identity, order, niche and horizon. Each of these, empirically speaking, projects its own constellation of ‘reach’, and the nation has, more often than not, provided the umbrella under which this negotiation has been investigated: audiences and sponsors have welcomed ‘scientific’ evidence about the biophysical, social and historical foundations for national and cultural identity. The fostering and promotion of Estonian national identity indeed offered such an umbrella for Kant’s initial endeavours; in fact, his work explored not only issues of identity and niche, but also elucidated issues of identity and order. Horizons of scale on the ordering of space and human activities, he demonstrated, had varied through history, each occupying group creating its own appropriate order within the framework of resources (niche) within reach. During the 1930s he argued strongly for an ordering of lifespace which would promote both the integrity of national economic life and the integration of his home nation into a wider regional context. After his move to Sweden, however, issues of ‘home’ (identity and niche) were probably ‘bitter sweet’. Less emotionally demanding were issues of order: the functional organization of space and time offered intellectual puzzles for which he already had welcome suggestions. These were the contributions which apparently were most welcome in Sweden.

Although Kant’s early research was conducted at micro-levels of observation, his horizons were never confined to the local scale. Rather, he sought to relate particular cases to the national context and also to relate his own methods and approaches to international scholarly trends. His theoretical imagination and analytical innovations, however, were clearly at the urban and (nodal) regional scale – fields of urban influence and the dynamics of migration flows were his favourite foci. And these would claim further appeal after his
move to Sweden. Research horizons could be set at the national scale, models for comparative-national analyses proposed, and eventually the global scale explored in his monumental Lexicon.

The career journeys of twentieth-century geographers all reveal the extent to which emotional, aesthetic and moral considerations have entered into apparent choices of substantive focus and epistemological orientation. Nor can such choices be understood without reference to the changing circumstances of audience and sponsorship for their efforts. The growing interest in national and regional identity around the world today demands a reassessment not only of cognitive styles, but also of those world views projected by early twentieth-century European geographers which placed such priority on nationhood as a fundamental building block for world humanity.

The anthroposphere today might more appropriately be conceptualized as an arena of diverse cultural worlds, each attuned to distinct melodies of tradition, values, aesthetic and moral preferences: pockets of order sustained by livelihood which are themselves dependent on some combination of local and global resources. Superimposed upon, and at times quite insensitive to, the traditional values of these cultural worlds, are systems of economic and technological order which hold increasing discretion over the global interactions of humanity and earth. Such systems today support gross inequities in human access to resources and also give rise to serious and possibly irreparable damage to the biosphere itself. How feasible, then, might be those prospects envisioned by Kropotkin and Kant, of a world in which ‘each nationality brings its own precious building stone for the general development of the commonwealth’? Already towards the close of his own career, Kant sensed the challenge to discover ways whereby international and cross-cultural dialogue could be facilitated on issues of human co-responsibility about the global interactions of humanity and its terrestrial home.

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