



RESEARCH NOTE

Russians as Presented in TV Documentaries*

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It is widely acknowledged that the media plays a crucial role in constructing definitions of national and ethnic identities (Gillespie 1995: 11; also Anderson 1983). Hence, mediated images, narratives and information challenge established national cultural boundaries and identities. Salzman (2002) suggests that the mass media has 'an agenda setting function' by including specific issues and ideas in messages and excluding others. At a cultural level, the media applies a certain homogenisation of representations (Erikson 2002: 278). Television aims at a concise articulation and it exploits culturally familiar images or anecdotes which speak to the audience (e.g., Rummakko 2002: 147-148; Salzman 2002: 356). Furthermore, viewers easily agree, specifically in everyday TV watching situations with meanings which are given priority by the film-makers.

In the Finland of today both immigrant research and media attention is increasingly focused on immigrants' ethnic identification as a result of the increasing number of migrants, specifically from Russia since the 1990s. Arguably, in this context the viewer encounters ethnic determinism reducing all behaviour to ethnic and cultural factors and maintaining certain images as stereotypes or as given facts. These images form a strategy of negotiating power relations in present national and public sphere.

Thus, anthropologists have to negotiate mainly with the media and political representations to obtain discursive space of this particular phenomenon (Marcus 1998: 243).¹ Identity and culture as specific subjects of study are topical in this sense.

In the following I will focus on Russians and the Russian theme on TV. This theme constitutes one of the contexts for my ethnographic study 'The Hidden Minority: Perceptions of Identity and Ethnicity among Russians in Finland'. The project includes the 'old' Russian minority as well as the 'new' Russian minority. The 'old' Russian minority in Finland implies those who arrived in the country after 1917 including their descendants. The estimated number of the 'old' Russian minority in Finland is about 5,000 persons. Although language is considered the crucial criterion when defining an ethnic minority group externally, the number of 5,000 tells little about the size of the group for two reasons. Firstly, these people are generally bilingual and secondly, by 'concealing' their native language they easily hide their ethnic identity in public.

The 'new' Russians are the people who have migrated to Finland since the 1960s. The estimated number of this group is about 30,000 (Statistics Finland: 2000). Notably, this number includes Ingrians who were granted the status of 'returning emigrants' by the Finnish government in 1990.² Compared to other groups, the Russian minority is numerically the largest one with the exception of the Finland Swedes.

The overall aim of the project is to study the informants' subjective perceptions of their identity and ethnicity in its own contexts. I wish to explore why the minority, considered nowadays an ethnic group in Finland, is a hidden minority from an outside as well from an inside perspective.

* This article is based on my presentation in the workshop Contested Memberships for the SYREENI Seminar in Tampere, Finland, May 16-17, 2002. SYREENI is the Finnish abbreviation for the multidisciplinary research programme on Marginalization, Inequality and Ethnic Relations in Finland of the Academy of Finland.

¹ Earlier, Ernest Gellner (1993) has paid attention to the public responsibility of anthropologists.

² At that time President Mauno Koivisto stated his opinion that the Ingrians were Finnish.

There are different ways of dealing with cultural difference. Rather than taking difference as a given I attempt to situate the production³ and construction of otherness within the historical process and within a number of contexts of the informants.⁴ The construction is individual as well as collective since major historical happenings might mould specific personal identities.

It is also easy to notice that the 'new' minority is hidden in public. It is rare that this minority is visible in the media, although a shift has happened during the past two years. Russian speaking persons are often unwilling to be interviewed in the media as this could result in unpleasant consequences on the personal level, we are told.⁵ This becomes understandable when we consider the manner in which Russians in Russia or Russians in Finland are displayed in documentaries on TV. Their voices are indeed heard but we should pay attention to what these voices are trying to tell us and, when dealing with Russians in Russia, do we hear all the voices? Besides, in my experience I seldom hear people discuss other topics on Russians in Finland than the ones on prostitution, drugs, theft or the vulgar behaviour of newly rich Russians. Even Finnish dogs are in danger: 'don't ever leave your dog bound to a lamp-post outside the shop. They steal them.' I have heard this warning a couple of times.

The minority discussed in this article is evidently socially and culturally heterogeneous. For the sake of simplicity, not analysis, I call the members of the minority 'Russians'. In the following, I outline how Russians and their identities are constructed and presented mainly on Finnish TV.

Russians and the 'Russian Theme' on TV

Due to the break-up of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and the flow of Russian migrants to Finland, documentaries or magazines on what can be termed the Russian theme are shown regularly. The films can be treated under two categories: Films relating the life and strategies of life in general of immigrants in Finland, on the one hand, and life in Russia in a broad perspective, on the other.

Since 1997 I have been recording programs/films about Russians⁶ shown on television. My archives are nevertheless not all-inclusive since it has been impossible to study all magazines, which might include information about Russians. Over the past two years there has been a substantial increase of films and documents on the Russian theme. If there were only a few films in 1999 and even in 2000, there were 19 films in 2001 compared to 35 films up to December 2002.

Russians in Finland

Most films of the first category mentioned, life among Russian immigrants in Finland, try to map the Russian minority by interviewing representatives of the Russian group as well as of trade organizations, authorities and, sometimes, researchers. The obvious intention of the filmmakers is to cover the 'field' meaning an exhaustive description of the object in question. However, this kind of endeavour is bound to fail. Why? The chosen social and cultural contexts in which the interviews take place are obviously chosen from an outside perspective. Often they are based on prevailing stereotypes of Russians thus adding fuel to pre-conceived conceptions. In the following I will give you a few examples of this phenomenon.

³ Gupta and Ferguson (1992: 14-16) acknowledge that cultural difference is produced and maintained in a field of power relations.

⁴ Englund and Leach (2000: 236) talk about 'contexts of people's concern'.

⁵ Personal information from two investigating journalists at the *Finnish Swedish Television* and the largest Swedish daily *Hufvudstadsbladet*.

⁶ My archives also include films about other ethnic minorities in Finland or Sweden but the recording of these has been less systematic than the recording of Russians.



Let us first look at the introduction of a programme for young adults called *Gogo*. The first images deliberately take the spectator to the world of established prejudices about Russians in Finland. These are shown in a sequence accompanied by simple headlines. The whole sequence of images is based on all our senses. Besides the eyes, the spectator is expected to use her sense of hearing and touch. The sense of smell can be imagined.

The TV presenter announces: 'Gogo accompanies a Russian tourist group on a guided tour in Helsinki. But who are they, after all, the largest group of foreigners in Finland?'

TITLE
Russians

TEXT 1
Russians, that is what they are.

BACKGROUND PICTURE
Flag with the two-headed eagle.⁷

TEXT 2
Russians and alcohol.

BACKGROUND PICTURE
Stalin in his office followed by a film showing two armed policemen finding a bottle of alcohol in a hay-cart. The peasant driving the horse is upset. The militias drink deep from the bottle and pierce the load of hay with their sabres searching for more liquor.⁸

TEXT 3
All Russians want to come to Finland.

BACKGROUND PICTURE
A crowd of people in an open place. There is trouble. Riot.⁹

TEXT 4
And they do not know any traffic regulations.

BACKGROUND PICTURE
Gallop ing cavalry in a small street paved with pebbles. This is a historical picture from the 19th century, obviously an excerpt from a movie. The hooves of the horses are almost knocking down a mother and her child. The mother holding her child throws herself at the side of the street and looks terrified. The background music gets louder and in a sudden crescendo the famous melody 'Kalinka' is played.

TEXT 5
And they mess up everything.

BACKGROUND PICTURE
Dark, almost oily water. The camera shows from the back a swimming man. He leaves in his wake faeces bobbing on the water.

After this sequence of prejudices the young reporter continues: 'I think all these prejudices that we have about Russians are interesting. These prejudices are in fact

⁷ Film in black and white.

⁸ Film in black and white.

⁹ This is most probably a footage from the March Revolution in 1917.

inherited. We (meaning the young ones) have never had any conflicts with Russians but still I have feelings about Russians, such as:

- they are somewhat worse than we are
- they smell
- they are bad
- basically, they fail in everything.

And this is not something that somebody has told me, not even during my childhood. It is simply a collective prejudice that prevails in the whole society and everybody is entangled'.

Not that this reporter is wrong. In her dissertation (1998) the historian Outi Karemaa showed that Russky hate almost became public opinion among the Finnish population during the 1920s. Thus, values about '*ryssät*'¹⁰ propagated to the war generation are multifarious and diffuse. Some of the historical reasons to anti-Russianism are political. In order to disguise the lack of unity of the Finnish nation during and after the Civil War, the White Camp blamed the war on the Russians. The war led to the expulsion of tens of thousands of Russians from Finland (Karemaa 1998; see also Loima 2001). Also the two wars fought between Finland and the Soviet Union together with painful conditions of peace negotiations must be mentioned. These implied a lot of suffering for the Finnish population and explain why the Russian minority was hidden and why it wished to hide itself. A third factor is the simplified negative image of the Soviet and, later the Russian society conveyed by the media since the beginning of the cold war.

The obvious aim of the *Gogo* film is to question prevailing stereotypes and to provide alternative images. This is commendable. The film continues by interviewing Russian tourists who, in their turn, politely remind the audience about stereotypes about Russians. 'We have seen films on TV,' says one youngster 'but are we alcoholics?' he asks the spectators (not visible to him) and points to himself and his girlfriend. 'Are we not Russians?' The young tourist guide, aged 23, has only good things to say about Finns 'but one thing always amazes me,' she says, 'all the signs in cafés and shops in Russian: do not take anything with you without paying for it, do not touch, well, approximately do not bite ... or, call the shop-keeper. There are no such signs in English, only in Russian.'

The film also deals with unemployment and the difficulty to get a job for a young Russian woman despite language fluency in both Finnish and Swedish. The Café Moskva in Helsinki as a reminder of the dubious similarity between Finland and Russia, at least according to American filmmakers (the reporter finds this rather offensive). Further on, a language class for Russians, and, finally, the obligatory context of music. A few of these visual inserts are quite informative and the reporters ask the spectators to join them on the web pages of *Gogo*, by writing down their ideas about Russians. I do not know where this leads in the end. What I do know is that this film could have been made without the introductory scenes. The *Gogo* TV programme is obviously addressed mainly to young people who are most vulnerable, their minds are easily shaped, even permanently. Evidently, children cannot articulate their experiences in the language of adults. This means that only after childhood can these experiences or perceptions be expressed (Okely 1996: 165). How is a matter for empirical research.

Admittedly, the spectator is reminded about prevailing stereotypes and prejudices about Russians in all these films. Several films provide short recapitulations in brief flash-backs about the common history of Finland and Russia¹¹ but, again, why do these flashbacks

¹⁰ After the Civil War in 1919, '*Ryssät*', literally Russians, has a pejorative touch.

¹¹ See, for example, *Tositarina* [The True Story]: 'The Russians came', 6 February 2001, TV1. This film relates the history of the arrival of Russian refugees in a simplified manner telling us that after independence the



suffer from baggage enacted in presentations like: 'Peddler, prostitute, rich tourist - the Russian has many names...'¹² or, programs like 'The Russians came' alluding to the old fear for the world-wide spread of communism. Visually, the title of the film is displayed in huge red capital letters against a black background adding an anarchic flavour to the phenomenon. On the whole, red colour used for letters in titles and texts of the films is common and easily leads a viewer's associations to symbols of communism e.g., the communist flag.¹³

Moreover, in a number of films of this category there is a commendable attempt to bring Russians and Finns into dialogues with each other. Both parties are usually represented by leaders or heads of organizations, official authorities or corporations. It is conspicuous that the same individuals appear in several programs - especially representatives of Russians. Has this to do with the afore-mentioned fear of displaying oneself in TV?

Lately a few films¹⁴ have discussed the lack of a Finnish immigration policy with respect to Ingrians.¹⁵ One of the titles of these programmes captures the discussions: 'What kind of Ingrian is good enough for Finland?'¹⁶

The focus of documentaries about Russian immigrants in Finland is on the so-called new Russians. This is understandable. The label 'new Russians' is however awkward since Russians who have moved to Finland do not acknowledge this name as an all-inclusive one on themselves. During a meeting I, accidentally, happened to mention this concept and was met by disbelief. Two women tried to assure me that the concept 'new Russians' is reserved exclusively to Russians who are, in short, 'nouveaux riches'.¹⁷ Later, one informant, representing 'old Russians' told me that he was indeed familiar with the meaning of new Russians. He said: 'In the Internet there is a generator of anecdotes comprising almost 50,000 anecdotes ... and there is a specific category with *novije russkie* [new Russians].¹⁸ These stinking rich.' As it were, these terms - old and new Russians - seem presently to have become standard within academics and publicly.

The second largest subgroup of films about Russians in Finland consists of profiles i.e., Russian individuals and their ethnicity rather than their identity. Two general remarks are appropriate as to reporters' questions about identity in these films. Firstly, the questions are highly homogenizing. The journalist expects the interviewee to speak for the whole minority, which means that the interviewee is not considered an individual. Conversely, a reporter interviewing four young girls at a dance studio in Helsinki¹⁹ expects them all to be of the same opinion. The question 'Are your boyfriends Finnish or Russians' causes bewilderment and laughs among the girls and one of them says: 'Most have Russian, some have Finnish... But we cannot talk for all ... this depends on the person. There is no difference when you fall in love, that depends on the person.' The other girls repeat this.

number of the permanent Russian population in Finland was 5 000 'but soon there was a flood of Russian refugees from the east'. This is followed by some observations about these 'old emigrant families' who did not approve of the revolution and the communist administration ending with a statement without any more information: 'all their descendants, the Babitzins, the Dolivos, ...are still an asset for Finland.'

¹² *Inhimillinen tekijä* [The Human Factor]: 'Is it allowed to speak about *ryssät*?' 14 September 2001, TV2.

¹³ On the intricate interplay between concrete symbols and ideological contexts see *Idols and Myths in Music* (1985).

¹⁴ Such as *OBS* [eng. ATTN.] 27 November 2001, TV1; *A-Talk* 20 February 2002; *Ajankohtainen kakkonen* [Topical Channel 2], 5 March 2002.

¹⁵ A person is considered a returnee if s/he is Finnish or if one of her/his parents is Finnish or if at least two of his/her grandparents are Finnish. Many of the returnees are Russian speaking.

¹⁶ *Ajankohtainen kakkonen* [Topical Channel 2], 5 March 2002.

¹⁷ Personal information in December 2001. Apart from this, 'new Russians' together with other 'new' ethnic minorities are called new Finns in TV documentaries. Conversely, 'old minorities' are never called old Finns.

¹⁸ <http://kulichki.com/>. See also http://www.sharat.co.il/nosik/new_russian/

¹⁹ In *Tositarina* [The True Story] *Venääläiset tulivat* [The Russians came]. 6 February 2001, TV1.

In short, questions are homogenizing and replies are heterogenizing. This confirms the experience of other informants as well as my own ones, i.e., in order for a member of a minority to cope in a majority society you must learn to see how differentiated the majority society is. This is not a matter of strategy but a matter of survival.

Secondly, members of minorities are expected to know how they feel in an ethnic sense. This means that one is almost obliged to declare oneself to be something ethnically. This causes obvious stress for the informant. Viktor maintains 'I do not divide it in percentages. I am both a Finland Swede and a Russian, not in some specific order of appearance.' After contemplating at large [on the question of his ethnic identity] he concludes literally, almost desperately, but with humour: 'It lacks empirical evidence, but this is how it is'. His brother Alexander says in his turn: 'It is (answering a question about his ethnic identity) not to drink tea from the Samovar!'²⁰ Admittedly, reporters ask questions like 'how do you feel to be an 'X' or 'a bearer of X heritage' of all members of whatever minorities in TV.

The interviewee has to state that s(he) does not correspond with stereotyped images imposed by the 'others' in Finland at the same time as s/he wishes to give an accurate picture of her or himself in front of the public.

Generally speaking, there is a discrepancy between the aims of the two parties concerned. The filmmakers and journalists of the visual material do not deal with the interviewees within a wider context, while the latter do their best to situate themselves within one. Processes of the production of otherness, whatever it is, are not addressed. Admittedly, the Russian minority has been hidden from social research²¹ until a few years ago, due to political and social reasons.

A third, very subtle component can be mentioned. That is a certain dehumanization of Russians uttered by Finnish informants who have stayed for a period in Russia themselves. Let us listen to what a Finn, Pete²² having stayed for a year in Viipuri has to say about Russians as compared to Finns. He is engaged in his own private business buying cheap cigarettes, alcohol and CDs and selling them to Finland.

Int: Do you long for Finland?

P: Well... yes... In principle you long for it but one gets accustomed to this.

Int: What do you long for most of all?

Pete: More Finns around me so that I would not be constrained to stammer in poor Russian everywhere. And then, of course, there are these customs, they are peculiar here. These (Russians) are... well, all Russians are alike. You cannot get along with these like with people in a normal way. In Finland you can.

The views expressed above speak for themselves. However, I personally welcome films about Finns in Russia.²³ Arguably, the media have hitherto hidden a lot of information

²⁰ 1 November 1999, TV1. The documentary series *Fosterjord* [Fatherland] was produced by the Finland Swede television. The documentary series was translated into Finnish as *Muu maa, oma maa*, literally Other Country, Own Country.

²¹ There are some recent books on Russian life in Finland during 1917-1939 (Nevalainen 1999; Baschmakoff and Leinonen 2001). The latter is an enlarged and re-edited version of an article in Russian (1990) on local and oral history with illustrations, describing the Russian past in Finland with an emphasis on Russian culture in a narrow sense up to 1939.

²² In *Silminnäkijä*. 'Viipurin valtaajat.' [The Eyewitness: 'The conquerors of Viipuri'], 18 April 2002, TV2.

²³ The major Finnish daily newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* had an article about Finns in the Russian town of Viipuri, not far from the Finnish border. The reporter unwrapped the life of Finns based on illegal residence and illegal affairs. (29 June 2002).



about Finns living in the 'shadow zone' in Russia. More of these films could call for reflexivity among citizens in Finland.

Russians in Russia

The Finnish media usually report about the Russians in their news when they find prostitutes, drug dealers or Mafia people or other criminals among them. Otherwise they are ignored.²⁴ Documentary films on Russia are in line with these themes: the Mafia in Russia, Russian women as victims of prostitution in the West, very rich and powerful Russian men (often called oligarchs, a concept we never encounter in descriptions of rich and powerful men in the West) as benefactors among utterly poor people in Murmansk and the Godfather of Chechnya and his Empire may serve as outstanding examples. In particular, convicts and other people involved in illegal activities, even children abound. It can be fairly stated that the image of Russia and Russians in Russia is utterly grim in this category of films. Russia seems to survive because of, strong women, albeit victimized.²⁵ Images of Russian people in Russia as presented in the Finnish TV is commented upon by three Russian women (who married Finnish men 8-10 years ago) in three separate documentaries. In her profile²⁶ Z. says that the image of Russians is not positive at all and that she feels defiance in wishing to show 'that there is another image of Russia as well'. She specifies: 'the media give a correct image but the image is one-sided.' T., in her turn, is asked what she thinks about standard comments about Russians, for example, 'Russians move in groups', 'Russian women use a lot of make-up,' and, 'Russian cars are in a poor condition and cause accidents'. She says: 'This is correct. Russians are no saints. All of this takes place among 130 million Russians! But give us a chance!'²⁷ Finally, O., in yet another profile²⁸ of a Russian woman who has married a Finn exclaims: 'When talking badly about Russians such as: All Russians steal, all Russians cheat, all Russians are prostitutes... who is speaking here??'

Another, much smaller sub-group, consists of documentaries or fiction dealing with the history of communism (e.g., films about Stalin) enacted in profiles of famous men such as Stalin's bomb constructor Kurchatov.²⁹ Beginning from 2002 this sub group of films has been complemented with a series 'The red tsars of Russia' (sic) i.e., profiles of Gorbachov, Jeltsin and Putin.³⁰

During the past year a new sub group of films is emerging providing a strongly reflexive approach to the common past of Finland and Russia. Atrocities of war and connected phenomena open old scars or heal old wounds. Recently, four films about the wars between Soviet and Finland have been shown.³¹

Films of an almost ethnographic genre from the former Soviet base Porkkala in Finland close to Helsinki and from Viena Karelia in the Republic of Karelia in Russia find their place in the psychologically diffuse zone between Finland and Russia. In a sense they form an appendix to the war films. Who came from where? Who is who? The war generation and their descendants represented by Finns as well as Russian citizens move

²⁴ Cf. Table 27 and Table 30 in Raittila and Vehmas (2002). Anna Todorova notes that the Balkans are usually reported to the outside world in time of terror and trouble (1997: 184).

²⁵ See, for example, *Ulkolinja* [The Outside Broadcast]: 'I love you my child', 27 March 2002, TV1.

²⁶ *Fosterjord* (sw) [Fatherland], 1 November 1999, TV1.

²⁷ The series *I elden* [In the Fire]: 'Human rights in EU', 1998, TV2.

²⁸ *Pohjantähden alla* [Under the North Star]: 'The winds of passion blow towards Russians living in Finland' (series), 21 January 2001, TV2.

²⁹ 5 January 2002, TV1.

³⁰ 6, 13 and 20 May 2002, TV2.

³¹ These include interviews with Russian as well as Finnish prisoners of war. See *Ryssä Perkele* and *Suomalaiset sotavankileirien saaristossa* [The Finns in the prison camps of the Gulag] 2002. TV1 and *Aunuksen sota. Omituinen ja hullu sota.* [The expedition to Aunus. The bizarre and crazy war], 18 December 2001, TV2.

in a landscape of past and present.³² This temporal contrast offers a structure for their narratives. Going through the history is in itself a perpetuating force (cf. Skultans, 1998). These two different time spheres offer a similar structure for narratives in dialogues that I have conducted with informants. An appeal to childhood memories is almost always present.

An Intersubjective Research Approach

Sharing a past with a number of informants, i.e., my parents and grandparents arrived in Finland a few years after the Russian revolution, has allowed me to get to know their narratives and present perceptions in a dialogic interchange (Marcus and Fischer 1986: 69). Is it possible that a feeling of 'we' or a feeling of 'me' for that matter, among, at least, the descendants of the so-called old Russians, can disregard externally indicated criteria of identity provided, for example by the media? By disclosing the past the narrators construct a social reality. This new reality provides social and cultural resources for identity construction. Seen from the outside, ethnicity can be conceptualized as an imagination, which is partly based on an invisible subjective process of negotiation (meaning a person's negotiation with herself) and partly on a negotiation between a number of persons in an always-present historical perspective.

My earlier study on the development of ethnicity within a Tanzanian context (1997) supported a participatory research approach recognizing that 'researched people' are producers of knowledge (Jerman 1997a and 1997b). All the same this approach specifically emphasized the reflexive dimension, a basis of an ethnographic study. Evidently, ethnicity may manifest itself from an external point of view, in a contradictory way. An intersubjective research approach thus recognizes that knowledge is socially constructed and embedded. To be more specific, research is an interchange of knowledge in which the quest for secondary sources can be compared to the collection of primary material.

Informants are active agents. In their narratives they seem³³ to return to recurrent phenomena or contexts, which seem central for identity construction. I evaluate these contexts or phenomena together with other notions of the narrative and juxtapose them to data in secondary sources. Informants often provide me with the latter, such as documents and letters, without being asked. This approach has helped me to investigate and detect connections between, for example, fear in various disguises and the psychological or concrete history of anti-Russianism.

The descendants of 'old' Russians are socially and economically diverse and their family background (including parents and grandparents in the country of origin as well as in Finland) also shows many variations. This has affected their social, political and economic existence in Finland. After all, we are dealing with individuals. Despite their heterogeneous background both socially and economically, part of the informants are descendants to people who were denied the right to belong to a certain society as socially full-fledged subjects. Interestingly, this pertains as well to a number of present day migrants from Russia with an Ingrian background. Despite their present social heterogeneity, their close kinfolk such as parents or grandparents share(d) a past of suffering.³⁴ Writing in another context Vieda Skultans notes that individual accounts of the past demonstrate how the social permeates the personal (Skultans 1998).

³² *Euroopan vuoksi*: 'Takaisin Karjalaan', [For Europe: 'Back to Karelia'], 9 April 2002, TV2 and The Eyewitness: 'The gate of the sickle and hammer', 12 September 2002, TV2.

³³ I am deliberately careful in stating something final at this stage of the research. My main point here is to describe part of the research process.

³⁴ Personal information and Olga Davydova (2002) who notes that informants provide her with, what she terms 'must stories' about suffering, for example, stories about deportation.



Similarly to the ethnic consciousness of the protagonist, the little boy and youngster in Andrei Makine's novel *Dreams of my Russian Summers* informants are affected by the 'majority' society. Ethnicity is confirmed or negotiated by the environment. This is the reason why perceptions of ethnicity and identity must be studied in its own context. This is why a question like who you are misses its point. As to informants in films - they imagine and contest their identities in a different way from the point of view of outside filmmakers.

Clichés about Russians are familiar to most Finns. Arguably, among the majority of Finns these clichés determine pre-conceived contexts of Russian life and open straight roads to imagine so called Russians and their peculiarities.

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