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### **Alexander Danzer:** **Ethnicised Symbolic Landscapes as a Constraint to Nation-Building in Transition**

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## Abstract

The paper develops a social geographic approach to analyse why nation-building in many transition countries may not have succeeded to date. Nation-building is strongly rooted in historical narratives that are projected onto public space using banal physical and semantic artefacts, such as monuments and street names. It is argued here that the individual's perception of those artefacts may thwart official space production and, conversely, that official ethnicisation of public space may impede civic nation-building. In the first part of the paper, the author reveals the theoretical underpinnings of nationalism and the 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983) and how these are incorporated into public space under the constraints of a diverse ethnic composition. As a means of constructing history, political actors establish banal physical artefacts in public space. These physical objects are used by titular nations as devices to foster cultural integration and replace the old Soviet narratives. If these artefacts are seen to characterise the ethnic group that 'produced' them in the eye of their beholder, a process of symbolisation and reification takes place. In other words: Individuals appropriate spatial objects as symbols of ethnic signification. The production of such 'symbolic landscapes' has been studied in detail in social science, but not from the micro-perspective of individuals. This author constructs a social geographic model based on Werlen (1997) that combines the macro-level production of symbolic landscapes with individual symbolic appropriation. Large ethnic minority groups, which are often culturally supported by their external homelands, produce their specific artefacts alongside those established by the nationalising state. From the individual's perspective, these diverse and often conflicting historical narratives are seen as multi-ethnic symbolic landscapes. The author therefore extends the theoretical framework to account for these complexities. In the second part, this conceptual approach is empirically investigated in two steps. First, the applicability of the author's 'geography of banal ethnicisation' theory is demonstrated in the case of Kazakhstan. Second, symbolic landscapes are investigated at the micro-level with an explorative study involving 19 members of the German minority in Kazakhstan. The results show that public space resembles a battlefield of symbols. Nationalising states and external homelands are antagonistic actors confronting the individual with symbolic landscapes. Symbols are not *ethnic* per se but rather *ethnicised*, i.e. *imagined* in ethnic terms by the beholder. The results of the investigation contribute to an understanding of why the 'construction' of history in many transition countries has not convincingly succeeded to date and why the ethnicisation of public space may impede civic nation-building. The results also yield important implications for policy debate.

## 1 Introduction

In April 2007, the city of Tallinn, Estonia, featured prominently in the international press when mass demonstrations erupted following the removal of a Soviet war memorial. The length of the protest along with unforeseen outbreaks of violence came as a surprise to many observers. This incident might not seem so astonishing if one considers the social and psychological transformation processes that have taken place since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

While the focus of much of the economic and social literature has been on the technical and institutional dimensions of the transition period, its neglect of the psycho-social dimension persists. This paper aims to fill part of this gap by showing that rivalling interests of macro-level entities (e.g. states) are brought to the micro-level through an identification process. Individual identification in turn strongly determines the development of national coherence.

Identities are constructed in the contentious environment that exists between insiders and outsiders. Ethnic identities are therefore most strikingly pronounced in multi-ethnic environments where incongruities between ethnic, cultural and political formation of groups are present. In other words, if an ethnic group – like the Russian minority in Estonia or the German minority in Kazakhstan – does not command a political formation, differences become apparent and an antagonism along the dialectic lines of 'us vs. them'

may develop. Ethnic identity is understood here as the process of self-referencing vis-à-vis different groups through identification with several identificatory sources.<sup>1</sup>

The contributions of this paper are the following: First, a perception model from human geography is augmented with concepts from nationalism research; the resultant framework could potentially be widely used to study the spatial construction of ethnic identities. Second, I propose and develop a micro-level perspective of nationalism and combine it with traditional macro approaches. Third, rather than studying isolated symbols, which was commonly done in more traditional approaches, I comprehensively analyse symbolic landscapes for the understanding of local nationalism.

The structure of the paper is as follows: In the initial section, I review the relevant concepts of nationalism research and develop my geographical model of banal ethnicisation. In the next sections, I briefly sketch out some main points of Kazakh history, formulate the aim of the research project and describe the methodology employed. The empirical evaluation is divided into two parts: I first examine different types of nationalism in the case of Kazakhstan and then test my ‘geography of banal ethnicisation’ hypothesis with qualitative data obtained from the German minority in Kazakhstan. The final section of the paper concludes with policy implications.

## 2 Developing a Geography of Banal Ethnicisation

The genesis of nation-states has been controversially discussed in the social sciences for decades. While primordialist thinkers understood nation-states as the final product and institutionalisation of historical ethnic group formations, modernists subscribed to the belief that the mythical and artificial character of nations constituted imagined communities.<sup>2</sup>

The quasi-experiment of the dissolution of the Soviet Union left behind a new and slightly modified version of nation-building processes. Soon after gaining sovereignty, most of the newly born states took measures to both overcome the Soviet ideology and construct a new national identity. In contrast to the process that took place in West European states in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, their nation-building projects had to build up integrative forces for the development of nations *ex post*.<sup>3</sup> Rogers Brubaker introduced this aspect into the theory of nationalism and labelled the practises of newly independent states as ‘nationalising nationalism’. The titular nation’s elites tried to fill the power gap of the disrupted Soviet empire by promoting a new ideology of nationhood. Brubaker also observed that most of these new countries were plagued by the incongruity of state and nation, i.e. the existence of large minority groups on the territories of the titular nations. Overall, these significant minorities often received political and financial support from their ethnic homelands. Brubaker observed a triadic nexus between the nationalising state, the minority group and its external homeland, and showed how external homeland nationalism could potentially hamper nationalising nationalism by the new state and thus lead to conflicting outcomes.<sup>4</sup>

Brubaker put emphasis on the rivalling interests in the nation-building process without elaborating upon the policies implemented by states in transition during their nation-building process. These measures potentially vary from institution-building to identity promotion. At the same time, Michael Billig, a British social scientist, challenged the prevailing opinion of nationalism as a project that culminates in the establishment of a nation-state. He argued that even established states make use of banal practises to continuously re-produce feelings of belonging to an (imagined) nationhood.<sup>5</sup> Examples of these routines are

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1 Kłosowska, Antonina: *National Cultures at the Grass-Root Level*. Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001.

2 Anderson, Benedict: *Imagined Communities. Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.

3 Kaschuba, Wolfgang: *Geschichtspolitik und Identitätspolitik. Nationale und ethnische Diskurse im Vergleich*, in: Binder, Beate et al. (eds.): *Inszenierung des Nationalen*, Cologne: Böhlau, 2001, pp. 19–42.

4 Brubaker, Rogers: *Nationalism Reframed*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

5 Billig, Michael: *Banal Nationalism*. London: SAGE Publications, 1995.

flag-waving and media coverage for international sporting events, activities which are typically embedded in the daily routines of individuals and thus unconsciously appropriated rather than explicitly understood. I extend this conception by dropping the assumption of intentional action in the production of banal artefacts. Rather, I analyse all the potential banal symbols (monuments, street names, grocery shops) from the ‘consumer’s perspective’. To better understand this position, I amend Brubaker’s and Billig’s concepts with the notion of “Sozialgeographie alltäglicher Regionalisierungen”,<sup>6</sup> which was put forward by the Swiss geographer Benno Werlen and makes use of Giddens’s theory of structuration.<sup>7</sup> Werlen argues that the acting individual should be placed at the centre of analysis. The person interprets his or her physical life context and simultaneously projects symbolic meaning on various elements of the human-made environment (artefacts). In other words, physical material takes on meaning that is not immanent but rather attributed to it by individuals. As suggested above, not only constructed artefacts with political intent can become spatial symbols, but any physical elements. The Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, for instance, symbolises the German reunification for some people. Nevertheless, it is nothing more than a stone gate that was obviously not created for that purpose; it became a symbol of reunification taken in connection with the events surrounding the fall of the Berlin Wall. If several interrelated symbolisations take place, mental symbolic landscapes are created in the individual’s mind. Symbolic landscapes serve to:<sup>8</sup>

- show who is in power
- exhibit ideologies
- create places and rival other places
- foster loyalty and identification

In the context of nationalism, I restrict my analysis to the ethnic connotations that are projected onto public space (i.e. banal physical and semantic artefacts) by individuals. In multi-ethnic settings, urban space becomes a medium for individualised multi-ethnic symbolic landscapes. To give an example, individuals may consider a grocery shop ‘German’ or a university ‘Kazakh’ in a derogatory sense. These sorts of everyday banal appropriations made by people in urban spaces may thwart official attempts to promote nationalism. Figure 1 (on the next page) illustrates the entire conception of my ‘geography of banal ethnicisation’.

Projections of meaning greatly depend on individual knowledge and life experience. Therefore, it is important to analyse the information aspect of an artefact, i.e. the knowledge of its existence, prior to its signifying aspect. The signification process of an artefact produces a symbol that reduces the complexity of the social context for the observer. If many people ‘read’ similar meanings into artefacts, these become symbols with strong mobilising potential (as in the case of the Soviet war memorial in Tallinn).<sup>9</sup>

This concept has several advantages over the more structural theoretical approaches to Anglo-Saxon political geography. These approaches evaluate how and why spatial artefacts such as monuments are loaded with national or ethnic meaning.<sup>10</sup> The first major shortcoming of these studies is that they take the perspective of the ‘neutral observer’ and mistake artefacts for symbols without investigating whether the ob-

6 Werlen’s theoretical conception for a social geography of everyday regionalisation marks a clear shift from a space-centred towards an action-centred human geography.

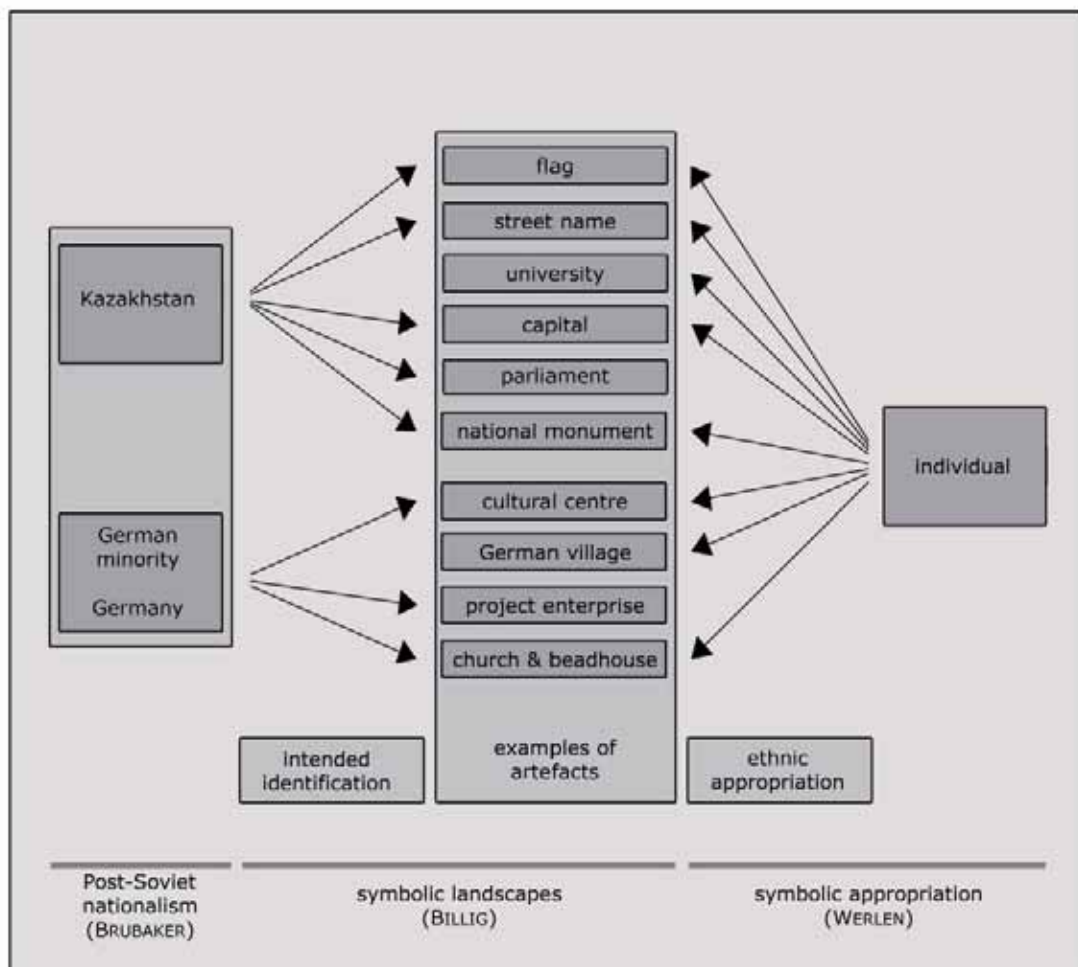
7 Werlen, Benno: *Sozialgeographie alltäglicher Regionalisierungen*. Band 2: Globalisierung, Region und Regionalisierung. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1997. Further details on the conception can be found in Danzer, Alexander M.: *Eine Geographie alltäglicher Ethnisierungen*. Munich: Mimeo, 2005.

8 Jones, Martin / Jones, Rhys / Woods, Michael: *An Introduction to Political Geography*. Space, Place and Politics. London and New York: Routledge, 2004, pp. 116–120.

9 Cp. Duncan, James S.: *The City as Text: the Politics of Landscape Interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

10 Johnson, Nuala: *Cast in Stone: Monuments, Geography, and Nationalism*, in: *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 1995 (vol. 13), pp. 51–65; Azaryahu, Maoz: *The Power of Commemorative Street Names*, in: *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 1996 (vol. 14), pp. 311–330; Atkinson, David / Cosgrove, Denis: *Urban Rhetoric and Embodied Identities: City, Nation, and Empire at the Vittorio Emanuele II Monument in Rome 1870–1945*, in: *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 1998 (vol. 88), No. 1, pp. 28–49; Light, Duncan: *Street Names in Bucharest, 1990–1997*. Exploring the Modern Historical Geographies of Post-Socialist Change, in: *Journal of Historical Geography*, 2004 (vol. 30), No. 1, pp. 154–172.

jects really have any meaning for the individual. This approach suggests that monuments exhibit immanent and uniform meaning per se; it follows from this that any analysis of national monuments may potentially be trapped in reification. A second shortcoming is that most of the authors restrict their analysis to artefacts that were *intended* to arouse identification. Since they do not analyse the observers' micro-level perceptions, they end up describing state-led homogenising forces of identity construction. Many papers are misguided in their descriptions of the impact of spatial policies on ethnic identity; this impact cannot be properly ascertained without knowing the individual's perceptions. Third, the analysis of single artefacts may be sufficient when looking at the production of symbols. However, from the individual's perspective, so narrow an approach does not properly reflect the true symbolic meaning, because single artefacts are embedded in complex symbolic landscapes where meanings are interconnected and therefore no longer independent.



### 3 Kazakhstan after the Dissolution of the Soviet Union

Kazakhstan was the last Soviet Republic to declare independence, on December 16, 1991. The territory was by then characterised by large minority groups, as census data from 1989 shows: The Kazakh population (6.5 million) was just slightly bigger than the Russian minority (6.1 million), followed by the German population (946,900). The Kazakhs are a nomadic people divided into three sub-ethnic groups. Hence, kin-

ship traditionally plays a much more pervasive role than territorial ties. To smooth out tensions between the sub-ethnic groups, the Kazakh political elite may wish to launch an all-Kazakh nation-building project.<sup>11</sup>

The political leadership of the country has exhibited an ever-intensifying autocratic style of governance, especially since the advent of a constitutional change in 1995 granting the president far-reaching legislative and executive powers. One of President Nazarbayev's major concerns was to relocate the capital from Almaty (formerly Alma-Ata) to the city of Aqmola (which ironically means 'white grave' in Kazakh; it was later more appropriately renamed Astana, which is Kazakh for 'capital'). Nazarbayev called the establishment of the new capital the 'product of a centuries-long search',<sup>12</sup> which provides a good example of his tendency to glorify the history of the Kazakh nation.

## 4 Aim of the Study

Understanding to what extent urban space can exhibit rivalling symbolic landscapes on the macro-level first requires an empirical evaluation of whether multiple forms of nationalism exist. To keep the model simple, my investigation is restricted to the political actions of Kazakhstan and Germany on the territories of the Republic of Kazakhstan.<sup>13</sup>

In the second part, I focus on individuals' construction of symbolic landscapes with varying degrees of ethnic loading. Two hypotheses will be assessed: Individuals not only appropriate artefacts that were *intended* as carriers of national narratives, but also banal artefacts from the context of daily life. These multi-ethnic symbolic landscapes recast urban space as a battlefield of symbols.

Due to limitations in space, the paper neither analyses the psychological channels through which urban space reconstructs the individual ethnic identity nor explains how individual and minority identities affect the appropriation of public space. An examination of the social stratification and allocative distribution of power that is eventually projected onto public space is also beyond the paper's scope. Both topics will be addressed in my future research.

## 5 Methodology

To begin, the applicability of my theory of 'geography of banal ethnicisation' to the case of the German minority in Kazakhstan must be established. To this end, a literature review shows that Kazakhstan is practising nationalising nationalism while Germany is backing the German minority with homeland nationalism. To assess the socio-geographical dimension of these nationalisms, I interviewed 19 members of the German minority in Kazakhstan, using a two-stage qualitative methodology, in 2004. All respondents were between 20 and 80 years old and lived in different cities in Kazakhstan. The selection of interviewees was done according to the snowball principle. For the first interviews, which lasted from one to four hours, a biographical narration analysis technique was used. The second round was conducted in a semi-structured format. To reduce halo effects on the second interview, the second interview was taken two weeks after the first. The transcripts from both sets of interviews were then checked for consistency.

In a first step, I reconstruct sources of individual ethnic identity, taking into account both the lived (objective) and the narrated (subjective) life histories of the interview subjects. The sequence of an individual's narration gives insights into crucial experiences (lived history) and thus helps to chronologically sort pref-

11 Schatz, Edward: The Politics of Multiple Identities: Lineage and Identity in Kazakhstan, in: Europe-Asia Studies, 2000 (vol. 52), No. 3, pp. 489–506.

12 Nazarbayev, Nursultan: Festrede zur Übergabe der Hauptstadt Astana, in: StadtBauwelt, 2002 (vol. 93), No. 12, pp. 24–27.

13 I am aware of the fact that states themselves do not act like natural persons. For the sake of simplicity and without loss of generalisation, I will talk exclusively about the state's actions from this point forward.

ferences and attitudes from his or her self-representation (narrated history) *ex post*.<sup>14</sup> In the second step, ethnic symbolisations of artefacts are explored and brought into identification contexts.

## 6 Empirical Evaluation: Multi-ethnic Policies in Kazakhstan

The following section analyses different kinds of nationalism, beginning with nationalising nationalism in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. After that, the external policies of the Federal Republic of Germany are evaluated as an example of homeland nationalism.

Since December 1991, when Kazakhstan became independent, many researchers have observed a process of Kazakhisation. In contrast to official announcements, the Republic of Kazakhstan took measures to favour an ethnic national conception rather than a civic one. To put it differently, several policies were implicitly aimed at giving Kazakhs an edge over minority populations:

- politically motivated re-settlement of ethnic Kazakhs in the north of the country in order to achieve a population majority in all parts of the country<sup>15</sup>
- ethnic clientilism in public staffing policy<sup>16</sup>
- policies favouring citizens with Kazakh heritage (indicating a conceptual shift from a civic nation towards an ethnic nation)<sup>17</sup>
- demotion of the Russian language to a ‘language of communication’, potentially leaving room for discrimination<sup>18</sup>
- ‘scientific’ proof of the establishment of the first Kazakh state in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (incidentally, a time when Europe was far from the eve of nationalism),<sup>19</sup> which subsequently became the standard version of history in school books.<sup>20</sup>

Corresponding policies executed by the Federal Republic of Germany to assist the German minority are generally more difficult to assess due to their more indirect character. Above all, the nation’s responsibility vis-à-vis political action was initially not very clear. Nowadays, it is mainly the “Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau” (KfW) and the German development agency GTZ that are involved in several ongoing cultural and economic aid projects. The literature as well as several talks with experts from the political, cultural and economic spheres revealed the following substantial support schemes:

- opportunities for ethnic Germans to immigrate to Germany and obtain German citizenship. According to Article 116 (1) of the German Basic Constitutional Law, public spending on free flights to Germany exceeds €50 million per year<sup>21</sup>

14 Fischer-Rosenthal, Wolfram / Rosenthal, Gabriele: Warum Biographieanalyse und wie man sie macht, in: Zeitschrift für Sozialisationsforschung und Erziehungssoziologie, 1997 (vol.17), No. 4, pp. 406–427.

15 Rowland, Richard H.: Regional Population Change in Kazakhstan during the 1990s and the Impact of Nationality Population Patterns: Results from the Recent Census of Kazakhstan, in: Post-Soviet Geography and Economics, 2001 (vol. 42), No. 8, pp. 571–614.

16 Olcott, Martha B.: Kazakhstan. Unfulfilled Promise. Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for Peace, 2002; Holm-Hansen, Jørn: Political Integration in Kazakhstan, in: Kolstø, Pål (ed.): Nation-Building and Ethnic Integration in Post-Soviet Societies. An Investigation of Latvia and Kazakhstan. Boulder: Westview Press, 1999, pp. 153–226.

17 Kolstø, Pål: Political Construction Sites. Nation-building in Russia and the Post-Soviet States. Boulder: Westview Press, 2000.

18 Olcott, Martha B.: Kazakhstan. Unfulfilled Promise. Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for Peace, 2002; Kolstø, Pål: Political Construction Sites. Nation-building in Russia and the Post-Soviet States. Boulder: Westview Press, 2000.

19 Nazarbaev, Nursultan: A New Capital – A New State – A New Society, Speech of January 10, 1998, in: StadtBauwelt, 2002 (vol. 93), No. 12, pp. 24–27.

20 E.g. Ermakov, V. A.: Kazakhstan in the Modern World. A Study Book for School and University [in Russian]. Almaty: Karzhy-karazhat, 1998.

21 In recent years those spendings have dropped considerably due to falling emigration numbers; Bundesrechnungshof of the Federal Republic of Germany: Bemerkungen 2000 zur Haushalts- und Wirtschaftsführung des Bundes. Bonn, 2000, p. 250; Klüter, Helmut: People of German Descent in CIS States – Areas of Settlement, Territorial Autonomy and Emigration, in: GeoJournal, 1993 (vol. 31), No. 4, pp. 419–434.

- active foreign policy to promote the re-establishment of the former Volga Republic<sup>22</sup>
- policies promoting the economic and cultural well-being of the German minority as well as political and economic support for self-organisation, language promotion and religion-related issues. Those policies added up to €670 million between 1990 and 1998.<sup>23</sup>

Taken together, the measures clearly show that the Federal Republic of Germany implements policies that support (ethnic German) citizens of the Republic of Kazakhstan. However, these individuals are only accorded German citizenship upon arrival in Germany.

When czarina Catharine the Great invited workers and farmers from the area of what is currently southern Germany in the year 1763, the people arriving in Russia were not Germans in the strict sense. At that time, the evolution of the German nation-state had not yet begun. Nevertheless, those people bonded with each other via a process of ethnogenesis spurred by external pressure and exclusion during times of pro-Russian movements. Later, the bond was strengthened upon the passage of Soviet passport laws, according to which German nationality was not only a statistical but also a legal category (a distinction that was exploited for discriminatory purposes). The example of the Germans as a minority abroad illustrates quite nicely how imagined communities evolve.

The minority group faces two mutually antagonistic forms of nationalism, both of which demand a high degree of adaptability. Policies of both the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Federal Republic of Germany contain a spatial component and manifest themselves in the daily lives of all citizens.

In general, the establishment of new historical narratives shapes urban space in Kazakhstan: Besides the virtually ubiquitous appearance of the Kazakh flag and crest, the use of the Kazakh national colours is omnipresent. Street names named for Soviet and even Russian heroes were exchanged for their Kazakh counterparts, old monuments often demolished and new heroes cast in stone. Most demanding, however, was the relocation of the Kazakh capital.<sup>24</sup> Less obvious political support was given for the construction of mosques. This support reveals, as Pål Kolstø has pointed out, a two-fold paradox: Formerly communist, non-religious leaders using (non-national) Islam to boost their national projects.<sup>25</sup> German support is spatially apparent in the erection of some monuments (e.g. the monument dedicated to Heinrich Vogeler in Karaganda), the establishment of German cultural centres and libraries and in support for churches or beadhouses.

## 7 Empirical Evaluation: Symbolic Landscapes from a Micro-Perspective

In the following, I will open the black box of macro entities discussed above and shift the focus to the level of individuals. From this new perspective, I investigate individual perceptions of symbolic landscapes.

As described above, the biographical aspect (i.e. how the past affects current life) as well as the information aspect (i.e. the awareness of an artefact) strongly determine the signifying aspect (i.e. the symbolisation) of the ethnicisation process. Ethnic identification is – as described in the introduction – based on both inclusion and exclusion (i.e. of the and against the outsider groups) processes.

22 Frank, Alexander / Wolf, Markus: Kasachstandeutsche ohne Zukunft?, in: *Aussenpolitik. Zeitschrift für internationale Fragen*, 1993 (vol. 44), No. 2, pp. 153–162.

23 Chambris, Alexis: *Deutsche Vorposten in Zentralasien. Deutschlands Förderungspolitik der nationalen Minderheit im Ausland am Beispiel von Kasachstan*. Strasbourg: mimeo, 2004, p. 73. It should be kept in mind that this financial aid has been substantially cut in the last few years, see von Gumpfenberg, Marie-Carin: *Staats- und Nationsbildung in Kasachstan*. Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 2002, p. 105.

24 Cp. Anacker, Shonin: *Geographies of Power in Nazarbayev's Astana*, in: *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 2004 (vol. 45), No. 7, pp. 515–533.

25 Kolstø, Pål: *Political Construction Sites. Nation-building in Russia and the Post-Soviet States*. Boulder: Westview Press, 2000, pp. 73–77.

To compile the various inclusive sources of individuals' ethnic identities, I utilise the technique of biographical analysis, which clarifies people's ethnic identity backgrounds. The interviewees explicitly or implicitly named the following identity ties: language, religion, ethno-national cultural artefacts and practises (costumes, dances), festivals, common history and destiny, 'German virtues' like tidiness and diligence, kinship ties, 'German blood', nostalgia and aspiration. It should be kept in mind that most of these sources are themselves artificial constructs, the products of homogenisation policies over the last few centuries. As the interviews attest, some elements of ethnic identity are common to all interviewees, while others are highly specific (e.g. engagement with the minority organisation 'Renaissance'). Roughly speaking, people can be located on an ascending scale of identity power, from very basic up to highly specific and personalised elements. For example, the interviewees with weaker ethnic bonds cited only their German legal status when asked what made them 'German', while others described a full set of personal ties, like the German language, historical roots and folklore.

Identification against other groups, i.e. through an exclusion mechanism, requires classification criteria. In the interviews, I found ethnic differentiation alongside criteria of resource allocation and power. Some interviewees quite arrogantly called Kazakh ethnicity inferior and deemed Kazakhs incapable of leading the country. Others accused the Kazakhs of establishing new power relations in which non-Kazakhs are said to be exploited and discriminated against. Strong internal identification relatively often calls for mutual acceptance between antagonistic groups, while external identification leads to a devaluation of the outsider group.

From the individual symbolic landscapes, three categories of elements emerge:

- official artefacts, which were intentionally produced by political elites, e.g. monuments, the Kazakh capital and street names
- artefacts that have been accorded symbolic value by individuals irrespective of the producer's intent, e.g. cultural centres, grocery shops, mosques, restaurants and universities
- mental constructs that refer to real and imagined places, e.g. tidy German villages, informal names of city districts ('Berlin' in Karaganda, for instance)

In many cases, the interviewees argued that their – either positive or negative – attitudes towards symbols or places were shaped by crucial interactive experiences, which in turn influenced their further dealings with the place. For instance, one young woman expressed negative feelings towards her hometown university, where she had had experiences that she perceived as discriminatory. Nowadays, she labels the university 'Kazakh', which is shorthand for the 'corruption of Kazakhs' and the 'arbitrariness of the Kazakh administration'.

A clear connection between the individual ethnic identity and the individual symbolic landscape seems to exist. I therefore developed a simplifying typology of the interdependency of ethnic identification and public space perception (Table 1 on the following page).

Table 1: Ethnic identification and symbolic landscapes

		Internal identification with insider group	
		strong	weak
External identification against outsider group	strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• German symbols are neutral territories in a Kazakhified country</li> <li>• Kazakh symbols threaten German identity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kazakh symbols show power and Kazakh dominance</li> <li>• Individuals evade Kazakh symbols</li> </ul>
	weak	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• German symbols show coherence in the German community</li> <li>• Symbols show mutual acceptance of ethnic groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification with another ethnicity</li> </ul>

Source: Interviews with members of the German minority in Kazakhstan

As the table shows, the identity of the individual strongly influences perceptions of the urban surroundings. Up to this point, it is not quite clear whether identity plays the role of a filter that shapes people's perception or whether people with different perceptions develop their identity accordingly. This question will be addressed in future research.

To summarise, Kazakhstan is not only challenged by homeland nationalism of inter alia the Federal Republic of Germany but also by the local symbolic landscapes in individuals' minds. These ethnicisations produce feelings and sometimes acts of opposition, which prevent nation-building of a civic conception. If Kazakhstan not only officially but also practically intends to become a nation-state for all inhabitants rather than only for ethnic Kazakhs, it has to take heed of the forces that may hamper this development.

## 8 Implications for the Production of Urban Space

The results of the above analysis show that (1) public space is not ethnic per se but used as a medium for ethnic territorialisation and that (2) not only intentionally created artefacts (e.g. monuments) are ethnicised, but virtually any physical structure can be loaded with ethnic content. According to Werlen, the appropriation process becomes relevant for people's actions, a sentiment that was implicitly verified by many interviewees in their accounts of their past actions. These results call for more thoughtful participative planning of urban space and for measures to prevent what I wish to call the 'segregation of public representation'. The idea behind participative processes in this context is not to prevent individuals from building up symbolic landscapes, but rather to enable them to recognise the heterogeneity of the public sphere when considering the aims and strategies of political actors. This especially holds for countries that have not yet managed to fully implement democracy, a system that ensures that all groups and minorities of society enjoy not only legal but also practical protection.