Media images of the Kaliningrad region in the structure of migration attitudes of millennials and the reform generation

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MEDIA IMAGES OF THE KALININGRAD REGION IN THE STRUCTURE OF MIGRATION ATTITUDES OF MILLENNIALS AND THE REFORM GENERATION

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This article explores the role of a regional media image on migration attitudes. Attention is drawn to the Kaliningrad region, a Russian exclave whose population growth is solely due to migration. The study aims to determine how the media images of Kaliningrad affect the decision to move. The research draws on Radaev's concept of generations. It uses 2014— 2018 regional and national publications about the Kaliningrad region (N= 1913) and semi-structured interviews with informants (N= 44). The research methods are publication analysis and in-depth interviews processed using the Atals.ti software. The five images identified are a region of international cooperation, a military outpost, an economically attractive area, a territory of developing infrastructure, and a tourist destination. The most substantial intergenerational differences concern the media images of a military outpost and an economically attractive area. Members of the reform generation are more likely than millennials to see a military threat and consider the security aspect when moving. Millennials showed greater awareness of what constitutes the image of an economically attractive region. It is concluded that differences between millennials and the reform generation in evaluating the significance of the region's media images depend crucially on the migration motives. For millennials, the priority is employment and career growth, whilst for the reform generation, it is finding a comfortable place to live in old age.

Keywords:

media image, Kaliningrad region, millennials, reform generation, migration attitudes

Introduction

Globalisation and mediatisation are ushering in an age of open societies when anyone can compare their aspirations in life with how people live in other cities and states. The age of curtainless windows encourages to consider mobility channels, whilst education and career tracks are becoming linked to a change of residence. In line with the mobility theory, social mobility is turning into social capital, the acumulation of which gives an advantage and power over others [1, p. 95].

Considering mobility as social capital, the Kaliningrad region, which was populated and continues to grow through migration, presents an interesting case study [2, p. 73]. Its exclave position creates a social environment that is a unique combination of opportunities and limitations [3, p. 61]. Emphasising duality in the perception of the geography of the border city, Olga Vendina writes that one can never understand whether it is the 'façade of the country or its backyard' [4, p. 53]. This duality creates an ambiguous image among newcomers and questions the potential gain in social capital. On the one hand, there are prospects of international cooperation. On the other, there is a knot of problems and challenges [5].

Although the Kaliningrad region is among the primary destinations for domestic migration in Russia [6], it does not have a governmental programme for promoting its image. Recent studies prove that the media representation of a tourist destination is the principal source of information about the region [7] and a decisive factor behind the decision to travel [8] or relocate [9].

This study explores the connection between the decision to relocate to the Kaliningrad region and the image of the exclave created in the Russian media. Acknowledging the generation aspect makes it possible to track differences in awareness of the regional situation and understand how media representations affect the perception of opportunities and prospects in two age groups. In other words, this work aims to measure the presence and significance of media representations of the Kaliningrad regions in the structure of intentions to emigrate among millennials and the reform generation.

Media representations and migration attitudes

Three traditional areas can be distinguished within migration intention studies, depending on the object. These are spatial, socio-economic, and social

status investigations. Spatial studies focus on the 'relationships between the territory of origin, the travel distance, and the temporal parameters of relocation' [10, p. 95]. The groundwork for spatial mobility studies was laid down by Ernst Georg Ravenstein [11] and Dorothy Swaine Thomas [12]. In Russia, this area of research is represented by studies of inter- and intraregional migration [13]. Domestic migration in Russia is as active as in European countries. The decision to relocate correlates with both certain stages in human life and the attractiveness of the destination [14].

Socio-economic mobility investigations are associated with Everett Lee's econometric model and Andrei Rogers and Luis J. Castro's works [16]. They have led to the identification of pull and push migration factors and the mechanisms behind spatial relocation. These factors are operative laws, transport system characteristics, awareness of the destination, etc. [15]. All these factors are extensively explored in Russia [17—20].

Studies of the social status aspect of spatial mobility see migration as an opportunity to improve social standing. For example, Anthony J. Fielding [21] examines how migration affects the social status of migrants, and Oded Stark discusses the connection between the family and professional situations of migrants [22]. The findings of social mobility studies based on migration biographies are also of interest: 'unlike those of respondents without a relocation experience, the biographies of migrants are closely connected to vertical mobility on both intra- and inter-generational levels' [1, p. 102].

Another area of migration attitude studies [8—9; 23—24] has not yet received empirical support in Russia. These investigations focus on the place image and the territorial media brand as factors behind tourism and migration strategies. The approach proposed in these studies implies that migration attitudes are affected by the media images of an area [25—28]. John Nadeau &; Anja H Olafsen [9] demonstrate a connection between the place image and migration attitudes. They conclude that a comprehensive evaluation of the image of a country is a more significant migration predictor than attractive employment prospects [9, p. 305].

Yet international theoretical and applied findings might not be transferrable to Russian place image studies. The problem lies in the lack of consensus in Russia and abroad about the scope of the term. In the English-language literature, the concept *country/place image* has undergone dramatic change over the past 40 years — from the perceived quality of goods manufactured in a country to the sum of ideas and beliefs a person has of a place [29, p. 86].

The Russian-language literature explores not only images but also representations of regions [30—32]. Having analysed principal approaches to the conceptualisation of these two notions, we concluded that the image of a territory is a 'tool for communication [between the agent who uses it and the target audience] to achieve a goal' [30, p. 423]. The representation of a place is an 'idea of reality impressed on the audience by the media industry' [31, p. 92] or the 'media representation of a place', which should be investigated based on analysis of representation of a region promoted in the local, federal, and international media [32, p. 121]. In a broad sense, a media representation is the 'representation of reality in the texts constituting the media space. In a narrow sense, they are 'fragments of reality described in texts written by professional journalists' [31, p. 91].

In this work, we consider the representation of the Kaliningrad region in a narrow sense. We define it as the sum of thematically linked events displaying selected characteristics of the region in newspapers, journals, on the radio, television, Internet, and by information agencies. The media discourse generated by other information agents (YouTube bloggers, posts on social media, etc.) will be considered in further research.

The question raised by this study is as follows: how do migrants evaluate the effect of the Kaliningrad rhetoric created and disseminated by the Russian media on their intention to relocate to the region.

The theoretical basis of the research

Theoretically, the study draws on Vadim Radaev's generation concept [33]. This concept builds chiefly on the ideas of Karl Mannheim [34], who was the first to explore the sociological dimension of the problem: 'in actual fact, yet another link is needed to constitute a generation: participation in the common fate of the given historical and social community. a generation is real if people comprising it are connected by ties manifested in social and intellectual symptoms' [34, p. 35]. Radaev deserves credit for viewing the historical context of generational socialisation through the prism of landmark events and processes in Russian history. In this study, the reform generation is defined as people born in 1968—1981. They socialised at the time of perestroika and the ensuing liberal reforms of 1985—1999. Millennials, born in 1982—2000, matured in the early 2000s, a period of relative stability and prosperity in Russia.

The study focuses on these two generations for several reasons. Firstly, these groups stand out for social mobility and migration activity [2, p. 76]. Therefore, migration brings to the region professional intellectual and labour resources. Secondly, the interaction between these generations ensures the reproduction of administrative and business elites in the region, the accumulation of social and cultural capital, and a shift in the paradigm of regional development.

Methods and empirical materials

At the first stage of the study, we analysed Kaliningrad-focused publications from Russian media. We used data from federal and regional Russian media, obtained with the help of the Medialogiya system. The sample was drawn from publications containing the word combination 'Kaliningrad region', which appeared in 2014—2018 in newspapers, journals, information agency materials, on the Internet, radio, and television. The period of the study coincided with geopolitical changes. We assumed that the incorporation of Crimea and the ensuing sanctions and counter-sanctions had affected the Russian rhetoric about the Kaliningrad region.

For each year, 1,000 news pieces from 100 different media outlets were obtained, whilst the sample (N=1913) included only those that met the following two criteria:

a) the region was mentioned in the headline or the first paragraph;

b) the piece did not cover recent local incidents.

Each piece of news (for instance, 'Russian nuclear weapons approaching NATO') was assigned a label ('NATO' in this case), after which similar pieces were subsumed under a single category ('military outpost'). Only those media representations were further analysed that appeared in the media each study year (Table 1). Five main media representations of the Kaliningrad region are 'a region of international cooperation', 'a military outpost', 'a region of economic prosperity', 'a region of developing infrastructure', and 'a tourist destination'.

Table 1

Representations of the Kaliningrad region in the Russian media

Representation	Percentage of all media representation, %					Average for 2014—2018, %
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	
A region of developing infrastructure	17.9	6.7	10.3	13.5	13.9	12.5
A region of international cooperation	14.2	9.2	13.7	8.1	5.0	10
A region of economic prosperity	7.2	18.3	15.6	18.3	22.4	16.4
Russia's military outpost	11.6	16.8	21.0	15.9	12.5	15.6
A tourist destination	7.5	10.7	10.3	9.2	9.1	9.4

Source: calculated by the authors based on an analysis of news reports

To verify the correlation between the Kaliningrad-focused media discourse and respondents' intentions to migrate, we asked them about their source of information about the region. Almost all answers included the two categories — locals (acquaintances, relatives, and friends who had recently moved to Kaliningrad) and the Internet (forums, bloggers, online media). Some respondents said that they had taken account of the opinions of tourists visiting Kaliningrad. A typical answer to the question 'When planning relocation, what information did you rely on to understand what was going on in the city and the region?' was as follows.

First, I talked to my acquaintances, my then future husband, his relative and friends. I surfed the Internet, searched for the best places to live, for some sights, nature, things like that.

Tatyana, 47 years

Respondent sample

At stage two of the study, we conducted a series of interviews with millennials and members of the reform generation who moved to Kaliningrad after 2014. Forty-four respondents took part in the survey. Several methods were employed to recruit participants in the survey. Firstly, we used contact information given by respondents of an earlier mass survey about the socio-economic, cultural, and political potential of the Kaliningrad region (2019). Secondly, we invited acquaintances, colleagues, and students to participate in the interview and posted relevant information to the social media accounts of the sociological laboratory at the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University. Thirdly, there was a snowball effect: new respondents were recruited by those interviewed earlier.

We interviewed 15 members of the reform generation (six men and nine women) and 29 millennials (10 men and 19 women). Most of them had arrived from other Russian regions (29 people). The most common cities of origin were Arkhangelsk (four people), Omsk (three people), Chelyabinsk (three people), Murmansk (two people), Saratov (two people), Vladivostok (two people), and Barnaul (two people). Most international migrants had come from former Soviet republics, such as Kazakhstan (ten people), Belarus (two people), Ukraine (two people), and Latvia (one person).

Since more millennials took part in the survey than members of the reform generation did, we processed the interviews using c-coefficient (Atlas. ti software). Code co-occurrence, or c-coefficient, indicates the strength of the relationship between two codes. It varies between 0 (no relation) and 1 (the maximum strength of the relation). C-coefficient values below 0.1 were interpreted as no relation. The coefficient was calculated from the formula: $c = n_{12}/(n_1 + n_2 - n_{12})$, where n_{12} is the frequency of co-occurrence of codes 1 and 2 in the selected fragment; n_1 and n_2 are the frequencies of occurrence of codes 1 and 2 respectively throughout the project.[1] According to the formula, the strength of the relationship between codes is affected more strongly by the number of co-occurrences than by the occurrence of each. This way, the quantitative difference between codes is levelled off (in our case, this is the difference between representatives of two generations). A computer-assisted analysis made it possible to establish the relation between millennials/members of the reform generation and several variables (media representations).

[1] Atlas.ti 8 Windows — Full Manual, p. 169.

Content of the main media representations
of the Kaliningrad region

We dedicated a special publication to how the content of representations of the Kaliningrad region changed in Russian media in 2014—2018 [35]. Thus, this section merely outlines each of them. The media representation 'a region of international cooperation' is found in the statements of Russian and European officials about mutual commitment to cooperation and news pieces on daily contacts between Kaliningraders and Poles, the introduction of electronic visas for foreigners, and incidents of Russophobia in Poland and Lithuania.

The media representation 'a region with developing infrastructure' has three components — medical, logistic, and those related to the energy sector.

The 'tourist destination' representation is constructed by publications about the gambling zone, music and movie festivals moving to the region, the amber festival, the preparation for the 2018 FIFA World Cup, the preservation *and enhancement* of cultural sites, and the improvement of accessibility and convenience of local beaches and the Curonian Spit national park.

The media representation 'a region of economic prosperity' is comprised of news items about the offshore zone on Oktyabrsky Island, cryptocurrency mining prospects, and advances in production, the fishing industry, and agriculture, as well as of publications on the special economic zone in the Kaliningrad region and the territory's ranking on the investment climate.

The 'military outpost' representation is made up of publications about militarisation in response to growing NATO presence, the development of the defence industry, and naval reinforcements in the region.

Media representations of the region
and the migration attitudes of newcomers

When considering the representation 'a region of international cooperation', respondents focused on the exclave position of Kaliningrad, the advantages and disadvantages of proximity to the EU. We looked at what role regional geography had on respondents' decision to move to Kaliningrad, i. e. whether they were motivated by prospects of international cooperation or viewed the exclave position as a spatial, cultural, and economic obstacle.

Analysing the co-occurrence of corresponding codes revealed a significant difference between the two generations (Table 2). For millennials, the border position of the region is a predominantly positive factor. The answers given by members of the reform generation revealed both negative and positive attitudes to the regional geography.

Table 2

Attitudes to the exclave position as a factor in international cooperation

Generation	The region's exclave position is a positive factor in international cooperation	The region's exclave position does not affect international cooperation	The region's exclave position is a negative factor in international cooperation
Millennials	0.63	—	0.33
Reform generation	0.25	0.19	0.32

Source: results of data analysis using Atlas.ti software.

Members of both generations named opportunities for travel and shopping in the EU as advantages of the region's exclave position:

> The pros of moving to Kaliningrad are are the easy of traveling to Europe, the opportunity to buy groceries in neighbouring countries and make trips there.
>
> *Tatyana, 47 years*

> When I lived in the Far East, I couldn't afford a trip to Korea, Japan, or China. It was rather costly… But when I moved here, I visited three countries in about six months. I went to Rome, Barcelona, and then flew to Paris right away. Of course, I thought about this when I was deciding to relocate.
>
> *Valentina, 22 years*

When commenting on the downsides of the exclave position, members of both generations once again gave very similar answers. They believe that the main problems are poor transport connections to mainland Russia and the need to obtain visas for travelling overland.

> We knew that, without a visa, you can travel to mainland Russia only by air or sea. To go by car or train you need a passport and a visa'
>
> *Vyacheslav, 46 years*

The survey also highlighted inter-generational differences. For millennials, proximity to Europe is a strong motive for moving to the Kaliningrad region. They see the exclave position as an opportunity. The European factor was less relevant for the reform generation [36, p. 95].

To analyse attitudes to the 'military outpost' representation, we asked whether a possible threat from neighbouring NATO member states was a factor in respondents' decision to move to the region. Most millennials did not anticipate any danger of this kind (Table 3).

Table 3

Attitudes to the military factor

Generation	NATO is not a threat	NATO is a threat
Millennials	0.49	0.14
Reform generation	0.26	0.25

Source: results of data analysis using Atlas.ti software

For the reform generation, the strength of the relation to the answers 'NATO is a threat' and 'NATO is not a threat' was almost equal.

Back there [the respondent arrived from Riga], anti-Russian propaganda began four years ago. So, I worried about proximity to NATO states, that is, about provocations from belligerent pro-American forces. For me, moving here meant joining friendly forces.

Vitaly, 43 years

Most millennials were indifferent to this topic. There were several reasons for such attitude. The first one was a lack of knowledge:

I didn't know that the Kaliningrad region bordered on NATO states. I was never interested in what countries were members of the bloc.

Vasilisa, 20 years

The second was a humanistic stance: '

I didn't worry about that at all. And I still believe that people of the 21st century want to live in peace.

Ivan, 27 years

The third reason for millennials' placidity was geopolitical considerations:

As long as the Russian Federation has nuclear weapons, we have nothing to worry about.

Yulia, 27 years

A casual attitude of Kaliningraders to NATO is uncommon for residents of Russian border regions. The survey showed that, as compared to Crimea and the Murmansk and Primorsky regions, Kaliningrad had the smallest percentage (44%) of those who regard a military attack on Russia as probable [37, p. 117] or consider a 'military outpost' development strategy optimal for their region [37, p. 122].

The influence of the 'tourist destination' representation on the migration attitudes of respondents was studied by examining how tourist trips to the region and the degree of awareness of its history, ecology, climate, and cultural and natural sites affected the decision to relocate.

Most members of the reform generation mentioned the historical components of the region's attractiveness as a tourist destination (Tabe 4).

> I decided just to have a look at first. I came to Kaliningrad, and I liked it a lot — the nature, the architecture. I love little old houses, especially German houses.
>
> *Irina, 50 years*

Another significant factor was nature and climate.

> Firstly, it's the mild and moderate climate. Secondly, it's easy access to the sea. It's cold, of course, but it's still a sea. And you can get there whenever you want.
>
> *Eduard, 44 years*

Table 4

Social mobility incentives for millennials and the reform generation

Millennials			
Number one incentive	Number two incentive	Number three incentive	Number four incentive
Nature and climate (0.43)	Economy (0.41)	Geography (0.36)	Historical heritage (0.2)
Reform generation			
Number one-three incentives			Number four incentive
Nature and climate (0.23)	Historical heritage (0.23)	Family matters (0.23)	Geography (0.21)

Source: results of data analysis using Atlas.ti software

For millennials, nature and climate are also among top migration priorities.

> When relocating, we only considered what we saw ourselves when we were visiting friends here. We came in November, and there was no snow. And the trees were still green.

Pavel, 33 years

But the economy is more important than the historical and geographical factors.

> Locals are obsessed with the German bi-level bridge… I don't understand what's so special about it. It's horrible, ugly, and inconvenient. Some even like the House of Soviets. Anyway, it's one of the sights too.

Daria, 29 years

The weight of the representation 'a region of economic prosperity' was estimated based on how respondents correlated their prospects after relocation with the economic situation in Russia's westernmost region. Millennials distinguished several components in this media representation.

The industry component:

> I moved because I wanted to try my hand in a different kind of business — tourism. I thought that this region would offer great prospects in the area.

Ilya, 32 years

The projects and prices component:

> Kaliningrad is constantly developing because of its offshore zone. There's a gambling zone too. Europe's investing in the region. What's also important is the pricing policy. Probably, only Naryan-Mar, Novaya Zemlya, Murmansk, and Franz Josef Land are more expensive than our part of the world [the responded arrived from Arkhangelsk].

Evgeny, 36 years

The career component:

> I had a goal, to work in my field of expertise. I came across a vacancy in Kaliningrad. World-renowned confectioner Elena Gnut lives here. She needed an assistant. I didn't even expect that she'd choose me…

Yana, 33 years

Nevertheless, members of the reform generation rarely linked their decision to migrate with the awareness of the socio-economic situation in the region. Three scenarios describe the attitude of respondents to the representation 'a region of economic prosperity'.

1. Passive scenario. The respondent was not interested in employment or asked acquaintances or relatives to find them a job.

> Friends told me about this job, and they arranged a job interview. I came and got the job.

Elena, 45 years

2. Active scenario. The respondent was looking for a job but adopted a wait-and-see strategy.

> I was sending out resumes. I waited for someone to reply. All the interviews were over the phone.

Viorika, 51 years

3. Proactive scenario. The respondent learnt about the situation in the region in advance and took full responsibility for employment.

> I talked to some acquaintances and my husband. I monitored job search websites and applied for different jobs.

Tatyana, 47 years

The representation 'a region of developing infrastructure' had little effect on the migration attitudes of either generation. It was, however, mentioned by millennials a few times.

> I was looking for a nice city with a developed infrastructure, especially children's facilities.

Yana, 33 years

Results and conclusions

This research of attitudes to migration has shown that the investigation of effects of place image on intention to migrate is at the stage of conceptualisation in Russia. The article aimed to contribute to the field of knowledge by correlating motives for migration with the media representations of the destination. When interviewing respondents, we did not encourage them to focus on any particular topic. We only tried to understand what idea of the Russian exclave they had when relocating.

In practical terms, the media representation 'a region of international cooperation' as a motive for migration means opportunities for travel and shopping in neighbouring countries. Respondents did not see incidents of Russophobia in Lithuania and Poland or simplified entry to the region for foreigners as factors in international cooperation. Nonetheless, both topics have been widely discussed in the Russian media. Members of either generation were not looking for cooperation opportunities pointed out by Russian and European officials (receiving education, business contacts, etc.).

The 'military outpost' representation appeared in the answers given by reform generation respondents. Some of them worried about the military situation in the Baltic Sea region. These concerns may be explained by the fact that the reform generation moved into adult life in the 1990s when the USSR disintegrated, and the country's role in the international arena decreased. Millennials, who matured in the 2000s when the country was more active internationally, were much less affected by this media representation.

Only nature/climate and historical heritage, the region's major tourist attractions, were mentioned by members of both generations. Local infrastructure projects earned little interest from respondents. Perhaps, media representations aimed at potential tourists have little effect on prospective migrants who focus on other things.

The region's economic potential as a motive for migration has a different effect on millennials and the reform generation (Table 4). The strong presence of this media representation in the answers given by millennials may mean that their decision to move to the Kaliningrad region was mainly career-driven.

Some media representations of the Kaliningrad region (tourism and infrastructure) have a negligible effect on the structure of migration attitudes, whilst others ('military outpost' and international cooperation) had a concomitant influence. There were both similarities and differences in how millennials and the reform generation interpreted some of the representations ('military outpost', 'a region of economic prosperity').

The interviews demonstrated that the attitude to a media representation is closely linked to the respondent's motive for relocation. For example, career-focused migrants were well aware of the situation in the local business community and international cooperation opportunities. Overall, the structure of motives for migration differed between the two generations. The highest priority for millen-

nials was career prospects, whilst the reform generation was looking for a comfortable place to live. Regional authorities should consider this conclusion when devising place-branding initiatives. Educational institutions and public and private companies may benefit from these findings by incorporating them into their recruitment programmes.

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