To be or not to be:
State death and the digital Leviathan

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Illustration on front page: *The digital Leviathan*. The iconic Leviathan, on the verge of demise and dispossessed of his guarantor for physical protection; the now broken sword, clutches a hard drive as a last mean of conquering death. In his left hand the sceptre is still in place. Originally it may have stood for something royal or divine but now it is left to symbolise the unity of the collective self – embedded in the state about to fall.
Abstract

This thesis explores state death and the possibilities to escape death that comes with the digitalising of the state. The analysis, built on earlier theorising of how we could understand what the state is, explicate the connection between the narrative of the identity, or “collective self”, and the survival of the state through a repository of its key information, which in turn could be viewed as an asset in terms of recognition. Hence we could envision the possibility for the state to possess identity repositories where certain information becomes the bearer of identity, which ensures the survival of the narrative of the collective self, after invasion and territorial conquest. This is also put in relation to statehood and its intimate connection to the contemporary notion of spatial domain and how it might be affected by digitalisation.

Key words: State death, digitalisation, narrative, collective self, recognition.
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I. A beginning of an end: introduction

Throughout human history many political entities have been born, lived and then died. States, the prevalent term denoting this kind of political entity, are born from the thought, will and labour of humans. The continuous development of ideas amongst humans of states as centres of authority and politics has given the state both existence and political power. Some states have died as a consequence of the acts of other entities aggression or lack of will to preserve them amongst those whom held it up by thought, will and labour. The fate of states during the course of history has been one of change in regards to the shape and outline of their political forms and constitutions. An example of this is the relationship between territory, authority and sovereignty and how the technological development of cartography came to cause and affect that relationship and notion of statehood.¹ As noted by Jordan Branch:

> The modern state was founded on a collection of narratives about and representations of the world, a major component of which was supplied (and continues to be supplied) by maps. The question remains, then, as to whether new technologies and practices will strengthen, transform, or replace those foundations. Focusing on the intersection between technological changes, ideas of legitimate authority, and political practices offers the best means of approaching this fundamental issue.²

This approach to the evolving conditions and construction of statehood holds two interesting aspects for the life of states.

Firstly the existence of the modern state is, according to Branch, founded on a collection of narratives. Narratives derived from persons and collectives of persons are fundamental building block of the state.

Secondly, technological development influences the ideas that construct what the state ‘is’. While this gives understanding of the life of the state, as a concept, we may presume that it would also set conditions for the fate of states – including the possibility of death.

² Ibid; page 185.
The fate of the individual state have so far encompassed everything from a long life, changing conditions of existence, turbulence such as internal strife and in some cases - violent death at the hand of external powers. The reasons for state death has been explained by geographical position, internal structural problems and unsettled territorial disputes. While the explanations for state death are many, territory seems to continuously reappear in debates about the risk of state death and the death itself. Through invasion and occupation many states have met their end. As stated by Brandon Valeriano and John van Benthuysen:

States are at greater risk of death when their territory is either questioned (disputed) or conquered by another state. By losing control of territorial boundaries, or the homeland, a leader’s political authority is fatally undermined. Political leadership is hard pressed to control the foreign policy destiny of the state when its territorial integrity becomes threatened. Therefore, it is suggested that a primary factor that can account for the death of a state is the existence of a territorial issue.

Without control over territory the fundamental requirements for being perceived and recognised as a state dissolves. While Valeriano and van Benthuysen points towards hardship for the political leaderships regarding the perseverance of a state it is of the utmost importance to recall what Jordan Branch highlighted earlier. “The […] state [as a concept] was founded on a collection of narratives about and representations of the world.” While constituting an integrated and key component of a state the political leadership is merely one part of a greater construction, which is in need of having its foundations, i.e. the recognition from its people, intact. These foundations – the

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3 The term ‘violent state death’ should be understood as in Fazal, Tanisha M. "State death in the international system." *International Organization* 58.02 (2004): 311-344. To Fazal violent state death is “cases in which one state uses military force to conquer or occupy another” and is no longer able to conduct foreign policy (page 312); The extensive use of anthropomorphisms and metaphors surrounding the state is a thoroughgoing topic in this thesis.


7 Valeriano and van Benthuysen (2012); page 1170. Also see Branch (2013) on authority, sovereignty and territory.

8 Ibid; page 1170.

9 Branch (2013); page 185.
narratives and the representations of the world – are ingrained in how “state people”, be that political leadership or ordinary citizens, perceive and act upon the world. Hence, these fundamentals are key in understanding the conditions for birth, life and death of states. State death in the last two centuries of history “has occurred quite frequently […] fifty of 202 [sic …] states have died, and most have died violently”\(^\text{10}\). While our contemporary world, in the wake of the Second World War and since the inception of the non-conquest norm\(^\text{11}\), seems to constitute a safer environment for states\(^\text{12}\) the advent of state death seems to still be present within the international community.\(^\text{13}\) The research mentioned above is focused on factors, like territory and the control of it, as variables that play a crucial role in the demise of states. The centrality of territory is evident in the Estonian Cyber Security Strategy for 2014-2017. The Estonian state plans to use “Virtual embassies [to] ensure the functioning of the state, regardless of [their] territorial integrity”\(^\text{14}\). This sentence highlights many interesting aspects of the state, some of which have already been mentioned above. Underlying the sentence are suspicions of something happening to the (Estonian) state that will cause hardships to its functioning. This is related to the territorial integrity of the state – something that could be interpreted as a common or usual mean or prerequisite to uphold the functioning of the state. The solution, or advantage, against the looming, but not yet unveiled threat is to be found in the beginning of the sentence: “Virtual embassies”. Virtual embassies (a digital back-up of key state information) provide a mean to ensure the function of the state, in a possibly dire situation where the territory of said state is under threat or even lost. In this case the Estonian strategy deals with the continuity of the state in the sense that it is its functions, such as “E-services, processes, and information systems (including digital registers of evidential value)”\(^\text{15}\), that continues to function during a territorial “challenge”.

\(^{10}\) Fazal (2004); page 312.
\(^{11}\) Ibid; page 231-234.
\(^{12}\) Ibid; page 339-340.
\(^{14}\) Ibid; page 9.
\(^{15}\) Ibid; page 9.
Research problem
The Estonian Cyber Security Strategy raises some interesting questions about the state, its preconditions for life and death and the development of digitalisation. If a scenario would play out where a state would find itself wholly stripped from its territory and by traditional standards already be dead or close to, what role could ‘virtual embassies’ – or put in other words; a digital ark - have? In order not to read too much into the Estonian Cyber Security Strategy this thesis uses the digitalisation of the state and state death as a point of departure in the investigation of the questions stated above and elaborated upon below.

Research questions and argument of the thesis
When one thinks of the life of the state it seems to be entwined with the fate of its spatial domain. If we employ a thought experiment, wherein a fictional state has implemented the measures delineated in the Estonian Cyber Security Strategy and subsequently loses its territory completely, the following two descriptive questions may posed:

In what sense could the state be said to “exist”\textsuperscript{16} after the loss of territory?

What instrumental means are there to be found to prolong or ensure this existence?

The argument made in this thesis is that it is necessary to understand the state as a collective self, attached to a narrative. Through digitalisation and its effect on the storing and accessing of information the narrative could in some sense be prolonged and protected in a situation where a state is at risk of complete territorial loss. The instrumental “solution” presented in this thesis should at no time be understood as a mean that could be enough in it self to provide a way of escaping state death.

The next chapter is used to present the disposition of this thesis where elaborations on each of the following chapters are presented.

\textsuperscript{16} The terms existence and life are used extensively through the thesis, and often synonymously. The precise moment of non-existence or death or is only possible with a clear definition of states’ preconditions for existence or life. As illustrated in this thesis the actual death of a state, viewed as a narrative, is more elusive in terms of an actual threshold. Hence “existence” should be understood as vitality or life force – and not a binary status of be or not be.
II. Disposition

The sole purpose of this chapter is to present the role of each of the following chapters, their logical ordering and relationship to one another. This chapter relies on meta-communication with the reader, which in turn reappears throughout the thesis to ensure a higher degree of intelligibility in the goings between chapters and ideas.

Following this Disposition-chapter is the third chapter of Methodology. This chapter is used to present and explain the underlying philosophy of science of the thesis, the chosen research design and empirical foundation. The fourth chapter, Death of States, holds an account of the relevant literature on the concept of state death. The chapter concludes with the identification of the need to understand what the state is in order to understand its death. Following the literature review are two chapters of theoretical frameworks. The first of these two, the fifth chapter; Defining and understanding the state – the stories told, presents Erik Ringmar’s narrative understanding of the state. The ensuing sixth chapter; Spatial domain and recognition, elaborates on the relationship between the state, its spatial domain and the recognition of this relationship, utilising Jordan Branch’s theoretical framework of the cartographical state. The seventh chapter; Repositories for information as a holder of identity, is of a more dual nature. An extension of the literature review is given on the subject of digital identity and information repositories within the technological community, along with a theory of “identity repositories” in a narrative context derived on the former and combined with previous social scientific reasoning on the subject. The chapter ends with a presented developed understanding of identity repositories as a holder of collective narratives. The next chapter, number eight – The possibilities of digitalisation – provides an account of an empirical observation of what information resources is believed to be possible migrate abroad by the Estonian state. The ninth chapter – Migrating identity repositories – contains the analysis of four different information resources and what they could mean for a state if they were to be migrated in the case of territorial loss. The tenth and final chapter – Not an end – concludes the analysis and a discussion of the results are made along with some remarks on the need for future research.
III. Methodology

This thesis relies on a hermeneutic scientific approach where the interpretation of text is central to reaching new knowledge. The author combines earlier approaches and frameworks of what the state is, theories of collective narrative and the possibilities of digital systems ability to function as repositories for narratives and identities. In order to do so a large amount of texts is consulted, interpreted and in the process of doing so also given new meaning in order to build new knowledge for the social sciences. In this chapter the methodological approach of this thesis is presented and explained. The chosen research strategy is outlined and motivated and the method of answering the stated research question is elaborated on.

Ontological assumption

Ontology, i.e. “the study of what there is” guides the enquiry and this thesis in approach to the existence of things, under which conditions they can be said to exist and how they are related. The ontological assumptions made in this thesis are idealistic in their approach to social reality. This idealism should be understood on the basis of the dichotomy approach to realism and idealism. An elaboration on the applied ontology is done in the part Applied ontology of this thesis.

Ontological idealism in social science treat social reality and the external world as something that is constructed by individual minds. As described by Norman Blaikie ontological idealism takes the position on social action as not being mere behaviour but, instead, involves a process of meaning-giving. It is the meanings and interpretations created and maintained by social actors that constitutes social reality for

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17 Hermeneutics – “Hermes, the winged messenger of the gods, was […] the deity of speech, writing and traffic [emphasis made by the author of this thesis]. Hermeneutics is the art of interpreting what Hermes brought.” (Hacking, Ian. Historical ontology. Springer Netherlands, 2002; page 93).


them. Social reality consists of the shared interpretations that social actors produce and reproduce as they go about their everyday lives.20

During the research conducted for this thesis this philosophical standpoint enables the investigation of the self and collective self’s identity in terms of social constructions, which derives their existence from social actors’ interpretation of them. On the other hand it limits the possibilities from investigating identities as absolute objects with set properties and attributes. Intimately connected to the ontological assumptions that are made in the thesis is the epistemological assumption on how knowledge of social reality can be obtained.

**Epistemological assumption**

The epistemological assumption, i.e. “the [philosophy] of knowledge and justified belief”21, defines what is possible for the enquiry of this thesis, in its approach to acquiring and building knew knowledge for the social sciences. The epistemological assumption about the world utilised in this thesis is social constructionism.22 The social constructionism notion of knowledge and how it is acquired by social scientists is that it is dependent on the conceptualisation and interpretation of social actions and experiences. For a social scientist the very construction of knowledge is in itself socially constructed and it relies on the actions and interpretations of other social actors, constituting their own constructed realities. This assumption allows for the building of knowledge of state and man through conceptualisation of the meaning that has been given to these entities by different social actors. The prime subjects of inquiry are different social scientists and political thinkers whose thoughts and interpretation of the state are used to further theorise about the life and death of this entity of social construction. However the enquiry also encompasses the investigation of actors within the technical community as well as within the Estonian state. The construction of knowledge about the world happens amongst both social actors and those who study these actors and their realities.23 What happens between these two levels of construction

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22 The term ‘constructionism’ is derived from the definition made by Norman Blaikie (2014); page 22.
23 Ibid; page 22-23.
is of central importance for the research strategy presented below and utilised logic of abductive research strategy.

**Research strategy and method**

The research strategy of this thesis is to employ an abductive logic of enquiry.\(^\text{24}\) As stated in the introduction of this chapter the goal of the thesis is to operate with a combination of existing theoretical frameworks, and empirical observations. The chosen research strategy and logic of enquiry for this thesis encompasses a working method that describes and understands social reality and its conditions. As explained below, the central theoretical framework to be utilised is based on an idealistic form of ontology and the epistemology in turn takes on a constructionist approach. As defined by Blaikie\(^\text{25}\), the conditions and requirements stated below falls within the frameworks of an abductive research strategy. In the structuring of enquiry and presentation of said work the author goes back and forth between intuitively using already existing ideas and theories, analysing new phenomena observed as empirics and then go back to the theory with new insights on necessary adjustments and/or new points of development in terms of what it could be applied to. The application of Ringmar’s theory of recognition and identity, Branch’s theoretical framework of the cartographic state and technological impact on statehood demands an evolving process of observation and reflection. Chapter five and six essentially contains two theoretical frameworks where key conceptualisations of social realities are highlighted, combined and explained in order to understand the state, its relation to spatial domain and its death. The part of “going back and forth”, which is essential in the abductive logic of enquiry, and process of is utilised in the seventh chapter; *Repositories for information as a holder of identity*. The prime objective in this chapter is the theorisation and conceptualisation of “identity repositories”, which is needed in order to understand the potential usefulness of the migrating of information resources abroad in the case of territorial loss – accounted for in chapter eight and analysed in chapter nine. As stated in the *Disposition*-chapter a short literature review is given on the subject of digital identity and information repositories within the technological community, as well as some conceptualisations on the subject by social scientist. Ingrained in this review is a theorising of “identity

\(^{24}\) Ibid; page 56, 88-104.  
^{25}\) Ibid; page 68.
repositories”, deriving the understanding of individual and collective self, and identity on Ringmar’s narrative understanding of the self.

In order to gain knowledge about how social actors view and understand digital systems and information repositories, the hermeneutic interpretation is directed at their (written) formulations about it. At this point in the abductive process Blaikie raises another important issue:

The language that the researcher uses to describe and understand actors’ social world needs both to be derived from lay language and to stay as close as possible to it. Abductive logic requires a hermeneutic dialogue to occur between first-order, lay concept and meanings and second-order, technical concepts and interpretation.26

The “first-order lay concepts and meanings” should be understood as what the actors, subjected to enquiry, is telling us about digital systems and functions, information and identity repositories.27 This is in turn the foundation that the researcher derives his second-order interpretations from – used throughout the thesis and analysis. Method-wise this process of interpretation must be clearly accounted for, and the language used coherent through the thesis. The extensive use of block citations has a dual purpose in this case. It provides both a way of presenting an idea or conceptualisation that takes the reasoning of the thesis forward, at the same time as it illustrates the ensuing hermeneutic interpretation.

**Applied ontology of this thesis: the self and collective self**

This thesis is built upon an ontological idealistic approach to the view of being, identity and (social) reality. Hence the view and ontology of this thesis most central object of study – the state – is derived from the Hegelian notion of self-consciousness and primary on the interdependence of such consciousness through the adaptation of Erik Ringmar’s approach to the state and its narrative.

To understand this self-conscious and what Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel meant with it the author have chosen to rely on the interpretation of Hegel’s work by Peter Singer.28 In short Singer concludes that for Hegel “self-conscious beings [will

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26 Ibid; page 101.
27 The term ”lay” is used to mark the relative standings of the social actor and the social researcher in an enquiry. Lay is lay for the social researcher in the context of the field of enquiry (social science), the actor(s) subjected to enquiry in this thesis is in no instance a layman within their own fields of research and/or work.
find] that to realize itself fully it must set about changing the external world and making it its own”. This leads to the need amongst each self-conscious to seek and acquire “acknowledgement or recognition [in order to be] ‘Selbstbewusstsein’ [i.e. being self-assured]”\(^{29}\). This necessary “bond” between individual minds stems from Hegel’s view on the self-conscious mind and the prerequisite for its existence. A self-conscious mind must be a consciousness mind that interacts with other consciousnesses. For Hegel “minds are not separate atoms, linked together by accidents of association. Individual minds exist together, or they do not exist at all”\(^{30}\).

The Hegelian notion of interdependence between self-consciousnesses has been used to generate a framework focused on the ontology of subjects, i.e. the stories that the subject is telling about it and how they resonate with the stories that are told by others about said subject. This ontology is according to Ringmar\(^{31}\) taking the shape of a narrative, which in turn formulates and builds a story over time. To Ringmar we as persons

… are more than physical matter [...] this ‘more’ is what comes into being through the stories that we tell. Similarly, while a state may consist of all kinds of bureaucratic structures, institutional mechanisms and other body-like organs, it is – as an entity endowed with an identity – necessarily at the mercy of the interpretations given to it through the stories in which it features.\(^{32}\)

As subjects the self and our collective self is generated by the Hegelian interdependency between different self-conscious subjects and their need for (mutual) recognition. The story of the subject may be highly contested and is likely to change over time or even end, in some sense. The important aspects of the need for recognition is that in the process of ‘establishing’ one self or a collective self, like a state, the world is inevitably shaped and given meaning. The ontology is what socially is being ascribed a subject such as a man or a state.

\(^{29}\) Ibid; page 76-78.
\(^{30}\) Ibid; page 96.
Empirical observation
The empirical observation of this thesis is the Estonian *Virtual Embassy Initiative*. To investigate the empirics of this initiative two pieces of material are consulted. The first one is the *Estonian Cyber Security Strategy for 2014-2017*. The strategy accounts for the strategic context in which the Virtual embassies are to play a role to ensure the functioning of the state, regardless of territorial integrity". The second piece of material is the *Implementation of the Virtual Data Embassy Solution* –report. This report provides an account of the research made by the Estonians in the migrating of two information resources, and related legal and technical perspectives. The empirics gathered from these two materials can be divided into two categories; *thoughts* and *instrumental means*.

The *thoughts* are the perceptions of the state, its relation to territory, functioning – and presumable existence – following a challenge to the “territorial integrity”.

The *instrumental means* are the possibilities of handling information by utilising digital media for storing, transferring and communicating information.

Theses two materials might seem to constitute a relative “small amount of text”. At the time of writing this thesis there appears to be little else of interest in way of empirics to gather on this case. However, the small amount of text should not be confused with limited empirics. By asking the right questions to the chosen material the richness and ampleness of its empirical content unfolds.

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IV. Death of states

History bears the story of many realms and states. They are born, they live together and eventually some of them have come to demise. The notion of state death can be quite surreal especially if one thinks about the death of a contemporary western state like Sweden. While the threat of state death for Sweden might feel like a distant and quite obscure notion the global historic account shows that such has been the fate of other states. In the words of Thomas Hobbes – “nothing can be immortal, which mortals make”.

While the life and continued strife of states has been subject of much research and debate amongst social scientists the eventual death of some of the subjects usually falls within another academic discipline – namely that of historical studies. Lost kingdoms and vanished realms fill our history and in order to get to know some of them and their faith one can consult the extensive historical literature on the subject. In ‘Vanished Kingdoms: The History of Half-Forgotten Europe’ Norman Davies provides us with an account of the birth, life and eventual demise of 15 European states with their respective realms. Davies’ exploration of dead political entities and hidden, or buried, layers of realms on the European continent serves as a good outset for this thesis. The lesson to be drawn from Davies’ book, with regard to state death, is that states have been at risk of dying violently at the hands of other states. Conquest, invasion and eventual disintegration have killed and buried realms. In the ground the realm joins the other layers of vanished kingdoms and lost realms. As Kalevi J. Holsti notes “The high death rate of pre-modern polities through conquest and physical annihilation stands in stark contrast to the relative (in historical terms) security of statehood in the past two centuries”. However the state death has occurred the last two centuries of the modern international system and statehood.

35 Realm i.e. “kingdom or sphere, or domain” (realm Def. 1 and 2. Merriam Webster Online, Merriam Webster, n.d. Web. Accessed May 16, 2016) should be understood as the kingdom as a whole – the domain hold on to by a political entity such as a state.
36 Hobbes, Thomas. Leviathan. 1651. Part II, Chapter XXIX.
39 The Correlates of War Project. Correlatesofwar.org. Available from:
With the notion of the possibility for state death accounted for it is time to look at some of the variables that can help us understand the conditions for the death of a state, and also its survival. While not covering the more ancient history of the world and its different states the research conducted by Tanisha Fazal’s *State Death: The Politics And Geography Of Conquest, Occupation, And Annexation*\(^{40}\) provides answers to what conditions have been present at the death amongst states since 1816. By using the Correlates for War index (COW) Fazal is able to identify one particular endangered kind of state – the buffer state. A perhaps depressing remark is the strong correlation between geographical position and risk of state death. This resonates with Rudolf Kjellén’s thought on geopolitics and the state. In his work *The State as a Living Form* Kjellén states, “The life form of the state is the tree’s, which stand and falls at its place”\(^{41}\). The spatial domain of a state seems to be vital to its chance for survival.

Fazal makes a concluding observation that “it seems that these buffer states are born to lose”. Based on her analysis Fazal formulates three concrete policy implications based on her analysis. For states that find themselves as a buffer between other rivalling states it seems that the acquiring of recognition, promotion of non-conquest norm and mobilizing of national resistance is key to surviving.\(^{42}\) Being a state one could use Fazal’s study and concluding policy implications as means of putting up more of a fight in the face of an existential threat. For nonbuffer states, especially in more isolated areas, demilitarization might “be a viable option”\(^{43}\). Another paradigm that plays a central role in Fazal’s research is the death of states is the post-1945 norm of non-conquest amongst states. As stated by Fazal the entrance of the US supported norm on the international stage has been followed by a decline in state deaths.\(^{44}\) While this might serve as a soothing fact Fazal makes a final remark on the 2003 US-led invasion in Iraq and its possible challenging of the non conquest norm.\(^{45}\) Events, such as the annexation of Crimea, which took place after the publication of Fazal’s work in 2011 may also signal that the non-conquest norm is facing continued challenges.


\(^{40}\) Fazal (2011).


\(^{42}\) Fazal (2011); page 232-234.

\(^{43}\) Ibid; page 233.

\(^{44}\) Ibid; page 231-232

\(^{45}\) Ibid; page 232, 234-239
The Russian aggressions against its neighbours in recent years could be seen as an echo from the more violently pre-1945 history where invasion and conquest where more common and states suffered a higher risk of death. Estonia, used as an example of a state temporarily vanishing under the Soviet empire in Davies’ Vanished Kingdoms, is geographically situated in a possibly dire spot. The Estonian Cyber Strategy for 2014-2017 might be seen as an empirical indicator of the existence of the fear of conquest in our contemporary world. In relation to the (digital) continuity of the state the strategy states that

E-services, processes, and information systems (including digital registers of evidential value) that are essential for the digital continuity of the state are constantly updated and mapped, and they have mirror and backup alternatives. Virtual embassies will ensure the functioning of the state, regardless of Estonia's territorial integrity.46

This planned measure reflects an interesting aspect of what the Estonian state identifies as possible threats and possible counter measure, or advantage, against it. In more general terms the survival of a state, as a set of functions, seems to constitute some part the aim. That Estonia prepares itself for a possible territorial challenge or crisis may be seen as something that could reaffirm the notion that the days of invasions and conquests are still not over. The measure to make a digital backup of the state opens up a wide range of interesting questions. If the state, to some extent, could be reduced to a mere set of functions and capabilities the development of e-government, digital backups and more or less autonomous systems opens up for a new approach to the life and survival of state. However the state would still have to exist in some sense, regardless of the level of autonomous functioning.47 Besides this function-driven approach the potentially massive amount of state information, such as public register, national land survey data and state gazette, could be viewed in its own right as something that would mirror what the state is or was. This point is elaborated on in the seventh chapter.

The passage from the Estonian Cyber Strategy highlights another aspect of the state and its survival. The relationship between the state and its territory is intimately

47 When interacting with the hypothetical set of autonomous functions we would still have to interact with “it”, i.e. the state. An elaboration of the “it” will be given at the beginning of the next chapter.
connected when talking about security in international relations. This might seem to be quite obvious – how could a state as an authoritative entity ‘be’ without control over some sort of spatial space with defined borders? However this “obviousness” is in itself highly interesting for the study of the state, statehood and the survival of states. This aspect, connected to the development of technology is addressed along with the survival of the state in the age of digitalisation in chapter six and ten. But firstly we must understand what it is that really dies when state death occurs. In order to do so we must know what the state “is”.

V. Defining and understanding the state: the stories told

A basic question that could be asked is in what sense we could say that a state exists at all. That the state holds significance in our lives and in the studying of the world might be easy enough to prove. We pay our taxes to ‘it’, we can work for ‘it’ and when we are born and finally die it gets noted somewhere inside of ‘it’. The bureaucratic apparatus and its servants are quite visible and the work being conducted on a daily basis shapes and defines many parts of our lives.

When we study the goings of the world the state has and still has a, if not the most, central role in terms of being an entity, agent and phenomena. In the academic field of international relations theory (IR) the school of realism holds that the state is a priori given, i.e. that the state should be the object of analysis when approaching the international arena. The priorities of every state are pre-socially given where the aim for power or security is ever-present. Through the realist approach the interior ongoing of a state is separated from its exterior life i.e. the international system – where the state is one solid entity amongst other entities. With a more pluralistic view of the world the state dissolves into a less rational actor with a multitude of sub-actors and bureaucracies that comes to shape and define states’ interaction with each other. As

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49 Control should be understood as recognised control in terms of sovereignty, and not effective control. In the case of for example Nigeria the effective control of territory could be questioned. It is still recognised as a state legally and thus, by all contemporary conventions, should have a territory.
51 This ontological separation between two different forms of political life – life inside the state and international relations between states – was first done by Machiavelli (Walker, R. B. J. *Inside/outside: International Relations as Political Theory*. Cambridge University Press, 1993; page 36).
Erik Ringmar notes “the two pictures seems to portray the same thing, only at different distances”\(^52\). Ringmar further states that:

> When viewed from afar – either in time or in space – the state appears unified and purpose. Yet if this is the case we have surely hit upon an entity of a very strange kind. It seems we need to take the state for granted in order to be able to analyse whatever goes on in world politics, yet the very same state mysteriously disappears once we start looking for it. The state simply vanishes somewhere in between the moment in which we start investigating it. But if our view of the state depends on our perspective in this way, how can we ever hope to give an accurate, and final, description of it? Where, and what, is it? Does the state, or does it not, exist?\(^53\)

Ringmar instead proposes that we should investigate the metaphorical language that surrounds the state and man. Since the state, as a collective self, is hard to understand as ‘being’ one should study it as something that always will be ‘being as’. Ringmar goes on to elaborate on the importance of metaphors in order to describe ourselves and collective selves. The lives of individuals are filled with the process of making sense of the unfolding of their lives, which in turn creates the narrative, composed of many metaphors. However, metaphors are confined to a given moment in time and since time moves onwards the metaphorical usage becomes temporal.\(^54\) Hence the metaphors in turn amounts to stories over time, which form a narrative of every self.\(^55\) Man, his life and the stories he tells are deeply connected\(^56\). This is also true when we approach our collective selves. Collective groups take on the form of imagined communities and the state could be seen as the “political guardian of this storytelling group”\(^57\). If the collective self truly is a narrative and a story then it can be open for redefinition by numerous actors with their own stories and accounts of the world. If those stories

\(^{52}\) Ringmar (1996).
\(^{53}\) Ibid; page 442-443.
\(^{55}\) Ringmar (1996); page 451.
\(^{56}\) Cf. MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. London: Duckworth, 1985; page 216: “[Man] is in action and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal” and Sartre, Jean-Paul. *La nausea*. Paris: Gallimard, 1938/1972; page 64 (translation made by Erik Ringmar (1996)); “[Man] is always a story-teller, he lives surrounded by his stories and the stories of others, he sees everything that happens to him through them; and he tries to live his life as though he were recounting it.” These two quotes are also used by Ringmar (1996); page 452.
\(^{57}\) Ringmar (2012); page 4.
become accepted over the original story the original collective narrative could change. Ringmar notes that

The result is an occasion when not only our interests, but also our identities are called into question; when we suddenly will be presented to ourselves as a new kind of character participating in a different kind of plot. In the case of an individual, perhaps we could call such a time an ‘identity crisis’; in the case of society, perhaps we could call it a ‘formative moment’.  

In the worst situation, for a collective self, the identity crisis leads to the end of the collective story and the “death” of the narrative. This Hegelian understanding of identity, recognition and acknowledgement of the self constitutes the most basic framework for understanding interactions, preferences and goals between different self-consciousnesses. Going beyond these fundamental conditions the world can be observed as a complex set of ideas and norms concerning, amongst other things, statehood. To be able to keep an identity the narrative of the collective self needs recognition and acknowledgement. One of the central conditions for statehood is territory. “Conditions” should be understood as the set of preferences that a multitude of self-consciousnesses would derive their “criteria”, or perception for recognition of other selves and collective selves. The need for recognition concerning the status of statehood for a collective self has clear implications for a state’s being or not being. Shortcomings in gaining recognition as being a state, and sovereign political unit, by other states severely limit the possibilities of Selbstbewusstsein and possibilities of “acting like a state”. Sovereignty is hence useful to approach “as a set of practices, ideas, beliefs, and norms [but ultimately it is] a distinct legal or juridical status. A state either is sovereign or it is not.” Sovereignty gives answer to what it takes to be a state, what it is to be a state (part of the identity), the continuity of life and possible death. “Any polity can claim sovereignty, but aside from internal governance the claim establishes no rights in relation to other states […] It is the other states that validate the claim through the act of diplomatic recognition.”

58 Ringmar (1996); page 456.
60 Holsti (2004); page 112.
61 Ibid; page 114.
sovereignty, and statehood is to join a “club”\(^{62}\) in the international society. Hence sovereignty, like territory constitutes a part of the foundation of the norms concerning contemporary statehood. However, the current norms and rules about the state as the sovereign holder of a territory have had strong influences on the international stage. These norms and rules come close to what could be perceived as a “truth”\(^{63}\) of statehood. Truth according to Freidrich Nietzsche is

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[a \text{ mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms}—\text{in short, a sum of human relations which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power; coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins.}\(^{64}\]
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The author would like to draw away the attention from “truth” in general but keep Nietzsche’s illustration of truth as “truth of statehood”. Like Sartre, MacIntyre and Ringmar\(^{65}\) the statement of Nietzsche emphasise the importance of what is being said about a subject. Nietzsche’s words on truth are brought up in this context not only to further illustrate and elaborate earlier points made by Ringmar on metaphors and anthropomorphisms. The quote in it self holds a metaphor, about coins, to illustration and give weight to what Nietzsche wanted to say about truth. Truth, metaphors and anthropomorphisms to Nietzsche, could be applied to what the state is. Just like a coin, battered to a point of formlessness where it is no longer a coin, the state with all its physical institutions and attributed status of subject loses its value and “being” the instant it looses recognition. It is at this point hard to envision recognition as having defined thresholds. Recognition from the international community, through

\(^{62}\) Ibid; page 114-115.
This has also been argued by Hans Kelsen to be a reciprocal process since a community that wants to be recognised as a state has to recognise the other community as a state, according to international law to “work”. “A state exists legally only in its relations to other states. There is no such thing as absolute existence.” (Kelsen, Hans. “Recognition in International Law: Theoretical Observations”. The American Journal of International Law 35.4 (1941): 605–617; page 609). Thomas Lindemann approaches recognition of statehood amongst states as something that goes beyond the ordinary recognition of identity – in this case it is about \textit{dignity}, i.e. a socially accepted and generally acknowledged standard of respect.” (Lindemann, Thomas (2012); page 212-213).

\(^{63}\) Cf. Agnew, John (1994); page 71; “It is ‘common sensical’ to see the territorial state as the container of society when the state is sovereign.”


\(^{65}\) MacIntyre, Alasdaire (1985); page 216, Sartre, Jean-Paul (1938/1972); page 64 and Ringmar (1996); page 450-452.
declarations of diplomatic recognition from states, is perhaps one of the most definable (and formalised) acts of recognition, with highly concrete implications for the collective self being denied of it.\textsuperscript{66} A state “battered and formless”, like the coin, to the point where it is stripped of territory would lose the recognition of being its former self. The intimate relationship between state and territory is elaborated on in the next chapter.

VI. Spatial domain and recognition

Intimately connected with the contemporary state is its authoritative standing over a spatial domain. As described in Jordan Branch’s book *The Cartographic State: Maps, Territory, and the Origins of Sovereignty* the modern notion of statehood and authoritative rule over one solid piece of territory can be traced back to the fifteenth century and early modern Europe. At this time the world looked much different from the world today and our contemporary international system of states with exclusive authority over each territory. In the early modern Europe a feudal vassal, who as an authority over a fiefdom with personal bond rather than territorial to a distant monarch, “shared” and overlapped the territory with authorities such as the church that also exercised authority over the people. The modern state and its sovereignty is “defined by a particular collection of ideas and practices of political authority: specifically, territorial demarcation and mutual exclusion” of sovereignty. Hence the origins of these ideas can be traced back to the early modern Europe and the beginning of the cartographic revolution. When the methods of cartography developed the ideas and construction of territorial authority changed over time came to be what it is today. According to Branch two processes within the cartographic revolution led to our contemporary international system and idea of statehood. The old

medieval territorial [authorities] over a series of locations, such as towns along a route of travel, was replaced by modern territorial authority over a uniform, linearly bounded space. Changes in mapping technologies both made possible the modern concept of territory and also undermined the authority of medieval spatial ideas [while] the elimination of non-territorial authorities resulted from this same explosion in the production and use of maps in early modern Europe. Political interactions and structures during the medieval period involved both territoriality and forms of legitimate authority divorced from territory, including personal feudal bonds and jurisdictional rights and duties. With maps increasingly used at all levels of European society, these forms of political authority not amenable to cartographic depiction were undermined, resulting in the exclusively

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68 Ibid; page 70-71.
69 Ibid; page 24.
70 Ibid; page 19.
Key points, to be used in this thesis, from this account of historical development is the relationship between technological development and the changing view on political entities, and by extension the reconstruction of political reality. Technologies, like cartography, in the hand of political will may be utilised to create information bearing documents, like maps over territories that are part of a ‘simulated’ real that holds much power in its ability to predate the “real”, i.e. spatial areas. As Branch concludes “the modern state was founded on a collection of narratives about and representations of the world, a major component of which was supplied (and continues to be supplied) by maps”. When the Estonian state talks about continuity of the state in relation to territorial integrity one must understand this in relation to “what is meant by security or conquest [which] changes depending on the domain that is being defended or expanded”. With the current ideas and practices of political authority and territory the loss or weakened control of the latter is critical to the former. However this critical relationship should be viewed as critical in relation to norms and ideas about contemporary statehood. The ideas about conditions for statehood finds embodiment in international law. The legal system for states dictates that “the state as a person of international law should possess […] a defined territory”. If a political entity wants to survive the international system as a state it must first and foremost be recognised as a state. Within this recognition lie the criteria and expectation of control over a territory. This set of rules might be seen as very real conditions for existence within the current international system. During the current norms and ideas of statehood the state as a subject “remains the same even as it changes its rulers, its citizens and its political

71 Ibid; page 68-69. Cf. Agnew, John (1994); page 60ff. The emergence of the modern state has also been referred to as the state being the undisputed winner of an mêlée with other subjects of authority and jurisdiction, such as the Holy Roman Emperor and the pope (Ringmar (2012); page 14).
72 Ibid; page 68. This argument is also made by Branch who relates this simulative power to Jean Baudrillard’s notions of the postmodern condition (Baudrillard, Jean. 1988. Jean Baudrillard, Selected Writings, ed. Mark Poster. Stanford University Press).
74 Ibid; page 22-23.
76 Ringmar (2012).
system, or as territory is added to or subtracted from it. It is only if the state is completely divided up by others that its subjectivity comes to an end”.77 Norms and ideas, part of what gets embodied by law, sets conditions like interests, preferences and goals for the self and the collective self. The birth, life and death of states are dictated by these ideas, but dictated by them through the shaping of other entities’ preferences for recognition and acknowledgement. The Hegelian Selbstbewusstsein leads to the search for recognition and acknowledgement for the collective self.78 Part of this search leads to the endeavours of shaping the surrounding world in accordance to one’s own perception of self and strife for recognition by others.

This chapter is concluded by some remarks on the continued development of statehood. The conditions for statehood in our contemporary world should be understood as constructions that have developed over time. What the future might hold for the state in terms of “criteria” for recognition is veiled in uncertainty. Branch gives his view on both the relationship between developments affecting statehood and what is necessary to think of when approaching subjects such as territoriality and sovereignty:

> Today’s economic, social, and technological changes may lead to a transformation of the very constitutive basis of statehood and the state system. Thus, we should ask the following: is the foundational ideational structure of political organization being changed by new forms of territoriality, by the undermining of territoriality, or by new forms of non-territorial organization? Is such ideational change being implemented in practice? These key questions are difficult to answer so long as we continue to assume a fixed definition of sovereign statehood and merely question whether that is being violated, weakened, or supported […] The question remains, then, as to whether new technologies and practices will strengthen, transform, or replace those foundations. Focusing on the intersection between technological changes, ideas of legitimate authority, and political practices offers the best means of approaching this fundamental issue.79

The notion of “fixed definitions of sovereign statehood” and the need to go beyond this formalised relationship paves the way for a more constructive approach to the state and its death through loss of territory. By taking Ringmar’s Hegelian approach to what the state “is” (a collective narrative) and what it needs (recognition of its story) is also part

77 Ibid; page 5.
78 Singer (2001); page 78.
79 Branch (2013); page 172, 185.
of the point made by Branch about the changing nature of statehood appears to be shifting trends in the stories about states, or their ontology.

Before dealing with information repositories and identity some summarising of the two theoretical frameworks is needed. The state (as a concept) and a state (the individual state) is its ontology, i.e. the collected stories told about it. The story derives from the process of making sense of the unfolding of life or existence, which in turns creates a narrative composed of metaphors and stories told over time. The story, or narrative, is in need of recognition from other selves and collective selves, i.e. states, as it unfolds. The state takes on the role of being a “political guardian of [the] storytelling group” that are the selves constituting the imagined community the state derives its existence from. Deeply entwined in the notion of modern statehood and the narrative of it is the connection to a spatial domain, or territory and sovereignty. This development was affected by the cartographical development in early modern Europe, which came to shape the political reality of the international system and statehood. This narrative conceptualisation of the self and the collective self, in this case the state, along an understanding of technological development and its impact on the conditions, i.e. political reality for statehood enables us to closer investigate the role of information repositories and digitalisation in the face of state death.

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80 Ringmar (1996); page 451.
81 Ringmar (2012); page 4.
VII. Repositories for information as a holder of identity: recognition of identity as a narrative

Within the technical community the concept of identity plays a central role in the interaction of people with functions and services based on information technology (IT) systems.82 Concerns about identity is often centred around information in the form of different attributes and identifiers, such as name, birth date and gender, connected to for example an account or entry in a register. In the digital, or cyber or Internet, realm these different personal attributes and identifiers manifest themselves to one or several “digital identities”83. In the context of the digital realm and online presence of people an individual have the ability to have several digital identities for our bank, social networks, health services and the broader range of services provided through e-government.84 The storing of such bits and pieces of identity-related information in repositories can potentially amount to a quite extensive representation of a person, in terms of information about attributes and identifiers. In fact a “digital identity is a representation of a human individual’s identity in a computer network system [...] A person does not really exist in the cyber [or digital] world”85. However that which does exist digitally might be seen as a mirroring, or embodiment of parts of a person’s identity. What does this mirroring of a fragmented identity represent, and how does it affect the self of a person? From the literature three different conceptualising statements highlights what might be an answer to this two-part question.

Eric Schmidt and Jared Cohen states that going online (for citizens) means coming into possession of multiple identities in the physical and virtual world. In many ways, [peoples’] virtual identities will come to supersede all others as the trails they leave remain engraved inline in perpetuity [...] what we post, e-mail, text and share online shapes the virtual identities of others86.

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84 E-government is the general label on the usage of IT by governmental agencies to provide their services and functions.
85 Thanh and Jørstad (2007); page 9.
The second statement concerns the developing relationship between identity in the digital and physical realm.

With continuing activities of individuals in both worlds it is most likely that a convergence between digital identity and physical identity will take place.\textsuperscript{87} 

The third statement illustrates the effect of digitalisation, through its pinnacle; the Internet, on collective relationships.

The Internet […] is able to give shape and substance to political relationships that might otherwise be only fleeting […] Benedict Anderson's […] perception of the close relationship between the progress of print-as-commodity and the congealing of national consciousness would appear in this case to be confirmed on a broader scale: a vast, borderless, relatively uncensored store of ideas, information, and images has now made it easier to imagine global communities or cosmopolitan federations of peoples, basically alike in their expressions of grievance, collective pride, and hope […] Computer literacy seems to confer something more than just the advantages of high-speed communication. It has at the same time simplified and solidified the connection between dissent and identity. The Internet in particular is a tool of both liberation and of liberative imaginings of the self.\textsuperscript{88} 

The first statement confers the separation between the digital and physical identity of citizens. Information in the digital realm, filled with attributes and identifiers, is viewed as being perpetual – it is most likely stored and collected in large amount, in different repositories for at least a very long time. The statement also points to the relationship between the different pieces of information that are being produced by people and how it affects, or even shapes the virtual identities of others. This shaping might be rather obvious – in the digital realm the pieces of information, such as text, images or voice recordings, have the ability to hold information about persons, such as events, 


relationships or opinions, which in total amount to one or several digital identities. However the relationship between the “digital and the physical” is yet in need to be clarified and explained.

This need gets even more apparent by the second statement – if a convergence between the two is under way then there must be a difference and separation between them initially that is disintegrating. This disintegration is said to derive from the “continuing activities of individuals in both worlds”. Our digital presence, increasing or not for the individual, fills the digital repositories with more and more identity-related information over time. Through communication and social networks, public registers and administration of services and commerce information about us is created on a daily basis. These information resources are to a varying degree containing information which says something about who we are. Are is the attributes and preferences that we have about ourselves, but also other people (selves) and institutions (collective selves) perception about us. Repositories subjected to the storing of such information are already being talked about as “identity repositories” within the technical community.  

The argument above should be sufficient to widen our understanding of the phenomena of identity repositories and how they are connected to the self, and the self’s search for recognition. This brings in the central meaning of the last statement; the digital realm lets relationships amongst different selves, which amounts to collective selves, get embodied extensively through the mass storage and instant communication of information. Connecting to earlier thoughts about collective conscious and imagined community Benedict Anderson work on nationalism is brought into the picture. Intimately connected to the contemporary state is the powerful belief that a people who share a common language, history, and culture should constitute an autonomous and sovereign political unit – namely nationalism. In his book Imagined Communities Anderson gives a thorough account for the rise of nationalism. One of Andersons main points is that the combination of the technical invention of the printing press and capitalism during the sixteenth century had a great impact on the formation of

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nationalism. When books were printed in vernacular languages instead of Latin a common dialogue started to emerge amongst different groups in Europe, which came to lay the foundation for the modern nation-state.\textsuperscript{91} Technological development and its effect on the formation of the collective self seems to reappear once again. As Ronald Niezen notes the “vast, borderless […] store of ideas, information, and images has now made it easier to imagine […] communities […] of peoples”\textsuperscript{92} from digitalisation.

To elaborate on the effects of digitalisation, imagined communities and the collective narrative that the state rests on Ringmar’s points about the state needs to be revisited. The state is a collective self. Just like the self (singular) builds upon the self’s narrative about the self the collective self is shaped and bound by its collective narrative. The narrative amounts to stories over time, which is filled with information in need of recognition from other selves. These stories could be understood as the simple collection of what is being said about a (collective) self. This collection logically encompasses all forms of information communicated around the self – verbal, painted or written – all formats that can be stored digitally. These repositories are the continuation of the Hegelian shaping of the world in accordance with the self.\textsuperscript{93} Hence part of the narrative of the self can be found within the numerous “identity repositories” already existing in the world. What ultimately may have changed with the digitalisation of information are the possibilities for a more active agency of the self in relation to other consciousnesses in an external setting.\textsuperscript{94}

The question then arises: what information repositories are “out there”, what content is possible to store within these repositories and how do they work?

\textsuperscript{91} As noted by Agnew, John (1994); page 59: “In the political science literature the term ‘nation-state’ is often used as synonymous with territorial state.”
\textsuperscript{92} Niezen (2005); page 549-550.
\textsuperscript{93} Singer (2001); page 91-92.
\textsuperscript{94} The difference could be illustrated by the differentiation between “I” and “me”. \textit{I} is used to ascribe myself active agency, i.e. the self is a subject pronoun. \textit{Me} is a passive form used to refer to something that happens to the self or define the self in some way, i.e. the self is an object pronoun. The perks of digitalisation; the access to – and the possibility for reshaping of information, allows a more active interaction with exterior identity bearers of the self. Information that would otherwise only allow for a presence of \textit{me} theoretically allows for an \textit{I}. Courtesy of the lyrics of the song \textit{In Search For I} by In Flames: “As I begin to search for I, The I is lost in me”.

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VIII. The possibilities of digitalisation: the Estonian Virtual Embassy Initiative

The Estonian Virtual Embassy Initiative was pursued in 2013. The initiative is part of the stated goal of creating and strengthening the digital continuity of the Estonian e-government. As stated by the Estonian government’s Chief Information Officer (CIO) Taavi Kotka: “geopolitical events in 2014 brought the question of continuity to the forefront of national conversations in Estonia”,96 making the Virtual Embassy Initiative part of planned protective measure against threats to central state digital information resources and functions. Being highly dependent on digital functions and services Estonia as a society and state is in need of a secured continuity in access to several digital resources. As an example “98% of banking transactions are done online, and most use either national identity cards or mobile IDs. It is of utmost importance that, even if a crisis develops in Estonia, digital authentication and authorization services remain operational”.97 Interaction between state and citizen, such as voting or paying taxes, relies upon the functioning of digital identities for authentication as well as access to a variety of information resources, such as the public register.98 The protective measures for strengthening the continuity of the digital state are centered on the backup of key information resources. Backup, i.e. the copying and archiving of data, are supposed to utilise three core elements of storing, complementary to one and another. Firstly a backup of data and “live services” will be situated within Estonia’s borders, i.e. the “Government Operated Cloud”.99 Secondly backups will be located at physical Estonian embassies, or dedicated data centres, in allied countries, i.e. “Physical Data Embassies”. Thirdly backups of (non-sensitive) data will be stored in the private sector’s public cloud, i.e. “Virtual Data Embassies”.100 The backup for different digital services and functions demands a continuous update of information. In the first element of backup, within the Estonian territory, the cloud computing enables this continuous

95 Kotka and Thomlinson (2015).
96 Ibid; page 5: “Continuity, or in this case digital continuity [should be understood as] information […] kept secure even if the state suffers a large-scale cyber-attack, natural disaster, or a conventional attack on a datacenter” (page 1).
97 Ibid; page 1.
99 Cloud, or cloud computing: ”the practice of storing regularly used computer data on multiple servers that can be accessed through the Internet” (cloud computing Def. 1. Merriam Webster Online, Merriam Webster, n.d. Web. Accessed May 9, 2016).
100 Kotka and Thomlinson (2015); page 7.
access and updating of information from multiple locations. The element of physical data embassies has in turn two approaches; both which is situated outside of the physical territory. The first approach is based on the utilising of allied government cloud solutions and dedicated data centres, through bilateral agreements. The second approach means utilising already existing physical embassies abroad, in “friendly countries”. The already established

diplomatic status […] would extend Estonian jurisdiction to the e-government services in question and ensure that they are afforded the same protections, including immunity, as a physical embassy, consulate, or ambassadorial residence. Indeed, transforming server rooms in physical embassies into data embassies would allow Estonia to create a network that would ensure its digital continuity, even in the face of determined efforts to damage it or take it offline completely.\textsuperscript{101}

The third element of backup is more restricted in terms of what kind of information that are being perceived as feasible to store in said environment, due to concerns about data protection, privacy, and data integrity. However, public clouds offer both a high degree of availability and have a high capacity to deal with widespread cyberattacks, and the information will be located outside of the physical borders of Estonia in the global cloud environment.\textsuperscript{102}

So far the Estonians have accounted for the test of two information resources being migrated to the public cloud. The information resources subjected to the test was the website of the President of Estonia and the State Gazette (Riigi Teataja)\textsuperscript{103}. There are two key points of interest from the Estonian case of “digital state backup” and digitalisation of the state in general. The digitalisation of information has the relative advantage of allowing vast amounts of information to be stored, accessed and updated over time. As the Estonian case shows it might also be possible for a state to have key state information resources migrated abroad in case of a crisis. For the sake of theorising about the possibilities of state survival, identity repositories and

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid; page 8.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid; page 8.
\textsuperscript{103} As stated by the authors; “The first government service, a ‘monument’ website, is the official website of the President of Estonia (\url{www.president.ee}); The second is a key government registry, the Riigi Teataja or electronic State Gazette (\url{www.riigiteataja.ee}); The State Gazette is a critical, public government web service, hosting Estonia’s official body of laws. No paper copies of the laws are kept and legal acts are only in effect if they have been published online on the State Gazette. Without the State Gazette, the Estonian legislative system would not be able to function, so testing the potential for migrating it to the cloud was of utmost importance.” (Kotka and Thomlinson (2015); page10).
recognition additional information resources could be imagined to be subjected to backup to a data embassy. In the next chapter two additional information resources – a Public Register and information of a National Land Survey (or National Mapping Agency)\textsuperscript{104} – are subjected to analysis in relation to the state, identity and collective narrative.

\textsuperscript{104} The collected data of a national land survey, or national mapping agency, generally contains geographic information of a country, topographic maps and cadastral information.
IX. Migrating identity repositories: the survival of the narrative

Before an analysis can be done on the digitalisation of the state and its survival post-territorial loss some recapture is needed on earlier points made in the fifth and seventh chapter.

The digitalisation of information has brought on immense possibilities for storing, accessing and updating information over time. Information subjected to storing can, and do contain identifiers and attributes of individuals. This is already observed within the technology community as “identity repositories”, in the context of tracking identity-related information for people with the authority to access managed systems.105 The next step is to draw upon Hegel’s understanding of the self-conscious’ search for recognition, and the adaption of Ringmar’s narrative conceptualisation of the self and the state. The process of fashioning objects, such as digitally stored information, “in accordance with [the self’s image] of how they should be [are part of the shaping of] the world practically as well as intellectually”.106 This logically extends to the digital realm where individual as well as collective selves create, shape and search for recognition for their narratives, i.e. “digital identities”. Hence the information repositories out there truly are identity repositories. The two information repositories tested by the Estonians for migration in the case of a crisis, and the two additional information repositories are now to be inquired for pieces of collective identity and narrative below.

President’s website

The first information resource subjected to the migration test in the Estonian case was the president’s website. The Estonians identified it as a “monument website”, defining this as a “websites with symbolic status […] defacement or other attacks on [such] websites would be seen as damaging to the reputation of the country”.107 In the collective narrative of a state some narratives have a greater impact and outreach then other narratives in the shaping of the collective identity.108 Such “strong”, or “symbolic” narratives would be likely to be found within communication from the political leadership of a country and its state. The collective narrative, embodied within the information resource of a public state, or presidential, website constitutes a part of

105 Iverson (2015).
106 Singer (2001); page 92.
107 Kotka and Thomlinson (2015); page 10.
what could be migrated and saved during a territorial loss as it has the virtues of containing influential identity-bearing content for a collective self. As believed by the Estonians the defacement – altering, corrupting or destruction – of such a website would be damaging for the countries reputation. In the case of a potential imminent state death the collective narrative may very well face a serious “formative moment” where the defacement and spreading of dissident or “hostile” information may erode the current narrative. To migrate and ensure the continuity for such a narrative bearing website after territorial loss seems to be a vital part in the fight for state survival.

**State Gazette**

The state gazette, i.e. a state’s official body of laws, constitutes a fundamental part in a functioning legislative system. While the backup and migration of such an information resource would save the information in case of territorial loss the system and people that depends on it might still have problems utilising and enforcing the national law due to the loss of control over the territory.

But the law in itself can be seen as having a part in the collective narrative of the state. As noted by Anthony D Smith the “cultural sphere [of] national identity is revealed in a whole range of assumptions and myths, values and memories, as well as in […] law [and] institutions”¹⁰⁹. The laws of a nation and its state is a substantial part of the self’s image of how the world should be, within the imagined community, and laws undeniably plays a part in how we shape the world practically as well as intellectually. Institutions of the state, as exercisers and vessels of law are part of this shaping. If these institutions cannot enforce the law and continue the shaping of the collective, due to loss of control over the spatial domain, the narrative of how the shaping was, and should have been still exist. Through the perks of digitalisation the storing, accessing and updating of said information might also enable a greater continuity in the legislative body. In the greater narrative of a state the migrating and ensuring of continuity of the legislative body of information could be an important step amongst others in fighting for state survival, in a narrative sense.

**Public Register**

The public registers amongst states are filled with identifiers and attributes of individuals. Moreover they contain information about relationships. The relationships

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in front of us can be divided into two levels of analysis. The first, and lowest level of analysis contains the relationships between individuals, such as marriage, parentage and heritage. The other, more “holistic level”, illustrates the wider and coordinated relationship between the individual self and the collective self. The register holds a map of the networks of some of the relationships between the different selves within the imagined community – constituting the foundation of a contemporary state. The importance of this information resource for the collective narrative is perhaps not the mapping in itself but what it embodies and symbolise – the collective bond between different selves and the collective. Given the norm of how a state “should be”, i.e. the ontology of a state as a concept, the register could hold an international value in terms of recognition and continuity for the state that lost its territory. The same way as the other information resources the public register would benefit from digitalisation in the sense of the narrative gaining increasing continuity and embodiment.

**National Land Survey**

Lastly, the information resource of a national land survey is to be analysed for collective identity and narrative. The collected repository of maps, cadastral matters and geographical data found within modern national land surveys have been subject to digitalisation within the contemporary state. What then is to be found within all this geographical – and ownership related information? Like the public register these information repositories are layered with information about relationships on two levels. On the lowest level the information of the land survey illustrates individual ownership of land, its spatial relation to other individuals’ ownership of land and collective ownership of land, such as common land. On the holistic level, like the public register, something more unfolds when we approach the collected amount of maps, geographical data and cadastral information of a state. What lies before us is the great narrative surrounding one of the most fundamental things a state, as a collective narrative, can posses – spatial domain. This kind of information repository contains the narrative of the collective self’s relationship to territory, the spatial room of the individual selves taking part in the imagined community and the forms and laws surrounding these relationships and ownerships. The national land survey might be the clearest example

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of how the self in a collective practically and intellectually shapes the world after its own notion of how it should be.
X. Not an end: concluding remarks on the survival of the digital Leviathan

“You are likely to be swallowed whole hence you must take care to ensure that you are not digested”

— *Rousseau on the imminent death of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth* ¹¹¹

The advice, laden with metaphors and anthropomorphisms, made by Jean-Jacques Rousseau to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the face of its approaching death captures something essential when thinking about the death of states at the hands of other states. We can interpret “swallowed whole” as the dispossessed of territory and total loss of control over any spatial domain. As noted before the state as a subject is intimately connected to its spatial domain and by law it vanish as a subject first when it is completely “[spatially] divided up by others”¹¹², i.e. “swallowed whole”. The second part of the advice speaks of something that should not matter if (state) death really was “death” as the demise of mortals. There is some need of clarification surrounding Rousseau’s advice and the actual “time of death” for a state. The “digestion” of the state could be understood as the dissolving of state institutions, political system and national identity. Drawing upon the discussion made in this thesis the state is what it is said to “be as” – the metaphors amounting to stories over time. These stories – the state’s identity – are the subject that is lost and/or transformed into something else when a state gets conquered (swallowed whole), and the suppression and dissolvent of it sets in (the digestion). Hence death seems to be quite illusive for the state, understood as a collective narrative.

That which is in common in all of the four examples given in the previous chapter is the embodiment of the collective narrative belonging to an imagined community. The embodiment, or substantiation is the collected amount of digitalised information, which has taken relationships, that was only “fleeting”¹¹³ or existed in print but limited by the constraints of physical paper and archives. Constrains in this context is the relative limits of the amount of information that could be stored, accessed and updated over time pre-digitalisation. With the coming of the digitalisation of information the conditions for state death may have changed, something that future


¹¹² Ringmar (2012); page 5.

¹¹³ Cf. Niezen, Ronald (2005); page 546.
research would have to empirically investigate. The narrative that would survive the “swallowing of the state” and escape the ensuing digestion through virtual embassies would contain an account and a mapping of identities, their interconnections, ownership and claims on spatial domain, amounting to a collective narrative – far more vigour than pre-digitalisation information resources. How then could this vigour, or resilience of identity repositories be relevant for states finding themselves at a shortage of territory? Two kinds of usage could be imagined. The first are the instances where status quo is to be maintained. The other usages are the instances where the aim is gaining activity in agency.

Status quo is the situation where a collective self is recognised as having the status of statehood but is facing a threat to its territorial control from an antagonist force. This would clearly fall within the framework of what this thesis explicitly has dealt with. However we could widen the theorisation of the narrative understanding of identity repositories and state death to the situation facing island states like the Maldives. Instead of being swallowed by an antagonistic state the sea would engulf the territory and the collective self would be in peril, as the people being a part of it would have to leave the former territory. The migration of both the collected narrative and the people constituting the imagined community poses an interesting field for future research. How would the collective narrative be pressed if the original spatial domain no longer were in question of controlling and the people of the collective self had have to find new lands?

The second usage; gaining activity in agency, is a viable possibility for enhanced vigour and resilience of those collective narrative whom already are dispossessed and/or denied statehood. The dispossessed would constitute the imagined communities that once constituted sovereign states, and met their death at the hands of an antagonistic entity. These “dead” states and hard pressed or dormant collective narratives would have the opportunity for an instrumental usage of the digitalisation of identity repositories in their struggle for “resurrection”. Besides resurrection the possibility for instrumental usage of identity repositories could also be relevant to the

birth of states, or at least preservation of non-state collective selves, such as a diaspora.\textsuperscript{115}

Along the individual strife of states the norms and laws of statehood – creating the conditions of the narrative in its “being” among other states – is worth some final remarks. If the assumption made in this thesis, about the changing conditions for survival against state death, is correct the potential for change in how we perceive statehood and its relation to spatial dominion may come about, or already be ongoing. Erik Ringmar gives one assessment of the current situation. The “intellectual giants” that stood on our shoulders have been shrugged off and their theory of rational choice will “pass into history with the passing of the hegemony of the state and the hegemony of the European international system […] questions of identities will […] become evermore prevalent. Our collective subjectivities will look for other vehicles to which they can attach themselves.”\textsuperscript{116} The specific role of digitalisation and identity repositories in this changing order might find some answer in the reasoning of Jordan Branch on the topic of cyberspace\textsuperscript{117}

The networking possibilities of cyberspace have also recently developed into a massive presence of online social networks [suggesting] the theoretical possibility of forms of community that are utterly non-territorial and non-spatial, instead being based on person-to-person ties. Yet the persistent strength of socialization by the “schoolroom” map – literally during school but also afterwards in the media and elsewhere – may leave little room for complex, non-cartographic forms of identity, community, and authority to take hold. After all, the very terminology of ‘cyberspace’ illustrates the resilience of modern territoriality and the strength of spatial understandings of the world, evident in the predominantly spatial metaphors applied to this new realm.\textsuperscript{118}

The spatial understanding and social reality of identity, sovereignty and statehood may indeed endure in the digitalised world. Endure however is not the same as unchanging, and that is why the development between authority, territory and narrative is truly something deserving of future attention and investigation for every science concerning itself with the life and death of states.


\textsuperscript{116} Ringmar (2012); page 14-15.

\textsuperscript{117} In this thesis cyberspace is understood as synonymous with the digital realm.

\textsuperscript{118} Branch (2013). Page 184.
The concluding remark of this thesis will be on the digitalisation as technological development and its meaning for the narrative of the self and collective self. Identity repositories without recognition from a consciousness cannot be anything other than information repositories. A collective self’s narrative stored within digital systems that is without recognition and political will, is nothing but an extensive library on the life off a state. Stored information is nothing but instrumental. It has the meaning that it is given by an interpreter or a collective of interpreters. This is ultimately the difference between an information repository and an identity repository – to become the digital ark of a state the ones and zeros needs recognition of those who are taking part in its story. Digital or not – the foundation of the Leviathan is what it always was.
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