

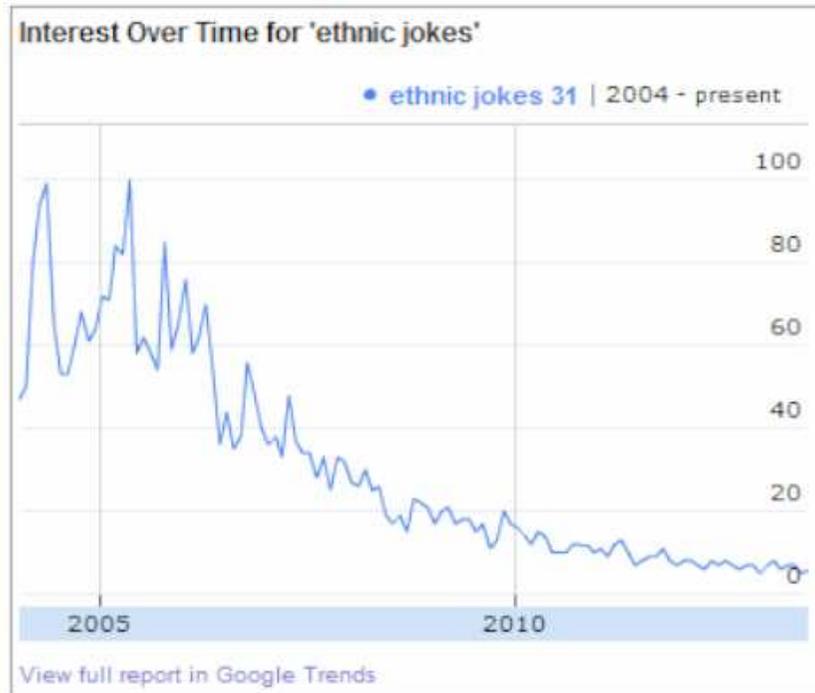
**CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN JOKES
ABOUT FINNIC AND BALTIC
NATIONALITIES**

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**A couple of words about ethnic
jokes in general**

According to Victor Raskin (1985), the three basic kinds of verbal humour are: 1) **sexual** humour; 2) **ethnic** humour; 3) **political** humour.



Nowadays ethnic humour is in **disgrace**, ethnic jokes are regarded **politically incorrect**, **offensive** to the targeted nations, **not funny**, people avoid telling them, the interest for them is drastically decreased in the last decades.

A special "neutral", "innocent" euphemistic **artificial term** has been invented to denote whatever ethnic character – the **Smogarian**.

Nevertheless, the tribes or nationalities that live in the **neighbourhood** of each other, or share one and the same **living space**, or are in **contacts** of some other kind, have been used to mock each other during all the history of mankind.

Some examples on **Kymians** and **Abderites** from the classical **Greek** collection **Philogelos** (not later than the 10th century of our era):

- A man from Kyme was trying to sell some honey. When someone came and tasted it and said that it was very good, the seller said: "Well, yes: if a mouse hadn't fallen in it, I wouldn't be selling it!"

ATU 1578A*. Philogelos no. 173: <http://www.curculio.org/Ioci/november.pdf>

- An Abderite, seeing a eunuch conversing with a woman, asked him if she was his wife. When he answered that a eunuch could not have a wife, he replied "Then she must be your daughter."

Philogelos no. 115: <http://www.curculio.org/Ioci/november.pdf>

- A Kymean doctor, operating on someone who was in terrible pain and crying out, switched to a blunter scalpel.

Philogelos no. 177: <http://www.curculio.org/Ioci/november.pdf>

- Running into a poindexter, a friend said "I congratulate you on the birth of your son." To which he replied "Yes, thanks to all my friends!"

Philogelos no. 98: <http://www.curculio.org/Ioci/january.pdf>

**Ethnic butts in
Russian jokelore**

In the **Soviet period** the list of **principal ethnic targets** in Russian jokes was quite short:

the **Jews,**
Chukchis,
Georgians,
Ukrainians.

After the collapse of the USSR the **former** ethnic butts have **continued** their existence in Russian jokelore.

But in addition to these a number of **new ethnic characters** have emerged – first of all the representatives of the former **Baltic** Soviet republics that regained their national independence in **1991**:
the **Estonians,**
Latvians,
Lithuanians.

Of these, the **Estonians** have evidently become the **most popular.**

1.	Russian	42753	21.	Tatar	905
2.	Chukchi	14981	22.	Greek	810
3.	Jewish	13369	23.	Turk	795
4.	American	7337	24.	Byelorussian	610
5.	Georgian	6642	25.	Kazakh	605
6.	German	4639	26.	Azeri	592
7.	English	4280	27.	Spanish	571
8.	ESTONIAN	3800	28.	LATVIAN	543
9.	Chinese	3787	29.	"PRIBALT"	521
10.	French	3207	30.	Chechen	504
11.	Ukrainian	2891	31.	Korean	475
12.	Japanese	2868	32.	Uzbek	462
13.	Armenian	2594	33.	Dutchman	442
14.	Pole	1959	34.	Bulgarian	317
15.	Italian	1205	35.	Khant	307
16.	Arabian	1137	36.	Persian	298
17.	Gypsy	1075	37.	LITHUANIAN	286
18.	FINNISH	1059	38.	Komi	275
19.	Czech	918	39.	Vietnamese	268
20.	Moldavian	906	40.	Eskimo	265

Eight years ago I performed a number of searches in the Russian search engine 'Rambler' to find responses to the search string 'X-ian' + 'joke' where X-ian was Russian, Chukchi, Jew, American, Georgian, etc.

The table on the left indicates the top 40 most frequent nationalities.

Synonymity of target nationalities

Folk narratives reveal quite a large synonymy and replaceability of "name labels" of their characters.

For example, there is the following item in our Russian Internet material:

•A Latvian is blowing bubble gum bubbles in a café, and trying to mock an Estonian: Do you eat the entire loaf of bread? – Yes, of course. – Well, we gather the crust in a container, make muslix out of it and sell it to Estonia.

The Latvian continues: Do you eat your bread with jam? – Yes, of course. – Well, we in Latvia use only fresh fruit, but we gather the seeds, skins and other rejects in a container, make jam out of it and sell it to Estonia.

The Estonian loses his patience: What do you do with your condoms after you've used them? – We throw them away, of course. – Well, we gather them in containers, make bubble gum out of them and then sell it to Latvia.

An **alternative pair** of characters in **Russian jokes** can be the **Finn (+)** and the **Swede (-)**. In Russia the joke is evidently a recent loan. In any case, **Google indicates** occurrences of the same plot with **dozens of other combinations** of peoples:

+	-
Canadian ~ Filipino ~ Irishman ~ Frenchman ~ Greek ~ Indian ~ Thai ~ Asian ~ Kenyan ~ Mauritian ~ South African ~ Australian	American
American	Canadian
American	Frenchman
Irishman	Englishman
Frenchman	German
Croatian	Serb
Lebanese	Syrian
Indian	Pakistani
Singaporean	Malaysian
New Zealander	Australian
Jamaican ~ Guyanese	Trinidadian
Nelson Mandela	George Bush

A **similar synonymity** holds between the **Finnic and Baltic butts** in Russian jokes. About 1/4 of observed 582 plots turned out to have **two or more** and **30** plots **three or more** different ethnic targets.

The following **five plots** were at least once connected **with all four nationalities**:

- **Quarrelling about unimportant trifles** (the possible "prototype narrative" of the now globally known expression [*Don't fight,*] *hot Xian guys* ~ ... *горячие Хские парни*)
- **At first, a hitch-hiker is told that Tallinn ~ Helsinki ~ ... is not too far, and, after several hours of driving, that it is now far indeed**
- **Пистатый паспорт** (obscene-sounding dialog between Xian and Russian customs officials)
- **Xian parachutists hovered above the town for three days**
- **Russians went into space? – Really, all of them?**

Russian jokelore in general **does not make a clear-cut distinction** between Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians, and the elements of their **languages**, their proper **names**, geographic **places** etc. are **often confused**.

For example, **Estonian schoolboys** can have **Latvian or Lithuanian names**, such as Janis, Mihalis, Peters, Vitas, **Estonian farmers** can have **Finnish family names**, like Kaakinen or Toivanen, etc.

The indistinguishability of the "pribalts" is well expressed in a Russian (self-ironic, I guess) joke:

- **A Russian says about Lithuanians: "Well, they are those who live in Riga and speak Estonian..."**

- The ESTONIAN (sic!) dog does not react to its master's call "Sharik!", but reacts to the call "Sharikas!" with merry barking "Gavs, gavs!"

I am sure that Estonians have never had dogs bearing the name **Sharik**, let alone **Sharikas**.

- ESTONIANS (sic!) finally translated the fairy tale "Peter Pan" – in it they have named him "Питарас Пенис" ("Pitaras Penis").

"**Pitaras**" is apparently also an allusion to the vulgar slang word **пидарас** (= homo).

In the texts above the Estonian is confused with the Lithuanian and Latvian.

Besides, there is a lot of other jokes proceeding from the fact that the **masculine substantives** in **Latvian** have the **ending -s** and in **Lithuanian** the **ending -as**.

The following two below come from Estonian jokelore:

- **'Cat' in Lithuanian is "Kurnäuskas" (*kurnäu* is one of Estonian counterparts for *miaow*).**
- **The hare (*jänes* in Estonian) and *peni* (i.e. 'dog' in the Southern Estonian dialect) discuss moving to Latvia.
The hare says: "In Latvia I will be called "Janis"."
The *peni* (dog): "Oh? Mmm... I see... I guess I will give up moving to Latvia..."**

The dominant of slowness

Slowness is not among the most widespread features of ethnic characters in jokes. It has originally been ascribed to several **Northern** peoples like the **Finns**, **Norwegians** and **Swedes**.

Under **Urho Kaleva Kekkonen**'s long rule, Finland had **friendly** political relations with the Soviet Union. Russia and Estonia were easily accessible to **Finnish tourists**, and Finland was one of the few foreign lands that were easily accessible to **Soviet tourists**.

Therefore it is a good reason to think that it is probably the image of the **Finn** that has **initiated** and **mediated** the process of the further **southward expansion** of the slowness stereotype in Russian jokelore.

But later, in the **1990s**, a great deal of slowness motifs were transferred to the now more current **Estonian**, who thus **took over** the role of the emblem of slowness.

In the following examples **EF ~ EFian ~ EF-land** mark jokes connected with both Estonians and Finns

“Brake”:

In contemporary Russian slang, the mocking name for Estonians (sometimes also for Finns, and in general slow people) is "brake" (*тормоз*)

- The symbol of Tallinn is "Старый Тоормоз" ('Old Break' < Old **Toomas**, i.e. the weathervane on Tallinn City Hall)
- An EFian behind the wheel is an emergency brake
- EF vodka is brake oil
- EF brake pads are the most effective in the world

- **EFians only beat up people who tell unpleasant jokes the next day**
- **Why don't Estonians have hangovers?**
 - **They do, but two days later**
- **EFians get erections three days after looking at a pornographic magazine**
- **EFians' ejaculation comes three days after having sex**
- **An introverted EF looks at the tips of his own shoes while talking with others, and an extroverted EF looks at those of his conversation partner**
- **An EF boss asks his Russian secretary to type a little slower, because he can't dictate that fast**

- **EFians are the wealthiest nation in the world, because they are unable to spend their salary fast enough**
- **EF rally drivers are successful because they are unable to raise their foot from the gas pedal while in curves**
- **EF ambulances bear the text 'Time heals all wounds' (*Время лечит*)**
- **EF buses bear the sign 'Please speak to the driver to wake him up'**
- **Physics has been removed from EF school programmes, so as not to traumatise children with the concept 'speed'**

- **In EF casinos, stakes can be placed for the next day**
- **In the EF version of the game show 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire' there is an additional 'lifeline' – 'Write to a friend'**
- **A new class of service has been created in EF-land – 'postal Internet'**
- **An EF cyclist comes third in a running marathon**
- **The EF ski team freezes at the start of the competition so as to wait for the first snows**
- **An EF Olympic winner only realises by evening that he has won first place**

- **In EF hunting shoots, the figure of the 'running wild boar' has been replaced with the 'sleeping sloth'**
- **EFians' favourite pastime is to watch frolicking sloths in the zoo**
- **What is a slow waltz? – That's Estonian rap**
- **In EF-land slowly dissolving coffee has been invented**
- **The EF hound is a breed specially designed to hunt wounded snails and tortoises**
- **The army of EF-land has slow reaction forces that kill their enemies with boredom**

In EF-land, **natural processes** in general take place much more slowly, **time** passes more slowly, and **gravity** is not as strong:

- **Considering the local conditions, NATO sent a dirigible to protect the Estonian air border**
- **In EF-land, a new and harmless strain of the AIDS virus has been discovered – its incubation period is longer than a human lifetime**
- **Why is the Internet so fast in Estonia? Are the connections broader? – No, the seconds are longer**
- **Even in St. Petersburg, the tempo of life is slower than in Moscow, because the proximity of EF-land influences the city**

- **An Estonian wolf gets caught in a trap. He chewed off three of his paws, but was still unable to free himself**

The next one is my absolute favourite:

- **Эстонский кирпич медленно плыл вниз, рассекая плотный таллиннский воздух...**
- **The Estonian brick slowly slid downwards intersecting the thick air of Tallinn...**

**Residual aspects:
asexuality, stupidity,
language, political matters**

Finns' and Estonians' slowness is evidently associated with

dull-wittedness

linguistic incapability

sexual inertia

– i.e. with the mainstream ethnic topics such as

ASEXUALITY

DUMBNESS

LANGUAGE DISTORTION

The motoric, physiological, mental, emotional and intellectual expressions of slowness are densely connected and overlap.

Asexuality

As already noted above,

- **An EFian gets an erection three days after looking at a pornographic magazine**
- **An EFian ejaculates three days after having sex**
- **On his wedding night, an EFian is only able to take so much initiative as to say good night to his bride**
- **Sex seems to an EFian to be more pleasant than Christmas, but then again, Christmas happens more often**
- **An EFian girl prefers sex to be 'either back or forth', not 'back and forth, back and forth'**
- **An EF woman asks her husband to kiss her after having just returned from a long business trip; he is surprised: "What is the need for such orgies!"**

Dullness

For example, the two following plots were, among others, **formerly connected with the Soviet militia:**

- **Estonian policemen. One of them asks the other to check whether the strobe lights on the roof of their car are working. The other policeman gets out, looks up and says: "It's working... it's not working... it's working... it's not working..."**
- **An Estonian suffering from heat or a hangover asks a friend to bring him some lemonade. The friend returns and says: "There wasn't any lemonade, but I brought you some cookies."**

The Estonian (or Finn) in Russian jokes is **tardy and **dull-witted**, though **not lazy**, but **orderly** and **sparing**.**

- **Two Estonians ~ Finns go to a brothel and ask the madam what they could get for \$5. The madam says that for \$5 they could fuck each other outside in the bushes. They do so, return and ask: "Who should we pay the \$5?"**
- **An Estonian ~ Finn picks up a dead crow "just in case"; a year later he takes it back to the same place, because he has discovered that he does not need it.**

**Language:
stretched speech and accent**

The dimension of slowness regularly participates in Russian imitations of Estonian or Finnish accent as well. The Estonian in Russian anecdotes also speaks Russian – a horribly broken Russian with enormously stretched vowels and consonants and a harsh accent. This accent does indeed have something in common with the actual accent of Estonians' Russian, but in general it is conventional and mythological.

The bulk of Russian joke tellers and writers have most likely never heard real Estonian speech.

For example, in the **Tallinn tube (sic!), the train driver is unable to announce the next station before the train has reached it.** Here are a couple of such formulae which in normal language would mean something like **Caution, the doors are closing! The next stop ... Oh, here it is, the next stop!:**

- **Слеэээээээдуууюуюцаааяаа остаааановка... АААА вот в прооочееэми ии онааа!**
- **Остороооооожнооо, двери закрывааайууутся, сле-ду-ща-я стаанцийааа, ОУ! А вооот и следущааайаааа сттаанцийааа...!**

- Осторо**шш**но, д**ферри** сакры**фаа**ются!...
Осторо**шш**но, д**ферри** сакры**фаа**ются!...
Слету**щая** стан**тсия**... Слету**щая** стан**тсия**... О!
А вот и слету**щая** стан**тсия**!
- О**сттаро**шно, т**верри**... за**крри**файутся
Уфажаемые... пассажиры, не.. **ссабы**файте
.. с**фои** вещи.... пошалу**йста**... С**летт**ую**щая**
стан**сия**... А фот и она!
- Оосторо**шш**-но д**веррри** закрываю**уут**ся...
след**уую**ю**щаа**я ста**анция**....О!
Следу**ую**ю**щая** ста**анция**!
- Астарошна, т**верри** сакры**фаа**ются...
Слету**ющая** остано**фка**.... **ООО**! Слету**ющая**
остано**фка**...

**Language:
misunderstandings and puns**

Some examples:

- **An Estonian says: Russians are odd people, everything is *sapor* for them, church is *sapor*, fence is *sapor* and when they're constipated, that's also *sapor* [this refers to the Russian words *собор*, *забор* and *запор* respectively]**
- **A Russian customs official asks an Estonian truck driver: What are you hauling? – "Труппы!" [i.e. he means to say *truby* = pipes, but the Russian hears *trupy* = corpses] The Russian asks: "Are they in coffins?" – "No, in piles."**

- **Kalev complains to Ilya Muromets that his horse does not want to walk. Muromets recommends shoeing it (*подкуй*) [sounds a little like *pod hui*, which would mean 'under the dick']. The Estonian does not understand what Ilya said and answers: I've already hit it "*под куй и под яйца*" [very literally: 'under its dick and under its balls`], but it still won't move.**
- **A Latvian tells a Russian that his name is Vilis Skuja [sounds a little like *vylez s huja*, which would mean 'climbed out from the dick']. The Russian answers: "I am not asking what hole you climbed out of, I asked you your name!"**

- The Latvian asks Russian about someone: "**Kur viņš?**" [= **Where is he/she?**]. The Russian answers: "**But we do not have anyone called Kurvinsh on our staff!**"
- The mail address of the Estonian Institute of Experimental Biology is really and truly **ebi@ebi.ee** – which, spelled in Russian computer slang, sounds like "**fuck, doggie, fuck, point, ye-ye**"

Attempts themselves to explain puns etc. in a foreign language inevitably look like a special kind of humour. The following is from a paper of mine (6 years ago):

A Chukchi goes to have lunch at a restaurant in Moscow. The waitress approaches and the Chukchi asks her: "Please, bring me "spisok bliudei" [which is close in meaning to 'the list of foods' but sounds a lot like "bliadei", the plural genitive of "bliad" ('whore', 'hooker')]." It remains unclear which of the two meanings the Chukchi intended, probably the latter. The waitress asks: "Do you mean the menu?" The Chukchi again misunderstands – he thinks that "menu" is the accusative of the first person pronoun "ia" (i.e., 'Do you mean me?'; the grammatically correct accusative in Russian is "menia"), transposes this broken form to the second person, hence "tebju", and answers: "We'll see, perhaps "tebiu" (i.e. 'you' in singular) as well."

Political matters

Surprisingly enough, the strained **political relations** between Russia and the Baltic states are **only quite modestly represented**, mainly through Estonians' and Latvians' painful attitude to Russians' poor knowledge of Estonian resp. Latvian.

- The restoration of Estonian **independence**,
 - the **dissatisfied Russian diaspora**,
 - the entry of Estonia into the **European Union** and **NATO**,
 - problems with the implementation of the **language law**,
 - **border treaties**,
 - **'Bronze Man' riot** in 2007,
 - the annual **meetings of SS veterans** in Sinimäed
- surprisingly enough, all these circumstances have yielded **relatively few direct anecdote motifs**.

There are only a few jokes on the Russian Internet that refer to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania gaining national independence.

For instance:

- **An Estonian child asks his mother to buy a tin of Baltic sprats, and his mother agrees to buy even two tins, because we are now sovereign and can afford it.**
- **'Pribalts' ask a Russian who has hoarded toilet paper when Russians began using toilet paper, and the Russian answers 'ever since pribalts stopped licking our asses'.**

There are more jokes that criticise 'pribalts' for being **painfully sensitive about language matters, and demanding that Russians living in their countries speak in their languages.**

- **The joke in which the stubborn 'pribalt' refuses to communicate his three wishes to a Russian-speaking goldfish seems to be one of the most widespread of all jokes involving Estonians.**

One can also find some genuinely evil nostalgia for earlier times, clear references to deportation, imprisonment and invasion.

- **In response to Estonians' request to spell the name "Таллин" (Tallin) with two 'n's, Russians recommend spelling "Колыма" (Kolyma) with two a-s.**
- **In answer to an Estonian's question how long it takes a Russian to pack up his things, the Russian answers that he doesn't know, but it takes him about 45 seconds to assemble a Kalashnikov machine gun.**

The **joke about the colours of the Estonian flag** is particularly cruel, but "objectively" witty and well-structured. Here **Vovochka** is **obviously a positive** character.

- **Teacher: What does the blue on the Estonian flag symbolise? – An Estonian student (Peeter): ... the blue Estonian sky that before was polluted by Russian fighter planes, but is now clean once again. –And what does the black symbolise? – An Estonian student (Aino): the sacred soil of Estonia, which was once trampled by the boots of Russian soldiers, but is now clean once again. – And what does the white in the Estonian flag symbolise? – A Russian student (Vovochka): It symbolises the white snow of the steppes of Siberia, which for decades was trampled by the feet of the ancestors of the present Estonians ... and they'll trample it again, just as soon we return here!**

In the next two examples the '**pribalt**' is an **obviously negative** (cruel, unjust) character:

- A Russian asks an Estonian or Lithuanian for directions to get to a particular street. The response: left, right, straight, left again and you'll be at the railway station.
- A young man saves an Estonian child from a pool of crocodiles. The journalist writing about the event considers this to be a genuine Estonian heroic deed, but hears that the young man is Russian, and writes a news item entitled "Russian steals crocodile's breakfast".

Only very rarely are Estonians, Latvians or other inhabitants of the former Soviet camp **allowed to be positive** (clever, witty, victorious) characters in Russian jokes, but **almost never against a Russian antagonist**. The examples below actually represent the Soviet and not the contemporary stratum of jokes.

- **As an experiment, the Soviet Union decides to grant Estonia national sovereignty from 6 o'clock in the evening to 6 o'clock in the morning. At 7:00, Estonia declares war on Finland. At 8:00 the Finns capture Tallinn. At 9:00 Estonia signs an act of complete and unconditional surrender.**
- **Members of three nationalities throw out of an airplane everything they have enough of. The Frenchman throws a bottle of wine, the Russian a case of vodka, but the Estonian throws the Russian out of the plane – we truly have enough of them.**

**There is a substantial common part
between ethnic humour and
cartography as well...**

North-Eastern Europe according to many different nations

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHW7DCP8_GE

Europe according to a Spanish

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4bmFtK9tDVA>

Europe according to French people

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRko2y4d2JI>

Europe according to the "average" Italian man

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5QOsnIYPWSg>

Europe according to the Irish

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1RyI0xYOn6g>

Europe according to Britian

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hcCXoqfPw9o>

Europe according to a German

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MMbVXFnhy6A>

Europe according to Serbians

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNTc5LG4CYk>

Europe according to Croatians

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fojKAIpFgMA>

Europe according to Bulgarians

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0kMBeI0jQA>

Europe according to Czechs

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmy3dZ3Pvrg>

Europe according to Russians

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Im3ZMN_1wWU

Europe according to Greeks

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIHi6zIB8pE>

Europe according to Hungarians

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRko2y4d2JI>

Europe according to Lithuanians

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Hx0TJjPd9g&NR=1&feature=endscreen>

Europe according to Latvians

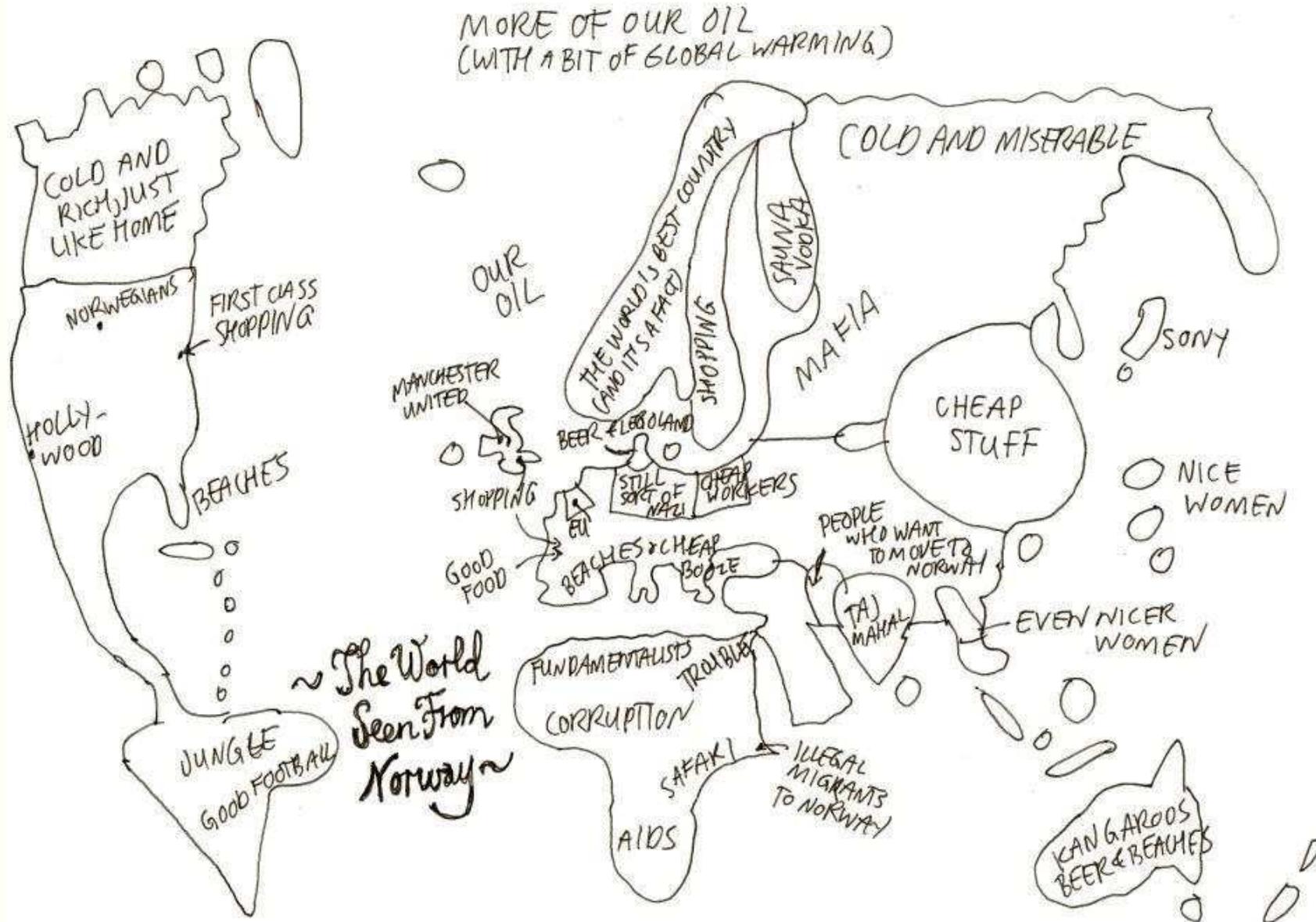
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4e_IFkRrRwA

Europe according to Estonians

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUgqXGu_gTQ

The World Seen From Norway

https://fbcdn-sphotos-h-a.akamaihd.net/hphotos-ak-ash3/555199_281415615317921_160966790_n.jpg



Estonian map by Annika Karing

<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=359585270733940&set=a.200472336645235.59583.100000474116966&type=1&ref=nf>



THANK YOU FOR ATTENTION!