

What is the State of Elgaland-Vargaland?

A concerned essay on the right to rule, a couple of interesting thoughts and some really nice cultural references.
The State of Things

The country shall be built by law.
King Karl XV of Sweden

On May 27th 1992, the kingdoms of Elgaland-Vargaland were proclaimed. Various sections and aspects of life were annexed and proclaimed as the territory of the infant state. This could be seen as a wholly unproblematic event in the history of mankind, but one could equally ask what right these two kings have to annex no-mans land. Even more importantly, by what right are they occupying rather private parts of my life and mind?

State of the Art

Art is a three-letter word
William S Burroughs

One could argue that Elgaland-Vargaland is an art project and thus the question of what they are allowed to do or not do lacks relevance. But does the fact that art is a three-letter word allow it to be a three-letter world? That is: is anything possible within the art world? To some extent the answer is, yes, anything is possible. But I would argue that this reasoning short-circuits itself since it either takes off in ignorance or ends in a paradox.

Ignorance. A definition of the notion “art” is as impossible as it is unnecessary, whereas the notion “art world” is more necessary, but equally impossible. The art world we refer to is as diverse as the rest of the world. What is OK in China is impossible in Sweden. It is just that the art world is a different kind of community, where people in New York, London, Paris and even Stockholm form one community which agrees on what is art and what is not from their particular position. But from another position, other people from New York, London, Paris and Stockholm could equally agree on an alternative viewpoint. It’s not a question of location, but of taste, and to some extent also a question of mind-set and education. The map of the art world is not defined through latitudes and longitudes, but by different institutions, exhibition spaces, some (but not all) art magazines, some (but not all) departments of art history. Outside this map, you will find people who are likely to disagree on the definition of art that the art world subscribes to. And we are not talking about quality in art, but if what the art world calls art actually qualifies as such. This is evident not least in the US, where art is dragged into court every now and then, and where various senators hold aggressive speeches against art dealing with sex — that great American trauma — at the tax payer’s expense. Not that it matters to me that the world is constructed this way. I don’t think that everybody could or would “understand” and agree about what is art. As the saying goes: some will pay for what others pay to avoid. No harm in that, but evidently the expression “everything is possible” has a very contextual meaning.

Paradox. Now let us accept the contextual definition that everything is possible. Still a lot of artists will try to use this rather liberal definition to show that there is a lot of hypocrisy. With the chock effect in mind they will bring into the world of art what didn’t belong there yesterday, saying that anything is possible obviously isn’t the same as saying everything is allowed². This kind of action addresses itself exclusively to the art world, i.e. it is only made to make sense to those on the inside. To understand that something is “brought in” to the art world requires that you understand that it didn’t belong there before, and that you understand why it belongs there now. The art produced communicates with its audience through the common art context, comments on events known only to those who are familiar with the field. This is all fine with me. This is not necessarily an elitist standpoint, since many people couldn’t care less about art. It even has some honesty to it that most “democratic” art projects lack completely.³

But it is clearly a paradoxical situation: The action is defined as art by breaking the border between art and non-art. But if that makes it art, and is to be understood and forgiven as such, then it doesn't reach out of the art world at all. This is why the reference to the art world in the case of Elgaland-Vargaland is barking up the wrong tree, since we are dealing with something which tries to reach out, outside the field of art.

Relevance: If there is any relevance to a project such as Elgaland-Vargaland, it must be because it doesn't try to be art. If the ambition was to be art, and only art, one might suggest to the kings that they paint instead. It would make more sense. But this is apparently not what they are aiming at here. Why would they send an invitation to the proclamation of their country to newspapers' foreign editors, and not the cultural editors? And why would they send an announcement of their infant state to all known states around the world? Clearly, the ambition of the action is to be more than art (it can, of course, be art as well). The reasons, explanations, rights and excuses for the construction of Elgaland-Vargaland must be sought elsewhere.

State of Mind

All men are created equal.

Abraham Lincoln

The Western world practices freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion and belief, and hence anyone is free to do pretty much what he/she pleases. Go on about your business, so to speak.⁴ In the general sense, then, the freedom to proclaim a state exists in its own right. But, defending the proclamation of Elgaland-Vargaland from the standpoint of citizen's rights is totally out in the blue. Individual rights exist only to the extent that they don't threaten the rights of the state. And the state has the right to govern. In fact, the state will govern over all areas it possibly can. Since religion, the market and freedom of speech are not within what it can control, the state will make it look like it allows these things. But don't let that fool you!

Debating over the rights of a citizen in the Western community can be interesting, but there is another angle to the citizen idea. It could be argued that the right of the state exists through the citizens in it, meaning if there are citizens in the state, this legalizes the state as such. After all, you are not forced to be a citizen of Elgaland-Vargaland. Now, this might actually solve the problem for us. It's no big deal, it doesn't harm anybody, and they seem like nice guys all right... But on the other hand, this line of reasoning would allow any community to establish themselves, which might include not-very-nice communities. Could it really be argued that Elgaland-Vargaland is to be allowed just because it seems to be an altogether nice idea? And is it really such a nice state, no matter how many citizens it has to argue for it. It seems like we are returning to the original question: By what right are they taking control over rather private parts of my mind? And, given that this is OK (I don't need my mind anyway) by what right is a state proclaimed here? What does it mean to take the right to govern? The right to be king, to rule.

State of Alarm

Protect me from what I want.

Barbara Kruger

Doubts about the rulers' right to rule and what it is they are in fact defending, have been raised ever since it became impossible for the king (or any ruler) to rely divine right. When God granted the King his right to rule, the requirement of total obedience had its natural explanation. The clearest example of this way of thinking can be seen in European history until the French Revolution, particularly during the period of Louis XIV of France and his "cousins" on the thrones of the other countries.⁵ I don't know if it was God or divine right that first had to leave the building, but this line of argument lost its impact somewhere along the way. Since then, (and to some extent even before that time) states have been proclaimed and justified by the fact that the citizens need protection. On the

other hand, it is also true that the state itself has been criticized for this very notion of protection, i.e. that the state is foremost interested in protecting itself from its inhabitants rather than from any alien force.

The state, of course, will never admit that any of its actions are carried out to preserve its power and/or the existing order. It will always pretend that everything is done with the utmost care for the benefit of the citizens. The fact that this is not the case is amply demonstrated by several examples of state actions. In the late 19th century, Baron Haussman created the boulevard system we now find emblematic for the city of Paris. The question is, as is well known, was this an action of a philanthropic government, which tried to open up a closed city, bringing daylight into a maze-like infrastructure. Or was it rather something that allowed the same government to easily transport troops from one area to another. Given the history of the Paris community, and given the fact that city planners from ancient history⁶ to the present have been in military service, the most common and obvious conclusion is the latter one. But the history of Baron Haussman and the city of Paris is but one example of how governments use the structure to control the population. The Haussman example is often referred to because it has become as a symbol for governmental control, as is the boulevard system has become for Paris.

Many political actions, which are carried out in the name of revolution or terrorism, can be said to bring this protectorate⁷ side of the system to light. (I hereby blow this shopping mall to pieces to show that the state is in fact a police state.) And since there are people who are either sensitive or paranoid about control, most governmental actions can be looked upon as violating individual rights. Sometimes this is evident; especially when we are dealing with groups in societies who aspire to control other groups within the same system. Any Western country's immigration policy will do as an example, as could Jewish European history, or, same but reversed, Palestinian history in the Middle East or the apartheid system. Sometimes this is less obvious, and also on a decreasing scale likely to be true: police and military troops, surveillance cameras constitute one level ("we know what you do"). Identity papers, taxes, computer systems, credit cards ("we know where you are, what you do and what you like") constitute another. Television sets, sports, liquor stores and drugs in general constitute yet another ("we keep you calm and happy"). More unlikely scenarios say that we all get a microchip implanted in us when we are born (for all of the above reasons).

But these examples can all be described as belonging to the historical agenda. Not because the state is unlikely to want to control the citizens, but because there are too many important forces today working across the borders, and hence the state has less to control. It's the free market ideology, and no matter what we think about it, it is a force to be taken into account as much as the state, when it comes to impact on individuals around the world. Maybe it could be said that the right to proclaim a state such as Elgaland-Vargaland exists in the present situation, where actual borders no longer have the relevance they once used to.

State of Grace

What is is, what is not, is possible.

Blix Bargeld

In modern society, sometimes described as post-modern meaning it rose from the ashes of the modern one, sometimes as late-capitalistic, meaning that it is in fact only a logical step within the same old system, the position of the state is far from certain. What does it mean to live in a state, such as Sweden, when strange forces such as the market govern so many important issues on the political agenda? You could say that proclaiming yet another state does not help matters, it only adds to the confusion.⁹ The question of what it means to live in a state will not be answered by living in one such as Elgaland-Vargaland. But what if that question is just a result of old ways of thinking? Maybe the kingdoms of Elgaland-Vargaland are in fact compatible with what it could and should mean to live in the modern world. Of course, states such as we know them, will not give in anyway, but freeing our minds can

be the first step. Maybe the kings are there to let us out. Their presence could very well be our grace. The state as the analyst's couch.

The entire constitution of Elgaland-Vargaland speaks this kind of language and, of course, if we are interested in a state that serves its citizens, what other document is better than the constitution? Where else should our quest find its final solution, and allow us, at last, to rest? Perhaps the kingdoms of Elgaland-Vargaland is the long sought for Paradise Lost? This is accomplished not by protecting your rights as a citizen, but by reminding you of your own, individual right.

Well, it is possible to argue like this. It is a rather nice, not to say humble thought, to pretend to be nothing else but the protectors of your interests and rights. The constitution demonstrates for us that the state is nothing more than what we make of it. Anybody can be anything. It is a beautiful thought, but this does not mean we have found the true legal basis of the state, the legal basis of the kingdoms of Elgaland-Vargaland.

First of all, we have had it with prophets pretending that their way is actually your way, simply because it is the right one. There is no point in arguing about whether Jesus, Mohammed, Buddha, Marx were good guys or not. Most likely, they were. But more important is that apparently no one can decide that you are free. After all, the meaning of the word "free" is far from self-evident. Following a leader might be handy, but it also means handing over your decisions to a Supreme Being. And this is far from my definition of freedom. In a great scene from Monty Python's film *Life of Brian*, Brian wakes up only to find that his followers have parked themselves outside his building. When he tries to explain to the gathered crowd that they don't need him, they agree. In fact they agree to whatever he says. "You are all born equal" — "Yes, we are all born equal." "You can think for yourselves" — "Yes, we can think for ourselves." Etc. Is the point clear? Can the point be made clear?

State of Health

You say you believe in Zarathustra? But of what importance is Zarathustra?

You are my believers: but of what importance are all believers? You had not yet sought yourselves when you found me. Thus do all believers; therefore all belief is of so little account.

Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only when you all have denied me will I return to you...

Friedrich Nietzsche

Stay healthy, stay normal, stay free. All these "stay things", what do they really suggest? Why stay when one can move? Why stay the same when one can change? This is the problem with the analyst's couch. I'm not saying that it is a myth, or a lie or a fake.¹⁰ I am not saying that it doesn't work, or that it doesn't help. The analyst's couch can even be a rather good thing, nice of it to stop by, actually. It isn't really the practice of it, but the idea behind that leaves some questions unanswered. This is because it "claws you back", it works under the laws of "stay" and normality. But what is "healthy" "normal" and "free"? It used to be considered healthy to beat your wife, quite a normal thing to do, because at that time women were considered to be subordinate to men under the law — this is all the freedom they could handle. Similar reasoning can be seen in the argumentation against, for example, democracy and equal rights before the law, etc. The question is, of course, whose order it is that is considered "normal"?¹¹

Sure, no man is an island, and we all get by with a little help from our friends, no harm in that. But if there is a point to the analyst's couch, it is that you cannot rest, you cannot be brought back to normality. This is why no document in the world can give any state the right to exist, not even if it only has all the good things in the world to say. No

right exists to claim the right, to take control, of anything. No dogmas prevail, and therefore, there are no rights. However: the right to proclaim a state such as the kingdoms of Elgaland-Vargaland is not to be found in a relativistic standpoint that since there are no rights, there are no wrongs either. We do not have to choose between heaven or nothing, rules or no rules, on or off. That things cannot be justified from a fixed position from which everything else can be concluded does not mean we are headed for catastrophe.

I could go on forever, but it is probably the case that this lesson cannot be taught. This is why disputing the rights of Elgaland-Vargaland can be one way of understanding its right to exist. The dispute as such is this very right. But to understand this right could also result in the proclamations of another state.¹² So don't stay healthy. But do take care.

Håkan Nilsson
Minister of Bloody-Marys

1. And, to go philosophical for a while, if that is so, what does the notion "art world" mean (apart from being an eight-letter word).
2. In the end, one wonders what will happen if anyone defines murder as an artistic action.
3. I believe that it was Churchill who told the story of the guy at Speaker's Corner who promised strawberries and ice cream to everyone every Sunday if he was elected. When someone in the audience said that he didn't like strawberries, the speaker replied that if gets elected, then everyone would have to eat strawberries and ice cream every Sunday.
4. For one thing there is the mixing up of the political and moral agendas. If what you have to say doesn't please the community, then freedom of speech doesn't matter much.
5. But the story didn't end there. The late emperor of Japan depended on the same explanation. Even communist rulers depend on it, but the formulation will then be "the great son" as in North Korea.
6. Well, you didn't really believe that it was merely a coincidence that the poor people lived outside the city center, often also outside the city walls. After all, they made a rather effective wall themselves.
7. That is, protection of the system, not of the people.
8. Of course, one has to ask to whose confusion one adds. After all, not all confusion is bad for you. Believing that one has everything figured out is much more dangerous. Mostly because it means that someone else has figured it out for you.
9. The right way, the path to the truth, is often said to give its reward in the life after this one. (My kingdom is not of this world.) But what good is eternity? As far as we can see, eternity is good for giving the clerks a heaven on earth. They are doubtlessly Pharisees...
10. Have you noticed how many things that are called myths these days? Just follow the cultural pages of a decent journal, and it will turn out that just about everything you used to believe in is a myth. It is madness of course,

insane, but still... The real problem with the notion perhaps isn't the madness about it, but that it points towards another platform from which the "myth" can be revealed. The sanity of the insane - now that is really insane.

11. Can you believe in Zarathustra? This last reasoning evidently has its cultural reference based in the writings of Deleuze-Guattari. But doesn't it kick back? Beliefs, references. Are we after all nothing more than librarians, keeping the thoughts in order, listing them by subject and ordering them alphabetically?

12. When reading the word "understand", one should always be skeptical. Understand often means "agree with me".

Welcome

Welcome to the Digital Territory of KonungaRikena Elgaland-Vargaland (the Royal Kingdoms of Elgaland-Vargaland).

The Kingdoms of Elgaland-Vargaland [KREV] were proclaimed in 1992 and consist of all Border Territories: Geographical, Mental & Digital. You are currently visiting the KREV digital territory as a citizen or as a tourist. You are encouraged to browse the digital territory of the Kingdoms - follow the links on the right.

Elgaland-Vargaland is the largest – and most populous realm on Earth, incorporating all boundaries between other nations as well as Digital Territory and other states of existence. Every time you travel somewhere, and every time you enter another form, such as the dream state, you visit Elgaland-Vargaland.

Kings Carl Michael von Hausswolff of Vargaland and Leif Elggren of Elgaland are pleased to welcome you and invite you to email them via the KREV admin office.

KREV Customs & Passport Control

About KREV citizenship: every individual owns, by his/her/its own force, the right to citizenship in the state of Elgaland-Vargaland. Any individual who works on behalf of the welfare of Elgaland-Vargaland will be eligible for citizenship. Citizenship cannot be inherited or transferred.

The KREV passport identifies its bearer as a Citizen of the Kingdoms, and entitles that person to certain special privileges. The KREV passport is valid for all known or unknown territories, states or kingdoms and is valid in every time and space; past, present and future; existing or non-existing. Citizens of the Kingdoms are constitutionally immortal and millionaires (in Thalers, the KREV national currency, by decree of the National Reserve Bank of Elgaland-Vargaland).

If you are already a KREV Citizen with a valid passport, welcome to the Digital Territory.
Something to declare?

If you are not yet a KREV Citizen, or if you have something to declare, please proceed by:

- Locating the KREV Embassy or Ministry nearest to you geographically, and contacting the Ambassador or Minister there for assistance.
- Applying for KREV Citizenship and obtaining an official passport. To do this, just complete the application form (downloadable .pdf) and send it via postal mail to the Royal Chamber postal address on the form along with the necessary photos, etc. Your passport will be prepared at the Royal Chamber, signed and stamped by Their Royal Majesties and then airmailed back to you.

Download: [KREV passport application form](#).