

# When Cultural Environments hurt: 'Dark Heritage', the wilderness and the war in Finnish Lapland

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# Cultural landscapes as contested landscapes

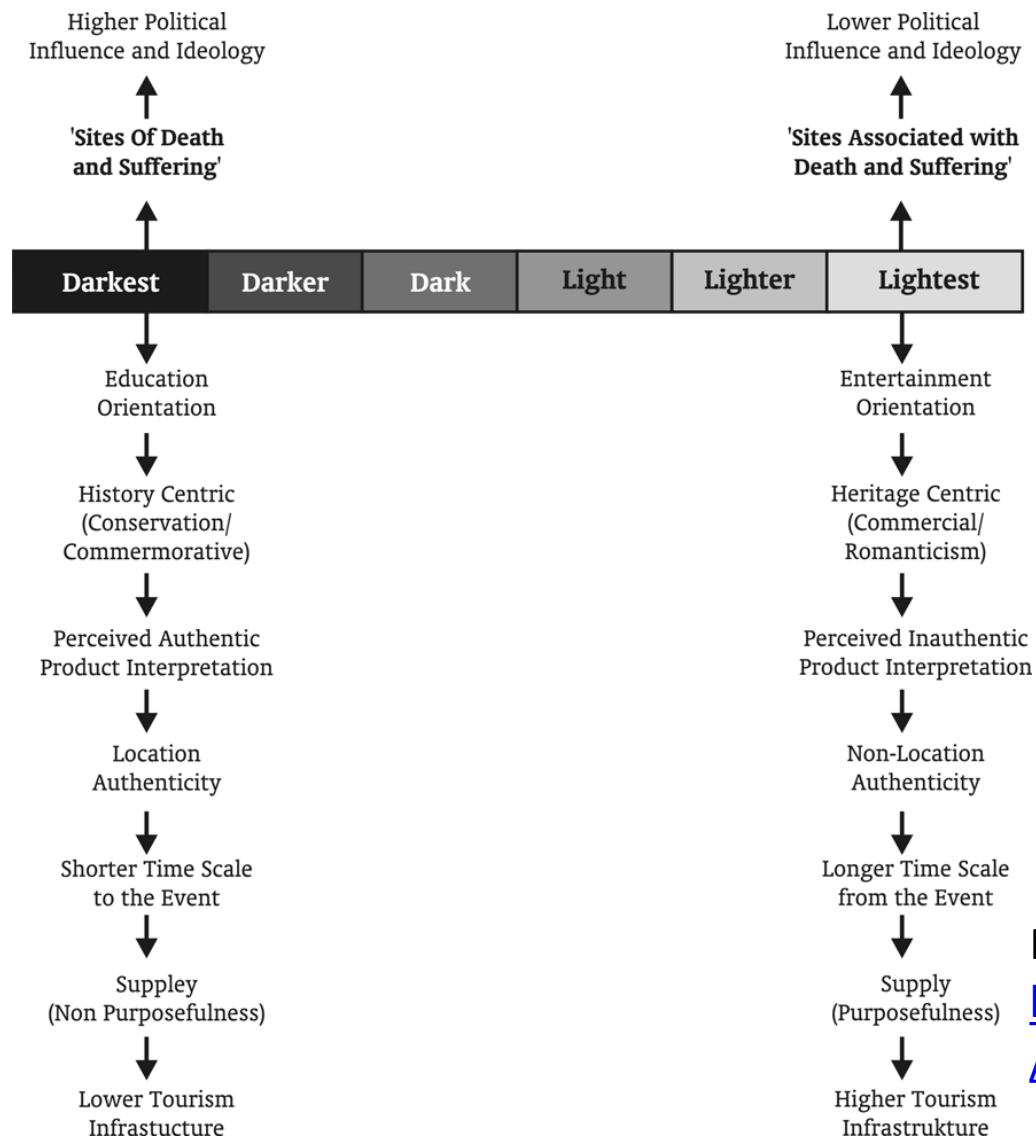
“...the concept of ‘landscape’ oscillates between the dominance of aesthetic and scientific values within heritage protection, and an understanding that invariably draws in intangible associations such as identity social history and a sense of place, thus providing an important focus for local communities.”

(Waterton 2005: 310)

“...to reinforce the role of the cultural landscape in recalling these events: to be there, at the place, is important...” “...the power of linking the oral account of an historic event to the cultural landscape.”

(Smith 2007: 20)

# The 'dark tourism spectrum': fifty shades of dark?



From Stone 2006: 151  
[http://works.bepress.com/philip\\_stone/4/](http://works.bepress.com/philip_stone/4/)

# The seven dark suppliers

## (Stone 2006: 152-157)

- Dark Fun Factories
- Dark Exhibitions
- Dark Dungeons
- Dark Resting Places
- Dark Shrines
- Dark Conflict Sites
- Dark Camps of Genocide



A dark shrine? Flowers at the site of a fatal cycling accident in Newcastle, UK. Creative Commons license image by Hayley Green.

# Lapland War

## 1944-45

German scorched earth tactics:

- 16,000 buildings
- >1000 road bridges
- 100 railroad bridges
- 40 ferries
- 170 km of railroad
- 500 km of road
- 3000 culverts
- electricity pylons cut down
- >30000 heads of cattle and reindeer killed
- >130,000 landmines and other explosives in the landscape



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# German military sites in Lapland

- Germans in Finland 1941-1945
  - 1941-1944 allied against Soviet Union
  - "Lapland War" 1944-1945
- Finnish-German relations a tender subject in Finland until very recently...

# Pidä Lappi siistinä ry.:

## ”Keep Lapland tidy association”

- Formalized collecting of ”war junk”
  - have collected and sold >120 000 kg of German materiel as scrap iron since 2005 from the wilderness...
  - <http://www.pidalappisiistina.fi/>



# Metal Detecting in northern Europe

- “Serious leisure” (Ferguson 2013)
- Other activities also involved, e.g. collecting, selling, researching
- Commitment of time and possible club membership
- Motivations can include seeking recognition for their efforts
- ...but also include drivers such as a desire to be out in the countryside (Thomas 2009)



Private ‘museum’ of Klub Pommiak in Jõgeva, Estonia. Metal-detector users display their own finds and also those donated to the exhibition space by the public. (photo: S. Thomas)



# Metal Detecting in Finland



- Recent archaeological research at sites of conflict in Finland have noticed treasure hunting activity (e.g. Seitsonen and Herva 2011, Seitsonen and Kunnas 2009).
- Metal detecting hobby has grown exponentially in Finland in past few years (Thomas et al., forthcoming)

News 14.9.2013 13:44 | updated 14.9.2013 16:14

## Kemi survivor suspected of explosives offences, manslaughter

In the aftermath of Friday night's deadly explosion in Kemi, police say they found and confiscated over 100 pieces of ordnance. One man was killed and another injured handling war era munitions in a local garage. The survivor now faces charges for unlawful possession of explosives and manslaughter.

 Recommend Be the first of your friends to recommend this.

# Internet Discussions and self-perceptions (Karelia/Russia)

“....some people here try to name me graverobber and after that in PM ask me to sell relics SS. This is a polity of double standards.”

“First of all, the diggers and people exhuming fallen soldiers here on forum are NOT soulless black diggers... ...The key point here is, that we do our work in a respectful way, of genuine interest and with respect to the fallen on both sides.”

“... it is about finding items that were handled by fighting men and women from such desperate times in the most violent century of them all. When I recover an item, it moves me to think that I am the first person to handle it since the person who discarded or lost it.”

“...I would probably be doing the same thing you are if I had these sites near me (and it was legal to dig). As a lifelong student of history and a WWII fanatic, I would be in my element digging and discovering such beautiful relics. I am not perfect by any means and understand 100% why you do this, but if I were doing this, the last thing I would do is sell them off. If I had to get rid of them, I would donate them to a museum.”

A photograph of a snowy outdoor setting. In the foreground, two people are standing. On the left, a person wearing a red hat and a dark coat with a tan messenger bag is seen from the back. On the right, another person in a dark coat is leaning forward, looking at a white rectangular sign or information board in the middle ground. The background consists of snow-covered evergreen trees and a utility pole with a light fixture. The overall atmosphere is cold and quiet.

**Lapland's Dark Heritage:  
Understanding the Cultural Legacy of  
Northern Finland's WWII German  
Materialities within Interdisciplinary  
Perspectives**

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- **Project blog:**  
<http://blogs.helsinki.fi/lapland-dark-heritage>
  - **Follow us on Twitter: @DarkLapland**



**Photographs: Oula Seitsonen**

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