

Opening session: *Windows to Nordic Colonialism*

Leila Koivunen and Anna Rastas: *The Integration of Discussions on Colonialism into Finnish Research*

Finnish scholars, most recently historians, have shown an increasing interest in analysing the implications of colonialism in the Finnish context. In this presentation, we introduce our collaborative projects in which we have crossed disciplinary boundaries and combined historiographic and ethnographic approaches to trace – and raise – discussions on colonialism and its effects on Finnish society and culture.

We will first talk about our co-authored article (2020) in which we outlined the relation of Finnish historical research to colonialism before and after the 2010s and analysed how, from the 1970s onwards, multidisciplinary postcolonial theorizations have reached Finland and become integrated into the research conducted in various disciplines. How claims for decolonization in the fields of identity politics and activism have become intertwined in academic discussions will also be discussed by using as an example our new book (edited volume, in print) focusing on museums.

Magdalena Naum: *Colonialism, collecting and regimes of knowledge – approaching Native American objects in Danish museums*

Collecting indigenous objects was entrenched in colonialism. Collections signified material and symbolic possession of the Other, invited particular objectifying gaze and production of knowledge. Varied in terms of scale, scope and intention, the practice of collecting continued pervasively throughout the colonial period.

Nordic museums are full of colonial objects; curios, trophies and relics obtained as souvenirs or systematically collected by scientific expeditions. In my paper, I will focus on three such objects: Haida figure of medicine man, Nuu-chah-nulth bird rattle and Kwakwaka'wakw totem pole model, from Ehlers collections in Haderslev in Denmark. I want to highlight collaborative investigations of these objects combining traditional Western academic approaches with indigenous knowledge. These investigations stem from a deeper question of what does it mean to decolonize knowledge and (self) critical doubt whether current investigations of Nordic colonial entanglements make a sufficient effort to include indigenous perspectives.

Sami Lakomäki: *"If These Two Obviously Hardened Men... Are Allowed to Live" – How to Reckon with Colonial Violence in Early Modern Sápmi?*

In Finnish popular imagination the colonization of Sápmi is commonly envisioned as a peaceful process. Some Finnish scholars, too, have cited the fact that no "Sámi wars" ever raged in Fennoscandia as evidence that colonialism in this area differed radically from European colonialism on other continents. Others have evoked this alleged lack of violence to question the very sense of speaking of colonialism in Sápmi.

Yet there is plenty of evidence of violence associated with the expansion of states, churches, and settlers into Sápmi, especially during the early modern period. Some of this violence – e.g. the sixteenth-century warfare between Sweden and Russia that devastated eastern Sámi communities or the execution of Sámi shamans as witches – is easy to recognize in the documentary record, for it corresponds nicely to modern commonsense notions of violence. Other deeply damaging acts and processes fit less well into such everyday understandings but may still deserve to be analyzed as violence, including the destruction of Sámi resources and sacred sites by slash-and-burn farmers and priests, respectively.

My paper is intended as an invitation to discuss how we, as scholars, should reckon with these complex forms of violence. How did colonialism and violence interlink in early modern Sápmi? What role should these linkages play in our analyses and narratives?

Panel I – *Everyday Racialization in the Nordic Countries*

Mante Vertelyte: *‘Why are they not friends?’ – Unpacking youth Racialization in Denmark*

How is friendship implicated in processes of racialization and postcolonial formations of nationhood? Whose friendships count as an asset or threat to national collectivity? Addressing these questions, this presentation explores ways in which young people’s friendships are implicated in Danish schooling practice and in relation to the discourse of ‘immigrant integration’. Young people’s friendships have been central to debates around minority integration in Danish society. Specifically, through schooling, students with diverse racialized-ethnic backgrounds are expected to form bonds and connections as a way to strengthen social cohesion and unity.

Drawing from ethnographic research in Danish public schools and interviews with education professionals in Danish schooling contexts (comprehensive school, extracurricular schooling state institutions), this presentation deploys the concept of ‘intimate technology of concern’ in order to explore how and with what effects concerns over young people’s friendships across racialized lines are implicated in welfare value projects of minority integration. Referring to the literature on friendship, understood as a regulatory modality of intimacy, the presentations shows how through the racialized figuring of friendship as both a threat and valorized ‘cozy solution’, young people’s social relations are celebrated as cultural achievements of integration and ‘social mixing.’

Sayaka Osanami Törnngren: *Being Visible yet Invisible – How race matters for Asians in Sweden*

The number of immigrants from Asian countries to Sweden has increased significantly since the 1970s; although Asians are becoming increasingly visible in Swedish society, Asians are not represented in the public, political and academic discussions. Historically, Asians have always lived with the contradicting image of the good and the bad held by the West: Yellow Peril and the model minority myth. Asians are also often seen as belonging and not belonging in the country of that they immigrated to and live with the image of perpetual foreigners despite the Asian presence for decades.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemics, different countries including Sweden are observing a surge of anti-Asian racisms and discrimination that have existed for a long time articulated in violent ways. In this presentation, based on various research that I have conducted, I highlight how and in what ways race matters for Asians in Sweden. Quantitative and qualitative research that I have conducted constantly show the visible and the invisibility of Asians in Sweden, embedded in the racial hierarchy of Sweden.

Panel II – Colonial Culture as Nordic Culture

Åsa Bharathi-Larsson: *Uncle Tom's Cabin as Media Culture*

Shortly after its publication *Uncle Tom's Cabin, Or Life Among the Lowly* (1852) by Harriet Beecher Stowe quickly became a bestselling book. It was not only well received in the United States, Great Britain and Continental Europe. It also reached an audience in Sweden and in the Swedish-American communities in the United States. During a time of intense debate about slavery, abolition and race relations on both sides of the Atlantic the novel drew on and helped give rise to a broad visual media culture that included Sweden and Swedish-American communities.

This paper will discuss my current project “*Uncle Tom's Cabin in Swedish-American Borderlands*” and in particular the work by the artist Jenny Nyström. Moreover, the peculiar case of Sweden, as an example from the Nordic region of Europe, allows the project to address the heritage of colonial practices and colonial cultures in a region that were on the periphery of colonial endeavours. The project not only fills a gap in the existing literature, but it can also help us think in new ways about the importance of movement of pictures, books, ephemera and other visual artefacts between distant communities and the ways in which border crossings shaped discussions about slavery and race relations.

Elina Arminen: *The literary representations of environmental colonialism in Finnish Pechenga*

In my presentation, I will consider, how the conquering the nature in Pechenga is depicted in Finnish prose fiction. The former Russian area of Pechenga was annexed to Finland in 1920, and it was part of Finland until 1944. In Finland, during those years, was published a lot of literature dealing with Pechenga, mostly travel and wilderness narratives. However, also several contemporary authors, for example Joni Skiftesvik, Katja Kettu and Heidi Kõngäs, have been interested about the colonial history of Pechenga.

I will argue that in the beginning of the 1900s, Pechenga's position as part of Finland and Finland's right of use its nature resources were justified and naturalized by prose fiction. In addition, I will point out that the discussion considering the Finnish colonial history and the problematic human-nature relationship in Pechenga has been going on since 1990s.

My particular interest is on the changes and continuities in the ways Finnish prose fiction has represented colonial practices in Pechenga and their impacts to natural environments and indigenous people. The key concepts are environmental colonialism, nation building and belonging. I will illustrate the analysis with readings of Kaarlo Hänninen's youth novel *Jäämeren Sankari* (1925) and Joni Skiftesvik's short story “*Petsamon kultatynnyri*” (1991).

Thajilah Olaiya: *Resistance and Remembering in the Former Danish West Indies*

The three islands of St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John achieved different trade goals depending on location and terrain. Because of their geopolitical location and west-traveling trade winds, access to commerce and harbors made the former Danish West Indies (DWI) an unofficial gatekeeper that were both plantation economies and a port of call for coal and provisions for Caribbean and Latin America trade.

This paper will examine how women of African descent socially and economically shaped the DWI after emancipation in the late 19th century. Though slavery was abolished in 1848, people of African descent were economically subjugated under legislation that bore grave labor injustices. The famous labor uprising known as The Fireburn of 1878 were led by four women; Queen Mary Thomas, Queen Agnes Salomon, Queen Mathilda Macbean, and Queen Susanna Abrahamson. The four Queens made a stance for economic equity under Danish rule due to the 1849 Labor Act known as Contract Day. This became a catalyst for future change.

The paper will conclude with the various ways in which the four Queens are remembered today. Through music and song, the people of the Virgin Islands celebrate the women who brought labor rights to the forefront. Statues and murals still draw breath in the Virgin Islands, New York, and Copenhagen, Denmark. How do these statues add to the historical record and the collective memory of the four Queens?

Panel III – *Resource Colonialism Over Time*

Laura Junka-Aikio: *Whose settler colonial state? The Arctic Railway, hinterland communities and self-indigenization in Northern Finland.*

There is growing recognition that also the Nordic states and societies may be considered as “settler colonial” in their relationship to the indigenous Sámi people. One advantage of the framework is its emphasis on the colonial present - on contemporary structures, practices and policies through which settler states and societies actively continue to assimilate, erode or “eliminate” indigenous peoples today. What the focus on settler colonial continuity often overshadows, however, is how also the colonial state has transformed over time, for instance in terms of its economic and political rationalities, modes of operation and considerations of state space, and how such changes affect the articulation of settler identities and the relationships between the state, the settlers and the natives.

In my presentation, I interrogate such trajectories of settler colonial change in Northern Finland, using the discourses and struggles relating to the Arctic Railway as the empirical point of departure. An inquiry to the Arctic Railway’s history and how it is advanced in the present brings attention not only to the contemporary aspects of Finnish colonialism towards the Sámi, but also to significant changes in the relationships between the state and Northern Finland’s Finnish population.

Jonas M. Nordin: *Copper, Culture, and Colonialism. 17th Century Copper Extraction in Sápmi*

During a period of 40 years in the second half of the 17th century, a process of industrialization was initialized in the northern part of the Torne River valley, northern Sweden. The industrialization was the result of global demand for copper and brass, but its practice was a local and regional encounter between different groups of people with a manifold of identities, languages, economic, and social backgrounds. The modern industrial production units, some 100–150 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle, created spaces which functioned as contact zones for Indigenous Sámi and Finnish inhabitants, Swedish and Dutch workers. The industrial sites also functioned as footholds for the growing colonial expansion of the Swedish crown, the Lutheran church, and early capitalist society. Local knowledge was pivotal for the establishment of the industries. The making of local spaces, closely connected with international networks of people, capital, and knowledge, affected the social and spatial everyday practices at the works and in the surrounding lands. Sámi products and raw materials from Sámi areas were exported to the Atlantic economy. Sámi material culture and symbols were to a growing degree appropriated into a western worldview of otherness.

Dag Avango

This presentation discusses Swedish colonialism in the polar regions – the Arctic and the Antarctic. The focus is on resource oriented colonialism in the late modern period, involving state and corporate actors from Sweden. With a point of departure in two research projects on the role of Sweden in global resource colonialism in this period, the presentation aims to explain how and why the Arctic and to some extent the Antarctic region became an arena for Swedish colonial endeavors. How and why did state and corporate actors explore, take possession of, and extract natural resources in the Arctic and Antarctic? What were the consequences of their activities for people and environments? The presentation will conclude with a discussion about the legacies of Swedish resource oriented colonialism in the Arctic and Antarctic in the present.

Panel IV – *Imperial Artefacts: Looting, Museums, and Nordic “Exceptionalism”*

Liv Nilsson Stutz: *Exceptional, ahead, or behind? Swedish museums and their relationships to human remains*

This paper takes an international and comparative perspective to critically examine the attitude to human remains in general, and to repatriation and reburial in particular, in Swedish museums. The main focus of the paper is on how Swedish museums, in harmony with dominating discourses in the general cultural and social debates, have dealt with, first its nationalist past (in the 1990s), and more recently its colonial past. It will discuss how these movements, when viewed from the outside, have created impressions of being both progressive and conservative, depending on your perspective. While recognizing the role of museums as both places of research and places of engagement with the public, the author critically examines whether that unique position drives these important cultural institutions to be leaders or a followers in terms of engaging important intellectual debates and challenges, and to what extent they can be both.

Eeva-Kristiina Harlin: *From repatriation to rematriation – Sámi objects and the change of paradigm*

In this paper I discuss the role of Sámi objects as actors in time and space, spanning an era from colonialist collecting to postcolonial museum change and repatriation, rehabilitation, decolonization and finally rematriation. Collecting of objects has been practiced in Sámi area from the 17th century onwards by missionaries, priests, scholars, collectors, and travelers. As a result, over 50 000 Sámi objects are in the hands of others. Since 1970's Sámi people have been demanding the right govern their own cultural heritage. Finally, during the last years, a change of paradigm has emerged in the field of Scandinavian cultural heritage, as the demands of Sami peoples demands to the right to govern their own cultural heritage. My presentation is based on my dissertation research, during which I have dealt with repatriation, museum collections and the meanings of objects and how they can be helpful as a means for decolonization.

Panel V – *Nordic People in Transimperial Networks*

Mikko Toivanen: *Finnish colonisers under a foreign flag? The career of Hjalmar Björling in the Dutch East Indies*

My paper examines the career of the Finnish newspaperman and merchant Hjalmar Björling in the Dutch East Indies in the nineteenth century. Born in Turku, Björling emigrated in the 1870s to Batavia, the capital of the Dutch colony, where he ran a shop for some years; later he worked as a plantation manager on the island of Sumatra. After his return in Finland, Björling was also active in writing about colonial Southeast Asia for Finnish newspapers.

Contextualizing Björling's career with reference to contemporary developments in Dutch colonization efforts and long-term trans-Baltic connections, the paper attempts to uncover some of the necessary conditions and global networks that allowed Finnish (and specifically Finnish-Swedish) individuals to seek out careers within the Asian possessions of the Dutch Empire. Björling's career is also analyzed as a case study of how returnees from imperial settings around the world could position themselves in the Finnish public sphere as experts on colonial affairs and cultural intermediaries and thus benefit from their experiences both financially and in terms of social status.

Lisa Hellman: *Coerced Colonialism: 18th-century Swedish Prisoners of War in Russia and Central Asia*

In the early 18th century, Russia, the Qing empire, Tibet, and several nomadic polities had claims on Siberia and the Central Asian borderlands. The Russian expansion is commonly understood as colonialism, while other expansions are more often seen as imperialism. In the midst of these competing, non-European expansions, I trace strategies of – and the strategic use of – prisoners of war. As an effect of the Great Northern War, at least 25000 Swedes (here meaning men and women in the Swedish army, regardless of birthplace) were taken prisoner by the Russian army. They were moved further eastwards, and eventually placed in camps across Siberia, prison camps that in different ways underpinned the Russian expansion. The prisoners were used as coerced labour, sold into slavery, and taken captive anew and ending up in Central Asian systems of coercion, supporting imperial projects far from the Baltic.

This paper traces the ways in which prisoners of war were forced into carrying out intellectual and manual labour within various colonial projects, but also the ways into which such labour should be understood as conscious strategies by the prisoners themselves. That allows for a discussion of how to understand colonialism, as well as its actors.

Eyrún Eyþórsdóttir: *Doing Diaspora – Creating Icelandic identity and heritage in Brazil*

In late 1990s an Icelandic heritage association was established in Brazil by a group of Brazilians of Icelandic descent. These Brazilians are descendants of 37 Icelanders that settled in Brazil in late 19th century. Two main aims of the heritage association were to forge and strengthen relationships to Iceland, and to make Brazilians with Icelandic ancestry conscious of their Icelandic roots. Since the establishment number of participants have increased, and Icelandic diasporic identification and heritage making has become part of some Brazilians present day lives. What makes this case interesting is that the 19th century Icelandic migrants in Brazil did not place any importance on their Icelandic traditions or language and soon they appear to have adapted to their new home society. No Icelandic traditions or language were passed to following generations. Thus, this interest in present day towards Iceland it new.

This paper, by myself and Kristín Loftsdóttir, is intended to answer why did Icelandic ancestral past become salient for group of Brazilians in the 90s, and why does it continue to have relevance for them in present day? This paper bases on my PhD dissertation in social anthropology. It is an ethnographic, qualitative study. Fieldwork was done in Brazil and 36 Brazilians of Icelandic descent were interviewed.

Panel VI – *Art and Nordic Colonialism*

Jacqueline Hoang Nguyen: *The long walk: following the tick-ticking sounds into the unknown – or, The omitted*

Based on the SWICH artist-in-residence that I conducted at the Museum of Ethnography in Stockholm in 2015, I propose to reflect on some of the challenges of being a guest artist working with a photographic archive within an institutional setting. SWICH – Sharing a World of Inclusion, Creativity and Heritage, was composed of ten European partner museums which reflected on current issues concerning the role of ethnographic museums within an increasingly differentiated European society.

My aim with the residency was to rely on my family's biographical photographs in order to contrast them with similar images available in the museum's collections. Photographs in our family archive came from Indochina during the Nguyễn Dynasty and travelled different journeys to the comparable images in the museum. My goal was to raise two questions, "How do the family histories of migrants, based upon vernacular photography, create friction when put in relation with institutionalized documents?" and "What type of knowledge is thus constructed between the vernacular and the official documents?" In my presentation, I will reflect on my experience and, more importantly, on my body and its migratory history that antagonized the museum's current mission and imagined public.

Anna Ekman: *Les archives suédoises*

The project was initiated by Anna Ekman and Cecilia Järdegar around an archive of glass negatives from Swedish missions in what was the Belgian Congo 1890 – 1930. Together with the Congolese sculptor Freddy Tsimba they investigate what alternative readings of history can take shape when new artworks are created using the archive as a starting point.

The project has been allowed to borrow several hundreds of glass negatives from the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden as well as descendants of missionaries. These are images that in part have not been archived or developed before, and as such they are an important but forgotten piece of both Swedish and Congolese history. The missionaries were also part of a process whereby they documented the existing culture where they settled – before it was changed or destroyed as part of the Christening of that society.

How do we confront this type of imagery today, from a Swedish perspective and from a Congolese one? How can historical pictures find a new context and new interpretations, outside of the unequal power structures that were in place at the time they were taken? The project has included journeys to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to return photos, a series of exhibitions in Sweden and the DRC, and the book *The Opening*, published by Sailor Press.