



SCIENTIFIC FINAL REPORT

Two- and three-year projects and postdoctoral projects

Regnr Östersjöstiftelsen: Dnr 49/14

Project manager: Gunilla Gunner

Project title: The Gateway to Russia: Memory Politics, Materiality and Collective Identities – St. Catherine Swedish Congregation in St. Petersburg around the turn of two Centuries

1. The three most important results of the project and what conclusions can be drawn from them

The aim of this research project was to explore and compare the significance and role of St. Catherine's Church and congregation at the turn of the 20th century and the current century. By analyzing the meaning and function of the church and congregation at these two time periods and placing it within a broader context, this study aimed to highlight crucial political, economic, and religious changes while also identifying persistent cultural patterns and historical continuity.

The project consisted of two parts: a historical and a contemporary historical analysis. Both parts focused on the formation of religious and national identity in relation to cultural memory and materiality. The historical analysis examined the prelude to the events that were examined in the contemporary historical study, providing an in-depth examination of the St. Catherine congregation's place in St. Petersburg at the turn of the 20th century, and served as a necessary foundation for the contemporary analysis. The period between 1937 and 1991, during which the activities of St. Catherine's congregation were halted, and the building was used for other purposes, was initially not meant to be included in the study. Instead, the research was meant to concentrate on the developments during the period 1990-2015. The objective was to examine the role of the church and congregation in the last 25 years, analyzing the religious, political, and economic significance assigned to the building and congregation, identifying key actors, and exploring how the church served as a space for collective and individual religious memory and identity formation. Based on the specific inquiries, the functions, and meanings of the church for the parties involved were to be examined.

We have successfully carried out the sub-studies outlined in the project proposal. However, during the project, it became apparent that an expansion of the scope of the study was necessary. Initially, the plan was to initiate the study at the beginning of the 20th century, exclude the period between 1937-1991, and conclude the research by 2015. However, upon further examination, it was determined that including the pre-1900 period and the intermediate period were crucial for a thorough understanding of the subject matter. Additionally, the current state of the church building, heavily influenced by events during the Cold War, necessitated a more comprehensive analysis. As a result, the project was extended, enabling us to examine developments up until 2022. These changes ultimately led to a study spanning the years 1800-2022, which has provided valuable insights and contributions to the project's findings.

The key research findings are partly a result of the extended study period. Through this, the project has generated new understanding of the history of St. Catherine's and has been able



to identify continuities and changes in terms of the church's significance and purpose. The project has both built upon existing research and ventured into uncharted territory.

Additionally, the project has generated new insights into the significance of St. Catherine's church in relation to Swedish foreign policy. The research has uncovered a complex and prolonged process between Sweden and Russia, in which the church and congregation played a central role in negotiations between the two countries. By shedding light on this process, we have been able to demonstrate how Sweden sought to gain access to the building to establish a platform for Swedish culture and thereby enhance Swedish-Russian relations. This process has not been previously documented.

The project has advanced the theoretical approach, utilizing theories of transculturality, thereby uncovering new insights in the source material. This approach has enabled the identification of both diachronic and synchronic dimensions of transculturality, highlighting how ongoing changes have been intertwined with both the past and other contemporary cultures. St. Catherine has emerged as an especially noteworthy location for the study of both dimensions of transculturality.

In addition, the theoretical approach has been enhanced by incorporating perspectives from the field of material religion and narrative theory. This has also led to the development of a new methodology, using multimodal narrative theory in the analysis of the building.

The project has made a significant contribution to a more nuanced and detailed understanding of Swedish mission initiatives to Russia around the turn of the 20th century. Notably, it has revealed that the work of Swedish missionaries among Swedish- and Finnish-speaking communities in St. Petersburg and its environs had a significant impact on the work of St. Catherine's congregation, which had not been previously acknowledged. Hence, the project has enhanced the understanding of religious minorities in Russia during the early 20th century, providing new and previously unexplored insights. Furthermore, some of these missionaries, sent by the emerging revival movement in Sweden, played an important role in the relief work among war prisoners in Siberia on behalf of the Red Cross.

2. The project's contribution to the international research frontline

Since the project deals with the relationships between Sweden, Russia, and to some extent Finland, the research results produced (and described above) are simultaneously contributions to the international research frontline. Additionally, the results will contribute to various international research fields: critical heritage studies, material religion, Baltic studies, church history, religious studies, and mission studies. Through this project, connections and networks have also been established with researchers from Russia and Finland, further strengthening the exchange of knowledge and ideas in the field.

Our project also delves into the life and work of a notable Swedish missionary, Wilhelm Sarwe, who served with the Red Cross during World War I in Russia. His contributions have been acknowledged by the international project "Under the sign of the Red Cross" and have led to the establishment of connections between our project and the Central City Library L. A. Pushkin in St. Petersburg. Through these interactions, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of Sarwe's work and further contribute to the historical research on this topic.



3. The contribution of the research to the knowledge of the Baltic Sea Region and Eastern Europe

The project has contributed to the development of new and deeper knowledge about the relationships between Sweden and Russia. It has increased knowledge about the various networks and contact routes between the countries of Sweden, Finland, and Russia.

In the initial years up until 2019, the project was characterized by good working conditions and opportunities to conduct field studies in Russia. However, in the years that followed, the project has been affected by natural causes such as the global pandemic that closed borders, and later the war between Russia and Ukraine that made field studies in Russia impossible.

Since our project deals with the relationship between Sweden and Russia over a longer period, the events of recent years have deepened our reflection on the issues that the project deals with.

Sweden's role as a part of the Baltic region has been highlighted by the fact that it has historically and today been of such vital importance for Sweden to have good relations with Russia. In this context, the study of St. Catherine's significance for the diplomatic relations between Sweden and Russia has been important.

When the project began, we compared the contacts between the countries in the early 1900s with the spirit that prevailed at the turn of the century 2000 when the open borders allowed for the development of various contacts. As the border between Sweden and Russia has become increasingly impenetrable in recent years, we can conclude that a time window has closed.

4. New research questions that the project has led to

The project has led to several new research questions and research collaborations. One such question that emerged concerned the transformations of religious buildings and the offerings of meaning that can linger in buildings after they are de-sacralised. We got the opportunity to work on this question in a research collaboration with researchers at The Poline Institute/Åbo Akademi.

Another research collaboration the project was involved in concerns the role of the Church of Sweden during the Cold War. For a couple of years, we participated in project activities such as workshops and writing camps that led to an anthology titled *Before the Walls Fell: The Swedish Church during the Cold War*.

We have continued the research on individual missionaries in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century. Several of these, including Wilhelm Sarwe, carried out important work that we want to examine.

Another research question which can lead to a new research project concerns the collaboration between the ethnographic museum in Stockholm and Swedish missionaries in Russia and China at the beginning of the 20th century. A large part of the museum's collections from Russia and China was collected by Swedish missionaries and is still unexplored.

Furthermore, in the project's final phase, we were faced with questions concerning the current religious conditions in Russia. One question concerns the conditions for the clergy and members of the Lutheran churches and how the churches relate to the political situation today. Another question is what sense-making occurs in relation to church buildings' physical traces of past terror and war. Could these tracks be starting points for micro resistance?



5. Dissemination of the results of the project within and outside the research community

PUBLICATIONS

Articles

[“S:t Katarina svenska församling i S:t Petersburg: Kyrkan som minnespolitisk arena, andlig arena och transkulturellt rum”](#) in *Kyrkohistorisk årsskrift*, 2016, ISSN 0085–2619, Vol. 116, s. 41–55.

“Postsovjetisk minnespolitik ur ett kyrkohistoriskt perspektiv: Svenska kyrkan och S:t Katarina församling i S:t Petersburg” in Lennart Sjöström (ed.) *Innan murarna föll: Svenska kyrkan under kalla kriget*. Skellefteå & Artos förlag, 2019, p. 145–180.

[“A Swedish outpost in St. Petersburg. The Church of Sweden and St. Catherine’s Lutheran Church in St. Petersburg. Post-Soviet Memory Politics room a Church Historical Perspective”](#) in *Baltic Worlds*, ISSN 2000-2955, E-ISSN 2001-7308, nr 1-2, s. 118-130.

Monograph

Minne och materialitet: Kyrko- och missionshistoriska perspektiv på svensk närvaro i Ryssland 1880–2022 (preliminary title): To be published spring 2023. To be published electronically and with open access.

List of presentations, lectures, and conference presentations

The five most important conferences: no 2, 4, 6, 20, 25 in the list below.

1. Project presentation at The Centre or Baltic and East European Studies (CBEES). Title: *The Gateway to Russia: Memory Politics, Materiality and Collective Identities – St. Katarina Swedish Congregation in St Petersburg around the turn of two Centuries*. 2/2–2015.
2. Paper presentation at the XXI World Congress of the Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) in Erfurt. Title: *The Gateway to Russia. Memory Politics, Materiality and Collective Identities – St. Katarina Swedish Congregation in St. Petersburg around the turn of two Centuries*. 23–29/8 2015.
3. Project presentation at the Historical Conference in connection with the 150-year Jubilee of St. Catherine Lutheran Church in St. Petersburg. Title: *St. Catherine Church in Historical and Contemporary Perspective*. 7/11–3/12 2015.
4. Lecture at the Church History Symposium in Uppsala. Title: *Perspektiv på S:t Katarina svenska evangelisk-lutherska kyrka i S:t Petersburg under 1900-talet: Kyrkan som minnespolitisk arena, rum för andlig gemenskap och bas för transkulturellt skapande*. 21/4, 2016.
5. Presentation in Uppsala at a workshop as a part of a book project called *Church of Sweden and the Cold War* financed by the Research Foundation Sweden and Christian Faith. 21/5, 2016.
6. Paper presentation in Montreal, Canada, at the Association of Critical Heritage Studies (ACHS) conference. Title: *The Gateway to Russia” ”What does Heritage Change?* 4–9/6, 2016.
7. Presentation in Sigtuna at a workshop as part of a book project called *Church of Sweden and the Cold War* initiated by the Research Foundation Sweden and Christian Faith. 26/11, 2016.



8. Presentation in Sigtuna at a workshop as part of the book project called *Church of Sweden and the Cold War*. 29–30/1, 2017.
9. Presentation in Farfa, Italy, as part of the book project called *Church of Sweden and the Cold War*. 3–8/4, 2017.
10. Project presentation at the visit of scholars in Studies of Religion in St Petersburg 27–30/4 2017.
11. Presentation of the project during an international exchange between teachers from Södertörn University and Herzen University in St. Petersburg, 22–24/5 2017.
12. Lecture at Hedlundakyrkan in Umeå. Title: *St. Petersburg & Uppsala: om kyrkor som rumsliga minnen*. 8/2, 2017.
13. Presentation in Sigtuna at a workshop as part of the book project called *Church of Sweden and the Cold War*. 19–20/1 2018.
14. Presentation in Assisi, Italy, as part of the book project called *Church of Sweden and the Cold War*. 11–17/4 2018.
15. Lecture at the 300-year Anniversary of the Dutch Reformed Church in St. Petersburg. Title: *The Lutheran Church in St. Petersburg as in the Case of the Swedish Lutheran Community. Between Continuity and Renewal*. 25–29/5 2018.
16. Book release of *Innan murarna föll: Svenska kyrkan under kalla kriget*, the final part of the book project *Church of Sweden and the Cold War*. 26/4 2019 in Uppsala.
17. Presentation of the Swedish Missionary W. Sarwe at the Central City Children's Library. A. S. Pushkin in St. Petersburg. 19/11 2019. <https://petrograd-kids-odyssey.ru/>
18. Lecture at a seminar at the Sigtuna Foundation where Bengt Jangfeldt presented his book on Immanuel Nobel and his sons' life and work in Russia. Title: *S:t Katarina svenska kyrka i S:t Petersburg: Ett levande religiöst kulturarv*. 13/11, 2021.
19. Conference presentation, at a research conference arranged by Centre for the Study of Christian Cultures (CSCC), Åbo, Finland. Title: *The Church of St. Catherine - A contested Swedish heritage in St. Petersburg*. 17–19/11 2021.
20. Paper presentation at the Research Conference in Theology and Religion in Helsinki. Title: *Porten till Ryssland: S:t Katarina svenska kyrka i S:t Petersburg*. 18–20/5 2022.
21. Presentation of the coming book on the Swedish Missionary W. Sarwe during a scholarship stay at Villa San Michele, Capri, 12/9-2/10 2021.
22. Lecture at the Research School in Church History at the University College Stockholm. Title: *Mellan materialitet och immaterialitet: Perspektiv på kyrkohistorisk materialitetsforskning*. 20/10 2021.
23. Presentation at Nordveck (Nordic Research Network on Pietism) conference in Köpenhamn. Title: *Mission på museum: Om samarbetet mellan Svenska Missionsförbundet och Naturhistoriska Riksmuseet vid 1900-talets början*. 16–19/6 1922.
24. Presentation at Nordveck (Nordic Research Network on Pietism) conference in Köpenhamn. Title: *Svensk hantverksmission bland basjkirer: Mission in Disguise*. 16–19/6 1922.
25. Paper presentation at the conference Religion and Change in the North in Åbo. Title: *Heritagisation and foreign diplomacy; Claiming a religious building to enhance Swedish-Russian contacts*. 9–12/11 2022.
26. Lecture at the Senior University in Immanuelskyrkan Stockholm. Title: *Säll är den själ som i Herren funnit förlossning och frid*. 2/12 2022.