

**SCIENTIFIC FINAL REPORT**

Regnr Östersjöstiftelsen: 2015-0077

Project manager: Charlotte Bydler

Project title: A New Region of the World? Towards a Poetics of Situatedness

**1. Purpose of the project**

*The New Region of the World* in this project is no geographical area but applied as a conceptual and analytical topos, a figure of thought inspired by Martinican poet and philosopher Édouard Glissant (*Une nouvelle région du monde*, Paris 2006). In Anthropo- and Eurocentric thought, this “new world” is regarded as an empty space, free to use for resource extraction as well as human experiments. The world, however, is conflicted and transforming, both literally and figuratively. It can be described by seemingly self-contradictory terms such as urban Arctic or industrial nature, modern indigenous culture. Glissant encourages us to interpret this world as a connection of parts, as an archipelago where stereotypes (fixed notions and concepts) are set against change in the world to create new images of and for the present world. Our endeavours included attending to ideas about heritage, hybridity, and materiality as emergent from these. Thus, we focused on the relationships between human beings and their cultural and ecological environments in the world of connections and interactions.

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

A connecting theme of the project was discussing who has the right to heritage, how heritage becomes commercialised and institutionalised and how institutions, in their turn, start dictating heritage creation not least by methods that aim at assessing its value for human well-being applying the ecosystem service approach. The underlying current was offering plausible alternative histories and highlighting the connectedness of peoples, worlds and the ways people organise these worlds to make sense of their existence. These issues were examined in the context of Sámi culture and crafts (Bydler 2017, 2021), and land rights in connection to mining and planning practices (Dahlin 2021a, b). The questions of authorship, living and changing heritage as opposed to fixed in a certain moment in time were touched upon in relation to peri-urban landscapes around Stockholm (Hammer et al. 2017, 2019) and coastal areas, especially the harbour of Paldiski (Peil 2021a). These were further examined in connection to theoretical aspects of belonging and home (Peil 2020, 2021b). Theoretically, as well as literally these themes may be seen as edgelands where different cultures, approaches and lifestyles meet and mix in new and exciting, often also in problematic ways. In our analysis, we adapted Glissantian ideas of connectedness, archipelagic thinking and that of Relation (Peil & Wiedorn 2021).

The focus was on exploring fundamental questions about physical spaces and their “imaginaries” around the world adding a historical and ecological dimension. This Glissantian neologism was used for the simple reason that whereas the English language does not accommodate a noun form of the adjective “imaginary”, Glissant’s French draws a sharp distinction between the substantives “imaginary” and “imagination”. His use of the term “imaginary” refers to a broader human faculty allowing us to conceive of our world, providing a more fruitful alternative to the “imagination”. In establishing his



contradistinction between the imaginary and the imagination, Glissant (*Philosophie de la Relation* 2009: 112; Michael Wiedorn's translation) holds that: "The world as representation is given in the imagination but insofar as it is also the *Tout-Monde*, which is to say a non-totalitarian totality, whose details and multiplicity are not lost, it opens itself up to the imaginary". With the *Tout-Monde* Glissant embraced both particularity and totality, which, in his view, were in a symbiotic relationship, both dependent on and influenced by each other. This world may be seen as connected by a Glissantian rhizome or archipelagic thinking, which idea was expressed as a special collection in *Karib – Nordic Journal of Caribbean Studies*. In summary, the project presented a New Region of the World that is neither a solution nor an answer but rather a source of creation and creativity, an opening for new journeys across the disciplines to think differently.

The project was also an exploration of a possibility to practice, in Édouard Glissant's terms, "archipelagic thinking" and his poetics and to format the performance as academic text connecting new imaginaries and storytelling with other species humans share the planet Earth with. Archipelagic thought was associated with the privileging of suppositions over conclusions, with prominence accorded to particularity, to the smallest to be considered, existing alongside an awareness of the entire world. It is a habitual world with limited resources requiring careful and inventive approaches that acknowledge unprecedented and unpredictable effects ranging from the levels of bacteria and viruses to insects and snails, as well as rodents and other mammals. Humans share this world with many other creatures, the effects of this involvement have never been as glaringly evident as at the time of completing this work in 2021.

### **3. The project's contribution to the international research frontline**

The project made a significant contribution to international Glissant studies (for reference see, Library of Glissant Studies, <https://www.glissantstudies.com>) by shifting the focus to how Glissant's work continues to be interpreted in new ways in disciplines other than philosophy or literary studies. Fundamental questions about physical spaces and their "imaginaries" (in a Glissantian sense) around the world, with special attention to the Baltic (and Arctic and the Sami culture), were explored. The project also embarked on finding ways to combine ecology, natural and cultural heritage in discussing the future in landscape planning.

The project also identified new images of, and for, the contemporary world in respect to Sámi culture. The work by artist Lisa Vipola – a self-taught in the craft of *duódji*, meaning that she has not acquired the skills from her forbears – may be interpreted as "cultural appropriation" – an inappropriate use of the culture of another group, which lead to discussing issues of commercialisation and rights to heritage. An analysis of the Swedish National Agency (Statens konstråd) commissioning an installation for a kindergarten playground in Jokkmokk expanded on the issues of native language and extraction of resources in Sápmi. Sámi *duodjárs* (practicians of *duódji*) and multi-artists Joar Nango and Anders Rimpi created *Giella* (Language) aiming at revitalizing the Sámi languages. Glissant distinguished between two ways of self-expression – *langue* and *langage* –, closest conveyed in English as the neologisms *voice-language* and *use-language*. Like these artists, Glissant was also from communities whose native languages (*langue*) were considered second-rate by those in power. By contrast, they both have enjoyed play in their professional language (*langage*) to highlight and question such presumptions.



Glissant's archipelagic thinking was connected to the concept of edgeland in order to highlight the aspect of any place being the centre or a vantage point, and on the edge, simultaneously. The town of Paldiski – the Baltic Port – bordering the Gulf of Finland, may be seen as such remarkable Glissantian vantage point from which to draw attention to the creation and persistence of the 'imaginaire' that Glissant argued binds people as much as economic transactions. The port is both closed (as a military base or due to customs regulations) and open as a harbour. Thus, it frames all kinds of flows of peoples, materials and policies, yet it is on the edge literally and figuratively. In Paldiski, the imaginary seems independent of the physical environment, the past and future, and the people and thus a question – has Paldiski emerged because its geography and history encourage us to think in certain ways, or have they rather prohibited our thinking in other ways? – was formed as central in this research on human and non-human relations in time and space.

The applied and empirical part of the project also addressed the implications of different perceptions and demands on the landscape for a sustainable development of a social-ecological system. In particular, it contributed to an understanding of transforming landscapes as carriers of heritage and to how different ecosystem services are related to and perceived by various stakeholders. Cultural landscapes were analysed through the lens of ecosystem services and planning practices. The case study focused on transformation of landscapes around the Stockholm region where recreational activities, such as horse-keeping, are replacing traditional agriculture. Horse-keepers' and local governments' perspectives in relation to new demands affecting the landscape were examined highlighting a need for integrative planning approach that accounts for the full range of ecosystem services and links cultural heritage with ecosystem functioning.

Connections between cultural heritage and landscapes were further explored through an analysis of heritage becoming a part in a planning process and the issues of indigenous land rights. This processual focus enabled discussing how landscapes, or landmarks, which are deemed worthy of preservation, relate to proposed development and the transformations of lifestyles in a case study of Arctic mining landscapes. The theme was further examined by analysing how culturally creative processes have systematically helped to sever indigenous peoples from their lands. This complexity was demonstrated through the story of the former Soviet gulag and mining town of Norilsk, regarded as a part of an archipelago and interpreted by Canadian filmmaker Françoise Jacob.

#### **4. New research questions that the project has led to**

The synergy created by a cross-disciplinary approach may lead to new ways to tackle the issues of time and space, heritage creation and preservation as well as planning practices and to foster the study of literary, artistic and visual worlds and to think beyond the persisting conceptual barriers and scholarly divides of disciplines, as well as of text, image, and physical space.

Bridging the two approaches between the material and imaginary, the ways in which design and artifacts, as well as other material objects, influence the cultural and ecological ideas of heritage may be examined further to rejecting the binary oppositions, such as material and imagined in aiming at resilience and sustainability of the contemporary world.

#### **5. The contribution of the research to the knowledge of the Baltic Sea Region and Eastern Europe**

The project opened new areas, such as the former Soviet Union, and enforced others, such as the Nordic countries as colonial powers, for post-colonial studies. New connections



were made at a theoretical level while discussing rural and urban, land and sea, home and away, in and out for critically analysing such dichotomies.

## 6. Dissemination of the results of the project within and outside the research community

### Main project event and a special issue of an Open Access peer-reviewed journal

*Karib – Nordic Journal of Caribbean Studies* (<https://www.karib.no/collections/special/poetics-of-space-archipelagos-and-wanderings/>) based on the presentations of a special **session** organised by Tiina Peil and Charlotte Bydler at the Royal Geographical Society – Institute of British Geographers Annual International Conference ‘Geographical Landscapes / Changing Landscapes of Geography’ held in 2018, in Cardiff, Wales, UK.

### Peer-reviewed international publications in journals and books:

1. Bydler, C 2017 Decolonial or Creolized Commons? Sámi Duodji in the Expanded Field. In: Aamold, S., Haugdal, E. & Angkjær Jørgensen, U. (eds) *Sámi Art and Aesthetics: Contemporary Perspectives*, 141–162. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.
2. Bydler, C 2021 Lekens plats i en antropocen offentlighet: Om Vril Båt Sten/Fijfere Vanás Geađgi av Joar Nango och Anders Rimpi. In: Nilsson, H (ed.) *Omförhandlingar: Den offentliga konstens roll efter millennieskiftet*, pp. 105–116. Huddinge: Södertörns högskola, <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1614260/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
3. Dahlin, J 2021a The Continental Archipelago of Norilsk, *Karib – Nordic Journal for Caribbean Studies*, 6(1), DOI: <http://doi.org/10.16993/karib.84>
4. Dahlin, J 2021b Hur stor är en gruva? Överlappandeproblemområden i en handläggningsprocess, *Nordisk Administrativ Tidsskrift*, 98 (1) DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7577/nat.4270>
5. Hammer, M, Bonow, M, Petersson, M 2017 The role of horse keeping in transforming peri-urban landscapes: A case study from metropolitan Stockholm, Sweden, *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift – Norwegian Journal of Geography* 71 (3), pp. 146–158 <https://doi.org/10.1080/00291951.2017.1340334>
6. Hammer, M, Bonow, M, Petersson, M 2019 Perspectives on horse keeping and horse welfare in peri-urban landscapes. In: Bornemark, J., P. Andersson & U. Ekström von Essen (eds) *Equine Cultures in Transition. Ethical Questions*, pp. 240–256. London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis.
7. Peil, T 2020 Home. – *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* 2nd ed., pp. 53–57. Oxford: Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-102295-5.10193-3>
8. Peil, T 2021a A Town That Never Was – Archipelagos, Edgelands, Imaginations. *Karib – Nordic Journal for Caribbean Studies*, 6(1), p.2. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.16993/karib.86>
9. Peil, T 2021b Ühe maja elulugu – Fr. R. Kreutzwaldi 13 Tallinnas, *Tuna* 4: 43–61 <https://www.ra.ee/tuna/2021-2/tuna-4-2021>
10. Peil, T and Wiedorn, M 2021 Introduction: Poetics of Space – Archipelagos & Wanderings. *Karib – Nordic Journal for Caribbean Studies*, 6(1), 1–4. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.16993/karib.78>



### Conference presentations:

1. Bydler, C 2017 Vad ska vi med samtidskonst till när vi har kulturarv? Samtidskonstdagarna, Kalmar Art Museum, 8 October 2017.
2. Hammer, M & Dahlin, J 2017 Shaping Cultural Landscapes in Transformation. Examples from Sweden. IALE 2017 European Landscape Ecology Congress. From pattern and process to people and action. Ghent, Belgium. 12–15 September 2017.
3. Peil, T 2017 Exploring and mediating place = creating space in tourism. Conference presentation at the 7th Nordic Geographers Meeting, Stockholm, June 2017.
4. Peil, T 2018 The Baltic Archipelago, at the Royal Geographical Society – Institute of British Geographers Annual International Conference, Cardiff, Wales, UK, in August, 2018.
5. Peil, T 2021 Archipelagos, Edgelands, Imaginations: Using Glissant's Ideas in Cultural-Historical Research. Symposium – The Annual Craft Exhibition 2021; 26.11.2021 <https://www.skmu.no/arrangement/symposium-the-annual-craft-exhibition-2021/>

### Workshops

1. Start-up workshop, Lidingö, September 2016, organised by Monica Hammer.
2. *A New Region of the World? Towards a Poetics of Situatedness*. A Nature/Culture Initiative workshop, CBEES, Södertörn University, 16 December 2016, organised by Monica Hammer and Charlotte Bydler.
3. Visit to Kalmar Art Museum, March 2017 with presentations, organised by Charlotte Bydler.
4. International workshop *Poetics of Place – An exploration of space in the spirit of Glissant*, IKL, Södertörn University, 10 November 2017, organised by Tiina Peil and Charlotte Bydler.
5. Visit to Luleå and Jokkmokk with discussions and workshops on Sámi culture, February 2019, organised by Charlotte Bydler.
6. *Cultural landscapes in transformation – implications for sustainable governance in the Baltic Sea Region*, CBEES, Södertörn University, 29–30 October 2019, organised by Monica Hammer, Johanna Dahlin et al.