



Summaries of two- and three-year projects approved in 2022

Project manager	Project title
Alireza Behtoui	School Dropout and the Post-Dropout Trajectories of Young People in Sweden and Finland: A Longitudinal, Multi-Method Comparative Study
<p>Summary: This project aims to provide insights into school dropout processes and post-dropout school-to-work transitions (STW) in Sweden and Finland, by taking advantage of the countries' institutional similarities but different development over time. In the project, we conceptualize these processes and transitions through "social reproduction" theory and "career decision-making" theory, as influenced by a combination of factors at the micro, meso and macro level. To capture this complexity, the project will rest on a comparative design, and apply a mixed-methods approach using high-quality register-data in Sweden and Finland and semi-structured narrative interviews. Dropout processes and STW transitions are of major interest for both scholars and policy makers. However, most research currently comes from the USA. With this project, we seek to address this lacuna and contribute to knowledge that can help improve educational and labour market policies and youth wellbeing in the Baltic region. While Sweden and Finland are just two countries in the Baltic Sea region, the project will use its comparative design to test and refine theories with more general application and thus be beneficial to a wider array of countries. This makes the project relevant for both the interdisciplinary research community, and for policy makers in the Baltic Sea region and in Europe in general.</p>	
Caroline Hasselgren	A matter of transition? Working life trajectories and retirement behavior in post-socialist contexts across Central and Eastern Europe
<p>Summary: The project asks what role major societal transition play on older individuals' working lives. European countries are undergoing significant shifts in population age-structure and governments are continuously working to solve the impacts of these changes on social welfare and labor markets. The focus in research has predominately been on Western countries, leaving Central and Eastern European countries (CEEC) behind. This is alarming since the CEEC, alongside population aging, are still faced with challenges related to the extensive societal and economic changes that followed the fall of the Soviet Union and accession to the European Union. Yet, work life trajectories and retirement behavior in the region are nearly unexplored. The project strives to fill this gap by investigating pathways to retirement in and across 11 CEEC. It applies a life course lens in which diversity of regimes are accounted for and, consequently, individuals' opportunities to act within different contexts. Using longitudinal and cross-sectional data from the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe, three principal questions are addressed: How do individual-, household- and meso-level factors interact and influence work trajectories and retirement behavior in the CEEC? To what extent can differences between countries be observed, and how do they relate to national variations in, e.g., welfare state provisions, pension reforms, and labor market policies?</p>	



Ekaterina Kalinina	Sustainable Urban Development: Agency, Networks and Communication in uncertain times
<p>Summary: During the last years, sustainable urban development became the focus of agenda for both governmental agencies and citizens in Russia. Several international projects aimed to promote sustainable development were launched and some of them have had concrete results. However, Russian military aggression in Ukraine has put an end to any political opposition and resulted in harsh oppression of activism in Russia and many activists leaving the country. Hence, the project will study what happened with SUD initiatives in post-2022 Russia by focusing on the investigation of the networks and communications the stakeholders create while working with urban planning, environmental protection and social innovation in new political and security conditions. What citizens can do if there are no opportunities to get funding or learn from other international experiences? What networks activists build given that many activists have left? What resources civil society still has to drive social and political agendas?- these are some of the questions that the study will provide answers to. By working together with activist groups, civil society organisations and citizens, who care about democracy and environment, the project will provide a set of guidelines on how to work together. The guidelines will be useful for both policymakers and citizens and result in a tool kit, a series of publications, a series of workshops and a conference.</p>	
Tora Lane	Writing and Thinking at the Margins: A Philosophical Strategy to Resist Totalitarianism in Post-War Eastern Europe
<p>Summary: The aim of this project is to examine a philosophical strategy that is not overtly political, yet serves as resistance to totalitarian ideology: a way of philosophical thinking and writing at the margins of dogmatic forms of totalitarian political ideology and totalizing systems of thought after the Second World War. We will investigate this strategy in the works of Hannah Arendt, Merab Mamardashvili and Alexandru Dragomir. By paying attention to their way of writing and developing thoughts on writing under the constraints of oppression, we connect Dragomir's and Mamardashvili's philosophy with Arendt's critique of totalitarianism and her own exercise of writing notes. The main research questions are: 1. How do Mamardashvili, Dragomir and Arendt write thoughts and think writing as a form of resistance at the margins of totalitarian ideology? 2. How does this form of resistance enhances the understanding of resistance in Eastern Europe during the communist era? 3. How do these forms of writing and thinking imply a particular critique of modern philosophy and its tendency to build totalizing systems of thought? The project constitutes a gateway to retrieve an often over-looked legacy of resistance among East European philosophers in the communist era, and it contributes to the knowledge of the intellectual history of the region.</p>	
Lars Lundgren	A Sea of Data: Mediated temporalities of the Baltic Sea
<p>Summary: Recent decades have witnessed a drastic increase in the amount of data gathered from the Baltic Sea with the use of digital technologies. These data gathering practices demonstrates multiple functions of collecting and interpreting data, and how mediating technologies are situated in the "traffic between nature and culture".</p> <p>The aim of this project is to illuminate the traffic between nature and culture by analyzing technologies which mediate the Baltic Sea. To do so it focuses on three areas having drawn particular attention to the Baltic Sea region: surveillance, transportation, and sustainability.</p>	



The project is divided into three case studies: 1) Monitoring the Baltic Sea: the Submarine Crisis , 2) Logistical media and traffic on the Baltic Sea, 3) Environmental media and the science of the Baltic Sea.

The project contributes to the currently expanding fields of elemental media and ocean humanities. Within these fields, the proposed project is designed to empirically illuminate the multiple dimensions of mediation, temporalization, technological change, and conceptual history. The project contributes to the knowledge about the Baltic Sea region by the fact that the three aspects chosen – surveillance, transportation, and sustainability – all have been experienced and explored locally, perhaps to a higher degree than in any other maritime region.

Daniel Lövgren

Organizing REKO: The Viability of a Local Food System in Finland, Sweden & Latvia

Summary: The production and consumption of local food is often advocated as an alternative to the unsustainable global and industrial food system. REKO has rapidly been established as an innovative alternative for both production and consumption of local food via digital and physical activities. It was established in Finland 2013 and has since proven a successful recipe for local food, with Sweden joining a similar development in 2016. Recently there is budding activity in Latvia. REKO is, however, not a formal organization - there are, for example, no formal leaders, guiding documents, or stated identity - and can be described as an informal and loose social formation where producers and consumers interact without intermediaries, using Facebook and physical meetings places called pick-ups. The purpose of this project is to explore what makes REKO viable in three variously mature contexts in the Baltic Sea Region: Finland, Sweden, and Latvia. For this purpose we adopt the theory of organizationality - a communication based view on how loose social formations achieve degrees of "organization-ness" through interconnected processes of identity, actorhood and decision-making - and theorizing of place. From an ethnographic approach, we select five local REKO rings (2 in Finland, 2 in Sweden, and 1 in Latvia) to study online interactions, documents, and to perform 17 observations and 50 interviews.

Katarina Mattsson

Cruising the Baltic Sea: Nation, Gender and Sexuality in pleasure-based ferry traffic between Finland, Åland and Sweden

Summary: With a focus on pleasure travel and consumption this project contributes with a unique perspective on the Baltic Sea, as something more than just an ocean. The project explores the intersections of nation, gender and sexuality in pleasure-based ferry traffic between Finland, Sweden and Åland, in the changing geopolitical context from the post-war period until today. The questions asked are: How have notions of nation, gender and sexuality been negotiated in the marketing of the ferry traffic and its destinations, as well as in the organization of the cruise experience? How have these notions interacted with notions of social class, race/whiteness, modernity and borders between East and West?

The project is conducted through a multi-disciplinary approach, primarily using archival sources, ephemera collections, written reminiscences and ethnographic materials. The research questions are answered through three sub-studies focusing on (i) the historical marketing of ferry cruises and gendered and sexualized images of cruises and destinations, (ii) the cruise ferries as a transnational space for cruising and sexual encounters, with a particular focus on gendered and sexualized desires for the other and (iii) contemporary trends and the gendered and sexualized segmentation of the ferry market. The project will



advance the understanding of how the Northern Baltic Sea has emerged as a transborder space for pleasure travel, entertainment and consumption.

Linn Sandberg

Imagining Queer Aging Futures : a study of LGBTQ aging in Estonia, Poland and Sweden

Summary: The populations of the Baltic Sea region are among the fastest aging in Europe and there is an overall need for more research in this area. The aging of sexual and gender minorities, which have faced and continue to face considerable discrimination, intolerance, and stigma, are particularly overlooked. Previous research, mainly from Anglo-American contexts, has shown how lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people are often vulnerable as they age. However, the vulnerability is highly linked to context; the countries in the region vary significantly for example in terms of provision of state-funded eldercare and civil rights and attitudes towards minorities. Consequently, the aim of this project is to explore how LGBTQ people in Poland, Estonia and Sweden, aged 50 and older, imagine their aging futures, what they understand as liveable later lives and how they adapt to aging through their everyday practices. The project is a qualitative mixed-methods study conducted through three case studies in the respective countries. The material is collected through focus groups, individual interviews, and a creative method where participants are asked to visualize how they imagine their aging futures in a format of their choice (e.g. poetry, filmmaking, photography). The project will provide unique insights into the needs and wishes of aging LGBTQ-people in the Baltic Sea region and may be of significant value to help improve the health and well-being of this group.

Thomas Sedelius

Semi-Presidential Shifts in the Shadow of Russia: Executive Power and Party Behavior in Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine

Summary: Constitutional stability among post-Soviet countries is challenged by recurring institutional conflict, autocratic presidents, weak party systems, frequent changes to the constitution, and external aggression from Russia. Semi-presidentialism, where a directly elected president shares executive power with a prime minister, is currently the model in 20 countries in Eastern Europe. Several post-Soviet countries have recently shifted from a president-parliamentary to a premier-presidential form of semi-presidentialism, however, where weaker presidential powers are combined with a government anchored in parliament. The overall purpose of this project is to understand why and under what conditions post-Soviet countries have reduced presidential powers, and what implications these constitutional shifts have had on party organization and behavior. The project combines statistical analyses across the post-Soviet semi-presidential countries with a focused comparison of Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine – three countries that, against the Kremlin's preferences, represent constitutional change away from a president-dominated system. We draw on a combination of expert interviews on the one hand, and on a palette of country-specific data and written material on the other. The project contributes to new empirical data and theoretical understanding of the interplay between constitutional change and party politics in a context of fragile democratization and Russia's external pressure.

Liudmila Voronova

The future of visual journalism in Finland, Russia, and Sweden. Working with photographs as visual truths

Summary: The aim of this project is to understand how visual professionals at news organisations classify, make, and present photographs as part of the broader context of visual journalism in order to make truth claims about the world. We look at the current



changes in the field of visual journalism in Finland, Russia and Sweden. Today, photo departments at news organizations are shrinking and photojournalism is de-professionalized. At the same time, contemporary societies are facing knowledge struggles, where the traditional knowledge institutions, such as journalism, have been challenged by authoritarian and populist politics and discussions about “alternative facts”. Photographs are important in these knowledge struggles because of the strong correspondence between a photograph and how we visually experience reality. In an era of abundance of circulating images, the role of visual professionals is more important than ever. By participant observations and qualitative interviews at different news sites, this project will shed light on how visual professionals understand photography in different journalistic contexts and what kinds of visual competences and skills they value. We contribute by proposing ways of working with images to support critical thinking around photography’s trustworthiness and thereby strengthening the role of visuals in building sustainable democratic societies in the Baltic Sea region, which has become an epicentre of the knowledge struggles.

Yuliya Yurchuk

From Sweden with love: circulation and interpretation of Ellen Key’s ideas about sexuality, love, motherhood, and education in the late Russian Empire and the early Soviet Union (1890-1930)

Summary: The aim of the project is to study the circulation, reception, and reshaping of ideas of the Swedish intellectual Ellen Key (1849 – 1926) in the late Russian Empire and the early period of the USSR (1890-1930) and to trace the influence of her thoughts on the formation of the ideas about love, sexuality, motherhood, and education in new contexts. The study will shed light on how ideas and knowledge produced in Sweden were transformed and used after crossing the boundaries of nations, states, and intellectual traditions when they started circulating in Russia. A broader aim of the project is to contribute with new knowledge to the discussion on how European feminist thinkers from the late 19-early 20th century influenced the intellectual landscape of Europe and how their ideas were received and adapted to different contexts and by different movements that transformed the history of the 20th century.

The project's theoretical point of departure is collective action theory that underscores the importance of collectivity and organised actions for dissemination of certain ideas. Special focus is on interpretative communities as main actors in dissemination and interpretation of Key’s ideas. Theoretically, the study will contribute to the discussion on how forms, and norms of knowledge co-exist in various materialities, contexts, and regulatory practices, shedding light on the role of publishing, circulation and communication of knowledge in the transformation of societies.

Francesco Zavatti

Strategies for Survival of Displaced Fascists: The Romanian Legionaries in the Western Hemisphere, 1945-1965

Summary: The project sheds light on an understudied aspect of post-war fascism: the mobilization of East European 'expatriate fascist parties' (Griffin 1991) which had been kept alive by émigré fascists as embryonic entities in the West. Why did East European fascists deem it necessary to provide continuity to old political instances in the context of post-war displacement and settlement in the West? Considering 'nostalgia' (Griffin 1991) and 'fanaticism' (Eisenberg 1967) to be inadequate categories for analyzing the reissuing of fascist interwar social movements in the context of fascism's global ostracization, the project draws from post-war displacement studies and it identifies need as the drive for post-war political mobilization of displaced fascists. By biographical method and network analysis, the project will show that, in the context of displacement, keeping bonds with old



comrades was vital for personal salvation and that, in the successive settlement in the West, mobilization absolved the same forward-looking function but the improved materials conditions offered also possibility to normalize the infamous collective identity. With focus on selected Romanian fascists displaced after the war and settled in the German Federal Republic, and on key individuals from their global networks, the analysis of their printed literature and of states' and intelligence archival sources will outline a history of the strategies for survival implemented by displaced fascists.