

Art and culture in the mental and material reconstruction process following the Lapland War (FEENIKS)

Why we study?

Finnish Lapland experienced a collective material and mental disaster in the autumn of 1944, when retreating German troops destroyed the material culture, buildings and infrastructure of the province virtually in their entirety. In practice, the entire civilian population – over 100,000 people – was evacuated to northern Sweden and Ostrobothnia. People returning home had to start a new life from scratch. Not only had their homes and public buildings been destroyed, but everyday objects from furniture to photographs had been ruined; the entire landscape of the region had changed. By the year 1953 more than 21,600 buildings had been built or repaired, and most of the province came to consist of new buildings. Migrants from the Salla and Petsamo areas, which were ceded to the Soviet Union, had to build entirely new home districts for themselves. Not only did Lapland suffer material losses, but the *feeling of social cohesion and national equality* among the region's inhabitants was wounded as well. Although the mental consequences of destruction and loss do not manifest themselves as concretely as the material effects, they require a reconstruction of their own. (Tuominen 2001; 2003; 2005a; 2011; 2012; Lähteenmäki 1999.)

In the public and even academic discourse, such epithets as “peripheral” and “marginal” or various iconic clichés (Voss 2002; Autti 2010) are often accepted as representing Lapland and its culture. The exoticising and ethnocentric attitude easily ignores ordinary Lapland in all its polyphony and versatility – the everyday ethos of life that supported the people of Lapland in the challenging circumstances of the reconstruction. Also the expression “**Winter and Continuation War**” [1939–40 and 1941–44, respectively], established in the Finnish historical discourse, have erased the **Lapland War** [1944–45] from the national memory of World War Two. (Tuominen 2011; 2012.) Earlier research on the reconstruction era has largely confined itself to macro-level national issues. In the overall interpretations of national history, the evacuation of the entire population of Lapland and the evacuees' return to the ruins of their home districts have received much less attention. History has similarly overlooked the migrants from Petsamo and Salla, including the Skolt Sámi population.¹

The existing academic research on the destruction caused by the Lapland War and on the reconstruction of the province foregrounds military history, draws on quantitative approaches and/or reads more like a report than an analysis; the topics investigated in

¹ A recent example of the treatment of the war in Lapland and the marginalisation of its material, social and emotional consequences is Professor Henrik Meinander's work *Suomi 1944. Sota, yhteiskunta, tunnemaishetki* ["Finland 1944: War, society and emotional landscape"]. The indisputable merit of this work is that it studies in detail Finland as the losing party in the war and the new Finland that emerged from the war in terms of the world of mental experience, taking into account also the international context. However, the events of the war in 1944, including destruction, reconstruction and the return to peace are seen in the collective national experience as being rather homogeneous and compact. To the extent that the destruction of Lapland is discussed in the work, it is viewed from the perspective of rationally justifiable strategies, not from the standpoint of the people who experienced the devastation. The work contains images relating to the Lapland War and the reconstruction of the province which are proffered as a national imaginary of the Continuation War, although the sources of the images are not documented. Yet again, Lapland is deemed to be a landscape worthy of *illustration* but not one embodying *experiences* (Meinander 2009.) On the iconic clichés associated with Lapland, see Autti 2010; cf. Voss 2002.

this vein include macro-level construction projects and the natural resource economy, as well as the living conditions and prospects of coping of those on resettlement plots.

This project addresses thematically, geographically and theoretically a heretofore neglected and marginalised area of research. At the same time, the topic of the research project has an integral connection to the current assessments of internal and external migration in Europe and different cases of local post-disaster follow-up. The research conducted to date on the mental reconstruction of Lapland and on the micro-level phenomena of daily life that relate to that process consists for the most part of the articles, monographs and theses written in the 1990s and 2000s by the researchers in the present project and researchers committed to it through the project network.

This research project, which draws on established research collaboration, is the first systematic initiative to produce a comprehensive picture of the role that art and cultural activities played in the mental and material reconstruction of Lapland. The relevant exponents of art and culture in this regard included the work of organisations and associations, the public activities of intellectuals, the prevailing religious circumstances, and the libraries and educational institutions. We confine our focus to the least studied dimension of what is a broad, under-researched area. (See also Stanley-Price 2007).

Thematically, the research continues two previous projects at the University of Lapland headed by the principal investigator: *Northern identities and mentalities* (Tuominen, Tuulentie, Lehtola & Autti 1999a; 1999b), and *Lapland in War: A micro-historical approach* (Annanpalo, Tuomaala & Tuominen 2001). Methodological background for the project is provided by, among other sources, the project *Interaction of Art and Research: Art, Identity and Integration of the Self* (targeted application, funded by Academy of Finland, 1999–2001).

What we study

The focus of the project is the *role of art and culture in the mental and material recovery following the Lapland War*. Culture is understood here in broad scope, with the research approaching it from the perspectives of a range of different disciplines: cultural history, art history, art education, Sámi research, photography research, literature research, sociology, architecture and museology. In addition to artistic representation and the related organisations and institutions, culture embraces the material sphere of everyday life, the built and un-built environment, and intellectual and spiritual activities. Our point of departure is to *contextualise* what we study *in both historical and societal terms*. The selection of the research focus, data and sources emphasises everyday practices. The study draws on previously unexplored sources and materials, viewpoints and approaches.

The destruction that impacted the material, psychological and environmental life of the people in Lapland had profound repercussions for the relationship to the past, definition of the present and expectations for the future among those who experienced it. On the basis of previous research, we proceed from the assumption that reconstruction took place amid and was influenced by many simultaneous and partially conflicting mental and societal factors. (Tuominen 2001; 2005a.) Lapland was not only rebuilt; it was reconstructed in every sense of the word. Figuring

prominently in the analysis of what we call *the ethos of reconstruction* are *nostalgia* and *modernisation*, which are key concepts despite – or precisely because of – the tension between them.

Our main question is: How was Lapland reconstructed both materially and mentally in various spheres of life by and through art and culture?

The sub-questions are:

- What kinds of regional, national and international traditional and modern/modernising influences, values and practices did reconstruction introduce into the culture and everyday lives of people in Lapland?
- How have Northern art and culture articulated the reconstruction ethos of Lapland? How can this ethos be interpreted through an examination of art and cultural activities?

The project as a whole has a clear shared point of departure, focus of research and array of objectives. All of the component studies are closely linked to the main question above and to one or more of the sub-questions.

The period of time to be studied spans some ten years, from the beginning of the Lapland War in 1944 until 1955. Mental reconstruction, however, continued into the early 1960s, as organisational and cultural activities became better established. On the other hand, one can claim that the mental reconstruction of Lapland continues to this day. The primary focus of the research is the province of Lapland, but some of the sub-projects extend beyond the provincial border to other northern regions. The international research cooperation will enable the project's researchers to engage with a broader European context and situate the points of departure and results in that context.

How we study: *Time, place, experience and interpretation*

The psychotherapist Soili Hautamäki (1988) observed, "One's cultural lifeline also breaks if a traumatic event reveals too soon that too much, and too much that one considered self-evident, has been irrevocably lost". When civilians and soldiers returned home after Lapland had been destroyed, the cultural lifeline of the province had been snapped. In that situation, the people were forced both personally and collectively to build and interpret anew – in *time* as well as in *place* – their relationship to their home district as they had experienced it and as they remembered it. For many, the destruction of their home meant losing the connection, one all-important for identity, to their own past. This connection originates and lives in artefacts, places, spaces, and landscapes that carry memories and emotional experiences (Tuominen 2011). Historian Maria Lähteenmäki (1999) crystallises this bond as follows:

When the object that reminded us of grandfather was gone, the child didn't remember the grandfather at all: he was no longer there reminding

the child of life “in those days”. The tradition and the sense of security that the object embodied had been severed. The reconstructed community was entirely different from what it was before the war. It was lonelier and more insecure.

The methodological point of departure in the project, one which moulds the research into a coherent whole, draws on the Gadamerian *tradition of hermeneutics*, which defines hermeneutics "as the skill to let things speak which come to us in a fixed, petrified form, that of the text" (Gadamer 2004). In addition to addressing what has been spoken and written, our challenge is to get places, images and objects to speak again. Here, the project's methodological basis broadens into the area of *visual hermeneutics* (Gaskell 2001; Harvey 2009; Autti 2011). We emphasise the *contextualisation* of written, visual, material and oral sources, thick reading and sensitivity to the *interpretations* of the *meanings* ascribed by contemporaries to their *experiences*. Crucial here is the concept of the *presence of history* and the *multilayered nature of time and place*. (Braudel 1969; de Certeau 1984.)

Since the end of twentieth century, the concept of multi-layered time has become one of the fundamental ideas of what are known as the new histories – in terms of not only *the past under scrutiny* but also *the now-time of the researcher her/himself* and, thus, the terms and conditions of interpretation. Not only the time of experiences, but also the time of the interpretation of experiences is layered. The layered nature of time takes on heightened importance especially when the aim of the research is a turning point beyond compare in the history of an entire society. After the destruction caused by the Lapland War, people's relationship with the past, now-time and the expectations regarding the future, had to be reevaluated and reorganised. Both the past and the future live in people's experiences of and acts in a here and now; on the other hand, now-time colours both the images and experiences of the past (memories) and of the future, the horizon of expectations (*Erwartungshorizont*, see Koselleck 2003; Tuominen 2010).

The conception of multi-layered time entails different lengths and “thicknesses” of time, that is, differently paced changes of different temporal layers in history (Braudel 1969). Jacques Le Goff (1974) claims that the slowest element to change in the course of time are mentalities. In our view, the “mentality [or ethos] of reconstruction” of Lapland has continued far beyond the point in time when the material reconstruction was declared complete. Thus, in this project both “the reconstruction proper” and subsequently the concrete and symbolic repossession of the landscape, homes and the living environment, as well as the interpretations related to them, are seen as part of the *reconstruction of mind – and history*.

The multi-layered nature of place is fundamentally linked to the multi-layered nature of time. Before the destruction caused by the war, a place lived and experienced in everyday life had changed radically to a place full of future prospects laden with memory, memories and fervent expectations. According to Michel de Certeau (1984), one place includes another and places are linked together in both time and space. There is memory of something else having been in a place. Narrative structures are thus essential in studying spatial themes. De Certeau emphasises our daily use of space as a practiced place: place is an experienced and lived space. Thus a place is a construction which directs and defines a person's relationship with

the world. Place is attached to location and time, but also has an aesthetic, political and poetical function. A place-specific identity can also prompt ethnic and religious debates (Crang & Thrift 2000; Eglinton 2008; MacDonald 2003). The researcher's own experiences and perceptions are essential in the study of a place. The perception of the researcher is dependent on his/her personality and background, research task and, in particular, culture, which defines for example the shared meanings and values of a place. The researcher thus produces a new experience, representation and interpretation of a place.

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