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Contents / Sommaire / Inhalt

Editors, Editorial committee, Editorial board ........................................... 5
Contributors ................................................................. 6

Articles / Aufsätze
Else Mundal, The Relationship between Sami and Nordic Peoples Expressed in Terms of Family Associations ......................................... 25
Tatiana Bulgakova, Collective Clan Disease among the Nanay ................. 59
Wayne Edwards & Tara Natarajan, Rural Society and Barriers to Well-Being 85
Davin Holen, A Resilient Subsistence Salmon Fishery in Southwest Alaska. A Case Study of Fish Camps in Nondalton .......................... 101

Miscellanea: Notes / Notizen
Integrating the Human Dimension in IPY 2007–2009. Reflections on the Achievements in Sweden (Dag Avango) .................................................. 123
Northern Studies Research at Umeå University (Peter Sköld) ................... 127

Reviews/Comptes rendus/Besprechungen
Thomas Thornton, Being and Place among the Tlingit, Seattle: University of Washington Press in association with Sealaska Heritage Institute 2008 (Julie Raymond-Yakoubian) .......................................................... 139
Gustav Adolf Beckmann, Die Karlamagnús-Saga I und ihre altfranzösische Vorlage, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag 2008 (Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie 344) (Lars-Erik Edlund) .................................................. 142
Arnold Dalen, Jan Ragnar Hagland, Stian Hårstad, Häkan Rydving & Ola Stemshaug, Trøndersk språkhistorie. Språkforhold i ein region, Trondheim: Tapir akademisk forlag 2008 (Det Kongelige Norske Videnskabers Selskab. Skrifter 2008 nr. 3) (Lars-Erik Edlund) .................................................. 143
Leiv Heggstad, Finn Hødnebø & Erik Simensen, *Norrøn ordbok, 5. utgåva av Gamalnorsk ordbok ved Heggstad & Torp*, Oslo: Det norske samlaget 2008 (Lars-Erik Edlund) .................................................. 144


*Kormaks saga. Historik och översättning av Inggerd Fries*, Stockholm: Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademien (Filologiskt arkiv 48) (Lars-Erik Edlund) ............................................................... 145


Jan Lindström (ed.), *Språk och interaktion 1*, Helsingfors: Institutionen för nordiska språk och nordisk litteratur, Helsingfors universitet 2008 (Lars-Erik Edlund) .................................................. 147


Tim William Machan (ed.), *Vaðbrúðnismál [with an introduction and notes]*, 2nd edition, Toronto: Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Durham University, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies 2008 (Durham Medieval and Renaissance Texts 1) (Lars-Erik Edlund) .................................................. 150


Helge Omdal & Helge Sandøy (eds.), *Nasjonal eller internasjonal skrivemåte? Om importord i seks nordiske språksamfunn*, Oslo: Novus Forlag 2008 (Moderne importord i språka i Norden 8) (Lars-Erik Edlund) .................................................. 151


Instructions to Authors .................................................. 156
express thanks to Umeå University for actively supporting and for hosting this conference. We want especially to express gratitude to the local organising committee: Pär Eliasson and Lennart Petterson for handling both practical matters and important scientific issues, and the chair of this committee Lars-Erik Edlund, whose important role cannot be exaggerated, and to Heidi Hansson. Many thanks also to the other members of the SC-IPY Working Committee for Culture, Society and Humanities, who also played a crucial role: Aant Elzinga, Lisbeth Lewander, Stefan Källman and Inga-Lill Norlin. And sincere gratitude to the Municipality of Umeå for their support of this event. Furthermore, we are grateful to the organisations that funded this conference: the Swedish Research Council, the Swedish Institute, the Municipality of Umeå, Umeå University, Västerbottens Läns Landsting, the Embassy of Denmark, the Embassy of Canada, the Embassy of Latvia and the Nordic Council of Ministers. Finally, thanks to all who contributed to the conference by presenting their research and participating in the discussions.

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Northern Studies Research at Umeå University
The research environment Northern Studies is long established at Umeå University, encompassing a range of research projects applying northern perspectives and investigating specifically northern issues. The research body comprises distinguished scholars that are leading actors on the national arena and occupy central positions in the international research community. Indigenous research is a vital concern, with the Centre for Sami Research constituting a central part of the environment. Other foci are ecology and environmental research, social organization and economic development issues and research from historical, cultural and linguistic perspectives. Solid multi-disciplinary foundations, international potential and high societal relevance characterise the environment. The research agenda has been given direction with joint projects organised around the cornerstones Conflict & Collaboration, People & Identity, and Resources & Competitiveness.

Since its establishment 40 years ago, a focus on northern issues has been a distinguishing mark of Umeå University. Over the years a great number of scientific and scholarly projects have originated from the research environment, which has created a firm basis for international collaboration involving all the university faculties. The strength of the environment has benefited from this increased precision, and Northern Studies is now one of the key areas for international cooperation at Umeå University.

Conditions in the northern regions are receiving intensified research attention, in Sweden as well as internationally. The pressing global issue of rapid climate changes and the consequences involved has a research focus in the cir-
cumpolar area. The human dimension has more recently become an important field of northern research, and Umeå University is one of the key actors in the field, making “the human dimension” the general theme when Northern Studies hosted the final international conference of the International Polar Year (IPY); see pp. 123-127. The research environment Northern Studies has strategically developed a concept that provides a multi-disciplinary response to present and future demands of research-based knowledge for a sustainable development in the north. The researchers within Northern Studies are partners in some of the most prominent international research projects, like Histories of the North—Environments, Movements, Narratives (BOREAS), North Atlantic Population Project (NAPP), Community Adaptation and Vulnerability in Arctic Regions (CAVIAR), and The Capability of International Governance Systems in the Arctic to Contribute to the Mitigation of Climate Change and Adjust to its Consequences (CIGSAC).

The Centre for Sami Research (CeSam) is a core environment within Northern Studies. Since the interrelations between Sami history and the contemporary situation form complicated, and to a great extent unknown, processes of successful cooperation and conflict, research has an enormous responsibility to contribute here, and the indigenous field offers important opportunities to combine societal utility with theoretical and scholarly development, as well as taking part in extensive international collaboration. CeSam is a driving force in the Nordic context, and the hub of a scientific network including the Sami Centre (Tromso, Norway), Sami University College (Kautokeino, Norway) and Giellagas Institute (Oulu, Finland). CeSam is also the organizer of major conferences and workshops. The research environment is internationally attractive for PhD students and senior guest researchers. Apart from constituting an important foundation for the strategic partnership between Umeå University and the University of Manitoba, the indigenous field opens up for collaboration with universities outside the northern hemisphere, such as Australia, New Zealand and Brazil. CeSam is part of Umeå University’s fundraising campaign, with the aim to become a national centre for Sami research.

The planned research structure of the Northern studies environment is designed around the three thematic areas Conflict & Collaboration, People & Identity, and Resources & Competitiveness. Each area includes at least ten externally financed projects, and the considerable critical mass of research efforts produces favourable conditions for multi-disciplinary development and strate-
gic progress. Northern Studies has access to exceptional source infrastructures, for example the world unique Population Data Base Sápmi, registered and kept by the Demographic Data Base, where the entire traditional area of the Sami is covered, allowing the construction of complete life biographies for all the people in the region during the time of colonization (1750–1900). Northern Studies is also responsible for the Digitized Sami Media Archive with 70,000 articles. The Environmental Archaeology Lab has been successful in northern research for 25 years; it is sponsored by the Swedish Research Council and acts as Sweden’s only national resource lab for the field and region. In addition, there is solid publication experience, including the peer-reviewed *Journal of Northern Studies*.

The development in the northern area might be described in terms of both successful cooperation and prevailing conflicts. The research within Northern Studies includes in-depth analyses of the background and development of the situation. The indigenous issues are strong profiles of each theme. Distinguished areas are land use and natural resources that comprise the complex systems of forestry, agriculture, mining and reindeer herding. Cultural and identity formative processes are together with social, legal, political, demographic, and health perspectives of great importance. Competitiveness is also essential, and production, productivity, tourism and regional development are critical issues in relation to climate change, sustainable development and globalization.

Research within the framework of Northern Studies is of great relevance for society and responds to the demand for research-based knowledge. Interaction is accordingly of great importance. Northern Studies has an ambitious collaborative agenda that includes a great number of Swedish and foreign universities. Outreach activities involve communities, organizations, institutions, companies, and administrations on different societal levels. Parliamentarians, ministries, NGOs, bureaucrats, lawyers, and entrepreneurs in the north all need research-based knowledge. The Sami society urges more research into matters of relevance for the indigenous population. Northern Studies is a strategic and valuable platform where various types of interaction can take place.

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