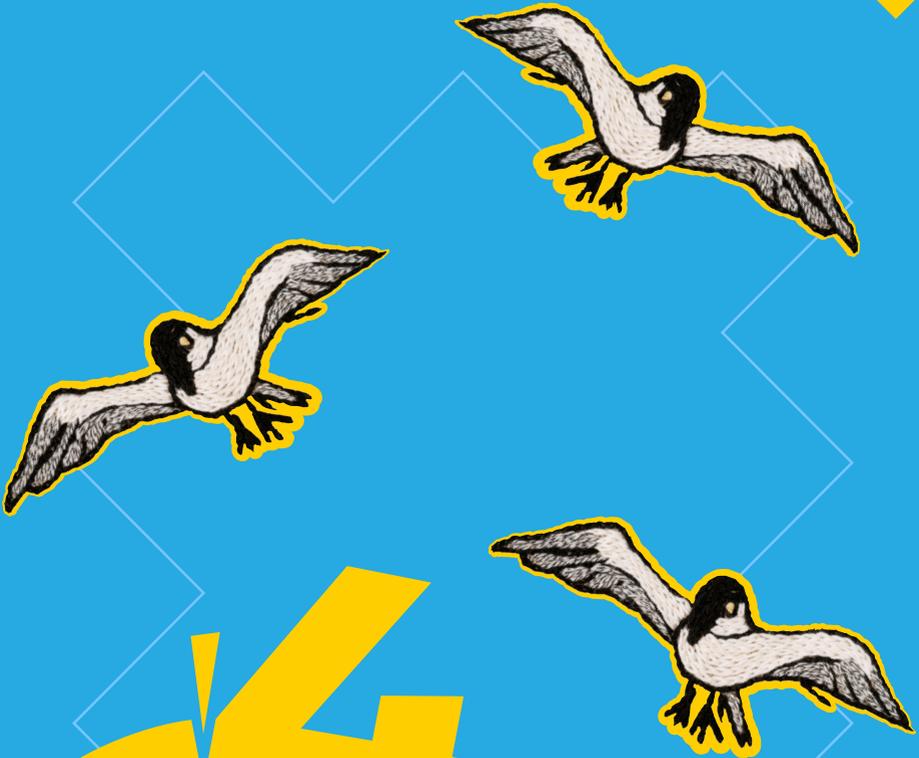


18-20 March 2026



**64. ANNUAL
CONFERENCE
OF THE ESTONIAN
NATIONAL MUSEUM**

Estonia-Swedes. A Diaspora with Roots

Conference Organising Committee:

Sofia Joons (University of Tartu)

Aivar Jürgenson (Estonian National Museum)

Kristel Rattus (Estonian National Museum)

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CULTURAL ENDOWMENT OF ESTONIA



Estonia-Swedes: A Diaspora with Roots
International Interdisciplinary Conference
18–20 March 2026

Tartu 2026

Programme 18 March

11.00–12.30

Greetings, practical announcements, plenary session

- ◆ Plenary session by **Jörgen Hedman**. The Swedes in Estonia

12.30–13.15

Lunch break

13.15–14.45

I Session – Session chair **Anu Järs**

- ◆ **Margareta Hammerman**
The Evacuation of the Estonia-Swedes during World War II
- ◆ **Josefine Sjöberg, Ann-Catrin Östman**
Refugees within the Russian Empire? Estonia-Swedes as
Irregular Migrants in the Finnish Archipelago ca. 1810–1840
- ◆ **Glenn Kranking**
“60 Bloody Letters”: Elmar Nyman’s Collection of News
from Estonia’s Swedish Community in the Early Nazi Occupation

14.45–15.00

Coffee break

15.00–16.30

II Session – Session chair **Sofia Joons**

- ◆ **Ivar Rүүtli**
Ten Years of the Estonian-Language *Eibofolke*: Memories of Translation
- ◆ **Christopher Thiele**
Recent Svenska Odlingens Vänner (SOV)
Projects Enabled by Våra Anor
- ◆ **Anu Pink, Maret Tamjärv**
The Folk Costumes of the Estonia-Swedes:
The Editors’ View of the Book’s Origin Story

16.30

Opening of the exhibition “Five Brides” in the foyer in front of the exhibition “Estonia-Swedes: A Diaspora with Roots”

Programme 19 March

10.00–11.30

III Session – Session chair **Terje Anepaio**

- ◆ **Sofia Joons**
Song-Collectors from Near and Far: A Comparison of Insiders' and Outsiders' Perspectives on Estonia-Swedish Music Culture
- ◆ **Kristel Rattus**
Estonia-Swedish Identity in Biographical Interviews
- ◆ **Reeli Reinaus, Piret Pöldver**
Collecting and Researching Place-Lore on Ruhnu Island

11.30–11.45

Coffee break

11.45–12.45

IV Session – Session chair **Anna Liisa Regensperger**

- ◆ **Henry Timusk, Kata Varblane, Elisabeth Hedfors**
Vormsi Island, Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow:
An Example of Implementation of Estonia-Swedish Cultural Heritage

12.45–13.30

Lunch break

13.30–14.30

V Session – Session chair **Kristel Rattus**

- ◆ **Anna Liisa Regensperger**
Education Programs in the Estonia-Swedes' Exhibition
- ◆ **Elisabeth Hedfors**
Lecturing Swedes without any Pre-knowledge about the Estonia-Swedish History:
Estonia-Swedes' Cultural Contacts with Other Ethnic Groups

14.30–14.45

Coffee break

14.45–16.45

VI Session – Session chair **Sofia Joons**

- ◆ **Round-table**
One Ethnic Minority, Three Countries: International Cooperation and its Role in Preserving Estonia-Swedish Cultural Heritage

16.45–18.00

Guided tour

Programme 20 March

10.00–11.30

VII Session – Session chair **Kristiina Praakli**

◆ **Eva Liina Asu**

An Overview of the RUNSKA Project: Documenting and Promoting Runska, the Endangered Estonia-Swedish Dialect of Ruhnu Island

◆ **Eva Liina Asu, Miina Norvik, Karl Pajusalu**

The Position of Ruhnu Estonia-Swedish in the Linguistic Contact Area of the Gulf of Riga

◆ **Ida Västerdal**

Genitive Inflection in the Noarootsi Dialect

11.30–11.45

Coffee break

11.45–13.45

VIII Session – Session chair **Kristiina Piirisild**

◆ **Tiina Kull**

A Glazed Bodice for the Island Bride:
Imported Fabrics in the Wedding Traditions of Ruhnu

◆ **Edgar Mirjamsdotter**

The Aibo Tapestry: Cultural Transmission through Threads

◆ **Mariliis Vaks**

Research on Estonia-Swedish Wooden Artefacts at the Estonian National Museum

◆ **Maria Lindén**

The Preservation and Regional Variations in Finland-Swedish Folk Costume

13.45

Lunch break

The Swedes in Estonia

Jörgen Hedman

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The document discusses the historical and social developments of the Swedish population in Estonia, focusing on their status, land ownership, and cultural identity. It describes how the Swedish settlers in Estonia were initially granted privileges but later faced restrictions, leading to changes in their status and land ownership. The text also highlights the emergence of a collective national identity among the Swedish community in Estonia, including the establishment of education institutions and publications. Furthermore, it outlines the significant events that affected the Estonia-Swedes, such as the Soviet Union's annexation of Estonia, mass deportations, and the subsequent occupation by Nazi Germany. The document concludes with the post-independence era, detailing the land reform in Estonia, the return of cultural autonomy for the Estonia-Swedes, and the preservation of their heritage through initiatives such as museums and exhibitions. The second section here concerns the Swedish village of Gammalsvenskby situated on the western bank of the Dnieper River and its development from World War II and during the post-war period. Finally, it highlights the events leading up to the Russian occupation of the area in 2022 and the war between Russia and Ukraine, the destruction of the village and the flight of its inhabitants.

The Evacuation of the Estonia-Swedes during World War II

Margareta Hammerman

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The period after 1920, when Estonia had become independent and was no longer part of the Russian Empire, brought hope for the future: communities developed and the economy improved, even for the small populations along the coast. On August 23, 1939, the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany divided Eastern Europe, and the three Baltic States were 'allocated' to the Soviet Union.

The islands of Naissaar, Pakri and Osmussaar were evacuated in order to establish Soviet military bases. The population was displaced and had to find housing on the mainland wherever they could. When 110 residents of the Pakri Islands were later granted permission to be evacuated to Sweden, hope was sparked that more would be allowed to leave, and lists were compiled with 5,000 names of those wishing to emigrate to Sweden.

More than 567 young men, fathers, sons, brothers, and loved ones, as well as some women, were deported and forcibly mobilised, taken to the Soviet Union, with young recruits transferred to the Red Army in June and July 1941.

In September 1941, the Germans arrived as liberators, and life initially began to look brighter. But in May 1943 a mobilisation

order came for the German army. This was a war that the Estonia-Swedes did not see as theirs and they began seriously looking for a way to escape to Sweden. This is why the escape began with small boats. During May and June, nearly 40 small boats with young, mainly mobilisable men left Estonia's western and northern coasts aiming to reach the Swedish or Finnish coasts.

Things started to go badly for the German war machine, and rumours spread that they would lose, and it seemed as though the Russians would come back; experience of the first Soviet occupation made people again want to emigrate.

In 1940 the Swedish government appointed a committee to take care of the arrival of the 110 residents of the Pakri Islands, the Pakri Committee, later the Committee for Estonia-Swedes. In the autumn of 1943, the evacuation of the 3,300 sick and elderly began with the ship M/S Oden, led by Carl Mothander in cooperation with the Red Cross.

Later during the summer of 1944, the evacuation began in cooperation with the Nazi officer Ludwig Lienhard, who managed in nine trips with M/S Juhan to transfer the remaining Estonia-Swedes to Sweden. At the same time the escape with small boats continued. About 1,000 people stayed behind for various reasons. The last evacuation started on September 20 with M/S Triina from Tallinn harbour, landing at Brevik, Lidingö on September 22 1944. At the same time the Soviet army had once again reached Tallinn, and the second occupation began.

Refugees within the Russian Empire?

Estonia-Swedes as Irregular Migrants in
the Finnish Archipelago ca. 1810–1840

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Escaping serfdom, forced labour and conscription, Estonia-Swedes were able to find refuge in Finland. Prior to 1809, a royal decree made it possible for Lutheran fugitives from the Russian empire to settle in Sweden. As Finland transformed from an integral part of the Swedish realm into a separately administered part of the empire in 1809, irregular migration was controlled more efficiently. Historically, there had been strong contact between communities in the Finnish archipelago and Estonia-Swedish communities.

This paper studies the experiences and treatment of Estonia-Swedish runaways in southwestern Finland in the first part of the 19th century. We utilise sources that depict the aims to control irregular mobility on different judicial and administrative levels. Unwanted mobility within the Finnish grand duchy and within the Russian empire was regulated through ordinances and decrees that were communicated in public notices to Finnish subjects and local authorities, who were to handle it in practice.

First, we study when and how people from Estonia-Swedish communities were depicted in the runaway notices circulated in public from the county of Turku and Pori. Apart from the age, gender and social standing of those regarded fugitives, we study depictions of ethnicity, appearance and clothing. Second, we investigate the reception of escapees through two court cases about the illegal lodging of Estonia-Swedes in communities where Swedish was the main language. Old Swedish legislation declared that those providing board for vagrants were subject to prosecution and fines. This legislation was reiterated and used during this period. The interrogations enable study of the tactics used by migrants and the attitudes of commoners in receiving communities. Moreover, we pay attention to concepts used to designate these people both in terms of ethnicity and social standing, and in understandings of refuge. We can point to networks, hospitality, and processes of inclusion.

“60 Bloody Letters”:

Elmar Nyman’s Collection of News from
Estonia’s Swedish Community during
the Early Nazi Occupation

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Estonia-Swedish refugee and scholar Elmar Nyman collected 61 letters written by Estonia-Swedes in the early months of 1942, in a folder he labelled “60 Bloody Letters”. These letters were sent by Estonia-Swedes to their friends and relatives in Sweden shortly after the end of the brutal Soviet occupation of 1940–1941, and when hopes were high from the arrival of the Nazi soldiers who pushed the Red Army out. Throughout the initial Soviet occupation, contact with Sweden had been severed, so these letters were among the first personal communications from Estonia after the hiatus. The letters provide insight into the horrors and brutality of what they experienced under the Soviet occupation and separation from loved ones across the Baltic Sea, as well as the rumours that abounded concerning torture and disappearances. They document news of friends and loved ones who died or whose fate remained unknown, and the desperation of the people who endured the trauma of occupation. In contrast, the early months of Nazi occupation were framed as liberation and a return to civilisation. They capture a moment in time when there was a sense of hope again for an independent Estonia where they could return to life as before, and portrayed pride in seeing the Estonian flag flying once

again, alongside the Nazi flag. In this paper, I will analyse the letters, and how individual stories helped shape the image of Soviet horrors that played a part in Sweden working to repatriate the Estonia-Swedish population ahead of the Soviet return. I will also put the letters into the historical context of the Nazi occupation, and how Nazi officials attempted to encourage the liberation narrative despite having no plans to return independence to the Estonian state, ultimately leading to the mass flight of Estonia-Swedes by the end of the war.

Ten Years of Estonian-Language *Eibofolke*: Memories of Translation

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The translation of C. Fr. W. Russwurm's (1812–1883) major work *Eibofolke or Swedes on the Coasts of Estonia and on the Island of Ruhnu* (1855) into Estonian was already being discussed in the late 1990s. At that time, the project remained dormant for several reasons. The work began in 2011 on the initiative of the Estonian Swedish Academy NGO and lasted intermittently for four years. The translation was published in the autumn of 2015.

Given the importance of the work as a primary text and historical source, the translation presented a number of challenges and dilemmas. Should we make an academic or a so-called popular edition? A standard translation or an annotated edition? Is it possible, and how, to adapt a 19th-century German academic text for the 21st-century Estonian reader?

The original book itself is not easy reading as there are many stylistic inconsistencies (Part I: History and Topography is based on written sources and is dry and abstract, with difficult language; Part II: A Description of Folk Culture is more lively and natural, with information from oral informants and direct observation as sources). Local inconsistencies also prevail in the presentation of place names, the structure of the subject and name index, the list of sources, etc. A separate issue was the author's terminology, which is hopelessly outdated by today's standards. All these aspects obliged a distinct approach.

What is there to remember and learn from these four years?

The older the text, the more background work and editing it requires. It was possible to observe the author's methodology and attitude towards his research object. It is extremely respectful, delicate, and at times nationally romantic and lyrical. The author searches for the "old and disappearing".

With the help of digitised material available online it has become possible to check the source references and quotations. They are extremely accurate. This allows us to assume that the oral sources used in the compilation of the work are also accurate and reliable, which in turn confirms the reliability of the entire book.

It was very pleasant to interact with professionals who helped to comment on and explain the text, especially in the field of ethnography and folklore studies. At the same time, there was a lot of work to harmonise these comments. The comments received from Estonia-Swedes on the author's observations during the work were also of great help, confirming their accuracy.

So it can be said that it is in many ways a collective creation. The book has now been available in Estonian for ten years and has begun to live a life of its own. It is interesting to observe its use in non-fiction and fiction, and in community life.

Recent Svenska Odlingens Vänner (SOV) Projects Enabled by Våra Anor

Christopher Thiele

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The Estonia-Swedes who managed to reach Sweden during World War II were all neatly recorded, and the total of all of them soon became the official number of Estonia-Swedes who came out from behind the Iron Curtain. However, when the genealogy team began preparing for the launch of Våra Anor in 2021 and the data was digitised and became easier to cross-check with sources, we realised that there were larger gaps than anticipated. People were either completely missing or were unrecorded after World War II. Many hours have since been spent and are still being spent on finding all the missing persons and closing these gaps.

Individuals typically missing from SOV's archives include:

- ◆ seamen who were at sea at the time Estonia was occupied,
- ◆ those who were working on Gotland, in mainland Sweden, or in Finland when Estonia was occupied,
- ◆ those who were born in the Orthodox parish in Vormsi,
- ◆ those who were deported or transferred/mobilised to the Red Army.

Most of these individuals were also Estonian citizens in 1940.

The following three projects that have been ongoing between 2021 and 2025 will be presented:

- ◆ Estonia-Swedes buried in Gotland,
- ◆ documentation and exhibition on deported and mobilised Estonia-Swedes,
- ◆ finds in books from Vormsi Orthodox Church.

The Folk Costumes of the Estonia-Swedes: The Editors' View of the Book's Origin Story

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Although there has been a keen interest in folk costume recently, as evidenced by numerous books introducing the traditional costumes of different counties or even parishes, the Estonia-Swedes, who have lived on the Estonian islands and the coast of northwest Estonia for centuries, have so far received little attention. Therefore, *The Folk Costumes of the Estonia-Swedes*, published in the summer of 2025, is all the more pleasing, offering a fascinating insight into the history and clothing traditions of this ethnic group collected under one cover. People who are thoroughly familiar with the folk costumes and their production in the region provide an overview of the development and specificities of the costumes of each historical Estonia-Swedish settlement: Vormsi, Noarootsi, the Pakri Islands, Ruhnu and Hiiumaa. The book, richly illustrated with historical photographs and object illustrations, is intended for anyone interested in the history and wearing traditions of folk costumes.

What was the story of this extensive overview? What is the importance and uniqueness of this Estonia-Swedish folk costume book? The book's editors reveal the content of the collection

and the principles of compilation and design, introducing the joys and challenges associated with editing. For example, how to ensure that the visual material of the book has a logical and emotional connection with the content, down to the smallest detail. Questions requiring further research, and the exciting findings that emerged during the work, are also highlighted.

The Folk Costumes of the Estonia-Swedes is published by the Estonian Swedes' Cultural Administration together with Saara Publishing House. The authors of the book are Ivar Rүүtli, Juta Holst, Kristina Rajando, Yngve Rosenblad, Marju Tamm, Violetta Riidas, Lembe Maria Sihvre, Külli Uustal and Helgi Põllo.

Song-Collectors from Near and Far: A Comparison of Insiders' and Outsiders' Perspectives on Estonia-Swedish Music Culture

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My paper aims to take a closer look at song collecting within Estonia-Swedish communities from the 1850s to the present. First, I will present an overview of the main collecting projects that were carried out both by Estonia-Swedes and scholars from outside the community, who thereby can be understood as outsiders. Second, I will compare the collecting projects and search for differences between insiders' and outsiders' work. Questions behind the comparison are what aims were behind the different collecting projects, how were they financed and organised, and what happened with the songs after they had been collected? I will also compare the collectors' backgrounds, previous experience and professional networks. Finally, I will draw attention to the song-collections and look at why these songs were seen as valuable, what happened with the songs after they were collected, and whether the song collections have caused any revivals, so-called archive loops.

Estonia-Swedish Identity in Biographical Interviews

Kristel Rattus

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In the spring of 2025, the Estonia-Swedes: A Diaspora with Roots exhibition opened at the Estonian National Museum introducing the traditional material and spiritual culture of the Estonia-Swedes and the development of Estonia-Swedish culture from the 20th century to the present day. In preparation for the exhibition, the museum organised fieldwork in both Sweden and Estonia in 2024, during which video interviews were conducted, objects and documents were collected and deposited, Estonia-Swedish cultural events were recorded, and the everyday life of Estonia-Swedes was observed. A total of 44 people of Estonia-Swedish origin were interviewed in Sweden and Estonia: 21 men and 23 women, 24 residents of Sweden and 20 of Estonia.

In my presentation, I will examine the expression of Estonia-Swedish identity in these interviews. What does it mean to be an Estonia-Swede today? Is Estonia-Swedishness perceived as a fading phenomenon or a living culture? What places, events and symbols serve as points of support for Estonia-Swedish identity? How do they differ across generations and between people living in Sweden and Estonia?

Collecting and Researching Place-Lore on Ruhnu Island

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We have been collecting local lore on the island of Ruhnu for two years. In this presentation, we will describe the problems and successes we encountered in our work.

Since almost all the islanders left Ruhnu for Sweden in 1944, they took all the oral tradition with them. Until then, folklorists had hardly recorded the island's tradition at all, and among the little that has been collected, place-lore is essentially absent.

We have decided to focus our work on the island and not its inhabitants. In addition to the heritage of the Estonia-Swedes, which we hope to find by translating material from the Uppsala archive, we will also examine the stories of the people from the island of Kihnu who settled on Ruhnu at the beginning of the Soviet occupation. We will also interview people who came to the island for summer vacations in the 1970s or their descendants.

Based on the island's history, we have collected place-lore on Ruhnu and Kihnu and reviewed texts found in Swedish archives. In 2024, we conducted nearly 20 interviews on Ruhnu, including

with descendants of two Ruhnu Swedes. The main interviewees were local residents, but also some summer residents of Ruhnu. In 2025, we also interviewed people who had returned to Kihnu, and in the autumn we continued the interviews on Ruhnu.

In addition to interviews, we will examine material found in the Estonian National Museum, the Aibolands Museum, and the Estonian Cultural History Archive at the Estonian Literary Museum.

Vormsi Island Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow:

An Example of Implementation of
Estonia-Swedish Cultural Heritage

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Until World War II the majority of Vormsi inhabitants (a total of 2,800 people) were Estonia-Swedes. After World War II in 1945 only around 60 members of this community remained. People from all over Estonia became the new inhabitants.

Since 1989 the cultural and historical roots of the island have become increasingly vibrant. St. Olaf's Church was restored and reopened in 1990, initiated and maintained by local young Estonian families.

In 2000 the Vormsi Farm Museum opened, original the farm of an Estonia-Swedish family. Today the farm museum is operated by VKÜ (*Vormsi kodukandi ühing*), a local organisation. Its board is a mix of local Estonians and Swedes with roots on the island.

For ten years, each summer, the *Vormsi Kultuurilaager* for children has been held on Vormsi. Children from all over Estonia attend.

In 2022 the *Ormsökistan / Vormsi Kirst* event started. The aim is to be a meeting place of locals and Estonia-Swedes returning to their roots. In seminars, group-discussions and during coffee breaks, people of different backgrounds and histories get together. July 2025 the event was staged for the fourth time.

In 2023 Vormsi Municipality introduced a new graphic design to be used all over the community as part of a Leader project. The design draws inspiration from local Estonia-Swedish heritage.

Our presentation will share the process of restoring historical and cultural heritage. We will use examples and share our experiences of a deepened and continuing processes, including personal relationships.

Education Programs in the Estonia-Swedes' Exhibition

Anna Liisa Regensperger

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At the Estonian National Museum, we strive to ensure that every age group can discover meaningful themes and activities across all exhibitions. In *Estonia-Swedes: A Diaspora with Roots* the education programmes ranged from day care to adult learning.

For our youngest visitors, we have designed an immersive tour that children as young as three can enjoy with their families keeping both children and parents curious, involved, and entertained. A similar approach has been developed for children up to third grade. In these activities, the group moves through the exhibition together, completing playful tasks along the way: learning a simple dance, trying to chew leather to make it soft, escaping a field of breaking ice, or moving around the room like a school of fish.

Students in grades four to nine can explore the exhibition through task-based activities such as trading goods in a market, preparing traditional foods, organising a playlist for an event, or designing and redrawing folk costumes. Older students, including the end of middle school and high school, engage with the more challenging aspects of history. By reading personal memories displayed in the exhibition, they create a family or character and decide what that character – or they themselves – might have done in the historical situations presented.

For teenagers and adults learning Estonian as a foreign language, we have created a special lesson focusing on the Estonia-Swedes. This programme helps learners build vocabulary related to traditional life on the coast while deepening their understanding of local history.

To reach the widest audience possible, the exhibition also serves as a discovery space for children's camps. We have offered a popular Christmas programme, which sold out shortly after its announcement, as well as a competition inviting participants to design a board game themed around the Estonia-Swedes.

The main aims of our education programmes are threefold: first to offer engaging ways for visitors to interact with the exhibition while supporting key topics in the national curriculum; second to create a space where learning happens without paying too much attention to it; and third to inspire continued curiosity long after the audience leaves the museum.

Lecturing Swedes without any Pre-knowledge about the Estonia-Swedish History:

Estonia-Swedes' Cultural Contacts with Other Ethnic Groups

Elisabeth Hedfors

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and the *Vormsi Kirst* planning committee

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Vormsi is the ancestral home of my paternal family. In 1989, I had the privilege of visiting for the first time, when news of glasnost and perestroika was widespread. I lived in Borås (100,000 inhabitants) and had the task, from our local newspaper Borås Tidning, to document the first return of Swedes to the island. Articles from my visit were widely read and I was asked almost every month to participate in lectures and programs during the years that followed.

Since then Estonia has regained its independence and I have moved to Jönköping. The interest within the community has continued. Since 1989 I have given about 150 lectures and programs in schools, NGOs, churches, city libraries, Lions and Rotary clubs, etc. In 1999 I cooperated with a curator at Jönköping county museum in the production of the *Hem till byn, Koduküla* exhibition, set up in Jönköping and later travelling to Tallinn and Vormsi.

The form and content of my lectures vary depending on the group. There is always a part on the history of Estonia and the Estonia-Swedes, and in particular Vormsi. I speak about the way of life as my Dad knew it when growing up. I talk about times of war and the family's escape as refugees to Sweden. I speak about feelings and emotions of those returning to a different Vormsi 50 years after losing their homes. I always make comparisons with the refugee debate of today. And I speak about contemporary life on Vormsi.

In my presentation I will share the experiences of lecturing in Sweden, in a context where there is no prior knowledge of the Estonia-Swedes. I speak about reactions, about war, and about losing relatives. People can identify with this because the Estonia-Swedes were originally natives of Sweden. I will talk about meeting people born to refugees from Estonia and other parts of the world.

An Overview of the RUNSKA Project: Documenting and Promoting Runska, the Endangered Estonia-Swedish Dialect of Ruhnu Island

Eva Liina Asu

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This presentation provides an overview of the main goals and outcomes of the RUNSKA project, a joint initiative of three academic institutions (the University of Tartu, the University of Gothenburg and the University of Latvia), representatives of the island community in Estonia (Ruhnu Kultuuriruum) and the association of former Ruhnu islanders in Sweden (Runöbornas Förening). The project is funded by the NordPlus Nordic Languages programme with the broader goal of documenting and promoting knowledge of the critically endangered variety of Ruhnu Estonia-Swedish.

The chief outcome of the activities carried out to document and systematise Runska dialect linguistic archive material (including dialect texts, recordings, word lists) is an open research-oriented database with information about the content and location of the material. During the project newer recordings have been made and an older sample recording has been translated and transcribed. Several activities have been carried out to educate people and promote knowledge of Runska, including the compilation of school teaching material in Estonian, a text for a Wikipedia page, linguistic input for different information ma-

terial for the locals and visitors to the island as well as popular scientific articles in Estonian and Swedish.

The talk will also give a brief summary of three project seminars, each targeting a different audience, including a seminar at the Svenska Odlingens Vänner (SOV) Estonia-Swedish organisation in Stockholm for the Estonia-Swedish community (in Swedish), a seminar about Runska and other Estonia-Swedish dialects for the research community at the University of Gothenburg (in English), and a language seminar about Runska on Ruhnu Island for the local community and the school (in Estonian).

The Position of Ruhnu Estonia-Swedish in the Linguistic Contact Area of the Gulf of Riga

Eva Liina Asu, Miina Norvik, Karl Pajusalu

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The islands and coastal areas surrounding the Gulf of Riga form a linguistically interesting contact area between different language varieties representing two distinct language families. The varieties of Estonian and Livonian spoken in the area (Kihnu, Häädemeeste and Saaremaa Estonian, and Courland and Saalaca Livonian) belong to the Finnic branch of the Uralic family, while the Swedish and Latvian varieties belong to the Germanic and Baltic branches of the Indo-European family. The focus of this paper is on Ruhnu Estonia-Swedish, a small variety of Swedish once spoken on Ruhnu Island, located at the very heart of the Gulf of Riga.

The aim is to explore the position of Ruhnu Estonia-Swedish in the contact area by examining some linguistic features that it shares with its cognate and noncognate neighbours. Examples will be drawn from phonological, morphological and lexical levels as it has been shown that the study of features belonging to different linguistic levels can reveal distinct patterns (Aikhenvald 2006). As a source, earlier descriptions of Ruhnu Swedish (e.g. Vendell 1882; Lagman 1979) and general overviews of Swedish dialects (e.g. Rendahl 2001) will be used.

For instance, one of the characteristics of Estonia-Swedish is the use of singular marking with masculine and neuter nouns when preceded by a cardinal numeral, which is at least partly attributed to Estonian influence (Rendahl 2001: 156). In Standard Swedish the plural form is used instead. An example from Ruhnu Estonia-Swedish can be found in Lagman (1979: 197): *fem, sjex **fjaring** eL* cf. Standard Swedish: *fem, sex **fjårdingar** (med) öl* ('five, six firkins of beer').

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Genitive Inflection in the Noarrootsi Dialect

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In Standard Swedish there is only one inflectional ending used to express possession, the genitive *-s*. It is used on nouns (1a), proper nouns (1b) and pronouns (1c)¹ (SAG II:112).

- (1) a. *Pojkens båt* ‘The boy’s boat’
b. *Eriks båt* ‘Erik’s boat’
c. *Hans båt* ‘His boat’

However, in Old Swedish and earlier stages of the language there were several genitive endings, depending on the grammatical gender, number and noun class of the word, such as *-s*, *-a(r)*, *-a* and *-u* (Pettersson 2005).

In the Estonia-Swedish dialect of Noarrootsi there seem to be two inflectional endings for the genitive case: *-s* and *-sa*, although they do not appear in the same syntactic context: *-s* is used in the attributive position while *-sa* is used in the predicative position (Lagman 1979; Brunberg et al. 2015).

Attributive position	Predicative position
<i>Påjkens båtn</i> ² ‘The boy’s boat’	<i>Båtn är påjkensa</i> ‘The boat is the boy’s.’
<i>Eriks båtn</i> ‘Erik’s boat’	<i>Båtn är Eriksa</i> ‘The boat is Erik’s.’
<i>Hans båtn</i> ‘His boat’	<i>Båtn är hansa</i> ‘The boat is his.’

¹ The genitive *-s* can also, particularly in spoken language, be added to the whole noun phrase: e.g. *de fyras förslag* ‘the suggestion of the four (of them)’, *karln dårs fru* ‘the wife of that man’ (SAG I: 176, my translation and underlining).

² The examples given in the table are my own, based on the grammar descriptions (Lagman 1979; Brunberg et al. 2015).

Similar genitive markers, i.e. *-s* and *-a*, are common in dialects in southern Sweden: e.g. *Erika bil* ‘Erik’s car’. There it is known as ‘double genitive’, since it seems possible to stack the endings *-s* and *-a* on top of each other: e.g. *Erikas* ‘Erik’s’, *Sivsa* ‘Siv’s’ (Josefsson 2009, my translation and underlining).

In this talk I will discuss whether *-s* and *-sa* are in fact two separate genitive markers and how these inflectional endings relate to the genitive endings in Old Swedish and southern Swedish dialects.

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A Glazed Bodice for the Island Bride: Imported Fabrics in the Wedding Traditions of Ruhnu

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In the Swedish-speaking island community of Ruhnu, wedding traditions have preserved a unique fusion of global material and local identity. Archive photographs and museum holdings reveal that both brides and bridesmaids wore fitted bodices (*snevel* in Ruhnu dialect) sewn from English callimanco – a striped, satin-weave, glazed wool fabric exported from Norwich and known across the Baltic and Nordic region by various names such as *kalmink*, *kalemank* or *kamlott*.

While imported materials in rural communities often gave way to newer cloth over time, Ruhnu's wedding bodices tell a different story. The callimanco used in these garments is over two hundred years old, a fact that only became clear through recent research. As the objects in museum collections were acquired without precise dating, their age was previously unknown. However, through collaborative research on textile trade routes, particularly the circulation of worsteds across the Baltic Sea, it is now possible to trace the origins of this tradition to the late 18th century. This dating is further supported by cut analysis, which aligns the construction of these bodices with patterns typical of that era.

This paper draws on textile analysis, vernacular photography, and museum evidence to argue that the Ruhnu *snevel* was more

than a garment: it was a marker of belonging, gendered identity, and intergenerational continuity within a diasporic island community. It offers new insight into how the Estonia-Swedes sustained cultural distinctiveness not only through language and faith, but also through cloth.

The Aibo Tapestry:

Cultural Transmission through Threads

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This paper focuses on the Aibotapeten, Aibo Tapestry, created and housed at the Aibolands Museum in Haapsalu. The museum is a grassroots institution that has worked as a key site for (re)shaping, performing, and preserving Estonia-Swedish cultural heritage since the early 90s. Drawing from my ongoing doctoral research, titled “Estonia-Swedes: Transnational Identities and Cultural Heritage”, I adopt an open-ended approach that uses ethnographic fieldwork performed at the Aibolands Museum, following various threads to uncover how the Aibo Tapestry connects to cultural belonging and narratives of both the past and the present.

In one thread, I examine how the Aibo Tapestry transcends its status as a mere artefact, embodying a dynamic performance of cultural heritage and history. Its creation involved active participation, historical research, storytelling, and community engagement, positioning it as a performative act of cultural transmission. Guided tours of the tapestry further enhance this performance, shaping visitors’ understanding through curated narratives.

Another thread explores how the tapestry being displayed in Aiboland amplifies its symbolic weight as a cultural artefact that is intimately linked to the physical space of Aiboland, where the narrative of the tapestry’s imagery unfolds. This connec-

tion underscores the importance of place in the preservation and development of Estonia-Swedish identity. By examining the Aibo Tapestry within this context, this paper contributes to a broader understanding of how minority groups navigate and sustain their cultural heritage in a transnational landscape.

Finally, I will analyse my initial encounter with the tapestry at the Aibolands Museum and explore how the position and placement of a cultural artefact can influence its meaning contrasting my experience at the museum with photographs and prints of the tapestry.

Research on Estonia-Swedish Wooden Artefacts at the Estonian National Museum

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During the nearly two-year preparatory work for the Estonia-Swedes: A Diaspora with Roots exhibition, I delved deeply into the collection of wooden objects at the Estonian National Museum. Working simultaneously as both a conservator and an exhibition curator, I mapped and systematised Estonia-Swedish furniture analysing it based on material, manufacturing method and evidence of use. The research process enabled me to attribute Estonia-Swedish origins to several previously unknown objects and to uncover their cultural background.

In my presentation, I will introduce my research journey and the methods used, and give examples of how the wooden objects in the Estonian National Museum collections enrich our understanding of the daily life, living environment, and material culture of Estonia-Swedes.

The Preservation and Regional Variations in Finland-Swedish Folk Costume

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The Brage Society was founded in 1906 to cultivate and promote Finland-Swedish folk culture, for example, music, dance, costume and tradition. An important purpose was to present performing arts and research side by side. The Brage folk costume section gives advice and sells materials related to the traditional costume of the Swedish-speaking parts of Finland.

The Society's costume area is the Finland-Swedish coastal regions. The costume agency consists of a small museum, a shop with folk costume materials and an archive with background material. In 1922, the Society arranged the first costume congress, which decided that it would be responsible for reconstructing both a woman's and a men's costume for every Swedish-speaking and bilingual town in Finland. This is why costume-related work in the Swedish-speaking part of Finland is still today organised by the Brage Society in Helsinki. The costumes have since then been reconstructed in collaboration with local committees, and today we have 186 different women's and men's costumes.

What is a folk costume? It is a festive costume that is reconstructed based on the dresses used by the common people in the 19th century. The Houtskär woman's costume from the

southwest archipelago of Finland is very decorative. Houtskär is near to Turku and consists of approximately 700 islets. The Houtskär wedding dress was described in the 1870s. The costume consists of a red wool skirt, white apron with bobbin lace, embroidered bodice and a green jacket with yellow silk ribbon edging and a border of sheep fur. The costume includes knitted mittens in red, white, black and yellow with small knots and tassels.