Transnational Death

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Transnational heritage work and commemorative rituals across the Finnish-Russian border in the old Salla region

The Salla municipality, located in Eastern Lapland in the borderland between Finland and Russia, has a complex transnational history due to the events of the Second World War. The borderlines between Finland and Soviet Union were redrawn twice in the 1940s: first after the Winter War (1939–1940) and again after the end of the Continuation War (1941–1944). Additionally, as a result of the Moscow Peace Treaty, almost half of the territories of Salla were ceded to the Soviet Union. It has been argued that the WWII mass evacuations and territorial losses that Finland faced have turned into a national story of suffering.[1] Karelians in the former southeastern parts of Finland as well as the residents of Salla and Pechenga (Petsamo) in Eastern Lapland lost their homes and the connection to their ancestors' lands, consisting of farmland, lakes, and forests that had provided their livelihood for centuries. In particular, Karelia has become a place for nostalgic reminiscence and pilgrimages full of myths, utopias, and emotions. The heritage societies of former Karelian residents are still active after 70 years, organizing tours in the area, putting up memorials, and holding annual festivities.[2]

Compared to the public memory culture of ceded Karelia, the evacuations and territorial losses of the area of Lapland have received much less attention

1 Outi Fingerroos, "'Karelia Issue': The Politics and Memory of Karelia in Finland," in *Finland in Word War II: History, Memory, Interpretations*, eds. Tiina Kinnunen and Ville Kivimäki, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012); Kristiina Korjonen-Kuusipuro and Anna-Kaisa Kuusisto-Arponen, "Emotional Silences. The Rituals of Remembering the Finnish Karelia," in Painful Pasts and Useful Memories. Remembering and Forgetting in Europe. CFE Conference Papers Series 5, eds. Barbara Törnquist-Plewa and Niklas Bernsand (Lund: Centre for European Studies, 2012); Nina Sääskilahti, "Ruptures and Returns. From Loss of Memory to the Memory of Loss," *Ethnologia Fennica,* 40 (2013): 40–53.; Davydova, Olga. Voitonpäivänjuhla Sortavalassa. Juhlinnan ja muistin politiikkaa rajakaupungissa. *Elore*, 22, 2 (2015), 2.

2 Fingerroos; Korjonen-Kuusipuro and Kuusisto-Arponen; Ulla Savolainen, *Muisteltu ja kirjoitettu evakkomatka: Tutkimus evakkolapsuuden muistelukerronnan poetiikasta.* (Joensuu: Suomen Kansantietouden Tutkijain Seura, 2015).

in the national narrative.[3] However, over the past decades, both official and unofficial heritage forums related to WWII in Lapland have become remarkably active, resulting in fruitful collaboration, for example, between museums and amateur history hobbyists.[4] In the area of Salla and across the border in the ceded territories, these groups have created a range of activities to cherish the WWII heritage. The ceded parts, including the old village center where the Lutheran church of Salla (named Kuolajärvi until 1936) was located, were not accessible in Soviet times. For about 50 years, the ruined church and the surrounding cemeteries were not accessible to Finnish citizens and were left without maintenance.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the abandoned and overgrown churchyard and deserted cemeteries across the border were turned into scenes of regular commemorative rituals. In 1992, the Salla Society (Sallaseura ry) was created in order to take care of the cemeteries and church ruins and to cherish the memory of Old Salla and its many villages.[5] The society offers a chance for the descendants of the former residents of the annexed territories to gather in Salla, to cross the border, and to pay their respects to their ancestors. This chapter explores the heritage work and the commemorative practices and rituals taking place in ceded areas. What kinds of meanings are attached to the transnational commemorative practices of the Salla region? How are they organized and who participates in them? What motivates the heritage activists, as well as the former Salla villagers and their children, to take part in the transnational heritage work?

As part of the research project "Lapland's Dark Heritage,"[6] I visited Salla, the local museum of war and reconstruction, and the many historical war sites on the Finnish side of the border. Furthermore, I conducted interviews with the history hobbyists and heritage activists who maintain the cemeteries and memorials in Kuolajärvi. These key members of the Salla society also organize guided visits to the historical war sites and hold a yearly commemorative service at the Old Salla churchyard. In addition

3 See for example, Marja Tuominen, "Lapin ajanlasku: menneisyys, tulevaisuus ja jälleenrakennus historian reunalla," in Rauhaton rauha: Suomalaiset ja sodan päättyminen 1944–1950, eds. Ville Kivimäki and Kirsi-Maria Hytönen (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2015); Sääskilahti, and Nina Sääskilahti, "Konfliktinjälkeiset kulttuuriympäristöt, muisti ja materiaalisuus," *Tahiti: taidehistoria tieteenä,* 1 (2016).

4 See Eerika Koskinen-Koivisto and Suzie Thomas, "Lapland's Dark Heritage: Responses to the Legacy of World War II," in *Heritage in Action. Making the Past in the Present,* eds. by Helaine Silverman, Emma Waterton and Steve Watson. (New York: Springer, 2017); Vesa-Pekka Herva et al., "'I Have Better Stuff at Home': Treasure Hunting and Private Collecting of World War II Artefacts in Finnish Lapland," *World Archaeology*, 48, 1 (2016): 267–281.

5 See, Salla Society's webpage, available at: http://sallaseura.fi/.

6 The material for the article was gathered in "Lapland's Dark Heritage," a multidisciplinary research project funded by the Academy of Finland, which seeks to understand the various engagements with the material heritage of German military presence in Finnish Lapland. The current research is part of independent projects funded by the Finnish Cultural Foundation and Emil Aaltonen Foundation, carried out at the University of Jyväskylä in 2016–2017. I would like to thank Dr. Eliza Kraatari for her insightful comments on this text.

to interviewing these heritage activists, I have analyzed media materials (videos, photos, and written reports) of visits to the Old Salla cemeteries and the annual commemorative services held across the border, as well as the web archives of the Salla Society's activities.[7] Instead of traditional ethnographic fieldwork, my approach uses a combination of different methodologies: ethnographic interviews and a close reading of media materials. I would have obtained different kinds of data by being there and taking part in a commemorative service and experiencing it for myself.[8] However, written and recorded materials (edited video as well as reports and photos from different decades) highlight other dimensions of knowledge,[9] bringing to the fore, for example, the agency of individuals who engage with the heritage work around commemorative practices and the social and cultural meanings of this participation.

WWII and the heritage scene in Salla

The municipality of Salla was a central stage of the WWII events of Finnish Lapland. Some of the most decisive battles of the Winter War between Finland and the Soviet Union took place there. When the Winter War broke out in 1939, the aim of the Soviet troops was to cut Finland in half at its narrowest point near Salla.[10] This plan did not succeed, but the area suffered significant territorial losses: the municipality of Salla lost around half of its area – altogether nine villages – to the Soviet Union.[11] In addition to these, the provisions of the subsequent peace treaty also required the construction of a railway line from Kemijärvi to Kelloselkä. The construction of this "Salla line" employed people during the period of Interim Peace (from March 13, 1940 to June 25, 1941), as did the construction of new defense fortifications, garrisons, and bunkers constructed at Joutsijärvi in Kemijärvi and the tank barriers that were built in Salla and Savukoski along the Salpa defense line (*Salpalinja*). The threat of a new war clearly hung in the air.[12]

7 The photo and video materials are courtesy of the Salla Society and the Salla Museum of War and Reconstruction. I would like to specifically thank Jarkko Sipola, Pekka Moilanen, and Eeva-Liisa Vuonnala for their generous help in gathering the research material and enhancing my knowledge of the cultural heritage work in Salla.

8 See for example, Korjonen-Kuusipuro and Kuusisto-Arponen.

9 According to Sarah Pink, the modern project of ethnography is to translate the visual into words. Pink herself has introduced a different approach that explores the relationship between visual and other (including verbal) forms of knowledge making meaningful links between different research materials. See Sarah Pink, *Doing Sensory Ethnography* (Los Angeles, California: Sage 2007).

10 Pasi Tuunainen, "The Finnish Army at War. Operation and Soldiers, 1939–45," in *Finland in War II: History, Memory, Interpretations*, eds. Tiina Kinnunen and Ville Kivimäki (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012).

11 Hanna Snellman, *Sallan suurin kylä – Göteborg. Tutkimus Ruotsin lappilaisista.* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2003).

12 Pertti Airio, Minna Hamara, and Kaisa Hytönen, *Eastern Lapland during the Winter and Continuation Wars. (*Kemijärvi: The Local Federation of East Lapland, 2013).

Image 015: The Salpa defense line is a 1200 km-long row of bunkers on the eastern border of Finland stretching from the Gulf of Finland to Pechanga in northern Finland. The line crosses the Salla municipal center, connecting with other WWII memorials, August 8, 2016. Photo by the author.

At the start of the Continuation War, German troops arrived in Eastern Lapland. From the end of 1940, some 200,000 German troops were based in Finland, mostly in the northern parts. Together, Finland and Germany launched an offensive on the Soviet Union from the direction of Salla in the summer of 1941. The offensive, codenamed "Silver Fox," was meant to proceed to Kandalaksha (Kantalahti) and later to Murmansk, but it was stopped for three years at the Verman River. The following period of trench warfare ended when the German troops, experiencing a counterattack by the Soviets, retreated back to Finland and toward northern Norway in autumn 1944. The German presence in Lapland, under Colonel General (*Generaloberst*) Eduard Dietl, enjoyed relative harmony with the locals until late 1944. In October 1944, however, Finland's treaty with the Soviet Union required it to declare war with Germany. What was at first a "pretend" war escalated into actual conflict, the Lapland War (1944–1945), with devastating consequences for northern Finland. Retreating German troops adopted "scorched earth" tactics, destroying not only their own military settlements but about 90% of the infrastructure and dwellings of Lapland.[13] In the area of Salla, the destruction was complete: all villages except two were fully destroyed. In addition to the dwellings, hay sheds, agricultural machinery, cellars, and even wells were smashed and burned.[14]

13 Marja Tuominen, "A Good World after all? Recovery after the Lapland War," in *The North Calotte: Perspectives on the histories and cultures of northernmost Europe*, eds. Maria Lahteenmaki and Paivi Maria Pihlaja (Helsinki: Publications of the Department of History 18, University of Helsinki, 2005).

14 Hanna Elo and Sirkka-Liisa Seppälä: *Raivaajien ja rakentajien Salla. Sallan kulttuuriympäristöohjelma.* Suomen ympäristö 31. (Helsinki: Ympäristöministeriö, 2012).

After the war, the people of Salla had to rebuild their lives from scratch. Those who had lived in the ceded parts of the municipality were moved to the western part and settled in villages where they had to clear new farmland from forests and wetlands. The center of the municipality had to be relocated, too.[15] The effects of war on the local community were profound; the postwar years were characterized by a collective trauma, as well as silence and a sense of rupture. On the other hand, the process of resettlement and the reconstruction of Salla also rooted perseverance and a sense of community in the postwar generation.[16] Interestingly, present-day Salla bases its identity strongly on the war and postwar time: local histories emphasize the postwar efforts, calling them "the miracle of Salla" (*Sallan ihme*). The vast voluntary heritage work carried out in the area resulted in the establishment of the Salla Museum for War and Reconstruction (*Sallan sota- ja jälleenrakennusajan museo*), henceforth the SMWR, in 2010.[17]

The SMWR, which is now run by the municipality, employs three museum workers. The idea of having a local museum was already in the air in the 1950s, but it was not until 2003 that local heritage activists, including members of paramilitary and reservist organizations and the Salla Society, joined forces to convince the municipality that the local war heritage has both national and transnational significance, as well as the potential to lure tourists to the area.[18] Together with municipal officials, the activists created three EU-funded projects to document and study the local WWII heritage.[19] The museum was started mainly by amateurs with help received from the professionals of the Provincial Museum of Lapland. Collectively organized action on this scale around war heritage, including the establishment of a new museum, is rather unique in Finland. In the case of Salla, the key group of heritage activists also includes local military history hobbyists, such as members of the Salla search group for fallen Finnish soldiers (*Lapin sotavainajain muiston vaalimisyhdistys ry*),[20] which was established in 2002, as well as members of local reservist associations and guilds, who are experts in different fields of military history. The local hobbyists often act as experts and guides for visitors who wish to familiarize themselves with the war history of the surrounding area. Our research on the WWII history hobbyists of Lapland has indicated that the intersection of expertise in military history

15 Snellman, 39–40; Elo and Seppälä, 48–49.

16 Snellman.

17 Salla-wiki. As the local tourism site describes, the aim of the museum is to offer a realistic picture of the complex history of the Kuolajärvi-Salla region on the Russian border, which has lived through both good and bad times (http://loma.salla.fi/en): "Salla in the middle of nowhere." While the emphasis of the museum exhibitions is clearly on war efforts and events, the prewar history of the municipality is also featured.

18 Interview 2.

19 See, Airio et al.

20 The group is a member of the national Association for Cherishing the Memory of the Dead of the War, which since 1998 has coordinated the search for and repatriation of remains of Finnish soldiers from battlefields currently located in Russia (http://www.sotavainajat.net/in_english).

and local knowledge of war historical sites in the wilderness personally motivates the hobbyists to engage in so-called *serious leisure* activities.[21] In addition to enhancing local tourism, which is of crucial importance to the economy of the area, the other important motivation for safeguarding the local war heritage lies in "honorary debt," a patriotic spirit that is still strong among the generation whose family members fought in WWII and struggled to rebuild the area after the war.[22]

In the case of cultural heritage work and transnational encounters and rituals, patriotic ideologies do not exclude friendly collaboration between local Finnish and local Russian authorities who honor the victims of the war, regardless of their nationality. The current chair of the Salla Society speaks fluent Russian and has good relations with local Russian authorities, as well as heritage hobbyists from the local Russian search group for fallen soldiers. The SMWR has received a significant donation of objects from the Russian search group. The museum has also hosted a joint cross-border exhibition, created together with local Russian museums of the Kandhalaksa area.[23]

Heritage sites and practices of commemoration across the border

The first section of the SMWR's permanent exhibition introduces the destruction of the old Salla church, an eight-cornered log building designed by C. L. Engel and constructed in 1838. There are photos and a scale model of the church right next to the entrance of the exhibition hall. The church was set on fire during the first days of the Winter War in 1939, right after its renovation had been finished. The event was very tragic, as it was the local Finnish soldiers themselves who had to set the fire, because they did not want to leave the church for the Red Army.[24] For a long time, the ruins of the church and the cemeteries around it were abandoned and overgrown with vegetation. Today, the churchyard is a large nature area with trees and wildflowers hiding the barely visible ruins of the church. The area of the hero cemetery is a cleared empty space encircled by a white fence. In 1995, an iron cross was put up inside the fence and, a year later, a stone memorial with the names of fallen soldiers was erected in front of the cemetery.

In the case of Finnish soldiers, it is rare for the hero cemetery to be located on foreign ground. The remains of fallen Finnish soldiers were evacuated from battlefields and, when possible, buried in the soldier's home region with honorary rituals in so-called hero cemeteries. These cemeteries followed the model of the hero cemeteries of the 1918 Civil War in Finland, which were dedicated to the civil guards (*Suojeluskunnat*), also known as

21 Koskinen-Koivisto and Thomas. For more about the concept of serious leisure, see Robert A. Stebbins, "Volunteering: A Serious Leisure Perspective," in *Nonprofit and Voluntary Action Quarterly, 25 (*1996*):* 211–224.

22 Interview 2.

23 Interview 2. For an overview of the goals of the joint museum project, see http://www.salla.fi/museohanke/Museohanke.pdf.

24 Interview 1; Elo and Seppä, 98.

Image 016: Close to the church ruins, the hero cemetery and the memorial erected there commemorate the Salla-based soldiers who fell during the Finnish Civil War, the Winter War, and the Continuation War, 2010. Courtesy of the Salla Society.

the Whites, the winners of the Civil War.[25] In the post-WWII years, the hero cemeteries became important sites for personal mourning, remembrance, and strengthening national identity. Today, the hero cemeteries continue to function as a central locus for rituals that construct the collective and national memory of war.[26] At Old Salla, located apart from the church in Peterinselkä, there is also a cemetery of German soldiers established in 1941 during the Continuation War. There rest the remains of 7,000 Nazi soldiers who fell in the battles near Kandalaksha and in the battles near Kiestinki and Kalevala. In recent years, access to these places in the Russian border zone has become more restricted, especially for tourists of other nationalities than Finnish.

In Finland, the culture of death is centered on cemeteries, which are most often located in the proximity of Lutheran (or Orthodox) churches.[27] It is a common habit to visit the graves of beloved ones and ancestors on special days such as Christmas Eve and Day, All Saints' Day, Father's and Mother's Day, with people lighting candles or bringing flowers to the graves.[28] In addition to this remembrance, official ceremonies by the Finnish army and reservist and paramilitary organizations take place at hero cemeteries during

25 Petri Raivo, "'This is Where They Fought.' Finnish War Landscapes as a National Heritage," in The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration, eds. by Timothy G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson and Michael Roper, London: Routledge, 2000), 150–151; Ilona Kemppainen, *Isänmaan uhrit. Sankarikuolema Suomessa toisen maailmansodan aikana.* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2006), 71, 73.

26 Raivo, 153–154; Tiina Kinnunen and Markku Jokisipilä, "Shifting Images of 'Our' Wars: Finnish Memory Culture of World War II," in *Finland in War II: History, Memory, Interpretations*, eds. Tiina Kinnunen and Ville Kivimäki. (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 235.

27 Ilona Pajari, "Kuoleman rituaalit Suomessa," in *Kuoleman Kulttuurit Suomessa,* edited by Outi Hakola, Sari Kivistö and Virpi Mäkinen. (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2014).

28 Marja-Terttu Knapas, "Vanhat hautausmaat – monien muistojen puistot," in Puistot ja puutarhat – suomalainen puutarhaperinne, ed. Anna-Maija Halme, 75–83. (Helsinki: Suomen Kotiseutuliitto, 2005).

national holidays and flag days, such as Independence Day (December 6) and the Flag Day of the Finnish Defense Forces (June 4). There are also several other official commemorative days such as National Veterans' Day (April 27) and the Commemoration Day of Fallen Soldiers (the third Sunday in May). As explained earlier, visits to the Old Salla churchyard and cemeteries were allowed after the collapse of the Soviet Union, with the establishment of new national and regional administrations and the opening of the border station. In the beginning, lots of paperwork and negotiations with both border authorities and local administrations were required.[29] Since 1991, however, visits have been possible with a visa. Since its foundation, the activists of the Salla Society have managed the paperwork with the help of local connections, and they have also begun to regularly organize trips to Old Salla, first clearing out and later maintaining the heritage sites.[30]

The annual commemorative ritual held in the Old Salla churchyard in July includes a Lutheran memorial service, a practice which is typical of the Finnish culture of commemorating the dead and paying respect to fallen soldiers.[31] Typically, the event includes a coffee service and, in some cases, continues as a more informal festivity, similar to the tradition of Finnish village gatherings. In 1992, the governments of Finland and the Russian Federation ratified an agreement regarding visits to the cemeteries and memorials of fallen soldiers, as well as the treatment of their remains. This also made it easier to organize group visits and festivities across the border. Since 1993, a Lutheran liturgical (field) service has been held in the Old Salla churchyard every summer in July. In 1994–1995, the Salla Society rented some land next to the churchyard where they could put up a maintenance building. In 1996, the commemorative service also included an inaugural memorial to the fallen soldiers, which was attended by over 550 participants. The festivity offered many participants the first opportunity to cross the border.

Representatives of the local Russian authority and regional administration are always invited to the commemorative service. As part of the ritual, the organizers and the invited representatives also pay respect to the fallen Soviet soldiers. In the 1996 ceremony, official representatives of both countries included regional (provincial and municipal) and religious authorities (bishops of Oulu and Murmansk), and the service included both Lutheran and Orthodox liturgies. These, as well as the speeches by Russian representatives, were translated into Finnish.[32]

29 See descriptions and photos of the first visits by heritage activists and preparations of the festivities in 1991–1998 at Salla Society's webpage (http://sallaseura.fi/?page_id=279) and the webpage of Kuolajärvi village (http://kuolajarvenkyla.nettisivu.org), updated by the members of the Kuolajärvi Facebook group, consisting of descendants of the annexed Salla .

30 Today, a visit to Old Salla in the border zone requires a tourist or permanent personal visa as well as notification for the border authorities.

31 Raivo; Knapas.

32 The Lutheran ceremony was led by a respected bishop of Lapland, Olavi Rimpiläinen, who also officially dedicated the memorial statue for the fallen Finnish soldiers buried in the hero cemetery.

In addition to the Lutheran service, the commemorative ceremony always features the placement of funeral wreaths and flowers to commemorate the ancestors buried on Russian soil. This part of the ritual is often very important to family members and relatives, who can thereby personally pay their respects to their loved ones. The event can be described as holy, as it ritually materializes the emotional bond to the deceased.[33] For the Russian participants, this moment offers a chance to express empathy and solidarity. At the documented 1996 ritual, one of the most distinguished Russian representatives, Vladimir Ahremejko, the mayor of Kandalaksha, brought flowers and greetings from the people of the nearest Russian town. His words sought to express the collective condolences of his people and to articulate that they understood the difficult time that all the Salla residents had gone through. He also acknowledged that the war had been initiated by the Soviets and that, in his view, it had been unfair to the Finns. In my interpretation, his words reflected the spirit of the reestablishment of Finnish-Russian relations in the 1990s and the reevaluation of history that took place after the collapse of the Soviet Union, which enabled transnational collaboration in organizing memorial practices.[34]

Reestablishing the connection to the ancestors' lands

In the 1990s, most of the participants of the annual memorial service still carried living memories of the Old Salla region from before WWII. As the generation who experienced the war and evacuation has now aged and can no longer take part in pilgrimages or the annual memorial service, their children, most of whom belong to the so-called Baby Boomers born in the end of the 1940s, have become more interested in this family heritage. Most of them have moved away from the Salla region, thereby losing the connection with some of their relatives, former neighbors, and friends. One of the ways of reconnecting with this transnational cultural heritage is to engage with the Salla Society through the internet, visiting the Society's webpage, and leaving messages in the virtual guestbook. The activists of the Salla Society also maintain a separate webpage for those who are interested in the history of Old Salla and family histories, and a closed Facebook group entitled "Kuolajärvi village" (*Kuolajärven kylä*), referring to the former name of the village center.

33 See also Kristiina Korjonen-Kuusipuro and Anna-Kaisa Kuusisto-Arponen, "Muistelun monet muodot. Kertomus, kehollisuus ja hiljaisuus paikan tietämisen tapoina," *Elore,* 24, 2 (2017): 10. Elsewhere I have analyzed the emotional ties expressed by placing objects with national symbols and colors on gravesites. See Koskinen-Koivisto.

34 This period of reevaluation did not last long. Since the beginning of the 2000s, the commemoration of WWII and the interpretation of history have returned to the highly patriotic tones emphasizing the victorious past of one nation, and a narrative that connects the heroic deeds of the Soviet Union in WWII with the success of Russia today. See Davydova.

The digital age helps people to engage and participate in heritage work in new ways, allowing people to cross geographical distances, and to autonomously create, publish, and distribute content through social media.[35] The wider social and cultural impacts of this participatory heritage work are yet to be discovered. As discussed in many other chapters of this volume, transnational death often brings up questions of belonging and identity. In the case of Old Salla, digital platforms enable people to rebuild and engage with a village community that has disappeared and scattered around the country—and even across national borders, mainly to Sweden.[36] The main activities of Kuolajärvi village's webpage and the Facebook group are channeling genealogical information, sharing photos, and identifying dwellings and locations in the photos. Shared background and knowledge seem to foster a sense of belonging and regional identity in the second generation.

Kristiina Korjonen-Kuusipuro and Anna-Kaisa Kuusisto Arponen have studied the pilgrimages of former Karelian residents to the annexed territory, emphasizing the embodied, material, and emotional dimensions of place-making. They argue that the trips to the lost territories enable visitors to engage with the place through ritualized and embodied practices, such as walking in the landscape and collecting stones and flowers, which represent ways of knowing that transcend word and language.[37] Indeed, connecting with the remaining physical landscape is regularly mentioned in the descriptions of trips to Old Salla. A female visitor who took part in the ritual at the Old Salla cemetery in 2016 described how crucial it was for her to visit the site and how it allowed her to understand the suffering and longing that she had heard in her parents', aunts', and uncles' stories. For her, it made a difference to see and experience the pretty, unconstructed landscapes of Old Salla, which she likened to a natural park.

It seems that engaging virtually does not suffice when it comes to connecting with ancestors and their land. Instead, the personal physical and embodied experience of visiting the territory—"being there" and "seeing and sensing the place with one's own eyes"—is also of crucial importance for the subsequent generations.[38] The virtual guestbook of the Salla Society regularly features questions about the possibility to attend a journey to Old Salla and the next summer's memorial service. The amount of participants in the annual ritual is not as high as it used to be in the 1990s and 2000s, but every year there are new people who want to join the trip.

35 Elisa Giaccardi, "Introduction: Reframing Heritage in a Participatory Culture," in *Heritage and Social Media: Understanding Heritage in a Participatory Culture*, ed. by Elisa Giaccardi (London: Routledge, 2012).

36 In the 1970s, Salla lost more residents than any other Finnish municipality. A significant amount of them immigrated to Sweden. For more information about the immigration, see Snellman 2003.

37 Korjonen-Kuusipuro and Kuusisto-Arponen 2017.

38 For visits to WWII sites as quests and pilgrimage in the Russian context, see Johanna Dahlin, "'Now you have visited the war': The search for fallen soldiers in Russia," in *Heritage of Death: Landscapes of Emotion, Memory and Practice,* eds. Mattias Frihammar and Helaine Silverman. (London and New York: Routledge, 2018).

Present and future of heritage work and transnational collaboration

Cherishing the cultural heritage of WWII and the ceded land is still very much alive—and even flourishing—in Salla. There are several heritage activists and societies working together in various organizations and collaborating cross-institutionally and transnationally. The work of the Salla heritage activists has resulted in a municipal local museum specialized in war heritage and reconstruction, employing two people fulltime and offering a place for official heritage work to be done in the area. The leading heritage organization, the Salla Society, is also active online, offering a chance for the second generation to reconnect with their families' past and to explore the history of Old Salla. The annual commemorative service in the churchyard there has also become an important means of reconnecting for the children of the former residents of Old Salla.

The acts of commemoration across the border require transnational collaboration between Finnish activists and the Russian administration and heritage scene. In the area of Old and New Salla, these groups help each other in the search for the remains of fallen soldiers on foreign ground and take part together in commemorative rituals. This tendency of blurring the questions of victimhood and victory, along with approaching war as a universal human experience rather than simply in terms of national triumph, seems to characterize many contemporary practices of commemoration.[39]

It has been argued that through commemorative rituals, people bond beyond themselves, connecting participants and generations to come with their ancestors.[40] Thus, the rituals have both personal and collective meaning.[41] In this vein, it is interesting to see how the future of heritage work will unfold in Salla: will there be continuity and interest among the third generation to continue engaging in active heritage work and transnational collaboration? Will those descendants also want to cross the border to see their ancestors' land, maintain the gravesites, and hold commemorative ceremonies? Or perhaps the municipality and its official heritage institution, the Salla Museum of War and Reconstruction, will assume some of these responsibilities and continue to specialize in transnational war heritage and collaboration, enticing Russian and German tourists to learn about the manifold layers of war history in the region. Of course, this would require greater financial investment in heritage work, which currently relies on the keen and rather unique volunteer work of the local heritage activists, as well as smooth collaboration between organizations and individuals across the border.

39 Mattias Frihammar and Helaine Silverman, "Heritage of death – Emotion, memory and practice," in *Heritage of Death: Landscapes of Emotion, Memory and Practice*, eds. Mattias Frihammar and Helaine Silverman (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 7.

40 Barbara Myerhoff, "Rites and Signs of Ripening: The Intertwining of Ritual, Time and Growing Older," in *Age and Anthropological theory*, eds. Keith Jennie and David Kertzer. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 306.

41 Dahlin.

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Interviews

Interview 1: Interview with Elina Jokinen, the female guide of Salla Museum, by Eerika Koskinen-Koivisto, Oula Seitsonen, and Suzie Thomas. August 8, 2016.

Interview 2: Group interview with Jarkko Sipola (the Curator of Salla Museum), Pekka Moilanen (the chairperson of the Salla Society), Pasi Purhonen (the treasurer of the Salla Society), and Martti Remes (history hobbiest). All four men are also active members of the Salla search group for fallen soldiers. Interview by Vesa Pekka Herva, Eerika Koskinen-Koivisto, and Oula Seitsonen. August 8, 2016.

Audiovisual Materials

Video of the 1996 commemorative service, inauguration of the memorial, and the summer festivity by Salla Society. Courtesy of the SMWR.

Online Material and Leaflets

Salla Society website: http://sallaseura.fi/

Reports and photos of the commemorative ceremonies of 1993–1998, 2008–2010, 2014

Website of Kuolajärvi village: http://kuolajarvenkyla.nettisivu.org/ (accessed April 28, 2017)

Salla-wiki: http://www.sallawiki.fi/wiki/J%C3%A4lleenrakennus (accessed April 24, 2017)

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