

# Resisting Finnish Colonialism: The Case of New Sámi Activism



# BACKGROUND

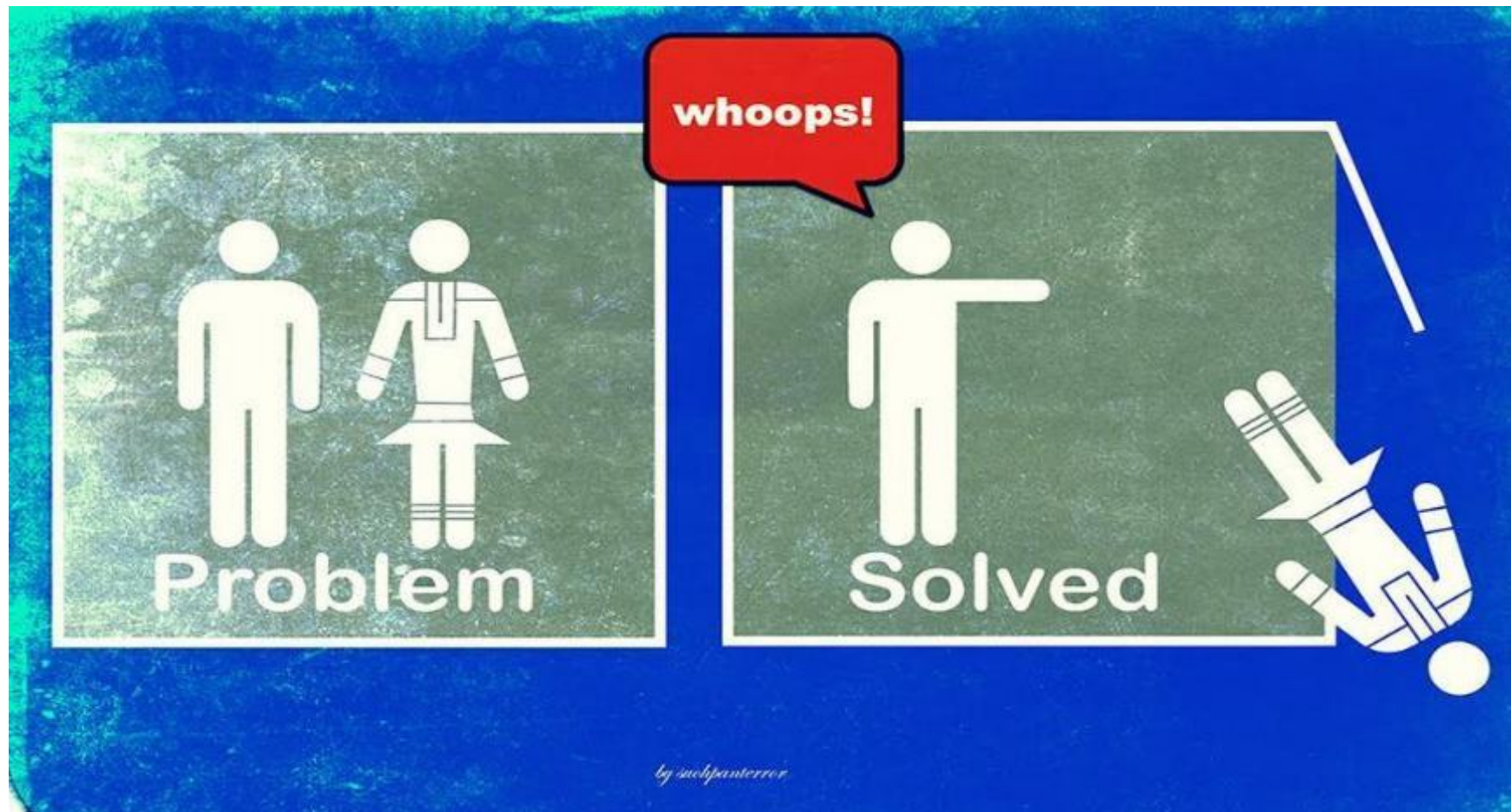
- Peacebuilding and reconciliation
  - Truth and reconciliation commissions
- Scandinavian tradition of Peace and Conflict Research
  - Root causes of violence
  - Structural violence – positive peace
- Research Ethics
  - Indigenous methodologies and knowledge claims

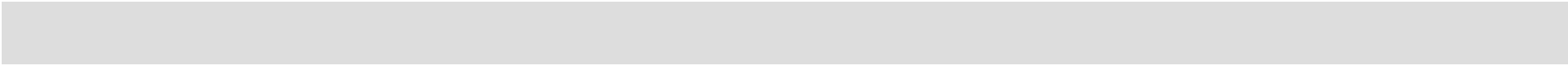
# GOAL

- I examine the new/recent forms of Sámi activism
  - Resistance
  - Performances - Art
- Discuss the problem of colonialism
  - Settler-colonial relations
- Expand the notion of violence to better capture the problematique of reconciliation
  - How violence can be remembered?

# CONTEXT

- *Suohpanterror* collective

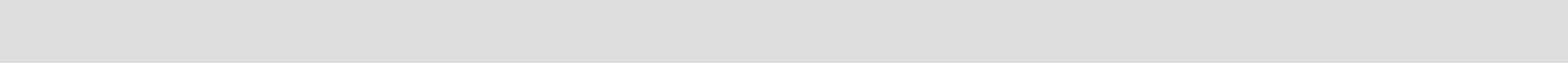


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- Takes part in the struggle over history writing in Finland
  - Deals with the constitutive logics of the settler-colonial relations
  - Emphasizes the transnational nature of (indigenous) struggles
    - e.g. Idle No More, Standing Rock pipeline protest, Take a Knee, Pussy Riot
  - Makes a political intervention to present

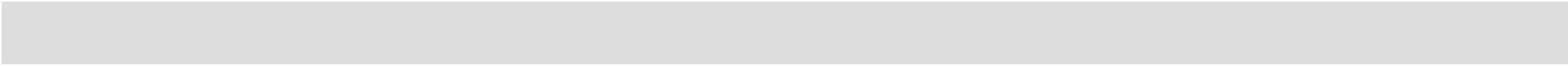
# ART AND POLITICAL THEORY





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- *“Images are not innocent. They tell us things about the world.” (Alfredo Jaar)*
  - Art can itself form a critical inquiry as art has collective affective potential
  - Affect is accompanied with intellectual operations that stimulate critical thought – “transactive art” (Jill Bennett)



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- Art can have transformative potential
  - Art is an outcome of a complex set of relationships between what is allowed to be said, perceived and understood (Jacques Rancière)
    - Art is a work on the distribution of the sensible
    - Who belongs to the community and who are cast out
    - ‘The political’ – dissensus
    - An ‘enactment of the political’ where politics emerges with respect to the practices of governance and to different forms of violence

# TRUTH COMMISSIONS

- Initiated in Finland in 2017 – Norway – preliminary hearing process summer 2018
  - Deals with the past – discover and reveal
  - Aims at future reconciliation
- South Africa 1996-2002
  - Restorative justice – human rights abuses
  - Public hearings
  - Critique: amnesty, religious ideology (confession), did not deal with land issues
- The problem of subject: G. Spivak “Can the Subaltern Speak?”
  - Silence and embodiment
  - Styles of narrating

# INDIGENOUS EXAMPLES

- Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
  - Residential schools
  - 2008 formal apology
  - Compensations
- Australia: long process
- Commission for Historical Clarification in Guatemala as a part of the Oslo Peace Agreements 1997-1999
  - Mayan 'genocide' - recognition

# CRITIQUE

- State-dominated
  - Does not render states accountable - national culture/identity

There were two friends, Peter and John. One day Peter steals John's bicycle. Then, after a period of some months, he goes up to John with outstretched hand and says 'Let's talk about reconciliation.'

John says, 'No, let's talk about my bicycle.'

'Forget about the bicycle for now,' says Peter. 'Let's talk about reconciliation.'

'No,' says John. 'We cannot talk about reconciliation until you return my bicycle.'

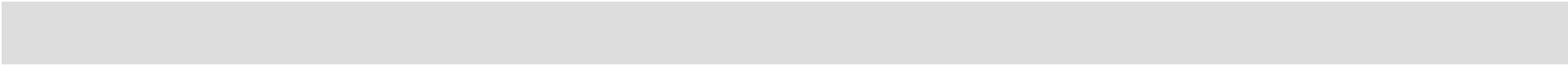
- Critical questions: who initiates, who can take part, what is the mandate?
- The nature of conflict/violence – settler-colonial violence?

# ANALYSIS: MAKING VIOLENCE VISIBLE



# Kiasma art museum, 11.9.2016, Petra Laiti

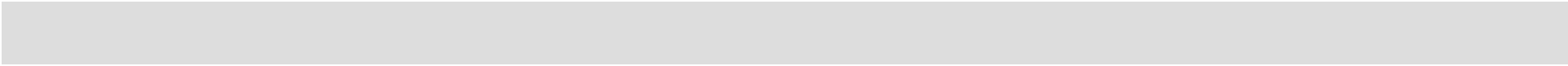


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- Performance makes visible some of the mechanisms of settler-colonial violence
    - Practices of appropriation
    - Silence(d) gendered bodies
    - Questioning their place and time
    - Denial of knowledge claims
  - Laura Stoller and Sara de Leeuw: settler-colonial violence is intimately-scaled and lived violence that is constantly being reproduced and reborn through individual bodies and relationships

# SETTLER-COLONIAL VIOLENCE

- This type of violence does not constitute a single event with an end-point, but rather it is based on constantly operating practices that have structural qualities
- Violence is structural in the sense that it functions through practices that seek to neutralize the differences and produces standardized patterns of being a citizen
- It renders alternative forms of existence as well as histories and futures unrecognized
- This type of power and violence is difficult to critically evaluate, protest against, or reform, precisely because it is often hidden out of sight



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- Settler-colonial violence is slow violence – Rob Nixon
    - Imperceptible change whereby violence is decoupled from its original causes by the workings of time
    - Enacted slowly over time
    - The invisibility of the casualties as casualties that are not seen, counted or remembered
    - What can be reconciled?



- And it is accompanied with epistemic violence –  
G. Spivak

- Implies obstructing and undermining other than Western methods or approaches to knowledge
- Erases the space from which the subaltern could speak and where she could be the “knower”
- Dismisses the other ways of knowing, and also speaking where the colonial subject is constitutes solely as the inferior other and “different”

# THE POLITICAL OF THE PERFORMANCE

- De-classification of spatial and temporal orders is precondition for politics
- Who is qualified to become visible
- Politics is making visible the (colonial) boundaries and differences through which “our place and time” and “their place and time” are produced
- The enactment of the political, namely a capacity to evoke the question who belongs to the national and political community, where are the frontiers of the community and who is cast out and how the casting out is done

# PEACEBUILDING

- How settler-colonial violence can be remembered and spoken about?
- This abjected heritage remain “challenging” and “akward” (Elisabeth Edwards and Matt Mead)
  - “Narratives of the colonial past cannot be mobilized for ‘positive didactic purposes’; nor can they be easily rehabilitated and reincorporated in the national imaginary”
- Making slow and epistemic violence visible – making intervention to the distribution of the sensible
- Reconciliation?

# CONCLUSIONS

Sámi activism introduces political, settler colonial, struggle to the core of the nation. It does not rupture the power positions as such, but rather challenges the classifications of those worthy of inclusion and those excluded as well as brings forth a space for the appearance of a colonized subject.

It engages in a radical political practice that displaces the limits and frontiers of social exclusion. Political struggle in this sense is not a rational debate between multiple interests, but the struggle for one's voice to be recognized as the voice of a legitimate partner.

8.10. 2015, Helsinki

