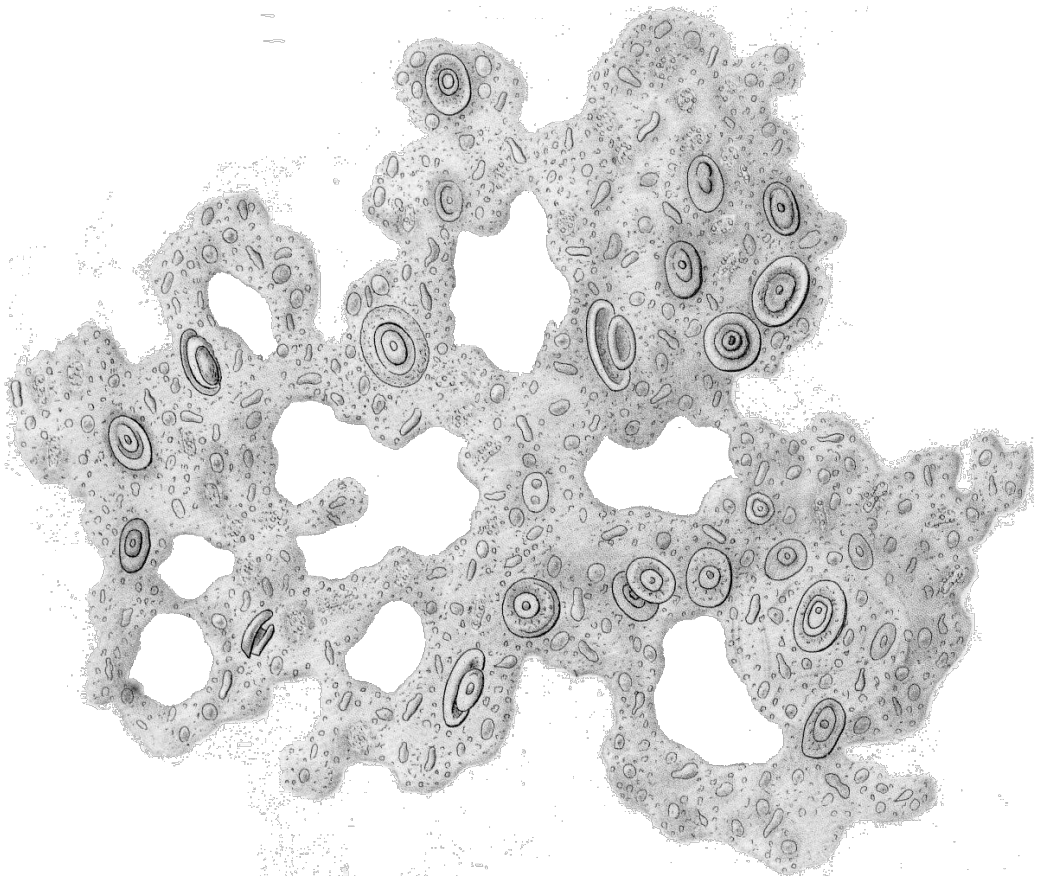
Beyond Plunder.

Remoteness in archipelagic and aquapelagic thought

8-11 April, 2027

Department of Culture and Aesthetics, Stockholm University, Sweden

in cooperation with Konstnärshuset (Artists' House) and Slipvillan Gallery



Îles mauvais papier déchiré sur les eaux
Îles tronçons côte à côte fichés sur l'épée flambée du Soleil

Raison rétive tu ne m'empêcheras pas de lancer absurde
sur les eaux au gré des courants de ma soif
votre forme, îles difformes,
votre fin, mon défi.

Îles annelées, unique carène belle
Et je te caresse de mes mains d'océan. Et je te vire de mes paroles alizées. Et je te lèche de mes langues d'algues.
Et je te cingle hors-flibuste

Islands cheap paper shredded upon the water
Islands stumps skewered side by side on the flaming sword of the Sun

Mulish reason you will not stop me from casting on the waters
at the mercy of the currents of my thirst
your form, deformed islands,
your end, my defiance.

Annulose islands, single beautiful hull
And I caress you with my oceanic hands.
And I turn you around with the tradewinds of my speech.
And I lick you with my seaweed tongues.
And I sail you unfreebootable

Aimé Césaire, *Cahier D'un Retour Au Pays Natal (Notebook of a Return to the Native Land)*, 1939.

Drawing by Ernst Haeckel, Bathybius Haeckelii, 1870; image source Wikimedia Commons. Haeckel referred to this sample of mud from the Atlantic seafloor to prove his theory of the "Urschleim" ("primordial slime") as the source of all organic life, but was later forced to admit that he was mistaken.

Aimé Césaire's writing gives us place as scattered shreds of beloved wastepaper floating upon the water and islands as articulate bodies (*annulosa*) composed of rings. A locus that floats, held within a "carêne" – an old Genoese word referring as much to a walnut shell as to a ship's hull. Césaire's beloved home is fragmented, pieced together from scraps of bodies, paper, nuts, and boats.

With its third symposium, the international collaborative project *Studies in Remoteness* takes up Césaire's archipelagic and aquapelagic thought to theorise across places and peoples subjected to dispossession, extraction, and environmental ruin (Glissant 2009, Martínez-San Miguel & Stephens 2020, Turnbull 2025). Such places and peoples, like Césaire's islands, are scattered. So too are circumpolar communities scattered. Indigenous homelands fragmented by borders and colonial infrastructures are scattered. Diasporas are scattered. How do we think across these scattered states of remoteness? What relations become visible when we resist the enclosure of 'situated' context and address the scattered condition of remoteness as connectedness and affiliation – perhaps, as the ungrounded, fluctuating, tensile rhizome through which solidarity and theory alike can emerge?

Césaire offers us the metamorphic term *hors-flibuste*. Translated to English as *unfreebootable*, modified from the colonial Dutch word *vrijbuiter* (plunderer, robber), the term gently conjures the image of a loving bond that knows and refuses the logics of extraction, and thus bears witness to people-place relations beyond plunder. We wish to start there, with the *unfreebootable* love of places-laid-to-waste and with love-languages of resistance that entangle theoretical and poetic thought. This is already exemplified by Césaire – who alongside Édouard Glissant, who first articulated archipelagic thinking – was a Black diasporic poet and decolonial theorist. Césaire and Glissant lived lives that inextricably entangled scholarship and artistry; Their works are also consequently expressive of both situatedness and cosmopolitan belonging to the wider world.

Buffer Zone, Sacrifice Zone, No-go Zone, Exclusion Zone, Security Zone

Through the attention of contributors to political logics of wasting (Liboiron & Lepawsky 2022) and necropolitical infrastructures (Mbembe 2019), the symposium *Beyond Plunder* expects to foster a site for critical inquiry of distance, marginality, and peripheralisation. The peoples and places living under colonial and imperial systems that devalue them are increasingly labelled with the term "zone" and drawn into political imaginaries of remoteness as the unlivable site where no one, in their right mind, would or should remain. Even so, these logics of destruction implicitly expose the very entanglement between bodies and lands that colonial and imperial epistemes would seek to deny: For who would displace the burdens of extraction, ruin, and dispossession onto others, except those who already (if only negatively) recognize a deep mutuality – an enduring interdependence – of people and place?

A Sea of Islands: Archipelagic conversations from the Polar to the Equatorial

In her recent book *Ice Geographies* (2025), scholar Jen Rose Smith (dAXunhyuu) discussed Fijian anthropologist Epeli Hau'ofa's articulation of Oceania as "a sea of islands", and his contrasting of Oceanic homelands and homeseas with imperial vision, which has long reduced such places to "islands in a far sea" (1994: 152). Addressing Oceania within her work on Arctic colonial politics of race and indigeneity, Smith found resonance in how Oceania and the Arctic alike have long histories as military testing grounds used by nations that construct such places as "remote" for strategic advantage. Thus, when Smith interacts with Hau'ofa's work, she emphasizes "remoteness" not as a the far remove of Oceania and Arctic from each other, but as a colonial construction which systematically diminutises and devalues both places among the vast elsewheres which then compose colonial peripheries.

Who we are looking for

Studies in Remoteness is dedicated to fostering an intellectually rigorous and practice-inclusive context equally open to researchers, educators, artists, curators, architects, community leaders and elders, activists, students, among others. The project aims to create meeting grounds for collaborative and community-based research and artistic work that critically and productively inquires infrastructure, visibility, performativity, and historicity. **As a study circle within the Nordic Summer University, we are able to offer ECTS points to students.**

For this symposium, we look forward to applications from people whose work contributes to re-evaluation and retheorisation of people-place relations and systems of plunder, expendability, and waste. We aim to bring together contributors who might think archipelagically and aquapelagically across a diversity of land and seascapes – moorlands, bogs, fells, desert, steppes, taiga, tundra, estuaries, mudflats, and dune fields – and the communities who live there. We would warmly welcome contributors who work in island studies (nissology), circumpolar studies, human geography, blue humanities and oceanic studies, Indigenous studies, diaspora studies, critical heritage studies, Baltic and Nordic studies, environmental humanities, posthumanism, human ecology, art history, performance studies, and critical colonial studies, among others. *We particularly invite proposals that engage with voices and worldviews often marginalized or erased in dominant knowledge systems.*

How to Apply

The *Studies in Remoteness* April 2027 session "Beyond Plunder" will be structured to privilege lingering attention and in-depth conversation among participants. Therefore, spots for contributors are limited. Applicants are invited to envision contributions up to one hour in length (research presentations, performances, artist talks, experiments, and reading and/or discussion sessions). **Applications should include [a] An extended abstract (up to 600 words) of the proposed contribution (1-2 pages); [b] up to 1-page bio of the presenter(s). 2-3 pages total please.** Precaritised artists, students, and scholars living in Stockholm and the surrounding region who express exceptional need can be considered for participation with the fee waived.

Email applications to: *lindsey.drury@fu-berlin.de* and *helenahildur@gmail.com* by 15 January 2027. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis, applying earlier is encouraged.

Costs

While travel and hotel for the April 2027 symposium in Stockholm should be self-organised by participants, the *Studies in Remoteness* co-coordinators will organise an inexpensive overnight option in the city. We also warmly welcome requests for support letters for individual funding applications for those attending and regularly correspond with our participants about funding opportunities that coordinators and contributors are pursuing.

Symposium & Membership Fees
Nordic Summer University Annual Membership is a contribution made by all participants annually to support the volunteer-run, democratic, and independent academic organisation.

70 € – Reduced rate fee (20 € for the symposium, 50 € Nordic Summer Uni. membership fee)*
150 € – Standard fee (50 € for the symposium, 100 € Nordic Summer Uni. membership fee)**
230 € – Supporting membership (80 € for the symposium, 150 € Nordic Summer Uni.)***

*The reduced-rate fee is for individuals with an annual income below €25,000, as well as students, early-career researchers, retired, unemployed, working in precarious or low- income circumstances.
**The standard fee is for individuals with an annual income between €25,000 and €50,000.
***The supporting membership fee is for individuals with an annual income above €50,000, as well as institutions or individuals whose membership is funded by their institution, employer, or research grant.

About *Studies in Remoteness*

Studies in Remoteness: Sensoria of Absence, Distance, and Neglect is coordinated as a study circle within the Nordic Summer University by performance historian Dr. Lindsey Drury (Freie Universität Berlin / Germany) and artist Helena Hildur W. (Sweden), with team members Theol. Dr. Shiluinla Jamir (Nagaland) and PhD candidate Tinka Harvard (Åbo Akademi / Finland). The April 2027 symposium *Beyond Plunder* is organised in cooperation with Prof. Dr. Karolina Enquist Källgren (University of Stockholm / Sweden).

Studies in Remoteness does foundational theoretical, artistic, and historical work toward initiating a new field of interdisciplinary research in critical remoteness studies. To unpack the geopolitical, environmental, and cultural dimensions of 'remoteness' – particularly, in the circumpolar North – we center Indigenous scholarship and critiques of extractive colonialism, as well as artistic and embodied approaches, in a series of six symposia across the Baltic rim between 2026-2028.

The project turns its attention to the notion of "a place far away"– be it the regional peripheries or cartographic borderlands between nation states; the residential areas of Indigenous/minoritized communities; historical testimonies and lacunae; sub-cultural meeting spots or your neighbour's kitchen. Theorizing modernity by turning to its so-called outskirts, the project inquires sensoria of absence, distance, and neglect that have blossomed along the frontiers of colonial empires and sedimented among the margins of modern infrastructures of "global connectivity". With lingering attention, Studies in Remoteness intends to unsettle conditions of obscuring or exoticising – resolutely acknowledging histories, topographies and epistemologies with an eye to how these might come into "intense proximity", as coined by Okwui Enwezor.

As a three-year collaborative research project, *Studies in Remoteness* brings together a network of scholars, artists, and activists to engage in community-based research practices. By establishing a co-creative space for community building and artistic practices – open for the sharing of facts, questions, concerns and practices – we believe that our work will prove enduringly relevant.

Condensed study plan summer 2027- summer 2028:

Nordic Summer University Summer Session and Summer School, 23-30 July 2027 (Hola folkhögskola, Nyland, Sweden) Topic: *Infrastructures of Remoteness*

Winter Session, March 2028 (Kilpisjärvi Biological Station, Enontekiö, Lapland, Finland) Topic: *Sacredness and protection*

NSU Summer Session and Summer School, July 2028 (Baltics, venue tba) Topic: *Being Lost*

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Liboiron, Max & Josh Lepawsky. 2022. *Discard Studies: Wasting, Systems, and Power*. Boston: MIT Press.

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