



**Nordic Complicity? Some Aspects of Nordic Identity as
“Non-Colonial” and Non-Participatory
in the European Colonial Event**

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“Now [...] the kind of colonialism that you need is more economic and less territorial: this is neocolonialism, and in fact neocolonialism is like radiation – you feel it less like you don’t feel it – you feel like you’re independent.”

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak¹

What right do we have to use historical facts to celebrate our own nationality and the present condition of our society? What relationship do we have with our past? And what does the “our” mean in such constructions as “our history” or “our past”? These are not questions that will be fully answered here. However, they inform my interest in the history of two ships called “East Indiamen “Götheborg”, one an original from the 18th Century, and the other a latter day replica. By making some historiographical remarks, using the example of the two “East Indiamen Götheborg” ships, my aim is to show how history is used and misused to confirm a personal or, as in this case, a national self-image. (The two are of course interrelated but I will not discuss that here.) To do that, I will begin by telling the story of the two ships and the way in which they are currently represented. I will continue by highlighting some of the Swedish colonial encounters and end with some remarks about Swedish and perhaps Nordic self-righteousness and complicity in the colonial and neo-colonial worlds.

The Haitian historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot has written one of the finest little books about how history is written, not written, un-written, re-written, etc. to boost one’s self-esteem and offer “peace of mind”.² He uses the phrase “silencing the past”, in his book of the same title, to show how unthinkable or inconvenient events are systematically written out of history.³ He highlights how “unthinkable” the story of the Haitian revolution was, and still is; the thought of black slaves using the intellectual tools developed by the bourgeois revolutionaries of France to free themselves from the likewise French bourgeois plantation owners has not been easy to accept and is therefore, according to Trouillot, forgotten again

and again. This forgetfulness can be seen as an *activity*, and not what we usually see it as: as something that is *not* done, *not* remembered: a non-activity.

The main reason for my interest in the concept of *forgetfulness* in this context is to understand how the choice to forget or look away can function both on an individual level and on the level of entire populations. The case of the Scandinavians is particularly illuminating. Here we have populations who are convinced that they are the most developed and caring people in the world, with a sense of solidarity as a natural part of their identity and therefore continue to be unable to acknowledge their own part in the colonial adventure. I am convinced that it is not primarily knowledge of our colonial legacy that we lack, but the courage and will to draw conclusions from the knowledge that we already have. Our “forgetfulness” and our love for our self-image makes it possible to ignore all evidence that is there right before us, if only we dared to open our eyes.

When it comes to the history as well as the non-history or silence of colonialism in relation to the Nordic countries, we are not talking about things unknown, but about events that are well-known yet systematically and actively forgotten, considered un-worthy of contemplation or un-important in this particular context. They never seem to be integrated into the past, which we consider important in our bank of memories that constitutes our self-image. Information about Sweden’s colonial history is available in history books but is not considered worthy or important for us to understand our present – even if we consider the concepts of “history” and “memory” as being important. But we need to ask ourselves: *which* history and *which* memories do we consider as being important? *Whose* memories and *whose* history?

I will return to these problems, but first I must recount the story of the first of the two “East Indiaman Götheborg” ships. I will then go on to discuss the current representation, public perception and discourse around the second of the two ships: a modern day replica of the 18th century ship, which re-enacted the original ship’s journey between Scandinavia and China, setting sail from the harbour of Gothenburg in September 2005 and arriving in Shanghai in June 2006.⁴

In the foreword of a recently published book on the project, the Deputy County Governor proudly explains:

“The East Indiaman ‘Götheborg’ unites a wide range of different fields: history, craftsmanship, marine engineering, culture, politics, marketing, and trade and industry. But above all it links people in different parts of the world. The East Indiaman ‘Götheborg’ is and will remain an important link and a symbol for good relations and trade between Sweden and China, and all the other countries the ship will visit during her voyage.”⁵

This event is used, as you can see from the quotation, to support the discourse that today’s Sweden is one of the most equal countries in the world, and that its tradition of equality goes a long way back into history. The book claims that it tells “the whole story of this unique project”.⁶ Everything that is inconvenient is considered irrelevant or, in Troillout’s words, “unthinkable”, and is as such written out of history. If you are familiar with Swedish history and with colonial history, you might be, as I am, astonished by the absent colonial context. The colonial circumstances are merely mentioned as something that other countries were involved in.

In the year 1743, the first of the “Götheborg” ships left the harbour of Gothenburg for its third journey to China. Two years later, it returned for the last time fully laden with goods such as tea, china, silk and spices. But it did not actually reach the harbor because it ran aground and sank just at the entrance of the port of the city of Gothenburg. During the following years, parts of the goods were rescued and along with the insurance payments the trip was all together a profitable project for its owner, the Swedish East India Company, which was ranked as one of the most profitable companies in Sweden at the time.⁷

Twenty years ago, a thorough marine-archaeological excavation was started by a group of idealistic and enthusiastic divers and archaeologists, who were mostly interested in the remains of the ship’s cargo and had no commercial agenda for the project. Amongst the wreckage, broken china was rescued; much of which was later used in a floor mosaic installed in the Old Central Square in Gothenburg during its refurbishment. The excavation and its findings generated research and books about the ship, the company, and about china.

Later on, the wild idea to reconstruct the ship grew out of this excavation. The project began quite idealistically, however, in the mid-1990s the reconstruction project was running out of money and alliances were made

with big local companies, with the city government and the county. In this process, the sense of adventure and the emphasis on research was lost – or made commercial. In the project’s first decade, the desire for knowledge (which of course is not, as we all know, ever pure or innocent), and a love of adventure were significant driving elements; elements typically attributed to both colonialism and modernity. Whilst I would say that the project was quite naïve, being blind to the colonial context of the East Indiaman, at least it also lacked pretensions.

If we look again at the Deputy County Governor’s quotation above, it is quite obvious that the naiveté is gone and replaced by modern rhetoric: *“But above all it links people in different parts of the world. The “East Indiaman Götheborg” is and will remain an important link and a symbol for good relations and trade between Sweden and China, and all the other countries the ship will visit during her voyage.”*⁸ So which were all those countries that they were visiting? Nothing much has been said about how and for what reasons the new and the old ships chose their specific routes. That is quite understandable considering the desire to maintain the image of the East India Company as an innocent trading company, which created wealth for European countries with no costs or losses to anybody. We all know, however, that there is no such thing in this world as complimentary wealth. The first stop for all East Indiamen was Cadiz on the west coast of Spain. It was the most important stopover on the way to China and in the 18th century, ships stopped there for a single reason: silver. The tradesmen in China were not particularly interested in trading with the Europeans – they already had what they thought they needed. But they had a craving for silver, and so all ships had to bring silver in order to conduct any business at all. Silver was sold in Cadiz. It came to Cadiz from Spanish America. This Spanish port was an important junction in the intricate trading web, since one of early colonialism’s most important products was the silver won from the mines that Latin America seemed to be full of.⁹

The next stop was often Brazil, where fresh food and water was loaded. The main reason to go as far west as Brazil, however, was the winds: it was impossible to sail along the African coast – one had to cross the Atlantic Ocean to benefit from the trade-winds. Subsequent short stopovers included South Africa and Indonesia. This original tour has been more or less reconstructed. But today, as the ship is equipped with the most modern technology, it is goodwill and business that is

looked for in the ports, not trade-winds. A lot of private and public actors are involved as sponsors and promoters of the project. This extract from a group of Swedish ambassadors, who wrote an article on the subject in Sweden's most influential newspaper, gives an interesting insight into what their aspirations are:

*"It is important to show that Sweden, for example through the Swedish East India Company, has a long history as a successful trading nation. Today, as Swedish companies belong to the world's leading in the fields of communication and transportation, the East Indiaman is a concrete symbol for the importance of international contacts and free trade. The image of Sweden as a nation without a colonial past, but with a long history of international trade is strengthened. As a representative of Sweden it is part of our assignment to, in severe competition, enforce Sweden as an interesting co-operation partner, and we therefore see good reason to actively support the project of the East Indiaman in our work."*¹⁰

This is a significant quote that neatly summarizes the public image of the role of the "Göteborg". The East Indiaman is today used in the official rhetoric to promote Swedish companies and business. They are still trying to keep up the aura of adventure and a lot of young people are engaged in unpaid work, joining the trip as sailors, which enforces a surface idealism. The company makes adverts where they invite sponsors to pay for a "pupil".¹¹ The biggest daily paper of Gothenburg, also an important sponsor, has a blog on the ship that makes it possible for everyone to follow the daily life on the ship. So, we have adventure on one hand, and on the other the rhetoric about trade and the importance of access to the Chinese market, which is viewed as extremely important for Sweden's future as a wealthy nation.

When I first heard about the project, I was struck by yet another example of a characteristically male-dominated effort to achieve something, which, in my opinion, is quite meaningless. The project did not, however, draw much of my attention.¹² But since the project has come closer to its realization, and its importance, or the efforts to make it important, have been growing, the discourse surrounding it has begun to sound more and more peculiar, and the silence, all that was not said, even more noticeable.

The colonial context, which was a necessary condition for this kind of trade, is rarely mentioned, and if it is mentioned at all, it is never presented as a problem, rather as an objective fact, which Sweden seems to have had nothing to do with. In other representations, the reality is totally corrupted, as in the case of the

ambassadors' statement that Sweden was non-colonial. It is true that there was no colonial relation between Sweden and China in the 18th century. But the "Götheborg" and the East Indian trade were not isolated phenomena; trade between the Swedish East India Company and tradesmen of China was not "pure".

One necessary precondition for Sweden to be involved in trade of this nature was the opportunity to profit from other, more fortunate colonizers on its route; colonizers which had already established strong trade networks.

What should not be forgotten, but constantly is, is that the reason that Sweden did not have colonies of its own was due to a failure to obtain them rather than a result of having higher moral standards than other European countries. Sweden and the Swedes did not actively chose not to participate in the colonial venture in far-away territories. Rather, Sweden was weak in those projects it started. There are several reasons for this failure. One is that Sweden, especially in the previous century, the 17th century, was very active in its immediate surroundings, foremost in the Baltic Sea, where the country was something of a superpower. That weakened the interest and the need to seriously conquer far away territories. Also the resources to do so were restricted due to the work to keep the empire at home together.

But, as we soon shall see, there is a connection between Sweden's most serious, but unsuccessful, effort to colonize, and the East India Company.

Sweden and the Swedes did have colonial ambitions. There are a few more or less well known examples of conquering colonial explorations. An early example from Sweden's period as a great power in the 17th century is that of Cape Coast Castle on the African Gold Coast. In 1649, the Swedish African Company had the permission to trade with slaves, ivory and gold in West Africa. A year later, the building of a fort named Carolusborg, after King Karl X, was initiated. Less than fifteen years later, the Swedes lost the little fortification, first to the Danes, who were more successful in that area. The fort was later lost to the Dutch and lastly to the British, who made it a part of the their Gold Coast colony. But there are still traces of Sweden to be seen in the west of Ghana: Cape Coast Castle, "proudly" situated on the Cape, is an old fortification constructed to keep and supply slaves. Today, it remains as a sinister tourist attraction housing an exhibition, which tells the story of the Swedish, Danish and other nations' colonial participation in this horrifying business.

Another example of Sweden's rather unsuccessful colonial history is the West Indian island Saint-Barthélemy, which is part of the archipelago of Guadeloupe. The island was first colonized by the French in the middle of the 17th century. In 1784, the Swedish King Gustav III was given the island as a part of a bigger deal. It was not very rich in natural resources, but was used as a free port within the colonial mercantile system, especially in times of war. When free trade was established by the end of the 19th century, the use of a free port was obsolete and Saint-Barthélemy was given back to France. Guadeloupe is still a French Overseas Department (DOM). However, the capital is still named Gustavia, after the Swedish King. Parallel to Rue du General de Gaulle is the Rue du Roi Oscar II, a street named after another Swedish King. It is said that the relatively unusual amount of blue eyes and blondish hair is a heritage from the time when the island was Swedish.

The most interesting colonial enterprise in this context, however, must be the one that the Swedish King Karl XII tried to launch: the Swedish colonization of Madagascar. It all started with a widespread "plague", a plague they called piracy, something which could be compared to one of the great "plagues" of our time, what we call: terrorism. Both terrorism and piracy act outside the law, are said to threaten the resources of the civilized world, meaning the civilized world's means to make profit worldwide. At that time, as always, there was only a thin line between righteous conquest and criminal conquest. To distinguish between a pirate and a conqueror was not as easy as in the fairy tales. They didn't necessarily only have one eye and be carrying a pirate flag. Their activities were pretty much the same as the colonialists, but some acted within the law and some didn't; some stole from other thieves, others stole from the "natives". There were also "legal" hijackers who were given permission from the authorities, although probably not from local ones. Those who lacked permission were classified as pirates. This agrees in many ways with the logic that characterized the Europeans' crusades from the 16th century and onwards. The one that arrived "first" had rights that could only be challenged by other Europeans. The only other valid or acknowledged players were white Western men or men in duty. The only exceptions were the places, where the native power was too strong, as in the case of China.

The pirates constituted a threat, alongside all other threats that the sea itself posed, together with illnesses and undernourishment. The trade was a quite risky business. For a long time, the Caribbean Sea were a favorite spot, but in the late 17th century there was a keen and growing competition, and protection was increasing. That forced some of the pirate business to move to other waters,

one of them being the Indian Ocean. Apart from the ships from different East Indian companies from the European countries, there were tax ships sailing from Eastern and Southern Africa to India, and ships with wealthy Muslim pilgrims. So there were many vessels in this sea.

Since the pirates were quite successful, there were increasing efforts to stop them, and in the early 18th century the developing European nations were quite successful in this and the pirate business became less profitable.

The island of Madagascar, which is situated on the route between Europe and China in the middle of the Indian Ocean, was popular amongst pirates who had organized a kind of community there. Many of them were prosperous, and they had founded a republic of their own: Libertalia. Some of them wanted to become legitimate and to be partners in the expansion of the trade, which would be a more safe way to go on with their business.

Here our heroic King Karl XII enters the story. He realized that after all, Sweden could not be satisfied with the domination solely over Scandinavia; a domination that was showing increasing signs of weakness and decline. The Baltic Sea was not enough for his ambitions and new countries were emerging around the Baltic Sea that could defy him. So when he was contacted by a representative of a group of pirates or former pirates, who wanted to better their reputation, launder their money and settle down in Sweden in return for the island Sainte-Marie next to Madagascar, he didn't oppose their suggestion. Negotiations started and in the year 1718, he had declared Sainte-Marie as Swedish. The plan was to follow up with the establishment of a Swedish colony in Madagascar. That was made possible by a promise from the king that he would protect the pirates in that area, and that they would become citizens of Sweden. The idea was that they should quit their pursuits and settle down in Sweden. In return, they should contribute with an enormous fortune and twenty-five well-armed ships, which were needed in all the wars that our heroic King was involved in. The money, 4 million pound sterling, and the colony was a perfect supplement in a moment of crisis.¹³

But, a button ended the life of Karl XII before the deal was fully settled. That didn't totally end the business; however, it complicated things. The negotiations were continued with queen Ulrika Eleonora, who supported the idea of a Swedish colony in the Indian Ocean. In 1721, an expedition was equipped. Precisely as is the case with today's East Indiaman, the expedition was not fully funded, but it sailed off to Spain nonetheless. There, the money and the plans to colonize

Madagascar were postponed. The interesting link between this enterprise and the Swedish East India Company is the entrepreneur Henrik König. He played a major role in the late part of the colonizing project, and twenty years later it was he, together with the Scotsman Colin Campbell and Henric Sahlgren, who started the East India Company.¹⁴

What has this got to do with rethinking Nordic colonialism? Today's celebration of this ship is not as innocent as it might seem. The ship is given a lot of attention and a lot of public money. As I see it, the ship and everything connected to it could have been used to start a public discussion about the legacy of Nordic colonialism, which is, however, never even mentioned.

The historical conditions that made East Indian trade possible are played down. Today's East Indiaman is given a decisively different symbolic meaning than its origin justifies. The original circumstances of the trade and the ship are written out of its historical context. The East Indiaman was technically speaking not a colonial enterprise, but not even colonialism itself was. Colonialism developed successively to what it came to be in the late 19th century. As conflicts grew and the need to guarantee access to the resources demanded by the European economy grew the need to strengthen the possessions grew, and gradually the strategies to guarantee access developed into what is now called colonialism. This parallels the very gradual process in which nationhood, and nation states were established.

The Swedish East Indian Company actually tried to establish a trade station in India, and it is exactly through these kinds of trade stations that many colonies began. But the stronger powers Britain and France prevented it from happening.

How shall we understand this forgetfulness of historical facts? As I said earlier, many actors state that the colonial context does not matter today or that it is not important. But to whom does it not matter? It is not important – or it is made un-important – by those who want to preserve the picture of a blameless Swedish history, or a beautiful story about Swedishness.

In today's rhetoric about the East Indian Company's supposedly non-colonial activities, a clear picture is portrayed supporting the idea of the Swedish politics of neutrality (another myth in the construction of Swedishness) and Sweden's commitment to human rights. In that picture, the East Indiaman is supposed to symbolize "an important link and a symbol for good relations and trade between Sweden an China, and all the other countries the ship will visit during her voyage."¹⁵

The colonial circumstances are supposedly overshadowed by the fantastic possibilities that the ship is said to carry. Even this can be put into question – so far the self-righteousness has shined stronger than the presumed international interest in the project. The way in which the project is promoted and represented in the urge to collect more money and more support has presumed that the world is waiting for this event to happen and for the ship to pass by their harbor, but that is rather a part of the mythology created around the ship than the truth. Obviously, there is a lot of interest from China – but as we know, in China there are strong interests in establishing good relations to respectable countries in the West, not least to better their reputation when it comes to the question of human rights. Elsewhere, the interest in the ship has been quite weak or non-existent.¹⁶

History in this sense is often used in daily life to construct meaning, without too much consideration of historical facts. Historical consciousness, the feeling of being part of history, is not only built on historical facts. It is produced through reconstructions, performances, rituals and celebrations of the past, which create identification with selections of history. Today, we can see it in the commercial event industry. History is widely used in what some management guru has called the “market for peace of mind”, a set of constructed meanings that are prefabricated and consumable.¹⁷ In this market of history making, the classic eras of the Vikings, the Wild West, the Pirate Bay, etc. exist side by side for anyone to consume. And the consumption of these products gives the individual a feeling of connectedness and peace of mind that does not indicate that they are a part of the problems of this world, but rather that they are part of the solution.

I am not going to criticize those small-scale private businesses that commercialize history in order to survive, but in the case of the East Indiaman, which has already cost more than € 30 million, most of them from public funds – that is another story. However, as mentioned before, it is not only a personal state of mind that is at stake; it is a national state of mind we are talking about. It has to do with how Sweden is benchmarked as “Sweden – a place of light and goodness” and to reassure the Swedes that we have an honorable history to lean on. But what does it mean to exclude annoying facts from history? Is it simply innocent and childish or does it have implications for the world order?

Those pieces of china that were rescued from the original “Götheborg”, which now form a mosaic in one of Gothenburg’s most central squares, could have been used as a symbol of a multicultural Sweden. A symbol of that Sweden that has been complicit in world history – for good and for bad. Together with the East Indiaman, in another version of the story, they could have been used to

show how dependent Sweden is and has always been on the knowledge, capital, resources, labour, etc. of other people. A symbol of how dependent we all are on each other in this world and how old that dependency is. But today another story rules, a story about heroic deeds, about the white man capturing and “civilizing” the rest. It is a story about us contributing, but not taking, coming with peace and blond innocence. Those kinds of stories tend to construct the “Others” as dependent receivers, as passive objects, and “us” as active subjects.

Most of us prefer the story about Scandinavia as non-colonial to fit with our self-perception. But what are we silencing to keep that story alive, and at what costs? And what does that silencing disclose about us, today? We might not be able to tell another story without letting go of our own preconceived self-image first, and is this not happening because we don’t want to face the consequences of the truth? Maybe we should in both the big and small things be forced to re-evaluate our entire lives and lifestyles?

The Danish philosopher Peter Kemp stresses the continuity between our history and our present: “To live as if our history has not marked our culture and our ways of thinking is illusionary, even if it is one of the strongest illusions today.”¹⁸

Those ideas that seem to rule the East Indiaman project are only admitting to half the story. But what is not admitted to might mark our present even more, perhaps to the degree that it must be kept silent.

This event is used to affirm the idea of Sweden as equal. Moreover, it is used to affirm the long history of this ideal of equality. In fact, it is thought to be so old that it can be assumed to be a part of the Swedish national character.

The East Indiaman was a part of and subscribed to the same conquering and economically driven structures as the more successful colonial enterprises. The major difference between Sweden and other big countries (Sweden was quite big and influential by that time) was that “we” didn’t succeed in our enterprises outside of Scandinavia and the Baltic Sea. Why can’t we admit and discuss that? Why do we have to repeat the lie about the non-colonial era over and over again? My guess is that awareness of the unrighteous world order and of the unjust treatment of all our new Swedes is easier to repress and keep repressed if we can lean back on a self-image of strong egalitarian ideals. Silencing historical facts helps us in the production of myths that legitimize actual internal and international politics.

We are living in a world where colonial, patriarchal and capitalist structures are available for anyone, who needs them, to legitimize unequal choices. Those structures work as a filter that sorts people and resources on a basis of their origin, identity and social status. As long as we do not admit to our colonial past, we are unable to see how these structures survive in our times.

Colonialism does matter also in today's Sweden, even if Sweden wasn't a very successful colonial power. Our self-image tells us that we represent an incontestable humanism with a long history. We preserve the idea that Swedes carry an inner feeling for justice and fairness. Our long history of relative peace is taken as a token of this inner given Swedish humanism: our welfare state, the Swedish model, the presumed equality between the sexes, the presumed liberal right of asylum. The image of ourselves as tolerant and having solidarity as our first priority are other signs of this kind of presumptuousness. But Sweden, Swedes and Swedish capital are profiting on the world order that was established during the colonial era. Especially after the Second World War, Sweden has been able to take advantage of a world order, where the light-skinned, blond and Nordic are privileged. When those privileges are combined with myths about our historical innocence, as is the case in the story about the East Indiaman, then we can take even bigger advantages of the neo-colonial world order.

What would all those people who died only to serve this trade think about this "symbol of good relations"; all the slaves who worked in Latin-American silver mines to supply the necessary currency; all the slaves that were part of this chain of commodities that were exchanged – would they agree that "the whole story" is told when theirs is not mentioned?

I want to finish with a quotation from Michel-Rolph Trouillot that might suit future historians' conclusion on Nordic self-delusion: "Naiveté is often an excuse for those who exercise power. For those upon whom that power is exercised, naiveté is always a mistake."¹⁹

Notes

1. Robert Young, "Neocolonialism and the Secret Agent of Knowledge – Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in an Interview," in *Oxford Literary Review* 13, no. 1-2, 1991, p. 221.
2. "Peace of mind" is not Trouillot's expression, though. I will come back to this later in the paper.
3. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the past: power and the production of history*, Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1995.
4. For full photo documentation, see the project's official website <http://www.soic.se/>

5. Ingrid Arensberg, *Ostindiefararen "Götheborg" seglar igen/The Swedish ship "Götheborg" sails again*, Sävedalen: Warne, 2005, p. 7.

6. *Ibid.*

7. How profitable it really was is still not known since all the accounts were strictly confidential and even burned after the books were balanced, in order to keep the partners anonymous and to not upset the other East Indian companies from England and Holland.

8. Arensberg, *op. cit.*, p. 7. My emphasis.

9. Before the silver mines ran short, between 15 - 20,000 tons of silver from Latin America, especially from Bolivia and the mine Potosí, were shipped over the Atlantic. Göte Nilsson-Schönborg, "Silver från Sydamerika blev Kinesiskt porslin", in Jan Erik Nilsson (ed.), *Ostindiefararen "Götheborg": berättelsen om den sista resan, silvret, porslinslasten och utgrävningen*, Göteborg: J E Nilsson, 1992, p. 47.

10. The authors of this article are a number of Swedish ambassadors, representing Sweden along the route: Lars Andreasson, Mats Bergqvist, Peter Ekelund, Karin Ehnbohm-Palmqvist, Lars Grundberg, Lennart Linnér, Börje Ljunggren, Helena Nilsson, Gunilla Olofsson, Ulf Sörmark, Teppo Tauriainen, Margareta Winberg, "Ostindiefararen sätter Sverige på kartan", *Göteborgs-Posten*, April 3, 2004. My emphasis and translation.

11. It is the company, Svenska Ostindiska Companiet AB (SOIC), which today runs the project: www.soic.se. The fact is that most of the "pupils" are not sponsored. The cost for a pupil is SEK 30,000 (more than € 3,000), which they have to pay themselves to be a part of the project.

12. In the film *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* from 2003, Captain Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp) explains to governor's daughter (Keira Knightley) that "what a ship really is, [...] is freedom". Perhaps this aura of freedom is still working and might explain some of the symbolic power that the East Indiaman "Götheborg" seems to hold for many people.

13. Lasse Berg, *När Sverige upptäckte Afrika*, Stockholm: Rabén Prisma, 1997, p. 61–70.

14. Many of the big and important families of Gothenburg founded both their wealth and reputation during this period. Remarkably many wealthy Scotsmen (often the younger sons who didn't have an estate to inherit but needed a fresh arena for their capital) contributed to the growth of the city, especially through the trade in Asia, where their fortunes grew. These fortunes were partly reinvested in Gothenburg and so they marked the city in many ways, some which are still there.

15. Arensberg, *ibid.*

16. In the conservative daily paper *Borås Tidning*, a number of critical articles were published during the winter of 2006 in which the rationale in using more public means towards the project was critically questioned from an economical point of view.

17. Max Liljefors, "Prime time trama – historia och television", in Catharina Raudvere, Anders Andrén & Kristina Jennbert (eds.), *Hedendomen i historiens spegel. Bilder av det förkristna Norden*, Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2005, p. 185.

18. Peter Kemp, *Världsmedborgaren: politisk och pedagogisk filosofi för det 21 århundradet*, trans. Joachim Retzlaff, Göteborg: Daidalos, 2005, p. 19.

19. Trouillot, *op. cit.*, p xix.