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## COLONIAL PASTS AND POSSIBLE FUTURES

- a case study of the Louis de Geer monument



Photo by Nygren, 2020.

### CRITICAL SPATIAL PERSPECTIVES

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This thesis is critically investigating Swedish colonial heritage in forms of monuments and statues in public spaces. This thesis suggests that public spaces with colonial heritage should be decolonized and investigates how this is possible through the medium of architecture.

The aim of this thesis is to show how Swedish colonial heritage can exist unchallenged in a public space and explore how it could be handled in a different way. This is researched with literature studies of Swedish colonialism, postcolonialism and decolonization projects. Together with qualitative interviews with local citizens and institutions this creates the theoretical framework and background.

The theoretical framework is applied to a case study of the monument of the former slave trader Louis de Geer, at the square Gamla Torget in Norrköping. The monument brought attention when the story of Sweden's participation in the transatlantic slave trade became more known to the public, especially after a local art exhibition in 2018 and the George Floyd (BLM) protests in 2020.

The theoretical framework of Sweden's colonial history and postcolonial theory shows a strong connection with colonialism and ideas of races and racism. It also shows how Sweden have participated in colonialism, and therefore how Sweden also is responsible for inherited racial injustices. The reference examples

and postcolonial theory does not give an unequivocal answer to how a public space is decolonized, rather that it is strongly dependent on context and that there are many strategies to use.

Through five implementation strategies, explorations on how the monument could be approached are developed. The implementations are exploring *acceptance*, *communication*, *addition*, *transformation*, and *subtraction* for the specific case. The implementations are then discussed in connection to postcolonial theory, reference projects and local citizens opinions, aiming for continuing the discussion on colonial heritage in public spaces.

This thesis shows that there are several alternatives and combinations in between the extremes of doing nothing and total removal which can inspire for a broader discussion or contribute to other ideas and solutions.

Keywords: colonial heritage, decolonization, postcolonial studies, monument, Norrköping