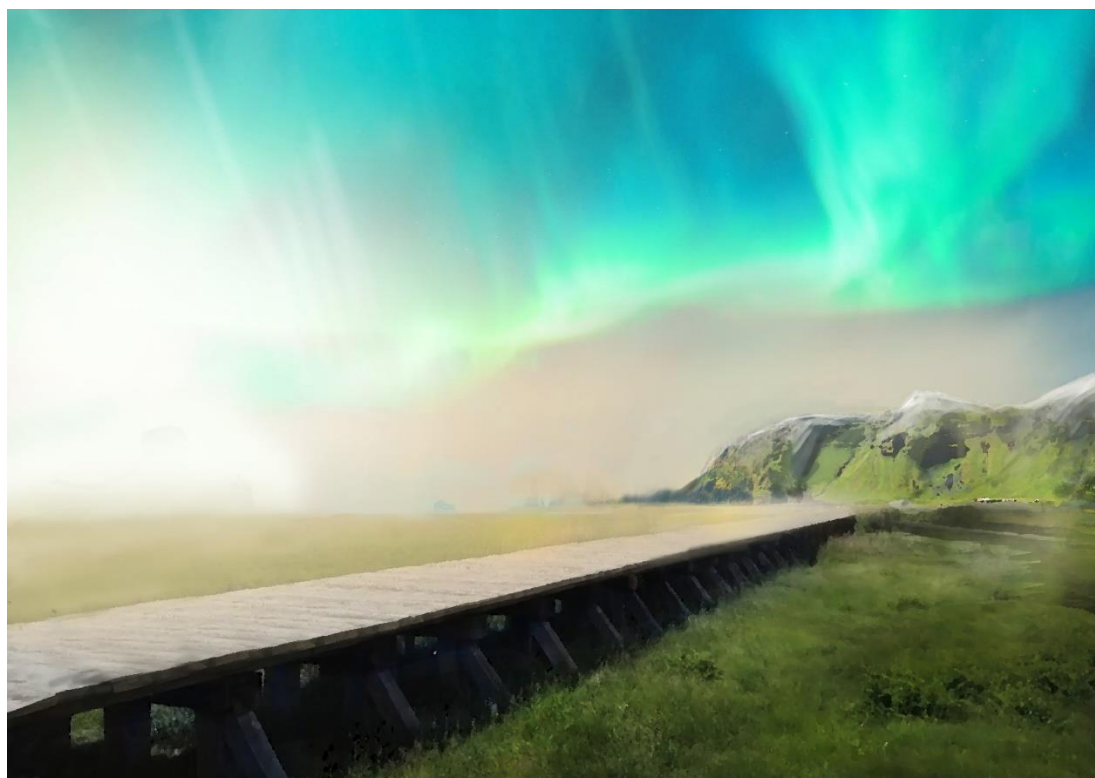


French-speaking Association for Nordic Studies' 6th biennial conference

The North as a Meeting Ground



Vikingebro (J. Degueldre)

May 19th to 21st, 2025

**University of Mons (UMONS),
Faculty of Translation and Interpretation (FTI-EII)**

CALL FOR PAPERS

The 6th biennial conference of the French-speaking Association for Nordic Studies (APEN) will be held in Belgium from **May 19th to 21st, 2025**, and will be organised by the department of Nordic studies (service NORD) within the Faculty of Translation and Interpretation (FTI-EII) at the University of Mons.

This new edition of a recurring scientific event aims to bring together researchers, PhD students and professionals interested in the Scandinavian and Nordic regions to strengthen the ties between specialists, enrich new or existing projects and works or set them in motion, and take stock of the current state of research in Nordic studies, regardless of scientific fields. In this regard, the call for papers is open to any discipline from the humanities, provided they touch on the broader Nordic topic.

Through its theme, the conference wishes to explore the North as “a meeting ground”. The notion calls for a wide array of reinterpretations: it seems particularly suitable for a region that is often considered “peripheral”, while simultaneously possessing a certain centrality due to being glorified or held up as a model in many discussions. Following this theme, we suggest that the notion of “meeting ground” may be envisioned according, but without being restricted, to the following dimensions:

- **Meetings between humans:** the notion summons the various Viking raids and settlements in different places, or the gradual displacement of Sámi people northwards in Fennoscandia. It also brings up Northern Europe as a region of migration: international emigration, first and foremost towards the American continent during the 19th and early 20th century, but intranational migration as well when the industrial revolution that made people leave the countryside led to massive urban growth. Likewise, northern Europe played and continues to play the role of a land of asylum, from migration waves coming from Finland to Sweden half a century ago to the arrival of refugees more recently. Regardless of whether old or new, domestic or international, such population movements never failed to lead to a variety of myths, ideologies, discourses and literary works. Encounters between humans were and are still the source of many depictions or even conflicts.
- **Meetings with nature:** the fantasized relationship of Northern Europeans with nature is said to be inhabited by a deep respect towards it. Prominent explorers have certainly braved the wrath of the wilderness and discovered uncharted places: Amundsen or Bering’s famous expeditions, far away from national borders or seas, come immediately to mind when one thinks of Nordic adventurers. But what about institutional legislations, such as *allemansrätten*, that allow their beneficiaries to freely wander and discover the land they live or travel in? Aren’t writers from the *statariskolan* the expression of a revolution which, although technically “industrial”, unfolds far away from the bigger urban settlements? Tenacious as it may be, the myth of the Scandinavians enamoured with natural spaces holds a certain truth.
- **Meetings across time and space:** numerous depictions of Northern Europe have transcended temporal and spatial boundaries. Novelists and readers alike open the doors to their respective world, inviting each other to embark on journeys, sometimes aimless such as those of Harry Martinson, or in adventures, often wonderful like those of Nils Holgersson. Painters and musicians bridge eras, places and traditions: such is the case of the *polska*, Sweden’s most popular countryside dance in the 19th century, that was inspired by the Polish royal court. Other examples easily come to mind. The figure of the “Northern barbarian”, used and abused by pop-culture, metal bands and video games alike can be said to share the same idealised features as the golden age of a welfare state that now belongs to the past. For both its inhabitants and its neighbours, the North is rich with representations. Myths supported by an abundant literature, a wealth of evocative artistic, historical, and archaeological heritage, and a solid sociopolitical

discursive ground lay the groundwork for an efficient soft power contributing to a certain portrayal of Nordic countries and their perception by the public.

- **Urban and peri-urban meetings:** in regions where traditionally low population densities have consequences for social organisation, but also in towns where lifestyles are constantly evolving and new requirements emerge, the specificities of the situation call for responses in urban planning or development. “Participatory design” and universal design are cornerstones of Scandinavian urbanism, and open new ways to access otherwise restricted areas. For instance, both the Oslo Opera House and the Norwegian furniture company Vestre’s factory, known as “The Plus”, aim to empower citizens by inviting them to reclaim public space, allowing them free movement on and around their premises. The growing importance of the environment in public discourses finds an echo in urban policies, so that four Nordic towns in total won the European Green Capital Award since the creation of the award in 2010. Simultaneously, the coining (or rather, the diversion) of the term “copenhagenization” to refer to cycling advocacy in town is another proof that Northern Europe is perceived as a role-model in the matter.
- **Meetings between languages:** in Denmark, the issue of minority languages within the Kingdom gained prominence after a member of the Folketing decided to give her speech in Greenlandic in spring 2023. Since then, the debate pertaining to the rights of linguistic minorities and their political participation has intensified. In a similar fashion, the status of Sámi languages in the countries where they are spoken, the position of Swedish language in Finland and of Nynorsk in Norway, and the question of sociolects, ethnolects and their acceptance in the social sphere pave the way for numerous future studies in linguistics, sociology or political sciences among other disciplines. As a fundamental aspect of Scandinavian studies, intercomprehension between Danish, Norwegian and Swedish deserves attention, particularly as the increasing presence of English poses a threat to its existence and the efforts aimed at its advancement. Another issue worth considering is the promotion of Nordic languages outside Northern Europe. Indeed, while the European Union aims to enhance the use of Danish language within its institutions through the “mere dansk i EU” programme, the teaching and learning of Danish abroad face threats due to budget cuts to the *lektoratsordning*, a structure responsible for promoting and teaching Danish overseas. This decision prompts questions about the status and usage of national languages in notoriously anglophone countries. Furthermore, it also prompts questions about translation, interpretation, and the training of future professionals.
- **Meetings between disciplines:** despite being a field in its own right, Nordic studies also serve as a focal point for specialists from various scientific disciplines. This interaction is profitable to the existence and transmission of new methods and theories that other fields of research may benefit from. As such, any multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary approach is encouraged.
- **More generally,** and in addition to the suggestions above, APEN welcomes any communication proposal linked to Nordic studies.

Submission:

Individual proposals (20 minutes + 10 minutes for discussion) or panels (3 to 6 presentations) must be submitted no later than **December 6th, 2024** via email (apen2025@umons.ac.be).

They should include a title, a 300-to-400-word summary (excluding references), 5 keywords and a short biographical note, in Word format.

Languages:

The main language of the conference is French. Communications in English or any of the three Scandinavian languages (Danish, Norwegian, Swedish) are welcome.

For the convenience of non-French-speaking participants, the organisation committee is looking to offer interpretation services from French to English for at least one of the parallel sessions every time. In order to make the interpreters' work easier, lecturers may be requested to provide a copy of their presentation some days ahead of their presentation.

Fees:

25 euros (10 euros for PhD students; free for students and APEN members).

Organisation Committee:

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Conference's website: <https://apen2025.sciencesconf.org>

APEN's website: <https://www.etudes-nordiques.fr>

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