



VIGDÍS FINNBOGADÓTTIR
INSTITUTE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

*The Vigdís International Centre
of Multilingualism
and Intercultural Understanding*

Meeting of the West-Nordic Region Research Network
with the Vigdís Intl. Centre Intl. Advisory Board

Reykjavík, 21 & 22 April 2017

Abbreviations

VIC: The Vigdís International Centre of Multilingualism and Intercultural Understanding

IAB: the International Advisory Board of the VIC

WNN: the West-Nordic Region Research Network

AH: Auður Hauksdóttir – **SD:** Sebastian Drude – **BB:** Birna Bjarnadóttir

Chairs

AH, Professor of Danish and Director of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Institute; and SD, Director of VIC

Participants

Members of the West-Nordic network:

Denmark: Nina Møller Andersen, Lecturer on Danish as a foreign language, University of Copenhagen; Karoline Kühl, Associate Professor of Danish, University of Copenhagen; Peter Juel Henriksen, Associate Professor of Corpus?-linguistics, Handelshøjskolen, Copenhagen.

Faroe Islands: Malan Marnersdóttir, Professor of Faroese Literature, Fróðskaparsetur; Bergur D. Hansen, Assistant Professor of Faroese Literature, Fróðskaparsetur

Greenland: Per Langgård, Special Advisor for the Greenland's Language committee; Katti Frederiksen, Head, Greenland's Language committee; Karen Langgård, Assistant Professor of Greenlandic Literature, University of Greenland

Norway: Gunnstein Akselberg, Professor of Social linguistics, University of Bergen

Sweden: Ulla Börestam, Professor of Linguistics, University of Uppsala

Iceland: AH, Professor of Danish, University of Iceland; Gísli Magnússon, Assistant Professor of Danish literature, University of Iceland; Pernille Folkmann, Assistant Professor of Danish, University of Iceland; Þórhallur Eypórsson, Professor of Linguistics, University of Iceland; Þórhildur Oddsdóttir, Adjunct in Danish, University of Iceland

Members of the IAB: Jens Allwood, Professor of Linguistics at the University of Gothenburg; Peter Austin, Professor of Linguistics at SOAS University of London; Lars Borin, Professor of Linguistics at the University of Gothenburg and Director of Språkbanken; Bernard Comrie, Professor of Linguistics at the University of California, Santa Barbara; Anju Saxena, Professor of Linguistics at the University of Uppsala; Kristján Árnason, Professor of Icelandic, University of Iceland.

Minutes

A) Internal WNN meeting, Friday 21 April 10:00–12:00

(Chaired by AH; not covered here.)

B) Joint IAB, boards and WNN meeting, Friday 21 April 13:15–14:45

SD introduces himself to the members of WNN, and discusses possible research projects for VIC. He then asks if one member of the WNN would like to brief the IAB on where the WNN stands.

Karoline informs all that Zakaris, AH, Gunnstein and herself have been working on a specific research project and will be applying for a research grant. Greenland may also participate.

SD asks if he understood correctly that there are a few research projects under way, and one of them has to do with the linguistic situation in the West Nordic region.

Peter Juel: It is on language changes in the region.

AH highlights what she discussed during the session with the IAB.

Bernard stresses that in order for VIC's IAB to be able to give advice on the culture/literature part of the West Nordic research project, an expert in literature is needed on the board.

AH agrees that it would be good to include an expert in literature.

General discussion follows on possible research topics like Danish as a language of literature in the region; thematic connection between language and literature across the West Nordic region; microcosms of universal movements/interconnections of various worlds via immigration/immigrants.

SD suggests that the research network investigates available knowledge on intercultural understanding & multilingualism in the region, for what is already available? And in Iceland? What is the data on immigrants?

Peter Juel suggests an open-door policy at VIC: The Centre can establish itself by collecting specific data, and **SD** asks: How many languages, for example, are spoken in hotels in Iceland here and now?

AH points out that one should not underestimate the current position of the humanities at the University of Iceland. It is strong, thanks in part to VIC.

SD notes that VIC could serve as a bridge between cultures/group of people in Iceland; more important to focus on lived experiences of natives and immigrants in Iceland and their ideas on, for example, what 'home' is/means than to foster research under the banner of digital humanities.

Kristján suggests that the focus of VIC should be on exhibitions and the study of languages, followed by a general discussion on various possibilities, also within the West Nordic region.

Bernard stresses the comparative aspect of the WNN's research project, and how it may contribute to the bigger world.

Lars suggests that a project like the West Nordic could map out various aspects of post colonialism in the region.

C) WNN meeting, Friday 21 April 15:15–17:30

SD notes that what is needed at this point reg. the WNN is to formulate concrete ideas/actual projects in order for its members to be able to apply for grants. He also suggests the translation of literary works as a possible research topic in/for the cultural part, adding that such projects should be formulated from within the group of scholars in that given field.

AH suggests the subject of 'influence' from abroad and how literary movements/philosophical ideas can be traced in certain works of literature, including 'loanwords' that are or could be viewed as characteristic of these movements/ideas. Such a research would map cultural contact in the region and contribute directly to the linguistic part of the research.

Kristján notes that it is important to include both functional and structural parts in the research. **AH** agrees.

Pórhallur discusses his ongoing research within the West Nordic research project – a mirror research project, which draws on a bigger research project that is conducted by a group of linguists, including a couple of members of IAB (Anju and Comrie). He stresses also the necessity to include – in the research on loanwords and language changes in the West Nordic region – the subjects of grammar, syntax, etc.

Lars suggests that the space between grammar and vocabulary is an exciting one to explore, in particular in relation to a language like Icelandic.

Jens asks how this is to be accomplished – to combine the linguistic aspect with the cultural one. And **SD** asks how we are we to make this research visible and exciting.

Pórhallur: There are already existing maps, and more to make, adds **SD**.

Nina: If the members of WNN do not get funded, what will then happen to WNN?

AH: There are funding possibilities.

SD: We are not here to decide which projects will apply for grants.

AH stresses the near future structural changes reg. VIC, on the one hand, and VFI, on the other. VIC will, for example, manage all publications for both the Institute and the Centre.

Peter would like to know what the value of VIC is for the West Nordic research project – is it perhaps related to policy issues, or governmental policy, he wonders.

SD: We need to ask ourselves where this Centre is going. What is the *vision* of the Centre? Does it include education for the government of Iceland in matters of language? Should it occupy itself with policy making and or politics? So far, we have focused on the following issues:

- 1) how to raise money
- 2) exhibitions

What else should VIC do? What is the mission of the Centre?

AH: It is, at least, a platform.

Peter mentions the UNESCO-connection. No money there, but still...

Kristján: Clearly, there is some ideology behind the establishment of VIC. The question, however, is if it is first and foremost a research institute, or if the scholars at VFI are to be responsible for the research conducted at VIC.

AH: Both.

Kristján: What about grant applications? Do people apply via the Faculty of the Humanities, or VIC?

AH: Depends on the subject matter.

D) IAB and WNN meeting, Saturday 22 April 10:00–17:30

Revised agenda for the morning session: IAB meeting 10:00-12:00.

(Not covered here.)

Afternoon session: Planning of project proposals, with input from IAB members.

The West Nordic Research Network: a list of current and near future projects:

- 1) AH reports on a specific research project, which centers on Danish in the West Nordic Region – situation and contact from 1750-1950 in West-Norway, Faroe Islands and Iceland. A substantial Rannís grant application (grant of excellence) is being written and will be submitted before June 15, 2017. (See also the document on the Rannís grant application in question, which was distributed on-line during the April 22-meeting). In order for people to understand better the significance of a particular research project on language and culture contact in the West Nordic region, SD suggests that he drafts a statement for the West Nordic research network. All agree.
- 2) Gísli reports on a literature project: Existentialism and Vitalism in modern Danish, Faroese and Icelandic literature. Other participants: Malin, Bergur and Birna B. The research will focus on

German philosophy in Danish literature, and the way in which certain ideas and literary movements cross over from Danish literature into Faroese and Icelandic literature. As noted by Bergur, it is possible to expand this research project into the realm of language and explore both aspects of the language of philosophy and the language of literature in the given region. Whether this research project could focus in particular on loanwords is another matter, as Birna B. noted. People also wonder if this research project could include aspects of translations in the given region. Malan expressed some concern reg. the timeframe of the Rannís-project, and wonders if all research projects under the banner of the West Nordic network should stick to the same timeframe.

General discussion follows.

SD asks: Is there a given time restriction for all projects under the West Norden banner?

AH is of that opinion, and suggests that when exploring certain cultural/philosophical/literary movements crossing the West Nordic region through Denmark, the literature/culture research projects should focus, in part, on the subject of loanwords.

SD is of the opinion that the bigger the umbrella for the overall West Nordic research project is, the more fruitful it becomes.

AH agrees that it is good to present various projects. The question now, however, is what fits into the 2017 Rannís application.

Pórhallur notes that there are two types of Rannís grants: a) project grant, and b) grant of excellence. The latter needs to be carefully composed, and the most important thing is for the application to demonstrate a clear focus. Applicants also need to be able to argue why this particular research is relevant here and now.

Kristján notes that for the Rannís application, the focus should be on loanwords in the given countries.

AH notes again that in the West Nordic research project, the research on the language changes need to be combined with research on cultural changes, and that the subject of literature is essential.

More discussion follows, also on post colonialism and how the overall research project draws on multidimensional material; a fact that should be highlighted in the Rannís grant application, **Peter** notes.

SD notes that the overall West Nordic research project is not yet fully focused, and that one big grant application is already a handful for the time being.

- 3) **Pernilla, Nina** and **Pórhildur** present three pillar project on Danish in the West Nordic region, with a special focus on acquisition and learning/education. (**NB**: more info from Pernilla).
- 4) Greenland: **Katti** states that Per, Karen and she would all like to participate in the Rannís-application research project. They would collect data according to the given timeframe. **Per is of the opinion** that if they find some money, they could provide the Greenland-perspective reg. the arrival of new words/ideas in Greenland. He also notes that in order to find some money, they need to be associated with a network of this kind; the West Nordic research network could, indeed, open up doors. They could also contribute to a research on current views in Greenland reg. both Danish and English. **Karen** then provides a brief overview of the history of loanwords in Greenland, and reports on how Danish universities are defining the development. We can explore the changes up to 1950, but what is equally interesting is to explore the changes that occur after 1959, or at this time when a lot of loanwords enter Greenlandic.

General discussion follows.

Referring to Karen's remark, **SD** states that the time frame of the West Nordic research project/projects should indeed be broad.

Karen asks if there is an existing data on loanword after 1950.

Yes, **Kristján** replies, and states that people have looked at this, and that the big moment in the history of Denmark on this front would be the beginning of the twentieth century.

Karen is of the opinion that it is very interesting to compare the situation in Greenland with what is occurring in Iceland and Norway.

Kristján notes that in Iceland, formal language planning started early twentieth century.

Per: Reg. the timeframe: We can start in a given timeframe, or not. We need to consider what is best for the grant application, and then we can work on other projects...

SD is of the opinion that the network has no authority to decide. 'We', the members of the network, need to formulate the document I have mentioned before. What I suggest is that the Rannís application will be worked on first, and then other projects follow.

AH notes that the Rannís application does not exclude other people to apply for other grants.

Karen asks if Greenland should apply for Nordplus?

Yes, **AH** replies, with our assistance. The next deadline is October. She also asks about the government in Greenland, and if there are possible funds to apply from them?

Ulla asks about the near future plans for the Network, if the next meeting is scheduled in the spring of 2018 in Copenhagen and what the overall plan is for the Network.

AH notes that in order to plan the near future, the Network needs to figure out what it has achieved during the last twelve months. The immediate plan for the near future is to showcase an exhibition next year on the languages in the West Nordic region. Before we know where we are heading, however, we also need to figure out where our budget stands. This meeting has a bit more expensive than the last one, thanks to the number of days the members are staying in Iceland.

15:00–16:30 - Final session.

AH proposes the following 2017-2018 plan for WNN:

- a) RANNÍS grant application
- b) NORFA grant application
- c) She will request a grant from Greenland (government) of 100 thousand Danish krónur for our colleagues in Greenland to participate in the WNN/create a corpus
- d) Others who have planned projects apply for other grants
- e) Exhibition in the new building – West Nordic Region, (could become a travelling exhibition and featured in Nuuk, Smithsonian, etc.)
- f) NORA

Nina stresses that the WNN needs to hold on to the literature people.

SD agrees, and notes that the document on the WNN should be a kind of Manifesto and that all members of the WNN should be able to refer to it in their grant applications.

AH notes that the WNN will conclude with a conference, and that there is also budget for one more network-meeting. She then thanks everyone for the inspiring days in Reykjavík: Sebastin, the new Director of VIC, our friends in the neighboring countries, the colleagues here and last but not least the IAB.

SD notes that the first scholarly work done in the new building is the WNN.

AH adds that her first task as the Director of VFI some years ago was to apply for a grant to hold a seminar on language and literature in Greenland and Faroe Islands.

Bergur notes that WNN should be aware of existing work on literature in the region and that it should be presented in our context.

AH adds that there are a few articles that have been published on Danish in the West Nordic region and that they could become background material for the network. We need a homepage for WNN, she also notes.

On half of all present, **Nina** thanks AH and SD, and both receive a well-earned round of applause.