

Maare Paloheimo – Research Project

Shared Economic Spaces of Finnish towns - The Emergence and Assimilation of Russian-born Merchants in Finland, 1809-1917

The research focuses on outside influences on Finnish society and economic life by examining Russian-born individuals engaging in business activities in Finland from 1809 to 1917. After 1809 the number of the Russian-born individuals as well as Russian influence increased markedly in Finland, as the territory that approximately constitutes modern Finland was ceded from Sweden to Russia after the war of 1808-1809 and became the Grand Duchy of Finland, an autonomous entity within the Russian Empire. The immigrant Russian population and their descendants remained in Finland after 1917, when the country gained independence. This project investigates research themes related to the emergence of Russians in Finland: the main focus is on the assimilation of Russian merchant families into Finnish society and the shifts in policy towards the Russian minority from 1809 to 1917.

The theoretical framework of the research builds on discussions on ethnic entrepreneurship, representations of economic nationalism, borderland studies as well as immigration. The research will provide new insights into the development of the business-government relationship in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, contribute to our understanding of the gradual process of diversification and internationalization of business life as well as the cultural and social impact of immigrant business actors in a border country.