



## **Nordiska museet and Skansen: Displays of Floating Nationalities**

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### **Abstract**

This article explores how national narratives were performed and displayed at Nordiska museet and Skansen from late 19th century until the end of the 20th century. It shows how the museum's national narratives were negotiated and transformed in the wake of new political orientations, from the utopia of "folkhemmet" to contemporary visions of the multi-cultural society. Nordiska museet and Skansen have strongly been associated with successful nation-making. This notion however tends to suppress a prevailing tension between the museum's Nordicness and its Swedishness. From very early on Artur Hazelius collected objects from an indecisive Nordic area, including Russia and Germany. After his death in 1901 efforts were made to nationalize Nordiska museet and Skansen. From time to time the museum's Nordic identity has been mobilized, a story that run parallel with tendencies to reject the museum's Scandinavianist legacy, a legacy dating back to a period when the contemporary Nordic nation-states were yet not politically or culturally defined.

## Sweden in Miniature

In 1890 Artur Hazelius, the founder of Nordiska museet in Stockholm, received as a gift some houses and a garden named Framnäs at Djurgården, close to the building site of the present Nordiska museet. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Djurgården was transformed into a noble residential area, paired with the creation of several entertainment establishments and popular restaurants (Tjerneld 1980). Hazelius had rather spectacular plans for this small piece of land, as can be recognized from an etching dating back to the same year. Among the buildings on the etching were Ornäs Loft from Dalarna and Borgunds stave church from Norway (Hazelius 1900:282). According to a tradition, that was vividly reproduced by historians until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the loft gave protection to the king-to-be, Gustav Vasa when he in 1521 was on the run from the Danes. In the mid 18th century the then owner Jacob Brandberg turned the upper level of the cottage into a Vasa-monument and museum. In 1896 the Ornäs loft was acquired by the state (Lagergren 1931). At the World's Fair in Paris 1867 a replica of Ornässtugan was set up. It was later rebuilt in the garden of Ulriksdal's castle in Stockholm as domicile for the king's personal physician (Sjöberg 1978).

Borgunds stave church was, and still is, one of the best preserved, well-known and most visited stave churches in Norway and considered a most remarkable Norwegian national monument. When a new church was built for the parish of Borgund in 1868 the stave church was purchased by the state; in 1877 sold to The Society for the Preservation of Norwegian Ancient Monuments.

Artur Hazelius' vision for Framnäs is telling both of the historical contexts and national symbols: Sweden and Norway constituted one Kingdom until the dissolution of the union in 1905. Gustav Vasa hold a strong position both in old patriotic and newer nationalistic discourses being credited with establishing Sweden as a sovereign state. The stave churches were regarded as characteristic of Norwegian popular history and culture and most precious national treasures. Combining them in an outdoor exhibition can be interpreted as a grand show-off of the Swedish-Norwegian union including loyalty to the king of Sweden-Norway, who was appointed as protection master of the Society for Nordiska Museet, established in 1880. However, there is also another dimension: Before becoming a museum founder, Artur Hazelius was deeply involved in the Scandinavianist movement and the efforts to bring forth a future Scandinavian nation, the United States of Scandinavia.

The extraordinary plans for Framnäs were never realized. In March the year after Artur Hazelius acquired a hilly and picturesque piece of land at Djurgården called Upper Skansen. During the summer the earlier obtained Morastugan was rebuilt on this ground, together with a few other buildings: a picking-house from the parish of Orsa in Dalarna, a larger cottage from the parish of Kyrkhult in Blekinge, a replica of a stone cabin from Blekinge, a copy of a somerseth from the parish of Mörsil in Jämtland, two replicas of a charcoal burner's huts from Västmanland and Småland and a "Laplanders" camp (Upmark 1916:102-106). In October 1891 Skansen opened to the public. The years to follow witnessed the incorporation of new ground, increasing the size of Skansen and the further setting up of houses, farmsteads, paths, animal enclosures and plantations, ponds with water, mile posts, grave crosses and rune stones (Skansen 1906). "Artur Hazelius carried on his work with restless speed", as Bernhard Salin later phrased it (Salin 1906). The efforts to develop the open-air museum were many, as were the ideas for its future. Hazelius

dream of a copy of Borgsund stave church remained. In 1898 a Swedish architect travelled to Norway to carefully study the stave church (Upmark 1916:125). The dream was never realized, however another building from Norway, The Vastveit Storehouse from Telemark, dating back to the 14th century, was rebuilt at Skansen (Berg & Biörnstad 1980: 505-508).

Artur Hazelius was not without sources of inspiration for collecting and exhibiting buildings. An apparent and probably inspiring parallel was King Oscar II's collection of old Norwegian houses - including a stave church - placed in the garden of the king's summer residence at Bygdøy near Oslo, later integrated with Norsk Folkemuseum. Ancestors of open-air museums were the reconstructions of peasant cottages, ancient ruins, antique temples and "exotic" pavilions that often were to be found in parks and zoological gardens. Another source of inspiration was the many historical and "primitive" buildings that were shown at the international exhibitions in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century" (Rentzhog 2007).

What were the founding narratives of a collection of old houses and huts rebuilt in a park in Stockholm? How was visitors invited to experience history and folk-life? To start with, one must keep in mind that Skansen never has been a museum exclusively of peasant buildings and rural folk life. The "Laplanders" for example, were commonly in the dominant culture considered belonging to the groups of "primitive people". In 1898 a replica of a "Greenlanders" house was erected on Skansen, intended to picture the old winter life of "the Eskimos" (Hazelius 1900: 285). In 1896 Emanuel Svedenborg's summer house moved to Skansen from south of Stockholm and was made a small museum over the world famous theosophist (Upmark 1916:124). In 1897 the Scandinavian Art and Industry Exhibition was held at Djurgården in Stockholm. After its closure two exhibition pavillions were donated to Nordiska museet, including their original exhibitions. One of the buildings was renamed Skansens mining exhibition. This building contained several exhibitions: one of Scandinavian mining, a ship model and a model of Copenhagen freeport, and exhibition of boats and hunting and fishing gears from Finland, Norway and Sweden. The other building contained a reconstruction of a coal mine and a diorama of the limestone quarry of Limnhamn and a model of Visby (Hazelius 1900: 175-185). Artur Hazelius himself made a distinction between "ethnographic" objects and houses, including the peasant cottages, and buildings illustrative of cultural history. Today's Skansen shows for example the Town Quarter, picturing a non-specific but assumed "typical" Swedish town in the mid-19th century. Here one can visit among others buildings, the Pharmacy, the Bakery, The Engraver's Workshop, The Workman's home, The Hazelius Mansion (the birthplace of Artur Hazelius) and the noble estate of Jakobsberg (Blent 2005).

The prevailing image, that Skansen first and foremost presented Swedish folk life pre-supposes a certain strategic blindness. In order to re-create a homogenous vision of Artur Hazelius the obvious heterogeneity of Skansen has been suppressed, both by Artur Hazelius himself and by his many biographers. For instance, that fact that Skansen also was a zoological garden is regarded as an accidental addition to the real purposes, contrary to the fact that Hazelius himself was very conscious about that wild animals would attracted a larger public than old houses (Schmidt Galaaen 2005:84).

The heterogeneity of Skansen mirrors, among many things, floating ideas and ideals of what precisely the nation is, territorially, in terms of what people that nation consists of and what stories that should be told about that nation (Hillström 2010). Many scholars have put forward

that Skansen has successfully contributed to the shaping of the Swedish nation. Skansen was a place where the national community and culture were exhibited, narrated and performed. Artur Hazelius has been identified as a true nationalist, whose objectives were to rediscover, foster and protect the individuality of the national Swedish community (Bohman 1997; Sörlin 1998).

To interpret Skansen as an arena for performing national stories and national life it can be helpful to make use of metaphors from the theatre. Skansen can thus be viewed as a large scene. The scene is a small-scale Sweden, although with rather different contours when compared to the Swedish map. The main reason why Skansen was in the first place conceived as a minimized Sweden is that houses rebuilt or copied at Skansen were collected from different landscapes and “Sweden” was regarded as the sum of its many landscapes. Artur Hazelius’ vision was to create a living museum (Hazelius 1900: 288). At Skansen it was possible to attach “life” to material objects. Women and men – and in the very beginning mannequins – dressed in folk costumes, flower, trees and domestic animals added “life” to the houses. Thus Skansen appears like a stage with elaborated scenography, intended to create the impression of a real world that at the same time was lost and belonged to the past. It was a world made of well established perceptions of rural folk life to be viewed and experienced by a middle and upper class cosmopolitan audience.

What play then was set up? The major play took place in the fantasy of the public, adding meaning, feelings and value to the nostalgic scene. Bernhard Salin illustratively wrote:

The peasant’s old house, it is true, invites by itself the modern man on account of its divergences from what is usual now, it sets the fancy in motion, the worn furniture and household utensils elicit images from the many generations who lived, worked, suffered, and died there (Salin 1906).

Many other actual plays were set up by Artur Hazelius and the museum staff to attract the audience and to enhance the illusion of past life. Indeed, Skansen was a place, especially during spring and summer, for many celebrations, festivities and manifestations of different size and content. Historical events and persons were remembered; there were spring costumed festivals and royal Memorial Days, traditional celebrations of May Day Eve and Midsummer Eve, the latter with folk dances and folk music. In 1899, for example, the Memorial Day of the poet and composer Carl Michael Bellman was celebrated with a costume parade picturing Bellman himself and famous characters from his songs: Fredman, the clockmaker; Mowitz, the drunkard, Fader Berg, the musician and Ulla Winblad, the prostitute, on an outing in the country side. The 6<sup>th</sup> of November, the Memorial Day Gustaf II Adolf, was commemorated with a speech of from the bishop: a procession of cavaliers dressed in 17<sup>th</sup> century costumes; patriotic hymns performed by pupils from Girl’s Schools; and parades by the Garrison Regiment of Stockholm. The 30<sup>th</sup> of November, the Memorial Day of Karl XII, was honored with flagging, cannon salutes and patriotic hymns conducted by pupils from public schools (Böttiger 1902: 114).

Skansen did not tell a cohesive and teleological story of Sweden starting with identifying a pre-historical genesis and then moving further along the axis of pre-historical and historical developments. It did not tell a political story of the nation, although well-known events in Swedish history and royal Memorial Days were not neglected. The narrative was made up of a compilation of national symbols and traditions, a colorful bouquet of “the best” that Sweden can show: cultural and political heroes, picturesque folk life, “exotic” inhabitants in the north, beautiful nature scenarios, traditional music and dances, military music, to mention some of its

content. Skansen created a utopian national whole that harmoniously integrated regional and social diversity, ordered to be most appetizing for the eye of viewer. Much was told about an idealized peasant life, nothing however was told about the growing working class and social conflicts of the time.

In fact, what is most striking is the absence of the chronological dimension. Skansen presents a timeless past in which the social classes live in harmony and mutual respect. In defining the common national identity and heritage Skansen is clearly contributing to a construction of the past as a “foreign country” (Lowenthal 1985). Hence, the distance between now and then, between a traditional way of life and a modern life was emphasized. The experience of an unstable and rapidly changing present was posed against a stable and slowly changed past (Eriksen 1993). Against the plurality of modern times was posed the clear normative framework of a society built up of the four estates (*fyra stånd*). The individualism of the new society was contrasted with the collectivist peasant culture and an organic and natural social hierarchy. To sum, the social tensions of industrial society was juxtaposed to the homogeneity and harmony of past times. Skansen appears to be an expression of a middle-class mythology – a narrative about the natural and authentic life of pre-industrial society. Skansen can be understood as a bourgeois Eden, saturated with national symbols of various kinds, a space of harmony, order and beauty. In this Eden, there was one easy identified “other”, the Sami. The interest in the Sami culture at this time did not include all its different aspects, but was mainly directed towards the culture of the reindeer-herding nomads (*fjällsamer*). These were argued to be the most authentic and primitive “Laplanders”. It was also “*fjällsamer*” that inhabited the Sami camp at Skansen during summertime. The process of construction of the Sami camp is worth recalling. It was preceded by expeditions of male explorers whose adventures were described in public letters published in the newspapers. The “explorers” were not alone, but had company with Sami people to guide them. They nevertheless described their travels as heroic quests for survival, portraying themselves as “alone with nature in an unknown land”. In these and other stories the Saami were presented as wild, uncivilized and close to nature. They became popular objects of exoticism and curiosity. In late 19<sup>th</sup> century politics of identity, they seem to have served as a popular “other” against which the identity of emerging modern subjects was confirmed (Hillström 1997).

Looking upon the museum mission of Artur Hazelius one finds a striking occupation with things, clothes and occupations associated with women. In presenting the past, the domestic sphere played a dominant role. The many women that worked at Skansen, preferably from Dalarna, who were dressed in folk costumes and often depicted in company with goats, enhance the impression that the past was also feminized. Hazelius’ vision of a “living past” presupposed the idea that it was possible to transcend the border between representation and life “as it was”. The Darlacarian women were chosen to embody this idea. To conclude, the national narrative told and performed at Skansen is built up of different national symbols and is intertwined with discourses of modernity, civilization and gender. Metaphorically, Skansen is a large scale tableau vivant, incorporating the visitors in the national spectacle.

### **Skansen - a proper museum?**

The idea of the open-air museum was successfully spread. However to many museum professionals during the turn of the twentieth century Skansen appeared less a museum than

something else more indefinable. Success in terms of numbers of visitors was not necessarily an achievement in the eyes of self-conscious museum professionals, who strongly argued, that a museum primarily served scientific purposes and that professional competence was made visible through the science based ordering and preserving of authentic objects, collected in the main purpose of knowledge production. The museum, according to many professionals, was an institution of science. After Artur Hazelius death, some argued that Skansen should be separated from Nordiska museet, as it was *not* a museum. Those who defended that they should be kept together, explicitly argued that Skansen loose the risk of becoming pure entertainment. The intimate relation to Nordiska museet guaranteed that Skansen transcended the less decent sphere of public amusement (Hillström 2006) The critique of the open-air museum stood for long and when the divorce actually took place in 1963, the arguments were very much resembling those articulated 60 years before (Eklund Nyström 1998). In 1933 Gösta Berg published a biography of Artur Hazelius (Berg 1933). One of his aims was to correct an earlier biography written by the then famous Swedish literature critics Fredrik Böök (Böök 1923). Böök characterized Hazelius as a grand director of theatre, who managed to mobilise the masses to appraisal of Sweden and Swedishness. Berg on the other hand underlined that Hazelius main purpose was *not* to foster patriotic feelings with festivities and themed masquerades but to contribute to the development of science. Obviously, Berg was deeply involved in museum politics. He tried hard to make the past of Skansen proper in order to legitimize the museum in the present – as well as contributing to a retouched history of its founder, Artur Hazelius. Mimetic display, costumed staff, music, folk dance, theatre, spectacular festivities, restaurants, cafes, living domestic and exotic animals, contributed strongly to the popularity of Skansen but the right way of seeing it was as a national collection of building types, showing regional varieties and historical development characteristic of Swedish architecture, Berg argued. If the visitor did not understand the proper purpose and preferred the various amusements that were offered this should not be taken as an indication of the real value of exhibiting houses nor the deepest intentions of the museum founder (Hillström 2005).

Berg's critique of Böök illustrates conflicting museum ideals and shows that the relation between nation building and museums that are characterized as national is not without complications. How should the nation be presented accurately within a museum? What purposes did museums serve? Did they serve the purpose of shaping nationalized individuals and collectives, if so, in what ways? In fact, Berg argued that patriotic manifestations were not an essential part of museum practice but rather a result of compromises with the public's taste.

### **Nationalizing Nordiska museet and Skansen**

Nordiska museet opened in Stockholm in 1873. It was initially named the Scandinavian-Ethnographic Collection (Skandinavisk-etnografiska samlingen), reflecting Artur Hazelius Scandinavianist commitments. The name was changed in 1880 when the museum was turned into a private foundation, formerly it was owned by Hazelius himself. Until 1905 the museum was located in central Stockholm. In June 1907 the new monumental building for Nordiska museet opened to the public.

Initially, the Scandinavian-Ethnographic collection was presented as a permanent exhibition of mannequins dressed in national costumes. Soon Hazelius' collections expanded in various

directions. They continually became both bigger and more diverse. The public, the press, the admirers as well as the critics were amazed, but also puzzled. What kind of museum was this? What, more precisely, were the ambitions of Artur Hazelius? A single and well-articulated official meaning of the museum was never established. On the contrary, the floating meanings formed a substantial part of the achievements of Nordiska museet in terms of rapidly growing collections and of public endorsement. Artur Hazelius' main strategy was to allow as many actors as possible to contribute to the museum. According to Artur Hazelius' rhetoric, the museum was built by the people and in line with the people's will, opinion and taste in terms of the items collected. One of the many aspects of diversity was the indecisive geographical boundaries of the collections. From the very beginning Artur Hazelius collected objects from Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Greenland, Iceland, Estonia, Russia and Germany (and from other areas). This circumstance contributed to uncertainties among both admirers and critics of the museum. Through which lenses should the museum be viewed: Was it a museum representing Sweden and the union neighbour Norway or a Scandinavian (Danish, Norwegian, Swedish and perhaps Finnish) museum? Was it a museum of the old Swedish Empire? A museum of Northern Europe? What kind of "nation" or "people" was assumed in the collecting and exhibiting practices? (Hillström 2006).

The setting for cultural museum-building in Scandinavia in the late 19th century was deeply saturated by attracting and repelling forces of countries complexly connected together in political history. Up until 1809 Finland was part of Sweden; in 1814 Denmark and Norway parted and Norway entered into a union with Sweden. Up to the last quarter of that century Scandinavianists sought to establish a pan-Scandinavian nation-state, and celebrated the cultural unity of the Scandinavian people (Finland was often included). The Scandinavian movement represented a nationalism that, in retrospect, has been described as a romantic illusion of a Nordic community upheld by naive students. In its historical context, Scandinavianism was an important political and cultural force. Artur Hazelius was mobilising a well-established Scandinavian network when starting his new career as a collector and museum builder. These political and historical circumstances formed the contexts of museum-building in the North.

The founder and director of Nordiska museet, Artur Hazelius, died in 1901. After his death the various meanings of the museum and its miscellaneous collections were regarded with suspicion by many museum professionals. Soon after a committee was formed. Its chairman was Oscar Montelius, a renowned archaeologist and museum curator. The committee's purpose was to devise a programme for the internal design of the new museum building, including the layout of new exhibitions. The committee members disagreed in several important respects, including the meaning of the museum as a national institution. The committee's report was published in 1902 and strongly stressed Nordiska museet as a national Swedish institution. The report underlined that Nordiska museet was founded with the aim of strengthening national feelings and patriotic values. Despite the common knowledge that Artur Hazelius had been firmly rooted in Scandinavianism and a feeling of Nordic affinity and community, he was ascribed with the original intention to create a museum for the *Swedish* people (Nordiska museet 1902).

The heavy emphasis on the museum being a national Swedish museum can be understood as an effort to make the museum more consistent in terms of which people and nation it appealed to and represented. Stating that Nordiska museet was a museum for, above all, the Swedish

people solved an important problem. One reason to stress the Swedishness of Nordiska museet was the crisis of the union between Sweden and Norway. From around 1890 this union had entered a period of crisis that ended with its dissolution in 1905. It seems highly reasonable that the committee tried to adjust the identity of Nordiska museet to the actual political situation. Being sensitive to the political currents of the time, not least the Norwegian claim for self-government and independence, it was less sensible to emphasize the museum's Nordic identity, especially when the big Norwegian collection in the museum was repeatedly deplored in Norway. In the nationalizing process of Nordiska Museet the political downfall of Scandinavianism ran parallel to changes in principles of the rising museum profession. The politically convenient "de-Scandinavization" of Nordiska Museet after Hazelius' death in 1901 was therefore argued in terms of scientific and museological carefulness. Science demanded, Oscar Montelius argued, that Nordiska Museet should be transformed into a proper Swedish National Cultural History Museum.

In 1916 Gustaf Upmark, head of Nordiska museet, declared that the principle borders of Skansen coincided with Sweden's (Upmark 1916: 112). Upmark knew that the imagined territory of Skansen originally was not the borders of the Swedish nation state. He, for example, explicitly quoted Artur Hazelius, who had stated that he wished to 'reproduce also complete buildings which were typical for the Nordic countries during different epochs' (Upmark 1916:110)). In addition, Skansen was also a zoological garden with many species from distant parts of the world. Upmark, who found exotic birds and monkeys improper for Skansen, emphasized that Skansen no longer bought any of these but received them as gifts (Upmark 1916: 146). Obviously, Upmark preferred to hold back the heterogeneity of the open-air museum and contributed to Skansen's nationalization.

In September 1905 King Oscar II acknowledged Norway as an independent state. Prince Carl of Denmark ascended the Norwegian throne as Haakon VII in November of the same year. While the dissolution of the union was celebrated in Norway, many Swedish politicians and intellectuals considered it a great loss. The 1th of November 1905 thousands of blue-yellow flags were hoisted on public buildings in Sweden, replacing the earlier union flag. At Skansen the royal family participated in a manifestation aiming at demonstrate the importance of the blue and yellow colors (Nordiska museet 1905). Intentionally or not, this ceremony contributed to that Skansen more than ever before was identified as a national arena. The years to follow the dissolution can be characterized as a period of Swedish-national consolidation. Former Scandinavian co-operations ceased and Nordic festivities were replaced by Swedish patriotic manifestations (Hemstad 2008: 297-393). The efforts to "nationalize" Skansen were a step of rational adaption to the political realities, cultural tendencies and professional preferences after 1905. The Nordic framing of Artur Hazelius' museums was losing terrain. It was easier to "nationalize" Skansen than Nordiska museet, since the latter housed thousands of objects collected from a broad, geographically uncertain Nordic area, including Germany. Also the new museum building was itself reminding of the Scandinavianist legacy, since the Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish and Danish coat of arms were inserted on the façade. However, writing the history of Skansen, Upmark could not totally ignore the original Nordic theme although he rejected its contemporary relevance.

## The new museum and the new exhibitions

The new museum building at Djurgården was designed by Isak Gustaf Clason, a leading Swedish architect who was devoted to the idea of a Nordic renaissance style. The building enclosed a great main hall encircled with galleries resembling the nave of a Gothic cathedral. According to the original but never realized plans, the museum should form a quadrangle, one of them, the now built, would be used for festivities (Mårtelius 1987). The visitor who ascended from the entrance hall confronted a heroic statue of Gustav Vasa, made by Carl Milles. It pictured the aged king, holding in his left hand a sword symbolizing the freedom he had won for the nation. The surrounding galleries of the ground floor contained objects and cottage interiors picturing peasant life of different landscapes of Sweden. Some of the interiors – also called dioramas - had originally been created by Artur Hazelius and helpful donors and were shown in the earlier locations of Nordiska museet. The exhibitions were arranged according to what museum professionals then described as a geographical principle. The objects were ordered and exhibited in different landscape rooms, for example “Skåne”, “Småland” and “Dalarna” (Hillström 2006: 377-380). Some of the museum personnel questioned the relevance of the geographical principle, arguing that it was a proper method of exhibition in a *Völkermuseum*, less convincing in a *Volksmuseum*, aiming to present the common identity of the folk. Since the geographical principle also was prevailing at Skansen, Nordiska museet run the risk of laying too much emphasis on the variations of the Nordic people, disregarding the national and ethnographic unity of “our” people, they argued. Both from the patriotic and the scientific viewpoint, it was more fruitful to accentuate the cultural uniformity of the people. If the collections of peasant objects were not exhibited systematically in informative groups, the “ethnographic” folk culture department of the museum would form a compilation of different province museums, gathered under one roof, they concluded. (Nordiska museet 1902). As a result of this critique displays of peasant objects were set up in rooms located at the basement of the building, illustrating for example “the use of fire”. In these exhibitions local provenience played a subordinated role and the nostalgic atmosphere that overshadowed the landscape interiors was gone. Instead, the visitor could view loads of items, sorted by kind.

The galleries of the first floor were filled with heterogeneous collections: Peasant objects from Finland, Denmark and Norway, musical instruments, toys, a collection of church ritual staves and other church objects, guild items from Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Germany, tapestries, embroideries and jewelry, The gallery of the second floor was split up in small rooms displaying the upper-class collections. The department was arranged in successive periods from 1500 to 1900. The numerous exposed objects were displayed in interiors illustrating the dwellings of burghers and the upper classes and in rooms filled with museum cases. Several of them pictured rooms from royal castles and one of the interiors, the room of Oscar II, was designed by the architect Ferdinand Boberg for the World Fair in Paris in 1900. The different epochs of style were explicitly connected with different dynasties and the room series started illustratively with valuable (but few) objects from the period of Gustav Vasa (Hillström 2006: 377-380). The upper class division corresponded with the Royal Armory and represented an older kind of patriotism, typically articulated in splendid collections of weapons, armour and standards.

In fact, the Swedish Royal Armory was installed in Nordiska museet and placed in the main hall, a process that started in 1904 and ended in 1909 (Hillström 2006: 311-334). The precious

collections of the Royal Armory included, among many things, ceremonial and other weapons, and requisite items for parades, such as richly decorated saddles. In the 1850s the official costumes of Sweden's royals were incorporated into the Royal Armoury and in the end of the 19th century the royal carriages were moved there from the Royal Stables. Among the Royal Armory highlights were (and are) the elk-hide buff coat and the blood-stained shirts worn by Gustav II Adolf at the Battle of Lützen in 1632, Charles XII's dirty uniform from Fredriksten, the costume worn by Gustav III at that historic masked ball in 1792 and - the center of attention - Gustav II Adolf's horse Streiff, stuffed with straw, which he rode at the battle of Lützen (Livrustkammaren 2003).

What is the national narrative told in Nordiska museet after it's reopening in the new building? In the face of the great efforts to nationalize Nordiska museet it was obviously still a museum without distinct geographical borders and the wide heterogeneity of the collections is still characterizing the displays. If one, however, "forgets" the many items at the first floor, there is a national Swedish museum composed of two conceptions of the nation, the older patriotic and representative performance of the aristocracy and royal power, expressed at the top floor and in the great hall, and the newer romantic discourse of the folk, inspired by Hegel, Herder and Schelling, expressed in the galleries of the first floor. The museum was picturing a harmonious estate society. Peculiar is, that the upper-class division was ordered chronologically, showing historical changes. Similar to Skansen, the peasant division was organized without any attention to chronology. The peasants belong to a timeless past, well in tune with the Herderian concept of a metaphysical *folk*. One might draw the conclusion, that the upper-classes were represented as the true exponents of civilization. The idealized, timeless folk of the first floor was mirroring romantic ideals of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, while co-existing ideals of progressive civilization was articulated in the upper-class division. One of the perennial antinomies of the concept of culture is thus illustrated.

### **Nordiska museet and Skansen and the Utopia of "folkhemmet"**

In 1928 Andreas Lindblom (1889-1977) succeeded Gustaf Upmark as director of Nordiska museet and Skansen. Lindblom was, similar to Upmark, an art historian. He directed Skansen and Nordiska museet for 26 years, until 1956. Lindblom came to a museum in crisis. The finances were bad and Skansen was rundown. The question of a separation between Nordiska museet and Skansen was once again debated (Medelius 1998: 313-317). Lindblom started his new museum career with formulating a new plan for Skansen, and in the 1930's a profound transformation took place. This was necessary, argued Lindblom, since Skansen was outdated as a public institution for modern times. Skansen was attractive to rural residents, to nostalgic townspeople with special interest in masquerade and play, and to children, who loved the animals, as he later, and deprecating formulated it. (Lindblom 1954: 29). Lindblom managed to enhance the popularity of Skansen. The courses of action were many and diverse. He found inspiration and legitimacy in looking backwards on the efforts of the founder, Artur Hazelius. Contrary to for example Gösta Berg, who tried hard to retouch the purposes of the founding father, Lindblom did not hesitate to characterize Artur Hazelius as an inventive business man with diffuse principles (Lindblom 1954: 25-62).

1930 was the year of the famous Stockholm Exhibition. The exhibition's slogan was: "Accept!" arguing for acceptance of architectural functionalism, standardization and modernization. It attracted more than four million visitors. At Skansen Lindblom initiated an international exhibition of photography, an exhibition of the drawings of the famous Swedish artist and cartoonist Albert Engström (who in addition made many caricatures of Skansen and Artur Hazelius), a calf elephant was hired from Germany (later replaced by the elephant Lunkentus) and a giant tortoise, that children could ride on, was purchased (Lindblom 1954: 33-35).

In the years to follow Skansen was given a new layout and many of the old buildings were moved within the area. New restaurants were built and the old cottages were complemented with additional houses to form larger farmsteads. Animal enclosures were separated from restaurants and the zoological garden was reconstructed. Old iron cages were replaced by for example a "beer mountain". Many birds, for example the eagles, were set free. The so called Reindeer Hill, associated with elevated patriotic speeches, was removed. The Town Quarters was established. It was intended to consist of old buildings from Stockholm and to represent a Town Quarter of Stockholm. Also Skogaholm Manor was rebuilt at Skansen, and a new entrance was erected. Lindblom's vision was to make Skansen more complete in terms of representation of the Estates. The Peasant and Clergy estates were adequately exhibited, the latter through one church (Seglora) and two belfries (Håsjö and Hällestad), the Nobility and the Burghers less so. The Skogaholm Manor, with principal building, wings and pavilions was reconstructed with the purpose to illustrate the buildings, homes and lives of the nobility in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Town Quarters should illustrate the buildings, homes and lives of the Burghers (Lindblom 1954: 37-73). Lindblom was visibly also following older trajectories when he modernized the public appeal of Skansen. He also, like Hazelius, favored to employ women from Darlecarlia. They both worked and lived at Skansen, some of them for decades (Lindblom 1954: 107-108).

The programme of activities was extended and evening dancing was organized - despite much resistance. The celebration of The Memorial Day of Karl XII ceased at Skansen in 1934, mirroring a weakened attention in Sweden to the king before and during the Second World War as he also functioned as symbol of pan germanism (Zander 274-275). Hero kings and the commemoration of famous battles associated with the Age of Greatness were generally losing ground after the Second World War (Zander 240-341). The celebration of the Memorial Day of Gustav VI Adolf ceased at Skansen in 1946 (Medelius 1998: 329).

The traditional Spring Feast that had attracted many visitors during Hazelius' lifetime came to an end and the many costume parades that had characterized the earlier programme were abandoned. Lindblom introduced instead so called Landscape Days, which attracted large audiences. The idea was that Local History Societies in co-operation with staff at Skansen should organize a festivity with a popular mixing of happenings, music and speeches. The local governor and the bishop were self-evident participants, and ideally a famous person coming from the chosen landscape but living in Stockholm should participate (Lindblom 1954: 37-60). The image of Skansen as a museum of all landscapes was also marked at the new entrance that was now colorfully decorated with landscape banners (Berg 1998: 355).

Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a patriotic, anti-socialist celebration was organized at Skansen on First of May, the International Workers' Day. This feast also disappeared from the programme. Contacts were instead now successfully taken with the labor organizations and the Social Democrat Party. The labor movement had earlier avoided Skansen, as it was associated with political conservatism and old-school non-democratic nationalism, not the least manifested by the anti-socialist First of May Feast. In 1930, a summer festivity for the Social Democrat Party was held at Skansen, indicating the beginning of a new era (Lindblom 1954: 37-60; Medelius 1998: 313-331). The party's choice of Skansen is also mirroring a new political orientation closely connected with Per Albin Hansson, Social Democratic statesman and leader of the party between 1925 and 1946. He formulated his vision of Folkhemmet (the People's Home) in 1928. In short, the programme included reformist, egalitarian, social policy reforms, reforms of unemployment policies and an active role for the state in promoting stability and growth of the economy. The traditional class war rhetoric of the Social Democrat Party was substituted for a vision of a national community marked by solidarity over old class barriers (Hirdman 1979).

Although Skansen in many ways was transformed in the 1930's, the major impression is still, that the past of the nation, as narrated at Skansen, is something that is not marked by time or change. The past is something distant from now; a paradise lost. The story told is not about a past society that is differentiated by social and political inequality; wealth and power for a few and misery and want for the many that is successfully replaced by modern times of democracy and raised standards of living. Contrary, Skansen is not telling a history, rather performing a past which is something like a happy and innocent childhood of modern society. The installation of a worker's home in the The Town Quarters in 1938 made no difference, although it was an important gesture towards the labors movement and the Social Democrat Party and a symbol of the "new" Skansen and its willingness to become a real people's park in the beginning of the *Folkhem* era, a time when the *folk* was invested with new meanings.

During the Second World War Skansen became an arena for national mobilization, large scale patriotic manifestations and military defence exhibitions in close collaboration with the royal family, leading politicians, the Swedish army and many voluntary defence organizations. Although Lindblom characterized Skansen as the native home of all Swedes, the Scandinavianist legacy of the institution was not ignored. Nordic events and exhibitions were set up both at Skansen and Nordiska museet during the war. The institution was obviously not only providing the proper symbolic space for national defence propaganda, but also for manifestations of solidarity with Sweden's Scandinavian neighbours (Bohman 1997; Berg 1998:347-357).

In his memoirs, written in 1954, Lindblom described Nordiska museet as a democratic institution conducting research on the whole of the Swedish society *samhället*, from the court to the old people's home. Skansen similarly now attracted all, both diplomats and workers. While Nordiska museet was a scientific institution, Skansen was a "cashbox" and a "shop window" of Nordiska museet, and a unique "complexio oppositorum" (Lindblom 1954: 214). While Lindblom accepted the heterogeneity and ambiguity of Skansen he initiated transformations of the exhibitions in Nordiska museet with the purpose to make them more in accordance with what was now considered modern principles of ethnology and functionalism. Whereas Landscape Days were introduced at Skansen, the landscape rooms were removed one by one, the last of them, Skåne, in 1955. The so called geographical principle was dismissed and provincial origin

was subordinated to arrangements that intended to show historical developments and the uses of different objects. Themed exhibitions with names such as “Hunt”, “Fishing” and “The Peasants Art of Furniture” replaced older interiors in the Peasant Division (Lindblom 1954: 91-101).

The Upper-Class division was also altered. The old exhibitions ordered in epochs of style were replaced by a themed exhibition named “Food and Drink” (today this exhibition is called “Table Setting”). The aim was to show, according to Lindblom, the complex cultural historical problems connected to food and cooking. Lindblom was, in fact, realizing the earlier proposed *Volksmuseum*, rejecting the older *Völkermuseum* (Lindblom 1954: 91-101).

The older national narrative based on provincial origin and romantic and picturesque illusion of the Peasants was thus exported to Skansen and succeeded by systematic ethnological exhibitions of various functional aspects of society like “eating” and “housing” Now, also the Peasant division was approached with a notion of time and change, suggesting that the people are not many, but one.

Still, the Royal Armory was installed in the main hall. The combination of a cultural history museum for the whole people with the Royal Armory seems to have been without frictions, pointing to an ongoing integration of national symbols.

### **Nordiska museet in the postmodern era**

Both Skansen and Nordiska museet are institutions more than hundred years old. Since 1963 they are separated in two independent organizations. The Annual Report of Nordiska museet from 2010 tells that the museum is a national museum of cultural history. Its collections mirror the cultural history of *Sweden* from the 14<sup>th</sup> century until present. The collection contains about one and a half million of objects (most of them stored in magazines with restricted access). The foundation Nordiska museet is the owner of in sum 460 buildings, among them Tyresö Castle; The Julita Manor (including Sweden’s Museum of Agriculture, that holds gene banks for apples, pears and rhubarbs) and the Rococo-style Country Residence of Svindersvik. In 2010 the number of visitors to the museum was 229 813 (Nordiska museet 2010).

According to the Annual Report the museum is devoted to activities of cultural history in a national perspective. The motto set by Artur Hazelius, “Know thyself” expresses the purpose of the museum, to increase knowledge about our age to make it possible to actively meet the future. The post-modern impossibility of a conventional national rhetoric is evident in the present goal of the museum to be a museum for all people, regardless of age, gender, cultural background and national descent. Also evident is that the Swedishness of the museum is underlined. The fact that the collections incorporate objects from different Scandinavian countries, for example Denmark, is not mentioned. Only a few years ago the Norwegian and Icelandic collections were deposited in Norsk Folkemuseum and the National Museum of Iceland, a step towards the national homogenization of the collections. Noteworthy is that the former director of Nordiska museet, Lars Löfgren, as late as 1998 wrote the following:

Hazelius saw the Nordic countries as a cultural entity. Our museum has collections from the whole Nordic region and also from Estonia, unique because they were collected so early on. By linking up once more with the countries of the Baltic we wish to change and renew the image of a common Nordic culture (Löfgren 1998: 492).

A major tendency today is the gradual transformation of Nordiska museet into a national museum of fashion. In the beginning of the new millennium neither the national narrative of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, nor the utopia of *folkhemmet* are providing useful foundations for museum identity and mission. A post-modern form of nationalism is not articulating the cultural or the political Swedishness but is rather marketing Sweden as a brand in the commercial venues of the expansive experience society.

### **Skansen – “enjoyed by all and accessible to everyone”**

According to the document “Vision, mission and strategic objectives: Agreed by the Skansen Board on 19th February 2008 “ the mission of Skansen is to provide “insights into Sweden’s heritage and natural history relative to the present day and with an eye on the future” (Skansen 2008). The focus is on the visitors, which means that Skansen will “develop its position as a major attraction for a large and diverse public of all ages and from all nations”. Skansen should further “bring the past to life and “emphasize ethno-biological connections” (Skansen 2008). In addition, the historical settings shall be designed with the help of well-documented knowledge. In 2010, the number of visitors to Skansen was 1 285 122. Skansen is dependent on the incomes of the entrance fees, sale within the area, and the turnover of the tenants. The state subsidy is covering 39% of the costs (for Nordiska museet 70%) (Skansen 2010). When Artur Hazelius opened Skansen as an open-air department of Nordiska museet, one force was lack of money. Not many visited Nordiska museet; Skansen however attracted much larger audiences. For a long time Nordiska museet was financed by the income of Skansen, this regime prevailed until the separation of the institutions in 1963.

Today, Skansen is a major tourist attraction in Stockholm and a popular destination for families with small children. The explicit focus is on the visitor, so challenging for museum professionals in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is today a matter of course, a guarantee for further development and success. Skansen then and now is dependent on its visitors and their appreciation. In a time when “experiences” is a buzz word for museums, Skansen shows strong capacity to survive. Skansen was installed as a special genre of amusement park, and continues this tradition with even less hindrance from professional museological doctrines than before. Although still proclaimed to be a Sweden in miniature, the nationalist rhetoric is adjusted to post-modern times. For example this year (2011) the internet commercial for the traditional Midsummer festivities is illustrated by a photograph picturing a dark skinned woman dressed in a traditional Swedish folk costume signaling that traditional festivities at Skansen are for all people, regardless of ethnicity. The national narrative told at Skansen is in many ways still the same as hundred years ago; however, the meanings invested in the narrative are different. Skansen is not making Swedes in the old nationalistic sense. Now Skansen is telling that Sweden embraces every inhabitant of the country. All are welcome in the arms of the loving Skansen. This new Utopia of Skansen is ambiguously combining old nationalistic symbols with post-modern rhetorics and practices of integration, plurality and hybridization. For tourists, Skansen can offer both the “new” and the “old” Sweden. Harmony is still the hallmark.

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