National narratives are crucial to the construction of legitimate citizenship: who belongs to what community, what qualifies inclusion and exclusion, what virtues are celebrated and what vices are refuted? These questions do not have arbitrary answers, but instead are connected to rather stable ideas of states and nation, and are continuously changing alongside the emergence of new ideals and new territorial boundaries.

The new ideas, which restructured earlier sets of feudal relationships at the turns of 18th and 19th centuries, show a remarkable resemblance, at least superficially, to those appearing in many parts of the world where social and political conditions might instead imply a greater variety of ideals. Cultural transfer and the creation of narratives of uniqueness appear hand in hand.

The idea of citizenship itself might be seen as an infusion of aristocratic ideas of individual rights into a bourgeois setting, a Bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit, developing an independent sphere of equality, freedom of speech, tolerance, and mutual respect. But at the same time as rapid change and turmoil, historical vision imagery was transformed from an earlier construction of a glorious past with Biblical and classical references into a national history where the persistence of an independent peasant culture that supposedly thrived before the development of a stratified society and the state created a decisive starting point. This is true for 19th century cultural Swedish heroes such as E.G. Geijer and E. Tegnér – but also for Karl Marx. This is the case for Sweden, which had a large number of historical free-owning peasantry within 18th and 19th C societies, but also for Denmark, which had just created a class of that standard, and for Iceland, which was more dominated by fishing than by toiling the soil, and finally for Romania. A similar idea of a pre-state condition of equality, freedom, and happiness unites the narratives of the Bible, Das Kapital, and the bourgeois elites trying to secure their understanding of citizenship and territorial sovereignty in the 19th century.1

1 Patterns of national historiographies have been mapped by Berger, Stefan, "National Historiographies in Transnational Perspective: Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries", Storia della Storiografia, no. 50 (2006), p. 3-26.
The timing and more precise connotations of bringing the peasantry into the narrative of the national-state – and possibly out of it – as manifested at national museums in the Nordic countries are the focus of this essay. Furthermore the relationship between representation in other public forms, for instance regional museums, will be discussed to establish the point when and how the peasant was moved into the centre of national narrative in national museums of archaeology and ethnology, and open-air and art museums. What values of relevance to the construction of political community and citizenship are communicated through the representation of peasantry in the public sphere, specifically within the contemporary displays of national museums? The text’s ambition is to present the need for and challenge of a full investigation of the subject, rather than fully exhausting it.

Ideas of citizenship

In the early modern state, the main issue was rather how to make people accept the inclusion demanded by the rulers to adhere to the right religion and law, and the king’s right to levy taxes and soldiers and to deliver war power. Examples of the territorial ambivalence are manifold during the Middle Ages, not only in the politics of the aristocracy but also within the decisions made by the organized peasantry to participate on the side of one particular group rather than another – or to stay at home to ”defend their own country”, meaning the old provincial district, not the territory of the state. But we can also find more positive demands for the right of political participation, rule of law, and a direct relationship with the state/the king. In the 17th century this is articulated in terms of national identity similarly to the “working class of pastoral England”: fri odalbonde, a freeholder, is an even more demanding identity than the equivalent ”free-born Englishman” because it not only implies secured property rights and protection under the law, but also implies direct political participation in the forth Estate of the Diet, based on the argument of custom existing from time immemorial.2

It is by now well known that the late 18th century is the point at which the ideology of nationalism charges citizenship with its more wide-ranging aspects of cultural, moral, and historical heritage and closes the scope of economics, culture, and education within the national borders with a high degree of ideological legitimacy. The issue of exclusion became, according to the minor research field that deals with the development of historical citizenship in Sweden and Scandinavia, ideologically demanding for ordinary people

due to the development of a mobilizing nationalism in the 19th century, and economically demanding due to the emergence of the modern welfare state in the 20th century. Between these came military conscription, individual income tax, and universal suffrage.³

It is possible that the early implementation of military tenure (indelningsverket) and the subsequent successful mobilization of an army loyal to the king, which reinforced a direct link between the king and the peasantry, helped to pave the way for a complex framework for the formalized power of the fourth estate. In the 18th century, the fourth estate gradually became more and more a “pure” estate of freeholding farmers. An overall broad participatory political culture with strong judicial rights, local participation in parish life and regional courts, and the use of negotiation rather than violence for governance was developed at an earlier stage in Sweden than in countries with mercenary armies.⁴

The groups discerned by contemporary discourse as “the people”, notably the virtuous middle class, were in most countries identified with the bourgeoisie, but in Sweden the alternative of including the peasants, or rather the freeholder, was articulated successfully even among the intellectuals and in the pre-revolutionary parliament. The concepts used for drawing the line between “virtuous” and “dangerous” people could vary. Perhaps a continuum could be drawn from the American case, which not only lacked an aristocracy, but also a peasantry (understood as an uneducated manual labouring mob), leading to the Swedish/Nordic inclusive concept, which first incorporated not only the small farmers into the people, but also, and quite readily, the workers, which was formalized through political alliances during the 1930s. On the other extreme of the continuum, one can place Germany with its more exclusive concept of Volk, making for an entirely different political

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agenda. The role of peasant varied depending on the claims made on citizenship in these different political cultures.

In the Swedish 19th century debates on (communal) citizenship, an interesting array of arguments was brought forward. Behind the prevailing arguments for a census and graded votes based on property was either a meritocratic idea that the wealthier were among the best in virtue of their success, or the old-fashioned opinion of an inherent connection between wealth, better birth, and virtue. A more communal view was expressed by the argument of participation according to the dues and duties performed. This principle was also conversant with the commercial model of an incorporated company. Everyone who contributed to the execution of the decisions should in this line of argument have a say – perhaps in accordance to the size of the work or money placed into the common effort. In this argument it is not property itself, but rather the ability and duty to contribute that rationalizes the privilege of citizenship. Thus, the argument for property could be developed or resonate in different discourses on the basis of participation: merit, virtue, competence, stability, or the association of taxpayers (a society or company).

There is often a broadening of the argument by the national project in both a democratic and moral dimension. In order to educate the lower classes, they have to be given a place where knowledge and responsibility could become rooted, and prepare them for national integration. This is thus the same argument for citizenship as on a national level.

As hinted at earlier, property as a basis for influence should not only be connected to the market principle where its influence is most clear-cut. Under the old regime, property was also an important basis for granting rights or access to important resources. But affluence was also regarded as a necessary sign of power and virtue, or at least as a necessary independence to provide the personality principle with some credibility. Property was clearly connected to action within the “political sphere”, above all government. The long prevailing restrictions on voting rights for people with public debts or in need of public help could be interpreted as a residual of an old concept of virtue-property. Thus property could be used for personal as well as contributory arguments for participation, as independence was a prerequisite for citizenship.

Opposed to this principle is the universalistic idea that each person has an equal value which should also have a political side to it; citizenship as a natural right. This view has its roots not only in the Enlightenment and the

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5 Hallberg, Peter, Ages of liberty. social upheaval, history writing, and the new public sphere in Sweden, 1740-1792 (Stockholm 2003); Stråth, Bo and Sørensen, Øystein (eds.), The cultural construction of Norden (Oslo 1997).
6 See Aronsson, Peter, "Local Politics. The Invisible Political Culture", in Stråth and Sørensen (eds.), The cultural construction, p. 315 and p. 172-205 for a full argument and references.
7 Such restrictions on voting rights existed until the Second World War.
American and French revolutions, but is also part of a latent message within Christianity and the idea of the parish as a (religious) community as those who belong together and those who take their refuge in the same church (this is the etymology of the Swedish word “socken”, parish). The most consequent argument for a radical representation reform with a low census and equal voting rights was rooted in the peasant estate, not in the bourgeoisie, where the property dimension often was favoured. However, this is not to be seen as a breakthrough for liberal ideology, but as an instrumental view that in order to change the tax-system and get rid of privileges, one had to broaden and equalize the concept of franchise. But as part of a political culture, the politics can be traced back to a traditional contributory mentality with clear communitarian or communalist roots.

If we regard this complexity of political visions of peasant political participation as working ideas in the building of society, are there any links between this reality and the national explication of the role of peasants in national history and national museums?

Historical narrative and the peasantry

The idea of specific nations and states has, in Northern Europe, interacted with the idea of a common Scandinavian culture. In classical writing from Tacitus Germania onwards, there is a layer of description which recognized Nordic peoples both as part of a shared culture and as divided into tribes/nations. This dynamic between a Scandinavian cultural community and the changing borders of national states and their history has been very productive in politics, museums, and academic disciplines until today, for better or for worse. Images of Norden (“the North”) are laden with unspoiled nature, simplicity, social egalitarianism, protestant ethics, and democratic culture with ancient roots. These images create space for a certain flexibility and integration within the Nordic sphere. It has, however, also been used for racist endeavours, and might be less useful as an integrative tool for more global challenges.8

Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and Iceland are today often regarded as belonging to the exclusive group of nation states that actually lived up to the idea of one people, one country, and one state. This statement was continuously repeated in the 19th century political program of Scandinavism that was supposed to counterbalance the expanding powers of Russia and Germany.

8 A more comprehensive and comparative analysis of the development of the idea of a Nordic Culture and its representations in the developing infrastructure of national museums is presented in a forthcoming work by Peter Aronsson in 2008.
The path each nation-state took in the modernization process and the relationship between nation and state are two of the major conditions framing the context for cultural policy and its conflicts and utopias that museums were to fulfil. These vary within the Nordic countries, more so in the early 19th than the early 21st century.

Henrik Stenius has suggested that the common Nordic culture which stresses uniformity and unity has its roots in a common protestant culture. Not even in Norway, where Protestantism was forcibly introduced by Denmark, was any distance to this part of colonial heritage marked. Instead, Protestantism has been written into every national narrative as part of manifest destiny, beneficial in the long run and producing values like freedom of belief, democracy, and equality: As a bulwark against the East and Catholic Europe in Finland and Sweden, and as closely related to the national mentality in Denmark, with NSF Grundtvig’s connection of religion, reform and nationalism as remarkably influential over time. Others have further stressed the importance of the above-mentioned Gothicist and Germanic ideas of ancient tribal and Biblical descent in creating ideas of national belonging.9

Stenius argues furthermore that the differences in political culture that can be discerned are due to different relations between (civil) society and the state. In Sweden a strong civil society invades the state and creates a corporative unity. In Norway local mobilization holds its legitimacy by being the centre of politics, in Finland a strong state is the tool for unifying society, and in Denmark a dual norm system leaves the state alone and creates a civil society of complexity and independence not seen in the other Nordic countries.

The differences in the relationship between state and society became decisive, since they determined how the idea of the people, Folk, as an embodiment of the nation could possibly develop. All of these variations shared and were inspired by German thought (Hegel, Herder, Schelling) which influenced progressive historical writing in the mid-19th century, and were also influenced by people as the foundation of new disciplines and museums for documentation, preservation, and display of the nation. Typically, the history books changed their titles from addressing the state and realm (rike) to deal with the people and the nation. For example “Svenska folkets historia” (The Swedish People’s History, by E.G. Geijer 1832-36) and “Det norske folks historie” (The Norwegian People’s History, by P.A. Munch 1852-63) show the nation and people becoming the new object of history rather than a purely political state body.10

9 Stenius, in Stråth and Sørensen (eds.), The cultural construction.
10 Text on Scandinavian historiography from a joint article by Aronsson, Peter; Fulsås, Narve, Haapala, Pertti; Jensen, Bernard Eric, "Scandinavia and Finland", an article in a forthcoming volume to be published by Palgrave MacMillian with working title Society and the Nation: Ethnicity, Class, Religion and Gender.
To Geijer, the concept of people, and for that matter the concept of society, is readily associated with the history of the kings. According to Geijer, a nation state is constituted by the oath and trust between the common people (allmoge) and the kings. The aristocrats are more of the villains here, threatening the unity of the nation and the bonds between king and people. The myth has some foundation in reality, since the Swedish state system (including Finland) has the peculiarity of allowing formal participation for the peasantry, the dominant group of freeholders, both in the position as one of four estates in the parliament, formalized in the 17th century, and in practical participation in both judicial matters and direct proto-democratic participation in the parish administration, including poor relief and schooling. This meant that the border between state and society was constructed differently. The "public sector" in Sweden could and can mean state, municipal, and collective responsibility. Only in the late 1980's was the term society introduced in a more independent, common European manner, reinforced by the discourse of civil society, but without leaving distinctive marks on the conception of community so far.

Different states, similar narratives

Considering the differences of the state-making paths of the Nordic countries, one might be surprised by the similarities of the structure of the modern national narratives. In fact, some traits seem more to be part of a genre of "narrating the nation": the early arrival of the nation, its proto-democratic structure, threats and evil coming from outside, a period of trouble, and then the rise of the good society: democracy, liberal economy, and eventually gender equality. If the egalitarian "thing society" and the Vikings provide a common starting point for the foundation of medieval states, the Nordic welfare state provides the culmination, where the intermediate struggle of endless Scandinavian wars are at the bottom of the U shaped narrative – for the modern politically correct interpretation at least. The two strong ideas of common heritage communicated violence, power, and a deep democratic tradition originating in pre-historic society. It is differently interpreted in each nation as part of the national heritage moulded by the Scandinavian culture, and frequently reaches back to Tacitus’ image of the strong, healthy Germanic people not yet degenerated by high culture. This image has been popular in other countries such as England and Germany. Kaiser Wilhelm II

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donated a Viking statue of mythical Frithiof to be installed in Norwegian Vagnsnes in 1913, to symbolize the strong bonds over the sea between the Germanic people.  

In all of the Nordic countries, the reconstruction of Viking sites is manifold, and this pre-state Scandinavian culture negotiates distinct national images of the typical Viking. In Norway, the Vikings are high-sea adventurers, setting the scene for later heroes like Fritiof Nansen. The Viking museum on Bygdøy is situated between the Folkemuseum and the modern maritime museum. In Sweden he (usually the Viking is a he) is less adventurous and more industrious, very much as a craftsman and tradesmen of the late but rapidly industrialized and neutral Sweden. In Denmark, to no great surprise, the Viking became, with the help of Erik Arup’s powerful synthesis of Danish history “from below”, a farmer who made Denmark what it is by toiling the land and breeding the livestock. Even Finland invented the Finnish Viking in its nation-building process to take advantage of the shared Scandinavian heritage, when the young nation created a suitably prolonged past in order to legitimize the state-making process as a renaissance rather then an innovation.

The Viking burial ships from Norway and Denmark provide aesthetic objects signalling craft skills and bravery. Places with dubious and ambivalent Nordic heritage are to be found in a territory ranging from Russia in the east to England, France, and Ireland in the west, and they are subject to a very diversified use, all with Nordic resonance, but never with the Nordic as a sole reference. They combine existential, local, regional, and national implications into the very foundational myth of the Nordic that began to take shape in the 17th century and still is very much alive.

This narrative figure will not be developed further here but is a very good example of how the idea of a common Nordic heritage plays a role, and that the idea of a strong democratic and egalitarian society provides 19th century democratization with an ambivalent imaginary.

Kings and dynasties dominate historiography until the early 19th century, but there are early works on Nordic culture, e.g Olaus Magnus in the 16th Century, which represent peasant culture as exotic, unique, and defining. It

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13 Arup, Erik, Danmarks historie, Bd. I-II. (København 1925-1932); Svenstrup, Thyge, Arup. En biografi om den radikale historiker Erik Arup, hans tid og miljø (København 2006).
14 Fewster, Derek, Visions of past glory. Nationalism and the construction of early Finnish history (Helsinki 2006); Petersson, Bodil, Föreställningar om det förflutna. Arkeologi och rekonstruktion (Lund 2003); Wallette, Anna, Sagans svenskar: synen på vikingatiden och de isländska sagorna under 300 år (Malmö 2004).
15 In Scotland, the Nordic heritage was connected to the more advanced Lowland culture supposed by the elite to be not only distinct from the English, but well above the more savage and Highland Celts. Presentation by Andrew Newby and Linda Andersson Burnett at the European Social Science History Conference in Lisbon 2008.
is, however, with the discovery of popular culture in post-revolutionary Europe that peasant culture became the defining base on which nations are built and states erected. At this time, the pre-historic and non-political character was decisive for its function as a shared foundation.

The necessity to deal with inner and outer borders manifests itself in suggested interpretations of the origins of the people.\textsuperscript{16} In pre-democratic Finland, Finnishness was most successfully constructed by emphasising political-territorial unity rather than linguistic community – otherwise the culturally, politically, and economically important Swedish-speaking group would have been left outside the construction. This hard-line Fennoman argument became gradually more feasible through democratization and the emergence of a Finnish-speaking elite in the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century. In Finland the idea of migration, based on the observation of a very different Finno-Ugric language, was for a long time the predominant explanation of difference, and was vital in producing otherness in relation to its long Swedish past and its long standing inner minority of Swedish-speaking Finns. However, this now seems to have been refuted based on genetic evidence. In Norway a similar interpretation, and even harder to defend, was maintained in the first half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} century. The Norse tribe was then the only true Nordic survivor, while Danes and Swedes instead came from German tribes.

Similar complexities for the construction of the people, the Folk/Volk, along Herderian lines were present in the whole of Scandinavia. The Sami people and the Innuites were not really a problem during this epoch, since they played the role of the “radical other” and their different language and culture were rather seen as an asset than the opposite. Suddenly, in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century, they became important in the territorial claims of the states as inhabitants of otherwise empty territories.\textsuperscript{17} Norway had a similar situation to Finland regarding state-making and language, but it was even more ambiguous, since the ruling classes spoke Danish and the Norwegian reception of this as a written language was that it was too similar to satisfy high demands for uniqueness. Even when a new variant of the Norwegian language was retrieved, allegedly recreated through pre-Danish dialects by Ivar Aasen in the mid 19\textsuperscript{th} century, it was in fact a new construct. In Denmark a mixed language in the south of Jutland, Schlesvig Holstein, provided one of the motifs for conflict with Germany which was solved by both war in 1864 and referendum in 1920. Here language differences were less ambiguous but were used to emphasize distinctiveness to a powerful enemy that threatened

\textsuperscript{16} The historiographic treatment of difference is one of the comparative issues in the project \textit{Representations of the Past: The Writing of National Histories in Europe (NHIST)} and treated comprehensively in a joint article by Aronsson, Fulsås, Haapala and Jensen in “Nordic National Histories”, in a forthcoming anthology on Macmillan Palgrave.

\textsuperscript{17} Lundström, Inga (ed.), \textit{Historisk rätt? Kultur, politik och juridik i norr} (Stockholm 2007); Wallerström, Thomas, \textit{Vilka var först? En nordskandinavisk konflikt som historisk-arkeologiskt dilemma} (Stockholm 2006).
the existence of a sovereign state until the end of the Second World War. For some opponents of the European Union, there is a long line of threats to be aware of even today. This was especially true of the Norwegian opinion, where “union” came to signify Danish, Swedish, and German occupation and a threat to freedom.18

Peasants in public culture

The territorial link between Folk and Nation has been an even more persuasive link, even if it lacks strong narratives, heroes, and villains. If accepted, it provides a rock solid identification that can be put to work in poetry, painting, and tourism. It can also be linked to the historical narrative by archaeology. Hence, art museums with their national schools of art, landscape painting, and museums of antiquity and archaeology all play into the natural and timeless voice of the national choir.

These voices are articulated in all of the Nordic countries, but perhaps most so in Norway, where the language issue was a bit more ambiguous. Ernst Sars, one of the founding fathers of the vision of Norwegian history as an unbroken chain from the Viking era to the state-in-making in the end of the 19th century, stressed this when utilizing a Scandinavian comparative approach. It was done in order to stress differences rather than similarities, and among the unquestionable differences were those of landscape.19

This line of reasoning was part and parcel of a widespread grid of interpretation, where observations of similar artefacts along with language constituted cultural groups. Changes over time and spatial differences were interpreted as people moving, conquering, and settling as new rulers. Remaining differences within a given region were then reminders of earlier peoples inhabiting the realm who lost out in the historical chain of evolving cultures.20 More complex images of cultural transfer and hybrid cultures are today more com il faut among academics, but they lack the visuality and force of a map with borders – so the images prevail in the popular imagination as well as in the many public representations of colonization and early beginnings. The iconic image of this is the Scandinavian map of the Ice Age. The ice withdrew, leaving its marks in the landscape, upon which all schoolchildren are trained to observe north-south marks left on rocks and ridges by

19 Fulsås, Narve, Historie og nasjon: Ernst Sars og striden om norsk Kultur (Oslo 1999).
20 Trigger, Bruce G, A history of archaeological thought (Cambridge1989); Svanberg, Fredrik, Decolonizing the Viking Age 1 (Stockholm 2003) and Svanberg, Fredrik, Decolonizing the Viking Age 2 (Stockholm 2003).
melting water and gravel. Under the Ice lies the map of the modern Scandinavian states along with some of the major cities, creating the illusion of Hegelian history pointing directly from the Ice Age, then early settlers, then contemporary politics, all as part of natural history rather than a contingency.

The questions of racist elements in the Nordic countries are of course relevant. Sweden has the dubious honour of leading the development of the racial ideas, so common in the 19th century, both scholarly and institutionally. The Institute for Racial Research in Uppsala was founded in 1921. The thoughts were applied to all kinds of differences. Of course a main line was drawn between the primitive cultures and the advanced. Even Ernst Sars, who opposed the racial argument as a means of distinction between European civilizations, did apply them to the Samis, as a people without history. This placed them outside historical narrative. Representation of them in museums was for the most part to take place within the natural history department, which has been the rule for most indigenous people up until the last decades.

But racist ideas were not only put to play against the radical other. Social and regional differences could also be attributed and connected to evolutionist history. Hence various models connected C.J. Thomsen’s tripartite prehistory to invasions of cultures/races. As late as during the Second World War, this idea was used to map regional variation of the Nordic race, where the long-heads marked the dominance of the latest invasion of a Nordic ruling class, pressing earlier and lower races into the periphery. The famous ethnologist Gunnar Olof Hyltén-Cavallius connected these ideas with ethnology and folklore: the trolls were a popular recollection of stone-age people, and the giants reflected the Bronze Age in the tales of later successors.21 The collection of folktales, the documentation of supposedly ancient customs, and artefacts became all a widespread activities first in a small circle of intellectuals like The Götiska förbundet (“The Gothic Association”) and soon among a more wide-spread strata of convinced intellectuals who looked for new narratives and sentiments to encourage a new community to emerge out of the withering dynastic order of feudal society.22

The teleology of all of the Nordic narratives started with a communal peasant society, much as in Marxist schematic development. The common enemies of the natural goal of a unified and peaceful territorial state of contemporary territorial extension were the universal Roman Catholic Church and the class interests of the nobility. Even absolutism under monarchical rule was viewed as something good, as a necessary step on the way to order

and unification. Still, the nobility was not seen as a part of the folk, while the clergy became so through Protestantism.

In museum representation we might see a less conflicting view, since it should in theory be an objective representation of a legitimate community. Negotiations have to be made outside the scenes. In cultural historical museum, already during the early establishment of the Hazelius collection, material cultures from all four estates were represented as parts of a non-conflicting whole, representing a recent stable past which was disappearing, and thus was in need of moral and scientific rescue missions. It was represented as a losing form of life untouched by modernity and in need of honouring rituals so that the values of piety, contendedness, simplicity, strength, and stability could be transferred to further generations. Certain regions were identified as more prone to represent this culture well, and hence were especially valuable to rescue: Dalecarlia, Telemark, Carelia. Expeditions were sent out to the regions to collect items for representation in the capitals.

As an example, the actual power of farmers in contemporary Sweden was quite strong after the parliamentary reform in the 1860s, and through the agricultural revolution, to the distress of many traditional elites. The inherent drive to romanticize the ancient peasantry was therefore hampered in the state-oriented institutions like the National museum. However, a more romantic and national view could be made attractive to both bourgeoisie and socially-advancing modern farmers alike in other parts of the public sphere. These included both the regional historical associations and regional museum movements (mirroring the national institution but with a more public (allmoge) touch and tendency in its presentations), and the-ever-more successful establishment founded by Artur Hazelius. We can leave the early developments out, just noting that the starting point is when a collection of items from Dalecarlia, which became a treasured part of a rather haphazard collections within the Scandinavian Ethnographic Collections, Skansen and The Nordic Museum, opened in 1873, 1891, and 1907 respectively. In the 19th century this national structure was supplemented by a network of local history museums in nearly every parish, often built around the musealization of one or more peasant homesteads of an archaic design. The local and national representation thus came to coalesce in representing the most valuable past as a traditional peasant life-style.  

Dalecarlia was considered both an province of surviving ancient peasant traditions and the place of the birth of the nation, narrated as the mobilization of the peasantry by Gustavus Vasa and the resistance to the Danish hegemony disguised as Union of Kalmar (1389-1523). The province was musealized and filled with monuments already from the mid-18th century.

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23 Björkroth, Maria, Hembygd i samtid och framtid 1890-1930. En museologisk studie av att bevara och förnya (Umeå 2000); Arcadius, Kerstin, Museum på svenska: länsmuseerna och kulturhistorien (Stockholm 1997).
This connection points to a very important theme in the narrative, with a strong and natural liaison between the monarch and ordinary people, the allmoge (wider than the peasantry, with an archaic touch to it\textsuperscript{24}) against the blood-sucking aristocracy and middle-men of the bureaucracy.\textsuperscript{25}

Professional historiography developed differently in the Scandinavian countries, leaving room for different dynamics between historians, politics, and museums. In Sweden and Denmark the historical profession became directed towards political state-making in both conservative and liberal camps, while there was more room for cultural dimensions as a part of real history in Norway and Finland. The historical museum became strongly oriented towards the scientific ordering of the findings. This made the ground open for popular history and private museum founding became especially vital and the state less active than one might imagine, due to different reasons. In the declining empire the drive was to overcome the losses of territory and “honour” during both the early 19\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} century and to win back the glory within the present borders. In the new states the cultural process was negotiating an external state while simultaneously explicating national pride.

August Strindberg belonged to the prominent critics of historians and archaeologists and their obsession with detail. The strong support for Artur Hazelius’ private enterprise (one which was followed by a multitude of people who created local, regional, and national links in many places) developed in the public sphere into a peculiar museum foundation that has enjoyed state grants up to the present. In Denmark, father and son Carlsberg emerged as the patrons of national museums of a more traditional kind, but here the absolutist state was more rapid and resolute in the creation and converting of its royal assets to national museums than in Sweden. The parliamentary situation in Sweden made it necessary to convince the peasant estate of the need for museums, and as peasants saw no representation of themselves in the public collections in the early 19\textsuperscript{th} century, their representatives fiercely contested such establishments as long as they could.\textsuperscript{26}

In most Nordic countries historians held their grip on the audiences and their influence on the state for a longer period then in Sweden, at least up until the Second World War. The outcome of the secession of Norway and the civil war in Finland secured a more straightforward national interpretation of the dominant culture, but with a different political colour. In Norway, nationalism had a liberal flavour, since the unionists had been conservative, while in Finland the conservative white side was victorious in the civil war.

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\textsuperscript{24} Liljewall, Britt, Bondevardag och samhällsförändring: studier i och kring västsvenska bondedagböcker från 1800-talet (Göteborg 1995).
\textsuperscript{25} Fryxell, Anders, Om aristokrat-fördömandet i svenska historien jemte granskning av tvenne blad i prof. Geijers tvenne föreläsningar (Stockholm 1845).
\textsuperscript{26} Dissertation project on the process of establishing a Swedish National museum by Per Widén, Gothenburg http://www2.iisg.nl/esshc/programme.asp?selyear=8&pap=4498.
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of 1918, and the democratic reforms reduced the influence of the Swedish minority to its numerical size. A conservative Fennoman version of history entered the mainstream culture, but a strong and institutionalized minority culture produced an important national minority within the Finnish state.

Creating a national museum in Sweden was one of the major state efforts to place the nation on display in the second half of 19th century. Denmark achieved that earlier than Sweden, trigged by the Napoleonic wars and the power of the absolute monarchy. Finland began later, but did so even more comprehensively at the end of the century. Norway was similarly hampered by a union liaison, and fostered its collection within civil society or at the universities.

What significance does the representation of the peasants have for the construction of national identity and the place for common people/peasants in its community, i.e. the anatomy of citizenship? When is a peasantry identified and displayed as part of a national narrative? How is it characterized? What is the role of the peasantry in the narrative told? Sweden will here be used as the main case for some exemplary considerations and outlooks.

Swedish national museums
The early historical collections of archaeological findings dated back to the investigations made by the Collegium of Antiquities in the mid-17th century and followed the rather varied institutional shifts through the centuries. The collections were kept at the royal castle and at aristocratic palaces in Stockholm.27

The pre-historic collection was to be organized according to the new scientific tripartite principle: Stone, Bronze, and Iron Age introduced already after 1826 for the archeological findings, directly inspired by Copenhagen and Thomsen, when the collections for the first time sporadically became accessible to the public on request. But the whole collection also contained coins, documents, and royal memorabilia. Popular artefacts (peasants, Samis) were only there as either pre-historical archaeological findings or on aesthetical/ethnographical grounds as excellent handicrafts. Coins and medals took most of the space, even in 1847, when the collection for the first time opened to the public, explicitly aiming at the foundation of a national historical museum.28 It was, however, still labelled the Royal Antiquity and History Museum (Kongl. Antikvariska och Historiska Museum). In 1855, the name State History Museum (Statens historiska museum) was used for the

27 The overview is from Thordeman, Bengt, "Lokalfrågor och inredningsproblem", in Ad patriam illustrandam: hyllningsskrift till Sigurd Curman 30 april 1946 (Uppsala 1946).
first time, and from 1870 presented its particulars under the main heading of National Museum.\textsuperscript{29}

The National Museum opened in its own building in 1866 after being fiercely contested by the peasant estate. Out-manoeuvred in 1846 and seeing tax money go to this extravagancy in the capital, the peasants became less loyal to the old parliament and more prone to see the advances of a modern two-chamber constitution, eventually put in place the same year the museum opened.\textsuperscript{30}

The bottom floor was dedicated to the mixed academic and royal collection. In the new building there was much more space, but the principal division and emphasis was similar. No notice was yet given to chronology within the pre-historical exhibit, i.e. the Mesolithic revolution was not clearly established.\textsuperscript{31} The royal/national was emphasized by the S:t George monument, moved from the Stockholm Cathedral (\textit{Storkyrkan}), signifying victory over the Danes in the Middle Ages, with royal heroic memorabilia and coins taking most of the space. Hans Hildebrand, in taking over from his father, Bror Emil in 1879, wanted to create a proper National Historical Museum of the antiquarian collections. Hildebrand however did agree to dispose of some objects from the modern era (executed to the full extent in 1915), and handed the peasant collection explicitly to Artur Hazelius’ successful Nordic Museum. The fact that Hildebrand fully embraced the Royal Armoury (\textit{Livrustkammaren}) collection of royal memorabilia from the modern historical epoch but was ready to let artefacts of peasant culture go, was due to a combination of the success of Hazelius and a vision of “history” where the (modern) peasantry did not have any prominent role and deviated radically in its cultural expressions from the higher and more important ranks of society. Even for a dedicated cultural historian soon to be outplayed by his even more politically-oriented colleagues, the peasant culture was the least valuable part of cultural history. In 1897, Hildebrand’s colleague Oscar Montelius attempted another solution and argued for a physical merger of the two as separate institutions within the planned square together with the present Nordic Museum building, to create a proper National Museum, even more outstanding then in other countries.\textsuperscript{32} The argument illustrates conflicting ideas about the place of the peasantry in cultural and political history, and by implication, in contemporary society.

\textsuperscript{29} Nerman, Birger, ”Statens historiska museum: samlingar och verksamhet”, in \textit{Ad patriam illustrandum: hyllningsskrift till Sigurd Curman 30 april 1946} (Uppsala 1946), p. 186-187.
\textsuperscript{31} Nerman, ”Statens”, p. 188-189.
\textsuperscript{32} Nerman, ”Statens”, p. 190. Hildebrand’s programme for the museum was presented in Swedish Antiquarian Journal (\textit{Antikvarisk tidskrift för Sverige}) 1881: 6, p. 1-62. Available at http://runeberg.org/antiquid/. See also chapter 8 in Hillström, Magdalena, \textit{Ansvaret för kulturarvet. Studier i det kulturb appointed museumets formering med särskild inriktning på Nordiska museets etablering 1872-1919} (Linköping 2006).
The displays within the museums were object-oriented and were not primarily represented in a social context. The second principle for organization was, however, territorial and regional, which were recognized as pre-state organizational units. Even if it was object-oriented and emphasized the spread of forms, the regional context represented a pre-state community. A major division later became the Neolithic revolution, turning hunters and collectors into peasants, and nomads into villagers. But in the exhibit itself, no notice was given to chronology within, i.e. the Mesolithic revolution.33

When studying Montelius’ printed guide (1872) to the museum, one gets a somewhat deeper and modified view of the narrative presented.34 The royal antecedent from 1666 is noted, but the new orientation from 1830 emphasized the actual creation of the modern institution: “a collection giving for every year a more true image of the history of Swedish agriculture from the most distant past to the latest Century” (sic).35 Agriculture is also emphasized by its first displayed objects and the evolutionary narrative. The first object is a hand-mill signifying the earliest farming practices. Between the presentation of the objects and the condition they were found in, a story is narrated with indent style. The advances are evident even within the Stone Age, when the handicrafts in stone works are presented. The idea of early farming is introduced as a novelty through arguments of comparison with Switzerland and Denmark, and through recent findings in Sweden. Burial grounds as the sites of most findings are at the forefront, and are presented in 114 numbers organized according to region. Adjectives such as “unusual”, “rare”, and “beautiful” intertwine with extensive prosaic descriptions of the skills needed to produce the objects, supposedly to compensate for the lack of images. Remarks indicating diffusion and trade from more civilized districts to the periphery, suggest the evolutionary dynamic. The idea important to the coming century was evolutionism, and was possible to apply to all kinds of collections, as it brought historical development to the centre of explanatory and illustrative power: things, epochs, and territorial difference could be presented as an ordered whole thorough diffusion (trade and migration) and evolution (civilization).

The somewhat abrupt and still soundly hesitant conclusion was “the people that lived here during the earlier Stone Age were most probably our forefathers, progenitor to the Svions and Goths [Svear och Göter] within historical times”.36

33 Nerman, ”Statens”, p. 188.
34 Montelius, Oscar, Statens historiska museum: kort beskrifning till vägledning för de besökande (Stockholm 1872). The booklet appeared in several reprints. The fifth edition was translated to English in 1887.
36 Montelius, Statens historiska museum, p. 3.
Skansen, the Nordic Museum, and the regions

There was a strong and prolonged fight in Stockholm at the end of the 19th century on the issue of who was to represent the national past, what should be represented, and how it was to be done. With varying intensity, the same question has been open for debate up to the present. The main players were academic archaeologists, historians, and antiquarians who argued for the premier importance and legitimacy of a state collection and scientific collecting (Hildebrand, Montelius). These were challenged from two flanks: civil initiatives in the capital, above all by Artur Hazelius expanding his Scandinavian Ethnographical Collection into plans for a Nordic Museum, and the opening of Skansen, an open-air museum with great international impact. His approach was more civil, public, and entrepreneurial. It was all-encompassing, and less analytical and more openly nationalistic. In the rhetorical presentation of the collection, its focus on the peasantry (allmogen) was ever more emphasized as the turn of the century approached.37 A three-part division of labour was agreed upon formally in 1919. The History of Antiquity (which was housed in the National Museum before 1943) would take care of archeological objects and the Roman Catholic Church – ending chronologically in 1520, with Reformation and the creation of the strong Vasa national state. The Nordic Museum, opening in 1907, took care of popular culture with a more narrow national scope than originally intended, and with an ever stronger emphasis on the scientific method. The immensely popular Skansen was more open to fostering national communal feelings and joy through living history and third-person interpretations, historic plays, and festivals, much in the same way it does nowadays with Allsång på Skansen (allsång literally meaning “community singing”) – the closest to Baltic Song festivals Sweden gets.

The third factor in negotiating peasant representation were the regional museums and their organization. This struggle echoed an earlier strife in the early 19th century with the Gothic Association (Götiska förbundet) as the challenger to the official organization – the Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities (Vitterhetsakademien). We might also say that this resembles later tensions in the museum world, creating a rather stable set of challenges between civil society and the state on the one hand, and the capital and the regions on the other hand.

In the 20th century, the role of the museum as a popular educator with its roots in the 19th century increased, while the scientific role of the collections was even more pushed aside. Even more so, this occurred through post-national uses of heritage as an important part of the travel industry where art,
heritage, tourism, and conferences are features of an expanding industry involving strategic global investment.38

**Political unity and cultural diversity as strategies – Swedish export**

The international exhibitions in the second half of the 19th century inspired a representation not only of industrial products but also of national culture. The idea of moving not only smaller objects but entire buildings from various parts of the realm to represent a particular region in another place seems to have grown widely. In Scandinavia, Oscar I supported Christian Holst in 1882 in Oslo in opening the first genuine peasant building re-erected to represent national building tradition to the public.39

The open air museums presented an extremely successful program for displaying peasant culture and regional variation to a broad public audience. They presented a structuring idea for dealing with questions of regional diversity and national unity in Scandinavia, which was represented most explicitly in outdoor museums that opened in 1891 in Stockholm, 1897 in Copenhagen, 1902 in Oslo, and 1909 in Helsinki. The creator of Skansen was very successful in selling the idea of a living museum not only to the contemporary Swedish public but also to an international public, where this idea rapidly spread a century after the original National museum idea made its triumphant expansion as a response to the Napoleonic turmoil.40 Now the differences to negotiate were more connected to rapid industrialization, urbanization and class conflicts: A stable peasant society anchored people’s minds in a unified past where differences were looked upon as predominantly cultural – not economical or political.

Skansen collected and re-enacted milieus of regional peasant farmsteads and a multi-performing re-enacting stage for national sentiments referring to the Swedish nature, fauna, regional diversity, farming practices, and crafts as a place for rest and rejoicing in a world now lost. The image of an organic society, distinctly regional, but classless, natural, bound to harmonious and happy labour of the ground and nature, placed it outside history. Through the metaphors of soil and the labouring of the land, a narrative link between the

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38 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara, *Destination culture. Tourism, museums, and heritage* (Berkeley 1998); Dicks, Bella, *Culture on display: the production of contemporary visitability* (Buckingham 2003).
40 A comprehensive history of the open air museums is available in Rentzhog, Sten, *Open air museums. The history and future of a visionary idea* (Stockholm 2007).
archaeological artefacts at the National Museum was created and eventually dispersed in regional museums all over the country. A functional division of labour was established, strengthening the construction of a specific national role for peasant culture which went far beyond the struggle for legitimacy of the various ideas of science and museums that occupied the minds of contemporary competitors.

The success was immediate and global, spreading all over the world, with an emphasis on northern Europe and societies with a Germanistic or Slavic ideology. It had a strong resonance to the peasantry as the backbone of national stability and sentiment. It was so successful in its public appeal that it became a problem to deal with as the museum label had a strong scientific connotation. Adversaries claimed it went beyond the line dividing museum from entertainment or politics – both perfectly legitimate – but not worthy of the title of museum. The Nordic Museum was struggling to draw the limit, especially after the death of Hazelius in 1901. Also the secession of Norway, the opening of the new building in 1907, and outbreak of the First World War changed the role it played, and moved its legitimacy in a direction of stressing the scientific scope of its collection, taking the national delimitation more and more as a natural border despite its name, and emphasizing the peasant culture as the essence of popular culture while (still today) exhibiting all kinds of cultural objects of the past in a sometimes haphazard order.41

One might think a full-fledged Open Air museum was an even more the optimal response to negotiating regional difference with national unity in a Norwegian national community than in Sweden. In Norway, the political message had to be moderated while it remained in union with Sweden, but even after that, the idea of nationalism was less state-oriented and centred on the idea of local and regional community. The Oslo museum, however, was much more scientific in its approach than the Swedish one, which was much more inclined to living history. This showed in the number of visitors, which was ten times higher in Stockholm than in Oslo. Nationalism is obviously not the only or perhaps even the main reason for visiting a national museum: Joy, entertainment, living animals, and theatre were parts of the Skansen success in the public sphere – and some of its trouble when it was questioned whether it really was a (scientific) museum at the turn of the century.42 The tension between a program of scientific or of popular appeal is one of the most long-standing and productive in the history of museums. In Norway it was arguably even more important to secure the scientific basis for the national reprepsentation of ancient peasant culture than to attract large crowds of visitors. A parallel could be drawn to the development of scientific his-

41 Biörnstad, Arne and Baehrendtz, Nils Erik (eds.), Skansen under hundra år (Höganäs1991); Bohman, Stefan, Historia, museer och nationalism (Stockholm 1997).
torical writing in Germany – a nation-state in the making and in need of the most solid arguments. Sweden as a stable nation-state could be a bit more slack and open to entertainment in certain sectors of the museum landscape, but had to keep its guard up to avoid diminishing the truth value of its efforts.

The program for diversified modern scientific museums became part of the development of the whole body of knowledge. Empirical science demanded factual archives and visual representations of the world. Ordering and putting things into coherent chains of evolution established knowledge. Hence the history of geology, nature, culture, societies, technology, and art was to be represented in scientific museums. This principle of understanding change was a novelty, and was juxtaposed with the older Linnaean idea of systematic taxonomy. Ordering axes by size was not enough. They had to be interpreted as part of a distinct culture, itself understood as a precursor of contemporary use. National framing was naturalized as an institutional prerequisite with no need of justification – since the whole apparatus of evolution and the fact that the nation framed these activities proved that the nation was the purpose of it all. This was a form of hidden nationalism legitimating and working through its objective methodology. Against this program were many of the museum entrepreneurs addressing the identity question by adjusting to market conditions and the need for entertainment. Only a few of the more successful managed to balance these demands to get the benefits of both market and state subsidies, embattled by academic critics and professionalized museums who wanted to safeguard the label museum for purposes of a higher order. The scene was in fact set already now for many of our contemporary battles, but not all of them.

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\begin{array}{c|c|c}
\text{Orientation:} & \text{Public} & \text{Experience} \\
\text{Schooling, hands-on} & \text{Theatre, role-play} & \\
\text{Rational Knowledge} & & \\
\text{Archive, research} & \text{Treasury, Gallery} & \\
\text{Collections} & & \\
\end{array}
\]

The Norwegian Museum of Cultural History (Norsk Folkemuseum) opened in 1894, and became the main focus of this idea of scientific representation, later complemented with the sacral museum of Viking burial ships and later the National Maritime Museum which connected the Viking, peasant Norway, and the great explorer with modern Norway living by the sea of fishing and oil resources. The ensemble of museums can be interpreted together rather than one by one, coming closer to the experience of a visitor and the overall architectural and visual imprint on the capitals. This broad approach to a museum landscape rather than just one collection at a time is productive when moving from a focus on visionary initiatives to the possible impact the realized exhibits and impressions have on visitor experiences and on the public sphere in general. However, this approach is not possible to pursue in its full complexity here.

The Museum of National Antiquities

The Museum of National Antiquities was given a new specifically-built location during the Second World War. The opening was received with standing ovations, much due to its forceful narrative on how the peasants had created the country and its richness by toiling the soil. Narratives of labour and agrarian endeavour beautifully reflected the epochal agreement between industrial labour and organized farming interests, modernity, and tradition in the 1930s.

The 20th century direction was moving bit by bit towards placing educational aspects of the exhibitions more centrally. Objects were removed to study collections, and models were constructed to show burial grounds more in principle than by using authentic remains. The credo of the exhibition was the story of an unbroken chain of evolution, where our ancestors struggled for survival, civilization, and community, building from pre-history to the Sweden of the present. Race theory was a self-evident starting point to make that point valid. The argument was that Sweden was purely Arian and was populated by long-heads already in the Stone Age. This refutes the earlier popular and powerful idea of explaining differences by reconstructing waves of migration. This idea could be dangerous, especially when the Samis sometimes were identified as belonging to an earlier invasion, and even more so with potentially successful new invaders on the doorstep. There was no problem with this as long as the evolutionary idea gave legitimacy to the strong and victorious late-comer, but what if the idea of ancestry and ancient origins was given precedence over sheer power? – which could easily happen in a world shaken by two world wars and slowly embracing

43 Nerman, "Statens", p. 201-204.
democratic ideals as a part of its culture and identity.\textsuperscript{44} It was claimed that no major migration to Sweden had taken place since the Stone Age. Thus, the Swedes were heirs to the people who populated Sweden at the end of this period. Now as then, it was argued, the population of Sweden was mainly of the Nordic race, tall and with long skulls. This biological continuity was unmatched elsewhere in Europe.\textsuperscript{45}

It is very clear that the public is addressed more unambiguously, and that researchers were directed to collections outside the display. A program for pedagogical activity was launched immediately, and popular education became part of its main purpose. Of course educational efforts are not an invention. These efforts have predecessors as part of the nation-making aspect, where socializing citizens is an essential aspect of governance. Now, however, this aspect was addressed openly, and in a systematic mode.

Moving through the exhibition takes the visitor on a chronological journey of technological advances, both in the societies under scrutiny who developed adequate tools, and in the heroic archaeologists of our time as scientists who unveil hidden truths. Stories of gender are part of the unreflected reconstruction of the famous woman from Barum.\textsuperscript{46}

Now the Mesolithic age is emphatically presented, defined by the presence of a specific type of boot-shaped axe, but the story is about how gathering is complemented by agriculture and herding. "Hunters and fishermen become settled peasants. The culture advances thanks to the cultivation of soil and keeping of cattle. As a result the basis of our ancestors’ culture is created."\textsuperscript{47}

Nevertheless, concealed in the emphasis on technological development was a reassuring continuity on behalf of the people carrying the advances. The Stone Age passage graves are claimed to mirror the dynamic organization of the peasant Stone Age society and their excellent construction skills.\textsuperscript{48}

Evolution, not revolution, signifies change. Peace is behind the expansion ending with colonies in the present Russian territory back in Iron Age. As the \textit{Sviones} mentioned by Tacitus are identified with realm of the Svea people (\textit{Svearike}), Nerman can conclude that Sweden is the oldest of the nation-

\textsuperscript{44} This is especially true in the articles of Bagge and Nerman. Sven Nilsson in Sweden advocated migration arguments, but this was an international mode of explanation with great power. See Renfrew, Colin, \textit{Arkeologi och språk. Det indo-europeiska ursprungets gåta} (Stockholm 1993).
\textsuperscript{45} Curman, Sigurd; Nerman, Birger and Selling, Dagmar (eds.), \textit{Tiotusen år i Sverige} (Stockholm 1945), p. Xxx.
\textsuperscript{46} See \textit{Fornvännen} 2000:2 for the latest findings. The Barum woman is still contested as one of the true valuables of the story of Sweden.
\textsuperscript{47} Description and citation from Regner, Elisabet, \textit{Tiotusen år i Sverige - en idéhistorisk analys av en arkeologisk utställning} (Stockholm 1995), unpublished student thesis at Stockholm University, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{48} Regner, \textit{Tiotusen år}, p. 28.
states now existing in Europe. The foundation of this continuity is the peasantry. It is concluded that only the Danish and the Norwegian have toiled the land for as long as the Swedish peasants, who have carried out such labour since the Stone Age. The Kingdom of Sweden was ancient. The king, elected by free men in Mora, began his royal tour of the country (eriksgata). Securing the new narrative in the century-old Geijer tradition, a bond was created between stability, peasantry, the king, and the existence of the state of Sweden. This is a strong story with the turmoil of war surrounding it, and it was received by the public with overwhelming applause. Some scholars were certainly lamenting the lack of systematic display and the sacrifice of scientific rigour on the altar of popular re-enactment. They might have been happier with the Bronze Age exhibition which was the most conservative of all, with elements of continuity from the National Museum to the recently closed exhibit. The exhibit was the second in the building (the first was a successful military exhibit of Sweden on alert) and was meant to be provisional. Its success was perhaps due to the force of the war in producing a strong national narrative, but proved to be instrumental up until the seventies. A rapid industrialization governed by Social Democrats, resting on an agreement with the Peasant Party (Bondeförbundet), and the People’s home (Folkhemmet) as the central metaphor allowed this narrative to work far beyond the war. It negotiated a neutral welfare-state well into the 1970s. After that, it can be said to have become gradually obsolete, and finally closed down in 2003, paralleled by a broad and self-critical discussion of the role of national institutions in a multi-cultural setting.

The new exhibits try to relate to all of the post-modern challenges observed, and to re-orient narratives within the specific political culture of Sweden. This means telling a reflexive, gendered, multi-cultural, class-conscious story of the territory of contemporary Sweden, explicitly stating that Sweden of course did not exist at this time. Furthermore, most of the findings are from Scania, and not from the Baltics or Pomerania. The national master-narrative is there but in a very Freudian way, which must confuse the visitor. This means, however, that technological advances are toned down and a will to bring forward individuals is emphasized, yet still within the same chronological and epochal approach.

Parallel to this is a lively debate on how a contemporary cultural heritage constructs or contributes to ideas of democracy and citizenship. This is true, for example, also in Denmark and Norway. The debate and, above all, policy decisions involve a re-framing of national narratives within the specific cultural and political context of each country.}

50 Regner, Tiotusen år, p. 31.
51 Andersson, Joakim and Aronsson, Peter, 10000 år - på 90 minuter. Pedagogisk verksamhet i forntidens basutställning (Norrköping 2004), unpublished.
in Denmark is radically different with a strong emphasis on the national heritage and the need for canonical knowledge of Danish culture for all citizens. This calls for a comparative analysis. Similar ideas of founding national peasant cultures are able to develop in quite different ways, even within a cultural region defining itself as Nordic welfare states.

Conclusions

Images of a distant peasant society which founded the nation developed out of romantic nationalism all over the western world. The images rooted contemporary states in ancient tribes, the right of long labour, and documentary evidence buried in the soil. The actual political conditions in most countries varied considerably, but the pressure of industrialization and democratization had to be dealt with all over the world. Hence the magnetic power of the peasantry as an image of stability, hard labour, and collaboration; virtues expected to counteract rapid urbanization and social unrest.

The public appreciation of peasant culture in the 19th century had a precisely designated cultural value. This value at the same time was negotiating rapid change, creating a vision of a shared past and unchanging values, and placing agricultural society at large in the museum as a part of the past. In this negotiation of the two visions of the future, industrial society gained the upper hand. The farmers themselves early on appreciated the lack of support in their fierce opposition to the building of a national museum. It is only when a new societal contract was established in the 1930s that a strong narrative from below occurred with not only cultural, but also strong political implications. This was reinforced by the turmoil of the wars of the 20th century.

People’s home (folkhemmet) nostalgia was more prone to negotiate life conditions in the era of flexible capitalism in Sweden, when history and exhibitions in the western world first became a place to be recognized collectively (workers, women, minorities) and later were also the space for more individualistic, aesthetic, and existential demands.

Similar tendencies were at work in neighbouring nations. Due to differences in political culture and actual state-making, one may expect to find various roles of peasant imagery at work during different eras in history. Maybe it is possible to sketch a brief chronology of the use made of peasants in national narrative as related to the creation of a notion of the people and the borders of a political community, for further comparative purposes:

II 1840-1900: Bourgeois collection of material culture negotiating modernization and rapid change to consolidate ideas of progress while at the same time securing the foundations of an immobile antecedent to contemporary society. *Now-then contrast.*

III 1900-1970: Evolutionary narrative of unbroken continuity of settlement and labour to secure right to land and property and legitimate democratic rule. *Progress.*


These epochs have not vanished entirely. They left a heritage of narratives to be allocated new spaces by the historic newcomers. A Golden Age agenda can be reestablished by urban environmentalists or, with less political claims, by anyone on vacation in the countryside. The progress and contrasting mode of using the past is usable when advocating the necessary story of a relatively successful path of events for ourselves – collectively and individually. Again, the more fragmented view of the past as a foreign country is a heritage of the Enlightenment manner of understanding the rupture between us and the past, the very precondition for recognizing ”history” at all.

Images of the virtues of the peasantry were important in the gradual expansion of citizen rights, in reform programs of land and housing, in the communal reforms and so on. But perhaps today we are moving onto a new stage where the stable past to relate to is not an ever-more distant peasantry, but an equally imaginary high industrial welfare society? There are signs of the 1950s which can be interpreted as the Golden Age in contemporary society, rather then the 1850s.⁵³

The epochs suggested above, however, are very crude ideal types formed by various processes into distinct varieties of peasant imagery:

- Different social strata might have different use of past peasantry. For instance, farmers cling to their centrality and radical workers might criticize this early on. Denmark as a country which modernized itself through industrializing agriculture places the peasantry differently. Even Viking society is interpreted differently based to differing national self-understanding.
- Various ways to national sovereignty give rise to different chronologies and emphases. The centrality of culture in ad-

vancing a national-state to be is greater in new nations than in old.

- Variation in actual political, social and economic structures gives resonance. The actual strength of the Swedish peasant estate hindered the establishment and strong representation of peasants at the National Museum. The agreements between labour and agrarian capital paved the way for a strong representation in the modern era.

There are many interesting differences implied in this essay. Still, I would in the end argue that there are strong epochal similarities that need to be understood and explained. For anyone visiting different museums and inspecting their representation of peasantry, the similarities are striking, their claims on national and regional uniqueness repetitive, and the impact of recognition sometimes reassuring and at other times tedious.