

# **Cultural Regions and their Uses: The interpretation of landscape and identity**

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## ***Introduction***

The idea of cultural regions and regional cultures has a long pedigree in several disciplines and traditions, and in different national contexts. Indeed the variation of customs and habits across the face of the world seems one of the most basic elements experiencing the world. It is an impulse to curiosity, to travel, a source of misunderstanding and translation and sometimes conflict and hostility. Here I want to explore three consequences or issues thrown up by thinking of cultures as spatially patterning the world. The first is that of defining which culture occupies which territory. Typically we think of place and culture as bound together – each shaping the other, but I want to argue that our notion of these ‘regions’ and territories is at least as inflected by how the specific ways that have been used to interpret the world as by cultural patterns. In other words how do we define the ‘region’ or territory, and, relatedly, how do we define the culture. Second, this spatial patterning raises issues of scale. Thus we might at one level talk of ‘Latin American’ culture to refer to the shared histories of conquest, resistance and mixed Indian and Iberian heritage. At another level strong political claims are made by states to claim to legitimacy through the notion that one people form one state. In a problematic relationship to this then are accounts that see regional cultures within – and especially problematically – across nation state borders. These we might say are thus respectively epistemological and ontological issues with thinking about regions and cultures. The third point I want to make is more of a consequence of how we think about regional cultures. It is to think then about how these ideas are represented, popularised and instantiated in society. So here I am going to chart particular preservation efforts through especially open air museums. How they move from the realm of academic studies of folklore, ethnology, cultural geography into popular culture, political institutions and so forth. Of course it is not quite as simple

as this since I will try and show that academic interest often derives from precisely popular sentiment and the cultural zeitgeist as much as intellectual curiosity.

To give some focus to these issues I am going to focus on the experience of one country – Sweden. The choice is perhaps surprising since most visitors to Sweden would tend to remark on its homogeneity rather than diversity. And yet it is a country that has a vibrant and strong tradition of celebrating regional cultures. In fact it has at various times had ‘local culture’ studies on the school curriculum, it has an organisation dedicated to defending, preserving and celebrating local cultures (the hembygdsföreningen) that consists of 2000 individual groups each dedicated to a small area, and these organisations have, at times, had statutory rights to be consulted and provide input in planning decisions about what buildings or developments fit the architectural heritage of a locality. These have created something like 1300 hembygdsgårdar or open air museums of local culture. I will look at how it reconciled this commitment to subnational regional identities with a national polity. More specifically I am going to move to focus around especially the region of Dalarna which has become a celebrated case for folk culture, its preservation and role in national identity.

The outcome of this paper is to suggest two problematic consequences of thinking about regional cultures as a sort of human mosaic of differing cultural areas distributed across the land. The first, is to contest the notion that differing cultural identities operate in some nested hierarchy of attachments like a Russian doll. The second is the association of people and territory producing senses of exclusive identity couched in terms of ‘authentic’ or local culture that can have xenophobic or even racist leanings. To illustrate how we might end up at this conclusion we might pause for a moment on the Swedish term ‘hembygd’. A dictionary translation is to ‘local area’ or ‘natal district’, a literal translation is ‘home district’ but the more evocative translation is homeland. Now in English this tends to suggest *national* belonging, but the Swedish term suggests a smaller scale sense of ‘home turf’. Its nearest cousin is in German – ‘heimat’ with its sense of ‘homeliness’. And here we would have to note the German heimatschutz movement and the heimat museums museums of local culture alongside the tangled history and concurrence of these notions and their appropriation by Nazi ideology. Also emerging around the end of the nineteenth century this movement too focused upon the local area of birth and its relationship with a national identity (Confino 1997; Applegate 2000; Boa and Palfreyman 2000). It gave emotional charge to the attachment to natal soil where authors like Eduard Spranger made ‘the distinction between milieu or environment as the surroundings into which any human individual is born and the Heimat which is the outcome of the process of growing together with the land’ (Boa and Palfreyman 2000, page 5). This emotional sense of belonging alongside the possibly exclusionary sense of being part of a

regional culture is the back drop for this essay. In looking at Heimat, as a local belonging and culture there is the sense that the spatial metaphor of home territory implies 'a bounded medium of some kind which provides a sense of security and belonging' (Boa and Palfreyman 2000, page 23). So if this is where our analysis may take us, let us start with some careful thinking about the concept of the 'cultural region' and its uses.

## ***A Cartographic Imaginary***

In this section I want to raise some issues concerned with thinking of cultures as not only varying across the face of the world, but occupying territory. The sense of the human mosaic is one specific way of imagining cultures – stressing we might say occupation and control of territory through time. We could alternately think of cultures as webs of flows and entanglements. In James Clifford's (1997) apt phrase, not so much about cultures setting down roots and developing in a place through time but routes whereby connections between places, flows of ideas and practices serve to drive development. So here I want to ask how a vision of cultures as distributed as mappable, spatial extensive and more or less exclusive occupants of different scales of territories was constructed through a variety of academic and popular practices.

## **Regions as Concepts in Geography**

There is a long and voluminous tradition of studying the region in various guises in geography. We have the 'regional survey movement' of British geography, tied to a chorographic process of enumerating physical and human features of regions (Matless 1999). Alternately we have the Berkeley School around Carl Sauer who tracked the origins and dispersion of cultural practices and their assemblage into distinctive whole – as culture regions from the 1920s onwards. But perhaps most germane to the discussion here is the tradition of the French Annales school and Paul Vidal de la Blache. We might take the starting point of 'the existence of a variegated landscape of differentially adapted human groups to their immediate environment' (Archer 1993, 500) and from that the oft cited motto that a region is a medal struck in the likeness of its people, with an emphasis on the reciprocal relationships of cultures and environments through a 'long durée' till there is a 'seamless robe' of nature and people. In studies inspired by the variations across the Pays of France,

Vidal de la Blache and his followers have written movingly attending to the common folk, to hearing their innumerable footfalls and the print they leave on the landscape. Archer (1993) has argued here we see a strong sense of holism and also an evolutionary perspective in looking at the environment's role in shaping culture – which reminds us that in the early twentieth century this connection of land and culture was regarded with much less scepticism.

For a comparison if we turn to early twentieth century British geography we find prominent adaptations of similar ideas. Drawing on the work of people like the French ethnologist Frederic Le Play we can find activists such as Fagg and Branford writing texts on 'regional survey' as a method. This regional approach enabled the construction of a human ecology perspective – where the map becomes a privileged vehicle for understanding culture. Indeed, according to Matless, it was the definition of sound study as the art of the mappable that led to the dismissal of Marx and sociology in favour of Le Play (Matless 1999). We might notice two further elements here in this regional survey movement. First, an active engagement with 'civic education' where mapping and understanding the home region, be it ever so ordinary, was seen as part of the education of a citizen and way of developing skill and above all attitudes to build a cohesive society that would place school pupils 'in command of their region' (Matless 1999, page 197). Second, the sort of human ecology focusing on people land relationships did not restrict itself to simple bio-social systems. It certainly began from this, tending to unproblematically position nature as a substrate upon which human societies were built and to which they responded – thus geology and climate at a base level, then soils and hydrological systems (which were open to human modification) thence to agricultural and settlement structure and finally social beliefs. Much modern scholarship might challenge this view of physical factors being external to social ones, but more notable for us is that the connection of people and land was indeed seen in an emotional register. Fagg charted a range of psychoecologies, whereby for instance taking an idealised transect of mountain to coast, the mountainous terrain allegedly fitted with hunting as a form of subsistence that also gave rise to a disposition to ancestor worship or Glories in the Past, possibly an idealisation of Death as social ideals and deities with anti-social tendencies to warlordism; while in the foothills poor peasants inclined to idealising rest and Nirvana but harboured anti-social types such as bandits or 'Corsicans' like Bonaparte (Matless 1999, page 203). From Le Play came this strong focus on the varied intersections of place, work and folk then not just as a physical system but an all encompassing shaping of life. And this is in the strong sense of how each element shaped the others into a holistic regional culture.

## Bygd och Natur: National Romanticism

The link of environment and people comes through strongly in the Scandinavian artistic movement of 'National Romanticism'. Erik Gustaf Geijer, who followed the gothic revival across Europe, turned to the transcription of oral traditions of the peasantry (with Arvid August Afzelius) and pioneered the publishing of Swedish Folk Tales (*Svenska folksagor*) in 1814-15, setting the themes for the subsequent National Romantic movement:

'Every folk lives not only in the present, but also in its memories: and it lives through them. Every generation propagates itself both physically and morally, bequeathing to the next generation its customs and concepts. This tradition from one time to another unifies a people, fostering their unbroken consciousness of themselves as a nation; it transmits to them, so to speak, their personality' (cited in Facos 1998, page 33-4)

The notion of customs from time immemorial that formed the bedrock of national belonging, and possibly renewal, was thus at the core of the movement. It interpreted this folk tradition through the link between nature and people – especially a supposedly particular Scandinavian feeling for nature. The movement aimed to reclaim this sense as the basis for both national pride but also as an authentic way of life, in an almost Heideggerian sense *avant la lettre*. If language is the house of being then art and language were shaped by the environment into a specific way of dwelling in the world (Spirn 1998). Thus we can find influential commentators like Bergh, a prominent ideologue of the progressive movement, writing at the turn of the twentieth century that:

"Our art should... be just like our nature! It should express our special character and the feelings of our hearts, using for this purpose the colors and forms of our country and our people. We must take to art for the sake of nature and not of art.

Art shall grow in the country because nature sings in the breast of the entire nation and demands an expression -- an art. And the artist must be one with the whole people. It is only thus that genuine and deep rooted art can be created that will live in history as Swedish art' (cited Frykman and Löfgren 1987, page 58).

This strong link of art and nature then, is not seen simply as an aesthetic representation, but a moral discourse and moreover one that is directly emanating from the landscape. It suggests that 'landscape literature is the product of life not a mere representation of it.' (Spirn 1998, page 49). In Denmark there were discussions of the reclaiming of the heathlands of Jutland (Olwig 1996; Spirn 1998), in Finland arguments that Finnish language and the music of Sibelius offered privileged ways of relating to the forests and lakes and so on. In Sweden the hembygdsrörelsen clearly linked local mostly material culture, especially the built fabric, with nature in its publication 'Bygd och

Natur' – Locality and Nature. The valorisation of nature and specifically a notion of Swedish nature comes through in a variety of media. Thus a poem by Gustaf Fröding (A Young Birch tree) plays on the qualities of light often associated with northern latitudes in art

### **En ungbjörk**

De var en morgon, just som dagen steg  
allt högre upp utöver berg och branter,  
och dalen sov ännu och skogen teg,  
men vällukt strömmade från alla kanter.  
Där gick en älv som klar och djup och mörk  
gav återsken åt dagens strid med natten  
och åt den smärta formen av en björk,  
som böjt sin krona över älvens vatten.  
Det var en ung och vek och blyg gestalt  
med nyutsprunget grönt och fina grenar  
och dagg var stänkt på löven överallt  
som över lockar stänk av ädelstenar.<sup>1</sup>

(Fröding 1943)

Nature is compared to bejewelled splendour, but notably here the play over and over again of the qualities of light, are put in context of the silent birch forest of mountainous Sweden, empty of people but with an almost personified young tree. These are themes that are picked up in the art works of artists involved in the movement such as Anders Zorn (1860-1920) or Carl Larsson (1853-1919). This artistic movement offered a renewed romantic vision of nature, as something to be participated in through outdoor pursuits and simple life lifestyles, and opened the pleasures of solitude and the interior of Sweden as a rural wilderness as a realm of importance. It celebrated a romantic version of rural culture for its contact with nature rather than despised it for

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<sup>1</sup> My regrettably unpoetic translation would be as follows:

*A Young Birch Tree.*

It was a morning, a beautiful dawn  
Spreading over the steep mountain heights,  
And the valley and forest slept silent still,  
But the daylight poured from all the edges.  
There flowed a river clear and deep and dark,  
As once again at day overcame night  
And revealed the slender form of a birch,  
Its crown bending over the river water.  
It was a young, delicate almost shy form  
With sprouting greenery and elegant branches  
And dewdrops glistening all over its leaves  
Like the enticing glitter of gems. ...

unsophistication. Thus we can contrast the detached objectifying ethnographic observation of paintings like Kilian Zoll's *Midsummer Dance at Rattvik* (1852) with a more participative and involved style in Anders Zorn's (1897) portrait of *Midsummer dances* in Mora some 30 miles away (Sandström 1992; Sandström 1996; Facos 1998, page 53). Folk life and practice are thus seen as promoting an almost mystical union of people and land. So Carl Larsson writing of the people of Halland summed up his feelings in a letter saying:

'Kindly, powerful, blond people, mostly with honest, innocent faces. You know I was so happy, felt so free in the midst of these, my own folks, as they say. They were a simple, pure breed, not the jumble of human tramps one finds in the cities. And how they 'got into nature', as we painters say. They were like flowers of the field, the result or product of the earth.' (Larsson cited in Facos 1998, page 60)

This offers an anti-urban and racialised discourse of a pure breed contrasted to mongrel urban dwellers, with an authentic way of being deriving from nature. In the words of Kenneth Olwig, Sweden built upon a notion of *landskap* as a crafted place in which one dwells, rather than an aesthetic way of perceiving the environment, and thus saw the local region as 'an area carved out by axe and plough, which belongs to the people who have carved it out' (Olwig 1993, page 311). My aim is to point out how this connects with more formal regional perspectives on culture. Both Vidal and the British Regional school had a strong chorological interest in specific regional types and variations. They also had a strong sense of the environment and adaptive, evolutionary processes – as where Vidal drew upon Ratzel's biological method of treating peoples as analogous to organisms shaping their niche in the evolutionary order. Moreover, Vidal too was acutely aware that urban societies were emancipators from these natural controls and links of people and land. Instead of physical processes linking people to their environment there were 'generalised relations' in industrial society that eroded these ties. In other words this regional model is set up with a localised scale that is seen as being disrupted by a more expansive modern economy. We have a heritage here of models of bounded local cultures created through interaction with the environment, being counterposed to modern society which is posed as larger scale, rootless modernity. Of course, the conservative possibilities here are shown up in the way prewar German *Heimat* movements were all too easily coopted as forming a counter ideal to the rootlessness of modern life and the Jewish diaspora in particular. This chimes with the much writing in diverse fields at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In studies of English folklore we find a salvage work being conducted trying to find the last remnants of the folksong and tradition (Boyes 1995), or in German *Heimat* literature we might note 'heimat' also connoted the rural or provincial roots away from

which urban industrial society was moving in a trajectory from nature towards ever greater civilization, or alternatively alienation, and was where different temporalities – of remembered and half-forgotten childhoods, of unchanging tradition and circadian rhythms abutted modern epochal and historical changes (Boa and Palfreyman 2000, page 44). These themes then of regional identity, belonging and crucially stories about loss form a backdrop for our story of the mapping of regional cultures.

## **Artefacts as Metonyms for Regional Cultures**

Let us turn to the history then of studying the diverse cultures of Sweden. There was a long tradition of mapping diversity through the country emerging from the Gothic movement of the early nineteenth century. Popular or folk culture gradually moved from being an object of embarrassment and horror to being celebrated. Reading travel accounts even from the first Baedeker in the mid nineteenth century, its account of the wonders of Lake Siljan in the county of Dalarna was tempered by references to the local people – about whom the prime point of note was less their ‘traditional’ dress or arts, than the lack of customary bathing. Certainly northern Sweden began to be positioned, for metropolitan Stockholm based intellectuals as something rather alien – either in terms of disgust but increasingly in terms of a longing. The traditional broad division of Sweden was into three regions Götaland (the furthest South and West under the influence of Danish culture), Svealand (the heartland of around Stockholm in the South East) and Norrland (the long extending north up into the arctic circle). The first major conference on ethnological regions was organised by Oscar Montelius in 1874, focusing upon dialects and language and published in 1877 (slightly earlier than an atlas of French dialect or the dialect atlas work in Germany by Mitzka and Wrede in 1902 which also led to a 1920s survey of Germanic cultures charting manners morals and laws by Aubin, Frings and Müller (Ditt 2001)). Building from these starts major cultural dividing lines were charted across Sweden, starting with Sunbärg who in 1910, located an East-West split — the Flodstrom line - between cultural hearths in Denmark, via Skåne (or generally Götaland), and Mälardalen (the Stockholm region) out to Svealand (Helmfrid et al 1994:60). Later work added a North-South division producing along what is known as the shieling line (Erixon 1945, page 10). This was the southern limit of ‘fabodar’ systems of transhumance cultivation, that is of winter and ‘fabodar’ or shieling, summer pastures, whereby the main farm has a subsidiary farmstead where animals are taken for the summer months, generally located higher in the mountains and up to 40km from the



main village (Figure 1). How these regional divisions were arrived at, or we might say created is something that is worth studying in some detail.

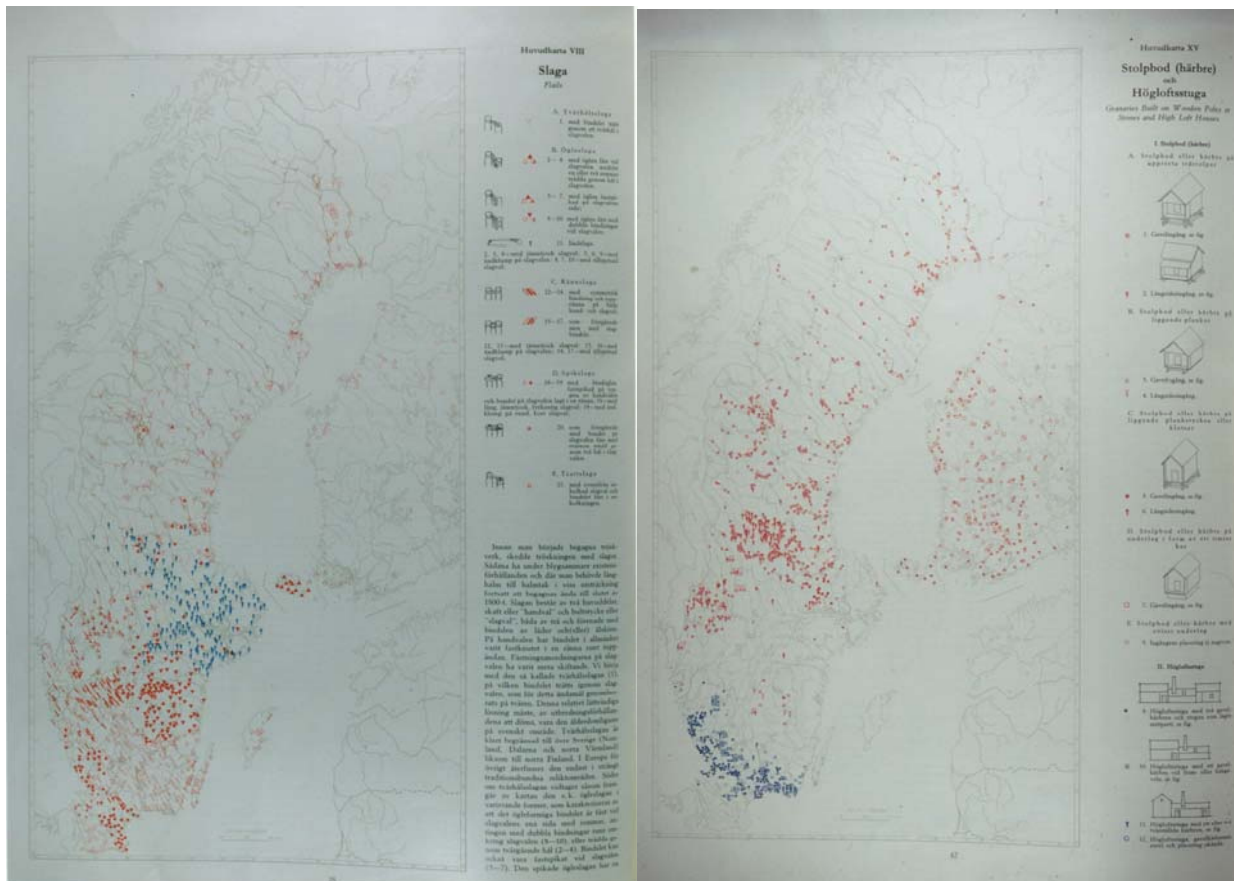
FIGURE ONE



Perhaps the greatest academic contributor to this mapping of regional cultures was Sigurd Erixon (1888-1968). Here he adopted the approach of mapping cultural attributes – especially material culture rather than language, stories or music. In immense detail he compiled data on the variation of the fabric of daily folk life. So his compendious works (eg Erixon 1945; Campbell, Erixon et al. 1950) set out to present the distribution first of specific material culture artefacts and attributes. Let us for instance looking at something like flails used for threshing corn in peasant farms, Erixon and collaborators looked in detail at the patterns of construction. Each flail was basically two lengths of wood articulated around a knot, that allowed the user to generate a vigorous beating action. The map here focuses on how those knots were tied. This minute detail reveals three clusters of different types of knot – reflecting the three broad traditional regions, with loop knots clustering in the East, with eye knots in the North, and the far West and South using predominantly double whipped parallel knots (Campbell, Erixon et al. 1950, Map 8; Figure 2) Looking at the barn types, the overall structure suggests that barns connected to the main farmhouse cluster in the south, especially

characteristic being a ‘trinity’ structure with a single storey farm house flanked on both ends by higher barns (hogloft), while to the north are varieties of freestanding raised barns (stolpod) that stand on beams to keep them off the ground and are constructed of planking or alternately wooden beams joined in different ways and with entries through porches on the long or short sides (Campbell, Erixon et al. 1950, Map 15, Figure 3). Other maps go into the types of wood notches and roof ridges, or the location of hearths and sleeping accommodation for various kinds of people – adults, workers, children. Interestingly in terms of mapping cultures then these material artefacts come to stand as metonyms for cultures, that is as parts that come to stand for the whole, as indicators of particular regional patterns of adaptation. Indeed, in Berkeley school mappings of the cultural regions of the USA there are precisely analysis of barn constructions in the Midwest around Wisconsin used to indicate a Swedish cultural origin (eg. Zelinsky 1973).

FIGURE 2 & 3



Thus by comparing these distributions one after another a series of different dividing lines emerge. Erixon (1945) thus adds nuances to the divisions of outlined above where (Figs 4) he charts the northern limit of the two storey barns (boundary 2) or the southern limit of north Swedish pot cooking (boundary five) or the north-south boundary of ‘oblique barn’ construction (four), while in figure 5 the line (d) is the northern limit of a specific type of threshing, while boundary (a) is the

southern most extent of the fabodar system of transhumance cultivation, making this bundle of boundaries effectively the shieling line, and other boundaries are those of raised barns(b), a chair type (g), the north south oriented boundary (h) in the west is about oven types, while (j) is the eastern limit of Easter bonfire ceremonies. Although it should be noted that these lines while based on rigorous evidence are also often about frequency, tendency and distribution – so some of them are analytic constructs. Indeed, we need to remember these are lines around the distribution of specific artefacts and less frequently records of practices. From the superimposition of these lines and others could be produced a map of regional cultures (Figure 6). Here the bold lines are ‘regional cultures’ while the finer lines mark out the 24 län or counties of Sweden. And here we should notice that the cultural mapping does not fit the civic structures of identification and local governance. But equally if we look at Erixon’s work examining the morphology of farmsteads, we find it does not fit national space either (figure 7). This map of Scandic types shows a spill over between Norway, Denmark and Sweden where category five are simple square shapes of characteristic of North Swedish culture, with all the farm buildings including the farmhouse forming a solid line around a square yard a central Swedish double ended arrangement (six), or irregular groupings in the far west. That regional definition may be complex is hinted at by area ten being described simply as an amalgam of other types. And this pan-scandic vision is not without its own chauvinisms, since many Danes might object to having their building style classed as south Swedish (eight), rather than saying that southern Swedish style was mostly Danish. Indeed nineteenth century pan-scandinavianism was often a form of Swedish nationalism.

FIGURE 4

- 1 = sydgränsen för det sydgötiska huset med högre gavelhärbargen.  
 2 = nordgränsen för det sydgötiska huset (högloftsstugan)  
 3 = nordgränsen för framkammarsstugan (gles horisontell skrafering = kärnområdet)  
 4 = östgränsen för den kluvna räfsan  
 5 = särskilda kökets nordgräns  
 6 = syd- och västgränserna för de snedväggiga höladorna med uppåt vidgad rymd  
 7 = sydgränsen för tvärhållsslagan  
 8 = Uppsvängda spiskåpans nord-, öst- och sydgräns.

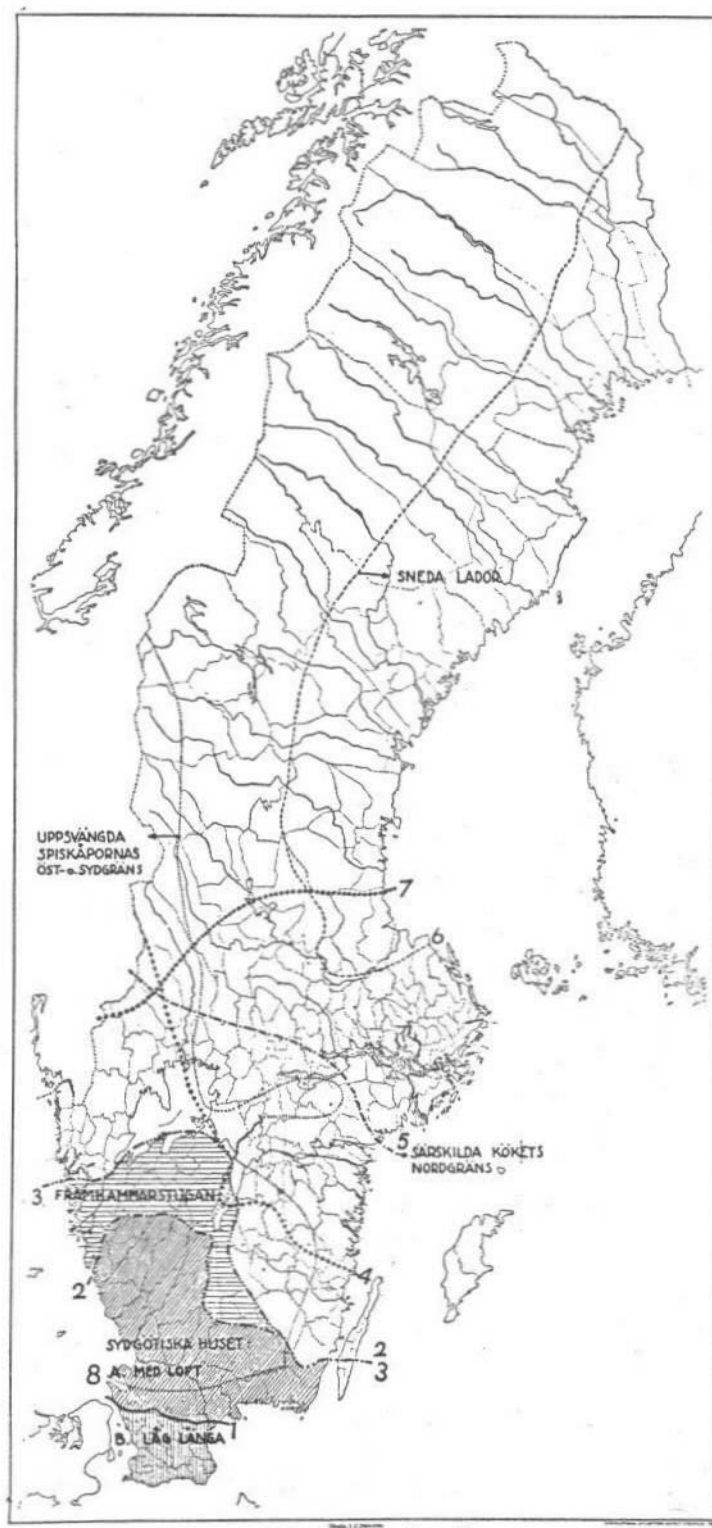


Fig. 3. Utbredningskarta över några kulturformer i Sverige.

FIGURE 5

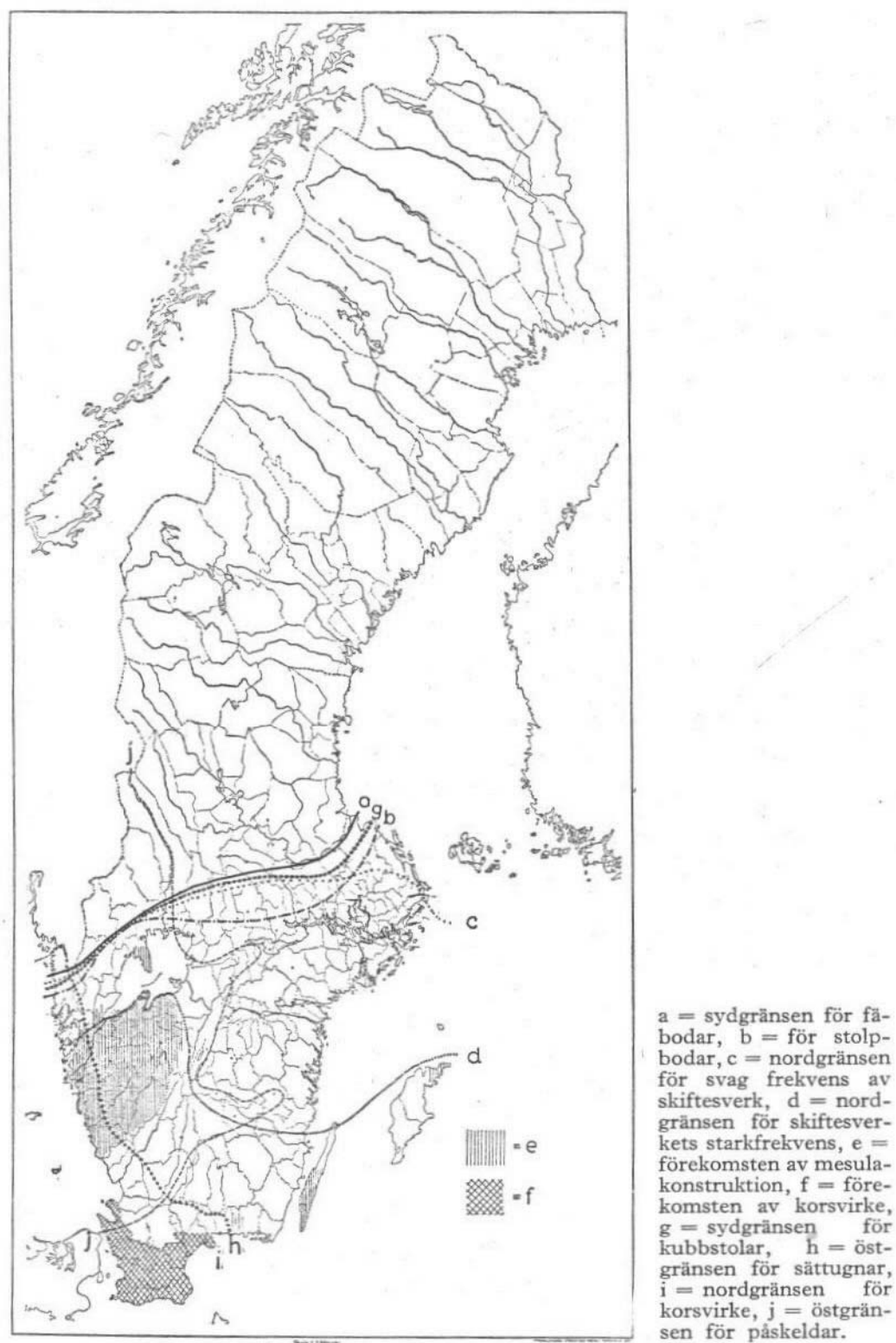


Fig. 2. De skiljande kulturgränserna mellan övre och nedre Sverige (a, g, b, c) och utbredningen av några sydvästsvenska kulturformer.

This last point points again at the complexities of how cultural regions may not fit neatly with either local or crucially national polities. And here we have to return to the method of compiling these regions from types of material artefacts, because this involves two analytical operations. First, identifying artefacts and defining their characteristics then, second, linking them as more or less diagnostic indicators of specific cultures. In other words actively constructing senses of what regions are and what the elements of commonality and difference might be. Thus in the interwar period, in the ethnic, cultural and political turmoil of defining nations out of the remains of the Austro-Hungarian empire, Hungary engaged in exercises to define its distinctive folk culture – especially through music. Folklorists working in rural areas identified a specific tonal sequence as distinctively and exclusively part of ‘Hungarian’ folk culture. In other words, Hungarian music uses this sequence. From their thought it is easy to invert the logic, that if the music uses the sequence it must be Hungarian, and only a short step to say that thus the players must be bearers of Hungarian culture and thus part of the Hungarian people. And so mapping musical tones expanded beyond Hungary into claims for the ‘Hungarianness’ of people as far away as Transylvania, who spoke no Hungarian but could be claimed to share part of the same culture (Hirsch 1997). Or we could look at the culture region work people such as the historian Franz Petri looking at the spread of Germanic culture outside the borders of the interwar German state. His charting of a supposed ancestral cultural hearth around post-Roman Frankish peoples based upon an examination of field and place names, taken as indicators of Germanic culture, enabled him to declare that ‘The character of Frankish settlement in Walloon and Northern France [was] utterly Germanic’ (Ditt 2001, page 245). In other words the construction of these regions from specific indicators is a process which works to define membership of cultures in specific ways. It raises issues of what is seen as a core element of a culture and what a variant, and thus what defines members. In other words these are not neutral acts of just ‘finding’ or mapping pre-existing regional cultures. Amid all the detail and meticulous attention to detail it is worth thinking about the emotional attachment to places not just of inhabitants but of researchers and artists.

FIGURE 6 & 7

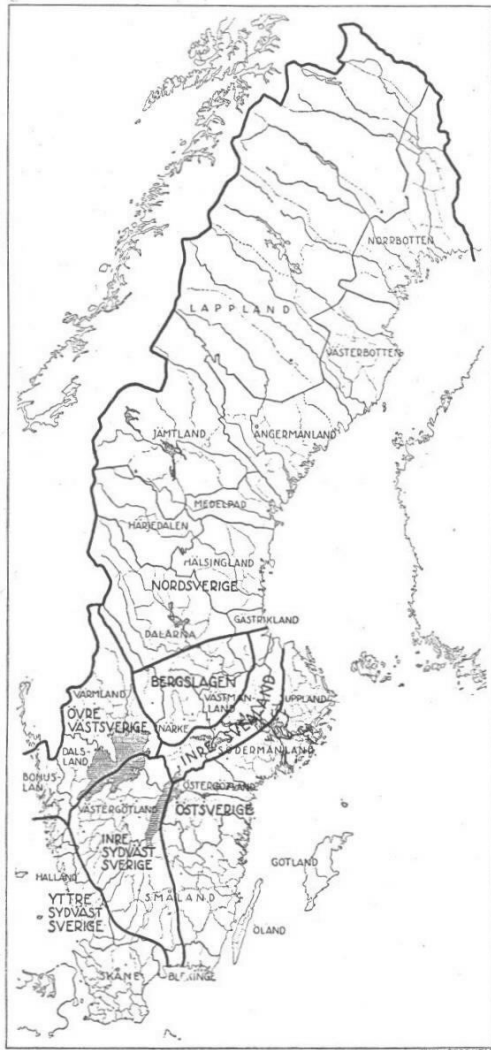


Fig. 15. De svenska kulturområdena.



Fig. 11. Utredningen av Skandinaviens gårdstyper

1 = oregelbundna klungor, 2 = enkel- eller parallell-längor, 3 = vinkelställda huvud-längor eller tendens till fyrkantsform, 4 = blandformer med tendens till gles fyrkantighet och särskild mellan man- och fågård, 5 = enkel fyrkantsform (nordsvensk typ), 6 = dubbelställda fyrkantsform (centralsvensk typ), 7 = rektangelform med stängsel mellan man- och fågård (götisk typ), 8 = enkel, tät fyrkantsform kring fågårdspå (sydsvensk typ), 9 = blandformer av 5, 6 och 7 (Bergslagen), 10 = blandformer av 2, 3 och 7.

## Returning Exiles and Disappearing Worlds

If we look at the artists closely associated with the folk revival their biographies tell interesting stories. Zorn and Larsson both came from poor backgrounds, but then married into wealthy families and developed international reputations. Zorn's mother was from Mora in Dalarna, but he learnt his art in Paris, travelled to the Mediterranean, Britain and the US (he is still the only painter to do official portraits of two US Presidents) and made a considerable fortune. His artistic sojourn in France, like many other Swedish artists who became part of the international art circuit was marked by feelings of homesickness that came to be aesthetically expressed. The sentiments are neatly captured in Verner von Heidenstam poem *'Thoughts of Loneliness'*:

*"Ensamhetens tankar"*

Jag längtar hem sen åtta långa år.  
I själva sömnen har jag längtan känt.  
Jag längtar hem. Jag längtar var jag går  
men ej till människor! Jag längtar marken,  
jag längtar stenarna där barn jag lekt.<sup>2</sup>

The poem describes a homesickness that permeates dreams during eight years of exile, and the cadences fall on 'längtar' which is longing or yearning. And what is yearned for in the last two lines – not the people but the field and stones where he played as child. It is attachment to land and place, written through childhood memories. So we have temporality here of personal aging and loss. It is a temporality that as mentioned above tends to be overcoded by the intrusion of historical change upon a place remembered as timeless or unchanging (Boa and Palfreyman 2000, page 44). Thus Zorn was shocked at the degree of social change upon his return to Mora in 1886. And it has to be remembered this was a period where at the end of the nineteenth century the countryside experienced something like 20% depopulation with massive emigration to Swedish towns and overseas to the USA.

The interest in folk culture then has to be framed by this sense of nostalgia, where 'Scholars and folklore collectors saw themselves as a rescue team picking their way through a landscape of cultural ruins, where scraps and survivals of traditional lifestyles could still be found. Through their enthusiastic work they helped construct the myth of a traditional and national peasant culture.' (Frykman and Löfgren 1987, page 59). Similarly in English folk studies, early twentieth century collectors fanned out across the country in search of a lost village culture, and interpreted what they found in the light of that idea. The 'last remnant' of the 'folk' were held not to appreciate the value of what they knew - they were unworthy custodians. The various versions of songs that were found were then sifted by collectors to find common elements that might show an original antecedent behind the current multiplicity. The model was clearly one where an original folksong was posited and then seen as degenerating through the process of transmission. The folk became bearers of a fixed inheritance rather than inventive agents developing customs. Thus field work that showed multiplicities of folk tales and songs was dismissed as showing these degenerations rather

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<sup>2</sup> Thoughts of Loneliness  
I yearned for home for eight long years  
In my own sleep have I longed to feel  
I long for home. I long to go there  
But not for the people! I yearned for the fields  
I yearned for the stones where I played as a child



than say folk inventiveness and adaptation. The reconstruction thus invented a pure and uncontaminated image of a folk that denied the middle and upper class action that was responsible for collecting of material and indeed any other urban and middle class influence in the folk culture itself through fashions, local gentry and the like (see also Engman 1995). Indeed the folk themselves were so mythologized that even by 1893 critics commented that much more was being made of the Lore than the Folk. The empirical messiness of rural life was being removed from the idea of the folk (Boyes 1995). While the romanticism of some folklore collectors in England was extreme, and we may see the nostalgia of artists as expected we can find echoes in Erixon's more personal writings – reflecting on his childhood in nucleated villages that had since been dispersed into rationalised separated farmsteads and with consolidated landholdings during periods of agrarian reform. So we need to recognise some of the underlying impetus for the definitely scholarly if not arid collection of data on regional cultures:

‘It is naturally wrong to dismiss Erixon and his generation of scholars as sentimental dreamers who, behind all their maps and tables, longed for the bygone, deep-rooted village communalism, far from the industrialised world. On the other hand, it is true to say that longing for closely knit villages and uncomplicated community in beautiful houses inspired them to a restless study of the rich historical deposits in the Swedish landscape of the twentieth century.’ (Hellspong and Klein 1994, page 29)

Put together this is classic salvage anthropology – documenting the last traces of a dying way of life. There are two things to notice here, first, it tends to position all change as decline or erosion of local culture. Any innovation ends to be ruled inauthentic – a position that will need some qualifying. Since, the second is that we will see many artists did see themselves actively intervening to preserve and if necessary to revive various folk customs. But the sense of agency in both cases is not with the folk. They tend to be placed in an ethnographic bell jar as a traditional society to be preserved, interpreted and used as a model by outside observers. Thus if we now begin to turn to reservation and interpretation efforts we find

‘The Nordic Museum and Skansen were to a great extent created by bourgeois city dwellers for other bourgeois city dwellers. For them, peasants, especially those from Dalarna (the province also known by the Latin name Darlecarlia), were the most genuine representatives of all that was truly Swedish, and it was to Skansen and the Nordic Museum that parents took the whole family to find confirmation of the myth of the old peasant society’ (Hellspong and Klein 1994, page 21)

In other words the peasant society formed an object of most interest to those now living outside of it. It was being transformed from a way of life into a spectacle. And the key protagonists were urbanised intellectuals who imbued the movement with their anxieties over changing times and events

## ***Representing Regional Identity***

In this section I want to unpack how this focus upon regional diversity and belonging was articulated in a series of institutions – specifically forms of preservation and museums. I want to start with a national museum and then look at how the nation state articulated its notion of belonging through the local scale. First I want to do this by pointing to forms of popular knowledge about regions that it promoted through national museums and tourist activities. Then I want to argue that the relationship is a little bit more complex, and look at how one particular regional culture, Dalarna, came to be invested with enormous significance. Finally I want to ask how the notion of regions and people and land relationships has inflected our understanding of traditional customs in that region. Building on folk collecting this became charged with a national significance in defining identity in a time of rapid change.

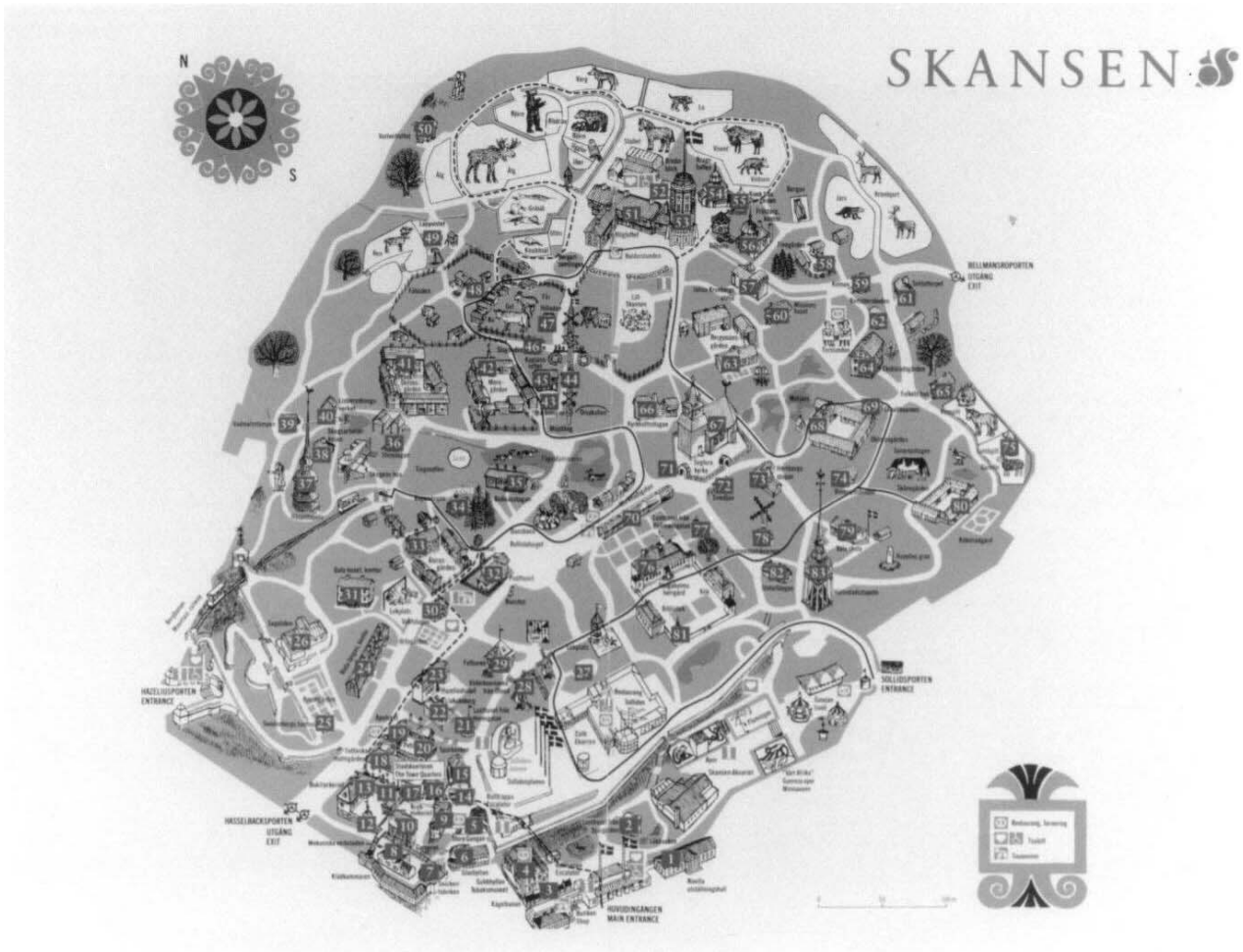
## **Mythic space**

The most remarkable manifestation of the cartographic sense of culture comes in Skansen museum founded by Artur Hazelius in 1891. As the story goes, he was inspired by travels through Sweden, especially to the village of Leksand in Dalarna in the 1870s, to find a way of preserving and representing traditional ways of life. His solution was the world's first open air museum. This now familiar institution gathered exemplars of buildings from all the regions of Sweden into a park in order to present a Sweden in miniature (figure 8). Let us for a moment think of how radical a departure this was. This museum does not tell a strong narrative of national development – not a teleological history of national triumphs and increasing commonality. It is in the words of Georges Poulot a 'musée de l'espace' rather than 'musée du temps' (Poulot 1994, page 66) and resists

'the idea of distributing the nation's cultural heritage without attention to regional specificity' (page 66) and thus fragmenting cultures to make a narrative, instead choosing to subordinate the narrative to culture's 'organic integrity'. In other words instead of lining up all the different types of ploughs, or costumes according to an

academic schema, it presents then 'in situ' in tableaux reconstructed to show the holistic regional culture.

FIGURE 8

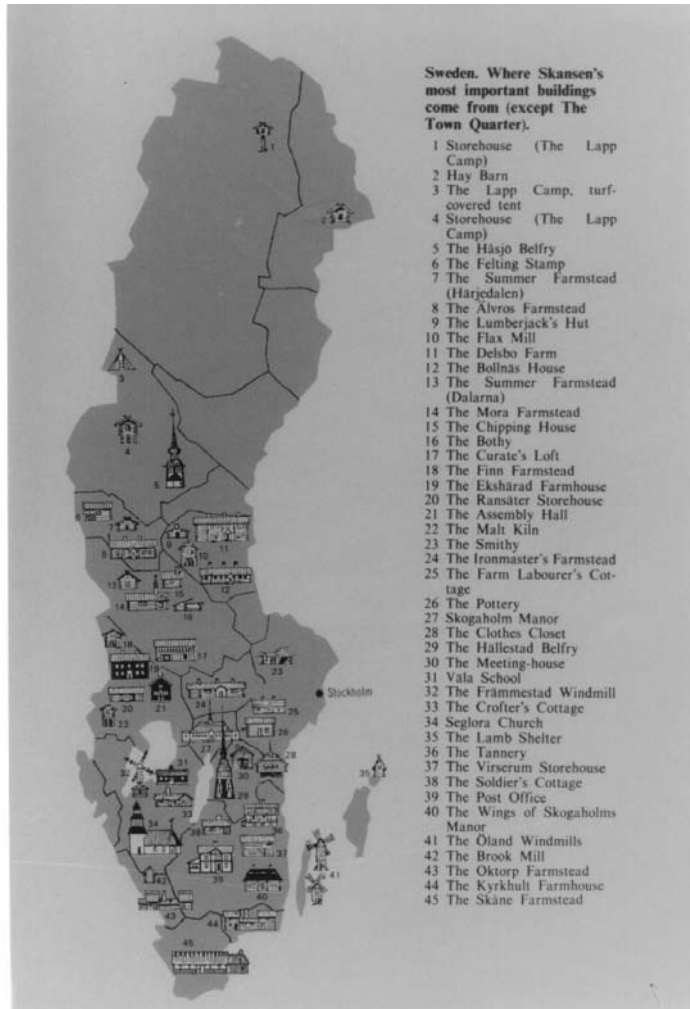


In this sense all Sweden is gathered and made available to a visitor – in metropolitan Stockholm to walk about. Key buildings from around Sweden were purchased and relocated (figure 9) from the regions identified in folk studies. The corollary is given the authority invested in Skansen, the museum's choices served to reinforce notions of which were distinct regional cultures and their typical features. This mythic space then, condensing the imagery of Sweden into one park becomes a place to learn about one's nation. If we look at the response of the contemporary commentator Gustaf af Geijerstam writing in 1892

'This exhibition of old Swedish life affected me like a dream, a great popular poem, set in reality, which after its fashion set in motion all imaginative powers ... It is the Swedish people's differences, their varied composition, that makes such a vivid

impression when one goes for a walk through this project.’ (cited in Facos 1998, page 72)

FIGURE 9



We get the sense of the miraculous ability to walk through cultures presented in the round, but moreover the sense of the spirit of poetry rendered into solid material. Geijerstam describes the Blekinge farm from the far southern Sweden (number 44 on source map and 66 on Skansen lay out) remarking precisely on its three in one arrangement of two storey barns abutting the farmhouse with a luxuriant grass roof – a form he associates with the prosperity of property owning southern Sweden, though still preserving traditions as shown when ‘behind the buildings there are growing hop yards, where hops are taken when midwinter comes and Christmas beer links us to ancient pagan custom’ (Geijerstam 1892, page 20). What impresses him as much as the burnished copper pots and pans that are the signs of ‘household wealth and housewives pride’ is the leap and contrast in a few paces:

‘Then it is only a step and I stand on the narrow [entry] stairs of the Moragården [Mora farmstead]. They are small and narrow, as if the type of stairs shrank, as one travels further North. The whole appearance is different, furniture, household utensils all are diverging from the sort in Blekinge. For it is a long way from south and to north, and Swedes do not live close to each other. They are spread over this country, equal in length to half of Europe, and thus with equal difference between Dalarna and south Sweden as between Pomerania and Vienna. The feeling is one of travelling to a foreign country, when one arrives at the far north, there soaring mountain white with deep snow drifts grow and the northern lights sparkle in the cold winter nights’ (page 21)

The vivid reconstruction is enough to set him reminiscing that ‘It was as though I was by Mora parish trees’. The Moragården was bought in 1885 and was one of the opening exhibits suggesting a key role for Darlecarlian culture at that stage. He remarks how Dalarnese folk retain dress and customs that have been long since forgotten elsewhere. Indeed Hazelius hired girls from Dalarna in folk costume to staff his early exhibits. But it is distance and diversity that are the main message of his story. Indeed still in Skansen’s promotional material the Moragården and its ‘fabodar’ represent upper Dalarna and make up two of six North Swedish landscapes, and one of the others is a Same camp.<sup>3</sup> It thus contrasts with groups of metropolitan East Swedish and Danish influenced south-west regions. However this amazing condensing of spatial diversity serves to accentuate the effect of these exhibits as static cameos. An effect increased by the spatial compression where the Mora exhibit is coupled with a ‘fabodar’ summer farm, which as the guide notes in reality be several days removed (figure 1) while the main farm buildings were assembled from Malung and Ostnor. Thus the Moragården, comprising several buildings dating from the sixteenth to nineteenth century (a main dwelling from the eighteenth century, stables from 1660, several from the sixteenth century and with one barn from 1320 making it the oldest in Skansen) is described in the 1998 guide as:

Despite the living quarters and cowhouse being of relatively recent date, [late nineteenth century] the farmstead in its entirety provides a good picture of what a farm in the province of Dalarna looked like during the Vasa period [sixteenth century] and how they survived in these tracts until the 20th century (Guide Skansen Moragården, 1998 p22-3)

It currently aims to represent how a family in Dalarna might have lived in the nineteenth century (<http://www.skansen.se/hgt/index.htm>). The narrative and exhibit thus compress up to six hundred years of social change and development into the category of ‘timeless’ and unchanging tradition

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<sup>3</sup> The range of landscape types and their groupings can be viewed on the Skansen website, <http://www.skansen.se/gardar.htm>. Bergslagen in Lower Dalarna is a separate part of the museum.

that apparently ended. Senses of temporal dynamism are suppressed and the presentation of regional types tends to confirm the notion of holistic, separate and coherent regional local cultures.

## **Nationalised Interpretation**

However as I have tried to suggest the sense of regionality is as much an artefact as all the accumulated material culture. I am not seeking to deny regional variation but to stress that its interpretation is by no means uncontested. Thus Skansen's very physicality works to solidify notions of regions – after all the buildings, in their materiality serve not only as representations, not only as metonyms of larger wholes but as apparently incontrovertible evidence. But let us turn for a moment across the Øresund to Denmark and the Danish Open Air Museum (founded 1901), where in the words of its founder Bernard Olsen it aimed to:

‘give a picturesque and understandable image of our folk and provincial peculiarities, it should preserve the memory of former days, of the ways of life and thinking of our people in those times. By means of an understandable and captivating presentation it was to show, how our national characteristics have been formed by climate and the nature of our country under the continuous influence of European culture’ (Skougaard 1995, page 23)

Here again we have the notion of national character formed in the long durée through the interaction of people and land in a particular place. And the captivating presentation offers a glimpse into the world of the past common folk. Except if we head a few miles south a few years later into Germany we can find similar farm buildings in a museum created by Magnus Voss, where there they are described as exhibited many of the features of a Saxon archetype, only slightly corrupted and debased. In one the commonality is seen as Germanic, with ‘Danish elements’ as aberrations from this common stem; in the other the aberrations become the commonality of particular Danish genius in adapting to their place (Skougaard 1995). The same artefacts stand as tangible evidence of both.

My aim is not to arbitrate – because some interpretations are not supported as well as others. But rather to point out that all of these are subject to nationalising claims, and indeed are techniques for nationalising subjects through viewing them. Thus Hazelius's other foundation of the Nordic anthropology museum greets visitors with a statue of Gustav Vasa and the command ‘Warer Swenske!’ (Be Ye Swedish!). If we look at the map of Skansen itself at the extreme northern end, number 50 stands a lonely barn (Figure 10), dating to the fourteenth century and ornately decorated

it seems oddly underinterpreted. It is a lofthärbre – a raised barn – from Telemark, which happens to be in Norway. And at this point we can see the shadows of pan-Scandinavian regional museum that never developed. One that did not develop especially as Norway seceded from the Royal Union with Sweden in 1905.

Figure 10



But we can find the notion of touring regional diversity then turned out beyond the museum, as though Skansen becomes a script for practices of interpreting the wider country. Suddenly there is a shift towards precisely the aestheticised sense of landscape as something from which one is detached but one beholds as an object, as with the Swedish national cycling club advocating bicycle tours, where each guide covers a region with a characteristic picture of the front and the slogan ‘Know Your Sweden’. Similarly in Germany the so-called Lanstuhler theses sought to promote a patriotic touristic principle that wedded national ideals with an interest in beautification of the land (Applegate 2000, page 64). In the arts figures such as Ola Hansson, Selma Lagerlöf, Verner von Heidenstam and Gustaf Fröding articulated various regional identities. Though as we shall see the sense of detachment, that again suggests this is movement about the folk for urbanite visitors rather than a movement of the folk was an issue of controversy – with many attempts to get visitors back in touch with, especially, nature. There is then a perennial tension here between concrete and more abstract ways of relating to nature. The sense of a locale and a communal identity around

effectively mediaeval parishes is reinforced by this hembygd focus and has played a role in localist mobilisation and identification, resisting new civic categories (Ekman 1991).

The tension of particular and abstract comes through strongly in the nationalisation of folk culture. When at Carl Larsson's suggestion the Kvinnliga Allmänna Nationaldräktsföreningen (Women's General National Costume Society, founded 1902) wrote to (Prince) Gustav Ankarcrona as a prominent artist and folk promoter about selecting a national folk costume he replied that Sweden had none, and that borrowing one place's would inevitably produce discord. Instead he suggested inventing a new general Swedish one and offered his assistance in so doing, along with Larsson they developed a national costume in 1905. The costume is a clear invention, in a folkish style, that despite its purported generality, echoes those of Dalarna where both the artists were based. Its aim though was to recover a sense of virtuous, timeless Swedishness against the influence of modern, and French, fashion. The issue of the relationship of locality to nation is thus complex as we can see in the shifting scales of the term hembygd – where 'hem' or home can be local or national (Björkroth 1995). We can find parallel tensions in Germany, for instance, where Applegate charts the way that the Palatinate attempt to use a notion of regional homeland to foster a democratic sense of belonging at the provincial level at the close of the nineteenth century and then a greater absorption of 'heimat imagery' into a generalised national identity – when for instance local culture was reclassified as not being a distinct region and put together with formerly 'different' cultures (Applegate 2000).

## **Hembygd: Localism and regional identity**

August Strindberg is perhaps the most critical voice of some of this romanticisation of the regions, where at the start of his controversial *The Swedish People* (1882) he argued against the myth of a seamless development from an ancient Swedish culture. Looking at a heritage of folk dress and ballads he sceptically noted that the costumes in their present state are not especially old and the ballads are neither especially popular or even always Swedish with the songs written by "gentlemen" – 'not as we want to believe from workers out in field not the folk', and not uncommonly of foreign extraction. Likewise for Dalarna depicted as 'the original Swedish cradle and hearth' it was actually only established later than both Götaland and southern Svealand. An outsider reading the regional paeans might end up thinking that the "Swedish people are not a nation of multitudes but small tribes who live in an everlasting feud with each other and therefore impede origin and speedy development of the national.". So while Carl Larsson argued simply that :



"for the one who can love the whole must start by loving the part" Strindberg points to amore complex relationship. Highlighting the fabrication of tradition he alludes to modernisation stories that have tended to depict the creation of a national citizenry and a progressive movement away from concern with local affairs towards the national.

That there was a regional celebration is not in doubt. From its very launch, the 'Society for Preservation of Local Culture' (Hembygdsföreningen), in 1916, had some 200 branches while by 1920 there were some 2000 societies nationally. Even then the average membership of each was generally between 100-500. Scaling the numbers up we can suggest a national membership of 200,000 to 1 million out of a population then around 7 million. Currently there are 1600 associations and 1300 small scale village museums. Nor was this restricted to Sweden, in Germany less trend than a heimat mania (Confino 1997) swept the country while there was an international conference in Paris 1909, Stitgart 19212 and a parallel organisation Denmark (Skougaard 1995, page 34). In 1914 Karl Erik Forsslund's 'hembygdsvård' manual on preserving local natural and cultural environments, was published that ran to nine editions and by 1919 there was a new subject on school curriculum 'hembygds-kunskap' - 'local geography and history', with strong echoes of the British regional desire to produce citizens through knowledge of the locality. While mobilising the slippage between home and land at national and village scales the state hoped that:

'The potential contradiction between localism and patriotism was resolved by a synecdochic form of nationalism. A synecdoche treats a part (landscape, hembygd) for the whole (Sweden, nature), or the whole for the part. In spatial terms the unique character of every cultural region, hembygd or landskap, was at once confirmed and incorporated in a wider discourse of national coherence during a period of political turmoil, proletarianization, and intense commodification of rural and urban spaces.' (Mels 2002, page 138)

The success of this binding and the incorporation of the particular was not automatic. Thus if we read an account from the interwar years of the promotion of regional culture in Dalarna:

'During the height of the tourist season Dalarna gives the impression of being a province in which local patriotism is so emphasised that it overlooks the greater stream of Swedish history. This is perhaps because the stress laid on local antiquities, crafts and folklore has become the basis of a lucrative commerce... Yet underlying this ostentatious expression of the Dalarna cult the inhabitants have a deep regard for their

beautiful region and strong desire that its customs should not be forgotten'. (Edwards 1940, page 50)

Half a century earlier his trip to Skansen led Geijerstam to recall watching the folk customs around Lake Siljan in Dalarna and remark that the people there 'view themselves, more than country folk in one or another province, and rather as a nation in themselves' (Geijerstam 1892, page 23). What I want to outline is how ten local images, and especially local images of Dalarna come to stand for the larger nation. In part the situation of Dalarna is articulated through the region's historical role in supporting King Gustav Vasa in his campaign for the throne of an independent Sweden – with the region thus scripted into teleological nationalist historiographies. But more generally, there seems a strong parallel with Alon Confino's analysis of Germany, where he stresses neither the national or local but their 'meeting point – where antagonism and friction reconciled in the end through a process of remembrance and forgetting in the Heimat idea and an image of the German locality, region and nation' (Confino 1997, page 9)

So if we unpack the quote from Edwards a little further we find already Darlecarlian identity is articulated in the context of a national indeed international frame – 'at the height of the tourist season'. It is already externally oriented at least in part. Indeed far from being an isolated organic culture in communion with the land. A more scrupulous investigation suggests Dalarna, and other regional cultures, were very much part of the flows of contemporary culture. Hazelius could recruit Darlecarlian women to be docents in Skansen because many already came seasonally to Stockholm to find work. The painter Anders Zorn who became one of the great champions of the area, was born in Mora, but was the illegitimate child of a bottle factory manager in Stockholm where his mother worked. In other words far from being cut off, the area was part of cyclical patterns of labour migration. So let us now turn to how this regional culture was imagined and how it gained such centrality to the national imaginary.

### ***Typicality and iconicity: Dalarna as national symbol***

That it gained centrality is clear from adverts throughout the century that used female figures in folk costume – especially unmarried girls from the Siljan village of Rattvik—to symbolise Swedishness to sell tobacco, agricultural machinery and coffee among many other items. (Rosander 1988, pages 107, 120; Hamrin and Norling 1997). Moreover the tourist symbol of Sweden became the little, usually red, Dala wooden horse. The horse was popularised by being used a symbol at the New York World Exhibition in 1939. This raises two points. First, that in such exhibitions the layout of

national pavilions echoes the Skansen layout of regions and again turn them into spectacles for an outside audience. Second, the horse might equally be a symbol of the acumen of the handicraft association at Nusnäs near Mora that sent 10,000 to be offered as souvenirs, suggesting that ‘craft’ production was a good way along to industrialisation (Brück 1988). The horse continues to be significant and familiar national symbol (figure 11). The question is how did a set of local relationships putatively between people, culture and land come to be so transportable – how did this landskap become a nationalised landscape (Applegate 2000). How did it come to pass that in 1862 the journalist P F Barford could write ‘as the Capitol was to Rome, the Acropolis to Athens, so is Dalarna to Sweden’.

FIGURE 11



Well first we have to say it was *not* because Dalarna was ‘typically Swedish’. Although by 1937 Gustaf Näström published ‘Dalarna som Svenskt ideal’ and ‘Today to have a chalet or house painted with the red paint of Falun [the copper mining town of Dalarna] is an absolute incarnation of everything Swedish’ (Rosander 1988), Dalarna in many ways is untypical. The distinctiveness comes both in the preservation of folklife and the Nordsvensk pattern of summer and winter farmsteads, but also an almost unique pattern of landholdings. The land tenure was fragmented through a system of multiple inheritance - including women (Sporrong, Ekstam et al. 1995, page 112). The result was small holdings being continually dissassembled and reassembled through deaths and marriages - indeed the ‘parstuga’ farmhouse, typical of the area, was able itself to be

able to be split in two and moved. The inheritance system survived several phases of land reform through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and continued up till the 1960s in some cases. The result is that the social system of Dalarna was possibly, and certainly could be presented as, egalitarian and marked by relatively little social differentiation.<sup>4</sup> The peculiarity of Darlecarlian agriculture was thus well suited to adoption by groups trying to promote a Swedishness founded in an ethics of equality. It also harks back to the mobilisation of the idea of *landskap* as collective commonlaw heritage, as opposed to elite rules (Olwig 1996).

This anomalous system and the regional peculiarities attracted the attention of the British Le Play Society, that focused precisely on studying the land, culture and people interactions we saw Le Play highlighted at the start of the paper. Thus their expedition to Dalarna was interested in an inherited peasant tradition which was seen as ‘unaffected’ by large scale industrial development in Southern Dalarna, with the other parts of the province remaining ‘true’ to its ‘agricultural tradition’ (Edwards 1940, page 7). Conventional accounts thus separate ‘Lower’ Dalarna as the industrial area below the East and West Dal confluence, and either calling all the remainder Upper or distinguishing the mountainous tract towards the Norwegian border (Upper) and the most symbolically important area around Lake Siljan (Middle).<sup>5</sup>

‘The lowlands which surround the Lake [Siljan] support numerous peasant communities and other thriving settlements where the forest has been cleared. The mode of life evolved by the inhabitants during many centuries of occupation, while being typical of Sweden, also exhibits distinctive features of its own. It is indeed the adaptation of the life and activity of these people to the particular features of the local environment that the real distinctiveness of Middle Dalarna is to be found.’ (Edwards 1940, page 5)

Why this environment and this set of traditions were so amenable to nationalised interpretation can then be accounted for partly in the ‘democratic’ and relatively equal nature of land distribution and social differentiation which appealed to the Oscanian state and progressive intellectuals as an inclusive model of Swedishness, as opposed to more stratified societies in southern Sweden. Moreover it could be claimed as ‘really Swedish’. Geijerstam thus identified this area as the place where Swedishness started and Danishness ended— capturing both the sense of the historical role of

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<sup>4</sup> Edwards (1940:24-5), using 1932 data, recorded 98% of holdings less than 10ha, with 48% of holdings smaller than 2ha and 24% under 1ha.

<sup>5</sup> Confusingly, the Skansen nomenclature classes both the last two (Middle and Upper) identified by Edwards, as ‘Upper’.

Dalarna in supporting Vasa, but also geographically Dalarna is outside the cultural regions influenced by Denmark (Geijerstam 1892). It's regional position as the southern end of 'Nordsverige', just north of the shieling line with fabodars and north Swedish farmstead patterns, located it sufficiently far from Danish influence to claim to represent distinctive Swedish attributes, but not so far north as to be associated with the denigrated and 'alien' Same culture. It's symbolic, geographic centrality is evident when the opening of a regional account is:

'Dalarna lies almost entirely between the latitudes 60° and 62° North, thus occupying a position transitional between the exclusively forested regions of northern Sweden and the more highly cultivated and industrial parts to the south.' (Edwards 1940, page 5)

The position is oddly then also one of instability - a regional idea forged out of a point of transition. In some senses chosen for what it is not and certainly framed by this context of other regions. However overwhelmingly the material mobilised was an arguably still extant and visible folk culture. This in itself set Dalarna outside the mainstream of Sweden in that it persisted in wearing folk costume (figure 12). Alongside this went craft activity – from wooden horses to watches in Leksand to knives in Mora. Now we should note this is being interpreted by folk promoters as craft work, but could equally be often called proto-industrialisation. However, as collectors would point out the folk costume varied from village to village. Infact Dalarna's internal variation is remarkable, leading the Erik Axel Karlfeldt, winner of the Nobel Prize for literature 1931, to remark that "Dalarna är en enhet av mångfalter" (Dalarna is unity out of diversity). And the drive for celebrations of very local can be seen in the rise of more than 50 hembgydsgårdar in Upper Dalarna by the second world war (Figure 13). Zorn's gammalgård (site 24) is perhaps the largest but we can also observe the house of memories of Adelborg in Gagnef (7) (1905), the preserved Holengårdar created by Ankarcrona at Tällberg (1910) (18), or Leksand (17) by Jones Matts Persson (1899) with many more following in the interwar years. Of a Swedish total of 40 local preservation societies in 1915 Dalarna boasted 13. (Anderson 1978; Rosander 1988, page 127). The reason for the explosive growth can be seen in the sense that these commemorate the ordinary and everyday life and its celebrate it as special, and thus not having a museum is tantamount to announcing that there is nothing special or worth celebrating in the locality (Confino 1997). What this means is the celebration of precisely the local variations within supposedly a singular cultural region - so we picture here Rattvik costume, while just some 30 kilometres away, in Gagnef, Otilia Adelborg christened the children her 'yellow ducklings' due to their rather different traditional dress.

FIGURE 12



FIGURE 13



Also there was a style of wall decoration called ‘kurbitts’ – originally ‘rose paintings’ – that took flower motifs or biblical stories and translated them into local idioms. This wall decoration was picked up by the national romantic artists, and also by the equivalent of an Arts and Crafts movement. It was seen both as a conservative aesthetic and as an alternative modern aesthetic rather than industrial functionalism. In the list of celebrated hembydgsårdar, already we see a range of names of artists, who came to the area to be inspired. Indeed, we have seen Anders Zorn returning to Mora in 1886, Carl and Carin Larsson in Sundborg, Ottilia Adelborg first visited Gagnef in 1893, after visiting Skansen, then stayed there in 192 and from 1908, and Ankarcröna was based at Tällberg from 1890, living in the old buildings he would bequeath as the museum. These are just the well known figures since in 1900 there were 43 artists in a colony at Leksand.

We can look at the role of these metropolitan culture brokers in fashioning folk culture if we look at Anders Zorn. Upon his return to Mora, he set about preserving and revitalising the folk culture he recalled from his childhood as best he could. One of his foremost contributions was through a series of paintings of folk life. These moved from the national romantic style to offer a vision, not of scenery, but the texture of folk life – as we noted producing an intimate portrait rather than a distanced observation. He ranged from the daily rituals of washing and cooking, through to the solitude of the shepherdess, the luminescent twilight of night at the midsummer's fair and alcoholic excess, through to the vivacity of the almost impressionistic paintings of dances. While these are not simply sentimental works, they are also far from transparent records drawn from life. Zorn used an old farmstead he bought in the nearby shieling of Gopsmor, one and a half Swedish miles away, as a rural retreat and as a studio.<sup>6</sup> He held events and painted the participants so these occurrences were to an extent staged. Equally, the slightly exoticising effect of these paintings is amplified by his focus on the feminised elements—continuing his studies of nudes, bathing and dressing. There is a slightly disconcerting sense of buying access to a normally private vision. An awkwardness worth noting since it encapsulates the way preservation was at least in part dominated by outsiders, viewing folk culture as an entity rather than those inside it for whom it was a living mutating range of practices.<sup>7</sup>

Zorn based his modern and manorial residence, with its own central heating and the fourth telephone in Mora, on his preserved maternal grandparents dwelling brought from Yvarden in Utmeland parish, and to which he added a studio in an old 'eldhus' (cookhouse) and erected a 'harbre' (barn) next door (Björklund 1972, page 17). He collected artefacts, while his wife Emma collected textiles, till in 1913 he recreated a farmstead on the outskirts of the village. After his death Emma continued this project and added a recreated fabodar and outlying buildings. The collection amounted to some 45 buildings, dating from the fourteenth century to the nineteenth. While Zorn's remembered childhood distends back into time immemorial, like most hembygdsgård in Dalarna, the majority of buildings came from the second half of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The ancient gammelgård thus forms a continuum stretching the lived times of recent generations into time immemorial. Alongside this went a school where Zorn hoped the presence of the old buildings would be both an educational and moral resource in teaching: 'to let young Dalarna people get an

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<sup>6</sup> Ironically the old Gopsmor was flooded by a reservoir, so the museum to Zorn has recreated his recreation of a summer pasture at a new location.

<sup>77</sup> One might also note the slightly earlier role played by the Swedish speaking elite of the Grand Duchy of Finland in promoting a Finnish culture in the struggle to assert a national identity. Löfgren, O. (1989). "The Nationalization of Culture." *Ethnologia Europaea* XIX: 2-23., Engman, M. (1995). Finns and Swedes in Finland. *Ethnicity and Nation Building in the Nordic World*. S. Tägil. London, Hurst & Company.



idea of the industrious life led by earlier generations while they were studying the theories of their own time, in simple houses from an earlier period.’ (Björklund 1972, page 18). Here we saw a less aesthetic and more active attempt to push engagement and contact and thus continue or recreate the link of people, land and culture. It is an approach that risks very quickly shading into creating the local culture it seeks to preserve.

## **Reinventing the local**

It is something of a commonplace to talk of invented traditions (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1989), and there are several that now are taken to characterise Dalarna. Thus most celebrated is the midsummer pole raising – which is now extended to last a week, and staggered between villages so that visitors may go from one village to another. The ceremony is typically located in the hembygdsgårdar, and is now a popular festival. So in Tallberg the Holengården hosts it and announces in its publicity that:

‘A celebrated tradition is ‘May pole’ raising on Midsummers eve. The May pole is adorned with plaited birch branches, other symbols like cockerels, and pennants, circular wreaths, hearts, twelve bouquets of flowers and pine cones. A midsummer arch composed of two tall birch trees permanently twisted together is in the foreground, with a flower bouquet, that greet travellers arriving at the park and welcome the visitor’

Let us note then each village has its own symbols, but also the permanence of the symbols. As at the Moragården in Skansen which is the scene of almost national midsummer festivities, and has the midsummer pole raised permanently. Indeed so iconic is this, that when taking a group of students around Skansen and trying to find the direction to the Mora farm, they all oriented themselves by simply looking for the Midsummer Pole. In Dalarna itself though the ritual was ‘reinvigorated’ by Anders Zorn who also organised folk music competitions—and two of whose most famous paintings are of folk dances and returns from a midsummer dance. We can look at his influence in staging folk music festivals that bred new interest, so that now thousands attend festivals in Rattvik, Falun and the Visfest in Borlänge. Since 1969 there has been a music festival for high summer all round Lake Siljan which celebrates the inspiration and composition of artists such as Hugo Alfvén, Anders Zorn, Oskar Lindberg, Erik Axel Karlfeldt och Lille Bror Söderlindh in promoting local folk music and dance. Carl Gudmussen stimulated a revival of Dalarna long and short horn blowing by collecting songs and melodies. In fact now in the National Atlas series the area is marked out by little accordion symbols (Helmfrid, Spöröng et al. 1994), and it has the

highest density of folk musicians (more than 21 per 10,000 inhabitants) in the country in what has been called the 'Polska belt' of central Sweden (Alsdskogius 1993, page 13). Zorn and Knis Karl Aronsson both played a role in commissioning 'traditionally' carved and decorated timber dwellings, and promoting courses to perpetuate the skills needed. The latter also revived the local custom of rowing to church, recalled by Geijerstam:

'Clocks ring out for matins, and towards the shore, down the slope from the church around which stand noble spreading beeches, with a wealth of long, soft, waving branches, rare for that part of Dalarna, oarsman three long boats, packed with passengers and crew in their multi-coloured, white and red, gaudy festive costumes. I remember, how they long boats scrunch into the sand, how the crowd pours out up the hill-slope into church, how the clock chimes fell silent and church door closes. Afterwards tumbling out in the most comical spectacle past my eyes. That mass of people, who had filled the capacious parish church, the loud songs their plump, prosperous excited faces, hot and eventually the universal sleepiness during the lengthy sermon and also smell of onion which the women foolishly carry for snacks bring tears to their eyes. And all these memories are brought are coupled with visions of Siljans lofty mountains standing against the bright blue sky.' (Geijerstam 1892, page 22)

However, by 1910 the custom had fallen into more or less into abeyance. Knis Karl Aronsson revived it in 1936 as a spectacular race between parishes – something that was certainly new. However, one cannot lightly suggest these institutions play with an idealised image of the past – when many have a formidable commitment to preservation. Indeed, through much of the century the hembygdsföreningen have played an active role in codifying and defining what is 'authentic' vernacular construction within the planning process (Björkroth 1995). It seems inadequate to use definitions of authentic and inauthentic that contain problematic assumptions and presuppositions about the folk culture itself being unchanging and localised.

## ***Concluding remarks***

What I have tried to show through the detailed study of Dalarna is that far from being an organic isolated entity, regional cultures tend to be created reflexively through active interventions. The

case raises many issues about whether something are 'fakelore' or indeed whether if the church boat race has been taking place for 75 years whether it is not now established itself as a tradition. May be a better phrase is public historicism. Certainly the effect of these historic festivals and recreations has been to traditionalise new rituals, that is to express them in an historic idiom, as well as preserve old ones (Ekman 1991, page 127). However, does this make these regional identities and cultures inauthentic? Or might we say it is the starting point of seeing local cultures as bonded, unreflexive and undynamic that inevitably makes innovation seem alien.

In fact it may that we have a reflexive loop of regional cultural performance. If we look at 'doing regional culture' in Sweden through Dalarna, we can find that folk costume was in decline in the nineteenth century but that people often wore it to please the tourist market. Does this make it inauthentic? Certainly some pastiches were invented for tourists but is the rest a difference of staging? If since 1891 Dalarna folk have at times been paid to appear in costume to curate their culture, does this mean the role of costumed 'curator' is now in itself a traditional part of Darlecarlian culture. In other words is the performance of tradition, rather than just tradition, the regional culture of Darlecarlia. And now, given its national and international audience, given the return of urbanites to summer cottages, to what extent is this about a region in itself than the aesthetics of a region? I would suggest that looking at the performance of these cultures starts to move away from the pitfalls of essentialising notions of links between people, land and culture.

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