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CULTURAL HERITAGE IN SWEDEN IN THE 2000s

CONTEXTS, DEBATES, PARADOXES

ABSTRACT

The article analyses the contexts, arguments and paradoxes of thinking about cultural heritage in Sweden of the 2000s when the topic achieved broad societal relevance in traditional media, internet fora, political communication and academic research. The discussion focuses on four themes: the normative criticism paradigm that has been increasingly influential in the heritage sector in recent years and the tensions and conflicts it provokes, recent heritage work on and with the until the last two decades silent ethnic minority Romani Travellers, the continuing media polemic around the Sweden Democrats and its heritage policies, and the heritage debate initiated by journalist and China expert Ola Wong in 2016. The analysis builds on projects and publications featuring heritage professionals, academics, NGO people and professionals with other kinds of cultural capital working in the heritage sector, as well as on illustrative debates and interviews in the mass media. The debates are often heavily polarized, interwoven with positions in other politically loaded issues such as globalization, migration and integration, and laden with questions of the legitimacy and authority of political and institutional actors.

Key words: Sweden, cultural heritage, debates, Sweden Democrats, Romani Travellers

INTRODUCTION

Viewed from an outsider's perspective, the ways of dealing with heritage in contemporary Sweden differ significantly from what can be observed in other European countries, especially in Central European ones. The geographical distance between Poland and Sweden is not that big, both countries are EU members and participants in numerous international heritage bodies, but the logic, priorities and products of heritage work in Sweden in many cases appears unconventional and needs to be explained in more detail.

Consider three very recent examples. In April 2017, the Swedish government decided to refrain from the nomination of the presented suggestions of Swedish immaterial cultural heritage for UNESCO's heritage lists. A dignitary from the Department of Culture commented upon the decision in the following manner: *Quite often, it is difficult to argue that a particular heritage or a particular tradition would be more important or more significant than some other. We think that, at present, there is no reason to do to order them in this kind of value hierarchy.*¹ Another example concerns preparations before the inauguration of the Viking Museum in Stockholm's downtown. Despite the fact that Vikings have been a trademark of Sweden for almost a century, the establishment of a modern museum that would attract numerous foreign tourists and domestic visitors to the Swedish capital has not been a priority until now. A journalist who was allowed to see some exhibits before the official opening reported about a masterly done wax figure of a Viking whose physical features correspond to a reconstructed DNA-profile. He writes: *The Viking happened to be male. With reddish thick wavy hair brushed back and goatee, he looks like [...] well, like a quite stereotypical Viking. 'I can already see the criticism waiting for me,' says [...] one of the museum's creators. 'It is a cliché image of the Viking.' But he is not a representation of the Vikings, not a type, he represents only himself.*² Yet another example is about plans to install "Stolpersteine"³ in memory of the Holocaust victims in Stockholm. This project was put on ice in 2007 and 2010, but in 2017 the "Stolpersteine" were finally approved by the Stockholm municipality. The decision to mark several places in Stockholm as sites of the Holocaust commemoration, despite the well-known fact that Sweden was not a site of the genocide, brought much criticism. Some Swedish debaters, among them representatives of Jewish organizations, were scandalized by what they perceived as the effort to create 'fake' memories

¹ C. Gustafsson, "Inga svenska traditioner på Unescos listor över kulturarv", Sveriges Radio, 11 April 2017, at <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=478&artikel=6669759&utm_source=dlvr.it&utm_medium=twitter>, 20 June 2017.

² C. Daun, "Vikingens rätta ansikte: 'Alla var inte vedervärdiga'", *Svenska Dagbladet*, 18 April 2017, at <<https://www.svd.se/vikingens-ratta-ansikte--alla-var-inte-vedervardiga>>, 20 June 2017.

³ "Stolpersteine", literally 'stumbling stones', is an art project by the German artist Gunter Demnig. This is a cobblestone-size mini-monument mounted in pavement and bearing an inscription with names and life dates of victims of Nazi extermination policies. Since 1992, over 56,000 "Stolpersteine" have been installed in 22 European countries.

and capitalize on the tragedy of European Jewry for city-branding purposes.⁴ In a nutshell, these cases exemplify the different problems the heritage sector faces in Sweden. However, what makes them comparable is a noticeable uncertainty about who are the targeted audiences and, consequently, what the suggested heritage product should epitomize. A corresponding problem concerns the diverse stakeholders and custodians of heritage, a problem that eventually affects the quality of the heritage product. These difficulties may be a side-effect of the transitional period accompanying the creation of new visions of heritage, but may also turn out to be a new normality.

Without trying to paint an all-encompassing picture of the recent public debate on heritage, this article will focus on broader contexts, main lines of argument and some paradoxes of thinking about heritage in contemporary Sweden. The period in focus is the dynamic 2000s, when against the background of epochal global events (the war on terrorism, the growing political polarity of the post-Cold War world, the global economic crisis, rise of radical right-wing movements, mass migration etc.), heritage emerged as a topic of broad societal relevance in the traditional media, internet fora, political communication and academic research. In Sweden, the intensity of the recent heritage-related debates might indicate a growing concern about the impact of globalization on the Swedish welfare model, its national specificity and democratic institutions. It may also give clues as to the transformation of the country's cultural field, and help to estimate its current constellations of power.

In a similar vein, the recent vivid media polemic not only says quite a deal about the internal logic of heritage-making in the Swedish context, but also reveals the general sensitivity of the heritage domain to international contexts and changing trends of national politics. We can get a clue about the gamut of conceptualizations of heritage as a broadly defined *cultural practice about cultural practice*⁵ in a particular national case. Besides, we will be able to distinguish more specific political-ideological currents and detect struggles in the field of power that craft specific visions of heritage. With some exceptions,⁶ the latter aspect has been under investigated, as academic literature usually brings to the fore policies, institutional backgrounds and internal motivations of heritage claims, without explaining the more complex ideational contexts of change or stability. Hence, this study intends to fill this gap to some extent by sketching a broader picture of the recent developments in the domain of heritage in Sweden.

Our ambition to make sense of the contemporary discussion on heritage in Sweden inevitably leads us to the issue of the actors participating in the debate as well as the contexts and rationale of their statements. For this purpose, we suggest extracting useful arguments concerning institutional logics and fields of power. Against the backdrop

⁴ D. Korn, "Skammens stenar", *Focus. Sveriges Nyhetsmagasin*, 3 March 2017, at <<https://www.fokus.se/2017/03/449082/>>, 20 June 2017.

⁵ P. Aronsson, L. Gradén (eds.), *Performing Nordic Heritage. Everyday Practices and Institutional Culture*, Farnham 2013, p. 4.

⁶ E.g. J. Lundberg, *Det sista museet. Reflektioner om identitetspolitik, kultur & integration*, Stockholm 2016.

of these theoretical suggestions, we will proceed with an analysis of several resonant debates that have brought the issue of heritage into the limelight.

FIELDS OF POWER AND THE INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS OF HERITAGE-MAKING

Any definition of heritage is a difficult (and some even say vain) enterprise. Some analysts conclude that neat academic definitions of heritage inevitably straightjacket and undermine its ability to function as a ‘convenient shorthand’.⁷ While theoretical debates about the role, scope and characteristics of heritage pervade the international academy and international heritage bodies, on the national level systematic thinking about heritage is congruent with national cultural politics, memory politics and democratic participation. A resonant public polemic triggered simultaneously by several opinion-makers may be highly instrumental in clarifying the reasons, dynamics and mechanisms of strong collective preoccupation with heritage in certain periods. Moreover, the outcomes of public discussions in this matter may have long-lasting effects on the legitimacy and positioning of various institutional and individual actors engaged in heritage work.

It would be an oversimplification to state that the opinions about heritage circulating in a contemporary society are a direct outcome of political directives and party politics. While refracted through the lens of national cultural policies, popular ideas on heritage are also indicative of the logics generated by supranational actors and transnational institutions. Nevertheless, visions of heritage relate to national political discourses in plenty of ways. Much points to the fact that heritage in Sweden grew into a significant public issue as its mobilizing potential became re-discovered in the new political circumstances of the 2000s, about which we will return to in subsequent pages. To frame the following discussion theoretically, it should be stipulated from the very outset that, similarly to the notion of culture, heritage is a stake of competition in several fields, primarily the artistic and intellectual fields. However, heritage brings to the fore what may be conveyed to the future generations in the shape of institutionally selected, approved and curtailed versions of culture. Without necessarily being intentionally politicized, heritage thus becomes instrumental in struggles over the definition of social classifications (included/excluded, modern/outdated, native Swede/migrant) and attains a political significance as a node structuring symbolic hierarchies. Heritage thereby functions as an instrument of (dis)empowering groups and organizations with various ideological outlooks.

In our opinion, it makes sense to focus on the empowering qualities of heritage resulting primarily from its normative quality, flexibility and engagement with diversity. Laurajane Smith emphasizes all these aspects when she writes that *Heritage can be un-*

⁷ M.L. Sørensen Stig, J. Carman, “Introduction: Making the Means Transparent: Reasons and Reflections”, in *idem* (eds.), *Heritage Studies. Methods and Approaches*, London–New York 2009, p. 12.

derstood as one of a range of specific resources of power that is drawn on to validate or invalidate claims for recognition of diversity or to maintain misrecognition and indifference to diversity and thus help maintain political marginalization and injustice. In this rendering of the politics of recognition, claims to identity are contextualized within historical and contemporary acknowledgements of inequity to make claims for parity in policy negotiations over the distribution of material resources. The assertion of moral worth and self-esteem is also fundamental in this process. [...] In applying these concepts to heritage, I suggest that self-recognition by individuals and collectives as either the inheritor of privilege or of marginalization might be understood as a first step in the playing out of either the seeking of recognition for yourself or of the granting of recognition to others.⁸

This argument supports the view of heritage as a valuable asset in the struggle for symbolic dominance that takes place in the field of power. Pierre Bourdieu describes fields as metaphorical arenas of engagement and struggle, arenas where various actors with diverse resources confront each other to win the right to define institutional logic and stakes in certain domains, in particular in the domain of culture and cultural politics. The success or failure of their performances depend on types and proportions of particular resources (more specifically, cultural capital, social capital, economic capital and, eventually, symbolic capital) they can mobilize. According to Bourdieu, *field of power* [is ...] *the system of positions occupied by the holders of diverse forms of capital which circulate in the relatively autonomous fields which make up an advanced society.*⁹ The diversity of capital mobilized in the symbolic struggles correlates with eventual plurality of principles of hierarchization¹⁰ or, in Thornton's terminology,¹¹ institutional logics operating in the field of power. In translation to the heritage problematic, this means that heritage work engages with various aspects of democratic pluralism, cultural diversity and claims on cultural custodianship. Quite expectedly, issues of plurality, diversity and power are also constantly present in the public debates addressing heritage.

In the 2000s, the nexus of institutional and normative plurality, cultural diversity and empowerment became the heart of the heritage debate in Sweden. Unlike in Poland, where cultural domination has for a long time been a prerogative of the intelligentsia, and cultural capital transmitted by intelligentsia families became a universal demo-

⁸ L. Smith, "‘We Are... We Are Everything’: The Politics of Recognition and Misrecognition at Immigration Museums", *Museum & Society*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2017), p. 71.

⁹ L.J.D. Wacquant, "From Ruling Class to Field of Power: An Interview with Pierre Bourdieu on La Noblesse d'État", *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 10, no. 3 (1993), p. 20, at <<https://doi.org/10.1177/026327693010003002>>.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹¹ P.H. Thornton, *Markets from Culture. Institutional Logics and Organizational Decisions in Higher Education Publishing*, Stanford 2004; P.H. Thornton, W. Ocasio, M. Lounsbury, *The Institutional Logics Perspective. A New Approach to Culture, Structure and Process*, Oxford 2012; P.H. Thornton, C. Jones, K. Kury, "Institutional Logics and Institutional Change in Organizations: Transformation in Accounting, Architecture, and Publishing", *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, vol. 23 (2005), pp. 125-170, at <[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0733-558X\(05\)23004-5](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0733-558X(05)23004-5)>.

cratic resource,¹² in Sweden the custodianship and legitimation of heritage has always been a more ambivalent issue. Historically, several types of institutional logics defined cultural politics and the subordinated sector of heritage in different constellations over different periods. Until recently, a relative stability of heritage discourses and practices in Sweden was ensured by a prevalence of cultural-professional, bureaucratic and democratic logics.¹³ Despite path-dependence and a general consensus on the importance of these logics for the heritage domain, their combination is far from unproblematic, as each of them has its own objectives and legitimation strategies that often conflict with each other. Cultural-professional logic that stresses the importance of cultural products of high quality and gives the upper hand to expert (professional, artistic and academic) judgement is often on a collision course with a democratic logic that stipulates the equal participation of citizens and encourages public co-creation of cultural assets. Each of these logics, in their turn, may come into conflict with bureaucratic logic that focuses on implementation of political decisions, obedience to rules and maintenance of hierarchies.

CULTURAL POLITICS AND HERITAGE WORK IN SWEDEN: CONTEXTS AND GENERAL TENDENCIES

Since the end of the 1990s, the dominant position of cultural-professional and bureaucratic logics has been seriously challenged. While the left-leaning cultural politics in the 1970s and 1980s rested on principles of the centralized distribution of funding and protection of culture against commercialization, with Sweden's membership in the EU (1995) and periods of center-right rule, the idea of culture as a factor of regional development and economic growth won the day.¹⁴ This, in turn, implied the activation of management and market logics in defining the rationale of cultural politics and heritage work. Such a shift was a result of several factors that disturbed the relative balance in the field of cultural politics. Some of these factors were connected to socio-political developments in Sweden, while others pertained to ideational trends of transnational, pan-European or global character.

A global-wide development reverberating in the heritage debates on national and regional levels is the changing status and quality of elites coming up with claims to

¹² T. Zarycki, R. Smoczyński, T. Warczok, "The Roots of the Polish Culture-Centered Politics: Towards a Non-Purely-Cultural Model of Cultural Domination in Central and Eastern Europe", *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 31, no. 2 (2017), pp. 360-381, at <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325417692036>>.

¹³ J. Svensson, K. Tomson, "Institutionell förändring på det kulturpolitiska fältet", in eadem (eds.), *Kampen om kulturen. Idéer och förändring på det kulturpolitiska fältet*, Lund 2016, p. 295; B. Jacobsson, "Stabilitet och förändring: om kulturpolitikens kringelikrokar under fyra decennier", in J. Svensson, K. Tomson (eds.), *Kampen om kulturen...*, pp. 49-70.

¹⁴ B. Jacobsson, "Stabilitet och förändring...", pp. 49-70; T. Möller, *Svensk politisk historia. Strid och samverkan under tvåhundra år*, Lund 2015.

cultural authority and thus altering the existing status quo in the field of power (compare, for instance, the problematic concerning 'escape of elites',¹⁵ or 'anywheres vs somewheres'¹⁶). The traditional role of cultural experts originating from bureaucratic and academic sectors is increasingly being challenged both from above (i.e., by economic and political powers) and from below (by heritage activists and opinion-makers from all walks of life). However, viewed from the global perspective, the most significant conceptual/ideological trends detectable in the heritage discourse and practices of present-day Sweden are neoliberalism, normative criticism and multiculturalism in conjunction with universal discourses of human rights and recognition. In the 2000s, these developments gained momentum in the West, and most obviously in the EU where they correlate with principles of the European normative conditionality.

The Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust and foundation of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance in 2000 were pivotal events signaling the ambitions of the Swedish state to obtain a position of influence in the ongoing Europeanization of historical narratives and create useful symbolic-political alliances. The realization of this initiative was especially important for Sweden, a country that did not experience either the German occupation or the Holocaust. The symbolic significance of the Holocaust was not only conveyed through a range of educational initiatives (like the Living History Forum) and exhibitions, but also by efforts to make it a tangible and permanent part of the Swedish public space.¹⁷ The recent initiative to install several 'stumbling stones' in memory of the Holocaust victims ("Stolpersteine") in Stockholm points in this direction. In the 2000s, the increased interest in the Jewish legacy was also reflected in the establishment of the Jewish Museum in Stockholm and granting Yiddish the juridical status of official minority language in Sweden.

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter of Regional or Minority languages ratified in 2000, were another step on the path of Europeanization of the Swedish politics. It was followed by the Swedish Law on minorities and minority languages adopted in 2000 and extended in 2010. Despite the support of these symbolic-political initiatives, by and large, much indicates that in the 'reluctantly European' latecomer Sweden¹⁸ Europeanization continues to be conceived primarily in terms of economic, administrative and partially political adjustment to the EU regulations.¹⁹ Europe is *accepted, but not prioritized*²⁰ in many important societal domains, and cultural politics and heritage work is one of them. Although Sweden is a diligent implementer of European policies and regulations, a deeper alle-

¹⁵ C. Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*, New York 1995.

¹⁶ D. Goodhart, *Road to Somewhere. The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics*, London 2017.

¹⁷ See: B. Törnquist-Plewa, "The Europeanization of the Memory and Heritage of the Second World War and the Holocaust in Sweden", in K. Kowalski, B. Törnquist-Plewa (eds.), *The Europeanization of Heritage and Memories in Poland and Sweden*, Kraków 2016.

¹⁸ T. Möller, *Svensk politisk historia...*, p. 260.

¹⁹ Ibid.; *SOU 2016:10 "EU på hemmaplan"*; J. Tallberg, N. Aylott, C. Bergström, *Europeiseringen av Sverige*, Stockholm 2010.

²⁰ J. Tallberg, N. Aylott, C. Bergström, *Europeiseringen...*, p. 137.

giance to European identity in the sphere of culture and education is practically non-existent.²¹ One of the clear indicators of such a state of affairs is, for example, the non-participation of Sweden in the European Heritage Label. Instead of Europe as a focal point of transnational identity, the broader public as well as cultural elites in Sweden traditionally refer to the Nordic countries (*Norden*) and to some extent to Scandinavia as a supra-national identity-generating discourse.²² This tendency may become more pronounced under the influence of two major pan-European developments affecting the country: the massive immigration of the 2000s that reached its culmination in 2015, and the accompanying growth of restorative nationalism. The ideological profile of the Sweden Democrats (SD), an anti-migration and Eurosceptic party, is interesting in many respects. In particular, in the 2000s, SD took a lead in the discussion on a national cultural canon and heritage, partly due to the negligence of this problematic by other parliamentary parties. We will come back to this detail later.

The necessity of the better integration of previous migrant populations and accommodation of newcomers, a growing concern with the declining quality of secondary education and a keener focus on national identity against the background of global cultural developments resulted in a zooming of interest on cultural politics and heritage work. A milestone event that defined Swedish cultural politics of the 2000s was the Investigation of Cultural Politics (Kulturutredningen) that was presented by the center-right Alliance government in 2009. Compared with the similar investigation presented by the Social Democratic government in 1974, several novelties were introduced and became the focus of a heated public debate. Three ideas were especially elevated: the role of culture as a factor of economic growth which is foregrounded in the EU cultural policy documents, the idea of culture management, and decentralization of decision-making in the sphere of cultural politics.²³ The articulation of these relatively new viewpoints in the Swedish context can be regarded not only as an adjustment to global cultural trends, but also as a spill-over effect of the EU's promotion of the so-called cultural and creative industries in the wake of Lisbon Strategy in 2000.²⁴ The next step on the way to adjustment of cultural-political visions is the recent Proposition about Cultural Politics (2017) that includes a Museum Law and changes in the Cultural Environment Law. This important initiative is driven by the Ministry of Culture where leading positions were presently embraced by the members of the Green Party (Miljöpartiet).²⁵ One of the most notable changes in the text of the proposition that was accepted by the

²¹ *SOU 2016:10...*

²² P. Aronsson, L. Gradén (eds.), *Performing Nordic Heritage...*

²³ J. Svensson, K. Tomson, "Institutionell förändring...", p. 12.

²⁴ E. Rindzeviciute, "Les liaisons dangereuses? Kultur och ekonomisk tillväxt i EU", in J. Svensson, K. Tomson (eds.), *Kampen om kulturen...*, p. 82.

²⁵ Miljöpartiet (the Green Party) has been a partner to the Swedish Social Democratic Party in the minority coalition government of Sweden since 2014. The party was founded in 1981 and presently focuses on environmental policies and climate change. In their party platform, Miljöpartiet elevates ideas of participatory democracy, ecological wisdom, social justice, children's rights, environment-friendly economy, nonviolence, equality and feminism, animal rights, self-reliance, freedom, and sustainability.

Parliament on May 31st 2017 is the systematic deletion of the word 'national' from the earlier phrase 'national cultural heritage'.

Before we proceed to the analysis of the Swedish debates on heritage that brought to the fore ethno-cultural diversity, the changing power balance in the domain of cultural work and a plurality of institutional logics, two important details should be stipulated. One is a surprising unanimity of views on cultural heritage that have been recently expressed by mouthpieces of the parliament parties in Sweden. When asked in 2014 by journalists of the Swedish Radio²⁶ about priorities in the field of heritage, practically all the established political parties, with the exception of the Greens and the *parvenu* SD, took up the issues of financing (more money to cultural activities, free entrance to museums) and accessibility of heritage through digitalization. Hence, the approach to heritage prevailing among the Swedish political establishment is developing along the intersection of two types of organizational logics: the democratic and the management ones. This is well in tune with visions of the leftist Swedish intellectuals who have dominated cultural debate in Sweden since the 1960s.²⁷ The Greens and the SD diverged from this general tendency by focusing on the content of heritage. While the former emphasized the democratization of cultural heritage by means of creative activities at heritage institutions and a focus on the cultural environment, the latter used the opportunity to stress the necessity of a national heritage foundation, a national cultural canon and increased support of organizations protecting Swedish national traditions. In the struggle for the definition of priorities in the field of heritage, the Greens presently have an obvious advantage as a party governing in coalition with the Social Democrats and supported by the Left Party, while the self-designated nationalist SD is not regarded by the political and cultural establishment as ideologically 'decent' and therefore meets obstacles in their cultural activities. Nevertheless, some reputed opinion-makers who represent the mainstream gamut of political opinions and who use to denounce SD for xenophobia, anti-migration propaganda and an exclusive view of the nation, have increasingly turned their criticism against what is claimed to be short-sighted heritage policies promoted by the Green Party. As one of them pointed out, *the right extremists' best friend is the Ministry of Culture led by the Greens.*²⁸

Another important detail that helps to shed light on the contradictions and ambiguity of the recent approach to heritage in Sweden is the institutional structure of heritage work. The official formulation presented on the website of the Swedish Heritage Board refers rather to 'cultural environmental work' (*kulturmiljöarbete*) that comprises all environments affected by human activities – buildings, industrial complexes, forest or mountain landscapes – as well as intangible components related to them, such as tra-

²⁶ "Partiernas förslag för kulturarvet", Sveriges Radio, 20 August 2014, at <<http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=478&artikel=5942868>>, 20 June 2017.

²⁷ J. Ljunggren, *Inget land för intellektuella. 68-rörelsen och svenska vänsterintellektuella*, Lund 2009.

²⁸ "Patrik Oksanen: MP:s kulturella beröringsskräck spelar högerextremisterna i händerna", *Dalarnas Tidningar*, 12 April 2017, at <<http://www.dt.se/opinion/ledare/patrik-oksenen-mp-s-kulturella-beroringsskrack-spelar-hogerextremisterna-i-handerna>>, 20 June 2017.

ditions and folklore.²⁹ This reflects a broad conceptualization of heritage corresponding with the UNESCO- and EU-promoted approaches that acknowledge the role of heritage as a resource for achieving sustainable development.³⁰ The interpenetration of the cultural problematics and environmental issues is also well in line with the visions of the Green Party, which has taken the lead in formulating the agenda for heritage work in Sweden in recent years. Thus, according to the Swedish Heritage Board, the range of actors in charge of the cultural environment work is extremely broad. It comprises all principal institutions such as regional and local governments, the churches, industries, universities, museums, various NGOs as well as authorities responsible for forestry, water supply, agriculture and traffic (see fig.1). Within such a broad institutional framework, cultural-professional logic risks losing its consolidating power, as expert knowledge of heritage professionals is expected to be dispersed in a broad institutional landscape. The thinness of the cultural-professional and bureaucratic arguments may be compensated, on the one hand, by opening the field of heritage to non-professionals and the wider public and, on the other hand, by leaving the ground to professionals without cultural credentials and specific cultural capital (managers, educators, consultants, investors, developers, communicators). The predominance of democratic, managerial and market logics in the field of heritage implies a different vector of the heritage work. The appeal, usability and openness of heritage for the broader public may be framed as a necessity for whole-sale solutions that it is expected will cater for the various societal groups and, besides, will be acceptable for every individual. This opens the field of heritage up for ‘popular’ ideological agendas that rely on democratic rhetoric and herald the emancipation of individuals and marginalized groups, but, as we will show further, in tandem with this it will disenfranchise significant categories of citizens and resurrect essentialist thinking about identities, communities and belonging. One of them is the so-called normative criticism.

In what follows we examine normative criticism in the heritage sector and identify who might be empowered and disempowered by the projects and publications referring to this normative-epistemological paradigm. We focus on some inconsistencies and paradoxes highlighted or being provoked by this paradigm, in particular, the tension between cultural diversity and the diversity of perspectives, views on what constitutes politics, and a discursive strategy we call the ‘essentialist boomerang’. We also scrutinize whether some of the declared aims of normative criticism, most importantly the inclusion of previously invisible or silenced groups and perspectives, could be achieved within other, less divisive frameworks. The discussion then continues with a review of the legacy of Romani Travellers, the continuing media polemic around SD, and the analysis of the heritage debate initiated by journalist and China expert Ola Wong in 2016. The

²⁹ Riksantikvarieämbetet (Swedish National Heritage Board), *Kulturarv*, 2015.

³⁰ “The Hangzhou Declaration: Heralding the Next Era of Human Development”, 2013, at <<http://www.unaavictoria.org.au/news-resources/the-hangzhou-declaration-heralding-the-next-era-of-human-development-see-mo/>>, 20 June 2017; Council of Europe, “Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society”, 2005, at <<http://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/199>>, 20 June 2017.

analysis builds on projects and publications featuring heritage professionals, academics, NGO people and professionals with other kinds of cultural capital working in the heritage sector, as well as on some illustrative debates or interviews in the mass media.

Fig.1. "Roadmap for actors involved in working on the cultural environment". The picture illustrates the all-embracing and reciprocal character of thinking about institutional responsibility for heritage in Sweden



Source: <http://www.raa.se/app/uploads/2016/05/Broschyr_Vision-för-kulturmiljöarbetet-till-2030_webb.pdf>, 20 June 2017.

NORMATIVE CRITICISM AND THE LOGIC OF (DIS)EMPOWERMENT IN THE HERITAGE SECTOR OF SWEDEN

In a report from 2016 on the role of cultural heritage work for social development, the Swedish National Heritage Board states that throughout the 2000s cultural heritage has increasingly *focused on identity, social cohesion and inclusion* and, consequently, on social hierarchies, ownership of heritages and the right to access such heritages.³¹ The report concludes that the emphasis on the heterogeneity of the past *has come to focus even more on identity and on questions about how people in the past saw their identities or which identity its traces represent. This sometimes might mean that legitimacy is being sought in the past for identities that are being manifested in society today.*³²

These arguments are well in line with normative criticism (*normkritik*), a specific theoretical and empirical framework stemming from the US academy that became endemic in the larger sector of cultural heritage in Sweden. Normative criticism promotes awareness of social norms that allegedly guide important social practices, and questions the production of normality and deviance with the ensuing social inequality. Normative criticism is therefore often discussed alongside such notions as intersectionality and identity politics. It places the focus not on individuals and groups perceived to be deviant from the norm, but rather on the hierarchies and the privileges of those upholding the norm. In the field of cultural heritage in Sweden, normative criticism therefore seeks to highlight the norms underpinning previously dominant conceptions of heritage and redirect attention to experiences of individuals and groups that were previously excluded or whose stories were earlier not distilled into cultural heritage. Among the perspectives most frequently included in the heritage politics of normative criticism are ethnic and sexual minorities, gender, contemporary migrants and refugees, the disabled etc. The rhetoric is thus about democracy, emancipation and participation. Hence, normative criticism provides a set of easily understood but also potentially divisive catchphrases for communication with NGOs and the wider public.

Normative criticism can be said to be fairly thin in terms of ideational content. Nevertheless, as it props up intersectionalist projects, including nexuses of state or regional bureaucracies, academia and the heritage institutions, it turns instrumental in producing the whole-sale solutions in the heritage sector. Here normative criticism enables emancipation and representation of previously silenced and invisible perspectives and identities. However, as we will argue, it risks leading to the sorting out and disempowerment of other ones. As will be demonstrated below, it introduces normatively loaded rhetoric to heritage work, often in form of binary oppositions of inclusion-exclusion, open-closed, tolerant-intolerant, and even good-evil. Consequently, many proponents of normative criticism tend to envision positions and participants of the debate in accordance with such binaries.

³¹ *Kulturarvarbetet i samhällsutvecklingen. Redovisning av regeringsuppdrag om omvärldsanalys och kunskapsöversikt avseende kulturarvsområdet. Rapport från Riksantikvarieämbetet*, Stockholm 2016, p. 41.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 43.

An article from 2016 on a website for museum professionals celebrating the advent of the new inclusive heritage paradigm and applauding the coming government proposition on cultural politics, refers to the two most important projects that have contributed to the spin-up of normative criticism in the heritage sector in recent years. It also exemplifies the rhetoric of well-positioned heritage professionals on the outlook of museums within the framework of normative criticism. While several contributors applauded the increased independence of museums promised in the proposition, one museum director expressed her doubts about the effect a renewed notion of cultural heritage might have on *SD and other nationalist forces*.³³ Although, as will be shown later, the Minister of Culture Alice Bah Kuhnke rejects allegations that she is trying to impose normative criticism from above, the article states explicitly that the museum professionals were enthused by the minister's earlier speech where she argued that it was time to include the dark pages, not only the bright ones, in the stories about Sweden. This idea echoes key notions associated with the Europeanization of memory emphasizing the need to tone down self-aggrandizing histories and confront difficult national pasts instead.³⁴ It was supported by the director of the Regional Museum in Kristianstad in the following terms: *The museums have focused on nostalgia and have therefore been exclusionary. But now there is a spirit where other groups insist on being making themselves heard and visible, groups whose history has not been written, e.g. the Roma, LGBT-persons and the disabled*.³⁵ In a similar vein, another museum director made it clear that Swedish museums need to showcase the stories they were earlier reluctant to address, although they should not substitute, but rather complement the ones already exhibited: *It is easy to pinpoint as cultural heritage (kulturmärka) a nice old house, but harder to tell the difficult parts of our Swedish history. The institutions really need to widen their scope of selection for what is highlighted. As a complement to the canonized image other aspects have to be showcased*.³⁶

In conclusion, the article quoted above elevates both key arguments of normative criticism and props up the political logic according to which the heritage institutions in Sweden are responsible for protecting heritage from being hijacked by SD: *Today more than 70 museums and organizations are forming a popular movement that shows that monocultural society has never existed. In reality, Sweden has always been heterogeneous, but what did not fit in the dominant historiography was silenced. Sweden Democrats' efforts to annex the notion of cultural heritage with rhetoric and threats, and claim a monocultural truth has been the immediate reason for many people to bring up a more realistic view of society*.³⁷

³³ F. Söderling, "Nu är kulturarvet en het fråga", Utställningsestetiskt Forum, 3 June 2016, at <<http://ueforum.se/16/163/163synpunkt.html>>, 8 June 2017.

³⁴ K. Kowalski, B. Törnquist-Plewa, "Heritage and Memory in a Changing Europe. Introductory Remarks", in *idem* (eds.), *The Europeanization...*, pp. 15-32.

³⁵ F. Söderling, "Nu är kulturarvet...".

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.*

The first emphatic and well-argued effort to question normative criticism and contemporary identity politics in the heritage sector was made by the literary scholar, writer and conservative public intellectual Johan Lundberg. In his book *The Last Museum* (2016)³⁸ he argues that the programmatic preoccupation with cultural diversity risks to undermine the diversity of perspectives, ideas and outlooks in the heritage sector. In his view, the different geographical, thematic and temporal foci of various museums have historically guaranteed a diversity of perspectives. Museums enabled the visitor to *step out of his contemporary role and meet an abundance of perspectives that differ from the contemporary's own*.³⁹ If all museums instead were champions of cultural or, rather, demographic, diversity as filtered through the prism of normative criticism it would amount to a reduced ideological diversity reflecting a restricted contemporary vision imposed on all exhibitions regardless of their focus. Lundberg doubts whether such a perspective would serve the task of inclusion and integration, which is advocated by the paradigm he criticises.⁴⁰ Although Lundberg's effort to oppose normative criticism and identity politics to would-be universalist aesthetics and ideals of high-quality art and literature is not necessarily convincing, his distinction between cultural diversity and diversity of perspectives is valuable.⁴¹

In Sweden of the 2000s, a striking feature of institutional discourse that supports and propagates normative criticism are the ubiquitous references to the role of the heritage sector in fighting forces accused of working for exclusion, in particular the policies of SD. This task is awarded a prominent place in the justifications for several recent heritage projects working in this paradigm, as well as in other prominent theoretical contributions to the paradigm.⁴² To some extent, we witness a situation where both SD and the adherents of normative criticism claim that the other side started politicizing heritage first. More often, as will be shown below with reference to the media polemics on the cultural politics of SD, heritage professionals and heritage activists critical of SD maintained that heritage is by definition political, and that it is the specific content of heritage politics that is at stake. Most explicitly this point was underlined in the intersectional projects "Disturbing Homogeneity" and "Norm, Nation and Culture". In several publications, Anna Furumark, the leader of the projects, concludes that heritage is always political, and thus can be used both to *create communities, to include and overcome differences and to exclude, shut out and create an us and them and draw boundar-*

³⁸ J. Lundberg, *Det sista museet...*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13. A similar argument is also sometimes made in heated Swedish discussions on immigration – those claiming to favour cultural diversity are often criticised for not respecting the diversity of opinions, e.g. the right to oppose or highlight problems with immigration. See e.g.: A. Johansson Heinö, *Gillar vi olika? Hur den svenska likhetsnormen hindrar integrationen*, Stockholm 2012.

⁴² See e.g.: A. Furumark (ed.), *Att störa homogenitet*, Lund 2013; A. Furumark, M. Eivergård (eds.), *När det stör*, Lund 2016; C. Hyltén-Cavallius, F. Svanberg (eds.), *Ålskade museum. Svenska kulturhistoriska museer som kulturproducenter och samhällsbyggare*, Lund 2015.

ies between people.⁴³ “Disturbing Homogeneity” thus sought to convince heritage professionals that no neutral position exists, that their sector is inherently political, and that there is a distinction between party politics, i.e. the struggle for political power of formal political parties, and ‘general politics’.⁴⁴ In the final project report, published as a book in 2016, she envisions a heritage politics that is inclusive, seeks to change existing societal norms and fights exclusionary nationalism.⁴⁵ However, eventually she repeats the binary opposition between good and bad heritage policies leading either to a victory for the inclusionary side or to the landslide of nationalists who would then proceed to use the heritage sector to further their exclusionary, essentialist, and anachronistic politics. The vision of the heritage field is here almost Tolkienesque, as it is presented as the scene of a fierce struggle between the good forces of openness and inclusion and the evil forces of rigid boundaries and exclusion.

A further indication of this binary thinking is the construction of the heritage field and the choice of opponents in key norm criticist publications as they exhibit examples of strongly negative reactions to their own or their colleagues’ previous work. As will be discussed below, resistance to normative criticism in the heritage sector is not limited to SD or other nationalist actors, and the reasons for taking such critical positions is hardly only a matter of intolerance and downplaying of diversity. However, practically all the negative reactions to “Disturbing Homogeneity” showcased by Furumark and Eivergård, stem from SD politicians and activists, *intolerant and nationalist environments on the web*⁴⁶ and populist, radical right and neo-Nazi internet publications.⁴⁷ Hyltén-Cavallius and Svanberg⁴⁸ analyze very vaguely defined ‘ultranationalist’ views on cultural heritage found on web forums, and not the least the reactions on such forums to various heritage initiatives advocating normative criticism. Despite the alarm about the prevalence of nationalism and exclusionary visions of heritage, very little reflection is given as to why this might be the case, and especially absent are considerations about whether some expressions of normative criticism could provoke such reactions. The specific discursive regimentation seeks legitimacy by focusing on the most radical opponents. Since publications supporting normative criticism are actually known and read in web forums such as Flashback, this choice might sometimes contribute to a polarization of debates on cultural heritage, and even in the long run help to foster a future backlash against the inclusion of minorities and previously silenced groups supported by normative criticism.

⁴³ C. Hyltén-Cavallius, F. Svanberg (eds.), *Älskade museum...*, p. 8.

⁴⁴ A. Furumark (ed.), *Att störa...*, p. 60. It is difficult not to notice here that this book itself, as well as other similar publications, is replete with calls to fight the heritage policies of Sweden Democrats.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁴⁷ A. Furumark, M. Eivergård (eds.), *När det stör*, pp. 86-103. The exception is a reference to journalist Marika Formgren’s critique in the liberal-conservative magazine *Axess*.

⁴⁸ C. Hyltén-Cavallius, F. Svanberg (eds.), *Älskade museum...*, ch. 2.

ESSENTIALISM STRIKES BACK: THE UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES OF THE HERITAGE RHETORIC OF INCLUSION, PLURALITY AND UNIVERSALISM

A paradox that emanates from the application of the norm criticist framework in the heritage field is that its professed anti-essentialism sometimes runs full circle and returns as essentialism. Notably, both inside and outside the heritage sector, normative criticism goes in tandem with mainstream academic methods aiming to deconstruct notions of naturalized ethnic, cultural and historical continuities and bounded communities. One such community is the nation, a frequent target of norm criticist deconstructions. As was noticed earlier, the Proposition on Cultural Politics of 2017 works in a post-national direction and systematically obliterates references to a national cultural heritage. Nevertheless, a sizeable number of the proponents of normative criticism tend to recognize the importance of the nation as a phenomenon *that is here to stay [...] for the foreseeable future*.⁴⁹ The task is thus not to abandon national ramifications, but to build a pluralistic and inclusive Swedish nation.

Exhibiting such pluralistic and inclusive narratives on the national past would perhaps provoke less controversy if heritage workers accepted the possibility of a pluralist present unfolding from a past that was less pluralist, at least in ethnic terms and within current state borders. However, the problem is that, as Swedish historian Peter Aronsson assumes, contemporary Swedes have been encouraged to perceive their continuity with historical populations of the country primarily through the anti-essentialist spectacles highlighting universal and existential identifications. Aronsson points out an interesting tendency: while exhibitions of the Danish National Museum unabashedly display an ethnic Danish narrative spanning thousands of years, the National Historical Museum in Stockholm, where much norm criticist work has been conducted, explicitly challenges the idea of a continuity between the ancestors and the descendants. He assumes that: *In Sweden the memory is oriented towards seeing others, putting ethnic Swedes in a similar position to new Swedes. We are not related with but curious about the others that lived here before us. Hence memory is instead universalized and thought to be able to talk to all visitors on an alleged existential level without ethnic qualification*.⁵⁰ In Aronsson's interpretation, exhibiting a reflexive, gendered, multicultural class-conscious story of the territory of contemporary Sweden and explicitly stating that Sweden of course *did not exist at the time* thus means confronting the visitor *as an individual meeting equal but distant strangers in a universal conversation about death, power, family life etc.*⁵¹ The abovementioned example of the rhetoric of curators at the new Viking Museum in Stockholm aptly illustrates this sort of argument.

⁴⁹ Svanberg in: A. Furumark (ed.), *Att störa...*, p. 29.

⁵⁰ P. Aronsson, "Writing the Museum", in J. Hegardt (ed.), *The Museum Beyond the Nation*, The National Historical Museum, Stockholm 2012, pp. 33-34.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

The described vision of historical continuity or rather lack of it, in the heritage sector echoes the approach evident in the first book based on the “Disturbing Homogeneity” project. Here, the universalist focus on openness, mixing, movement and change replaces previous visions of identification with real or imagined ancestors. As we will see, essentialism is lurking in some of the assumptions of normative criticism, especially in the idea that people with roots in other countries cannot identify with Swedish displays of the past that underline continuities with people from historical periods during which they and their ancestors did not live in the country. Paradoxically, insisting that such an identification is possible would draw on notions of the territorial, the universal and the existential, but would perhaps be less normative critical since it would focus on newcomers as much as on the beneficiaries of the established norms. Instead, one prefers the rhetoric of inclusion that displays a detached and for many visitors undoubtedly insipid identification with people from the past. Considering Aronson’s observation that the national master narrative is after all still present in the Stockholm exhibition, but *in a very Freudian way, which must confuse the visitor*,⁵² the merits of a post-national mnemonic approach to pluralist nation-building can be questioned.

It seems that essentialist notions creep back into the language of museums by drawing on normative criticism through the loophole of ideas about representations. The idea that normative criticism and the identity politics stemming from it might strengthen essentialist notions of identity was highlighted by Johan Lundberg. His book criticizes oftentimes very detailed representation of various identities and experiences, as brought forward for example in a report on museums and diversity by the Swedish Exhibition Agency rhetorically asking when we will see museum directors that are both disabled and transsexual. Lundberg then poses the question why it is assumed that a transsexual disabled museum director would necessarily support the agency’s view on traditional museums as institutions furthering oppression.⁵³ In other words, normative criticism seems to carry a risk of essentializing the views of individuals as reflecting one or some of their presumed identities.

A brief polemic exchange in the Gothenburg daily *Göteborgs-Posten* between a liberal public intellectual and a PR strategist at a Swedish heritage institution exemplifies the clash between competing perspectives on cultural heritage in contemporary Sweden. Adam Cwejman, a liberal opinion-maker and politician of Polish-Jewish-Ukrainian origin, criticized both the central Swedish Exhibition Agency and one of the regional Swedish museums for their statements that Swedish museums are exclusionary *just by depicting Swedish history* and that new stories of the past are needed because of the demographic changes in the wake of the recent immigration.⁵⁴ Cwejman quoted the director of Västerbottens museum who said that *maybe we have to let go of the 19th*

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ J. Lundberg, *Det sista museet...*, p. 18.

⁵⁴ A. Cwejman, “Rör inte mitt kulturarv”, *Göteborgs-Posten*, 9 March 2016, at <<http://www.gp.se/ledare/adam-cwejman-r%C3%B6r-inte-mitt-kulturarv-1.3923>>, 8 June 2017.

*century farm and think whether we can use the houses and tell other stories.*⁵⁵ Cwejman claimed that this attitude is problematic both because it does not reflect an accurate view of history, and since it implies that foreign-born Swedes *would feel alienated by taking part of Swedish history*, an assumption he regarded as *directly condescending as it views those of us with foreign background as over-sensitive children*. Instead, Cwejman proposed another, slower path to inclusion into the local and national Swedish cultural heritage that challenges the normative critical ramification advocated by some heritage professionals and politicians: *That Gothenburg has been populated by people who didn't look like me, who didn't share my ethnicity, name or customs and language of my forefathers does not make the place any less interesting or important to me. This will be my history as I live my life here. And with time my descendants will speak self-evidently about their Gothenburg roots. I don't want their and my history to be told through an ideological and diversity-marinated filter.*⁵⁶

A communication strategist from the Swedish Exhibition Agency took terms with Cwejman's idea about historical accuracy. She argued that the best way to create true historical accuracy, which has been distorted by the previously dominant homogeneous frameworks at the museums, was to include silenced voices and invisible perspectives of, for instance, women as well as ethnic and sexual minorities.⁵⁷ Cwejman replied by pointing out that he had never denied the importance of including forgotten groups and perspectives or the fact that those groups previously were excluded. He recounted in more explicitly liberal terms his critique of collectivist notions on identity and diversity resulting in 'paternalistic' attitudes towards migrants and minorities: *There is nothing in a truthful and wide account of Swedish history that excludes those with foreign background. We who have foreign background are mature enough to realize that although Sweden today is an ethnically diverse country this has not always been the case.*⁵⁸

This polemic exemplifies how a new vision of heritage projected by some politicians, civil servants, academics and heritage professionals runs the risk of being perceived as disempowering not only by nationalist political parties and web activists, but also by mainstream public figures. Resistance to the alleged disempowerment is often expressed through quite contentious notions of historical accuracy and historical continuity. However, what is considered as threatening by commentators like Cwejman, is not the inclusion of new perspectives and a new focus on minorities, but the perceived negligence of historical continuity and 'accurate' depictions of the past coming in the wake of normative critical agendas inculcated by official institutions.

It is instructive that the Swedish National Agency official assumed that Cwejman's reference to the epistemologically contentious notion of historical accuracy implies

⁵⁵ The quote was taken from a reportage on Swedish Public Service Radio: P. Öberg, "Landets museer ändrar kurs", Sveriges Radio, 7 March 2016, at <<http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=478&artikel=6382680>>, 8 June 2017.

⁵⁶ A. Cwejman, "Rör inte...".

⁵⁷ Idem, "Kulturarvet är alltid i rörelse", *Göteborgs-Posten. Ledarbloggen*, 16 March 2016, at <<http://blogg.gp.se/ledarbloggen/2016/03/16/riksutställningar-svarar-adam-cwejman/>>, 8 June 2017.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

that he might question the very idea of including historically excluded minorities and neglected perspectives. This might on the one hand simply have been an example of discursive foul play. On the other, this could also exemplify the binary thinking noted above, which presupposed that an individual or an institution is believed to be either for or against inclusion, either for openness or for the sealing off of cultures from each other. If this is the case, then we witness an envisioning of the field of heritage in terms of a Ricoeurian hermeneutics of suspicion, which is often a characteristic of radically polarized debates. The presented discussion serves as an example of how parts of the heritage sector sometimes generate unnecessary tensions by antagonizing those who in fact do not oppose inclusionary heritage policies.⁵⁹

When essentialism does not strike back, one may instead sense a fine line between deconstruction and attacking straw men, i.e. refuting views that an opponent did not express. The above-mentioned debate, where opponents of normative criticism were presented as opponents of the inclusion of minority heritages, exemplifies this development. There also was much controversy around Ingrid Lomfors, the Head of the Living History Forum, who was accused of having denied the existence of a specific Swedish culture during a public event organized by the government to stimulate support and acceptance for refugees in October 2015. In a recent polemic exchange, she argued that her words had been distorted by 'the Internet trolls' and that what she had meant was that *the notion of the existence of a unitary native culture that goes back to ancient times is not built on fact. We have always been influenced from outside.* Her opponent, the conservative journalist Lars Anders Johansson, made the obvious point that she was debating a straw man, since no one would claim that Swedish culture is unchangeable and free from outside influences.⁶⁰ In a similar case, which can also be seen as an example of selective constructivism, the chairman of the Swedish National Heritage Federation in a public debate with a representative of SD denied the possibility of speaking about a specific Swedish culture because of the multiple origins of its various expressions, while simultaneously taking the existence of a seemingly holistic immigrant Kurdish culture for granted.⁶¹

⁵⁹ It should be noted, however, that when Cwejman made the same point in a conversation with two heritage professionals during a public event arranged by the Swedish National Heritage Board the reactions of the latter were much more self-reflective and accommodating than in the example from the newspaper debate. See: "Att engagera sig i kulturarvet", UR Samtiden. Kulturarvet och samhällsutvecklingen, 2016, at <<https://urskola.se/Produkter/199636-UR-Samtiden-Kulturarvet-och-samhallsutvecklingen-Att-engagera-sig-i-kulturarvet>>, 8 June 2017.

⁶⁰ "Replik: Johansson borde sluta lyssna till nättrollen", *Jönköpings-Posten*, 18 April 2017, at <<http://www.jp.se/article/replik-johansson-borde-sluta-lyssna-till-nattrollen/>>, 8 June 2017.

⁶¹ "Kritik mot SD:s kulturpolitik", Sveriges Radio, 27 September 2010, at <<http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=1650&artikel=4047229>>, 8 June 2017.

REPRESENTING ROMANI TRAVELLERS: WHOSE LOGIC WINS?

In this section, we briefly look at how recent trends highlighting cultural diversity in the heritage sector have affected representations of Romani Travellers,⁶² arguably the most exposed and simultaneously least visible ethnic minority in modern Swedish history. It is not possible here to provide more than a brief introduction to the complex background and identities of Romani Travellers or to the dark legacies of state policies towards the group in the 20th century that affected many individuals and seriously disrupted inter-generational cultural transmission. The heritage sector began to include stories and experiences of Romani Travellers in the 2000s, following a cultural and social revival in the group in the 1990s.

Romani Travellers, who together with other groups such as Kelderash, Lovara, Arli, Finnish Kalé etc. have officially constituted the Roma national minority since 1999, are the Roma community with the longest historical presence in Sweden. Also after the arrival of the Kelderash Roma in the late 19th century, Romani Travellers were by far the largest of the Roma groups in Sweden, and probably continue to be so today, although the contemporary Roma group is much more diverse due to recurrent waves of immigration starting in the 1950s.⁶³ In terms of identification, many Romani Travellers see themselves as a specific group among the Roma with their own Romani language and a specific culture, while others consider themselves an ethnic group outside the Roma framework.

The historian Ludvig Wiklander identifies three main phases in Swedish minority politics towards the Romani Travellers in the 20th century.⁶⁴ Firstly, in the first half of the century the group was framed in racial terms as a socially undesirable mix of Swedes and Roma constituting a serious social problem, a view that had the potential to inform very harsh measures from the local authorities against individuals and families.⁶⁵ Although there was no coherent state policy officially targeting Romani Travellers, the group was very significantly overrepresented as both victims of enforced sterilizations

⁶² In Swedish, the group is most often referred to as *resandefolket* or *resande*, while *romanifolket* is preferred by some Romani Travellers. Internally terms such as *dinglare* and *tavring* are also frequent. Until the 1990s the most frequent term both in official documents and popular use was *tattare*, which is considered derogatory by the group.

⁶³ There are no official ethnic statistics in Sweden, and estimations of the size of group vary strongly. Journalist Bo Hazell, a leading Swedish expert on the history and culture of Romani Travellers estimates the number to be 20,000-25,000. See: B. Hazell, *Resandefolket. Från tattare till Traveller*, Stockholm 2011, p. 7. Romani Traveller activists, depending on their definition of who should be regarded as a member of the group, provide different numbers, e.g. 6,000-8,000 (Ralf Novak-Rosengren, Romani Traveller musician and activist, personal communication with Niklas Bernsand), or 30,000-50,000 (Jon Petterson, Romani Traveller activist, chairman of the Franzwagner Society, personal communication with Niklas Bernsand). The second estimation focuses on the number of persons with two Traveller parents, regardless of the extent of personal identification with the group.

⁶⁴ L. Wiklander, "Resandefolket och svensk minoritetspolitik. 1990-talets paradigmskifte", *Historisk Tidskrift*, vol. 135, no. 4 (2015).

⁶⁵ M. Ericsson, *Exkludering, assimilering eller utrotning? 'Tattarfrågan' i svensk politik 1880-1955*, Lund 2015.

in the period 1935-1975, enforced adoptions and abuse in social care. An estimation by the Swedish government report based on a limited selection of applications for sterilization found that victims might have been found in as many as one out of four Romani Traveller families.⁶⁶ Secondly, in the post-war years Romani Travellers were re-conceptualized as a socioeconomic group with a Swedish background, or a *social isolate* as one of the academic legitimisers of this discourse, sociologist Adam Heymowski termed it.⁶⁷ The view of Romani Travellers as a socially distinct rather than an ethnic group was in part a rejection of the stigmatizing racist paradigm, but can also be seen as a reflection of the self-image of a forward-looking post-war society where old prejudices could be made irrelevant by social engineering facilitating equality and progress. This meant that Romani Travellers became viewed as a remnant of past inequality that could be overcome by social reforms, making any cultural distinction of the group irrelevant. While this view opened up for assimilation into the majority society, local authorities in many cases continued to differentiate Romani Travellers families in social policy. From the 1940s the group therefore virtually 'went underground' for many decades, as many Travellers hid their identities in public to avoid persecution.⁶⁸ This discourse was dominant well into the 1990s, and was not overcome until the beginning of the third phase, when Romani Travellers were recognized as part of the Roma national minority in Sweden in the law of national minorities in 1999. As late as 1992 Romani Travellers in a programmatically diversity-friendly handbook on the history of immigration in Sweden were categorized as a *socio-cultural isolate originally stemming from the majority population, which are usually attributed a 'secret language'* and have now *through sociopolitical measures become assimilated*.⁶⁹ The view of the group as merely a social formation consisting of outcasts from the majority society is deeply insulting to many Romani Travellers, and is seen as one of the root causes to their suffering in the post-war years.

Countering such images has therefore been an important part in the emancipation struggles since the 1990s. In an interesting case of heritage from below, Romani Travellers drew on both emerging DNA techniques and genealogical research as tools for empowerment in their effort to refute the (until recently) hegemonic view of them as a Swedish social isolate that can be made to disappear by social engineering. Many Travellers often use digitalized archives to research their family origins, participate in genealogical forums and cooperate with genealogical experts. Drawing on a wide va-

⁶⁶ See: SOU 2000:20 "Steriliseringsfrågan i Sverige 1935-1975. Historisk belysning – Kartläggning – Intervjuer", p. 240. See also: B. Hazell, *Resandefolket...*, pp. 132-133. The oft-quoted 1:4 ratio is based on the approximated share of applications in relation to the number of 'tattare' found in the official inventory of 1944. The investigation of serious abuse of children in social care also pointed to a strong overrepresentation of victims from the group. See: SOU 2009:99 "Vanvård i social barnvård under 1900-talet", p. 149.

⁶⁷ A. Heymowski, *Om 'tattare' och 'resande'*, Uppsala 1955; idem, *Swedish 'Travellers' and their Ancestry. A Social Isolate or an Ethnic Minority?*, Uppsala 1969.

⁶⁸ See life stories of Romani Travellers in: B.-I. Hedström Lundqvist, A. Hellman, "Sveriges historia – ett resandeperspektiv", in caedem (eds.), *Dinglarens väg. Vårnos Drom. De ofrivilligt åsidosatta*, Uppsala 2015, e.g. pp. 30-31.

⁶⁹ I. Svanberg, M. Tydén, *Tusen år av invandring. En svensk kulturhistoria*, Värnamo 1992, p. 350.

riety of sources, genealogists have recently demonstrated the complex origins of the group. Most importantly, genealogist Bo Lindwall shows after many years of study that Romani Travellers can trace their ancestors both to Roma ancestors, to the Swedish majority population, and sometimes also to families with various ethnic and cultural background that had specific professions such as knackers and executioners.⁷⁰ Simultaneously, as is shown in journalist Karin Bojs' and genealogist Peter Sjölund's recent book, many Romani Travellers draw on the increased accessibility of DNA tests to find out more about their origins.⁷¹ Tests made so far show that the origins of all tested Romani Travellers can partly be traced back to the Indian subcontinent, while they all also have strong roots in Scandinavia and Finland, and some also in Turkey and Eastern Europe, namely the areas they passed on the way to Scandinavia.⁷² According to our Romani Traveller informants, this endeavor has grown even more popular since the publication of Bojs' and Sjölund's book in 2016. Genealogy and DNA technique here thus come forward as important tools for empowerment of a hitherto stigmatized and unrecognized ethnic minority.

The cultural and social revival beginning in the 1990s as heritage from below also encompassed efforts to revitalize Traveller Romani, to safeguard and popularize the musical tradition, and to express the historical experiences of the group.⁷³ Some of these efforts were made in cooperation with professional linguists, folk musicians etc. Of key importance for popularizing knowledge of this group in the larger society was a large and encompassing book by journalist Bo Hazell, which included a focus on language, music and other aspects of cultural heritage, as well as radio and TV programs made by Hazell in the late 1990s.⁷⁴

The heritage institutions' work on and with Romani Travellers began slowly in the 2000s. Projects have developed in close cooperation between heritage professionals, academics and ethnic activists. Some of the most notable heritage initiatives in this regard involve Bohusläns Museum in Uddevalla. To date, the only permanent exhibition in Sweden devoted to the group, *Meet the Romani Travellers*, is located here,⁷⁵ and the museum is one of the partners in the transnational project "Resandekartan" mapping sites important to the group's history in the Swedish-Norwegian borderland region and

⁷⁰ B. Lindwall, *Anor från landsvägen. Hur jag finner mina förfäder bland resandefolket*, Solna 2014, pp. 117-130.

⁷¹ K. Bojs, P. Sjölund, *Svenskarna och deras föder. De senaste 11000 åren*, Stockholm 2016, pp. 170-180.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁷³ See, e.g. the Swedish-Romani dictionary: L. Lindell, K. Thorbjörnsson-Djerf, G. Carling, *Ordbok över svensk romani. Resandefolkets språk och sånger*, Stockholm 2008, and the song book: R. Novak-Rosengren, M. Länne Persson, *Resandefolkets visor. 500 år i Norden. Muntlig sång- och visstradition*, Göteborg 2012, and the collection of oral history in: B.-I. Hedström Lundqvist, A. Hellman, "Sveriges historia..."

⁷⁴ B. Hazell, *Resandefolket...*

⁷⁵ "Möt resandefolket!", Bohusläns Museum, at <<http://www.bohuslansmuseum.se/utställningar/mot-resandefolket/>>, 8 June 2017.

publishing them on an ambitious web site.⁷⁶ The museum also led the excavations of the abandoned Traveller village Snarsmon close to the Swedish-Norwegian border.⁷⁷ In 2014, the Örebro County Museum led excavations of another former Traveller village, Krämarstan outside the town Finnerödja as a part of the normative critical flagship project “Disturbing Homogeneity”.⁷⁸ In southern Sweden, the art museum in Ystad hosted the exhibition *Romani Travellers and Brolin* about a prominent Romani musician family from the Skåne region. Less attention has so far been paid to the urban heritage of this group, which has neither been systematically studied nor presented despite its long and compact historical presence in specific neighborhoods of cities like Malmö and Helsingborg. However, some researchers have conducted historical studies on the pogrom against Romani Travellers living in a central urban district of Jönköping in 1948.⁷⁹ The exhibitions and projects focus partly on the difficult past and persecutions against the group, e.g. the cottages in Snarsmon were likely torn down,⁸⁰ and Romani Travellers were forced out of Krämarstan by the local population.⁸¹ This is not always the case, though, as e.g. many of the places marked as heritage sites by the project “Resandekartan” are places of interaction between Romani Travellers and the majority population, and in 2013 this category of sites was more frequent in the project than those indicating the heritage of conflicts.⁸²

While heritage projects with a focus on and in cooperation with Romani Travellers tend to be positively received by the group,⁸³ exhibitions claiming to represent the Roma group in general can be more problematic. A recent study analyzing heritage work on Roma at Malmö Museums in the early 2000s indicates that conflicts over representations arose not the least between Travellers and other Roma working on the exhibitions.⁸⁴ It is also reported that Romani Travellers were worried about the participation of other Roma whom they considered to be potential hijackers of the heritage

⁷⁶ Resandekartan/Reisendekartet, at <<http://reisendekartet.no/sv/>>, 8 June 2017.

⁷⁷ See the book emanating from the project: B. Andersson (ed.), *Snarsmon – resandebyn där vägarna möts*, Bohusläns museums förlag, Uddevalla 2008.

⁷⁸ A. Furumark, M. Eivergård (eds.), *När det stör*, p. 124. In Swedish, the name of the project, “Att störa homogenitet”, refers to the idea that homogeneity can or should be disturbed, and does not carry the potential second meaning of the English translation of homogeneity itself being disturbing.

⁷⁹ See e.g.: M. Ericsson, *Exkludering, assimilering...*, and J. Selling, *Svensk antiziganism. Fördomens kontinuitet och förändringens förutsättningar*, Limhamn 2013. The pogrom, which was virtually unknown to the Swedish public until well into the 2000s, has in recent years often been used as an example of the dangers of racism and xenophobia and the presence of such illnesses in modern Swedish history. A monument to the victims of the pogrom was erected in Jönköping in 2014.

⁸⁰ B. Andersson, “Möte med Snarsmon”, in idem (ed.), *Snarsmon...*, p. 60.

⁸¹ B. Hazell, *Resandefolket...*, pp. 232-248.

⁸² I. Martins Holmberg, K. Jonsson, “Kulturarvsprojektet Resandekartan – nationsöverskridande plats-historia”, in I. Martins Holmberg (ed.), *Vägskälens kulturarv – kulturarv vid vägskäl. Om att skapa plats för romer och resande i kulturarvet*, Göteborg 2014, p. 205.

⁸³ E.g. *ibid.*, p. 211.

⁸⁴ C. Johansson, “The Museum in a Multicultural Setting. The Case of Malmö Museums”, in L. Gouriévidis (ed.), *Museums and Migration. History, Memory and Politics*, Abingdon 2014, pp. 130-131. In

excavated in the Snarsmon village.⁸⁵ One factor underlying such sentiments is the Travellers' perception that other Roma might be more recognizable as 'archetypical Roma' according to the expectations of the Swedish majority society. Among the factors feeding such moods was the clear underrepresentation of Romani Travellers in relation to other Roma in many events accompanying the 500-year anniversary of Roma presence in Sweden in 2012, despite the fact that only this group can claim such a long historical presence.⁸⁶

A consequence of lesser visibility in the larger Roma framework is that specific experiences of other groups in exhibitions, books or the media often are presented as pertaining to all Roma, including the Travellers. An example here are the Kelderash Roma civil rights struggles of the 1960s, when representatives of the then approximately 740 members⁸⁷ of this group together with supporters from majority society fought for recognition, while the much larger group of Romani Travellers was completely voiceless in the public debate and faced strong assimilatory pressure. In representations of this struggle, the perspective of the silenced and under- or misrecognized Romani Travellers is rarely brought to the fore. Furthermore, the strong focus on the lack of modern housing and schooling in the struggle for Kelderash emancipation can be portrayed in a way that looks similar to the experiences of all Roma.⁸⁸ A knowledgeable Romani Traveller activist who challenged the frequently held assumption that Roma did not live in houses or had access to schooling until the 1960s, recalled the fact that his story bewildered the Swedish parliament.⁸⁹

A further example concerns old toponyms, mostly in the Swedish countryside, that indicate historical local presence by Romani Travellers. Those place names often refer to the old popular denominations of the group that are no longer in use or are considered to be offensive, such as Tattarkullen, Skojareberget etc., but are preserved as toponyms for hills, forest paths, or places for old homesteads or camps. In recent years, such place names have occasionally been challenged as part of efforts to combat traces of old intolerance and racism on the Swedish map. Interestingly, those efforts have met strong resistance from Romani Traveller activists and organisations who see the place

connection with one of the exhibitions the curator stressed the need to distinguish between Romani Travellers and other Roma, on request from both groups.

⁸⁵ J. Hjort, *Utvärdering av Bohusläns museums verksamhet om och med resandefolket. Utvärdering av verksamheten 2004-2013*, Uddevalla 2015 (Bohusläns Museum Rapport, 2015:7), pp. 49-50.

⁸⁶ E.g. during an event specifically devoted to Romani Travellers organized by The Centre for European Studies in Lund in 2012 representatives of the group noted wryly that 'the cousins' were more visible in the celebrations. Among the reasons for this is the longer established public voice of e.g. the Keldarash group, since the civil rights struggles in the 1960s.

⁸⁷ N. Montesino, I. Ohlsson Al Fakir, "The Prolonged Inclusion of Roma Groups in Swedish Society", *Social Inclusion*, vol. 3, no. 5 (2015), at <<http://dx.doi.org/10.17645/si.v3i5.247>>.

⁸⁸ This impression emanates e.g. from the exhibition *We are Roma. Meet the people behind the myth*, produced by Gothenburg City Museum in cooperation with the Living History Forum and Roma activists, shown since 2014 in several Swedish museums, e.g. Malmö Museer.

⁸⁹ J. Pettersson, "Vad är romsk historia i Sverige?", *É Romani Glinda. Den romska spegeln*, no. 4 (2016), p. 4.

names as testimonies of the historical presence and as traces of their ancestors and relatives. In 2016, a Swedish government report on measures to combat racism towards Roma claimed that some Roma are offended by such toponyms and proposed that the government should further investigate how to relate to these place names.⁹⁰ In their response, the Romani Traveller organisation Franzwagner Society wrote that such names do not express anti-ziganism in the first hand. Rather, they *testify to our historical presence in the country as these places are part of the Swedish-Roma history and of the immaterial cultural heritage*. The Society argued instead that name changes would be anti-ziganist, since they would *make invisible Roma's historical participation in the Swedish society*.⁹¹ The text further pointed out conflicts over representation with other Roma groups, as it wondered who should have the final say in such questions, emphasising that such places are *a historical heritage belonging to Roma with a long historical presence in the country*. Another Romani Traveller organisation, Kulturgruppen för Resandefolket, responded in similar terms that the names *are a reminder of the overall presence of Romani Travellers in Swedish nation-building*.⁹² In the larger framework of minority politics such conflicts over representation are paralleled in the debates over apology and compensation for state persecutions in the 20th century. Here, efforts of the authorities to frame the issue as pertinent to the whole Roma community are challenged by Traveller activists, who point out that exactly their group was overrepresented among victims of the state abuse and their language and culture were under attack, while many other Roma were not present in Sweden at the time of abuse.⁹³

By and large, Romani Travellers in the 2000s benefited from the emphasis of the heritage sector on cultural diversity and the inclusion of previously silenced perspectives. In some cases, Romani Traveller activists also employed an explicitly normative criticist approach in their work.⁹⁴ Considering the focus of the preceding section on normative criticism that stresses the importance for heritage work for questioning majority norms, it is notable that the field work conducted on Romani Traveller heritage sites did not seem to antagonize the local non-Romani population. The project “Resandekartan” reported that on some occasions the local population exposed prejudices and feelings of discomfort caused by shame over past wrongdoings. Nevertheless, no one openly criticized marking some locations as heritage sites of Romani Travellers, and

⁹⁰ SOU 2016:44 “Kraftsamling mot antiziganism. Slutbetänkande av Kommissionen motantiziganism”.

⁹¹ Yttrande över SOU 2016:44 “Krafttag mot antiziganism”. Remissvar Franzwagner Sällskapet, 14 December 2016, at <<http://www.regeringen.se/4af67d/contentassets/c2b7817bfc9444f8a578ceadf1438e87/franzwagner.pdf>>, 20 June 2017.

⁹² Svar på remiss SOU 2016:44 “Krafttag mot antiziganism. Kulturgruppen för resandefolket”, at <<http://www.regeringen.se/4af262/contentassets/c2b7817bfc9444f8a578ceadf1438e87/kulturgruppen-for-resandefolket.pdf>>, 20 June 2017. The complexity of such heritage conflicts is shown by a case when in the town of Varberg the name of neighbourhood Tattarkullen, was questioned by another traveller organisation, while Kulturgruppen manage to defend the old name.

⁹³ See e.g.: Yttrande över SOU 2016:44..

⁹⁴ E.g. B.-I. Hedström Lundqvist, A. Hellman (eds.), *Dinglarens väg...*

many people responded with interest.⁹⁵ It strikes us as perfectly possible to empower a historically harassed ethnic minority such as Romani Travellers in terms of cultural heritage without creating feelings of disempowerment among the majority population. However, as will be demonstrated in the following chapter, the polemic around heritage issues in the Swedish media challenges this assumption in several respects.

TWO WAVES OF MEDIA DEBATES ON HERITAGE IN THE 2000s: WHOM DOES HERITAGE EMPOWER IN SWEDEN?

Since the beginning of the millennium, quite an intense debate focusing on heritage issues has taken place in the Swedish media. Two waves of this polemic, with almost six years between them, addressed different topics and confronted different political stakeholders, but they also had principal similarities, as in both cases democratic participation, ideological instrumentalization and multicultural contexts of heritage-making were brought to the fore.

Until the beginning of the 2000s, heritage had seldom been a subject of major public discussion with political implications. Previously, the sporadic exchange of opinions and critical commentaries among museum professionals, cultural workers and representatives of the state bureaucracy were eclipsed by other concerns. The situation changed radically in 2010 when SD entered the parliament. As a relatively new party that channeled popular dissatisfaction with the slow integration of the migrants and permissive migration policies of the Swedish state, they saw their chance in taking over and animating the lukewarm concept of heritage. Against the background of the relative disinterest of the more established Swedish parties in creating strong cultural-political profiles, the tactics of drawing attention to heritage issues proved to be successful. However, turning heritage from a peripheral issue of other parties to SD's own calling card did not come as a surprise, as the analogous move had already been successfully tested by the sister party of SD, the Danish People's Party. The motion about the introduction of the Swedish cultural canon that SD presented in October 2010 was inspired by the Danish example. Eventually, this idea, that in Sweden was earlier formulated but then abandoned by the Liberal Party (then known as Folkpartiet), did not find support in the parliament. Nevertheless, this proposition struck a chord with the Swedish public as it problematized the ideological conventions that had long gone unquestioned in the Swedish mainstream cultural discourse.

The principal target of SD's cultural-political initiatives was *Swedish anti-nationalist nationalism of the 1990s*. As Peter Aronsson further explains, *In fact, Sweden is [...] an example of an almost paralyzing paradox between a new rhetorical content pointing to a civil, non-historical, non-cultural citizen identity and a silent ethnically understood 'we' that is Swedish, national and needs to handle the whole topic of diversity to stabilize*

⁹⁵ I. Martins Holmberg, K. Jonsson, "Kulturarvsprojektet Resandekartan...", pp. 212-213.

*the ethnically and historically transmitted nation.*⁹⁶ SD chose to underscore the latter aspect of Swedishness that was allegedly endangered by the *cultural imperialism and cultural relativism* inculcated from above. Well in line with this argument and unlike other parliamentary parties, SD proposed to regard culture from an anthropological perspective,⁹⁷ i.e. not as high culture and arts, but as traditions and daily practices. Consequently, in the party documents heritage is linked not to institutionalized practices curated by professional elites in the first turn, but rather to *heritage from below*, as it unpacks *common norms and values, collective memories, common myths, common festivals and traditions, common customs and practices to be able to keep together in the long run.*⁹⁸ Nevertheless, the praiseworthy intention to underscore solidarity aspects and the democratic value of heritage in practice often took the form of encouraging a conservative cultural canon and folksy culture that supposedly all genuine Swedes identify themselves with. As SD's cultural-political manifesto states, this type of heritage has not only Swedish but also Nordic outreach. It focuses on the conservation of church antiquities and the work of the Heritage Board, the state historical museums and the Nordic Museum, among others.⁹⁹ It is also associated with local history societies (*hembygdsföreningar*) stemming from the popular education movement of the early 1900s. As a way to promote this conceptualization of heritage and 'common identity', SD suggested to radically reduce the financing of activities that *boost the multicultural societal experiment.*¹⁰⁰ In particular, SD condemned the ambitious governmental initiative to merge several famous cultural museums into one Museum of World Culture. In the party ideologists' view, this restructuring was a clear example of the top-down imposition of multicultural agenda at the expense of Swedish heritage. In the same vein, SD also argued that state funding of the modern arts and music should be reduced, especially those that do not have *a constructive aim and broad popular anchoring.*¹⁰¹

Quite expectedly, these and similar propositions triggered a storm of protests and indignant comments in the Swedish media.¹⁰² Among the staunch critics of the SD cul-

⁹⁶ P. Aronsson, "Demokratiskt kulturarv – nationella institutioner, universella värden, lokala praktiker", in A. Alzén, P. Aronsson (eds.), *Demokratiskt kulturarv? Nationella institutioner, universella värden, lokala praktiker*, Linköping 2006, p. 11.

⁹⁷ "Hotet mot en fri kultur", *Dagens Nyheter*, 22 October 2014, at <<http://www.dn.se/kultur-noje/kulturdebatt/hotet-mot-en-fri-kultur/>>, 20 June 2017.

⁹⁸ "Partiet för kulturarvet", Sverigedemokraterna, at <<https://sd.se/var-politik/kulturpolitik/>>, 20 June 2017.

⁹⁹ Sverigedemokraterna (SD), *99 förslag för ett bättre Sverige. Sverigedemokraternas kontrakt med väljarna 2010-2014*, Stockholm, 2 September 2010, Svensk Nationell Datatjänst, at <<https://snd.gu.se/sv/vivill/party/sd/manifesto/2010>>, 20 June 2017.

¹⁰⁰ "Censur och mångkultur heta i riksdagens kulturdebatt", Sveriges Radio, 16 December 2010, at <<http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=478&artikel=4243660>>, 20 June 2017.

¹⁰¹ "SD vill avveckla kultur som provocerar", *Svenska Dagbladet*, 23 September 2010, at <<https://www.svd.se/sd-vill-avveckla-kultur-som-provocerar>>, 20 June 2017.

¹⁰² Ibid.; Å.M. Larsson, "Kulturarvsfrågan ägs inte av de främlingsfientliga", Ting och Tankar, 3 October 2010, at <<http://tingotankar.blogspot.se/2010/10/kulturarvsfragan-ags-inte-av-de.html>>, 20 June 2017; "Hotet mot..."; P. Wirtén, "Kulturarvet och Sverigedemokraterna", *Arena*, 10 October

tural agenda one could see first and foremost heritage professionals, academic researchers and opinion-makers belonging to the non-nationalist mainstream. Many journalists and cultural professionals strongly opposed SD's propositions and asked whether increased state financing of church antiquities, open air activities and traditional dance and music will not create a homogeneous 'harmonious' Swedishness that would put a lid on less consensual cultural phenomena.¹⁰³ Another argument voiced in this connection was that the politicization of the cultural heritage by SD would, on the contrary, lead to an even stronger polarization of society. Some other discussants pointed out that SD simply capitalizes on the taken-for-granted ideas rooted in the Swedish cultural-political tradition: *The critique raised against Sweden Democrats mixes symptom and illness. Critique had to be directed against the current cultural politics that created the very idea of 'our cultural heritage' and thereby laid the ground for thinking that changed the premises of the preservation work, namely thinking about culture as separateness.*¹⁰⁴

As many alarmed commentators assumed, by bringing to the fore the ethnic Swedish majority and its allegedly homogeneous view of heritage, SD exposed its xenophobic, fascist and racist nature. However, a sober academic approach to the SD's thinking about heritage exposes more obvious similarities of SD's arguments with national romanticism rather than with extremist right ideologies.¹⁰⁵ Popular national romanticism, with its contempt for 'elitist intellectual tastes', its hailing of 'people keeping both feet on the ground' (*verklighetens folk*), suspicion of those 'who are not like us' and search of ontological security in 'our own' culture seems to strike a chord not with some extremist minority, but with broader groups of voters in present-day Sweden. When the established political parties chose not to talk about heritage and when the discussion about the cultural content of Swedishness as distinguished from other cultural affiliations was banned as 'promotion of xenophobic views', the vacuum was filled by a new party that could mobilize their voters exactly around these questions.

As Björn Magnusson Staaf emphatically points out: *The one who controls the cultural heritage has an important tool for defining who 'we' are. [...] It is a gross intellectual error to think that supporting cultural heritage promotes xenophobia. Cultural heritage work is not about reproducing a static story of how something once was. It largely consists of running a discussion about how we understand ourselves in the present time.* At the end of the day, as the scholar concludes: *Discussion about how we presently understand ourselves*

2010, at <http://www.magasinetarena.se/2010/11/10/kulturarvet_och_sverigedemokraterna/>, 20 June 2017; J. Nordwall, B. Svanström, "SD:s hembygd är inte vår hembygd", *Aftonbladet*, 2 October 2010; A. Gill, "Vårt kulturarv – Sverigedemokraterna, främlingsfientlighet och bevarandearbete", *Fornvännen. Journal of Swedish Antiquarian Research*, vol. 107, no. 2 (2012), pp. 112-115, at <http://samla.raa.se/xmlui/bitstream/handle/raa/3301/2012_112.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>, 20 June 2017.

¹⁰³ J. Lindahl, S. Schwarzenberger, "Så vill SD rasera kulturen", *Aftonbladet*, 9 September 2016, at <<http://www.aftonbladet.se/kultur/article23484494.ab>>, 20 June 2017.

¹⁰⁴ A. Gill, "Vårt kulturarv...", pp. 112-115.

¹⁰⁵ "DN Debatt. Kontroll över kulturarvet SD:s medel för att nå makt", *Dagens Nyheter*, 3 October 2010, at <<http://www.dn.se/debatt/kontroll-over-kulturarvet-sds-medel-for-att-na-makt/>>, 20 June 2017.

*should continue. The work on these issues is our responsibility, as it addresses key issues of democracy. [...] To guarantee this, it is of the utmost importance that all parties in the parliament take the cultural heritage seriously and support it.*¹⁰⁶

It is not difficult to notice that during the first wave of the debate around 2010, the main target of criticism was the obvious political instrumentalization of heritage issues by one nationalist party, rather than effects of politicization of heritage field *per se*. Some debaters admitted that political use of cultural heritage is unavoidable, but the question is which kind of politics should be given a priority.¹⁰⁷ As an example of already existing tacit politicization of the field, Gustafsson and Karlsson mention practices of research support to the humanities and social sciences in Sweden that took *conservative direction [...] instead of a broader view of cultural heritage and the relationship between archaeology, politics and contemporary society.*¹⁰⁸ As a remedy these authors suggest to accept the challenge and take a standpoint for a *democratic, solidaristic and multicultural policy and to use cultural heritage for these purposes.*¹⁰⁹

To summarize, despite its entrenched, retrospective and restrictive agenda in the field of heritage, SD willy-nilly catalyzed a debate about the side-effects of normative criticism, multiculturalist ideology and political uses of heritage in Sweden. The debate exposed quite a broad consensus about the nature of heritage as a democratic resource, but also demonstrated a rift between nationalist circles referring to majority democracy, and their opponents who rather envision consensus democracy or liberal democracy with its emphasis of human rights and individual freedoms. It also highlighted the existence of polarized opinions about how heritage and heritage politics should empower and disempower. While SD mouthpieces made it clear that the Swedish majority is disenfranchised by heritage institutions failing to suggest a feasible vision of identity and community, their opponents assumed that nation-oriented heritage politics risks to disempower migrants, minorities and 'anti-nationalist' cultural producers.

The second wave of the heritage debate that culminated in autumn 2016 addressed similar issues, but from a different perspective. This time the war of words was triggered by the publications of Ola Wong, an expert on China and journalist affiliated with the Swedish liberal-conservative newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet*. The main focus of his polemic was the continuing controversy around the merging and re-location of four important cultural museums (the Museum of Ethnography, the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, the Museum of Mediterranean and Near-Eastern Antiquities all in Stockholm and the Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg). What was conceived as a large-scale project aiming to support integration and present the heritage treasures of Sweden in a global framework, proved to be, in Wong's words, *a microcosm of cul-*

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ A. Gustafsson, H. Karlsson, "A Spectre is Haunting Swedish Archaeology – the Spectre of Politics. Archaeology, Cultural Heritage and the Present Political Situation in Sweden", *Current Swedish Archaeology*, vol. 19 (2011), pp. 30-31.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 31.

*tural politics that went astray in post-colonial thinking and the suffocating norm of normative criticism.*¹¹⁰ In line with his argument, an especially alarming development was the planned merger of the museums within the framework of the Museum of World Culture. Referring to the tough economic situation and administrative difficulties, the management reduced the museum staff with expert knowledge in ethnography and antiquities, and opened the door to ‘generalists’ schooled in gender and diversity issues. Thus, Wong’s argument runs, instead of promoting knowledge, the new museum organization fosters the ‘correct’ ideological outlooks. As a source of such skewed development the journalist pointed out not only the politically indoctrinated museum leadership, but also the political establishment, especially the Ministry of Culture dominated by representatives of the Green Party. He put it bluntly that *The government wants to use the museums as an ideological instrument against SD. However, the ongoing politicization of the Museums of World Culture risks oiling the wheels of the right-wing populism.*¹¹¹ While normative criticism and post-colonial theories may serve as a useful explanatory framework, it is wrong to turn them into an indisputable guide for museum practice.¹¹²

The targeted museum chefs and politicians were quick to reply. Most importantly, the incumbent Minister of Culture Alice Bah Kuhnke (Miljöpartiet) took part in the discussion to counter Wong’s argument. Her main message was that the ministry had nothing to do with the ideological top-down steering. Instead, every cultural organization has the right to decide about the direction of its activities, provided that they are in line with the existing official directives. Neither did the minister admit that certain ideological narratives had been given a priority: *It should be repeated that some assignment to promote normative criticism at our museums has not been given by me. It is totally strange to me to control our state museums in this way, but the cultural policy, on the contrary, is about increasing the distance between the politics and the profession.*¹¹³ Nevertheless, many representatives of authoritative academic institutions and cultural organizations supported Wong’s position in the debate and saw the imposition of norm critical models and the negligence of cultural expertise on different levels.¹¹⁴ The leitmotif of many publications siding with Wong was the necessity to respect knowledge and cultural expertise, and at the same time to safeguard heritage and culture as a democratic resource beyond party political influences.

The second wave of the heritage debate encompasses around 75 publications. Its initiator Ola Wong was recently rewarded with a prestigious prize of the Swedish Academy. This acknowledgement signals a symbolic victory of Wong and his supporters.

¹¹⁰ “Bah Kuhnkes kulturpolitik hotar kulturarvet”, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 28 September 2016, at <<https://www.svd.se/bah-kuhnkes-kulturpolitik-hotar-kulturarvet/om/museidebatten>>, 17 June 2017.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² “Vem är det som har kolonial blick egentligen”, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 7 October 2016, at <<https://www.svd.se/vem-ar-det-som-har-kolonial-blick-egentligen>>, 17 June 2017.

¹¹³ “Det gör ont när tesar brister”, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 27 September 2016, at <<https://www.svd.se/det-gor-ont-nar-teser-brister>>, 17 June 2017.

¹¹⁴ “Museidebatten handlar om respekt för kunskap”, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 11 November 2016, at <<https://www.svd.se/museidebatten-handlar-om-respekt-for-kunskap>>, 17 June 2017.

However, to say that the group who was empowered by this debate were solely liberally-minded experts and museum workers, would be an oversimplification. Notably, Wong himself is not a cultural professional in the narrow sense of the term. Rather, he assumed a position of a well-educated commentator and responsible citizen concerned with quality and reputation of the cultural product crafted in contemporary Sweden. In one of his polemical letters Wong defined his audience and closest allies as the educated middle class. The debate has shown that this category 'proved to be much alive' and is ready to support the cultural-professional and democratic logic of the heritage field. However, an alarming finding of the debate was that the educated political class *met the fate of the* [extinct] *Tasmanian wolf*.¹¹⁵ Indeed, with some rare exceptions, the second wave of heritage debate did not strike a chord among the high-positioned politicians. This may imply that the established practices of ideological inculcation and use of heritage for getting political advantage will not undergo some radical changes in the nearest time. It seems that in Sweden, economic reasons, effective management and transmission of the 'correct' ideological messages to the broader public will continue to provide leverage for the political actors in the field of culture.

CONCLUSIONS

This article focuses on the transformations of heritage-related discourses and practices in Sweden since the beginning of the 2000s. As has been argued, the enhanced public interest in heritage is stimulated partly by a pan-European process of 'the return of the national' but also by globally spread insecurity about the future in terms of the welfare state, democracy and technological development. Another contributing factor is the internal dynamic of the heritage field where constellations of democratic, managerial and market logics grew strong and now successfully compete with cultural-expert and bureaucratic logics. In the 2000s, a combination of these background factors and the domestic political developments created a specific cultural climate in which the concept of heritage all of a sudden attained a considerable political clout. While some opinion-makers and professionals pleaded for the field of heritage to be left outside party politics, the majority of commentators took the political nature of heritage for granted. Depending on its specific content and implementation, heritage may serve as an instrument of empowerment or disempowerment, marginalization or support of cultural-political demands of various population groups. Thus, the recurring question of the recent heritage polemic is what kind of politics should or need to be catered by heritage in the changing socio-cultural circumstances.

As has been demonstrated, a cultural-political paradigm that over the past two decades has exerted much influence in the heritage sector of Sweden and, consequently, became either enthusiastically accepted or fiercely criticized, is normative criticism.

¹¹⁵ O. Wong, "Den bildade politikerklassen på utdöende", *Svenska Dagbladet*, 3 November 2016, at <<https://www.svd.se/tecknet-pa-att-den-bildade-medelklassen-lever>>, 17 June 2017.

The main attraction of this heritage discourse is its transformative potential, as it promises representation and emancipation of certain previously marginalized perspectives and identities. Nevertheless, it stands out with its insistence on normatively loaded rhetoric, often in form of binary oppositions such as inclusion-exclusion, open-closed, tolerant-intolerant, and good-evil. It does ‘disturb homogeneity’, as it challenges deeply entrenched mono-cultural structures of cultural representations and destabilizes competing elite discourses on heritage. However, it also deliberately excludes a range of actors and perspectives and, consequently, disturbs the knowledge-promoting tasks of heritage institutions. No wonder that normative criticism became the principal hallmark of mainstream heritage practices in Sweden, but also one of their most criticized aspects. As this article argues, the reasons behind the ubiquity and strengths of normative criticism in the heritage sector may be sought in the specificity of elite thinking about Swedish national identity that balances between ‘anti-national nationalism’, non-historical future-oriented citizenship, individual rights, universalist allegiances and vainly prides of being at the forefront of linear historical development.¹¹⁶ This is also one of the reasons for the resistance to this paradigm, as many Swedes, including the political and ideological mainstream, rather subscribe to notions of Swedish national identity as something rooted and continuous. As our examples show, many actors oppose not inclusion or minorities, but what is perceived as the disruptive zeal of a normative paradigm that often does not seem to be satisfied with inclusion and making minorities visible but rather undermines the very idea of bounded continuity.

The intensity of the recent heritage-related polemics once again demonstrates that heritage is a power resource that can make a difference in the field of politics and serve as a catalyzer of identity processes. In this context, it is important to know whom heritage caters to, who is empowered by it in the first turn and who is expected to have a decisive word in forming its visions. As the analysis of the Romani Travellers’ case demonstrates, heritage work guided by the ideas of inclusion and recognition, and thus evoking basic principles of normative criticism, may empower unprivileged minorities in their struggle for cultural acceptance. At the same time, in some other contexts, norm critical assumptions destabilize the legitimate conceptualizations of the nation shared by the majority and elevating identifications with certain historical origins, territory and cultural characteristics.

The waves of polemic around the SD heritage propositions as well as the introductory examples (the discussion about Swedish intangible heritage, the Viking Museum in Stockholm and the “Stolpersteine” in the same city) indicated that skillful balancing between the array of demands and interests of various heritage actors presupposes the constant (self)interrogation about custodianship of heritage. Context-sensitive answers to this question may help to avoid the dead ends and extremes often stemming from either a too broad and all-encompassing or, on the contrary, a too narrow and specific view of heritage and its custodians. However, this is easier said than done as the de-

¹¹⁶ A. Nelvin, “Svensken – den sista människan? Hoppet att alla till slut ska bli som en själv är det sista som överger oss”, *Kvartal*, vol. 2 (2016), at <<http://kvartal.se/artiklar/svensken-den-sista-mnniskan>>, 20 June 2017.

bates are heavily polarized, interwoven with positions taken on other politically loaded issues such as globalization, migration and integration, and laden with questions of the legitimacy and authority of political and institutional actors. In this regard, the case of the Romani Travellers shows a mostly positive example of how heritage professionals are able to include new perspectives while downplaying belligerent and antagonistic rhetoric, and without turning heritage into a zero-sum game.

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