



THE FOLK MUSEUM AND THE FOREIGN

**Scandinavian folk museums and transnational
connections**

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Foreword

This thesis would not have been the same without the kind and professional help of the people at the Norwegian Folk Museum's Documentation Centre, where special thanks is due to Stine Nerbø and Else Rosenqvist. It would also be much less coherent without the insightful guidance of Professor Dominik Collet at the Institute for archaeology, conservation and history (IAKH) at the University of Oslo.

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Abstract

The world's first open-air folk museums were launched in Sweden-Norway during the latter half of the 19th century. The everyday life and traditions of bygone days now acquired its own institution, and the relocating of buildings to create rural and regional microcosms easily available to urban centres ensured that national unity could grow. The Scandinavian folk museums have repeatedly been studied as parts of a nation-building process, but a recent transnational bloc in history writing have brought to the fore a need to reorient and look beyond national framings, aiming to shed light on the connections below and beyond the national state level. In this thesis the object is to provide such a historical perspective for the museums of Sweden-Norway by tracing the folk museums through their formative years, using nationalism only as a backdrop for a more expansive discussion on the role of the museum as part of transnational networks exchanging, adopting and adapting foreign ideas to suit local contexts. I suggest that the emergence of the Scandinavian folk museum can only be understood as consequence of the unique confluence of national frames and transnational networks – an entanglement that remains challenging for many museums today.

1. Introduction

Folk museums aspiring to a national scope have always held a tangible connection with a sense of shared identity reaching back into the age of nationalism. When museum objects become interwoven with family histories, a connection is made between personal and national framings through both place and time. For the museum's audience, a sense of belonging, of home and one's place in the world may begin there and then. However, this braiding of personal and national identity is a relatively new phenomenon in museum history. It gained wider traction only when folk museums emerged in 1880s and 1890s, with Scandinavia quickly becoming an unlikely pioneer. Its role reflected the regions unique combination of national struggles with the Europe-wide take-off of folkore studies. Together they shaped what became the latest addition to a family of sciences and museums. Curators,

politicians, visitors and traders – each with their own interests – colluded in this development. The Nordic museum's Artur Hazelius (1833-1901) and the Norwegian Folk Museums's Hans Aall (1869-1946) loom large in any discussion of the folk museums, but though they were greatly influential, their role provides only part of the picture. What follows will therefore introduce a roster of actors from among academics, museum people and collectors. These historical figures are included to highlight connections, contexts and influences both domestic and transnational. Their legacy ensured that within the increasingly contested union of Sweden-Norway, the folk museum found its shape early on. Why here and why then?

To approach these questions, the thesis will pursue an in-depth analysis of the two principal folk museums in Sweden-Norway and their personnel: Stockholm's Nordic Museum and the Norwegian Folk Museum (NFM) in Oslo. Drawing on archival material, museum journals, and biographical material, it will explore how these institutions were at the same time 'national' pioneers as well as closely entangled with European ideas, networks, and markets. Reconnecting these national pioneers with their transnational environments – something earlier research has often omitted – will answer questions such as: Where did the open-air museum idea begin, and how did it travel? What is uniquely Scandinavian about the first open-air museums and which other, alternative, transnational networks were at play here? How and by whom were these more-than-national flows facilitated?

More than just the innovation of enshrining folklore, the unique characteristic of the Swedish-Norwegian concept lay with the open-air museum. Would it be possible to trace this concept of the open-air folk museum from Sweden-Norway and perhaps further from its dim origins out on the European continent, and in the process perceive something of how transnational connections were made? Such was the starting point of this thesis, and a guiding star for the pursuit of transnational connections as could be identified. Where did the open-air museum idea begin, and how did it travel?

State of the art

The Scandinavian open-air museums have often been studied in a predominantly national context. In contrast museum histories have experienced transnational turn in recent years. These studies re-evaluate the embedded networks of practitioners, patrons, audiences, objects and ideas that shaped and qualify 'national' museum environments – often in response to postcolonial challenges. For example, Stefan Berger (2015) has noted how 19th century

national museums in Europe relied on inspiration from foreign institutions, citing a transnational influence on both the collecting and conveying processes of many museums.¹ Berger presents national art museums as an “edifier and educator of national citizens” often as a means to reflect national prestige; the imperial-national museums as conveying prestige by connecting colonial powers to a heritage of “high civilizations” such as Roman and Greek heritage; meanwhile the archaeology and history museums were often focused on crafting a ‘master narrative’ of a nation’s history to connect a people to their past.² On a general level, this establishes a museum’s agency in a nation-building context. At the same time, it serves as a starting point for a closer look at the nuances created by unique contexts, such as within the Swedish-Norwegian union.

Eriksen (2009) argues similarly that the museums can be considered part of what has been called a *universal encyclopaedic project*, and in so doing she highlights a transnational connection with a greater European culture of experts, practitioners and ideas.³ Eriksen states that though museums had long displayed the past, for Norway it was not until the 1890s that the past was truly mobilised as an educating force for the present; only at that point had museums become “historical institutions”.⁴ This meant that folk museums helped interpret objects to create narratives about local culture to shape local identities.

Clifford (1997) posited that museums are indeed ‘contact zones’ for the meeting of cultures. They undermine as well as create narrow national framings.⁵ The relevance of Clifford’s theories for this discussion lies with his perspective on museums as not merely “collections of universal culture, repositories of uncontested value, sites of progress, discovery, and the accumulation of human, scientific, or national patrimonies”; that it behoves the scholar to view “all culture-collecting strategies as responses to particular histories of dominance, hierarchy, resistance and mobilization.”⁶ This perspective downplays the idealism permeating much of 19th century rhetoric, favouring a kind of analytical cynicism. Nonetheless it remains an apt perspective as a framework for understanding the perceived dominance implicit by the Swedish folk museum seen in relation to the resistance implicit in the Norwegian one.

¹ Berger, “National museums in between” (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015), p. 29.

² Berger, “National museums in between”, pp. 15-17.

³ Eriksen, *Museum, en kulturhistorie* (Oslo: Pax, 2009), pp. 34-37.

⁴ Eriksen, *Museum, en kulturhistorie*, pp. 74-75, 88.

⁵ Clifford, *Routes* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

⁶ Clifford, *Routes*, p. 213.

Why museums thrived in Scandinavia remains a poignant question. Bennet (2015) notes how folklore and ethnography museums acquired a broad appeal in regions where independence movements were strong but failed to gain a similar traction in regions striving for independence was less relevant, stopping just short of suggesting that a folk museum is an instrument for the cultivation of cultural pride in places where that culture is under assault from rival cultures or nations.⁷ His global observations resonate well with the Norwegian context, where the nation's elites were indeed concerned with nation-building since the partially successful rebellion of 1814.

There are several works available to tell the institutional histories of the Swedish-Norwegian folk museums. Hegard (1984) has shown in meticulous detail how these institutions were assembled, providing a rich tapestry of information though with few attempts at interpretation.⁸ With the volume *Nordiska Museet under 125 år* (1998), the museum took a largely national perspective by presenting itself first and foremost as part of the nationalization of Sweden, contributing to homogenization of the populace.⁹ The open-air section at Skansen brought all the districts of Sweden together within one sprawling exhibition in a bid to forge a constructed national whole, a "Sweden in miniature". It concludes that national consciousness was the major objective of its founder, and Skansen is seen as the culmination of that project.¹⁰ This institutional history was however early in recognizing some key transnational influences such as the great expositions but is somewhat limited in exploring the result of this influence. More recently Amundsen (2011) has looked at the NFM's attempt to mediate between a cosmopolitan urban elite and a rural and traditional peasant class. Here the NFM's purpose is seen as being a unifying factor for all strata of the Norwegian society, thereby aiding the establishing of a new and distinct Norwegian national identity.¹¹ Galaaen (2005, 2011) compared the two institutions with the aim of understanding what sort of relationship they cultivated during the years of Swedish-Norwegian union, looking at both the official relationship and the individual and sometimes private relationships between some central figures.¹² Though several of these works draw parallels between the different folk museums, they rarely venture outside the union of

⁷ Bennet, "Museums, nations, empires, religions", p. 73.

⁸ Hegard, *Romantikk og fortidsvern* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1984).

⁹ Sörlin, "Artur Hazelius och det nationella arvet", pp. 18, 23.

¹⁰ Sörlin, "Artur Hazelius och det nationella arvet", pp. 25, 28, 38.

¹¹ Amundsen, "Men of vision" (Uppsala: Swedish Science Press, 2011), pp. 52-54.

¹² Galaaen, «Kolleger og konkurrenter» (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2005); Galaaen, «Kolleger og konkurrenter» (Oslo: Norsk Folkemuseum, 2011); Bjorli, «Kultur, vitenskap og samfunn» (Universitetet i Bergen, 2000), p 12.

Sweden-Norway. As a result, the dynamic between national frames and transnational experts, audiences and traders remains largely unexplored.

A duality of purpose

The existing research literature reveals a somewhat surprising or self-contradicting blend of local and foreign. Though the national and transnational might seem like forces in opposition, such as within a country striving for independence, the history of the folk museums illustrates that the they negotiated national identity was quite reliant on transnational contact for inspiration. In this regard, the Norwegian Folk Museum at Christiania (Oslo) has generally been understood as part of the legacy of the Nordic Museum at Stockholm, by which it was predated by roughly two decades. This is drawn from the account of the museum's creator Hans Aall, who found inspiration by reading about Skansen in a newspaper in 1894.¹³ The NFM's founders were quite vocal that it was not sufficient that Norwegian culture was being conserved at Skansen in Stockholm merely "for the sake of science", because that would provide no "sense of nationality" to the Norwegian people.¹⁴ In a closely related thesis (2005) and subsequent article (2011) Galaaen therefore explored the tensions between the Norwegian and Swedish institutions, noting the influence of the political climate and the union's dissolution as important in shaping their work, echoing a similar analysis put forward by Bjorli (2000).¹⁵ There was a separation of the folk museum's scientific research from the goal of attracting and educating the public, reflecting a duality of purpose.¹⁶ This has also been remarked on by Amundsen (2011), who connected this duality with competing and increasingly separate ideas within the NFM's leadership.¹⁷ He remarks on how this double agenda also can be viewed as a divide between the "intelligentsia" influenced by "foreign founts of culture" and the greater populace suggested as the other extreme representing native culture. In domestic terms this was seen by 19th century contemporaries as a spatial disconnect between urban and rural cultures. The democratic and nationalist ideas prevalent around the time of the advent of the folk museums endorsed a museum's need to educate its audiences on their own nation's history. A folk museum would bring the true native rural into urban proximity. In such a perspective, the purpose of the 'national' folk museum appears to

¹³ Hegard, *Romantikk og fortidsvern*, p. 153.

¹⁴ Aall, *Norsk Folkemuseum*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁵ Galaaen, «Kolleger og konkurrenter» (2005), p. 37.

¹⁶ Rentzhog, *Friluftsmuseerna*, pp. 41-42.

¹⁷ Amundsen, "Men of vision", p. 47.

have been the lessening of this divide.¹⁸ This also suggests that the transnational nature of the folk museum would seem to lie with the educated elite itself, painting the folk museums as a showcase for local culture and history, albeit created with foreign methods.

Knell's (2011) chapter on national museums finds that Scandinavian folk museums have been a major driving force for the "historical anchoring of national identity".¹⁹ Drawing a line between *professionals* oriented towards such things as "internationalism, multiculturalism, 'science', history"; and *publics* oriented towards such things as "nation, memory, ethnicity", Knell also promotes a similar duality of purpose for folk museums. Rentzhog (2007) suggests an even clearer division embodied in the two separate locales of the Nordic Museum, with the open-air locale being not for true conservation, but rather for the fulfilment of a "public mission".²⁰ Most scholars therefore seem to tacitly agree on such a duality of purpose. The object of this thesis is to look further into these "foreign founts" and examine the nature of the communication between the professionals of the museum field.

This dichotomy has provided a model for analysis which can be applied to a museum's public profile. In many cases the ideology axis is where the democratic ideals come into play, and where an entertainment approach is adopted by an institution as a means of attracting visitors. The division between the scientific and the ideological mandate of the museum has been largely adopted in this thesis. One may however worry that such a division assumes that scientific aspirations were adopted only to advance the science and in so doing downplays the ideological implications of nationalism. There is however evidence that this is not the case as conservation and research was often intended as being for the sake of future generations and their national consciousness. In this sense a scientific rationale for museum work becomes a long-term investment for the same ideological reasons. As such it seems that these two directions of museum practice have a more complex relationship. Scientific motivations can be separated from ideological only insofar as academics and museum professionals were more interested in their subject matter than in their political implications.

¹⁸ Amundsen, "Men of vision", pp. 48-49, 53-54.

¹⁹ Knell, "National museums and the national imagination" (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 11.

²⁰ Rentzhog, *Friluftsmuseerna*, p. 28.

Methods

This thesis is built on an archival study, based on sources from The Norwegian Folk Museum and Nordic Museum. This includes correspondence, annual reports and publications authored by the institutions. To supplement these (institutionally biased) primary sources, older studies of relevant historical material have been quoted and integrated into more recent scholarly discussion. The language of this thesis' primary sources is in both Norwegian and Swedish. As this is intended to be a study accessible to English-speakers, some of these have been translated for integration into this text. For direct quotes from the source material, such translations have been made by me. Though the form may be slightly modernized, the translations aim to be as close to the meaning of the source as possible. The titles of the annual reports have been translated as well for better text flow. The NFM's *Årsberetning* and the Nordic Museum's *Meddelande* are both referred to as that institution's annual report. An examination of letters is used to complement the findings in these publications. Such correspondence carries some weaknesses of reliability because they often present only one side of the exchange and furthermore require significant effort to be deciphered – there are large variations in the style of gothic handwriting prevalent in the majority of correspondence from this period. The state archive of Norway has provided some material from the personal writings of some central figures in Norwegian museum history.

The larger part of the analysis is based on the printed annual reports of the folk museums. These are rich sources of statistical data as well as examples of formal communication. Here can be found the ideological foundation of the museums, the methods of collection and the economics of the institution. The museums were also meticulous about recording the official channels of communication with other museums worthy of closer inspection. These sources are obviously biased towards the administrative leadership and its official or intended agenda. As a result, this thesis will feature an analysis of the records showing contact with foreign institutions, remarking on the geographical spread of contacts, contents and implications of such communication. That said, the reports are not perfectly candid about every detail and require a critical and reflexive reading practice. The most obvious bias in the publications printed by the museum originates with the need to project the institution in a favourable light. A constant need for income in the museums' early years meant that it was incumbent on the director and board to curry favour with wealthy donors through persuasive rhetoric. The work of collecting buildings in particular was a strain on the finances of the freshly founded institutions. The reports were part of an arrangement in which the contributors saw how their

contributions were utilized in a transparent way. There was a pressure to make progress in the great project of saving cultural heritage for posterity which put pressure on collectors and those financing them alike. This pressure lessened as state support increases after the turn of the century, though the scientific need to collect was still exhorted.

The open-air concept is here studied as a particularly suggestive example of how transnational communication occurs. The history of exhibition practices is relevant to this thesis as it opens a dialogue with the museology field, but a more complete analysis of such matters is left to specialists of that field. For the sake of practical feasibility, the role of the universities are also largely outside the scope of this study.²¹ It however bears mentioning that Norway's single university played a significant role through the active work its academics, its ethnography collection and that collection's conservators, which are recognized here as important agents on the Norwegian museum scene. Another matter left mostly undisturbed is that though museum directors, academics and politicians have written much about their motivations, it is difficult to ascertain how the audiences thought about the folk museums. There are records showing that tourists visited the folk museums, and we know tourism was a growing trend during these years, but such travellers were also people of means, and thus most likely part of the elite. This represents a line of questioning that bears more investigation but can only be addressed by carefully reading between-the-lines here.

Theory: Transnational and national history writing

Whereas around the turn of the 21st century it was common to use the term *international* in discussions about communication across borders, there has been a movement in the intervening time to adopt the term transnational. *Transnational* as a term describes a perspective of historians and museologists to look not only at the interactions within or between nations (bi/international). Instead, it suggests a range of exchanges that transcend, challenge, or subvert national framings and the personnel usually associated with them. International history writing to a greater extent recognizes national borders as natural divisions and barriers. *Transnational* on the other hand disregards such borders, seeing sprawling networks and associations extending across. The transnational dimension of the

²¹ The role of such institutions as the "university of things" has been more thoroughly explored by Collect & MacLeod (2016).

museum's role in history has according to adherents of the discipline long been overlooked.²² It grew from older subsets of history such as international history and diplomatic history, which were more concerned with the top level of national interactions, disregarding the less official channels of communication.²³ This historical revisionism is recent enough that there is a certain mingling between the old and the new terminology among the relevant literature, as illustrated by the following excerpt:

The [Norwegian] Folk Museum's official view on the connection between national and international or European culture developed from an isolated national cultural understanding to a recognition of interplay between national and international impulses.²⁴

In this 2005 vocabulary, *transnational* as a term is not present, although it would be appropriate to the context. There is an overlap of meaning in *international* with what I will refer to as *transnational* in this thesis. The "international impulses" described in the above excerpt is here understood an expression of transnational sentiment. In a transnational perspective, museums can be perceived as nodes in a web of contact across borders, allowing the spread of ideas from one country to the next irrespective of and across the political framework we associate with a nation. Staying mindful of the manifold roles of the folk museums, it is time to further explore this perspective. However, it should be noted that focusing on transnational dimensions does not mean fully disregarding national framings.

Transnational history pays attention to the dependencies and the transferrals that cross territorial and political boundaries – the reciprocal perceptions and transmissions. It is interested in the 'links and flows' – as formative factors – between 'people, ideas, products, processes, and patterns', while also acknowledging the continued relevance of the nation-state paradigms and the varying intensity of cross-boundary transfers over time.²⁵ Framing one's study only within one nation does not sufficiently pursue these "links and flows" below and beyond national frameworks, and a comparative study is not wide enough to accommodate the field of view espoused by this perspective. I contend that these transnational flows and communities are seminal in the creation of the supposedly "national". By this token, innovations such as the "national" open-air museum coalesce from a transnational foundation. The transnational perspective is a more recent analytical tool for historians to critically situate and challenge the naturalisation of national perspectives.

²² Meyer & Savoy, *The museum is open* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), pp. 5.

²³ Iriye, *Global and transnational history*, pp. 5-7, 48.

²⁴ Galaaen, *Kolleger og konkurrenter*, p. 66.

²⁵ Meyer & Savoy, *The museum is open*, pp. 5-6.

However, in this study, such an approach reevaluates not just the national perspective of older museum histories. It also challenges the way many the contemporaries positioned themselves: National ‘awakening’ and fostering a “sense of nationality” was explicitly cited as motivation by folk museum directors.²⁶ Here, this study will help to differentiate the national self-fashioning of museum practitioners and their transnational practice. For nineteenth century contemporaries, transnational exchange seems to have been a more implicit presence, a fact of life. This is not to say that contemporaries were unaware of this fact. They often used the term *cosmopolitanism* to describe a similar tension and experience and discussed it as a counterpoint to the traditional life associated with rural life.²⁷ Historically, the term *cosmopolitan* may be construed an example of a “post-modern” realization that borders were not much of a barrier to the exchange of ideas and impulses.²⁸

As a result, a transnational sensibility is not something that needs to be imposed on the historical cases. The tension between national, economical, academic or material levels was an essential – though often overlooked – part of the (folk) museum history.²⁹ The political context of the open-air museum’s birth is strongly influenced by nationalism as it appeared in the political climate, central to which were the opposing forces of unification and subjugation on the one hand and independence on the other which characterized the more turbulent years of the Swedish-Norwegian union. The Norwegian nation was still in the process of being established during the period which will be examined in this thesis. Museums were supposed to help instil this rather abstract sense of community and kinship with other members of the nation. In their bid to educate the populace, it was important to transmit what constitutes a nation. What was viewed as “national” highlights the connection between the terms *people*, *nation* and *folk* (as in *folk museum*).

The objects of this study are folk museums with a national scope, though they are notably not government-owned.³⁰ National museums have oftentimes been seen as museums run or funded by the state apparatus. In the case of the folk museums, they should rather be viewed as a museum collecting the nation in its entirety. Though territorial borders have often framed the nation rather rigidly, this is done in recognition of the fact that borders between countries have changed repeatedly, and from the nineteenth century definition there may be a

²⁶ Aall, *Norsk Folkemuseum*, pp. 4-5; Rentzhog, *Friluftsmuseerna*, pp. 27-28.

²⁷ Amundsen, “Men of vision”, pp. 49-50; Sørensen, pp. 95-96.

²⁸ Paul, «Tyskland – Skandinaviens port til världslitteraturen».

²⁹ Meyer & Savoy, *The museum is open*, p. 4.

³⁰ Bennett, *The Birth of the museum*, p. 115.

discrepancy between the borders and the nation. In short, the scope of the conservation effort is taken to determine the museum category in a greater sense than the museums affiliation. Qualifying the national dimension instead of taking it for granted might help to broaden our understanding of these momentous developments on Europe's fringes.

Structure

This thesis is divided in to three major parts. The second chapter is intended to provide a historical basis for understanding the folk museum's position nineteenth century Scandinavia. Museums are emphasized as political actors and the political context of Sweden-Norway is therefore a red thread throughout. This also includes a theoretical approach to ideologies complemented by examples of contemporary perspectives. The chapter furthermore presents some major agents in the folk museum scene, situating them in the contemporary context by their relation to their respective museum projects.

Chapter three presents some case histories by investigating some of the most important folk museums of Sweden-Norway. The Norwegian Folk Museum (NFM) is here the primary focus, with The King Oscar Collections and the Nordic Museum at Stockholm presented closely related institutions. Scientific fields legitimized these institutions and provided a backdrop of transnational community of museum. The chapter also includes a discussion about the NFM as it interacted with an international market of commodified cultural objects. The roster of influential agents is through this perspective expanded to include antiquities traders and dealers as active in deciding folk museum collections were assembled.

Chapter four follows transnational connections in close-up by examining entanglements created through great expositions and a study of the NFM's and Nordic Museum's annual reports between the years 1883 and 1905. The main analysis concerns records of contact with foreign correspondents, both museums and societies. Findings show signs of a divided Europe, where the scientific communities of Atlantic colonial powers developed in a different direction than that of central- and northern Europe. Implications for understanding the transnational contact between museums in Scandinavia and Europe at large is discussed, leading up to some reflections on the "transnational national".

2. Setting the scene: Contexts and influences

During the nineteenth century the central agents of museum development were the educated and the wealthy, a cosmopolitan group overall, who also possessed the means to travel. A modern museum director could get on a steamboat in Christiania to go attend a Danish conference of anthropology in Copenhagen or Berlin. A Swedish curator could ride on freshly laid train tracks into previously isolated Norwegian mountain valleys, hoping to bring back the last few remaining artifacts hidden away in some farmer's loft – or even the loft itself. Or the secretary of a scientific society could go by both land and sea on a tour of different institutions in several different nations, aiming to bring back fresh trends and ideas to his home community. This chapter will concern some of these historical figures and the contemporary contextual factors influencing their work.

Next, it is important to look at the political context. In the wake of political revolution and the crumbling of empires, Europe was starting to look inward to its own cultural history, though perhaps less so among the largest colonial powers, whose interest lay mainly with their far-flung colonial possessions. For smaller countries, rapid modernisation and industrialisation brought to the fore that the old ways of life were fast disappearing. On the heels of the great revolutions and the commonality's entry into government through democratic reforms, a new focus was the national community, the people. Common identity and questions thereof were a major concern for the elite, but to formulate and transmit this sense of identity to the masses was a challenge in mass communication.

Central figures

In late nineteenth-century Sweden-Norway, certain individuals of the elite stand out as influential innovators of museum development. These men were central to the folk museum's advancement from idea to reality. This gallery is not exhaustive, and there will be other, lesser agents mentioned outside this section. These are simply the major agents in Sweden-Norway. They were all active near the end of the century and often influenced one another, though they came from different generations. As contemporaries, the relation between them had the flavour of both rivalry and co-operation, and all contributed significantly to the development of the folk museum and open-air concept.

King Oscar II of Sweden Norway (1829-1907) has received less attention as a museum builder than the directors of the Nordic Museum and the NFM. By virtue of his title, he did not directly administrate a museum, but with the help of a Norwegian cadre of supporters, he oversaw the founding of a history museum at Bygdøy outside Christiania (later Oslo). Oscar had to position himself carefully between two squabbling nations. As the last king of the Swedish-Norwegian union he came into his kingship in a difficult period. When he ascended the throne in 1872, the union was only 58 years old, but already edging towards crisis. Oscar's family was inextricably linked with the union. The union had begun with his grandfather Karl III Johan. As the first Bernadotte king, Karl Johan struck down the Norwegian rebellion in 1814, but had originally been a French Field Marshal by the name of Jean Baptiste Bernadotte.

The king may be viewed as part of the elite, a figure at the pinnacle of society and moving in the most influential circles, and he may be viewed as an inherently transnational figure. As king of two countries, Oscar was in a position to influence the cultural and political development of both. He entered the Norwegian museum scene in 1881 when he opened his collections at Bygdøy outside Christiania to the public. The collections comprised a conventional indoor section and an open-air section displaying authentic historical buildings in a way that no other institution had managed to do. These buildings would be absorbed into the NFM after the dissolution of the union. Tellingly, the NFM had been established on the adjoining land plot, marking itself as a rival to the king's project. Opening a museum on his private lands at Christiania may have been intended to promote cultural unity within the union, or to curry favour with rebellious Norwegians. Or did the king just have a vested personal interest in the science of cultural history? Oscar publicly professed to have Norwegian interests at heart as much as Swedish, rejecting that the dynasty saw Norway as the lesser kingdom and professing to feelings of love for both peoples.³¹ This is a widely accepted portrayal of the king in Swedish history-writing: He is described as having "harboured strong sympathy for Norway and its people, and had been appalled by the conflict within the union", and his policies "aimed from the beginning to even out differences between the union's partners".³² Oscar envisioned himself in the role of mediator between the two kingdoms, careful to not favour his native Sweden too much. When Artur Hazelius sought support in establishing his Nordic Museum in Stockholm, Oscar allowed himself to be

³¹ Oscar II, *Mina norske memoarer*, p. 3.

³² Holm, "Introduction", in *Mina norske memoarer*, p. 1.

named Protector of the museum's society. He also leased land to both the Nordic Museum and the NFM when he could have chosen not to. This may explain why he launched a Norwegian rival project to that of Hazelius' Scandinavist one.

Artur Hazelius was a Swedish philologist who turned to conservation. He is credited with being the founder and driving force behind the Nordic Museum at Stockholm during its early years. Owing to his position at the head of innovation decades before the folk museums found their form, he can reasonably be called the father of the Scandinavian folk museum. He started an ethnographic museum in 1873 and won international acclaim with his dioramas of Swedish folk culture.³³ Casting his nets wide, he sought out objects from all over the north for his ethnography collection, and even outside the Nordic countries.³⁴ A Scandinavist by heart, he participated in Scandinavist student meetings both in Christiania and Copenhagen during his youth. This led to him shaping his museum into a super-national collection with objects from all the Nordic countries, a line pursued by the museum for as long as he was at its helm. This naturally made him unpopular with the independence faction in Norway, where he was seen as a thief of Norwegian heritage, even if his work blazed the way for his Norwegian counterparts.

Yngvar Nielsen (1843-1916) was a historian who acquired his primary education in Copenhagen, but also visited universities in Berlin, St. Petersburg and London. He became known for being a pro-unionist who developed a close relationship to king Oscar II. From 1877 and until his death he was director of the Christiania University's ethnographic collection and oversaw a modernising of that department along more scientific principles. In 1881 he petitioned the national assembly for funds to collect objects of cultural heritage but was denied.³⁵ He instead helped Oscar II's museum by writing articles on the king's collection of buildings.³⁶ Nielsen managed to build a collection in his Norwegian section of the ethnographic collections and tried once again to apply for funds for a museum of Norwegian cultural history, but his royalist tendencies robbed him of crucial support.³⁷

Museum director Hans Aall co-founded the NFM in 1894 and remained its director through a lifetime of hard work. When the museum was founded, he was a fresh-faced conservator at

³³ Degroff, "Artur Hazelius", p. 229.

³⁴ Hillström, "Contested boundaries", p. 588.

³⁵ Hegard, *Romantikk og fortidsvern* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1984), pp. 149-150.

³⁶ *Fjerde beretning om Bygdø kongsgaard* (1886)

³⁷ Norsk biografisk leksikon, s.v. "Yngvar Nielsen".

the start of his career, but he had influential friends. Aall was the protégé of Moltke Moe and had followed him on travels through the countryside as Moe worked to record oral traditions, tales and songs. Aall's other great ally who became the leader of the NFM's association's board was the academically acclaimed professor Gustav Storm, a historian educated in Germany and proponent of German scientific ideas. Most accounts show that Aall never concerned himself much with ideology, leaving that part to Moe.³⁸ He instead dedicated his life to the museum and the goal of saving as much folk culture as he could, hitting his stride after the turn of the century. Aall's leadership of the NFM oriented the museum as much towards science as ideology. Throughout the early 20th century, he would become in Norway what Artur Hazelius had become in Sweden; a transnationally acclaimed pioneer in the scientific study of folk culture history. Aall himself referenced both the Nordic Museum and the ethnographer Yngvar Nielsen as sources of inspiration for his work.³⁹ Unlike Nielsen, Aall dared to launch his museum without state support, relying on the network of his friends. As the concept of folk- and open-air museum developed, the NFM found itself at the forefront of innovation in museology. Aall became known for creating new systems of categorization and display and was a respected authority overseas.⁴⁰

The folklorist Moltke Moe (1859-1913) gained fame as he roamed the valleys of Norway to save tales and songs for posterity. Moe wanted the Norwegian people to know their history and their culture and build a national identity. He is considered part of the leftist Lysaker-circle, an alliance of nationalist artists and scientists who worked to influence Norwegian cultural life. Moe co-founded the NFM and wrote its most influential statement of purpose in 1894, anchoring the institution as a part of the Norwegian nation-building project.⁴¹

In summary there was a curious duplicity of national fervour and transnational outlook which motivated and united many of these figures. Museum directors and owners could orient their institutions towards promoting the nation, the union or even the whole Nordic region, but on some basic level they simply sought the welfare of their native nation. Although some may have aspired to political neutrality; to be servants of science and uninflected patriotism, such collections were not assembled in a political vacuum. European trends influenced all of these men to some degree, but how this influence found purchase in their work differed

³⁸ Amundsen, "Men of vision", p. 47; Bjarli, "kultur, vitenskap og samfunn", p. 37.

³⁹ Hegard, *Romantikk og fortidsvern* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1984), pp. 149-150; Bjarli, *Kultur, vitenskap og samfunn* pp. 107-108.

⁴⁰ NFM/D/0024 – Letter to the NFM from the British Museum of Natural History 11.8.1903.

⁴¹ Bjarli, "Kultur, vitenskap og samfunn", p. 28.

significantly, and thus received different measures of popular support. In 1890s Norway, those who held favour with the nationalist left were better positioned for success in establishing a folk museum than those who did not. In Sweden, to promote Nordic unity was by implication a kind of “soft” power projection which sat well with the elite of a nation focused on retaining its last vestiges of imperial power.

The elite and the museums

As examples of the educated elite, the people presented in this chapter show that virtually no person central to the development of the folk museums were isolated from the ideas of the wider world. Through their education and study trips they were all acquainted with the ideas circulating at their time, provided with language training and introduced to wider European schools of thought. The museum creators of Sweden-Norway became nodes in a network, taking part in a legacy that had begun hundreds of years before. The modern museum and most of the traits we associate with such an institution began its development long before the 19th century. Its roots may be traced from the renaissance period, when the European elite cultivated an interest in the teachings of the classical ancient period. They were taught the ancient languages of Greek and Latin at the universities, and this created a transnational mode of communication mostly exclusive to the elite.⁴² Objects as well as ideas could thus more easily travel from one end of Europe to the other. The museums can be considered part of what has been called a *universal encyclopaedic project*.⁴³ The belief at the time was that the apparent chaos of nature and history could be ordered and understood.⁴⁴ This was what drove the people behind the first collections. Assembling collections became a popular pastime for an elite aspiring to Aristotelian erudition. It could therefore be said that the early museums were founded on a thirst for knowledge, but the collection only became a museum when it was opened to the public. Even if there was an educational dimension to the attractiveness of the early museums, a large portion of their purpose was associated with entertainment.

In Norway the upper stratum of society was not aristocracy by the standards of other European countries. Centuries of poverty, plague and Danish overlordship had all but wiped

⁴² Knell, «National museums», p. 22; Eriksen, “Museum

⁴³ Eriksen, *Museum, en kulturhistorie*, pp. 34-37.

⁴⁴ Pedersen, «De norske museene får sin form», p. 43.

the old Norwegian nobility from the map. Owing to greater autonomy under the Swedish rule after 1814, there was room for a somewhat more egalitarian society when compared with other countries. With the absence of nobility, the elite in Norway was essentially separated from the general populace by their education and vocation, though this also correlated with personal wealth. The Norwegian umbrella term for this group is *embetsmenn*, which translates to official (implicitly royal). These men made up the administrative, judicial and religious apparatus in the country. In Norwegian history-writing, this upper social stratum is not typically referred to as a social *class* on basis of their property, but rather as a Weberian *stand* (*stände*) defined by its social prestige.⁴⁵ They practised statecraft, occupied most positions of authority and are credited with steering the kingdom under the Swedish hegemony. At their core they were an urban group: professors, priests, policemen, officers, lawyers, judges, and so on. This is not to say that they were not present in rural districts. The parish priests in particular had an administrative presence in the countryside as they played a leading role in local communities across the country. These were also the men who served as consuls coordinating trade relations abroad, though Norway under Sweden was not permitted its own foreign policy apparatus. After 1814, this elite began a nation-building project which in many respects signified a continuation of the Danish-led rebellion of that year. It involved among other things the formulation of a Norwegian identity as unique and separate, especially from Swedish culture, the union partner. Using the free Norwegian peasant as a symbol of independence closely relates to the Norwegian fascination with folk culture which would spur on the creation of a true folk museum in the late 1800s.

Defining the nation

The political context of the open-air museum's birth is strongly influenced by nationalism. This is not merely because the nineteenth century was the era of nation-building; there was also the opposing forces of subjugation and independence which characterized the more turbulent years of the Swedish-Norwegian union. This coincides with an international trend of intensifying nationalism during the late 19th and early 20th century.⁴⁶ The Norwegian nation was still in the process of being established during the period which will be examined in this thesis. Museums were supposed to help instil this rather abstract sense of community

⁴⁵ Weber, "The distribution of power within the community", p. 143.

⁴⁶ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, p. 105.

and kinship with other members of the prospective nation. In their bid to educate the populace, it was important to transmit what constitutes a nation. The folk museums fit into a Hobsbawmian perspective of nationalism defining the nation. Hobsbawm (1992) called the early stages of nationalism “purely cultural, literary and folkloric.”⁴⁷ His view was that the social elite defines the nation; that it is “constructed essentially from above”; that “the popular masses [...] are the last to be affected” by national consciousness.⁴⁸ The elite is thus established as the agents of nation-building, and nationalism is presented as the ideological component of nation-building which formulates a programme of national unity.

How was the nation viewed in 19th century Sweden-Norway? Hobsbawm is reluctant to define universal criteria, whereas Berger (2015) highlights cultural, linguistic, ethnic and political differences as key to establishing the uniqueness of a nation, elements to establish a contrast with a “constructed [...] neighbouring other” nation.⁴⁹ What was viewed as “national” highlighted the connection between the terms *people*, *nation* and *folk* (as in *folk museum*). We know that the influential museum director and ethnographer L. K. Daa viewed “nation” and “country” as separate; the nation was the people who inhabited the country.⁵⁰ By examining to historical dictionaries, Hillström (2010) found that the Swedish encyclopaedia *Nordisk familjebok* (1887) defined *nation* as:

[lat. natio, people from nasci, to be born] People; unit of people with common descent, physique, mentality, fatherland, language, culture, religion, legal system, customs, forms of government and historical memories. In the Swedish language “nation” and “people” are usually used without distinction.⁵¹

Language is the second cultural marker on the list and a subject of contention for many nation-building projects. Its importance is suggested by the fact that the Nordic Museum’s Artur Hazelius and the NFM’s folklorist Moltke Moe both involved themselves with the formulation of national grammar.⁵² This list of national markers is otherwise extensive, and it is not immediately clear how many of these markers would have to be present to claim common nationality. Whether people understood the markers of shared nationality in a

⁴⁷ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, p. 12.

⁴⁸ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, p. 10, 12.

⁴⁹ Berger, “Berger, “National museums in between”, p. 25.

⁵⁰ Hillström, “Contested boundaries”, p. 593.

⁵¹ Hillström, “Contested Boundaries”, pp. 590-591.

⁵² Hegard, *Romantikk og fortidsvern* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1984), p. 192; Amundsen, «Men of vision», p. 47.

restrictive or liberal sense could define whether or not they supported the national narrative commonly associated with the NFM or the super-national unification project espoused by the Nordic Museum. The idea of a common Nordic or Scandinavian culture would find less such markers in common to argue for than a single kingdom would, but then again it is worth remembering that before nation-building began in earnest, there was less national homogeneity even within kingdoms than what modern times have conditioned us to expect.

The Bernadotte union

The Swedish-Norwegian union provides the contextual framework for the historical events discussed here. The arrangement lasted some eighty years, spelling one last chapter in the long view of Swedish expansionism. Over the course of the Napoleonic wars, Sweden had lost its Finnish possessions to Russia in 1808 and needed to look elsewhere to expand as a regional power. When the union's architect Karl III acquired Norway from Denmark in 1814, it had resulted in a rebellion led jointly by renegade Danish royalty and the Norwegian elite. This rebellion established a Norwegian national assembly and authored a progressive constitution. The rebellion buckled under threat of Swedish invasion and true independence was denied the Norwegians.⁵³ Notably, significant autonomy was still afforded them under the terms of the negotiated peace. The result was a union of crowns with an intact Norwegian constitution and national assembly. Sweden did however assume control over Norwegian foreign affairs. The reasons for these rather lenient terms are not fully agreed upon. Some historians have noted how Karl III was pressed for time to settle the matter, which he had pressured the Danish king into immediately after Napoleon's fall. Others have pointed out how years of war might have made him tired of bloodshed, resulting in a reluctance to forcibly suppress those he would rule.⁵⁴ The former French revolutionary Karl Johan had after all become that which he had fought against for most of his life as the *ancien regime* had been his enemy for many years. Perhaps he favoured a style of rule more in tune with the modern enlightenment ideals, which the Norwegian constitution embodied. In any case the loose Swedish hold over Norway paved the way for decades of defiance as nationalism gathered momentum there.

⁵³ Dyrvik, *Norsk historie*, pp. 248-251.

⁵⁴ Sørensen?

How was Sweden to formulate a programme of benevolent nation-building in a nationally resurgent Norway? The two union partners Sweden and Norway had closely related cultures but their national histories had radically different narratives. While 19th century Norway hummed to the tune of national revival, Sweden's fortunes had deteriorated throughout the preceding centuries. As Norway faded into obscurity from the 14th to the 16th century as a subject of Danish rule, Sweden had pursued an expansionist dream of a Baltic Sea empire, often with Denmark-Norway as its greatest rival. By the end of the Napoleonic wars, many of Sweden's imperial aspirations had been quashed. Over the 17th and 18th centuries, many of their possessions had been lost, most notably during the Great Nordic Wars in the early 18th century. By the time of the Napoleonic wars, the royal lineage was stagnated and geriatric, and Sweden had to cede dominion over Finland to Russia. The Swedes attempted to revitalize their fortunes by inviting a French general to become king, founding a new dynasty. The treaty of Kiel of 1814 which led to the defeated Denmark ceding Norway to Sweden may consequently be seen as an attempt at halting this imperial decline.

Incorporating the “folk” into nation building

The age of folk museums occupies the twilight years of the Swedish-Norwegian union. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s, continued belligerence from separatists in Norway characterized a lot of the political arena. Museums occupied an important position alongside the universities in formulating and transmitting to the wider public how society should view the nation's past. In Norway there arose two notable historical narratives used in the nation-building project: The national revival narrative and the free Norwegian farmer narrative. During this period, history museums typically showed archaeological finds from the medieval and Viking era. The Folk Museums on the other hand did not concern itself with the periods of history which underpinned the national revival narrative, but its focus was well suited to supporting the glorification of the free Norwegian peasant. On the surface level, this seems to connect the folk museum to the nation-building movement, but if we look at the people at the center of the first Folk Museums, we might find that there is more to the role of these museums.

With the aim of upholding an egalitarian society, nobility as an institution was abolished by the national assembly shortly following the union with Sweden. The Norwegian countryside was by 1814 populated in large part by peasants who owned their own land, a comparatively

special privilege not afforded to many of their European counterparts. This would provide a solid foundation for an egalitarian democratic society while also furnishing nationalists with a rallying-point for what was seen as uniquely Norwegian. It may seem reasonable to assume that this was part of a constructed nationalist narrative post-1814, but as far back as the 1760s there is evidence of a special esteem afforded to the free Norwegian farmer. This perspective was not only confined to Norway; during this period a widespread interest in peasant culture spread from Germany and extolled a “folkloric rediscovery of ‘the people’.”⁵⁵ By most accounts Norwegian folk culture held a special esteem in neighbouring countries. In Sweden, Norway was by some seen as an “ideal land” of romantic nationalism.⁵⁶ In Denmark, an illustration can be found in the royal gardens of Danish Frederik V, which were adorned with numerous renditions of Norwegian peasants. In these gardens there was a conspicuous absence of any Danish counterparts, which is thought to be due to their oppressed state.⁵⁷ The downtrodden Danish peasant was a symbol of the past while the free Norwegian farmer was more in tune with progressive democratic ideals. It seems this made the former unworthy of artistic rendition. Since Norway and Denmark had been united for several centuries, we may see this example as an expression of pride and patriotism. This kind of blending of “high” art and folk culture gives a glimpse of established patterns of exhibition which predated the folk museums: The sculpture garden.⁵⁸ Interestingly though, Swedish peasants had a similar reputation, challenging the uniqueness of such a national symbol.⁵⁹ In the Swedish-Norwegian context, such similarities could be an argument for cultural unity or a matter of rivalry and imitation, depending on whether someone was pro-union or separatist.

The elite in Norway had been influenced towards cosmopolitanism in the 1830s and 40s. During that time, a need for the modernization of society was connected with the need to absorb fresh impulses and ideas from abroad. As one prominent statesman put it: “the interests of any single state are inextricably tied to the cosmopolitan interest of the global state.”⁶⁰ It was feared that failure to do so would leave Norway stagnant and that other nations would quickly outpace them in the race for modernity. The desirable aspect of these foreign ideas was mainly perceived to be scientific innovation for the good of all humanity. The

⁵⁵ Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780*, p. 103.

⁵⁶ Sörlin, “Artur Hazelius och det nationella arvet”, p. 33.

⁵⁷ Østergård, «Nationale identiteter: Tyskland, Norden, Skandinavien», p. 31.

⁵⁸ Hegard, *Romantikk og fortidsvern*, pp. 14-16.

⁵⁹ DeGroff, “Artur Hazelius and the ethnographic display”, p. 241.

⁶⁰ Sørensen, *Kampen om Norges sjel* (Oslo, Aschehoug, 2001), p. 96.

political liberalism prevalent among enlightenment thinkers had formed a narrative about the progress of humanity as a whole.⁶¹ The encyclopaedic project and the knowledge it produced was common property of all citizens; truth was truth no matter where it may have been discovered. The study into the nature of man and his origins would influence the political arena as well as museums in many respects, such as with theories about race. The separation of ethnography and folk culture in museums served to separate the exotic and the local, but in the museums of imperial power, this was more obviously connected to the natural differences between coloniser and the colonised; the perceived human hierarchy was propped up by science.

Folk culture history was seen as an anchor to what was truly and uniquely Norwegian. Prominent figures such as the famous folklorist Moltke Moe argued in 1909 that to truly forge the disparate elements of the populace into a national brotherhood, the elite would have to know and appreciate folk culture. For the independence movement to gain traction, the nationalists needed a grass-roots alliance with the peasantry. This became the guiding principle of the Norwegian Leftist movement.

The reason, the main reason by far [that rural and urban life has been disconnected from one another], is that the two parts of the nation have derived their nourishment from very different sources – the intelligentsia predominantly from foreign founts of culture” And what did Moltke Moe see as the solution? His answer was “full knowledge of the other side [...] As European culture must be an essential constituent of the national, the national must likewise be an equally essential part of the highest education.⁶²

The esteemed professor had hit on an important theme by realizing that education was exacerbating the differences between the urban and the rural – education was what was connecting the elite to the foreign. In our terminology, Moe was clearly cognizant and concerned about transnational influences working on his compatriots. According to the folklorist – perhaps unsurprisingly – the elite was too cosmopolitan; they did not sufficiently connect with their rural fellow countrymen. To incorporate “the national”, which by implication he meant inclusion of the rural, into the elite’s education was Moe’s way of rooting the upper class more firmly within their home nation.

⁶¹ Sørensen, *Kampen om Norges sjel*, p. 96.

⁶² Amundsen, “Men of vision”, p. 49.

Dreams of a united Scandinavia

One way of promoting harmony within the union could be to pursue a programme of cultural homogenization. Scandinavism could theoretically provide a foundation for such an undertaking, if successfully transmitted to the populace of both countries. Around the same time there were even ideas of pan-Germanism, based on ideas of racial and cultural kinship between Nordic and German peoples. Sørensen (2001) presents Scandinavism along with pan-Germanism as supernational ideologies aimed at the peaceful unification of the peoples of the Scandinavian peoples on the one hand and the unification of perceived Germanic cultures on the other hand. The ideological spectrum within the Scandinavist movement ranged from “weak” to “strong”; respectively corresponding to *cultural* or *political* Scandinavism.⁶³ Whereas the weak variety envisioned a Scandinavian union or federation with separate nation states intact, the other extreme called for the establishment of a monolithic nation of Scandinavia. Proponents of the latter were vilified by their critics as adherents of national *amalgamation*. The less heavy-handed alternative was a *complementary* Scandinavism, which saw a strong national identity and unique culture of the respective nations as a natural prerequisite in the formulation of a Scandinavian identity and culture. Prominent adherents of this perspective include Oscar II and Artur Hazelius.⁶⁴ Although it had a limited impact in Sweden-Norway, Scandinavism could arguably be viewed as its own nation-building project parallel to Norwegian nationalism.⁶⁵ Scandinavism was at its most popular several decades before the folk museums saw the light of day, but still attained some influence among museum circles. It is often seen as a response to German expansionism in the years leading up to the unification of the *Reich*; especially in Denmark the idea of a united Scandinavia to resist German pressure was popular. In this sense, Scandinavism and pan-Germanism appeared as opposing ideas in the wake of Danish-Prussian wars.

Adherents of Scandinavism included several museum directors and owners, notably two separate kings as well and a folk museum director on the Swedish side and prominent academics such as ethnographers and ethnologists on the Norwegian side. Eilert Sundt (1817-1875) was an ethnologist and material folk culture pioneer who first engaged with the Scandinavist movement as a student in Copenhagen in the 1840s and became an outspoken

⁶³ Hansen, «Et skandinavisk nasjonsbyggingsprosjekt», pp. 19-22; Sørensen, *Kampen om Norges sjel*, pp. 234-236.

⁶⁴ Oscar II's memoarer,

⁶⁵ Hansen, «Et Skandinavisk nasjonsbyggingsprosjekt», p. 125.

advocate for the movement as Danish-Prussian conflicts escalated. After graduating, Sundt went on to conduct ethnological studies on folk culture, and specifically the houses and farm buildings of the rural population. This paved the way for the rational assembly of open-air museums decades later.⁶⁶ He remained a Scandinavist until the movement resurfaced in the 1860s. Sundt is a classic example of the transnationally influenced *embetsmann*. His studies in Denmark exposed him to continental ideas, and his interests led him to visit the early international expositions. Sundt would not live to see Hazelius' Scandinavist open-air museum manifest as an embodiment of many of his ideas, but his scientific interest in the way ordinary people lived in the countryside helped pave the way for making building conservation a legitimate discipline during a period of time before the folk museums of Scandinavia came about.

Ludvig Kristensen Daa (1809-1877) was a historian, ethnographer and politician who ran the University of Christiania's Ethnography Museum from 1863 until his death. At around the same time a Scandinavian Society was founded at Christiania. Daa was a core member, providing the movement with scientific backing. His theories on the ethnic history and migration patterns of the Scandinavian peoples supported the idea of a common Germanic heritage and therefore provided legitimacy to claims of common culture.⁶⁷ During the 1840s, Daa had identified the cultural arena as the foundation for a closer relationship between Nordic nations. Conflicts expressed in written works and art were by him seen as an obstacle to unification.⁶⁸ Daa was also an influential figure in the museum business. As director of the university's ethnographic collections, Daa held the view that an ethnography museum should include as many cultures as possible. He was therefore noted as supportive of Artur Hazelius' early collection efforts, and the Nordic Museum as an ethnographical museum for all of Scandinavia. During his period as museum director in the 1860s he travelled frequently abroad to build a network of contacts by which to obtain objects for the museum's collections.⁶⁹

Among Swedish Scandinavists of note were the union kings Oscar I and Oscar II and the Nordic Museum's Artur Hazelius. The latter two founded museums displaying folk culture; Hazelius' project embodied a stronger kind of Scandinavism than that of the king, as evinced

⁶⁶ Hegard, *Romantikk og fortidsvern*, pp. 30-31.

⁶⁷ Hansen, «Et skandinavisk nasjonsbyggingsprosjekt», p. 12.

⁶⁸ Sørensen, *Kampen om Norges sjel*, pp. 239-240.

⁶⁹ Hillström, "Contested boundaries", p. 593.

by the museum's name. Scandinavism could in theory harness the ideas of nationalism to promote a super-national identity and unity. This is one way of understanding the project started by Artur Hazelius at the Nordic Museum at Stockholm. The resistance which arose in Norway in the face of any strong Swedish attempts at unification or amalgamation may have been why Oscar II began a rival collection of folk culture at Christiania. Oscar argued for equanimity, at least in spirit, between the two union states.⁷⁰ This may explain why the king would start a Norwegian-based rival project to the Nordic Museum at Stockholm, when both Oscar II and Artur Hazelius were known to favour Scandinavism. Nation-building within the individual kingdoms may seem like a natural enemy to harmony within the Swedish-Norwegian union unless Oscar was convinced that weak Scandinavism was more aligned with his goals. A museum would in this case be the king's approach to affiliate himself with Norwegian nation building, thereby garnering support in Norway.

Whereas Scandinavism made ripples in Denmark and to some extent in Sweden, such ideas did not find similar purchase in Norway.⁷¹ Sørensen sees a connection between museums and "weak" Scandinavism, as he concludes that although Scandinavism fell out of fashion in Norway, the idea of complementary Scandinavism continued to garner sympathy among the elite throughout the 19th century. This ensured a cordial international relationship, acting as "a catalyst for various kinds of cooperation, not only on the formal political arena, but even more so in relation to cultural, industrial, scientific and other institutions".⁷² This neatly summarizes the transnational role of museums, particularly within Scandinavia. The museums are put into a bigger picture, that is as part of a Scandinavian-German "contact zone". The two regions were politically entangled, especially after the wars over Schlesvig and Holstein in the 1860s. Whether to encourage friendly relations with the emerging great power that was Germany or to present a unified Scandinavian resistance was a question of some importance in Sweden-Norway. Scientific knowledge was used by Germans to legitimize a brand of imperialism which professed to return the southern Danish-controlled territories to the German fold.⁷³ Attempts at garnering support of a resistance towards German expansionism through Scandinavian unity met with negligible amounts of success in Norway. To Norwegian separatists, the 'dangerous neighbour' was Sweden, who thwarted the Norwegian dream of independence in 1814. Sweden's 'dangerous neighbour' was Russia,

⁷⁰ Oscar II, *Mina memoarer*, p. 3.

⁷¹ Sørensen, *Kampen om Norges sjel*, pp. 227-230.

⁷² Sørensen, *Kampen om Norges sjel*, p. 252.

⁷³ Weber, "Det nordiska arvet", pp. 44-45.

who ended Sweden's old dream of a Baltic Sea empire when they wrested control of Finland in 1809. Denmark's threat became Prussia or unified Germany, who conquered the southern Danish territories in the 1860s. Meanwhile, Pan-Germanists saw the unification of Scandinavia and Germany as necessary to defend ethnic Germans against a perceived threat from Slavic cultures. The actions of these royal collectors were informed by the hierarchy of Great powers and lesser powers, of empires and colonies. Norway might well resent any attempt by Sweden at claiming Norwegian heritage for its museums in Stockholm, since such a project attempted to build a Norwegian folk identity inexorably linked with Sweden. In essence, that same method of culturally fuelled imperialism could be used by any great power to justify conquest of land. The German monarchs Friedrich Wilhelm IV and Wilhelm II, ruling respectively before and after the German unification of 1871, both wanted Norwegian stave churches constructed on German soil. Oscar II also acquired his own stave church in 1884, but notably he did not remove it from its native country. It is hard to conclude what the king's intentions were, though his Norwegian councillors held some sway in the decision. If we accept that he was swayed by his steward Holst into opening a museum to show the ties between the dynasty and his people, then it follows that museums were seen as a medium for more than mere nationalism.

Societies and associations

Whereas the nation-centered history traditionally focused on nation states and how they interacted, transnational history incorporates the notion that non-governmental or private actors – sometimes called non-government organizations (NGO) – can facilitate significant cultural exchange across borders, and that their impact on history requires further investigation.⁷⁴ In nineteenth century terms, organization archetypes such as the museum association and the scientific society become important agents. During this period, it was rather commonplace for members of the elite to enter into such societies or associations. This was by no means a uniquely Scandinavian phenomenon, and perhaps even more common on the continent; during the 1880s and 90s, the principal folk museums of Sweden-Norway corresponded more with German societies than with other museums.⁷⁵ On the whole these were organizations which both demonstrate the active involvement of the elite to the

⁷⁴ Iriye, *Global and transnational history*, pp. 14-15.

⁷⁵ This discussion will be continued in chapter 4.

furthering of political or scientific goals (or both). Such societies usually formulated a cause to promote through public channels, and the museum as an institution was no exception. Museums which were not state-funded had to rely on their own attendant association for income, as members usually pledged a certain sum of money or gifts to contribute to the museum's collections, sometimes in return for exclusive privileges. The NFM and the Nordic Museum both formed supporting societies, respectively in 1883 and 1894.

These societies and associations held great potential for transnational exchange since they frequently published material and exchanged it with foreign correspondents. It was also not uncommon for there to be members hailing from foreign territories. Though many societies were scientific in orientation, others had more political goals, like the Norwegian Scandinavian Society (Skandinavisk Selskab). Both Eilert Sundt the ethnologist, Ludvig Kristensen Daa the history professor and politician as well as Yngvar Nielsen the ethnographer and museum director were members of this society.⁷⁶ The Norwegian Heritage Conservation society (Foreningen til Norges Fortidsminnesmerkers Bevaring – FNFB) played an important role in facilitating building conservation prior to the advent of open-air museums. The society employed archaeologist Nicolay Nicolaysen (1817-1911) to identify buildings worthy of conservation over the course of the nineteenth century and thus paved the way for Norwegian open-air museums through his work. Among its members were also the NFM's Harry Fett and the painter J.C. Dahl (1788-1857), the national romantic painter who held a professorship at the art academy in Dresden since 1824 and helped orchestrate the first moving of a Norwegian stave church in the 1840s.

A society could also be intended for the furthering of an academic discipline, and whereas some societies had foreign members only as a result of individual contacts, such scientific societies could be organized with the express purpose of creating a professional community which could transcend national borders. During a period of vigorous co-operation with the Nordic Museum, Hans Aall and his Swedish counterpart attempted to launch a Scandinavian Museum Association in 1902, but the Danes refused. The drafted declaration for the founding described it as working for "cooperation between Nordic cultural history-, industrial arts-, and ethnographic museums."⁷⁷ The document was drafted in Swedish and signed with the same ink by representatives of the Nordic Museum, then signed in different ink by Hans Aall. This could suggest Swedish initiative or simply expediency; Christiania was closer to

⁷⁶ Hansen, *Et skandinavisk nasjonsbyggingsprosjekt*, pp. 72-73.

⁷⁷ NFM: D/L0002/0008 - Archived copy of a partially signed declaration, dated September 1902.

Copenhagen than Stockholm. Scandinavian unity would have meshed well with Artur Hazelius' vision for the Nordic Museum, and for a period after his death in 1901 his son attempted to continue that legacy. That an alliance of these three kinds of museums was deemed feasible does however tell us something about the relationship between the contemporary family of museums and sciences. This will be explored below.

Conversations about identity

The early folk museums were not only repositories of national heritage, but also a target for ideas from abroad. Nationalism was rather explicitly present in their early history, repeatedly acknowledged by contemporaries. The transnational exchange was taking place simultaneously, but in a less explicit way. In other words, the pioneers of museum development and those involved in a public discourse about museums speak rather plainly about the political value of such institutions and how it can aid the growth of the nation, or encourage the fight for independence, as in the case of Norway.⁷⁸ How the museums facilitated transnational exchange is less explicit with 19th century contemporaries. The explanation for this may simply be that the agents of museum development saw transnational exchange as a custom not worth remarking upon as explicitly as progressive issues.⁷⁹

A common interpretation of the role National museums such as the NFM is as a staging ground for cultural identity.⁸⁰ The need to define and shape a cultural or national identity might be viewed as a sign of a connected international community. In other words, once a local community is exposed to other cultures and established national identities, the need to define one's own increases. This is especially true for the resurgent nation of Norway in the 19th century, and as a process it can be traced from the revolution in 1814 to the attainment of full independence in 1905. To the contemporary leading political and academic figures, the lack of widely accepted cultural markers to match those of neighbouring countries becomes a sign of backwardness in your local community.⁸¹ An important goal then becomes to identify what makes your culture unique; what separates you from your neighbours. Such a process is therefore at least partly a bilateral endeavour – like mutually agreeing to borders on a map. When there are disagreements on where those borders should be located, conflicts could

⁷⁸ Examples of which are discussed in the next chapter.

⁷⁹ Moltke Moe's speech as quoted below is seemingly the most explicit example of this.

⁸⁰ Amundsen, "Men of vision", p. 39.

⁸¹ Sørensen, *Kampen om Norges sjel*, p. 96.

ensue. There is a sense of what Sharon Macdonald described as “national identities and a national public [...] defined through difference from other nations and ethnic groups – the new world picture was one of discrete, spatially-mapped, bounded difference”, where cultural boundaries were marked by “highlighting the cultural, technological or moral superiority of the ‘home team’ through contrast with others”.⁸² Folk museums were central to these matters, as history and politics were closely connected in the matter of shaping nationality. Yet another way of finding common identity could be to highlight a common connection to the land itself, to promote a connection through a shared home, which is perhaps even more attainable by open air museums who sought to bring the rural into urban centres.⁸³ In any case this suggests that the nature of what a ‘sense of nationality’ constitutes may have been highly subjective.

The Norwegian Folk Museum was founded on the idea of fostering a Norwegian national identity. The NFM’s mission of independence and the Nordic Museum’s mission of unification made the two institutions natural opponents on account of their overlapping field of interest in Norwegian peasant culture. Studies into the relationship between the two museums have shown that the NFM continuously sought to communicate and learn from the Nordic Museum, but its Swedish founder Artur Hazelius was at first reluctant to accommodate this.⁸⁴ With the death of Hazelius in 1901 there was a period of détente and professional cooperation. Correspondence between central figures show that there was a strong interest in scientific exchange even if the two kingdoms were politically at odds. With mounting national tension and the subsequent dissolution of the Swedish-Norwegian union in 1905 another cold front set in, putting a dampener on the budding collegial relationship.⁸⁵

Does communication between the unified nations of Sweden-Norway constitute transnational communication? To simply answer no is to disregard the nation-building which had been going on over the course of the nineteenth century. Had we however asked this question of the Danish-Norwegian union which preceded the Swedish one, the answer would likely be no. Danish rule had persisted for so long, and cultural intermingling had penetrated most layers of Norwegian culture.⁸⁶ With the Swedish union, the case is much different; the context and the terms of the Swedish union was greatly changed when compared with the

⁸² Macdonald, “National, postnational, transcultural identities”, pp. 274-275.

⁸³ Knell, “National museums”, p. 11.

⁸⁴ Galaaen, «Kolleger og konkurrenter» (2005), pp. 82-84.

⁸⁵ Galaaen, “Kolleger og konkurrenter” (2011), pp. 190-191.

⁸⁶ Østergård, «Nationale identiteter», p. 31.

period under Danish rule. I argue that by the late nineteenth century, the divide between the two cultures was such that we may call Swedish ideas transnational when imported into Norway. The 1814 revolution had started the national awakening in Norway, and the elite in Norway would spend almost a century nurturing a national consciousness into a desire for independence. The Danish hold on Norway had lasted long and been firm, though war and famine had fomented discontent. By most known accounts, the 1814 rebellion was unexpected to many Norwegians, and driven by the Danish-educated elite. According to one contemporary, “96 out of 100 Norwegians were firmly resolved to staying [Danish subjects] to the end”.⁸⁷ Added to this was the considerable autonomy obtained by Norway after surrendering to Sweden, which has puzzled scholars ever since. Part of the answer to why Norwegians were given loose reins may lie with the fact that the Swedish crown-prince overseeing the negotiations back then had previously been a French Field Marshal in Napoleon’s army. The democratic development in Norway may have stirred the sympathies of Karl III, formerly Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte. The Bernadotte dynasty would struggle with the consequences of these early concessions for the most of the union’s duration. The loose hold over Norway – the essentially unchecked powers retained by the Norwegian national assembly under Sweden, ensured the strength of the independence movement in Norway. This in turn precipitated the development of a separate Norwegian nationhood. Language, history and art was being mobilized to support this movement, as were museums. The nation’s distant history was readdressed early on through antiquity museums, and over time the recent past was addressed through industrial arts museums and folk museums, among others. Over time there were two distinct nations within the Swedish-Norwegian union, also according to many contemporaries. The founding statement of the NFM states in no uncertain terms that to travel to Stockholm to study Norwegian heritage was a source of embarrassment to the Norwegian nation.⁸⁸ The museum sought support in patriotism and pride, seeking to negotiate a sense of nationhood in a transnational Nordic arena.

Summary

This chapter has endeavoured to paint a comprehensive picture of the founders of the Folk Museums themselves and the society they moved in. The historical figures presented here are

⁸⁷ Dyrvik, *Norsk historie 1536-1814* (Oslo: Samlaget, 2011), p. 253.

⁸⁸ Aall, *Norsk Folkemuseum* (Kristiania: Norsk Folkemuseum, 1920), pp 4-5.

notably all from the upper strata of society, which is in line with the idea top-down transmission of nationalism promoted by Hobsbawm. Had these museums not been situated in the heart of the nation's capital and run by people of means, of contacts and resources and education, it seems the Scandinavian folk museum innovation would most likely not have taken place. It is also well to keep in mind that all museums were simultaneously societies, which were organisations supported by those with the means to contribute towards the museum's mandate of saving the uniquely local cultural heritage. Those on the lower rungs of society had little role in these museums' development but were over time included in the Norwegian nation-building project once a need for a grassroots national unity was realized. However, that there are examples of nineteenth century contemporaries reflecting on their own 'cosmopolitan' nature shows that they possessed a greater sense of what in modern terms is called transnational influences than one might have previously thought. Judging from the above excerpts, the dichotomy of rural and urban permeated the thinking of several of these connoisseurs of cultural history. As compared with the romantic high standing of untouched rural culture, it is as if the urban elite believed themselves somehow out of touch with the 'true' nation out in the districts. Perhaps it seemed as though the headlong tumble of industrial development had reached such an inexorable tempo that some sort of counter-mechanism had to be engaged. The proposed remedy was to educate the people of the capital, and in so doing counteract the transnational impulses which were wiping out the uniqueness of local culture. Bjorli (2000) saw the NFM as "a theme park for the bourgeois which educated them on their own true heritage".⁸⁹ The other side of the spectrum was populated by those who welcomed foreign influence to the point where a new common culture could be forged. The next chapter will go on to show how modern rational methods of collecting and conserving were employed to save national heritage; the foreign was being mobilized to save the local. The subtle notes of contradiction in this sentiment is something which should be probed further.

3. Early folk museums in Sweden-Norway

The early folk museums of Sweden-Norway pioneered both the folk- and the open-air museum concept but were built on a museum legacy stretching back centuries. The humble

⁸⁹ Bjorli, «Kultur vitenskap og samfunn», p. 28.

beginnings of the museum as a concept began with private collections and by stages evolved into the established institutions they are today. Three important museums in Sweden-Norway paints a picture of how this museum concept was implemented and developed: The Nordic Museum, the King Oscar Collections and the Norwegian Folk Museum.

Eriksen (2009) identifies the four cardinal traits of a museum as being an institution endeavouring to “collect, conserve, research and convey”, noting how it fell to each museum how to weigh these different goals in relation to one another.⁹⁰ On a general level museums’ role in society can be understood in multiple ways: As a treasure chest for nationalists and academics, a trophy case for imperialists, a place of learning for the everyman, a haven for innovative research, and more. To many nineteenth century museums, conservation was the motivation behind the collecting effort; cultural relics had to be saved from oblivion. Finds from this study indicate that the collecting by the NFM and the Nordic Museum interacted with a transnational marketplace where objects were imported and exported to cater to the museum business, reluctantly relying on third party traders and dealers. When the folk museums entered this market near the end of the nineteenth century, this helped accelerate a commodification process of old household objects, a process which had begun decades before with the rise of less specialized history museums.⁹¹ Indeed there are signs that demand even outplaced supply for such objects. With relation to establishing a collection for a new kind of museum there is also a marked pragmatic aspect permeating the source material which should not be neglected: As private enterprises, the museums were pressed to quickly assemble attractive collections in order to foment interest and make money, sometimes in competition with other institutions. As a result, they could not always collect what they wanted nor in as structured a way as they would have liked. Such economic pressures precipitated a rift between the museum’s intended role and its actual role, something which is reflected in the source material.

The research function of the museum was helped along by correspondence with foreign institutions, colleagues and friends. The fledgling folk museums spent some time establishing themselves before embarking on significant research. At the NFM the first researcher was employed in 1900, some five years after the founding. The Nordic Museum on the other hand had a great increase in its production of scientific texts, which were generally attached to

⁹⁰ Eriksen, *Museum, en kulturhistorie* (Oslo, Pax, 2009), p. 115; Galaaen, *Kolleger og konkurrenter*, p. 37.

⁹¹ Pedersen, “De norske museene”, pp. 42-43.

their annual report, as well as a comprehensive list of texts written about the museum by foreign writers.

In the folk museums, the function of conveying could both be focused on exhibiting an authentic presentation of the past, and on the other hand being tailored to convey a picture of national unity. There are signs of a tension between these two approaches, which could come to a head with the increase of political conflict. Peter Aronsson has observed that “the need for national display to complement the political process [...] seemed to overtake the desire for knowledge as a driving force” within nationally oriented museums after 1870.⁹² One might make the argument that to nineteenth century contemporaries there was no need to separate nationalism and science; that they were too much intertwined for a separation to make sense. At times historical studies were undertaken purely with the aim of informing the nation.

The nineteenth century museum scene

One could say there are two axes of historical development influencing the role of the museum, correlating to a duality of purpose as mentioned in the introductory chapter. One is as a staging ground for ideology and the education of the masses. Borne on the intellectual development of the enlightenment, the museums were influenced by political trends such as the growth of democracy and nationalism. In Sweden-Norway, the political union set the stage for how the folk museums performed in the public sphere and the context of a forced union of crowns precipitated the use of the museum as a means of nation-building. The second axis is the concurrent development of scientific disciplines which imbued such museums with the ideal of being repositories of truthful knowledge. In cultural history museums, particularly the folk museum, these two axes intersected as forces not quite in opposition but not quite aligned. The elite’s desire to enlighten and awaken the people in particular emerges as a result of a transnational structure. Having developed for much of the nineteenth century, this becomes more pronounced as we approach the 1880s, a decade heralding the arrival of the Swedish-Norwegian folk museums. The establishment of the Norwegian Folk Museum came after decades of rapid expansion in museum activities, owing partly to the fact that the humanities were a family of scientific disciplines in rapid

⁹² Aronsson, “Explaining national museums”, p. 31.

development. The age of reason had created a society where information on many subjects was increasingly sought after, collected, categorized and stored for the sake of progress, for the nation or civilization in general. In the 1880s and 1890s, this rapid development however meant that labels put on the different disciplines often struggled to impose order on a growing family of museums. Approaching the nature of nineteenth century museums involves remarking on some different types of museums or fields of study which emerged during that time; fields that were not yet firmly defined and therefore suffered from overlapping fields of interests.

Since the start of the 19th century, history museums had spread all over Europe. The strengthening of democratic ideas meant that they were seen as important mediums for educating the masses. The central question was what this education should be like. Proponents of nationalism wanted the museum's message to help shape a national identity, while academics were more concerned with the rational conservation of the past. Meanwhile scientific thought was flourishing. Historians such as the German Leopold von Ranke were making great strides in the history field, constantly developing scientific systems of categorization. For museums, this meant branching out and assigning whole museums to what had before been a department or a niche field of study, which in turn resulted in a more marked trend towards museum specialization. It also meant revising the methods by which objects were gathered, how exhibits were ordered.

It was a sprawling tangle of museum culture into which the folk museums injected themselves. In Norway, archaeological items had been collected since 1811 under the label *oldsager* (antiquities). Ethnography as a discipline obtained its own museum in 1857 when The Ethnographic Collections of the University at Christiania opened. The Christiania Museum of Industrial Arts had opened in 1876, dedicated to local arts and handicrafts. When they were established in the 1880s and 1890s, the folk museums' area of interest was a scientific niche which was already somewhat represented in various other museums and collections. Folk museums often grew out of ethnography collections but could be said to have a relation or overlap with history, industrial arts, folklore, ethnography, ethnology and anthropology collections. By the 1880s and 1890s, the idea of a rational conservation effort among scientific circles had resulted in museums reflecting a single given discipline. The past was a rich treasure trove of information, and the wide scope intimated by the term 'history museum' had become too wide to fit comfortably into any single building, and its objects too disparate to fit into a simple system of categorization. It was a tumultuous period for

museums and some of the specialized institutions would not survive this process of specialization, but the folk museums remained buoyant. The uniqueness – especially of their open-air collections – carried them through. In the 1840s the Norwegian statesman W.F.K. Christie advocated the idea of expanding the range of objects fit for preservation. Christie suggested that common household and farming implements should be kept and exhibited in a museum, and thus signalled for the first time in Norway that peasant culture in itself was a worthy object of study.⁹³ The national romantic idea of peasant culture as “the true and uncorrupted culture of the nation” coalesced in many European countries during the early 19th century. The national romantic movement ensured that folklore was a subject of interest in Norway. Focus then turned to more tangible heritage, to objects and then later to buildings.⁹⁴ Another part of the foundation for an open-air museum came with the early surveys done by Eilert Sundt, who through the 1850s and 60s made the leap from studying everyday objects of the peasantry to studying old farm buildings in a scientific way. He created his own categorizations for the different types of buildings and their significance to peasant culture, even reportedly envisioning collecting buildings.⁹⁵ Sundt’s studies reportedly inspired ethnologists in Sweden as well.⁹⁶

What parts of the past were worthy of collection, conservation and exhibition had continuously widened in scope on the scale of chronology as well: Interest in the past had expanded to include recent history. Historical periodization in Norway was often referred to as pre- or post-reformation history.⁹⁷ Those concerned with national independence focused their studies on the pre-reformation period, which was when Norway was last independent and a regional power to be reckoned with. In this context, the Norway under Danish rule after the reformation held less value for building a national consciousness. The interest in more recent history picked up in earnest during the last decades of the nineteenth century. The post-reformation period was not even taught systematically in museums before the turn of the century.⁹⁸ Interest in cultural history had gone from heavily favouring “high” art and the legacy of kings and great men to also admitting “low” culture and the everyday customs of peasants.

⁹³ Pedersen, “De norske museene får sin form”, pp. 42-43.

⁹⁴ Stoklund, “Between Scenography and Science”, p. 24.

⁹⁵ Hegard, *Romantikk og fortidsvern*, pp. 29-30.

⁹⁶ Sörlin, «Artur Hazelius og det nationella arvet», p. 28.

⁹⁷ Aall, «Norsk folkemuseum og dets arbeide i de nærmeste aar»; “Gamlebyen på Norsk Folkemuseum”.

⁹⁸ Amundsen, “Men of vision”, pp. 40.

Folk culture history in the family of social sciences

The founders of the NFM were apparently well aware of this scientific proliferation when they announced the museum's business plan in 1894. In their founding statement, they made sure to announce that their museum would not conflict with the local museum of industrial arts or the museum of antiquities at the University.⁹⁹ Particularly the overlap between the folk museum and the largest ethnography collection – that belonging to the royal university – was great. The authors apparently felt that the museum required a justification of its legitimacy; that it was separate in scientific focus from other museums and had a legitimate category in the contemporary system of disciplines and would not present a hindrance to the nation's contribution to the ordering of history. This shows an intention among the founders to anticipate early public criticism against the museum revolving around the question of the museum's overlap with other collections. Another common criticism questioned whether “any old thing” was worthy of conservation, to which Aall retorted that the museum was not just any collection of antiquities, but an attempt at painting a “complete and rich picture of our old country's culture”.¹⁰⁰ To the layman, what was on display in the museum seemed like a trend gone too far. Museums dedicated to art objects and the ancient at least reflected something that was either aesthetically pleasing or a remnant of lost ages. The mundane objects of the recent past, still evident in the lofts and cellars of the common populace, needed scientific coding to be made worthy of exhibition. Their value and attractiveness as exhibits relied on them being coded as a sample of a larger category in a scientific system.

In Stockholm, The Nordic Museum started out as an ethnography collection. Ethnography was a new discipline and thus not clearly defined or separated from each other as scientific circles shifted and evolved over time, drawing on ethnology, anthropology, archaeology and folklore. As a case in point, Magdalena Hillström has shown how Swedish dictionaries between 1881 and 1907, *ethnography* and *anthropology* went from being interchangeable to being separated into the “cultural aspects of man” for the former and the “physical aspects” for the latter.¹⁰¹ There were geographical variations in the labelling of the disciplines as well. In German language the term *volkskunde* (folklore) could mean the study of exclusively the German people in Germany while in Austria it signified the study of multiple Austro-

⁹⁹ Love for «Foreningen for Norsk Folkemuseum» vedtagne 19 Decbr. 1894.

¹⁰⁰ Aall, *Norsk folkemuseum og dets arbeide i de nærmeste aar* (1915).

¹⁰¹ Hillström, «Contested boundaries», p. 599.

Hungarian cultural groups. In Norway, folklore was more associated with immaterial remnants of the past; as folklorist, the NFM's Moltke Moe was an expert on oral traditions, tales and songs. The contemporary Austrian branch of folklore has confusingly enough been described as "an ethnographically-oriented, ethnological folklore".¹⁰² To present folklore as a mix of different cultures carries some significant implications. There is a palpable similarity between the Austro-Hungarian branch of ethnography and the Scandinvist folk culture history of Artur Hazelius, whose Nordic Museum collected folk culture history from all over Scandinavia. Within the Swedish-Norwegian union, and to some extent other multi-national political entities, what was seen as the quintessentially national was complicated by the presence of multiple *folk*, which also complicated a national museum's natural tendency to display representations of the dominant culture. Natural science, ethnography and anthropology were intermingled and influenced by imperialist ideas, thus establishing a "cosmopolitan anthropology" in which all of human civilization was to be collected in the British museum, and nationalism was less confined within the home country.¹⁰³ Ethnography exhibitions were here founded on "the prevalent belief that foreign cultures were examples of stages in a progressive development from primitive to advanced".¹⁰⁴ This underscores the influence of the political context over scientific matters and therefore museum prerequisites. In Great Britain it was normal to separate objects in the museum as either "classical" or not. The heritage of the renaissance was such that the classical education of the people who ran the museum meant that they saw Greek and Roman antiquity as the superior culture. For the British, the non-classical seems to have been viewed as "the other", the history of the uncivilized, the savage, the aborigines, the barbarians.¹⁰⁵ The presence of an imperial element in the British Museum distinguishes it from the Norwegian context but is in some ways parallel to the Swedish context. In Great Britain the ethnographic collections became the place for something described by Chris Wingfield as:

[...] that combination of prehistoric archaeology and ethnography that would in time become anthropology. As such it became instrumental in efforts to establish a global narrative of civilization that would tie together miscellaneous antiquities from across the world.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Jöhler, "The Invention of the Multicultural Museum", p. 51.

¹⁰³ Wingfield, "Placing Britain in the British Museum", pp. 131-135.

¹⁰⁴ Simmons, *Museums: A history*, p. 162.

¹⁰⁵ Wingfield, "Placing Britain in the British Museum", pp. 126-131.

¹⁰⁶ Wingfield, "Placing Britain in the British Museum", p. 131.

This has also been acknowledged by Tony Bennett, who remarks that European national museums have “been shaped by, and helped to shape, the fluctuating dynamics of varied sets of transnational relationships”, which in turn “significantly influenced the particular disciplines that have most informed the practices of museums in particular historical contexts”.¹⁰⁷ The Nordic Museum’s early collection efforts from all over the Nordic region may be seen as one parallel.

Ethnography’s connection to anthropology often crossed paths with 19th century theories of race and Darwin’s theories of evolution. The imperialist mission of European great powers was often founded on the dehumanization of colonial subjects, and this required a rational explanation founded in science. In 1904 British scholar David Murray remarked on the value of ethnographic collections in facilitating archaeology by educating people about the “lower forms of civilization” but also lamented the lack of British antiquities in British museums. By his account the process of having separate domestic and foreign sections in a museum was a recent development long overdue. He added that it was time British museums should look to Germany for inspiration.¹⁰⁸ Meanwhile, the Scandinavian folk museum focused on life on the lower rungs of society. The greatest contrast here was the positive light in which the simple rural life was portrayed.

The fluid state of the scientific system of disciplines meant that folk museum innovators were often involved with other sciences. One poignant example is the German Rudolf Virchow, a polymath best known for his medical studies. Virchow founded a German Museum for Folk Costumes and Products of Home Industries in 1888, which Artur Hazelius saw as a spiritual successor to his folk museum.¹⁰⁹ Bjarne Stoklund writes:

[Virchow’s] path to the field of cultural history went through medicine, or to be more precise through another of the specialities that were making great strides in the last part of the century: the physical anthropology. [...] At the time, the step from archaeology to ethnography was a small one, and Rudolf Virchow got actively engaged in the establishment of a Museum für Völkerkunde [ethnography] in Berlin. The folk museum, which he found the inspiration for in Stockholm, he had initially imagined as a subdivision of the ethnographical museum.¹¹⁰

To summarize: The German scholar adopts Swedish ideas, as the Swedish scholars had in turn adopted continental ideas. This shows rather plainly the transnational nature of science in

¹⁰⁷ Bennett, “Museums, nations, empires, religions”, pp. 71-72.

¹⁰⁸ Siegel, *The emergence of the modern museum* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2008), p. 302.

¹⁰⁹ Nordic Museum’s annual report 1897/1898, pp. 312-314.

¹¹⁰ Stoklund, “Between scenography and science”, p. 31.

general and museums as staging grounds. The relationship between the German and Nordic countries was closer than most transnational relationships in part because of the perceived cultural kinship. This will be further explored in the following chapter.

In short, folk culture history as a field of study and a museum niche was closely entangled with the field of ethnography, and during the latter decades of the nineteenth century needed to separate itself from old distinctions and obtain legitimacy as an independent discipline. The two primary folk museums in Sweden and Norway both shared this connection. The Nordic Museum at Stockholm evolved throughout the 1880s from an ethnography collection to a folk museum. By degrees, the *folk* label was established as denoting post-reformation cultural history. At Christiania, even though ethnography was generally concerned with cultural artifacts originating from foreign or exotic sources, during the latter half of the nineteenth century the university's collections also contained a Norwegian section. Around the turn of the century there were several rounds of discussion about whether or not the privately run Norwegian Folk Museum should be absorbed into the state-owned ethnographic collections. The reverse happened when the Norwegian section of the ethnography collection was instead donated to the folk museum in 1906.¹¹¹ The folk museum and the open-air museum concepts naturally bore a close relation, but a museum with an open-air exhibit did not necessarily have to label itself as a folk museum. This is especially true for some of the early innovations in the open-air genre before the folk label was established. The King Oscar II collections at Christiania was one such case, as will be shown below.

On the matter of the museum's legitimacy, the foreign could also be harnessed as a threat to be counteracted by the folk museum's collecting and conserving. In an annual report from 1906 the NFM board writes: "If we act vigorously and quickly, we can yet still create a monument to our inner history, just as worthy as in our neighbouring countries."¹¹² This simple phrase can tell us a lot about the museum's goals and strategies of that time. It is however taken from an application for increased governmental grant, and as such must be understood as the piece of persuasive rhetoric it is. The museum's authors highlight the time pressure created by external threats to the preservation of the past, specifically ethnographic collections abroad. These collections relied on local dealers who served as middle-men in a transnational trade of cultural artifacts. This threatened the museum's ability to convey "our inner history" in as dignified a way as in neighbouring countries. In Sweden, Hazelius stated

¹¹¹ Nielsen, *Universitetets ethnografiske samlinger*, p. 83.

¹¹² NFM Annual report 1906.

“we are a small people, but we should think big”, implicitly comparing his museum to those of other nations.¹¹³ This legitimizing of the museum project is a repetition of the founding principles formulated about one decade before. This was written right after Norway gained independence in 1905, and the rivalry with the Nordic Museum at Stockholm had subsided after the dissolution of the union destroyed any Scandinavist aspiration which may have been harboured by its leadership or members.¹¹⁴ There was likely a need to reaffirm the threat posed from foreign collectors now that the biggest competitor for the collection of Norwegian culture had now mostly been removed from the picture.

One might argue that the interest in history, archaeology, and similar disciplines was motivated by political aspirations. As mentioned, there was a marked interest in Norway in discovering the past which is often related to the formulation of a national identity, and therefore useful to the independence movement. To achieve a cultural revival of the independent medieval kingdom of Norway, the *embetsmenn* employed many symbols to evoke a national consciousness.¹¹⁵ It is fair to say that to be a historian in 19th century Norway was to take part in shaping the role of the kingdom of the past and potentially, the future. The history field was of interest to Scandinavists as well for similar reasons. Oscar II, the king of the Swedish-Norwegian union at the time when the folk museums were established, also concerned himself with learning about the past. He established a close relationship with pro-union academics in Norway and requested lectures at his own home.¹¹⁶ But even the historical material used to underpin ideology, as folk culture history fuelled nationalism in Norway, was of interest to foreign actors. There is a well-documented interest in Nordic culture among Germans in the late nineteenth century. This interest encompassed not only history and folk culture, but also contemporary works of art and entertainment.¹¹⁷ This interest in all things Scandinavian must be seen in relation to the trend of seeing Germans and Scandinavians as members of a greater Germanic kinship, both part of the same “tribe”. Around the turn of the century, this pan-Germanism was popular among the German elite.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ Rentzhog, *Friluftsmuseerna*, p. 28.

¹¹⁴ Galaaen, «Kolleger og konkurrenter», pp. 50-51.

¹¹⁵ Amundsen, “Men of vision”, pp. 38-39.

¹¹⁶ Hegard, *Romantikk og fortidsvern*, p. 33.

¹¹⁷ Paul, «Tyskland – Skandinaviens port til världslitteraturen».

¹¹⁸ Sørensen, *Kampen om Norges sjel*, p. 263.

The origins of the open-air concept

Royalty feature rather largely in the tale of how buildings came to be moved and exhibited, but there were other wealthy collectors too. Such endeavours certainly required abundant resources, although there are certain unique advantages to moving buildings in Scandinavia. Wooden building techniques made disassembly and reconstruction more feasible than with other materials.¹¹⁹ There were examples of Norwegian moving wooden structures over the course of the 18th century, often on model of the English romantic landscape-park and continental role models.¹²⁰ Then in the 1840s the great project of moving an entire Norwegian stave church to Prussia was successfully undertaken by the Prussian king Wilhelm IV with the aid of a Norwegian member of the FNFB in Prussia.¹²¹ For the Paris exposition of 1867, a replica of a Swedish farmhouse was brought to Paris and later back to Sweden-Norway, where the Swedish-Norwegian king Karl XV had it reassembled at his castle in Ulriksdal. That same year a romantic landscape park was created at Christiania by a Norwegian collector.¹²² Artur Hazelius founds his Scandinavian Ethnographic Collection in 1873, which is the same year he brought his first display to an international exposition in Vienna. He would keep contributing to such expositions over the course of the 1870s, eventually rebranding his collection into the Nordic Museum in 1880.¹²³ Notable about these events is that their chronology implies a great influence being exerted by the foreign, and perhaps especially by the expositions – which shall be more closely examined in the next chapter. The next major development came with the opening of the King Oscar Collections in 1881. Archaeologist Nicolay Nicolaysen, working on behalf of the conservation society FNFB started corresponding about the moving of an old loft from rural Norway to Christiania in 1875, but does not acquire the means to do so until 1881 with the help of Oscar II.¹²⁴ It is not clear whether Oscar II knew about the Prussian precedent in moving Vang stave church from roughly four decades before he rescued Gol stave church, but it is safe to say that it brought the king prestige to successfully save this uniquely Norwegian building from demolition and make it accessible to inhabitants of the capital. Meanwhile in Sweden, the idea of moving buildings for conservation and display was being fully embraced. In 1876 a Swedish collector had moved his first building, and in 1882 a fledgling open-air exhibition

¹¹⁹ Hegard, *Romantikk og fortidsvern*, pp. 1-3.

¹²⁰ Hegard, *Romantikk og fortidsvern*, pp. 14-15.

¹²¹ Klein, *Vang stavkirke reiser til Berlin*, ss. 81-83.

¹²² Hegard, *Romantikk og fortidsvern*, s. 35, 61.

¹²³ DeGroff, "Artur Hazelius and the ethnographic display of the Scandinavian peasantry", p. 231.

¹²⁴ Hegard, *Romantikk og fortidsvern*, s. 39.

opened at Lund.¹²⁵ This was around the time when Hazelius was looking to purchase both Norwegian and Swedish buildings meant for his open-air museum at Skansen, though his open-air section would not open until 1891.¹²⁶ More than just the moving of buildings, one might also consider adding zoological gardens, botanical groves and panoptikons to the list of precursors. Skansen especially is known for its attempt at a holistic representation of both nature and civilization within the same exhibition.¹²⁷

The royal collections at Christiania

Oscar II's history museum opened at Bygdøy outside Christiania in 1881. It comprised both an indoor museum at Oscarshall and an outdoor section close by. The open-air section would go on to become part of the NFM in 1907, two years after the dissolution of the union. The building collection at Bygdøy is therefore an important forerunner for the open-air museums since it makes the museum the first institution to establish an open-air collection of authentic buildings with interiors. It predated the NFM by some 14 years and the official opening of Skansen at Stockholm by a decade. The king sanctioned its establishment, but much of the initiative came from his Norwegian supporters. The task of creating and promoting a history museum was handed to loyal pro-unionists within Norwegian intellectual circles. Director of the university's ethnographic collections Yngvar Nielsen, history professor Ludvig Ludvigsen Daae and the archaeologist Nicholay Nicholaysen made up the core of this group.¹²⁸ Though the legwork of collecting, organizing and marketing the exhibition was done by these men, Oscar II's ownership of the collection ensures he is recognized as one of the pioneers of open-air museum development in Norway.

If we were to ask why the king involved himself with the conservation of Norwegian peasant culture heritage, the answer comes down to what sort of intentions he had for his museum and building collection. Preserved correspondence between the king and his steward Christian Holst (1809-1890) dating from 1880 makes it highly likely that it was Holst who persuaded Oscar into launching the museum, by arguing that it could provide a tangible

¹²⁵ Olsrud, *Om «Et av de viktigste arbeider ved et museum»*, p. 68

¹²⁶ Stoklund «Between scenography and science», p. 27; Hegard, *Romantikk og fortidsvern*, p. 45.

¹²⁷ Sörlin, «Artur Hazelius och det nationella arvet», pp 35-36; Rentzhog, *Friluftsmuseerna*, p. 26.

¹²⁸ L.L. Daae is not to be confused with the aforementioned L.K. Daa.

connection between the Bernadotte dynasty and the Norwegian nation through displays associated with the union's history. Holst wanted the museum to show "the rebirth of Norway's independence under the current dynasty's leadership".¹²⁹ Holst's formulation of the museum's message seems strategically formulated to counteract separatist rhetoric. This would mean that the museum at Oscarshall was founded on political motives, intended to transmit the king's version of the nation and its past. When it opened in 1881 the museum exhibited a mix of royal artifacts and national romantic art. There was in fact very little on display to suggest a history museum except for the open-air section.¹³⁰ It is hard to conclude what the king's intentions were, though his Norwegian councillors held some sway in the decision.¹³¹ If we accept that he was swayed by his steward Holst into opening a museum to show the ties between the dynasty and his people, then it follows that museums were seen as a medium for more than mere nationalism. Norway's dangerous neighbour was Sweden, who thwarted the Norwegian dream of independence in 1814. Sweden's dangerous neighbour was Russia, who ended Sweden's old dream of a Baltic Sea empire when they wrested control of Finland in 1809. Denmark's threat became Prussia or unified Germany, who conquered the southern Danish territories in the 1860s.¹³²

Nicolay Nicholaysen (1817-1911) was a man with a passion for conservation of folk culture. He had been touring the country as chief archaeologist of Norway's major conservation society FNFB for years before eventually assisting the king's project. He would then interestingly go on to assist the leftist-sponsored Norwegian Folk Museum. Historians paint a picture of Nicholaysen as a man concerned first and foremost with the rescue of Norwegian heritage. His experience in surveying buildings was extensive enough for him to suggest collecting a complete farmstead with all different types of historic buildings rescued from the countryside represented, so as to form a "clear picture of the characteristics of each".¹³³ The structure of a *tun* (farmyard-style) grouping of buildings would in turn be adopted by the NFM as it expanded its collections on the neighbouring land plot from the late 1890s. Nicholaysen's influence on the open-air concept should therefore not be underestimated.

¹²⁹ Hegard, *Romantikk og fortidsvern*, p. 32.

¹³⁰ RA/PA-0040/G/L0095: *Innbydelse til Oscarshall's historie museums åpning* (1881).

¹³¹ Hegard, *Romantikk og fortidsvern*, pp 52.-53.

¹³² Hansen, «Et skandinavisk nasjonsbyggingsprosjekt», pp 127-128.

¹³³ *Fjerde beretning om Bygdøy Kongsgaard* (1886).

The administrative work was delegated to the steward Holst, who was himself an active promoter of the museum project. When it first opened, the king's museum was very limited in scope. It seems the time-window for preparing the museum's opening was limited and the founders excused themselves that the collections on display were not as comprehensive as they would have liked. Holst stated that he only had six months to organize the museum, since the king wanted the opening to coincide with the prince's birthday. This notwithstanding, was Oscar II really in a rush to make his mark in the cultural life of Norway or was the project just royal caprice? Some of the evidence suggests that it may have been the influence of Yngvar Nielsen which spurred the project on. Nielsen had just the year before advocated for the state-sponsored creation of a cultural history museum, but parliament had withheld support. As a well-known royalist, Nielsen was unpopular with the leftist bloc in parliament.¹³⁴ He had been a member of the Scandinavian Society, and when Hazelius wrote in 1898 (several years after the founding of the NFM) in recognition of similar museums in Norway, he tellingly mentioned Nielsen's initiative, writing not a word about the NFM.¹³⁵ Nielsen also went on to become tutor to the prince in 1883 and held private lectures for the royal family in their home.¹³⁶ He and Holst reportedly both urged the king to sponsor a history museum, and it seems they obtained the king's blessing but little time to achieve their goals.

Historian Ludvig L. Daae's (1834-1910) claimed in his opening speech for the Oscarshall History Museum that though it was launched as a history museum, the collections promoted "our national art" and that foreign descriptions of the museum had categorized it as an art museum.¹³⁷ Indeed, on the itemized list of exhibits published on the occasion of the museum's opening, roughly two thirds of the items may be described as artifacts of the royal house. The remaining third were artistic depictions of Norwegian history. The royal collections thus attempted to employ a mixture of romanticism and symbols of the Bernadotte hegemony. It was arguably as much art gallery as history museum. This hybrid style of exhibition was not unheard of in the 1880s, but both Holst and Daae lamented the lack of actual historical exhibits. The duality of the collections could simply reflect a disparity of

¹³⁴ Norsk biografisk leksikon, s.v. «Yngvar Nielsen».

¹³⁵ Nordic Museum's annual report 1897/1898, pp. 312-314.

¹³⁶ Hansen, *Et Skandinavisk nasjonsbyggingsprosjekt*, pp 72-73; Hegard, *Romantikk of fortidsvern*, pp. 33-34.

¹³⁷ RA/PA-0040/G/L0095: *Innbydelse til Oscarshall's historie museums åpning* (1881).

purpose between the king and his supporters: The legitimacy and popularity of the royal hegemony on the one side and the preservation of Norwegian cultural heritage on the other.

As such, the collections displayed inside Oscarshall were not much of a folk museum. What was innovative was the king's authentic historical farmhouse, called the Hove-cottage after its former owner, which he had moved to his property at Bygdøy and exhibited there with original interiors. The collection soon grew to a handful of buildings and was crowned with the successful translocation of Gol stave church to Bygdøy in 1885, thus walking in the footsteps of Prussian king Wilhelm IV. When Holst started publishing reports for the king's holdings and collections at Bygdøy, the 1886 edition included an article by Nielsen, who writes in praise of the "rescue" of the Hove-cottage, describing it as a "precious treasure for all of Norway's people", who no longer had to "search outside the borders of their own land to see how their ancestors lived and abided one hundred and fifty years ago", something which sounds remarkably like the NFM's founding statement which notably would not be authored for another 8 years. He then goes on:

Therefore this house possesses a truly national meaning. It will give the capital's inhabitants and everyone who travels there an insight into that life which the rural populace living in the more remote settlements have conducted, up until few years ago. One can here acquaint oneself with the outer forms of the old peasant life [...]¹³⁸

There is a ring of the scientific to the legitimization of the museum's open-air section, but there is also a flavour of nationalism about it. We do not know whether such marketing of the king's collections was instructed by the king personally, but Nielsen's close attachment with the monarch may suggest the king's close involvement. If so, the barb pointed at Hazelius' rival project in Stockholm can be construed as a subtle condemnation of the Nordic Museum's collection. This Norway-friendly stance seems at odds with the king's interests but may also be a deliberate strategy by the king to garner Norwegian support. In a 1881 newspaper article, Yngvar Nielsen wrote of how foreign royals used their private parks to display "many imitations of national buildings from their respective country", and used this to highlight the authenticity of the building moved and reassembled as part of Oscar II's collections.¹³⁹ By relocating authentic buildings, the king had in Nielsen's view facilitated the next step towards scientific accuracy, and should therefore be hailed as a patron of science and the nation, a model monarch more than his foreign counterparts. This praise was most

¹³⁸ *Fjerde beretning om Bygdø Kongsgaard* (1886).

¹³⁹ Hegard, *Romantikk og fortidsvern*, p. 35.

likely not in line with the realities of the situation, as Nielsen as mentioned was intent on having the king's favour. His perspective almost certainly does not reflect the majority's view – but Nielsen's credentials as a scientist are otherwise well regarded. The royal involvement played a role in laying the groundwork for the open-air museum concept may also be understood as constituting part of the tradition for the elite to assemble ethnographic collections which had started centuries earlier. Kings moved in the very grandest elite circles and had the resources to spend lavishly on their collections.

Keeping in mind Oscar II's sympathies, could his entry into the museum business be understood as a Scandinavianist endeavour? His father Oscar I (1844-1859) had expressed support of the idea of a "dynastic" Scandinavism under Swedish leadership, possibly just in the interest of cementing the Swedish-Norwegian union, but never made any gains in that direction.¹⁴⁰ Oscar II also harboured Scandinavianist sympathies and was an outspoken supporter of a unified Scandinavian front against Germany during the Prussian-Danish wars of 1863-1864.¹⁴¹ It seems reasonable to assume that Swedish kings would favour a strong Scandinavism, but this would require support among the elite, and in Norway this elite was more in favour of more local autonomy. Scandinavism in the 1860s had attempted to make a closer union as part of the roadmap for Scandinavian political unity, but that had met with fierce resistance from the Norwegian nationalists.¹⁴² The events leading up to the opening of the royal collections at Bygdøy make it clear that it was at the least intended to connect the royal family with the Norwegian people. But any attack on Norwegian autonomy tended to result in deteriorating relations within the union. One might say that the Bernadotte dynasty had vaguely imperial ambitions but aspired to modern democratic ideals. To reconcile the two, a "weak" Scandinavism through cultural exchange seems the logical conclusion. The king could in such a perspective employ a cultural imperialism to replace the military imperialism of old. The modern monarch needed the hearts and minds of his people on his side. The king's museum separates itself from the other two institutions discussed below. Being the brainchild of a very small circle of academics and administrators, it may simply have lacked the popular backing of the other two. It had no attendant association and lacked the connection to the general population which the other folk museums had. Its mission was

¹⁴⁰ Sørensen, *Kampen om Norges sjel*, p. 241; Hansen, *Et skandinavisk nasjonsbyggingsprosjekt*, p. 3.

¹⁴¹ Svensk biografiskt lexikon, s.v. «Oscar II».

¹⁴² Sørensen, *Kampen om Norges sjel*, p. 244. The role of the great expositions will be discussed further in chapter 4.

left unfulfilled as the Norwegian separatists gained momentum as the nation approached 1905.

The Nordic Museum and The Norwegian Folk Museum

The Nordic Museum at Stockholm coalesced in the early 1880s under the monolithic leadership of Artur Hazelius. His ethnographic collections, which had been launched in 1873, renamed itself the Nordic Museum in 1880. The founding ethnographic collection had been collected from all over the Nordic countries, and the rebranding itself is significant since it meant that Hazelius was no longer content with the “ethnography” label for his museum. A Nordic Museum is not explicitly a folk museum, though its contents embodied folk culture history, but the new name reflects a vision of cultural unification represented in a museum which is commonly connected with Scandinavism. The Museum’s motto and message to its audience became: “Know thyself”. This was no longer to be a collection of exotic objects from far-off cultures – it was to tell a tale of national heritage. The Nordic Museum at Stockholm was a Swedish-based project intended to gather the cultural history of all Northern nations within a single museum, projecting a message of cultural unification. Such Scandinavianist aspirations challenged any purely nationalist movement within the respective kingdoms, and none more so than the Norwegian one.¹⁴³ In 1882 it had established a supporting association to gain economic independence from Sweden. Around the mid-1880s, the museum started collecting buildings from both Norway and Sweden, and in 1891, the open-air section of the museum opened under the name “Skansen”. With this the world’s first national open-air museum was established. By virtue of being first and helped by the internationally established reputation of its founder, the Nordic Museum to many became known as the principal folk museum of its era.

Hazelius did much to develop the idea of holistic museum exhibits through dioramas with authentic backdrops and wax figurines, a technique which was to become the trademark of open-air museums.¹⁴⁴ Added to this came animals and plants, and people in traditional garb performing various acts of culture. At the Nordic Museum, new ideas were constantly implemented. When the Museum received new localities in 1891 and the open-air section at Skansen was established he incorporated a zoological element. With Hazelius’ death in 1901,

¹⁴³ DeGroff, “Artur Hazelius and the ethnographic display”, p. 238.

¹⁴⁴ DeGroff, “Artur Hazelius and the ethnographic display”, p. 230.

the Museum's direction became somewhat less clear-cut. Internal disagreements on the focus and style of exhibition led to the formal separation of the open-air section and the conventional collections into separate locales, focused on different modes of exhibition. Where the open-air section would be more entertainment-oriented, and more aimed at ideology, the object collection which retained the name of Nordic Museum would focus its efforts on scientific displays and research.¹⁴⁵ The duality of museum concerns was thus more explicit at Stockholm than it was at Christiania.

From the founding of the Nordic Museum in 1880, it would take another 15 years before the Norwegian Folk Museum was launched in 1894. The NFM was a project initiated by a circle of cultural history enthusiasts with politically left-leaning tendencies, and so might be viewed as a response to the royal attempt at shaping historical narrative.¹⁴⁶ By its own accounts it was inspired by the Nordic Museum and aimed at providing a staging ground for Norwegian nationalism. These are both themes which feature heavily throughout its early history. The way the museum legitimized its work by the need to save a disappearing heritage from foreign threats and from the march of modernity mixes scientific goals with ideological ones. The announcement of the NFM in 1894 was accompanied by a written appeal by Moe. Aall would repeatedly refer to this text as the foundation of the NFM. According to Moe, the goal of the museum was to “teach us to better comprehend our people [...] and the more we understand, the more our sense of nationhood is strengthened”.¹⁴⁷ One might call this science for the sake of ideology, one the means and the other the end. Moe also offered a nod of acknowledgment for the collections at the Nordic Museum, but with reservations.

[...] for science it is still available also in Stockholm (however uncomfortable it might be to travel there to study Norwegian culture). But now the nourishment our people's *national feeling* should draw from such a collection – ? And consideration to what is to a nation dignified and appropriate – ?¹⁴⁸

The qualifier «for the sake of science» highlights the dual concern of the great project which was to be undertaken by the museum. His rhetoric allows that there is scientific value to be found at the Nordic Museum, but to rely on Swedish conservation for Norwegian matters was nothing short of an embarrassment. Moe apparently deemed it justified to downplay the importance of scientific study and emphasize that such a collection needed to be on Norwegian soil to sustain a feeling of nationhood. That the collections at Bygdøy were the

¹⁴⁵ Galaaen, *Kolleger og konkurrenter*, pp. 31-35.

¹⁴⁶ Bjorli, «Kultur, vitenskap og samfunn», p. 28.

¹⁴⁷ Aall, *Norsk folkemuseum*, p. 3.

¹⁴⁸ Aall, *Norsk folkemuseum*, pp. 4-5.

beginnings of just such a collection is not alluded to, possibly since it threatened the fragile legitimacy of the NFM's humble beginnings. Though the king's collections had also been touted as being for all of the Norwegian people, the royal ownership and the unscientific hybrid nature of the king's museum may have spurred on the makers of this competing project. The NFM's founders had a relationship of opposition or rivalry to the king's supporters. The NFM's chairman Gustav Storm had heavily criticised a history schoolbook written by Daae and Nielsen in 1871, just around the time when Storm vied with Daae for the post of history professor at the royal university. Nielsen criticised the NFM repeatedly and in 1900 tried to convince the government to have the folk museum absorbed into a generic history museum owned by the state.¹⁴⁹ His dislike of the museum may be due to political disagreements; the NFM was run by members of the left-leaning Lysaker-circle. Or perhaps on account of the NFM's success where Nielsen's similar ambitions had failed.

Moltke Moe's reputation was well established and provided the link to folk culture conservation on which the NFM was founded. For instance, his ideas on bringing together the rural and urban is put into practice is evident with the addition of city apartment buildings into the open-air section of the museum – what has been called Aall's "dual-culture dichotomy".¹⁵⁰ Aall, being the junior partner who was nonetheless director of the museum, had two sources of inspiration for the running of an open-air folk museum. One was the King Oscar Collections. It is telling how the NFM ended up buying the plot of land adjacent to the king's collection, which confers some intention of expanding on what the king had started. The most influential inspiration was likely the Nordic Museum and Skansen at Stockholm, which had taken this concept further and was seen as a rival in the collection effort since it espoused a Scandinavist ideology of cultural unification. Artur Hazelius had gained fame with his museum project. He had been working to acquire Norwegian material for more than a decade already when the NFM was established in late 1894.¹⁵¹ The nascent rivalry embedded in the overlapping interest of the two institutions set them up to be rivals, but in the interest of professional cooperation there were periods of cordial relations.¹⁵²

Though the Norwegians had less of a desire to collect and display Swedish material than vice versa, the transmission of Swedish ideas to those associated with the Norwegian folk museum

¹⁴⁹ NFM/D/0023: Letter to the NFM from the Ecclesiastical and Educational Department, 2.11.1900.

¹⁵⁰ Bjorli, *Kultur, vitenskap og samfunn* (Bergen: Universitet i Bergen, 2000), p. 107.

¹⁵¹ Hegard, *Romantikk og fortidsvern*, s. 45.

¹⁵² Galaaen, "Kolleger og konkurrenter", pp. 190-191.

through these periods was nonetheless significant. Galaaen (2011) has already demonstrated how the spirit of cooperation between the NFM and the Nordic Museum constituted a degree of cultural exchange which had most likely not otherwise occurred.¹⁵³ Though the Norwegians had less of a desire to collect and display Swedish material than vice versa, the transmission of Swedish ideas to those associated with the Norwegian folk museum was nonetheless significant. There is evidence that the leadership at the two museums wanted to achieve a higher degree of cultural exchange even after the union was dissolved in 1905 but were prevented from doing so by the political climate at the time. That the collaboration and exchange continued even after the nations were separated indicates that the museums had both contributed to transnational communication and to the separation of Norwegian and Swedish national cultural identities.

Museums as enterprises

The general trend during the nineteenth century was that the rise of nationalism precipitated an increase in national museums. Simmons (2016) condensed a general model of European national museum development in which most museums started out as private collections before eventually coming under state ownership and control. The museum's function is by his reckoning to enshrine "representations of the dominant culture". The starting point of such collections could be palace collections of wealthy princes, church treasuries or teaching collections at universities.¹⁵⁴ Although many of the older museums transitioned from private to state ownership, there are many cases where the three steps of such a model do not adequately represent the nuances of reality. There were many variations at play when a national museum was founded, as has been emphasized by Simon Knell.¹⁵⁵ Thus a national museum in Norway didn't necessarily have the same characteristics as in England. The distinction between national museums and other local museums was not necessarily dependent on the presence or absence of state ownership. Ethnographer Yngvar Nielsen stated, and was later quoted by Hans Aall, that the goal had always been to create a "independent Norwegian national cultural history museum".¹⁵⁶ Coming from Nielsen, an independent museum likely meant free from state influence, and not free from union

¹⁵³ Galaaen, «Kolleger og konkurrenter» (2011), pp. 190-191.

¹⁵⁴ Simmons, *Museums: A history* (London, Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), pp. 150, 166.

¹⁵⁵ Knell, "National museums and the national imagination", p. 6.

¹⁵⁶ Aall, *Norsk Folkemuseum*, p. 1.

overlords, as Nielsen was a well-known supporter of the union and friend to the king. To nineteenth century contemporaries, a national museum sought to collect the nation's history, typically as defined by cultural markers or geographic boundaries, similar to a national art museum. Where cultural boundaries were less marked, as in the case of Sweden-Norway, a museum could aspire to collect a whole ethnic or cultural group's history. An example is the Norwegian Folk Museum, which developed as a privately owned national museum right from its inception. It received some funding from the state in 1897 after only roughly two years in existence but was still largely dependent on donations and generated revenue. By 1907 the state would ameliorate this dependency by ramping up monetary support, but in the meantime the museum had been in dire straits economically. The Nordic Museum developed similarly, as it remained private during its establishing period as well.¹⁵⁷ However, rather than being a repository for Swedish nationalism exclusively, the Nordic Museum harboured super-national aspirations, and did not ally with the Swedish head of state.

This prompts two observations: Firstly, that the state was hesitant to invest in a national folk museum, even in an independence-oriented country such as Norway. Secondly, that in their early years, the Swedish-Norwegian folk museums should be viewed as business enterprises. The latter observation carries a lot of possible implications. NFM correspondence with creditors shows that the economic concerns of the NFM were such that they threatened the museum's future. Around the turn of the century Aall spent a lot of his correspondence asking for loans and donations while fighting banks for a delay on existing loans.¹⁵⁸ In such a situation it was imperative that the museum is attractive to its target audience. Added to the context of nationalism and an active independence movement, this put pressure on the museum's leadership to market the museum in a way that would inspire further monetary support from private entities. A way of achieving this would be to highlight the nationalistic potential of a folk museum and to target the wealthiest of the elite or the most influential in parliament with their exhibitions and historical narrative in order to attain the funds needed. This early iteration of the NFM was in this sense a museum after Moltke Moe's heart: To educate the elite rather than the common people. It displayed rural life but catered to the prosperous urban populace which were the likely source of revenue.

¹⁵⁷ Nordic Museum's *annual report 1882*.

¹⁵⁸ NFM/D/0023 - Correspondence 1900, Galaaen, *Kolleger og konkurrenter*, p. 55; Aall, *Norsk Folkemuseum*, p. 6.

Building a collection: motivations and methods.

A closer look at the collecting methods of the Norwegian Folk Museum in practice has shown how the museum's methods of acquisition fit into established patterns. These patterns had been developing in Norway for much of the 19th century and shows foreign influence through the perceived presence of competition both from inside and outside Scandinavia. The collecting effort also reflects the ongoing balance of consideration between the aesthetically pleasing and the scientifically interesting, a question which played a central role in helping museums evolve into the modern 20th century institution. The research function of a museum is not suited to drawing visitors and generating income. The Folk Museum launched as a nationally oriented endeavour but was not owned by the nation state. Throughout the first decade of its establishment (1894-1905), their material collections and operating funds were generated mainly by private entities. This is where the pragmatic side of museum business makes itself known. Preserved material from the NFM archives indicates that the museum was in dire financial straits at several points during its first decade.¹⁵⁹ This implies that the museum's public profile was influenced by a pressing need to attract paying customers, but perhaps more importantly, sponsors. Potential contributors would be found among the elite, which means that though the museum was constituted on the basis of educating the wider public, as a business it was to some extent forced to direct their marketing towards the wealthy few. As my examination of collecting practices will show, this does not mean that the wealthy were the only contributors, particularly to a museum's material collections. Many people of various means solicited the museum in a bid to sell them some heirloom or other, or even buildings.

The Folk Museum assembled its initial object collection in the time between its inception in 1894 and its grand opening at Bygdøy in 1902, as well as a modest collection of buildings for the open-air section. Here I treat the object collection and the building collection separately. With the aim of looking at how the collection effort was subject to competition, a focus on the former is justified by the fact that the latter was of a more innovative nature and considered the hallmark of the Folk Museum, while the former was less unique, having been pursued by other museums for some time. For the acquisition of a collection of objects the museum had to find its place among a family of museums which were less specialized than 20th century museums would later become. To illustrate this the constituting statement of the

¹⁵⁹ NFM/D/L0022, L0023, L0024 – Correspondence 1903, 1905.

Folk Museum had – likely in an attempt to quell criticism and justify its existence – specifically stated that it would surrender any objects that “belonged” in the Royal University’s antiquities collection or the Industrial Arts Museum at Christiania to those institutions.¹⁶⁰ As a strictly Norwegian folk museum, the NFM had only the domestic market as a source of objects. The University’s Ethnography Collection could however look further afield, as most exotic objects fell within its purview. This is why Yngvar Nielsen could simply buy Japanese and Chinese art objects from “a shop *Zur Theepflanze*, Kärnthnerstrasse” on an otherwise unrelated visit to Vienna in 1877 and add these to the university’s collections.¹⁶¹ As often as not however, Nielsen’s collection grew through the charity of experienced seamen who had collected on their travels.¹⁶² The market for objects was transnational in extension, but meant that the collection effort was little different from buying souvenirs. Approaching the turn of the century, more rational methods became the norm.

The ways in which the Norwegian Folk Museum acquired its early collections is meticulously recorded in its annual reports. In 1895, Hans Aall travelled the countryside as freshly appointed conservator in search of both buildings and objects worthy of the new museum. Aall travelled through both southern, western and northern parts of the country, showing a desire to enact the museum’s national aspirations.¹⁶³ In this, he went in the footsteps of Yngvar Nielsen, who had made similar travels in an attempt to build a Norwegian department at the university’s collections in 1878-1880.¹⁶⁴ About one third of the objects comprising the initial collection were gifts. The remaining two thirds were acquired by the museum both directly and through intermediaries. The gifts and direct acquisitions were much more prestigious than those acquired through intermediaries. The ideal method of acquisition was a “rational” collection effort, done by experts in the field of cultural history, and the gifts had to be announced as a matter of etiquette. The goal was stated as being: “the rational search through the different estates, done by persons with some knowledge of cultural history.”¹⁶⁵ Traders and dealers in antiquities are condemned even as the museum apologetically admits its own reluctant use of them. This practice is justified by the need to

¹⁶⁰ *Love for «Foreningen for Norsk Folkemuseum»* (1894).

¹⁶¹ Nielsen, *Universitetets ethnografiske samlinger* (Christiania: W. C. Fabritius & sønner, 1907), pp. 59-60.

¹⁶² Nielsen, *Universitetets ethnografiske samlinger*, pp. 61-75.

¹⁶³ NFM Annual report 1894/1895.

¹⁶⁴ Nielsen, *Universitetets ethnografiske samlinger*, p. 79.

¹⁶⁵ NFM Annual report 1894/1895.

establish a nationwide network of contacts for the sake of monitoring the market.¹⁶⁶ Nonetheless, the use of antiquities dealers as intermediaries by institutions who still aspired to some degree of scientific standard seems to have been widespread during the late 19th century. The somewhat arbitrary way in which the collecting effort came about was later lamented by Harry Fett in 1905. Commenting on a published paper on art history, he stated:

Unfortunately, the scientific significance of this material is diminished by the lack of secure information. Nowadays this is one of the greatest mistakes with the collection of our folk art and ethnography, that it happens in a less rational way, mostly through random traders.¹⁶⁷

The prevalent view thus seems to have been that too much of the collection process was left to those who were seen as laymen; profiteers without the proper education and properly scientific or patriotic motives which were so popular among the elite. It went against the rationalist ethos inherited from the enlightenment period that such operations should be left to chance. The fear was that even if the traders and dealers peddled objects worthy of preservation, they would skip entire districts and not acquire the information needed to identify the objects.¹⁶⁸

An established market

The threat of competition in the collecting effort is explicit from the museum's inception. In the first annual report concerning 1894/1895, the authors state that much money would be needed to combat an "almost systematic pillaging of the countryside" by a network of *opkjøbere* (traders) and *antikvitetshandlere* (antiquities dealers), and that the museum will need the resources to outbid these competitors. Echoing Moltke Moe's address in the 1894 meeting that established the museum, the report states that even foreign tourists are part of this competition (presumably this must have been wealthy collectors or their representatives). The authors of the report warn that haste is needed or else within a few years it will be too late to acquire the collection the museum needs to fulfil its ambitions.¹⁶⁹ This argument is likely a refrain sung by many ethnographers and is made in such close connection with the need for more funds that it seems appropriate to question the veracity of its claims. What is interesting here is the foreign nature of this perceived threat. Writing in 1907 about his time

¹⁶⁶ NFM Annual report 1894/1895, p. 16.

¹⁶⁷ NFM Annual report 1905.

¹⁶⁸ NFM Annual report 1894/1895, p. 16.

¹⁶⁹ NFM Annual report 1894/1895, p. 17.

as director of the university's ethnography collection, Yngvar Nielsen quoted and agreed with his predecessor L.K. Daa that:

The acquisition of such newer antiquities has become a matter of fashion in other countries. There are already three art dealers in Christiania, who buy everywhere such Norwegian products of art. As they profit from turning them over to foreign tourists, they are spread over all of the wide world and disappear into private collections beyond counting.¹⁷⁰

The antiquities dealers especially seem to have had the potential to provide links to Europe at large. One prime example of such a dealer is the business run by M. Hammer out of Bergen, who dealt in: "Wholesale & retail export – specialty enamelled spoons & Norwegian Filigree Jewelry. Largest collection of Norwegian silver antiquities."¹⁷¹ Hammer had built up a jewellery and antiquities empire in western Norway, with business partners in England and ties both to English and German royalty.¹⁷² This dealer was used by the Folk Museum to help augment its initial collections. His letters bore the following print in English:

By special appointment jeweller to H.R.H. The Prince of Wales. LARGEST COLLECTION OF NORWEGIAN ANTIQUITIES. COMPRISING SILVER, BRASS WORK, OLD CHINA, FURNITURE, ETC. MANUFACTURING GOLD- AND SILVERSMITH. SPECIALTY: NORWEGIAN FILIGREE JEWELRY. BRANCHES: ODDE (HARDANGER) MOLDE OG TROMSÖ."¹⁷³

Notably both the use of the English language and the descriptor *Norwegian* conveys a strong implication of an English-speaking market for Norwegian cultural heritage. In 1904 a British conservator wrote that: "As we approach recent times archaeology shades into antiquities, and the archaeological collection grows into the historical."¹⁷⁴ This together with the style of advertisement strongly implies that such objects were in demand on English-speaking markets. A common description of the list's contents might simply be "fine art". The category "antiquities" confers a vested interest in old objects, but the attachment of the nation of origin provides one extra layer of meaning. There is however no mention of peasant culture, suggesting that foreign collectors favoured an item's aesthetic qualities over its scientific value, meaning the market was at this point still dominated by wealthy laymen collectors and not scientific institutions. Though this does not eliminate the threat to objects of interest to the Folk Museum, it made it less likely that traders and dealers would acquire

¹⁷⁰ Nielsen, *Universitetets ethnografiske samlinger*, p. 77.

¹⁷¹ NFM/D/L0027. M. Hammer's business card bore this print in English.

¹⁷² Indahl, *-med en sølvskje i munnen*, pp. 42-44.

¹⁷³ NFM/D/L0027: Letter to the NFM from M. Hammer, 9.7.1895.

¹⁷⁴ Siegel, *The emergence of the modern museum*, p. 302.

objects with more purely scientific and less aesthetically pleasing qualities, a category which fell under the folk museum's purview almost exclusively. That is, unless there was such an established market for that category of antiquities that the intermediaries knew that they were in demand.

The traveling salesman

The collection process was not only done by conservators in the field, but also by antiquities traders. These seem to have catered more to domestic museums and could have a clientele consisting of several museums. A letter of recommendation addressed to the Folk Museum in 1895 from the industrial arts museum in Bergen is an apt illustration. In this letter Johan Bøgh, as director of the museum, recommends to Aall an antiquities trader who "acquired for our folk museum the good collections from Setersdalen and Telemarken" and furthermore "contributed to the various collections in Bergen". In this glowing endorsement, Bøgh states that the trader "knows well what a folk museum wants".¹⁷⁵ Also remarkable is that Bøgh seems to refer to his own museum as a folk museum. With the nationally-oriented Norwegian Folk Museum at Christiania being the first of its kind in Norway, Bøgh's phrasing is peculiar as Bergen had no museum that styled itself in such a way officially. The structure of the letter suggests that Bøgh is in fact referring to his own museum. Bøgh is therefore indicating that the label of Folk Museum was less of a distinction from existing museum concepts and more of a rebranding. As already mentioned, the overlap between industrial arts museums and the Folk Museum was such that Aall and his co-founders felt the need to make a promise not to infringe on their collecting effort.

Many of these exchanges point towards an established market on objects of interest to museums and private collectors alike. At least as regards the Folk Museum, this seems to have been the case, considering the many offers sent to Aall during the period 1895-1905. Over the years various private opportunists and agents appear to have sent offers of old buildings or antique objects to be bought.¹⁷⁶ This means the museum's collecting effort was effectively assisted by the general populace. A portion of these were gifts made in good faith and can be assumed to come from wealthy contributors more concerned with seeing the nation's history put on display as a means to foster nationalistic sentiment.

¹⁷⁵ NFM/D/L0027: Letter to the NFM from Western Norway's Industrial Arts Museum, 25.4.1895.

¹⁷⁶ NFM/D/L0022, L0023, L0024: Correspondence dated 1898, 1899, 1900, 1903, 1905.

In business dealings, the correspondence of the late 19th century was often to the point and lacking comment, but with some exceptions. In the union's final year of 1905, when Aall announced an exhibition of antique ovens, he received in response a donation from a foundry with the declaration that "it would bring us pleasure to be able to contribute something to the Norwegian Folk Museum's collections."¹⁷⁷ For others it is hard to judge from the offers of antiquities for a price if the seller was motivated more by money or by any sense of patriotism or love of history. One of these refers to the Museum's advert in the newspaper. The seller advertises the oven's age and aesthetic features and a price is negotiated. Letters such as this give the impression of a simple business transaction, without any lofty ideals touted by either side. In any case we can conclude that the market assisted the museum in its work. A perfunctory analysis can be done based on what the report chooses to highlight among its recent acquisitions. In summary it seems like these dealers and traders make up part of the museum business which escapes scrutiny on account of being done discreetly. Owing to the lack of sound rational methods, collectors wanted such transactions kept out of the public eye. The strong presence of such agents in the correspondence does however suggest that they played a greater role in the collection effort than the self-fashioning museologist of the time cared to admit. Daniel DeGroff has already asserted that: "This sort of complex transaction (involving buyers, pilferers and gifters, opportunistic intermediaries and frustrated third-party nationals) becomes common in a world where the artefacts of national cultures become value-laden."¹⁷⁸

The commodification of buildings

Buildings had less of an established market in 1895, but it can hardly be called non-existent. Between the king's own collection of buildings at Christiania assembled in the early 1880s and the energetic effort undertaken by the Skansen open-air museum at Stockholm, word had spread that well preserved old buildings could earn a humble farmer a substantial amount of money. The NFM's annual reports can offer some clues into what kind of exhibits the Folk Museum saw as worthy of collecting. It bears mentioning however that economic concerns may have affected their choice. Still, at this early stage a sizeable amount of funds had been amassed to furnish an initial collection. The price of an old building has been shown to range

¹⁷⁷ NFM/D/L0024: Letter to the NFM from Hamar Ironworks, 27.11.1905.

¹⁷⁸ DeGroff, «Artur Hazelius and the ethnographic display, p. 239.

from a few hundred crowns to upwards of one thousand. The initial funds as reported by the museum numbered in the tens of thousands. Only two other buildings are presented for the year 1894/95, and the other two had been gifts. Additionally, the actual transport of the buildings had also been sponsored. It is therefore likely that the Folk Museum sought an expert recommendation from Nicolaysen with the intent of purchasing a single building for that year. That building would therefore need to hold a high value or sense of attraction.

The centrepiece of the first collection of buildings was the old wooden smoke shack from Numedal, acquired with the assistance of Nicolay Nicolaysen. Nicolaysen had helped pave the way towards building conservation in Norway through his central position at the FNFB. That Nicolaysen assisted the king in acquiring some of the buildings for the King Oscar Collections at Bygdøy in the early 1880s provided further credentials.

The old smoke shack is praised for its age and authenticity and its decorating artwork, in that order. The building's medieval origins are highlighted, and the featured runic inscription explicitly mentioned. These two qualities are likely central to this first and foremost acquisition for the open-air museum; it provided a palpable connection to a perceived Norse golden age of Norwegian independence. It had the potential to attract guests interested in the nation's history and revival – which typically meant the elite, coincidentally that same group of people who possessed the resources to aid the fledgling museum.

The Folk Museum's archive of correspondence yields clear signs of an established market on antiquities in the final years of the 19th century. Traders and dealers were profiting off collectors and museums, both inside and outside the Sweden-Norway union. As the scientific field of interest for conservation expanded to include even everyday objects and past rural ways of life in general, this market saw a potential for considerable growth as well. What may have been seen as old junk before would thereby acquire value through a process of commodification.

Summary

The three central projects oriented towards creating an open-air museum which have been presented here seem to have had three different agendas. Though they all made strides in the great project of preserving cultural heritage, only one of them can reasonably be called successful in its wider cultural or political aspirations. The King Oscar collections were

created to display a palpable link between the Norwegian people and their Swedish king, a moot point after 1905. The Nordic Museum at Stockholm was intended to create national consciousness in not only Sweden but Norway as well, thus bringing together the union's cultures and erase the division between them.¹⁷⁹ The NFM meanwhile was founded to take charge of the conservation and formulation of the Norwegian heritage and identity. Like the others, it sought to safeguard objects worthy of conservation, which were to be saved not only from oblivion but also from foreign interests – a goal in line with the independence project in Norway. The king's collection came first but soon lost its relevance, having part of its collection transferred to the NFM. The Nordic Museum was launched on the basis of European ideas and made great strides in showing Europe a new form of display in its open-air section at Skansen. It however failed to bring the two kingdoms closer to unification. The NFM followed in their footsteps but complemented a nationalist vision, helping bring about an independent Norway by aiding Norwegian nation-building. These three projects found inspiration from afar and built on ideas from abroad, through both scientific and commercial networks of conservation. The collection methods of the NFM shows the presence of a transnational market where cultural objects were a commodity and commercial players influenced the museum's collection. These lesser agents nonetheless played a significant part in shaping the collections.

According to Sörlin (1998), during the nineteenth century science becomes “the ‘inventor’ of regions and states”.¹⁸⁰ If this is so, and the ‘inventor’ of the nation according to the Hobsbawmian perspective on nationalism is the elite, then it follows that science was a tool of nation-building, and not just the objective pursuit of knowledge. Transnational scientific communities brought changes to the European fringe. Whereas the folk museum displayed the nation and the local, and the ethnography museum on the exotic, anthropology evolved into a discipline encompassing all of humanity. Since it focused on the local and concerned itself with history, folk culture history was a good fit to promote nationalism. Despite this focus on the local, the folk museum was however still the repository of a branch of knowledge which evolved its own set of methods and modes of display. This could be observed and imitated by those interested in following in the footsteps of the Nordic innovators. As a science, folk culture history would eventually transcend borders. The duality

¹⁷⁹ Implicitly under Swedish leadership.

¹⁸⁰ Sörlin, «Artur Hazelius och det nationella arvet», pp. 19-20.

of the museum as remarked by Galaaen in balancing ideology and science is by implication the balancing of the national and the transnational.

4. Transnational exchanges

If we can establish that the folk museums were run by a cosmopolitan elite and served as contact points between cultures, then what sort of mediums were used to facilitate this communication? The annual reports of the museums show a structured exchange of ideas between museums and societies through a correspondence of annual reports, as well as more sporadic informal exchange of letters between museums and societies. An analysis shall be made here of the point of contact created by the annual reports. The geographical spread of such correspondence and the contents of it communication can both relay something about the motivations and methods behind this network connected to the folk museums. Both the NFM and the Nordic Museum communicated with Germany more than any place else. There seems to have been almost no communication with the lands west of the Rhine. The reasons for this imbalance are interesting not least because the Nordic Museum owes some of its open-air concept to world fairs, which were French and British affairs for much of the 19th century.

Great expositions

The open-air museum concept evolved alongside a tradition for grand international expositions, exhibitions or fairs. One could even say that expositions were an instrumental part of why the open-air museums came to be. The effect of such events in speeding the transmission of ideas between different parts of Europe in the late 19th century can hardly be overstated, and their influence was also felt in Scandinavia.¹⁸¹ From their humble beginnings as market fairs in France, the exhibitions developed into grand showcases for manufactured products and industrial technology originating with the host city or nation. It should come as no surprise that a context of national prestige and rivalry was soon to follow. The expositions drew royalty, wealthy patrons and aspiring scientists, among them Scandinavian academics and museum directors. We know that the influential Norwegian ethnologist Eilert Sundt

¹⁸¹Stavenow-Hidemark, «Museitankar i tiden», pp. 41-42. Rentzhog, *Friluftsmuseerna*, p. 38.

visited and was influenced by ideas discovered at the fair, and Hazelius practically forged his renown on this grand stage.¹⁸² The grandest expositions were imitated by lesser versions of a more limited geographical scope. Sweden hosted a Scandinavian Arts- and Industry Exposition at Stockholm in 1866 and again in 1897. This latter iteration co-operated with the Nordic Museum, using its grounds as a base for the exposition locales. Organizers remarked that very few Swedes had the means to travel abroad to experience the “nature of modern continental art”, and that the exposition would work as “a powerful means to further the whole nation’s spiritual development”.¹⁸³ This perception of the education of the general population evokes the same rhetoric as the folk museums’ in defining one’s usefulness to society. This also affirms the divide between people of means and the poor in terms of access to transnational influences.

The expositions represented a chance for a nation to present itself in ways that reinforced national identity. An the ‘universal’ expositions, sometimes called world fairs, it was important for participants to present their nation in the best possible way. The fairs were excellent stages for national prestige, and the air of competition between different participants would often bring bold new exhibits designed to outdo one’s contemporaries.¹⁸⁴ Whether one wanted to convey a message of cultural unity, as with the “All-German” Exhibition of 1844, or a message of separation or independence, as with Norway’s example, the expositions were the perfect arenas to reach a wider transnational audience.¹⁸⁵ But as a national showcase, the expositions were also very well suited to asserting a unique and favourable national identity on the international stage, where countless foreigners could form an impression of a country as progressive or backwards depending on its exhibits. The aforementioned jeweller M. Hammer of Bergen, who would eventually go on to supply the NFM with antiquities for its collection, participated at the 1889 Paris exhibition with three displays of Norwegian jewellery.¹⁸⁶ The antiquities dealers’ commercial interest and the folk museum’s conservation interest intersected at the desire for international attention using national artifacts as the attraction. Though they provided a basis for continued transnational exchange, the expositions may safely be termed international since the state was actively

¹⁸² Lien, “Hva kan vi lære av Eilert Sundt?”, p. 85; DeGroff, “Artur Hazelius and the ethnographic display”, p. 231.

¹⁸³ Looström, “Utställningens förhistoria”, p. 11.

¹⁸⁴ DeGroff, “Artur Hazelius and the ethnographic display”, p. 236.

¹⁸⁵ Greenhalgh, *Fair world*, pp. 20-22.

¹⁸⁶ Indahl, *-med en sølvskje i munnen*, p. 44.

involved, their exhibits like “cultural embassies”.¹⁸⁷ In advance of the 1900 Exposition Universelle, the Norwegian national assembly voted to commission a treatise on Norway, written in English and titled *Norway – An official publication for the Paris Exhibition 1900*. The weighty pseudo-scientific volume produced as a result included sections on everything from the geology of Norwegian mountains to folk music and dance and had the Norwegian constitution and Articles of Union with Sweden attached. Over the course of thirty-nine chapters, every aspect of the country and its people is meticulously described. The last chapter, which concerns music, opens with the following phrases:

The Norwegian people are not perhaps a singing people to the same extent as many other European nations. The mighty ocean that beats upon the shore, the dark fjords with their overhanging cliffs, the noisy waterfalls, the miles of blue-green pine and fir, the endless wastes of mountain and ice with the crackling flames of the northern lights, the long night of winter – all the Titanic force with which Nature has endowed the country, casts a shadow of sadness and melancholy over the people. Their lips do not open so readily for song as in a land where the southern sun creates an eternal spring.¹⁸⁸

Though this may seem humorous today, this poetic account shows a strong national romantic influence on the author. There was a need to portray Norway’s particular landscape in relation to Norwegians as a distinct people with unique cultural characteristics, aimed at a wider European audience. By contrast, the more concise and sober “Anthropology” (which was by then apparently the study of the physical aspects of man) chapter remarks on the excellent fairness, height and breadth of chest as central characteristics of the Norwegian.¹⁸⁹ The Norwegian identity was here rooted in the observable physical realm but also evident in the people’s emotions and physical abilities.

The 1867 Paris exposition might well be described as the spark that ignited the ideas throughout Europe that would develop into the exhibition techniques commonly associated with folk- and open-air museums. The organizers invited the participants to bring replicas of traditional buildings. Far from being empty shells, the structures were accompanied by appropriate interiors, and even local people in traditional folk clothing were also brought to populate these buildings.¹⁹⁰ The result was multicultural rural hamlet along the Champs de Mars with inhabitants from many far corners of Europe, where the privileged could stroll and take in authentic representations of the various cultures. In effect, the only two things that

¹⁸⁷ Stavenow-Hidemark, “Museitankar i tiden», pp 41-42.

¹⁸⁸ Siewers, “Music”, p. 617.

¹⁸⁹ Hansen, “Anthropology”, pp. 79-80.

¹⁹⁰ Jöhler, «The invention of the multicultural museum”, pp. 62-63.

separated such expositions from the open-air museum was permanency and scientific integrity. The entertainment factor which had played a larger role in the old cabinets of curiosities was rather dominant at the fairs, which were made to impress and amaze. Skansen arguably imitated this aspect by way of its “living museum” approach, in a way like a permanent Sweden-exposition.¹⁹¹

For the 1867 exposition the Swedish delegation exhibited a traditional rural cottage.¹⁹² Observing all this was none other than Artur Hazelius. When he returned for the 1878 exposition, he did so with a display of distinctive dioramas and tableaux which used authentic historical structures for their setting and reportedly won much fame.¹⁹³ Consequently this means that the very idea of moving buildings to his museum came to Hazelius must have come at least in part from the world fairs.¹⁹⁴ The ideas which sparked new innovation in Scandinavia were picked up at the 1867 exposition, refined and developed, and subsequently reintroduced in new forms at the exhibition in 1878. Within 3 years of this success, Hazelius had rebranded his ethnography museum into The Nordic Museum. Additionally, when the new buildings for the Nordic Museum were to be designed, Hazelius wanted to model them on the Palais de l'industrie i Champs Elysées in Paris.¹⁹⁵

Contact Zones

The mood of the larger exposition was as a showcase of human progress. In light of the “civilizing mission” promoted by imperialists, this also meant showcasing various cultures hailing from each nation’s respective colonies. At the 1867 exposition, organizers started bringing in native peoples to populate the rustic villages that made up such a large part of the exposition.¹⁹⁶ It is not so strange to imagine that exhibiting objects from less developed societies or primitive peoples at the heart of the industrialised world must have been like peering into the past and watching human civilization at an earlier stage of development. The weight of these largest exhibitions, termed *universal* expositions or world fairs, lie with

¹⁹¹ Rentzhog, *Friluftsmuseerna*, pp 19-21.

¹⁹² Hegard, *Romantikk og fortidsvern*, s. 35. The same cottage which was then subsequently brought to the castle of king Carl XV to be assembled on its grounds.

¹⁹³ *Svenska män och kvinnor*, s.v. Artur Hazelius; DeGroff, «Artur Hazelius and the ethnographic display”, p. 229.

¹⁹⁴ Hedström, “Museipedagogik”, s. 429; *Svenska män och kvinnor*, s.v. “Artur Hazelius”.

¹⁹⁵ Nordic Museum’s annual report 1897/1898.

¹⁹⁶ Greenhalgh, *Fair world*, p. 126.

western Europe. This meant that up until the famous world fair of 1900, the colonial sections of the great expositions only grew larger and more opulent. In James Clifford's terminology, the expositions were *contact zones* bringing many of the world's cultures together within a frame of European overlordship.¹⁹⁷ The juxtaposition at the great expositions of colonial cultures and Swedish cottages and folk culture apparel prompts a discussion about power relationships. The relationship between the colonial great powers and the lesser nations at the European fringe was asymmetrical in a different way than between colonisers and colonised. To the Swedes, expositions were an arena to both receive and transmit cultural and scientific impulses. The power politics of that time period evokes a social-Darwinist school of ideas wherein the strong eat the weak, and it was the same story for both nature and nations.

In a contact perspective, museums are spaces where cultures come together. Clifford coined the term mostly in the context of a colonial asymmetry of power, of "coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict".¹⁹⁸ By this measure the British museums were typical contact zones for the native cultures of colonial possessions. Conflict was a recurring theme in the later years of the Swedish-Norwegian union, and in its way the Swedish programme of unification was an attempt at dissolving national barriers. Objects of Norwegian material culture on display in Swedish museums had felt invasive to many Norwegians. There were however fewer protests to the exchange of immaterial culture such as song and dance. Both the Nordic Museum and the NFM had constructed a fairground with the intent of hosting cultural events and celebrations. In the period between Artur Hazelius' death in 1901 and the union's dissolution in 1905, the two museums attempted a programme of cultural exchange wherein folk dancers from Norway performed in Sweden and vice versa. Good relations between and mutual benefit had created a professional sphere which disregarded the conflict between the museums' respective nations, and perhaps even sought to dampen the disagreements.¹⁹⁹ The culture exchange was a reciprocal arrangement, an agreement between nations on friendly terms. It was made possible by a cordial professional air of cooperation which did not extend much past the museum sphere. In the political sphere, resentment was building on both sides of the border during the last decades of the nineteenth century. The Scandinavism which had been evident during Hazelius' time was fading at the Nordic Museum and would be all but expunged with the end of the union. The NFM struggled with

¹⁹⁷ Clifford, *Routes*, p. 198.

¹⁹⁸ Clifford, *Routes*, p. 192.

¹⁹⁹ Galaaen, «Kolleger og konkurrenter», pp. 191-192.

attracting audiences in general to its events and the Nordic Museum, which had more success with their events, received criticism for not showing exclusively Swedish culture.²⁰⁰ The museums' co-operation shows a desire to uphold transnational exchange even as nationalism was fortifying the border and fixing on the differences and disagreements between the separate nations.

Professional cultural exchange

The *embetsmenn* of Norway absorbed distinctly foreign ideas in their attempt to construct a modern nation. The central figures behind the NFM were no exceptions; indeed, the founders seem to have had a particularly strong connection not only to Sweden (naturally), but with Germany as well. Moltke Moe's speech at the grand opening of the NFM in 1902 illustrates how one of the main thinkers behind the institution envisioned the museum as part of a greater community.

The folk museum is a museum of the people. But our Norwegian culture is also a part of world culture, constantly influenced by it [...] the trick is to blend the foreign with one's own, assimilating it, reshaping it to suit one's own personality. Assimilate, not borrow. We ourselves shall be judged by what we have created.²⁰¹

Judging by this, the museum's stance on cosmopolitanism or transnational influence was generally in line with the nation-building of the Norwegian *embetsmenn* of the 1830s and 1840s; to stay true to one's culture but not to do so in isolation from foreign ideas. The most influential agents at the NFM were predisposed for accepting such foreign impulses. There was Gustav Storm, the first chairman of the museum's association. He provides a tangible link to Germany by being known for being a proponent of modern German scientific ideas at the royal university of Christiania, having studied abroad at Berlin in 1875. Storm continued to travel abroad to study at intervals through the last three decades of the 19th century.²⁰² As an example, when the NFM hired its first researcher in 1900 the person selected for the job was the Swedish-German second generation immigrant Harry Fett, an alumnus of German and Italian universities who also made sure to highlight his foreign travels in his application to the museum.²⁰³ This speaks of a museum leadership interested in staying abreast with

²⁰⁰ Hegard, *Romantikk og fortidsvern*, p. 187; Galaaen, «Kolleger og konkurrenter», p. 192.

²⁰¹ Amundsen, «Men of vision», p. 50.

²⁰² Norsk biografisk leksikon, s.v. «Gustav Storm».

²⁰³ NFM/D/L0023: Letter to the NFM from Harry Fett, 1.12.1900.

progressive foreign ideas by fostering relations with foreign institutions; they wanted someone in touch with the latest scientific gains on the continent, and Fett brought an international perspective to cultural art studies. His view was that the national art style should be viewed as part of wider international trends.²⁰⁴ Fett would go on to manage much of the correspondence with his Swedish counterparts at the Nordic Museum at Stockholm, even traveling to Stockholm to observe and study the Swedish museum business in action for an extended period.²⁰⁵ He is often portrayed as aloof from the political conflicts of that time, and – like Aall – most concerned with the science of conservation. He seemed opposed to the idea of the Nordic Museum buying Norwegian cultural artifacts for display simply because he disliked mixing the categories of Norwegian and Swedish. To display both would undermine the scientific order of the Nordic Museum.²⁰⁶

Ethnographic museums made cultural exchange a scientific endeavour. The nineteenth century saw a rising demand for foreign artifacts, ranging from the souvenirs of sailors to art objects procured by the aforementioned professional dealers. The presence of a market for cultural artifacts stretching across borders speaks volumes about the transnational affiliations of the modern museum. Like other commodities, a trade network profiting by translocation of the exotic is in evidence. The perceived foreign threat to Norwegian cultural heritage was put into words by Aall and his compatriots at several points during the 1890s and 1900s.²⁰⁷ We can infer that foreign influence made the Norwegian elite aware of the fact that other European nations were broadening their field of interest in terms of collecting – that there was a foreign market or at least a professional foreign interest in folk culture. Sweden and Artur Hazelius' Nordic Museum was naturally the locus of this perceived threat after the illustrious Swede began his collecting effort during the 1880s. On account of their political union, Sweden arguably occupied a position to Norway which was not exactly foreign, but to those with aspirations towards an independent Norway, this would not necessarily be true. As the independence movement in Norway took steps to separate Norway culturally from Sweden, they appeared more and more like two different nations.

²⁰⁴ Galaaen, «*Kolleger og konkurrenter*» (2005), p. 58.

²⁰⁵ Galaaen, «*Kolleger og konkurrenter*» (2005), pp. 89-90.

²⁰⁶ Galaaen, «*Kolleger og konkurrenter*» (2011), pp. 193-194.

²⁰⁷ NFM Annual report 1894-1895; Aall "Norsk Folkemuseum", pp. 4-5.

The annual report: A post-card to other institutions

One of the major ways the museum connected with foreign sister institutions was through the exchange of annual reports. These publications had two target audiences. Firstly there were the museum society's members, a target audience interested in updates on how the museum managed its resources and in which direction they developed. That purpose faded to secondary importance over time as the contents of the typical annual report evolved steadily alongside the museum itself. The second target audience was the local scientific community, potentially both the professional scene and the wider public discourse. Since new museums needed time to stabilize as businesses, early reports were dominated by such topics as financial statistics, lists of members, donors and the state of the different collections, resolutions by the board of directors and sometimes a short scientific piece. As the museum consolidated its presence and stepped up its research efforts, the reports would come to incorporate more cultural history subject matter. The Nordic Museum had a cadre of amanuenses and allied academics to supply content for the museum's annual reports. By the mid-1890s the contributions to their annual reports had grown substantial, to the point where they could produce hundreds of pages of scientific material. Thus, they went from being leaflets of less than 100 pages in the early 1880s to being bound volumes of several hundred pages by the late 1890s. The publication ended up being a sort of hybrid between a scientific journal and a business statement. In later editions the research articles were often put first, while the book-keeping was crammed in near the end.

The closest that the King Oscar Collections ever came to a museum publication was the annual report on the king's holdings at Bygdøy. Within this pamphlet, the museum and its collections made up only a portion. Though Yngvar Nielsen and others wrote scientific articles which were published with the report, it was not a similarly professional report when compared to the other two museums discussed here. The lack of any museum association made for a poorer network and though the king's allies attempted to support the report, there was less scientific ambition and less activity with the king's top-down controlled museum. In many other cases, the precursor to an actual museum took the form of a society with a political or scientific agenda. The Nordic Museum and the Norwegian Folk Museum both had their attendant associations from early in their formative years. The society could provide the members for a board of directors and donations to make up an initial collection, as well as the beginnings of a network for collecting objects.

The NFM's annual reports show how the museum was kept running by a growing number of people who each made contributions in varying degrees. When it was founded in 1894/95, it followed closely in the footsteps of Hazelius and his Nordic Museum. Like its Swedish counterpart, the museum had allies among prominent academics in the field, such as Storm and Moe. However, Aall could only hire his first scientific associate in 1900.²⁰⁸ Opening such a position often meant that the museum needed the money for upkeep of such a role, both in wages and in the financing of research trips which could sometimes span several countries. In this respect, a museum's finances dictate to a large extent how actively the institution can facilitate research projects. Poor finances could therefore hinder a transnational exchange of ideas. In hiring a research amanuensis, the museum signifies another step in the scientific ambition for the NFM.

Although the driving force behind the museums consisted mainly of the educated elite, the closely associated message of cultural unity at the national or supernational level, as well as the glorification of peasant culture, provided the folk museums with an air of being a grassroots movement. In the 1882 report for the Nordic Museum, Artur Hazelius relays that his overtures to the national assembly resulted in a failure to make the museum state-owned. In response to this, he forfeited his private ownership of the Museum and its collections, declaring that henceforth it was to be an "independent institution" owned by the museum's society.²⁰⁹ The museum and its attendant association thus became a collective endeavour for those with the interest and the means to further the cause. This was likely intended to convey that when the state declined to assume ownership, the people assumed that responsibility themselves. The museum was funded by members, and the collections were in part supplied as gifts by members and other well-wishers. The society would henceforth portray itself as an alliance of people from different walks of life, pooling their collective resources, such as they were, into a common project and a higher goal: The museum and its mission to safeguard the country or region's cultural heritage.

Facilitating foreign contact

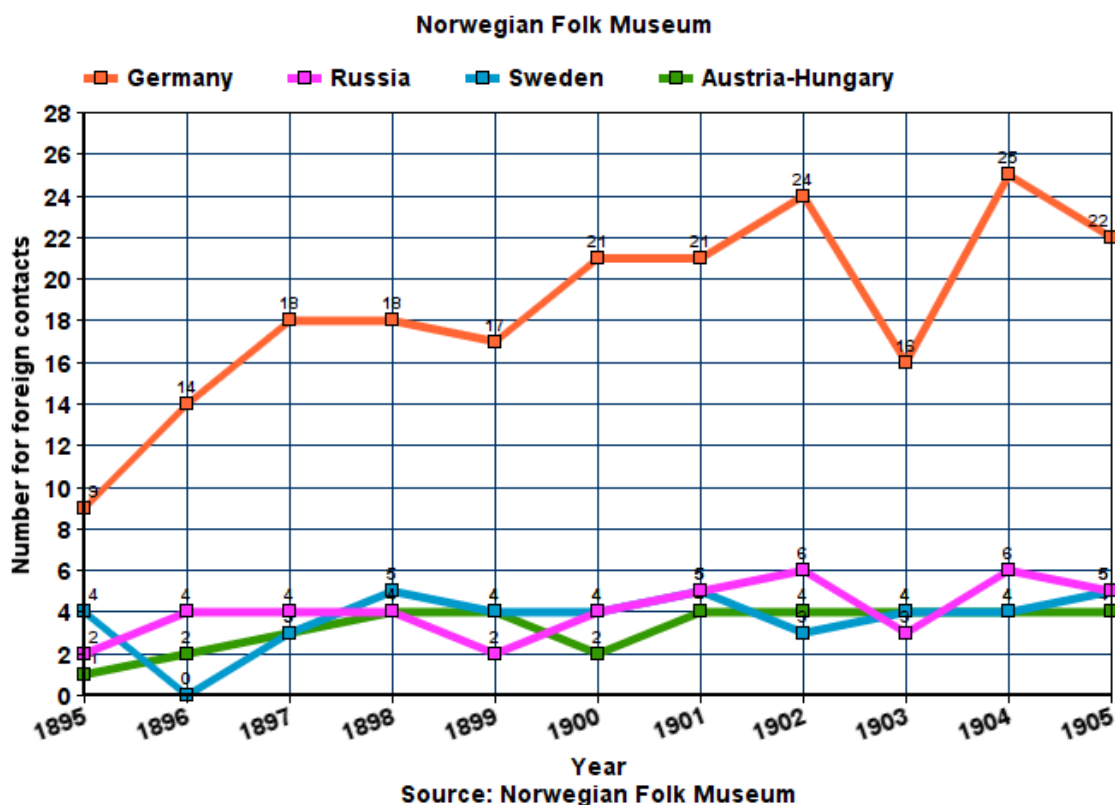
The annual report facilitated transnational exchange through an arrangement of reciprocal exchange. This was a formal and regular channel of transnational communication, the

²⁰⁸ NFM Annual report 1901.

²⁰⁹ Nordic Museum's annual report 1882, p. 50.

contents of which have been analysed below. The NFM and the Nordic Museum both maintained lists of correspondents in each report. The contents of these lists change somewhat in from one year to another, meaning that such exchanges could be infrequent, and moreover the reciprocity of the exchange seems to have been an unwritten rule. Throughout the first year of its existence, the NFM sent around thirty copies of its report to other museums and societies, both in Scandinavia and Europe at large. Twenty-two institutions returned the gesture.²¹⁰ In the following years, this number would climb steeply. Sometimes due to extraordinary circumstances the reports could not be published yearly, and both annual periods would be included in the next publication. This is why the first 17 years of the Nordic Museum's existence yielded only 15 publications.

From the beginning, German institutions dominated the records, affirming the presence of German interest in Sweden-Norway. No other nationality would come close to establish the kind of professional and cultural exchange that was established with the folk museums. Simply put it seems like the German interest in Scandinavian culture was great, and the desire for German science was great in Norway. Thus the arrangement benefited both sides.



²¹⁰ NFM Annual report 1894/95, NFM/D/0027: Correspondence dated 1895.

This is owed to the fact that not only was there an interest in German ideas in Norway, but there was a keen appetite for Scandinavian culture in Germany. Pan-Germanism was alive and well in Germany, and the message of national unification which had led to the formation of Germany as a unified state in 1871 likely made Germans more interested in folk museums than other peoples would be. Another contributing factor is that German museums had a particularly good reputation during that period. The British scholar David Murray claimed in his 1904 treatise on museums that the national museum at Nuremberg was “one of the greatest museums of the day”, and in France the superior organization of German museums was likewise praised.²¹¹ For its part Norway had cultivated a cultural connection with Germany through artists and academics who lived and taught in Germany.

It is worth noting that in the examples of the Norwegian Folk Museum and the Nordic Museum these annual reports were published in the institution’s native language. Although the Scandinavian folk museums sent their annual reports far and wide, were these communiqués doomed to gather dust in libraries, preserved in the spirit of collection and conservation, but not read? The language barrier meant that though Scandinavian scholars through their education were able to acquire the language skills to read German, French or English, scholars from continental Europe were not as likely to be able to read Scandinavian languages. In other words, there is an asymmetrical relationship between Scandinavia and the continent which resembles a centre/periphery dynamic, and indeed a similar argument has already been made for the accumulation of Nordic heritage in Sweden.²¹² The great powers were assured in their superior development, and the fringe nations were left to try and learn from them. There is however evidence to show that Scandinavian languages could be translated and read in Germany. The union in Denmark had positioned Norway closer to Germany, as Denmark was in closer contact with the Germans than all other Scandinavians. In fact it was recorded that within the Danish-Norwegian state predating 1814, as much as one third of the crown’s subjects spoke German, about the same as the portion of Norwegian speakers, though most of them resided in the border territories with Germany.²¹³ In Germany there was a great interest in Scandinavian culture. Scandinavian plays ran in German theatres and Scandinavian books were sold in great numbers, to a point that Germany has been called “Scandinavia’s gateway to world literature”. This also meant that there was a market for

²¹¹ Siegel, *The emergence of the modern museum*, pp. 231-234; Bertinet, “From model museum to the fear of the uhlan”, p. 124.

²¹² DeGroff, «Artur Hazelius and the ethnographic display”, p. 238.

²¹³ Østergård, “Nationale identiteter”, p. 31.

translation from Scandinavian languages into German, both amateur-wise and professionally.²¹⁴ This makes it more likely that the language barrier was not insurmountable as an obstacle to reciprocal transnational exchange.

Furthermore, the contents of these early reports were extensive; a meticulous collection of information about the museum's business matters was included in addition to the scientific content. The early reports of the national folk museums appear as markedly oriented toward local audiences, or more accurately the museum's contributors and members of the museum's society. E.g. lists of all contributors and additions to the collections. The reports devoted many pages to finances and statistics, which could to a greater extent transcend the language barrier and prove useful to German societies and museums. Although the earliest reports from the Scandinavian folk museums were more like letters to their 'shareholders' than anything else, they could relay a lot of numerical data regarding the running of a museum. Moreover, in the case of the Nordic Museum the reports became more and more like scientific journals as the museum grew and consolidated its existence during the 1880s. Their report featured a progressively larger section of illustrated scientific articles.

If translated or deciphered, these annual reports could potentially provide a veritable treasure trove of information for those interested in founding museums of their own on the Scandinavian model or existing museums wishing to adopt these ideas. The place to find people likely to adopt such ideas were the scientific societies, and records show a great interest in the annual reports among such societies, particularly in Germany.²¹⁵ The Nordic Museum's official records show that it corresponded as much with scientific societies as with established museums. In the 1889 reports, a whole 34 out of 44 German correspondents were *verein* or *gesellschaft*.²¹⁶ It stands to reason that such societies would be lodestones for scholars and enthusiasts with the potential to establish museums in their own rights within their local communities.

The following graphs show how in Germany the interest in Scandinavian cultural history grew enormously towards the end of the 19th century. Here the Germans outpaced the other great powers, as recorded contacts in Germany outnumbered all other nationalities combined. If we count German-speaking contacts, the majority is even greater.

²¹⁴ Paul, «Tyskland – Skandinaviens port til världslitteraturen», pp. 194-195, 200.

²¹⁵ NFM Annual reports 1895-1905, Nordic Museum's annual reports 1883-1900.

²¹⁶ The Nordic Museum's annual report 1889.

France and the British Empire are conspicuous in their absence from this list. The explanation may also be that the British contacts were dealt with separately or more informally. Despite the meticulousness of the reports, there is some disparity in the records of foreign contacts when cross-referenced with the museum's collection of letters. For example, there is no mention of any official contact with English museums in the report, but among preserved letters are found mentions of an NFM Annual report finding its way into the hands of the British Museum. The total absence of British contacts would seem a suspicious omission if it were not for a single mention in the 1900 edition of a scientific society in Glasgow providing an exception. In the Nordic Museum's 1898 records there was similarly one single point of contact in London.²¹⁷ It could be that British contacts were simply handled separately and privately. It is however as likely that the British received it through a member of the NFM's association traveling or living abroad. The Swedish success at the world fairs in Paris should have paved the way for such contacts but during the early years it was not to be. There is no obvious explanation for this absence. If it was because of a predominance of German language competence in Scandinavia, then that only underlines the sympathy for German culture in Norway and Sweden. This connection persisted despite the fact that Prussia had recently sparked a war with Denmark and annexed its southernmost territories as a step in their mission to unite German territories in 1871, a point of some contention for those with Scandinavianist sympathies.²¹⁸

The Nordic Museum's association also documented rigorously whenever the museum received public mention abroad. Through a network of correspondents, records were kept of both mentions in foreign press and of scientific research at home and abroad with reference to the Nordic Museum. This growing list was published in every report. In the 1899-1900 issue, the list of publications (including the museum's own) about the Nordic Museum was compiled in a list of around 40 items. Of these, 8 were in either German, French or English.²¹⁹ In the last report he compiled before his death – the 1897/1898 issue – Artur Hazelius also writes briefly on how he perceived the museum's influence abroad. Plainly he saw his museum as the main source of inspiration to similar institutions in both Norway, Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands. In Switzerland he describes the growth of several similar and "magnificent" museums as the result of a "call of awakening". In Germany he

²¹⁷ NFM Annual report 1900, Nordic Museum annual report 1898.

²¹⁸ Sørensen, *Kampen for Norges sjel*, p. 255.

²¹⁹ The Nordic Museum's annual report 1899-1900, pp. 202-213.

highlights the Deutsches Museum für Trachten und Geräte and its founder R. Virchow as having used the Nordic Museum as a model, and that several German museums allegedly had followed in that institution's footsteps.²²⁰

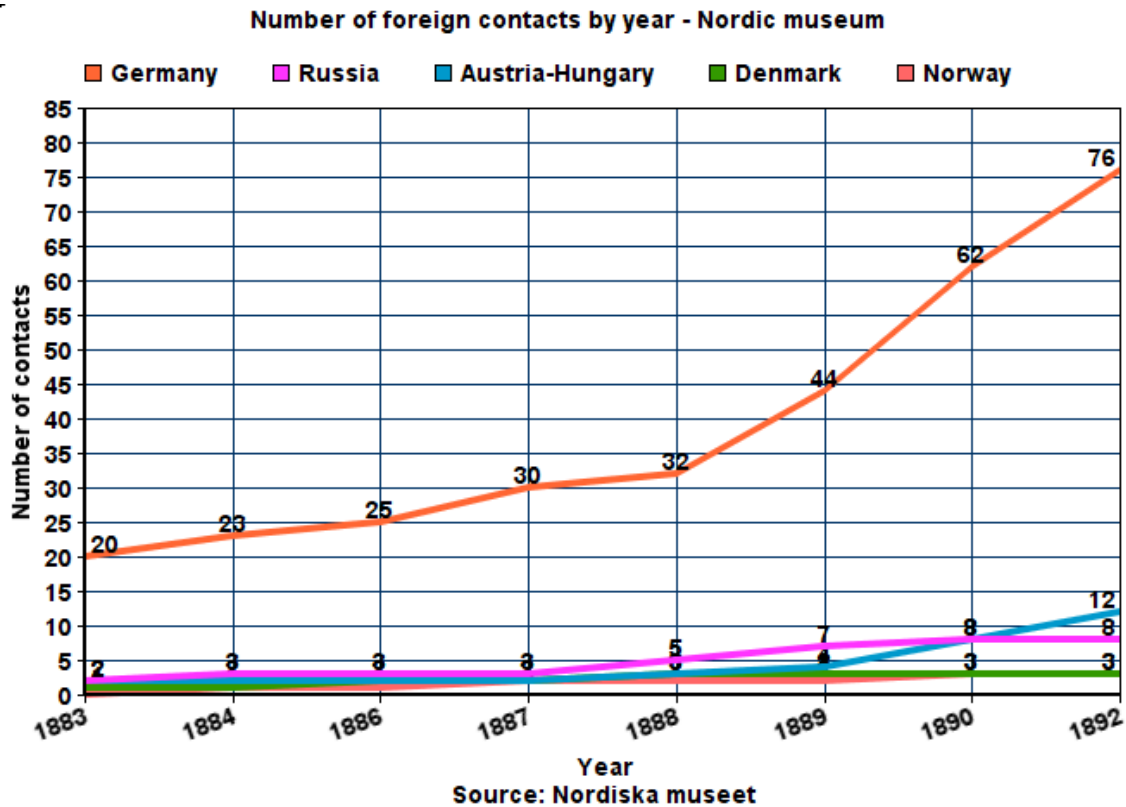
Virchow emerges as another example of the transnational scientific elite. He sought inspiration for his conservation efforts both in Northern and Southern Europe, having studied both Austro-Hungarian and Swedish-Norwegian museums. Considering the geographical breadth of Virchow's network of connections means that he could have provided a link between similar scientific communities in Christiania and Vienna. His connection to Artur Hazelius is widely known. Moreover, Hazelius had exhibited Swedish folk culture at an exposition in Vienna in 1873.²²¹ In 1889 Virchow travelled to Vienna to visit the anthropological society there and on Budapest to tour the national museum.²²² There were similarities in the scientific development which may be owed to the nature of multinational political unions. A museum and society for folk life and folk art had been founded in the Austrian capital at the same time as the NFM had been founded in the Norwegian, but notably the NFM's only recorded correspondent in Vienna up until 1905 was the *Association of Geographers at the K.K. University*.²²³ That the Norwegian Folk Museum was known in certain circles of the Austrian capital must be assumed, but that circle may have been limited.

²²⁰ The Nordic Museum's annual report 1897-1898, pp. 312-314.

²²¹ DeGroff, "Artur Hazelius and the ethnographic display", p. 231.

²²² Jöhler, "The invention of the multicultural museum", p. 59.

²²³ NFM Annual report 1898; Jöhler, "The invention of the multicultural museum", p. 57.



The only other preserved evidence of the NFM communicating in a professional capacity with Great Britain is an exchange between Aall and the British Museum of Natural History dating from 1903. The British Museum requested a “a description of your new method of numbering objects in your museum”, to be presented to the museum’s association and printed in their journal.²²⁴ Aall had also apparently been invited to the association’s meeting in Aberdeen, but had declined. Curiously, the museum’s representative refers to the NFM’s annual report though no English correspondents are mentioned in the NFM’s official records. As such it seems that the NFM’s records includes only those museums or societies which had agreed to an exchange of reports. Could it simply be that the British and French empires made up such different contexts from the other European nations? Both politically and scientifically. The British and French had their attention across the oceans, where a race for colonial world domination was still taking place.

²²⁴ NFM/D/L0024: Letters to the NFM from the British Museum of natural history, 24.6.1903; 11.8.1903.

Germany and Scandinavia

The scientific influence which German universities exercised over Norwegian scholars is just a part of a larger picture; a fascination and sense of kinship which spanned multiple elements of society. The folk museums through their close ties with the German scientific community shown by the annual reports, stood squarely in the middle of this connection. The German-Scandinavian connection seems like something of a special romantic connection, a tale of mutual interest helped by the idea of pan-Germanism. Much has been written to show how these two cultures communicated more vigorously with each other than with other cultures. The united German nation was at the forefront of industrial development and did not look to Scandinavia for their economical prowess.

An example of this connection was the Norwegian painter J.C. Dahl. He was appointed to a teaching position at the art academy in Dresden during the 1820s and stayed there throughout his life. Dahl was also a founding member of the Norwegian conservation society FNFB which would lay the groundwork for Oscar II's building conservation efforts in the early 1880s. Dahl's passion for his country's heritage led to the pioneering transplantation of a Norwegian stave church on German soil decades before any such project was begun in earnest in Scandinavia. Dahl managed to gain the ear of the Prussian king Friedrich Wilhelm IV, who aspired to the role of enlightened ruler. The project of moving the stave church was completed at great cost; the king had to foot a bill of more than 140 000 mark.²²⁵ The church stands today as a testament to the commitment of 19th century collectors and specifically the attractiveness of Scandinavian culture in Prussen and Germany.

Scandinavism surged whenever there was an outside threat, like Germany was to Denmark or Russia was to Sweden. Especially Germany and Scandinavia was politically entangled, particularly after the wars over Schlesvig and Holstein in the 1860s. Whether to encourage friendly relations with the emerging great power that was Germany or to present a unified Scandinavian resistance was a question of some importance in Sweden-Norway. Scientific knowledge was used by Germans to legitimize a brand of imperialism which professed to incorporate the southern Danish-controlled territories into a unified German federation.²²⁶ Attempts at garnering support for resistance towards German expansionism through Scandinavian unity met with no success in Norway.

²²⁵ Klein, «Vang stavkirke reiser til Berlin», p. 83.

²²⁶ Weber, "Det nordiska arvet", pp. 44-45.

A European divide?

The analysis of the folk museum's foreign correspondence has shown a strong connection with the German scientific arena and a significant absence of contact with any western-European great powers. The explanation for this is multifaceted, but at its base lies the cultural connection along the lines of that postulated by pan-Germanism. The idea of "tribes" was widely discussed among unification movements in a scientific way.²²⁷ The ethnic roots of peoples could be traced back to a common descent, though those people were now spread throughout different nations. This idea of brotherhood and was bolstered by studies in the physical anthropology to provide an argument for closer contact between nations. As such it is not so strange that the folk museums quickly established a rapport with Germany.

The sheer absence of any English, French or even Spanish correspondents can be tied to different political climates causing different public interests. In Britain, folk culture history elicited less interest, which as mentioned may have to do with different political contexts, which led to collection and conservation adapting more towards colonial territories.²²⁸ Language barriers may play a role, but that does not fully explain the difference. The French and English were regular organizers of the greatest expositions, the world fairs. This means they were exposed to some of the same trends which helped bring about the open-air folk museum, but it seems folk culture history was simply not as popular there.

In the case of the NFM, some sparse evidence of English interest has shown up in the less formal correspondence.²²⁹ The common denominator for the absentees may simply lie in their geographic position as seafaring great powers with colonial empires. This would affect how they organized their museums and the scientific categorization. There is evidence of a branching in the field of ethnography, with western Europe going one way and central Europe the other. Earlier discussions have noted the folk culture innovation in Scandinavia as a "progressive phenomenon, and a "movement of revolt against the centre by the cultural periphery of Europe; a part of a movement, among, intellectuals, towards, self-definition and liberation in regional or national terms."²³⁰ This may explain the apparent divide. As mentioned in chapter two, the British branch of ethnography was influenced to a much

²²⁷ Hansen, «Et skandinavisk nasjonsbyggingsprosjekt», p. 71.

²²⁸ Bennett, "Museums, nations, empires, religions", p. 72.

²²⁹ As mentioned in ch. 3, "An established market".

²³⁰ Bennett, *The Birth of the museum*, p. 115.

greater degree by imperialism. In London, the museums wanted to show less developed civilizations as subordinate to the British Empire, and science could supply an explanation for why the colonized were inferior to the colonizers in terms of technology, statecraft and even race. As a trophy case for the empire, their museums catered to national pride through imperial prowess, through a dichotomy of “us” and “the other”.²³¹ The interest generated by this made the artificial villages at the expositions possible, and in a sense was only a way for the museums to showcase the national collections and national prowess.

A pattern emerges, and the divide was palpable even to contemporaries at the time. Reinhard Johler has shown how in Austria-Hungary there seems to have been some sense that central- and eastern Europe constituted its own separate sphere of museum contact, owing to a disparity of scientific interest.²³² In central Europe, the nature of the field of ethnology, ethnography and folk culture history worked differently than in the western nations. A greater plurality of ethnic “tribes” meant that modern central European nation states viewed folk culture history more closely related to ethnography. As one Austro-Hungarian museum curator put it:

But if we also have to abdicate that our exotic and international collections rival those of other countries, then the cultural-historical development of our nation demands that we resolutely collect the fruits of this developmental process, [...] thus securing an ethnographic collection for our nation the likes of which the western states, as a natural consequence of their conditions, can no longer create. In this field, our first priority is to illustrate the living conditions of the currently living races of people in our fatherland through the ethnographic objects of the individual peoples and regions.²³³

The Austro-Hungarian political context is somewhat similar to the Swedish-Norwegian one. The perceived differences between “western states” and “us” in this excerpt may help explain the absence of British correspondence with the Swedish-Norwegian folk museums. Also as a part of the German-speaking sphere, they may have been subjected to some of that same pan-Germanism as German scholars.

Conclusion

At some time during their formative years, the folk museums hit a tipping point when they went from being an importer of ideas and scientific innovation to being an exporter. The folk

²³¹ Wingfield, “Placing Britain in the British Museum”, pp. 126-131.

²³² Johler, “The invention of multicultural museums”, p. 54.

²³³ Johler, “The invention of multicultural museums”, p. 56.

museums were a result of increased transnational communication, connections and ideas from Europe at large. The expositions, the evolution of science, the growth of national identity – they were all larger trends which resisted any containment within a single country’s border. The architects of this diaspora were the members of the top rungs of society, from monarch to merchant, who with democratic ideals lifted up the common people as worthy carriers of history. The foreign was both an asset and a threat to the folk museum since it relied on foreign ideas to establish itself and to keep abreast of the latest pan-anthropological scientific effort. Simultaneously the foreign was also a threat which worked to displace objects of cultural heritage; to separate the nation from its history. In the words of Meyer & Savoy (2014), there was indeed an ebb and flow to the transmission of ideas across borders. This thesis set out to trace the origins of the Scandinavian open-air museum concept and to explore how the open-air museum conveyed not only to local audiences, but also foreign communities. To that end, various transnational structures have been presented here. Working through individuals, through organizations, through expositions, through commercial markets, and through publication of annual reports – by degrees through all of these combined was transnational exchange taking place. Hans Aall himself used an image of ocean waves when he wrote about the NFM’s history: Rapid industrial change “washed away the remnants of our disappearing old culture”²³⁴ and the new and various cultural history museums of Norway needed strong local leadership in order to “benefit from foreign cultural currents without being knocked over by tidal waves”.²³⁵ The wave which had brought nationalism and new scientific trends had flowed northward from continental Europe and washed over Sweden-Norway, which sat on the shoreline of European society.²³⁶ Just as Europe’s ideas and trends struck the Nordic countries, they also sparked uniquely Scandinavian ideas. These would in time flow back in new forms to Europe at large to make splashes of their own within other nations on the continent. In the attempt to trace the folk museums’ origins, there seems to be many foreign founts of inspiration. If one were to pose the question: “Did Scandinavians invent building conservation and the open-air museum?”, answering “yes” paints only a partial picture. To develop these concepts, the Norwegian and Swedish folk museums were very much reliant on the precedent set by French expositions, German scientists, and English landscape parks. When the German R. Virchow adopts these

²³⁴ Aall, *Norsk Folkemuseum og dets arbeide i de nærmeste aar* .

²³⁵ Amundsen, “Men of vision”, p. 43.

²³⁶ And Norway especially, given its subservient status to its union partners after the reformation.

concepts back in Germany, he completes the reciprocal cycle of ideas between Scandinavia and the European continent.

The framework for understanding the folk museums' role in society can be formulated as a series of dichotomies. As shaper of identity, the folk museums evoked an "inclusion through exclusion" mechanism as described by Dominik Collet, by which museums since their early history had relied on displays of alterity to contrast and uplift the local audience from the "other".²³⁷ This thesis has argued that the dichotomy of urban and rural can be understood as a dichotomy of local and foreign. This comes close to describing what may be termed the "transnational national", an interplay of identities collecting its components from the other to affirm one's own. The national could not be fully developed if it had not brushed with the transnational. There is also the dichotomy inherent in the museums' educational role, one of science and ideology, which has here been referred to as a "duality of purpose". As shown, if a folk museum focused on the transmission of political ideology, it could promote both separation and unification. Its exhibits could orient towards entertainment or scientific authenticity, depending on economic factors or the need for popular attraction.

The folk museums were a result of increased transnational communication, connections and ideas from Europe at large. The fairs, the evolution of science, the growth of national identity – they were all larger trends which resisted any containment within a single country's border. The vessels for this diaspora were the people on the top rungs of society, from monarch to merchant, who with fascination or agenda lifted up the common people as worthy carriers of history. The foreign was both an asset and a threat to the folk museum since it relied on foreign ideas to establish itself and to keep abreast of the latest pan-anthropological scientific effort. Simultaneously the foreign was also a threat which worked to displace objects of cultural heritage; to separate the nation from its history. The true innovation was not the individual parts of a folk museums, such as the dioramas or the moving of buildings, but rather the combination of it all into a permanent whole. The museums and the people associated with them were instrumental in providing a link between domestic and foreign. These institutions had a close association with a transnational scientific community and held a mandate as a means of education for the wider public.

²³⁷ Collet, "Staging separation", pp. 68-69.

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