

Samhällsmuseum efterlyses - Svensk museiutveckling och museidebatt 1965-1990

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Abstract

Calling for the Community Museum – Development in Swedish museums and the museum debate 1965–1990, The Department of Culture and Media Sciences, University of Umeå, 2014. Papers in Museology 9.

A new cultural policy developed in Sweden in the 1960's in order to renew the activities of museums in a more socially relevant direction. The dissertation examines whether the museums adopted the new policy and to what extent the objectives were achieved. The thesis analyses three main areas: the new cultural policy and the attempts to implement it; activities in selected museums along with different intellectual trends that shaped their activities; and the debate between different "thought collectives" (L. Fleck) regarding museums' missions and objectives as well as expectations within the museum sector. How did the various "actors" relate to the objectives of the new cultural policy? The thesis confirms the potential of the museums as generators for renewal and innovation in terms of democracy and development of the society. There was a clear shift in attitudes from values associated with the "Cultural heritage museum" towards the in this thesis introduced idea of the "Community museum". The study shows how museums tried to introduce activities relating to current political and social issues, which supports the principal hypothesis in the study, that the museums became more socially relevant during the investigated period. However, during the 1980s, there could be seen a clear recurrence back to the idea of "Cultural heritage museum". The movement in opposite directions illustrates the museums' strong ties to the earlier traditional "styles of thought" (Fleck) and their role as cultural guardians, which severely restricted their capacity for innovation and new ways of thinking.

Nevertheless, the Swedish Exhibition Agency (Riksställningar) performed a role as a spearhead for the new cultural policy, corresponding with the heterodoxy and new style of thinking represented by the "Community museum". A number of persons dominating the debate within the museum sector had a crucial importance in the shift towards the concept of "Community museums". A revitalisation of the exhibitions, pedagogy and content was accomplished, often as a result of the Swedish Exhibition Agency's efforts to develop the medium. During the period 1965–1990 Swedish museum exhibitions moved towards a temporary and more socially oriented content. According to Steven Conn's principal thesis "Do museums still need objects?" the importance of objects gradually declined during the last century. In line with this development, the new Museum of Work had no objects/collections of its own. Furthermore, the arrival of new technology in the late 1980's gave pre-conditions for reshaping knowledge and contributed to new attitudes towards communication. Museums were now seen as centres for social contact and communication.

The role of museology as an academic discipline in the reprogramming of the museums towards a more socially oriented approach is another important issue. Museology has been criticized by those who – in the debate – questioned the entire idea of "Community museum".

Nyckelord/Keywords: Museologi (Museology), Kulturpolitik (Cultural policy), Samhällsmuseum (Community Museum), Kulturarvsmuseum (Cultural Heritage Museum), Utställningar/exhibitions, Riksställningar (the Swedish Exhibition Agency), MUS 65, Ekomuseum (Eco-museum), museifält (museum field), museum doxa, museum heterodoxa.

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