

The ideas and beliefs behind the Open Air Museums have developed under more than a century. At the same time most people would probably recognise the core of the concept even if they could make a time travel back to the very first museums of the kind in the 1890s. In April 2007 leading staff members from Open Air Museums all over the world met at Skansen in Stockholm for discussions about the future of this very special kind of museum. This anthology captures the main questions which were discussed through the papers presented at the conference.

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On the Future of Open Air Museums



Heritage Learning: a question of here and now

At Jamtli we say: "We believe in 'The End of History.'" By that we mean that, there is no more need for great (national or regional) narratives and instead there is a need for competences in a lifelong learning world! Almost twenty years ago, Francis Fukuyama proclaimed "The End of History" (Fukuyama 1989). What he was writing about was the impression that there seemed to be no demand for the grand national or even universal narratives anymore. The grand narratives had been based on the belief that all members of a society can have a core element of their social identity constructed by the use of the same elements from a "common" past. Fukuyama was among the first to formulate the notion that the social and cultural basis of such belief was disappearing.

But that is by no means the same as to say that there is no demand for other forms of experiencing the past or traces from the past. One might claim that instead of having one history to fit a lot of people, we today see it as normal that each person lives with many histories. These many different histories coexist without creating visible problems for the individual. In this way, it is possible for the individual to have many partial identities at the same time. You can and will belong to many social groups and you will feel that you share identities with each group and with all the groups at the same time, but you will probably be the only person with this particular sum of identities and exactly that mixture, which in terms of identity will be what constitutes your personality.

This possible flexibility of identities forms a central characteristic of modern or post-modern man and woman today. For the sake of simplicity I will here leave it at that and just refer to influential thinkers of the late twentieth century such as Anthony Giddens and Zygmunt Bauman.

That an individual today, at least in the developed parts of the world, has to adapt him/herself to a life characterized by change creates great demands on both basic and continuing education and learning. As we are all different as learners and as learning needs also differ from person to person as well as over time, there is of course a huge demand for a great diversity in

learning provision. On a national and even more at an international level, organizations such as UNESCO, OECD and EU, have proclaimed that a policy of lifelong learning is essential to continued development. The EU, for instance, with very little hesitation has presented a list of key competences with elements of knowledge, skills and attitudes which can all be traced back to thinking within UNESCO and OECD (Reading 2001, OECD 2002, EU 2005, Euredice 2000 and Rasmussen 2006). It seems highly likely that as one consequence of this educational and labour market policy, we will see a continued rise in public demands for output from the traditional systems of formal educational institutions (Field 2006). Today, and even more so in the future, we will also see the achievable competences from various educational and learning systems described in ways that make them trans-nationally comparable (Edwards 2006). To meet the demands of the EU or other policymakers with regard to key competences, comparability and outcomes from learning, it will not be enough for society to rely on the formal educational system in the future, as it has not been in the past either. Historically, learning has been an area which many different institutions and organizations in society have divided among themselves (Ehlers 2006 and 2007). Even today there are competences which are better learned, that is to say more efficiently learnt, in different learning environments, and we may even realize that some people, children as well as adults, learn better in some environments than in others (Ekholm and Hård 2000 and Jarvis 2007).

The opportunities for cultural heritage institutions opened up by post modern thinking about learning have only been subject to research to a small degree (Insulander 2005 and Illeris 2006). Even in a country that leads the way in terms of heritage learning research and development such as the United Kingdom, we have seen very little research about the learning potential for adults in heritage institutions or even the possibilities of learning through cultural heritage and not about heritage (Clarke 2002 and MLA 2006). If we choose the broader meaning of the term learning where the individual is a more or less active learner 24 hours a day, we find that the role played by heritage is studied in the sense that history is used for leisure (Jensen 1994, Aronsson 2005 and Zipsane 2005b), and is often seen as being in opposition to the use of the construction of history for purpose of power (Zander 2001). This is however still a long way from studying visitors as learners, and that difference in perspective might explain why for example very little academic attention has been paid to adult learning in museums (Anderson 2000 and Funch 2005).

Therefore, at Jamtli we have chosen to characterise our pedagogical work in the following terms: We do not teach history! The aim is not to learn about heritage and our visitors are not in school!

If we choose to see museums and other heritage institutions as learning environments in the broad sense of learning, it is suddenly easier to realize how learning in such environments has nothing or at least very little to do with learning about the past. Instead we can open new doors to learning by using chosen experiences and interpretations about the past and exploit the potential to be found in transforming these experiences into cultural heritage. This makes possible a very special learning process which deserves attention (Henriksen and Frøyland 1998 and Anderson 2000 and Clarke, Dodd, Hooper-Greenhill, O'Riain, Selfridge and Swift 2002).

We who know the museums from the inside also know from our own experience and feel instinctively how we can be overwhelmed by simply being aware of the potential we just "know" is there, and of course it stimulates this feeling when we meet our users and hear their remarks about how nice and user-friendly they find our museums. But it is not enough to say that the museums are nice when we want to understand them as learning environments. The same thing can be said about archives and art galleries.

At Jamtli we describe our learning efforts and pedagogical work in the following way: we are creating special learning experiences designed to develop competences that are needed in a life-long and life-wide perspective!

To give an impression of what I gladly call the potential of museums as learning environments, I will here just discuss four small case studies and focus on the relation between potential learning outcomes and the concept of key competences. Each case study has a different target group and that by itself indicates the potential for lifelong learning in heritage learning.

Heritage learning at work in a preschool environment

When mothers or fathers come to Jamtli Open Air Museum and participate in special activities with their children of preschool age, we may indeed ask why. More than fifteen years after the open preschool on the museum site opened, it is still in public demand and the demand is growing. Two members of the museum staff with pedagogical skills and qualifications lead activities in the old farmhouse milieu together with some 20 children and as many parents, and sometimes even grandparents.

The small children participate in activities in which they wash, bake, milk the cow or the goat, take care of the harvest from the fields and the timber from the forest, and other sorts of activities which formed part of everyday life for people in rural communities in the latter part of the 19th century. They borrow a 19th century style dress or a sweater and suddenly they belong to another time, another place and another world where fantasy becomes real. The old farmhouse timber building with its specially designed 19th cen-

tury milieu, the children's borrowed dress and the teaching staff also dressed in 19th century costumes together form a world of their own. The imaginative abilities of small children are enormous and therefore it is relatively easy to bring the children into a fantasy world of a special time and space (Borgström 2003). To function in that world the children need some help, and this is where parents come into the picture. These often young parents know enough, or at least they think they do, about the "old days" to help their children in these activities.

In such surroundings, it is possible to create learning situations where an important outcome is about mutual learning experiences across two or three generations. But the learning outcome also concerns some of the specific abilities you can learn from activities in a 19th century environment. One might expect such specific abilities to be about the actual skills from that period in history, however, such skills probably only form a part of the new competence acquired. At the centre of this new competence might be the realisation from this experience that you can only achieve certain things if you do them as team work. Or it could be the simple understanding that people can live in a different way from how we do today, and the child learns that certain things belong together in order to create a full picture in the mind (Selmer-Olsen 1993). The horse, the cow, the hens and the goat all belong to an image of a farm for the children who have participated in the preschool activities at the museum.

The use of possible imaginative so called "time travel" is quite developed as a pedagogical method in its own right and with its own traditions for both children and adults, even though the international spread of the method has its focus on school children and young adults (Westergren 2004 and 2006). Probably, the more sensitive nature of children in preschool age, and, there-



fore, also the presence in that target group of a greater imagination and sense of fantasy, does, however, indicate that the method of time travel is most efficient with the youngest children (Borgström 2003).

Heritage learning competences and the development of attitudes

The special competences involved in role play method and the potential of this method as developed within heritage learning can be used in a great variety of ways. But it is ultimately concerned with a learning outcome which is about stimulating the development of attitudes.

When the 9th grade school children (ordinarily 15 years old) participate in the pedagogical programme called "On the Run!" at the Jamtli Open Air Museum, the pedagogical staff at the museum have told the ordinary teachers that this programme will probably change some attitudes for some of the children in three- to four-hours time. That does not seem to deter the children or the teachers. In this role-play the children will first be asked to play the role of refugees and then of asylum seekers. They will each adopt the individual identity of the person described in their individual manuscripts, and they will be smuggled in different ways into an imagined country very similar to Sweden. Many of the children lose their few belongings on the way and some will unfortunately lose contact with a fellow refugee or another family member on the way to this country.

Well into the country, the participants will experience several interviews and the uncertainty natural to a life which has no guarantee of the outcome. Even a short time of about half an hour spent in boredom in the refugee camp is experienced as too long. In the refugee camp you can watch television in a language you do not understand, and some of the pieces from the chess set are missing.

The participants will come to realize that the interpreters in the asylum centre may not at all times translate their answers or their questions in a way that satisfies their needs or expectations. At the end of the programme the participants are told whether or not they will be granted the right to stay in the new country, and as in real life, only about 10–15 percent of the applicants, that is about 1–2 out of the 20–30 participants in each programme, will be given the opportunity to stay in this new country.

The purpose of this programme has been to stimulate attitudes of understanding of the difficult situation for both refugees and for the officials who handle cases involving asylum seekers. The programme actually seems to be very much in demand and is considered as both stimulating and effective (Zipsane 2005a and 2005d). By questioning the young people before, during

and then again some weeks after their participation in this programme, it has even been indicated that the effect on the attitudes of the participants is profound. It would appear that the impact on the attitudes of the young women is much stronger than of the young men (Löfstrand and Zakrisson 2006).

We have the impression that the participants in a pedagogical programme such as "On the Run!" are learning through the activation of their sense of empathy. It is the experience of being angry, nervous, excited, bored, happy, and unhappy that the participants talk about when we have asked them later about their memories of their experience. Of course, they do acquire some knowledge about legislation and statistics when the pedagogical staff from the museum introduces the programme, and the participants develop their skills as role players and as actors through the activities of the programme. But it is the change in attitudes we have focused on in both our description of aims and of evaluation of the programme.

So far our experience indicates that the way to stimulate changes in or the adoption of attitudes goes through the experience the learners acquire through their feelings. The practical experience underlines that the key to success in this type of pedagogical programme is the use of the typical pedagogical competence of a museum which is familiar with role-playing methods and the right composition of learning aims in terms of knowledge and skills to balance attitudes.

Heritage learning and the production of positive learning experiences

The environment of heritage institutions like archives, art galleries and museums has developed over many years to become places with a special atmosphere. Very often the institutions seem to forget what has made them so special and what it is that makes them unique. In the museum the visitor as well as the employees experience many different formal competences in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes, a creative environment, a strong impression of creativity and a sense of tranquillity coexisting with a productive atmosphere.

This special atmosphere is the strongest factor in shaping the museum as a learning environment with a particular potential. People who have learning difficulties in other environments suddenly become more efficient learners in a museum (Henriksen and Frøyland 1999). This means that the museum can create positive learning experiences for people who under other circumstances are actually seen as losers: "Museums are a non-threatening environment in which to learn. The adults they meet are not their teachers and can talk to them in a non-threatening way. By practising patience, observation and

listening skills, the student emerge with greater confidence and self-esteem" (Lumley 2006). Thus, the museum becomes a free zone with potential positive learning experiences, especially for some of the young people otherwise often described as the "misfit" youth, who because of their alienation processes, are easily marginalized (Ziehe and Stubenrauch 1982).

The formal school system is continually improving, in the sense that it produces higher quality of education and ever more complicated competences. The critical focus of the media on the educational system often seems to forget that the school system actually works and that it works very well (OECD 2001 and Knoll 2004). What deserves more attention is the group of young people who leave the school system without adequate basic competences.

The early school leavers have been the focus of attention at the Jamtli Open Air Museum for some time. Together with the Regional State Archive and a local Folk High School, the museum has been engaged in creating positive learning experiences for these young people. The aim of the work has been to stimulate the participants to re-engage with the formal system of education or otherwise to achieve basic competences. The results have been very positive. Of the participants, one third has re-engaged with a school or has begun complementary studies at the Folk High School.

The exact reason why some of the participants become learners differs from person to person, and it is quite normal for the successful participants almost to defend themselves by explaining that they naturally would have begun their studies with or without participation in the heritage learning activities, even though they would probably have waited a little longer! (Augustén 2006). But the impression from the activities so far is that what the participants learn at the museum and the archive is the ability to concentrate, to achieve self discipline and to engage with other people. The actual way to such learning experiences goes through stimulating curiosity and making the fulfilment of that basic curiosity dependent on concentration and engagement, which they discover is based on self discipline (Zipsane 2007b).

Heritage learning and interaction with the social capital of Senior Citizens

The Jamtli Open Air Museum has the great advantage of having many friends. Some of these friends are organized in an association. They are mostly retired people who seem to share one interest, namely an affection for Jamtli. In the Regional State Archive, many people gather to satisfy their mutual interest in genealogy. These people are also mostly retired from normal working life



and they are also often members of the local or regional association of genealogists. Such associations of genealogists indeed also share a strong affection for the archive.

All these elderly people are engaged in activities in the heritage institutions which may very well be described as learning processes (Davoren and O'Donoghue 2000). The difficulty in the task of description comes from the fact that the activities point in two different directions of learning. On the one hand, the elderly people through their activities become the maintainers of knowledge, skills and attitudes which they transform into something which other people, often from a younger generation, may learn from. This is interactive intergenerational learning in its finest sense! On the other hand, the elderly people themselves become learners in the heritage institutions as they participate in the activities there. This learning goes in many different directions and differs from person to person.

One person in the archive may have to learn how to use the internet in order to get interesting information on genealogy. Through the actual genealogical search, the person also learns something about structure and the advantages in structured searching both manually and in databases. The same person may also learn and relearn social competences in relations with other people in the archive fellow visitors or staff.

Another person is active in the Open Air Museum and is participating in

the group of people sewing and repairing costumes. Through this activity, this person is both learning or relearning skills and social competences, in the same way as the person in the archive.

These people are at the heritage institutions because they want to participate in the activities available there. There is nothing about these activities which does not deserve to be described as heritage learning activities. Their learning processes may consist of knowledge, skills and attitudes, but in one way or another the learners here produce and consume social capital as they learn.

Heritage learning: what is working and why is it working?

In classical pedagogical literature it is repeatedly assumed that the formal system of education is specially designed for learning processes which have their foremost learning aim in acquiring knowledge, even though naturally the learners always learn some skills and some attitudes in this process.

In the same way one might expect that the heritage institutions such as Open Air Museums are especially appropriate for learning processes which have stimulation or creation of attitudes as their foremost learning aim. If we take such a claim seriously we may understand what is happening in the heritage learning processes. The extraordinary learning potential of heritage is concerned with the special atmosphere, which is so difficult to explain, but which has its own power of attraction over people. It is symptomatic of the current situation that with a growing interest in the impact of learning in museums in the United Kingdom, the classical division of learning into knowledge, skills and attitudes was suddenly considered inadequate. There was a need for a broader description of the heritage learning outcome (MLA 2005). Under the title of "Generic Learning Outcome" the divisions of learning have become as follows:

- Knowledge and understanding
- Skills
- Attitudes and values
- Activity behaviour and progression
- Enjoyment, inspiration and creativity

The point is that from a classical perspective on learning, the learning outcomes "activity, behaviour and progression" and "enjoyment, inspiration and creativity" would be seen as parts of the outcome called "attitudes". The extra subdivisions clearly reflect the need for a broader understanding of what is meant by the learning outcome labelled "attitudes." That need may well derive from a long awaited and much appreciated understanding of the special possibilities available through heritage learning. It is reasonable to see the

Open Air Museum as a special learning environment. The "art" of learning activities in the Open Air Museum finds its greatest potential in the use of the following characteristics:

- Full size
 - Three dimensional
 - Nature and culture
 - Authenticity
 - All senses are activated
- Actually, there is nothing else to it!

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Conclusive remarks on behalf of the conference committee

Open Air Museums and the Future - a comment

Many interesting questions were brought forward by both the conference and by Sten Rentzhog's book *Open Air Museums* in Stockholm in April 2007. As the conference title "The Future of Open Air Museums" suggests, it was our objective to discuss the future of open air museums as well as a number of questions within the field of history. Participants were therefore invited to share their thoughts and reflections around open air museums in general.

Open air museums could be said to be a construction of the past. The first open air museums were established and developed in response to a specific challenge of their time. In fact, they served a specific purpose. As pointed out by many, however, the open air museum as a concept has also proven to be a viable one. Many new museums have been established all over the world. This is perhaps the best proof that as a museum category it certainly is fit for survival and thus well equipped to meet the future. On the other hand, open air museums are difficult and challenging both to maintain and to run.

Both the conference papers reproduced in this book and the discussions touched upon many aspects of running an open air museum. However, a few were of such relevance I would like to point them out in this conclusive comment.

The most thought provoking statement, in my view, during the many interesting discussions was the assertion that open air museums are important. Having the need to stress our importance perhaps suggests that we might be insecure about our future. Many of the questions asked, suggested that there is great uncertainty regarding the future of the museums, their funding and about the public's needs and requests.

Why then, are open air museums important?

The discussions provided many arguments; it was stressed that they ensure the preservation and accessibility of historic buildings for the public and for