

## **Acceptance and Conformity: Merging Modernity with Nationalism in the Stockholm Exhibition in 1930**

By Carl Marklund & Peter Stadius

### **Abstract**

This article takes a closer look at how interwar supporters of modernism sought to overcome the opposition they had to face. It does so by looking at the usage of history and Swedishness at the Stockholm Exhibition in 1930 and contrasting this experience with a brief excursus on the image of progress and Americanism as presented at the *A Century of Progress* International Exposition, held in Chicago in 1933–1934. The backers of both these exhibitions – functionalist architects and progressive businessmen, respectively – consciously sought to find ways in which to savor the propagandistic value of this “the shock of the new” while retaining a reassuring continuity between well-known and widespread self-identifications with “the idyll of the past.” They did so by forging “national” forms of modernity, attempting to bypass the political conflicts and ideological polarizations which characterized the interwar years. As such, it is argued, they also exemplify how the logic of the exhibition could be used for harnessing technology, science, and *funkis* (functionalism) as tools for re-identifying the nation with modernity and simultaneously de-politicizing modernism.

**Keywords:** Exhibitions, modernity, modernism, anti-modernism, nationalism, functionalism, progressivism

More than any other date since the industrial revolution 1930 constitutes a boundary line between old and new [in Sweden].

Göran Therborn (Therborn 1981: 25–26; Pred 1995: 97)

The utility art of every age shall be a child of its time. Novelties shall be tested, meanings confronted with each other. But the artistic inspiration must have to be rooted deeply into the own soil, in the soul of the own people, in order to grow sound and strong.

Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf (*SvD*, 17.5.1930)

## Introduction

The Nordic, or Scandinavian, countries are often assumed to have followed a rather unique path towards “modernity.” This path has been characterized by compromise (or even consensus), cooperation (between classes and interests), and relative peacefulness, at least if compared with interwar Continental Europe (Stråth & Sørensen 1997; Glans & Almqvist 2001). While this characterization may underestimate the numerous conflicts which in fact took place there is nevertheless a powerful notion that the “project” of modernization provided a unifying vision which could bypass some of the many conflicts and fault-lines which undoubtedly existed in Nordic societies.

Indeed, the emergence of a new Nordic, modern, (social-)democratic, and welfare-based society construction, mostly in Denmark and Sweden, has for long been central when characterizing Scandinavian societies both abroad and at home during the last 80 years or so. Most notably, inter-war Scandinavia was portrayed as capable of somehow combining the past with the future, the old with the new, and the modern with the national. In July 1936, just to take one example, Tennessee editor and historian George Fort Milton informed US President Franklin D. Roosevelt in a letter that he was crossing the Atlantic:

...to study how the Scandinavians have made such an admirable synthesis of yesterday and tomorrow [...] I am persuaded that the discoverable and usable analogies in Sweden and Denmark are substantially more than America can find in the more rigid autarkies such as Russia, Italy, and Germany [...] There has been consent as well as change. And it is extraordinarily important that we here in America find out how there can be change by consent rather than by conflict. (Woodward 1997: 302)

However, the Scandinavian countries were not the only societies struggling with the challenge of modernity – “the shock of the new,” in Robert Hughes’ famous characterization – at this time. It is therefore valuable to place the Scandinavian attempts in international comparison.

In this article, we will take a closer look at how the idea and image of a modern Nordic mass society model was kick-started during the Stockholm Exhibition in 1930. While the Stockholm Exhibition has been analyzed in some detail by previous scholars, its particular role in the Swedish attempt at joining the old with the

new has not yet been compared and contrasted with other exhibitions in other countries. Modernity is often said to form part of the national mythology of Sweden, in some ways akin to the American national identification with “progress” (Ruth 1984). We will therefore make a brief outlook to the A Century of Progress International Exposition held in Chicago in 1933 and 1934 in order to compare American and Swedish attempts to merge modernism with nationalism.<sup>1</sup>

Both the Stockholm and the Chicago Exhibitions – as museum exhibitions, industrial expositions, and art fairs more generally – served as display cases of American and Swedish society undergoing great changes. As such, they represent attempts at freezing the liquid and potentially dangerous experience of modernity into a more controlled national framing. The idea of fairs and exhibitions was born around a mid 19<sup>th</sup> century concept of national pedagogical practice and class inclusion. At the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the fairs developed into more or less institutionalized forms of competition and comparison between different nations (Cornell 1952: 116–132; Wurdak 1996: 51–84). National museums also fitted into this broader movement towards national cohesion and international competition, seeking to forge a collective understanding of the history of the nation, while the task of fairs and exhibitions carried the ambition to guide the nation towards the future. Hence, exhibitions and museums have both been conditioned by current needs. In both cases, the boosting of national ego has been the rule, rather than the exception.

This need of boosting the national ego gained a more acute edge under the pressure of rising economic instability and rampant financial crisis which hit both Europe and North America at the end of the 1920s. The resulting crisis brought out conflict about the direction of the future and the tangent of the past in most industrial societies as national myths were shaken to the core. It is in this context we must see the new national narrative on display in both Stockholm in 1930 and in Chicago in 1933–1934. However, not everyone agreed to these new narratives. For example, the new and modern Sweden aggressively marketed and displayed at the Stockholm Exhibition pleased some and disgusted others, in Sweden as well as abroad. Such a bold manifestation of a new aesthetic and social program was obviously felt as a political standpoint as well.

In other words, modernity did not merely represent the shock of new forms of art and expression. It also came packed with notions of a new social order which ran against traditional understandings of the good life and “the idyll of the past.” As such, the aesthetics of modernism could hardly be separated from the political and social program of cultural radicals. So, who needed and wanted this new modern Sweden and this new America? Who were the actors? What were the arguments? These exhibitions served as a catalyst for a quite heated debate on modernity and modernism in both countries, debates which would last well until the outbreak of the Second World War. In this debate, attitudes towards national his-

tory, subject to conscious subordination to futuristic aims in the exhibition, can be studied in operation.

In order to do so, we will first map the background of the Stockholm Exhibition in 1930 and the group of functionalist architects who organized it, in particular looking at the way in which they made use of particular stories about the ethnicity, history, and tradition of the nation in order to market their modernizing ideology, but also at what kind of opposition they encountered. This Swedish experience is compared and contrasted with the attempt of American business and industry to market modernity as a benign power in the wake of the Great Depression.

It is our argument that the planners of both the Stockholm and the Chicago exhibitions consciously sought to find ways in which to retain the propagandistic value of the shock of the new and at the same time present a reassuring continuity between well-known social norms of the past by forging a new national form of modernity. We claim that this attempt in many ways ran counter to the political conflicts and ideological polarizations which characterized the interwar years, and represented a conscious attempt at harnessing modernism as a tool for national re-identification and modernistic de-politicization.

## **Architecture and Functionalism – The Stockholm Exhibition 1930**

The Stockholm Exhibition in 1930 was a national exhibition arranged by the Municipality of Stockholm and *Svenska Slöjdföreningen* [“Swedish Arts and Crafts Association”], a national arts and crafts association central in the country’s national cultural policy making from late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. The Exhibition has often been seen as the main single event introducing functionalist architecture on a popular level in the emerging mass society in Sweden (Råberg 1970). The exhibition was a continuation of the tradition of similar art and industrial fairs arranged in Stockholm in 1851, 1866, 1897 and 1909 (Chrispinsson & Sörenson 1999). The core group behind the exhibition included architect Gunnar Asplund (1885–1940), journalist Ludvig “Lubbe” Nordström (1882–1942), and art historian Gregor Paulsson (1889–1977), who also acted as president of *Svenska Slöjdföreningen* (after 1976 *Svensk Form*).

Paulsson had first hatched the idea of an exhibition in Stockholm after his visit to the Paris World Fair in 1925. After his appointment as commissar of the Exhibition in 1928, he delivered a speech at *Svenska slöjdföreningen* revealing his new and bold approach for the planned exhibition, opting for a full-out acceptance of new functionalist trends. This was a signal of how the entire project was to be distanced from the arts and crafts approach and the neo-classic “Swedish grace” of the 1920s launched to international fame in Paris, which was kept as too elitist and unsatisfactory in its modernist message. With him he had a group of architects, complementing each other: the young and dogmatic ideologist Uno Åhrén (1897–1977), also nick-named Mr. Concrete, the social housing pioneer Sven

Markelius (1889–1972) and the above-mentioned Gunnar Asplund, who somewhat smoothed the break between 1920s classicism and the radical functionalism of the 1930s within the group (Sommar 2006: 123).

As Lorentz Lyttkens has pointed out the industrial revolution and its modernity had to be transformed into an equally social revolution of modernity and this, “was launched with thunder and lightning by the Stockholm Exhibition in 1930” (Lyttkens 1991: 18; Pred 1995: 97). In this sense the commissar Paulsson set the tone, opting for housing and other structurally fundamental pieces of society construction rather than just promoting beautiful design objects in everyday life, as had been the case in the 1917 Home exhibition (*Hemutställningen*) arranged at the Liljevalchs museum of art in Stockholm by the same arts and crafts society (Alzén 2002). The stakes were now much higher. The space for dialogue with what was conceived as the reigning bourgeoisie aesthetic ideals was often minimal, and the functionalist modernism was frequently marked by a certain unwillingness to communicate with the past. This shock of the new was the main impact of the Stockholm Exhibition. This shock treatment was aimed at overwhelming the masses and to disarm possible resistance.

In comparison with the World Exhibition held the summer and autumn 1929 in Barcelona, the emphasis on providing a uniform functionalist architectural milieu in Stockholm was indeed striking. Even if the famous German pavilion *Werkbund* by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969) in Barcelona has a prominent place in architectural history, it was about the only true functionalist statement in Barcelona. This Bauhaus School and Weimar Germany show case had to share the role of attraction on the Montjuich Hill with *The Spanish village – el Poble español*, a collage of picturesque and traditional Spanish architecture still standing transformed to a recreational and tourist attraction. In Stockholm, by contrast, the organizers provided a functionalist statement exhibition, where absolutely no building on the entire fair ground was allowed to deviate from the central ideology of modern, radical and minimalistic aesthetics. This was made by creating what the British architect historian J. M. Richards in 1940 credited as “the first large area with functionalist architecture on the same place” (Pred 1995: 98). Until the Stockholm Exhibition, functionalist works had mostly been presented singularly to the great public, often looking quite strange, especially in highly built-up urban environments. Now, for the first time, there was a dedicated and uniform functionalist space ready to be experienced by the masses during that summer.

And indeed, the masses came: Considering the short time the exhibition lasted, this event – part public education, part popular amusement – marked an unprecedented modern mass experience in the history of Sweden. The exhibition area on the Gärdet south sea shore facing Djurgården stretching to present day Diplomatstaden, was visited by almost four million visitors from the opening day 16 May to the closure on 29 September 1930.<sup>2</sup> Even if this represented only a tenth of the estimated visitors to the Chicago Exhibition (see below) three years later, it ri-

valued the latter in terms of modernism and optimism. Indeed, the Depression had not yet hit Sweden with its full power at the time the exhibition gates opened in the beginning of this unusually hot summer.

Even if the facilities were all torn down afterwards, the memory of the exhibition would live on and constitute the symbol of how Sweden entered modernity. One often quoted manifestation of this memory culture is the young “proletarian author” Ivar Lo-Johansson’s (1901–1990) account from 1979:

The many acres of plain grass stretching from the Diplomat City to the Life Guard Dragoons had been built-up with functionalistic houses and exhibition halls of steel and glass, paved with new streets and given way for squares, towers, dams, dustbins, signposts with prohibitions, oases for rest and contemplation of a brand new city. All that could block the vision was gone, all rubbish which could have prevented the observer from gazing into the future had been removed. [---] Flags were blowing in the wind. Fountains were playing. The whole thing felt as if one were walking on a street leading right into the future. One was already in Urbs, The City of the New Human.

(Lo-Johansson 1979: 452)

Indeed, the Stockholm exhibition played an important role as a symbol of a new national self-identification of Sweden as a “modern” and “progressive” country. This national re-branding played out on two different levels: On the one hand, the exhibition signaled what may be called a “nationalization” of the long-standing concerns regarding the quality of the “good home” for the ordinary man and woman. In fact, the exhibition introduced the general public to the functionalist socio-political program for an industrial, planned, rationalized, and standardized production of housing to meet the needs of a badly-housed Swedish working class. This problem was considered to be of national importance. If functionalism claimed to be capable of solving this dividing issue, it would by inference be taken as an intervention reaching far beyond the confines of mere aestheticism, into the core of the political tension about what kind of society Sweden should be, a debate which had been running high in the wake of intensifying labor market conflict and growing political polarization in the late 1920s.

On the other hand, and far more playfully, the new Swedish nickname *funkis* – that diminutive of the term for the new architectural style – begun to symbolize everything new and “cool” in colloquial speech, including clothes, music, lifestyle. As such, it became almost a plague during the summer of 1930 (Pred 1995: 108–109; Christinsson 2007: 80). The word *funkis* – not used in English – was taken into Danish, Norwegian and Finnish architectural jargon soon, which shows the Nordic impact of the Stockholm exhibition. It thus marks a beginning of launching radical architecture as part of a national and specific Nordic (or also referred to as Scandinavian) form of modernity. In Denmark the functionalist ideas arrived somewhat independently, but in the other Nordic cases the Stockholm exhibition was crucial. The new trends also arrived autonomously to Norway during the late 1920s, but the importance of the Stockholm exhibition as a showcase for a larger public is also underlined by Norwegian art historians

(Brekke, Nordhagen & Lexau 2003: 318). The Stockholm exhibition was not the absolute beginning of the broader Nordic interest in the functionalist ideas and aesthetics, but perhaps the single most important event at this early stage and a starting point for a broader diffusion of the functionalist ideas (Lindh 2002: 113).

In Finland the young Alvar Aalto (1898–1976) joined the International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM), which was the main international forum for the new functionalist architecture, on the initiative of Sweden’s Sven Markeilius. He was greatly inspired by the new trends when visiting the second CIAM congress in Frankfurt am Main in 1929, and upon returning from Germany he shared this new and radical vision with the Finnish press, stating that architecture had to: “[...] forward the idea of replacing the present way of building based on taste preferences and coincidences, with a complete consideration of a more scientifically established minimum norms.” (*ÅU*, 3.11.1929) This social awareness displayed by Aalto was undoubtedly close to the ideas of the central radical modernists in Sweden. Together with Erik Bryggman (1891–1955) he had presented the first pure functionalist buildings in Finland at the Turku 700 years anniversary fair in the summer of 1929 (Lindh 2002: 112–113).

### **“Accept the Given Reality – Only Thus May We Have a View to Control It..”**

It was in conjunction with this newly-established self-identification of a “modern” society that the functionalist architects behind the Stockholm Exhibition could programmatically declare their motto to be *acceptera* (“accept”), i.e., “accept the given reality – only thus may we have a view to control it, to master it in order to change it and create culture which is a flexible tool for life.” (Asplund et al. 1931: 198) *Acceptera* [sic!] was also the title of a pamphlet book written collectively as a post scriptum of the exhibition and published in 1931 (hereafter referred to as: *Acc*). *Acceptera* is not just an architectural manifesto, but rather an all-embracing statement of how the life of modernity could be achieved in Sweden. The crucial point was to strive forward on the path of progress, explicitly defined as industrialism, mass production, mechanization of all sectors of production, urbanism and a rejection of old bourgeoisie aesthetic norms. Otherwise, the authors – who included Asplund, Paulsson, Markeilius and Åhrén, as well as the architects Wolter Gahn (1890–1985) and Eskil Sundahl (1890–1974) – explicitly warned, Sweden would be relegated from the centre to the periphery. With simple yet powerful imagery, the authors of *Acceptera* showed how Sweden had become part of what they called “A-Europe,” the Europe of tractors and electricity, great cities, efficient industries, and new media entertainment. Yet, it constantly ran the risk of ending up in what they called “B-Europe,” the Europe of horse and carriage, traditions, and superstition, as exemplified by the Balkans and Eastern Europe, as well as the south of Italy and Spanish Andalusia.

The authors operated with the terminology of present and ancient Sweden – “Nu- och forn-Sverige”. The former was B-Sweden, with a religious culture from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a dwelling culture from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and an education culture from the 19<sup>th</sup> century (*Acc*: 22–24). At the same time, Swedish industry had moved full speed ahead into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The present day belonged to A-Sweden. Indeed, some even concluded that Sweden had entered a Second Great Power Era, as was incidentally the title of a book published two years before the Exhibition by industrialist Gerard De Geer (1928). In his book, De Geer explained that export of patented Swedish innovations would conquer the world and bring prosperity to what less than two decades earlier had still been known as *det befästa fattighuset* [“The Fortified Poor-House”] in the phrasing of a widely spread and read Social Democratic pamphlet.

Since the Swedish industry had clearly shown its development during the past 60–70 years, it was of utmost importance than the rest of the society would not lag behind. This lack of development, visible for many in the large emigration wave from rural Sweden to North America, was a true concern and fear scenario for many. The past would have to be aligned with the needs of the present, B would have to be upgraded to A. The authors of *Acceptera* and the central figures behind the Stockholm exhibition skillfully tied these larger societal questions to the question of housing, town planning and radical minimalistic design. This was the still missing piece that would make Sweden a great place to live in. The finger was pointing at each individual of the nation: “The one who does not want to accept, he desists from cooperating in the development of culture. He will recline into a meaningless pose of bitter heroism or worldly skepticism.” (*Acc*: 198)

This intriguing oscillation between the individual and the collective is omnipresent in *Acceptera*: The first page in the book portrays a photo montage of a young man standing in front of a vast sea of an anonymous crowd, and the text asks: “The individual and the masses... the personal or the general?” (*Acc*: 3) The imagery illustrates a central tension in the *Acceptera* discourse: On the one hand it is about creating a certain type of mass society where the rate of class inclusion, and hence social leveling, would be greater than ever before. On the other hand the text speaks directly to the reader, to the individual. There is no doubt that the pamphlet was aimed at reforming the individual, let it be that this time the group of individuals was very large. This constant interplay between individual and collective is in the end aimed at the individual, who is given the responsibility to elevate him- or herself to the level of modernity. The figure of thought bears a resemblance with how religious ideas and practices have been promoted in different societies. All instructions, explanations and motivations are given by the experts – the self-ordained high priests of modernist revivalism (Gullberg 2001: 127) – i.e., from above. It is just to follow the sign-posted path and to accept the objective reality. This is at least the textual strategy build up by the authors, and was ob-



viously also the central idea behind the huge public event that the exposition constituted.

The stated aim of the Exhibition and the authors of *Acceptera* was to promote the image of irreversible progress and to, “shape a visual and emotional identity for a new human being that can take the step from ‘B-Europe’ to ‘A-Europe’.” (Mattson & Wallensten 2009: 16) Thus it is no surprise that the main focus of the exhibition, apart from the steady focus on the new and brave modern future, is to describe and make the Swedes aware of the giant leap in wealth and prosperity that Sweden had achieved during the past 60 years. The grand narrative was focused on the blessing brought to this country by industrial development, and consequently rural culture and tradition was impossible to integrate into this vision of future Sweden. The contrast to the Scandinavian Arts and Industry exhibition held in Stockholm 1897 and featuring the then recently opened *Skansen* is striking. Rural culture was a thing of the past as was also the central role of the parish priest in society. Now, scientifically competent experts, who contemporary Americans called “social engineers,” were to guide society according to good political morals and scientific competence.

Much has been said about the explicit message of modernity and how this was imposed from above on the Swedes by a certain interest group that seemed to have some kind of semi-official blessing by authorities. This was a time when “the expert”, possessing scientific knowledge, was highly esteemed and respected in an intellectual environment where science would aim at providing a new universal objectivity. This was the content of the so-called social engineering ideals present not only the radical left and movements like Clarté, but more and more also accepted over the ideological borderlines. Even if many within the left claimed monopoly on radical modernism, it is clear that leading industrial actors had a great interest in these ideas as part of their own strategies of earning profit. This becomes apparent when looking at the Chicago exhibition 1933 later in this article.

This observation also makes it important to ask to what extent and in which respect was the exhibition and the practical implementation of the functionalist program in Sweden a specific Nordic phenomenon? Functionalism as such was a European movement, centered in Germany and France and with multiple early influence channels over the continent. Later it was implemented globally as a form of modern architecture. Yet, we feel that functionalism has had a comparatively greater and over-reaching impact on society in the Nordic countries. Firstly, there was an articulated attempt to present radical functionalism as closely connected to traditional folk architecture. This was a way of claiming the new radical ideas as part of national cultural heritage, which differed radically from how the heavily future-oriented functionalism was perceived in other parts of the world. Journalist and cultural historian Gustaf Näsström (1899–1979) published a popularized book *Svensk funktionalism* [Swedish functionalism] in the fall of 1930,

simultaneously with *Acceptera*. His message is explicit, when he claims that, “many tendencies in today’s radical architecture have deep roots in old Swedish building tradition and history.” (Näsström 1930: Foreword) This was in line with the authors of *Acceptera*. The connection of aesthetic minimalism with rural culture, closeness to nature and the Lutheran value of thrift can be noted also in other Nordic countries. Secondly, the practically goal-oriented implementation and the strong focus on centralized planning can be seen as a typical feature of the comparatively homogeneous Nordic societies with a traditionally high degree of trust in authorities. This consensual societal and political culture of trust in authorities and law obedience, potentially explains the easy acceptance of the shock of the new, given “from above” by authorities that the majority recognizes.

This to a certain extent programmatic strategy of implementing modernity from above invites us to consider the analysis made by historian Henrik Stenius on tolerance and modernity in Nordic societies. Stenius sees a connection between the uniform rural Lutheran culture that united political culture in both Scandinavian kingdoms during the early modern era (*circa* 1520–1800) and the Enlightenment project of modernity during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The actors are just given different roles in the same play. Stenius sketches the outlines of a deeply-rooted culture of conformity in Scandinavian societies leaning on, “the peasant-as-citizen [...] determined to figure out the common good, to reach consensus, because it is the mark of true democracy to have everybody thinking alike” (Stenius 1997: 168). The idea of tolerance is not, as in some other regions where Protestantism is dominantly present, a matter of tolerating diversity and accepting subcultures, but rather a question of “patience” in the “strive to draw everybody into the world of modernity” (Stenius 1997: 169).

This suggests that the entire exhibition can be seen as a one and only option presented to the Swedish people: “Accept, or otherwise...” Otherwise, the argument implied, the future of both the individual and the nation would be imperiled. Refusal to accept the given reality would result the continuation of misery and injustices for the poorer classes. As such, it would be a betrayal of not only the concrete achievements of Swedish industry but also of more long-held values of the Swedish nation. The organizers apparently believed strongly in their cause, and a certain amount of sectarian conviction and dogmatism can be detected in their attitudes (Gullberg 2001: 127). Somehow it was inevitable that new and modern times had arrived and this had to be accepted, but exactly which kind of modernity was still up for debate as was the question of how radical this consensually accepted modernity would be.

It is therefore perhaps significant to note that the debate on modernity and modernism in Sweden as set off by the 1930 Exhibition was primarily about...houses. It was not primarily about non-figurative art, stream of consciousness literature, machine romantics, cult of the future, or about a new political program, but, indeed, about houses. This pragmatic connection between modernity and ordinary

people's homes, housing, and living standards, accentuated the practical and comparatively low key intellectual touch of Swedish modernism (Mattson & Wallenstein 2009: 16; Eriksson 2010: 7). It is also the essence of the Swedish national interpretation of the new and radical modernist manifesto. The simple, ordinary, folkish, pragmatic and practical were on the agenda, in contrast to the metaphysical, revolutionary, and often overtly intellectual and speculative dimension which dominated much of radical modernism elsewhere in the 1920s and 1930s. The strategy was to forward the program as containing universal and rational values, thus making it difficult to challenge with any "serious" arguments and thereby forcing the opponents to revert to the rhetorical arsenal of tradition, aesthetics, and style.

It is therefore of some interest to look at whether the Swedes so readily did accept the one and only option presented at the Stockholm Exhibition and whether the opponents went into the trap set up by the functionalists. A closer look at the way in which the Exhibition was received in the press and in the public opinion – support as well as opposition – might therefore be relevant here.

## **The Opposition**

The early reporting in the press was unanimously positive and a general enthusiasm about that summer's great event sparked an initial atmosphere of consensus. This was underlined by the presence of the King Gustav V and the Crown Prince at the inauguration ceremonies on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May 1930. There was an established tradition, both in Sweden and other monarchies, that the monarch as a unifying symbol of the nation would sanction grand exhibitions by inaugurating them. In his speech King Gustav V was diplomatic to say the least, declaring that:

Even if one can have diverging opinions about some of the most modern schools and ambitions to shape something new in terms of aesthetical value, I am, however convinced that the core of the exhibition in a joyful way will show that our art industry takes a most prominent place not only here at home but also on the world market. (SvD, 17.5.1930)

The role of the King was to be the symbol of Sweden, not to take part in a cultural debate. The existing tensions within Swedish art and architectural circles would surface on the pages of the daily press quite soon as the summer advanced. It was a debate that had an elitist and expert oriented dimension on the one hand and a popular dimension on the other hand. It is obvious that there was no unanimous acceptance of the new functionalist program, and the apologists and propagators of these ideas were acutely aware of this.

The opposition within the art and architectural field clearly manifested itself within the public debate. Many in the older generation could not accept the exhibition, and the popular author and artist Albert Engström (1869–1940) is credited for having said that this all reminded him of things he had seen in Moscow in the early twenties (Pred 1995: 111). While Engström represented a cultural and intel-

lectual past that was now fading in Stockholm, the perhaps most prominent and persistent domestic critic was the furniture designer Carl Malmsten, also a member of *Svenska slöjdföreningen*. Malmsten (1888–1972) was primarily critical about the promotion of industrially produced goods at the expense of handicraft tradition. He was of the same generation as Paulsson and Asplund – while many of his fellow combatants, such as sculptors Carl Milles (1875–1955) and Carl Eldh (1873–1954), as well as architect Ragnar Östberg (1866–1945), belonged to an older cohort – so there was no generational gap to explain this divergence in opinion.

For Malmsten, the sell-out of Swedish handicraft tradition in the name of industrialism, functionalism and internationalism was not the right path to take. The exhibition organizers met Malmsten's complains at the planning stage by stating that everything that could be qualified as good quality Swedish handicraft would be at display, "only copies and apparent pastisch works would be excluded. No specific artistic style is to be favoured."<sup>3</sup> (Råberg 1970: 175; Rudberg 1999: 197) This promise on behalf of the organizers was not kept and concessions to the "elitist" arts and crafts movement were minimal. The rumors of programmatic supervision and control of everything from large buildings to small details as merchandise in the vending booths, was apparently more than just rumors and during the summer the conservative daily *Svenska Dagbladet* started a campaign of trying to find as many kitsch objects as possible and giving them publicity in the press. They apparently succeeded in their provocations, since the organizers as a consequence of this publicity even sanctioned raids on the fair grounds.

The critique of functionalist architecture continued during the thirties and it is apparent that the exhibition 1930 angered many opponents. The grand revenge of the opponents was symbolically erected on the very same plains of Gärdet in 1938, when *Sjöhistoriska museet* ["The Maritime Museum"] was inaugurated. The building designed by Ragnar Östberg, the architect of the Stockholm City Hall, represented a neo-classical style that had been prevalent in the 1920's. The building even flirted with the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Gustavian style, since the stern piece of *Amphion*, the pleasure and command vessel of Gustavus III was to have a central place in the building. The museum project was only possible with the generous donation by the Knut and Alice Wallenberg Foundation. The only conditions the donors set for the Swedish state was that the building was not to be designed in a functionalistic style, which obviously caused a great uproar among the leading functionalist architects (Cornell 1965: 24).

### ***Svea Rike: Past, Present and Future Tense***

However, despite the shock value of *Acceptera* and the *funkis* modernity on display at the Stockholm Exhibition, the organizers did make an attempt to bridge the rift between the past and the present, between new and old: The *Svea Rike* exposi-

tion gives us an insight into how modernity coped with history when aggressively forging a new ideology in Sweden in 1930. This exhibition section has been thoroughly examined by both Annika Alzén (2002) and Petter Tistedt (2005) and the idea of dealing with *Svea Rike* here is to examine it as the only historical element in the Exhibition.

Even though the organizers frequently underlined the unofficial character of *Svea Rike*, it is clear that it had an undoubtedly official character bearing the name of the realm and posing the official coat of arms at the entrance (Tistedt 2005: 26). The Crown Prince was honorary president of the Exhibition Committee and as mentioned earlier the entire event had been opened by the King, who seemed especially pleased with this part of the Exhibition, according to the conservative press (SvD, 17.5.1930). *Svea Rike* (hereafter referred to as: *SR*) combined history with current statistics and racial anthropology, and a grand teleological interpretation of the current state of affairs and the potential of future Sweden was thus given historical depth. The section was predominantly thus a presentation of current statistics, a kind of learn-to-love-your-country's-statistic exposition in the name of scientific rationality that was so much a part of the dominating modernity discourse at the exhibition.

The separate, obviously functionalist style, building hosted a section where great efforts had been made to visualize statistics on Sweden in an appealing manner for the great public. However, history had its role in this setting, more precisely in the entrance hall where a set of posters visualized the great past of the Swedes. It started with, "how Sweden arose from the cold and darkness of the Ice Age more than 10 000 years ago [...] that was the beginning of the Swedish Realm's drama." (*SR*: 7) A little bit further a chronological exposé of high visual ambitions, presented historical persons, buildings, documents etc. from medieval time onwards. This was a more traditional way of packing historical knowledge as part of national education. The great kings from Gustavus Vasa and Gustavus II Adolphus to the scientists Carl Linnaeus and Olof Rudbeck were present in this quite conventional presentation.

The initial text for the *Svea Rike* exhibition, written by journalist Ludvig "Lubbe" Nordström, is very explicit in its objectifying of Sweden's past as a tool for future direction.<sup>4</sup> These 10 000 years had been a process leading to a national unit that had strived and fought for its existence. As a northern European country it possessed the tradition of antiquity and, "250 years ago it was the leading power between The Arctic Ocean, the Atlantic Ocean, the great Russian-Siberian tundra belt and Europe, the centre of culture." (*SR*: 7) However, the drama was still continuing, something Nordström wanted to be sure that the spectator understood and took to his and her heart: "And now? The Swedish Realm as a great power ended 200 years ago, but during the last 100 years its economical power has slowly gained. Sweden is a leading industrial country." (*SR*: 7) History had proven that Sweden could not just survive, but also achieve a great position internationally.

This was the challenge now facing the Swedes. The Swedish Realm was now in a process of change. This process of industrialization, urbanization and internationalization – in short modernization – put new demands on society and its members. What was needed in this new era was an “intellectually trained and morally mature people” as “the main capital of the Swedish Realm. School will be the steady foundation of the factory Sweden.” (SR: 7) Nordström’s rhetoric is ambiguous. He speaks about the “factory Sweden” in the purest *Acceptera* style, but at the same time as the exposition itself is called *Svea Rike* – The Swedish Realm. The first term is extreme in its futuristic proclamation, while the latter embodies all the traditions that the coat of arms *Tre Kronor* stood for as it embellished the functionalist façade of the *Svea Rike* building. Certainly, however, it was Nordström’s as well as the Exhibition organizers overall aim to bridge the apparent opposition between exactly these two symbolic worlds by showing how the pride of past glory on the battlefield could be sublimated into belief in a new, modern and productive Sweden.

In many provincial newspapers this section attracted the most unanimous praise. Maybe it was the section easiest to grasp, and thus the most nationalistic in a traditional and “understandable” sense (Pred 1995; Tistedt 2005: 56–57). Obviously this enthusiasm can be read as a subtle articulation of an ambiguity towards the massive functionalist shock that the rest of the Exhibition constituted. However, the presence of a history section to our mind had a role to play in the modernist shock treatment: The great moments and persons in Swedish history tied together old and new, and helped to nationalize the next step that was now to be taken in “the drama of the Swedish Realm”. Those who wanted the series of successful events in Sweden’s national history to continue had to accept the new functionalist program for the sake of the nation and for the sake of him- or herself. Only through accepting modernity could Sweden become great again. Nationalism hence equaled modernism, and *vice versa*.

Interestingly, this initial part of *Svea Rike*, was a combination of history and racial anthropology – Historiska fotomontaget och rasbiologiska avdelningen [“Historical Photographical Montage and the Race Biology Section”]. (SR: 6) This accentuates – besides the obvious sign of the times – once again the focus on the nation as a collective through the individuals, each important for the total quality of the nation. The entire exposition was a message to the individual Swede, and here again the rhetoric is quite straight forward. A set of “six Swedish S” was presented as typical of the Swedish character: “*självständighet* [“independence”], *skarpsynthet* [“sharp-sightedness”], *storsinthet* [“generosity”], *sparsamhet* [“thriftiness”], *stolthet* [“pride”] and *ståndskänsla inför världen* [“sovereignty against the world”]” (Alzén 2002: 3). All statistics presented served the purpose of showing how Sweden was developing and becoming part of, “A-Europe or the industrial Europe, the nucleus of the world.”<sup>5</sup> This could be explained by history, where “war had given him [the Swede] organization, science given him tools, and

from these industry evolved, that finally brought him out in the sun among the great nations of culture.” (SR: 7–8) Nordström used a metaphor of how ice was part of the soul of the Swede, thus explaining why the Swedish striving towards the warmth of the sun had always been the objective. History is described as a continuing progression, a constant drive for reaching the highest level of civilisation and wealth. And what else would have been more natural for a country that possessed such a high degree of pure Nordic-Germanic race types among its population.

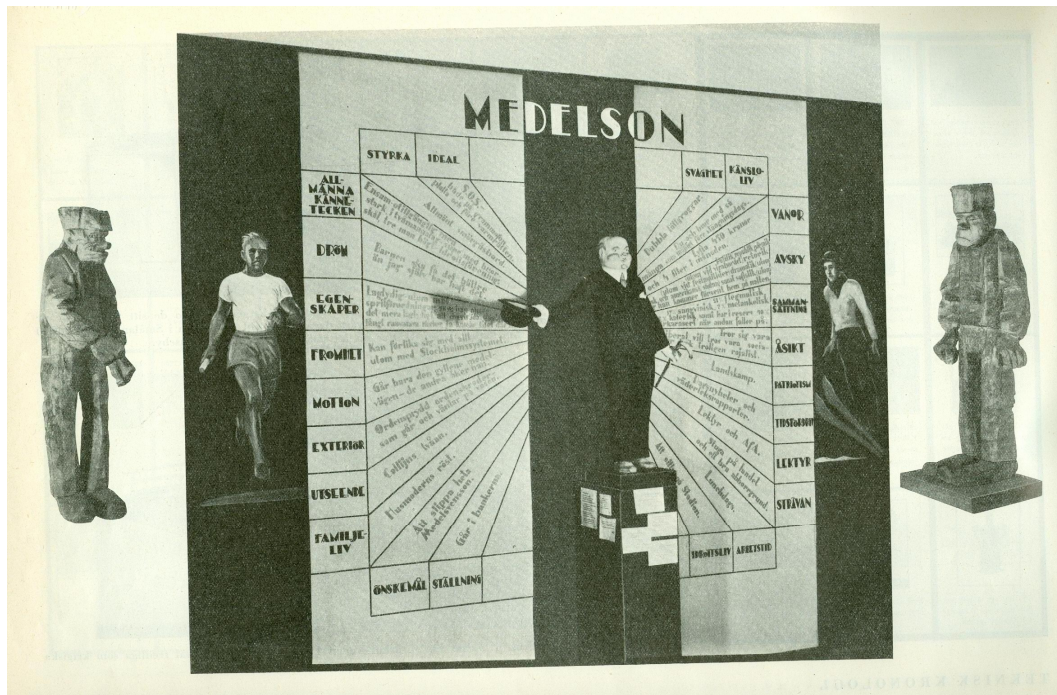
The section for race biology was produced by Herman Lundborg, head of the Swedish Institute for racial biology founded in Uppsala 1921, *Rasbiologiska institutet* [“Institute of Race Biology”]. Here a map of Sweden was sectioned showing the predominance of the “Nordic” (Aryan) racial type in the country. The differing types presented as constituting part of the Swedish racial blend were the “Swedish Vallons, the East-Baltic Race (‘Finns’) and Lapps.” (SR: 21) The people was indeed seen as “the main capital” in the quest for national success, or as Lundborg had written some years earlier: “A populace material of good racial faculties is the highest asset of a country.” (Lundborg 1925: 8) Even though it is not expressed, it becomes quite clear that the ideal Swede would be of Nordic race.

### **Medelson: Modernity as Bodily Exercise**

However, this serene and nationalistic pathos together with the seriousness of presenting scientific data needed some lighter touch in order not to bore the public. *Homo ludens* was thus also let in, but even in the playful presentation of *Medelson* – the average middle-aged Swedish man – there was an underlying serious message. The reshaping of both body and mind was the underlying purpose of this seemingly humorous part of *Svea Rike*. The rotund and jovial figure of Medelson is somewhat awkwardly placed on a pedestal. Behind him a chart of his true character and opinions is presented as a circular diagram. He is a man who is content and do not want change. He likes the way things are, does not particularly fancy doing too much sports, eats and drinks a little bit too much, but generally he is a nice chap. On both sides of the diagram two sporting figures, a track runner and a cross country skier respectively, hint at how a modern and new human being was to look like. At the most extreme is additionally added two images of two small carved wood figures by the popular and famous folk artist Döderhultarn. These were rural archetype men, here symbolizing the past and undeveloped B-Europe.

Set between the scruffy figures of *forn-Sverige*, and the high-performance sportsmen-citizens of *nu-Sverige*, Medelson is a not yet fulfilled version of the cultural (r-)evolution. An individual too content and unwilling to stretch his capacities to the full, is not a vital part of the collective work towards the fulfillment of a trimmed nation. Medelson must change, but he must also understand why he

has to conform for the sake on the Swedish Realm, that is now taking a giant leap in order to become a beacon for modernity in the world. A-Sweden in A-Europe cannot afford Medelson, who probably liked his old fluffy armchair just as much as the later Archie Bunker did in the 1970s American sitcom, to be too comfortable in his lifestyle. Medelson has to get in shape, do sports, eat less, drink less, and become a better citizen in order to fulfill his part of the deal.



As we can see, not only the those who did not conform to statistical norms – whichever “race” they belonged to – would need to conform to a new reality and accept a stricter regime in order to improve themselves in the interest of the Swedish Realm. Also, the statistically speaking “normal” Swedish man had to do his part of the job. He could not rely upon his very normalcy to make him exempt from the future drive of national/rational modern project as outlined at the Stockholm Exhibition and the path of the past as illustrated in the *Svea Rike* exhibit.

This “ideology” of functionalism relied upon two basic concepts, as Björn Linn has pointed out: The whole functionalist system of a typologization of the dimensions, demands, and needs of individual human life hinged upon the concept of “the average human,” *l’homme moyen*, as formulated by Belgian statistician Adolphe Quételet (1796–1874). The other concept concerned optimal efficiency in industrial production processes, as pioneered by Frederick W. Taylor (1856–1915). From these two sources, Linn argues, the idea that housing and living should be reorganized as the frames around a rationalized process of household work, rather than around social customs and practices of the past. In a parallel development, architects increasingly redefined themselves as engineers, becoming technicians rather than artists (Sandström 1989: 55; Zunz 1998).



But this reformulation also allowed for another very important step. The functionalist could also begin to take the step from collecting and analyzing facts about society, to begin to actively try to change and shape that society. Functionalism, in the national Swedish rendition as put on display in the Exhibition and in *Acceptera* presented two fix points for such a change: First, there was the idea of the average human – Medelson – which could be used to identify similarity as well as difference in a population and hence be used to inculcate a need for change. Second, there was the idea of a close connection between an unstoppable modernity which goes across all lands and from which there is no escape on the one hand, and a national community which cannot be denied, on the other.

Previously, modernity and modernism had largely been presented in Sweden as international in origin and alien in temperament. Numerous relatively negative accounts of modernity had dominated the public opinion up to this point, not the least since modernity was closely connected with the “cutthroat capitalism” and cultural leveling primarily symbolized by the great melting pot on the other side of the Atlantic where so many Swedes had gone (Alm 2002). Now, however, through the careful presentation of their arguments at the Stockholm Exhibition, the functionalist architects and their supporters among the cultural radicals across the political spectrum could launch modernity as not only the only way forward for Sweden, but also as the only truly Swedish way forward. Three years later, they would have the opportunity to present this image abroad, at the World’s Fair in Chicago in 1933–1934.

### **Business and Progressivism – The Chicago Exhibition 1933–1934**

A little while ago this site was placid lake. Now, shimmering beside the water, a dream city is risen. It lights the sky with splendor, yet soon will disappear and be merely memory. [...] As two partners might clasp hands, Chicago’s growth and the growth of science and industry have been united during this most amazing century.

(Chicago. A Century of Progress [CCP], 1934)

Since its founding in 1833 as a frontier outpost, Chicago had developed into one of North America’s biggest urban and industrial centers by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Chicago had become *the* archetypical modern metropolis, often depicted in films and books. To Americans and Europeans alike, Chicago embodied the promise and the peril of American life perhaps more than any other city at the time. Apart from celebrating the century which had passed since Chicago’s founding, the more wide-ranging goal of this massive investment in the midst of the Great Depression can be gauged from the theme of the fair: technical innovation and progress.

Progress had long been part of American identity. As such, it had been closely connected to the other core values of American civilization, such as competition, creativity, and individualism, especially in the field of business and entrepreneurship.

In the mid-1930s, however, this identification appeared questionable. Not only had the Great Depression brought progress to halt. It had also spawned a seed of doubt as to whether capitalism, liberalism, and individualism – core American values – were up to the test as the USA had reached its geographical limit and no longer seemed able to buy off its growing social problems by expansion to the west. Furthermore, modern industry and advanced technology, which had for some time been positively coded as part of American self-identification, appeared more nefarious as capitalism swung to an all-time low while highly technology-dependent sectors of the economy laid off workers in masses. Anti-modernism, anti-capitalism, and technology critique – since long predominantly European specialties, which played a mostly aesthetic role in American intellectual debate – begun to spread as Americans found themselves increasingly confused as to who they were and what kind of society they lived in (Pells 1973).

The organizers of the Chicago's Centennial celebration – mostly business interests and industrialists – stated that the World's Fair should largely in response to this sense of disorientation “help the American people to understand themselves, and to make clear to the coming generation the forces which have built this nation.” (CCP) In other words, the backers of the exposition sought to defend the existing order despite its many recent failures with references to the history of American progress, pointing to how American industry and “American civilization” had overcome adverse situations before.

In order to bring this point across, the organizers commissioned noted progressive historian Charles A. Beard (1874–1948) to write a piece on the concept of progress in light of the contemporary calamities and to connect it to the theme of the exposition (Beard 1932). Beard championed a rather unsentimental view of history (and history-writing) as a sociopolitical instrument for the change of the present in the service of the future (Beard & Beard 1927). For example, the Bolsheviks had shown, Beard told Raymond Fosdick already in 1922:

...that you can have the power of government – the symbols of sovereignty – and have nothing but dust and ashes. The sword won't do the job any more. The social engineer is the fellow. The old talk about sovereignty, rights of man, dictatorship of the proletariat, triumphant democracy and the like is pure bunk. It will not run trains or weave cloth or hold society together.

(Hofstadter 1968; Nore 1983: 93)

Technology would be the only way forward towards the future, Beard concluded in his commissioned work for the World's Fair. By subscribing to this view and making it the official ideology of the World's Fair, the organizers not only sought to attract business interests. They also vied for support among the academic community (where Beard was a respected name) for a rallying cry to save traditional American values of thrift, industry, and innovation at a time when the nation turned against its past identity of modernity and progress.

The purpose of American business interests organizing the great Chicago Exposition was – among other things – to show that business could operate the econo-

my just as efficiently during the present crisis as it had managed to do earlier. The crucial task was therefore to repair the broken links between technology and industry and between science and capitalism in order to rekindle the belief in progress in a time of crisis (Marklund 2008). However, words alone would hardly suffice in convincing the American public about the inherent value of capitalism in the midst of the Great Depression. Action and example would be required.

### **“Science Finds, Industry Applies, Man Conforms”**

Action and example is exactly what the Chicago exposition would put on offer to the 40 million or so visitors who gathered at the gay fairgrounds next to Lake Michigan for two summers in a row during the otherwise somber 1930s (Rydell 1993; Rydell & Schiavo 2010).

The motto of the Exposition was summarized in the sentence “Science Finds, Industry Applies, Man Conforms.” This motto clearly outlined the role of these three elements, and requires little interpretation: Science would ask the crucial questions about “know what,” industry would provide the “know how” while citizens would be happy to tag along as consumers.

The so-called “Hall of Science” was at the heart of A Century of Progress. The building itself contained the message of modernity as the official program encouraged visitors to consider that it had been erected on “man-made land – a creation of engineering science.” (CCP: 26–27) The architectural commission in charge of the Exposition stated that it would be unfitting for the World’s Fair celebrating the progress of the past century “to hark back to antique times and house itself in the traditional manner in buildings copied from ancient Greek temples and the Roman Forum.” This temple of science did not “seek to veil itself in the aroma of ancient history,” as “the beauty of the new architecture is peculiar to itself,” as the Official Guidebook of the World’s Fair declared (CCP: 27).

In conjunction with the Hall of Science visitors also could find the “Hall of Social Science,” exhibiting a wide variety of topics as described in the official guidebook to the exposition (CCP: 93). All these seemingly diverse exhibits were subjected to one overarching theme: “The struggle of knowledge to bring order to social life.” (CCP: 91) Order was apparently an undisputed good in this rendition of modernity. Again and again, the theme of knowledge and order was interwoven with the message that, despite the current setback, social life had made great progress during the past century, not the least if the visitor cared to study the comparison between “old inhuman laws” of the past with the social legislation and “community-planning” of the present on display at the World’s Fair (CCP: 91).

The diversity and inequality of American life presented a difficult problem for the planners of A Century of Progress. They solved it by directing attention to the progress of social welfare and philanthropy and obscuring its exclusions. African-

Americans, for example, were largely excluded from the fairgrounds, except as functionaries, which makes the “Special research at the World’s Fair to establish standards of the American type” an interesting example of racial coding of modern America. The organizers of the fair had contacted the Harvard Anthropometric Laboratory to set up a measuring station where, according to the Official Guidebook, “many thousands of visitors to the exhibit have been weighed, measured, tested and questioned,” turning cheerfully to the reader and suggesting that “You may stop and have your record taken.” (*CCP*: 94) The results of this research would naturally conclude that the “American type” was predominantly white.

Originally, the intention had been to include a far more ambitious social science exhibit. Sociologist Howard W. Odum (1884–1954) of University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, had been contacted by the fair organizers to demonstrate the capacity of modern American social science to provide guidance and control in an era of crisis, just as objectively and efficiently as any natural science. However, despite Odum’s network of contacts, the North Carolina professor failed to secure the necessary funds from American business and research foundations. These investors were generally skeptical of the link between social science and social reform. They remained more convinced by the more material achievements of “pure science,” e.g., mathematics, chemistry, and physics – especially as demonstrated by industry through its production of consumer goods (Jordan 1994: 89).

Perhaps this connection between material advance, modern science, and technological prowess was nowhere as clear as in the presentation of “modern homes” as markers of progress. The organizers did not balk at drawing explicit comparisons with Native American dwellings or African huts in order to make their point (*CCP*: 16). Here, it was easy to demonstrate in concrete and practical terms the advantages of modern science in providing cheaper, cleaner, and more comfortable housing than in the past. While not available to all just yet, the Home and Industrial Arts Group presented an impressive view into the modern way of life in the modern home (*CCP*: 127).

In the so-called Home Planning Hall, the visitors could experience how these ideas could be brought to “direct application to the problems and wishes of modern home planners.” (*CCP*: 133) This is also where the Swedish contribution would make its mark on the Chicago World’s Fair. In the words of the Official Guidebook for 1933, the Swedish pavilion exemplified not only an “unique architecture” – “just two boxes,” someone called it – but also “the revival of home industries under the lash of economic necessity.” The next year, in 1934, the Swedish contribution – with an extensive exhibit prepared by the Swedish Arts and Crafts Association, which had been instrumental in the Stockholm Exhibition four years ago – had not changed substantially. Yet, the American reception of the Swedish exhibit contained a new twist, noting both the practicality and the “distinctive” Swedishness of the Swedish designer objects (*CCP*: 22).

The Swedish exhibit at the World's Fair placed the emphasis upon the Swedish manufacturing industry and its products rather than upon any particular Swedish social legislation or political reform when promoting the vision of Sweden as a modern nation. Due to the close collaboration between artists, industry, and labor, Swedish manufacturers could show that modern technology did not necessarily have to imperil either the artistry or the quality of the products. Thus, modernity and nationality could be merged in and through everyday objects.

In the case of American industry, "the science exhibits were intended to exemplify 'the idea of scientific and industrial unity' and to inject 'system and order' into the exposition and, by extension, into American culture as a whole" as noted by historian Robert W. Rydell (1993; see also Jordan 1994: 89). While the Swedish backers of modernism came up against the challenge of marrying nationalism with rationalism in order to make modern aesthetics palatable to a traditionalistic majority, the American proponents were more concerned with the task of combining industry with science in order to defend modern capitalism in the eyes of a more radicalized American working class.

This tension came to the fore a few years later, in 1938, as the ten-mile-long preview parade of the 1939–1940 New York World's Fair, was forced to obey traffic signals at the intersection of Thirteenth Street and Seventh Avenue in downtown Manhattan while one hundred thousand participants in the May Day parade cut across its path. The May Day parade highlighted what the world's fair organizers – many of whom had been instrumental in arranging the Chicago Exposition a few years earlier – already knew, namely that they could not assume mass support for their vision of the world of tomorrow. In fact, as Rydell has keenly observed, the parade was part of the job of "selling the Fair," and this job was bound up, with "the task of selling Americans on the idea that the vision of the future projected at the fairs was worth pursuing" (Rydell 1993: 116).

## Conclusion

Coming to an end, it is time to summarize the (dis)similarities between the experience of combining a modern self-identity with a national self-identity in the Stockholm and Chicago exhibitions, respectively. The differences are considerable, and serve to bring important characteristics of both these events and the times they reflect into the light: In Chicago, for example, both business interests and progressives within social science participated, but business interests clearly dominated and consumerism prevailed above any overt calls for social reform. In Stockholm, by contrast, architects and cultural radicals forged a tight-knit community whose political message could be neatly packaged in harmless propagation of new styles of housing. Perhaps this may have been a contributing factor to why the modernistic style in itself became so central in the critique of the opponents.

Indeed, in Stockholm, the opposition to modernism seems to have been primarily based on the grounds of tradition and conservatism among established social elites, yet it was directed at modernism because of its aesthetic, rather than political radicalism. In Chicago, by contrast, the skepticism towards modernism rather emanated from public opinion on the grounds of economical and moral issues, due to the strong association between modernity on the one hand and capitalism and industrialism on the other. The Chicago Exposition in fact amounted to an attempt by business and capital to take back the good will generated by the popularity of machinery and engineering triumphs, successes which stood in glaring contrast to the dismal prospects of American economy.

While the World's Fair in Chicago sought to reestablish the traditional American association between the American nation and modernity, the Stockholm Exhibition, by contrast, strove to recast the Swedish past in a modernist form, thus establishing a rather new link between modernity and nationhood. Here, however, the Swedish modernists could draw upon long-standing, widely shared, and safe associations between "Nordicity" and various modernist virtues, such as order, pragmatism, and thrift. Indeed, this type of merging Nordic nationhood with modernism was not unique to Sweden, but it took different forms in different Nordic countries, as Kazimierz Musiał has shown (Musiał 2002).

There are several similarities as well. Despite the optimistic tone set in the promotional texts produced in support of both these exhibitions, there is a worry uniting the optimists: Both Lubbe Nordström and Charles Beard come across as convinced that the world of tomorrow would become a better place than the world of yesterday. Yet, both agree that this would not happen automatically. Effort, on the part of business, citizenry, and government would be required if modernity would not self-combust. "Man" – whether the average "American type" or the jovial Medelson, to say nothing about the Roma and Sami of Sweden or the African-Americans or Native Americans of the USA – would not only have to "accept" the world of tomorrow as a given fact already today. They would also have to conform to modern "normalcy" as identified and promoted by Swedish functionalist architects just as well as by American progressive industrialists – all in their own interest, of course.

The planners of the Stockholm Exhibition went to great lengths to emphasize the continuity between the Swedishness of the past with the Swedish community of the future, by using a narrative which compared past achievements on the European battlefield with present day victories on the global market – and hopefully future ones, too. Here, the backers of modernism could rely upon the strong notion of consensus as identified by Stenius (1997) above about reaching modernity together – i.e., Medelson had to get fit and leave his semi-decadent bourgeoisie habits behind him.

Similarly, the backers of the Chicago Exposition signaled economically determined path towards the American community of the future. Rather than promising

some emotional or political bond or community for the future (even though the ideals of Americanization of the immigrant and the identification of the American type may indicate otherwise) their message was firmly based in the promise of future consumerism: American science would find the means, American industry would implement the findings, and Americans would end up enjoying the fruit of both – as consumers – if they only remained true to American values of individualism, innovation, and perseverance. In other words, consumerism would provide Americans with community, rather than any program of political or social reform. This presupposition was of course put at risk when prosperity came under threat. This is where science and technology – as proverbially American values and virtues – could be harnessed in the interest of American civilization.

To some extent, statistics and race could be used as a point of reference for modernity and normalcy in Sweden with its homogeneous population. In the USA, the planners of the World Fair rather used the desire of prosperity and higher living standards – which could be assumed to be largely similar across a very wide spectrum of people – primarily due to its more heterogeneous demography. Swedes could easier accept the notion of a modernistic future through references with the perceived community of a familiar past, while Americans could easier accept the notion of a capitalist present through references to a prosperous future of consumerism.

We have here tried to point to the role of exhibitions in showcasing society and promoting visions of the past, present, and future in an accessible way through the museum, the exposition, and the observatory gaze. For all their differences, we hope that this brief survey of the Stockholm Exhibition in 1930 and *A Century of Progress* International Exposition in Chicago in 1933–1934 can serve to illustrate the power of the modern exhibition – with its dioramas, its statistics, its cult of science, and its usage of visual presentation – in bringing home the quintessentially modern paradox in conforming to the norm in the interest of liberty and in accepting the given for the sake of change.

**Carl Marklund** (born 1974) holds a PhD in history, assistant professor (adiunkt) at the Department of Political Science and Contemporary History at AGH University of Science and Technology, Kraków, and is a researcher at the Network for European Studies at University of Helsinki. He is a member of the Nordic Openness project within the programme framework Europe's Cultural Diversity. E-mail: [carl.marklund@helsinki.fi](mailto:carl.marklund@helsinki.fi).

**Peter Stadius** (born 1970) holds a PhD in history, adjunct professor (docent) in Nordic Studies, and is acting University lecturer in Nordic Studies at University of Helsinki. He is a member of the National History – Nordic Culture project within the Nordic spaces research programme. E-mail: [peter.stadius@helsinki.fi](mailto:peter.stadius@helsinki.fi).

## Notes

- 1 Ulf Zander has argued that modernity and tradition must be understood as complementary concepts, while Jonas Frykman and Orvar Löfgren have pointed to the continuity between bourgeois modernity and progressive modernity. See Ulf Zander (2001): *Fornstora dar, moderna tider. Bruk av och debatter om svensk historia från sekelskifte till sekelskifte*, Lund: Nordic Academic Press; Jonas Frykman & Orvar Löfgren (1979): *Den kultiverade människan*, Lund: Liber Läromedel; and Martin Wiklund (2006): *I det modernas landskap: historisk orientering och kritiska berättelser om det moderna Sverige mellan 1960 och 1990*, Stockholm: Symposion, pp. 19, 78.
- 2 Naturally, many visitors made repeated visits. Nevertheless, 4 million visitors is a quite impressive figure considering that the total population of Sweden in December 31, 1930 reached a mere 6,142,191 (SCB, 1992). It should also be mentioned that the Exhibition attracted some minor numbers of foreign visitors; from Finland came 18 000; from Poland 3000; from Estonia and Lithuania 2000–3000, and from the rest of Europe 1000 visitors. See also Eva Rudberg (1999): *The Stockholm Exhibition 1930. Modernism's Breakthrough in Sweden*, Stockholm: Stockholmia förlag, p. 191.
- 3 Minutes from the executive committee (*Verkställande utskottets protokoll 24*) 1929.09.04. Stockholm Municipal Archive: Svenska Slöjdföreningen.
- 4 Nordström was instrumental in combining rural traditions and modernity in Swedish intellectual life during the 1920's and 1930's. He embodied a belief in Sweden's future, even if his journalistic reports also exposed misery and problems especially in rural Sweden. He is best known for his series of radio programs in 1938 on social misery, which were later published as a book, *Lort-Sverige* (1938). His ability to combine simple and practical questions of dwelling and comfort with bigger national issues of politics, made him central in the Swedish "modernity project".
- 5 Here, we can directly observe how the worldview of the *Acceptera* authors influenced the drafters of the *Svea Rike* exhibition. *SR*, p. 8.

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