

SETTING THE FRAMES

NATIONS, CIVIL SOCIETY, DISCIPLINES AND PROFESSIONALS DEFINING NATIONAL MUSEUMS

26-28 February 2007, Linköping University, Sweden

End of call date: 15 December 2006

This three-day conference is the first in a series bringing together current and recent PhD students and senior scholars. Application for participation is open for all disciplines doing research on the historical and contemporary dynamics surrounding National Museums. The program and series is presented on www.namu.se.

SETTING THE FRAMES is part of the program *Making National Museums: Comparing institutional arrangements, narrative scope and cultural integration* (NaMu), funded by Marie Curie Conferences and Training Courses. The Marie Curie Conferences & Training Courses are one of the four so-called Host-driven actions aimed at supporting research networks, research organisations and enterprises. The specific objective is to bring together researchers with a different level of experience.

The NaMu programme will form a new departure for understanding and working with the diversity of museum institution in Europe by bringing the multidisciplinary field of museum and heritage studies together with a sharp and comparative focus on national museums. The purpose of the programme is to develop the tools, concepts and organisational resources necessary for training researchers, investigating and comparing the major public structure of national museums, responding to challenges of globalisation, European integration, and new media. This will be achieved by a series of conferences providing a venue for younger scholars and eminent researchers from Europe to gather and develop the multidisciplinary competence necessary to understand and compare the dynamics of national museums in a framework of broader studies of historical culture and identity politics. The full programme of six consecutive workshops is presented on the website www.namu.se.

The first conference will work under the heading "Setting the Frames", denoting the work of refining the comparative scheme that is presented below. Cultural, archaeological, art, natural and technological museums might be part of forming a national museum in each country.

Participation can be granted on the following conditions to one or the whole series of workshops:

a) A motivation indicating the applicant's research interest and ability to contribute and benefit to the workshop(s)

b) Suggestions for papers that relate to the comparative design but might deal with a variety of empirical questions such as:

- How can we understand and define the national museum concept? How has the concept been understood and defined by different actors in the past? What historical, political and cultural contexts are relevant to the creation of national museums?
- How are politicians, the public sphere, university disciplines and civil society negotiating the concept of National Museum in different nations? Different groups of actors and users might stand for

different defining processes through both intentions and practices. What historical changes can be identified? How can their role in the broader historical culture be assessed?

■ How could the creation of and narration within National Museums be read as performative acts, texts, visual and architectural statements and discourses?

Comparative Design

The theoretical issues to be considered at this stage of formation of a multidisciplinary research field are directly related to making the above comparative questions operational: What methodology is relevant, required and operative to map and compare national museums and assess their role in the public sphere? How can the comparative scheme and research ambition be designed to capture different museum traditions and different nation-building processes to lay the foundation for a fruitful comparison?

1. A national museum may be a single building hosting something labelled national museum or perhaps a cluster of national museums of culture, art and natural histories. The different ways of organising the form and content of national public display is in itself the first of the comparative questions raised: What forces and intentions are materialised in the institutional division of labour between national museums? How are cultural transfer and transnational exchanges part of the design?

2. The second comparative question is related to the content of the narratives presented by the national museums: what political order and what values are legitimised? Who are presented as actors in the formation of the nation, what "we" in terms of territory, class, gender and ethnicity etcetera forms the proper national community? What is the destiny of the people?

3. The third question has to do with the results: What is the place of the national museum in the culture at large? The question will be answered in terms of visitor figures, by analysing its place in the public sphere and by assessing how exhibitions work at a reception level. To what extent is the narrative working its way successfully in the public sphere? Does it resonance in old dominant traditions stabilising and legitimising the present order? Does it present new programmes trying to invoke a specific agenda and a yet not established viewpoint of the past in order to create a new future?

Among the keynote speakers are professors Tony Bennett and Stefan Berger.

More information on the website, www.namu.se. Send application by registering at www.namu.se and submit an abstract of 1-3 pages to joakim.andersson@isak.liu.se before 15 December 2006. Admittance will be decided before 10 January.

Grants for accepted participants will cover travel costs and accommodation at the conference.

The following workshops work under the headings:

2. **Shaping the national museum: Historical studies of the making of national museums.** Museum studies, University of Leicester, 18-20 June 2007

3. **European national museums in a global world.** Department of culture studies and oriental languages, University of Oslo, Norway, 12-14 November 2007

4. **Comparing European national museums: territories, nation-building and change.** Linköping University, Sweden, 25-27 February 2008

5. **National museums in a technological Europe.** Museum studies, University of Leicester, 16-18 June 2008

6. **Concluding conference: European national museums encountering a globalized culture.** Department of culture studies and oriental languages, University of Oslo, Norway, 17-19 November 2008

Norrköping 1 December 2006,

Professor Peter Aronsson (co-ordinator), Culture Studies, Linköpings universitet
Professor Simon Knell, Museum Studies, University of Leicester
Professor Arne Bugge Amundsen, Culture Studies, Oslo Universitet