

Swedish Archaeology in the Twenty-First Century

The Necessity of a (self-) Critical Dialogue

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Come gather 'round people wherever you roam
and admit that the waters around you have grown
and accept it that soon you'll be drenched to the bone.
If your time to you is worth savin' then you better start swimmin'
or you'll sink like a stone for the times they are a-changin'.
(Bob Dylan 1963)

In this paper it is argued that the rapid changes that have taken place within Swedish archaeology during the last decades can be discussed under the headings of structural, economical, public and theoretical changes and problems. It is also stressed that, taken together, these problems constitute a serious “crisis” in contemporary Swedish archaeology. So far, discussions seem to have focused mainly on the structural problems, while the economical, public and theoretical problems have been more or less neglected. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to i) discuss the structural, economical, public and theoretical changes that have taken place in Swedish archaeology during the last decades and point to both the problems and the possibilities created by them, and ii) discuss the present structural, economical and public problems from a theoretical perspective by stressing that these problems can, at least partly, be solved within the framework of an awareness of the (self-) critical possibilities inherent in some of the theoretical reasoning of the last decades.

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INTRODUCTION

There are different opinions concerning the condition of contemporary Swedish archaeology and its capacity to orientate itself in the twenty-first century. Those who believe that everything is in order, that everything is developing in a positive direction, that the problems that exist will solve themselves, and that Swedish archaeology can approach the

new century with optimism, can perhaps stop reading at this point. The following text namely will argue that contemporary Swedish archaeology has serious problems and is in a state of “crisis”. It will also be argued that Swedish archaeology is in desperate need of a (self-) critical dialogue concerning its future.

In his book *Introduktion till Arkeologin* (Introduction to Archaeology) from 1969 Carl-Axel Moberg stressed that Swedish archaeology was in a state of “crisis” due to, among other things, i) the widening gap among archaeology’s different fields, i.e. academia, museums and heritage management, ii) the fact that more persons are educated than there is a need for in the archaeological sector, iii) a situation whereby archaeological research is neglected on the behalf of education and mediation, iv) the fact that new theoretical trends within international archaeology (e.g. New Archeology) seem to be neglected, and v) the lack of dialogue between the advocates of different theoretical schools, e.g. New- and Cultural-historical archaeologists. Moberg argued that the way out of this “crisis” can be found in a dialogue among archaeologists with different interests and approaches to archaeology (Moberg 1969:15-22).

During the decades that have passed since Moberg’s book was published, only one of the problems inherent in the “crisis” discussed by him has been solved, namely the integration of parts of the arguments of New Archeology into Swedish archaeology. The other problems are still not solved and in fact have intensified. They have become more serious as a consequence of archaeology’s structural development and the general tendencies, opinions and changes within Swedish society. Thus, the “crisis” of Swedish archaeology and Moberg’s call for a dialogue are as relevant today as they were back in 1969. During the 1990s there was an increasing awareness that the division of archaeology, and its activities, into separate and partly isolated sectors could be conceived of as an identity problem both for the discipline and for its practitioners. From time to time this awareness came forward in texts that, with varying strength, described the structural situation as a “crisis”, or at least as a serious problem (cf. Randsborg 1990; Baudou 1991; Kyhlberg 1991, 1995; Larsson

& Rudebeck 1993; Gillberg & Karlsson 1994; Riksantikvarieämbetet 1995; Rudebeck 1996; Kristiansen 1996; Lindblad 1999). In these texts the structural problems of Swedish archaeology are primarily conceived of as a consequence of archaeology’s expansion, that is, the “crisis” is a consequence of the exceptional growth of archaeology (cf. Kristiansen 1996). As we shall see, it can be argued that this is a limited and partly simplified view of the present situation, since there are also other conditions that influence the contemporary situation. The “crisis” can be said to be even deeper than hitherto noticed in the discussions, since today Swedish archaeology is strongly influenced by the new socio-economical conditions of the 1990s. At the same time, for various reasons, it has great difficulties in approaching and in integrating the present theoretical discussions that exist within the discipline on an international level, that is, post-processualism. Swedish archaeology has also serious problems when it comes to the integration of the huge public interest that is directed towards the discipline, its methods, and towards the past. So far, these conditions have been more or less neglected when discussing the “crisis” of Swedish archaeology (for exceptions see Welinder 1991, 1995; Gillberg & Karlsson 1994; Burström 1997, 1999; Larsson 1999). This situation is unsatisfactory, and against this background the aim of the present text is therefore to:

- i) discuss the structural, economical, public and theoretical changes that have taken place in Swedish archaeology during the last decades, and point to both the problems and the possibilities created by them
- ii) discuss the present structural, economical and public problems from a theoretical perspective by stressing that these problems can, at least partly, be solved within the framework of an awareness of the possibilities inherent in the theoretical reasoning of the last decades

THE STRUCTURAL PROBLEMS OF SWEDISH ARCHAEOLOGY

Swedish archaeology has expanded during the entire twentieth century, but the most marked phase of expansion occurred during the period 1965-1995. During these decades Swedish archaeology changed rapidly from a handicraft to a full-scale industry. From an archaeology in which research, management and education were held together in relatively small social groups, there developed an archaeology in which the aims and activities were carried out on an industrial scale. During the period this expansion occurred simultaneously in all the archaeological fields, since the economical resources increased steadily in all of them. The number of students as well as the number of exams increased at the departments of archaeology, and the number of permanently employed as well as the number of archaeological excavation-projects increased in the fields of heritage management and museums. Thus there was, at least in the beginning of the period, a development whereby all fields evolved parallel and in some kind of harmony. For instance, the "county museum reform" of the late 1970s led to the creation of new museum bodies all over Sweden and to career and employment opportunities for a large number of archaeology students educated in the 1970s and early 1980s.

At the start of the 1980s the discrepancy among the fields increased due to a higher degree of specialisation and the fact that more people were educated than there was room for on a permanent-employment basis within heritage management, academia and the museums. However, this problem was partly concealed by the fact that the infra-structural development of the Swedish society during the 1980s and 1990s also led to a relatively large number of rescue-excavation projects that did demand a large number of trained archaeologists. It can be noted, however, that most of the employment was of a seasonal character. Today there are over 1000 students

at the archaeological departments of the universities in Sweden. The question is, how will these persons spend their archaeological lives when they have finished their education?

It is no wonder that the rapid development during the end of the twentieth century and the structural changes that arose from it, led to both friction and problems among the archaeological agents as well as among the different bodies of archaeology. Elisabeth Rudebeck has stressed that the fields of heritage management, museums and academia seem to have different opinions and expectations regarding the university education of new archaeologists, and that academic archaeology, in some cases, does not want to function solely as a place for the training of field-archaeologists since there is also a responsibility to archaeological research, etc. (Rudebeck 1996). Kristian Kristiansen has stressed that the consequences of archaeology's development during the last decades have not yet been fully recognised within the academic sphere of archaeology. He argues that, in general, the archaeological education that is given at the universities does not correspond to the fact that most archaeologists work within the field of heritage management; that is, the content of the education does not correspond to archaeology's new structures and functions (Kristiansen 1996). This argument can, however, be reversed; that is, archaeology's new structures and functions do not correspond to the education, and to the theoretical discussions, at the universities. This at the same time as it can be stressed that the archaeological education does not correspond to the fact that most archaeology students will never have a chance to work within the archaeological fields.

THE ECONOMICAL PROBLEMS OF SWEDISH ARCHAEOLOGY

As we can see from the development of Swedish archaeology during the period 1965-1995, the discipline is intimately connected to the general economical development of the

Swedish society. In the end of the 1980s and onwards Sweden's national economy ran into serious trouble. One means of trying to solve these problems during the 1990s has been the policies of new liberalism, put forward and practised in governmental position by the Social Democrats as well as by the middle and right-wing parties. Since the archaeological fields of heritage management, academia and in most cases the museums are firmly connected to the state, and in a monopoly situation, none of them has been spared from the new economical/political conditions of the 1990s.

So far, it seems as if it is the museums that have survived best during the 1990s and the new economical/political climate. But perhaps this is an illusion since the staff of most (county) museums consist of a large number of curators working under the auspices of state-directed activities for unemployed persons.

Concerning the heritage-management field, the National Heritage Board (Sw. *Riksantikvarieämbetet*) has been reorganised and partly reduced during the 1990s. At the same time its regional rescue-excavation offices, as well as the heritage-management bodies within the county administrations, have to act under new laws that encourage competition between different actors in the heritage-management market. As a consequence, and in line with the new-liberal ideology, the monopoly of the National Heritage Board has been broken and the amount of free enterprise is steadily growing within the heritage-management field (cf. Kuhlberg 1991, 1995; SOU 1992:137; Petersson 1994).

Since the mid-1990s the academic field of archaeology, together with other disciplines within the Humanities, has witnessed general governmental decisions concerning the Swedish educational policy that can be classified as catastrophes. This is the case, for instance, with the new rules for admitting students to the Ph.D. education and concerning the present educational policy that

favours natural science and technology above the disciplines within the Humanities (Riksdagsbeslut 1997/98:46; SOU 1998:128; Karlsson 1998a, 1999). For the academic field of archaeology, the above situation means for instance that a larger part of the research carried out at the university departments in the form of research projects, tends to become more dependent upon economical resources from external (state) foundations (this includes the financing of research in the form of Ph.D. theses carried out by post-graduate students). There is an obvious risk that the boards of these foundations will primarily support mainstream research projects focusing on traditional archaeological questions, while they will be more restrictive towards research projects directed at the theoretical dimensions of archaeology. The support from these foundations has increased during the last years, and at present there are perhaps more economical resources than ever for archaeological research in Sweden. Due to this circumstance there is an obvious risk that archaeological research in the future will lose its dynamic as well as its pluralism. As will be seen below this circumstance is especially problematic within archaeology on account of the theoretical development, and the resulting shift of interest, which has taken place within the discipline during the last decades. The question is also whether it is the money or the archaeological research that will come into focus when archaeological departments apply for economical resources from these foundations. One can also wonder what the (student) interest in an archaeological education will look like in a few years, when the full effects of the present educational policy are felt.

THE PUBLIC PROBLEMS OF SWEDISH ARCHAEOLOGY

As mentioned earlier the rapid expansion of Swedish archaeology and its growing specialisation during the twentieth century, and especially since the 1960s, have led to

problems in the relationship between professional archaeology and the interested public. It has been stressed that there is a widening gap between professional archaeology and its public. At the same time it must be noted that this situation seems to be intimately connected to general tendencies within Western society. Since the seventeenth century Western society has developed in line with the “modern-project” and its trust in an epistemology of logic, rationality, objectivity and professionalism (Foucault 1990; Toulmin 1990). During the twentieth century this trust has been exposed within the frameworks of a quantitative and positivist epistemology, and since the 1960s archaeology is no exception from this trend. This development has created a general and profound gap between experts and non-experts which is characteristic of the late twentieth century. However, in the case of archaeology it is paradoxical that this gap is growing at the same time as the public interest in archaeology, its methods and in the past is rising. The actual gap, and the isolated expert position of archaeologists, is characterised by the fact that the basic idea that archaeology has something to learn from people outside the discipline has faded away during the late twentieth century (Welinder 1991; Burström 1997). It is interesting to note that this idea, and the dialectics of knowledge that follows from it, was inherent in and formed an important part of archaeology/antiquarianism from the seventeenth century up to the 1960s (Burström 1997; Karlsson & Nilsson, forthcoming). However, today it seems as if the basic idea of a dialectics of knowledge between archaeology and the public has disintegrated as a consequence of archaeology’s professionalism and its epistemological (positivistic) standpoints, and of the isolation and supremacy of knowledge that followed from it. The relation to the public seems to be viewed as a one-way communication, whereby the public is supposed to consume the archaeological knowledge in a

rather passive manner, for instance at museums (Burström 1999; Karlsson & Nilsson, forthcoming). Thus, on the general level there is a dichotomy between the professional archaeologists and the interested public, and the public knowledge does not seem to be regarded as a resource for professional archaeologists any more (cf. Larsson 1999). Of course, there are exceptions from this general trend. At some places the public is, for instance, actively encouraged to use the museum and its archives as a resource, and at other places there exists a co-operation between the professionals and various interested regional associations (cf. Althén *et al.* 1999). The point is that the professionals always construct the frameworks for these activities, and they are still carried out under the dichotomy between professionals and the public. At the same time there is no general plan within Swedish archaeology for the integration of the public interest and the public knowledge at a national level. In most cases it seems as if this interest and the activities that it leads to are condemned by professional archaeology. This is the case for instance when it manifest itself as Viking festivals or as texts/books produced by regionally situated amateur-historians, etc. For various reasons this is a serious situation, since at different levels it is intimately connected to themes such as the public trust in our activities, the democratic dimension of our activities, and the development of the archaeological knowledge (Østigård 1999).

THE THEORETICAL PROBLEMS OF SWEDISH ARCHAEOLOGY

On a general level the theoretical problem consists of the fact that Swedish archaeology has difficulties adopting theoretical reasonings that are widespread in international archaeology since the 1980s, that is, post-processualism (Olsen 1997; Carlsson 1998; Karlsson 1998b-c; Jensen & Karlsson 1998). Despite this, it can be concluded that during the last decades Swedish archaeology has

witnessed an increasing awareness of the fact that archaeology and our interpretations and understanding of the past are intimately connected to the present socio-political context. In other words there exists a dialectics between the socio-political context and the archaeological discipline, its interpretations and its activities (cf. Jensen 1988; Burström 1989, 1993, 1996; Varenius 1995; Jensen & Karlsson 1998; Herschend 1999). This awareness is a product of processual, Marxist and post-processual influences.

Concerning the post-processual archaeology of the last fifteen years, it is important to note that it does not let itself be conceptualised under a collective heading since it contains a broad spectrum of facets and approaches. However, within the directions of critical- and post-structural archaeology there exist epistemological and ontological arguments and questions that are more or less common to both approaches. This applies, for instance, to the following arguments: there is no original meaning to be recovered from the past, since the meaning ascribed to the past and its remains is partly dependent upon the present interpreter and his/her context; archaeological interpretations of the past can never be a value-free and objective to their nature; as archaeologists we need to decide which role we want archaeology, and our interpretations, to have in the present; archaeological knowledge does not accumulate since it is dependent upon the present socio-political context; there is an intimate dialectic between the archaeological interpreter and the interpreted material culture; as archaeologists we must deconstruct the dichotomies between subject-object, present-past, theory-method, public-professional archaeologists, science-society etc. (cf. Shanks & Tilley 1987a, 1987b; for an introduction to the post-processual argumentation see also Olsen 1997; Jensen & Karlsson 1998). Even if this argumentation primarily has developed and been established at the university departments in the Anglo-American context, it has

also had a limited impact within Swedish archaeology (*ibid.*). Today the post-processual argumentation and questions connected to it are an integrated part of discussions and education at the archaeological departments of the Swedish universities. So far, however, this argumentation has been limited to the academic arena. The archaeological fields and activities outside the universities, such as heritage management and museums, have namely been quite unaffected by post-processual arguments. I will return to this below, but in short this situation has so far partly widened the gap between academia on the one hand and the other archaeological fields on the other. It has also, as mentioned earlier, led some commentators to the conclusion that the archaeological education given at the universities does not correspond to the fact that most archaeologists work within the field of heritage management. In other words this underlines the opinion that the archaeological education at the universities encourages philosophical abstractions that do not have any relevance for the fields of heritage management and museums.

However, the situation is perhaps not as simple as that, and the actual argument can be reversed. On the international level the content of the discussions dealing with archaeological theory has changed direction during the last fifteen years, and post-processual views are now, at least partly, well established within Anglo-American archaeology. This at the same time as the younger, largely non-established, archaeological generation of Swedish archaeology is more or less affected by post-processual arguments. When analysing the post-graduate archaeological theses (Ph.D. and Licentiate) presented at Swedish universities during the 1990s, one finds that there is a growing interest in post-processual arguments and questions (see for instance, Burström 1991; Hjørungdal 1991; Magnusson-Staaf 1994, 1996; Olausson 1995; Artelius 1996; Gustafsson 1996; Johansen 1997; Hegardt 1997;

Kaliff 1997; Karlsson 1997, 1998b; Arwill-Nordbladh 1998; Cassel 1998; Gillberg 1999; Göransson 1999; Jensen 1999). This interest is also present in ongoing Ph.D. works, in a large number of BA and Master's papers, and in a growing number of anthologies and articles in journals. This situation underlines the argument that the post-processual argumentation is on its way to becoming established within Swedish archaeology. The theoretical problem of Swedish archaeology consists just of this fact. As we have seen above, it has been argued by some writers that academic archaeology does not correspond to the archaeology that is carried on within the fields of heritage management and museums. It seems as if this discrepancy consists at least partly of the fact that post-processual rhetoric is a part of the archaeological education – a rhetoric that, at least partly, fosters archaeological identities that do not correspond to the contemporary identities in the fields of heritage management and museums.

The situation is further complicated by a theoretical gap, as well as a gap in the direction of interests, between post-processual-influenced archaeologists that are on their way to becoming established on the one hand, and archaeologists holding positions on the boards of foundations etc. on the other hand. Often the latter do not understand the point of the meta-archaeological questions which the former want to analyse and discuss. There are also other dimensions of the theoretical problem, that are directly linked to the structural problem, that further complicate the situation. For instance, there is the fact that the budgets at the university departments of archaeology are becoming more and more dependent upon successful applications to various foundations, since the direct state support for archaeological education is declining. As mentioned above, the risk in this situation is that the foundations will primarily support mainstream archaeology, while projects directed at post-processual questions will be unsupported.

THE POSSIBILITIES OF SWEDISH ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

It was argued above that Swedish archaeology has problems when it comes to its structures, economical conditions, relationship to the public, and openness towards contemporary archaeological theory. Taken together these problems constitute a serious "crisis" within Swedish archaeology. However, and this is important, there are also possibilities inherent in the dark picture sketched out above.

Approaches to structural and economical problems

It can be stated that, when trying to solve the structural and the economical problems of Swedish archaeology, the gap between archaeology's different fields must be bridged. Undoubtedly, one step in such a direction was taken when the National Heritage Board in the mid-1990s decided to situate "research co-ordinators" at different archaeological departments and in different regions throughout Sweden (Flodin 1999). These co-ordinators try to organise and draw together the activities of the different fields of archaeology in the regions where they work. This approach has been successful, and one example of the fruitful achievements that are a consequence of this approach is the regional co-operation between archaeology's different fields in western Sweden. Here archaeologists within the fields of academia, museums, the western branch of the National Heritage Board (i.e. the rescue-excavation office), and county antiquarians etc. have joined with others around common projects, a common theoretical education for archaeologists working within heritage management, and a common journal (*in Situ*). In connection with successful fund-raising undertaken by the Department of Archaeology at Göteborg University, some large projects are also partly drawn into this framework. At a regional level the participants in

these projects are namely connected to archaeology's different fields. For instance, it has been possible to give temporary project-employment to people ordinarily employed in the heritage-management field and at museums within the framework of these projects. This means that, during the time they are employed within the projects, they are able to finish their doctoral theses – theses grounded in experiences and material brought together within their ordinary working field (Artelius 1999). In this way a very interesting connection and co-operation among the different fields of archaeology has been created.

Despite this positive regional development, which seems to be part of the solution to the structural and economical problems, there are at least three points that must be raised: i) The projects initiated so far, which thus serve as bridges between the archaeological fields, are on a general level directed towards the mainstream of archaeological questions. ii) As a consequence of this, there are (at least so far) no projects connected to this context that are grounded explicitly in the latest theoretical development (i.e. post-processualism). iii) There are (at least so far) no general discussions of the relationship between archaeology and its public within this context. This means that the positive, regional co-operation among archaeology's different fields that is taking place in western Sweden primarily is approaching the structural and economical problems of archaeology.

Approaches to public and theoretical problems

It can be stated that, when trying to solve the public and the theoretical problems, the gap between archaeology and its public as well as between the explicit interest in post-processualism and the rest of archaeology must be bridged. This at the same time as the (self-) critical possibilities inherent in post-processualism ought to be accepted.

It has already been stated that the arguments of post-processualism have had diffi-

culties in becoming accepted outside the university departments. One of the reasons that the post-processual arguments have not been able to influence the activities of heritage management, museums etc., can be found in the theoretical fixation inherent in most of post-processualism. This fixation has, for instance, led to an unfortunate neglect of discussions directed at archaeological methodology. Since most post-processual approaches stress that the original meaning of the past is beyond our present reach, the need for most archaeological methods aimed at a reconstruction of the past has been questioned (cf. Shanks & Tilley 1987a, 1987b). Of course, archaeological methods are dependent on, and a reflection of, epistemological and ontological views immanent in both the societal context and in archaeology. However, from a post-processual standpoint this does not necessarily mean that it is enough to state this circumstance, and to argue, over and over again, that processualism is fixated by archaeological methods. Even if self-reflection is a necessary ingredient in the post-processual argumentation, it is not enough to view method as synonymous with text-analysis, self-reflection and critique as has sometimes been proposed (cf. Shanks & Tilley 1987a, 1987b; Karlsson 1998b). This is mainly because it is not necessary to limit post-processualism in this way. Against the background of post-processual epistemology and ontology, there are namely huge, and so far mostly unexplored, possibilities to develop other/new reflexive, pluralistic and "open" methodological approaches – approaches that fit better with the post-processual theoretical arguments than the methods used in contemporary archaeology. This is the case also concerning field methods. This means that theory, if there is no dichotomy between theory and method, must also make a practical turn. Abstract arguments must be applied in practice, and a methodology must be developed that does not work within the framework of the dichotomies between past

and present, theory and method, interpreter and interpreted, subject and object, (archaeological) expert and the public, and science and society (Hodder 1999; see also Holtorf, forthcoming; Karlsson, forthcoming, and Holtorf & Karlsson, forthcoming). This is necessary, or at least desirable, for two main reasons: i) if post-processualism shall be able to reach beyond the academic lecture rooms. ii) if the potential inherent in the post-processual arguments, and in its methodology, shall be put to practice.

In one sense it seems as if this methodological turn is exactly what post-processualism has been going through since the beginning of the 1990s. Good exponents of this are Ian Hodder's discussion of a hermeneutic excavation practice (Hodder 1991, 1992) and Christopher Tilley's arguments for a phenomenological stance when trying to understand the past/present landscape (Tilley 1994), as well as his arguments for a more "open" excavation policy (Tilley 1989). Some actual examples of this "methodological turn" consist of the claims for a reflexive and fluid methodology at the contemporary excavation of Çatalhöyük (Hamilton 1996; Hodder 1997, 1998, 1999; Thomas 1996), and Barbara Bender's, Sue Hamilton's and Christopher Tilley's "phenomenological" directed excavations at Bodmin Moor (Bender, Hamilton & Tilley 1997). All of these post-processual methodological approaches are approaching field situations, but there are also other methodological approaches that, for instance, are directed at the mediation, and the accessibility of, archaeological research results (cf. Holtorf 1998a, 1998b).

In this context the reasoning and practice of a post-processual methodology are interesting for various reasons. Among other things, against the background of the post-processual epistemology and ontology such a methodology creates possibilities for a transcendence of the dichotomy between archaeological experts and the interested

public. For instance, within the framework of such a methodology interested groups and associations can be invited to contribute their knowledge in a more organised and profound way than is the case today (Burstrom 1999). Since there are just few examples of a post-processual methodology it is, of course, hard to say what it can lead to if put to practice in Sweden, but when discussing the theoretical and public problems of archaeology this seems to be an important path. Of course, this does not mean that archaeology on a general level must adopt post-processual arguments, standpoints and methodologies. However, when trying to deconstruct the public and theoretical problems of Swedish archaeology there ought to be a place both for the post-processual interest that is on its way to becoming established, and for experiments with post-processual methodologies within the framework of the (practical) activities of heritage management and museums.

A general approach to the "crisis"

It should be noted that the (self-) critical arguments of post-processualism are not only valuable when approaching the public and theoretical problems inherent in Swedish archaeology. Perhaps these arguments are strongest when acting on a general level, contributing to (self-) critical discussions concerning the future of Swedish archaeology and concerning the aims of archaeology: Why archaeology, and for what (political) purposes and what (political) aims? This means that they can act as a (self-) critical and constructive injection to contemporary Swedish archaeology – an injection that can contribute to a situation whereby Swedish archaeologists first become aware of the "crisis" within the discipline, and then, gather to discuss and try to solve it. Directed in this way, the (self-) critical arguments of post-processualism can be put to action in a very practical manner, fostering a dialogue and thus contributing in a constructive way to the future identities and developments of Swedish archaeology.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Against the background of the different problems (i.e. structural, economical, public and theoretical problems) presented above, there is no doubt that Swedish archaeology is in need of (self-) critical and future-directed discussions. This since the discipline is in a state of “crisis”.

It has been argued that the activities taking place within the framework of the regional archaeological co-operation in western Sweden are at least partly successful when coping with the structural and economical problems. At the same time it was stressed that, for various reasons, this co-operation is limited to its nature; it is anchored in a regional context, and it does not (at least so far) include ways to cope with archaeology’s public and theoretical problems.

It has also been shown that, if put to practice, the arguments and methods of post-processualism – i.e. (self-) criticism and a deconstruction of the dichotomy between archaeology and its public – can constitute a means to solve the public and theoretical problems inherent in Swedish archaeology. In accordance with the (self-) critical claim inherent in most of post-processualism, this theoretical approach can also act on a general level, contributing to (self-) critical discussions about the future of Swedish archaeology and about the aims of archaeology: Why archaeology, and for what (political) purposes and what (political) aims? Ironically these questions have been constant points in the post-processual agenda since the middle of the 1980s. Perhaps the time has come to take this agenda, or at least some of its critical dimensions, seriously. If taken seriously, the post-processual argumentation and its methodology can perhaps be a creative way to solve the structural, economical, public and theoretical problems described above. This since these arguments present us with (self-) critical questions that we ought to discuss and answer.

The (self-) critical questions mentioned above are of course good starting points, but the next step is to create various forums (journals, projects, seminars, conferences etc.) for serious discussions – discussions in which people from different fields of Swedish archaeology can take part in the necessary dialogue concerning the future identity/ies of Swedish archaeology. The outcome of these dialogues can be the formulation of a broader archaeological identity grounded in the necessity of (self-) criticism. An identity that makes archaeology (and an archaeological education) valuable also outside the archaeological fields. Perhaps it is the lack of dialogue that constitutes the real “crisis” in Swedish archaeology. Moberg did point in this direction over 30 years ago, but the dialogue has not started yet. This at the same time as the “crisis” has become deeper due to contextual circumstances. Perhaps it is high time that we start the dialogue, since the only thing that is completely clear is that if we neglect the (self-) critical dialogue the future of Swedish archaeology in the twenty-first century looks quite dark. Therefore, “Come gather ‘round people wherever you roam...”

English revised by Laura Wrang.

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