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Blockbuster exhibitions

The Future of Swedish Museums?

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Abstract

With the heavy cutbacks worldwide in the museum field, museums need to find other methods to finance their operations (Black, 2012). The survival of museums depends if the audiences come. If no one visits the museum, then what good can the 'big and expensive institutions' contribute to the society (Wäre, 2002, p.271)?

Opinion on what museums are about differs depending on what values the one you are talking with holds (Hall, 2011). With many trends and countertrends, my interest was caught by the discussion of inclusionary and participatory museum, i.e. the social museum, and the trend of mounting blockbuster exhibitions. While at first glance, these two phenomena seem to contradict one another, I wanted to investigate if it might not be possible to merge them, such that the blockbuster exhibition concept could work as a means to achieving the goal of social museums. The social museum should work for the good of society and its population, and hence should include and welcome everyone (Heumann Gurian, 2006). According to the guiding ethos of a social museum, museums should promote cross-cultural understanding, as well as building bridges of apprehension between diverse groups in society (Sandell, 2007).

A short definition on the word 'blockbuster exhibition' could be an exhibition that attracts a lot of people to see it and thus generates profit. However, one has to look beyond the numbers blockbusters represent: profit, audience, marketing, etc. During my research I have reached the conclusion that if a blockbuster is well made, it can not only contribute to the budget and audience size, but can also add educational value. A well-made exhibition, regardless of whether it is a blockbuster or not, makes the visitor leave the museum happy and content. What is more important, a well-made exhibition makes the visitor leave the museum with new knowledge.

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1.1 Introduction

The aim

My intention with this dissertation is to understand how the blockbuster concept affects Swedish museums. I aim to research the situation museums stands in today with respects to 'blockbusters.' I will primarily look into how the blockbuster concept can benefit the social museum, a theory developed by Elaine Heuman Gurian.

It is my conviction that we have only seen the beginning of the blockbuster wave in Sweden, and more is to come. In North America blockbuster exhibition have been produced since the late 1960s ('Art history and the "Blockbuster" Exhibition', 1986). However, 'the blockbuster show as we know it is a relatively recent phenomenon' (Barker, 1999, p. 127). In Sweden blockbuster exhibitions have only been put up during a period of 5-10 years (Wetterskog, 2012).

The inspiration of writing about this topic came while I was doing my internship at the Museum of World Culture (MWC) in Gothenburg, a museum that is a part of the organization National Museums of World Culture (NMWC). Other museums that also belong to NMWC are: The Museum of Ethnography, The Museums of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Antiquities (MMNEA) and the Museum of Far East Antiquities (MFEA). The four museums of the NMWC are assigned by the Swedish Government 'the task of exhibiting culture of the world and bringing it to life. The task also includes the promotion of interdisciplinary knowledge formation and new ways of meeting the public.' (ALEMF, n.d).

During my internship, the MWC was under a large re-organization, where the exhibition policy was changed drastically. From producing temporary civil society debate exhibitions that were closely associated to the mission statement and local spirit, the museum was now going to set up fewer but bigger exhibitions, due to the cutbacks that the organization was struggling with. My impression of the direction given from the board of directors was that the MWC needed to be more profitable. This was distressing news for

the staff at the MWC. At the top of the discussion list, during the end of my internship, were discussions about how big the damage would impact be on the future of the MWC, including whether the museum would: begin to take admission fees; become a more profitable museum; as well as start to execute blockbuster exhibitions. When talking about blockbuster exhibitions, the staff would repeatedly refer to the *Terracotta army* exhibition, held in 2010 in Stockholm, which became more successful than was originally expected. Furthermore, frequent reference was often made to the *Inca* exhibition that was produced in the same exhibition hall and with similar concept not long after the *Terracotta army* exhibition. However, even though the expectation of visitor number was half of what the Terracotta army exhibition accomplished, in reality even fewer visitors than were expected attended the *Inca* exhibition. In the opinion of the museum staff at the MWC, repeating the same phenomenon of putting up one big scale exhibition after another in Gothenburg would not have the same impact. One reason is that the audience in Gothenburg differs from the one in Stockholm. Nevertheless, from what I understand the NMWC have found a concept they believe in, and that is to do exhibitions about well-known themes, such as world treasures, which will capture many visitors, and thus hopefully become popular and profitable.

Problem statement

With heavy cutbacks, the Swedish museums are facing a challenge to keep up with delivering the same quality on exhibitions, programs, etc. as they have always done. The implication is that they are forced to put more focus on the economic situation to make the institutions' activities more efficiently (Lord & Lord, 2009). One response to this situation is the blockbuster phenomenon (Barrett, 2011): exhibitions that generate great profits, due to many sold tickets among other sources, such as merchandise sales, etc. Hence there are many discussions of the danger museums are facing of becoming pro-profit organizations.

This dissertation intends to investigate how blockbuster exhibitions influence the Swedish museum mission and the social role they have. How can the blockbuster concept benefit Swedish museums and their audience? What arguments are there for and against the blockbuster concept? Given the strong

focus on museums' economic well-being, how will the blockbuster concept affect the question of inclusion, and the social museum? I want to see whether blockbusters can be a solution to attract a broad audience and the economic challenges museum are faced with today, seeing as it seems to be the most discussed scheme that has been put forward against the 'inclusive museum'. My primary question asked in the dissertation is:

Can blockbuster exhibitions be a means to fulfilling the aims of inclusive and participative museums, i.e., the social museum?

History of museums

The cabinet of curiosities

The history of museums begins with the cabinet of curiosities, which was for the eyes of the prince, and a few select individuals (Heumann Gurian, 2006; Barrett, 2011). The content in the cabinet represented the cosmos, and was for people that were culturally trained and were considered to know how to decipher the relation between the objects and the whole. The collection, the content of which was both of *naturalia* and *artificialia* origins, included botanical and zoological specimens as well as artworks (Abt, 2010, p.123). In the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries the collection was exhibited in the princely gallery, which was richly decorated, and 'often featured an iconographic program', which would glorify the prince by comparing him with Apollo, 'a bearer of the gifts of peace and the arts of civilization' (Wallach, 2002, p.122). Many times the galleries were used in diplomatic visits, to display the power of the prince (Abt, 2010; Wallach, 2002).

By the time of the French revolution, the objects, which once belonged to the prince, were used to shape the nation. In the use of shaping the nation only the primary topic needed to be changed. The experience evoked by the content was unaffected. The arrangement of the objects, i.e. the exhibition strategy, remained the same, where some of the objects were replaced to better express the spirit of the nation. The pre-modern museum wanted 'to create surprise or provoke wonder' (Bennett, 1995, p.2).

The museum in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century

Prior to the establishment of the many museums in Great Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it was popular among the British citizens to go to the world fairs. The fairs in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were seeking to educate people about the British imperial superiority (Bennett, 1995). During this time education and entertainment were understood to be different things (Greenhalgh, 1989). Paul Greenhalgh (1989, p.86) states: 'not only was the relation between education and pleasure problematic, but also the boundaries of what properly constituted pleasure'. Thus in the end the audience abandoned the fairs, given that their visits were regulated by being educated during their leisure time instead of simply enjoying the fairs (Greenhalgh, 1989). Lessons learned from the Great Exhibition in 1851, and other world fairs around that time, influenced the numerous initiated museums to work towards a direction of education that was simultaneously entertaining (Bennett, 1995; Greenhalgh, 1989). The Great Exhibition, nevertheless, opened up the doors for the audience, which resulted in increasing visitor numbers to the British Museum (Bennett, 1995, p. 71).

Concurrently as museums in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were established, the modern museum took shape (Bennett, 1995; Greenhalgh, 1989). The focus was to supply civic education, which was equally entertaining (Bennett, 1995; Greenhalgh, 1989). The significant indication of the state's change of attitude, regarding the policies that concerned the museum 'as an instrument of public education', was revealed in the opening of the South Kensington Museum in 1857 (Bennett, 1995, p. 71). With prolonged opening hours, lower admission fees, and exhibiting industrial-related displays, the newly opened museum was more visitor-friendly (ibid, p. 72). Instead of concentrating on objects solely, the museum started to increasingly focus on the audience. The museum began addressing the people as a public and as citizen, rather than to diminish them (ibid, p. 95). The main focus was, however, still on the objects. According to museologist Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (1989) public museums were shaped to work for three functions: the elite temple, democratic education and disciplinary society. The stay at the museum was still restricted in some ways (Bennett, 1995).

Museums today

In some museums, still, the structure and procedure remains the same as it was during the time at the prior turn of the century. Over the last hundred years there have been same reform demands of museums – to open up and make museums accessible to everyone, and to represent culture and values (Bennett, 1995). Once again, museums are facing a paradigm shift. It is an interesting time, which occurrence many in the museum field are monitoring and discussing this period of evolving functionality of modern museums. However, there is space to investigate how blockbuster concept affects Swedish museums' efficacy and social consequences, which I have not seen any signs of in my research. In addition to the paradigm shift, museums also face budget inconveniences, due to cut backs, which are on the account of the financial crisis in 2007 (Butler, 2012).

One trend that can be observed is the shift of convergence from the objects to the audience, which has caused the new movement to let the audience contribute and affect the activities that happen in the institution. Trends today are leaning towards the inclusive and participatory museum. The advent of technology has also made it easier for museums to create interactive exhibitions, giving the museum more tools to create an inclusionary environment. People who advocate this movement in one way or another, include Elaine Heumann Gurian, whom I will discuss further later on, as well as John Falk, Lynn Dierking, George Hein, and Nina Simon. Among other trends that can be sensed is the new wave of establishing museums with the intention to strengthen the nation and create an identity, which could be considered as a countertrend to the inclusive and participatory museum. For instance, this can be seen in countries that once belonged to the Soviet Union, and in China, where two to three museums are initiated every week (Janson, 2011; Janson, 2012b). Historically, it was important for museums to build an identity and administer the identity of the nation (Bennett, 1995). Today museums have problematized the concept of national museums (Sandahl, 2002). Yet, some tendencies indicate that many countries have begun to create national museums again (Janson, 2012b). These museums are incredibly profile, built to manifest its place and region (ibid). Thus at the same time as

some initiations are problematizing the construction of nationality through museum exhibitions, many other international museums are building national identities (ibid). However, this will not be discussed any further in this dissertation; while I do find it certainly interesting, it is a separate topic for further research.

A countertrend to the social museum, one could say, are the 'blockbuster exhibitions,' where the centre of attention is attracting a great audience, which may often also generate a big profit. In many of these blockbusters the focus is on the objects alone, and though the execution may be modern, grand and breath-taking by today's standard, it is only a disguise to hide the old exhibitions' pedagogical design: see, but not touch (Persson, 2012)!

The political climate

Compared to North America, where there are a lot of private museums and galleries which are pro-profit, the political climate in Sweden is different. The museums are non-profit organizations, and there are barely any private museums in this Scandinavian country. Most of the museums belong either to the state, the region or the municipality, and thus get governmental grants. Due to these circumstances, there are goals the museums are expected to reach as well as restrictions for the museums to take into consideration: what they may and may not do; what they can and cannot do. Museums need 'to satisfy diverse constituency demands' (Kotler & Kotler, 2000, p. 287). They have a responsibility towards the public, and there is a tacit agreement that museums have a moral standard to live up to, which prevents them from going across the border (Bennett, 1995). Museums in Sweden are supposed to serve the community. The means of how to do so are being discussed.

Ever since the political shift in Sweden, where the right wing coalition of conservatives and liberal parties has gained power in the politics, the climate has changed somewhat. It is understood that culture is expected to pay for itself. A seminar about sponsoring collaboration between museums and business world was arranged to illuminate information about how sponsoring could benefit both the cultural sector as well as the business world (Ministry

of Culture, 2011). In addition, many museums are facing the fact of economic cutbacks. What is happening in Sweden is not a unique situation. Museums worldwide are struggling to endure an environment of restrained resources (Black, 2012). In general, '[m]useums and galleries generate less of their own income than any of the other art forms' (ibid, p.4). They have realized that it is important to attract visitors, and museums' view of visitors is becoming more as of 'consumers and customers' (Barrett, 2011, p.56). Pressures on museums 'to become: "customer focused" and "commercially positive,"' are increasing (Kirchenblatt-Gimblett, 2002, p. 56). Jennifer Barrett (2011, p. 56) maintains: 'One response to this situation was the creation of the "blockbuster" exhibition'. Museums' competitors are amusement parks, movie theatres, etc. Entertainment accessible at home makes digital media, such as television and computers, competitors to the museums (Hall, 2011). Researches have shown that people consider museums unable to offer them satisfying ways to spend their leisure time. Some even consider museums unwelcoming. Museums are doing their best to attract more visitors and broaden their audience range, simultaneously trying to include everyone.

1.2 Theory

Defining museum ideologies

The public museum

The first public museum was established in Europe. Opinions of whether the Ashmolean Museum in Great Britain, initiated in 1683, or the Louvre in Paris, opened in 1793, is the first public museum differ (Abt, 2006). The Ashmolean was the first museum providing public access to the museum, while the Louvre, due to the French revolution, was the first museum opening up for the masses (ibid, p. 115). However, none of these museums was a ‘public museums’ as ‘public museums’ are perceived in the twenty-first century (Abt, 2006). According to Sociologist Tony Bennett: ‘The public museum, as is well known, acquired its modern form during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries’ (Bennett, 1995, p. 19). Culture was conceived as a mean to govern the public and to practice another form of power (Bennett, 1995). The architecture of the museums that were built during late eighteenth and early nineteenth century witness the paradigm that was in fashion at the time. The audience could see the objects clearly, as well as other visitors at the museum, thus they would learn civic behavior through each other (ibid). It was a space where the public could practice civil behavior (Bennett, 1995; Hooper-Greenhill, 1994a). The museums wanted to cultivate superior citizens (Bennett, 1995). The original purpose of museums was ‘to bring the reforming power of the “highest and best” achievements of our “civilization” to “the masses”’ (Moore, 1997, p. vii). The public museum was also a place for representation, where the public could go and become knowledgeable in culture and the universe (Bennett, 1995). Modern museums have always viewed it as their responsibility to educate in civic behavior and transmit cultural values (Heumann Gurian, 2006).

The social museum and its role

Since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries society has changed, as has the role of the museum. Changes in society have not only reflected on the exhibition medium, such as how objects are displayed, but it have also influenced the way museums view their educational role in society (Hooper-

Greenhill, 1994a). George Hein (2002, p. 6), Professor Emeritus of Arts and Social Sciences, questions what the meaning of education implies:

The modern world has changed the social and cultural structure in which [educational] function is taking place. Indeed, the very nature of education, both what we mean by the term and what we expect of educational institutions, has changed.

Sociologist Diane Barthel emphasizes change in modern world: ‘Museums appear to be part of the process of modernization, and self-consciousness about their social role in creating social order appears to be part of postmodernism.’ Today museums are places for conveying civic engagement, where they concentrate on the needs of the individual audience and the knowledge they possess, which can develop into assets for the museum (Barrett 2011; Black, 2012). According to museum and heritage consultant Robert R. Janes (2009, p. 21): ‘civil society is defined as “an idea of community in which citizens enjoy equal opportunity to participate in public life and culture.”’ Museums have become a place for international audience gathering to ‘explore and exchange all kinds of knowledge and information’ (Appelbaum, 2002, p. 163). Museums that conduct a nation’s identity are no longer needed (Janson, 2012a). In its place museums are now approaching ‘local and global social concerns’ (Sandell, 2007, p. 5). Museums regard themselves as responsible for promoting social change and fostering cross-cultural understanding, and ‘to tackle prejudice and intolerance and to foster respect for difference’ (ibid, p.1). On the authority of Graham Black (2012, p. 224), a well-known author in the museum field, museums are neutral surroundings and ‘we need museums to take on the role of “third places”’, to help communities to grasp their cultural backgrounds and become aware of it, while simultaneously creating a platform for communities to understand each other better and grow to be a society that works well in democracy. Moreover, Janes (2009, p. 22) declares that museums belong in the sphere of the civil society, and museums are to serve society, ‘by engaging in the interests and aspirations of their communities’.

The social museum = the civilized museum

The modern museum tradition many museums work in comes from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century (Bennett, 1995). Some have realized that museums need to change their traditions, and the best way of how to accomplish this is under debate. Some within the museum sector consider the future direction for the museum is an inclusive museum, where everyone is welcome. They wish to enlighten the audience that museums are no longer 'boring' institutions (Black, 2005, p. 188). Heumann Gurian (2006) is one voice in this vein, among many. She has decades of experience in the museum world, and acts as a consultant for museums and visitor centers in need of advice for further development. In her book, *Civilizing the Museum* (2006), she advocates inclusiveness in the museum field, where the community is a natural part of the museum (ibid). Many people perceive museums to be elitist, in particular art museums (Heuman Gurian, 2006; Van Oost, 2002). According to the professor in Culture Science, Volker Kirchberg (1998, p. 10) 'museum is more than an economic decision, it is an expression of a life style.' This is a cause to why people are unwilling to enter museums (SInstitution, 2002). Heumann Gurian (2006) writes about people's unwillingness to enter the museums is caused by 'threshold fear'. It is important to open up the museum for people who feel uncomfortable to enter the museum too. To achieve this goal of becoming a museum for everyone, museums need to transform even more (ibid). '[T]hey will have to make many and multivaried changes because there are both physical and programmatic barriers that make it difficult for the uninitiated to experience the museum' (ibid, p. 115). The first step for museums to include broad audience is to set up a policy that encourages focus on inclusiveness (Black, 2012). Nevertheless, if a museum really wants to become more inclusionary it has to focus less on the objects, or even discard this traditional aspiration. Although the objects are central to the function of the museum, they 'are not the heart of museums' (Heumann Gurian, 2006, p. 34).

Heumann Gurian (2006) considers timeliness to be an important feature, which comprises the answer on how to make museums more inclusive. Timeliness could be used as instrument to make museums benefit society even more (ibid, p. 57). Putting up exhibitions that discuss timely topics that are relevant to the audience is very important; seeing as the topic itself will thereby attract visitors simultaneously as the exhibition contributes valuable information. It can also create dialog between the exhibition and the audience, as well as a dialogue among the audiences, where information is exchanged (Appelbaum, 2002). Producing exhibitions that encourage dialog creates a feeling of inclusion (Simon, 2010). Nina Simon became famous as a blogger writing about her various museums projects, lectures she held, and her opinion of how museum organizations should be run. Today Simon is executive director of the museum of Art & History in Santa Cruz. She converts the theory of social museum Heumann Gurian advocates into practice. In *The Participatory Museum* (2010) Simon gives several examples of how to involve the audience in exhibitions. Simon asserts that the audience is looking for something more in exhibitions; something they can be personally involved with, that can move them, and where they can contribute to the exhibition (Simon, 2010). ‘They expect the ability to respond and be taken seriously’ (ibid, p. ii). Throughout her book she repeats the words: ‘create, share and connect’ (Simon, 2010). People seek an environment they can connect with on a personal level, and which they can affect (Heumann Gurian, 2006, p. 91). This brings returning visitors to a museum, and thus it is essential that museums include and involve the community (Heumann Gurian, 2006).

Heumann Gurian (2006) maintains that museums should let the community use the building more frequently. She considers that the museum facilities should be used in more ways than only for the traditional museum activities (ibid), with spaces for varied functions to be used. Mixed-used spaces invite a broader range of people to take charge over them. ‘It makes sense that the more varied the internal spaces, the more diverse the audience’ (ibid, p. 107). Moreover, seeing as visitor will approach the arrival hall at least once, and it is often used as a gathering point, etc., thus it is ‘the one location where the most concentrated and differentiated activity happens’ and a perfect location

for setting up something and trying to entice people to explore the rest of the museum (ibid, p. 106). Heumann Gurian suggests that arrival halls should be used as inside streets, with shops and cafés, etc., given that arrival halls, and other spaces with similar function, encourage strolling and resting (ibid, p. 106). ‘Eventually some of the visitors, even those who initially merely went for lunch at the cafés and restaurants, will go and explore the rest of the museum’ (Heumann Gurian, 2006). Moreover, the museum space is safe for people to come together, which is a cause for museums to become more civically responsible (ibid).

Heumann Gurian (2006, p. 116) states that, in reality, many museums do not want to ‘become more inclusionary institutions’. However, she maintains that the museum should be for everyone, in the sense of making the audience feel welcome, but also regarding shaping museums and the production of exhibitions, where the community can make an important contribution (ibid). She advocates museums being in service to the community.

1.3 Method

The question I am asking in my dissertation is of a qualitative nature, seeing as it discusses the future of Swedish museums. I wanted to give myself, as well as the readers of this dissertation, a deeper insight into this area. I also wanted to adapt the methods and answers I got from my research according to my problem statement. I deemed that reading and analyzing literature, regarding the blockbuster topic, would not be enough, especially given that most of the works considered mainly discuss North America and somewhat the British museum field. In view of the fact that culture differs depending on country, as well as the line of policy that is conducted in the country, I felt I was required to do interviews to get the answers I needed for further analysis that would lead me to an answer to my problem statement (Patel & Davidson, 1994).

My judgment is that it would be enough to use the two methods – interview and literature analyses – for my research, given that other methods would not actually answer my question of whether blockbusters could be a means of achieving the social museum. Methods such as observation and case study would be time consuming, which would require that I observe and/or study limited cases. In addition the result by using such a method would give highly specific information, while my question is of an open nature and demands answers that cover a more drawn-out time span. Regarding other methods such as experimentsor , focus groups, statistical analyses: these are clearly out of the questions as they would not give me the answers I needed for my research.

My interviews are of low standardization as well as low structuring nature, as I wanted to have the freedom to immerse in certain information I found interesting that I learned from the interviewee (Patel & Davidson, 1994). Furthermore, in case the interviewee was talking about something I felt I needed to acquire deeper understanding within a field I forgotten to ask about, I wanted to be able to do so. Another motive for choosing to do interviews of low grade of standardization is because I felt I had no need to do systematic and quantitative comparison of the answers and generalize them (ibid). For

the motivations given previously, I have also chosen to ask questions of low grade of structure that gave opportunities for open answers (ibid), as I intended the interviewee to have the space to give answers within a broad spectrum and then gradate them. Given that my dissertation is about the future of Swedish museums, with a focal point on blockbuster exhibitions and the 'social museum', I interviewed people within the Swedish museum field, to find out their opinion of the circumstances and the direction museums are heading towards.

As a compliment to my interviews I have considered prominent theories, and other information, in the literature. This was to give myself knowledge to compare against the information I got from my interviewees. The data acquired from the literature was also used as a tool to analyze the information from the interviewees. During my time of collecting data I have partly concentrated on literature discussing new museology, blockbusters, marketing and films.

Material

I have chosen to interview people with great experience within the museum field in Sweden, seeing as my problem statement, as mentioned previously, touches upon the future and development of the exhibition medium in Sweden. As I wanted a broad spectrum of information from my interviewee, to help me analyze the answer for my problem statement, I looked for diverse qualities of my interviewees.

The interviewees

Staffan Forssell is director general at the Swedish Exhibition Agency (SEA) where he has served since December 2010. The SEA has a state mandate to monitor the external environment. Forssell has a history of managerial posts in various cultural institutions, including the theatre field as well as museum field.

Ted Hesselbom is currently the director of The Röhsska Museum of Fashion, Design and Decorative Arts. In 1997 he was a board member of FormMuseets Vänner and in 2006 a board member of the NMWC. Hesselbom is educated in graphic design and has previously worked as a creative director.

Mårten Janson is editor-in-chief at the SEA, specializing in the subject of external environment monitoring. He also gives consultation and is a visiting lecturer at Stockholm University.

Min-Jung Jonsson is working as Director of Exhibitions at Fotografiska museet. Before working at Fotografiska, she worked at the NMWC as head of the Exhibition Department of the three museums in Stockholm, and has great experience in the museum field from other museums as well.

Cajsa Lagerkvist was head of the Exhibitions and Content Department at the MWC at the time of the interview. Her new job is at the Göteborg City Museum (GCM) as head for the Public Department. In 2005-2011 Lagerkvist was Board member of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) Sweden.

Mikko Myllykoski is Experience Director at Heureka, The Finnish Science Centre. He has been working in the museum field since 1990, with experience of a number of blockbuster exhibitions with themes such as dinosaurs.

Isabella Nilsson is the director of the Gothenburg Museum of Art. She was previously the museum director of Millesgården, an art museum in Stockholm. Nilsson has a background of being an art critic and head of the cultural department at various newspapers.

Christian Penalva is a curator at the GCM, who has worked with exhibition production since 2007, and is a strong believer in integrating feminist perspectives and openness in museums.

Eva Persson has decades of experience in exhibition as a medium, and was granted an honorary doctorate from Linköping University as indication of her importance within the museum field; she is also the originator to UtställningsEstetiskt Forum, a forum to discuss exhibitions.

Si Han was the assistant project leader of the exhibition Terracotta army, and also the curator responsible for the content of the exhibition. He is currently an in-house curator at the MFEA.

Katarina Stigwall is a representative for the NMWC at the Anna Lind Foundation, whose 'purpose is to bring people together from across the Mediterranean to improve mutual respect between cultures' (Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation (ALEMF), 2012). She was the project leader of the Inca exhibition.

Daniel Wetterskog is currently head of the Public Department at the National Museum of Science and Technology (NMST). He has many years of experience working with exhibitions in various cultural institutions. Wetterskog has an education in museology and science of art and is interested in issues such as contemporary art and international perspectives, among other matters.

2.1 What is a Swedish blockbuster exhibition?

The blockbuster exhibition – a new phenomenon

Wetterskog (2012) and Stigwall (2012) confirmed that the blockbuster exhibition concept is a fairly new phenomenon in Sweden. According to Wetterskog (2012), the blockbuster concept has been occurred only in the last 5-10 years in Sweden. Blockbuster exhibitions are a new phenomenon for the NMWC as well, Stigwall (2012) stated, who was the project leader for the *Inca* exhibition. Recent years of pursuing blockbuster exhibitions are an indication of the political situation in Sweden, which encourages the culture sector to find financial solutions elsewhere than funds from the government, such as sponsorships from the business world, etc. The idea is that culture should be able to support itself financially (Wetterskog, 2012; Ministry of Culture, 2011). However, Wetterskog (2012) believes that it is not necessary that the line of policies have ‘forced’ museums to do blockbuster exhibitions, but rather that the policies ‘allow’ museum to do blockbusters, making it more acceptable to pursue profit and bigger audiences. Nevertheless, Wetterskog also pronounced that politicians basically want to see profits, from all ends, and greater audience sizes, while and the means of achieving this is less important. Museums have mounted blockbuster exhibitions as one way to increase profits (SInstitution, 2002).

Every cultural institution wants as large an audience as possible to come visit their institution. Forssell (2012) affirms that it complies with artist interests, in the sense that artists want their works to be viewed by as many people as possible. Moreover, Forssell maintains that if the cultural institutions proclaim anything else, they are lying. The *Terracotta army* exhibition, released in 2010 in Stockholm, is a splendid example of the blockbuster phenomena, which many of my interviewees also have noted. The exhibition was followed by the *Inca* exhibition, 2011, which was produced in the same spirit.

Criteria blockbuster exhibitions must fulfill

The opinions of my interviewees, have differed regarding what criteria make a blockbuster exhibition. However, all of them agree that it is important that the topic of the exhibition is popular, well established and familiar to the public. This factor acts universally (Baird, 1998; Wetterskog, 2012). It is basically topics of common knowledge that appeal to the wide audience as well as attracting new possible audiences (SInstitution, 2002). While Janson (2012a) maintains that the topic must be world-class, even though he considers this a sad phenomenon. Stigwall (2012) emphasizes that world treasures as a topic is a blockbuster, seeing as everyone already knows something about the subject. According to Forssell (2012), topics of this kind are always exciting. In Lagerkvist's opinion, it is very difficult to make a blockbuster out of unknown material.

Marketing strategy is an important feature that contributes to the success of blockbuster shows (Barker, 1999; Hadida, 2009; SInstitution, 2002). Lagerkvist (2012) states that when a greater marketing campaign is implemented, more people will discover the exhibition. The impression the audience gets is that they must see the show 'before it disappears.' (SInstitution, 2002, p. 13), due to the limited time the exhibitions are scheduled. Blockbuster exhibitions attract large crowds over a relatively short period, as they are news events and 'encourage word-to-mouth promotion' (ibid). Those who have seen the exhibition spread the words to others, and those who have not seen the exhibition yet notice the attention it receives, which causes them to want to see it (SInstitution, 2002). Both Janson (2012) and Stigwall (2012) argue that it is important that the marketing does not promise too much, which is why it is important that museums should not spare on the marketing. Forssell (2012) explains if a trailer is good and the audience discovers that the film did not keep its promise, i.e. the film is bad, those seeing the film spread this information and advise their friends not to see the movie. The same condition applies to exhibitions (Forssell, 2012). According to Myllykoski (2012) if the blockbuster is bad, and does not add any value to the visitors, it will be revealed. Hence, visitors who have seen the exhibition will warn their friends and families not to see the exhibition (Forssell, 2012; Myllykoski, 2012).

In the end, the result will be that the exhibition, which was produced with the intention of becoming a blockbuster, will fall short and fail (Myllykoski, 2012). Nevertheless, in blockbuster exhibitions, marketing is used to generate income to be used later to put up other major exhibitions (SInstitution, 2002). According to Emma Barker (1999), senior lecturer in art history, one of the qualifications that defines a blockbuster is the quantity of visitors. Looking at the number she refer to, 'a minimum of 250 000', and comparing to the Swedish population; it is clearly difficult to reach that goal for each exhibition with blockbuster aspirations (Barker, 1999, p. 127). The Swedish population is close to 9,5 million inhabitants, whereas close to 1,4 million live in the capital city, Stockholm (National Encyklopedin (NE) 2011a, NE 2011b), which would mean 20 % of the inhabitants in Stockholm would need to visit an exhibition to make it a qualified blockbuster. Therefore it is a challenge to mount a blockbuster show by this criterion. Wetterskog (2012) compares Sweden with China regarding the difficulty with capturing a big audience. For instance, in Beijing an audience of one million is considered small number of visitors, whereas in Sweden it would mean almost every inhabitant of Stockholm municipality. Furthermore, Wetterskog maintains, it is important to remember that it takes about the same amount of money to execute a blockbuster show, regardless of in which country the exhibition is going up. It would be wrong to compare visitor numbers with countries that have many times more inhabitants, seeing as even if the same percent of inhabitant from both countries would have visited an exhibition, the actual numbers of visitors in some circumstances would differ massively. Wetterskog asserts one should not stare blindly at visitor numbers. Number of visitors to the *Star Wars Exhibition* was around 60 000, but on the other hand, this represented a greater number of visitors than the population of Örnköldsvik's municipality (ibid). Hence an exact number of quantities cannot define whether an exhibition is a blockbuster or not (ibid). Besides, Lagerkvist (2012) considers one of the criteria that defines blockbuster shows as they manage to overwhelm the initial audience goal that was set. This in turn implies that the blockbuster exhibition cashes in potential profit, which will yield more revenue than the expenditure the exhibitions cost.

Both Lagerkvist (2012) and Stigwall (2012) assert that timeliness is another aspect that is significant to have in mind when putting together a blockbuster. According to Wetterskog (2012), with the right timing the museum and the exhibition receive a lot of attention from the media; seeing the public demands this type of information, resulting in journalists will write about it, which in turn creates a lot of free advertising and PR. In addition to Wetterskog's statement, and in the line with the social museum, Si regards timeliness as an important feature for museums to benefit society (Si, 2012; Heumann Gurian, 2006).

Wetterskog (2012) considers blockbuster arts exhibitions as a category in itself, as they do not appeal to a wide audience, and do not provide much variation in the exhibition range (i.e., multimedia, interaction, and a variety of medium, etc.). In his opinion, it is often critical to the blockbuster exhibition that the visitor can do things in it. Furthermore, blockbuster exhibitions are interactive and offer a variety of media, which appeal to broad audiences (ibid). Penalva (2012) on the other hand, is of another view, and considers that the blockbuster concept mainly promotes art exhibitions. Persson's views (2012) coincide with Penalva (2012), but she also mentions treasure exhibitions. The nineteenth century-style treasure exhibitions have been popular again thanks to '[a] variety of developments during the past two decades, including federal insurance indemnification and exhibition support from corporations and the national endowments' ('Art history and the "Blockbuster" Exhibition', 1986, p. 358).

Forsell (2012) has a very interesting point of view when he explains to what criteria he holds a blockbuster exhibition. Some of the criteria have already been mentioned, while some provide a refreshing perspective, and others are utterly new. Forsell considers that people basically are looking for quality. In his opinion, if an exhibition is well done, audience will come, be it theater or museum. Whoever manages to supply something of good quality can attract audiences; it is one of the criteria for an exhibition, which anticipates becoming a blockbuster exhibition. One must also deliver to many, that is criterion two, according to Forsell, although this has always been a problem

in the culture sector. In his opinion, culture builds communities, bridges and understanding; however, there is the problem in making people want to experience it. Forssell states that any cultural institutions feel they have a particular audience they turn to and are afraid and/or unwilling to try pulling in new audiences, and thus do not welcome everyone. In his opinion, marketing and advertisement is a strategy cultural institutions can use to make everyone feel welcome to take part in culture exhibition. The third criterion is material that is attractive to a wide audience. Depending on the target, it may be of different substances. For children, the topic of dinosaurs is attractive. Well-known names, such as Van Gogh, are a magnet for other visitors. Nonetheless, a well-known name in and of itself is not enough, Forssell declares. The show has to be carefully executed, and contain something extra which has not yet been displayed (Kirchenblatt-Gimblett, 2002; Nilsson 2012). Audiences, in general, want to see challenges, something that is different and exciting. They want something they have not seen before (SInstitution, 2002). Therefore Forssell considers that the museums must be brave and expand their borders, and become welcoming, which is what Heumann Gurian (2006) also stresses. All these three criteria are a difficult combination, and Forssell (2012) doubts if they can be combined. Nevertheless, both Lagerkvist (2012) and Janson (2012a) argue that a lot of features must be compatible if a blockbuster is likely to succeed. Janson declares that museums need to invest more time and budgetary resources, as well as devote more space to produce blockbuster exhibitions. Museums would additionally have to make more dynamic and exciting exhibitions, which most museums fail to do.

Borrowing the ‘blockbuster’ vocabulary from the film industry Regardless of which field, whether museum, book publishing or film industry¹, the use of ‘blockbusters’ has always surprised and puzzled people when they first emerged (Baker & Faulkner, 1991, p. 287). According to David Dean (1996, p.159), the origin of the term ‘blockbuster’ derives ‘from the popular name of the huge German bombs used in World War II to blast large

¹ With the term “film industry” I referring to the motion-picture studio that produces movies for the masses, such as DreamWorks SKG, Warner Bros and Universal Studio.

sections of a city; in the museums sense, it refers to a revolutionary, powerful exhibition.’ The usage of the vocabulary ‘blockbuster exhibition’ in the museum field, however, is borrowed from the film industry (Marthur, 2005, p. 700). Furthermore, as the vocabulary suggests, blockbusters in the film industry and blockbusters in the museum field shares many commonalities. For instance, the marketing strategies for blockbusters are well planned and heavily financed (Smithsonian Institution (SInstitution), 2002). The release strategy of an exhibition is similar to the release strategy of a film, ‘in particular, its screen coverage upon release and release date’ (Hadida, 2009, p. 315), An example is the traveling exhibition about dinosaurs, which held its premiere opening 1997 at the American Museum of Natural History. The dinosaur exhibition shared the same title as Steven Spielberg’s movie, *The Lost World*, as well as the marketing budget (Marthur, 2005). The exhibition contained, among other objects, newly discovered specimens, as well as props from the movie *The Lost World* (Museum Design Associate, n.d). There are many other examples of blockbuster exhibitions making use of popular movies as a theme. According to Saloni Mathur (2005, p. 700), who is active in cultural anthropology and art history, this phenomenon is ‘effectively blurring the boundaries between the world of museums, the world of Hollywood, the world of fashion design, while also creating a convergence of interest between these powerful economic sectors.’

Other feature blockbuster exhibitions share with blockbuster films, are the phenomenon of attracting large number of people and the popularity they gain. As a result the profits of blockbusters, from tickets, products, restaurants, cafés, etc., are great. Hence the producers wish to repeat the phenomenon: in the movie field, where a sequel movie is produced; and in the museum field, where the exhibition travels to the next destination to repeat the success (Baker & Faulkner, 1991). However, a blockbuster must offer something new and refreshing that the audience has not yet experienced, or else the number of people coming to see the ‘big happening’ will fall short. For example, the reason why Spielberg’s first movie about dinosaurs, *Jurassic Park*, became a huge success and a blockbuster is due to the technology that made it possible to recreate realistic dinosaurs on the movie screen, which had never happened

before (Baird, 1998,). Thus seeing *Jurassic Park*, ‘became a pilgrimage to an “event”’, rather ‘than just another trip to the theater’ (ibid, p. 90). Robert Baird (1998, p. 90), who holds a Ph.D. in Cinema Studies, declares that ‘[s]uccessful blockbusters are like one another in that they develop scene types and narrative formulas capable of evoking mass and cross-cultural cognitions.’ Although Baird’s statement was addressed to movies, I find it equally relevant concerning blockbuster exhibitions as well. Regarding the theme of the blockbuster exhibitions, the preference of each person is individual; hence it is difficult to assure a success of blockbusters (Hadida, 2009). To make a blockbuster is difficult. Blockbusters need to have ‘the right ingredients’ to guarantee capturing huge audiences (Baker & Faulkner, 1991, p. 289). Moreover, repeating blockbusters is also difficult, seeing as ‘the odds against repeat success are staggering’ (ibid).

There are differences with the blockbusters in these two fields, which distinguishes the meaning of the term ‘blockbuster’ in the film industry and in the museum field. In the film industry, the films are copied and promoted in numerous cities at the same time, and sometimes even in various countries simultaneously (Buckland, 2006). A blockbuster exhibition tour from one city to another and does not have the same impact as a blockbuster film. An additional difference is the impact a blockbuster has on culture. In the film industry a blockbuster creates a culture, whereas in the museum field blockbuster exhibitions emulate and build on already existing culture. For example, the King Tut exhibition 1976 at the Metropolitan Art Museum (Met), which was immensely popular and ‘drew enormous crowds’ (Skinner, 2004, p. 113). King Tut was produced around the topic of Egyptian pharaoh culture. The *Star Wars Exhibition*, on the other hand, was building on the culture that was created by George Lucas’ Star Wars movies.

Three kinds of blockbuster exhibitions

The literature discusses blockbuster exhibitions in the nature of arts and blockbuster shows that are based on archeological objects, where the artifacts are treated as art (such as Barker, 1999; Skinner 2004). In some literatures the authors mention adventure themed exhibitions (such as Moore, 1997). There seem to be three kinds of blockbuster exhibition: one kind that is based

on *masterpieces*, exhibitions on Picasso, van Gogh, Monet, etc., where the exhibitions are centering around the artist, his/her masterpiece and other works; a second kind bases on *treasure* themes, exhibitions such as King Tut, Terracotta Army, etc., where world treasures are showcased as invaluable art pieces; and a third kind that bases on *adventure* themes, such as the Star Wars Exhibition, Indiana Jones, dinosaurs, NASA, etc.

The characteristics of the three kinds

Among the three kinds of blockbuster exhibitions, masterpiece is the theme that is perceived as the most elitist of them. Art museums in general are perceived as elitist (Heumann Gurian, 2006). In many art museums there is a notion that artworks speaks for themselves, and thus the labels contains little information, often no more than the name of the artist, title, technique and year of production (Arvidsson, 2011). Hence it is up to the audience to interpret the masterpieces, which implies that the audience needs previous knowledge about the art in the exhibition. ‘Art speaks to those whose education has enabled them to master the cultural context that gives it meaning’ (ibid, p.25), thus it is excluding everyone else. In Sweden this would apply to a rather large number of average citizens, seeing as the subject of art history is almost non-existing in Swedish primary and secondary schools (Werner, 2011).

Blockbuster exhibitions based on the ‘treasure’ theme can be perceived as elitist, depending on the execution. In many treasure-themed exhibitions, the artifacts are put behind glass cases and thus non-accessible for the audience in the sense that the audience cannot have a closer look. However, these kinds of exhibitions are less elitist than blockbuster art exhibitions, as they generally contain more information than art exhibitions, and they often comprise artifacts of archeological origins, which need explanation of where and what time the artifacts come from. The artifacts need to be put into context in order to be comprehensive, which opens up the possibility to of making the exhibition more interactive and inclusionary.

Adventure themed blockbuster exhibitions normally allow the audience to interact and participate in the exhibition and are not conceived as elitist (Wetterskog, 2012). Many topics in this kind of exhibition are related to

popular culture, such as the film industry. Furthermore, the objects in the exhibition are commonly reproductions or props, thus they are not as sensitive to closer looks as archeological artifacts are (ibid). In many cases the objects are designed to be used by the audience (ibid). However, it is important to recognize that all subjects that could be displayed in the adventure themed exhibitions are not always lighthearted. Heureka, a science museum in Finland, was the second museum to mount an exhibition about climate change, in February 2012: *Klima X* (Myllykoski, 2012). The exhibition was originally created by the Norwegian Museum of Science, Technology and Medicine in Oslo (Heureka, 2012). *Klima X* got media attention in Finland and attracted many visitors (Myllykoski, 2012). Myllykoski proclaimed that the exhibition offers an unusual experience, as the visitors wades in water and eight cubic meters of ice, while wearing supplied wellingtons. Being an interactive exhibition, *Klima X* is considered as adventure themed exhibition, even though the subject matter is of serious import (ibid). Furthermore, subjects such as the Holocaust always attract a broad audience, even though the subject is heavy to digest (Lagerkvist, 2012). Exhibitions about the Holocaust, or other heavy subjects, could be produced in treasure-themed or adventure-themed blockbuster exhibitions, depending on how the museums want to convey the message and how inclusionary the museum is intended to be.

Blockbuster exhibitions turn to interested audiences

Hesselbom (2012) believes that blockbuster exhibitions are targeting experienced museum visitors, and therefore do not succeed in broadening the audience. For instance, visitors who feel that the admission price is too high will not go to see the exhibition (Kirchberg, 1998; SInstitution, 2002). More importantly, visitors who have no interest in the topic of the exhibition will avoid it (Hadida, 2009). The audience will only go and see exhibitions with topics they find interesting and want to know more about (ibid). The experienced audience goes to museums to confirm themselves, e.g. to confirm the knowledge they possess (Bennett, 1995; Hesselbom). Through the content and substance, blockbuster exhibitions turn to a specific audience that already has insight and/or is interested in the subject itself (SInstitution, 2002). If one has no basic knowledge of the exhibition's topic one cannot relate to it

and will have difficulties absorbing the information in the exhibition (Palm, 2006). Thus the audience member who does not possess the knowledge required by the exhibition will not benefit by seeing it, but will instead be excluded. The issue of exclusion in the museum field is already an existing problem (Heumann Gurian, 2006). Museums do not welcome everyone, and this should not be further emphasized in blockbuster exhibitions (Hesselbom, 2012).

2.2 Swedish examples of blockbuster exhibitions

Terracotta Army and Inca exhibitions in the Secret Rock Gallery

The NMWC executed both of the exhibitions, *Terracotta army* and *Inca*, in the Secret Rock Gallery (SRG), an underground space that belongs to the National Property Board Sweden. The tunnels and the rooms inside the mountain originally belonged to the marines, and were used by the marines since World War II up to the middle of the 1980s. For many years no access was granted to unauthorized people. The next exhibition that may go up in the SRG 2013 could be about Tutanchamon, although due to the disturbance in Egypt, it is uncertain if this is possible (Si, 2012; Statens museer för världskultur (SMVK), n.d.).

Si (2012) and Stigwall (2012) note that the *Terracotta army* exhibition was a big risk for the NMWC, as the expenditure of exhibition was close to 28 million Swedish crowns. According to Si (2012), one of the goals with the *Terracotta army* exhibition was for revenue to cover expenditure. Over 350 000 visitors came to see *Terracotta army*, which is the most visited exhibition in Sweden to date (SMVK, n.d.). Revenue from the exhibition not only covered expenditure, in addition it netted a profit of over 20 million crowns (SMVK, 2012). Inasmuch as the NMWC and the MFEA were not prepared for this crowd, as the original expectation was around 150 000 visitors, the experience of the exhibition for the staff was extreme and overwhelming (Stigwall, 2012). Lagerkvist (2012) maintains that the *Terracotta army* exhibition was a show that urged the audience not to miss it. According to Si (2012) and Stigwall (2012), the popularity of the exhibition forced the NMWC and the MEWA to mobilize the entire organization, which disrupted the efficacy of other organizational components. In retrospect, both Si (2012) and Stigwall (2012) recognize that the experience was useful, as it could be taken as a lesson for future productions.

Before the opening of the exhibition, over 30 000 tickets were booked (Bäckstedt, 2010), which according to Janson (2012) is quite rare in museum context. In Sweden museums normally do not provide the service to pre-purchase tickets, which the NMWC did for the *Terracotta army* exhibition (Janson, 2012a). Due to the *Terracotta army*, the MFEA had an exceptional increase in audience number with 361 % more coming to the museum than normal (Dagens Nyheter (DN), 2010). According to NMWC's annual report of 2011, 90 % of the visitors who saw the *Terracotta army* also used the ticket to visit the MFEA, as the entrance fee was included in the ticket of *Terracotta army*. As stated by Si, another beneficial feature the exhibition brought to the MFEA, as they had hosted a unique exhibition, was putting the museum on the world map. The MFEA also received a lot of positive feedback.

The *Inca* exhibition is the second exhibition that was mounted in the SRG. According to Sanne Houby-Nielsen, the superintendent at NMWC, the exhibition was about the first encounter between Europe and South America, the moment the world became truly global (Regeringskansliet, 2011). For the first time in 50 years, artifacts of the Inca realm were exhibited in Sweden (ibid). The artifacts came from fifteen different museums in Peru, and consisted of gold and silver sculptures, textiles and ceramics, etc. (Göransson & de Mufarech, 2011). Being the project leader, Stigwall (2012) felt a great responsibility towards the audience when working with *Inca*. Around 108 000 visitors came to see *Inca*, of which 90% were satisfied after the visit (ibid). However, the exhibition was criticized as aesthetically too similar to the *Terracotta army* exhibition (Linder, 2011). Stigwall (2012) noted that the visitors wanted to see and experience something else, something new. Internally, the NMWC are happy with the results from *Inca*, even though the exhibitions did not reach the audience goal, which was set at 150 000 visitors (ibid). Lagerkvist (2012) asserts that even though the topic about Inca is a known subject, it is not as established as the topic about the terracotta army, which may have contributed to poorer outcomes in audience numbers and profits.

Given the short time that the exhibition was executed, the result was better than expected, Stigwall (2012) articulated. The infrastructure and the structure worked. She considers that with more time they could have had the chance to attract more visitors, in the view of the fact that the marketing could be even more targeted and better disseminated and more integrated in other institutional activities, such as tourism, etc. Nevertheless, the *Inca* exhibition had more disadvantages when compared to the *Terracotta* exhibition. The *Terracotta* exhibition was a purchased concept and had longer preparation time (Linder, 2011). Another advantage was that it was the first time the SRG was opened up for the masses, which is a feature that contributed to the extreme success of the *Terracotta army* exhibition, as it had never been done before (SInstitution, 2002). In addition to the sensational space, the topic of the exhibitions completed the whole theme and settings: artifacts from Chinese emperors' graves showcased underground, adding something extra to the experience one would attain from visiting this particular exhibition (Bäckstedt, 2010). However, Janson (2012) notes that, in addition to placing the exhibition in an exciting space, the success of the *Terracotta* exhibition primarily depended on the convincing artifacts in the exhibition.

Moderna Museet

According to Forssell (2012), examples of Swedish museums that have executed blockbuster exhibitions include the Moderna Museet, which has collected, preserved and exhibited contemporary art from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, since the late 1950s, and in 2009 opened up another museum in Malmö (Moderna Museet, n.d.). Forssell (2012) claims that when Moderna Museet exhibits art from international and renowned artists the audiences will go and see it. In the past, exhibition such as the *Turner, Monet, Twombly* (Forssell, 2012; Stigwall, 2012; Wetterskog, 2012), have attracted many visitors. The exhibition *Turner, Monet, Twombly* was a collaboration with Staatsgalerie Stuttgart and Tate Liverpool, which compared the three artists' artworks and how they were related to each other (Moderna Museet, 2011). As claimed by Wetterskog (2012), *Turner, Monet, Twombly* resulted in revenue for Moderna Museet.

Fotografiska Museet

Fotografiska Museet was initiated in 2010 by Jan and Per Broman, both with many years of experience with photography (Fotografiska Museet, n.d.). It is a private corporation, which does not receive governmental grants of any kind, and hence the Fotografiska is entirely dependent on their revenue and sponsors (Jonsson, 2012). Apart from the entry fee, the Fotografiska offers photo courses, lectures, and workshops for people with different knowledge bases (Fotografiska Museet, n.d.). They also arrange events of various types (Jonsson, 2012). The Fotografiska has an audience number of approximately 1500 people daily, and one of the main reasons visitors come to the museums is because of the exhibitions, besides the events that are arranged. Hesselbom (2012) and Wetterskog (2012) assert that Fotografiska Museet is a splendid example of supplying blockbuster exhibitions over and over again. Hesselbom (2012) contends that every show they do aims to become a blockbuster. Besides Fotografiska museet there are no other museums in Sweden that make money on blockbuster exhibitions (Forssell, 2012). However, Jonsson (2012) reveals that the term blockbuster is not used in the organization, although it is a commercial institution. In order for the museum to invest in the organization they have to make a profit, as they are not granted any subventions from the state, not even from regional or from the municipal government (ibid). She explains that the Fotografiska seek to mount exhibitions which are of interest to the audience, and contributes to the audience's experience of the museum. Fotografiska Museet wishes to make the audience feel welcome, both members and new visitors, so as they are encouraged to return (ibid). Jonsson declares there is something for everyone in the museums, including exhibitions with the well-known masters as well as rising stars, which could be a factor in explaining the popularity of the museum. Wetterskog claims that many museums, in Stockholm, feel admiration for this independence, which in small towns is considered slightly too commercial.

The Vasa Museum

According to Janson (2012a), the Vasa Museum has temporary exhibitions, although these are not primarily responsible for attracting the audiences to visit the museum. The main attraction is a shipwreck from the seventeenth century (Vasamuseet, n.d.a). The museum itself is a massive exhibition, with several exhibits about the wreck as well as stories connected to it such as: the construction of the ship, daily life in the ship, the crew, etc (Janson, 2012a). The Vasa ship was salvaged in the 1960s and was stored in temporary museums, Wasavarvet, for 27 years (Vasamuseet, n.d.a). A new museum was built and ever since the opening ceremony in 1990, the Vasa museum has been visited by millions of tourists. With over one million visitors yearly, the museum is today too small, and is considering the possibility of expanding (Vasamuseet, n.d.b). As said by Janson, Vasa museum could support the entire organization without any outside funds due to their significant revenue.

The NASA exhibition

The NMST in Stockholm 'is Sweden's biggest museum of technology, and has a national charter to preserve [the Swedish] technical and industrial history as a part of [the Swedish] cultural heritage' (Tekniska Museet, 2011). In 2011, the NMST hosted the exhibition *NASA – A human adventure*. Wetterskog (2012) states that the exhibition was a blockbuster exhibition, and it had its premier opening at the NMST. The exhibition was about *NASA*, the technology and the people behind *NASA*'s success in space, which made *NASA* with the world leader in its field (Tekniska Museet, 2012). The exhibition was filled with objects that made it possible for the audience to acquire the perception of the astronauts' experience in the space (ibid). However, Myllykoski expresses that his impression was that the *NASA* exhibitions were not quite as profitable as the Technical Museum had hoped for. Nevertheless, *NASA – A human adventure* will continue to be showed in other cities in Europe and the USA (ibid).

Attempts to make Blockbuster exhibitions

Lagerkvist (2012) notes that some major exhibitions are well attended, but they are just on the border of becoming a blockbuster. Few exhibitions turn into blockbusters, despite strong effort. Many exhibitions are produced according to the blockbuster concept, with the desire to become a popular exhibition, which attracts a broad audience (Baker and Faulkner, 1991; Janson, 2012a; Lagerkvist, 2012). Lagerkvist (2012) expresses that most exhibitions are at the limit or fail to reach the border of becoming a blockbuster exhibition. As stated by Janson (2012a), it is comparable to the theater, where there are few playwrights who draw audiences, just as there are few subjects that can appeal to wide audiences.

Wetterskog (2012) maintains that there is no exhibition in Sweden that is made of genuine blockbuster spirit, but there are examples elsewhere in the world, such as the exhibition in New York about Alexander McQueen at the Met 2011. The Met knew that the topic was interesting for many people (Dumas, 2011), but never realized that it would become such a hit. According to Wetterskog (2012), neither did they anticipate the vast profit they would make from the exhibition. Throughout the Met's history, the McQueen exhibition was the eighth most popular exhibition, with over 650 000 visitors (Karmali, 2011). At the moment there is discussion at the Victoria and Albert museum to host the exhibition in London, seeing as they recognize a huge audience for the exhibition in Great Britain (Baily, 2011).

The Titanic exhibition

An example of an exhibition that failed to reach the threshold of becoming a blockbuster show is the exhibition about the Titanic, which was put up during 2009 by the Maritime Museum in Stockholm, and was the most detailed exhibition in Scandinavia about the tragedy (Statens Marina Museer (SMM), 2009b). The exhibition focused on the people onboard the ship, and stories from people that were involved with the Titanic in any way (Pauli, 2009). Given that many Swedish citizens were onboard the Titanic, the Maritime museum regarded the topic to be relevant and closely connected with Swedish history (SMM, 2009a). According to Wetterskog (2012), the idea

when producing the Titanic exhibition was that the exhibition would become a blockbuster. The result did not turn out quite as expected. Two days before closing the exhibition almost 70 000 people had seen the exhibition (SMM, 2009c), which consistent with Wetterskog's (2012) account I far fewer than had been hoped. This partly depends on poor timing. Wetterskog claims that had the exhibition been set up today, during the 100-year anniversary of when Titanic collided with an iceberg and sank, it would have been much better outcome. Furthermore, it would have received a lot of free PR because of the anniversary, given that papers would have connected the historical anniversary to the exhibition itself (ibid).

The exhibition about Etruscans and Afghanistan

Another example of Swedish exhibitions made in the blockbuster spirit is the exhibition about the Etruscans at the MMNEA. In a review by Pia Cederholm, editor-in-chief at UtställningsEstetiskt Forum, it appears that the marketing of the exhibition did not comply with what the advertisement promised (Cederholm, 2012b). With the *Etruscan* exhibition the MMNEA tried to partake in the latest trend of 3D, and offered an exhibition beyond an ordinary experience, which according to Janson (2012a), was a major failure given that the technology they used in the exhibition was 'ancient'. Another example of an exhibition with the aim of becoming a blockbuster is the *Afghanistan* exhibition at the Museum of Ethnography. In the opinion of Janson, this exhibition should have become more popular than it was, given that it contained such beautiful objects, and was also encompassed by an exciting story. In his opinion it would be possible to make a film or write a book on the story of the Afghan archaeologists who preserved these items and protected them from terrorists and other dangers that could destroy them (Museum of Mediterranean and Near Eastern Antiquities, 2011). The preservation story of the objects in the *Afghanistan* exhibition was told through a 30 min long film in the end of the exhibition, and was not enhanced. The architectural design consultant David Dernie (2006, p. 23) states: 'The recent approaches to narrative design have emphasized the importance of the visitor experience'. This could be one of the reasons in why few visitors came to see *Afghanistan*. The story is a significant ingredient for a popular exhibition (Appelbaum,

2002). The exhibition was showing the archeological objects as art works in glass cases. According to the founder of one of the world largest museum exhibition design firms, Ralph Appelbaum (2002, p. 163) these ‘traditional exhibitory – object in glass cases – cannot achieve [...] enriched narrative.’

Dinosaur exhibition

As is the case at many natural history museums, the galleries at the NHM are filled with stuffed animals, and the outdated exhibition design is from the nineteenth century (Alberch, 1994). In a certain sense the Natural History Museum (NHM) has become a museum of a museum (Kirchenblatt-Gimblett, 2002), and has about 100 000 – 150 000 visitors coming to the museum yearly (Larsson, n.d.). In Gothenburg there was a dinosaur exhibition at the NHM 1993 (Jerrark, 2010), which became popular beyond the expectation of the museum. That year the museum had 400 000 visitors (Larsson, n.d.). Lagerkvist (2012) notes that the dinosaur exhibition is the most visited exhibition throughout the NHM’s history. In addition, the exhibition made a profit. In a personal conversation on 26 April 2012 with the museum pedagogue at MWC who was involved with the dinosaur exhibition, Eva-Tua Ekström, I was informed that the profit accrued to the Museum Management of Gothenburg’s Municipality. Every museum including the NHM managed by the Museum Management would benefit from the revenue from the dinosaur exhibition for many years to come (Ekström, E-T 2012, pers. comm., 26 April). Wetterskog (2012) states that dinosaur exhibitions are always considered blockbuster shows; however he maintains that compared to the dinosaur exhibitions produced in Mexico, there have not been any big, nor well executed dinosaur exhibitions in Sweden so far.

And there was light

Other examples in Gothenburg on exhibitions with blockbuster aspiration include one in Eriksbergshallen: *And there was light*, in 2010. The aim of the exhibition was to attract people to come to Eriksbergshallen at Hisingen, and discover the surrounding and the river nearby (Quality Hotel, n.d.). According to Lagerkvist (2012), the exhibition was building on an already established brand and was marketed as a blockbuster. The promoters,

Excellent Exhibition in collaboration with Göteborg's marketing corporation, had high expectations and estimated an audience of 175 000-200 000 visitors to come (Furehill, 2010b). The content of the exhibition *And there was light* was presented in various combined mediums to convey a message (Hellekant, 2010). Wetterskog (2012), who saw this exhibition, adds that exciting lighting and sound, among other methods, was used to enhance the show. Everything in this exhibition was built around an art piece that may have been made by Da Vinci, and was estimated to be worth over one billion Swedish kronor (Clausson, 2010). The exhibition was based on props and replicas and authentic art works from various artists who interpreted the renaissance masters (Wetterskog 2012; Cederholm, 2010). According to Wetterskog (2012), consequently *And there was light* failed to become the blockbuster exhibitions the producers had anticipated, due to the fact that the exhibition revolved around a work whose credibility was questioned and did not reach the expectations built up by marketing. This is confirmed by the impression Penalva got from the exhibition (Penalva, 2012). Without having seen the show, given that he never considered the exhibition appealing, he perceived *And there was light* to be encased in props to conceal the poor content. Wetterskog (2012) declares that the Swedish market wants to see authenticity. However, he considered the show as very beautiful and deems it would have worked well in the US and Australian market.

In addition to the lack of authentic objects in the exhibition, the entrance fee for an adult was 225 Swedish crowns and for people under 25 years old the price was set at 100 crowns (Little Bliss, 2010). In the Swedish market, this is considered expensive (Janson, 2012a; Wetterskog, 2012). Stigwall (2012) considers one of the causes to why the outcome of *And there was light* turned out poorly is due to its aim of making money, while the promoters from Excellent Exhibition contend they wanted to let people know how the masters worked in Italy during the renaissance (Hellekant, 2010). Stigwall (2012) asserts that *Inca* were focusing on the content, which according to her is the opposite motivation for producing an exhibition. Given that the NMWC believed so strongly in the content, it was also easy to convey the grandeur of *Inca* and thus attract large audiences (ibid). Stigwall considers this is what

And there was light failed to do. Nevertheless, the plan for the exhibition was to go on tour for the coming eight years after the opening in Göteborg (Furehill, 2010a). According to the newspaper *Göteborgs Posten* from August 2010, Excellent Exhibition were negotiating with to locations in Asia, as well as two in Europe, to show *And there was light* (Johansson, 2010).

Star Wars Exhibition – a blockbuster exhibition in an unknown town

The *Star Wars Exhibition* was on a world tour through big cities in Asia, South America and Europe. It did one short stop in Scandinavia in 2008, in a small town in the northern part of Sweden: Örnsköldsvik, with a population of almost 55 000 people (2011). Wetterskog, who at the time was museum director of Örnsköldsviks museum och konsthall (ÖMK), got in contact with the right persons from Lucas Ltd. and the UAU, the Portuguese production company that owns the exhibition rights (Örnsköldsvik museum och Konsthall (ÖMK), 2008). When José Araújo, Production Manager at UAU, saw the environment by Höga Kusten 2007 he was thrilled, seeing as it resembled Endor, one of the planets in the Star Wars movie (ibid). There was one gap in the tour schedule, and thus it was decided that the exhibition was to be set up for about two months in Örnsköldsvik (Wetterskog, 2012), a town which was unknown to many up to that point.

Wetterskog (2012) explains that the goal of the *Star Wars Exhibition* was to introduce the ÖMK to the inhabitants of Örnsköldsvik, besides increasing the audience numbers and awareness of culture in the town. An additional goal was for the exhibitions to let the inhabitants discover that culture can be fun. Wetterskog wanted to show that it was possible to talk about art. Furthermore, he also wanted people to discover that it is possible to do a lot of new things with culture and the arts.

When Wetterskog and the museum brought up the idea of making the *Star Wars Exhibition* to the politicians, it suddenly became interesting to discuss (Wetterskog, 2012). Many of the discussions were about the exhibition and the museum. It could concern everything from painting the walls black, to why the show should be executed at all. Wetterskog claims the social climate

is different in smaller towns. What is interesting, but need not turn heads in a large city, can bring great excitement and heated discussions in a small town. According to Wetterskog, in Stockholm, no one would have questioned the reason for making such an exhibition as the *Star Wars Exhibition*, as it would be considered a fun show to do. Nevertheless, for ÖMK, which is a municipal museum, there was a great deal of suspicion on the motivations of doing the exhibition and many thought it would be too commercial. Wetterskog asserts that in Sweden people find it dreadful to show something that is already known. It is generally viewed as below the museums dignity to make exhibitions that are perceived as commercial gimmicks (ibid). However, Wetterskog argues that the *Star Wars Exhibition* was not a commercial gimmick, as some people suspected.

When it was decided to allow the *Star Wars Exhibition* to go up in the museum in Örnköldsvik, in addition to the budget for the exhibition the museum received money to renovate the building, which was much needed at that time, seeing as it was an old building that was beginning to decay (Wetterskog, 2012). Moreover, during the time when the museum was emptied and before the renovation, Wetterskog arranged a downhill race in the museum's stairwell, which attracted a new younger audience to come. Some of them also came back to visit the museum after the competition, and of these youngsters, some ended up working on the *Star Wars Exhibition*, dressed up as various Star Wars characters (ibid).

During Wetterskog's time at the museum, he guided tours in the museum, mostly for businesses, where he would take the opportunity to ask the visitors what they wanted to see in the museum (Wetterskog, 2012). He informed me that most of the suggestions involved the film industry, which in itself has close relation with culture and art making. For instance, storyboards are plotted, set designs are discussed and executed, costumes are designed, etc. Wetterskog explains that a huge amount of time is spent on this, and as a consequence excellent work is produced. He continues by noting that what is made during the production of the film is considered 'high culture'. When the film goes on the screens it becomes popular culture, in the view of the fact that

it is commercialized, and thus is held in less esteem by cultural institutions (ibid). Museums have always been viewed as the temples of high culture, hence they have the power to define what is high culture and what is popular culture, i.e. low culture (Moore, 1997, p.1). It is also feasible to compare this phenomenon with the exhibition medium, by say that blockbuster exhibition turns the exhibition itself into popular culture (Barker, 199).

In addition to the *Star Wars Exhibition* there was also another exhibition showcasing the works of Elisabeth Ohlsson Wallin (Wetterskog, 2012). This exhibition was viewed by more visitors than normally have done so, due to visitors that came to see the *Star Wars Exhibiton* who also wanted to see what was else in the museum (ibid). The results from the *Star Wars Exhibition* weighed up to the expectations that were put on it. Over 60 000 visitors came to see the exhibition, more than the actual number of inhabitants in the municipality (Wetterskog, 2012).

2.3 Does the blockbuster exhibition work in Sweden?

From my interviews I have understood that professionals in the museum sector could generally be divided into two camps regarding the discussion about blockbuster exhibitions: one is against blockbuster exhibitions; and the other is for. However, nothing is black or white. There are a variety of gray shadings, as there are people that stand in the middle of the two opinions.

Negative perspectives

Those against blockbuster exhibitions argue that among the negative perspectives are that blockbuster exhibitions are excluding some people of the community rather than including them. One of the reasons is admission fees associated with blockbusters, which are fairly expensive compared to the normal admission fee. Researches have shown that high cost of admission fee is a common reason why people do not go to museums (Kirchberg, 1998; SInstitution, 2002). Moreover, the economic issue is closely related to people's education and occupational background (Kirchberg, 1998). The danger if museums choose to do blockbuster exhibitions is that they will not include but rather exclude specific audiences, due to entrance fees (Hesselbom, 2012; Kirschberg, 1998). As has been stated by Kirchberg (1998, p. 10):

If museum managers increase entrance fees, they may increase their revenues. However, done this, they not only decrease the number of visitors but also change the socioeconomic composition of the attendance within the frames of the sociological brackets discussed above.

Hesselbom (2012) is critical of the concept of blockbuster exhibitions, seeing as he considers the aim of a blockbuster exhibition to be to increase the size of the audience as well as the museum's budget, and thus fail to broaden the audience. This is an issue, especially considering that cultural institutions are using government funds that come from taxes paid by inhabitants of the entire country. Forssell (2012) maintains that the financier, primarily the government, funds numerous cultural institutions, although at the moment, it is only a small

part of society that takes part in these the cultural opportunities. For instance, few new Swedish citizens take part in the full range of cultural activities they can experience. In the opinion of Forssell, cultural institutions need to work harder on engaging a broader spectrum of the Swedish citizenry. According to him, many museums are hiding behind their mission and believe that they 'cannot' do exhibitions that attract numerous visitors and be a museum for everyone. However, it is the museums responsibility to welcome everyone and therefore they should put more effort into targeting groups that are at risk of exclusion (Heumann Gurian, 2006; Mason, 2002). Hesselbom (2012) is a strong supporter of state subventions and the opportunities the financial support provides for museums, especially as regards opening the museums' door for audiences who do not know they want culture. With public funds, museums are given an opportunity to make exhibition which might otherwise not be profitable, thereby making culture more accessible to everyone. He admits it is expensive and a slow process to make culture accessible to all. However, Hesselbom highlights the work libraries do, which is, in his opinion, a good example of accessibility for different groups of various ages and demographics. Furthermore, Hesselbom argues that blockbuster exhibitions do not require funds from state subventions. He stresses that, with blockbuster shows, there are long-term opportunities for museums to persist without aid from the state. However, the economist Sara J. Skinner (2004) asserts that expenditures on blockbusters are high, which implies financial assistance may be needed to be able to mount them (ibid). Seeing as blockbuster exhibitions have the ability to 'spur local economic development', she emphasizes the importance of 'continuing policy debate regarding government subsidy of the [cultural sector]' (ibid, p. 124). According to Forssell (2012) it is not the money, which motivates museums to put up blockbuster exhibitions, but instead the wish to reach many. Forssell claims, however, that for blockbuster exhibitions the cost coverage is higher, which profits must cover. In the end the outcome of exhibitions is no profit.

Other disadvantages of blockbuster exhibitions include the fact that they are crowded, unless there is a restriction on how many can be in the gallery at the same time. In a crowded gallery, besides security issues, such as the danger of having too many people in the same room at once, there are other

considerations to bear in mind. It is difficult to view the objects in a crowded gallery. Thus the audience may fail to see the content of the exhibition, which was the purpose of going to see the exhibition in the first place. Besides, there is no guarantee that the exhibition will become a blockbuster, especially in view of the fact that blockbuster exhibitions are rare (Hadida, 2009). Only occasionally does an exhibition become successful in the sense that it could be counted as a blockbuster (Dean, 1996). Consequently, to make the decision of doing a blockbuster exhibitions may entail serious risks. Furthermore, if a museum is focusing too much on the revenues from blockbuster exhibitions, it may cause the museum staff to stray away from the museum's mission, hence forgetting the civic responsibility the museum has (Heumann Gurian, 2006). The theme is another restriction that may scare away some of the audience, seeing as in many circumstances visitors need to have prior knowledge about the theme, although in my opinion this is a minor issue in this matter, given that the theme of the blockbusters in general is well-known, and consequently may appeal to a very broad audience.

Positive perspectives

Advantages of blockbuster exhibitions include that they put the museum on the map. Due to the marketing strategy more people will know about the existence of the museum (Forssell, 2012; Lagerkvist, 2012; Myllykoski, 2012; Si, 2012; Stigwall, 2012; Wetterskog, 2012). Stigwall (2012) claims that blockbuster exhibitions establish a brand, and the name of the museum. The idea when putting up blockbuster exhibitions is to attract a new audience and hopefully also lead them to see the other parts of the museum as well, which can lead to significant profits (Lagerkvist, 2012). Blockbusters capture people's attention, and attract a large number of visitors. This in turn drives profits, which can be used to finance other parts of the museums' commitment. Visitors coming to see blockbuster exhibitions tend to go and see other exhibitions in the museums too. Myllykoski (2012) claims that once visitors know what the museum offer, the chance of them coming back to visit the museum subsequently is higher.

Apart from attracting many visitors, Wetterskog (2012) holds that there are other advantages to take into consideration regarding blockbuster exhibitions, which often are international exhibitions that are brought to the museum. Blockbuster exhibitions can help the museum gain financial profit, which later can be invested in other activities within the organization. Stigwall (2012) declares that with more money the museum can do more, and this is one way blockbuster shows can contribute to the overall function of a museum (SInstitution, 2002). The profit that can be made from a blockbuster may surpass expectations and can come to be used for many years onwards (Ekström, E-T 2012, pers. comm., 26 April). That is why the film industry, for instance, pursues blockbuster movies and is willing to gamble in the hope of the next film becoming a blockbuster (Baker and Faulkner, 1991). My judgment it that the same principle regarding blockbuster exhibitions is applicable in the museum field. However, one cannot neglect the fact that blockbusters do attract a great number of visitors, which many are not typical museum visitors. This indicates that blockbusters open the door for the non-typical museum visitor, and make museums approachable for them. Stigwall (2012) claims that blockbuster exhibitions are great, insofar as they make culture accessible for everyone.

Many of those I have interviewed agree that every museum wishes to see as many visitors as possible going to their museums to see exhibitions, regardless of what side they stand on regarding the blockbuster issue. Who would not want a big audience to come? Who would not want to make a profit? My interviewees, however, simultaneously ask whether the purpose of exhibitions is solely reaching out to as many as possible, or to be profitable as well. Perhaps it is better to do a decent exhibition, which focuses on affecting people. Maybe making the exhibitions participatory and inclusive for the audience, with pedagogic designs and a source of dialog in consideration, is of greater value? It is important to ask the purpose of the exhibitions, and what goals they are supposed to achieve.

In the opinion of Forssell (2012), there are only advantages in succeeding to attract large audiences. For instance, in case of a popular exhibition, museum staff may feel proud of what they have accomplished, and new opportunities may follow when income based on increased revenue comes in and increases

the feasibility of the rest of the organizations activities. The blockbuster phenomenon has always existed in society, and I think Forssell is primarily referring to the number of visitors the museum wants to capture, and the desire to create a blockbuster exhibition. Forssell considers the audience as intelligent. The audiences want quality. Thus he cannot see disadvantages with blockbuster exhibitions, only advantages. He is convinced that if the show they come to see is of good quality, they will come, whether it is a blockbuster show or a regular exhibition. While I agree with his argument generally, I also question the difference in audience size between a blockbuster show and a regular exhibition. Otherwise, every well-produced exhibition would have a huge audience, which would also mean that every blockbuster exhibition is of good quality. A good example on this issue is the *Terracotta army* exhibition. According to Persson (2012), the *Terracotta army* exhibition was poorly executed as well as retrogressive. She declared that it was like going back some decades, while walking through the exhibition, with objects behind glass and no interaction or pedagogic consideration. The exhibition was communicating in one direction and taking out the objects out of contexts, put up as beautiful artworks, instead of telling the story of the precious history it could have conveyed (Appelbaum, 2002). In the view of Persson (2012), this exhibition was badly executed, yet its success was a fact, with over 350 000 visitors coming to see the exhibition, which generated substantial revenue (SMVK, n.d.; SMVK 2012).

Exhibitions of good quality generate recurrent visitors (Myllykoski, 2012; Wetterkog, 2012; Lagerkvist, 2012). Forssell (2012) kept coming back to his opinion of the impossibility of fooling the audience. He declares that some professionals within the museum field consider it to superficial to focus solely on audience numbers. Nevertheless, exhibitions with many attendances show that the curator has done something well. The audience is smart; one should not despise them and look down on them. If the museum delivers exhibitions of great quality, the audience will come and see it (ibid).

Both for and against

It should be added that some people I have interviewed, such as Myllykoski (2012), Stigwall (2012) and Wetterskog (2012), believes there is a midway between the blockbuster concept and the 'inclusive museum'. One should not underestimate blockbusters, and consider them to be solely commercial and thus not belonging to the cultural life or the museum sector. Forssell maintains that if museums succeed in delivering culture to the masses, they have done a good deed. However, he stresses, just because museums choose to try to get a wider audience group does not mean the need to sacrifice quality in cultural value of an exhibition. Myllykoski (2012) claims it is possible to make an educational blockbuster exhibition if it is produced properly, i.e. with a solid scientific base, time to adjust the details, pedagogic implementation in the exhibition as well as program, etc. Forssell (2012) asserts that the baseline museums need to reach audiences, otherwise regardless of what museums do, it does not matter. Museums should put the audience at the center of their focus (Heumann Gurian, 2006; Hooper-Greenhill 1994b). In his opinion, the obligation to seek larger audiences is not negative. According to Stigwall (2012), it is easy to think that museums are digressing when making blockbuster exhibitions, but it does not have to be so. In addition, it is possible to implement the blockbuster concept in accordance with the museums' own missions. Blockbuster exhibitions offer the chance to showcase the museums' own collections, Stigwall contends, and they show that all the pieces are related to one another. Blockbuster exhibitions can also be a part of the museums' own mission (SInstitution, 2002). Myllykoski claims museums should not put on blockbusters that conflict with their missions. A blockbuster exhibition can be made in the spirit of the social responsibilities a museum has. It can also be inclusive and participative (Wetterskog, 2012; Myllykoski, 2012). Wetterskog (2012) explains that blockbuster exhibitions do not have to differ from a general exhibition as regards adding cultural and educational value. Furthermore, he believes it is up to the museum to assure good quality of the blockbuster exhibition, thereby contributing to the social role that the museums consider they have. The audience cannot be fooled (Forssell, 2012; Wetterskog, 2012). According to Wetterskog (2012), whether the blockbuster exhibitions are reputable or not, depends to a large extent on those who do the show.

The blockbuster exhibition as a concept will not disappear, but may perhaps evolve into new forms of subtypes (Penalva, 2012; Stigwall, 2012; Wetterskog, 2012). When people I have interviewed talk about blockbusters, they assert that the Swedish museums will eventually find another term for this phenomenon. A new terminology is required, seeing as the vocabulary, borrowed from the film industry, stands for something else than what they believe in and how the concept would function in the Swedish circumstances (Marthur, 2005). The term 'blockbuster' has a very negative connotation. Forssell (2012) notes that, by using the term 'blockbuster' it sounds like museums are debasing the ideals of their institutions for money. Penalva (2012), personally, considers that the blockbuster term is strongly associated with financial issues. It is all about exhibitions making a big profit. According to Forssell (2012), general perceptions among museum professionals suggest that museums should not do blockbuster exhibitions; instead he argues all cultural institutions should fill the galleries with activities as a way to fill the galleries with visitors, and blockbuster exhibitions could be one method to achieve this.

Expensive production

It is expensive for museums to produce their own exhibitions, both regarding the budget as well as staff time (Wetterskog, 2012). Bringing in international exhibitions to museums is also expensive (ibid). Wetterskog claims with spectacular expectations for international of exhibitions results in expenditure on such exhibitions increasing dramatically. To reach the goal of providing an extraordinary experiences, these kind of exhibitions raises the bars on technical, visual and spatial sectors. However, Wetterskog explains that bringing in an exhibition is only a fraction of what the own production costs, in comparison to producing an exhibition from the beginning. He considers that the trend of traveling exhibitions will grow bigger. It is possible to see traces of this already (ibid). In the museum field there are many discussions of whether to take in traveling exhibitions or not (ibid). Wetterskog argues that even those museums that are unwilling to put up traveling exhibitions

realize they may have to do this in the future in order to survive. Wetterskog believes that traveling exhibition can serve as a complement to the permanent exhibitions, and offer the public other information beyond that available from the museum's collections, and support the context/topic of the museums' shows and mission.

As bringing in blockbuster exhibitions are expensive, museums are pressured to promote them heavily (SInstitution, 2002, p.13). The Smithsonian Institution (2002) states: 'Interviews with museum marketing directors suggest that the promotion budget for a blockbuster exhibition will range between 15 percent and 25 percent of the total exhibition cost.' Furthermore, in nine out of ten cases, it also means that the exhibition will end up in Stockholm, the capital city of Sweden (Wetterskog, 2012). One may think this is unfair to the other towns in Sweden, but it is important to remember that there are more museums in Stockholm, not to mention simply more people there are living in Stockholm. In Sweden the population is almost 9,5 million people (NE, 2011a), of which around ten percent lives in the capital city (NE, 2011b). Keeping this in mind it is understandable that most large exhibitions are in Stockholm, as well as blockbuster shows. According to Wetterskog (2012), in Sweden we have only begun to mount blockbuster exhibitions and in the future, major exhibitions will make stops in Scandinavia: mostly in Stockholm and Helsinki.

Blockbuster exhibition do not equal success

The most important thing to remember regarding blockbuster exhibitions is that there is no single narrative which ensures success (Lagerkvist, 2012). There are no specific factors for success, unless the exhibition is a household name, when considering blockbusters (Stigwall, 2012). According to Lagerkvist (2012), it takes a lot of resources. Si (2012) concurs, noting that resources such as time, a competent team, a sufficient budget, etc. are significant factors to consider whether museums are interested in producing blockbusters. Furthermore, Lagerkvist (2012) believes that the blockbuster concept will promote economic awareness - what is selling will be an important question in this regard. However, she maintains, there are questions to take into consideration, such as: What is ethical? What is important? What is urgent?

The great danger Lagerkvist (2012) sees, if museums choose the path of making blockbuster exhibitions, is that museums will start to censor material that they present, due to the fact that the exhibitions would not otherwise sell many tickets. If that is the case, she considers museums will need to think further on their mission and goals. According to Si (2012), the aim with a blockbuster exhibition must be consistent with the museum's mission. In his opinion, the risk of blockbuster exhibitions is that the focus will be on generating revenue, and thus the theme will be of populist nature. Si claims that museums are tasked with providing nuance and processing the international outlook the media provides, and that the one the audience has. It is a great and heavy task (ibid).

2.4 Futures of the blockbuster concept in Sweden

New trends to monitor and follow?

In the museum field there are many other trends which are being discussed beyond the rise of blockbuster exhibitions. Lagerkvist (2012) notes the emersion of two strong trends today: one is the idea of the inclusive and participative museum, i.e. the social museum, which advocates co-creation, community projects, and recognizing that knowledge is not always possessed by the museum staff. The social museum is not only about facts in the exhibition; it is rather about trying to understand something new in its exhibitions. Another trend both Lagerkvist and Janson (2012a) sense is the exceptional experience the audience expects, which museums will aspire to supply. As Lagerkvist (2012) describes, the exhibition creates a ‘journey’, a distinctive experience, resembling the experience you get from movies. It resembles the film phenomenon, and according to Lagerkvist, the experience and expectations are also similar to visiting a strongly iconic destination, such as the Eiffel Tower. Wetterskog (2012) declares that throughout the world, not only in Sweden, there is demand that exhibitions should be spectacular. Museums need to provide spectacular experiences in exhibitions in order to attract the audience to come; the audience needs to be exposed to events different from those that can be experienced in their daily life (Kirchenblatt-Gimblett, 2002). In the exhibition there should be multimedia, and every section in the exhibition should revolve around the objects and put them in context, not focus on the objects solely (Wetterskog, 2012). For example, the artifacts in the exhibition about the Etruscans are displayed in its environment from its time at the MMNEA.

The influences of social media

Audiences do not think in terms of copyright and the creator’s right. They think in terms of being involved (The New Media Consortium (NCM), 2010; Rozan, 2011). It is something museums are very aware of and have started to incorporate in exhibitions. Simon (2010) explains the issue of involving the audience in exhibition excellently, and discusses this matter in her book

The Participatory Museum, as well as giving examples of how to realize participation in exhibitions. In the opinion of Janson (2012a), museums see that copyright issues are in transition, which they relate to and utilize. He notes that in some of the activities, museums use creative common, which is something museums are beginning to use to a greater extent. Furthermore, Janson (2012a) argues that if museum create something it should benefit the community. It is a way for museums to be relevant and stay relevant (ibid). Museums are for the people. Nevertheless, it is not fully acceptable to allow the public authority to fill knowledge the gaps in knowledge that the museum do not have. It is not an authorized method to create knowledge (ibid). Simon (2010) stresses the value in unauthorized knowledge, seeing as it creates an opportunity for the public to participate in the work museums do and add other aspects to the story of the exhibition (Simon, 2008). This is a trend in which social media such as twitter, flickr, fb, tumblr, etc., contributed to and increased consolidation. We are becoming more technology-literal (Roza, 2002). Visitors are using their smartphones in the museums to a greater extent (NMC, 2012). Museums take advantage of this and offer more information through QR-codes, as well as supplying other means for visitors to interact with the exhibition through their smartphones (Janson 2012a; Simon 2011). Janson (2012a) claims that the ‘participative culture’ is increasing, and there are correspondingly more and more creative ways of using the exhibition medium to create participation.

Penalva (2012) claims that social media is beginning to gain greater influence, or rather the museum is beginning to realize the benefits of social media. Hence museums are experimenting with social media and try to approach it professionally, though the development is slow at some museums. According to Janson (2012a), every cultural institution wants to use social media. If you look at the culture field, it is a trend more and more institution dive into. Social media encourages audiences to discuss and share (NMC, 2010). ‘Museums want and need to engage their audiences to survive’ (ibid, p. 13). Thus they try to use the feeds from social media to create participation (Roza, 2011).

The target groups

In Sweden children and young adults are currently the cultural sector's primarily target group (Werner, 2011). Nonetheless, Janson (2012a) maintains that museums should target seniors instead of children and young people. In his view, those who have time and money to spend on the exhibitions are in fact people in middle age and older, thus museums should take care of them, and make them the core target group. He maintains that museums can also target young people at the same time, but should consider them a secondary target group. However, Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (1994b) emphasize the importance of children and families in *Museum and their visitors*, by stating:

‘The combination of the growth in numbers of family-formers and the growth in number of young children means that the small group consisting of adults and children visiting together will become perhaps the most important group to plan for considering displays, events, comfort facilities and literature.’

The younger generation is the future, and one must start at young age and introduce culture into daily life, sparking the interest in culture and maintaining this interest over time (ibid). Nonetheless, I do agree with Janson that it is the elderly who have time and money to spend; hence we should value them and emphasize more this target group. The tourism industry has taken notice of this and begun to invest more in catering to elderly people, by offering travel destinations that accommodates this target group (Javalgi, Thomas & Rao, 1992; Horneman et al., 2002). According to Janson (2012b), to maintain relevant museums should follow the lead of the tourism industry, by targeting the elderly. Nilsson, however, stresses that if museums are to attract wide audience it is important to have exhibitions with different themes in the museum simultaneously, which target various group of people and of different ages. With good pedagogical activities it is possible to find ways for the general public to find all exhibitions accessible and of interest (Nilsson, 2012).

The relation between blockbusters, business world and tourism

It is commonly believed that blockbuster exhibitions have a close relationship with tourism. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2009) considers that tourism can strengthen cultural life, and maintains that ever since the 1980s cultural tourism has become a large source of economic strength. According to researchers in the Department of Cultural Heritage, Canada:

Special [...] exhibits, sometimes known as “blockbusters”, are often thought of as tourism and business generators. This belief is fostered by economic impact studies that bravely estimate the total gross domestic product or total jobs “created” by such exhibits. (Stanely, et al., 2000, p. 243)

Today tourism is the biggest industry in the world, where culture has a vast impact (Falk & Dierking, 2000). According to Stigwall (2012), the museum field is increasingly integrating with the entertainment industry. She considers that museums should be part of the entertainment industry. They should make culture interesting and accessible (ibid). Many cities and museums are focusing on the hospitality industry, mainly tourists (Janson, 2012a). Museums are concurrently competing with attractions such as adventure parks, science centers, and other business in the entertainment industry (Hall, 2011). In order to compete with their competitors, museums need to create spectacular experiences for visitors in the exhibition, making use of multimedia approaches in order to successfully engage the audience (Kirchenblatt-Gimblett, 2002). Due to the fiscal pressure museums are forced to do so (Bennett, 1995). To justify government funding museums do everything they can to attract sufficient audience (ibid, p. 104). However, from the audience’s point of view, there is the risks that they have come to expect the exhibition to be an exceptional experience. Lagerkvist (2012) argues that it may be difficult to live up to this conception, especially in other projects that are made later, as there is a risk that anticipations escalate for each visit.

According to John Falk and Lynn Dierking (2000, p.221): ‘Cities and towns have come to appreciate that a thriving museum community translates into real dollars for the rest of the local economy.’ Janson (2012a) regards this development, of museums trying to become visitor attractions and compete against other tourist attractions, as incorrect. Bengt Göransson, the former minister of culture during the 1980s, supports his opinion. In Göransson’s view museums should not target the tourism industry, in view of the fact that it is not the mission of museums to do so, but to work for the community (Göransson, 2012). Janson (2012a) considers that museums should look for other competitors instead, which are run in a similar way to their own activities, such as theaters, etc. Museums should focus more on being a public organization where visitors want to return, and provide satisfactory experiences (ibid). They belong in the world of academia, not in the tourism industry, nor the business world (Heumann Gurian, 2006). Janson deems that regional museums understand this concept better. According to him, examples of museums that are working for the local community are Mölndal Museum, Jönköping County Museum, etc. He claims that the county museums want to be relevant places for the community. Janson considers making museums relevant for the community as another way of getting more visitors. As stated by Penalva (2012), the GCM wish to have close collaboration with the community and business world in Göteborg in order to reach a wide audience, in accordance with the wish of the Göteborg city’s Cultural Committee who operate the GCM, which is partially why the blockbuster concept is not topically for the GCM (ibid). Although the GCM welcomes revenue, it is not a goal for which the exhibitions at the GCM explicitly aim (ibid).

Hesselbom asserts that museums can learn more from the business sector; particularly looking into the efficiency the business world is well acquainted with. In his opinion, it would probably be most efficient solution for museums to combine public funds and business procedure, and find a middle ground to work towards. Blockbuster shows open up opportunities to gain support and collaborate with both politicians and the business world. According to John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking (2000):

Museums are enjoying the support of the political and business communities in ways that were only dreamed about twenty years ago. Whereas museums have always been considered important parts of the community, today they are considered to be vital parts of the community.

Blockbuster exhibitions are also generally perceived to benefit society by creating more jobs in the city, such as at the museum, restaurants, cafés, hotels, etc., in order to take care of the stream of people coming to see the exhibition (Skinner 2004; Stanely et al., 2000). The museums' budget does not grow at the same pace as with the rest of the expenditure that is involved with the organization (Black, 2012). It opens up new opportunities to museums focusing on the audience as a source of more resources (Janson 2012a; Skinner, 2004).

The fight over the audience is becoming more intense in a 'relatively static market' (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994b, p. 68). Every museum want to create amazing exhibitions that everyone wants to see and thereby compete with other attractions in the city. The question Janson (2012a) asks is whether this is a trend or a social development happening in society at large. Nevertheless, in order to compete with tourist attractions, several major museums are working really hard on temporary exhibitions, and are investing more resources on these (Barret 2004). Janson (2012a) claims that all Swedish institutions want to make blockbuster exhibitions. A lot of effort is put into these temporary exhibitions, and this is an obvious occurrence, although Janson highlights Moderna Museet as an exception. Not long ago Moderna Museet invested heavily in their permanent exhibition and bought art pieces by female artists. It received widespread attention and attracted people to go and see the permanent exhibition (ibid; Sveriges Ambassad Köpenhamn, 2010). Janson (2012a) considers that investments on the permanent exhibitions are done too infrequently.

Towards a new museum organization

Time has passed by some museums. The guidelines followed by professionals in museums are from the last century (Forssell 2012; Wäre, 2002; Rozan, 2011). In the museum field, there is a certain group of people who work in the museum who are resistant to doing something different and special (Wetterskog, 2012). However, Janson (2012a) asserts that there is a heated debate going on in the museum sector, where museums internal organizations are restructured, which is affecting and changing the values museums previously followed. When the focus was to manage and take care of the collections, the museums have met the needs of the objects (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994a), hence in the past, conservators and curators 'held permanent senior posts' (ibid, p. 137). Although museums have been associated with education since their foundation in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, they have not always understood the importance of education, nor valued it (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994a). Today more emphasis is placed on the audience instead, therefore museum pedagogues gain a greater role, resulting in their entry in exhibition production at an earlier stage (Hein, 2002; Janson, 2012a). This is a trend that has lasted for almost a half century (Kotler and Kotler, 2000). Moreover, many new employees, in the younger generation, are entering the museum field, whereas more and more of them are in high positions of greater importance, and hence they contribute to change in the museum (Forssell, 2012; Moore, 1997; Penalva, 2012). Conservative staff often wants to retain the traditional museum and work accordingly to the structure that was transmitted from the last century (Hall, 2011). To keep the old traditions arguments are often made that museums' collections contain 'powerful and complex' stories that are vital to transmit to the audience (ibid, p 127). Forsell claims that it has always been a struggle between the staff who work for the public part of museums and those who work with collections. He reckons skilled museums will take account of the opinions of both sides. Furthermore, the Director of the Museum of science and Industry in Manchester, J. Patrick Greene (2002, p.190) states:

If the rest of the world is changing and [museums] are not, there is every likelihood that we will get left behind, until ultimately someone else decides we need to change and does it for us.

It is clear that we are living through a period of rapid social change, where the local and global community is increasingly in focus (Sandell, 2007). According to Forssell (2012), the gap due to the paradigm shift is being filled. He hopes that museums will fill the gap by bringing up issues dealing with value adding and understanding of each other. In his opinion, this is the answer to why it is so important that as many people as possible will partake in cultural experiences. Hooper-Greenhill enhances Forssells statement by explaining the importance of museums and how they contribute to the society:

Museums and galleries are vital to the educational and cultural health of society. This, however, is not always either seen or understood, and as long as this is the case the continued existence of museums will be tenuous. (Hooper-Greenhill, 1994b, p. 182)

Lagerkvist (2012) reasons that blockbuster exhibitions will be built up as museums become aware of what can be done in the Swedish market. Not every theme can be exhibited as blockbuster exhibition in Sweden (Wetterskog, 2012). Thus it is important to know the audience of museums. As mentioned earlier by Wetterskog, the Swedish audience wants to see authentic objects in exhibitions. Moreover, the market is not big enough to put up blockbuster exhibitions with concentrated target groups. According to Wetterskog, Harry Potter is an example of a blockbuster exhibition that would not work to show in Sweden, as it has a very small niche of audience: teenagers. Most teenagers do not go to exhibitions without parents in Sweden (ibid). Thus it is necessary for blockbusters to appeal to a wide audience for them to be counted as successful. There are other exhibitions, based on films such as Twilight, Indiana Jones, etc., which have the same issue as the Harry Potter exhibition (ibid). For the moment, blockbuster exhibitions must target multiple audiences if they are to thrive in our country.

What needs to be done

Penalva (2012) claims that in order not to be left behind, museums should integrate the external environment into the museum's activities to a greater extent, by strategically working with exhibition development. For museums to stay relevant, the external environment is important. Museum must change according to changes of society and the transformation of the world if they are to be timely and stay relevant for their audience. Change is not always a negative. Barbara Kirchenblatt-Gimblett (2002), professor in Performance Studies, is critical of museums remaining unchanged. She states (ibid, p. 61): 'Unless they changed, they would become doubly historical. They would become museums of themselves.'

Regarding the future, Si (2012) considers it important to look at what audiences want and their interests, and combine it with the museums' own mission. Stigwall (2012) deems that well-curated exhibitions, which through language and structure make objects more available to the audience, are something to emulate. This especially concerns museums that want to reach and create a dialogue with visitors. Exhibitions should encourage curiosity in the audience, would make them want to know more. Stigwall emphasizes that it is possible to accomplish these goals when making blockbuster exhibitions. In her opinion it is a way to attract visitors to come to the museum, as well as to return. In order for museums' survival, museums have started to focus on the community.

Forssell (2012), Myllykoski (2012) and Wetterskog (2012) are of the opinion that in the future will be characterized by great attention to visitor demands. The audience will demand cultural experiences of higher quality. In part, this demand may depend on the increasing convenience of traveling to other countries, which means that people have experiences and international standards which they will come to expect in their own city. Another demand from the audience on museums is for the museums to address topical issues. If museums have timeliness in mind, they will need capture topics that society is interested in.

Speculations on the future

Consistent with Forssell (2012), there exists a huge range of missions for museums, making it impossible to generalize and say what trend that can be glimpsed in influencing production of all exhibitions in the future. Both Hesselbom (2012) and Si (2012) share the same opinion, and add that the trends differ depending on the type of the museum. Si states that knowledge areas are divided at different museums, which makes generalization even more difficult. Examples listed by of this phenomenon by Hesselbom (2012) includes the fact that art museums emphasize the artist, whereas as county museums and historical museums focus on the pedagogy. In his opinion, different types of museums need to learn from each other and thereby become a better museum. Si considers the only substantively comparable base is of audience and revenues, which is insufficient information and does not mirror the wide spectrum of concerns museums deals with in their organizations. He stresses that the lack of common reference point makes it challenging to speculate on the matter.

The museums work is changing towards the direction of the social museum, which is to welcome everyone, as well as making exhibitions of great quality (Forssell, 2012). Yet, Hesselbom (2012) considers that the interest of the politicians will determine how the exhibitions will be produced in the future, and at the moment the current policies emphasize that culture should be profitable. However, Si argues that the state has realized that one cannot mount blockbuster exhibitions too often, as massive time is required for the preparation of execution of a blockbuster exhibition.

In the view of Hesselbom (2012), when expressing something relevant about blockbuster exhibitions, it is to simplify the image of the museum's activities if one is to say that the 'blockbuster exhibition' is a concept that will continue to be used in Sweden. Through the years, museums have pursued various ideologies (Bennett, 1995). Hesselbom (2012) notes that, for example, in the 1800s museums sought to preserve the cultural heritage, which was about to disappear. Later they wanted to invigorate the nation. In his opinion, today there is no need to strengthening the national identity, one of the many causes of which could be related to the convenient Internet access. Through use of the

Internet various nations are coming together in a globalized civilization, where one nation's acts affect another. Today, museums focus on multiculturalism and cultural diversity (Sandell, 2007). Museums want, among other things, to show that Sweden is a multicultural country (Hesselbom, 2012). Hesselbom declares that working in the museum field is political work, which aspires to improve the lives of inhabitants in the community.

What exhibition production will look like in the future depends entirely on the museum's mission, time, budget, etc. Lagerkvist (2012) submits that it is a long way to go if a museum chooses the way to be an inclusive and participative institution. She explains that it takes time, work, resources, and certain types of skills to reach that goal. The other path - blockbuster exhibitions – requires making use of diverse external expertise and the knowledge of how to enhance the exhibition experience. There is no right or wrong, in choosing what direction museums will continue to develop. However, Lagerkvist insists that museums must be aware that they cannot make choices without serious reflection, or else the consequences may create a sense that the choices they have made are contradictory. Forssell (2012) argues that everything depends on the trends that will change, which changes frequently. Possible outcomes will oscillate between various trends, and thus it is difficult to speculate on what the future of exhibition production will look like.

Lagerkvist (2012) speculates that in the future museums and other activities will bring in more major exhibitions from outside. Museums will to a greater extent dare to take a chance on the expenditure that these exhibitions will cost, hoping to gain a bigger profit, not just financial profit, but also profit in returning visitors. In lines with Lagerkvist's (2012) speculation, Si (2012) describes that Sweden is an innovative country in numerous different areas, but regarding cultural experiences he regards the country as on the fringe. In his opinion, the cultural field will embrace other existing, viable and ready-made ideas and concepts from other international museums. He contemplates that museums will do so in order to save time and money; furthermore, more and more museums will emulate this method.

According to Lagerkvist (2012), there is an ongoing commercialization of cultural life. This is partly because policy today indicates that cultural activities should find other financial solutions than relying solely on government funds. The implication of these statements and reflections is a future where financial issues will be put into greater focus, with blockbuster exhibition as one mean to generate revenue. Nevertheless, the Smithsonian Institution (2002, p.15) states:

Many museums marketing directors feel that blockbuster exhibitions have oversold the “unique, time-limited” experience, and devalued “everyday” experiences derived from permanent collections. The evidence is clear that blockbusters have trained museum visitor to look for spectacular and extraordinary exhibitions.

Wetterskog (2012), however, deems that what we have seen out of blockbusters now, is just the beginning of the blockbuster phenomenon. The blockbuster exhibitions that have been mounted are according to Wetterskog only a fraction of what is waiting museums. Professor of Business Administration, David A. Garvin (1981, p.16) claims: ‘For the foreseeable future, then, and as long as there are mass audiences to be found, blockbusters are likely to be a feature of American popular entertainment’.

3.1 Conclusion

Blockbuster exhibitions in general do not support the social museum

Some of the blockbuster shows, or exhibitions with the aspiration of becoming blockbusters, such as those produced by the NMWC and the museums belonging to the organization, King Tut, Alexander McQueen, seem to have been produced so the audience will experience amazement. When the blockbusters discussed in this dissertation are measured according to the theoretical position of inclusion developed by Heumann Gurian it is clear that these blockbuster exhibitions have failed to reach the requirements. I have identified three facts that prove why blockbuster exhibitions do not support the social museum. 1) Admissions fees associated with blockbuster exhibitions are commonly higher than the regular admission, thus excluding all of visitors who cannot afford admission. This is a vital feature that cannot be argued away. As Kirschberg (1998, p. 10) has stated:

Entrance fees are not a subjective barrier for the wealthy, but for the poor who are more sensitive about changes in these prices. Therefore, due to these different sensitivities an increase of museum entrance fees may in fact contribute to an elitist composition of museum attendances.

2) Many blockbuster exhibitions, especially those with themes such as art and treasure, put strong focus on spectacular objects. As mentioned before, these exhibitions do not allow the audience to have a closer look on the artifact. Furthermore, if the labels contain too little information the exclusion of audience members, who do not possess needed knowledge necessary to understanding the exhibition is even more enhanced.

3) Most of the blockbuster exhibitions mounted in Swedish museums are from other countries, which mostly imply that the concept is rather solid. This in turn denotes that museums have little to say and small margins to make any changes. This is an indication that blockbusters do not support the social museum Heumann Gurian advocates, regarding including the community in the work and letting them affect the composition of activities in the museum.

The restriction of the three blockbuster themes

As mentioned before, the three kinds of blockbuster exhibition themes: *masterpiece*, *treasure* and *adventure*, are restricted in various degrees regarding how they can benefit and work towards the goal of a social museum. The ‘masterpiece’ theme is elitist. I have found that blockbuster exhibitions of this kind make the exhibition more approachable and less elitist than other art exhibitions, given that it appeals to broader audience. Yet, many of them are executed in such a manner as to not feel inclusionary. The ‘treasure’ theme allows a greater opportunity to make the exhibition more inclusionary. For instance, connecting the topic to the community and its history makes the exhibition appeal to the audience on a personal level. The conveyed story, the timeliness, the degree of participation in the exhibition, etc. are other aspects that could make the theme work for the social museum. The ‘adventure’ theme includes a larger range of topics, and thus it is far easier to execute these kinds of blockbuster exhibitions in accordance with the aims of the social museum.

The relation of blockbusters in two different fields

Despite a number of similarities, there exist serious distinctions between blockbusters in the museum field and in the film industry. Concerning the commercialization the two fields stand at opposite sides. While many professionals in the museum field perceive that the mission of museums is to work for the society, the primary incentive of the film industry is capitalistic. Nevertheless, the fact that blockbusters, whether in the film industry or museum field, attract many and different kinds of people and reach a broad audience cannot be denied. However, as has been discussed at length above, the struggles inherent in achieving this sort of impact are legions as many features must correspond with one another and a blockbuster must offer something new and fresh.

Whether blockbuster exhibitions benefit the social museum

Museums cannot bring in a traveling exhibition too often, or even every year, financial feasibility for mounting traveling exhibition is on average once every two years (Si 2012; Wetterskog 2012). However, I find it difficult to argue for museums to bring in international traveling exhibitions, as it is very expensive, unless the exhibitions guarantee a great impact on audience influx. It is even more difficult to argue for this, considering the values the social museum represents and realizing that the blockbuster concept does not actually support the social museum. What is clear is that blockbuster exhibitions attract large crowds to the museum, some of which are not frequent visitors and would not have partaken in what the cultural institutions offer otherwise. From there it is up to the museum to deliver a blockbuster exhibition that can live up to the standards of the social museum. However, an aspect that motivates museums to put on a blockbuster exhibition is the revenue it generates, as well as the potential to stimulate tourism industry in the city by putting the city on the map. It is thus an ultimately a commercial motive which drives blockbuster exhibitions, which is more or less in direct opposition to the incentives of the social museum. Even though motivation benefits the business world and the tourism industry, it is clearly that it does not benefit the social museum.

The ideal of the social museum advocates museums for everyone, where all are equal and equally welcome. In all honesty, this is difficult to achieve in practice, since each individual has his or her own preferences and points of reference. However, blockbuster exhibitions are in general audience bearers, succeeding in attracting people from various social strata. Wetterskog argues that blockbuster exhibitions in Sweden must apply to a wide audience. A blockbuster exhibition is indeed intended to attract a wide audience, yet simultaneously one may consider that it targets only a narrow audience, as it turns to an audience that is interested in the topic the exhibition treats. In conclusion, blockbuster exhibitions fail to address everyone. Although blockbuster exhibitions do not include people from the entire society, they are one way to encourage more people to consume what cultural institutions can offer. Furthermore, if the revenue from blockbuster exhibitions is used in other activities museums operate, it will allow everyone to partake in what

museums offer in one way or another. The impact blockbuster exhibitions have on the audience can be transferred to the museums regular activities and result in returning visitors. It is important to listen to the audience and work for a museum that can benefit them and the society at large. However, it is important not to confuse this statement with my conclusions, where the blockbuster as a concept is not a direct mean to fulfill the goals of the social museum, but a tool that can be used in order achieve the social museum.

The benefits with technology and social media

Technology is becoming cheaper and makes it possible for museums to make exhibitions interactive and exciting to a greater extent (Janson 2012a). According to Janson, this is a trend that is of increasing significance. Museums put more resources into developing technology, and use technology to attract more visitors to the museums, such as through the use of multi-touch screens in exhibitions. They use technology mostly to increase interaction with visitors, and this trend has not subsided, but rather increased in importance (Janson 2012a). Social media in museums is possible thanks to technology and can be a great tool for museums to use, to involve the audience in exhibitions. As noted above, social media encourages the audience to engage and discuss, as it gives them a voice in the exhibition. By giving the audience a voice in exhibitions, museums are moving away from an elitist conception of the traditional museum. Hence they are working towards the social museum, and are inviting the audience to feel welcome at its facilities.

The specific impact of blockbusters in Sweden

In the past, museums in Sweden have not had the incentive to mount blockbuster exhibitions, as the government supported them financially (Barker, 1999). As was mentioned above, the emergence of blockbuster exhibitions originates in the financial crises in 2007, when the cutbacks to government funding urged museums in Sweden and Europe more generally to find other financial means of supporting the organization. Blockbuster exhibitions cannot save the financial future of museums, nor is the concept the sole answer to attract many visitors to the museum. The cost of bringing in a blockbuster exhibition divided with the amount of visitors needed for the revenue to cover up the

expenditure is a big challenge for the Swedish museums, which mostly has to do with the number of population in Sweden. Furthermore, most of the visitors only come to see the blockbuster exhibitions and participate in the rest of the museum's event and exhibitions if it suits their own plans.

My conclusion is that blockbuster exhibitions are not related to the sort of social museums Heumann Gurian advocates. Yet, if museums use the revenue generated by blockbuster exhibition, the concept can be used as a tool to support the aims of social museums. However, given the state of current cultural policy in Sweden, it may not be possible to utilize such revenue in order to enhance additional museum efficacy. In order for museums to exploit the revenue they acquire, cultural policy must change, so that profits can be used by museums to invest in the organization and other museum activities, and to work for an inclusive museum, which benefits society at large.

Possible future research

My conclusion indicates that it is possible to do further research of whether blockbuster exhibitions actually benefit the Swedish museums, and in what ways. Does the audience of a blockbuster exhibition actually learn something from the visit and what is their experience of it? Did the exhibition convey a feeling of the ethos the social museum promotes? Did the blockbuster exhibition change the view the audience had of the museum before seeing the exhibition? How many of these visitors of the blockbuster exhibition can consider to return to the museum afterwards? Case studies and observations could be done to give real facts of what benefits, or lack of them, a blockbuster exhibition contributes to a museum. Furthermore, a study of how the culture policies affects this matter is also highly interesting to investigate on. What kind of law changes could be executed to make it possible for museums to take care of the revenue from the blockbuster exhibitions and invest in their efficacy? The result indicates further research of the economic circumstances of blockbuster exhibitions, especially regarding how the profit of such exhibitions could be used in Swedish museums to benefit society.

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