
Fostering Individuals and Groups in the Swedish ”People’s Home”

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Abstract

The building of the Swedish ”people’s home” was closely connected to formal and informal institutions in society, which in turn provided the framework for social structure and development throughout most of the 20th century. This presentation focuses on the photographic narrative of the local institutions of a brass band, a mental hospital, a bath house and a village school.

These institutions were formal in the sense of providing the social services of creating the soundtrack for the social democratic movement, health care, hygiene and education, and from the perspective of society contributing to the creation of good citizens and a healthy society.

They were also informal in the sense of being grounded in the local context, creating and fostering collective identities and memories, providing not only employment opportunities for local people but in individuals also a sense of belonging and purpose.

In the local institutions, the social status positions were also contested and negotiated, and formal work relations could be softened and reversed in informal settings like the brass band. At school and at the bath house, all children regardless of their families’ social status received the same education and scrubbing in the same buildings.

Instead of standardizing local people into anonymous citizens, however, the local institutions provided the opportunity, against a predictable and relatively unchanging backdrop, for people to become visible as individuals. This presentation provides pictures of people as individuals and groups with the framework of the institutions in the Swedish ”people’s home”.

Keywords: photographic narrative: institutions: fostering: Swedish ”peoples home”

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