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The relation between research and museums : utopia or reality when museums become participatory?

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2015

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Gustavsson, K. (2015). *The relation between research and museums : utopia or reality when museums become participatory?*. Abstract from SIEF2015 12th Congress.

<http://www.nomadit.co.uk/sief/sief2015/panels.php5?PanelID=3503>

Total number of authors:

1

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The relation between research and museums: utopia or reality when museums become participatory?

Short Abstract

The paper investigates the relations between Swedish museums and research. Is there a need for scientific excellence when working with heritage management, collections, collecting and portraying cultural history or is this idea an utopia from the past?

Long Abstract

The relation between research and museums in Sweden has been a subject of debate among researchers as well as museum managers and curators during the last decades. The number of museum professionals with a PhD is low, which has been considered a problem. Publicly founded museums has for long been considered as reliable. The confidence from the visitors has been based upon the strong emphasis on reliable knowledge from the museums. But is this orientation towards authorativ knowledge a phenomena from a past century, now an utopia with no relevance, when transparency and visitor participation has become the ideals?

Museums of the 21th century is working participatory, they can no longer appear as authorities of knowledge. Experiences from the visitors and the citizens own constructions of heritage is just as important and interaction between museums and their visitors is at need. The notion of the need for scientific excellence at museums is challenged.

But is it possible to form a participatory museum without having a mood of work based upon research within this specific field, or is this also an utopia? Can a participatory museum be successfully formed without an interaction with research?

The aim with my paper is to investigate the relations between Swedish museums and research. Is there a need for scientific excellence when working with heritage management, collections, collecting and portraying cultural history or is this idea an utopia from the past? What is the relation between the participatory museum of the 21th century and research?