

THE NATIONALIZATION OF CULTURE

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Although nationalism is an example of a cultural force which in many cases has overruled other, traditional identities and loyalties in nineteenth- and twentieth-century society, the study of nationalism has not been focused very much on the cultural praxis of national identity formation and sharing. As a result, the ideology and politics of nationalism are far better understood than the creation of Hungarianness and Swedishness.

This paper¹ discusses some approaches in the national culture-building of everyday life, using mainly Swedish examples. The focus is also on national culture as a battle arena, where different interest groups use arguments about national unity or heritage in hegemonic struggles.

Different types of “nationalization processes” are discussed, as for example ways in which certain cultural domains come to be defined as national, how national space is transformed into cultural space, or the way in which every new generation not only is nationalized into a given heritage but also creates its own version of a common, national frame of reference.

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Revisiting the National Project

Nationalism is of special interest to that branch of anthropology within which most of the following essays were produced: European ethnology, a discipline born in the nineteenth century as a child of nationalism and Herder's *Volksgeist*. European ethnology and folklore developed with the more or less explicit goal of salvaging and assembling “national” folk cultures. This strongly ideologically charged project also included ideas about folk mentalities or national character.

Later generations of ethnologists faced the task of critically deconstructing these pioneer attempts at

creating a national folk heritage, and it is only after such a purge that it has become possible to return to the question of national identity and culture with new theoretical perspectives.

This collection of papers was born out of this recent ethnological interest in new perspectives on the making and remaking of national cultures. The starting point was a collaboration between researchers in Sweden and Hungary. In Budapest Tamás Hofer had, together with a group of colleagues, analysed the construction of a Hungarian national identity and the crucial role of folk culture in this pro-

cess, in Stockholm Åke Daun and Billy Ehn, among others, had been studying Swedish mentalities and changing self-representations, especially in the light of the recent waves of immigration to Sweden (cf. Daun & Ehn 1988). In Lund a group including Jonas Frykman and myself had worked on a project concerning class formation and culture-building in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Sweden, where one of our main tasks was to scrutinize ideas about a modern and homogeneous Swedish national culture and to look at the extent to which clichés and notions of national homogeneity concealed a cultural differentiation based upon factors like class, gender and generations (see Löfgren 1986).

These various approaches of deconstructing and reconstructing national culture-building had led all of us towards an interest both in the ways in which *national rhetoric* had been used as an argument in hegemonic conflicts between competing interests and classes in Hungarian and Swedish society during the last century (Do some Hungarian/Swedes claim to be more Hungarian/Swedish than others?), but also in the question of how behind this ideological facade of national unity, an *actual* nationalization of shared cultural understandings and knowledge had been established. To what extent, for example, do Swedes or Hungarians of today share a common frame of reference compared with the situation fifty or a hundred years ago?

It became evident that the cultural politics of nation building and the process of nationalizing culture are best studied within a comparative framework, in order not to be blocked by the occupational disease always threatening scholars looking at their native culture: what we in Sweden call “home-blindness”.

This collection of essays is the first result of a joint discussion of Hungarian and Swedish research into the making and remaking of national cultures.²

Åke Daun’s contribution, “Studying national culture by means of quantitative methods” mainly deals with the methodological problems of studying contemporary culture on a national level combining qualitative and quantitative approaches. Drawing from an ongoing research project he discusses various strategies for locating basic themes and person-

ality traits on a national level, trying to avoid the pitfalls of earlier grandiose speculations about “national character”.

Jonas Frykman’s paper “Social mobility and national character” looks at ideas about what is seen as “typically Swedish” and relates them to the culture-building of Swedish intellectuals in the making of the modern welfare state. It is their style of life and outlook on the world that has often been expressed in terms of “national character”. He analyses the social and cultural conditions under which such images of culture and personality are produced – a society with a high degree of mobility.

His analysis of a national setting, where progressive intellectuals have dominated the discourse on national culture and “Swedishness” can be compared to Peter Niedermüller’s paper on class and national culture in Hungary, “Symbols and reality in national culture: The Hungarian case”. Here the cultural battle over who represents the true Hungarian identity has been carried out within a very different social structure. He discusses the various paths developed in attempts to construct a Hungarian identity and heritage through uses of folk culture and the competing interests involved in these processes.

A neglected field of study is the strong modern connection between sport and nationalism. In his paper, “National feeling in sport”, Billy Ehn discusses the national rhetorics of sport and the ways in which they express national sentiments and loyalties, using material mainly from Swedish sport journalism.

Katalin Sinkó’s paper “Árpád versus Saint István: Competing interests in the figurative representation of Hungarian history” looks at processes of confrontation and negotiation between competing national heroes, symbolizing two different sets of ideas about Hungary and Hungarianness, which have been used by different groups for different purposes over the centuries.

Lena Johannesson discusses a different genre of figurative representations in her paper “Anti-heroic heroes in more or less heroic media”. She looks at the ways in which Swedish anti-heroes have been portrayed in twentieth-century media and the ways in which these national images are com-

ments on “Swedish” virtues and vices.

Food seems to have a magic position in the maintenance of a national identity among expatriates, who long to feel the tastes of the old country. Lists of what is “typical” Swedish often include food items. In her paper, “From peasant dish to national symbol: An early deliberate example”, Eszter Kisbán traces a very marked Hungarian example of the making of a national dish and the ways in which this Hungarian symbol has been used in cultural politics as well as in the tourist industry marketing of Hungarian culture.

New Dialogues

The scope of the papers indicates the new kind of interdisciplinary dialogues developed in the field of study of national culture and identity. For a long time this kind of dialogue was poorly developed. Although there were some attempts at cross-disciplinary exchanges, a fairly conventional division of labour existed, in which historians concentrated on nationalism as a political and ideological phenomenon, whereas anthropologists mainly worked within the conceptual framework of ethnicity, mostly with an emphasis on synchronic perspectives. This traditional division is, however, slowly disintegrating, as historians become more interested in nations as cultural formations and anthropologists have begun to interest themselves in the cultural politics of nation-building.³

Up till a few years ago research on national identity was to a great extent focused on the ideology and politics of nationalism, often within a framework of exposing nationalism as a type of false consciousness. There were so many myths of national culture, so much ideological rhetoric waiting to be scrutinized and exposed. (A fairly typical example of this genre is Ernest Gellner’s book *Nations and Nationalism* from 1983.) This was a necessary phase of research which now enables us to look in a more detached way at nationalism as a cultural phenomenon and as a historical process. (See, for example, the much more nuanced approach found in Benedict Anderson’s influential discussion of the origins and spread of nationalism from 1983.)

In spite of the expanding literature we still live with an underdeveloped and ambiguous analytical

framework, as Philip Schlesinger has pointed out in his critical survey of current research (1987); concepts like national identity, culture, mentality or heritage are still vaguely defined.

Being National?

When entering the Nordic Museum, a nineteenth-century child of Swedish nationalism, you first encounter the imposing statue of the Swedish king Gustav Vasa, often seen as the sixteenth-century founder of the Swedish nation state. Under his stern gaze is a carved motto directed to the visitor: “Be Ye Swedish!” (*Warer Swenske!*)

This early twentieth-century version of a royal command may illustrate the first analytical problem, that of working with concepts which cannot easily be moved around in history. An adjective like “national” or “Swedish” has totally different connotations for different epochs and different social groups. The twentieth-century message of the importance of being Swedish would have made very little sense to Gustav Vasa’s peasant subjects. Swedishness is a quality which can hardly be used trans-historically, at least not without a discussion of how this elusive trait is defined or redefined in different historical settings.

In the same way we have an extensive debate on the concept of nationalism. Should it be reserved for the ideological and political movements from the late eighteenth century onwards, as a product of the intellectual climate of the American and French revolutions? Is it possible or meaningful to talk about nationalism in medieval England or sixteenth-century Sweden? It seems to me reasonable to make an analytical distinction between the concepts of *patriotism* and *nationalism* in this comparative context, as representing two different cultural paradigms in nation-building. The wider concept of patriotism is based upon the love of God, King and Country by *subjects* of the state, whereas the idea of nationalism is based upon ideas about a “*Volksgemeinschaft*”, a shared history and culture, a common destiny, an idea of equality and fellowship, which means that nationalism contains political dynamite and can thus be used both to mask class interests or to fight them.



A middle-class family on the beach with the Swedish flag hoisted on the top of the tent, photo from the 1920s. Private flags were then still a rather exotic sight, or as a rural answer to a questionnaire on the use of this national symbol put it in 1940: "In my childhood towards the end of the nineteenth century the Swedish flag was an almost unknown concept. It was a good bit later into the next century that I started to see the blue and yellow flag among upper-class types and in vicarages... Hardly anybody thought of the flag as a symbol of the nation but rather as something tied to royalty, militarism and well-to-do people. The result was that the flag did not become popular among the less well-to-do and it still isn't, because the tradition is tenacious" (quoted after Biörnstad 1976: 48).

On the whole the national flag became a popular symbol rather late in Sweden. Brave attempts were made to create a national holiday, called "The day of the Swedish flag" from 1916, but this national celebration has remained a rather empty, official ritual with none of the popular fervour of the fourth or the fourteenth of July.

Interestingly enough, while official flag-waving is rather limited (and often joked about) in the Scandinavian countries, the private use of national flags is today more common here than anywhere else in the world. Flagpoles are found everywhere, next to summer houses, in caravan camps as well as in suburban gardens, and the flag is hoisted on all kinds of occasions, from family birthdays to Midsummer parties.

In the following I concentrate on the period of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: the grand centuries of nationalist ideology and nation states as opposed to the earlier era of the absolute monarchies. I will mainly focus on the problem of the making and constant remaking of national identity and culture, as an arena of contestation between different interests.

Do-It-Yourself Nationalism?

The National Flag, the National Anthem and the National Emblem are the three symbols through which an independent country proclaims its identity and sovereignty and, as such, they command instantaneous respect and loyalty. In themselves they reflect the entire background, thought and culture of a nation. (After Firth 1973: 314)

This quote from a pamphlet published by the Indian Government in the 1960s illustrates the ways in which a common symbolic language of nationhood is taken for granted today.

The interesting paradox in the emergence of nationalism is that it is an international ideology which is imported for national ends. Looking back at the pioneer era of Western national culture-building we may view this ideology of nationalism as a gigantic do-it-yourself kit. Gradually a set of ideas is developed as to what elements make up a proper nation, the ingredients which are needed to turn state formations into national cultures with a shared symbolic capital. The experiences and strategies of creating national languages, heritages and symbolic estates etc., are circulated among intellectual activists in different corners of the world and the eventual result is a kind of check-list: every nation should have not only a common language, a common past and destiny, but also a national folk culture, a national character or mentality, national values, perhaps even some national tastes and a national landscape (often enshrined in the form of national parks), a gallery of national myths and heroes (and villains), a set of symbols, including flag and anthem, sacred texts and images, etc. This national inventory is produced mainly during the nineteenth century, but elaborated during the twentieth.

The process in which national projects are made *transnational*, and recycled or remade in different settings and at different times is still with us, as new nations continue to be born within the same basic nineteenth-century paradigm. It is thus an irony that the liberating force of nationalism in developing countries can be seen in a way as the ultimate victory of colonial hegemony, as the nation-building is often carried out along truly Western lines.

The late-comers to this process of nation-building also have to live with the ironic comments of the pioneers. For the latter their own national identity has had time to be transformed from an ideological construction to a given, natural fact, and in their ridiculing of late-comers' attempts to create national symbols (mainly in the Third World) the "old" nations fail to see the parallels to their own past. Ernest Gellner has

touched on this problem which is sometimes boiled down to the derogative maxim "I am a patriot, he is a nationalist and they are tribalists" (Gellner 1983: 87).

Constructing National Identity

Gellner's quote underlines the fact that some national ideologies have been naturalized so early that they are rarely questioned today. Norbert Elias has pointed at the same problem in his comparison of French and German self-representations:

The questions "What is really French? What is really English?" have long since ceased to be a matter of much discussion for the French and English. But for centuries "What is really German?" had not been laid to rest. (Elias [1939] 1978: 6)

If there is a certain chameleonic vagueness about the concept of nationalism, it is still usually contained within the field of meanings denoting ideology, doctrine or political movement. The use of the concept of *national identity* is, however, more ambivalent, and it is probably in the development of this concept that ethnicity theory can make its most fruitful contribution, namely in the focus on identity as a dynamic process of construction and reproduction over time, in direct relation or opposition to specific other groups and interests: it is this dynamic and dialectical approach to identity management that is important here (cf. Schlesinger 1987).

During the last decade ethnicity studies have stressed the ways in which ethnic boundaries may change over time, how ethnic markers and symbols are created and communicated and how different criteria of identity can be selected in different situations. (There is, of course, the risk that this focus on the strategic aspects of ethnicity management overstates the fluidity, malleability and manipulatory aspects of ethnic identity.)

National identity can thus be seen as a specific form of collective identity. Like ethnic identity, it can be both latent and manifest: activated in special situations, confrontations or settings, dormant in others.

In what ways are national identities different from ethnic ones, and not only a specific variation on the

ethnicity theme? It is evident that a force like nationalism often uses ethnicity as a basis for constructing national cultures, but it can also be argued (in some cases) that an ethnic identity can be a by-product of nation-building. National identity can also be superimposed on traditional ethnic cleavages, turning Finns and Swedes into fellow countrymen in Finland, or producing true Americans out of a mosaic of immigrants. We need to devote more attention to

the ways in which national identity in a gradual process comes to transcend and subordinate other loyalties, be they regional, ethnic, or based upon class, gender or religion. How is it that national identity often works so well as an *inclusive* symbol?

Unlike ethnic identities national ones are always directly linked to problems of state formation and state discourse. They are produced and reproduced within a very special institutional framework, which



Towards the end of the nineteenth century the northern province of Dalecarlia came to be seen as the typical Swedish peasant heritage. Urban intellectuals made pilgrimages to this rather atypical piece of Sweden, where peasants still wore folk costumes, lived in large villages and maintained colourful rituals. "Dalecarlia with its solid people, its cottages, its old traditions, which still survive up here... where everything speaks *Swedish* as in no other region, and nowhere else does one feel so happy and proud of being Swedish as there," exclaimed one of the visitors in 1899 (quoted in Rosander 1987: 315).

The reason that Dalecarlia was chosen as the cradle of Sweden was not only the picturesque peasant life still surviving in the region but also because Dalecarlian culture fitted the middle-class mythology of "the old peasant society". There was no large rural proletariat to disturb the image of a happy village *Gemeinschaft*, and here one found the stereotypes of a freedom-loving, individualistic, and principled peasantry, embodying honesty, honour and love of traditions, living a simple life in close contact with nature. In short, the Dalecarlians represented the kind of cultural ancestors the new progressive middle-class intelligentsia wanted to have.

It is therefore no coincidence that the first building brought to the new open air museum Skansen in Stockholm (opened in 1891) was taken from Dalecarlia. Outside the cottage, museum guides pose in the Dalecarlian dresses, which were later developed into something of a national folk costume for the urban middle class. (Photo: The Nordic Museum)

sets them apart from other types of identity constructs.

Benedict Anderson has discussed national identity in terms of “imagined communities” of national fellowship. His by now almost classic definition of the nation runs:

It is an imagined political community and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.

It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. (Anderson 1983: 15)

In a discussion of Anderson’s thesis Michael Harbsmeier has argued that his use of the anthropologist Victor Turner’s *communitas* concept is too broad, it does not help us to understand the very specific nature of “the national community”, as opposed to the *communitas* of religious groups or empires. He develops Anderson’s framework by arguing that national identity is, unlike many other forms of social identity, totally dependent upon the imagined or real approval of this identity as a national otherness by others, that is, other nations (Harbsmeier 1986: 52).

The fact that national identity is always defined as a contrast or a complement to other nations, is illustrated by the nineteenth-century Scandinavian national movements. Norwegian nationalism was born, not in Norway, but among Norwegian students and intellectuals in Copenhagen towards the end of the eighteenth century. The Norwegian national identity came to be profiled against the centuries of Danish rule and the enforced union with Sweden from 1814. It is no coincidence that it was the historical period of up to 1300, before the union with Denmark, that came into focus in the creation of a Norwegian cultural heritage: Norwegians were above all Vikings (cf. Østerud 1987). In the Finnish national movement, folklore became even more important. The search for a Finnish folk literature and the emphasis on Finnish as a national language was a counter to the former Swedish domination and the new Russian rule after 1809. This construction of a

national Finnish folk culture was a task mainly carried out by the Swedish-speaking intellectual elite, who in this process had to become even more Finnish than the peasantry itself (cf. Honko 1980).

In nineteenth-century Denmark the construction of a national heritage and a national identity was above all profiled against the arch-enemy in the south, Germany, while Swedish nationalism of this era really lacked an arch-enemy or rather the threat of a dominating neighbour, as the traditional fear of Russian intervention had diminished. Against this background it is hardly surprising that the cult of *Scandinavianism* became a Swedish speciality, or even a kind of substitute nationalism. The national anthem talks about the “mountainous North” and the national folk museum was named the “Nordic Museum”.

Without analysing this national culture building as a *contrasting* project we cannot explain the different strategic uses made, for example, of folk culture in the nineteenth-century Scandinavian context. It is no coincidence that the authentic Norwegian peasant was to be found in the remote mountain valleys of Telemark and his Swedish counterpart in Dalecarlia, or that true Finnish folk culture survived in the forests of Karelia.⁴

For Hungary Tamás Hofer has analysed a similar process of stereotyping (see Hofer n.d.). The Hungarian peasant of the plains was created as a national contrast to the Austrian mountain peasant. Hofer has also discussed the ways in which a national peasant folk culture was used by different groups for hegemonic ends at different points in Hungarian history – for example, the elaborate use of folk culture as national symbolism during the Stalinist era of the 1950s. This was the great period for “state folklorism” in Eastern Europe, when smiling factory girls paraded in peasant costumes and the image of the “traditional folk” was used in appeals for national unity by the new rulers. Today, as Eszter Kisbán points out in her paper, the tourist industry is one of the chief marketing agencies for such stereotypes of national folklore.

The anthropologist Michael Herzfeld has explored the cultural politics of folklore in his studies of the

remaking of a Greek national identity after the end of Turkish rule in the nineteenth century, a process in which the Greek cultural heritage had to be purified of all Eastern elements and appear in a manner which conformed to European stereotypes of the true, classical Greek nation (see Herzfeld 1987).

Even the American immigrant nation developed a search for its own “folk culture” at the beginning of the twentieth century, when collectors and scholars roamed the Appalachian mountains in search of an “Elizabethan culture” whose bearers spoke like Shakespeare and plaited baskets while singing medieval ballads. This traditional culture had to be salvaged and reproduced in order to stem the disintegrating forces both from the modern world and the new waves of proletarian immigrants (Whisnant 1983).

Examples like these illustrate the ways in which folk culture becomes nationalized (and also sacralised). A correct, authorized and timeless version of folk life is produced through the processes of selection, categorization, relocation and “freezing”. One of the most interesting parts of this process is what is *left out*, (more or less unconsciously) disregarded or ignored as not being worthy of entering the showcases of the new national museums or the pages of the folklore heritage publications.

It is, however, important not to reduce these processes of the nationalization of folk culture to one of just “inventing traditions”. Here we have a much more complex pattern of accommodation, reorganization and recycling, in which different interest groups have different claims at stake. (Cf. the discussion of the ways in which Swedish and Hungarian intellectuals used the folk culture as a strategy of cultural politics in the contributions below by Niedermüller, Sinkó, and Frykman.)

If national peasants were produced in contrast to competing national images of other nations, the same process of profiling is found in the creation of national stereotypes: the typical Swede or Hungarian is usually profiled (consciously or unconsciously) against a counterpart and it is interesting to note that the stereotype tends to change with the object of comparison.

In relation to the happy-go-lucky nations of the

Mediterranean, Swedes define themselves as grey and boring, obsessed with order, punctuality and the control of emotions, characterized by a total lack of spontaneity and *esprit-de-vie*. If the comparison is made in relation to Finns or Russians, other qualities are stressed, because these Northern neighbours are often stereotyped as even greyer and more boring: they even make the Swedes look a little bohemian. On the whole there is an interesting metaphor of North and South in national self-representation: one’s own identity is contrasted with those who are more Southern and easy-going (but less dependable) and those who are Northerners and less easy-going than one’s fellow countrymen. There seems to be a tendency in many settings to produce an image which is based upon an idea of the golden mean. “We English are not as warm and hot-tempered as the French or the Spaniards, but more dependable and efficient; on the other hand, we are not as rigid or controlled as the Germans or the Scandinavians.”⁵ Ideas about emotional control or lack of it seem very central in these kinds of stereotypes, where North and South often stand for the cultural opposition of cold and warm. Another striking feature of these stereotypes is their gender bias. Although *das Vaterland* is usually symbolized by a national mother – Britannia, Marianne, Mother Denmark and Mother Svea (of Sweden) – the typical Swede, Dane or German is usually a man.

But national stereotypes also reflect changing geopolitical conditions, as for example in the altered ways in which Hungarians have viewed the Austrians, from the period of Habsburgian dominance to the contemporary situation, or the manners in which Danes have defined Swedes over the last century (and vice-versa). There is always an element of underdog–topdog argumentation in the ways national pride or national identity are expressed in relation to neighbourhood nations, be they defined as Big Brothers or Little Sisters.⁶

To conclude, one may argue that the construction of national identity is a task which calls for internal and external communication. In order to create a symbolic community, identity markers have to be created *within* the national arena in order to achieve

a sense of belonging and loyalty to the national project, but this identity also has to be marketed to the outside world as a national otherness. Such projects of self-presentation and self-definition can be analysed in many cultural arenas during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (An example of the latter is the big world exhibitions from 1851 and onwards, where nations have peddled their self-images; cf. the discussion in Benedict 1983, Rydell 1984 and Smeds 1983.)

National Culture

National identity and national culture are often used as interchangeable concepts. Here I would like to argue for the need to keep them apart, reserving the concept of national culture for that kind of collective sharing which exists on a national level or within a national cultural space. Rather little research in this field has studied *what* is actually shared on a national level and *how* it is shared.

It is quite clear that communication is a crucial problem here: how are these imagined communities shaped and held together over time, how is the social and political space of the nation also transformed into a *cultural* space: a common culture? This sharing is done in different ways and on different levels.

Let us think about the various ingredients which may be contained in the vague concept of national culture. First of all, I think we have to distinguish between "The National Culture" and an everyday national sharing of memories, symbols and knowledge. "The National Culture" which the French historian Maurice Agulhon (1987) has also termed "The national school culture" (or *la Grande Culture*) is a normative cultural capital: What Every Frenchman Should Know. This is the kind of knowledge which is dished out in school, carrying the authorized seal of the official public culture. The making of this kind of normative cultural heritage is an interesting study in itself. The boundaries between ideas about what every Swede *ought* to know and what all Swedes *actually* share tend, however, to become rather blurred.

An interesting example of this confusion of a descriptive and normative approach to national culture is found in the recent study *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* (Hirsch 1987). Hirsch

starts out by trying to delineate what actually is shared on a national level, using the USA as his case:

Suppose we think of American public culture as existing in three segments. At one end is our *civil religion*, which is laden with definitive value traditions. Here we have absolute commitments to freedom, patriotism, equality, self-government, and so on. At the other end of the spectrum is the *vocabulary* of our national discourse, by no means empty of content but nonetheless value-neutral in the sense that it is used to support all the conflicting values that arise in public discourse... Between these two extremes lies the vast middle domain of culture proper. Here are the concrete politics, customs, technologies, and legends that define and determine our current attitudes and actions and our institutions. Here we find constant change, growth, conflict. This realm determines the texture of our national life. (Hirsch 1987: 102)

Hirsch's categorization can be questioned, but his aim is to look at the domain of vocabulary, or rather what he terms *the cultural literacy* of a given nation: "the whole system of widely shared information and associations" (1987: 103), the kind of cultural competence needed to be able to take part in public discourse. Where he goes wrong is in his insistence that this national cultural capital belongs to a general mainstream culture which stands above class interests and power relations. The problem of hegemony and contestation is brushed away and his ultimate aim, thus, becomes rather futile, namely a list of 4,500 dates, places, people, events, books, phrases and sayings that make up the American common culture.

This attempt at standardization mirrors a given social position, reflecting the perspective of a middle-class, middle-aged WASP. The whole project again illustrates the difficulty of separating normative and descriptive approaches to what constitutes a national culture or shared knowledge.

Let me illustrate this dilemma further by quoting a couple of less ambitious attempts at defining national sharing. First T.S. Eliot's classical list of English institutions:

Derby-day, the Henley regatta, Cowes, August the 12th, a cup final, the greyhound races, the Fortuna game, the dart board, Wensleydale cheese, cabbage boiled in cloves, pickled beetroots, churches in nineteenth-century Gothic and Elgar's music. (Eliot 1949: 30)

Here is a Swedish version from 1985:

To be Swedish is to have experienced the Swedish summer in all its glory, it is Christmas morning, it is the high school graduation. It is to have been dressed up for the last day of school and to have seen the sun set over the edge of the forest, it is to have lit the Advent candles and to have read Elsa Beskow and seen the king. It is to have walked across a barrack square and to have stood by a grave. (Nordstedt 1985)

Both these examples are an insider's list of cultural traits, made for other insiders. They are lists of key symbols or key events which probably have a rich field of cultural connotations and evoke shared memories of similar situations. They both claim to have captured the *essence* or spirit of Englishness or Swedishness, but they reflect *one* version of or perspective on what constitutes the typical or essential in the national culture. This is England and Sweden described through the cultural lenses of two (male) intellectuals.

If we ask other persons to make up lists like these, we will get a wide range of variations with some common focus, but above all there is a tendency for people to pick very *visible* national traits: public rituals, family feasts, favourite dishes, key symbols and images. It is the "Sunday Best" version of the national culture which is often described, and it is interesting



The patterns of national sharing are also demonstrated in images and visual clichés which became saturated with symbolic meaning. This process of cultural condensation is very marked in the development of national sceneries. One of the best Swedish examples of this is the view of the little red cottage in the meadow at the edge of the lake, a landscape reproduced on scores of postcards and travel brochures. This image evokes a range of associations and connotations, which may produce profound homesickness or ironic comments – reactions which are hard for the outsider to grasp.

to reflect upon how such symbolic compressions of national culture are created and changed over time. You will hardly get the same list in 1920 as in 1988. Eliot's use of Elgar can be taken as one example of this gradual selection. In 1972 another fellow countryman states that "Elgar is loved by the English people as one of the greatest English composers and also for his unique expression of the deep intangible feelings of England" (quoted after Crump 1986: 164).

But as Jeremy Crump has shown in his analysis of the reception of Elgar, his music gradually became defined as typically English through being performed on ceremonial occasions and also by being put to patriotic use during the First World War.

The selection of items for such "Top Ten" lists of national symbols will often include small details or seemingly trivial elements, which are symbolic representations or distillations of central ideas or patterns of behaviour. They have, as Billy Ehn has put it, "a high specific cultural weight". He points out that images of Swedishness can be evoked in memories of the tastes and smells emanating from the traditional midsummer meal of pickled herring, new potatoes and cold aquavit: "a phenomenon which mirrors a whole cultural universe, images of summer, festivity, pleasure and nationhood" (Ehn 1983: 14).

The impact of such events depends not only on their being very visible rituals, but also on their sensual or emotional quality. The common national memories and understandings are sometimes more strongly articulated in non-verbal forms, in shared smells, sounds, tastes and visions. Raymond Williams has coined the concept *structure of feelings* for such elusive cultural phenomena, which cannot be described in terms of ideology or worldview (Williams 1977). In this sense, some feelings are more national than others, that is, they have a stronger symbolic charge.

I would, however, argue that the most important aspects of this national sharing are anchored in the trivialities of everyday life, in the ways in which we can talk about Swedish routines and habits. These traits are so obvious to us that we do not even consider them as typically Swedish. They are easier for an outsider to observe. Concepts like Swedishness

and Englishness, for example, imply that there is a certain cultural praxis as well as style that is contained within the national boundaries.

It is interesting to think about what people actually mean when they talk about a person behaving in a "very Swedish" way or looking "very British". People often find it difficult to actually verbalize these traits: they will say vaguely that there is something very Swedish about the way he carries his body, eats his meal, expresses certain feelings or laughs at a joke. Intangible traits like this make up one elusive part of a national cultural capital, or rather – to continue with Bourdieu's terminology – a national habitus or a set of dispositions. When people talk about Swedishness, they talk about this kind of imponderabilia, rather than about "cultural heritage" or *la Grande Culture*. Swedishness then denotes not so much what people talk about but their way of talking: the styles in which a problem is addressed, an argument carried on or a conflict resolved (or suppressed).

To conclude: a concept like national culture is in acute need of deconstruction: what kinds of knowledge of shared understandings is this national capital made up of, which parts of this capital are highly visible, which forms are less articulated or tangible? Are we talking about what all Swedes know or what they ought to know? It seems important to distinguish between, on the one hand, the symbolic capital that is defined as national and patriotic and, on the other hand, the knowledge and experiences which happen to be contained within national boundaries: the inside jokes, associations, references and memories which Swedes understand and Norwegians don't. In short, how can we categorize these different forms of sharing into registers or levels of a "national culture"?

How Wide is Nation-Wide?

The problem of sharing raises questions of communication and the creation of national arenas of interaction. The making of a nation is thus a problem very much linked to the project of *integration* and *standardization*. Language is a good example of this. One of the early aims of nationalists was to create a national language, often in settings where the spoken or written word did not respect national

boundaries. For nineteenth-century Norwegian nationalists the creation of a truly Norwegian standard language meant that old influences from written Danish had to be contested, but also that the border between Norway and Sweden had to be made into a linguistic boundary as well, in spite of the fact that people on both sides of that border shared a common dialect. The task of the linguists was to create a standard Norwegian language and the job of the school system was to make sure all Norwegians learned to speak it (cf. Österud 1986: 13). All over Europe we can study the same process, which also led to the creation of specific academic disciplines and school subjects, like “Swedish”, “Danish” or “English”. (See the discussion of the Scandinavian case in Teleman 1986 and for Britain, Coils & Dodd 1986.)

If language became an important medium for national cohesion and belonging (in most, but far from all nations), the nationalization of culture was very much linked to the creation of a *public sphere* by the rising bourgeoisie, who created new arenas and media of debate and information. We need to study the ways in which this kind of public discourse was turned into a *national* discourse.

Benedict Anderson has argued for the importance of what he calls “print capitalism” in producing a national community. He focuses on the role of the new media of newspapers in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and their role in supplying intellectuals with a forum for national exchanges. In Sweden it is evident that the creation of a multitude of local newspapers had this cohesive effect, in spite of the fact that there was no “national” paper in the nineteenth century (although there were some magazines). There was a constant borrowing and recycling of material between papers and a debate which made the local doctor or bureaucrat out in the province feel that he was taking part in a national discourse and had a knowledge of what was happening in the national capital.

Another new mass medium was the national school book. In Sweden the standard reader for the elementary school (*Folkskolans läsebok*) was used in all Swedish schools from 1868 up to around 1900. Several generations of Swedes, thus, grew up read-

ing the same texts and looking at the same pictures (Furuland 1987).

Media like these not only created national communities of communication but also produced gaps or communicative barriers between, for example, Swedes and Danes. Cultural sharing in a sense became less regional and more national but also less international during the nineteenth century. The Swedish elite talked and read more Swedish and less French and Latin, while the peasants were drawn into a national framework of thought and action.

During the twentieth century the mass media have often been seen as the symbol (or scapegoat) of the *internationalization* of national cultures, but even in the age of satellite television and rock videos I would argue for a more differentiated analysis of this phenomenon. The new media of our century, like radio and television, have played a crucial role in a further nationalization of culture. Many of the nineteenth-century media still remained class-based media, and a truly national public discourse was not created until the twentieth century.

In two other studies (Löfgren 1989 and n.d.) I have looked at this kind of massmediation of national culture: first in the ways in which a “national nature” is created in nineteenth-century Sweden – a set of sceneries which most Swedes learn to recognize as “typically Swedish”, views packed with national symbolism. This process of framing and condensing national messages in a piece of nature cannot be understood without reference to the mass-production of landscape sceneries, from oleographs to picture postcards and travel brochures and this production of national images was also helped by the proliferation of texts and songs about Swedish nature.

The other example looks at the very crucial role of radio broadcasting in establishing a national sharing. I have tentatively argued that the period of national broadcasting (and later television) with a one-channel system between about 1930 and 1970 has had an enormous integrating effect in Swedish culture and everyday life. These were decades when (almost) all Swedes listened to the same radio programmes or later viewed the same TV-shows.

In the late 1920s and the 1930s national broadcast-

ing gave Swedes a common focus, common topics of conversation and frames of references. A new kind of imagined community was developed as Swedes all over the country listened in to the same media event, be it the Sunday service, a sports transmission or a popular cabaret. New national personalities were created and even the weather was nationalized in the magic chanting of temperatures and winds from meteorological stations all over the country. National broadcasting also created a national rhythm of listening. People flocked to the morning gymnastics, waited eagerly for the gramophone hour, gathered for the evening news and went to bed with the national anthem, which ended each broadcasting day. The radio created new national traditions, such as the New Year's Eve celebrations. At midnight a mighty community of listeners stood to attention as the church bells from all Swedish cathedrals rang in a new Swedish year.

But even today, with a much more pluralistic media world, we must look at the ways in which international influences are nationalized into a local context as they cross the border. Dallas, Disney and Dynasty have different meanings and play different roles in different national settings. Sweden is, for example, often presented as the most Americanized country in Europe, but this Americanization has been carried out in an extremely Swedish manner. For a visitor from the USA it is often hard to recognize this American influence in the Swedish way of life: there is what Robert Redfield once termed an interesting process of *parochialization* going on in Stockholm as well as in Budapest. Ulf Hannerz has developed the concept of *creolization* for this local transformation of cultural flows within the world system in a discussion of American culture (Hannerz 1987).

A good example of the effect of national cultural barriers is found in the international world of advertising, where it is often demonstrated that an American or French advertisement cannot simply be transplanted into a Swedish magazine – it needs to be reworked by a local agency.

In the same way, consumer culture may also be both an internationalizing and a nationalizing force. One of the really strong cohesive national forces in

the United States is to be found in consumer patterns and messages (cf. for example Roland Marchand's study *Advertising the American Dream*, 1985). Consumption in the USA is in a way very American, with brands, styles and habits which keep the 50 states together, but also create barriers to the outside world. These barriers are often demonstrated in the popular jokes about American tourist complaints about the lack of American ways (especially foodways) in foreign countries. The establishment of a number of national chains of shops, motels, restaurants and other commercial institutions has created a standardized pattern which makes the Californian feel at home in both Idaho and South Carolina. (When the waitress approaches him in such distant territories asking what kind of salad dressing he would prefer with his meal, he instantly knows that there are three choices: French, Blue cheese or Thousand Island.)

To conclude: we need to develop a study of nationalizing media, agents, institutions and arenas. How is the nation established as a *nationwide* cultural space, as a horizon or communicative community, and how is the boundary towards other nations maintained? Such an analysis must focus on everything from schools and national (military) service to TV commercials and fashions, and it must examine the way regional or subcultural worlds are made national and the way international messages are creolized.

The Disintegrating Nation

Another perspective on this communicative process is found in the discourse on the disintegrating national culture, a discourse which is at least as old as nationalism itself. Nations have always been seen as falling apart, but the forces (or threats) of disintegration tend to vary through time.

One constant threat has been defined as regionalism, but this concept covers a wide range of relations, which may fluctuate in interesting ways from nation to nation and from time to time. France is a good example of highly varied regional movements, changing not only in focus and intensity but also in their political profile during the last two centuries.

Many forms of regionalism may function not as a potential threat to national break-up but rather as a



In 1909 a prize competition for a Swedish national monument was launched. A private donator had written to the king and pointed out that Sweden still lacked such a manifestation, which could demonstrate the Swedish people's gratitude for its country, state and culture and also create a feeling of national unity.

Of the 36 contributions, the only one remembered today is Sven Boberg's "Sleep in peace", with Mother Sweden snoring on the throne, flanked by the two heroes king Gustavus Adolphus and Charles the XII, who are squeezed into their boots. The artist suggested that his statue should be positioned in the entrance to the Houses of Parliament, in order to make sure that no one could get in or out.

A national monument was never erected in Sweden. 1909 was certainly not the right moment, as the nation witnessed the biggest general strike in European history, and time never again became ripe for this kind of national rhetoric.

kind of tension which may keep the national project alive and vital. In the Scandinavian countries regionalism has often functioned as a stable and more integrating than threatening element in the national landscape. In some ways the province or region has had the role of providing a micro-level model for patriotism. By learning to love your home region – one part of the national whole – you prepared yourself for national feelings on a higher level, this was the general idea in school education at the beginning of the twentieth century.

At that time in Sweden socialism was often defined as a major threat to national unity, later to be replaced by internationalism or Americanization. We find similar transformations in other nations, depending on the political climate.

This genre of popular debate is perhaps better analysed as a form of cultural contestation, in which different interest groups accuse other groups (or ideologies) of threatening the national ideal. Why do some Swedes at certain times define themselves as more Swedish or better nationalists than others? Why is it that this kind of discourse is more marked in certain historical periods?

It has, for example, sometimes been argued that Swedes are not very chauvinistic, because national slogans or patriotic appeals are less common here than, for example, in the United States or in Romania. But national arguments or national feelings are mainly activated in situations of uncertainty or anxiety. The incessant talk about American morals and values in the United States does not necessarily mean that Americans are more patriotic (or chauvinistic), but rather that the national identity has to be constantly reaffirmed because it is a somewhat fragile construction. The ethnic mix and fluidity calls for a constant remaking of America.

In the Sweden of the 1960s and 70s flag-waving and patriotic rhetoric were definitely *out*, at least in intellectual circles, but this was a period of national stability. In the political turbulence of the 1920s and 30s national rhetoric was a tool of political struggle between the left and the right. The conservatives argued that the social democrats were unpatriotic and out to destroy both traditions and the national heritage. Unlike their counterparts in France and Britain, the Swedish social democrats were, however, very successful in projecting an image of themselves as working "in the best interests of the whole nation". In a way they wrested the national argument from the hands of the conservatives and made it a part of their National Welfare programme. One symbolic manifestation of this change was the introduction of the national flag into the May Day demonstrations during the 1930s.

This was a period when the concept of citizenship

became central in the national rhetoric about the making of a modern nation, populated by modern individuals who had been freed from traditional collective loyalties in order to be nationalized as citizens of the new Modern Sweden. The constant references to the many rights and obligations of citizenship – a status which only the nation can give its people – was very typical of this period of nation-building.

Although the social democratic utopia usually called The People's Home was very much part of a project of modernity with eyes directed forward rather than to the past, there was also an attempt to redefine the national heritage. In the 1930s Swedish democracy was still a young institution and in shaping a new national history, great emphasis was placed upon the *democratic* traditions of Sweden (and above all the Swedish peasantry). The ethnologists joined in this redefinition. The traditional villages could now be described as the cradles of democracy, as “the moulds in which the Swedish folk mentality had been shaped, the setting in which our people has gained its basic social instincts” (after Johansson 1987: 7). New combinations of national heroes and villains were also produced.

In the 1930s we can thus analyse how a new national heritage is constructed with new symbols of common ancestry and identity, and the same type of analysis could be carried out for the end of the nineteenth century, when conservatives and liberals fought over the true national values and genuine heritage. (Cf. also Patrick Wright's discussion [1985] of the political struggle over definitions of the national heritage between Labour and Conservatives in postwar England.)

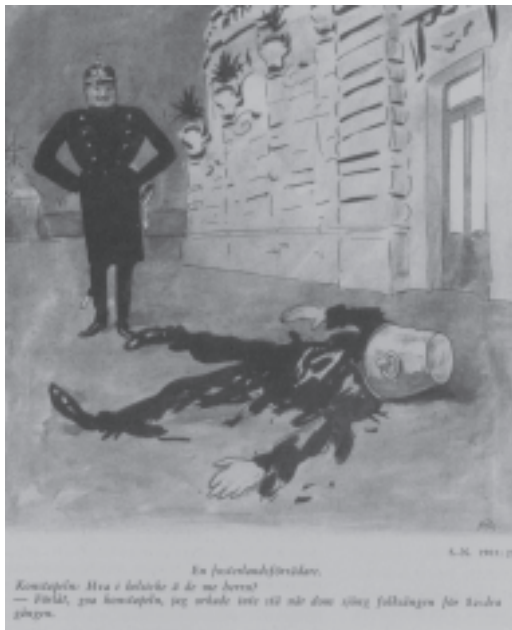
The discourse on national disintegration often misses the fact that national culture is constantly redefined. Every new generation produces its own national sharing and frames of reference, selecting items from the symbolic estate of earlier generations. It is usually not the nation that is falling apart but rather an older version of the national ideal. When indignant protests are made about Swedish schoolchildren who (supposedly) call the national anthem the “ice hockey song” because they only hear it at international matches, people forget that



In 1935 another national event led to a competition for a monument celebrating what was seen as the first meeting of the Swedish parliament in 1435. This time the object was a statue of the peasant rebel leader Engelbrekt from that turbulent period of Swedish history, who was used as a national symbol by both the right and the left. Many social democrats chose to see Engelbrekt as a symbol of early democratic and egalitarian strivings, thereby underlining the political parallels between the 1430s and the 1930s. The sculptor Bror Hjorth's contribution expressed this version of Engelbrekt, who was depicted as a popular leader and forceful agitator, but the official committee found his version too revolutionary and chose a milder and more conventional image of Engelbrekt. (Cf. the discussion in Johannesson 1985.)

only a few generations of Swedes have ever learnt to sing it.

This constant redefinition of a national symbolic and cultural capital can be analysed by trying to trace what kind of sharing has united different Swedes (say, a clergyman, a farm woman and an industrial worker) in 1880, in 1930 or today. I would maintain that the sharing is greater today than in the past, but different. Maurice Agulhon has, for example, argued



The caption to this cartoon from 1905 runs:

A traitor to his country.

The policeman: What the devil is wrong with you, sir?

— I am sorry, my good constable, but I just couldn't muster the strength to rise when they sang the anthem for the 82nd time.

The decades around 1900 were a period of intense production (and singing) of patriotic songs in Sweden, and community singing had another peak period during the Second World War (and even more so in occupied Denmark, cf. Karlsson 1988: 155ff.).

Benedict Anderson has pointed out the strong emotional charge in this kind of national ritual: "No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes, there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity. At precisely such moments, people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody. The image: unisonance. Singing the Marseillaise, Waltzing Matilda, and Indonesia Raya provides occasions for unisonality, for the echoed psychological realization of the imagined community" (Anderson 1983: 132). A more recent example of this is the key role of patriotic collective singing in the 1988 demonstrations for national revival in the Baltic states.

Many of the national rituals, like hoisting the flag, visiting a national shrine or breaking out in song, appeal more to emotions and gut reactions than to intellectual reasoning. Even the most ardent anti-nationalist may find himself fighting a lump in the throat at such occasions.

that France today is more *culturally* homogenous than during the nineteenth century, but that the *national*, symbolic capital (i.e. the patriotic school book culture) has diminished (Agulhon 1987).

In the same way national rhetoric tends to change. Arguments or language of earlier periods may sound bombastic, chauvinistic or even racist to our modern ears, but we have at the same time developed new forms of rhetoric about the superiority of our own country, which we do not think of as chauvinistic. In his paper on sports and nationalism below, Billy Ehn points out that nationalistic arguments and rhetoric which in other settings or arenas would sound bombastic flourish in the sport pages.

National Culture as Rhetoric and Practice

During the last two centuries nationalism has evolved as a strong source of cultural and social identity, and so far we have little evidence that it is dying, although it may often be dormant. The symbolic community of the nation still produces strong feelings and strong commitments as well as gut reactions of love, hate, pride and aggression. Flag-waving or flag-burning is still, in most settings, no laughing matter.

In this paper, I have argued for a historical anthropology of national cultures, focusing on some of the processes which develop, reproduce and change national identity and culture. This is a field of study which calls not only for a historical but also a comparative approach. Elusive phenomena like Swedishness or Hungarianness are best studied in contrast.

The comparative study of the ways in which nations are turned into cultural formations may benefit from separating three levels. First of all, there exists what we could call an *international cultural grammar* of nationhood, with a thesaurus of general ideas about the cultural ingredients needed to form a nation, like the check-list I mentioned earlier. This includes a symbolic estate (flag, anthem, national landscape, sacred texts, etc.), ideas about a national heritage (a national history and literature, a national folk culture, etc.), as well as notions of national character, values and tastes. This international grammar may also contain specific ideas about the institution-

al framework. During the nineteenth century it was not only a concept of national folk culture that was circulated between (mainly) European nations, but also guidelines for the proper establishment of institutions like national folk museums and archives, to name one example.

The international thesaurus is transformed into a specific *national lexicon*, local forms of cultural expression, which tend to vary from nation to nation. In this field we can observe how national rhetoric and symbols may be located in different arenas, emphasized in different historical periods or social situations. The third term, *dialect vocabulary*, focuses on the internal divisions within the nation: conflict groups and interests using national arguments and rhetoric, sometimes also creating different styles of national discourse, accusing each other of “vulgar nationalism”, “unpatriotic behaviour” or just representing the wrong type of Swedishness. The definition of the Swedish folk heritage of the late nineteenth-century bourgeoisie differed a great deal from that of the social democrats of the 1930s.

Whereas the concept of nationalism is relatively clearly defined as a political ideology, national culture is a term which often contains a mixture of normative and descriptive elements. I have argued for a focus on the everyday level of cultural sharing, which happens to be contained by national borders: the shared understandings and frames of references of Swedes or Hungarians.

In the study of the ways in which culture is *nationalized* we thus have to distinguish between two processes. One is concerned with the ways in which cultural elements are turned into symbols or national rhetoric – declared to symbolize the essence of the nation or its inhabitants or stated as norms about proper national behaviour and virtues; the other has to do with how cultural flows are contained, organized and transformed within the national borders – how national space becomes cultural space. This also calls for an analysis of the ways in which different cultural domains are nationalized, from landscape to sport, or perhaps even denationalized at later stages, as in the case with national symbols which lose their power or meaning.

In looking at national culture as process it is important to avoid a narrative structure based upon an evolutionary or devolutionary perspective, in which nations are born, come of age or fade away, to name a few common life cycle metaphors in studies of nationalism. Modern nationalism is a cultural paradigm, but all nations do not go through identical processes of making and remaking. Take the question of timing: when are certain national strategies, claims or rhetorics legitimate and successful or just futile or even comical?⁷ The erection of a national monument in Budapest in 1896 created a national rallying point, whereas in Sweden in 1909 the same plans proved to be a total flop.

Nationalism may often be a dormant cultural force, activated only situationally and selectively. National identity is not always an overriding loyalty and there are social groups which may combine a very international and cosmopolitan identity with a sense of national belonging.

In 1882 the Frenchman Joseph Ernest Renan gave his classic definition of a nation having to be something more than a mere customs union, a true nation must have a soul, he added in the style of contemporary speech and continued:

L'existence d'une nation est (pardonnez moi cette métaphore) un plébiscite de tous les jours, comme l'existence de l'individu est une affirmation perpétuelle de vie. (Quoted after Østergaard 1988: 29)

It is this problem of how the nation is reaffirmed by its national subjects in “daily referendums” that perhaps is the least developed theme in studies of national culture-building. The national project cannot survive as a mere ideological construction, it must exist as a cultural praxis in everyday life. Being Swedish is a kind of experience which is activated in watching the Olympics on TV, in hoisting the flag for a family reunion, in making ironic comments about the Swedish national character (and feeling hurt when non-Swedes make similar remarks), in memories of holiday trips to national sights, or in feelings of being out of place on the wrong side of the national border and securely at home on the inside,

in the sharing of national frames of references, from jokes to images.

We need to devote a lot more attention to how this kind of national sharing is produced and reproduced in everyday life, asking how deep, how long and how wide it is at given times and in different social settings, and how it varies from generation to generation. A study of this process, thus, calls for an analysis, not so much of rhetoric but of practice, of the lived national experience.

Notes

- 1 A version of this paper was presented at the 12th International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences in Zagreb, 24–31 July, 1988, in the session on History and Anthropology, and I am grateful for the stimulating comments put forward at this session. Special thanks also to Alan Crozier for his help with the translation and his constructive remarks.
- 2 The first workshop on “National Culture as Process” in Budapest, 1–3 May 1989, also included papers by Tamás Hofer and two Hungarian sociologists, György Csepeli and Judit Lendvai, as well as contributions by the Swedish historian Bo Öhngren and the ethnologist Anders Lundin.
- 3 The interest in cultural perspectives on nation-building among historians is expressed in works like Weber (1976), Hobsbawm & Ranger (1983), Braudel (1986) and Agulhon (1987) (see also the excellent overview in Østergaard 1988), whereas recent examples of anthropologists dealing with the cultural politics of nationalism are found in studies by, for example, Herzfeld (1987) and Kapferer (1988).
- 4 See the discussion on the nationalization of Dalecarlia in Rosander (1986) and the similar Norwegian processes in Berggreen (1989) and the general discussion in Oinas (1978).
- 5 The metaphor of a North-South dichotomy in national stereotypes was developed by Tomas Gerholm in a colloquium on national mentalities at Lund University in 1985.
- 6 The changing Hungarian cultural construction of national identity and the stereotyping of other nations were discussed at the seminar in two contributions by György Csepeli (n.d.) and Judit Lendvai (n.d.). For a discussion of the changing stereotypes of Danes and Swedes over the last century, see the discussion in Löfgren (1986) and Linde-Laursen (n.d.). A general discussion of national stereotypes is found in the Dutch anthropological journal *Foocal: Tijdschrift voor Anthropologie*, April 1986, which presents material from a colloquy on national character.

- 7 See the discussion of the timing of the claim to nationhood in Smith (1986: 8ff.) and Gellner (1983).

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