

# RECONSTRUCTION AS ENCHANTMENT STRATEGY

## Swedish Churches Burnt, Rebuilt and Rethought

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The reasons why a secular society bothers to rebuild a burnt church seem complex. Starting out from two case studies of burnt and reconstructed churches in Sweden, Skaga chapel and the church of Södra Råda, this article examines the perspective from which the process and result of material reconstruction may be understood as *enchantment strategies*. According to Weber's disenchantment thesis and the contemporary concept of heritagization, the significance of today's church buildings, as well as the decision to reconstruct, may be based on historical narratives and local self-images rather than religious worship. Without univocally contradicting this perception, however, the study shows that the reconstructions, as carefully staged situations, represent acts of faith and provide the actors with a sense of shared participation and new meaning.

*Keywords:* reconstruction, enchantment, Södra Råda, Skaga, heritagization

In a secular society like Sweden, where many church buildings are "managed rather than enchanted" (Partridge 2005: 11), rebuilding a burnt church appears to be a strange or even irresponsible activity. The majority denomination, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sweden, struggles to retain its members, church-goers are getting fewer every year and the number of consecrated buildings certainly exceeds the needs of its congregations (Svenska kyrkan 2017; Löfgren 2017; Hillström, Löfgren & Wetterberg 2017). To reconstruct a church that was destroyed is often to reinstate a building that was highly valued as a place of memory, but that was very scarcely used. But if the sensations of the past cannot be retrieved, and the premises are not needed as an active place of worship, how come most Swedish

churches that burn down are painstakingly reconstructed anyway (Alexandersson & Karls Fors 2004)?

One might speculate that it is for purely emotional reasons. In the past century, Sweden has seen one church building burn each year (ibid. 2004: 4). Anyone who has witnessed the fire of a community-owned, historic building like a church, knows that it arouses strong feelings. Most fires, even the ones resulting from an accident, are dramatic, death-evoking catastrophes that bring material loss as well as a strong sense of bewilderment. Initially, it seems likely that people wish to reconstruct what the flames have destroyed – that they want to beat the dark powers and "not let evil have the last word" (Anderson 2010: 7, author's translation). However, as a reconstruction takes some time to fulfil, it also

seems just as likely that those involved will have numerous opportunities to reconsider, put off or withdraw from the project, as those emotions subside. They may also decide to construct an entirely new building, without clinging to the original.

This article deals with the following questions: How are we to understand the seemingly irrational decision to reconstruct a historic, underused church building? Why, in the first place, rebuild something that was previously defined as functionally redundant, instead of accepting the loss and settling with the memory? Moreover, in case of an explicit, practical need, why reconstruct rather than adapting to contemporary requirements? What role do past events and historical narratives play in the process of reconstruction, and what expectations for the future are expressed along the way? To approach these questions, the text sets out from an investigation of two cases of reconstruction in the south of Sweden. In terms of methodology, the reconstructions are studied as *longue durée* processes that were set off first with the turning into heritage of these church sites, and stretch over a long period of time up until the fire and its subsequent events. The source material consists of historical archive material, daily press articles and interviews with local residents.

The first case deals with Skaga chapel, a medieval, so-called stave construction that was torn down and, more than a hundred years later, rebuilt twice by its small rural parish. The second case is the reconstruction of Södra Råda church, a medieval, log timber church that was sold by the parish as a heritage object in the mid-nineteenth century, and is currently being rebuilt by an association of different public and semi-public organizations. By examining the course of events that constitute the different stages of the reconstructions and exploring those narratives about the past that are referred to by its protagonists, the study aims at describing and discussing what other purposes these processes answer to than to regain what has been materially lost. At the time of the fire, both churches were considered as historic monuments in the sense that they had long been defined and valued with reference to past events. Their complex background as cultural

heritage objects, is one motive for choosing these particular cases, the other is the fact that the reconstructions did not answer to an explicit or obvious functional need, but to other less articulate desires.<sup>1</sup>

### **Disenchantment, Enchantment, Heritagization**

In order to make sense of the paradox outlined above, that church reconstructions in Sweden are strange, somewhat irresponsible proceedings, I would point to the interconnected concepts of modernization and heritagization (Leniaud 2002; Smith 2006; Assman 2011; Swenson 2013; Hillström 2013). Continuing Max Weber's line of thought, the secularization and disenchantment that characterize modernization make room for the turning into cultural heritage of a number of places, buildings and artefacts. Heritage is described with Laurajane Smith's words as "a multi-layered performance that embodies acts of remembrance and commemoration while constructing a sense of place, belonging and understanding in the present" (Smith 2006: 3). As such, it may be considered to both feed off and mirror this modernization. When it comes to churches, the interconnection is particularly evident since these buildings, in the early and mid-nineteenth century, were among the first to be legally and politically defined as historic monuments worth protecting. In Sweden, church buildings were regarded, valued and partly safeguarded as ancient monuments as early as the seventeenth century (*Placat och påbudh om gamle monumenter och antiquiteter* [Ancient Monuments Act] 1666). On a practical level, the change resulted in "an assigning of transcendental values to the cultural heritage in general, as well as the reassigning of secular cultural historical value to religious buildings and objects" (Hillström 2013: 2).

If we take the Weberian perspective as our starting point, the historic events that are set to define the church sites of the two cases, Södra Råda and Skaga, manifest an emerging modernization. What happened in the late 1700s and early 1800s, which ended with the demolition of the first church in Skaga and the selling and transformation of the

second in Södra Råda, may be considered as results of enlightened thinking. Likewise, the renegotiated, antiquarian definition of Skaga as a site with a previously strong mythical significance, may be seen as an expression of how modernity *embraces* the site's historical meaning; so does the local reassessment of historic values that took place in Södra Råda a few decades later. These places had to transform; Skaga due to the offering practice – referred to as *superstition* – that was tied to the church, and Södra Råda due to the impractical character of the building. Then, disarmed and changed into historically significant sites, they had to be restored as memorabilia and objects of scientific research. Following this understanding, the heritagization of these two churches and their subsequent reconstructions, which are based on their cultural heritage status, is another manifestation of modernization.

Without deeply probing into the innumerable interpretations of his work, we may safely establish that Weber's notion of modernization as a disenchanting or disenchantment of the world constitutes one of the twentieth century's most wide-reaching paradigms (Kim 2017; Taylor 2011; Partridge 2005; Jenkins 2000). As such, it has long been contested and its fundamentals challenged from a number of different perspectives. As pointed out by historian Michael Saler, the most important effect of the current redefinition of modernity, from disenchanted to re-enchanting, to (has always been) enchanted, is that it “may conjure alternative vistas to the historical imagination” (Saler 2006: 692). One of those alternative vistas, or counter-stories, is formulated by political theorist and philosopher Jane Bennett (Bennett 2001). The aim of her work is not to refute Weber's disenchantment narrative but “to weaken its hold” in order to present an ethic based on a different way of experiencing the world (ibid.: 8). Modern life, Bennett claims, does offer sensations of being “struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and the everyday” (ibid.: 4). Concrete phenomena related to nature, artefacts and cultural expressions may produce the outstanding and surprising condition of exhilaration that characterizes enchantment, but so can minor experi-

ences of wonder such as “weird outbreaks of original thinking amid pressures toward conformity [or] the swerve or ‘decisionisms’ of molecules at far-from-equilibrium states” (ibid.: 170).

Enchantment is something we encounter but, even more importantly, it is a comportment or a mood that can be cultivated – through consideration and decision. The reason why it should be, and why Weber's disenchantment narrative and the idea of loss that it is based on should be supplemented with tales of modern wonders is, for one thing, that these latter form equally valid accounts of modern living conditions. Secondly, Bennett claims, there are ethical implications that come with the notion of an enchanted modernity. If, in effect, we embrace the idea that the world inspires joy and powerful attachments, we make way for a mood that can propel an ethical generosity (ibid.). With Jane Bennett, this study proposes that the decision to reconstruct a cultural heritage church site may be regarded as an *enchantment strategy*, in terms of the protagonists' deliberate assuming of a mood that is open to sensations and embraces present and historic curiosities. No matter how loyal to the original and traditional crafts and methods, the building process, *per se*, entails an act of construction and thus of faith. The study also suggests that the enchantment strategy converges with the practise, or “multi-layered performance”, that is cultural heritage, thus giving both reconstruction and heritagization an ethical content.

### **Reconstructing Built Heritage**

Apart from Weber's disenchantment theory and, in Bennett's terminology its corresponding counter-stories, as regards reconstructing built heritage, my argument in the following will draw on the vast area of research closely connected to the professional field of heritage conservation (Bold, Larkham & Pickard 2018; Mager 2015; Egede-Nissen 2014; Buttlar 2011; Bullock & Verpoest 2011; Gegner & Ziino 2012; Barakat 2005). As pointed out by Hans-Henrik Egede-Nissen, whose work on the value of material authenticity is based on cases of reconstruction, “the destruction and subsequent revival of what we call

cultural heritage has a history that stretches from antiquity to our time” (Egede-Nissen 2014: 80, author’s translation). Under the heading “Revival as a healing practice” his thorough reconstruction historiography sets off from the destruction of Solomon’s Temple and the subsequent attempts to revive it, and ends with the present-day profusion of heritage reconstructions that go against the established heritage institution policies. Like Egede-Nissen, Thomas J.T. Williams uses a reconstructed church to display how heritage authorities equate historic value with material authenticity (Williams 2012). Though the area of research is broad, Williams’ article represents one of few research studies that focus on contemporary reconstructions of historic buildings destroyed by fire; its course of events, protagonists, rationales or aftermaths.

In 2004, the national heritage authorities of Sweden, Norway and Finland published a report that concluded two years of joint discussions and investigations on fires in historic buildings (Laurila 2004). While mainly designed as a fire prevention instrument, the work also touches upon the documented public reactions to church fires and reconstructions. The report published by the Swedish National Heritage Board, produced as a part of the Nordic project with equally normative, practical aims, concentrates on church fires in particular and goes further in its empirically founded discussions on reactions and attitudes towards reconstruction (Alexandersson & Karls Fors 2004).

This study partially takes off from some of the (surprising) conclusions drawn in these reports, mainly concerning the relationship between people and church buildings and the decisive factors behind the decision to rebuild. In Laurila, it is stated regarding the loss of Swedish churches that “[t]here is something special about old churches, something that people long for and love. Our academic discussions should take this side of things into consideration in order to find what touches the hearts of people, even if it does not follow accepted rules and practices” (Laurila 2004: 63). Basically, what is stated here is that since people’s attachment to church buildings is indescribable, we cannot require lawful-

ness or expect the congregations to express clear rationales. The reconstruction process cannot but rest upon the strong but vague grounds of affection. The Swedish study, based on 16 cases and among them Södra Råda church and Skaga chapel, distinguish three aspects that are crucial to the course of events following a church fire: the significance of the place, the extent of the damage, and finally, the practical needs of the congregation (Alexandersson & Karls Fors 2004: 10). Of these aspects, it is essentially the first one that will be thoroughly dealt with in this article.

Another aspect of the reconstruction process that is relevant in this context, is emphasized by Robert Pickard in his article on heritage restoration and reconstruction after fire (Pickard 2018). The decision to reconstruct, Pickard claims partly with reference to the Nordic experiences, owes much to the extent of the destruction, the views of the community and the type of insurance cover. However, it is also a result of “the extent of knowledge and recovered/useable fragments, and the opportunity for developing traditional skills using traditional materials” (ibid.: 212). This description of heritage reconstructions as a *means* to attain or uphold knowledge, mirrors an ideological change in orientation within the professional conservation community that was beginning to show in the 1990s (Cameron 2017). In the case of Södra Råda, this change appears to have been of great importance for the national heritage authority’s decision to support the reconstruction.

### **Södra Råda Lost and Regained**

I knew right away that it was the church. There was a sea of fire. Flakes were flying in the air. The fire brigade arrived, silently, with the blue lights only. I heard cracks and the hard wind blowing. I took photographs. Four pictures. Then I went inside again. I was in shock. (Henry Karlsson, resident in Södra Råda, in Lenken 2002)

On a windy November night in 2001, the medieval timber church of Södra Råda in the south-west of Sweden burnt to the ground. No one was injured and nothing but the church itself was destroyed. Still, the

fire was described as a catastrophe (Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå [TT News Agency] 2002; Sandberg 2001). Strong wordings such as “we cannot but grieve”, “it is a complete disaster”, and “I would have given *anything* not to have received this news” were used in the days that followed on the fire (ibid., author’s translation). This state-owned building had been an icon of medieval art, depicted as an exquisite gem located in the middle of a rural, sparsely populated and financially weak part of the country (Hildebrand 1857; Silfving 1914; Ullén 1979). It was both a national monument and the pride of a small local community, whose engagement in the church building as a tourist site and heritage object had a long and eventful past. The cause of the fire was established after two years when a man with deep delusional disorder, arrested for a much more tragic crime, communicated to the police that he had set fire to the church (Sveriges Radio Skaraborg 2003). At that point, the reconstruction was already well on its way.

The process that started in the days after the fire astonished most members of the Swedish professional heritage community. In an interview, two weeks after the fire, Head of the National Heritage Board, Erik Wegraeus, emphasized that interest and determination – rather than economic resources – were the decisive factors with regards to a possible reconstruction of the church in Södra Råda. “If we want to reconstruct, I cannot see any real obstacles”, he exclaimed, leaving the uncertainty of the “we” without clarification (Strömquist 2001). If by we, he was talking about the local residents, they did appear as unified in their wish to reconstruct the church (Lenken 2002; Strömquist 2002; Sveriges Radio Skaraborg 2004). A local politician representing The Municipal Party Our Future expressed in an interview in 2002 that “[t]he municipality can profit from the reconstruction in many ways. It means extremely much to us from a purely emotional point of view. In addition, the number of tourists will probably increase now when the excavations and constructions make the church more widely known” (Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå [TT News Agency] 2002, author’s translation). The public meeting that

was arranged in Södra Råda, six weeks after the fire, attracted more than a hundred residents and politicians, all of whom agreed to work for a reconstruction. The fire was not going to be the ending, quite the reverse.

On the evening following the public gathering, the directorate of the National Heritage Board arrived in Södra Råda to meet with the community representatives (ibid.). The announcement of the central authority was clear: the church was to be rebuilt provided the government agreed on supporting the project financially. What surprised many was certainly the last bit. The decision had been taken and was declared without any promise of state subsidies. Possibly even more astonishing was the very idea of reconstructing this piece of heritage. Reconstructing historic buildings had little theoretical backing within the scholarly context to which this musealized church belonged. Bold’s description of “a climate in which historicist reconstruction is frowned upon by heritage specialists as inauthentic” (Bold 2018: 5), fits well the ideological situation among most Swedish as well as European conservationists at the time. The conservation guidelines set in the Venice Charter in 1964 had had strong impact on heritage professionals. It had stated that all reconstructions should “be ruled out ‘a priori’”. Only anastylosis, that is to say, the reassembling of existing but dismembered parts can be permitted” (ICOMOS 1964: article 15). Undoubtedly, there were influential art historians that supported the idea of rebuilding the medieval church (Bonnier 2002b), but most professionals who had previously valued and researched the site saw little value in a reconstruction. Although some of Sweden’s most prominent restoration projects in the early twentieth century had started out from a pile of stones, they were not considered as reconstructions (Geijer 2007; Bedoire 2013). The national heritage authority had not been involved in the rebuilding of an entirely erased structure for a very long time. It was a controversial decision.

The venture had two principle aims; firstly, to be able to do research on medieval working conditions and construction methods by means of rebuilding

the church with traditional crafts, and secondly, to invigorate the local district as a nucleus of tourism and thus contribute to regional growth (Karlsson 2004; Södra Rådaprojektet 2008). In the press releases that followed on the decision, it was underlined that even replicas can become highly valued as cultural heritage, the reconstructed city centre of Warsaw mentioned as one example. The reconstruction in Södra Råda was described as a way of “not letting vandalism and destruction result in a lack of culture [kulturlöshet]” (*Göteborgs Posten* 2002). As put in the project management plan a few years later, “the National Heritage Board, in cooperation with municipal politicians of Gullspång [the municipality], residents of Södra Råda, the County Administrative Board and the Regional Museum found that a reconstruction was conceived as highly important” (Karlsson 2004, author’s translation). Without the pressing wish to reconstruct conveyed by the local community, the National Heritage Board would not have pursued the enterprise. To conclude, research was initially presented as means to the end – the end being a strong local community.

Nevertheless, the reconstruction developed into several research projects, the first focusing on the archaeological investigation, the following, and still ongoing projects, on questions related to historic crafts and materials (Karlsson 2004; Wallebom & Edlund 2005; Almevik & Melin 2016, 2017). Public activities, such as open archaeological excavations, workshops and courses were organized by the project management from the start, but all practical work on the church reconstruction was and is performed by professional builders, the production of building materials included. Some of these investigating craftspersons belong to the local community, while many travel long distances specifically to join in on the research project. Local resident, previously the key-keeper and custodian, Gunnar Ros, was initially assigned as project leader of the reconstruction. In an interview in 2006 he expressed a need to clarify the aim of the project: “It is important to remember that we are not building a church. Contrary to what many people think, the edifice has nothing

to do with the Church of Sweden. It is a building that will *look* like the church that burnt to the ground, but what is interesting is not the *building* in itself, but the means of achieving it. The reconstruction work and the building are pedagogical tools to show medieval building crafts” (Riksantikvarieämbetet 2006, author’s translation). Though fuelled and supported by the local community, the reconstruction is far from being a communal venture achieved by laymen; the aim that is emphasized today is new knowledge based on systematic research. In May 2020, the trusses were put in place and the goal of the foundation is to complete the timber structure in the summer of 2021.

Representatives of Södra Råda and the municipality actively participate in the reconstruction, though not as volunteers. As mentioned above, some of them work as craftspersons, others guide tourists, like they did before the fire, or perform tasks related to the project management. The reconstruction is entirely funded with means that come from the state, the region and the county. In the beginning of the reconstruction process, representatives of the National Heritage Board met regularly with craftspersons as well as municipality and county officials to discuss issues related to the reconstruction (ATA Acts regarding the reconstruction of Södra Råda, unsorted material 2002–2016).

In 2004 the Swedish state handed over the property and the reconstruction project to the Fundraising Foundation of Södra Råda Old Church Site that had previously been created by the municipality, and the National Heritage Board withdrew from the project (Insamlingsstiftelsen Södra Råda Gamla Kyrkplats 2018). According to the statutes, the purpose of the foundation is to manage the financial funds in a way that promotes the reconstruction and maintenance of the church and graveyard. Moreover, the foundation should endorse education and research within relevant fields of knowledge and collaborate with the public heritage institutions on national and regional level, as well as with the municipality. It is the foundation that assigns tasks to different actors, locals or non-locals, and make sure they are remunerated.



Figure 1: The reconstruction of the medieval timber church of Södra Råda, by using traditional methods and hand tools, primarily aims at a deeper understanding of the original church and its medieval context. (Photo: Gunnar Almevik, 2019)

### Historiography of Södra Råda as Heritage Object

There are obvious parallels to be drawn between the current situation and the past events of Södra Råda. At the time of the fire, the building had long been the object of recurrent negotiations regarding its significance and appropriation. Its history as a heritage object started in the 1840s when Swedish folklorist and artist Nils Månsson Mandelgren made a stop in Södra Råda, to visit the medieval church and document the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century paintings that covered the trefoil ceiling and most of the interior walls (Jacobsson 1983). At this time, he was assigned by the state to travel the country and document monuments and sites, mainly medieval. They were later presented in his magnum opus, *Monuments scandinaves du moyen-âge* (1855–1862), which was edited in France with the financial support of the French state. While visiting Södra Råda, Mandelgren learnt that the parishioners had re-

cently decided to replace the old church with a new, larger and more convenient one (*Ny Illustrerad Tidning* 1866; O:son Nordberg 1944). As he was used to buying medieval objects from peasants and parish councils, Mandelgren suggested the parish sold the entire church either to him or to his employer, the Swedish state (GLA, Södra Råda parish records 1849).

On June 28, 1860, after a decade of discussions and negotiations, the medieval timber church of Södra Råda, was formally sold for 2,000 Swedish crowns to The Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, hereafter referred to as the Academy. To get a fair picture of the sum, it corresponds with the number of hours of industrial work that 380,000 euro would buy today (Edvinsson & Söderberg 2011). It was a substantial price to pay for a 600 years old, in large parts rotten wooden construction that was deeply sunk into a swampy field and through the roof of which both sunbeams and

rain were making their way. The small church was crumbling, but at the same time thoroughly impressive, and it was the first building to be bought by the Swedish Crown for the sake of saving national heritage. There would be more. Since a new decree in 1828, the Academy was responsible for the national relics of antiquity, including the mobile and immobile fittings of old churches (*Kongl. Maj:ts Nådiga Förordning angående forntida Minnesmärkens fredande och bewarande* [Monument Decree] 1828). In parallel with the development in many Western European countries, Swedish church buildings were thus firmly established as heritage objects and must be safeguarded as such.

Although the result of a travelling artist who just happened to visit the church at a stage when the parish was to replace it, the state purchase was to con-

stitute something of a milestone in the history of Södra Råda community. To the approximately 1,500 parishioners (*Befolkningsstatistik Råda socken* [Demographic statistics, Råda parish 1850]), the selling and its practical consequences implied a change in the way the church was perceived; it transformed its significance. Up until then, the building had first and foremost been an obsolete and impractical impediment and a financial worry (GLA, Södra Råda parish records 1859). The parish council, led by the priest, had had a number of reasons to replace the church; the size of the nave (less than 100 m<sup>2</sup>) may have been generous in the fourteenth century but now seemed tiny, the shingle roof was leaking, the sill beams were rotten and the measures that had to be taken in order to keep the choir part from breaking away from the nave were estimated to be costly.



Figure 2: The church of Södra Råda was restored at several times around the turn of the century 1900. Here, the original southern entrance has been uncovered and the craftsmen are lifting the timber structure to replace the sill. (Photographer and year unknown. Source: Swedish National Heritage Board. Photo id. 3180-020. Public Domain)



Certainly, the council had been aware of the uniqueness of the paintings, and the church's value as a monument of ancient times, but the fact that a royal academy was willing to pay a large sum for the dilapidated building established its new status. In the years following the takeover, Södra Råda was turned into a national heritage site that the parishioners were set to safeguard on behalf of the state.

Though formally transformed into a state-owned museum object, the old church building would keep on being a recurrent issue of concern to the parish community. According to the formal agreement, the Academy was responsible for the maintenance of the building, which was labelled a "deserted church" [*ödekyrka*] (O:son Nordberg 1944: 4). However, the deal implicated a local custodian who was paid by the Academy to keep the key of the church, watch over visitors and see to the everyday maintenance (ATA, Acts regarding Södra Råda 1878–1923). The parishioners were responsible for keeping the graveyard and its surrounding, timbered wall in good shape. As the cemetery had recently been the only one in the parish, it was still frequented; the place stayed significant.

The local community did keep the timbered wall and the graveyard in order, but the church was deteriorating. During the first decades of state ownership, no grand measures were taken to secure the construction. The reason was most possibly lack of financing. In the 1890s, more than thirty years after religious practice had been moved to the new church, spatial changes were made to adapt the building to its formalized function as national heritage. Apart from some urgent restoration work considerable changes were carried out in order to make way for the new purpose (Bonnier 2002a). The paintings were uncovered and the eighteenth-century pews removed, some of them to be used to fabricate new roof shingles (ATA, Acts regarding Södra Råda 1878–1923). The gallery, added in the seventeenth century to meet with the growing population, as well as the wine cellar that was located in the vestry, were also taken out to make more space. The post-medieval entrance and porch on the south side of the chancel were closed while the medieval window was re-

opened. Finally, the eighteenth-century altar was withdrawn from the wall of the sanctuary in order to create a passage and enable visitors to experience the medieval window and paintings that were hidden beneath.

The goal of the restoration and alterations was to put the paintings in the best light possible without damaging the medieval framing, that is the timber structure. Members of the local community were continuously involved and remunerated to take care of practicalities and documentation, although the responsible architects were sent from Stockholm to administer the work. Letters and protocols were also continuously sent between different representatives of the local community; the vicar, the church warden, building contractors etc., and different representatives of the state; the Academy, the Superintendent's Office (*ibid.*). The very location of the church, far from highroads and railways, made local supervision and contribution necessary.

By the turn of the century the church featured as a post-card motif with pre-printed sentences such as; "Swedish folk-life; The old church should be seen" or "Södra Råda, an abandoned church, more than 600 years old". An interesting manifestation of the transformation from parish church to heritage attraction was the increasing number of signatures and scribbles that were written on the interior church walls, and their removal through restoration. A few doodles may have come about after the state takeover, but the great majority seems to have been produced over a very long period of time. As pointed out by art historian Veronique Plesch, "[t]he marks left by pilgrims in holy sites – graffiti in particular – are testimony to this desire of recording a visit, and even of maintaining a presence. The use of ex-votos or votive offerings is another practice that similarly maintains the pilgrim's presence beyond the completion of the journey" (Plesch 2002: 169). Södra Råda had previously been renowned for its votive offering rituals and was located along the pilgrimage route to Nidaros in Norway (Weikert 2004). It had layers and layers of testimonies. In 1909, when describing the present condition of the church, museum curator Axel Nilsson stated that the precious medieval paintings,



Figure 3: The painted log, displayed in the foreground as the main attraction of the picture, was found beneath the roof of the sacristy in Södra Råda old church. We do not know who the men were, neither when the photograph was taken or by whom. (Photographer and year unknown. Source: Swedish National Heritage Board. Photo id. 3180-019. Public Domain)

“as high as a man’s hand can reach, are covered with scribbles, right across the ornaments and figures” (Bonnier 2002a, author’s translation). According to the local custodian, the large number of visitors, especially in summertime, made it impossible to perform proper surveillance. The new visitors, who came for the heritage, seem to have continued to fill the walls with signatures, as if driven by a similar urge to prove they had actually been there. There were signs of prohibition put up to prevent new signatures, but they seem to have had little effect. To prepare the church for a royal visit, some of the parishioners – for once without involving the Academy architects or art historians – eventually removed all the scribbles from the medieval paintings by using “cloths wrapped on brooms” (ATA, Acts regarding Södra Råda 1878–1923). A few years later, the architect in charge proposed a fence that

would physically hinder people from reaching the paintings (ibid.). Suggesting this drastic alteration, he concurrently emphasized that it would not ruin the “moving impression” of the church (ibid.). The enchantment would remain.

### **State Ownership, Local Use: The Return of Religious Worship**

What is important to emphasize regarding the changes that were ultimately made to the church due to its being put on the national heritage map, is that they did not make religious worship impossible. Several facts also indicate that the local community did desire to resume religious activities in the old church and in some sense, re-appropriate the building. About forty years after the selling, the church council asked permission from the Academy to use the old churchyard for new burials (ATA,

Acts regarding Södra Råda 1878–1923). It seems like an odd wish to have a burial ceremony in a space that has the formal status of a museum. Certainly, there were still parishioners who had been baptized, confirmed and married in the old church, but there had been no burials for many decades. Although the wish was not granted, it pointed at a change in attitude.

A second indication of the parishioners' wish to repossess the church, was the suggested and contested removal of the entire building to Stockholm in 1908, aptly described in a letter from a representative of the Nordic Museum in Stockholm (ATA, Acts regarding Södra Råda 1878–1923). At this time, medieval church buildings had been torn down and sold in pieces for many decades already (Elmén Berg 1997). Academics and local history societies, often founded for the sake of saving a medieval church, protested and mobilized against the demolitions, but the practical needs of the parishes were usually stronger. However, some of the churches were donated or sold to open-air museums, the most prominent being Skansen in Stockholm, established in 1891. The founder of Skansen was looking for a church that would fit the museum collection of vernacular architecture and as a deconsecrated, state-owned national art treasure in need of long-term preservation, Södra Råda appeared as a given choice. The Academy as well as the National Heritage Board accepted the removal for the sake of creating a more secure environment and making the church accessible for more visitors. In 1908 and 1909, advanced plans were made on how to disassemble the timbered structure and move the paintings without having to remove a nail (*ibid.*).

From the start, the local community strongly objected to the removal (Cederbom 1963). The church belonged in Södra Råda, judging from the rhetoric of the parish, it even belonged to Södra Råda. In 1909 a local committee was created, among which the parish cantor and an influential estate owner and parliamentarian formed two prominent members. They travelled to Stockholm to court the Swedish king Gustav V and his minister of culture and education, and present their arguments. According to the local historian, who refers an interview with

the parish cantor, the king decided on the matter in the summer of 1909 when he visited the church and supposedly exclaimed: "You can keep the church, she shall remain where she stands" (*ibid.*: 399). In formal terms though, it was the Chancellor of Justice that, in the same year, finally rejected the proposed removal and gave the local community the right to retain the church.

The third circumstance that may be seen as a sign of parish re-appropriation, is slightly ambiguous since it also points at the completion of the church's transformation into a state-owned art museum: namely the introduction of an entrance fee (ATA, Acts regarding Södra Råda 1878–1923). The content of the moneybox was shared between the local custodian, who received two thirds, and the foundation established by the Academy to cover maintenance costs (*ibid.*). Interestingly enough, parishioners were exempted from the fee and could enter freely. The source material does not disclose the reasons why parishioners would enter, at all. Maybe granting free entrance was a principle gesture or an act of benevolence on the part of the Academy. Or maybe it resulted from the fact that parishioners already visited the church on a regular basis. According to the local custodian's yearly reports from the first decade after the state appropriation, it was mainly "country people" who visited the building and a few, what he calls, "better people" from outside the district (ATA, Acts regarding Södra Råda 1828–1877). At this point, and in this sense, the building was a heritage attraction rather than a place for worship. However, in 1922, the parish's application to reuse the church twice a year, *as a church*, was granted and religious practice thus resumed.

As important as it was, the granting did not imply full circle. Throughout the twentieth century, the church was used as both heritage research object and, now and then, church. In spring and summer, the parish would hold weddings, baptisms, confirmation ceremonies and occasional Sunday services in the old building, which lacked electricity and heating. Parallel to religious use, the building was visited, praised and administratively handled as a museum. All in all, the cohabitation went smoothly and there was rarely need for formal boundaries.

One of the occasions was in 1984 when the parish for a second time requested to bury the ashes of two emigrated parishioners in the churchyard of Södra Råda old church. To justify the denial, the National Heritage Board pointed at the site's undisputable legal and administrative status: "Södra Råda old church ceased to be a parish church in 1859 when the new church was put in place. It was then transferred to the state and has since been used as a museum [...]. The Heritage Board will therefore continue to treat both the church and the churchyard as a historic monument [that is, permanently abandoned] with an entirely changed use" (ATA, Acts regarding Södra Råda 1981–2000). The legal administrative frameworks did not correspond to what may be called situated or local experience, where the multi-functional, multi-significant church entailed a practice that did not hold apart different kinds of enchantments.

Contrary to what is frequently asserted, the concrete heritagization of this church essentially contributed to the continuation of religious worship. What did change throughout the process, though not (necessarily) as a consequence of it, was how the church was perceived by its local users and caretakers. Initially, the art historic values that kept the church from destruction were mainly defined and expressed by actors outside of the local community, but within a few decades the local significance of the building and the whole site changed. For one thing, as a formally defined national heritage, the building had become an economic asset of local importance. The considerable amount of money transferred to the parish for vending the church made a difference. Furthermore, the long-term maintenance of the heritage involved tasks and practicalities that had to be handled by local actors and remunerated. The state owner also saw to the costly restoration, which constituted a prerequisite for the church's functioning *à nouveau* as a place of worship; thus, the deliberate re-appropriation of the church did not involve local expenses. Finally, and more important than the economic aspect, the assessment that the spectacular medieval art treasures of Södra Råda represented, also defined the place and the parish. Heritagized, the church of Södra Råda thus benefited the local community in more than one respect.

### **Reconstruction of a Reconstruction: Skaga Chapel and the Idea of a Rejected Modernity**

Though the second case of reconstruction differs from the first in several, essential respects, it also has important similarities such as the relatively isolated location, the medieval past, the votive offering rituals and the wooden construction. Skaga is situated only 50 kilometres east of Södra Råda, on a small headland in the lake Unden. The sparsely populated district is characterized by hilly woods and narrow winding roads. Much like other places in rural Sweden, Södra Råda and Skaga are both elusively defined. Without the church-buildings, new visitors would not be certain whether they had reached the places at all.

On one of the first nights of the new millennium 2000, the tiny chapel of Skaga burnt to the ground. No one heard or saw anything and no one was hurt. When the church custodian arrived in the morning she found the chapel transformed into a pile of tarred wood (interview 2015). The snow that had fallen the evening before was untouched and there was nothing else that indicated arson. The reconstruction process began on that very day. There was local consensus about reconstructing the building. In the narratives, two factors stand out. Firstly, the stakeholders all emphasize the accord and community that characterized the work that was put into the process. Secondly, all accounts refer to the past, or rather, the many different pasts. Skaga stave church, as it is commonly referred to although in administrative terms it functions as a chapel, was built in the late 1950s as a fabricated version of a medieval church that had been torn down more than a hundred years before. Its past had puzzled and fascinated people ever since its demolition. The significance of the site and the building had thus been reinvented or renegotiated already. Its previous resurrection, the memories of which were dearly cherished (*ibid.*), and several layers of events and narratives defined the church. This fire became a new layer.

There are few known facts about the original church. Dendrochronological tests of the elements that were left of the so-called stave church, show that it was built in the early twelfth century. A stave church consists of a timber framing with vertical



Figure 4: The interior of Skaga chapel, reconstructed for the second time in 2001. The tree trunk pulpit refers to a written description from the early nineteenth century. The bear fur, stolen and replaced several times, is based on a well spread myth about two hunters who discover an abandoned church with a hibernating bear. (Photo: Eva Löfgren, 2015)

planks (staves) that are joined together by a simple tongue and groove construction. The first churches in Sweden were stave churches, which were more or less systematically replaced by stone, brick or log timber churches during the Middle Ages (Dahlberg & Franzén 2008). The church in Skaga seems to have been abandoned in the fourteenth century, probably due to the plague (Lindskog 1814; Klippås 1986; Lagerås 2016; Myrdal 2003). In the late sixteenth century Finnish families were invited to move to the area and according to local historians, this is also when the old church was re-inaugurated (Östberg 2001).

In the centuries to follow, Skaga became known as a votive offering church (Weikert 2004; Sundberg 1989). These churches were deemed to possess particular powers, which made people from all layers of society leave gifts in the form of money, precious objects, even food to the parish. The goal was to improve the communication with God or, as it were, make

one's voice heard. Though contributing to the overall economy of the parish, the votive and ex-votos were intended for the church or chapel itself (*ibid.*). They were offered either in a difficult or distressful situation, or in order to gain luck, or as a way of showing gratitude (*ex-votos*). The practice had both heathen and Christian roots (Weinryb 2016) and in Sweden, it peaked in the eighteenth century when the enlightened clergy took actions against it. Nevertheless, the church of Skaga, recognized well beyond the parish and county borders for its extraordinary status, still received votive offerings around 1800, though the amount of donations was declining.

In the historic narratives that have defined Skaga, the offering practice is consistently described as the main cause of the 1826 demolition (Ljungström 1868; Bäckgren 1933; Magnusson 1947; Klippås 1986; Carlshult & Rehnberg 2004). In 1865 it was stated in a Swedish historical-geographic and statistical

dictionary that “[t]here has been a lot of superstition in recent times and since this superstition would not be expelled quickly enough, it was decided the church should be torn down” (*Historiskt-geografiskt och statistiskt lexikon öfver Sverige*, 1865, author’s translation). In another article the following year, it was pointed out that the false beliefs expressed in Skaga resulted in the demolition of the church “to the astonishment and great sorrow of the country people” (*Ny Illustrerad Tidning* 1866: 11–12). In 1868, vicar and antiquarian Clas Johan Ljungström, who was deeply upset about ignorance of the Lutheran clergy regarding the value of medieval churches, wrote that “the convenience of the clergy, more than the mists of time, destroyed [Skaga], although superstition, offerings etc. were blamed in order to bring the old wooden shed down” (Ljungström 1868, author’s translation). Historians in the twentieth century continued to emphasize how the critique of the offering practice smoothed the way for the church’s demolition. The building had thereby become a representation of the irrational and fundamentally historical folk belief, and the demolition representative of the institutions’ harsh attempt to dissolve a place whose meaning challenged the new foundations of society.

Judging from parish records and contemporary descriptions, the demolition of the church was caused by its declining significance and its material dilapidation, rather than the strength of its reputation. Some members of the clergy certainly were concerned about Skaga’s desolate (uncontrollable) location and the substantial gifts that were offered to the parish and had suggested the object of the “heathen idolatry” should be demolished (GLA, Udenäs parish records 1802). But there was more to the offerings than the heathen aspect. In 1817, the congregation was advised by the bishop to refuse the offerings, that had also become a practical nuisance. During services, the church warden had to keep track of offerers as well as offerings, which seems to have created spatial disarray. In 1826, since the church had been “condemned and is standing unused, and that, because of many years of damage, she is losing her value”, the parish finally decided the

building and all its belongings were to be sold to the highest bidder at a public auction (GLA, Udenäs parish records 1826). At this point, it already served as a material stock; shingles had disappeared from the roof and several items of the furniture were stolen. There is nothing in the parish archives that indicates the demolition aroused astonishment or sorrow. The fact that parishioners bought the building elements and reused them in outhouses and cow stables, from which they would later be recuperated by the local history society, is most likely a manifestation of practical thinking. The historic value of the building had been pointed out several decades earlier, when a local priest exclaimed that “as an Age monument, [the church] should be kept from decay” (Ådahl [1786]1950: 54). But at this point, Skaga was not sacred, either as a religious place nor as a heritage object.

### **The First Reconstruction: A Joyful, Medieval Fabrication**

In the early twentieth century, despite the somewhat extensive literature that local historians and ethnographers had produced about the place and its surrounding woodlands, the grounds of the medieval chapel consisted of a blurry pile of stones in an undistinguished meadow. Contemporary maps show no signs of an abandoned sacred space, a church yard or an ancient memorial. Still, this is where the first reconstruction process begins. In 1916, a small plot of land located along the road was, for the first time, called “Skaga’s old church and burial site” (Lantmäterimyndighetens arkiv [The Swedish National Land Survey Archive] 1869–1920). It was separated off from one of the village farms and bought by the parish. The purpose of the purchase was not expressed in terms of a reconstruction of the church site, although it was soon followed by a thorough clearing, tidying up and fencing of the old grounds (GLA, Udenäs parish records 1916). Bush wood was removed and a fence and gate put in place to delimit and distinguish the site. It was also decided that “what belongs to the sanctuary should be recovered” (*ibid.*), that is, all the building elements from the medieval church that had been sold and

saved in 1826, should be retrieved and preserved as cultural heritage objects. Finally, three years after the purchase, a memorial stone was erected which read: “Here stood Skaga Chapel until year 1826. Everything is perishable. Look up above you. The parish erected this memorial in 1919.” The reconstruction process was on its way.

Skaga was far from the only place in Sweden where a previously disregarded medieval church turned into the centre of concern – on the contrary. In the words of architectural historian Anna Elmén Berg, Swedish parishes at this time were competing to restore their medieval churches (Elmén Berg 1997: 51). The many church restorations and memorials were partly expressions of a new orientation within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sweden, but first of all, they corresponded with the ambitious art history documentation venture, “Churches of Sweden”, that was initiated in 1912 and supported by the abovementioned Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities (Dahlberg & Franzén 2008). The aim of the work was to examine and describe in depth the art and architecture of each and every Lutheran church in Sweden, starting with the most ancient ones. As proven by the 1780s vicar in Skaga, churches had been looked upon as old and valuable before, but the change was now completed. These buildings were revered in a slightly different way from before; as if those in awe had moved a few steps away from the object of reverence, to observe it in all its material splendor and with all its flaws. In Skaga, where the old building was not even there to be revered, the architecture as well as the spatial practice of this church could and had to be entirely reconstructed.

Twenty years after the restoration of the site and the establishment of the memorial stone, a local history society formed with the parish priest as its chairman. Around then, the idea of rebuilding the entire church was already established, and in 1955, as a spin-off from the history society, the Foundation Skaga Church was instituted to promote the reconstruction of the medieval church building (GLA, Udenäs parish records 1891–1953). Apart from the priest, the project was actively advocated by a well-known art historian, Erik Salvén, who

had personal connections in the parish and who attended the constituent meeting (interview 2015). This museum curator was a member of the Royal Academy and had devoted much of his professional life to mending what he considered the damages caused by late nineteenth-century parishes who had replaced their medieval churches with new spacious buildings. One of Sweden’s most well-known restoration architects, Erik Lundberg, professor at the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm, was assigned to produce drawings that corresponded with a credible notion of the medieval church (ArkDes ritningsammlung [Centre for Architecture and Design Collection of Drawings]; Tuulse, Alton & Westlund 1975; Edman 1999). In the records of the parish council, it was noted that the plans to reconstruct the church in situ were realized thanks to “interested experts and scholars” (GLA, Udenäs parish records 1955). Their involvement was referred to as the main motive why the parish could allocate their limited funds to the reconstruction.

Skaga’s significance as a form of centre of events was thus consolidated with the aid of both the local community and external antiquarian expertise. The National Heritage Board supported the excavation of the old church yard, and took concrete part in the design of the stave church. In 1958, sending some samples of wooden shingles to the Skaga foundation, the state authorities emphasized the importance of choosing split shingles and not sawn. “The reason is, obviously, of cultural historical nature, since it is necessary in this case to apply old-fashioned building methods”, the representative of the board claimed in the covering letter (ATA, Acts regarding Skaga chapel, author’s translation). Though this was not a restoration project but the building of an entirely new edifice, the heritage authorities took actions – as if to ensure the historicity of Skaga.

The parish contributed financially and took great interest in the work performed by the Skaga Church Foundation. In 1959, the diocese also engaged in the plans that were taking shape. At this time, confirmation camps were being arranged around the country and as the reconstructed church was about to be built the bishop – who also happened to spend his

summers in a cottage near the church site – formally asked the parish whether Skaga would be a suitable location for such a camp. The following year, the foundation, in collaboration with the municipality, completed an entire confirmation campus on the site. The lodgings consisted of a number of historic timber houses that were donated to the foundation by a local factory owner, disassembled and rebuilt in the vicinity of the church.

The building of the stave church was finished by midsummer 1960. As it had involved (more or less traditional) construction methods and materials, highly unconventional at the time, and an experienced elderly work team, *in combination* with high profile actors such as university professors, antiquarians and bishops, the building process had attracted a keen interest from both local and national daily press. Skaga's remoteness and mythical past, systematically referred to in the articles, was another reason for journalists to follow the process. Thus, the new historic church rested on scientific antiquarian work and authentic medieval grounds and it had thorough support both locally and nationally, religiously and secularly.

Then, forty years after the small chapel was built, Skaga stave church burned down without drama or human injuries. There was no one to blame for the fire and therefore, it does not seem to represent a hurtful event among residents of Skaga (interviews 2015). Nobody will forget the first reconstruction, nor the first church, but the fire is considered a transit. "It seems the chapel has decided to stay here", one of the representatives of the insurance company said when asked about the reconstruction of the reconstructed church (Brandels 2015). The building had been properly insured and the compensation covered all costs. In addition, large donations from both parishioners and people around the country contributed to the project. According to one of the residents, "[t]here was nearly like a national appeal! Thanks to the camps, the confirmation camps, 50 years of confirmation camps!" (interview 2015). Many had bright and strong memories from Skaga. The vicar describes people's relationship with the church building as physical: "The *body* remembers,

and that body grows and reaches situations where decisions must be taken. And then, you have feelings, and those feelings will tilt the scales" (ibid.).

The issue of reconstruction was not debated at the time, even though there was one person who clearly questioned the practical need of the chapel (interview 2015). The mother-church can take far more visitors than are usually present on a normal Sunday service, and more importantly the number of young people who are willing to go to a confirmation camp is declining. However, the idea of reconstructing was supported by the majority, and no lengthy discussions were held, either about motives or consequences. The funding was secured, and the architect's drawings from the 1950s could be reused. A well-reputed, local group of crafts-persons built the reconstruction of the reconstructed stave church and the re-inauguration took place on Midsummer's Day 2001. The church, used as a chapel, is now functioning more or less as it was before the fire, that is on rare occasions such as Christmas Eve or Midsummer's Day. In the words of one of the elderly women, who grew up in the area and has been involved in the parish activities all her life, there was "no hesitation whatsoever, at the time, whether to rebuild" (interview 2015).

### **Reconstruction as Enchantment Strategy**

History distinguishes material re-constructions from simple constructions. The memories, perceptions and narratives of the past set the framework for creativity. Something that was lost is meant to be re-installed – the hopes of those involved relate to *that which used to be*. But while the copy is built, both the memory and the significance of the original seems to shift, sharpen and slightly reform. In that matter, reconstructions affect both history, present and future. Linking memory to identity, Assman talks about the "cultural acts of remembrance, commemoration, eternalization, past and future references and projections, and, last but by no means least, *forgetting*, which is integral to all these actions" (Assman 2011: 18). To reconstruct makes it possible to bring familiar and cherished practices into the future, but while new actors and experiences



are added, the reconstruction also entails a certain amount of forgetting.

Reconstruction, Neil Silberman argues, “is not a conservation approach but an engagement approach that can help reconnect people with place, history, and landscape” (Silberman 2015: 5). In Skaga, the reconstruction of year 2000 was an engagement-driven event. It was planned and performed entirely by local actors who decided to reconstruct in order to uphold Christian worship at the site, and to forward its already established, strong significance. Skaga-residents needed no help to reconnect with the history and the landscape, the connection was confirmed at the first rebuilding in the 1950s. Contrary to the reconstruction in Södra Råda, heritage authorities had, and still have, no interest in the rebuilding of Skaga stave church and did not contribute financially, or in any other way. The church that burned down in year 2000 was a reconstruction of a medieval structure. Technically, that church was not even a reconstruction, but a piece of new architecture based on the hypothesis of a contemporary architect. As such, it was a credible conjecture. The building had never appeared on any list, nor was it entitled to any conservation protection or grant. It had been financed with money from local sources and much of the practical work had been done by local craftspersons. The second reconstruction of Skaga was entirely covered by insurance money and donations. The process was very short and performed by professional though locally well-known and renowned actors. It did not aim at educating or offering research opportunities. The reconstructed, slightly revised version of the 1950s church and its existing significance and practice were the targets.

The medieval church in Södra Råda had been a state-owned, nationally recognized heritage object, and even though the decision to reconstruct relied on a local interest, most of the funding originates from state and regional institutions. Within the professional field the reconstruction appears as an example of the change in orientation that was proven by the *Guidance on Post Trauma Recovery and Reconstruction Document* that was set in 2016: “As a con-

cept, reconstruction is complex rather than singular and can extend beyond the reconstruction of fabric. From this perspective, reconstruction can be about reinvigorating communities and fostering processes and associations, as well as restoring form, function or physical fabric, depending on the nature of the attributes and their role in conveying [outstanding universal values]” (ICOMOS 2017).

In historian Dipesh Chakrabarty’s words, “[t]he moment we think of the world as disenchanted, [...], we set limits to the ways the past can be narrated” (Chakrabarty 2000: 89). It is reasonable to let the historical account of the two church-sites set out from the disenchantment narrative, and its antipode, the story about the previously enchanted condition. According to the narratives about Skaga, the church was both visited and destroyed because of its obsolete, offering practice. The demolition is depicted as the result of two conflicts, one between folk beliefs and official Lutheran doctrines, and the other between the local community and central institutions. The tearing down of the church denotes the strong significance of the place *in ancient times*, thus becoming a symbol of society’s transition into modernization. Moreover, the erecting of a memorial in 1919 and the scholarly engagement in the reconstruction of 1960 represent the interested but detached approach to the past, that characterize a rational society. These events do not imply a *critique* of modernization, on the contrary, they make common cause with modernization (Johannisson 2001).

As for Södra Råda, the narratives describe parishioners whose focus on functional requirements make them abandon their old and impractical place of worship in order to build a church with modern facilities. However, the state purchase opened up a new perception of the old building, that now turned it into an object of pride and profitability. The way the Academy acted at the time of the takeover, is depicted as resolute and motivated by academic purposes. It regarded the building as a container to safeguard the national treasure, the medieval paintings. Departing from these descriptions, the (rational) purpose of the reconstructions in Skaga and Södra

Råda was to regain the cultural heritage that constituted an essential part of modernization.

To those narratives we may add other ways of understanding the contents and purposes of the reconstructions. According to the counter-tale about the reconstructions, in Bennett's words the "carefully staged circumstances", they represent acts of faith and provide the actors with a sense of shared participation, meaning and continuity (Bennett 2001). The other purpose of the reconstruction is to reproduce and pass on a sense of local distinctiveness that seems to be the expression of consensus. The reconstruction processes are not operated either from within the local community solely, nor are they merely products of central institutions or authorities.

Max Weber's depiction of the disenchanting modernization has been challenged by those who point at the "gaps" of his binary narrative. Their main argument is that neither the past nor the time we live in constitute consistent, unified states. Modernization *encloses* what Weber expressed as opposites. Nature's order continues to be outstanding and incomprehensible. People are "struck and shaken by the extraordinary that lives amid the familiar and the everyday" (Bennett 2001). The elements of enchantment have taken new forms, but enchantment prevails. The heritage church reconstructions reflect the incompatible sides of modernization, the gap in the Weberian narrative. The reconstruction process does not provide a getaway (heritage as escapism) nor are the reconstructed churches hiding-places where its users revere the past without caring for the present. The reconstructions have entailed a slight redefinition of the sites as places of memory, as well as places to live and work in. In other words, the events of the past and the historical narratives, the collective memory and peoples' personal recollections, the activities and interactions during the reconstruction process as well as the expectations for the future – all intermingling in the reconstruction processes – do not form a nostalgic or distant counterpoint to what is happening today. The historical layers do not reduce the sites to their cultural history, they are included in their present-day significance.

## Note

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