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As above, so below? On AHD critique, identity, essence and Cold War heritagizations in Sweden

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In this article, the example of Cold War heritagizations in a Swedish context is utilized to reflect on conceptualizations of heritage regarding identity and authenticity within critical heritage studies and research on Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD). Herein, heritage is perceived as a difference machinery in which difference-produced identities are enacted and performed, and a Deleuzian and Butleresque antiessentialist perspective is adopted to show how the illusion of actual, nondifferential identities is underpinned by a hypostasized reification of AHD. Based on the analysis of how gender has been actualized within official and informal heritagizations, the central discussion concerns the purported benefits of heritages and heritagizations from below, often articulated within critical heritage studies literature. It is argued that both official and informal Cold War heritagizations construct a naturalized gendered logic of protection, with the consequence that security policy issues regarding protection and military violence are placed in a non-negotiable, extrapoltical sphere.

KEYWORDS heritage, identity, authorized heritage discourse, heritage from below, Cold War

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Introduction

This article focuses on Cold War heritagizations in a contemporary Swedish context. It aims to utilize these examples to consider and reflect on some conceptualizations of heritage regarding identity and authenticity within recent critical heritage studies and the critique of an Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD). The central discussion concerns the concept of AHD and the critique thereof, and the purported benefits of heritages from below. This in turn is based on discussions of how gendered logic and identity have been actualized and possible differences between official from above and informal from below heritagizations. As all heritagizations from our perspective are ongoing recreations and reenactments, the case of the Cold War concerns heritagization in the making. However, due to being constructed as ‘pastness’ relatively recently, the historiography of the Cold War is not yet as comprehensive and dominant as the historiography of many other past international conflicts or wars, e.g. WWI and WWII. Furthermore, due to being relatively close in time, remnants of the Cold War, such as bunkers and shelters, are also not open-and-shut features among Western societies’ official sites of memory. Given this incomplete ‘closure’ as being a period belonging to the past, we have identified that ascriptions of meanings are currently being produced when the Cold War is staged as heritage. In this article, we focus on Cold War heritagization to discuss and add to the understanding of the relations between identity formation, authenticity and heritage.

We first present our theoretical starting point, emphasizing an antiessentialist perspective in our understandings of heritagization and gender. Next, we present our analysis of the critical heritage scholar Laurajane Smith’s influential AHD critical theory and underscore the aspects that we perceive to be problematic by referring to two scholars, Robertson and Schofield, who draw on Smith in their discussion of heritage from below (HFB) and nonexpert-driven heritage. Then, we elaborate our empirical examples, providing a brief description of the background for Cold War heritagization in Sweden that is followed by an analysis focusing on identity formation through heritage from above and from below. Finally, we draw some conclusions from these examples.

A critique within critical heritage studies concerns how AHD initiatives frame heritage as from above and thus primarily support Western, White, nationalist, elitist, masculine and monumental notions of heritage (Smith 2006). Accordingly, this typical AHD critique entails that heritage ‘from below’ and heritage as ‘feeling’ is favourable, reflecting an authentic identity that surpasses discourse. However, we aim to question the ambition of seeking any authentic heritage and thus any ‘real’ identity. This means that we see it as irrelevant whether heritage comes from below or from above, or for that matter, if it emerges from ‘practice’ or ‘discourse’. To us, heritage is not an inherently authentic expression of anything. Our agnostic approach therefore implies that heritage is simply being done. Accordingly, we follow Stuart Hall, who states that ‘[n]ational cultures construct identities...
by producing meanings about ‘the nation’ with which we can identify; these are contained in the stories which are told about it, memories which connect its present with its past, and images which are constructed of it’ (Hall 1992: 293). This questioning of the nation might seem to mirror common AHD critiques. However, the implication of Hall’s argument not only points to the construction of the nation per se but also to the construction of identity in general. Hall insists that identity relies on difference; hence, identities always ‘function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render ‘outside’, abjected’ (Hall 1996: 5). We therefore support Hall’s statement that ‘[t]he unity, the internal homogeneity, which the term identity treats as foundational is not a natural, but a constructed form of closure, every identity naming as its necessary, even if silenced and unspoken other, that which it ‘lacks” (1996: 5). Thus, we argue that this production of identity through difference takes place regardless of scale. Consequently, a nation produces difference, just as a local, face-to-face community produces difference. Critical to our following reasoning, such differences are produced, not least, in and through heritage.

The concept of identity is therefore central to us, as is the function of difference. This applies both in a direct way and in a more general sense; hence, we draw on the Deleuzian scepticism of identity as constitutive, in which ‘all identities are only simulated, produced as an optical ‘effect’ by the more profound game of difference and repetition’ (Deleuze 1994: xix). That is, difference precedes identity and not the other way around. There is no identity prior to difference, and any identity, whether individual or collective, is an illusory offspring of relations in flux. Based on this anti-identitarian stance, we perceive heritage as a difference machinery in which difference produced identities (i.e. gender, race, class or a spatially defined ‘local community’) are enacted and performed.

Without excluding other kinds of identity formation, in the following section, we emphasize gendered identity. However, to make it clear from the beginning, our goal is not to raise the question of gender as representation. Nor are we aiming at a solution to how equality of representations of gender can be achieved in exhibitions or other expressions of heritage. That may be an important, however quite different issue, which has been a line of inquiry that has been strong within broader contemporary heritage studies, through, for example, Gender and Heritage (Grahn & Wilson 2018). Instead, we let gender constitute a clear and hopefully comprehensible instance of subject positioning, following our aim to scrutinize the relations between identity formations and heritage.

Given the general theoretical underpinning of the investigation, our overarching perspective primarily follows Connell and Butler concerning gender. We regard gender as part of a configuration that sustains relations of domination within a given societal order (Connell 1995: 71 ff). Mirroring Butler’s rejection of an essential gender reality beyond gendered performance, our premise is that there is no recourse to an unmediated identity that heritage ostensibly expresses. In line with Butler’s argument that ‘gender cannot be understood as a role which either
expresses or disguises an interior ‘self’ and that ‘gender can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent’ (Butler 1988: 528), we consider heritage a realization of difference and thereby of identity-producing division, i.e. an ‘essence fabrication’ (ibid.). More specifically, in the field of heritage studies, in 2008, Graham and Howard stated that there is a consensus on the limited intrinsic worth of heritage and suggested that values are ascribed to all phenomena called heritage, which are not only filtered through a type of identity formation, such as gender, ethnicity, or class but also through ‘that strange lens known as ‘insideness” (Graham and Howard 2008: 2).

The common assumption is that heritage has to be understood as process and practice (Harvey 2001: 327, Smith 2006: 1, Harrison 2013: 14) or, according to Harvey, as heritageisation (Harvey 2001: 320). Heritageisation, or heritagization, concerns how the past, materially and immaterially, is selectively used as a social, political, or economic resource in the present to impact global, national, regional, family, or individual identity formation. Furthermore, we support Harvey’s premise ‘that heritage has always [...] been produced by people according to their contemporary concerns and experiences’ (Harvey 2001: 320). Heritage does not, therefore, primarily concern the past. Rather, as Graham and Howard put it, ‘the contents, interpretations and representations of the heritage resource are selected according to the demands of the present’ (Graham and Howard 2008: 2). Merging this notion with Hall’s abovementioned ideas, we also suggest that heritagization, most importantly, involves both instances of exclusion and forgetting and of inclusion and remembrance; accordingly, the construction of any heritage is also an instance of disinheritance (Landezeilus 2003).

Some of these arguments and premises were forcefully put forward by Laurajane Smith in Uses of Heritage (2006), a work that has had a significant impact. This was followed by a wide range of similar research where both the conceptualization and critique of an AHD have become dominant themes. The conceptualization of AHD and critique thereof has gained significant traction and is now mainstream, representing ‘normal science’, in Kuhn’s (1962) words, within heritage studies. The concept has been very useful, drawing attention to the structural dimensions and what Smith identifies as the basic ideological functions and foundations of heritage; therefore, AHD has become a powerful tool for critiques of conventional heritage management and thinking.

Given that we agree with Smith’s starting point, that ‘there is, really, no such thing as heritage’ (Smith 2006: 11), we also concur that heritage is a sociostructural process that relates to uses, politics, power and domination, i.e. ideological aspects. However, despite our appreciation of this sober definition of heritage, we observe problems with Smith’s conceptualization. Smith arguably limits some aspects of her theorization, which in turn has implications for understanding the relation between identity formation and heritage. Later, we will elaborate on what this arrested line of arguments may imply through our empirical case analysis with specific examples of gender formation.
Nevertheless, a first implication concerns the AHD theorization. For Smith, AHD is ‘a dominant Western discourse about heritage [...] that works to naturalize a range of assumptions about the nature and meaning of heritage’ with ‘particular focus and emphasis – primarily the attention it gives to “things”’ (2006: 4). Furthermore, she states that AHD is ‘a professional discourse that privileges expert values and knowledge about the past and its material manifestations and dominates and regulates professional heritage practices’ (ibid.). The basically Foucauldian logic of Uses of Heritage infers that discourses are constantly in flux shaped by and shaping power relations and power/knowledge, emphatically so regarding the explicit reference to governmentality (2006: 51). However, in our view, AHD here ultimately instantiates as a more or less fixed substance, and not, which would be the reasonable implication, as a contingent, Foucauldian dispositif.

This, in turn, meshes with a second predicament, namely, the idea that the ultimate goal of heritage is to account for an authentic identity. Accordingly, while AHD in this conceptualization stands out as a framework that produces heritage, some subject positions have been considered objective and not artificial, imaginary or simulated. These positions are thus framed as as stable in their authenticity as the AHD is fixed in its rigid conceptualization.

This second implication is demonstrated by Smith’s example involving the community of Waanyi in Uses of Heritage, which is strategically located, signifying its importance, at the beginning of the introduction. Here, we are confronted with heritage production and, by extension, identity fabrication, which is presented as real and natural, i.e. veritably nonproduced. By performing heritage, e.g. talking, fishing, and being ‘in their cultural territory’ (p. 46), these women from a deprivileged and subaltern group serve as a counter image to the AHD, fulfilling an ideal heritage work (Smith 2006: 1–2). This appears to reaffirm that there are actual heritages (and identities) that escape the prison house of heritage discourse, i.e. a position, following Foucault, where to talk from outside of discourse and power (Foucault 1980, 1982). We find an inconsistency in Smith’s argument, which seems to critique the AHD machinery, however, at the same time expressing the view that something can evade and transcend the same machinery.

These problems regarding the conceptualization of AHD and authenticity are tightly connected. The first has been addressed by Skrede and Hølleland (2018), who argue that nominalization, that is, the operation where noun constructions replace verb processes ‘and thereby obscur[e] agency and responsibility for actions’ in Smith’s use of AHD in Uses of Heritage, elides ‘who did what to whom’ (Skrede and Hølleland 2018: 84–85). We argue that Smith’s AHD conceptualization, and even more the literature that draws on it, is better characterized as a hypostatization, i.e. an instance of reification: ‘when concepts, frameworks, and theories freeze into supposed representations of reality that reality cannot shake’ (Eidlin and Eidlin 2017: 417). We consider hypostatization a fitting characterization because hypostatic lexically refers to ‘[o]f or pertaining to substance, essence’ (OED) and because it involves treating abstractions as if they are concrete...
and even more importantly, ascribing intentionality and agency to these abstractions (Engel 1995).

This second issue is of importance since one of the alleged problems of AHD in Uses of Heritage and the subsequent AHD critiques is, in effect, the specific reification that AHD allegedly contributes to. That is, AHD is the origin, through the attention it purportedly gives to things, of the ‘privileging of material manifestations’ and thus ‘obsessions with physicality’ (Smith 2006, 4: 54). However, we argue that this AHD critique tends to open for a line of argument where AHD stands forward as an active factor in itself. In other words, we see a reification in the form of hypostatization, where the concept of AHD is attributed a factual agency, as an entity with intention and power to influence the course of events. This is profoundly problematic, given that AHD in the AHD critique in itself becomes a reification, and of a higher order, and in this obscures important relations instead of clarifying them.

One of the unquestionable strengths of Smith’s work is its identification of the reifications AHD produces, which can be considered seriously deceptive. Nevertheless, while reification, commodification and fetishization of actual things may elide important aspects of power, we suggest that the hypostatization of the abstract constructions of AHD, with its far-reaching attributes of intention, agency and teleology, is as problematic; it becomes an ontological fallacy that, rather than illuminating, underpins a mystifying conception of heritage.

**Venerating the heritage from below**

In an effort to value heritage initiatives that are initiated and executed outside official heritage industries and administrations, aptly described as heritage from below, Iain Robertson draws on Smith’s AHD theorization (Robertson 2012, 2008). Based on the argument that in effect, every collective act is an act of domination, explicitly disputing any (heritage) authority’s ability to recognize or represent an everyday individual life, Robertson’s argument implies that there can only be one authentic heritage for each individual. Affirming this radical denial of representation, he states, ‘The heritage from below expressed here is an assertion of a right to dwell: an engagement with and expression of landscape as an enduring record of the lives and works of past and present generations who have dwelt within it’ (Robertson 2012: 2). Applying this argument in his analysis of heritage work, e.g. memorial cairns on the Outer Hebrides in Scotland, he argues that the only valid heritage source is an ‘authentic’ connection to place and soil. Accordingly, we suggest that this argument reveals an oikomania, a fixation with an imagined inherent connection with land and ground. Such discourse not only discusses inclusions and remembrances but also chauvinistically and effectively determines those who have not received the right to heritage, the ‘unnatural’ dwellers.

Similarly, John Schofield has advocated a nonexpert perspective in heritage work (2014, 2015) (also critically addressed by Hølleland and Skrede 2019).
His claim that ‘heritage does not exist’ as ‘tangible things’ (Schofield 2014: 3) is built explicitly on Smith’s theorizing. However, the moderate and somewhat constructivist standpoint that heritage is a matter of perception clashes with an emphasis on ‘people who follow their emotional instincts’ (2015: 417), so-called ‘feelers’, to ‘implement and facilitate’ a people-centred heritage. This argument is constructed through the hypostatization of AHD as a cold, intellectual and distant, and clearly acting opponent. Accordingly, we reject Schofield’s suggestion that individual emotions are the driving force for inviting and embracing heritage management. In contrast, following Ahmed, we seek to question ‘any assumption that emotions are a private matter, that they simply belong to individuals, or even that they come from within and then move outward towards others’ (2004: 117).

The aforementioned predilection to and penchant for focusing on grassroots heritage from below has been discussed and problematized by Muzaini and Minca (2018). They question the tendency to romanticize alternative heritagizations, which is based on the ‘overtly simplistic binary of ‘AHD-evil’ – ‘HFB-good’ (2018: 3). However, they also claim that too much attention has been given to the ‘discursive’ level, e.g. national and global heritage lists, and call for additional research on ‘heritage as a process understood, practised and experienced on the ground’ (2018: 1). We argue that this division, while in principle a well-grounded notion, often implicitly leads to a strange and unfortunate way of considering ‘heritage on the ground’ (or ‘performed’ heritage) necessarily associated with HFB and of deeming ‘representational’ or ‘discursive’ heritage connected to AHD. Even so, we fully support their statement that things ‘are far more complex even when the past is actualized ‘from below” (2018: 2).

Our argument is based on and partly rehearses a debate in British heritage studies that took place during the 1980s and 1990s. Up for debate was the eventual liberating, healing or subversive effects of heritage. One side can be described as heritage optimistic, while the other stood forward as more questioning in its approach toward heritage and any redemptive abilities associated with it. In the debate, the heritage optimist, historian Raphael Samuel (1994), passed judgment on Patrick Wright, active in the fields of cultural studies and history, and especially Wright’s heritage critique in On living in an old country (2009 [1985]). Samuel (1994), who is extensively referenced by Robertson (2012, 2008), criticized the alleged cynical and, framed as, elitist standpoint of Wright. We regard the scepticist perspective of Wright as an early articulation of the standpoint shared by us in this article.

**Background and heritage context: the Cold War in Sweden**

For something to receive a second life as a heritage, it has to expire or at least be subject to the threat of disappearing (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998). Thus, when the Cold War declined in the early 1990s, the aforementioned identity-producing difference machinery was activated, as a heritagization of things associated with
the period, concrete and abstract, began. Cold War heritagization in Sweden has not only taken place within established institutions and frameworks but has also been performed informally and as part of everyday lives – it has, in other words, been driven as much by authorized heritage actors as by grassroot enthusiasts. As with all heritagizations, historizations and commemorations of war, questions concerning gender, nationhood and belonging were pushed to the front (Graff-McRae 2017; Repo 2008; Szitanyi 2015; Altinay and Petö 2016). Consequently, Sweden’s Cold War heritagization offers us the possibility to address and problematize some taken-for-granted ideas regarding the functions and possibilities of HFB and AHD concerning gendered aspects of identity (as well as other intersectional dimensions).

Drawing on its neutral geopolitical strategy, Sweden has nurtured an image of itself as a peaceful and solitary nation committed to international disarmament policies (Rosengren 2020). Nevertheless, despite the renowned ‘prevalent image of Sweden […] as the very antithesis of war and conflict’ (Burch 2013: 130), its Cold War period was characterised by the extensive militarization of the entire society. During WWII, Sweden was, in contrast to its neighbouring countries, neither occupied nor involved in active warfare. After the war, Sweden continued its policy of neutrality with respect to NATO and the Warsaw Pact. To make its neutral and nonaligned status appear credible, a large defence organization was deemed necessary. For male citizens, mandatory conscriptions with recurring intervals of military training meant first-hand encounters with the military. Together with wide-ranging investments in its civil defence, this constituted the Swedish doctrine of ‘total defence’, fostering high military and civil defence expenditures. Given its advantageous postwar position, Sweden was able to invest in a comprehensive domestic weapons industry (Åselius 2005; Kronsell 2012). The production of weapons, supported by the state, engaged a broad network of actors, from national companies to local subcontractors. Extensive domestic warplane production led to a proportionally large air force in the late 1950s that consisted of more than 4000 aircraft (Åselius 2005). The Swedish policy of deterrence, which underpinned its ‘total defence’ strategy (Cronqvist 2012) with a generous defence budget, a large domestic weapons industry, a ‘constantly conscripted’ male population (Sturfelt 2014), and a highly developed civil defence organization, rendered militarization a cornerstone in the construction of Sweden’s welfare state during the Cold War. This ‘deep militarisation’ (Kronsell 2012) shaped both the mental and physical Swedish landscapes in profound ways. First, it reinforced gendered citizenship (Eduards 2007; Sundevall 2011), affirming the division between masculine-coded protection and feminine-coded exposure and the need for the former (Åse 2016). Second, the defence budget fuelled military constructions, and regiment buildings, bunkers, shelters, fortresses and other defence establishments were erected in what appeared to be every corner of the Swedish territory.
These developments ended abruptly when global, bipolar East–West tensions eased. In Sweden, the international geopolitical upheavals of 1989 were followed by a period of radical downsizing and the professionalization of military forces. Conscription was abandoned in 2010, and the nationwide ‘peoples’ defence’ was replaced with combat units designed for international missions. Consequently, a large number of military installations lost their functions and were abandoned by the military in a relatively short period of time. As military organizations successively dissolved and the idea of a total defence lost its central societal function, the idea of preserving the traces of the Cold War expanded. This heritagization compulsion encompassed a wide range of actors, including state and official heritage institutions, entrepreneurs within the destination and experience industry and private, enthusiasm-driven actors.

A central initiative of heritagization ‘from above’ was initiated in 2005 with a state report called Defence in Detention (Försvar i förvar). Through the report, representatives from the armed forces together with representatives from the official heritage sector presented a plan for the preservation of Cold War heritage. The initiative was explicitly described as a ‘national manifestation’ to commemorate the ‘popular’ and nationally ‘broad’ support of the military defence (Försvar i förvar 2005). More than twenty, until then, ‘unofficial’, regimental museums were thus incorporated into the newly created and state-funded museum network, Sweden’s Military Historical Heritage (SMHA; Sveriges Militärhistoriska Arv). The new museums would be overseen by a state authority, the National Swedish Museums of Military History (SFHM).

However, the overwhelming majority of military remnants in Sweden were left unsupervised. This cluster of abandoned sites soon became centres of attention for a group of people with personal interests in the Cold War period. In this grassroots context, a network emerged where people shared information, made joint but informal visits to bunkers in remote and nearby locations and created meeting spaces, such as websites and Facebook groups. This heritagization was driven ‘from below’ and by personal commitments. As another study has shown (Frihammar and Krohn Andersson 2020), some distinctive features of the ‘bunkerology’ (Bennett 2013, 2017) movement have been a distrust in authorized heritage expertise and a pronounced struggle to understand and shape a Cold War heritage from a bottom-up perspective.

Sweden’s Cold War heritagizations have, roughly, been both literal top-down processes, where official heritage institutions have initiated the development of sites and curated them in line with museological expertise, and the results of enthusiast-driven grassroots activities, where personal engagement and experienced-based knowledge have guided content and expressions. Thus, while we discern overlaps between and within these two memory rationalities, the apparently different framings and contexts facilitate an empirical investigation of the differences between these top-down and bottom-up heritage conceptualizations, examples of which are common in the AHD critical literature.
Empirical and methodological notes

We will investigate and discuss four sites. As examples of HFB, we focus on Aeroseum on the west coast of Sweden and the Kalixlinjen Museum in the north. The exhibition at Aeroseum displays military aircraft in a massive 22,000 square-metre underground hangar. Its framing and activities derive from an insider entrepreneurial position, where the initiator’s role as chief commander at the former air force base and general air force background are of fundamental importance. The Kalixlinjen Museum is part of the experience establishment called Viltfarmen (literally, the Wildlife Farm), a one-person facility that includes cottages for rent, a restaurant, outdoor activities and conference rooms.

Aeroseum’s website calls it an ‘aviation activity centre’, stressing its ‘experience-based experimental and educational formats’ (aeroseum.se). This cavernous hangar was completed in 1955, served as a ‘secret’ shelter for the Swedish air force until the end of the Cold War, and has housed Aeroseum since 2008. The exhibition mainly consists of military aircraft, and in line with its activity profile, it is possible to enter a number of the exhibited vehicles, some of which have been converted into flight simulators where a visitor may sit in the authentic cockpit of an air force plane. Other aircraft have been reconstructed into climbing frames for children. The museum also lends spaces for veteran aviation enthusiasts to store and care for their aircraft inside the hangar, thus becoming part of the exhibition.

The Kalixlinjen Museum is located in the countryside, 70 kilometres east of the town of Boden. The name ‘Kalixlinjen’ refers to a historic defence zone in the region that was tasked with halting or stopping a feared Soviet invasion from Finnish territory. The exhibition is a bricolage of military objects, including rifles, machine guns, motorcycles, ammunition, and uniforms, equipment such as medicine storage boxes, skis and snowshoes, cutlery and metal plates, military information boards on how to handle weapons or descriptions of their technical constructions, and maps of the region. There were many clips from newspapers and popular history magazines about presumed violations of Swedish territory, mainly by the Soviet Union or Russia, depending on historical context, as well as descriptions of prominent Swedish military achievements, weapons or persons. There are also many articles about the Kalixlinjen Museum, typically from local newspapers and tourist magazines. Additionally, nonmilitary objects, such as old pedal organs, spinning coats and worn rag rugs, are in the museum but are not framed as exhibits.

The authorized heritage sites we have chosen are the Boden Defence Museum in northern Sweden and the Linköping Air Force Museum, located approximately 20 kilometres south of Stockholm. They are both part of the aforementioned SMHA

1Boden’ has a specific connotation in Sweden. The town is located in the north of the country, close to the eastern border with Finland. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the town has been influenced by the armed forces and by experienced invasion threats from the Soviet Union/Russia. Although its military activity has declined since the 1990s, its military legacy is still palpable.
museum network and have a municipality (Boden Defence Museum) or the state (Linköping Air Force Museum) as their mandators. Both establishments engage educated museum curators and staff and are well renowned in the museum sector in Sweden. Thus, the Linköping Air Force Museum was awarded the ‘Museum of the Year’ award in 2011 by the association Swedish Museums and the Swedish section of International Council of Museums (ICOM). Together with the Army Museum, the Swedish Military Heritage Secretariat and the Board of Military Traditions, it constitutes the SFHM, mentioned above.

The Boden Defence Museum is located in the town of Boden in quarters that used to house five regiments. The museum consists of a new building that connects a former military gym and an old storehouse. The museum was developed from one of Boden’s earlier garrison museums following the guidelines in the Defence in Detention (Försvar i förvar) report described above and was inaugurated in 2006 on the symbolic date of June 6th, Sweden’s National Day. The exhibitions are modern by museological standards and cover 2500 square metres. Neither the director, trained as an ethologist and art historian, nor the educator, with a museological education, has experience with military training. At our visit in 2019, there were three permanent exhibitions and several temporary exhibitions.

A state museum, the Linköping Air Force Museum, is the result of a decision by the Swedish Parliament in 1977 and part of the then newly formed authority, the Swedish Defence History Museums. It was inaugurated in 1984. Today, the museum has more than 200,000 visitors per year and houses three permanent exhibitions. The facilities were constructed for the purpose of being a museum. In terms of its exhibition ambition and design, the museum is at the forefront in Sweden. Despite its rather large number of planes, a considerable number of exhibitions consist of texts, carefully staged home settings and new installations. The museum staff are from the museum sector and have neither specific aircraft nor general military expertise.

The empirical basis for our study was collected through ethnographic fieldwork at the four sites. The sites are chosen out of a sample of more than twenty Cold War heritage sites documented and analysed in a three year research project with the overarching aim to investigate how Sweden’s Cold War period is interpreted and given societal meaning as heritage.2 The fieldwork included in situ observations documented in field notes and photographs, as well as semistructured interviews carried out with initiators and/or representatives of the management at each location and, where applicable, members of the staff in the public work. Aeroseum was visited for two whole days. The Kalixlinjen Museum was visited for one whole day including guided tours to some of its external visit sites and. The Boden Defence Museum was visited for one whole day. The Linköping Air Force Museum has been visited four times, each time for more than four hours. The sites’ web pages have

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2Research project Making a Military Heritage: Gender and Nation in Sweden’s Cold War History (P18-0210), funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond: the Swedish Foundation for Humanities and the Social Sciences.
been included in the analyses, as have political governing documents and media material concerning each place.

In the project as a whole, the methodology was designed to comprise several expressions of Cold War heritage, denoting identified ideal forms of official, commercial and informal heritagization. For this article, we have chosen four locations that are similar in size and area of activity, but different regarding framings, contexts and whether they are top-down or bottom-up heritage initiatives. The analytic strategy has been to compare the exhibitions regarding size, curatorial policy and texts, as well as evaluating the interviews with attention to attitudes to the establishment at hand, exhibition styles, the heritage field and the Cold War.

Cold War heritage from below and from above

The cavern is unbelievably massive. We were picked up at a train station by Aeroseum’s enthusiastic original initiator and former manager and have just arrived at the museum. Although we have heard about its size, actually entering the mountain hangar overwhelms us. The manager passionately describes the establishment:

Our idea has been that this should not be a museum, because a museum is visited once per generation in my opinion. But, an experience centre where things are replaced, renewed and changed and where you get to touch the objects; here, you come back time and time again.

A former pilot in the air force and division commander of the air flotilla that was based in the cavern hangar during the Cold War, he is now content to continue working there and show it to people. He stresses that Aeroseum, without external support, has ‘educated between 500 and 700 volunteers’, some of whom have been ‘extremely active’. These enthusiasts, all male, generally have a military background, and some of the exhibitions are both curated and actually built by volunteers, something that the manager highlights as an assurance of authenticity and accuracy. In addition to the volunteers, there are employed guides (with backgrounds as preschool and grade school teachers) who help visitors and visiting schoolchildren. During an interview, one of the guides points at the manager and unironically says that he is the Cold War in response to a question about how they exhibit the period. Aeroseum is thus very much a ‘one-man’ project. When the manager directly offers us the establishment’s car to return to town for the night, we have the impression that his authority is more or less absolute within the estate.

A similarly personalized Cold War narrative (i.e. presenting oneself as embodying the Cold War) met us at the Kalixlinjen Museum. This one-man museum is based on the owner’s experience at Boden when it was a military centre in Sweden during the

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3At the time of our visit, he was chairman of the Aeroseum Foundation, as well as vice president of the joint-stock-company of Aeroseum.
Cold War. He meets us in the courtyard outside the main building, where a military fighter plane, a SAAB J35 Draken, is placed with its nose driven into the ground to replicate a crash. In the surroundings, there are other military vehicles, for example, helicopters and some military-coloured trucks. Further from the main building, there are what at first sight appear to be a countless number of military cars. We receive the same personal and generous treatment as at Aeroseum, and the manager becomes our guide for a whole day. First, he presents the nearby premises and the museum, and we listen to his story about his experience as a young conscript when his group crossed the border into Finland to conduct reconnaissance missions, linking the exhibition to his life narrative and personally anchoring himself in the region. Throughout the tour, he shares anecdotes regarding how he accessioned specific objects and the backgrounds of others. When we pass a 170-centimetre anti-tank weapon, he urges the authors of this article, the two men in our four-person research group, to try to lift it. We doubtfully attempt this, but we are unsuccessful because of the weight. In the afternoon, he takes us for a drive through the countryside, allowing us to enter the abandoned bunkers and underground batteries that he considers part of the museum, where guests can stay overnight. Based on his descriptions, we understand that his well-developed social network in the locality provides him with full access to these facilities.

Accordingly, these museums comprise two examples of enthusiast-driven Cold War heritagizations, where typical insiders make use of the past. Both the manager of the Aeroseum and the owner of the Kalixlinjen museum are ‘in their cultural territory’ (Smith 2006: 46), i.e. natural dwellers (Robertson 2012); they are the ‘feelers’ that ‘follow their emotional instincts’ advocated by Schofield (2015: 417). In both places, a ‘boots on the ground experience’ is highlighted as a guarantor of their exhibition’s authenticity. Nevertheless, despite their typical heritage framing, both actors have a complicated relationship with the official heritage sector. The manager of Aeroseum has a distinctly pragmatic and strategic approach, accepting funding from the museum network while totally rejecting the label of ‘Museum’ for his enterprise. In our interview, he harshly criticizes how the museum authority of the Linköping Air Force Museum frames the air force’s Cold War heritage. In particular, he objects to its distancing posture that prevents visitors from touching or interacting with exhibits. On the other hand, the Kalixlinjen Museum was initially supported by the SMHA. However, the owner’s unwillingness to follow SMHA regulations eventually excluded the site from the network. According to him, this exclusion has cost him money, but it has also offered him the freedom to arrange the venture as he sees fit.

As mentioned above, the Linköping Air Force Museum is a highly respected institution among Swedish museums, and the exhibitions display aircraft in original and efficiently curated displays and milieus. The modus is subdued, instructive and sometimes humorous. The Cold War exhibition, for example, consists of ‘typical’ home interiors from each decade of the period, including both funny and
frightening installations, such as missiles arising through a living room floor or red
busts of Stalin placed on a bookshelf beside well-known Swedish titles. At the
Boden Defence Museum, the exhibitions are more conventional: images and
photos with explanatory text, objects in glass showcases, and models. One exhibi-
tion hall differs in its style and displays a tank, helicopter, tracked car, machine gun
and an airplane without any textual information other than their technical data. A
sign reading ‘Please, do not touch’ is frequently seen at both places.

The mutual backdrop of the Boden Defence Museum and the Kalixlinjen
Museum is the region’s extensive military history. When military activity in
Boden began to cease at the end of the Cold War, many soldiers switched to
working in the municipality and local business community. Additionally, the
town has many active so-called comrades associations that comprise former sol-
diers. However, how each museum grasps this dense military background differs.
At the Kalixlinjen Museum, the owner articulates a will to celebrate the military
protection of the Swedish border against the Russians. Thus, the clips from news-
papers and magazines on violations of the Swedish border underpin an everlasting
threat from the East, while the weapons and vehicles on display denote how the
military presence is a guarantor of security. The storyline frames a masculine pro-
tective position that is endorsed by the originator’s articulated boots-on-the-ground
experience. There is an outspoken focus on physically interacting with the Cold
War by riding in the era’s vehicles, touching its artefacts and staying in its
bunkers. Overall, we suggest that the owner signals a robust, rustic style that he
contrasts with our research group’s more academic mode. For example, when
one of the women of the group asks for the lady’s room, he points out its location
while quickly stating that the women may use the lavatory but that ‘you men’
should urinate outside, in nature. This curatorial policy affirms the affective and
emotional dimensions of heritage, and the populist context in turn naturalizes
extant national positions (Dittmer and Waterton 2017) and, by means of gender,
reproduces extant relations of dominance (Connell 1995).

However, the Boden Defence Museum’s approach diverges radically from that
above and strives to fully avoid glorifying military violence. Consequently, it does
not venerate generals or other military heroes in its exhibitions and does not sell
replicas of weapons in the gift shop. The museum director also states that he
actively removed the tank-shaped pedal cars that were part of the museum before
he was hired. As mentioned above, the director has no military experience; 
although he grew up during the mandatory conscription period, he actively
avoided his call to military service in his youth. From his professional perspective,
this lack of personal military experience is not an obstacle:

I have only experienced a great deal of goodwill and understanding [from the
military], and [the military] are so happy to explain when there is something I
do not understand. And, there are many concepts in the military that I do not
put much effort into understanding.
Nevertheless, the museum educator relates how the comrades associations continually criticize the exhibitions. They consider themselves Boden’s (true) bearers of tradition and feel disinheritied by the museum. They want the exhibitions to show more uniforms, weapons, medals and stories about the military’s earlier dominance of Boden, and the museum seeks ways to acknowledge this group. At the time of our fieldwork, for example, the museum was setting up a small exhibition on prominent skiers from Boden. The guide described the initiative as an opportunity to venerate heroic efforts (albeit in athletic instead of military activities) and display sought-after medals without breaking the museum’s nonmilitaristic policy.

When visiting the Kalixlinjen Museum and Aeroseum, it is difficult to distinguish between Cold War history and the auteur’s personal life stories. This has an effect on how legitimacy is created. The owner of Kalixlinjen constructs authenticity by drawing on his own experiences as a conscript. At Aeroseum, the personification is even clearer; the manager is regarded as the very incarnation of the Cold War. However, this grounding in individual personal experiences does not, following Robertson’s and Schofield’s readings of Smith, generate particularly personal exhibitions. Instead, we are, inverting the general critique of AHD theorization, confronted with obsessions with things and mechanical performance. The main collections at both the Kalixlinjens Museum and Aeroseum are military paraphernalia, such as vehicles, weapons, or technical data. However, this modus does not reflect the protective and preservation attitude of, for example, the ICOM’s code of ethics. On the other hand, this exhibition style invites a visitor to physically interact with collections. This user-friendly attitude reflects the idea that a visitor must experience and feel to gain an understanding of an exhibition. This could be contrasted with the hall at the Boden Defence Museum with only vehicles and weapons; according to the museum educator, this room is often excluded from guided tours because it does not contain any social or cultural context. The room is nevertheless much appreciated, the guide laments, especially by children who can interact with the artefacts.

A clear distinction between the official, top-down museums and the informal, bottom-up museums in our examples concerns their comprehension of change and time. At the Linköping Air Force Museum and Boden Defence Museum, the story of the Cold War is consistently told in the past tense, which stresses a temporal rift and frames the Cold War as history. The emphasis on a timespan underpins differences and facilitates possible reflections and ambivalences. The idioms at the Kalixlinjen Museum and Aeroseum are more in a present tense, for example more often using ‘is’ and ‘are’ than ‘was’ and ‘were’ in the texts. The story of the Cold War is told as if it has not ended. Furthermore, the Cold War is placed within an exclusively military frame, and importantly, the exhibitions do not explicitly articulate an end to the Cold War threat. Accordingly, the equipment displayed is not presented as obsolete but as features that are still salient to the defence of Sweden. They have not been permanently removed from circulation but are in custody until the need for them returns. This reinforces their authors’ masculine
protective position, which is circularly based on a self-affirming ‘trust me because I was there’ argument.

**Concluding discussion**

Clearly, all our examples underpin connections between a masculine protector privilege, military activities and the Swedish territory and exclude feminine experiences and perspectives regarding the Cold War. Thus, all our cases reproduce gendered configurations of the present societal order – we have not found anything that indicates anything inherently subversive with the heritagizations from below.

From below perspectives tend to privilege nonreflexiveness, resulting in a nonintellectual exhibition style that seeks to make visitors feel something. There is a primacy of self-legitimizing and self-explanatory boots-on-the-ground logic. This veneration of the construction of a personally grounded history may be most clearly reflected in the statements that suggest the former head of the Aeroseum ‘is the Cold War’, which implicitly disqualifies any other identity and subjectivity in telling the Cold War History. Both from below sites portray themselves as ‘subversive’, as they engage in an explicit resistance against official, formalized musealizations where visitors are allegedly not allowed to touch displayed objects (i.e. forbidden to personally interrelate with history) and do not therefore gain an authentic understanding (e.g. of how good ‘our’ potential for killing was). However, we consider this resistance an empty gesture, rather than a manoeuvre that renders the Cold War’s remnants resources for an inclusive or emancipatory heritage policy. The privileging of the nonreflexive, nonintellectual exhibition style nurtures the wordless experience of a traditional nationalist notion of the priorities and merits of one’s ‘own’ people, and fosters an understanding of how much better ‘our’ technology of death was and how proud ‘we’ should be of it. In addition, the experience is of things and only things, an overload of objects.

The above perspectives, on the other hand, foster reflexiveness to an extent, and we have observed some variations in the ambitions to address or even subvert asymmetries, such as straightforward chauvinistic and patriarchal discourses. The Boden Defence Museum has an explicit policy to not ‘glorify violence in any way’ and to always ‘keep the military history serious’. In one of the exhibitions at the Swedish Air Force Museum, humour and irony is used to rupture the otherwise often lionizing descriptions of the total defence system’s role during the Cold War. The same exhibitions display ‘home front’ milieus to illustrate the Cold War period, which could be interpreted as a way to recognize feminine experiences. Thus, these examples can be considered attempts to not only achieve a critical distance from the military’s significance as peace keeper but also efforts to interweave the experiences of women and feminine subject positions into the story of the Cold War in Sweden. However, while an ambition to foster such critical reflections may be implied, these exhibitions still seem subject to a general order of domination; the power structures are located elsewhere.
In sum, all four Cold War heritagizations in our study primarily privilege White, male, Western, monumental and militaristic features. Within the authorized performances, there are occasional interventions and attempts to move beyond patriarchal and chauvinistic concepts, but such interventions have not occurred through *vox populi* heritagizations. On the contrary, the processes from below, where heritage has been filtered through the ‘strange lens known as ‘insideness’” (Graham and Howard 2008, p 2), have obstinately functioned as difference machinery that automatically disinherits women and presents a mono-masculine narrative where all protecting agents are male. Such heritagizations construct a worldview in which the politics of security are understood in terms of armed conflict and warfare and of stable relations between protector and protected. In this regard, the territory and the feminine are framed as always and necessarily in need of protection.

Different heritagizations have consequences for what stories can be told and what identities are privileged, for how certain constructions of nation and gender are enabled, and for how threats, security and military protection can be presented and ultimately understood. Heritagization thus affects what defence policies appear conceivable (Wendt 2021; Åse and Wendt 2021). As has been shown, in our cases, the gendered logic of protection appears to be self-evident, a permanent and inseparable part of the history, present and future, of Sweden’s national collective. One consequence of this is that security policy issues regarding protection and military violence are placed in a nonnegotiable, extrapoltical sphere. This complicates critical reflections on the creation of national identities and on historical and contemporary security policies. In all our cases, the bipolar gendered protector/protected logic appears natural, the political dimension is made invisible, and the democratic scope for action is limited. Accordingly, it becomes difficult, or even impossible, to grasp that there were alternatives and that rearmament in the Cold War was actually a choice, i.e. a result of different political decisions and defence policy strategies, and not the compulsory result of a necessary and unavoidable development. This means a depoliticization of security issues and that politics *per se* appears to be suspicious and threatening.

We find that the from-below focus on experiences and the primacy of feeling fulfils a naturalizing function in the heritagization of the Cold War. The focus works as an appeal to a natural order; things are and should be, quite simply, as they are. Significantly, a crucial element in this naturalisation process is the reifying mystification that often is ascribed to the AHD in the AHD critique. This in turn, was revealed to be a hypostasized reification in the AHD conceptualization. Thus, as our analysis shows, the AHD comes forward as the stable counter image needed in theorizations of real identity and, by extension, heritage.

Regarding whether they are liberating and empowering, heritage from above and below, readapting Fredric Jameson’s (1988, 1998) interpretations of Manfredo Tafuri, are equally imaginary resolutions to and necessary failures of unresolvable contradictions. Power cannot be withdrawn or refused, but only redeployed (Butler
Deleuzian illusions of identity can and will be substituted, but only for other simulations that will be appropriate and useful within a given configuration. Any recourse to an actual, nondifferential identity is a mirage and thus a phantasm. From-below heritagizations completely embrace these phantasms, while official heritagizations, although unsuccessful, nevertheless wrestle with them. The final conclusion must be that from-below cases are no less or, for that matter, no more stable than the AHD, which is in turn no more or less stable than the societal order that it springs from and is an enactment of. However, is this truly a problem?

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