CHAPTER 10

Altering a Homogenized Heritage

Articulating Heterogeneous Material Cultures in Norway and Sweden

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Visitors to the Swedish pavilion at the New York World's Fair in 1939 would have been met by an introductory photo-mural showing a group of confident, young blond people gazing steadily into the future. In the emerging welfare state this group is approaching the future with the certainty that they belong and will be taken care of. The future is theirs, modernity belongs to them. It is the future of a solid democratic and modern welfare state aiming to harness the entire population into a large, inclusive and harmonious middle class. In this narrative, present as much in Norwegian as in Swedish design history, design is portrayed as democratic, in the service of the many, as building a modern egalitarian society. Yet, it is not just the future that belongs to the ideal citizens represented in the photo-mural but history as well. It is their history that has been privileged in scholarship. The result is a narrative producing and reproducing a self-understanding amongst the population of being part of relatively egalitarian but also homogenous societies in terms of gender, class and race/ethnicity.

This sanctioned history thus obscures the considerable heterogeneity of Nordic societies, past and present, and relegates a wide variety of alternative cultural practices and subject positions to the margins. There is a need to question the homogenized heritage of Nordic design and analyse it further through approaches within design historical scholarship articulating heterogeneity by applying perspectives of gender, class and ethnicity (or through an intersectional perspective). In this chapter we focus on how dominant design history discourse hides the fact that material cultures of ethnic minorities are

Fig. 10.1 Photo-mural displayed in the Swedish Pavilion at the New York World's Fair in 1939, as reproduced in the exhibition catalogue. Courtesy of Svensk Form.

and have been profoundly present in everyday life. Even recent national survey histories (Korvenmaa 2009; Brunnström 2010; Wildhagen 2012 [1988]), which have incorporated many of the critical and theoretical discourses in international design historiography, are mute on the subject of ethnic minorities. This is typical not only of Nordic design history, but of design history in general. Therefore, and because the issue of minority material cultures challenges notions of national identities and design cultures everywhere and also complicates the relations between the national, the regional and the global, our discussion points to a research agenda that is both national and global at the same time.

Nordic identity is too often treated as homogeneous. However, this is currently being questioned. It is becoming clear that such homogeneity comes at a price, that this sameness is built upon control, exclusion and eradication of difference. In this chapter we trace aspects of this historical development and examine how its resulting idea of a uniform identity is mirrored in current discourse. Design history constitutes a very good example for discussing how difference has been perceived within the Nordic identity discourse as national museums and educational institutions are heavily invested in the version of modernity which conventional portrayals of Scandinavian Design adhere to. Design history has been instrumental in constructing and confirming particular norms and identities and therefore serves as a good example of how

a homogeneous Nordic identity has been created and sustained. Our discussion starts with the open-air heritage museums which have served as an historical anchoring point for the modern Nordic identity, and which can also be said to be a distinctly Nordic invention. In this narrative the rural farmer has been ascribed a vital role. We analyse how a certain material culture identity is created at the open-air museum and how these museums are now facing difficulties in refreshing this identity. We then move on to discuss the design culture of groups that historically have been excluded from these narratives and analyse examples demonstrating the many challenges of devising a more inclusive approach to design history.

Harnessing Heritage

When the nation state as a political and cultural concept in its modern form emerged in nineteenth-century Europe, creating a history of its people was considered paramount in legitimizing the new construct. Both academic scholarship and popular presentations were enrolled in this endeavour, each contributing to establishing national histories as the prevalent genre (Berger and Lorenz 2008: 10). In the Nordic countries, the open-air museum, featuring full-scale versions of carefully selected elements of past material culture, became key institutions in defining this history. The independent farmer was made the primary historical subject in these narratives, marginalizing other figures like the more numerous paid farm hands, fishermen, sailors, dockers and maids. In 1881 King Oscar II's collection of vernacular architecture (transposed) from rural Norway was established in Oslo with the intention of showing the evolution of traditional Norwegian building types since the Middle Ages. Inspired by the Norwegian scheme, the Stockholm museum Skansen opened in 1891 after an initiative by Arthur Hazelius. Skansen would subsequently become the model for many open-air museums all over the world (Rentzhog 2007).

As a stage upon which – often quite literarily – the history of the nation and its people was played out, these museums assumed a political function as generators and guardians of national identity and purveyors of its historical legitimacy. A very good example is found in Sweden in the early twentieth century. In 1912 the government set up a housing committee tasked with improving the dire living conditions of people of little means. In one of its publications the committee claimed that new housing types for this population group should be based on historic houses exhibited at Skansen, finding there an aesthetical ideal that in the eyes of the committee was not tarnished by the current taste for 'frippery from abroad' (Zetterlund 2012). Today there is a greater socio-economic diversity of buildings exhibited at Skansen, but the housing committee clearly referenced the rural farm buildings so venerated by the urban bourgeoisie.

Fig. 10.2 Interior view of the eighteenth-century Morastugan – the first building to be relocated to Skansen, forming a key part of the museum from its opening in 1891. Photographer unknown. Courtesy of Stockholm Stadsmuseum.

Today it would perhaps be somewhat more difficult to dismiss something as 'frippery from abroad', given the intricate geographies of contemporary manufacture and because more complicated national identities are making it difficult to distinguish domestic production by style. Yet, this is an undercurrent in history writing and identity construction. For example, in 2000 the Swedish government published a report evaluating its design policies. Under the heading 'A Democratic Tradition' one can read how 'Swedish furniture designers and interior architects have often ... preferred blond and light interiors. Yet, there has been, and still exist, those who wanted to protest against this so called "Swedish design" and instead promote other traditions'. This tradition of the 'other' is defined as ornamental folk art, or designs influenced by kitsch and popular culture, the baroque shapes of Southern Europe and glowing colours as in Eastern Europe (Ljungh et al. 2000: 190).

Just how difficult it is to embrace what is considered 'foreign' to the conventional national narratives is equally evident in current attempts by the open-air museums to alter their practices. In 2000–2001 the Norwegian Museum of Cultural History (Norsk Folkemuseum) rebuilt a 1865 apartment building, *Wessels gate 15*, originally located in downtown Oslo, as part of the museum's large open-air exhibition space at Bygdøy, south-west of the city centre. Over the following years, the building's eight apartments were furnished

Fig. 10.3 View of the exhibition interior *A Pakistani Home in Norway – 2002* in the *Wessels gate 15* apartment building at the Norwegian Museum of Cultural History (Norsk Folkemuseum). Photo: Anne-Lise Reinsfelt. Courtesy of Norsk Folkemuseum.

with domestic interiors representing a broad range of time periods and social segments, from *A Doll's House – 1879* (furnished according to Henrik Ibsen's own scenographic descriptions), via *The Cleaning Lady's Home – 1950*, to *The Architect's Home – 1979*. The most contemporary interior, however, is *A Pakistani Home in Norway – 2002*, opened to the public in June 2003.

This latter exhibit is remarkable in many ways. Its appearance in a museum perceived by many as celebrating a sanctioned version of national identity and tradition can be read as an attempt at modernizing the institution's image and political significance. But whereas the Norwegian Museum of Cultural History has had a permanent exhibition on Sami culture – the Sami are an indigenous people whose homeland cuts across the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia – since 1958, its first effort at including by far the largest group of 'new' minorities in its narrative of national identity appeared only in 2003.

The domestic interiors on display in *Wessels gate 15* are intended to 'tell stories about daily life, living conditions and furnishing customs in Oslo from the late 19th Century to 2002' (Bing et al. 2011: 24). Although these exhibits are less pristine and elitist than those one would find in museums of decorative art, walking through the building nevertheless feels like a history lesson in good taste and social aspiration, until, that is, one arrives in the Pakistani apartment. All the other apartments showcase a kind of interior design that in one way

Fig. 10.4 View of the exhibition interior *Modern Living – 1935* in the *Wessels gate 15* apartment building at the Norwegian Museum of Cultural History (Norsk Folkemuseum). Photo: Anne-Lise Reinsfelt. Courtesy of Norsk Folkemuseum.

or another is to be regarded as commendable or exemplary, varying from 'respectable bourgeois' and 'cheap avant-garde' via 'flapper fashionable' and 'mid-Century modern' to 'working-class hero' and 'student savvy'. Against this background, *A Pakistani Home in Norway – 2002* stands out as an addition rather than an integrated continuity. The 'addition', writes Wera Grahn, 'is a familiar practice of exclusion . . . removing [the minority's] history from normal history, making it a subordinate clause' (Grahn 2011: 47).

This impression is confirmed when taking art and design history students to see the exhibitions in *Wessels gate 15*. Whereas exclamations signalling recognition, respect, admiration – envy, even – are the norm as we work our way through the other apartments, their reaction to the Pakistani interior is dominated by expressions of astonishment, disbelief, ridicule – horror, even. As this group has been socialized into possessing relatively specific aesthetic preferences and cultural capital, *A Pakistani Home in Norway – 2002* becomes for them a version of the infamous 'chamber of horrors' from the early days of the Victoria and Albert Museum (Frayling 2010). Norwegian art and design history students may not be 'average' visitors – if that term makes any sense – in fact their shared reaction reveals the homogeneity of the group and how a restricted aesthetic norm keeps being reproduced in formalized education and criticism. Yet, the museum reports similar responses from the general public too, including worries that the exhibition is denouncing Pakistani interior decoration practices as 'bad taste'. The curators' answer to such feedback,

however, is that 'the aim has not been to show good or bad taste (whatever that might be) but to show a snippet of reality' (Pareli 2004: 63).

But what really sets *A Pakistani Home in Norway – 2002* apart from the other interiors in *Wessels gate 15* is how this exhibition seems to be primarily defined by the (fictitious) dwellers' ethnicity, whereas the other interiors are defined by categories such as social class, occupation, economy, etc. So, although Pakistanis in Norway are as different as other Norwegians in terms of social and economical distinguishers such as education, disposable income, cultural capital and taste, *A Pakistani Home in Norway – 2002* comes, by the way in which the narrative is told by the museum, to represent an entire ethnic group rather than a specific socio-economic stratum as do the other interiors. The exhibition's introductory wall text does acknowledge the heterogeneity of Norwegian-Pakistani home cultures: 'the exhibition does not attempt to show how all Pakistanis in Norway live. Pakistani homes vary as much as Norwegian homes, according to the background, taste and means of those living there. This is just one example'. But because 'the background, taste and means' of the fictive inhabitants are not in any way expressed, as they are in all the other interiors, this disclaimer becomes something of an empty gesture. The ethnicity of the majority population is rarely, if ever, articulated or made relevant, whereas it often becomes the defining feature of minorities. The same mechanism is at work when Sami craft is always expected to primarily express an innate 'Sami-ness' (Guttorm 2004: 58–60).

In a sustained effort across many media (exhibitions, television, publications) at diversifying the representation of the material culture of Caribbean diaspora in Britain, Michael McMillan has argued for the need to account for its great variety and tensions formed along axes like geography, gender, generations and class to avoid such stereotyping and essentialism (McMillan 2009a; 2009b). Lacking the complexity of McMillan's work, the ethnic and aesthetic stereotypes presented in *A Pakistani Home in Norway – 2002* can be seen as emblematic of massive challenges faced by museums charged with communicating the (design) histories of ethnic and national communities (Peressut and Pozzi 2012). The result is often, according to Olav Christensen, 'oversimplification and a dearth of nuance in issues of "us" versus "them", or inclusion and exclusion … [M]useums far more commonly present national and ethnic communities as closed and restricted rather than as open, inclusive and dynamic' (Christensen 2013: 164). The result can all too often become a reductive rendering of history and of material culture, petrifying rather than challenging stereotypes of ethnic and national identities.

'Othering' is an efficient way of enhancing certain traits in the dominant narrative. Rather than infusing Nordic design history with much-needed heterogeneity, the Pakistani interior accentuates the homogeneity of the master narrative. As such, it can be considered an exercise in what Fredrik Barth calls 'boundary maintenance', a crucial feature of identity formation even

in poly-ethnic societies (Barth 1969). The 'otherness' of *A Pakistani Home in Norway – 2002* is also testament to the suggestion that the Norwegian Museum of Cultural History is perhaps not so much representing a history of Norway as a history of Norwegian historical identity.

Normative Materiality

In the catalogue for the *Swedish Modern* exhibition at the 1939 New York World's Fair, the concept 'folk art' is mentioned as being kept alive by the farming population. Stemming from 'outside sources', it had over the centuries been re-shaped 'in accordance with the needs of the people, their character, and the natural conditions prevailing in the part of the country in which they lived' (Stavenow et al. 1939: 11). This definition of the national handicraft tradition is still very much present in the heritage museums today, underpinning and anchoring the national identity. Handicraft organizations such as The National Association of Swedish Handicraft Societies and The Norwegian Folk Art and Craft Association were vital in establishing and mediating this conception of national craft traditions and making them a staple of Nordic design histories.

Ethnologist Charlotte Hyltén-Cavallius reveals how folk art was perceived as independently developed, with limited influences from other cultures. The folk craft was seen as being the product of a domestic condition with regional differences concerning climate, natural resources and aesthetic preferences. A specific Swedish logic was articulated where certain materials, quality and techniques were defined as 'authentically Swedish'. Cotton was perceived as foreign, whereas wool and linen were considered appropriate. Synthetic colours were not allowed; natural dyes were encouraged. Crochet was considered lazy as it could be made in a semi-reclining position. It was perceived as a sign of low working morale. Therefore it had to be opposed by the advocates of the 'authentic Swedish' (Hyltén-Cavallius 2007). Formulated at the turn of the twentieth century, this understanding of the 'authentic' is still, to a large extent, a prominent point of reference in defining Swedish handicraft. This line of reasoning is not only present in Sweden; it crops up repeatedly also in Norway. In the 1960s, Norwegian designers and theorists argued against the widespread use of exotic timbers in Scandinavian furniture design on the premise that these were foreign and unnatural, instead championing locally available materials as more 'appropriate' for Scandinavian design (Fallan 2011: 34–36).

Sustaining and formulating this authentic heritage became an issue for the Swedish government in the early twentieth century. In 1918 a governmental report outlining a national support system for Swedish handicraft was published (Hyltén-Cavallius 2007: 115). Here we find the same historical narrative as in

the *Swedish Modern* catalogue: farmers were crafting the tradition. In the 1918 report a system was formulated where the craft of the Sami were placed outside the handicraft tradition defined as eligible for support. The Sami constituted 'an indigenous population whose homeland cuts across national boundaries' and was therefore fundamentally unstable and a poor fit with the distinctly national framework of governmental structures. The report ascribed 'significant cultural values' to Sami craft but considered it unable to progress in relation to modernity, and therefore ineligible for subsidies. Removed from 'its natural habitat' it would lose all its relevance. Sami craft, with its limited and 'primitive' materials, would be reduced to a curiosity with no value beyond the realm of tourist craft, and would thus be vulgarized (Holmquist et al. 1918). This view of Sami craft corresponded completely with the contemporary and enduring official national policy on Swedish-Sami relations where the Sami people were to live parallel to, or outside, modern society in order to preserve their 'traditional lifestyle'. Sami craft was, along with the Sami people, to be kept outside modernity, not to 'sip from the cup of civilization' as this would ruin their traditional lifestyle (Sjögren 2009). Later efforts at coining national policies for craft heritage and practice would include Sami craft, but always as a separate category. In this practice of monitoring 'the tradition', the treatment of Sami craft is a direct parallel to the 'border maintenance' (Barth 1969) exercise identified in the Pakistani interior discussed above.

Even though there is some horn craft represented in the Swedish Modern catalogue, Sami material culture has been virtually ignored in Nordic design history. This can to a large extent be explained by its sustained categorization as 'primitive', or 'non-modern', and therefore not in compliance with design history's conventional bias towards industrial manufacture, applied art and aesthetic innovation in the modern sense. A rare exception to this ignorance is renowned Swedish design historian and critic Ulf Hård af Segerstad's 1971 book on Sami craft. His admiration and respect for the subject matter is palpable, as is his struggle to make it fit the conventional categories and approaches of his art historical training. In line with earlier views on Sami craft, Hård af Segerstad asserts that in order to remain relevant and vital, it must move from 'folk craft' to 'art craft' in a development modelled on the history of domestic craft in Scandinavia a century earlier (Hård af Segersted 1971: 96–99). Although obviously well meant, and perhaps quite progressive for its time, today his recommendation appears 'colonialist' or at least patronizing as it implies imposing on Sami culture and Sami practitioners a Western/white conception of craft and aesthetic value: 'White aesthetics has perpetuated understandings of art which have marginalized minorities, while at the same time creating myths of purity and disinterestedness' (Heith 2012: 159).

Even publications emphatically avoiding the now oft-made conflation of design and industrial design, such as art historical treatments of pre- and

non-industrial design (normally using the nomenclature of applied art, decorative art, folk art, etc.) have found little or no space for Sami design culture (Hopstock 1958; Hauglid 1977). Not even Peder Anker, former director of the West Norway Museum of Decorative Art, makes any mention at all of Sami craft in his recently revised book, purportedly updated to reflect 'what has happened since [the publication of the previous editions in 1975 and 1998] in the research into and perception of Norwegian folk art' (Anker 2004: 8). He thus seems to apply an ethnic rather than a geopolitical definition of what is 'Norwegian' – a definition which should be problematic to twentieth-century historians of any nation.

Sami representation in the exhibition histories of Norway's three decorative arts museums (est. 1876, 1887, 1893) is equally scarce. The National Museum of Decorative Arts in Trondheim staged a major show on historical Sami craft in 1971, and then a smaller travelling exhibition on contemporary Sami craft in 1985. In the catalogue of the latter event, the continuing craft tradition is presented as a defence mechanism against all the hardship and exploitation suffered by the Sami under colonial rule and 'an activity important for the preservation of Sami culture' (Teigmo Eira 1985).

In his study of museum exhibitions of Sami culture, Stein R. Mathisen has argued that the objects on show are usually selected based on their distinctiveness, their difference from majority culture, thus simultaneously homogenizing, aestheticizing and 'exotifying' Sami culture:

> Although the artefacts are collected from a large geographical area, one is still left with the impression of a homogeneous culture without significant local variations. Correspondingly, it is difficult to ascertain the temporal origin of the selected artefacts. It is all placed in some sort of 'ethnographic present', where time, periodization or development are not significant factors in understanding a cultural condition. This unclear temporal and geographical contextualization of Sami culture gives the impression of 'mythical time and mythical expanse'. (Mathisen 2004: 16)

Mathisen concludes that these exhibitions are problematic for two reasons: firstly, they 'construct and mediate images of cultures as homogenous, static and belonging to the past', and, secondly, 'because the narratorial perspective itself stems from a colonial situation' (Mathisen 2004: 22).

Mathisen points towards current difficulties in dealing with cultural representations of differences in the Nordic countries. However, a significant academic discourse on understanding Sami culture in a postcolonial perspective is now developing in the Nordic countries. This discourse has in turn directed attention also to the material cultures of other minorities whose belongings and domestic environments have been not only ignored in the writing of history, but even systematically eradicated. One such group is the Roma minority, which has long been subject to control and exclusion.

Missing Materialities

In September 2013, the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* revealed that the Swedish police had been making a register of Roma people (Orrenius 2013). In a file marked 'vagrants' 4000 individuals – including children – were registered. Five months earlier, the Vice-Chairman of the Norwegian right-wing Progress Party suggested banning Roma people from Norway (Zaman 2013). These are just two of many incidents and part of a long, often brutal, history of control and exclusion, jarringly at odds with the perceived values of Nordic societies (Aronsson and Gradén 2013: 3).

In early twentieth-century Norway camps for the detainment of these 'vagrants' were established. The most famous camp was Svanviken work colony in Eide, between Kristiansund and Molde, on the west coast of Norway. Opened in 1908 and operative until 1989, the camp was run by the Norwegian Vagrant Mission. Travellers and Roma people were detained here to be 're-programmed': no value was given to old traditions; instead they were to be 'integrated' in Norwegian majority culture. They were not allowed to speak their own language within the camp. Carefully monitored by the wardens, the inhabitants were to learn how to become productive citizens, including finding 'honest work', to become a part of modernity as defined by the majority. This control continued after the inhabitants left the camp, e.g. through threats to take away their children – an effective way of making the former detainees comply with the rules. Between 1949 and 1970 thirty-seven per cent of the camp inhabitants were sterilized, a practice resulting from a 1934 law regulating voluntary as well as forced sterilization of Roma people (Bastrup and Sivertsen 1996). Similar laws and practices were widely used as methods of control in Sweden. According to Etienne Balibar the nomad undercuts the power of the state and its possibility of forming collective subjects:

> To 'territorialize' means to assign 'identities' for collective subjects within structures of power, and, therefore, to *categorize and individualize* human beings and the figure of the 'citizen' (with its statutory conditions of birth and place, its different subcategories, spheres of activity, processes of formation) is exactly a way of categorizing individuals. Such a process is possible only if other figures of the 'subject' are violently or peacefully removed, coercively, or voluntarily destroyed. It is also always haunted, as it were, by the possibility that outsiders or 'nomadic subjects', in the broad sense, resist territorialization, remain located outside the normative 'political space' in the land of (political) *nowhere* which can also become a *counter-political* or an *anti-political* space. (Balibar 2009)

In order to avoid this threat of the anti-political space 'the nomad' had to be controlled and excluded. Several initiatives to enforce this policy were established throughout the Nordic countries. In Sweden, Roma people were forced nomads. Due to laws and local practices Roma people were not allowed

to stay more than three weeks in one place. This made it difficult for the Roma children to attend school, for instance. These local practices against permanent settlements have made traces of Roma material culture scarce – a fact that has contributed to its eradication from Nordic national identities as well as from design history writing (Grahn 2011). Large institutions such as Nordiska museet do have some material about Roma people and Travellers. However, most of it is produced about Roma and Travellers, not by them. The same applies to the recent exhibition at Oslo Museum, *Norvegiska Romá: Norske sigøynere* (*Norvegiska Romá: Norwegian Gypsies*), which opened in September 2014 (Halland Rashidi 2015). As a result, there are but few objects in the collections that reflect and document Roma design and making practices.

Yet, despite these attempts at eradication, in the first part of the twentieth century traces of individuals and also of their material practices were recorded in official documents such as governmental reports (Linders et al. 1923). One such example is a governmental report from 1923, *Proposal for a law concerning the treatment of vagrants*, containing an appendix on an 'inquiry into the manner of living of Travellers and Roma people'. Here Travellers and Roma people were mapped with the help of the police. Alongside reports on characters and living conditions is an account of incomes where coppersmithing and other metal work are mentioned as common professions, as well as basketry, brush making and paper flower making (Linders et al. 1923: 2). Clearly this production could be made part of a Swedish craft and design history yet this has not been present in design historical or applied art institutions.

However, there is one notable exception to this absence: the jewellery artist Rosa Taikon. The daughter of a goldsmith trained in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, she attended Konstfack University College of Art, Crafts and Design in the 1960s. She developed a jewellery practice that combined traditional Roma craft with the visual and material language of modernist art. Her work was, and still is, being exhibited in large art and craft institutions. Rosa Taikon has had solo exhibitions at The Röhsska Museum in Gothenburg and at the National Museum in Stockholm. In the autumn of 2011 the Nordic Museum in Stockholm staged an exhibition showing not just her jewellery but also her longstanding work for the rights of the Roma people that she undertook with her sister, the famous author and human rights activist Katarina Taikon. Rosa Taikon was the first in her family to gain a wider recognition by national institutions for her craft. Yet, her inclusion highlights the absence of her references, the Roma tradition, within the institutions. It is an absence that calls attention to the principles for writing Swedish craft and design history. Here a homogeneity has been constructed and the intellectual bourgeoisie has been the assumed design historical subject of modern design history writing (Zetterlund 2012). However, institutions are beginning to formulate the material culture history of Roma people. Recently, a collaboration was initiated between Roma organizations, the Swedish History Museum and

Fig. 10.5 Pagod, silver ring by Rosa Taikon. Photo: Karolina Kristensson. Courtesy of Nordiska museet.

the Multicultural Centre with the aim to materialize some of the historical sites in Stockholm. By archaeological excavation of former Roma campsites alongside collecting life stories, the project aims to demonstrate the presence of the Roma people in the Stockholm area. Perhaps the White Paper on abuses and rights violations of Roma during the twentieth century published by the Swedish Government in March 2014 will speed up this process of creating a material presence (Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet 2014: 8).

Conclusion

In this chapter we have sought to demonstrate how design history in two Nordic nations has harnessed heritage in constructing national narratives based on a distinctly normative nativism and been impaired by missing materialities, conjuring up particular images of Norwegian and Swedish design. As such, the

master narratives have produced a literature that is succinctly described by Lisa Banu, in her postcolonial critique, as 'normative design history' (Banu 2009: 315). The apparent harmony and homogeny of Nordic design history, then, must be challenged, because, as Partha Chatterjee reminds us, 'behind the gesture of universal inclusiveness is hidden a more subtle game of exclusions (Chatterjee 2010: 156). We hope to have revealed some of these subtle games, in particular as they relate to design history's role in formulating what is commonly referred to as the Nordic Model (Brandal et al. 2013). We have shown how the Nordic welfare states have controlled and continuously excluded difference, and how the normative notion of modernity that has been vital in formulating a Nordic design identity presupposes an exclusion of otherness in its construction. Like other strands of historical scholarship in the Nordic countries, design history has 'always had an integrative task. This has led to the overemphasizing of the homogeneity of society and the uniformity of historical experience' (Aronsson et al. 2008: 281). Design history then becomes a vital platform for discussing and altering the notion of a homogenized past that underpins current nationalistic discourses.

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