Introduction and Background

The OpenArch-Project is based on the work with different “work-packages” (WP), where two project-partners cooperate and which have different objectives like “The dialogue with the visitors” and “Communication and PR”. The Workpackage 4 is about “The dialogue with skills” and is managed by the Modena City Museums, Italy, and the Archaeological-Ecological Centre Albersdorf, Germany. To improve knowledge and practical skills at all project-partner institutions the idea is developed by the WP 4-partners to get experiences and practical hints by visiting Archaeological (and also ethnological) Open-Air Museums, who have already worked since a long time on the issues of presenting in practical ways skills and handicraft to the public. Here it is not only interesting what and how they present different skills, but also how these museums manage and organize the whole educational work.

For this reason the WP 4-partner Albersdorf (Germany) has realized a trip of the author to Sweden, where we find at the famous Open Air Museum “Skansen” in Stockholm the oldest institution of these kind with the broadest experience and programmes in presenting traditional and ancient handicraft skills and educational activities for different target groups (www.skansen.se).

The Open-Air Museum “Skansen” in Stockholm, Sweden

Skansen is the world’s oldest open-air museum, founded by Artur Hazelius in 1891. It is one of the most famous traditional (ethnographic) in the world and could be described as “a kind of archetypical mother to all open-air museums, a perpetual starting point for all discussion” (RENTZHOG 2007, 4). Here started the “democratisation of history” (ibid., 5).

Skansen is situated on the island of Djurgården in the city centre of Stockholm. Visitors to Skansen meet a historical Sweden reflected both in the buildings and their surroundings – from the Skåne farmstead in the south to the Sami camp in the north (“a Sweden in miniature”). The venues illustrate the different social conditions in which people lived in Sweden between the 16th and the first half of the 20th century.
In the houses and farmsteads there are historical interpreters wearing period dress. They explain to visitors how people lived in earlier times and they demonstrate traditional activities such as spinning, weaving, knitting and other crafts. Besides the houses and reconstructions of their typical cultural surroundings there are also ca. 75 different species of Nordic wild animals and of traditional breeds of Scandinavia. Skansen is also very active in organizing different festivals, events and music arrangements, which mostly have their ground in traditional manners, customs and holidays.

The official task of Skansen (by appointment of the Swedish Government) is to give insights into the cultural and natural history of Sweden and give possibilities to experience this for the visitor, this also with respect for the present time and also with perspective to the future. Skansen should realize educational programmes and activities for the general public and should operate with engagement and joy as a national meeting point. The “overall” vision, the guideline for the work of Skansen is to be an open-air museum in world class, which is joyful and visitable for all people.

An important part of the work of Skansen is here not only to demonstrate traditional skills, but also to keep them alive (by practical use). Here the different and sometimes long existing cooperations with external partners – like craftsman-organisations – play an important role.

In 2012 Skansen welcomed about 1,4 Mio. visitors (“which is more than the Chinese Wall”, Elisabet Wiedersheim-Paul, Educational Department Skansen). The daily visitor number is something between 2000 and 10 000 persons.
The Programme for the Study Visit

With the questions and interests from the OpenArch-partners in mind and with a concrete concept we got into contact with Skansens Administration, where our contact person was Charlotte Ahnlund Berg from the Cultural Historical Department of Skansen, which includes the Educational Department. She prepared a programme for the study visit from the 1.–3. 7. 2013. The programme consisted on the one hand of discussions/talking rounds with responsible staff from the different departments (management of education, development of open and pre-booked programmes, event management department, development of external cooperation), on the other hand also of activities/visits on my own in the open-air museum, where I could observe a wide range of educational and craft activities which were on display at that days. On Tuesday there was also the possibility to take part practically in an educational programme about the traditional summer pasture farms in middle and northern Sweden. On Wednesday I got the possibility to present the OpenArch-project, its aims and partner museums in a short lecture on the occasion of the daily information meeting of the educational staff in the morning (where the EU-funding was presented, the OpenArch-leaflets were given out and where a short discussion followed). In the following chapters of this report you can read about the most important results and issues of the author’s meetings in Skansen, which can give new insights into the practical work of an institution on this international level.

The “Morning Meeting” for all educators in the “Vaktstuga”-house
The Visitor is a Guest –
General Statements from Skansen’s Educational Department

(Meeting with Karin Holmberg and Elisabet Wiedersheim-Paul, group chefs for the educational department, on the 1. 7. 2013);
important information:

– The core of the educational work in Skansen is “the dialogue with the guests” (all visitors are named and seen in Skansen as guests). The personal meeting/talk between the guest and the educator is here of greatest importance.

– Education is of great importance for Skansen (not at least for the financing of different programmes and projects). The educational department is the biggest at Skansen.

– There are existing 11 departments in Skansen, with about 200 permanent employed persons and ca. 1500 seasonal workers.

– Most of the educational staff is employed at Skansen (most of them as seasonal workers), but the cooperation with external experts and staff (from different enterprises, but also from voluntary societies like the private gardeners) is also of great importance.

– Skansen cooperates here with the organisation “Borgerskapet” (“citizenry”), which is a collaboration of different crafts enterprises, where the museum gets – since many decades –

Presentation of the actual activities at a farmhouse

Information-sign “Daily in july: Come and help out with the daily farm chores!”
most of its experiences in skills and handicrafts. The “Borgerskapet” decides which persons are experienced enough to work in Skansen, Skansen itself fixes the times and selects the crafts shown.

– Skansen recruits new (educational) staff every year by “advertising” this in different newspapers in Stockholm. There are special demands for new staff, which has to have an academic background (also students of course are recruited).

– The (active) educators in the open-air museum are at first hand educators, and then (second) f. e. craftsmen. This shows clearly that mediation, information and education are most important (not f. e. production of craft products or sale).

– There exists a special training for the new educators: 1. Every educator has to take part in a general course, 2. then every one has to take part/observe the activities at the main educational stations at Skansen, 3. then every one can choose other stations of own interest, 4. then follows the practical course in skills and crafts, always together with a trained “old”/permanent employed educator as supervisor, so that the experiences can be passed down.

– It is an important principle for the permanent members of the different departments not to talk/to discuss about internal problems before the educators – because they should be trainers and give (positive) examples for the others.

– The main information and principles for the educational work at Skansen can be found in the little “Skansen passport” (Skansenpasset), which every educator gets before she/he starts his/her practical work in the museum (and which fits into a pocket). Detailed information for all educators is available in the written, 53 pages big information brochure for the educators, which is distributed/
published/revised every year 
(and where you can find information about the educational and internal cooperation principles, about the practical issues in the daily work, technical information, regulations, problematical situations etc., but also a photo gallery of all permanent staff in the Cultural Historical Department).

– A principle in the Educational Department is the “Morning Meeting” (Morgonsamling) every day for ca. 30 minutes, where new information is given from the administration, where short lectures and discussions take place and where every one can meet the active colleagues of the day.

– Besides that there are also regularly meetings of all educational staff (both permanent

Children helping to pick up the hay

Hay, collected in the traditional way – functioning as “original” example for the childrens activities.

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and seasonal workers), one time in the spring and one time in the autumn, where general things are discussed or presented.

- Another possibility for training the educators (and for marketing) are the regularly produced short-films about f. e. handicrafts and events.

- Another principle is that every person who is working at Skansen has to read the annual report(s), so that everyone has the same/comparable level of knowledge.

Open Educational Activities – Quality and Security

(Meeting with Monica Tornberg, educator, on the 1. 7. 2013); important information:

- “Open Activities” means fixed programmes at special times in the public open-air museum area, where the guests can attend without prebooking.

- It is necessary in Skansen for all educators to have an educational training on academic level (ca. 1,5 years of studies or comparable experiences).

- The planning of new (permanent) programmes starts often with a test-phase in form of an open activity; the ideas for the content of new programmes are – based upon the educational strategies of the government – taken from ideas and discussions of the staff.

- A very successful and regularly used activity (for children) is the programme “Helping in daily life work” (f. e. collecting wood, to pile up hay etc.); this are very often easy and safe activities, where the educator can be very flexible in the handling of this (because of weather reasons etc.).

- For safety reasons there are always two educators in one programme-area;

- The educators change regularly their working places (and colleagues), so there is a certain exchange of experiences and skills between the educators.

- The raw-material for the different activities is limited (f. e. clay for producing vessels); when the material of one programme has come to an end,
then the educator has at least one alternative programme (and material) to work with (which event. has to be taken out of the stock).

– The adverts/advices for the different open programmes are made very general for the public (f. e. “household-activities in the house of …”, “daily life in the Sami camp” etc.), so nobody of the visitors should become disappointed, when some activity is not offered.

– “Family-Learning” is a principle for the open activities, which means that – in the best case – all members of a family, children, adults and elderly/handicapped people, can take part in the programme and that they get motivation from the educators to take part on their own.

– At the end of the season (in autumn) there is always a “season's end festival” for all educational staff as a thank you (with dinner and special events).

Example for an Open Educational Activity: Fäbod (Summer Pasture)

with Osva Olsen, Educator (2. 7. 2013):

The day started with the morning meeting of all educators, where some instructions and informations were given from the office and ideas were discussed. The house where this meetings take place every morning (“Vaktstugan”) is also very important as a “place of refuge” for the active educators (for having a coffee-break etc.).

After the meeting (ca. 30 minutes) Osva Olsen prepared together with her colleague the material for the day (here especially prepared cheese, milk, cups etc.), which was taken out of the stock into a traditional wooden hand-cart for transportation. They also took on here their traditional clothes.

Arriving at the Summer Pasture Farm the two educators started with the preparation of the activities (setting up the advice-sign, pouring milk into the kettle, checking all tools, lighting the fire
Booked Educational Activities – Schools and Other Guests

(Meeting with Anna-Vera Nylund, educator, on the 3. 7. 2013);

important information:

– To develop new programmes for schools it is very important to take a look into the educational plans of the schools and kindergartens; here the planners get their ideas for new group-programmes.
– The next step is to develop introductory material for the teachers for each programme, which is given out to the teachers before they visit Skansen; this material is produced always in cooperation with schools/teachers.
– Skansen sends out every month a newsletter for all schools in the wider region of Stockholm.
– Besides the schools the group-visits of Swedish companies, very often with international cooperation-partners, are (also financially) very important; here a broad offer of programmes exists where also (traditional) food plays an important role; Skansen advertises this offer by sending newsletters directly to the trading-companies and societies.
– A special, new and very successful prebooked programme is the “Drop-In-Marriage”, where there is one fixed day per year (in the summer), when persons who like to get married can visit Skansen and get a special-individual programme with flowers, music, dance etc. in or around the prebooked houses, where the registry office is installed on that day.

Principles of Cooperation with External (handicraft) Experts and with Volunteers

(Meeting with Annika Johansson, educator, on the 3. 7. 2013);

important information:

Skansen cooperates since a long time ago with a lot of external organisations and persons, who have experiences in special handicraft skills like trade union organisations etc; there exist in most cases permanent contracts with the exter-
nal partners, which explain the content and the aim of the cooperation and which include information about the rights and duties of the partners; the contact persons f. e. with the handicraft-organisations are the eldermen or presidents. When there come new external partners there is always an introductory meeting with general information about Skansen; after that there will be carried out special theoretical and practical introductions for the new partners at their future place for the activities.

For the external partners – which in most of the cases come as (unpaid) volunteers in order of their organisation – exist some advantages in Skansen (f. e. free admission also when they are not active, taking part in special internal events etc.).

It is very important to let the external experts know that they are in first hand educators, not handicraft-workers, and that – for this reason – it is necessary that they are interested in talking with the guests and explain to them their work.

The task of Skansen to work as a “treasure for old skills” (which is named in the official guidelines of the government) has the consequence that there have to be regular seminars and practical trainings about old handicraft skills for the external and internal staff.

To get new people interested and involved in the (educational) work of Skansen there are regular “information-days” about old skills and handicrafts, which are organised together with the official handicraft societies.
Special Programmes and Events – Planning and Organizing the Year in Skansen

(Meeting with Urban Wallin, chef for the programme and event department, on the 2. 7. 2013); important information:

The different kind of the events are each organised by special groups/experts (f. e. for music, dance, traditional festivals etc.).
The work with “atmosphere”/scenical-theatrical backgrounds (light, animals, forest etc.) becomes more and more important in the recent years.
Also the “inclusion” of the visitors in the programmes itself (f. e. children as role-players in the theatre-play) is successful and important.
The organisation of series/regularly repeated events is quite new (f. e. theatre for children, which shows the same programme three times a week); the engagement of f. e. theatre-players for a whole season has a financial advantage and could be used better for marketing (also by mouth-to-mouth-information from the visitors, because the guests can visit the programme also in three weeks again with their friends etc.); after three years you can evaluate if a programme/event is successful or not.
A recent way of advertising and informing the public is “Skansen-TV”, where you can see in the internet www.skansen.se short films about different topics.
(f. e. also about different handicrafts and skills) this motivates obviously a lot of people to visit Skansen and to try out traditional crafts.

To summarize the study visit we can conclude that it is very important and inspiring to get new ideas and knowledge from colleagues which work in the same field, exchange of people and ideas is always of greatest value. At this point we would like to say “Thank you” to all friendly and open colleagues at Skansen. It was a very interesting and inspiring time to be there in summer 2013.

**Bibliography**


Skansens Homepage: www.skansen.se

**Pictures**

All pictures taken by R. Kelm, Albersdorf, in July 2013.