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# Amateur Eugenics: The "Great-Mother in Dalecarlia" Genealogy Project and the Collaboration Between the Swedish Institute for Race Biology and the General Public, 1930–1935

**Abstract:** This is a paper about the knowledge-circulation that took place between the Swedish Institute for Race Biology in Uppsala and the general public in Sweden between 1930 and 1935. It focuses on a genealogical survey of the descendants of "Great-Mother in Dalecarlia," a seventeenth-century woman who was the progenitrix of many prominent families in Swedish history. It argues that a promising line of inquiry within the field of the history of knowledge is a more systematic approach to studying how traditional academically trained elites, like eugenicists, have cooperated with members of the public. The main conclusion is that the "Great-Mother" project was not a question of a simple diffusion of knowledge from institute to society but rather was a reciprocal process of knowledge circulation between centre and periphery.

**Keywords:** circulation of knowledge, eugenics, Great-Mother in Dalecarlia, the Institute for Race Biology.

## Introduction

Since around the 1980s, numerous studies on the eugenics movement during the first half of the twentieth century have been published. Many of these have focused on the place of eugenics in society, and on how it was presented to the public in many countries. However, few studies have attempted to analyse the ways in which members of the public participated in eugenics research projects; how they directly contributed to producing and furthering knowledge of eugenics.

The present article approaches this question through a specific example: the Swedish Institute for Race Biology, a eugenics research facility, and its collaboration with private citizens during the first half of the 1930s. During these years, the institute attempted to make a large genealogical survey – the so-called "Great-Mother in Dalecarlia" project – and encouraged members of the public


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to assist in the research. The Great-Mother project was launched in 1930 and the last traces of it can be dated to 1935; as a result, these years have been chosen as the time frame for this study.

This paper places itself at the intersection between several different fields of research. First, it is a study of an aspect of the history of the Swedish Institute for Race Biology; second, as such, it is also a case study of the history of eugenics vis-à-vis the public in modern societies, in a broader sense; finally, it raises theoretical questions regarding the relationship between academically trained experts and non-academic amateurs, and thus between knowledge and power in society.

In this paper, the term race biology – in Swedish *rasbiologi*, and originally derived from the German word *Rassenbiologie* – is used interchangeably with the English word eugenics. However, please note that, strictly speaking, race biology was no equivalent of eugenics. The latter term implies a practical application of race biology, i.e., systematic knowledge of heredity among humans. As such, it has more in common with the German term *Rassenhygiene* and its Swedish equivalent, *rashygien* (literally, "race hygiene"). Still, in Sweden during the 1920s and 1930s, the distinction between the two words was most of the time rather blurry, even among experts. Moreover, the use of the word "race" in this paper mirrors that of the time and the place in question; hence, it will not be put within quotation marks.[1]

## Prior Research

The studies of the history of eugenics in Sweden are legion. From the mid-1970s onwards, the subject has been analysed from almost every conceivable perspective.[2] One of these is the way in which the Swedish general public have collaborated with the Institute for Race Biology, such as sending information or specimens and borrowing books.[3] Aside from this, there is also research dealing with an earlier exhibit by Lundborg, the itinerant exhibition of the "types of the peo-

1 Unless explicitly stated otherwise, all translations are my own.

2 For an almost exhaustive survey of the Swedish historiography, see: Martin Ericsson, *Historisk forskning om rasism och främlingsfientlighet i Sverige – en analyserande kunskapsöversikt* (Stockholm: Forum för levande historia, 2016).

3 Gunnar Broberg, *Statlig rasforskning: En historik över Rasbiologiska institutet* (Lund: Ugglan, 2002), 29–30, 34–35, 48–49, 57–58.

ple" of 1919.[4] Another adjoining field of research, in which similar conclusions are drawn, is that which treats similar kinds of public exhibitions or institutions, that were centred around different sorts of eugenics-related topics.[5] Yet, while giving many empirical examples of the interaction between the public and the institute, none of these earlier works has attempted to study it in more detail, as one coherent phenomenon.[6]

The studies of eugenics in relation to the general public have usually been of two kinds: on the one hand, studies on how eugenics has been received in different societies – specifically how its messages have been popularised and spread publicly;[7] on the other, how members of the public have become victims of different sorts of abuse, often eugenically motivated sterilisation campaigns, carried out by the authorities.[7] However, in this research, it is almost invariably a question of a one-way dissemination or diffusion of knowledge – of how ready-made results of eugenic research were spread from academic experts, to the general public. Conversely, there are few studies on how knowledge of eugenics was created in joint efforts by both professional eugenicists and members of the public.

This would seem to be a promising line of inquiry, since the history of the role of eugenics in modern society then could be further developed. That eugenics was a well-regarded and even popular progressive force in twentieth-century industrialised societies, especially during the 1920s and 1930s, is already well-

**4** Gunnar Broberg, "Statens institut för rasbiologi – tillkomståren," in *Kunskapens trädgårdar: Om institutioner och institutionaliseringar i vetenskapen och livet*, eds. Gunnar Broberg, Gunnar Eriksson, and Karin Johannisson (Stockholm: Atlantis, 1988), 195; Britas Benjamin Eriksson, "Delaktighet som pedagogik – Föreställd ras och publikpositioner i den svenska folktypsutställningen" (Master's thesis, Uppsala University, 2013), 15–17; Maja Hagerman, *Käraste Herman: Rasbiologen Herman Lundborgs gåta* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 2015), 149, 152–153; Ericsson, *Rasism och främlingsfientlighet*, 202.

**5** See, for instance, Maria Björkman and Sven Widmalm, "Selling Eugenics: The Case of Sweden," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society* 64 (2010): 379–400; Maria Björkman, *Den anfrätta stammen, Nils von Hofsten, eugeniken och steriliseringarna 1909–1963* (Lund: Arkiv, 2011), chapter 4; Eriksson, "Delaktighet som pedagogik."

**6** The only study that has done this is the author's own master's thesis, parts of which this paper is based on: Måns Ahlstedt Åberg, "Den cirkulerande raskunskapen: Interaktionen mellan rasbiologiska institutet och allmänheten 1922–1935, sedd ur ett kunskapshistoriskt perspektiv" (Master's thesis, Lund University, 2019).

**7** See for instance: Gunnar Broberg and Nils Roll-Hansen, eds., *Eugenics and the Welfare State: Sterilization Policy in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1996); Mattias Tydén, "The Scandinavian States: Reformed Eugenics Applied," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, eds. Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 363–376.

known.[8] However, the extent to which members of the general public in these societies were actively involved in the creation of knowledge of eugenics is much less studied. The phenomenon in question becomes all the more interesting in the light of the theories in the field known as the history of knowledge. This is a vibrant field that has evolved over the last 20 years, and that highlights the study of knowledge as a historical phenomenon, and hence would be highly suited as an approach to my case study. The field and its theories will be discussed in greater detail below.

# Historical Background

## Eugenics in Sweden and the Institute for Race Biology[9]

The term eugenics and its theory were originally formulated by the British polymath Francis Galton in the 1880s.[10] During the years around 1900, the theory of applying the knowledge of heredity among humans spread to Sweden, where it came to influence the young physician Herman Lundborg. His interest in the subject had originally sprung from attending lectures held by the natural scientist Gustaf Retzius. The latter proposed systematic anthropologic study of the population of Sweden, chiefly through anthropometrics, that is, the measuring of physical characteristics. In Lundborg's mind, these anthropological ideas cross-fertilised with the theories of eugenics, starting his lifelong zeal to introduce and spread eugenics in Sweden.

After propagating for nearly two decades for the founding of a national eugenics research-institution, the Swedish parliament finally, in May 1921, decided to create and fund such an institute. The State's Institute for Race Biology, as it was called, started operating in January the following year. Lundborg was appointed its first director and remained in this position between 1922 and 1935. Not incidentally, this period in the institute's history was influenced by his interests in physical anthropology, and the phenomenon of mongrelisation among humans and its (as he argued, adverse) side-effects. He also worked tirelessly to popularise and publicly display the institute's work, such as by contributing with a section about eugenics at the Stockholm exhibition of 1930 (see below).

**8** Marius Turda, *Modernism and Eugenics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 13–91.
**9** The text under this subheading is based on: Broberg, *Statlig rasforskning*, 60–76, 85.
**10** Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 3–19.

Aside from this, the institute also published a long list of popularised books, as well as articles in newspapers and journals.

After Lundborg's retirement, the institute had two other directors, but neither of them shared his interest in physical anthropology or had his talent for publicising research results. Even though this part of its history is less well-studied,[11] it seems that the research it carried out was more directed towards medically scientific questions of heredity, such as how blood types are inherited between generations. In 1958, the institute and its research were incorporated into the Department of Medical Genetics at Uppsala University, and thus ceased to exist as an independent organisation.

## The "Great-Mother in Dalecarlia" Project

On May 16, 1930, a great exhibition was inaugurated on Gärdet outside of Stockholm. This was the third Stockholm Exhibition – an exhibition in the tradition of the world fairs such as in London (1851) and Paris (1889).[12] Its primary focus was to display the new architecture style known as functionalism – in practice, modern, efficient and hygienic housing of the future – but this was far from the only aim.[13] It was also an exhibition of the people who were supposed to inhabit those houses and apartments – that is, of the Swedish population in its entirety.

The place where this ambition manifested itself the most was in a three-story pavilion by the name of *Svea Rike* ("kingdom of Sweden"). This was meant to be a panorama of the nation's past, from the melting of the glaciers during the latest Ice Age to the rapid industrialisation of the present.[14] The leitmotif of the exhibition was a question that clearly linked the country's past to its future: "What have we done, what can we do?" Around 30 authors and artists had been employed to design the pavilion and to popularise this message for the public.[15] Indeed, one of the explicit aims of *Svea Rike* had been to "put less emphasis on

**11** However, an important contribution has been made lately by Swedish historian Martin Ericsson. See: Martin Ericsson, "What Happened to 'Race' in Race Biology? The Swedish State Institute for Race Biology, 1936–1960," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 46, no. 1 (2021): 125–148.
**12** John Chrispinsson, *Stockholmsutställningar* (Lund: Historiska Media, 2007), 7–9, 81.
**13** Eva Rudberg, *Stockholmsutställningen 1930: Modernismens genombrott i svensk arkitektur* (Stockholm: Stockholmia Förlag, 1999), 75–102.
**14** Gregor Paulsson, *Redogörelse för Stockholmsutställningen 1930* (Stockholm, 1937), 165–175; Rudberg, *Stockholmsutställningen*, 137–140; Chrispinsson, *Stockholmsutställningar*, 87–89.
**15** Paulsson, *Stockholmsutställningen*, 165–175; Rudberg, *Stockholmsutställningen*, 137–140; Chrispinsson, *Stockholmsutställningar*, 87–89.

naked numbers, which one quickly forgets, than on images and popular productions, that leaves their mark in memory."[16] Accordingly, one scholar has called *Svea Rike* the "ideological core" of the entire Stockholm Exhibition.[17]

Nowhere in *Svea Rike* was this ideology more evident than in the section managed by Lundborg, the already mentioned director of the Institute for Race Biology. Above the entrance to this section were a number of quotes from poetry and literature, for example the following romantic lines written by the celebrated author Viktor Rydberg: "I was ordained by a friendly *norna* to be Swede, to be of Aryan blood, purest and oldest of all."[18] Much in line with this, the aim of the race biological section was primarily to show the Swedish population what it was and to make the visitors feel proud of themselves and their ancestry. It consisted mainly of comparative photographic galleries, showing different contemporary representatives of the Swedish people. The main didactic point of these galleries was to contrast different "racial types" against one another: the Nordic (or Germanic) majority type against ethnic minorities such as the Fins, the Sami, the Jews etc.[19]

However, the race biological section also looked to the past. This was especially the case in the exhibition of the family tree of the so-called "Great-Mother in Dalecarlia" ("*Stor-Mor i Dalom*"),[20] which was the popular name of Margareta Hansdotter Burea Zebrozynthia (1594–1657), a woman who had been the wife of two clergymen in the region of Dalecarlia (Dalarna). Her children became the ancestors of many prominent Swedish families during subsequent centuries – families which could still trace their lineage back to her in the 1930s. This phenomenon – the importance of "good genes" for the historical progress of families and for society as a whole – was of great interest to the institute, which spared no

**16** Paulsson, *Stockholmsutställningen*, 165.

**17** Chrispinsson, *Stockholmsutställningar*, 87.

**18** Diarienummer (D.nr.) 286/30 (October 2, 1930), Statens institut för rasbiologi (Rasbiologiska institutets arkiv) / The State's Institute for Race Biology (Archive of the Race Biological Institute) (SIFR) E2:9, Uppsala universitets arkiv / Uppsala University Archive (UUA). A *norna* was, in old Norse mythology, a goddess of destiny, who spun and weaved the fate of men.

**19** The photographic galleries are collected in the album: *Rasbiologiska institutets utställning å "Svea Rike" 1930 – 31*, Rasbiologiska institutets fotografiska arkiv, A7, Uppsala universitetsbibliotek/Uppsala University Library (UUB).

**20** *Stor-Mor* has, in this article, been translated literally to "great-mother", mainly to emphasize the archaic sound that it must have had to people at the time. *Stormor* is actually an old Swedish word that has the same meaning as the English *grandmother* or the German *Großmutter*. By the 1930s, it had not been in use for a long time in the Swedish language. Supposedly, it was used as a sort of wordplay, denoting at the same time her role as a grandmother of many, and as a historical progenitrix of the Swedish nation as a whole.

efforts in an attempt to chart the genealogy of Great-Mother. She was used as a symbol of the "pure and healthy Swedish stock," symbolising the foundation of the nation's power and well-being.[21]

## Eugenics and the History of Knowledge: Theoretical Considerations

During the past 20 years, the history of knowledge has been established as an important field of research in several countries.[22] A cornerstone in this field is the notion that knowledge – its forms, production, transmission etc. – should be studied as a historical phenomenon, and thus be historicised within its proper context. Also peculiar to the field, which sets it apart from the history of science, is the fact that the concept of knowledge is much broader than the relatively narrow science. It denotes all types of knowing that has been regarded as real and valuable by people in the past, for example practical skills or religious beliefs. Whereas science is usually defined as an empirical method through which one can reach certain verifiable results, knowledge can encompass anything that people in the past considered to be knowledge; even things that can be refuted by scientific inquiry, such as magic. What has been regarded as knowledge and what has not; what types of knowledge has been regarded as more valuable than others; and how this knowledge has been expressed, renegotiated and maybe even abandoned – these are all questions of interest to the history of knowledge.[23] In this context, eugenics appears as a suitable topic on which to apply this set of theories. From having had the status of a "hard science" during the early twentieth century, to today being widely considered as pseudoscientific nonsense, it shows better than most subjects that the status of knowledge in society depends greatly on historical contexts.

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**21** Broberg, *Statlig rasforskning*, 49–50.

**22** Philipp Sarasin, "Was ist Wissensgeschichte?", *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 36, no. 1 (2011): 159–172; Simone Lässig, "The History of Knowledge and the Expansion of the Historical Research Agenda," *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 59 (2016): 29–58; Johan Östling, Niklas Olsen, and David Larsson Heidenblad, eds., *Histories of Knowledge in Postwar Scandinavia: Actors, Arenas, and Aspirations* (London: Routledge, 2020).

**23** For the debate on the differences between the history of science and the history of knowledge, see: Jürgen Renn, "From the History of Science to the History of Knowledge – and Back," *Centaurus* 57 (2015): 37–53; Lorraine Daston, "The History of Science and the History of Knowledge," *KNOW* 1, no. 1 (2017): 131–154; Christian Joas, Fabian Krämer and Kärin Nickelsen, "Introduction: History of Science or History of Knowledge?", *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 42 (2019): 117–125.

An important concept within the history of knowledge is that of circulation.[24] Central to this approach is the notion that knowledge is not simply created by experts in the centre and thereafter distributed, in a static, ready-made form, to non-experts in the periphery. Quite the opposite, knowledge constantly moves between different spheres of society, and changes and develops as a result of this very movement.[25] The collaboration between the Institute for Race Biology and the Swedish public would be a very clear example on which to test this theoretical concept.

Closely related, another methodological maxim that has been stressed is the importance of studying actors as opposed to structures. German historian Simone Lässig makes a similar claim: "Because the processes involved in the production, negotiation and translation of knowledge vary according to time and place, studying knowledge as a historical phenomenon requires an actor- and practice-focused approach."[26] One such actor- and practice-focused approach is studying the roles that knowledge actors of non-professional status have played for professional academics.[27] This is yet another characteristic that sets the history of knowledge apart from other related disciplines, such as history of science: the emphasis that it places on ordinary people; on the kinds of relatively anonymous individuals, who throughout history have created, maintained and transferred different kinds of (non-academic) knowledge, but have seldom been recognised for this by historians. U.S.-American historian Mary Terrall has analysed this kind of collaboration between elite knowledge actors in the centre and non-elite knowledge actors in the periphery: entomologists in eighteenth-century Paris and their less well-known agents in the French countryside.[28] She stresses the reciprocity of this collaboration process: there was always, she argues, "a two-way traffic of insects, instruments, ideas, sentiments, observations and books. All these were the elements of new knowledge about

**24** James Secord, "Knowledge in Transit," *Isis* 95, no. 4 (2004): 654–672; Johan Östling et al., "The History of Knowledge and the Circulation of Knowledge: An Introduction," in *Circulation of Knowledge: Explorations in the History of Knowledge*, eds. Johan Östling et al. (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2018), 9–33; Johan Östling, "Circulation, Arenas, and the Quest for Public Knowledge: Historiographical Currents and Analytical Frameworks," *History and Theory* 59, no. 4 (2020): 111–126.

**25** Sarasin, "Was ist Wissensgeschichte?", 166; Lässig, "The History of Knowledge," 43.

**26** Lässig, "The History of Knowledge," 43.

**27** See, for example: Tobias Scheidegger, "Der Lauf der Dinge: Materiale Zirkulation zwischen amateurhafter und professioneller Naturgeschichte in der Schweiz um 1900," *Nach Feierabend: Zürcher Jahrbuch für Wissensgeschichte* 7 (2011): 53–73.

**28** Mary Terrall, "Following Insects Around: Tools and Techniques of Eighteenth-Century Natural History," *The British Journal for the History of Science* 43, no. 4 (2010): 573–588.

the natural world, though an analogous pattern of circulation could easily be mapped for knowledge about antiquities."[29] Accordingly, this paper argues that the same pattern could also be applied to knowledge about genealogy and race biology.

Closely related, Swedish historian of ideas and science Johan Kärnfelt has coined the useful and apposite term "the infantry of knowledge formation."[30] It denotes exactly the kinds of unknown, ordinary people, who throughout history have been vital for the creation and furthering of knowledge, but only rarely have received recognition for their actions in histories. The two main reasons for this have been a traditional focus on elite individuals – scholars, inventors and scientists – as well as a lack of sources regarding the people who assisted them, such as proof-readers or lab assistants. Similarly, in the same anthology, Thomas Kaiserfeld, historian of science and technology, convincingly argues that, without the countless small contributions made by numerous comparatively anonymous individuals, the activities of the Swedish Royal Academy of Sciences would almost certainly have come to a complete halt.[31] However, even though scholars like Kärnfelt and Kaiserfeld are addressing the phenomena, they do not make any theoretical claims as to how to develop a methodological approach to the concepts of knowledge actors and circulation of knowledge. This is unfortunate, since one question, that would seem to be a promising line of inquiry, is the following: how does one study the history of knowledge from a circulatory perspective that highlights the influence of non-elite, non-professional actors? To put it differently, how can such a methodological approach contribute to a deeper understanding of the inner workings of historical processes of knowledge circulation, and, more specifically, of the role played by "ordinary people" in these processes?

Swedish race biology and the way in which the Institute for Race Biology collaborated with members of the general public offer various examples of such processes. Precisely this kind of collaboration between academically trained experts and amateurs is here amply in evidence.[32] The empirical groundwork has thus already been made, and more energy can be put into testing and developing the theory. This is where this study situates itself, and where its significance lies.

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**29** Terrall, "Following Insects Around," 576.

**30** Johan Kärnfelt, "Cirkulation och mediering," in *Kunskap i rörelse: Kungl. Vetenskapsakademien och skapandet av det moderna samhället*, eds. Johan Kärnfelt, Karl Grandin, and Solveig Jülich (Göteborg and Stockholm: Makadam förlag, 2018), 381.

**31** Kärnfelt, "Cirkulation och mediering," 381; Thomas Kaiserfeld, "Vetenskapsakademiens fotfolk," in *Kunskap* eds. Johan Kärnfelt, Karl Grandin, and Solveig Jülich, 385.

**32** See *Prior research* above.

# The Great-Mother in Dalecarlia Project: Race Biology in Circulation

## The Stockholm Exhibition of 1930

On March 12, 1930, an order was sent from the Institute for Race Biology to the Swedish Telegram Bureau concerning clippings from all Swedish (and Swedish-language Finnish) newspapers that had participated in a nationwide appeal.[33] Around mid-March, the appeal was published in newspapers of all sorts, both large ones, with a national reach, and smaller, local papers.[34] It consisted of a short description of Great-Mother and her historical and race biological significance, as well as a presentation of the planned genealogical investigation. Finally, there was also a request for assistance from the general public, mainly concerning tasks such as collecting pedigrees and images.[35]

However, this was not the only preparatory measure taken by the institute. It had also sent out personalised appeals and questionnaires to individuals whom it assumed to be descendants of Great-Mother. On May 5, for instance, a letter of thanks went out to a director Erik Åkerlund, who had answered by sending a photograph of himself to Uppsala.[36] The letter informed him that "the research executed has given some support to the supposition, that Director Åkerlund would be a descendant of 'Great-Mother in Dalecarlia'" – a statement that he was asked to either confirm or reject, to the best of his knowledge.[37] There was no answer from Åkerlund, or at least none that has been preserved. Another thing that is missing in the archive of the institute are the traces of his photograph, or other pieces of the material that was sent in during the spring of 1930.[38] One possible explanation for this could be that the material that was meant for the exhibition was collected separately from the regular correspondence. That there indeed were things being sent can be ascertained from the

**33** D.nr. 152/30 (March 12, 1930), SIFR B2:6 (UUA).

**34** For a selection of the newspapers that participated in the appeal, see: (March 11, 1930) *Upsala*, *Gevle Dagblad*; (March 12, 1930) *Stockholmstidningen*, *Svenska Dagbladet*; (March 13, 1930) *Nya Wermlands Tidningen*, *Östgöta Korrespondenten* [see the album *Stor-Mor i Dalom, Utställningen, Svea Rike*, SIFR F1:2 (UUA)].

**35** See for instance: "Stor-Mor i Dalom och hennes ättlingar ett viktigt bidrag till vår kulturhistoria," *Falu Läns Tidning*, March 11, 1930, SIFR F1:2 (UUA).

**36** D.nr. 266/30 (May 5, 1930), SIFR B2:6 (UUA).

**37** D.nr. 266/30 (May 5, 1930), SIFR B2:6 (UUA).

**38** See the table of contents in SIFR E2:9 (UUA), *passim*.

fact that the photograph collection of the institute during the spring of 1930 grew from around 6,000 to 9,000 items.[39] Moreover, in an interview by a local newspaper in April, Herman Lundborg claimed that "a good deal of material has been received."[40]

The Stockholm Exhibition opened on May 16, 1930 and quickly became very popular. *Svea Rike* alone received around 300,000 visitors during the four and a half months that it was open to the public.[41] This also applied to the race biological section in *Svea Rike*, and in particular to its displayed Great-Mother project. Not only did it attract many visitors, but was also widely covered in newspapers during the spring and summer of 1930 – something which contributed greatly to public knowledge of, and interest in, her and her descendants.[42] Even after the exhibition had closed, the public interest persisted for years to come. Between November 1930 and May 1935, there were several private citizens who contacted the institute with different sorts of questions pertaining to Great-Mother and their own possible personal relation to her genealogy. They did not necessarily receive the reply they may have hoped for; on many occasions, the questions could not be answered.[43] For instance, on October 30, 1934 a man by the name of Vilhelm Masreliez got the reply from the institute that no connection between his family and Great-Mother could be established.[44]

## The Collaboration with Author Aivva Uppström (1930–1932)

The institute did not only attempt to reach a broader public though the press or personalised questionnaires; another venue that proved to be most efficient was literature. Indeed, during the spring of 1930, the institute collaborated with the author Astrid Wilhelmina ("Aivva") Uppström. She had already been mentioned by Lundborg in the nationwide newspaper appeal around mid-March as having

**39** Hagerman, *Käraste Herman*, 311.

**40** "Stor-Mors i Dalom ätteträd," *Upsala*, April 22, 1930, SIFR F1:2 (UUA).

**41** Paulsson, *Stockholmsutställningen*, 174.

**42** "'Stor-Mor i Dalom' har ättlingar på Tummelsta gård," *Sörmlandsposten*, March 6, 1930; "Stockholmsutställningen," *Nya Dagligt Allehanda*, May 15, 1930; "Vernissage på Stockholmsutställningen i dag," *Upsala*, May 15, 1930. These and many other newspaper clippings are to be found in SIFR F1:2 (UUA).

**43** For a selection of such correspondence, see: D.nr. 550/30 (November 28, 1930), SIFR B2:6 (UUA); D.nr. 92/31 (February 21, 1931), SIFR B2:7 (UUA); D.nr. 49/32 (January 27, 1932), SIFR B2:8 (UUA); D.nr. 187/34 (September 27, 1934), SIFR E2:13 (UUA).

**44** D.nr. 187/34 (27/9 1934), SIFR E2:13 (UUA); D.nr. 380/34 (30/10 1934), SIFR B2:10 (UUA); D.nr. 208/34 (2/11 1934), SIFR E2:13 (UUA).

made a "very lovable depiction of Great-Mother."[45] This was a historical novel with the title *Stor-Mor i Dalom: En kvinnlig livsbild från sextonhundratalet* (*Great-Mother in Dalecarlia: Depiction of a seventeenth-century woman's life*), a dramatized version of Great-Mother's life. First published in 1919, it had been so popular as to having already gone through two earlier editions by 1930.[46]

By then, Uppström was close to her fifties. The daughter of a circuit judge, she had been a teacher at a private girls' school between 1903 and 1921, but thereafter made a living as a journalist and novelist.[47] She lived at the fashionable Stockholm address of Narvavägen 22, and seemed to be moving in the higher social stratum of society – in other words, she belonged to the educated, national-conservative upper-class, where Lundborg tended to find many of his most loyal supporters.[48]

"Loyal" may indeed be an apt term to describe Uppström's relationship with the Institute for Race Biology in general, and with its director in particular – the two corresponded privately, long after the end of the Stockholm Exhibition.[49] The first letter in this correspondence is from March 1, 1930 and is about the coming edition of the book. Here, it becomes clear that he was taking great interest in it. She writes:

> A reverential thanks for Your kind remembrance of my book "Great-Mother in Dalecarlia" and for Your suggestions concerning the cover of the book! I have written to the publishing house about it. When the book had been published, several persons wrote to or telephoned me and mentioned that they were descendants of Great-Mother. Would it be of any use if I were to draw up a list of these persons for You? In that case I will gladly do so.[50]

The collaboration that followed between Uppström and the institute manifested itself most clearly in an epilogue, written by Lundborg, that appeared in the third edition of the book. This epilogue was dated May 22, 1930 and is in many ways an echo of the appeal that had been published in the papers around mid-March (in fact, certain parts of the text are identical to those of the appeal). It contains a

**45** See for instance: *Falu Läns Tidning*, March 11, 1930, SIFR F1:2 (UUA).

**46** Aivva Uppström, *Stor-Mor i Dalom: En kvinnlig livsbild från sextonhundratalet*, third edition (Uppsala: J.A. Lindblads Förlag, 1930).

**47** Paul Harnesk, ed., *Vem är Vem? Stockholmsdelen, årgång I* (Stockholm: Vem är Vem Bokförlag, 1945), 905; *Svenskt kvinnobiografiskt lexikon*, search term: Anna Maria Roos, accessed February 7, 2022, https://www.skbl.se/en/article/AnnaMariaRoos.

**48** D.nr. 154/31 (16/3 1931), SIFR B2:7 (UUA); Aivva Uppström to Herman Lundborg, December 22, 1931, Herman Lundborgs brevsamling / The Herman Lundborg correspondence (HLB) 14, (UUB).

**49** See Uppström, *passim*, HLB 14 (UUB).

**50** Aivva Uppström to Herman Lundborg, March 1, 1930, HLB 14 (UUB).

short discussion of Great-Mother and her many children, who had become the ancestors of many successful and illustrious families and individuals throughout history. "From her and both of her husbands," he writes, "has the good biological heritage emanated, that distinguishes the family tree well into latter days."[51] Directly after this text, an appendix is attached containing 15 portraits of Great-Mother's second husband, son-in-law, and some of her most remarkable descendants in addition to a pedigree of her children.[52]

The epilogue concludes with an argument for the desirability of an exhaustive genealogical investigation of the family tree of Great-Mother. It develops into an appeal directed towards the reader, and thus, the general public:

> An exhaustive genealogical and demographic investigation of this kind [...] demands several years of persistent work in order to be brought to a happy ending. [...] For this purpose [...] considerable assistance from descendants of Great-Mother in different parts of the country is required, which can be done through the sending, either as loan or gift, to yours truly, of portraits, genealogical inquiries, or other pieces of information, that presumably could be of interest to the investigation in question. Within the family tree of Great-Mother there seems to be an inherent viability, that among other things shows itself in great fertility, a trait which apparently is based on a feeling of obligation towards the ancestors and a wish to manage the good heritage well and to pass it on. One can take for granted, that this dogged viability shall be united with a distinctive love of family and a desire to have the history of the family tree cleared up, as far as possible. It is in the firm conviction hereof, that I have dared to initiate such a comprehensive investigation as the one outlined above.[53]

The third edition of *Great-Mother in Dalecarlia* appears to have been published sometime in June 1930, just a couple of weeks after Lundborg had written the epilogue.[54] Starting then, and continuously during the remainder of the year, it was reviewed in several newspapers and journals – the reviews being mainly positive.[55] The majority mentioned that Great-Mother had many well-known descendants, something which had surely been gathered from the epilogue and appendix. The existence of these was often acknowledged in the reviews, even though they were seldom commented upon. One exception to this was a review stating that the epilogue, the portraits and the pedigree had "to great extent in-

**51** Herman Lundborg, epilogue to *Stor-Mor i Dalom: En kvinnlig livsbild från sextonhundratalet*, third edition, by Aivva Uppström (Uppsala: J.A. Lindblads Förlag, 1930), 180.
**52** Lundborg, epilogue, 179–180.
**53** Lundborg, epilogue, 180.
**54** Based on when the earliest reviews of the book were published (see below).
**55** Many related clippings are included in SIFR F1:2 (UUA).

creased the value of the interesting depiction of [Great-Mother's] life."[56] "It is surely," another reviewer wrote,

> for a race-biologist, a wonderful field for research, this eminent woman's numerous descendants ,especially [*sic*] since so many of them has [sic] been prominent personality. [*sic*] For the descendants themselves [...] I imagine, however, that the consciousness of their possible descendance from the stately woman does not matter that much for their choice of actions.[57]

Long after it was published, the book continued to spark an interest among its readers in Great-Mother's genealogy. In September 1932, for instance, a letter was sent to Uppsala by a headmaster in Bollnäs by the name of Fredrik Bröms. "Yours truly," he wrote, "whom, in the epilogue in A. Uppström's book 'Great-Mother in Dalecarlia', sees that the Race Biological Institute is working on family tree investigations and – belonging to the Leksand-branch of said family – is very interested in this, permits myself to ask" if, and in that case where, the investigation could be purchased; if the institute needed any more material to complete it with; and whether or not copies of the portraits of Great-Mother and her first husband could be acquired.[58] A little more than a month later, Bröms wrote another letter, in which he gave thanks for a portrait of Great-Mother that he had received. He also conveyed his hopes of soon being able to dispatch the genealogical material that he had promised to send to Uppsala.[59]

## Contributions by the Public to the Great-Mother Project (1930–1932)

Bröms was not alone in sending genealogical material. Quite to the contrary, during the two years that followed the displaying of the family tree of Great-Mother at the Stockholm Exhibition, numerous individuals contacted the institute, offering to submit material that they thought could be of value to the ongoing investigation.

The first trace of these kinds of activities is a letter that was sent to a certain Anna Polheimer in Arvika, on June 4, 1930, in which she is being thanked for

**56** "Stor-Mor i Dalom. En märkeskvinna från 1600-talet," *Aftonbladet*, September 7, 1930, SIFR F1:2 (UUA).
**57** "Moder Margareta," *Tidevarvet*, June 21, 1930, SIFR F1:2 (UUA).
**58** D.nr. 313/32 (September 14, 1932), SIFR E2:11 (UUA).
**59** D.nr. 341/32 (October 24, 1932), SIFR E2:11 (UUA).

having contributed with a "pedigree aside from other pieces of genealogical information."[60] A similar letter of thanks was sent by the end of September to a woman named Gunhild Larsson-Pyk, the owner of a country house called Tummelsta: "Hereby the genealogical acts, that were received on loan, are restored. Professor Lundborg asks me to convey to You the institute's thanks for the kind complaisance, to having put said acts at our disposal."[61] It was probably (though not exclusively) with her in mind that the newspaper, by which she had been contacted earlier the same year, made the following remark: "[...] it has to be pointed out, that the descendants of Great-Mother have been most willing to put material at [the institute's] disposal."[62]

The very same day that the letter was sent off to Larsson-Pyk, three others were dispatched to individuals who had loaned different sorts of genealogical material to the institute. There was a K. U. Erlandsson, teller at the National Bank, who had a pedigree returned to him; a Sigrid Setterwall, who similarly had eight pedigrees handed back to her; and, finally, a captain by the name of F. Kihlstedt, who was asked for a prolonged loan of the "valuable contribution" that he had put at the institute's disposal – something which was granted, though not by himself but by his widow, since he had himself died in the meantime.[63]

In December 1930 and January 1931, a couple of newspapers reported that, due to its popularity, the pavilion *Svea Rike* was to be reopened during the coming summer, independent of the finished Stockholm Exhibition.[64] Furthermore, it had been decided that the race biological section was to be enlarged – according to one of the papers twice as big as the year before.[65] Another one of the papers made the claim that Lundborg still had "plenty of material that possesses great value from a demonstrative point of view."[66]

Despite this supposed abundance, the institute continued to willingly accept material submitted by the public during 1931. On February 14, for instance, a man named Daniel Erlandsson, veterinary in Trosa, offered a loan of genealogies that went back to Great-Mother's paternal grandfather and uncle; it was accepted

**60** D.nr. 296/30 (June 4, 1930), SIFR B2:6 (UUA).
**61** D.nr. 419/30 (September 29, 1930), SIFR B2:6 (UUA).
**62** *Sörmlandsposten*, March 6, 1930, SIFR F1:2 (UUA).
**63** D.nr. 415/30 (September 29, 1930), SIFR B2:6 (UUA); D.nr. 416/30 (September 29, 1930), SIFR B2:6 (UUA); D.nr. 417/30 (September 29, 1930), SIFR B2:6 (UUA); D.nr. 292/30 (October 8, 1930), SIFR E2:9 (UUA).
**64** "Svea Rike får mera rasbiologi," *Stockholmstidningen*, December 19, 1930, SIFR F1:2 (UUA).
**65** "'Svea Rike' återuppstår i sommar," *Upsala Nya Tidning*, January 24, 1931, SIFR F1:2 (UUA).
**66** "Mycket nytt i det nya Svea rike," *Stockholmstidningen*, January 24, 1931, SIFR F1:2 (UUA).

with gratitude.[67] A couple of weeks later, a certain Ellen Terserus in Stockholm was asked whether her branch of the Terserus family was in any way related to Great-Mother. Should this be the case, she was asked to put her pedigree (if any) at the institute's disposal, so that it could possibly "introduce the same on the pedigree in *Svea Rike*."[68]

On March 9, another letter, that deals with a reciprocal exchange of genealogical information, was dispatched to an Umeå-based woman named Annie Nordin-Forsberg. She was thanked for her contribution to the project (though it remains unclear what it actually was), and was, in return, informed about her lineage back to Great-Mother.[69] A different sort of errand appears on March 17, when Erik Hägg, a director-general living in Stockholm, was asked to complement some pieces of genealogical information that he had given.[70] Strikingly, the search for material did also traverse national borders, as when Gerd Bausch, resident in Neu Kaliß in northern Germany and another descendant of Great-Mother, received some questions about her family: what her husband's year of birth was, and whether or not they had any children together.[71]

Towards the end of the year, someone who naturally had a great personal interest in the Great-Mother project, Aivva Uppström, reappears in the Lundborg correspondence with the following message:

> Thanks for the letter and kind Christmas greetings! I hesitate to inform Mr Blackwood Wright about the Great-Mother-portrait that is offered for sale, since it would be a shame if this were to be brought out of the country. Perhaps the wife of the new archbishop, whom is also one of the descendants, would be inclined to acquire the painting? Yesterday I met the Wife of Government-councilman Willand Aschau, who mentioned, that they can both trace their lineages back to Great-Mother! He through Troilius; she, whom is a daughter of an alderman Pettersson, through Terserus.[72]

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**67** D.nr. 77/31 (February 14, 1931), SIFR B2:7 (UUA); D.nr. 99/31 (February 24, 1931), SIFR B2:7 (UUA).

**68** D.nr. 110/31 (March 2, 1931), SIFR B2:7 (UUA).

**69** D.nr. 127/31 (March 9, 1931), SIFR B2:7 (UUA).

**70** D.nr. 157/31 (March 17, 1931), SIFR B2:7 (UUA).

**71** D.nr. 214/31 (April 29, 1931), SIFR B2:7 (UUA). Please note that, in Sweden, *Gerd* is a woman's name, as opposed to in Germany.

**72** Aivva Uppström to Herman Lundborg, December 22, 1931, HLB 14 (UUB). I have not been able to identify either Blackwood Wright, Pettersson, Willand Aschau, or the latter's wife. However, government-councilman (*regeringsråd*) was until 2011 the title of a member of the Supreme Court of Sweden. Moreover, Elisabeth Eidem (*née* Eklund) was the wife of Erling Eidem (1880–1972), archbishop of Sweden between 1931 and 1950. Why she would have a particular interest in acquiring the painting in question, I cannot say.

Also, during 1932, a few Great-Mother-related errands appeared in the archive of the institute. On February 10, a letter of thanks was sent to a major by the name of Carl Heijkenskjöld, who had given a set of genealogical material.[73] Another person who received thanks, as well as a photocopy of a portrait of Great-Mother, was Elisabeth Krusell in Hjortsberga, who, aside from some genealogical information, sent photographs of herself and her immediate family to Uppsala.[74] A couple of months later, however, she asked them to have the photograph of herself returned (and received it), as she needed it for a book project of hers.[75] Finally, on November 10, 1932, Uppström wrote yet another letter, which started with the following line: "By chance I have heard of still a couple of descendants of Great-Mother, and thus thought of informing You about it, even though they may not be unknown to You."[76] This time, the matter at hand was five siblings by the name of Hagberg, who supposedly descended from Great-Mother on their mother's side, and from her first husband on their father's. "There should be genealogical indexes", she added conclusively, "in the home of one or the other of these descendants."[77]

## The Genealogical Research of Anders Westgärds (1931–1932)

On February 26, 1931, a local newspaper in the region of Dalecarlia published an article written by Anders Westgärds.[78] He was a farmer in the parish of Leksand – the place where Great-Mother was from – and in addition to this an enthusiastic hobby genealogist, who had busied himself with her family tree, which of course was of local-historical interest. In the article, he gave an overview of some of the more thoroughly investigated genealogical lines that went back to her. Aside from this, he also mentioned the role of the Institute for Race Biology in making the family tree "one of the country's more known and interesting phenomena."[79] "Thanks to the attention," he wrote, "that race biological science has given to

**73** D.nr. 96/32 (February 10, 1932), SIFR B2:8 (UUA).
**74** D.nr. 141/32 (April 5, 1932), SIFR E2:11 (UUA); D.nr. 252/32 (April 23, 1932), SIFR B2:8 (UUA).
**75** D.nr. 322/32 (September 30, 1932), SIFR E2:11 (UUA); D.nr. 607/32 (October 4, 1932), SIFR B2:8 (UUA); D.nr. 367/32 (November 27, 1932), SIFR E2:11 (UUA); D.nr. 710/32 (November 30, 1932), SIFR B2:8 (UUA).
**76** D.nr. 350/32 (November 10, 1932), SIFR E2:11 (UUA).
**77** D.nr. 350/32 (November 10, 1932), SIFR E2:11 (UUA).
**78** "Stormors dalagren utforskas," *Borlänge Tidning*, February 26, 1931, SIFR F1:2 (UUA).
**79** Ibid.

the same, it has been manifested how not only the high nativity, but also the original great fortitude and strength of the progenitrix, has, in many cases, gone down into later generations with undiminished strength, and in more refined and cultivated forms."[80] Two days later, the news of his ongoing investigations were published in a Stockholm-based newspaper; a small news item illuminated the fact that "'Great-Mother in Dalecarlia', known not the least from Svea Rike at the [Stockholm] exhibition" really had descendants in the home parish and that "local honour" thereby had been saved.[81]

Almost exactly one year after Westgärds had published his article, on February 25, 1932, two other local newspapers published articles announcing that he had succeeded in finding a formerly unknown branch of the Great-Mother family tree; a branch which included thousands of individuals and that led up to the present-day population of the parish. They also reported that four days earlier, Herman Lundborg himself had arrived in Leksand, to visit Westgärds and to discuss his genealogical findings with him.[82] The background to this visit can be traced back to February 13, 1932, when Westgärds had written to the director.[83] After his arrival Lundborg had been, as one of the newspapers writes, "pleasantly surprised to find so much work already cleared away," and had also expressed "his exceptional delight over the fact that a person, only out of interest for the matter, had accomplished such a feat of research."[84] What was being discussed during their meeting is not known aside from the fact that Lundborg offered Westgärds to continue his investigations at the institute's expense and asked him to transfer his research findings to "a system of cards, created specifically to this end."[85] Accordingly, just two days later, a consignment consisting of 100 so-called "family-registry cards" was sent off to Westgärds.[86]

The collaboration lasted several months, from late February to early May 1932. On March 8, for instance, the institute sent Westgärds some genealogical information about the Terserus family, from a reference work that he himself

**80** "Stormors dalagren utforskas," *Borlänge Tidning*, February 26, 1931, SIFR F1:2 (UUA).

**81** "Stormors Dalagren utforskas", *Dagens Nyheter*, February 28, 1931, SIFR F1:2 (UUA).

**82** *Falu Kuriren*, February 25, 1932, SIFR F1:2 (UUA); "'Stormor i Dalom'", *Falu Läns Tidning*, February 25, 1932, SIFR F1:2 (UUA).

**83** D.nr. 70/32 (February 13, 1932), SIFR E2:11 (UUA).

**84** *Falu Läns Tidning*, February 25, 1932, SIFR F1:2 (UUA).

**85** *Falu Läns Tidning*, February 25, 1932, SIFR F1:2 (UUA).

**86** D.nr. 142/32 (February 27, 1932), SIFR B2:8 (UUA). Even though none of these family-registry cards has been preserved in the archive of the institute, I have gathered that they were a sort of printed form on which genealogical data could be filled into blank spaces: for example, who were the mother and father of a person, and so on. Together, the cards would enable the user to register a large family tree.

did not have access to.[87] After some initial uncertainty about how to correctly fill out the cards,[88] he soon ran out of his original 100 cards, and had to request for consignments with new ones twice.[89] By March 31, a local newspaper reported that at least 164 family-registry cards had already been filled out by Westgärds, and that he had discovered a formerly unknown branch of the Great-Mother family tree.[90]

Finally, on May 9, Westgärds sent off the finished investigation to the institute, which by then consisted of 496 cards.[91] Nine days later, remuneration of 50 *kronor* was dispatched to him.[92] Around this time, the average weekly wages earned by craftsmen and industry-workers were between 29 and 43 *kronor*.[93] Soon thereafter, Westgärds acknowledged that he had received the money and also mentioned that he was planning to continue the investigation of the Great-Mother-descendants privately, promising that, in case he was to fill out any more family-registry cards in the process, he would send these to Uppsala.[94]

The results of his investigations, however, were not only sent to the institute, but were also published as a chapter in the 1932 yearbook of The Association of Antiquities and Home Soil of Dalecarlia (*Dalarnas Fornminnes och Hembygdsförbund*).[95] The chapter was to be greatly emphasised in a review of the book that

**87** D.nr. 164/32 (March 8, 1932), SIFR B2:8 (UUA).

**88** D.nr. 192/32 (March 21, 1932), SIFR B2:8 (UUA).

**89** D.nr. 108/32 (March 27, 1932), SIFR E2:11 (UUA); D.nr. 200/32 (March 30, 1932), SIFR B2:8 (UUA); D.nr. 118/32 (April 6, 1932), SIFR E2:11 (UUA); D.nr. 258/32 (April 27, 1932), SIFR B2:8 (UUA).

**90** "'Stormors i Dalom' Leksandssläkt," *Ludvika Tidning*, March 31, 1932, SIFR F1:2 (UUA).

**91** D.nr. 155/32 (May 9, 1932), SIFR E2:11 (UUA); D.nr. 292/32 (May 14, 1932), SIFR B2:8 (UUA).

**92** D.nr. 300/32 (May 18, 1932), SIFR B2:8 (UUA).

**93** *Lönestatistisk årsbok för Sverige 1932*, published by K. Socialstyrelsen (Stockholm: Isaac Marcus boktryckeri-aktiebolag, 1933), 75.

**94** D.nr. 179/32 (May 23, 1932), SIFR E2:11 (UUA).

**95** Anders Vestgärds, "Stormor i Daloms Leksandssläkt," in *Dalarnas Hembygdsbok: Dalarnas fornminnes- och hembygdsförbunds årsskrift 1931–1932* (Falun: Dalarnas fornminnes- och hembygdsförbund, 1932), 37–55. Between 1922 and 1935, the institute sometimes collaborated with this and other similar organizations. The first director of the institute, Lundborg, was a conservative steeped in the rhetoric of national romanticism, and as such he firmly believed that the healthiest, most eugenically sound parts of the population were to be found on the countryside. Thus, both the institute and the regional associations had a common interest in finding ways to make people out in the country produce genealogical and anthropological records, which partly could be used to describe regional culture and history, and partly would further research into eugenics.

was published in two Stockholm newspapers on February 6, 1933.[96] During the 1930s and 1940s, this organisation took a keen interest in race biological subjects, mainly with regards to genealogy and anthropology. For instance, during these decades, it occasionally employed amateur race biologist Bertil Lundman to carry out anthropological measurements on the inhabitants of certain villages and regions. One of Lundman's reports on his work was published in the same yearbook as Westgärds's paper.[97]

## Concluding Discussion

From the empirical examples studied above it becomes clear that the Great-Mother in Dalecarlia-project essentially was a result of cooperation between professional and non-professional knowledge actors. Far from being a simple diffusion of race biological knowledge from the Institute for Race Biology to the public, this paper shows that the process was oftentimes highly reciprocal. Not only was the public in Sweden very interested in race biology, but also a most active participant in some of the institute's projects. Indeed, the examples show the great influence that non-professional knowledge actors could have over the process of knowledge formation – even when academically trained, professional knowledge actors working in a state-funded research facility were officially orchestrating it. The initiative may have come from the institute, but from beginning to end the existence of the project depended upon the material that was sent in voluntarily from private citizens. Without their support there would not have been any Great-Mother project at all.

All in all, these people can be said to have been a prime example of the concept of the "infantry of knowledge formation," as formulated by Kärnfelt.[98] It can also be argued that their activities truly constituted a circulatory movement of knowledge. The knowledge originated among members of the public, was transferred via the institute, and finally returned to the public, in the shape of the race biological section at the Stockholm Exhibition – by which time it had developed into something quite different, indeed. After the wheel had come full circle, the knowledge that had been set in motion had changed. This resonates well with

**96** "'Stormors' nya ättlingar," *Stockholmstidningen*, February 6, 1933, SIFR F1:2 (UUA); "'Stormors' nya ättlingar," *Stockholms Dagblad*, February 6, 1933, SIFR F1:2 (UUA).

**97** Bertil Lundman, "Folktypsundersökningar i övre Dalarna," in *Dalarnas Hembygdsbok: Dalarnas fornminnes- och hembygdsförbunds årsskrift 1931–1932* (Falun: Dalarnas fornminnes- och hembygdsförbund, 1932), 76–103.

**98** Kärnfelt, "Cirkulation och mediering," 381.

what has been argued by scholars such as Lässig: knowledge does not merely circulate between different spheres in society, but changes and develops as a result of this very circulation.[99]

The empirical examples cited in this paper clearly show that the process of circulation contributes to altering knowledge. What had started as genealogical information and images (mainly photographs) became something different when it was processed by the institute and finally displayed at *Svea Rike*. It was moulded into race biological science and fitted into the constraints of the message about the importance of the procreation of good genes, for the progress and well-being of Swedish society. As such, the Great-Mother project was intimately connected with the underlying racial ideology that was central to the institute's research between 1922 and 1935. The Great-Mother project reinforced the message that a multitude of prominent individuals in the country's history (up to the present day) had been of "sound Nordic stock"; not only healthy, vigorous, ambitious and intelligent, but also essentially Swedish.

As far as I am aware, the Great-Mother project never went beyond mere documentation. Its goal appears simply to have been to prove the eugenic hypothesis that individual qualities such as health, diligence and vigour are hereditary, and that they can be passed on to later generations, providing that the "sound" individuals procreate. Their conclusions were never instrumentalised, in the sense that they were used as a direct argument for promoting marriages and raising the nativity of the country. This is truly astounding, since the so-called "population question" was one of the most fiercely debated political issues in Swedish society during the 1930s. One possible reason for this could be the fact that the answers to this question increasingly seemed to come from the left, from social-democratic thinkers.[100] Lundborg's national-conservative stance in this question was thus possibly dismissed. After retiring from the institute in 1935, he would become more and more politically radical and, not incidentally, increasingly isolated. During his final years, he even sympathised with Nazism – a movement which was never very influential in Sweden.[101] This mirrors the worldwide shift in the mid-1930s from so-called traditional (or mainline) eugenics to reform eugenics.[102] Lundborg was a representative of eugenics in its tradi-

**99** Sarasin, "Was ist Wissensgeschichte?", 166; Lässig, "The History of Knowledge," 43.

**100** See, for instance: Alva and Gunnar Myrdal, *Kris i befolkningsfrågan* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1934).

**101** Hagerman, *Käraste Herman*.

**102** Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 172–175. The main difference between the two forms of eugenics lies in an older, anthropological emphasis on physical characteristics as opposed to a newer focus on medical genetics. Traditional eugenics also had a preoccupation with racial dif-

tional form, whereas the social-democratic nativity program took its inspiration from reform eugenics. In other words, the Great-Mother project was the last effort of a eugenics movement, the ideas of which were, by the 1930s, rapidly becoming antiquated.

It is important to remember that the Great-Mother project continued to play a role well beyond the Stockholm Exhibition. Arguably, its significance lies in the life that it lived outside of its public display – not to mention the confines of the Institute for Race Biology – in Swedish society at the time. "Life" might actually be an apt term to describe the trajectory of the circulatory process that has been outlined above, for there was something almost organic in the way it grew and adapted to its surroundings. Most importantly, the intense publicising activities by the institute during the spring of 1930 – with the nation-wide newspaper appeal, the epilogue in Uppström's historical novel and the exhibition at *Svea Rike* – did result in the desired outcome: great public interest in the subject matter. Great-Mother in Dalecarlia was a project that the general public was very aware of during the first half of the 1930s; and this awareness – it is important to stress – affected the behaviour of some private citizens in ways that contributed to changing this project. When formally asked, genealogically interested members of the public showed themselves very willing to share the research-results of their own family-history – information which was processed, and then exhibited on the Stockholm Exhibition and beyond. The media coverage that the genealogical survey received led to a great upsurge in the interest in Great-Mother. This, in turn, encouraged more and more citizens to investigate their own ancestry and contact the institute about it. Moreover, this did not only include those who knew themselves to be descendants of Great-Mother, but also numerous individuals whose main motivation for contacting seems to have been mere interest in the subject.

The reasons behind the great public interest can be explained in several ways. First of all, many hobby genealogists found that their (usually rather esoteric) work was suddenly a question of national importance, and they were probably only too happy to share the results of their research. Another important reason was most likely a desire among persons to show that they were of particularly good or illustrious ancestry, combined with the seductive notion of being intimately interwoven into the history of one's own country – that is, that one came of good descent, carried these qualities in oneself and one day could pass them on to the next generation. The feeling of the importance of

ferences among humans, whereas reform eugenics had no use whatsoever of "race" as an explanatory model, and openly opposed it after ca. 1945–1950.

the biological heritage not only for one's own offspring but for the future of the nation was likely the attractive message behind the Great-Mother project, which raised much interest.

While it is not always possible to ascertain a person's socioeconomic status in the correspondence – even in the strictly formal Swedish society of the 1930s, where almost everybody was addressed with title – it appears relatively clear that the Great-Mother project was a concern for individuals of middle- or upper-class background. Almost everybody had professions like headmaster, company director and major, or, like Larsson-Pyk, were the owners of country-houses. The author Aivva Uppström is another good example. She was the daughter of a circuit judge, was educated, had worked as a teacher at a girl's school, lived at a fashionable Stockholm address and associated with people in the highest social stratum of contemporary society. In other words, the Great-Mother project was a genealogical survey of elite individuals in the past, for elite individuals in the present.

Moreover, the public responses were not in any way uniform; on the contrary, this knowledge spurred different reactions in different people. At least three distinct types of circulation can be noted among the empirical examples studied above. It was not only a question of a simple circulatory movement from institute to public and back again: i.e., the former asks the latter for information and receives it – such as with the case of Åkerlund. There were also examples of how it happened the other way around (such as with Erlandsson and Bröms): a private citizen who reaches out with an offer of information; and sometimes there were even reciprocal exchanges of genealogical information (Nordin-Forsberg). Indeed, Terrall's argument for the existence of a "two-way traffic" in the circulatory process of knowledge production applies well to all of these examples.[103]

A third type of circulation spurred by a private citizen were the investigations of the amateur genealogist Anders Westgärds. These make up one of the most clear examples of two important theoretical points, which have been stressed in this paper: on the one hand, of how a non-professional knowledge actor can prove decisive in a process of knowledge production[104]; on the other, of how knowledge is transformed when it circulates in society.[105] His private investigations started as a result of the media coverage that the institute's Great-Mother project had gotten but soon developed into something that attracted public attention in its own right. This attention led to Lundborg contacting Westgärds,

**103** Terrall, "Following insects around," 576.

**104** Kärnfelt, "Cirkulation och mediering."

**105** Sarasin, "Was ist Wissensgeschichte?", 166; Lässig, "The History of Knowledge," 43.

whose project came to influence that of the institute. Finally, the investigations resulted in a book chapter that was reviewed in newspapers.

Thus, it becomes clear that these three kinds of knowledge circulation, once set in motion, tend to be driven by a sort of domino effect. In the long run this turns into a sort of perpetuum mobile, propelled by the forces of public participation: a self-sustaining, self-strengthening process, almost independent of (but not necessarily without relations to) the "prime mover"; in this particular case, the Institute for Race Biology.

All of these findings have important implications for the theory being applied. In effect, they show that putting emphasis on the interaction between professional and non-professional actors in the study of knowledge production has great potential. In focusing on the role non-professional actors have played, the inner dynamics of the processes of circulation become visible. At the same time, focusing on circulatory processes gives individuals outside of the academic elites the kind of theoretical recognition that they have so far mostly lacked in the history of knowledge. What is more, it becomes clear that these processes have a tendency of reinforcing and sustaining themselves – that circulation engenders further circulation – which is another aspect of the theory that has not been stressed enough in previous research. In conclusion, these results open up for new ways of studying public participation within the history of knowledge.

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