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Cultural intensive care

Carina Ostenfeldt had really intended to become a nurse anaesthetist. But a road accident changed everything. The consequences of the spinal injury that she suffered got in the way of these plans and, instead, she found herself at a hospital in the role of patient. Carina Ostenfeldt explains:

"My own experience of a long process of rehabilitation has certainly played a part in developing the concept of 'All aboard! – the salutogenic museum'. But I have been primarily motivated by a concern for human rights and for what motivates people; not the way back but the way forward. One cannot regain what one has lost in functionality but has to find a new approach."

Issues of accessibility became very concrete after the accident because when she left the hospital after ten months of treatment it was winter with its snow-covered roads.

"It was impossible to drive a car up the hill to the house where I was living because of the snow. We had to get a snow scooter so that I could get into the house. One often has to look for original solutions and to think anew in order to solve the problems of accessibility; using one's creativity instead of looking for readymade solutions as well, in my case, as a group of creative and energetic friends."

She gave up nursing and began an arts degree at Karlstad University College with cultural studies backed up with education and psychology. Since graduating she has worked as a newspaper, radio and TV journalist, but has concentrated on producing exhibitions on a freelance basis as well as on commission from national art society Konstfrämjandet and Swedish Travelling Exhibitions. For the last four years she has been managing and developing the concept of *All aboard! – the salutogenic museum* which is based on a philosophy of accessibility.

There are four main pillars to the project: development of educational methodology, accessibility, interaction between rehabilitation and the arts, and operational development.

"Educational methodology is concerned both with development and learning. The educational competence can be used in several areas. 'All aboard! – the salutogenic museum' would not have developed into such a comprehensive operation if we had not struck a vigorous spring. And, of course, it is all the more exciting that the project is based at Sweden's best-known museum."

Carina maintains that it was thanks to the enthusiastic collaborators and financial support from the Swedish Inheritance Fund that it was possible to realize the project. A total of some 100 people – including technicians, educators, designers

and artists have worked on the project for shorter or longer periods.

That *All aboard!* was realized at the Vasa Museum was no mere accident. Among the staff there are Torbjörn Ågren, head of the museum education department, Malin Fajersson, head of communications and the director of the museum, Robert Olsson who all embraced the project from the start. They had been working in a similar direction and the new project made the tools and keys available for realizing their ideas in the form of actual activities.

All aboard! – the salutogenic museum has its own logo – a person driving their wheelchair forwards at full speed. The logo easily leads people to believe that this is a room for people with disabilities, But Carin Ostenfeldt is quick to explain:

"We really wanted to play a little with the international sign and make it more active. The angle is the same as that of the figures that decorate the warship Vasa but this is also the angle of people driving their wheelchairs at full speed in a wheelchair marathon race. Quite simply, the sign indicates activity."

All aboard! – the salutogenic museum has been organized according to educational principles through the socio-cultural perspective on learning and developing and with a fundamental salutogenic perspective.

"There is a particularly happy light in the glade where the humanities and medicine meet and something new is opened up. The answers may not be crystal clear but the questions that are posed open the way for new possibilities and contexts."

One example of just such a new context is the collaboration between the *All aboard!* project and the Astrid Lindgren Children's Hospital in which the museum can be used as an active ingredient in a rehabilitation programme for children and young people with the so-called *Vipers*.

"A range of opportunities for training have been built in to the *All aboard!* room. Children can be taking part in an educational programme and be training physical functions at the same time. One can see the entire project as a sort of cultural intensive care – definitely life supporting but with a different substance in the central vein catheter..."

Inga-Lill Hagberg Desbois
journalist and editor

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We dared to go Aboard!
Everyone included, all aboard!

Everyone is welcome – All aboard! means everyone. There are no individual solutions here but everyone uses the diving bell. That was something that attracted us, Jessica Stjernström from RBU (Swedish Association for Disabled Children and Youths in the County of Stockholm) explains.

RBU joined the project right at the start.

"We said yes straight away when we were asked about taking part in the

All aboard! project", Jessica Stjernström claims. "The project differed markedly from other proposals since there was an evident focus on achieving concrete results."

"The project manager was able to give a clear picture of what the project would really be like when everything was ready, such as riding an elevator designed like a diving bell", Jessica Stjernström explains.

"The room was to be for ALL children – not just FOR children but WITH children; and that is very different. There were to be no separate solutions and all children were to be able to do the same things", Jessica Stjernström.

Invitations to take part in the project committee were sent to various societies, organizations and government bodies. The goals and methodology of the project were established right at the start so that the committee's task was to be more of a sounding-board.

"I feel more like a participant in a creative reference group than in a steering committee", claims Kent Holmström who is head of hospital play therapy at the Astrid Lindgren Children's Hospital.

Accessibility is at the core of the project and this was a particularly important argument for Handisam, the Swedish Agency for Disability Policy Coordination. Handisam joined the project at an early stage.

"Removing obstacles' is one of the requirements of our guidelines for accessibility, and government bodies are required to have premises, information and operations that are accessible to everyone. The Vasa Museum now has a pioneering project which is an excellent model", notes Mikael Wahldén, senior adviser from Handisam.

He also points out that finding solutions that work for everyone is a central aspect of disability policy measures. Separate solutions are only permissible when all other alternatives have proved unworkable.

"But it is unusual for organizations to have such a total grasp of the issue right from the start", says Mikael Wahldén.

This project goes much further than merely widening door openings. Accessibility is not just a matter of being able to get into the building but is also concerned with proximity and being able to enjoy the museum under the same conditions as others.

Including everyone without resorting to separate or special solutions is not an uncommon goal but it takes time to achieve even at the country's leading organizations for people with functional disabilities and for promoting children's rights.

"It really ought to be self-evident. But thinking in this way is a challenge, even for those of us at RBU. It takes time to learn a different way of 'thinking'", Jessica Stjernström candidly notes.

Save the Children Sweden also struggles with the same issue, according to Christina Wahlund Nilsson. She is responsible for educational matters and is critical:

"Why is it that at Save the Children we have not yet achieved an approach that includes every child's needs? After

all, we are an organization that is concerned with children."

A group of children, the expert committee, has been employed by the *All aboard!* project. These experts have presented their views and proposals as to how the educational room should be designed and furnished. This is in accordance with the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child which is an important aspect of the project. One of the fundamental principles of the declaration concerns the right of every child to express its views.

"In this project the UN declaration has been carried out in practical terms and its principles have been spread. I often mention *All aboard!* as a fine example and a model when I am lecturing to groups", Christina Wahlund Nilsson claims. "We joined the project because it showed such remarkable respect for children."

At the National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools they regard the project as a model and consider that it has been carried out with a high degree of awareness and is well thought-out. The project has proved an inspiration to the agency and has led to changes in their methodology.

"I have become very aware of the child perspective and have been inspired by it. We now intend to work more systematically with consequential analyses from the child's perspective than we do today", Åse Karle, head of the eastern region, maintains.

The fact that the project devoted particular attention to the children's views and ideas right from the start was important to the agency which has supported the project from the beginning.

"In many instances the adults assume the role of experts but here they have treated the children's views as equally important and the children as equals. That is what is so inspiring about this project", Åsa Karle explains.

There is a real focus on children's activities at the Vasa Museum. For Torbjörn Ågren, head of the National Maritime Museums' educational unit which includes the Vasa Museum, the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child is very important and he regards its realization in the operations as a critical issue.

"We have three major exhibitions in hand and we have worked with children's groups in the same way as here. And here lies a fundamental value: that the *All aboard!* project is not just a politically correct assignment but has been much more radical and has meant a great deal to the practical work of the museums."

The *All aboard!* project has given Torbjörn Ågren an indication as to how the methodology should be developed:

"We have often 'gone astray' and sent individual educators on courses when, in point of fact, we need to ensure that everyone is thinking and developing in the same direction. *All aboard!* has certainly opened our eyes to how one should approach a situation."

Also on the project committee is Robert Olsson, head of National Maritime Museums which comprises the Vasa Museum, the Maritime Museum in Stockholm and the Naval Museum in Karlskrona. For him the project provided a key for how the museums should develop their strategies for accessibility.

"The fact that the project has such a concrete focus and is not just words was a wake-up call and this has helped us to look realistically at how we work and has exceeded our expectations in this direction", Robert Olsson explains.

The Maritime Museums' vision for 2015 posits reaching a state where "the operations are informed by a perspective of total accessibility". The approach involves an accepted, holistic understanding and includes access to information, the physical environment and treatment by the staff. The idea of accessibility was present right from the start, that is from 1961 when the Vasa was salvaged after more than 300 years at the bottom of the sea.

How important is it for a museum to appeal to children?

"It is extremely important and it is one of the requirements laid on the museum by the government. My personal view is that if museums do not appeal to children they will not survive in the long run", claims Robert Olsson.

The expert committee has been an important factor in the project.

"They are key people and that is not just something I am saying", claims Robert Olsson, "and they have helped us to solve various problems in a concrete manner and have been a great source of support."

The project committee is happy with the way the expert committee has collaborated in designing and furnishing the *All aboard!* room. The experts have presented ideas and proposals for a range of educational tools.

"This was of decisive importance to us at the beginning: that there was an expert committee of children", Jessica Stjernström from RBU maintains.

The Vasa Museum will soon be taking over responsibility for the room and it is to be open to the public and filled with activities at weekends and in school holidays. Implementing the operations in line with the other activities takes time and various solutions are currently being considered. At the moment the educational programme is being carefully gone through so that it accords with the new perspective.

For Mikael Wahldén the hardest nut to crack is having more generous opening hours.

"Now we have created a huge interest in the room and have not been able to cater for this entirely satisfactorily. And it is extremely important that we continue to be a source of inspiration and expertise for others."

There are no plans to build further *All aboard!* rooms at the two other museums because it is a question of developing a concept. This can be used in many other situations and not just at museums.

"No, the benefit is that we can carry over the idea of 'accessibility for all' into our future operations", Robert Olsson states.

And to make more places and locations accessible in accordance with the *All aboard!* concept, there does not always need to be a project with substantial funding. It is a question of working in the same way and of daring to do this. There is, now, a concept and a methodology for continuing this work.

"There are many ways of producing

variants on the *All aboard!* theme in other places that do not need to cost a single krona extra. It is all a question of how one plans from the beginning", Mikael Wahldén insists.

Inga-Lill Hagberg Desbois
journalist and editor

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A philosophy of access

It is generally claimed, that what is good for people with functional disabilities is good for everyone. But just think if this turns out to be untrue; think if the reverse is true. That what is good for everyone is also good for people regardless. Just suppose that the need is primarily an existential one.

Issues of accessibility are often dealt with in a lingering structure of philanthropy in which gratitude and proficiency syndrome are corner stones. This often impedes work to improve accessibility. One readily gets bogged down in technicalities and the need to compensate which, in turn, leads to special inputs for particular people with particular needs, sometimes even on particular occasions. But what happens if one leaves what does not work and, instead, looks at what really does work, thus escaping from the negative associations? What are the identity markers and the sorting mechanisms that are cast off or dissolved? What are the entrances that it becomes beneficial to pass? Which questions and possibilities are formulated and opened up? How does one make strategies for accessibility comprehensible, manageable and meaningful for the entire operation?

If one adopts an inclusive perspective rather than an integrative one, the difference is that an integrative perspective depends on laying down conditions while an inclusive one recognizes the world in which the other lives as being just as relevant and just as valid as my/our own.

An inclusive perspective also leads to emancipation, to a liberating dimension in that it is based on a transaction in which both parties not only meet but also adapt. But how are these "rooms" to be constructed? How are the activities there to be constructed so as to achieve this form of inclusiveness and emancipation? What might this look like within the framework, for example, of a museum's operations with displays and educational programmes?

A philosophy of access is more a matter of finding an approach that is developmental, and of offering tools that can keep the issue alive rather than providing readymade answers; of an exploratory process in which more voices, solutions, dimensions and insights can mix in an unending discourse.

Accessibility is a matter of democracy, human rights and health

Accessibility should be considered in the same context as questions of gender, ethnicity, class, etc. For then it will also become

recognized as a matter of power and of being made invisible, of democracy, rights and value as human beings. One ought to look at the processes that sustain dominance (superordination) and subordination and how defining others as “different” function. With a base like this as a starting point it becomes easier to abandon the exclusive solutions that are made in the name of goodness and to find new and developing variants. Thus, one of the starting points of the concept is to base the work on the intentions expressed in the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Accessibility is also something that affects people's health. Lack of accessibility readily leads to a sense of exclusion and a lack of stimulus and participation. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing. It claims that health at the highest level is one of the fundamental rights of every human being regardless of race, religion, political conviction, or economic or social situation. In a salutogenic perspective one speaks of people having adequate resources based on their situation, for being able to realize their vital goals (L. Nordenfelt, 1991). Being able to love, work, play and to be optimistic about the future are factors that generate health. But this also predicates an accessible social space.

People have different functional abilities and everyone needs to be part of a meaningful context

And so an accessible environment and operations should be so organized as to be comprehensible, manageable and meaningful for everyone regardless of their starting point; with solutions and approaches that, in different ways, support so-called coping strategies and empowerment and, therewith, the possibility of managing situations both practically, mentally and philosophically.

That people are different and have different needs may seem self-evident. We all struggle with our own difficulties and shortcomings in our lives. Our identities as human beings are dependent on several different factors for their development. Sometimes a functional impairment may provide one of the building blocks though with varying importance to the person concerned. But no one is merely a catalogue of obstacles or disabilities. How extensive the limitation is depends, to a very great extent, on the environment and the reactions the person meets as well as on the individuals themselves. If one does not accept the criteria that a construction depends on it will not form an important base to the individual's construction of her or his identity. Here a problem arises with representation which is a matter of identity: who represents whom? What happens with one's identity if accessibility increases or is no longer a problem? What happens to all the so-called intersectional identities, those identities that do not fit into given categories and that burst the bounds of these. Are they allowed to take part? A handicap or disability is as much a historical construction as it is a medical description. The concepts are dependent on a hierarchy in which total functional-

ity is the norm even though it can well be seen as a non-identity in that total functionality does not exist other than as a construction. It is classification that determines what is normal and what is to be sorted into different categories, thus objectifying people and creating norms. But classification and objectification can also be seen as an exercise of power; and they can give rise to various forms of resistance. Perhaps it is precisely in these resistance strategies that one can find solutions.

Contexts that are comprehensible, manageable and meaningful can be created, for example, by an expansive focus that involves broad, inclusive and liberating solutions that encourage independence and participation. They are created by developing functions and getting things right from the start, rather than adapting afterwards, and by making use of many functionalities rather than relying on mono-functionality with special solutions. An example of this is the All aboard! relief map which, besides using different tactile materials, is visually attractive and so on. Another example is the Vasa soundtrack of different sounds that are associated with the Vasa's construction and its history. There are also illustrations, Blissymbolics, Braille, easily grasped magnetic playing cards, and so on in a single unit where children can play together regardless of their functional needs.

The available solutions are often the most democratic and should, therefore, be the most attractive alternative.

Strategies for accessibility should be planned and carried out so that they form an innovative hub which develops all the operations as well as the people working in the organization.

Questions and problems are always part of a recognized context and so the solutions are to be found within the same context, being intra-linguistic: for example the exhibition medium and the educational activities. It is within a given context that one can work out new solutions, perspectives and insights. A museum has its problems but is also the seat of the best solutions. And so it is always possible to provide a complete and universal list of measures to be taken.

It is a matter of creating a learning context for the entire organization and for the creative process; a matter of leaving behind what is familiar and comfortable and engaging with imagination, commitment and serious effort. For example, by starting with the social dimension of learning and developing and by creating relationships; a working group undergoes a process of development as do the individuals who are part of it. So that different areas of competence, experiences, life-contexts meet and mix.

Developing possibilities for everyone to be able to profit by, enjoy and actively take part in, for example, the museum's activities on equal and dignified terms is an important aspect of promoting accessibility. As a bonus, the entire medium develops and new fields of activity are opened up provided that one never accepts other boundaries than those that are necessary for generating the power to conquer them.

Carina Ostenfeldt, Project Manager responsible for the concept

Health, not just feeling well

Our focus is on possibilities and children's own capacities for coping with their various difficulties – negative aspects are pushed into the background. What one can do is what is important, not what one can't, Stefan Hult from Salutologybrån maintains.

Aaron Antonovsky

The term Salutogenesis was minted by Aaron Antonovsky (1923-1994) to describe the various factors that increase our ability to deal with stress. Antonovsky was a professor of medical sociology who was mainly based in the USA and in Israel. For a number of years at the end of the 1980s he was also a guest professor at the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Lund University. Aaron Antonovsky was interested in what promotes health and why we are healthy.

Antonovsky had a metaphor that describes what is central to the salutogenic approach: “If one thinks of a river that someone has fallen into, one saves the person from drowning. This can be seen as analogous with the way that health services deal with people who are ill. The next step is to erect a fence on the riverbank to prevent people from falling in. The fence can be seen as a parallel to the health authority's recommendations and warnings. The salutogenic perspective means that, instead, one teaches the person to swim in the river of life.” [Antonovsky, Lund 1987]

For Antonovsky the river was the river of life. The river has various tributaries that lead to quieter waters and others that lead to dangerous torrents and whirlpools. But Antonovsky's main concern was to ask: “what enables one to swim regardless of where one happens to find oneself in the river, the state of which is determined by one's historical, socio-cultural and physical surroundings?”

Salutogenesis means the origin of health and is the opposite of pathogenesis which is concerned with finding out what causes illnesses and poor health. Antonovsky maintained that it was important to consider both aspects, both what makes us healthy and what makes us ill and he minted the concept of salutogenesis and the salutogenic perspective.

Antonovsky's found the answer to the question of what it is that keeps us healthy in the sense of coherence (SOC). It is when a person finds their situation to be comprehensible, manageable and meaningful that the conditions are favourable for enjoying good mental health, a sense of emotional wellbeing and quality in life.

Comprehensibility is an experience of understanding oneself, one's surroundings and situation and of being understood by others.

Manageability is concerned with the extent to which one sees oneself as having adequate resources and faith in one's ability to meet different situations in life.

Meaningfulness is a motivating component and an emotional experience of life having meaning.

Antonovsky maintained that what determines whether one is healthy or not depends on where one finds oneself on this continuum. He claimed that we are constantly moving backwards and forwards between health and illness and that we are never entirely either one or the other but that we remain both/and throughout our lives. People with a strong sense of coherence are able to identify and use both their own resources as well as resources in their own context for dealing with different types of problems.

The general resistance resources (GRRs) are protective factors and processes that help to build up a sense of coherence and to modify the effects of different risk factors and processes. Examples of this are good self-esteem, ego strength, coping, knowledge, material factors, social networks and meaningful occupation. These are constantly available and are activated when a difficult situation has to be dealt with.

In life we are faced with reverses and difficulties but how we cope with them depends on whether we have access to the keys necessary for dealing with them. If we can deal with them in a satisfactory manner then our sense of coherence is improved and we move towards the positive part of the continuum showing that we managed to deal with the difficulties in a positive manner.

Health

Health is defined by the World Health Organization as "not merely the absence of disease or infirmity", but "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being". From a salutogenic perspective, health is something other than the absence of disease or infirmity.

There are various definitions of health. Salutogenic researcher Emmy Werner, who has studied vulnerable children who developed well despite terrible odds, has defined health in the following terms, giving equal importance to each of the four aspects:

"Love Well" which stands for the ability to create and maintain good relations and to love other people.

"Work Well" is concerned with finding an occupation that one can enjoy given the capacities that one has.

"Play Well" is concerned with the extent to which one has things one likes doing in one's spare time: playing, finding and devoting one's time to something that one feels really excited about.

"Expect Well" is the ability to expect good things in one's world and how one's vision of the future agrees with the notion that "all will be well".

Antonovsky rejected the division into "ill" and "healthy" and, instead, proposed a sliding scale between seriously ill and completely healthy. The salutogenic perspective concentrates on factors that are as close to the healthy end of the scale as possible.

Salutogenic principles

Antonovsky was responsible for defining the foundations of salutogenic principles and the concept of coherence. Besides these there is also the principle of protective or resistance factors and saluto-

genic communication. I am here going to describe two longitudinal studies that Antonovsky referred to and that deal with Salutogenesis.

Protective factors

Emmy Werner is a Canadian professor of psychology who has studied children who live with a high risk of developing serious mental ill health. She has focused on vulnerable children who, nevertheless, have made a good development against all the odds, describing their capacity to recover and their resilience in the face of difficult events in their lives. Together with psychologist Ruth S. Smith she has conducted a unique research project that followed all 698 children born on the Hawaiian island of Kauai in 1955. Werner and Smith identified protective factors that could compensate for the psychosocial risks that they faced.

The second study was undertaken by Marianne Cederblad who was Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Lund University and who collaborated with Antonovsky during his years in Lund. This collaboration led her to apply the salutogenic perspective to the unique Swedish material of the Lundby Study.* She looked at the protective factors among children growing up in high-risk situations who have managed to preserve their mental and physical health into adulthood. Research into these resilient children has led to a better understanding of how protective factors function in dysfunctional situations. [In Sweden such children are known as "maskrosbarn" – literally "dandelion children" because of the dandelion's ability to put down roots and flourish even in the most unfavourable circumstances.]

Both of these studies have found protective factors at individual, family and neighbourhood levels. These factors include:

Positive self-confidence that means that one believes that one can survive against bad odds and that one can take an active attitude towards one's situation as well as showing greater responsibility. This has importance for how one deals with stress. By making young people aware of their own abilities they are then able to deal with their own situation which, in turn, helps to promote self-confidence.

Being independent which means that one can meet the world on one's own terms. If youngsters are not overprotected and are credited with new abilities or tools that they may not even always be aware of, they may then be able to assume greater responsibility themselves for their "teens project". This means that youngsters develop a better level of self-control and are able to take greater responsibility for their own actions. Feeling more independent also reduces stress levels.

Having an inner locus of control means that one has a sense of being able to influence and steer the way in which one's life develops. Without this inner

* The Lundby Study is a longitudinal study that started in 1947. The aim was to chart mental health and ill health in a normal population both at specific points in time and over longer periods.

locus of control, development is not in one's own hands and one feels that "this has nothing to do with me, it has to do with other people". What is important about having inner control is that one has more inner than outer control in life. Sometimes one has to place control outside of oneself. This can be a matter of preserving one's own sense of self by saying, for example, "I did not do very well in my exams because my parents did not have time to give me enough help. If I had had more help I would have got much better marks in the exam."

Having a social network of relations and friends who can offer support and help when one needs this represents a generalized resistance resource and is a protective factor.

Salutogenic communication

Salutogenic communication is "a dialogue with as little room as possible for different interpretations, questioning and misunderstandings". What one says should be clear, transparent and comprehensible.

I will here give some examples of what salutogenic communication can look like with regard to children and adolescents.

One of the foundation stones of salutogenic communication is supporting and seeing what is positive and constantly emphasizing and recounting positive aspects. Supportive communication means that one is genuinely informative and attentive in relation to the other and has an empathic understanding. It also involves giving oneself time to wait and giving the young person time to produce their own initiatives and/or answering questions. The young person needs to have the opportunity to express herself or himself and to be listened to and feel part of a dialogue that leads forwards. It is important to support initiatives from the young person, initiatives that are aimed at learning, gathering information or investigating.

Affirming the feelings of a child or adolescent and doing this by asking a question is an example of supportive affirmation. It is important never to question other people's feelings – for one's feelings are always authentic. The important thing is to help and support the child in seeking out adequate forms of expression for what she or he is feeling. One way of confirming the field is simply to pose a question. For example: "Are you aware that you contribute a positive atmosphere to the group? It feels as though you are irritated with me, is that the case? You seem to feel good when you do this, is that right? Was it difficult? In what way? Were you unhappy?"

Noting and clarifying positive events, elevating apparent and unconscious resources helps young people to accept a positive view of themselves. In a meeting with a youngster, if one arrives at a point where one needs to give instructions, they should be formulated in a positive direction; proposing that the youngster should "do like this" rather than "not do like that".

Humour is an important ingredient in salutogenic communication. We know that smiles and laughter are infectious and that they influence feelings in a positive direction. Laughter also binds people together,

helps to get everyone into a good mood and has an effect on the sense of context and cohesion. A good laugh encourages creativity which is a very powerful protective factor. Being able to laugh together, to be part of something humorous and to discover something enjoyable increases one's social competence, self-esteem and self-reliance as well as strengthening positive communication. The literature describes how adults with humour also have a capacity for accepting their youngsters' trials and tribulations for what they are – a difficult period of life that will eventually pass.

Salutogenic issues are linked to different salutogenic factors. The choice of questions to a child or adolescent determines how the other construes her or his experiences and, in this way, what they talk about and how they narrate it. Some salutogenic questions are reflexive and their overall aim is to help the other person to think in new ways and new contexts. They are formulated to stimulate reflection on the meaning of daily observations and acts and to consider possible new choices as well as mobilizing their own capacity for problem solving. Examples of reflexive questions are: "What can we say about this?", "What is the point of this?". Or one can make use of the "you to we" principle and ask "How do you think that we can solve this?" In this way one makes the young person part of her or his own project.

Practical applications of salutogenesis

The term can be used at group, individual and organizational levels. I can exemplify this from my own experience with habilitation for children and adolescents in Region Skåne in the south of Sweden. There is a development scheme in progress there which was started in 2003. The aim was to give greater emphasis to the salutogenic factors in work with children, adolescents and families. The development relies on stressing functions that work, all that is healthy and to look for strategies that make habilitation more meaningful, comprehensible and manageable. Each team has chosen a carefully delineated field in which to introduce changes which they have then tested in their daily operations.

In our daily activities we are concerned with feelings linked with a context:

Manageability – How children and families can influence habilitation routines. How can we, together, help the child or adolescent to take control of its own life? How can we, together, put a focus on the child's own resources and limitations?

Comprehensibility – How do we know that the information reaches its goal? How can we give information in different ways? How do we plan and agree goals with the child and the family? How are our meetings structured? How can we and the child's context ensure that the child feels understood?

Meaningfulness – How do we ensure that children feel that they are participants? How can we put a focus on children's interests, enthusiasms and wishes? How do we make it easier for children to feel positive about the future?

Habilitation means that one develops abilities, trains functions that are impaired, adapts the person's environment and provides families with support in dealing with their situation in the best possible way. In salutogenic terms one talks about "children and adolescents with functional capacities". This means that the work of habilitation more consciously focuses on the child's resources instead of its weaknesses and the goal is that the child should be able to meet adult life with self respect, should be able to influence her or his life, participate in society and have a satisfactory quality of life.

The salutogenic perspective is currently applied, for example, to psychiatry, education, social work, nursing and leadership or management. Salutogenesis is, as we have seen, a knowledge of what it is that promotes self-esteem, resilience and health. A positive faith in the future and general optimism mean that one develops a better sense of self and feels happier. When something successful happens this often leads to a positive spiral in all the other aspects of a person's life. This positive spiral can, for example, be prompted by success at work, a belief that one's children will do well at school or success in some hobby.

It is claimed that, in the USA, presidential candidates lose when they focus on the ills of society and win when they are more optimistic in their public speeches. President Obama, who made great use of the word "change" in his election campaign, is a good example of this theory. He is constructive and forward-looking, and he sees possibilities rather than problems. He is also humble in attitude; and there are people who regard him as America's first salutogenic president!

*Stefan Hult
Section Head within the Department of
Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Lund*

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Access without being separated

I have to use the back entrance when I go to a museum with my class. That is no fun, it feels all wrong. I want to use the same entrance as everyone else. Is that too much to ask?

When my class visits a museum I have to use a different entrance. Sometimes I have to ring a bell and wait for someone to open. This is no fun because it may be pouring with rain and I just have to sit there waiting and getting wet. I am also separated from the class and then I sometimes don't know where I am. Sometimes I feel that the class is fed up with me because it can take a long time for me to meet up with them again.

Adaptations for disabled persons can be a hindrance rather than helping. I don't want special solutions for me and others with disabilities but the same for everyone. I want to use the same entrance as everyone else and I want to be able to see everything at the museum. At present, signs can be too high up while railings

that are at eye height for people in wheelchairs can block one's view.

I confront these problems almost every time that I visit a museum. Sometimes the only things I remember from visiting a museum were the problems I faced. Surely that is not what the museum really wants me to remember most?

As a member of the expert committee I have been able to design the room so that it suits all visitors. I have checked that I can access all parts of the room in a wheelchair and reach everything in the room. I can go the same way as everyone else. This is how things should be everywhere.

When I finish secondary school I want to work with disablement policy issues because these questions are extremely important to me. Everyone should be treated equally.

Therese Sundqvist Andersson, aged 17

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The project has helped me to grow

Being on the expert committee has helped me to grow. We have worked on fitting out a room and we have trained to become guides and to write an article. It has been fun and I have learnt a lot that I did not know before.

The first time I visited the Vasa Museum I met eight or nine other young people who were all waiting for a meeting. It turned out that we were the "experts" for this project.

During the first year of the project we were to create a room that everyone could access and do different things in. We met on a number of occasions that year and we discussed together and came with suggestions for things to be included in the room. There were several good ideas: for example a computer game in which one can steer the Vasa; and being able to hoist a sail and other activities.

Working with this was fun and it was good to feel that we could help to produce something that everyone could take part in. Every time we met we went and looked at the room to see how it was progressing. When the room was finished it was time for the formal opening. There were going to be appearances on a stage and Therese and I were asked to make a speech about the project which we did. When the stage appearances were all finished the room was inaugurated and everyone wanted to check it out. We were presented with our salaries for the work and returned home. The project was due to last for another year and during that time we were going to train as guides. I was keen to continue with the project. The next year we met again and during the year we were going to learn about the ship so that we could guide people round the Vasa Museum. It was fun as well as educational to learn things that one did not previously know.

We also worked, during the year, with the *Vipers* – wooden chests which were filled with things from the room and were

for use in the hospital play therapy department at the hospital. The last thing we did that year was to inaugurate one of the *Vipers* at the hospital. Swedish Television were going to make a programme about us and the room and they were going to show it on TV on the crown princess' birthday. The money for making the dolls for the *Vipers* came from her fund. We showed the TV team round the room and talked a bit about ourselves and what we liked best in the room. This was not the first time that I was on TV but I was a bit nervous nevertheless. But everything went well.

The project was to last for a third and final year and this year we were going to write an article each and gather them together into a magazine. I like writing so I was looking forward to this year. We got to meet a journalist who explained how one writes articles.

Working on the project has been great fun and I have grown as a person.

Fredrik Johnsson, aged 15

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Room with built-in resistance

This is not just a playroom where there are crayons and paper. The All aboard! room is designed for everything from teaching our minds to training our bodies, project manager Carina Ostenfeldt explains.

It is difficult to sit still in the *All aboard!* room. One is constantly tempted to try out new tools and new abilities. How did one hoist a sail and how could one steer a large warship like the *Vasa*? What was Stockholm like at that time? Thanks to the relief map one can feel one's way with one's fingers and, with the textures of different fabrics and other materials one can find out where shipyards, dwellings, palaces and farms were located before the advent of modern Stockholm. What does the seabed feel like and what sorts of objects have been found there from the time when the *Vasa* capsized in Stockholm's harbour in August 1628? One can feel one's way to an answer by investigating the cavities in one of the walls with one's fingers.

"When one goes into this room one can't help being pedagogical. We don't spend so much time talking about King Gustavus Adolphus and 1628 here. It is more a matter of using the source materials as pieces of a puzzle or historic clues", Torbjörn Ågren comments. He is head of the education unit at the National Maritime Museums and has, himself, worked as an educator.

The room and the educational operations are intended to function for all children regardless of their functionality. The room is a total experience for all of the senses. It encourages independence, making discoveries, learning, participation, physical training and cooperation.

"All the children should be able to benefit actively from the educational ac-

tivities on equal and dignified terms and the activities are part of a rehabilitative chain for children and youngsters. The educational goals are not just a matter of learning things but, equally, of personal development", Carina Ostenfeldt explains.

Rehabilitation is an important aspect of *All aboard!* – the salutogenic museum and hospital play therapists from the Astrid Lindgren Children's hospital can visit the room with their youngsters as part of their chain of rehabilitation, either collaborating with the museum's own educators or working on their own. At the hospital there are the *Vipers*, mobile educational materials in wooden chests that are reminiscent of boats and that associate to the *Vasa* theme and provide a link between the hospital and the museum.

In this way, both parties gain a further arena for stimulating children and there is a range of abilities that they can train that are built into the room and the educational materials. One can, for example, work with various forms of hand training, strength, balance, upper-body stability and mobility while taking part in an educational programme.

"In this way, both parties gain another arena for stimulating the children. They can train various abilities here, for example balance, and they can train with the *Vipers* at the hospital; and this spreads our operations", project-manager Carina Ostenfeldt explains. She has also developed the "philosophy of accessibility" that is the foundation of the operation. "One can work with the *Vipers* in various ways and they stimulate the children's interest in the museum and a visit to the museum falls in the "negotiable" region for the parents. In this way we gain new groups of visitors that would not have come here otherwise.

Currently, the *All aboard!* room can be booked with one of the museum educators who has been trained to use all the functions. But, in the future, the project aims to provide courses at the museum for teachers and parents who want to learn how to use the materials. The project has aroused great interest and groups from Sweden and abroad have made visits to the museum to learn more about the concept.

"Our goal is to increase the staffing so that we can have both planned and drop-in activities at weekends and in school holidays", Torbjörn Ågren notes.

The *All aboard!* room has now been completed and, in order to produce suitable equipment or tools that everyone can use, Carina Ostenfeldt has led the process of developing functional educational materials, with a great deal of support from the museum educators, technicians, designers, artists, collaborators and freelance consultants.

"One of my favourites is this sail. The fact that children can themselves try hoisting the sail or lowering it is a hugely much more profound experience than merely standing in front of a group and talking about sails", says Torbjörn Ågren. "One can build up an entire visit with the focus on just a few aspects in a very exciting way. For example by working with a delicate fibre which, when twined together with other such fibres, will produce an amazingly strong rope. To then be able to

haul up a sail with the rope is not just a learning process but a memory for life."

Inga-Lill Hagberg Desbois
journalist and editor

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The ship is drowning!

Ida Kananen and Alvar Mikkola are second-year pupils in the Finnish School in the Stockholm suburb of Upplands Väsby. Today their class is visiting the All aboard! room at the Vasa Museum. With museum educator Sofia Dahlquist they spend their visit hoisting sails, checking out where exactly the Vasa capsized and salvaging finds from the wreck.

Alvar and Ida put their hands into the jaws of the lion. They hear a fierce roar and then the doors to the *All aboard!* room automatically open. A roaring lion makes a splendid way of entering the room. More hands want to try out the lion and there are smiling faces all round.

The class from the Finnish School consists of 14 children. Museum educator Sofia asks them to sit down in a ring on the wooden deck. In the middle of the ring is a relief map showing what Stockholm looked like in the 17th century. Sofia tells them about how the warship *Vasa* left the harbour and she asks Alvar to sail a miniature *Vasa* along a seaway that is shown on the map. The ship sails past the royal palace and Slussen and ends up in a hole on Riddarfjärden.

"But what happened here? Plop", says Sofia.

"The ship drowned", Alvar explains as he lets the little boat fall into the hole and disappear.

"Indeed. The *Vasa* capsized and sank to the bottom of the sea. And now, several hundred years later, it is here in the museum." Sofia places the museum on the map together with modern-day T-centralen, Djurgårdsbron and the Gröna Lund fun park. Even a small Viking Line ferry [connecting Sweden with Finland] is placed on the map.

"I've been on a ferry like that lots of times", one of the girls exclaims. The others nod in agreement because the children in this class all have strong affiliations with Finland.

When everything is in place Sofia can show them that the *Vasa* sank midway between the Gröna Lund fun park and the Viking Line terminal. This is something to remember next time they go on the roller-coaster at Gröna Lund or take the ferry to grandparents in Finland.

Sofia starts the next stage of the programme. She asks the children what is needed to make a ship like the *Vasa* go forwards or stop.

"An anchor", someone suggests.

"In a sense, yes. But you need a sail first", Sofia explains. There is a large red sail in the *All aboard!* room and now the children will start to work in the same ways as the crew of the *Vasa*. They divide into two groups and Ida is the captain of her crew. Her six sailors are each given a rope.

"Up! Down! Up!" the captain orders and the crew pull at their ropes for all they are worth and the red sail dances up and down, again and again.

After that the focus shifts to below the surface of the water. Sofia introduces words like diving bell and marine archaeology and she tells them about how people first began to explore the seabed. She shows them a doll wearing carefully crafted diving equipment. Then she hands out diving masks and headlamps. The children giggle excitedly as they put them on.

One wall of the *All aboard!* room looks like the side of a wrecked ship. There is a cannon, a gun port and holes in the hull. Sofia had placed various finds in the holes or cavities in advance. She turns off the ceiling lights and pulls two curtains across to create a feeling of murky water, seaweed and the seafloor.

In pairs the children dive in behind the curtains to salvage finds from the holes.

"What did you find?" Ida is full of curiosity as the first divers return with their finds.

The atmosphere is fairly chaotic while the diving is in progress. Ida finds a spoon while Alvar salvages a coin. When all of the children have tried diving they sit down and look at the finds together and talk about what the items might have been used for.

"This was the most fun: diving and collecting things", Alvar exclaims with a smile.

"One has to test oneself. It's fun when you get some things and don't just look at pictures", Ida maintains.

Annika Wallin, journalist

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Maintaining the 'wow' effect

"Next time may be you can talk rather less with the children", the teacher exclaimed with an affronted expression on her face before gathering together the class with her loud and high-pitched voice.

I was left standing on the steps to the red-painted 19th century farm, reflecting on what she had just said.

This all took place at an open-air museum. I had just finished an hour-long programme dealing with life on a farm in the province of Uppland 150 years ago. Fifteen eager six year-olds and I had tasted traditional bread, tried on period clothing, inspected the cowshed and talked about the baby in the cradle. At times the lesson was a little unruly because the children had a lot of questions and thoughts. We talked about everything from life on the farm to other important issues like Saturday candy and dinosaurs! The children became all the more excited while their teacher's expression grew increasingly disapproving. When we had completed the programme I was feeling rather satisfied. The children had been both curious and enthusiastic and they seemed to be very cheerful when we parted company by the steps. But my own satisfaction was short-lived when I heard the teacher's acid complaint

that I had talked too much with the children and that the lesson had been unruly. I knew what she meant but I could not really agree with her criticism. That was precisely what I wanted to achieve – talking *with* the children rather than giving them a lecture on life in the 19th century.

The event has etched itself into my memory and has become an example of a challenge that I have chosen to reject. For me, the most important thing is still talking *with* children rather than *to* them.

Every educational meeting is unique. It is a matter of timing and it builds on a conscious interplay on the part of all those present. It is a question of communication and of together creating a situation to which everyone feels they are contributing. The educator's task is to be sensitive to the child's needs as well as creating the conditions and organizing the situation so that the child feels affirmed and welcomed.

Every child who visits the museum is special and important. In every educational situation the child should experience that she or he is part of a context that functions for the child. One way of ensuring this is to focus on the child's own curiosity and will. When they visit the museums, children should not feel that it matters that they are sitting in a wheelchair or have a weak hand or limited vision or readily suffer from restless knees. At the museum we focus instead on all that the child can and wants to do. And to the extent that we can see the child's own resources the child can take part in what is going on.

In the meeting between child and educator there is a common context or narrative; a narrative that is individual and unique for each child and for the meeting. A narrative which will probably seem disorderly and lacking in structure, viewed from outside.

Four years after the event at the open-air museum I find myself at the Vasa Museum in Stockholm. It is just before 10 in the morning and the museum is silent and calm. There is a slight echo as I walk across the paved floor. In the midst of the gloom the gigantic wooden warship Vasa rears up. Illuminated by lamps its surface shimmers in an almost otherworldly fashion. It forces one to look at it and it retains one's attention.

Suddenly the doors open and a herd of children wearing their thick winter clothing, stream into the museum. Their voices are loud with expectation and their eyes are fixed on the ship. Some of them blink in amazement, open-mouthed and, for an instant, time almost stands still.

"Wow!"

"Shit!"

"It's huge!"

"Is this the Vasa?"

"Is it really the real ship?"

The children run up to the rails that surround the entire ship. New questions! "Why is it so dark?" "I'm freezing..." "What a funny smell!" "It's all dirty." "It really looks like a ghost ship."

It is this that constitutes the Vasa's 'wow' factor. There is something direct and immediate that almost everyone feels when they encounter the huge ship. Regardless of who one is, one is immediately struck as one enters the museum.

For many people, the first step inside the museum proves to be a remarkable experience in which all the senses are active. The encounter makes people want to learn more about it and to discover new things. The educator's challenge is to preserve the children's curiosity and their enthusiasm for discovering and studying the exhibits. Maintaining the 'wow' effect right through the visit!

The children and I make our way to the *All aboard!* educational centre. In the room visitors can make discoveries and can study all sorts of things connected with the warship Vasa. You can try sailing a ship or working as a marine archaeologist.

The bright yellow lion's head on the wall gives out a roar and the door opens for you. Inside the light is all green and bubbling with sound of rushing water. "It looks like water! Now we are at the bottom of the sea. Hold your breath!" one of the children exclaims.

We sit down in a ring on the wooden deck that occupies a good part of the room. It is dark and the eyes of the giant sea monster up on the ceiling shine down on us. Together we are going to be marine archaeologists and search for exciting things in the dark waters of the Baltic Sea. In pairs we dive down, pretending to swim through the seaweed down to the wreck. On the seabed, which has crept up alongside the ship, there are dark holes that are filled with secrets. One small boy at first thinks it's rather scary. His brave friend takes him by the hand and together they investigate one of these cavities in the wall. Triumphant the little boy presents his treasure – a little square object. He is now happy to swim back up to the ship again. Now it is time to study and document the find. The square object is quite small and all brown. It looks like a piece of chocolate, he concludes. But if one drops it on the floor it rings. So what can it actually be? The children ponder the matter. The boy discovers that it is marked with a "2" on one side. "Perhaps it is a coin", one of the children suggests. "But coins are not square", another child opines. "How do we know what things were like during the Vasa's time? We can look into the matter in the museum and see if we can find another coin like this one", I propose. Together we go off on a treasure hunt. After a while one of the boys finds an identical square brown object in a display case. It is a coin. "On the Vasa there were square coins that were known as *klippingar*", the boy reads. "Goody. I found a coin. What a pity I didn't live in those days. Then I would have been rich as anything now."

For me, a successful visit to a museum is one where all the children feel that they are being noticed and are part of what is going on. The content of the museum should be accessible to the child but on level where it can also challenge the child to try out something new. Some people may believe that the most important thing when leaving a museum is that one has learnt masses about what

life was like in the past. But I do not believe that there is any particular value in knowing a lot of history if one cannot connect it with one's person and one's own life. The narrative needs to start with

the child's own curiosity and desire to discover and to investigate.

When the child leaves the museum she or he should be able to take with them some new discovery. This can be a new experience or a new insight about himself or herself. Perhaps that today was the day when I dared to take up space. Today was a day when someone listened to me and thought that I was important. Today I dared to challenge myself and today I realized something that I have never understood before.

When an educational encounter seems, on the surface, to be a bit "disorderly and lacking in structure" this may actually be the result of successful collaboration based on the children's needs. Where the children succeed in expressing themselves and feeling that they are noticed. And in which the children and the educator jointly create a unique narrative.

Sofia Dahlqvist, educator

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A drop-in creative weekend workshop

Children are hammering and polishing and laughing – and every now and then someone screams in frustration because things are not working out as they want. I just need to shut my eyes for a moment to find myself at Skeppsgården, the creative workshop at the Vasa Museum. It is full of children building and shaping, sawing and hammering – and sweating from their exertions...

During the Easter vacation 2010 we tried out a new workshop methodology in the *All aboard!* room with a number of stations where one could undertake creative activities. The aim was that children and youngsters should be able to try their hands at 17th century craftwork while we museum educators could find out what aspects of the room encourage children to make their own discoveries. Everyone who wanted was able to mint their own coin, a *klipping* made of copper or aluminium and we provided punches with letters, numbers and a lion motif. Visitors could study ancient coins with the help of a magnifying glass. They could inspect with their fingers, feeling and squeezing them, measuring and weighing, and then form their own coin based on this data. They could also try writing with a quill pen, plaiting ropes, tying knots or making colourful copies of the Vasa's ornamental sculptures.

Many of the children and adults left the Vasa Museum with new insights and experiences that we had created together in the *All aboard!* room. The experience led to our seeking out more information about different crafts of the period and we read about the history of money and discussed what people actually used money to buy in 17th century Sweden, how much various items cost, whether everyone was part of the money economy and what money and payments are

like today. Visitors who tried their hand at plaiting thin ropes experienced the work with both their fingers and their noses as they caught the smell of tar and this brought back many childhood memories which they shared. Visitors could take home their tar-scented ropes which they might make into a key ring. Taking such an object to school would encourage all sorts of learning situations for other children.

The traditional view of a museum is that one visits it in order to gain knowledge and answers to one's questions, facts that are scientifically accepted. But our educational methodology is based on the concept of "a philosophy of access"; that every child or young person should be able to take part in our operations on equal terms. This demands more of us than merely giving lectures and supplying readymade answers. There are different teaching styles and we educators try to vary the teaching by combining theory and practice. We use props that stimulate different senses: scents, sounds, light, feeling, taste. Children can make studies of things, try out different techniques, test and concretize their knowledge. For us it is important to generate a sense of participation and to maintain a permissive climate in which youngsters dare to ask questions and to communicate with the educators and with each other, since we know that a great deal of learning takes place in dialogue with others. We seek to provide meaningful experiences in which it becomes possible to absorb the history of the warship Vasa.

Work with the *All aboard!* project has brought about a new understanding of the concept of accessibility. I have seen what it entails in practice and how I, as a museum educator, can create the necessary conditions that enable everyone to take part in our activities and provide them with tools that will help them with their own development. I have enjoyed excellent guidance from colleagues in the profession and there has been plenty of time and resources for testing ideas and theories.

Experience of running a creative workshop has shown that we can create activities that involve the whole family. My best memory from the Easter vacation workshop is of a fifteen year-old boy who lay down on our sofa and read the book about the Vasa pig while the rest of the family was busy making coins. It was wonderful to see him so caught up in the story that he seemed oblivious of all the noise going on around him. I think that he felt secure in the environment that we had created in the *All aboard!* room.

Tuija Kananen, educator

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From teaching unit to educational resource for all

All aboard! – the salutogenic museum is an educational concept that has given concrete expression to a particular value. We want our museums to do their part in changing the world – or at least to make a difference.

"A museum educator does and does

and does..." These were the despairing words of a museum educator at a meeting a few years ago and they have rung in my ears ever since. For a museum educator is, in the first instance, a "doer", and should really be a doer. If one wants to express this in salutogenic terms one might say that the praxis and methodology of their educational activities are one of the healthiest aspects of the Swedish museums. But there has been a degree of frustration among many museum educators over being able, on a daily basis, to see opportunities for acting as a central force in their museum's operations and role in society and yet not being able to link up these activities with a theoretical strategy. Or at least feeling that they lack the tools to do this.

Educational activities have a long tradition at Sweden's three maritime museums, though the educational staff recognize this feeling. The lack of a common, basic outlook has become apparent from time to time when we have sought to communicate our understanding of museum education within our own organization. "Learning is the province of the schools" has been the established view and this has led to our activities finding their own "educational niche" isolated from the other activities of the museum.

It has been my hope that, by means of this project, we would be able to turn the situation around. The idea of the project is based on the perspective one finds expressed in the formulations and spirit of the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child, in the notion of the importance of health as expressed in the principle of salutogenesis and in the socio-cultural tradition regarding what learning really is. We have borrowed ideas, concepts and terminology that have become keys and tools for broadening our educational activities.

If one sees learning as development rather than as the result of teaching, then the museum, as a cultural institution, can play a role in completely new arenas together with new partners. At the same time we have been able to move the educational activities into new areas in collaboration with others in our own organization and, with colleagues, to develop into a learning organization.

Thanks to the *All aboard!* project the educational consciousness among museum educators has achieved a common focus. What was formerly mostly an attitude or approach has now become a structured way of gathering round the learning and development that we see as a constant process in everybody – and not just schoolchildren. We make use of educational perspectives in a broad sense, for example with a family approach in our programmed activities but also with a focus on priority endeavours like the integration field with seniors or, as here, the field of health and rehabilitation. What is important now is that we, as a group, not only guarantee a factually correct material but also ensure that everyone is well received so that they feel noticed and respected and that they have the same opportunities to develop in conjunction with their visit to the museum.

This does not mean that our collaboration with the schools is subject to any

less priority. The new educational role still involves meeting classes at the museum but also includes acting as a “facilitator”, for example via our website, using Skype, or producing educational materials. With increased collaboration with teachers or with our own guides and visitor staff we have also considerably increased the schools’ opportunities for using the museum. But the important point is that we have demonstrated that the educational activities can function for every child or young person in a wider context. The Vipers – the educational materials that have been specially produced and that are stationed at the Astrid Lindgren Children’s Hospital could very well be used in a school context as well as in active rehab training.

An important result of working with this project is the fact that the collaboration between educators and colleagues has increased within the organization, in work with visitors and in the production of exhibitions. Our various perspectives have been able to meet on a new, common platform, and even if we shall need to continue work on manageability we can definitely claim that the sense of context has now increased. The fruit of this is, not least, a higher level of consciousness pertaining to the visitor’s perspective as well as issues of accessibility. Here the skills and experience of our external collaborators have been very important.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is another important point of departure for us in this project. It may be easier to claim that one *has* a child-based perspective than that one really *assumes* a child perspective at a government body like ours. In our communicative activities the UN convention has now been adopted as a central, strategic document. Children and youngsters have worked as reference committees in conjunction with several new exhibitions in the same fashion as with the *All aboard!* project. This is real work and we have found a working methodology that makes the UN declaration both manageable and meaningful.

The project has meant an upgrade of the educational programmes at the museum, providing us with a completely new platform. We have been able jointly to realize how our educational methodology can help us to develop both as individual educators and as an organization. Previously the staff of the museum may not have really understood the importance of the museum’s educational activities and the possibilities that these have for personal and organizational development. The educational activities are now receiving much greater attention from both the management and fellow members of staff. And there is now a much greater interest in how we are going to develop educational methodologies in the future.

One of the most important results of the project so far is that the museum educators have developed creatively new forms of collaboration, both within the museum with the technicians and beyond the museum with the play therapists and, not least, with children and young people involved on various committees and suchlike. When one works together with others in this way, it creates a new role in society for the museum and provides a

window onto the world around.

Together we have taken a great step forwards.

Torbjörn Ågren, Head of the education unit and museum educator at the Vasa Museum

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Playing equally well with lame hands

Together on terms that suit everyone’s capacities is a fine intention. But my own experience is that it is just as difficult to realize as it is beautiful in theory. Especially when someone’s capacities are so very different.

I was the one who started playing ping-pong with my children. And tennis too. I was the one who started cycling with them and taught them to play computer games. But it was never very long before they got so good that they preferred playing with friends of their own standard. As a father who sits in a wheelchair and whose hands are lame one very rapidly becomes overly bad at most things. There are not an awful lot of occupations that are equally well suited to my abilities and those of other people. When some game is played according to terms that suit me it is too banal or artificial for other people. When the game is not on my terms I tend to end up as a spectator. When not everyone can do real things together with others this has serious repercussions on all relationships. Everyone gets used to someone not being able to take part; even the person who can’t join in. So it is important to get rid of segregating environments.

In the *All aboard!* project at the Vasa Museum the ambition has been to create an inclusive environment with activities suited to everyone’s abilities. And they have turned the process upside down in the sense that the starting point is the actual functioning of people with disabilities. This is not really revolutionary in itself. They have merely given a little more thought to the proverbial notions that “like minds stick together” and that “people with disabilities prefer to play by themselves with specially adapted activities”.

With the cleverly adapted toys, educational aids and training tools in the *All aboard!* room, my lame hands were no longer the usual source of irritation during a game of *Vasa Memory* with my eight-year-old. We could also try our hand at marine archaeology together and look for Vasa finds in the lovely moist sand at the bottom of the sea. Everything in the *All aboard!* room is also accessible from a wheelchair thanks to the fact that the marine environment is mostly merely intimidated. But the bridge of the ship, the side seen from a diver’s perspective and the diving bell are sufficiently realistic to trigger one’s imagination. This is all that is needed provided that it is not one’s capacity for fantasizing that is disabled. With a little help from some children one can easily hear the gulls shrieking and fill one’s nostrils with the scent of tar and

rotting fish. It took a while for my children to let themselves shift in time but, in due course, they saw the links with 17th century Stockholm.

After visiting the museum their minds were much taken up with what they had experienced there. They had numerous questions to do with the Vasa. What did people eat in those days? Why did the ship sink? Couldn’t people swim in those days? What sort of games did children play? Were there disabled people at that time? The goal had been achieved. We had received a good dose of stimulating history – and we had got together.

The late winter sun shone from a sparkling March sky outside the museum; the same sun that shone on people at the time the Vasa was built. Both on people with functional disabilities and those without.

Peter Anderson-Pope, journalist

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A happy museum?

Where are there activities for those of us who are dog owners, share our lives with a Zebra Finch, are brunettes, very happy, vegetarians or in mourning? And if one doesn’t fit into any of those categories will one be welcome anyway?

A salutogenic museum is also an accessible museum. The aim is that a visit to the museum should be comprehensible, manageable and meaningful regardless of one’s functionality or background. The *All aboard!* project is based on the idea of a “philosophy of accessibility”. For three years we have been able to develop, test, discuss and play our way to a variety of solutions together with child and adult collaborators.

The manifold aspects of working with accessibility involve the entire organization and they can, depending on how one chooses to work, form a dynamic hub for the entire operation. There are challenges, as well as huge possibilities, for a museum to work with central issues pertaining to the exhibition medium, educational activities of the museum, and staff organization and this also opens up new opportunities for including other societal activities and of being active in new contexts. But it is important that the work on accessibility should be comprehensible, manageable and meaningful to the people involved in this work. What is it that one actually needs to know and how is the motivation aroused so that an inboard engine is started up, with an eagerness to undertake the task and not to end up with a set of more or less successful rationalizations or additions with packet solutions for different diagnoses, problems, or assistance aids?

The starting point should, perhaps, not be looking for faults but, rather, seeking out what is right and/or possible”. Starting from the salutogenic perspective means looking for possibilities rather than impediments and recognizing people’s fundamental need to be part of a social context and to participate. Not just to be welcome and *able* to attend but also *able* to contribute to a situation. This leads to

a different sort of solutions and a more dynamic work process. It is more a matter of "rigging" so that these situations arise within the various activities and operations.

"This business with the Vasa, it's a job too..."

It would certainly be desirable, in all public operations that address children and young people directly, that they should show zero tolerance towards inaccessibility. And so the core group in this project has been the expert committee made up of seven children who have been involved in the project right from the start.

The children are doubly competent, both as children and through their own experience of various functionalities. When one seeks to realize the intentions of the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child, there is no given method. And it is often easier to apply a children's perspective than the child's perspective.

If children are really to be able to influence contents, decisions and outcomes one needs to start from their own points of departure. One has to give them a mandate as well as possibilities. That was why the expert committee was the only group that could trump the project committee with regard to certain decisions. In the course of the project a five-stage method for working with the children's influence developed: *Building relations, Drawing up contracts, Strategies for curiosity, Degree of importance and Feedback*.

The most important stage involved building relations so that the child's experiences and vision of the world could make themselves felt. This takes time and so there has been an advantage in keeping the same children as members of the expert committee throughout the period of the project. Taking children seriously means that one values their contributions just as highly as those of adult collaborators. And so an agreement has been reached between the participating children and the museum in which they undertake to work in the expert committee. They naturally receive financial compensation for this work and this is a way of underlining that their work and their views are as important as those of the adults. At the end of each year the children receive certificates of service. It is important to give the meetings and the work a clear framework by drawing up a *Contract*. This specifies what is to be done, what is going to take place and how this will be organized. This gives the new situation predictability.

Finding *explorative strategies* based on curiosity is decisive: that the social situation surrounding our meetings and the work on the project is rigged in a manner that involves the children. One can't just ask what is interesting about the warship Vasa and the 17th century and so we started off by looking and becoming acquainted with a variety of different items and subjects. We looked at things and events that are also found in the child's everyday world and the concepts they use there in order to find a *degree of importance* and use it as a starting point for each child. Listening to what the child spends time on, what catches its interest

and asking questions about "why".

Listening to the child's story, the narrative structure of what they have experienced is a feature of the first meeting. What do they choose to begin by relating? What do they spend time in relating and return to? What was the situation like when their interest was caught? As well as asking follow-up questions about something that is important or fun and so on.

Starting from this we bridge to the subject content of the museum and the work with accessibility. Here it is a matter of finding a form that suits the respective child. Accordingly, we have worked with an assortment of methods to enable the children to express their views and proposals. Some of them chose to draw, some worked with modelling clay, some wrote and some chose to narrate and show their ideas. It is important to support the child in planning, getting started, carrying through and finishing off their work.

Feedback and evaluation are also highly important. That the child is enabled to explain how it reached a solution or proposal and that each child's work is clearly evident in the room and the activities; that it leaves an impression. It is advantageous to extend this via the social media that allow the user to communicate directly with other people using writing, pictures or sound recordings and in this way involving other children in the process.

"Steering the ship due south and daring to put one's hand into the lion's jaws."

The *All aboard!* room at the Vasa Museum is a total experience for all the senses. That every child should be able to take part in the activities on equal and dignified terms has been the primary concern. The room encourages empowerment – own power, independence, discoveries, challenges, learning, participation, collaboration and training – and so all the solutions and materials are broad and inclusive. They are based on a perspective of equality and seek to support different coping strategies, constructive attitudes and actions in order to be able to manage different situations. Children are also encouraged by the room to undertake everyday activities like moving from wheelchair to chair.

It is not primarily a matter of everyone doing the same thing in the same way but of meeting the child's fundamental need for challenges and participation on equal and dignified terms. A matter of establishing a sense of competence and optimism with regard to the future that are fused into the child's life project.

Accordingly, not a single adaptation has been necessary; merely *functional development*. All the material and all the approaches should have an integral sensitivity and flexibility. The educational and democratic idea is what powers the functional development. Since the environment itself, the material and the educational approaches are *multifunctional*, various new solutions have been created. It is more a matter of "rigging" the approaches and material so that they can cater to several needs at the same time. An example of this is the marine-archaeology boxes. If one has difficulty in

freeing an object in the sand which fills the boxes then the same material can be used but the object can be placed in the sand without this being compacted to such an extent. Another example is the game of *Memory* in which the cards are magnetized and can easily be picked up using a magnetic glove or pointer. These different solutions can readily be filled from another museum's thematic content or used in several other contexts. The design of the activities means that a group can consist of children with different needs; when children are working with an activity like marine archaeology, for example, a child with impaired vision can act as instructor for children with normal vision. A child with a weak hand can steer the entire ship. And if one can't quite cope with the pace, then the meditative clouds that move above the quiet corner can be changed into a starry sky and a discussion about how one finds one's way across the sea can easily become an intimate discourse on life at the moment.

Children who make use of the ideographic writing system Blissymbolics can play table games together with children who do not use BLISS.

It is important that a child should not always need to ask for help but can train at dealing with challenges in different areas of life. Here the sibling aspect is very important: that brothers and sisters can do activities together even though they have different functional abilities. It is also important to make it possible for parents with functional disabilities to be able to participate in family activities with their child, for example.

Whole and half class, artistic freedom, budget, play areas and joint horizons.

Being rooted in a system of ideas and theories has been a major advantage to the project. The salutogenic perspective as well as a socio-cultural view of development and learning have provided the orientation points both for the project committee's work and for the results of the project. There were concrete problems that had to be solved, as well as material needs, and this made the work meaningful for everyone who was involved. Work in the project committee thus became not an extra task to be fitted in but something that could be undertaken within the framework of each member's ordinary assignments and goals. Working with accessibility is a process of learning and development. Appointing a single person to be responsible for accessibility is probably not a very successful strategy. Problems and solutions are to be found in a given context and so the expertise and experiences of several different professions need to be mixed together. In this way one can avoid ending up in a situation where materials and approaches are merely added on instead of being fused together. Offering numerous different "packages" for different groups rapidly becomes unmanageable and leads to a focus on diagnoses and impairments rather than democratic and existential issues. People want and need to be part of a meaningful context.

In a socio-cultural perspective on learning and developing one works with an educational methodology that focuses

on social interplay. Educational expertise and experience has been employed in organizing the planning process for the *All aboard!* project. And so it has been important to try and direct the assignment and the various tasks at the *developmental zones* of all those involved. Finding oneself in this development zone as a group or an individual is characterized by a sense of commitment and meaningfulness – one is fired up to let loose the inner motivation. And the group has more of a locus of control, i.e. it is directed from within, thereby reinforcing the feeling that one can influence the situation oneself.

When one sets up a working group or committee with members from different professions one can make very conscious use of the field of tension that arises between different experiences, competencies and ideas by linking up the so-called everyday experiences and professional idiom from the different professions to produce common terminology and goals. The cognitive conflicts and the feelings of frustration that sometimes develop in an individual's or group's learning process can, when successfully channelled, become an important asset. It is precisely this that leads to new insights and solutions in, for example, the work on accessibility: curiosity about each other and with regard to the task at hand. A sense of trust develops with regard to how the group should work on a solution to the problem.

In promoting focus on the goals the notion of a "philosophy of accessibility" has been used and a common methodology for meetings in the various committees and working groups has been employed based on common agreement. There is a goal for each meeting as to what should be dealt with and that this should lead to. A summary of the meeting is produced noting what has been agreed, together with the tasks for the next meeting.

It is important that the group or organization should maintain the strategies for individual and joint learning that have been developed. Accordingly, our efforts have been monitored by a proactive evaluation process. Material from this evaluation is gathered from interviews with members of the various groups and from the various functions that have been carried out. Some of the material has come from common questions of so-called SWOT type: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats or Problems. We have also organized a "Socrates Café" a gathering, led by a philosopher who asks questions and comments from a Socratic perspective, raising concrete questions to an abstract level and challenging those attending to embrace new ideas. This is a democratic form of discourse which invites everyone to state their views, to participate actively in the meeting and to be listened to. The subject to be discussed is chosen by the participants.

The project has also followed an implementation model which is a combination of public lectures and seminars for selected staff who are later to act as process managers and to introduce their experiences to other parts of the organization.

If organized correctly, work on improving accessibility can enrich an organization

and its operations. It can be a process that causes different perspectives to fuse and it creates opportunities for unexpected discussions and meetings – perhaps leading on to a happier museum?

Carina Ostenfeldt, Project Manager responsible for the concept

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With lamb stew and gravel in one's shoe – the art of leading an idea-based operation

Believing in the idea oneself is essential in leading an idea-based operation. But so is an ability to get rid of "gravel in one's shoe" expeditiously.

Directing an operation, a voluntary body, a manufacturing industry or a museum makes large demands on the person who wants to assemble a group of people round an idea. Often these leadership qualities manifest themselves at an early stage of a person's development and people who have an innate capacity for taking initiative often become leaders.

But things do not always go smoothly. Sometimes people who have been quite retiring, if not shy, prove to be excellent leaders. And, in similar fashion, people who were very forceful and articulate when young become much **too** palpable in their leadership, bordering on authoritarian.

There are certain basic criteria that constitute a good leader. Shelves full of books have been devoted describing what makes the ideal entrepreneur or "boss". Thousands of universities all over the world that teach economics, marketing and business strategies have formulated theories about how to lead organizations, even in adversity. I intend to share some of these theories in this article.

There is a huge difference between being a manager or director and being a leader. Characteristic of a leader is that she "sees" more of the people she is working with every day. There is an inbuilt sensitivity that picks up subtle clues that do not always lead on towards greater profitability in the short term but that definitely improve the atmosphere of the workplace and the long-term success of the organization. Accessibility is a code of honour and it is important for most people for there to be an open door and a leader who is "available".

There are, of course, differences in the types of operations that people lead. For the head of a small business the idea-based message may be of less importance than for the leader of an organization with a philosophy and a message that has to be communicated to the world at large. In the latter case it is never a matter of a 9 to 5 job and the organization needs leaders who are totally convinced of the importance of what they are doing and are really prepared to do what is required.

In a smaller organization, setting a good example is incredibly important; being able to show, through one's genuine and total commitment, that one is prepared

to give up a great deal of one's own ego in trying to realize the idea. If one succeeds in getting an organization to understand how commitment is channelled into the idea I believe that the fundamental principle in the process will be more transparent. This type of leadership is very psychologically demanding and probably works best during the starting-up phase of an organization.

A strong, contributory factor is having the necessary "craft skills". There are many examples of everything from journalists to plumbers and doctors who have acquired a natural role as a leader largely because they have the skills necessary to produce the end product. If one wants a clinic for spinal-cord injuries to radiate the sense of being "world best" and that the environment there should be "astounding", it is a great advantage if one is totally consumed by the "idea" and by putting this idea into practise. This applies in principle to all idea-based operations. As the leader you need to have mastered the entire process. At that stage, joy and enthusiasm will be experienced as energy and the energy field can then be channelled forwards; and in this movement the loyal and responsive co-workers will be committed to the central task in a very different way from with a more rigid structure.

I have been privileged to lead such an organization; one that has undoubtedly been powered by ideas and by a pioneering spirit and in which it has been possible to eliminate many practical, technical and logistical problems because the force of the forward-moving organization, based on ideas, has been so strong.

The work of establishing ideas in an organization is often overlooked. It takes time and costs money – not to mention imagination and creativity. My own experience is that the time and financial sacrifice that one makes in order to establish the ideas repay themselves many times over. In that everything then becomes much more fun. It is not enough to take the staff on an outing once a year or a cruise in the Baltic.

Another important aspect of leadership is being "visible" in the right way and in the right context. One can joke about a "narcissistic" personality if, as leader, one turns up on television or radio or is featured in the press. But these appearances are effective. Family, relations and friends comment on the "result" and all one's co-workers feel pride if one has flow. They should, of course, be mentioned and given credit for what they contribute.

A rather trivial measure of success is the number of royal visits and visits by wives of foreign dignitaries on official trips to Sweden, or of Swedish government ministers to *Spinalis* each year. And since we have the world's best kitchen you don't just get a cup of coffee and a pre-packed bun but lamb stew that we have cooked ourselves. In the kitchen there is a scent of olive oil, red wine and garlic and a meal with a VIP guest is shared with all the staff; not just the management or the board but all 50 or so members of the staff. This helps everyone to work together towards the same goals.

Most of the people who take part in the "evolution" of a successful organiza-

tion enjoy a high degree of satisfaction with their work. But to achieve this it is essential that the leader should communicate awareness of the staff at all levels of the organization. Larger organizations naturally make the lamb-stew method more difficult to achieve.

Recruiting staff for an idea-based operation puts the focus on certain, special characteristics. It is often difficult to specify the job in detail in that it is the person as such who will become an important cog in the operation rather than the function itself. This is especially true during the build-up phase when all the staff need to be actively engaged in shaping developments.

How does one best lead an idea-based organization that relies on a jointly agreed philosophy? A fundamental necessity is, of course, that all the people working "on the floor" should also perceive the idea as being "just right", and it requires a great deal of personal energy to reach that point. Communicating an ideology or modern mindset cannot be done in a matter of seconds. People need time to reflect.

After a time, when the idea-based organization has grown and the leadership is looking for new ways to develop, it is not unusual for a number of people in the organization to feel somewhat disoriented and to wonder where the ship is headed. This is a serious, and often problematic, situation. It is essential that the leadership is responsive to the situation right from the start – before the "gravel in one's shoe" gets any bigger. Communicating the fact that our paths should now part in an empathic, straightforward and honest way is not easy. When such a situation has arisen and the "divorce" has been settled the temperature in the organization can fall drastically. Despite 25 years of leadership I still quite often experience difficulty in finding forms for managing such situations with as little drama as possible.

Let us consider what a "healing context" looks like, and how, as leader, one can start each day with one's catechism. How does one ask oneself how one can retain and develop a solid structure with the people that one has recruited? If one devotes enough energy to the conceptual endeavour of the process one may be able to move forward a step. Here the salutogenic approach has its natural place. *All aboard! – the salutogenic museum* at the Vasa Museum has, in a remarkably empathic fashion, presented egalitarian and dignified conditions for very many visitors who would otherwise experience exclusion.

The really big challenge is to use one's intellectual capacity and energy, one's inspiration and ideas to persuade all levels of staff to display a dedication to and enthusiasm for the common task. This is no easy matter but it is the essential goal and needs to radiate the operation right from day one.

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A ship for all – discovering the bridge from fantasy to knowledge

The warship Vasa was a failure. But at the Vasa Museum those masters of the thousand questions – our children – can make something magnificent and highly instructive out of the catastrophe. When, where and how does learning actually take place; and what is it that determines whether we learn or not?

At every moment of a person's development there is something that we have not yet mastered, something that is the beginning of an ability or skill. It can suddenly appear at a golden moment and then it can seem to have disappeared again. It is more often seen when we help each other, when we think and reflect together and when we cooperate. Perhaps we try it out by imitating someone who has already mastered it. This is not the sort of skill that turns up in school or in national tests; or that can show itself in answer to the challenge: "Do this! Get ready! Prepared! Now!" For in those situations one is expected to manage by oneself. One is not allowed to ask for help. This can give rise to a sense of frustration, a feeling of having failed, of meeting an obstacle or barrier to one's learning. But we do not give up. We accept the challenge of something we can almost manage, almost do.

Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), the Russian educational psychologist, developed a great interest in what people can "almost do", in proximal development, which he regarded as the next step in a person's development. Everyone has things, situations and skills that they have almost mastered or are in the process of developing: "Just a little, a little bit more and I shall be able to do that". "That almost worked!" "It was on the tip of my tongue... but now it's gone." "How did I do that really?" We can be totally immersed in this eagerness to master something, to remember something, to know or know how to do something that seems to be within our reach and is almost possible. We long for an aha-reaction. This is something that makes things seem important and gives inner motivation. Time and space are consumed by our desire to succeed and to understand.

Entering the Vasa Museum and seeing the ship there readily gives both children and adults the impression of something important in the offing. The Vasa is an "aha" place for the next-development area with a fascinating learning environment within reach. There is a bridge from the fantasies of children and youngsters to learning about the ship if one so wants. Such bridges play a special part because they generate meaning in the learning context. Vygotsky might have explained it as a bridge developing when the child's everyday experiences converge with the adult world. WE all need to create our own bridges. Every child who comes into contact with the ship has the right to their own questions and their own ship when they leave. Otherwise the ques-

tions become someone else's and are naturally less important. And thus the ship remains, fading and turning yellow like an old photograph.

The *All aboard!* project is about inclusion, about the right to investigate, to ask questions and to build bridges on their own terms. To "go aboard", experience, think and take one's own ship home with one; while also doing this with others, communally.

Inclusion is, first and foremost, a matter of being able to feel part of, being valued and regarded as someone who can do something now, can almost do it, will soon be able to, or in due course, in one's own way.

As early as the beginning of the 20th century Lev Vygotsky insisted that children with functional impairments should be given the same opportunities and experiences as other children. Vygotsky particularly stressed the social expectations that people with functional disabilities encounter may well be the greatest obstacle to their learning and developing. Research shows that children who are exposed to negative expectations suffer in terms of their learning and developing. The *All aboard!* project addresses this by talking about and stressing the fact that every child has different functional abilities rather than regarding certain children as having disabilities. This does not mean that one denies the fact that there are obstacles and impediments to learning and that we need to learn more about these, but the project shows a faith in the possibility of finding paths that will lead forward. There is development potential for every child. We must not let mental obstacles become actual impediments to learning for children and young people.

Back to the learning environment. The ship needs to be rigged before it receives visitors. It needs to be rigged and organized for inclusion, for learning and for areas of development. In this sense the ship is no different from any other learning environment, but it remains unique, just as with any other learning environment. In the learning environment it is the teacher who rigs or undertakes the preparation, first of herself and then together with the children. Or as Vygotsky put it: "The teacher's task is to organize the social dimension of learning". Rigging the learning environment is a matter of organizing learning as a joint exploration, a communal learning. The teacher can invite the pupils to take part in activities in which one can investigate, think, talk about and reflect on what one experiences. If one feels invited and encouraged it is easier to dare. One can become wiser together with others and then it is easier to behave wisely on one's own.

Rigging presents the ship in a certain way. I suspect that the various professionals who work in a museum seldom leave the presentation of the museum to chance. Behind the presentation are many hours of thought; and perhaps of learning too in an operational team. Thinking and learning on the part of the adults precedes the child's thinking and learning. Rigging is a matter of both the outer, visible rigging – materials, the physical environment, rooms – but also of rigging for an inner journey: questions, thinking,

learning. Thus a learning environment has both exterior and interior features. And learning must not be left to chance. The learning environment can be both inclusive and exclusive. In normal circumstances we expect visitors to be curious about the museum. But can a museum, a learning environment, be curious about its own visitors? And what happens then? Is this something one notices oneself as a visitor. I believe that one does.

The tools of mediation, to use Vygotsky's term, that exist in the learning environment, can involve one in new experiences, reflections, questions, hypotheses and conclusions about the ship, the sea, the world, history and the future. The learning environment can activate the visitors so that they are transformed into researchers. In the *All aboard!* room there are numerous learning activities and tools to investigate that the museum educators have rigged. One gets onto the upper deck not by the elevator but via the diving bell. "Diving bell. Why is it called a diving bell? I didn't see any bell in there..." someone may comment. Now there is something important and a question. And so the trip in the diving bell and the conversation about the diving bell lead to the child learning. Everyone is included in a journey and the experience of communal activities can stimulate the will to share experiences with others, to put them into words, to ask questions and to feel a sense of belonging. And so it is language, communication and questions that are, perhaps, the most important tools for investigation in the learning environment.

Questions have a central role as a learning tool. Children may come to the learning environment with just a single, simple question and leave with an infinite number of more complex unanswered questions. Much of what we know about life has been revealed to us because we asked ourselves and other people questions. But not every question needs to have an answer at every moment. Some questions and experiences do not develop their true contours until later. A child may be completely preoccupied by actually being in the learning environment for a while. The museum educators, teachers and other professionals in the child's world play an important role in that they may be available at a later time when the questions begin to take form.

Someone has claimed that what we know is determined by the questions that we ask ourselves. The driving force behind the questions is curiosity and the desire to understand what one does not yet know. This often becomes very evident with children who are the masters of a thousand questions, including the unexpected ones, and who reverse the perspective. With their questions they can create something magnificent and enriching out of something that was otherwise dismissed as a failure – like a ship that sinks.

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Support for educational development dialogue

- Causing all of the educational situations to grow for all who are involved by rigging the social and physical situation to enable learning and personal development to take place among visiting participants as well as museum staff.
- Supporting children, adolescent and adult visitors in the process of joining in and creating a meaningful coherence for their visit regardless of their starting point (sense of coherence).
- Finding joy and support in being able to help colleagues and visitors in developing the operation.
- Educational situations are defined as activities that are based on mediation. That is, situations in which there is dialogue and social interplay and where we can jointly address a question, subject or dilemma, or a challenge. By means of the dialogue and the encounter, thinking, skills and opportunities of fulfilling one's life-project are enhanced for the child or adult visitor as well as for the museum staff who are involved. Thus, educational situations can be presented by the educational programme as such as well as by exhibitions or in a rehabilitation process; for example, as in the case of the project committee's learning experiences during its operations. It is useful to try to define what we understand by an educational situation and to list the criteria.

FUNCTIONS OF THE MODEL

- Documentation
- Dialogue of Process and Experience
- Results and Quality Criteria

PERSPECTIVE AND IDEATIONAL BACKGROUND

A philosophy of accessibility – the salutogenic museum

- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Salutogenic perspective
- Socio-cultural approach to learning and personal development

1. DOCUMENTATION

Contents: Headings describing Content, Process, Result and Development Opportunities.

Aims: To document educational programmes, educational processes, results and development opportunities in dealing with different educational situations.

2. DIALOGUE OF PROCESS & EXPERIENCE

Contents: Questions that support dialogue and planning, carrying out and developing educational situations in accordance with the definition above.

Aims: Defining an educational situation and the relevant criteria. Creating, in every educational situation, a downpour of "golden moments" for all the participants regardless of their functional abilities through dialogue/conversation and continual documentation based on the needs of the group and the programme.

3. RESULTS & QUALITY CRITERIA

Contents: Questions that promote discussion of results, explorative strategies, challenges and prospective aspects.

Aims: Establishing and developing a perspective based on a philosophy of accessibility, with appropriate goals and results. Producing a common platform and jointly developing criteria for quality and developmental tasks.

Through: Dialogue/discussion and continual documentation of the fundamental idea behind the concept and its promotion.

1. DOCUMENTATION OF PROCESS, RESULTS AND DEVELOPMENT POSSIBILITIES

Contents:

A. Description of the educational programme: Title and Subject background – narrative defining the context, Target Group, Duration, Essential Materials, Preparations

B. Description of the educational process: Plan and Realization – which points are included together with their place in the basic approach of "A Philosophy of Accessibility"

C. Description of Evaluation: Results of the process measured according to chosen criteria and Prospective aspects of the project

2. PROCESS AND EXPERIENCE DIALOGUE

Starting point: Strengthen the sense of Coherence and Mediated Learning and Development. Based on the concepts of Aaron Antonovsky and Lev Vygotsky

Comprehensibility (Cognitive)

Concerned with understanding and tangibility.

That information is experienced as structured and clear.

That there is predictability about fundamental aspects like what one will be participating in; what one's task is; what is to be achieved; and how we are going to do this.

What does this mean to you and/or to the visitor to your operation or task?

What is needed to create this?

By:

How are we or how can we and our operation become attentive to the children's/visitors' framework of references, needs and functional abilities? How can we facilitate comprehensibility?

Organizing the social situation and interaction in our programme of activities for example.

Directing operations such as educational programmes, working methodologies and so on towards development zones.

A clear framework and predictability
Retrospective summaries – where are we in the process/situation

Self knowledge – how do I function as an educator/colleague and so on? What different ways of learning and being are on offer here?

Outer structure – including space, materials and planning strategies. What is available, what can be created and what is needed?

Manageability (Subjective)

Having access to the resources necessary for managing/dealing with a situation/task. What are these resources? Are they available? How accessible is the situation?

What does this mean to you and/or to the visitor to your operation or task?

What is needed to create this?

By:

How do we and our operation act supportively with regard to what cannot be actually managed, what needs to be learnt; i.e. the cognitive conflicts than arise? How does mediation work and how do we and our operation interact in these situations?

Supporting the capacity to plan, begin, carry out and end a task. What do we/the child/the visitor need to succeed with this task?

Knowledge – teaching specific skills. Providing mental tools, i.e. thoughts, terms and concepts.

Systematize the material and content that one is working with.

Balancing stress by working with coping strategies. Practising perseverance and remaining in the task.

Self-regulation by mirroring and talking about emotions and the situation help to generate understanding of one's own behaviour and of how this can influence the situation.

Focussing on and dealing with difficulties by pointing to resources and capacities of the individual and the group.

Scaffolding – transferring responsibility for the task/assignment to the child/visitor/colleague themselves.

Meaningfulness (Emotional)

Stimulating motivation is a matter of:

Is it worthwhile to make a commitment and investment in your and other people's time/lives?

Why should you do this?

Participation activates the inner engine.

What does this mean to you and/or to the visitor to your operation or task?

What is needed to create this?

By:

How do we and our operations promote participation; i.e. how do they make it possible for people to programme their own development? What do children/visitors want from their visit and from what they experience with us?

Create adequate goals as well as challenges.

Start with everyday notions and experiences – for example, tasks should be reminiscent of something known.

Explorative strategies and behaviours. What leads on, offers discoveries and so on?

Facilitate the bridging process by embracing the world of the child/working group/ visitor.

How might this be achieved? Produce examples.

Level of importance – based on what has been defined as important just now? What is interesting and attractive?

How would you/we act then?

Internalization – a process that gives an inner structure, like models and language.

Providing hope and faith in the future by looking forwards/prospective approaches.

Empowerment – own power.

3. RESULTS

Successes, disappointments, difficulties

What worked and why?

What did not work, what can we do differently?

QUALITY CRITERIA – Have the following been present? Add your own criteria
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: Best-for-the-child perspective and Child's right to life and development

Salutogenic factors and mediated learning: Comprehensibility? – Experience of structure, order, clarity

Accessibility: Broad, inclusive and democratic solutions

Retrospective summary – new and earlier experiences

What made the work/strategy doable?

Which solutions worked?

What can we learn from this?

QUALITY CRITERIA – Have the following been present? Add your own criteria
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: The child's right to have its rights provided, §31 and §23

Salutogenic factors and mediated learning: Manageable? – Experiences of resources and hope of managing situations

Accessibility: Multifunctionality and Functional development

Generalization and future perspectives?

What has been meaningful?

What is the challenge of the next step?

What experiences and solutions generated enjoyment, interest and hope?

QUALITY CRITERIA – Have the following been present? Add your own criteria
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: The child's right to have influence

Salutogenic factors and mediated learning: Meaningfulness? – Experience of participation and context

Accessibility: Liberating solutions

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When it's only almost right

Play invites laughter and laughter is infectious. Joy bridges over differences and through playing together children grow. But children who do not play wilt.

Few things are as directly associated with the child as play. While playing together they test each other. They learn to give and take. In play children investigate the world, they learn social interaction and they prepare themselves for adult life. Regardless of whether they are taking part in spontaneous play in the nearest wood or in a more organized fashion in a public park, play is one of the foundation stones of a child's development. Almost all children can play just about anywhere. Their own imagination sets the limits.

Play teaches children how to approach and how to keep a distance and to understand the joy of community in both body and heart, "Leka för livet" [Playing for life], the 2006 annual report from RBU maintains. RBU is the Swedish association for disabled children and young people. For children with functional disabilities things are not always quite as simple. Avoidable impediments limit and exclude them and the report notes that their exclusion starts as early as playing in a sandpit. The joy of being able to play is stifled before it has even developed in that many play facilities

are designed with the focus on children with a high degree of mobility, as though children with functional limitations did not exist.

Nine year-old Nicole loves her playground. It is right outside the building where she lives and it is here that she meets her friends and can play for hours. The park has a great deal to offer her – or would have if she could only use her legs. Nicole has a muscular condition and she uses a wheelchair for which the park is not adapted.

Let us take an example. Nicole loves going on the swings and the local authority has recently provided a double swing for two people. There is room for a friend or for a helper if one needs one. Nicole can lie in the swing while it is in motion. But to reach the swing she needs a firm surface for her wheelchair. The parks department has fitted a soft rubber mat and this sinks down into the sand underneath. Nicole fastens in the sand. The swing is accessible to her but she cannot get to it.

Another example is the playhouses that provide a never-ending source of role playing. Who has not moved into a playhouse and played a game of mother/father/child or of shops when they were small? There is a ramp leading up to the playhouse and inside there is a cooking stove that one can use from a wheelchair for which there is space beneath the stove. Nicole can play here on the same terms as her friends; or rather she would have been able to if the door opening had been wide enough for her to get into the playhouse. Nicole just has to stay outside.

All research is united in the understanding that play is of great importance to a child's development and learning. For Nicole, limitations in accessibility have obvious detrimental consequences.

Agnetha Mbuyamba, who is the chair of RBU, believes that these shortcomings are often the result of ignorance. "Decision makers say that every child has the same right to be able to play but the real world gives a different picture", she maintains. "Decision makers do not have the necessary expertise to put themselves into the child's place. Play enables children to develop socially and physically. Children learn about life through repetitive play.

Play facilities that are not accessible to all children do not just affect those with functional impairments but also their siblings. Families choose not to visit the playground because it does not work for all of their children.

Agnetha Mbuyamba exhorts everyone who has children with functional disabilities to make their voices heard. "How else are other people going to know and to understand? In all planning matters pertaining to children there is an obligation to consider what is best for every child. Financial considerations help to make children with functional disabilities invisible. I fear that children will become spectators in life and society if we fail to change our attitudes and do not make society accessible to all.

At the playground we encounter yet another small detail that makes it impossible for Nicole to play. Underneath a large climbing frame they have installed a giant noughts-and-crosses board. Nicole's wheelchair simply cannot get up to the

board, which is at a comfortable height, and so she has to be content to watch the others playing at a distance. She cannot wheel her chair through the sand that separates her from the board. A simple path made of a more solid material would enable her to take part. Only quite small adaptations are needed for Nicole to be able to take part in the games. As it is, she often remains a spectator.

It is noticeable that Nicole, rather than remaining a spectator, chooses other games that suit her better. She has a rich imagination and she often involves other children in her games. But poor adaptation to her needs mean that she sometimes has to play with children who can do what she can do rather than playing with the friends that she really wants to play with.

Nicole's mother, Anneli, does not believe that it would necessarily cost more to build a playground for all children. "Often they start by building a park that is not designed for all children and, when need arises, they start to adapt it. But really the need has been there all the time, though no one thought about it at the beginning." Anneli gives examples of small details that have great importance. "Right from the beginning one can provide a simple back-support on one side of the seesaw. This does not cost much but it enables children with poor balance or weak muscles to use the seesaw. Build swings designed for two persons from the beginning and don't wait until the "need" arises because the need will have been there all the time."

"Let the children meet", says Anneli, "and do not separate them with obstacles that can easily be removed."

Jessica Stjernström

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Children – with the right to play

Children are people too.

This is established by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. A true understanding of children and their rights still needs to be conveyed to the world.

Children can no longer be regarded as incapable of maintaining views and being listened to. Now it is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, agreed in 1989, that is the most important international instrument for promoting children's rights. It states that children must be given much greater control over their situation and more opportunities to influence the environment in which they grow up.

There are different ways of making the clauses of the convention a reality in children's everyday lives. One way is to work in the same fashion as the *All aboard!* project in promoting an environment in which children can develop.

The *All aboard!* project is a salutogenic, health-promoting programme that links up with the four fundamental principles of the convention (see infobox). By creating conditions in which every child or young

person, regardless of their functional status, can experience and take an active part in the educational activities on equal terms, no child or youngster is discriminated against.

The notion of the child's full and equal value as a person also leads to the conclusion that children must have the opportunity to be listened to and to influence their own situation. Article 12 of the convention is the paragraph that gives rise to the greatest amount of discussion, being the one that stresses the child's right to be able to influence its own life. The article deals with the child's participation and is based on the idea that children are competent to form their own views. The *All aboard!* project has been run in accordance with this principle. Right from the start the project invited seven children to take part in designing and realizing the project as the experts that they actually are. It was precisely this way of working, of actually trusting the children's ability to influence their own situation that the convention had in mind.

Some children have a long journey ahead of them if the convention is to be realized. Functional disabilities and behavioural problems can lead to the child's own right to influence its life and environment fading into the background. Youngsters with whom it is difficult to communicate and who take few initiatives themselves risk being subjected to a one-sided administration of functional aids and training while the need for interaction and communication are forgotten.

This can have unfortunate consequences, since the child risks acquiring yet another disability: a lack of skills in social interaction. The child's need for respect, empathy and lifelong communication gets forgotten. We cease to see the "child behind the functional obstacle". When the *All aboard!* project for a salutogenic museum at the Vasa Museum decided to develop an educational room that was adapted to every child's functional abilities, i.e. to ensure that the room and the activities were accessible to all right from the beginning and did not need to be adapted to different functionalities afterwards this increased the chances of every child developing regardless of their specific functionality.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – not children – focuses on the individual child. This is an important emphasis because it helps us to understand that each child is different. The *All aboard!* project works actively at seeing every child as a unique human being with their own thoughts and intentions.

Christina Wahlund-Nilsson
Save the Children Sweden

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The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The intentions of the convention are summarized by the four core principles of the convention: *non-discrimination, devotion to the best interests of the child, the right to life, survival and development, and re-*

spect for the views of the child.

The *child perspective* is a recurring theme of the convention, though it is difficult to arrive at a unified definition. One important starting point when trying to define the child's perspective is that adults can never see the world through a child perspective; only children can do this. It is a matter of respect for the child as a person, of showing empathy with the child's situation, of being curious and open for the fact that the child is a growing person who can listen and understand. All this is an adult version of a child perspective. A willingness to accept the consequences of what the child has communicated is the most important aspect of the adult's child perspective.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 20 November 1989. Sweden ratified the convention in 1991 and, today, every country of the world with the exception of Somalia and the USA has signed the convention. This means that all laws and regulations affecting children in the signatory countries must be in line with the intentions of the convention. It means, too, that all central government and local authorities as well as all private institutions are obliged to follow the convention in both policy and operations. The convention deals with all types of rights: economic, social, cultural, political and citizen's rights.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has the status of international law and governments that have ratified it are under obligation to respect it and to report on its implementation to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva at five-year intervals.

Christina Wahlund-Nilsson
Save the Children Sweden

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Now I want to write my own book about the Vasa

I helped to create a room at the Vasa Museum. Those of us who worked on the room were known as the expert committee and the project was called All aboard!

What was special about the expert committee was that all the members were children with some form of disability. I think that this was a strength because we think about how to fit out a room so that it can be used by everyone.

Initially I thought that the room was dull. There were just some chairs and a table. Now it is much more inviting. And it has become more fun.

There are lots of things in the room that are fun and exciting. One can learn things in an enjoyable way. What I like best about the room are the cavities in the walls. You can put your hand into the different holes and feel what is in there with your fingers. Another feature of the room that I like is that there is plenty of space and it is easy to move about in a wheelchair. I appreciate this because I use a wheelchair.

We members of the expert committee had also produced some wooden chests which we called *Vipers* [from the name of the small boats that serviced the Vasa]. These chests contained various things that children who are ill and can't visit the Vasa can look at and feel and learn all about. What I like best are the doll's clothes that show how people were dressed in the 17th century.

Another fun thing was that we experts were trained as guides. We were given name badges and we learnt more about the Vasa and the period. So now I can show the ship and talk about it to my friends.

But the best thing with the project is that I have learnt about the Vasa and the people from that time. This was so exciting that I have started to write my own book about Vasa.

Julia Hedenström, aged 13

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The room is fun for EVERY child

Just think that there was a time when there were playrooms that not all children could play in. Are you interested in knowing why? I can tell you a bit about my own experiences.

Before I started working at the Vasa Museum I only knew that there was a ship called Vasa and had visited the museum once or twice in my entire life. Now I was going to learn a whole lot more and also see to it that other children could do the same.

Our first project was to think up ideas for the *All aboard!* room at the museum. We could present our ideas using pen and paper or clay. I proposed that there should be books in the room. For example the *Vasa Story* and the *Vasa Pig*. I also suggested having clothes that one could use for dressing up. You can do that at the museum in Funäsdalen and I have played a lot there with my younger sister.

When everything was ready it was time for the official opening. There were lots of people in attendance and two of my classmates from school were there to check it out. They thought it was great fun and that the room was fine. It was a real plus that they came.

The next year we attended a training course for guides. We could choose what we wanted to learn about. I wanted to learn more about the ornamentation on the ship. For example, that the little boy on the stern of the ship was King Gustavus Adolphus aged ten. I haven't guided my class yet but I am hoping that I shall do so soon.

During the second year we produced a *Viper*. A *Viper* is really an old boat but we made one as a miniature version of the room. The *Viper* is designed for use by children in hospital who can't get to the museum. We gave the first one to the Astrid Lindgren Children's Hospital.

We were on TV too. It was pretty scary seeing oneself but at the same time

it was fun. I don't know why it was scary but I got a funny feeling when I saw myself on TV for the first time.

I am really happy to have been able to be part of all this. It has been an unforgettable experience.

I should like to point out that it is worthwhile going to the *Alla ombord!* room at the Vasa museum because it is fun for *all* children. So make sure you get there too!

Filippa Kritz, aged 11

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In my heart for ever

The All aboard! room and the Vipers – everything is now in place after three years of hard work. And for me the expert committee has meant a lot of friendship and love.

The *Alla ombord!* room is designed so that everyone can be there. There are seven members of the expert committee and I am one of them. We have been meeting for three years.

During the first year of *Alla ombord!* there was a great deal to think about and to build. As the opening date approached not much seemed finished. It was only a week before the opening that things fell into place. But, in due course, everything was ready and I felt happy but a bit apprehensive and I was looking my best in jeans and a really cool top. The best thing about the *Alla ombord!* room was the lift because they had turned it into a diving bell.

Inaugurating the *Vipers* was real fun. Filippa and I got to deliver them to the staff of the play-therapy department at the Karolinska hospital. Then we all ate a special *Alla Ombord!* cake and drank lots of sodas.

We members of the expert committee helped to decide what the room was to look like. I had the idea of a treasure hunt and I was pleased when it was finished. I thought that children might like to know what being a diver is like and finding treasures on the seabed. The treasures can be all sorts of things: a spoon, a lice comb or a coin.

We also appeared on TV and had to be interviewed. They asked what it was like to be part of the project.

In the autumn of 2009 I took my class to the *Alla ombord!* room. That was pretty cool. We went round the room and I explained what it was like being part of the project. Lots of my classmates lay on the bed and listened to the sound of the sea or the shrieks of the seabirds. Then they all tried out the diving bell and steered the ship. They all got arm bands, pins and stickers with *All aboard!* on them.

This is the best thing I have ever been part of. The project is going to live in my heart for ever. I feel proud and happy about being one of the group. And I get rather well paid for the work. I may buy a laptop with the money. I have had three years of total friendship and love meeting other people with functional disabilities. I hope that we will keep in touch with each

other even after the project is finished.

And when one becomes a mother one will be able to show one's own children what one helped to create.

Laura Stridh Guerra, aged 13

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These are your rights

No one has the right to treat a child unjustly or cruelly.

Every child is of equal value and everyone is to be treated in the same way.

When adults make decisions affecting children they must always consider what is best for the child.

Every child has the right to grow up in a secure environment, to have sufficient food, to attend school and to visit the doctor when they are ill. All countries must do everything possible to ensure children's survival and development.

Every child has the right to say what she or he thinks about different matters. Every child has the right to be listened to.

These are some of the articles from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which countries throughout the world have agreed on. Every child has the rights stated in articles 2, 3, 6 and 12 of the convention.

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A setting for play and rehabilitation

There were farms next to the churches in 17th century Stockholm. Reading the grooves and symbols for buildings on the relief map with the tips of their fingers, visually impaired children can understand what Stockholm was like on the fateful Sunday in August 1628 when the Vasa sank.

Working in accordance with the concept of "accessibility for everyone" is not always either simple or self-evident but requires a different way of thinking: "My assistant asked whether we should paint the relief map black as it was to be used by people who cannot see it. But it would not be attractive in that case, nor accessible to everyone", says set-designer Johan Killgren.

The principle of accessibility for all precisely captures the intentions of the *All aboard!* project: that everyone, regardless of functionality, should be able to use all the functions of the room. This has been the starting point for set-designer Johan Killgren's work on the relief map in the *All aboard!* room and the *Vipers* for the Astrid Lindgren Children's Hospital.

"Otherwise I work a lot with sets for television entertainment where one has to be observant of trends and make everything look good, which can become tiresome. Coming to hospital play therapy and working in this way feels much more important", Johan Killgren maintains.

He was brought in to the project at an

early stage, and his first task was to create the relief map which hangs in the *All aboard!* room. He then continued with the *Vipers*, the mobile chests for the hospital play therapy unit at the Astrid Lindgren Children's Hospital.

"Work on the *Vipers* started with a long list of what was to be included and the project seemed stimulating and fun. After that there were several special ideas that we developed as we went along", Johan Killgren explains.

The list contained both requirements and wishes but was formulated in such a way as to leave plenty of room for solutions, design ideas and the designer's own additions. The basic criterion was that everything should accord with the philosophy of access for all.

"The real challenge of the *Vipers* was the fundamental narrative and how we should approach the subject in relation to the children. The other main challenge was to include as many functions as possible and here the support of the staff at the hospital was invaluable."

The *Vipers* are containers that have to find room for as many items as possible and Johan Killgren had to work very hard to find room for all the components.

"I did not want to create a toy chest full of toys that do not actually connect with each other, and even though one considers their function, one has to retain the fictional narrative. The important thing is the experience that the child has. A child with a impairments has just the same need to create a story as any other child", Johan Killgren notes.

The expert committee, which consists of seven children between the ages of seven and fourteen, has had a lot of input with regard to the design and content of the room. And almost half of the items in the room are included in the *Vipers*.

Johan Killgren has not had a great deal of contact with the expert group but has, instead, analyzed how the educators work and how the children play. The views of the expert committee have been gathered and mediated by the project manager and the educators.

"When we made a sailor who can climb up a rope, for example, or a magnetic baton for the *Vipers* the project manager and the educators would say: 'This is something the physiotherapists are going to like! Because they provide training for the fingers, just like the Bliss memory game in which one turns over the cards with a magnetic baton.'"

Artist Maria Miesenberger took part in a trial of the material and the educators have played an important role in making it possible for her to evaluate how well the objects function educationally. One example is the plaster moulds which children can use to create their own figurehead.

The initial idea was that we should make four different moulds one for each sculpture, so that children could make four different sculptures. But dividing each mould into four parts makes many more combinations possible. One can now combine parts of a soldier and a mermaid in the same figure just as one wants; or one can choose to cast only a part of the sculpture.

The *Vipers* have now sailed off by themselves and are ready to entertain and

rehabilitate children at the Astrid Lindgren Children's Hospital where they are now an aspect of the rehabilitation programme.

Working with accessibility is not one of an artist or set designer's key tasks; artistic freedom is considered a primary value. But the *All aboard!* project has meant that function has been an important aspect of the brief; so that everyone is able to participate. Johan Killgren considers that his collaboration with the technical staff at the Vasa Museum was very satisfactory. "Working with them was great fun. They were deeply committed to what we were doing and they saw the *Vipers* as just an extension of the usual exhibition work", Johan Killgren comments. And Maria Miesenberger adds her opinion: "The finished *Vipers* were extremely beautiful, the ship part is like a jewel".

Inga-Lill Hagberg Desbois
journalist and editor

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Uncompromising dolls – accessibility and artistic liberty

Artistic sensibility and the principle of accessibility have cross-fertilized and led to dolls or puppets which can be used by all types of hands for vigorous games.

When we meet up, Maria Miesenberger is busily at work on the dolls. She shares a basement studio in Stockholm with Johan Killgren who is responsible for producing the *Vipers* for the *All aboard!* project.

Maria Miesenberger is an artist, known particularly for her photographs in the series entitled Sverige/Schweden and her large, androgynous sculptures made of aluminium and bronze. She has produced most of the dolls for the *All aboard!* room as well as for the *Vipers*. Maria Miesenberger sews all of the clothes for the dolls on her sewing machine.

The *Vipers*, carrying her smaller dolls, have now set sail for use in entertaining and rehabilitating children and youngsters in the hospital play therapy unit at the Astrid Lindgren Children's Hospital.

The dolls have marked features so that children who cannot see are able to feel their faces as well as their clothing and their shapes together with the materials from which they are made. "Figuring out exactly what the dolls should look like was a formidable task", Maria Miesenberger notes. She emphasizes that she is not primarily a doll-maker but an artist and sculptor.

The larger dolls, which are to function as puppets, have "moved into" the *All aboard!* room where they are used by the museum educators and professional puppeteers. The somewhat smaller glove puppets are used in the *Vipers*, primarily for children to play with but also as an educational aid.

"A normal theatrical puppet does not weigh as much as these do because the puppeteer has to be able to hold it up and act for quite a while. But this puppet has

been made so that it can withstand a lot of wear while being used as an educational aid for the children", Maria Miesenberger explains and arranges a large doll on her lap.

When she started working with the puppets, there was no definitive manuscript so that it was a real challenge to create a character for each doll. "The usual order of things was reversed because I made the puppet first and then had to create a narrative for it", she explains.

Maria Miesenberger has created a number of dolls for the *All aboard!* room including a ship's carpenter, the carpenter's wife, a bosun, a captain and King Gustavus Adolphus.

The viper contain a simpler sort of glove puppet which are designed to withstand being played with. There is a carpenter, a bosun, a girl and a cat that really wants to be a lion. Gustavus Adolphus is also present in the form of a soft, half mask which covers the face. A black raven and a seal have been purchased from Germany.

In the *Vipers* there is also a diver from the 17th century, a so-called heavy diver from 1961 and a contemporary diver who is a marine archaeologist. These have all been made by dressmaker Marie Nilsson.

Maria Miesenberger has consciously chosen not to make the glove puppets too pretty. "I have not made them look quite as beautiful as the larger puppets out of regard for the children. When one is a child and is ill and in hospital one looks different from normal and may have lost one's hair or lost weight. In those circumstances it is easier to identify with dolls that are not as pretty but have more character instead", she explains.

The carpenter puppet is a traditional type of a two-faced doll made from a wooden spoon. One side of the spoon is cheerful and proud of the magnificent Vasa ship while, if one turns the spoon round, the sad and disappointed face appears as the ship sinks.

"I have worked with the dolls on two levels. As an artist I am more visible in the large puppets while the smaller glove puppets have more practical functions to fulfil and my own artistic ideas have taken more of a back seat. The large puppets are more advanced in another sense even though the smaller ones took just as much time to create", Maria Miesenberger explains.

In the *All aboard!* room, all the dolls have different characters: besides the carpenter whom we have already mentioned, there are the bosun, the captain and also an ordinary girl and King Gustavus Adolphus.

Artists usually work with complete freedom and totally independently but here it was a matter of seeing to it that the objects were suited to their purpose and could be used by all of the children.

What consideration did you take – and how did it work out? "Initially it feels as though one will have to make concessions, but in many cases this turns out to be positive. What one does not want is a compromise", Maria Miesenberger claims.

Inga-Lill Hagberg Desbois
journalist and editor

Lots of talk led to a creative workshop

The All aboard! project introduced a new methodology to the work of the technical staff at the Vasa Museum too. "In our normal work we build things that can be looked at. Now we were faced with making things that could be inspected and handled", Peter Dans explains.

In their daily work the technicians at the Vasa Museum devote their time to building new exhibitions or improving and modernizing existing displays. When they were brought into the *All aboard!* project to build the room with its focus on accessibility they had to attempt a new way of working: "For the first time we were working in full collaboration with the museum educators. This was good because they were the people who were going to use the room" Tore William-Olsson explains. He is a lighting and audiovisual technician.

The technical staff initially felt that they and the educators were "speaking in different languages" and this led to their devoting a lot of time to lengthy meetings at which the pros and cons of problems and proposals were discussed and solutions hammered out.

"Lengthy meetings were needed for us to be able to make constructive decisions about what was to be done and how we were to do it", Per Johansson remarks. He is also a lighting and audiovisual technician.

Working together in new constellations can be tricky initially yet still seem worthwhile because it leads to a more profound understanding of our respective skills and may well prove useful in future productions. This is the view of the technical staff who are positive about their collaboration with the museum educators.

"The museum educators have always had to wait right to the end of the building work before getting involved, but they have always wanted to be consulted at an earlier stage. After this they will be", Mikael Gustavsson claims.

It took eight months from when the technicians started to take out the original furnishings with cupboards all along the walls and various other items that had to be removed, until the room could be put to use at the end of 2008.

"It used to look like a school classroom with cupboards along the walls", Per Johansson explains. He documented the room in its original state with both still photographs and film.

Everyone in the group is agreed that building the *All aboard!* room was an enjoyable task.

"I liked rigging the sails. That was fun, as was building the floor for the raised part of the room. I had never done anything like that before", Maria Ericsson explains.

In other building assignments the exhibition technicians often receive finished drawings with instructions as to what the exhibition is to look like. But in this case they worked almost in parallel with architect and designer Martin Jämtlid. Together they produced solutions to de-

tails, some of which developed later in collaboration with technicians, educators and the expert committee.

The elevator, or diving bell as we say here, was installed very quickly but it took time to build the upper balcony because we had to assess the structural feasibility of the design", Peter Dans explains.

In building the *All aboard!* room they worked in a team with other professionals such as designer, stage designer, dressmaker and others. "We worked with various craftspeople who were brought in for the project for particular aspects of the room. That was something we had not done previously. This gave us a new network of contacts which we can make use of in the future", Mikael Gustafsson explains. The new contacts have already led to their collaborating on other projects connected with the museum.

Accessibility was a new aspect for the technicians and is something that they have taken on board in working on the new permanent display for the Maritime Museum. Floors and other materials will have different structures which will enable more people to enjoy the display.

"There are building rules for heights of protective rails and gaps in the balustrade and suchlike that we have been used to working with. But we now have a more holistic approach and a realization that there are more special needs than merely catering for people in wheelchairs", Mikael Gustafsson notes.

Maria Ericsson is in agreement: "Accessibility ought to be a natural aspect of every exhibition production but one needs to reflect and to receive feedback as to what works and what does not work. In our particular case the project manager was central because she has so much knowledge about this issue, as do the expert committee."

Reflecting on the issue before one starts building is important, Mikael Gustafsson maintains: "We need to think through possible obstacles that can impede physical accessibility, reading signs, understanding contexts and we must avoid making things muddled or too cramped. And we need to think up solutions that do not separate people with impairments too much from people without such disabilities."

There are certain important components that worked while the *All aboard!* room was being constructed: control, compromises, smart solutions, discussions and the expert committee of children.

"The *All aboard!* room is relatively small and would have needed to have been twice the size to do justice to all of the ideas and so we had to discuss appropriate solutions or to find compromises", the technicians explain.

"We followed Martin Jämtlid's model of what the room was to look like a lot of the time, and he was sensitive to our ideas, flexible and open and he took advice from us with regard to various solutions", says Peter Dans.

The technical staff enjoyed this mode of working: "Working like this and finding solutions on site was a more enjoyable way of working than working from plans that one is not allowed to alter at all", Maria Ericsson claims.

The technicians also built the two *Vipers* that are deposited at the Astrid Lindgren Children's Hospital in Stockholm.

Building work took a long time – about five months in all – and was a bit like working in Santa's workshop with lots of different things that had to be made and put together and painted. "Building the room was even more stimulating because it was like a whole exhibition in miniature", says a contented Mikael Gustafsson. "Somebody was responsible for she shell – and then we did all the fun parts.

Inga-Lill Hagberg Desbois
journalist and editor

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All aboard! – without a ramp

"Make it accessible to everyone." This was the brief given to architect Martin Jämtlid when he started work on designing the All aboard! room. "This is a fundamental principle that will follow us in the future, though in an anarchic sort of way; not dull but still dignified."

Making premises accessible to all regardless of their functionality is not always a natural concomitant in building or refurbishing public property. "One can design premises that are infinitely staid and dull, with ramps and other typical adaptations", Martin Jämtlid notes. "But I am convinced that one can avoid this if one starts from the conviction that the premises are to be accessible to everyone. One can avoid the most predictable solutions and this leads to positive effects in the long run and goodwill on the part of the users."

In the autumn of 2007, the *All aboard!* – the salutogenic museum project was given the opportunity of re-designing a room at the Vasa Museum that had previously been used for educational activities. The new design was to embrace a "philosophy of accessibility" which meant, for example, that there was a salutogenic perspective to the project. The educational material, in accordance with the salutogenic perspective, would be accessible to all regardless of their functionality.

When Martin Jämtlid entered the room for the first time in the autumn of 2007 it did not give a very positive and playful impression. "It was an awkwardly shaped and dismal space so that anything that one did to it would be an improvement", Martin Jämtlid claims as we visit the room together. "The activities there consisted of various items that were taken out and put back into the numerous cupboards that lined the walls."

According to the long list of features required in the new room it should be fitted out in a manner inspired by the warship Vasa. The room did not need to be in period style; rather the reverse because being able to use one's imagination was important. Everyone was to be able to do everything, regardless of functional disabilities. There were to be no adaptations, but everything was to be done in the "right" way from the beginning, developing functionality.

"The great advantage of the room was the high ceiling. This made it possible to build on several levels which increased the dynamics of the room. One does not now think of the room in terms of being "tall" but "filled" without in any way seeming confined", says Martin Jämtlid.

He looks up at the balustrade which was turned into the "bridge" of the ship from which one can hoist or lower the sails and steer the boat using a computer joystick. The idea of being able to steer the ship came from one of the children on the expert committee who were involved in the project.

"One of the experts proposed red sails and red was a common colour for sails in the 17th century", Martin Jämtlid comments.

Numerous experiences, like the sails, are woven into the room and children can lift items themselves using block and tackle. There are layer upon layer of details for anyone wanting to research more closely; for example the black silhouette of the lion's head and the cavities in one of the walls which one can investigate with one's hands, looking for finds left on the seabed.

"I think that many visitors to the room feel that there are numerous functions in the room and that everything is part of a context based on the 17th century warship Vasa", Martin Jämtlid maintains. He also worked with permanent features in the room like the elevator that was turned into a diving bell with tactile surfaces, and a ventilation shaft that has become a monster of the deep, thus reflecting popular fears in the 17th century of what might be found in the sea. "I based my design on a play perspective. Children have this special capacity for using their imagination to create their own narrative of what is taking place."

Martin Jämtlid worked on the project for a year. There were innumerable aspects to discuss and to pay regard to in order to meet the demands for accessibility. "One decisive problem was structural integrity. We wanted to avoid having a column to support the balcony. It had to be self-supporting if the space underneath it was to be accessible. Fortunately the museum building is largely made of concrete so there was plenty of solid material to fix the balcony to."

Martin Jämtlid found his inspiration in books but was also very concerned that the room should not give a feeling of a game of "pirates" but that it should pay due regard to history and what actually happened. Almost everything he designed for the room met with positive reactions, though the emergency stairs gave rise to lengthy discussion. It would have been difficult to get wheelchairs down quickly in an emergency and so it had to be rethought. During the period of the project there were numerous meetings with the museum educators to discuss various functions in the room and these deliberations resulted in many valuable proposals.

"It was a positive challenge. There are so many gifted members of staff here that being part of the project has been really enjoyable", Martin Jämtlid notes. Asked what he is most pleased with about the room he looks around and claims that it

is precisely the feeling that one gets on entering the room; that he has a sense of being invited to take part.

The technical staff of the Vasa Museum completed the rebuilding work late in 2008 and the room was inaugurated on 28th November that year. "The ultimate test is whether the children like the room and, from what I hear, they never want to leave! One visitor claimed: 'This is the most egalitarian room that I have ever been in'; and you can't get a better testimonial than that", Martin Jämtlid observes.

Inga-Lill Hagberg Desbois
journalist and editor

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Listening with one's eyes

At last the teacher understood what the Vasa really was – having visited the museum some twenty times in the past. And this was because he had met a sign-language educator who is deaf herself.

The difference between meeting and listening to a sign-language guide with hearing and a deaf sign-language guide is vast according to the three sign-language guides Irina Kloch Bozkurt, Joakim Hagelin-Adeby and Jonas Brännvall who work for the Vasa Museum and the *All aboard! – The Salutogenic Museum* project.

"A person who is deaf herself gives a much more vivid picture than the sign-language guide who can hear and who merely translates the written signs. Sign language is a visual language so that when a deaf person communicates in sign language it is rather like watching a film without having to worry about what she or he means", Irina Kloch Bozkurt explains. She is deaf herself and has been an authorized Stockholm guide since 2002 as well as a sign-language educator at the Vasa Museum since 2009. "To be able to use one's first language is important since understanding it is much less effort", Jonas Brännvall maintains. Or, as Irina says: "It feels like being at home".

The *All aboard!* project stresses the fact that sign language is a language just like any other and not just an aid. For this reason, three people who are deaf themselves are being trained at the museum to act as sign-language educators so that the museum can offer educational visits for children and young people as well as guided tours in sign language.

One weekend each month Irina Kloch Bozkurt, or one of her colleagues Joakim Hagelin-Adeby and Jonas Brännvall, is on duty as a sign-language guide. Groups can book guided tours in advance. The guides spent a month in 2008 training for their work, with half of the cost being met by the Swedish county councils' interpreting service [Tolkcentralen]. The entire course was interpreted into sign language so that the three potential sign-language educators received the same training that the educators and guides with hearing underwent. Later during the summer they also

took part in an educational training course.

"It felt good to receive our own training and we could ask questions from a deaf perspective such as how we could work in the room from the point of view of deaf people", Joakim Hagelin-Adeby explains.

The three sign-language educators never attended a sign-language tour of a museum when they were children. No such guiding was available at the time. Being able to take advantage of what other people see as self-evident is something new to them.

Irina Kloch Bozkurt visited Italy with a group of sign-language interpreters from Sweden a few years ago. They visited several museums and were guided by interpreters from Sweden. One day the group was guided round the Old Town by some deaf guides from Italy and this made a deep impression. "What a fantastic experience. That made me realize what a huge difference there is between a deaf guide and a guide with hearing."

Recently Irina Kloch Bozkurt guided a group from a vocational college. "At the end of the programme the teacher told me that he had visited the Vasa Museum 20 or 30 times but that this was the first time that he had understood what the Vasa really is. And why was this? Because everything was explained in his own language, in sign language; and by a guide who was deaf herself."

The vessel is sensitive after so many years beneath the sea and so the museum has to be kept rather dark. This has repercussions for deaf visitors because they need light to see what the sign-language educator is explaining or wants to show.

"It is rather dark but I have tried to find the best places for signing from the light point of view. It is not good to stand immediately behind the light shining on various objects because that makes it more difficult for the visitors to see me. One has to think about where to stand", Irina Kloch Bozkurt explains.

"That is true", Jonas Brännvall agrees, "it is unsatisfactory if it is too dark or if there are lots of exhibits in the background."

There is another reason, too, why it is important to have deaf sign-language educators in the view of Joakim Hagelin-Adeby: "Deaf children find it easier to put questions to deaf educators. There is a better level of communication and a stronger sense of community."

The number of deaf children has declined in recent years since so many choose to have cochlea implants. The cochlea implant can be stimulated electrically to allow children who are deaf or have serious hearing disabilities to perceive sounds.

"My idea is that they should employ someone who was born deaf but has been given an implant. In that way one would gain access to a person who had learnt sign language properly but who would also understand people who have cochlea implants and can now hear and who would be able to change easily between the two languages", Joakim Hagelin-Adeby explains.

Inga-Lill Hagberg Desbois
journalist and editor

Blissymbolics – words aboard Communication – without a single word

A visit to a museum is an experience. Experiences are greater and richer if one is able to share them with other people and can put words to what one has experienced. But how can one do this if one cannot use spoken words?

Everyone's right to communication

The capacity to communicate with other people using speech or writing is something that most of us take for granted. Yet there are many people who do not share this ability. Spelling and reading can also be problematic for people who have never used their voices to say something.

It is essential to everyone, whether they use speech or not, whether they have hearing or are deaf, to be able to ask, to narrate, to make jokes, to discuss and so on; and not to be limited simply to yes or no questions.

Many people need support to be able to communicate. This can take the form of sign language or communication maps with symbols or pictures.

There are numerous different systems of symbols or images that one can choose from. One of these is known as Pictogram. This is a tried and tested pictorial support system designed for people with cognitive difficulties. But there is only one symbolic or ideographic system that is a complete language and that is Blissymbolics or Bliss.

Blissymbolics – an international language

Bliss is an international language in which words and concepts are represented by pictures or ideograms rather than letters. The symbols consist of black outlined images presented on coloured or white backgrounds denoting the word class the ideogram belongs to.

Bliss comprises a large number of symbols and grammar indicators which can be used to construct complete sentences. This makes it possible to express all words and to say what one wants to say by combining words into sentences. Below is an example:



Bliss users communicate by pointing on a communication chart. The user can point with a finger, forehead-pointer or lamp, or can use a computer with some other control system. The person that the Bliss user is talking to does not need to know what the symbols mean but merely reads the word above or below the symbol that is pointed to. In this way the Bliss user can hear and understand what the other person is saying.

Blissymbolics was created by Charles Bliss at the end of the 1940s. The system

was intended for international communication and was described in a book entitled *Semantography*. It came into its own in the 1970s as an aid to people with serious speech disabilities. Bliss has been used in Sweden since 1976. Today it is used by thousands of people in many parts of the world.

Why we chose Bliss

The aim of the *All aboard!* project was to ensure that every child, regardless of its functional capacities, should be able to take part in the educational activities at the Vasa Museum. And so it became important, and relevant, to become the first museum in the world to develop a site map using Blissymbolics.

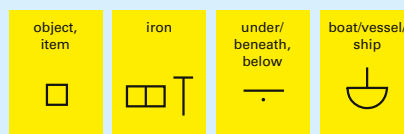
The Vasa Museum offers guided tours and information in rather more different languages than most museums. By placing a highly visible Bliss symbol on each sign in the museum we are sending a signal in two directions. Visitors who use Bliss themselves see their own language represented among many other languages in an official capacity. And people not familiar with Bliss learn about a new way of communicating.

Experience is needed for making Bliss accessible and enabling people to hear about the Vasa in spoken language while making use of Blissymbolics – some of them new – oneself. And so we created a stimulating book that includes a selection of words, Bliss symbols and pictures as well as a special Bliss chart for the Vasa Museum.

If there is a word that they need but that is not included on the chart, people who communicate using Bliss have to try to use a combination of words to make themselves understood. It can be very difficult, for example, to explain to one's parents that one has been to the museum and seen a mask or that the Vasa was steered using a whipstaff. And so the Vasa's Bliss chart contains a combination of common maritime terminology with somewhat less usual phenomena. Here is an example of how the Vasa Bliss chart makes it easier to talk about the concept of a "keel". One can point once at this symbol:



Or one can point four times at these four words:



Then the parents may be able to guess that one is referring to a "keel". But if one's parents have never heard of a whipstaff what does one point to then?

Selection criteria and production

The new *All aboard!* room was soon to be completed and the theme of the room was the natural starting point when we were

choosing words to include on the chart. But the room is by no means separated from the museum as such and so basic facts about the Vasa needed to be included. The Bliss material was to function separately from the room and to be accessible even at home. We also wanted to reach people visiting the museum without coming into contact with the educational staff or visiting the *All aboard!* room.

The first question that presented itself was: How are we to decide on the most important words? But we soon rephrased the question: How do we want our Bliss material to be used? This shifted the perspective from what we considered to be important facts to what we thought would be meaningful to the visitor. We think that it is fun and interesting for everyone to be able to talk about new and exciting experiences; and that includes Bliss users.

In the process of selecting facts we were greatly aided by Olof Pipping. He has an invaluable knowledge of maritime matters and helped to rig the Vasa in the museum. And he also has experience of communicating with Blissymbolics.

The ultimate criterion proved to be words that are often used in communication with the groups and children we meet in the museum. Some of the words were so specialized that they did not exist in Bliss and so we were obliged to create new signs. This was partly because it would be too complicated to explain the concepts, and because it can be fun to teach parents or friends a word that they do not already know.

Since Bliss is an international language one has to get new words approved by Bliss Communication International [BCI]. This is a voluntary charitable organization that is licensed to use and publish Bliss symbols throughout the world. If a word is missing in Bliss one can ask for or propose a symbol and BCI will then decide the matter.

Our own proposals for new Bliss symbols were produced with the help of Britt Amberntson who has been working with the language since it first arrived in Sweden. The Vasa Museum's proposals were shown at an international Bliss conference in Montreal, Canada, in the summer of 2008 where they were approved. Examples of new words that are explained in the introductory materials are: whipstaff, mask, braiding, diving bell, and furling a sail.

Both the introductory material and Vasa's Bliss chart are, of course, available without charge on the Internet.

Blissing visit

Our ideas about Bliss production tally pretty well with the actual results that we can now see. Not so much in terms of quantity, but in quality and variation.

We know that Bliss users have downloaded material and then visited the Vasa Museum precisely because we include Bliss as one of our languages. We have noticed that if the Bliss chart is visible when we have non-Blissing visitors it generates a lot of interest.

Avoiding special solutions is one of our hobbyhorses. An example of a simple means of including everyone in the same learning situation is to produce different educational materials using Bliss. For

example, a memory game using Bliss symbols on one card and a corresponding photo on the other card, or magnetic text signs and a Vasa soundtrack game.

We have received a number of visits by children that have been a combination of study visit and consultation. Children have been able to see the *All aboard!* room for the first time and to investigate parts of it and themes that interest them. After that the museum educator has become more active and asked how the child wants to use Bliss in this specific context. Together we have tried placing symbols on or near various objects. The objects can be ones that the child recognizes and likes or items they are curious about and have not seen before.

The advice and ideas we gain from such visits we can then make use of in meeting other groups. Children in a group can, for example, gather by the marine-archaeology wall and choose objects and tell each other about the objects.

By using Blissymbolics in the project and in the museum we have added to the value of the activities. People who use Bliss see their language treated with respect. The Bliss chart is available in both Swedish and English versions and can also be understood by Bliss users from other countries. By encountering Blissymbolics in a museum, visitors who do not speak Bliss gain a new experience from their visit.

The book containing pictures and Bliss symbols can be used by all as introductory or summing-up material. It also generates interest in Bliss and causes people to reflect on the different conditions in which we live our lives. We can warmly recommend others to follow our example.

Wern Palmius, advisor, *The National Agency for Special Needs Education and Schools*
Inger Elgestedt, educator

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The Vasa on the Blissymbolics chart

Canadian-born Shirley McNaughton, founder of Blissymbolics Communication Service, helped to develop Bliss during the 1970s and development of this international language still continues. Several new symbols and a maritime Bliss chart, developed as part of the *All aboard!* project, are a welcome indication of this.

At the beginning of the 1970s, special-needs teacher Shirley McNaughton discovered a collection of symbols in a book entitled *Signs and Symbols Around the World* by Elizabeth Helfman. The symbols had been developed by Charles Bliss during the 1940s. Bliss wanted to create an international pictorial language based on inspiration from Chinese signs. His ambition had nothing to do with people suffering from functional impairments.

Shirley McNaughton and her colleagues at the Ontario Crippled Children's Center in Canada realized that Charles Bliss' symbols could offer a useful basis

for the method of communication that their children needed.

"We realized quite early on that we were on the track of something valuable. We started with the symbols for "Hi" and "Bye", "man", "woman", "happy", "sad" and "love". And then we used the symbols that Charles Bliss had published to generate new ones."

Like a normal language

The first group consisted of 6-8 children suffering from cerebral palsy and it is children with this diagnosis that are the most usual group of users. A typical user of Blissymbolics has a low level of functionality and has difficulty in communicating in other ways.

"For these children, Bliss acts just like a normal language. They can move backwards and forwards in time. They can talk about their feelings and about things they have made up. The symbols are highly specific and not as easy to use as one might imagine."

The team at OCCC produced the first Bliss charts and formed the organization now known as Blissymbolics Communication International. Following the publication of an article in *Time* in June 1972, they received calls from all over the world. Sweden was one of the countries that showed an early interest in this revolutionary idea.

"This was an extremely intensive period. I had hardly been outside Ontario previously but I now started travelling round the world to explain what we were doing", Shirley McNaughton explains.

The public domain is important

Since this beginning, Blissymbolics has become an internationally recognized symbolic language that is now in use in 33 countries. The system has developed since 1971 when it was first used with a group of children with cerebral palsy. New symbols are constantly being added. In Sweden there is a secretariat that prepares them for submission in accordance with a standard produced by Blissymbolics Communication International. There are currently some 4'500 accepted symbols. One of the most recent additions is the *All aboard!* Bliss chart which was internationally approved in 2009.

"It feels wonderful that people use the language internationally and develop it for important ends", Shirley McNaughton enthusiastically exclaims.

She thinks that it is important that Blissymbolics are seen in the public domain as in the Vasa Museum.

"This increases respect for people using Bliss. I think that it will help people to communicate with this wonderful community. It is important for people with cerebral palsy to be able to share their language and their communication since there are so many limiting factors in their lives. But when it comes to Bliss symbols they are the experts."

More people learn to read

Much has happened in Blissymbolics since the first symbols were adopted in the 1970s. Technical developments have brought new possibilities and children with very limited functions can learn to use Bliss nowadays.

In recent years it has also become more usual for Bliss users to learn an alphabetical language too. Thanks to their experiences with Bliss they are able to learn to read and write.

"Most of us work to learn English. We teach them to read and to communicate."

Shirley McNaughton is sure of one thing:

"For me, Bliss is not just a language but an enriching factor in the user's life. People who use Bliss have special links with each other and with their teacher and others who communicate with them. They are part of a community. And this community extends all over the world."

David Hulth Wallgren, journalist

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Getting a grip on the Vasa Museum

A camera that one clicks from time to time can make it easier to remember and relate back to one's visit to the Vasa Museum. Images reinforce memory and help one to keep "control of the situation", thus making the context comprehensible.

Within the framework of the *All aboard!* project, in 2009 a course was organized by the educational staff at the Vasa Museum together with the supervisor. Supervised discussions were used to shed light on various educational and ethical issues and this resulted in a cognitively accessible visiting model. * In concrete terms this means that visitors know what locations and items are available, that they can choose what they want to see and that, in due course, they can find their way to these locations and items. Visitors should be able to gain an experience of the location or the object and be able to document it (using a camera) in order to remember it and to talk about it to other people. The aim was to prepare, to facilitate and to make the museum visit comprehensible.

Visitors should be able to experience something new, take initiatives themselves and choose what seems exciting and interesting to them. The concept was tested with the help of some ten youngsters attending the S:t Erik upper secondary school for individuals with learning disabilities, and six young adults who live in a neighbouring group home. One of the youngsters, a boy in his upper teens, who helped to develop and test the model expressed the view that he would like to return and show the figures of the men, show what life was like in the past when asked if he would like to take something with him to the museum and show something that he thought was exciting.

* Our cognitive abilities enable us to understand what things mean and to remember the things we need to remember. Thanks to our cognitive function we can calculate time and plan ahead. Functional states that frequently influence our cognitive abilities include developmental retardation, autism, ADHD/DAMP as well as physical impairments.

According to a salutogenic perspective – something that is a starting point for all aspects of the *All aboard!* project – a visit should be comprehensible, manageable and meaningful regardless of a person's functional capacities.

Comprehensibility is aided by providing a clear structure and predictability, something that is all the more important for people with cognitive difficulties. Access to sufficient time is decisive, both with a view to meeting on a number of occasions but also in order to have adequate time at each meeting.

The youngsters at the S:t Erik upper secondary school and their teacher filmed at the school and during their visits to the museums. The edited film was an excellent aid in returning to and remembering what had happened during the most recent visit.

After their first meeting with the educators at the Vasa Museum there were various different subjects that they wanted to discuss:

- We drank beer from a large tankard.
- There was clothing made from a grey fabric.

- They (the educators at the museum) were nice and we laughed a lot.

Most of the youngsters had talked about the Vasa Museum with other people they meet and they had mentioned the ship, the tankard and the cannons. When, at a later time, they were asked to sum up what had been most fun one of the group claimed that most fun had been eating dried fish while another thought that it was distressing when the floor moved up and down and it was dark in the space below deck.

A visit involves many meetings

During an intensive period together, the six young adults and the museum educators developed a model for visits to the Vasa Museum based on the group meeting prior to, during and after the visit.

Their visits were divided up into a number of occasions: three meetings and the museum and four meetings at the group home. During their meetings with a museum educator prior to visiting the museum they got to know each other and they practised documenting things using a digital camera. By enabling the young people themselves to choose a situation or an object, photography provides a comprehensible context and support for the memory. Photographs are a useful aid when one wants to return to an event after the visit and to tell someone else about a favourite location or object.

"We tried dressing up. The museum educators brought various things with them and that was fun", Christian Åström explains when reporting on the museum educators' first visit to the group home. He has chosen to show a picture of a man diving into the water and this is something that he would like to see again during his next visit to the Vasa Museum.

"I showed them my photographs when I got to work", Christian Åström continues.

The photographs were also highly important for one of the participants who does not have verbal language. With the help of the photographs and body language she was able to show other people what she liked best.

At the first meeting the young people were naturally rather cautious but they soon got used to us and to the business of visiting the museum. At the third and last visit to the museum, some of them went directly and hung up their jackets and started walking round the museum on their own. They had begun to be familiar with the museum premises.

Both the environment and the social situation had become familiar to those taking part. This ensured that the situation was manageable and comprehensible and meant that they could concentrate on new experiences.

*Ann-Marie Stenhammar
Supervisor collaborating with
the museum educators*

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Being able to steer the warship Vasa oneself is brilliant

I got the idea from sailing in the Stockholm archipelago in my grandparents' boat.

I had not visited the Vasa museum at all before I joined the expert committee. But now I am very pleased that I have learnt so much about the Vasa.

When we first arrived the room was painted red and everything was different from what it is today.

We were asked to think up our own ideas of what should be included in the room. My idea was that one should be able to steer the boat and so they created a computer game in which one can do just that. It is great fun and I am pleased with the result. I have been able to steer my grandparents' boat on trips in the archipelago. I like sailing south!

I also wanted tables in the room where one could sit and work. They are very important.

It feels good to have been involved in the project. Everything was fun. What was less good is that it was cold in the museum.

I especially like working with the microscope which can be linked to a camera. I have taken lots of pictures with this apparatus including images of a square coin or *klipping* which was used at the time the Vasa sank, and of a pewter dish found on the seabed beside the ship. I like doing photography and I have put the photographs up on the walls of my room at home. The camera ought to be readily available at all times.

I also like investigating the openings in the wall with my hands and feeling my way through the sand to discover items that are hidden there.

I have also visited the museum with my class and acted as their guide. That was fun.

Another museum that I like a lot is the Stockholm Music Museum where you can try out different instruments. That's fun.

Julia Snees, aged 12

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The computer game lets you feel how the Vasa's decks rolled

In the Alla ombord! room there is a really cool game. The idea is that you should feel as though you are on the warship Vasa. You can steer the game with a joystick.

In the *All aboard!* room there is a really cool computer game. You can stand on the upper deck and steer the ship with a joystick and if you look down you can see a giant screen with water and a small ship sailing on it. If you steer to the left the ship slowly moves in that direction, and the same to the right.

In the game one can steer towards the smoke that one can see ahead. Sometimes you can't see the smoke but after a while it turns up. The idea is that you should feel as though you are on board a real ship and are steering it. If you are on the lower deck and not steering you can stand on a board and feel how the ship is tossed by the waves, just as the Vasa was.

I have become good at guiding during my time at the Vasa Museum. I have led two real "guidings", for my own class and for two other classes. But I may guide the younger pupils in my school in a third guiding; and I am going to guide all my relations.

Tiemon Okejevoh, aged 12

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What is a person?

Why visit a museum? If one were to ask that question at the entrance to a museum I would expect the word *interesting* to turn up among the answers. Interest comes from the Latin *inter esse* meaning being between. This means that there is a meaningful relation between me and what I am standing in front of or am about to enter. If I fail to find any meaning there I shall probably leave the museum and, perhaps, never come back. The place seems uninteresting and it fails to connect with my world and me.

If interest and a sense of meaning are to be established between people and something specific this "something" needs to be accessible. The second part of the word interest can be interpreted as going; as in to go or something worth going to or having something that one can move with or unlimited possibilities of movement. That the room, society, the world are all accessible means greater freedom to move as one wants. Accessibility is an asset that means that I can experience freedom of movement.

It is a fine term: freedom of movement. The term relates not to external physical movement or function but to an inner experience and feeling. Like a rhythmical mental dance. It can be described thus when meaning arises; that it swings between me and the context that I am part of. Between the room and me. Between what is in me and what is

exterior to me. Between me and you and the world.

That this swinging sensation turns up sufficiently often is essential if life is to seem interesting and meaningful and completely irreplaceable for developing and using our abilities to evaluate, understand ourselves, plan our lives and make choices.

I can give an example from *All aboard!*, the educational room at the Vasa Museum that has been created with great care, expertise, understanding of human behaviour, experience and imagination. In the *All aboard!* room, all children are invited to steer the ship, try dressing up, study marine archaeology, subject themselves to the chaos of the storm or retire to the welcoming resting place in the corner. There is also a diving bell to take you from one deck to another, rather than an elevator for handicapped users. This is the sort of detail that says a great deal about a more profound way of reflecting on the matter of accessibility than "pure" functionality.

If we see accessibility solely in terms of *freedom from* obstacles and dependence on others then we risk missing the aspect of *freedom to* develop our innate capacities together with other children. It would have sufficed with an elevator for the disabled rather than a diving bell for all. This example shows a way of thinking, a way of looking at children and adults, of valuing participation and it points to serious differences between aims and methods. A diving bell rather than an elevator for persons with handicaps is an illustration of an approach that thinks in terms of functional opportunities rather than functional obstacles. This is an important distinction that Carina Ostenfeldt, who initiated and has run the project, has drawn my attention to.

The *All aboard!* room has not been designed for "doing specific things with particular people with particular needs". It has been designed to promote freedom of movement, participation and a sense of community for and between all children; children with different ways of being, similar and dissimilar, but much more like than unlike. The sense of community in the context of this project predicates the possibility of a "we", a we that is accessible. And freedom from functional impediments is a natural result of this cross-sector thinking.

The philosophy underlying the *All aboard!* project tells us something about the greater room which comprises everyone. In society at large many "particular things for particular people with particular needs" are decided. A person can also be "particular" in a variety of different ways. A person may be physically impaired, a patient, a client, a pupil, the person insured, a user, an applicant, a tenant, a guest, an immigrant and so on. These particular categories mean that the focus is on limited characteristics and qualities. These categories often form the basis of contracts and legal rights which, to an increasing degree, are entered into jointly by the individual person and society. The categories can become a succession of particular rooms with different and limited or more or less specialized tasks, rules, legal injunctions, ways of thinking, and languages, often without clear links

between them; like enclosed and inaccessible preserves.

Human reality often defies these neat categorizations. It is all too easy to lose one's way. In practice this means that one loses one's context and with it one's sense of freedom of movement. Instead one is left with a succession of contexts that it is difficult, if not impossible, to unite into a meaningful whole.

It is even difficult to find a single common and practical word or expression that would bind together all these categories into a single whole in a meaningful manner. *Every child* is, for example a powerfully motivating expression that can sometimes exceed all the different terms defining categories. But what do we call all the people who have left childhood behind them; and perhaps the diving bell too? How do we exceed the particular aspect and reach what it is that binds us together. How do we continue to emphasize what we have in common rather than what divides us, like rather than unlike? Is there some effective term?

During the 1990s the concept of an *individual* took the language by storm. The "individual at the centre" and the "focus on the individual" became slogans that were mainly contrasted with collective solutions, with large, grey apartment houses or office blocks and anonymous bodies and limited categories. On the one hand the meaning of seeing to the individual but, on the other hand, who has actually seen a living individual in the real world? I do not believe, for example, that nursing staff or people in the welfare services claim that there is an individual in the waiting room (unless something very untoward is happening!).

An individual is an incorporeal being who is incapable of sustaining relations and who cannot answer. The contours of the individual are drawn more by language, by law books, documents and political programmes than by a context of concrete reality.

The individual is incapable of swinging! And so it is fairly easy to bind an individual to legal rights, though things will be more difficult as regards human relationships and living contexts. One speaks of or about individuals but not with them. When the term individual is used to indicate freedom from obstacles and dependence our way of thinking should anticipate freedom to enjoy a sense of community and relations with other people, because otherwise the individual is merely alone, separated and impossible to have a mutual relationship with.

Everyone can demand their rights and freedom from obstacles but this does not ensure that a sense of community and comprehensible contexts will develop and be sustained. If this is to happen, then it is essential that other people (including professionals) recognize each and everyone's right to seek freely to develop her or his potential capacities and functionalities.

It is, of course, not enough to recognize other people's rights; there are already affirmations of these. Nor can recognition be limited to trying to develop people's functions, since people are not machines. What is needed is that the individual – the patient, client, visitor, et al. – should also be affirmed as a person

since a person is never entirely defined by functions or legal rights. To recognize and see someone as a person brings with it responsibility for helping to try to develop and contribute to the person's potential sense of freedom of movement. There is a responsibility to contribute to a person's ability to evaluate her or his surroundings, to understand herself, plan and make choices. To help to ensure that it swings and that life becomes interesting!

Göran Odbratt, author and journalist

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Background to the *Vipers*

A diving bell for a drip stand, figure heads for hospital beds that one can make oneself, and syringes that turn into cannons; a museum can also be an active part of a rehabilitation programme for children and youngsters.

Working with accessibility and children's rights can lead to a variety of dynamic effects. With increased accessibility and new collaborators a museum's normal operations can be upgraded and enter an entirely new context. This can be achieved without costly investments and can lead to mutual benefits and additional skills for the organizations and their staffs that are involved in the project.

An important development, using the device "From hospital bed to museum", has been the production of the *Vipers** filled with accessible educational materials, that are stationed at the Astrid Lindgren Children's Hospital at the Karolinska University Hospital at its two locations in Stockholm. We collaborate with the rehab team at the children's hospital, stimulating and challenging children and youngsters to undertake the various activities that a rehabilitation process entails.

In the *All aboard!* room at the Vasa Museum various training possibilities have been built into the room and included in the educational materials. Children can, for example, work with various types of hand training, strength, balance, upper-body stability, moving between wheelchair and other furniture and other training activities while also taking part in an educational programme.

* The units are called *Vipers* because this was the name of the small boats that accompanied the warship Vasa.

Carina Ostenfeldt, Project Manager responsible for the concept

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"The *Vipers* dupe children into training various functions"

Wanting to train but not being in the mood. Many children struggle with a lack of motivation for training, even children who really want to train in order to function better. And so rehab

training using the Vipers is beneficial in that children are "fooled" into training various functions even when they are not really in the mood, Senior Physician Bo Ericsson of the Astrid Lindgren Children's Hospital explains.

Patients in the Department of Paediatric Radiology at the Astrid Lindgren Children's Hospital where Bo Ericsson works include children who have suffered brain injuries from accidents with bicycles or mopeds, infections or, simply, a blow to the head. But most of the brain damage results from car accidents or cerebral tumours.

Children and young adults come to the hospital for both consultations with the medical staff and to train the functions that are partially or wholly impaired. They spend a lot of time at hospital play therapy on the floor below the clinic. Twenty years ago, at its inception, hospital play therapy was mostly concerned with giving young patients something enjoyable to do during their stay in hospital, taking their minds off their illness for a little while. Today hospital play therapy is an integral aspect of rehabilitation together with other forms of training with the speech therapist and physiotherapist, for example.

The *Vipers* are a new addition to hospital play therapy and Dr. Ericsson is very pleased with them. "I should like to schedule the use of the *Vipers*, just as with all other training in the rehab process", he proposes. "We also need a scientific evaluation based on a group of five to ten selected children who train with the *Vipers* so that we can learn what results one can achieve with them. This would also enable us to reach out to other doctors and patients all over the country so that they can work and train in accordance with this concept."

Bo Ericsson was an early collaborator in the *All aboard!* project of which the *Vipers* are part. "At the Vasa Museum they have invented an alternative form of rehabilitation which differs from the traditional rehab that takes place in a hospital or clinic. This is something that I welcome and I think that this is an example that should be followed by others", Bo Ericsson explains.

The idea of the *All aboard!* room and the *Vipers* is an extraordinarily valuable complement to rehab as well as a development of hospital play therapy in the view of Bo Ericsson. Many of his young patients are really motivated to train and to claim back the lives that they had before their illness or accident but find it difficult to really devote themselves to the necessary training which involves endless repetition of certain movements. This can be very dull and demanding.

"When they work with the contents of the *Vipers* there is a natural process in which one is not aware of doing rehab training. The training is done subconsciously in a variety of areas including cognitive, auditive, visual, gross and fine motor skills. The *Vipers* stimulate the senses and this is something that is difficult to achieve in an ordinary training scheme. And, at the same time, the patients relax.

Bo Ericsson notes that the *Vipers*, just like any other aspect of hospital play ther-

apy need to involve a hospital play therapist or other suitably trained person who keeps a professional eye on the activities which can otherwise merely be a game.

Rehabilitation from acquired brain damage is a matter of re-opening doors that have been damaged. This involves helping the patient to access the inbuilt computer in the brain which has already stored information about walking, speaking, reading, writing, counting, eating with a knife and fork, building models with Lego, cycling, jumping. And if children can play in rehabilitation, opening these doors again will be less complicated, Bo Ericsson observes.

"Children maintain high ambitions about re-opening the doors. They want to get their skills back and to be able to live as they used to. But trying to do this in rehab can sometimes generate blockages and the children can feel stressed by the therapy."

Although it may be easier for adults to feel motivated Bo Ericsson thinks that something on the lines of the *Vipers*, though with more adult aims, could be very effective in rehab training.

"There is a group of young adults – 18 to 25 – who have been involved in accidents and who have received inadequate rehab training. The most usual type of such patients has had an accident on a moped or a horse and received relatively modest injuries which, nevertheless, have led to some form of cognitive difficulty which is generally termed a 'hidden handicap'. This can involve amnesia, difficulty in planning ahead, behavioural problems and difficulties with impulse control. These patients can be difficult to rehabilitate in a 'voluntary' manner."

Dr. Ericsson is just about to retire after 35 years of working with neurological patients. During his professional life he has seen a striking development in his field from a time when young, seriously injured boys who had been involved in moped accidents were permanently committed to nursing homes to today's rehabilitation which achieves very gratifying results. Using current treatments and training methods, many patients can partially or wholly return to their "old" lives; or at least have much greater possibilities in their lives than was the case in earlier times.

"It is inspiring to witness young lads coming here in a seriously injured condition, having lost the power of speech and much else besides but who, after a great deal of training, end up more or less as they were prior to the accident", Bo Ericsson explains to me with a radiant expression.

*Inga-Lill Hagberg Desbois,
journalist and editor*

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The child's right to healing play

The last thing that children lose is the desire to play. Not even seriously traumatized children in the shadow of war and disaster can refrain from playing.

It is as though play is both a source of life and of survival and an opportunity to reflect on and comprehend what is fundamentally incomprehensible. Throughout our entire lives play can be active in our minds and can help us to achieve a sense of balance that may be lacking.

The child is driven by an inner developmental source. In its perceptions the child finds images of the future, and an imagination that knows no limits can often be a direct source of energy. A medical doctor who worked in famine-struck Congo told me recently about a relief consignment of food that failed to reach its destination in time. The situation was desperate. He had taken with him some toys, dolls, crayons and paper. This was all that he had to offer the exhausted and hungry children. When he presented the children with these items he was astonished to see them starting to play. In his view, the children survived because they were able to play and nourish themselves with the play materials.

Hospital play therapy is a legally protected right for children and youngsters in Swedish hospitals.* If one suffers from an accident or illness and needs hospital treatment one becomes vulnerable and dependent. One may have difficulty in understanding what has happened and one's need for a sense of being in control and secure can suddenly become very evident when it is no longer apparent. When the hospital staff inform the patient and talk about her or his situation, when they prepare the patient for treatment and answer questions, this helps to re-establish the sense of security and of participating in life that is so essential to us. Being able to *comprehend* our situation is a human necessity regardless of our age or of our cognitive, emotional or physical states.

Being able, in some degree, to comprehend, to see meaningfulness and to manage a situation is essential to everyone at all times. Age, functionality, maturity, reference framework, cultural and social opportunities are some of the parameters that we have to pay attention to in the meeting. At the children's hospital it is the hospital play therapists who have a special competence in this regard. The hospital play therapist at the hospital combines basic teaching competence with expertise in the field of special needs together with an extensive knowledge of different medical conditions, testing routines, treatments, physical examinations and so on. This means that the hospital play therapist has a contribution to make at many stages of a patient's contacts with the health service.

Some children show a particular fear of what is going to happen at the doctor's. They may be frightened of jabs, anxious about the hospital environment in general or about other concrete matters. In such cases it is usual for the hospital play therapist to help in the preparations so that the child, at its own pace, can acquaint itself (comprehend – embrace meaning – manage) with the process. In most cases this leads to the child daring to

* This right is established in two laws pertaining to health care and education: Hälso- och sjukvårdslagen 1982:763 19§ Skollagen 2a kap 4§ and 2b kap 4§.

cooperate so that the medical procedures can be carried out as planned. On some occasions, such as an acute situation, it is not possible to prepare the child. In such cases the hospital play therapist can help to ameliorate the child's situation by diverting its attention. Something as simple as blowing soap bubbles can suffice to enable a small child to forget its anxiety for the brief time needed to take a successful blood sample, though there are more spectacular possibilities too! Many nurses and doctors speak enthusiastically of what a skilful hospital play therapist can contribute in such a situation.

A third situation is that of the child that needs help to come to terms with alarming experiences in the hospital. Here the hospital play therapist can let the child work through what happened time and time again. Often this will take the form of letting a doll or a dinosaur undergo the treatment that the child experienced itself. In play, in conversation and in reflection – on the child's terms – what took place can become a calm and secure experience which gives the child the energy to move on in life.

Children in hospitals do not, in the first instance, play with other children. I often see children engrossed in their own play along side other patients. The drop-in playroom at the hospital is an oasis where children are free from treatments, examinations or having blood samples taken. One afternoon when hospital play therapy was closed for the day someone persistently knocked on the door. I was alone on the premises. All the other hospital play therapists had gone home. When I opened the door I came face to face with a nurse accompanying an angry and tearful little six-year-old boy. "I know that you are closed but he *has* to come in for a while". Accompanied by his little sister and his mother he entered the room. He showed me his elegant superman plaster dressing from having just given a range of blood samples. And he started to play. For twenty intensive minutes he played with the things he liked best in the room. After that he was done and he was ready to buy an ice-cream and go home. But playing was absolutely essential to him as a source of strength and recovery after a painful hospital experience.

Even what is most difficult can become comprehensible, meaningful and manageable. There are numerous examples of how children have coped with desperately difficult situations and been able to move on. The hospital play therapist can be a useful guide and counsellor to both parents and nursing staff. Many nurses and doctors make use of hospital play therapists as instructors and for teaching assignments. Besides medical knowledge, working with children in hospital also requires specialized, educational competence.

When work on the *All aboard!* project got under way it was natural that the Karolinska University Hospital should accept an invitation to take part. And it was natural that hospital play therapy should represent the hospital in the project.

In working on the development of the design for the educational room at the Vasa Museum there was a growing insight of the importance to children of

being addressed as capable collaborators, regardless of their functionality. Children always have the most important knowledge about their own development. The fact that, as an adult, one can help them to verbalize a process does not make it any less true that it is the child who holds the key to its own development. The very word development posits that there is an innate potential that can be realized. And the child is always primarily prepared to cooperate with its surroundings. The child has the skills, the desire to collaborate and the potential for development. The task of the adults is to use their resources to give the child space in which to grow. This is an image of collaboration and genuine creativity that has been an inspiration to our work in the hospital situation.

The second step was to transform the intentions that the room at the Vasa Museum manifests into a mobile, educational tool that can be used wherever the child happens to be. In our case the child is in the hospital. The *Vipers* have docked at the Astrid Lindgren Children's Hospital in Stockholm. We have now entered a trial phase to determine how best to use these treasure chests. The staff are being offered inspirational day-long courses and the patients are coming to terms with the *Vipers* step by step. The material of the *Vipers* has been beautifully produced and is of the highest quality both from a material and an aesthetic viewpoint. It gives rise to enthusiasm, curiosity and delight. As regards the Astrid Lindgren Children's Hospital the *All aboard!* project has given an opportunity to clarify, visualize and articulate much of the practical, and often hidden, skills that hospital play therapy represents.

Hospital play therapy while in hospital is a right. A right is the other facet of an obligation. We regard it as an obligation never to be content with what we "know" and "can do". Children develop, the role of the hospital changes, rehabilitation and health care break new ground. As educators and special-needs educators we have a particular responsibility for ensuring that a child perspective is maintained in the treatment of young persons in hospitals. The mutual process of knowledge and development that the various contributors to the project have been involved in is an excellent future format for how one can develop a "real" child perspective in collaboration with various experts and operations in society. Ask the children!"

Kent Holmström, Head of the Hospital play therapy Unit at the Astrid Lindgren Children's Hospital

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Encouraging joy in healing

Hospital play therapy should promote enjoyment, development and learning. The Viper contains materials that make this possible, hospital play therapist Ann Jacobson of the Astrid Lindgren Children's Hospital in Stockholm explains.

Most children who show an interest in the *Vipers* are in the typical discovery age between six and nine. Generally they get down on the floor and start by taking out the cannons.

"The cannons are very visible and they arouse curiosity. One can take them out of the ship and load them with paper balls. Playing with the cannons is very popular", Ann Jacobson explains.

One of the cannons can be fired with the help of a syringe. For children who have been frightened of jabs it can be helpful to play with syringes in this way. Firing this cannon also has a built-in rehab aspect in that one has to use muscles and fine motor ability in one's fingers to be able to release the shot.

Ann Jacobson is one of the people who thought up the idea of the *Vipers* and she appreciates the cleverly arranged training aspects. Though that is something that is primarily the province of the physiotherapist.

"It is true that part of the hospital play therapist's work is to prepare children mentally for various treatments or to work through alarming experiences in the hospital. But here in hospital play therapy's drop-in activities the children have a zone free of medical treatments. We do not talk about training here and the children that attend are free to do precisely what they choose. The *Viper* offers children a period of enjoyable play and delight in discovery. This is healing in a different way", Ann Jacobson maintains.

The symbolism of the Vasa is central to the aims of hospital play therapy. The ship itself is an example of a successful rehabilitation. The materials also provide inspiration for stories that can strengthen children.

"In the *Viper* there is a box of plaster moulds for making figures from the Vasa. Initially we did not understand the point of them and so we have not used them. But I have now attended a half-day course and I now realize what a treasure trove they represent. Each of the figures has a fantastic symbolic value. They speak of, potency, courage and strength. And who needs these qualities more than sick children?", Ann Jacobson says.

Ann Jacobson is looking forward to getting to know every aspect of the material but she emphasizes that this will take time.

"The *Viper* requires knowledge and, at present, I am busy communicating what I have learnt to my colleagues. It has also been clear that children need an educator who can help them in their investigations of the material. Accordingly, we are going to change our schedule so that there is a hospital play therapist in attendance for the *Viper* at all times."

One pleasant task in the future will be taking materials from the *Viper* to children who are too ill to attend hospital play therapy.

"There is a diver who can use a diving bell attached to an intravenous drip support. And one can play at being a marine archaeologist if a hospital play therapist lies down under a hospital bed and sends finds up from the seabed", Ann Jacobson explains with a sparkle in her eye.

Ann Jacobson encourages families where the child is well enough to leave

their hospital bed to visit the Vasa Museum and the *All aboard!* room there. She finds it a profound experience to visit the Vasa after working with the *Viper*.

"One moves from a small model to the enormous ship and one recognizes much of the detail from the *Viper*. When I last visited the museum there were several fantastic "reunions". It was as though I could say 'Hi, lion, I was playing with you today'."

Annika Wallin, journalist

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The *Vipers* in use. From bed to museum.

Robin Jacobsson finds a thimble in the Viper. This marks the beginning of several finds from the wreck, coin minting and dressing up. He investigates the material together with Mathias Mellstrand Sajnovic, who is almost the same age, and play-therapist Ann Jacobson.

Robin is nine years old and is being treated for leukaemia. He has just had a blood sample taken from his finger. Now he is looking at finds from the wreck of the Vasa.

"Why did they have one of these?"

He means the thimble. Ann, the hospital play therapist, explains that the crew took their sewing things with them to make or repair clothes on the trip to Poland.

"But they did not get very far", Robin adds.

He already knows a lot about the Vasa because he has played with the *Viper* several times and has heard the lion (with an MP3 player) telling the story of the Vasa.

"I was tired at the time. It was nice to just sit and listen", he explains.

How far did the Vasa actually get? Ann gets out the relief map showing how the ship left Stockholm. The wind got up. Robin recalls that all the cannons rolled over to one side.

"Yes, blub, blub, blub. The ship cap-sized and everything went to the bottom of the sea", says Ann.

This leads on to a chat about divers and salvaging the wreck. Robin can try his hand at being a marine archaeologist for a moment. He works in a sandbox which is covered with a cloth that has two openings in it. Robin pushes both hands through the openings and immediately senses some strange object.

"What is it?", he asks. It is a vertebra from someone's backbone. Robin has had numerous lumbar punctures. Ann shows him where on the bone the spinal fluid would have been.

Robin makes several other discoveries before finding a square coin that arouses his interest. Ann asks him if he would like to mint a coin himself. There are materials for making coins in the *Viper*.

"I'd like to do that today", Robin exclaims with enthusiasm.

At this moment Mathias turns up. He will soon be eleven and, like Robin, he is

very much at home in hospital play therapy after a succession of operations. He has always been interested in the Vasa and immediately picks out the cannons and starts shooting paper balls across the floor. He soon notices the work with making coins at the next table and immediately wants to try his hand at it. Ann helps him with the hammer.

"Now we shall see. I need to hit it really hard with the hammer", Mathias proclaims, giving it a hefty bash.

The coin is marked with a lion and initials. After that the metal has to be clipped and the edges have to be filed.

"Robin likes making things with his hands, but there are mostly girls in that corner of the playroom", his mother explains. She watches his work on the coin with great interest. This sort of craft activity interests boys too.

Robin spends a long time filing the edges of his coin until they are really smooth. Mathias is content with his own coin almost immediately.

"It feels good to have made a coin myself", he explains, turning his attention to the microscope in the *Viper*. This is connected to a computer screen and the idea is that one should be able to study finds from the wreck in detail. Though, if one prefers, one can look at one's own ear or inspect one's scalp. This is just as exciting.

"I can see that my hair is a bit sweaty", Mathias enthusiastically exclaims.

The Mathias plays a game of Memory and they try out the clothes that the ship's boys used to wear.

"They are rough and prickly", Robin notes.

Ann explains that the clothes are made of homespun just like in the Vasa's day.

After a while it is time for Robin to go home and Mathias has an appointment with another hospital play therapist. They have to stop playing. But next time they come to hospital play therapy's drop-in activities they want to play with the *Viper*.

"I want to make some more money", Robin explains.

"And I want to build a dock of Lego bricks round the ship", Mathias announces.

Annika Wallin, journalist

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A mix of culture – hard core for the brain

Learning to read and write is good but playing a musical instrument, looking at a painting or visiting a museum is just as important for the brain's development. And in the physician's new toolbox there are prescriptions for cultural experiences.

Gunnar Bjursell is professor of molecular biology and head of the Centre for Culture and Health at Gothenburg University. The Centre is a cross-sector research organization investigating the connection

between theoretical and practical applications which involve experiments in the real world in rehabilitation, care of the elderly and with schoolchildren, looking into how one can improve their daily lives by adding various experiences of the arts.

"Sometimes I am introduced in the following terms: Now Gunnar Bjursell is going to talk about the 'soft' questions. But then I insistently point out that these are the 'hard' questions."

Scientists today know a good deal about how the brain works and that cultural activities extend people's life-span. Most of our brain cells are already in place when we are born but recent research has shown that new cells can be added, though this requires the brain to be exercised.

"The brain needs stress. Just as muscle cells are stressed when we exercise, so we can stress brain cells, giving them multimodal stimulation by making music, doing crosswords and running. These reinforce each other and they stimulate us in different ways. We do not yet understand these mechanisms but the effect is known as transfer; the cognitive ability develops better when one does different things", Gunnar Bjursell explains.

The functions of the brain are complicated and different processes take place in the brain depending on what we are doing at the moment and what we are experiencing. Speaking and singing, for example, activate different parts of the brain, the speech centre and the music centre respectively. Music has different qualities and one can measure the reactions in the brain and interpret what one observes. For example, if music in a film makes you feel frightened there is a certain specific reaction; other types of music can increase the dopamine level while yet another type may stimulate the opiate receptors. When we come upon a partner, music can play an important role. A work by Mozart may give us a sense of spirituality, while other music may numb our feelings or reduce pain – as with music at the dentist's.

The sensory experiences that activate the brain most are cultural experiences, Gunnar Bjursell maintains. Quite simply, the brain becomes better at thinking if it is stimulated, activated and challenged. Gunnar Bjursell has been talking about the positive effect of culture on public health for a long period of time but it is only now, when quantifiable results supporting his views are available in scientific reports, that people are beginning to take serious notice. "The development has been like a popular political movement in Sweden and I have travelled and talked about culture and health in Norway and Finland too. Formerly the arts were regarded as something that was really only the province of a cultural elite, but cultural manifestations are important to everyone", Gunnar Bjursell explains. His Culture and Health project now receives support both from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Culture.

Many researchers are now interested in the connection between health, well-being and the arts both in preventive and in therapeutic situations. Increasing numbers of studies are showing a link between culture and health and in brain

research several processes have been identified that can lead to brain damage being repaired.

Experiences of the arts are also considered to be part of the healing process. Experiments have shown that it has been possible to reduce medication when patients have been able to listen to music. The results showed that this was not just a matter of psychological effects but also of biological ones. When we listen to music that we like, dopamine – the brain's reward system – is released as well as feel-good oxytocin that reduces pain and that this promotes healing of wounds and injuries, and lowers blood pressure at the same time that the level of stress-hormone cortisol is also reduced.

At clinics in several parts of Sweden, cultural events are now being prescribed by doctors in treating depressions and suchlike conditions. Certain illnesses can also be ameliorated by taking active part in cultural events; gymnastics for the brain leading to a healthier life. And research in Helsinki, where there is one of the world's leading centres for the study of the influence of the arts on the quality of life, has shown positive effects for stroke patients when they have been able to listen to music.

Asked whether it has been easy to convince doctors of the importance of the arts to health Gunnar Bjursell exclaims: "No! It has not. But doctors need to be encouraged to work with preventive medicine. Just consider what has been achieved in preventing tooth decay, for example. We inherit risks for health issues biologically, but the most widespread serious conditions like cancer, diabetes and obesity are also affected by our life-styles. And since we now know that we can help to prevent these and other conditions by making use of the arts, we have an obligation to make use of this knowledge. There are people who try and tease me by asking whether patients are expected to weave or listen to music on prescription, but the fact is that those yellow ordinations from the doctor act as a motivation", Gunnar Bjursell explains.

In Helsingborg, doctors write prescriptions both for singing in a choir and visiting the Sofiero palace gardens. And research in Scotland has shown that well-educated consumers of the arts have a life expectancy that is 15 years longer than that of poorly educated people who never take part in any cultural events.

"It is important for there to be dopamine rushes in the brain; it has to keep in training. And if we want to reduce ill health then the arts need to be part of the school syllabus. A good school day should have a rhythm to it with the three components of learning, making music and physical activity on the syllabus", according to Gunnar Bjursell.

"It is right that there is great emphasis on being able to read and write but these are 'technical' skills. They are not like the content of a book or like listening to music which trains the brain and develops our personalities. And this should preferably be a habit that we establish early in life, prior to adolescence, before children have developed prejudices about how they should relate to different manifestations of the arts. When children reach puberty their

brains are also busy with other matters."

Gunnar Bjursell considers that every child should learn a musical instrument and should sing a little everyday. "Any pop song will do because it is a question of doing something one likes doing oneself and that one regards as fun. In some schools the younger children are taught English with the frequent use of pop songs in that they give a direct stimulus and are perceived by the children as enjoyable as well as arousing curiosity about what the song is about and what the words mean. Singing pop songs becomes a good way of learning a language."

And it is precisely the fun element that is one of the components in the *All aboard!* project that attracts Gunnar Bjursell's support: "Fun and meaningful are terms that are increasingly important in society. If activities are really to be fun, then they have also to seem meaningful because otherwise one has no reason to repeat them. The brain benefits from being subjected to different types of environment and the *All aboard!* room is rich in offering different environments."

Gunnar Bjursell stresses that another important component of the project is accessibility: "That one alters one's perspective and makes it possible for everyone to take part. This is an inclusive way of removing the clinical aspect so that both children with and without functional impairments can take part on an equal footing."

Asked whether some arts activities are better than others Gunnar Bjursell replies: "No, it is the mixture that is important, everything from popular culture to Aristotle. Of course one should try to give children the keys to rather more advanced literature with more complex language, perhaps in beautiful episodes. This stimulates and gives all-round training and, sooner or later, the child will find her or his favourite artist or author".

He proposes culture coaches, for both children and adults, knowledgeable people who can help one to interpret and understand a painting, for example, something that gives one a deeper understanding and a richer cultural experience. "Carlo Derkert provides a model for this. He was a brilliant educator at the two national art museums, the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm and Moderna Museet. He could place himself on a chair and ask a group of ten-year-olds 'what do you see?' This always led to an interesting exchange and he showed the youngsters how to look at works of art in a more rewarding way", Gunnar Bjursell explains.

The arts are an integrative force which most people all over the world can relate to. Music, film, books and dance are universal means of expression. "We humans live with anxiety and apprehension", I often point out to people. "We fret about what people will say about us and whether we have said something that may be misconstrued and we worry about tomorrow. But listening to a good concert or looking at a beautiful painting can mean that we stop thinking about our situation for an hour or so and instead experience feelings of delight and of having enjoyed something."

"I can feel more alive after listening to a good concert than after a night's sleep." Forgetting for a moment what makes

us anxious and being able to reduce our stress level mentally and physically is an important part of the healing process. Being able to devote ourselves to something that we enjoy and that catches our interest makes it easier to find motivation for carrying on.

Asked whether there is any particular group that needs cultural experiences more than others Gunnar Bjursell answers with a smile: "No, but one can argue that the people born in the 1940s do not need to devote more time to the arts. My focus is on how we treat children. Not a single 12-year-old should leave school without being able to play an instrument, sing, have taken part in gymnastics or unable to read and write. The second important group comprises people who work in the health-care services and in factories where it is important for people to be able to relax and to charge their batteries, for example with a lunchtime concert at their workplace. The third group consists of elderly people who need to be stimulated to take part in dramatic performances, to sing in a choir or to listen to someone reading a book."

Gunnar Bjursell is, himself, a passionate consumer of the arts and he devotes a lot of time to different cultural manifestations. "I travel a great deal and I always try to attend a concert at the place I am visiting. Otherwise I like to listen to Bob Dylan, Michael Jackson and Puccini. I also play the guitar and piano a bit myself and all my family make music.

Inga-Lill Hagberg Desbois
journalist and editor

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Life skills as a way to growth The return of philosophy

When life radically changes following serious injury to the body from an accident this is often difficult for the person concerned to deal with. But, according to Professor Richard Levi, it also presents an opportunity for the person to mature and develop. In the field of rehabilitation medicine, a philosophical approach can help in seeking a new meaning in life and can provide a re-orientating dimension. In order to give patients existential guidance, nursing staff have been trained in philosophical dialogue in a project entitled Livskompetens [Life skills].

A taxi driver comes into the entrance hall of Södersjukhuset – one of Stockholm's leading hospitals – and finds a woman on crutches waiting just inside the doors. She hands the driver one of the crutches and takes hold of his arm and, a little unsteadily, they make their way through the doors. Where is she going? Presumably back within the horizons of her own world. But, depending on the extent of her injury she may not be returning to the same *life-world*, exactly the same circumstances as formerly. *Life-world* (from the

German *Lebenswelt*) can be regarded as the intimate world of a person's experience; a world that seems self-evident and totally natural – until something happens.

Now something has happened. There is a before and an after to a decisive event in life that can influence the rest of the person's existence and that may move the woman's horizons in several different directions. It is about this shifting of horizons and how it is dealt with in rehabilitation that I intend to speak to neurologist Richard Levi in the café at the Södersjukhuset in Stockholm.

Last year Richard Levi took up the post of Professor of Rehabilitation Medicine at Umeå University in the north of Sweden. Levi started his medical career with his friend and colleague Claes Hultling. Together they have gathered a great deal of expertise and insights in the field of rehabilitation medicine in the course of two decades, and have developed and publicized their findings. Richard Levi has shown that people's *life-worlds* often collide, not just with what has previously been taken for granted but also – and frequently – with the health system and rehab treatment.

"Sweden is a strange country", Richard Levi remarks. "We have a pretty adequate hospital service with appointments, doctors' rounds and suchlike, but almost no preparedness for the inner states that people have to deal with in conjunction with serious injuries. And so it is easy to rely on sleeping pills or to send patients to a psychologist or psychiatrist. I question this practice. The real issue is whether we should not, instead, regard reactions from people who have suffered serious injury as normal and adequate."

Richard Levi points to a gap between psychiatric practice on the one hand and experience from rehabilitation medicine on the other. Earlier attempts to integrate psychiatry or psychology into work with people with functional disabilities were not very successful.

"There is an extraordinary reluctance in psychiatry to treat people who are not well and have a very visible reason for not feeling well. The aim should not be to find a fault somewhere. This person's reaction is not pathological. The person is not thinking in a way that is wrong and that can be put right", Richard Levi explains.

So that if the patient's reactions can be regarded as universal and adequate then they should naturally be treated as such in rehab medicine. Accordingly, Richard Levi's conclusion is that rehab staff should develop their skills in seeing reactions as adequate signals and normal reactions and should therefore regard them as an invaluable aspect of the patient's efforts to re-orientate her *life-world*. The patient's reactions must not be seen or treated as an expression of deviant behaviour.

It is precisely this type of methodological development and scientific studies that Richard Levi is directing in his three-year *Life skills* project. Under the auspices of the project both medical and non-medical staff have received training in philosophical dialogue and existential guidance for and with patients.

"People who are cast into the existentially charged no-man's-land surrounding

life and death by a serious injury – and I say this somewhat cautiously because it can be misunderstood – discover a richer life that they value more highly than they did before the accident. When one's existence breaks down there are opportunities for growth and development. Many of us can live a whole life before we become aware of the fragility of existence. Much of life has run so smoothly that it is only now that one is suddenly faced by the question: "What is important?" In the context of a serious injury this is a very adequate reaction and so rehab staff should be prepared to meet this type of existential question", Richard Levi explains.

The *Life skills* project aims at giving the rehabilitation process a dimension that helps to create meaning and to facilitate reorientation.

"Our experience is basically positive and suggests that philosophy can be of real value in a medical situation", Richard Levi claims. "I don't believe in throwing philosophical aphorisms at people or choosing philosophical themes for a therapeutic attitude. I believe in a philosophical approach. Our notions are so limited by language. What is valuable about philosophy is that it can reflect on concepts and come up with something new."

He notes that, with regard to the body, it is normal to assume that the patient is the best person to give an accurate description of her or his symptoms. "The same thing should apply when we are trying to form an opinion of people's *life-worlds*. We focus on what the patient talks about without first interpreting it or psychologizing."

With the help of language it is possible to reflect on everything that has, so far, been a natural and self-evident part of our lives. Philosophers, for example, sometimes make an interesting distinction between *speaking* and *saying* as two different aspects of the same action. Paying greater attention to the act of speaking and less to that of saying is reminiscent of the artist who is more focused on the actual business of painting than on the picture as such, the work of art or the final result.

In a philosophical approach the result is not given in advance and there is no normative model for how life should be lived following an accident. The painting is not finished. We still do not know what the person is actually painting or what new elements are going to turn up, for they are individual people who will give expression to and establish their own *life-worlds*.

Richard Levi gives an example from a philosophical café that was part of the project. The adviser asked the question: "What is the point of a wheelchair?"

"Someone reacted very forcefully: 'What on earth sort of question is that? There is no point with a wheelchair. It is an appliance for an injury that cannot be repaired.' But there were other views too: insights into how society is constructed functionally, socially, humanly, and so on. A discussion focusing on wheelchairs can shift an accepted pattern as to what life should be like. The question is not a leading one and it can be answered in various ways. What is important to each person is to be able to continue their re-orientation", Richard Levi maintains.

Richard Levi and I are soon to part, he to join the stream of people penetrating further into the hospital and me to join the flow out through the doors. That is what we generally do. Without much reflection we follow streams of people, given patterns and well-used paths as far as we can. But if and when something in the contextual narrative falls apart and we no longer have an obvious answer to the questions of who, where, whither, then we are obliged to re-orientate ourselves, because we cannot live without a sense of meaning.

Göran Odbratt, author, journalist

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There are no special needs

Visiting museums is something that interests many children, young people and adults regardless of their status. But how do museum staff relate to a child with an impairment? Is it in the role of a personal assistant looking after a patient, or is it as a museum professional meeting a fellow citizen?

For many years, children and adults with impairment have been met with goodwill and compassion, being regarded as a group that needs assistance. Impairments have primarily been regarded as individual faults in relation to the human norm, weaknesses that can be wholly or partially compensated for by surgical treatments, clever aids or helpful people. But despite the fact that goodness has extended towards these people they have often been denied rights that are self-evident to other people. Well into the 20th century, there were many persons with impairments who lacked the right to attend school, the right to vote in elections or the right to bear children. These people were not taken seriously and lacked real influence.

In recent decades an environment-related perspective has been increasingly applied in connection with disability policy. Focus has been increasingly directed towards the obstacles which are constantly being created in the physical environment and in all sorts of operations. The fundamental idea is that society should be built with due regard to people's differences and not the other way round. With this way of thinking we can create solutions that are essential to 10 percent of the population, make life easier for 40 percent and are good for everyone. For far too long we have built society on the needs of the majority and then created special solutions for the other people. Museums are no exception. Persons with impairments are offered special exhibitions and educational program that are aimed specifically at them. It is important here to stress that it is by no means forbidden to continue creating collections of educational materials for children with learning difficulties or to build tactile displays specifically for persons with impaired vision. But one should be aware that these are a form of special solution

and that the long-term aim should be to provide universal solutions that work for everyone. Offering guided tours of a museum display with sign language is not a special solution, nor is guiding in English. This type of service gives visitors the opportunity to enjoy the same content as other people.

There is a tendency both in the museum sector and in the world at large to regard persons with impairments as a group for whom one should, from time to time, do something in the same way that one places a focus on some theme that has not been in the public eye for some time. "We have not had an exhibition about food traditions for some time, nor anything for persons with learning difficulties either. Perhaps it's time we did something about it?" But persons with impairments cannot and must not be regarded as a group. Rather, it is a matter of different types of human needs. People with functional disabilities are not more, neither are they less, interested in Sweden's history as a European power or the art of Picasso than persons without such impairments. An example that illustrates this group-thinking is the organization that installs a fire alarm for persons with hearing reduced in the toilet. In itself this is a good idea. But sometimes this alarm is only installed in the wheel-chair toilet and there is nothing to suggest that a person who is deaf will necessarily choose to use the spacious wheel-chair toilet. This indicates very clearly how wrong things can turn out when group thinking takes over.

In the year 2000 a national disability policy entitled *Från patient till medborgare* [From patient to citizen] was adopted in Sweden. The policy, encompassing all areas of society, is to be realized in its entirety by 2010. The title indicates the shift from a patient/care perspective to the citizen's perspective. Disability policy has been much strengthened by a relatively new international document, the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. This may well be the most important milestone ever with regard to disability policy. It presents us with a clear structure for continuing the work to achieve equal rights and opportunities for persons with impairments. The convention has been adopted by the UN General Assembly and has been signed and ratified by Sweden. It came into force in Sweden in January 2009.

The global guidelines that had hitherto been agreed and that formed the basis for the Swedish policy document were the *UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities* from 1993. One important difference between the convention and the standard rules is that the former is legally binding on countries that have ratified it. Every fourth year, beginning in 2011, Sweden has to report to the UN on how work in fulfilling the terms of the convention is progressing. Parallel with this report, the organizations representing persons with impairments Sweden will be able jointly to submit their own report on how the work is proceeding. Sweden has also signed a so-called facultative protocol which enables ordinary citizens to submit complaints directly to the UN if they consider that their rights have been infringed.

The interest shown in the convention is partly due to a general increase in the focus on issues pertaining to human rights in society. The *All aboard!* project is topical in that it is wholly in accord with the UN conventions on the rights of the child and the rights of persons with impairments. Thus the *All aboard!* project has become an important hub of expertise and a source of inspiration to other museums. At the same time, the project has been faced with a problem that disability policy itself struggles with. It is a widely held view that an operation or activity, an information system or a physical environment in which persons with impairments can take part, is to be regarded as a special operation which is only, or at least primarily, directed at persons with impairments. Seminars and projects frequently bear titles like "Museums for all", "Culture for all" and suchlike. The word "all" is readily understood as meaning "particular people with special needs". The same applies to the "all" in the *All aboard!* project. Throughout the duration of the project there has been an emphasis on the fact that it is directed at all children, whether they have impairments or not. Despite this, it is evident that, for people still caught up in an older tradition of compassionate care it is still easy to regard the whole operation as being a "disability project".

But *All aboard!* has not been about creating special activities for particular children with particular needs. The very ethos of the project is that it is aimed at each and every child.

In point of fact, there are no special needs, merely human ones.

Carl Älfvåg, Director General
Mikael Wahldén, Senior Adviser
Handisam – Swedish Agency for Disability Policy Coordination

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The power to classify

It is often claimed that regarding people with disabilities in a special way is a matter of ignorance. This assumes that injustices can be eradicated through information. But there are people who are critical of this view and who prefer to describe it in terms of power and conflicts of interest.

The explanation is popular everywhere. If one merely informs people about disabilities, they will be kind and do the right thing. Politicians and government bodies as well as those organizations that represent the disabled often maintain that if one spreads enough information about wheel-chair Braille notices then all premises will become accessible and everything will be readable by everyone. But who is to pay for this? What happens if someone gives priority to something else?

"One can't ensure that one is treated in the way that one wants just by informing people", Jessica Lucic comments on the public mobility service which she desperately tries to avoid but sometimes has to use. She explains that drivers often try to

get her to sit in the front seat although she has just told them that she wants to sit in the back. She asks if the seats at the back are already taken. They are not, but the driver still insists on her sitting in the front.

"It doesn't matter what I say. They do what they think is best anyway. I want to sit in the back to avoid having to talk to the driver because I know from experience that I shall find myself in a situation that I don't want to be in. I have been questioned so many times about how I lost my sight and how I cope with life. And I have to listen to people telling me how clever I am to be able to manage the seatbelt without help. It makes me feel like an object."

Jessica remembers one occasion that was different. The driver presented himself, said which taxi company he was driving for and explained that the car was 25 metres away. "Do you want to hold my arm or what do you want me to do", he asked and Jessica was flabbergasted.

"What a driver, I thought. He asks me how I want things to be done. So simply and politely. It felt as though I was being treated as an equal."

In a letter to the municipality's mobility service Jessica explained that she is tired of drivers who, without being asked, take her bag and try to put on her seatbelt. The authority replied that it was strange that things should work out so badly because all of the drivers have attended a course and they also have a handbook which states that they must introduce themselves and contains guidelines for their behaviour.

"Sometimes I pay for a normal taxi and there is a huge difference. In such cases I do not experience any problems. Those drivers do what I ask them to do. I can give them instructions and they do not question them."

Jessica thinks that it is contradictory that she should be treated so differently in these situations. People who drive standard taxis have received no special training for assisting disabled passengers unlike those who drive for the mobility service. Yet it is when she takes a standard taxi that she receives the best treatment and is made to feel like an equal. Her conclusion is that in one situation she is seen as a customer while in the other she is regarded as someone who is handicapped, an object. Or as she puts it: "like parcel freight".

At the hospital where Jessica Lucic works as a psychologist she has also had reason to wonder about how her blindness is regarded in relation to her professional position. Her guide dog has its basket in the office where she meets clients for psychological evaluation and it has only happened twice in four years that a patient has refused to sit in the same room as the dog.

"Many of my patients are from Bosnia and the Middle East and it is common for them to say that they are frightened of dogs. When I explain that this is a special dog and that she is not going to get up and approach them, they agree to have the meeting in the same room. I am calm and matter-of-fact and this probably helps when I am informing them. But, above all, I am in a position of power. I am in my professional role and I am at a hospital.

Many of these patients come from countries where authorities are held in awe."

But when Jessica, as a private person with a guide dog, wants to eat in one of the town's restaurants things are not as straightforward. "Restaurant owners here are often people born outside Scandinavia and I know that they are often frightened of dogs. And so I give the same information as I do at work, that the dog will lie down and not disturb anyone, and that less than one percent of the population suffers from a serious dog allergy and that the National Food Administration has made an exception to allow guide dogs in restaurants. But whatever I say is to no avail and I am almost never allowed into the restaurant. I conclude that this must have to do with a power shift. I am at a disadvantage and in such a situation, giving the same information about the guide dog that I give in my professional capacity does not help."

One person who has made a detailed study of processes in which great credence is given to information about disabilities is sociologist Agneta Hugemark. For several years she monitored the development of the new Stockholm neighbourhood known as Hammarby Sjöstad. "A spearhead for accessibility for people with functional disabilities" was what the politicians claimed in advance for the new neighbourhood. A committee to advise on accessibility was formed with representatives from the organizations that represent the disabled but, in the end, the neighbourhood was just as good or just as bad as any other new neighbourhood in terms of accessibility.

"Accessibility conflicted with child safety, for example, since they wanted to avoid having garbage lorries in the yards and this meant longer walks to the rubbish bins. The problem could have been solved but this would have cost more money. Financial considerations are in many cases, perhaps in most cases much the most important factor behind poor accessibility and this is no longer merely a question of information", Agneta Hugemark maintains.

Another person who is critical of the idea of a strategy relying on information is Jan Wiklund. He is an environmental activist and works at *Synskadades Riksförbund*, Sweden's association for the blind and partially sighted. He has developed his ideas in a book entitled *Demokratins bärare* [Upholders of democracy].

"Information is perfect if one wants to avoid having to deal with conflicts. And there are cultural, organizational and class reasons for wanting to avoid conflicts. Sweden is a country in which agreement is extraordinarily highly valued and where conflicts are considered shameful. Many organizations in Sweden are economically dependent on the state and they do not dare to bite the hand that feeds them. Organizations are dominated by people whose incomes come from information of one sort or another and they tend to believe that information is the most important thing there is. In view of this it is not surprising that talks of ignorance and the need for information overshadows the fact that disabilities are often a matter of conflicting interests".

Finn Hellman, journalist

Adaptation is not enough

Crip theory questions norms regarding functionality. So it is not enough for the arts merely to be accessible. Their task is to transform the public domain into a multifunctional and multidimensional commons.

Most people today would agree that the arts should be accessible to everyone; and that they are a public responsibility. The traditional medical explanations, that ascribed an absence of participation in the arts on the part of disabled individuals and that regarded rehabilitation and treatment as the solution have long since disappeared. Since the 1950s a new perspective on people with functional disabilities has developed, and with it, explanations as to what it is that gives rise to these disabilities. Instead of trying to explain the individual's difficulties in functioning, it is society's functionality that is emphasized. In the "social model" it is the faults in society that represent the core question. The reasons for a person's disabilities are to be found in the way society is constructed. And accessibility is part of the solution.

Sweden's *National Plan for Disability Policy* is, perhaps, the best result of a social model that one can find in Sweden; at least as regards political decisions. When the Swedish Parliament adopted it in 2000 this was a clear indication of how far we have come since the time when there were special institutions for the disabled and they were subject to exclusion. This change in attitude can also be seen in the everyday world. The Vasa Museum is working at making both its physical premises and its information and communications accessible. The *All aboard!* project links accessibility with questions about democracy and human rights and is expanding this perspective to include its educational activities.

There has been a shift in attitudes towards functional obstacles and the task of adapting society to everyone's needs is in full swing. This is naturally essential if the arts are ever to be accessible to all. The trouble is that this will not suffice in itself. Yet another step in our thinking is required. Accessibility to exhibitions can, at best, give opportunities for enjoying the experiences and life that are reflected in the exhibitions. When what is illuminated exclusively reflects "normality's" perspective on the world, people with disabilities merely experience confirmation of their alienation; while people without such disabilities are affirmed in their normative position.

Crip theory is one of a group of explanatory models that turns its gaze from the categorized groups and, instead, questions and studies the norms that created these categories. Within this norm-critical tradition one finds, for example, "feminist studies", "queer theory" and "critical white studies". These theories all question norms that classify people according to gender, sexuality and race, claiming that these characteristics are constructed or created by the society in which we live. In the same way crip the-

ory questions norms that divide society according to functionality into people with functional disabilities and "able" or "functionally normal" people. Crip theory turns away from the well-defined people on the margins of society and focuses, instead, on the invisible mass of people who are regarded as "normal".

The concept of crip theory was launched by Robert McRuer in 2006. McRuer is a professor of English at George Washington University. He has published a book entitled *Crip Theory - Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* in which he gives his view of functionality seen with the aid of a queer-perspective. His work follows in the footsteps of a handful of other American scholars who are interested in norms and functionality. One of these is Rosemarie Garland Thomson, Professor of Women's Studies at Emory University in Atlanta. She has coined a term to describe the ideal of perfect functionality both as regards democracy and the market economy. People who have disabilities are regarded as a part of the population but as irredeemably different and therefore the subject of special measures. Western democracy links its ideals to characteristics like independence, self-government and self-determination. People with functional disabilities are, on the other hand, seen as dependent and incompetent.

The arts can, and should, be used for questioning the normative world-view and its privileged position at the same time that they make room for and affirm people with experience of functional disabilities. This can be achieved, for example, by refraining from showing off the tragic or comic anecdotes that are so often used to represent the narratives of our lives. Living with a disability is not traumatic, exotic or even especially exciting. People who have personal experience of disabilities cannot be adequately portrayed in a series of anecdotal events but in their everyday lives. A person with cystic fibrosis who took part in the Museum of World Culture's exhibition *Tänk om - berättelser om funktionshinder* [Rethink - narratives of disability] replied disarmingly to yet another question about her limited life expectancy: "Perhaps forty years is a normal life expectancy for me".

Another way of shaking up our idea of normality is to show how people with disabilities can reject normality; that the desirability of privilege can be questioned and alternative positions can be elevated in value. In Jona Elfdahl's film *Paria* the main character aims a direct threat at the normative hegemony. "Tonight you are going to die and contemptuous laughter is the final thing you will hear because now we are on our way, we cockroaches, black rats, plague infested, we idiots." This open resistance and threatening defiance is not consistent with an image of the well-meaning *normat* and Elfdahl's imaginative counterpart. It has to be dealt with in a different fashion - by denying or by considering.

Regardless of the general reaction it is, not least, important to show alternative narratives of life, positions and proud identities so that people with disabilities are given the possibility of shaping and evaluating their own lives based on their own perspective. For people with disabili-

ties are not marginal people. They have always been and continue to be a part of the population that lives within the social structure. The problem is that normality's grip on them makes them strive to imitate "normality" rather than being what they really are: self-determining, conscious subjects.

Susanne Berg, manager, Independent Living Institute, writer

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Examples of functional developments and innovations

see www.allaombord.se

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Contact information

Bookings for educational programmes, guided tours in sign language and price information.

Contact: Booking Office: +46 (0)8-519 548 70

Information on contents and methodology of educational programmes and weekend activities.

Contact: Museum educators at the Vasa Museum at undervisningen.vasamuseet@maritima.se

Magasinet: Here you can download your own copy of the All aboard! publication www.allaombord.se (text-to-speech function)

Website:

About the project: www.allaombord.se

Further information about the educational activities at the National Maritime Museums.

Contact: Torbjörn Ågren, Head of Educational Unit at Swedish Maritime Museums +46 (0)8-519 558 03, 0733-60 42 94 torbjorn.agren@maritima.se

For further information about the concept of a "Philosophy of Access" and the "Salutogenic Museum" and the development of the project. Contact: Carina Ostenfeldt, Project Manager responsible for the concept +46 (0)701-10 56 13 carina.ostenfeldt@gmail.com





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