

REPORT ON VISIT TO SWEDEN UNDER AN EXCHANGE BETWEEN THE  
*ROYAL ACADEMY OF LETTERS, HISTORY & ANTIQUITIES* (SWEDEN) AND  
*AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF HUMANITIES*

Mike Smith

Centre for Historical Research, National Museum of Australia

The primary purpose of this trip was to attend an international conference in Stockholm (*Resilience 2008*, 14-17 April 2008). However, I used the opportunity to broaden my knowledge of Scandinavia and to visit a range of museums and institutions in both Sweden and Denmark. My Fellowship in Sweden was from 13-18 April, mostly in Stockholm, with a side visit to Uppsala. Carl Folke and Sverker Sörlin, both at the *Stockholm Resilience Centre*, sponsored my visit and I thank them for their hospitality.

During my time in Sweden, the External Relations Officer of the *Royal Academy*, Ms Helene Carson, was efficient and helpful. Because I arrived in Stockholm on a Sunday, the *Royal Academy* put me in Hotel Örnköld for one night before transferring me to their guest flat in Gärdet. Although only a small inner-city hotel, Hotel Örnköld is a rather wonderful art nouveau building directly behind the *Kungliga Dramatiska Teatern* (Royal Dramatic Theatre). The guest flat in Gärdet is conveniently situated (with respect to the T-banna and the shopping precinct along Valhallavägen) and forms part of an interesting suburban garden precinct dominated by 1930s modernist apartment blocks.

(1) I attended the RESILIENCE 2008 conference at Stockholm University (Resilience, Adaptation and Transformation in Turbulent Times, April 14-17) organised by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and the Stockholm Resilience Centre. This meeting over four days represents the first major international conference on resilience, a body of ecological theory developed in the 1970s and now widely applied to the analysis of interactions between people and environment.

(2) As part of the Resilience 2008 meeting, I was able to visit the recently formed *Stockholm Resilience Centre*, based at *Stockholms Universitet*. The SRC aims to provide an international and interdisciplinary hub for social and ecological systems research. Although the SRC was inaugurated in May 2007, *Resilience 2008* was in effect the international launch of the new centre and I was pleased to be able to attend.

(3) IHOPE ('An integrated history of people on Earth') led by Carl Folke and Sverker Sörlin is one of several international research programs that the *Stockholm Resilience Centre* supports and coordinates. It is the only one in its stable of research programs that explicitly takes an archaeological or historical perspective, aiming to look at 'regime shifts, scales and sources of reorganisation in social-ecological systems' over decades, centuries and millennia.

- This fellowship allowed me to participate in two IHOPE panels at the Resilience conference – at one of which I presented a paper outlining Australian initiatives in integrating archaeological and historical data with climate science and Quaternary science perspectives.
- I was also able to meet key members of the IHOPE secretariat including: Carl Folke and Sverker Sörlin, Robert Costanza (University of Vermont), Kathy Hibbard (National Centre for Atmospheric Research), Carole Crumley (University of North Carolina), Sander van der Leeuw (Arizona State University).

- My participation in the Stockholm meeting was strategic, as it has laid the groundwork for further international collaboration between the SRC and Australian scholars in history, environmental history and archaeology: One concrete outcome is a follow-up IHOPE workshop in Australia planned for early 2009 to deepen collaboration with Australian archaeologists and historians.

(4) I was also able to spend a day in Uppsala visiting Swedish colleagues in the *Afrikansk och jämförande arkeologi* (African & Comparative Archaeology program), *Institutionen för arkeologi och antik historia, Uppsala universitet*. This visit was hosted by Prof. Paul Sinclair (a leading Africanist archaeologist) and Dr Kjell Knutsson (a specialist in Mesolithic hunter-gatherer societies in Sweden and elsewhere).

- I was able to lay the groundwork for future collaborative research comparing time-series archaeological records from southern and central Africa, Australia and South America and for further dialogue on the most appropriate methodologies for this line of analysis.
- I was able to meet many of the PhD or post-doctoral scholars working in the department – including Thomas Eriksson, Helena Knutsson and Lorraine Swan.
- I presented a research seminar on ‘*Australian Deserts - An Archaeology of Dispersal and Colonisation*’ with shorter presentations on ‘*Time-series analysis of archaeological records from Australian drylands*’ and on the ‘*The archaeology of the last millennium in Central Australia*’ - providing a portfolio of recent research in Australian Deserts.

I am grateful to Paul and Kjell for the time they took to show me around Uppsala, including Linnaeus’ house and garden.

(5) Museums in Stockholm. The *Historiska Museet* (National Museum of Antiquities) was closed on the day that I was able to visit. I was more fortunate with the *Vasamuseet*. This superb museum uses the wreck of the *Vasa* – a 17<sup>th</sup> century man-of-war that sank in Stockholm harbour on its maiden voyage – as the centrepiece of a fine social history museum providing a window on life in Sweden in the 1600s. As a museum curator I was impressed by the careful integration of objects, content, design and public programs in the *Vasamuseet*.

(6) The opportunity to visit Sweden, courtesy of this Fellowship, also provided an opportunity to spend a little time in Denmark. At the *University of Copenhagen*, I visited the *Centre for Australian Studies* and the *Centre for Ice and Climate*. In the *Centre for Australian Studies*, I gave a guest lecture and class in a Masters-level course on ‘Australian deserts, archaeology, and the national imagination’. At the *Danish Nationalmuseum*, I presented a research seminar on ‘*Australian Deserts - An Archaeology of Dispersal and Colonisation*’ to the staff of the *Greenlandic Research Centre (SILA)*. I was also able to visit the *Louisiana Museum of Modern Art* (to see an exhibition comparing the works of impressionist painters Cezanne and Giacometti), *Kronborg Castle* (a renaissance building castle now on the UNESCO World Heritage list) and the *Vikingskibsmuseet* (a museum with interesting parallels in design and interpretation to the *Vasamuseet*).

I am most grateful to the Swedish Academy for facilitating this visit and was impressed by the quality of Scandinavian museums and the research initiative reflected in the *Stockholm Resilience Centre*. This visit has also laid the groundwork for further collaboration with the IHOPE program at the SRC and with archaeologists at the *University of Uppsala*. My only regret was the lack of any direct contact with the *Royal Academy*.