Corporate Museums, Memoralization and Organizational Memory

Introduction
History matters to organisations and has received increasing attention among researchers (e.g. Kieser, 1994; Clark & Rowlinson, 2004). History matters not only in the sense that organisations may develop along historically embedded paths (Teece et al. 1997; Schreyögg et al. 2003) and that strategic change processes can only be understood in their historical context (Pettigrew, 1990). Organisations and their members actually relate to corporate history in everyday life by remembering past events (Ericson, 2006), telling stories about them, or purposefully relating to history in order to gain legitimacy for a specific strategic agenda (Brunninge, 2009). This may involve preserving the memory of past events, rediscovering parts of corporate history that have already been forgotten or deliberately forgetting and concealing elements of the past that do not fit with contemporary strategic agendas (Karlsson, 1999; Brunninge, 2009). Corporate history reflects what the organization wishes to memorialize and, in effect, what memories which should be preserved and promoted. Sometimes references to the past occur on an individual level as a consequence of members’ existential need of remembering the past (Karlsson, 1999). In other cases however, references to the past are made in an institutionalised manner on an organisational level, e.g. when a company celebrates an anniversary or publishes a corporate history (Lundström 2006). The proposed paper will deal with a specific form of such institutionalised remembering namely corporate museums. We want to explore how processes of institutionalised remembering and forgetting takes place in corporate museums through a narrative lens where issues such as whose voice is heard, what stories are told and who is editing those stories, are
interpreted. The paper thus aims at contributing to research on organizations and history by paying attention to corporate museums as a specific form of history use in organizations.
Organizations and memorialization

Historians have shown increasing interest in investigating what history means to contemporary actors and how different communities construct conceptions of the past (e.g. Schulze, 1987; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1992). By producing narratives of history, human beings pursue a range of different purposes. The research on interpretations of history has proven to be helpful in understanding diverse issues such as the formation of collective identities (Zander, 1997; Trenter, 2000), or the creation of legitimacy for visions of the future (Karlsson, 1999). In a functional sense, one may talk of actors more or less purposefully “using” history (Karlsson, 1999; Aronsson, 2004). Elaborating on different conceptions of history in the Soviet Union and Russia, Karlsson (1999) found that references to collective history can serve a variety of different purposes that he labels uses of history. Apart from a scientific treatment of history, aiming at constructing a fair and trustworthy account of history using established scientific methods, he identified four other uses of history. All human beings have an existential need to remember in order to establish and maintain a connection from the present to the past where they come from. In addition, history may be instrumentalized for political purposes. Karlsson (1999) talks of the ideological and the moral uses of history, where the former refers to using historical examples in order to gain legitimacy for one’s ideas and the latter relates to rediscovering forgotten aspects of history, reviving old ideas. Finally, the non-use of history, i.e. refraining from remembering the past or purposefully omitting aspects of history that are inconvenient in relation to a specific agenda, is in itself an important way of treating history. Different political groups choose to emphasize historical events that support their political agendas or serve as examples for an envisioned future. This includes not only referring to those events that are considered as useful models, but also deliberately not referring to events and persons that are considered as bad examples. Similarly, referring to a Swedish context, Zander (2001) found debates between different political camps struggling for the “right” interpretation of Swedish history and the “proper” models among historical Swedish kings and politicians. These debates were not primarily oriented towards the past, but rather aiming for future-oriented agendas. Politicians understood that visions for the future in one sense or the other related to conceptions of the past. These could serve either as positive examples legitimizing a certain agenda or as warnings encouraging people to move into a new direction. It is important to note that the use of history is by definition selective. History is complex and comprises a
multitude of elements. It is not given per se what elements are important, what elements should be concluded and how these elements relate to each other. Actors telling stories about the past need to make choices what to include and what to exclude when constructing history. Such choices can be made more or less consciously, in some cases they are done without particular intentions; in other cases they may serve a specific purpose. Schulze (1987) compares history to a quarry where, metaphorically speaking, actors pick selected stones, tool them until they fit their purposes, and discard others. This implies that competing histories relating to the same events may exist and that conceptions of history can change over time.

Contrary to communicative memories, which are often short-lived, maybe lasting for one generation, and are based on the accounts of individuals who were alive at the time, collective memory comprises acts of memorialization covering the texts, ceremonies, images, architectures, and monuments mapped out to memorialize important events. Collective memories perpetuate, immortalize and commemorate shared history, identity, and community and they can take on new meanings as they are presented in new social and political contexts and to give new meanings to those contexts (Kansteiner, 2002). Cultural memories such as museums, monuments, films and other memorials then have the power to transform the way in which both the past and the present are conceptualized.

Nora (1998) points out that collective memory often relates to specific places, events or issues that he calls places of memory. In this context place is metaphorically meant and does not have to refer to a physical place. It might well be an event like the fall of the Berlin Wall, representing the fall of Communism or a document like the Magna Charta representing the breakthrough of constitutionalism and parliamentarism. This does not rule out that also places play an important role for collective memory, be it historical sites or places and institutions that have been created in order to cultivate remembering, such as monuments (Aronsson, 2004), archives (Nora, 1998) or museums (Lundström, 2006). Corporate museums as representatives of the latter category will be the focus of this paper.

Although the examples of purposeful reference to history refer to nations and states, the step to organizations is not far. Organizations are inherently political entities (Cyert & March 1963/1992). Pettigrew (1985) thus describes organizations as political systems characterized by different groups politicking around issues. Against this background, parallels between the use of history in politics and in organizations may be a useful means of studying
organizational dynamics. There have also been recurrent calls for historical approaches in the study of organizations from organization theorists such as Zald (1993; 2002) and Burrell (1997). However, few scholars have addressed how organizational actors refer to the past. Among the notable exceptions are Chreim’s (2005) work on change management in a Canadian bank, Lundström’s (2006) dissertation on the Swedish telecom company Ericsson, and Ericson’s (2006) study of how a Swedish consumer cooperative deals with its ideological heritage. Lundström (2006) draws upon Karlsson’s five uses of history, adding a sixth one that is more management oriented, namely the marketing use of history. Brunninge (2009) analyses how managers at two Swedish multinationals make purposeful reference to history in strategy processes.

Corporate museums
While history is alive in many organizations in the sense that it is remembered, referred to and reconstructed in everyday storytelling, few arrangements make corporate history as tangible as a museum. Stigliani & Ravasi (2007) traced the origins of corporate museums back to the early 20th century when companies in North America and Europe started to collect and preserve tangible records of their history in a systematic manner. Over time, the idea of corporate museums became increasingly popular. So far they have received relatively little attention among management scholars. Among the exceptions are Lundström’s (2006) accounts on Ericsson’s memorial room as well as Stigliani & Ravasi’s (2007) cases of three corporate museums in Italy.

Corporate museums are means of constructing narratives of corporate history, that is storytelling systems (Boje 1991). In this sense, museums are, to various degrees, co-creators of organizational narrative identities, which are “complexes of in-progress stories and story-fragments, [always] in a perpetual state of becoming, and suffused with power” (Brown 2006). As storytelling infuses organizational life with meaning (Gabriel, 2000) and forms a basis for sensemaking between different groups of stakeholders (Boje, 1991), the stories told or not told in a corporate museum are an important part of the sensemaking processes in an organisation. In order to understand construction of narratives in the context of a museum, a number of questions need to be asked. Whose voices are heard? Who is editing the narrative in a museum and how is the museum integrated with the organization?

Nissley & Casey (2002) put special emphasis on organized forgetting that is promoted through the things not addressed in corporate museums. An important reason why corporate
museums make interesting starting points when analyzing organizations is that the museums may give an extended overview of how core stories in corporations are managed over time and how histories of codex and rituals are constructed and textualized into ‘normalities’. Yet, as pointed out by Nissley and Casey (2002), collective memories of organizations are far from storages of ‘objectified truth’. Rather, organizations may opt for to ‘selectively remember or forget’, and that ‘what is remembered or what is forgotten shapes an organization’s identity and image’ (p. 44). That is, corporate museums may implicitly pose challenging questions how ‘normalities’ are perpetuated and how collective histories and the maintenance of familiar/al knowledge are maintained. Corporate museums can be seen as reservoirs of organizational history, including products, prototypes, photographs and other kinds of historical documents. Also, it represents a visual representation of corporate identity that might aid members of the organization to build and preserve what the company is essentially about (Ravasi and Schultz, 2006) and also inspire designers and marketers in the future product development. However, corporate museums do not serve as passive information channels of historical facts but constitute on the contrary an action-oriented discourse which is formed in an exchange between construction and function. How organization history is confirmed, rewritten, continued or perhaps erased through museums is of interest to both internal and external stakeholders, including researchers.

**Corporate memorialization and memory**

Museums are sites of collective memory that create connections between people and the past. Corporate memorialization takes different rhetorical approaches to constructing the past; the story they present is one take on history. However, memorials are not static, and can be read differently by the individuals who view them, that is, memorials will prompt different memories depending on space and time. The understanding of time is related to a specific encounter in a specific place. This opens up for a dynamic perspective where time/place is central for the interpretation of the memorial elements that are staged in a corporate museum. Thus, the visitors’ understandings of a tour in a museum is always in the making.

The notion of ‘double-voicing’ is also relevant to our study. To Bakhtin, double voicing characterizes all speech, since no discourse is isolated but is always part of a greater whole. In addition, discourse by necessity is drawn from the language world which preceded it (Bakthin, 1986). The way dialogical change works is that past events and actions are constantly recycled to form context and to be re-invented to current circumstances and needs:
Even past meanings, that is those born in the dialogue of past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all) - they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue. At any moment in the development of the dialogue there are immense, boundless masses of forgotten contextual meanings, but at certain moments of the dialogue's subsequent development along the way they are recalled and invigorated in renewed form (in a new context). Nothing is absolutely dead: every meaning will have its homecoming festival. The problem of real time" (Bakthin, 1986, p.170).

Ben Rampton (1998) builds on Bakthin's concept of double voicing as he elaborates on a technique and performance to use someone else's discourse (or language) for one's own purpose by inserting a different semantic intention into it. Rampton calls this 'code crossing’ or just ‘crossing’ and concerns “the use of a language which isn’t generally thought to ‘belong’ to the speaker […] [and] involves a sense of movement across quite sharply felt social or ethnic boundaries” (Rampton, 1998, p. 291). One discourse can then appear to be holding two voices, or “semantic intentions” (Rampton, 1998, p. 304). Sometimes the voices can harmonize with each other but in other uses the speaker may “introduce into the original discourse a semantic intention directly opposed to the original one” (Rampton 1998, p. 305, quoting Bakthin, 1984). Code crossing also allows for tampering with the identity of the original speaker. In organizational discourse, double-voiced discourse may be used to represent past and future voices and their function as translators between organizational praxis and practices and situated voices. The members can then “discursively move between a single situated utterance and organizational practices, implicating individual identity as they describe what language choices are appropriate for which roles” (Anderson, 2005, pp. 66-67).

As past events and actions are recycled, historical representation and memorialization in corporate museums can be steered by interest groups who need to define a usable past – and memories. Whether as a corporate cultural manager, as in the Vox case, or as an archeologist, as in the Smalltown case, the manners in which the events of the past are told, remembered, and become objects of museal representation. can either bolster corporate memory and tradition or question status quo by providing an alternative past.

Methods
This paper is derived from a larger empirical study about corporate museums. In this particular paper the empirical accounts are based on the study of corporate museums in two Swedish-based organizations. These organizations are chosen because, even though they have
some certain characteristics that makes them similar to each other (e.g., well-established, product oriented, international players) they differ substantially in how they manage and make use of their corporate museums which makes them interesting to contrast with each other. We have conducted interviews with key people working with the museums, as well as other organizational members to learn about how the museums are ‘used’ in the corporation and beyond. We have also made ‘guided tours’ where we have had the possibility to listen to the stories they tell in the museums as well as asking questions about why and how these stories have been built up. All interviews as well as ‘guided tours’ have been recorded. Other historical ‘artifacts’ such as annual books, films and marketing material has also been interpreted as to get a deeper understanding of how history is ‘made use’ of in the organizations.

**Empirical illustrations**

*The Smalltown Factorymuseum*

Smalltown is a Swedish company, with a heritage dating back to the 17th century. During its long history, the company has produced a wide variety of products, including firearms, kitchen equipment, sewing machines, motor bikes, and chain saws. Shifts between different dominant product categories characterize the history of the firm. As the company and the Smalltown brand have represented different types of products, building on different technologies and serving different customer categories and markets, the brand is not necessarily associated with the products the company is making today. Smalltown is currently a world leader in outdoor power products for forestry, lawn and garden care with clients in consumer as well as business segments. The Smalltown brand however, is used by a number of different companies that have taken over the firm’s product lines over the years. Today, Smalltown shares its main production site with a manufacturer of sewing machines that the company divested during the 1990s. The company is a listed company since 2006, with approximately 16,000 people employed globally. Over the years, the company has managed to grow continuously with high profit margins through a combination of organic expansion and acquisitions. Their corporate strategy is focusing on four key areas: strong brands, efficiency in the distribution network, a wide range in the product portfolio and efficiency in their logistics.

Smalltown’s corporate museum was founded in 1993 and extended in 2005. The Smalltown factory museum covers an area of 2,400 square meters and has an annual turnover of SEK
1,300,000 (EURO 118,000). Even though the museum has its own premises (in an old Smalltown factory building) it is located just next to the headquarter. Smalltown granted the principal authority of the museum to the local folklore society in 1992, whose management group deals with formal contacts regarding e.g. exhibitions with Smalltown AB, mainly its marketing department. The property is owned by Smalltown, who also pays the rent for premises and has furnished the museum with the lion’s share of exhibition artifacts. The museum employs 3 people, one of which is a newly (August 2008) employed archeologist, who will among other things, work with filing and documentation and registering museum artifacts, not to mention documenting the oral knowledge of former employees. In addition, there are 20-25 volunteers, including guides.

The museum is mainly targeted towards external visitors as a site of attraction for locals and as a tourist attraction (26-28,000 visitors a year in 2004). There are also internal visitors in the sense that company employees visit the museum (all Smalltown employees around the world has free life-long admission to the museum). However, there is not an established, elaborate strategy of how to make use of the museum in the organization. The talk about the museum is more that it is ‘nice to have’; it is something that people in general are proud of and there is a great potential to do something more about it. Contrary to Vox, it is rather difficult to get hold of someone at Smalltown who manages museum contacts. Eventually, we are referred to one of the product managers, who became involved in the museum by coincidence.

The exhibitions are largely arranged product category wise. Each category then oftentimes follows a chronological order where the visitors can see how each product-cycle has developed over time. Particularly the moped and motorcycle exhibitions are accompanied by photographs and old advertizing campaigns (brochures, advertisements and commercials), and it is this section that seems to attract most interest among external visitors. Even though the premises are occasionally used as a venue for receptions and guided tours of e.g. Smalltown customers, it is not presently formally used in the company’s employee induction or marketing towards customers (guided tours, etc.).

We try to learn from the museum in our product development, but it is not that we really make use of the museum because the knowledge is documented in the company […] in the heads of the product development staff (Smalltown Product Manager).

The corporate identity stories that are told through the guides and the exhibitions are loosely monitored by Smalltown and much trust is put on the loyalty of the former Smalltown staff that constitute the majority of the museum enthusiasts. This is illustrated in the design and
construction of the new exhibition celebrating the 50th anniversary of sawing machine production at Smalltown. The taskforce group comprises the local folklore society management group and a Smalltown representative. The latter’s main task is not to actively steep the group’s work but to be used as a consultant when it comes to facts, documentation and storytelling. Also, the management group mostly comprises former Smalltown employees who know the Smalltown consultant personally.

Researcher: You don’t seem to care which story that is told […] why is that?

Product Manager: To some extent it reflects a company uninterest in the museum, but it is also a matter of trust. Many of the company volunteers […] are still mentally part of the company, who are delegated an unvoiced trust […].

The newly employed museum archeologist expresses that the company is mostly interested in product development and running at a profit, and does not use the museum as an instrument in its marketing. On contrary, the museum workers, mostly former employees of Smalltown, are very keen to maintain and improve cooperation with Smalltown. The archeologist is currently formalizing the as yet informal contacts between various museum workers and the company. When elaborating on company and product history, he exclaims that “there is so much here which is interesting to highlight, things the company really should be interested in.

On a general note, the Smalltown museum has celebrated the industrial past of the corporation but has also been product-driven and topical in the sense that exhibitions have reflected current product development and diversification. The historical view of the past that is perpetuated and reinforced through the exhibitions and guides is not inclusive and provides little alternative voices to a past, e.g. labour history.

The corporate museum at Vox

Vox is an international corporation with 2 000 employees in 30 countries. It is a family owned business with family members on key management positions. It was founded in the 1940s by the father and mother to the current generation owner managers. Vox is among the largest suppliers in its industry, focusing on product development, production and selling of products under its own brand. They have a strong niche strategy, producing all their products in their own premises in Sweden and delivering the products through their own logistics system. The company has grown year by year mainly organically accompanied with few selective acquisitions along their own value chain.
In Vox, the cultural manager makes it clear to us at the outset of the interview that what she is about to present is the truth. She begins the interview by handing out videos and books, which bear the founder’s name and the subheading, ‘The True story’. And she closes the interview with the words “what I have presented to you is the truth”. In relation to their museum she present it as:

“We want to convey the [company] story.” (the cultural manager).

The history of the museum can be traced back to 1996 when Dorothy (one of the family members) quits her job as a school teacher to become the Culture Manager in the firm. That becomes the start for a formalized work where the core values that have been developed by the owner family are ‘implemented’ in the organization. The work has partly been a reaction to a crisis the firm went through during the 1990s. The founders’ son, Dorothy’s brother Charles had stepped back as the CEO of Vox and passed on leadership to an externally recruited CEO. The newcomer did not succeed in adapting to the down to earth culture of Vox and was fired after a few years. As Charles returned to the position as CEO, he and his siblings decided that it was important actively to promote the heritage of their parents and to communicate their down to earth values inside the organization as well as to external stakeholders. One of Dorothy’s first projects was to create a corporate museum in the old factory building where the company started in the early 1940s. The ground floor in the museum shows the original joinery with machines, carpenter benches and other old equipments that have been saved. In the staircase to the second floor, what immediately catches one’s eyes is a big, about 3 x 3 metres dry plaster painting. It features history thematic images of artifacts and buildings that symbolize pivotal points in the family (business) history of Vox (including a stone quarry, lime works, a picture of the founder’s wife milking cows and the founder plowing the land). In the foreground, the painting is picturing the founding couple on their wedding day. The countryside that they come from serves as the background.

On the second floor, the museum lay out is organized so that it takes the visitor through a journey that is staged chronologically. It firsts introduces the living room where the family lived during the start of the firm. It is authentic made with furniture from their home at that time. From there, the development is chronologically staged using their products, marketing material, photos and other evidence of the company development. As we are toured through the museum, the familial story behind every new series of products is told. At the end of the tour, there is a separate showcase solely devoted to the founder wife’s knitwork, a hobby she picked up as she retired:
We want to illustrate the contrast between old and new [...] The company history has formed the strategy that has built up our knowledge [...] The museum tells histories that amplify the image of technical know-how. (cultural manager)

The museum mainly has two type of visitors: employees and potential customers. They have created a ‘company tour’ that all employees participate in as part of their introductory package. This tour includes a guided tour at the museum, a tour in the factory, but also a training program about who they are as an organization and their core values that should permeate their way of doing business. A version of the tour is also used in sales pitches and to other significant people. That often starts with a sales representative that comes to pick the customer up in the morning in their private jet which takes them to their main premise. Here, they start with a guided tour in the museum, continue with a walk through their modern factory and end in the showroom presenting how their products can be used in a contemporary milieu.

One challenge the organization faced in their internationalization process was that potential customers did not know about their heritage in the industry. In order to spread their company history and vision internationally they created culture corner cupboards that they sent out to the local market offices around the world. More than one hundred of these ‘culture corners’ were distributed. They include a picture of the founding couple from the corporations’ 50-years-anniversay, a miniature model of the founders’ first carpenter bench, their specific blanket (these blankets are used in the transportation of their products from the factory to the client, which is an environmentally friendly and low cost solution for wrapping the furniture), a piece of veneer which is an important material in their products, and some other material. It is like a miniature museum for those not able to make the official tour in their main premises.

All together, the work with the museum is like the back-bone in the cultural work within Vox. The museum is then complimented with books, films and sections on their internet- and intranet web pages where more information about the organizations ‘culture work’ can be found. To a greater extent than in the Smalltown museum, the firm museum memory development is very exclusive and singular and contains no references to labour and workforce histories. The museum history as told by the cultural manager focuses solely on the founder and to some extent the founder’s wife. Each and every museum artifact seem to host anecdotal founder histories. However, founder-centered memory development and history writing seem to halt abruptly at the knitwork showcase.
Discussion

Smalltown and Vox have some general characteristics that are overlapping between the two organizations. Both are market leaders on an international market, they are producing companies selling products under their own brands and they have a pride in the handicraft that permeates their way of producing their products. Moreover, they both play an important role in the local community where the organizations where established once upon a time and there the headquarters still are located. Even so, there are great differences in how they work with their corporate museums which of course has implications for how their corporate history is understood by people in their surroundings.

In our analysis of the corporate museums we found three significant elements, that, when interpreted together, seem to make a difference in the understanding of how the museums are built up and ‘used’ in the organizations. These elements are: (1) the creation of narratives told in the museum, (2) Orchestration of the physical space and (3) Integration between museum and the organization. Please see the table below for a summary of how these elements consists of in Smalltown and Vox.
In the museum at Smalltown there is a joint editing process of narratives to tell where the employed people at the museum, representatives from the organization as well as local enthusiasts that serves as guides (most often retired employees), is organized in a committee. The physical space is organized in rather loosely connected micro stories. They thereby have created a museum where the visitor does not necessarily need to make the whole tour and where there is no absolute beginning and end. Even though the employees in Smalltown are proud of their museum there is no established cooperation for sales activities or alike. Different products are the primary focus of the museum and managers, employees or the organization as such play a relatively peripheral role. In sum, when we look at the three elements together (1) the creation of narratives told in the museum, (2) Orchestration of the physical space and (3) Integration between museum and the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative element</th>
<th>Smalltown</th>
<th>Vox</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who’s voice is heard?</td>
<td>Voices from powerful previous generation product development men, told in a way that varies depending on the guide or the specific time of visiting the museum.</td>
<td>The voice of the founding father accompanied by his three sons that also are owner managers interpreted by their sister how is the culture manager.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who is editing the narratives?</td>
<td>A joint editing process between enthusiasts that used to work in the business, the employed archaeologist and representatives from the business.</td>
<td>The culture manager who also is a member of the owning family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What genre is used?</td>
<td>A postmodern approach with open-ended and inconsistent micro stories.</td>
<td>A classical fairytale in a romantic setting with troublesome start and a happy ending.</td>
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### Orchestration of the physical space

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<tr>
<th>Narrative element</th>
<th>Smalltown</th>
<th>Vox</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How is the physical space organized?</td>
<td>Divided into various more or less separate parts according to their product categories.</td>
<td>Chronologically built up story that starts with the marriage of the founding couple and ending with the most recent products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What elements are used in the staging of the physical space?</td>
<td>All kinds of products that has been developed over the years in combination with some marketing materials and photos.</td>
<td>Mostly products, some marketing materials and photos. Also some ‘evidence’ of how it was in the old days from book keeping notes, invoices etc. There is no separation between the family and the business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the potential paths for the visitors?</td>
<td>An open-ended path with no absolute beginning or ending.</td>
<td>A unidirectional path to go through. A thought-through visiting process with a sort way of ‘consuming' the museum.</td>
</tr>
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### Integration of museum and the organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative element</th>
<th>Smalltown</th>
<th>Vox</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How is the museum 'used' in the organization?</td>
<td>There are no elaborate strategy of how to integrated the museum in the organization.</td>
<td>A well developed plan to use the museum in sales activities and employee programs. The museum plays an active role in the culture work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is the museum managed?</td>
<td>By an independent group, however with attendance from representatives from the organization.</td>
<td>By the culture manager.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
organization) we can see how Smalltown uses its museum in a *loosely coupled polyphonic* way. Loosely coupled in the sense that there is no clear integration of the business activities within the organizations and the activities in the museum. Polyphonic in the way that it is multiple narratives that are told by various voices in an open-ended milieu at the museum. We can say that Smalltown in one way have let go of the control of the narratives told in the museum. We call this way of relating to the corporate museum an *un-controlled voicing*. Different stakeholders are using the museum in different ways, satisfying different needs. While the archeologist, being in charge of the corporate museum at Smalltown has a scientific agenda, the museum satisfies the existential need of former employees to remember the past of the company as well as of their personal history as organizational members. Over the years, Smalltown has produced a wide range of different products. While most of the product lines have been either discontinued or sold to other firms, the retired employees still remember them as they have been involved in their production. Firearms, motor bikes, sewing machines and kitchen equipment stand for a comparatively large part of the museum’s exhibition as compared to the forest and garden equipment that is Smalltown’s primary business today. Although there are no tendencies from the Smalltown company to control the museum, it is obvious that the firm has an interest in emphasizing the current product range and thus in using history for marketing purposes.

The situation looks very differently in Vox. Contrary to the polyphonic, open-ended voices of Smalltown (the owners, the retired enthusiasts and the archeologist) the cultural manager of Vox, tells a closed and definite story. In the museum at Vox, the stories told are strictly edited and told by the culture manager. The tour in the museum is built up around a coherent metanarrative that is organized chronologically where the visitor is supposed to follow the staged path. The founders, i.e. the parents of the culture manager and the current CEO, play a central role in the museum, while the firm’s products have a less important role, mainly supporting the narrative about the organization and its founders. It is not possible to visit the museum without guidance from the organization. The museum is tightly connected to the organization and serve as an instrument in sales and HR-activities. We call this an *integrated monologic manifestation*. It is integrated in the sense that the museum has a clear role to play in the strategic work with customers and employees. How they work with the museum is worked through so that the activities in the museum should clearly contribute to the activities going on in the company. Their work with culture corner cup boards clearly signals how the museum is developed as to fit and
contribute to the business in general. It is monologic in the sense that the narratives created are based on one source (the family) and told by the way that the owner family wants it to be told. Moreover, the museum is organized and built up as to manifest the picture of the organization as a trustworthy, committed business partner. The culture manager that is an employed family member clearly has the role of being the voice controller. At Vox, the existential, the ideological as well as the marketing uses of history are central parts of the memorialization processes going on at the company. To the family members there is a clear existential need to keep the heritage of their parents alive in the firm. This need was actualized by the traumatic experience of handing over management to an external CEO who did not abide by the values the company was supposed to stand for. At the same time the emphasis on culture and values in the museum adds a political dimension, providing direction for strategic decision-making and allowing to “indoctrinate” organizational members. Finally, the museum is actively used in marketing by offering guided tours to customers and by including culture corner’s in the showrooms, basically forming micro branches of the museum in all markets. Like the Smalltown museum, the museum at Vox addresses history with a range of different purposes. However at Vox, the purposes are all pursued and controlled by one group of stakeholders, namely the owner-family.

Conclusions
Both at Smalltown and at Vox, history is selectively dealt with. At both museums, reference to potentially problematic issues in corporate history, such as internal conflicts, the role of trade unions etc is rare. While the marketing purpose of the museum in the Vox case is obvious, even at Smalltown where the museum is run by an independent organization, there is a desire from the company to put more emphasis on current products at the expense of products that are no longer produced. Hence in both corporate museums, narratives are constructed that support the corporations’ contemporary marketing strategies. The firms are presented as sympathetic organizations that are reliable partners to customers and other stakeholders as they have a long heritage of making high quality products. The corporate museums thus contribute to constructing the corporations’ identities as perceived by organizational members as well as the brand that is communicated to the market.

In this study we found two different ways of relating to the corporate museums and being involved in the narratives told in and around the museums. Where Smalltown is related to its museum in a ‘loosely coupled polyphonic way’, Vox work is characterized by an
‘integrated monologic manifestation’. This way of relating has implications for how the history is made present, where we found that Smalltown very much has let go of the narratives told in and around the museum, which we have labeled an ‘un-controlled voicing’. In Vox, on the other hand, the employed culture manager serves as a ‘voice controller’.

A corporate museum may at first seem to be a marginalized business activity that is not worthy much of attention. However, when looking more into depth about how such a place of memory is created it is a useful site for furthering our understanding of how organizations create, make use and consume their ‘history.
References

Schreyögg, G. Sydow, J. & Koch, J. 2003 'Organisatorische Pfade – Von der


