THE CONCEPT OF SKANSEN:
ORIGINS AND STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

The article discusses the development a special type of museums in Europe – open-air museums. Such institutions named «skansen» in honor of the first open-air museum, which opened in 1891 in Stockholm at the initiative of Arthur Hazelius. The five historical stages in the history of European skansens are offered to distinguish: 1) origin of the idea and the opening of the first skansen (up to 1891); 2) the establishment of skansen (from 1891 until the First World War); 3) Inter-War Period (the period between the First and Second World Wars); 4) Post-war reconstruction (up to about 1960); 5) Development of skansen as a scientific-research institution and tourism center (from 1960s until today). Each of the selected stage is characterized by its process of deepening and expansion of activity of skansens as special kind of museum establishments. Museums change according to the era and social requires. Skansen emerged in response to the disappearance of the traditional economic system and national culture under the influence of the processes of industrialization and globalization. Today skansen is the effective means of translation to new generations an appropriate national historical and cultural identity, traditional way of life of the people. Skansen (open-air museums) is important tool of intercultural and inter-civilizational dialogue. Such museums are also a means of communication, which able to withstand to many cliches and misconceptions imposed by the mass culture. Today the organization of open-air museums is one of the most promising and effective ways to preserve historical and cultural heritage. This type of museum has got status of «museum of the future». The article briefly discusses the most interesting and popular open-air museums as tourist destinations of the Nordic countries.

Keywords: skansen, open-air museum, stages of the development of European skansens.

The world is changing, and museums are changing with it [2]. As known, the «museums-collections» appeared the first. Usually they were created on the base of private collections of families of European monarchs. These included the «Museums of Fine Arts», where art from different countries, ranging chronologically were exhibited. Wealth of museums had been put on public display for two purposes: «to receive pleasure» by public and to improve the taste of people [2].

The first ethnographic museum appeared in the end XIX century. The mannequins in national costumes that stood in the windows, models of any national original scenes, characters, with indication of their belonging to a «large» or «small» motherland, were an indispensable attribute of these museums. In contrast to their «big» brothers, such museums were completed in the course of the expeditions «survey-selection»; they were supposed with the maximum fullness to reflect the characteristics of the local way of life.

The open-air museums should be considered in the light of changes of the European societies in the XIX century. Times of progress, modernization and social changes often evoked feelings of nostalgia, alienation and loss. But nostalgia and progress, tradition and modernization and their representations, are simultaneously contradictions and conditions of a more overriding motion in society, modernity, like the twofold face of Janus.

According to the famous Polish ethnographer E. Tchaikovsky, «the place, time and circumstances of the birth of the idea of open-air museums are debatable». Many good ideas in museum practice still remain ideas until «fact of establishing a new stage in the development of museums» becomes a reality.
“That is why Arthur Hazelius should be considered as the true founder of a new type of museum” [3; P. 11].

A new type of museum – skansen or open-air museum appeared in 1891. That year, Swedish scholar of language, anthropologist, collector Artur Immanuel Hazelius (30.11.1833–27.05.1901) (ill. 1) organized an open public access to the original objects – residential houses and household outbuildings, transferred by him to Stockholm at Djurgården from the village of Mora in Dalarna County in 1885. This exhibition was conceived as «Museum of life», and it became very popular among residents of the capital of Sweden soon, and began to grow in number and species composition. Soon, all over Europe such a museum began to spring up like mushrooms. Georges Henri Rivière called them the «museums of the houses», but it is more correct to name them the «museums of farm houses». And almost a century later started appearing so-called. «ecomuseums» and «industrial museums», which have been purposed to present the everyday life and work of some part of the population. Features and conditions of everyday life, shown in such museums, are presented in exact historical and geographical terms.

Today, skansen as a kind of open-air museums are in all European and in most countries of the world. The five historical stages in the history of European skansens can be distinguished.

I. Origin of the idea and the opening of the first skansen (up to 1891). There are several versions of the appearance of the first prototype of an open-air museum. According to the one of them, for the first time the idea of exposing peasant buildings with full home decor in an open environment – City Royal Park in North Zealand (Denmark) was proposed in 1790 by Swiss scientist Charles de Bonstetten [7]. According to another version, the World’s Expositions, particularly EXPO Vienna 1873 (Weltausstellung 1873 Wien), exerted the influence on emergence of concept an open-air museum. And the Europe’s first attempt of reconstruction of the prehistoric settlement in the park Bally (of Schönenwerd, Switzerland) also probably impacted on origin an open-air museum.

The Society for the Preservation of Ancient Norwegian Monuments that was primarily focused on the structures of rural architecture was founded in 1844 in Norway. In 1850s Norwegian ethnographer and sociologist Eilert Sundt was actively involved with the study vernacular architecture, and in 1861 he published five articles on this subject. In 1885, the Norwegian merchant Thomas Hefti built a house in Sarabråten, which was a copy of the famous historic manor from the Østerdalen. The household outbuildings traditional for county Telemark were constructed around this house. Around this building Hefti left intact all the old rural buildings, preserving the historic environment. In 1882 he made a proposal to establish an open-air museum, and organized the raising funds for transportation in Sarabråten and restoration of the famous

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1 J. Kronberg studio is now also part of Skansen, an open-air museum in Stockholm, and it is open to the public but only a few weeks a year.
church, which had previously been in the property of the Norwegian King Oscar II. It is important that the two ancient manors, belonging to T. Hefti, were available for public inspection as early as the 1860s.

All this formed the preconditions for the opening of «Skansen» in 1891, which wide echoed in most European countries.

II. The establishment of skansen (from 1891 until the First World War). The numerous works dedicated to the issue of the importance of preserving the authentic ethnic environment started to be published with the opening of the first Skansen. There were already 50 museums of a new type in Norway at the end of 1918, and in Sweden there were hardly more than 30 (among the most famous – Lund (1891), Leksand (1899), Eskilstuna (1903), Linköping (1901), Bunge (1912), Mora (1914), etc.) [5]. The private individuals or scientific organizations or local governments were the initiators of the museums. The creation of collections of the most ancient buildings was the main purpose of museums of this type.

III. Inter-War Period (the period between the First and Second World Wars). The First World War greatly changed the political face of Europe. Naturally, during the war, the possibilities of creating new museums were limited. However, at its end, when in Central Europe the new states were created, and many nations got new stimulus for self-knowledge, the process of developing a network of museums-skansens had resumed. In the Inter-War period in Europe were formed at least 227 open-air museums [3]. And once again the leading position was occupied by Sweden: 135 skansen, two of them – beyond the Arctic Circle. Not only increasing number of museums, but also an innovative approach confirmed the leadership of Sweden: in 1920 at the initiative of the local patriotic society was created in mining skansen in Ludvika (Dalarna). It was the first museum in which by the methods previously tested in ethnographic Skansen, work was carried out with the monuments of industrial machinery. Four years later – in 1924 – at the museum-estate Esarp the traditional technology of agriculture with the use of historical land use practices, old tools and machinery, was restored.

In neighboring Norway, where between the World Wars construction of open-air museums was actively in progress, arose at least 60 skansen. It is characteristic that they were formed in almost all provinces of the country. The largest among the established at this time museums, each of which included more than 30 monuments, appeared in 1924 and 1930. The most interesting museum in Norway of this period – skansen in Røros. It demonstrates the life of different social groups – miners, farmers from the highlands and indigenous people of Lapland [6].

Beginning of the Second World War led to stagnation of museums-skansens in most countries. Only in Sweden, which remained formally neutral, and partly in Norway and Finland, creation of skansens continued.

IV. Post-war reconstruction (up to about 1960). During the postwar years, considerable attention was paid to the restoration of historical monuments, ensuring their preservation for future generations. This is reflected in the creation of open-air museums, skansen, throughout Europe. The new open-air museum – Funen Village (Den Fynske Landsby), which had represented the history of rural life 1800s was opened in Denmark in 1946. In the same year in the castle and on the lands of Plymouth, started the work on the organization of the Historical Museum St. Fagans (Great Britain, Wales). This museum opened its doors to visitors in 1948. The museum assembled buildings made of wood and masonry, which represents most of the vernacular architecture of Wales. June 28 – July 3, 1948 the first Conference of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), which considered, including the development of open-air museums, took place in Paris. One year later representatives of 13 countries met in Copenhagen and Stockholm, where they discussed the transfer of monuments to museums from their native places. The Conference adopted the Declaration, in which the scientific definition of open-air museum had been given, and its goals had been formulated [3].

Thus, by the end of the post-war stage of development of museum of this type, the significant number of open-air museums in Europe was created, particularly in Sweden, Norway, Finland, and in countries where none
existed before (in Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, etc.). In the postwar years was created a number of museums, which are actively developed and tested new methods of conservation of monuments, new areas of research, and new forms of museum activity.

V. Development of skansen as a scientific-research institution and tourism center (from 1960s until today). This stage of development of open-air museums is marked by quantitative growth and distribution throughout Europe, as well as the introduction of new principles of creation and functioning of this type of museums, in the development of which Conferences of the Association of European open-air museums play an important role [6]. Skansens become the objects of mass tourism, expanding the range of services offered by institutions to visitors. Today a open-air museum, skansen, should base its work on the principle «demonstration the historical era, provision a modern range of services». And this is contain, from the one side, the threat of the loss of some of the authenticity, and from another – the potential to expand and promote the work of skansen. In history of development of open-air museums the original idea of transferring to separate territories of unique rural buildings (museums transported types – open-air museums), was transformed into a conservation of wooden structures in the villages or in cities in their original places – museums «in situ», or transfer of residential buildings and religious monuments in the new territory. Finally, the European experience gives an example of the organization of museums of mixed type with an emphasis on the preservation of the historic environment of existing settlements and the introduction in its structure the «new» but old by the time monuments of different periods of construction (The Isle of Man, Karilatsi village in Estonia or c in Hungary) [6].

Recently, there is a tendency to reproduce within the open-air museums traditional crafts and activities specific to the appropriate location and time – for example, the work of a miller, weaver, blacksmith, potter, carpenter, distiller, beekeeper and many others. Sometimes, museum visitors are also invited to try their hand in different kinds of traditional crafts under the guidance of a specialist (master classes), or creative clubs and groups are organized. Some crafts in individual cases far outgrew the scope of the museum.

Today, open-air museums in Europe are among the most visited destinations, both by foreign tourists and the inhabitants of the countries where these museums are located. The specificity of practically all countries of Europe consist in that fact, that today, under the conditions of globalization, exterior, impressionable component of national cultures is almost lost. And skansens (open-air museums) carefully preserve the appearance of national cultures that took shape in the era of the formation of nation-states to the beginning of the twentieth century.

Museum-skansen originated in Sweden, quickly gained recognition in the Nordic countries and then throughout Europe. But only Scandinavia became the «cradle» for the development and establishment of skansens [5]. Currently, there are a large number of open-air museums around the world and them popularity grows from year to year. For more understanding of the nature, species, structure and functions of skansen (open-air museums), some of the most interesting and popular among modern tourist facilities in the Nordic countries are considered below.

Sweden. A classic example of an open-air museum is the park-museum «Skansen». It became a model for other open-air museums in the Nordic and other countries. «Skansen» attracts more than 1.4 million visitors each year, and is the most visited museum in Sweden. Development of Sweden since the late 60s XIX century followed the path of urbanization. Agriculture was mechanized, industrialization «killed» crafts. All this caused the creation of Skansen. Ethnographer and culturologists Hazelius Arthur began to collect clothes, household utensils, furniture and tools – domestic utensils of former culture, all that was necessary to keep for the next generations. In 1880 he created on the basis of the expanded collection the «North museum» (Nordiska Museet), for which the king assigned a plot of land on island Djurgården [4]. However, scientist believed that visitors, which looked at the exhibits behind the glass of windows, had not the opportunity to feel themselves
As part of the historic environment. As a result, the concept of another, quite unusual museum was born. It presupposes the existence of the living exhibits (people and animals) in the original, the usual for them environment. For this purpose, Arthur Hazelius in 1891 purchased a plot near the hill-strengthening – «skans», bought and moved here about 150 ancient buildings – homes, farms, estates and churches, the oldest of which were dated back to the XIV century. Only three buildings in the museum have not original and had been carefully copied from examples that Hazelius found personally. The object had been placed in the «right» geographical order: the northern part of the complex corresponded to the north of Sweden, the southern part – to the south. Moreover, the soils from each region of Sweden were imported, and the trees and grass, peculiar to each are, were planted.

As nationalism developed in every European country, to display the diversity of regional traditions became an important part of representing nations. Representations of regional architecture, costumes and customs strengthened the national image of a country like Sweden. Thus, nationality and regionality are in fact two sides of the same coin. In that aspect, Skansen was a part of the mythological construction and the birth of the modern nation by collecting buildings from each Swedish region.

Originally, houses in Skansen were inhabited by the life-sized puppets, dressed in national costumes, but soon they had been replaced by real people. Hazelius wanted to animate Skansen, that mills and weaving machines worked. With the same purpose, he brought here animals. Even each servant of museum was hired from area, to which corresponded the part of museum, where he worked. Everything had to represent a unique picture of traditional Sweden. All the people, who «inhabited» the scansen, were dressed in traditional clothes, lived in houses-exhibits, were engaged in the usual work and even prepared their own meals, but at the same time they were glad to escape at any moment and answer visitors’ questions.

Skansen originally was part of the North museum, but separated and became independent in 1963. Objects in the building of the open-air museum still belong to the North Museum. Today’s museum preserves and develops the concept of the founder. The day of Swedish flag, days of crafts and other historical anniversaries are celebrated here, fairs, programs of folk music and dances are held, and there is the functioning church. Even the house in Stockholm, where Hazelius was born, had been transferred in Skansen. This house, situated together with 10 other buildings from Södermalm district, is an example of the urban environment XVIII–XIX centuries.

Thus, in «Skansen» a tour across the expanses of Sweden from north to south, from the XVI century and up to now can be taken, and the spirit of bygone days in the cultural and historical manor buildings can be felt. Here people, dressed in clothes of that period, perform different household work. And stores sell goods that typical for the early twentieth century (ill. 2).
Nowadays, the most popular events at Skansen are the national day celebrations, the Christmas market, the New Year’s Eve-speech, but perhaps most of all, a series of sing-along concerts broadcasted on TV. There are plenty of cozy cafes and restaurants in Skansen. Some of them are located in the old public buildings, and others, for example near Solliden square, offer spectacular views of the Stockholm. All of them are open in the summer.

It is always something going on in Skansen: almost all major festivals are celebrated in accordance with national traditions; various activities are carried out directly in the homes and estates.

The main goals of the Skansen at the present stage of its development: 1) ensuring of experience and understanding of the cultural and natural history of Sweden, its interconnection with the present and future; 2) demonstration of nature and culture of Sweden, mainly from the XVIII century and further, based on the verified knowledge and sources; 3) ensuring the preservation of collections of buildings, objects, plants and animals; 4) preservation of the diversity of the Swedish cultural heritage – customs, traditions, crafts; 5) biodiversity conservation of Scandinavian animals and plants. Skansen is a platform for diversity of cultural self-expression. And it unique open-air museum aspires to create an enabling environment for all guests of all ages and all countries.

**Norway.** Many Norwegian open-air museums were created on the base of monuments saved at its place – in suit. The Norwegian Museum of Cultural History (Norsk Folkemuseum) in Oslo is the largest cultural-historical museum that has a collection from 1500 until today. The museum was founded in 1894 at the initiative of Hans Jakob Aall. The museum contains 160 buildings, among them – the wooden church from the city Gol, constructed in 1200. It is one of 28 preserved wooden churches in Norway. The exhibits are located both in the open air and inside buildings. They represent the everyday life in Norway from the XVI century to the present. The different events take place in summer here. The buildings of the museum are open to visitors, and host in traditional clothing greets visitors.

**Denmark.** «The Old Town in Aarhus» is open-air museum-village, which includes the 75 historical buildings collected from 20 settlements from all parts of the country. The museum was opened in 1914 and remains among the most popular Danish museums outside Copenhagen. It serves about 3.5 million visitors a year. The museum houses mostly are half-timbered buildings. They originally had been built in the period between 1550 and late 1800s in various parts of the country, and then had been transported to Aarhus in 1900. All building – houses, shops, a pharmacy, a school, a museum, a post office, a customs and theater – all decorated in the original historic style. Most of the buildings open to the public. In the museum-village works personnel in the role of typical rural figures – merchants, blacksmiths, etc.

**Finland.** Seurasaari – open-air museum, which are located on an island in a few kilometers from the center of Helsinki. The island-oasis represents the traditional Finnish lifestyles. It is composed of farmsteads and cottages, which were brought from all over the country. Seurasaari was founded in 1909 by prof. Axel Olay Henkel. The museum gives a general idea of life in the Finnish countryside in XVIII–XX centuries. At the present time on the territory of Seurasaari 87 separate buildings and structures are located.

The open-air museum – a special phenomenon of the modern world culture. Architectural and ethnographic exhibition of skansen is effective tool of translation to new generations an appropriate national historical and cultural identity, traditional way of life of the people. For many ethnic groups open-air museum has a value of symbol and the living image of the traditional culture of country or region. Most important purpose of skansen today – to give the opportunity to modern people to discover the diversity of the world of their ancestors, to learn rightly and thoroughly the culture of other nations, to make their own conclusions about the similarities and differences on borrowings and identity, which is essential for the preservation of inter-cultural and inter-civilization dialogue. Consequently, these museums are also a means of communication, which able to withstand too many clichés and miscon-
ceptons imposed by the mass culture. Today the organization of open-air museums is one of the most promising and effective ways to preserve historical and cultural heritage. This type of museum has got status of «museum of the future».

References: