

# Old World Homecomings: Campaigns of Ancestral Tourism and Cultural Diplomacy, 1945–66

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## Abstract

This article examines the history of ancestral tourism and its development as a form of cultural diplomacy between 1945 and 1966. The phenomenon often referred to as ‘roots tourism’ has during the last decades increased in popularity, especially in Old World countries that historically have sent large numbers of people to North America. While previous scholarship has focused on its existential dimensions and its relation to the twenty-first century tourism and heritage economies, this article looks at how ancestral tourism grew out of European attempts at expanding the tourism industry after 1945. It studies the international spread of ‘person-to-person’ programs that sought to turn travelers into ‘ambassadors’, and the subsequent transformation of such initiatives into ‘homecoming’ campaigns through notions of co-descent, targeting Americans of European descent. By exploring the case of the 1966 Homecoming Year campaign in Sweden, the article shows that the attraction of ancestral tourism was grounded in its ability to combine economic and political incentives articulated in the Marshall Plan. It developed out of a liberal-democratic ideology that vested individual travelers with diplomatic agency. In the process, European tourist agencies calcified the notion that ancestral tourism served not only individual experiences, but also national economies and international relations.

## Keywords

Ancestry, cultural diplomacy, homecoming, Sweden, tourism, United States

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Visits to ancestral homelands have become an established and expected practice for individuals who trace lineage overseas. They are voyages of sightseeing and pleasure as well as ‘journeys into the self’, charged with emotional and existential meanings.<sup>1</sup> As explained by a popular US handbook in genealogy, ‘one day your natural curiosity will take you back to the land of your forefathers’.<sup>2</sup> This naturalized idea of homecoming constitutes a cultural script for the performance of ancestral connections across geographical spaces, featuring prominently in popular culture and forming the narrative backbone of genealogical TV-shows. It is an idea grounded in the ‘routes’ and ‘roots’ of identities shaped by migrations.<sup>3</sup>

Ancestral tourism is today an international phenomenon, enabled and promoted by the travel industry and heritage sector in Old World countries in primarily Europe and Africa.<sup>4</sup> Travel offices and agencies in Ireland, Scotland, Sweden, Norway, Poland, Germany, Denmark, Italy, Greece, and surely many other countries regularly offer ancestry tours, especially targeting the US market. As Dallen J. Timothy has pointed out, these are countries that have ‘experienced large-scale emigration during the past few centuries’ and where national tourism organizations are ‘actively involved in promoting’ different forms of ancestral heritage tourism. While not all are government programs, most are according to Timothy supported and funded ‘largely by national governments and initiated by public-sector agencies in conjunction with cultural groups and philanthropic associations’.<sup>5</sup>

This article examines the postwar history of ancestral tourism, with a particular focus on state-supported efforts to capitalize from, and thus to facilitate and stimulate, individual longing for ancestral homelands. It argues that, in addition to the individual longing for ancestry as an existential driving force of ancestral tourism, it is important to engage with the question of how powerful actors reinforced that longing. Even though knowledge about family and ancestral memories have been significant in many cultures across the globe, both in ancient times and today, the phenomenon of popular genealogical research is modern—dating back to the late-nineteenth century—and largely centered in North America and Europe.<sup>6</sup>

1 J. Hogan, *Roots Quest: Inside America's Genealogy Boom* (Lanham, MD 2019), 166.

2 A. Baxter, *In Search of Your European Roots: A Complete Guide to Tracing Your Ancestors in Every Country in Europe* (Baltimore, MD 1985), xvii.

3 S. Ahmed et al. (eds) *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration* (Oxford 2003); D. Chioni Moore, ‘Routes: Alex Haley's Roots and the Rhetoric of Genealogy’, *Transition*, 64 (1994), 4–21.

4 See for example P. Basu, *Highland Homecomings: Genealogy and Heritage Tourism in the Scottish Diaspora* (London 2007); K. Schramm, *African Homecoming: Pan-African Ideology and Contested Heritage* (Walnut Creek, CA 2010); A. Reed, *Pilgrimage Tourism of Diaspora Africans to Ghana* (New York, NY 2015).

5 D.J. Timothy, ‘Genealogical Mobility: Tourism and the Search for a Personal Past’, in D.J. Timothy and J. K. Guelke (eds) *Geography and Genealogy: Locating Personal Pasts* (London 2008), 128–9; See also S. Kelner, *Tours That Bind: Diaspora, Pilgrimage, and Israeli Birthright Tourism* (New York 2010), 15.

6 On the ancient history of ancestral knowledge, see J. Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge 2011); E. Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives: Genealogy, Identity, and Community* (Oxford 2012); H. Ruin, *Being with the Dead: Burial, Ancestral Politics, and the Roots of Historical Consciousness* (Stanford, CA 2019).

Like genealogy, ancestral tourism is also a modern phenomenon, originating in Europe and North America in the age of mass tourism. This article traces the role of state and non-state actors within this development, focusing on the two decades following the end of the Second World War. More specifically, it traces how the practice of ‘homecoming’ tourism was imagined and developed as a form of cultural diplomacy.

The article studies the history of ancestral tourism by weaving together two separate yet connected contexts: the postwar growth of international tourism and the development of European cultural diplomatic programs directed at the United States. These contexts intersect in the role of tourism and diplomacy in postwar Euro-American relations. The main body of the article is divided into five sections. It begins by discussing previous scholarship on ancestral tourism, outlining how historians, anthropologists, and sociologists have described and explained its history. The second section discusses the relation between tourism and diplomacy in Europe after 1945, pulling together scholarship in tourism history and cultural diplomacy as a contextual framework for understanding the history of ancestral tourism.

The introduction of so-called person-to-person tourism programs, as a way of encouraging American travels to Europe, is the topic of section three. The section discusses the international spread of these programs in the 1950s through studies of US newspapers, which catered to the target audience of European tourism industry advertisement, and records of the Swedish Tourist Traffic Association (*Svenska turisttrafikförbundet* or STTF) connected to the so-called ‘Sweden-at-Home’ program. It shows the ways in which the fundamental ideas of these programs and the framing of tourists as ‘ambassadors’ formed the ideological basis of the development of ancestral tourism campaigns.

The fourth and fifth section traces the evolution of person-to-person programs into campaigns of ancestral tourism through ideas about co-descent. Empirically, these sections focus on the case of a Swedish tourism campaign from 1966 called ‘Homecoming Year’, organized by the STTF to attract US tourists to Sweden. The study is based on sources from the STTF, records of the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, as well as Swedish and US digital newspaper collections. The 1966 campaign appears to have been one of the earliest coordinated attempts at adopting ancestry in the promotion of mass tourism, providing an example of how postwar ideas about tourism, politics, and ancestry were instituted in practice.

The Swedish case is particularly suitable to explore the history of ancestral tourism for two reasons. First, the nineteenth and early twentieth-century Swedish mass migration to the United States had produced a substantial American community that in different ways nurtured homeland longing and nostalgia. By 1960, there were over one million first- and second-generation Swedish Americans in the United States, not counting the unknown number of individuals who traced Swedish ancestry from even older

generations.<sup>7</sup> Second, while Sweden managed to stay out of the Second World War, thus keeping society and industry intact, its wartime neutrality and concessions to Nazi Germany (which included permission to transport unarmed troops through Sweden after the occupation of Norway) had tainted its reputation in the United States.<sup>8</sup> By the end of the war, Sweden began the work of strengthening relations with the United States. Unlike countries with large US ethnic communities within the Eastern Bloc—including Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia—it could pursue such relations with relative ease. As Sweden chose not to join NATO, and since it did not have the close political and financial ties to the United States through the Marshall Plan that, for example, France and West Germany did, its leaders sought to build rapport with the United States through means such as commerce, celebrations of common heritage, and public diplomacy.<sup>9</sup> Another means was through tourism.

Scholars have argued that the quest for ancestry has increased in modern society. Historian David Lowenthal explained the genealogical interest of the late twentieth century as a response to the ‘trauma’ of migration, refugeecism, and displacement, and sociologist Jackie Hogan describes how ‘our increasingly rootless society fuels the quest for authenticity, for deep history and for an elemental sense of belonging—for roots’.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps because of the human longing for ancestral knowledge and as a consequence of the history of migrations and displacements, the pursuit of ancestry has often taken the form of a search for places connected to personal pasts. These desires have been furthered by the twenty-first century development of DNA genealogy and human population genetics.<sup>11</sup>

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7 H.A. Barton, *A Folk Divided: Homeland Swedes and Swedish Americans, 1840–1940* (Carbondale, IL 1994); E. Lindquist, ‘The Swedish-Born Population and the Swedish Stock: The United States Census of 1960 and Comparative Data With Some Concluding Observations’, *Swedish Pioneer Historical Quarterly*, 16, 2 (April 1965), 80. The 1960 U.S. Census featured the category ‘foreign stock’, which included both first-generation immigrants and the native-born US population with one or two foreign-born parents. While the 1960 census was the first to allow respondents to self-identify race, it was the 1980 census that introduced the more generationally open question ‘What is this person’s ancestry?’.

8 M. Fritz and B. Karlsson, ‘Dependence and National Supply: Sweden’s Economic Relations to Nazi Germany’, in S. Ekman and K. Åmark (eds) *Sweden’s Relations with Nazism, Nazi Germany and the Holocaust* (Stockholm 2003), 114–9; J. Gilmour, *Sweden, the Swastika and Stalin: The Swedish Experience in the Second World War* (Edinburgh 2010), 45–54; K. Åmark, *Att bo granne med ondskan: Sveriges förhållande till nazismen, Nazityskland och Förintelsen* (Stockholm 2016), 666–73.

9 N. Glover, *National Relations: Public Diplomacy, National Identity, and the Swedish Institute, 1945–1970* (Lund 2011); A. Hjorthén, *Cross-Border Commemorations: Celebrating Swedish Settlement in America* (Amherst, MA 2018).

10 D. Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History* (Cambridge 1998), 9–10; Hogan, *Roots Quest*, 3.

11 Timothy and Guelke, *Geography and Genealogy*. On DNA and genealogical geographies, see C. Nash, *Genetic Geographies: The Trouble with Ancestry* (Minneapolis, MN 2015); K. TallBear, *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science* (Minneapolis, MN 2013); A. Nelson, *The Social Life of DNA: Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation after the Genome* (Boston, MA 2016). On ancestral traveling in popular culture, see Hogan, *Roots Quest*, 101–20; J. De Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture* (2nd edn, London 2016), 71–3, 194–202; A. Hjorthén, ‘Swedishness by Blood: Transatlantic Genealogy on Twenty-First Century Television’, *Swedish-American Historical Quarterly*, 69, 4 (October 2018), 303–17.

The pursuit of ancestral homelands has been especially strong in settler societies, such as the United States, that are founded on the dispossession of Indigenous populations and the replenishment of the landscape through mass migration and regeneration. As pointed out by cultural geographer Catherine Nash, ‘settler genealogies of Old World ancestry reflect a nostalgia for an imagined time when place, identity, culture, and ancestry coincided’.<sup>12</sup> Though not based on genealogy in a strict sense, a similar dynamic is present in ‘diaspora tourism’, for example among Jewish associations, connected to a search for identity and belonging.<sup>13</sup> The practice of homecoming has been propelled by major historical processes—including settler colonialism, migration, refugee displacement, urbanization, and economic and cultural globalization—but also stimulated by organizations, businesses, and states that have sought to capitalize on the longing that these processes have created.

Because of its immense cultural impact, the study of ancestral tourism will always be associated with Alex Haley’s *Roots: The Saga of an America Family*. Appearing as a best-selling book in 1976 and a blockbuster TV-series the following year, it has provided a shorthand for imagining transatlantic ancestral relations and the popular search for identity, not only in Africa but across the Old World.<sup>14</sup> As ‘roots tourism’ and diaspora tourism began to thrive in the 1990s, scholars in primarily anthropology, sociology, and cultural geography have turned our attention to the ways in which ancestry are negotiated across geographical spaces.<sup>15</sup> Studies of, for example, Irish, Scottish, and Ghanaian homecomings have demonstrated the individual desire for geographically situated ancestry and to experience

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12 C. Nash, *Of Irish Descent: Origin Stories, Genealogy, and the Politics of Belonging* (Syracuse, NY 2008), 9–10.

13 Kelner, *Tours That Bind*; T. Coles, ‘Tourism, Diaspora and the Mediation of Vacationscapes: Some Lessons from Enticing Jewish-Americans to Germany’, *Espace, Populations, Societes*, 2 (2003), 327–40; N. Leite, *Unorthodox Kin: Portuguese Marranos and the Global Search for Belonging* (Oakland, CA 2017). On the notion of ‘pilgrimage’ in ancestral tourism, see K. Schramm, *Coming Home to the Motherland: Pilgrimage Tourism in Ghana* (Abingdon 2004); P. Basu, ‘Route Metaphors of “Roots-Tourism” in the Scottish Highland Diaspora’, in S. Coleman and J. Eade (eds) *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion* (London 2004), 133–74; K. Schramm, *African Homecoming*, 133–46.

14 A. Haley, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (New York, NY 1976); D.A. Gerber, ‘Haley’s Roots and Our Own: An Inquiry Into the Nature of a Popular Phenomenon’, *Journal of Ethnic Studies*, 5, 3 (Fall 1977), 87–111; J.A. Hijjiya, ‘Roots: Family and Ethnicity in the 1970s’, *American Quarterly*, 30, 4 (Fall 1978), 548–56; T.K. Hareven, ‘The Search for Generational Memory: Tribal Rites in Industrial Society’, *Daedalus*, 197, 4 (Fall 1978), 137–49; L. Fishbein, ‘Roots: Docudrama and the Interpretation of History’, in John O’Connor (ed.) *American History, American Television: Interpreting the Video Past* (New York, NY 1983), 279–305. On the international inter-racial impact of *Roots*, see M. Frye Jacobson, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* (Cambridge, MA 2006), 2–8, 41–5; M. Stollery, ‘The Same, but a Step Removed: Aspects of the British Reception of Roots’ (Athens 2017), and N.P. Carter, W. Chalklen and B. Zungu, ‘Re-Rooting Roots: The South African Perspective’ (Athens 2017), and D. Meng-Hsuan Yang, ‘One Man’s Quest: Chiang Su-Chang, Roots, and the Mainlander Homebound Movement in Taiwan’ (Athens 2017), all in E.L. Ball and K. Carter Jackson (ed.) *Reconsidering Roots: Race, Politics, and Memory* (Athens, GA 2017), 147–201.

15 This scholarship goes back to Edward Bruner’s influential 1996 study on African American tourism to Ghana, ‘Tourism in Ghana: The Representation of Slavery and the Return of the Black Diaspora’, *American Anthropologist*, 198, 2 (June 1996), 290–304. See also discussion in Kelner, *Tours That Bind*, 10–8.

the places that one's ancestors walked.<sup>16</sup> Although homecomings for African diasporas and African Americans are structurally similar to those who claim European ancestry, they are shaped by the legacies of slavery and thus differ starkly in the dual burden of the history of the middle passage and of modern-day discrimination.<sup>17</sup>

While the contemporary cultural dimensions of ancestral tourism have received significant scholarly attention, there have been remarkably few studies devoted to its history. Anthropologist Shaul Kelner has pointed out that since scholars have been so focused on contemporary tourism, 'our understanding of the phenomenon risks generalizing from the present without paying adequate attention to the historically contingent character of 21st-century tours'.<sup>18</sup> One such contingent character is the state sponsorship of ancestral tourism, connected to the postwar growth of mass tourism and its entanglement with diplomacy and international relations.

Tourism, the leisurely 'travel in pursuit of pleasure and escape from everyday realities', had been a large business already by the early 1900s but it grew into a mass phenomenon after 1945. Spurred by technological development, especially in aviation, tourism was pushed by both economic and political incentives.<sup>19</sup> Much of early-postwar tourism somehow involved the United States. As one of few western countries to be virtually undamaged by warfare, the United States quickly transitioned into a strong peacetime economy. The affluence of many Americans meant that the United States was the country that in the late-1940s and 1950s could send most tourists abroad. Historian Brian McKenzie has noted that by 1952, 'the only demographic group more numerous than Americans in Paris was Parisians'.

16 C. Nash, *Of Irish Descent* (New York, NY 2008); P. Basu, *Highland Homecomings* (New York, NY 2007); K. Bhandari, *Tourism and National Identity: Heritage and Nationhood in Scotland* (Bristol, UK 2014), 114–28; Hogan, *Roots Quest*, 139–67; N. Leite, 'Travels to an Ancestral Past: On Diasporic Tourism, Embodied Memory, and Identity', *Antropológicas*, 9 (2005), 273–302. For research on ancestry in tourism studies, see B.M. Josiam and R. Frazier, 'Who Am I? Where Did I Come From? Where Do I Go To Find Out? Genealogy, the Internet, and Tourism', *Tourismos*, 3, 2 (Autumn 2008), 35–56; G. Higginbotham, 'Seeking Roots and Tracing Lineages: Constructing a Framework of Reference for Roots and Genealogical Tourism', *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 7, 3 (August 2012), 189–203.

17 J. Campbell, *Middle Passages: African American Journeys to Africa, 1787–2005* (New York, NY 2006); Schramm, *African Homecoming*; A. Reed, *Pilgrimage Tourism* (Oxfordshire 2014); I. Mensah, 'The Roots Tourism Experience of Diaspora Africans: A Focus on the Cape Coast and Elmina Castle', *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 10, 3 (2015), 213–32; P. de Santana Pinho, 'African-American Roots Tourism in Brazil', *Latin American Perspectives*, 35, 3 (May 2008), 70–86.

18 S. Kelner, 'Historical Perspectives on Diaspora Homeland Tourism: 'Israel Experience' Education in the 1950s and 1960s', *Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education*, 7 (2013), 99. Another exception is M. Harper, 'Homecoming Emigrants as Tourists: Reconnecting the Scottish Diaspora', in S. Marshall (ed.) *Tourism and Memories from Home* (Bristol 2017). It is possible that the genealogical craze of the twenty-first century, propelled by the Internet and DNA technology, has contributed to the lack of historical perspectives on contemporary ancestral tourism.

19 E.G.E. Zuelow, *A History of Modern Tourism* (London 2016), 149, 155–9. Quote on p. 9. For more on tourism and cultural diplomacy, see F.C. Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919–1933* (Ithaca, NY 1984); E. Piller, 'Managing Imponderables: The Rise of US Tourism and the Transformation of German Diplomacy, 1890–1933', *Diplomatic History*, 44, 1 (2020), 47–75.

The European tourism industry worked hard to attract US tourists, investing significantly in modernizing tourism facilities and advertising widely in US markets—both through national and joint multi-national campaigns.<sup>20</sup> The incentives for tourism development did not only come from within Europe, however, but also from the United States.

The efforts at rebuilding Europe after 1945 targeted many sectors of society, most famously industry and agriculture but also tourism. As part of the European Recovery Program (ERP), popularly known as the Marshall Plan, tourism was intended to address postwar concerns about ‘the dollar gap’—the trade deficits with the United States that limited the ability of European countries to pay for US consumer goods. In lieu of goods to export to the United States, tourism offered an alternative means of gaining US currency and creating local jobs.<sup>21</sup> ERP officials had a tangible influence on the promotion of Euro-American tourism. The agency tasked with implementing the ERP, the Economic Cooperation Administration, had a Travel Development Section with representatives in each of the 16 aid recipient countries. This sub-agency, in turn, helped create the European Travel Commission, which assisted national European travel offices with advertisement in the United States.<sup>22</sup> The ERP also channeled funds directly to the rebuilding of tourism infrastructures in Europe, paying for the construction and refurbishing of, for example, hotels, ski resorts, casinos, and airports. Writing about the development in Austria, historian Günter Bischof maintains that ‘ERP funds were the central engine in the reconstruction and revival’ of the country’s tourism after the war.<sup>23</sup>

Beyond its economic impact, tourism was also politically attractive. The idea that tourism could benefit foreign relations appealed to US government officials and politicians across the ideological spectrum. It ‘reflected an expansive American nationalism and optimism in the power of American consumers’, and underlined that individual Americans could play a role in the nation’s foreign policy. In the words of historian Christopher Endy: ‘Saving Europe from Communism and poverty never seemed so easy’.<sup>24</sup> The potential impact of cultural internationalism was after 1945 acknowledged in many different types of travel. Except for tourists, it included journalists, artists, scholars, and exchange students.<sup>25</sup> Traveling provided

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20 B.A. McKenzie, ‘Creating a Tourist’s Paradise: The Marshall Plan and France, 1948 to 1952’, *French Politics, Culture, and Society*, 21, 1 (Spring 2003), 48; Zuelow, *A History of Modern Tourism*, 150–55.

21 Zuelow, *A History of Modern Tourism*, 151; C. Endy, *Cold War Holidays: American Tourism in France* (Chapel Hill, NC 2004), 43; E.G.E. Zuelow, ‘The Necessity of Touring Beyond the Nation: An Introduction’, in E.G.E. Zuelow (ed.) *Touring Beyond the Nation: A Transnational Approach to European Tourism History* (Farnham 2012), 4–7.

22 Zuelow, *A History of Modern Tourism*, 150–5; Endy, *Cold War Holidays*, 42–52.

23 G. Bischof, ‘“Conquering the Foreigner”: The Marshall Plan and the Revival of Postwar Austrian Tourism’, in G. Bischof, A. Pelinka, and D. Stiefel (eds) *The Marshall Plan in Austria* (New Brunswick, NJ 2000), 379. See also B.A. McKenzie, *Remaking France: Americanization, Public Diplomacy, and the Marshall Plan* (New York, NY 2005), 111–46.

24 Endy, *Cold War Holidays*, 33–4; Zuelow, *A History of Modern Tourism*, 151.

25 See for example N. Prevots, *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War* (Middletown, CT 1998); J. Gienow-Hecht, *Transmission Impossible: American Journalism as Cultural Diplomacy in*

opportunities for informal interpersonal experiences and exchanges of ideas and values, offering the prospect of building cross-national communities—both among liberal-democratic nations and the Communist bloc.<sup>26</sup> As shown by Richard Ivan Jobs in his study of youth backpackers, tourism was not only a tool for transatlantic relations but also for European social and cultural integration.<sup>27</sup>

There is extensive scholarship on the adoption of culture and information as resources in forwarding national interests, associated with concepts such as ‘cultural diplomacy’, ‘public diplomacy’, and ‘nation branding’.<sup>28</sup> An important point of division within this vast scholarship concerns the level of state involvement or control, with some scholars studying cultural programs as a form of propaganda (as in the case of the Soviet Union) and others focusing on activities ‘beyond the realm of the state’ (as in the work of NGOs). Though scholarship has moved between studying state-controlled propaganda and nongovernmental information, Jessica Gienow-Hecht has pointed out the difficulty of demarcating the level of state interest. ‘The moment these actors enter’, Gienow-Hecht writes about nongovernmental organization, ‘the very definition of state interests become blurred and multiply’.

What is more, these actors frequently assume a responsibility and an agenda of their own, regardless of the program or organization to which they are assigned. While the degree of state involvement remains negotiable, the criteria of ‘state interest’—defined in the broadest possible terms and to the extent that informal actors likewise represent the state—remains stable.<sup>29</sup>

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*Postwar Germany, 1945–1955* (Baton Rouge, LA 1999); P.M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, UK 2004); G. Scott-Smith, *Networks of Empire: The US State Department’s Foreign Leader Program in the Netherlands, France, and Britain 1950–70* (Brussels 2008); D. Blanck, ‘Scholars Across the Seas: The American Scandinavian Foundation and the Sweden America Foundation in the Trans-Atlantic Exchange of Knowledge’, *American Studies in Scandinavia*, 40, 1–2 (2008), 100–125. On ‘cultural internationalism’, see A. Iriye, ‘Culture in International Relations’, in M.J. Hogan and T.G. Paterson (eds) *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations* (2nd edn, Cambridge 2012), 242–3.

26 On tourism and community building among Communist countries, see G. Bodie, “‘It Is a Shame We Are Not Neighbours’”: GDR Tourist Cruises to Cuba, 1961–89’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 55, 2 (2020), 411–34; A.E. Gorsuch, *All This is Your World: Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin* (Oxford 2011), 80–106.

27 R.I. Jobs, *Backpack Ambassadors: How Youth Travel Integrated Europe* (Chicago, IL 2017).

28 There have been lively discussions about the definition and usage of these concepts, as well as the concept of ‘soft power’. See for example Nicolas Cull, ‘Foreword’, M.K. Davis Cross and J. Melissen (eds) *European Public Diplomacy: Soft Power at Work* (New York, NY 2013), vii–xiii; J. Gienow-Hecht, ‘Nation Branding: A Useful Category for International History’, *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 30, 4 (2019), 755–79.

29 J.C.E. Gienow-Hecht, ‘What Are We Searching For? Culture, Diplomacy, Agents, and the State’, in J.C.E. Gienow-Hecht and M.C. Donfried (eds) *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy* (New York, NY 2010), 9–11. Quote on p. 10. A common definition of public diplomacy emphasizes the direct influence of a nation’s government or society, see M.K. Davis Cross and J. Melissen, ‘Introduction’, in D. Cross and J. Melissen, *European Public Diplomacy* (London 2013), xvii.



Tourism is illustrative of this tension, supported and promoted by state agencies and international state-sponsored organizations yet operated by private enterprise and practiced by individual holidaymakers. While tourism embody state interests, it functions beyond the overt involvement of state agencies.

Although primarily a study of ancestral tourism, this article's exploration of how 'old world homecomings' grew out of early-postwar cultural diplomatic programs contributes to the growing scholarship on the history of cultural diplomacy in Europe. Shifting focus from the agency of the United States, which has been the traditional concern of the field, scholars have studied post-1945 cultural diplomatic efforts aimed at creating European integration and cohesion—including across the Iron Curtain—and demonstrated ways in which individual nations and the European Union have sought to adopt cultural activities to gain international standing.<sup>30</sup> The study of ancestral tourism contributes to this latter strand of research. More specifically, it brings forth the role of international tourism within European cultural diplomatic history by centering on an example from the Nordic countries.<sup>31</sup>

The notion that tourists were not mere leisurely sojourners but 'ambassadors' began to shape the public discourse on tourism and international relations in the early 1950s. It was an idea that placed an added responsibility on individuals, charging citizens with the power of unofficial diplomacy.<sup>32</sup> In a *Washington Post* article in December 1952, syndicated columnist Drew Pearson argued for the significance of ordinary citizen's work for peace. The 'steady dripdrip of friendship over a period of years. . . makes war difficult', he wrote, exemplifying with Canada and England, where the long history of close personal relations with the United States would make war with these countries unfathomable. In the mind of Pearson, the 'firmest, surest road to peace' went through the individuals who 'have been working at people-to-people friendship'.<sup>33</sup> Fourteen years later, a *Post* headline announced that 'Everybody Is Getting Together Everywhere', declaring that 'It's getting so you can't go to a foreign country without having to get palsy with the people who live there'.<sup>34</sup>

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30 Gienow-Hecht and Donfried, *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy*, 75–133; J. Batora and M. Mokre, *Culture and External Relations: Europe and Beyond* (Farnham 2011); D. Cross and J. Melissen, *European Public Diplomacy* (London 2013); Ó.J. Martín García and R. Magnússóttir (eds) *Machineries of Persuasion: European Soft Power and Public Diplomacy in the Cold War* (Berlin 2019); C. Carta and R. Higgott, *Cultural Diplomacy in Europe: Between the Domestic and the International* (Cham 2020).

31 K. Clerc, N. Glover and P. Jordan (eds) *Histories of Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding in the Nordic and Baltic Countries* (Leiden 2015).

32 See for e.g. D.M. Madden, 'Ambassadors Without Portfolio', *New York Times* (15 January 1961). For more on the idea of individual citizens as unofficial diplomats, see K. Osgood's chapter 'Every Man an Ambassador' in *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence, KS 2006), 214–52; G. Scott-Smith, 'Private Diplomacy: Making the Citizen Visible', *New Global Studies*, 8 (2014), 1–7; Jobs, *Backpack Ambassadors*. The idea also took hold in the Soviet Union, see Gorsuch, *All This is Your World*, 107–9.

33 D. Pearson, 'Many Work to Achieve Peace', *Washington Post* (27 December 1952).

34 H. Sutton, 'Everybody is Getting Together Everywhere', *Washington Post* (17 July 1966).

If the *Post* headline was an exaggeration, it was not a big one. During the two decades that had elapsed since the end of the Second World War, state agencies throughout the western liberal democratic world had initiated so-called person-to-person programs, intended to further both tourism and international relations. By the early 1960s, there existed over 20 such programs in North America, Europe, and Asia, including the memorably named ‘Know the Norwegians’, ‘Find the Finns’, ‘Get in Touch with the Dutch’, and ‘Don’t Miss the Swiss’.<sup>35</sup> These ideas also took hold in the Soviet Union beginning in the mid-1950s. While tourism to Eastern Europe was intended to encourage communist friendship, tourists to the West were sent abroad as emissaries of the Soviet state who, upon their return, could provide information about industrial and professional life in capitalist countries.<sup>36</sup> The Soviet regime also sought to attract tourists through its ‘Sputnik’ travel program, launched in 1958, which hosted primarily foreign youth for propagandist purposes.<sup>37</sup> By the 1960s, the ideological and political role of tourism had thus become internationally recognized.

The first person-to-person tourism program was founded in Denmark. The scheme, called ‘Meet the Danes’—governed since 1945 by the Danish Tourist Association—had grown out of a hospitality program arranged for Allied personnel stationed in Denmark. The Danes who participated in the program played the role of ‘unofficial ambassadors’, according to the *New York Times*, who explained the ways in which the program functioned:

Visitors apply at the association’s offices in the main railroad station. Officials consult a copious black book in which members of the hospitality list are cross-indexed according to interests and professions. Architects, business executives, factory workers, students, artists and teachers are a few of the professional categories; interests range through music, sports, chess, social work, house-keeping and stamp collecting. This indexing leads to a maximum of compatibility during the visit, which is arranged with surprising informality and alacrity.<sup>38</sup>

The number of American tourists in Europe soared in the 1950s and 1960s. Americans made 376,000 trips to Europe in 1953, around 750,000 in 1959, and 1.4 million in 1965—and the figure continued to grow. In 1970, 2.9 million Americans made the

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35 R. Rigby, ‘Something Fine in the State of Denmark’, *Rotarian*, 101, 2 (August 1962), 18–21; S.R. Williams, ‘Meet the Danes, Find the Finns, but Don’t Miss the Swiss’, *Boston Globe* (15 February 1970). There were also programs in Austria, Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Monaco, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, the United States, and Yugoslavia.

36 Gorsuch, *All This is Your World*; K. Frederichsen, ‘Next Stop Soviet: People to People Diplomacy during Glasnost’, in O.J.M. García and R. Magnúsdóttir, *Machineries of Persuasion* (2019), 147–69.

37 A. Kozovoi, ‘The Way to a Man’s Heart: How the Soviet Travel Agency “Sputnik” Struggled to Feed Western Tourists’, *Journal of Tourism History*, 6, 1 (2014), 57–73.

38 R. Schwimmer, ‘Denmark Organizes “Life-Seeing” Tours’, *New York Times* (30 March 1952). See also V.I. Williams, ‘Meeting the Danes on Home Ground’, *New York Times* (2 May 1954); J. Wilcock, ‘Meet the People at Home’, *New York Times* (30 March 1958).

Atlantic crossing.<sup>39</sup> Between 1945 and 1962, Denmark had reportedly welcomed 50,000 tourists through the ‘Meet the Danes’ program, with an additional one thousand visitors continuing to sign up every month. About 80% of the tourists were American.<sup>40</sup> As the program evolved in the early 1950s and began to receive increased attention in US newspapers, the discursive framing of the program changed from one of ‘hospitality’ to one where the traveler was a ‘good-will ambassador’ and a ‘citizen envoy’ with an ‘individual relationship to foreign policy’.<sup>41</sup>

The international person-to-person programs were based on ideas about the mutual cultural benefits and international political potential of interpersonal relations. The goal was ‘goodwill’ and ‘understanding’—the vague, yet potent, language adopted by contemporaries to describe these programs. The value of person-to-person contacts was based on the notion that amity would materialize by people simply meeting each other. The fundamental idea was that people, in this way, ought to notice that they, after all, are not that different—or that potential differences could be overcome. The experiencing of another person’s daily life and thoughts in a casual setting would be a way of spreading the gospel of liberal democracy.<sup>42</sup>

Sweden had in 1954 commenced its own person-to-person program, called ‘Sweden at Home’.<sup>43</sup> The program was arranged through the office of the Swedish Tourist Traffic Association—a semi-governmental organization, who shared a responsibility with the Swedish Institute (SI), established in 1945, to spread knowledge and information about Sweden abroad. The STTF had been formed in 1902 as an association of businesses and organization engaged in the budding international tourism industry, including railway companies, shipping companies, hotels, and travel agencies. Through its statutes, adopted by the Swedish government, the STTF was tasked with promoting foreign tourism to Sweden and ‘with this purpose conduct enlightenment work’. It had its main office in Stockholm, but much of their activities were run through branch offices in cities such as Rome, London, and New York.<sup>44</sup> The Swedish government had since the 1930s been engaged in public diplomatic efforts in shaping the country’s image abroad, and the tourism industry had been involved in these campaigns. Compared to the SI, which had a broad mandate for public diplomacy programs, the STTF focused its own work solely on tourism.<sup>45</sup> As explained in a press release celebrating Sweden at Home’s 10th anniversary in 1964, the program was

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39 Endy, *Cold War Holidays*, 128.

40 Rigby, ‘Something Fine in the State of Denmark’, 18–21.

41 M. Lindsay, ‘Crash Program for “Citizen Envoys,”’ *Washington Post* (11 June 1956).

42 This idea also formed the basis for the construction of hostels to encourage European youth travel in the late-1950s, see Jobs, *Backpack Ambassadors*, 17–9.

43 Cf. N. Glover, ‘A Total Image Deconstructed: The Corporate Analogy and the Legitimacy of Promoting Sweden Abroad in the 1960s’, in Clerc, Glover and Jordan, *Histories of Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding*, 133, which sets the starting date of the program to 1969.

44 These were the statutes renewed by the Swedish government in 1948. On the organization of the Swedish Tourist Traffic Association, see *Turisttrafiken från utlandet: Betänkande avgivet av 1948 års utredning angående turisttrafiken från utlandet* (Stockholm 1951), 97–104.

45 A. Åkerlund, ‘The Nationalisation of Swedish Enlightenment Activities Abroad: Civil Society Actors and Their Impact on State Politics’, in Clerc, Glover and Jordan, *Histories of Public*

intended to give ‘foreign tourists the opportunity to meet Swedish families in their home environment’.<sup>46</sup> Sweden at Home was most likely modeled on similar schemes in other countries. In an effort to enable travel to capitalist countries, Soviet authorities had already in 1955 approached Sweden about tourism to and from the Soviet Union.<sup>47</sup> While it remains unclear whether this contact left any marks in the STTF records, Sweden at Home was from 1958 developed in cooperation with the major US cultural diplomacy scheme of the time: the People-to-People program.

Through an idea originating within the United States Information Agency (USIA)—a sub-division of the US State Department established in 1953—the People-to-People program was launched by President Eisenhower in September 1956. It was five years later incorporated as People to People International, and still exists today. The program was an element of the vast cultural diplomatic machinery initiated by the State Department in the late 1930s and drastically expanded in the 1950s, particularly through the USIA. The US at the time also carried other programs, such as the Fulbright Program and the Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe, known through the CARE packages that likewise were grounded in the ideal of person-to-person contacts.<sup>48</sup> Alongside the spread of cultural information and exchanges of students, academics, artists, and musicians, People-to-People was a tool for showcasing the strength of capitalism and liberal democracy to the world. It constituted, in the words of historian Kenneth Osgood, the Eisenhower administration’s ‘most ambitious program for stimulating private cooperation in waging the Cold War’.<sup>49</sup> According to a White House press release, person-to-person contacts were ‘designed to create understanding among peoples and build a common effort to advance world peace’. This quest was, in Eisenhower’s words, dependent on ‘the active support of thousands of independent private groups and institutions and

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*Diplomacy and Nation Branding*; Glover, ‘A Total Image Deconstructed’. On the Swedish Institute, see Glover, *National Relations*.

46 Verksamhetsberättelse, Swedish National Travel Office, 1 July 1954–30 June 1955, F3, Vol. 113, F1e, I-dossier, I7, Beskickningsarkiv Washington, 1920 års dossiersystem, National Archives in Arninge, Sweden (hereafter BW); Press release, ‘Sweden at Home’, Folder ‘Releaser’, Vol. 1964 20 (reference number 12/1–12/2), Svenska turisttrafikförbundets arkiv, SE/RA/730310, National Archives in Arninge, Sweden (hereafter STTF). The STTF archive is, remarkably enough, still unprocessed at the Swedish National Archives. It lacks a finding aid and is not organized in a proper and coherent system. In addition to the volume labels originally designated by STTF staff, I will therefore also refer to the reference numbers (*diarienummer*) used internally by the STTF.

47 Gorsuch, *All This is Your World*, 11.

48 F. Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York, NY 1999); R.T. Arndt, *The First Resort of Kings: American Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (Washington, DC 2005); N.J. Cull, *The Cold War and the United States Information Agency: American Propaganda and Public Diplomacy, 1945–1989* (Cambridge 2008); L.A. Belmonte, *Selling the American Way: US Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia, PA 2010); M.L. Krenn, *The History of United States Cultural Diplomacy: 1770 to the Present Day* (London 2017). On the USIA’s campaigns in Sweden, see M. Nilsson, *The Battle for Hearts and Minds in the High North: The USIA and American Cold War Propaganda in Sweden, 1952–1969* (Leiden 2016).

49 Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 233.

of millions of individual Americans acting through person-to-person communication in foreign lands'.<sup>50</sup> Rather than inviting the world to visit Americans in their homes, the People-to-People program was focused on promoting good tourist behavior, and on encouraging civic and voluntary organizations to correspond and interact with like-minded groups overseas. The program was, in this way, designed to spread propaganda abroad, but also to stimulate domestic interest in foreign relations.<sup>51</sup>

The various person-to-person programs were ideologically related, but some also directly cooperated with each other. In the spring of 1958, the manager of Sweden at Home, Margaretha Stiernstedt, traveled to the United States on a trip organized by the People-to-People Foundation. For her visit to Washington, DC, People-to-People had planned a comprehensive program of meetings with program representatives, journalists, the Swedish Embassy, the State Department, and the USIA. True to form, she also had a 'simple dinner' with 'a typical American family', and was accommodated during her three-night stay in the Georgetown home of a People-to-People executive.<sup>52</sup> Stiernstedt's most noteworthy visit was with President Eisenhower at the White House, to which she was accompanied by the director of the People-to-People Foundation, the former General Electric president Charles E. Wilson.<sup>53</sup> The following year, the STTF responded by inviting the director of People-to-People, Carla S. Williams, on a visit to Sweden.<sup>54</sup> The STTF hoped that the visit would 'bring a whole lot of good-will and good publicity in Sweden if the "Sweden-at-Home"-movement was turned into a model for a similar American organization'.<sup>55</sup> Although such an organization already existed, it was reported by the *Washington Post* that William's trip to Scandinavia—including time spent in Norway and Denmark—was a 'fact finding assignment' intended to 'gather ideas' to develop the program into 'America at Home'.<sup>56</sup>

The value of person-to-person contacts was envisioned as a powerful cultural diplomatic tool, but its range was still limited since it relied on a certain level of baseline conviction on behalf of the travelers. For an individual to even contact a foreign tourism agency to set up a meeting—effectively asking to be invited to their home—the traveler needed, from the outset, to believe that the ideal of intrapersonal contacts was ideologically sound. Perhaps even more importantly, they also needed to feel that it was socially enjoyable to have personal meetings with

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50 Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, *Press Release regarding White House Conference on People-to-People Partnership*, 31 May 1956. Available at: [www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov](http://www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov) (accessed 12 February 2020).

51 Osgood, *Total Cold War*, 237–52; Endy, *Cold War Holidays*, 144–8.

52 Verksamhetsberättelse, Swedish National Travel Office, 1 July 1957–30 June 1958, F4, Vol. 112, BW; C.S. Ching and C.S. Williams, 'Plans made by the People-to-People Speakers Committee', n.d. [1958], F4, Vol. 108, BW.

53 "'We're Not Bad Fellows," Ike Tells Swedish Visitor', *Washington Post* (11 April 1958).

54 Verksamhetsberättelse, Swedish National Travel Office, 1 July 1958–30 June 1959, F4, Vol. 112, BW.

55 B. Nordholm to C. Douglas, 7 August 1958, F5, Vol. 109, BW.

56 M. Benner, 'She'd Open America's Front Doors', *Washington Post* (19 October 1958).

strangers, from foreign lands, in unfamiliar homes, during their much-longed-for overseas vacation. While some travel writers questioned the meaningfulness of leisurely tourist activities—such as ‘window-shopping’ or ‘staring at an American motion picture on the Champs-Élysées’, which, according to the *New York Times*, was ‘not the kind of Paris holiday one... wants to remember’—it is likely that many tourists felt a greater allure by the prospect of a private restaurant dinner than ‘coffee in the home of a French family’.<sup>57</sup>

Alongside, and concurrent with, the person-to-person programs, tourist associations in several European countries developed a different set of programs that configured the interpersonal relations through intergenerational connections. These programs were fashioned through notions of extended siblinghood, the fundamental idea that individuals are connected when they descend from the same parent. All forms of co-descent are, as sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel has pointed out, extensions of this idea.<sup>58</sup> By adding ancestry to the mix of interpersonal relations—or, to put it differently, by injecting blood into the programs—the ideal of person-to-person relations was transformed and thus calcified, from friendship to kinship.

The idea that kinship contacts could be productive in terms of tourism and cultural diplomacy evolved in the early Cold War years. It was based on the notion that Americans of European descent constituted an important group to attract in order to increase US transatlantic tourism.<sup>59</sup> In 1951, the Organization for European Economic Cooperation recommended a set of changes to the European tourism industry intended to increase the number of American tourists. Together with suggestions for the construction of new hotels and infrastructures for transportation, it also recommended increased propaganda aimed at encouraging European-Americans to visit their old homelands.<sup>60</sup> A 1951 Swedish government report on the tourism industry, commissioned by the Swedish minister of commerce, referenced a survey made by the US Department of Commerce concerning the total number of American citizens returning from Europe to the port of New York City in 1949. The report explained that ‘no less than 46% of the total’ number of returnees were born outside of the United States. Fourteen percent of

57 Madden, ‘Ambassadors Without Portfolio’.

58 E. Zerubavel, *Ancestors and Relatives* (Oxford 2012), 35–36.

59 Although political scientists have argued that ‘blood kinship’ lost its importance for diplomatic relations after 1914, it has been acknowledged that blood-ties between populations remain important in international relations when they are grounded in histories of migration. See K. Haugevik, ‘Kith, Kin, and Inter-State Relations: International Politics as Family Life’, and H. Leira, ‘Kinship Diplomacy, or Diplomats of a Kin’, in K. Haugevik and I.B. Neumann (ed.) *Kinship and International Relations* (London 2019), 43–80; C.P. Jones, *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA 1999). This dynamic has also been acknowledged by scholars of immigration and diaspora. See D.R. Gabaccia, *Foreign Relations: American Immigration in Global Perspective* (Princeton, NJ 2012); Y. Shain, *Kinship and Diasporas in International Affairs* (Ann Arbor, MI 2007); R. Waldinger, *The Cross-Border Connection: Immigrants, Emigrants, and Their Homeland* (Cambridge, MA 2015). It is, however, not clear from this scholarship how the long-term, inter-generational cultural impact of lineage factor into these processes.

60 *Turisttrafiken från utlandet*, 17–20.

this group were Scandinavians. If one also counted ‘second generation Americans’, the survey indicated that as many as 58% of the total amount of travelers had ancestral connections to Europe.<sup>61</sup> This was clearly an attractive demographic for many European countries. Unlike first-generation diasporas, who often lived with relatives or family when returning to the old homeland, there was likely a greater chance that the (grand-)children of emigrants would stay at hotels and, thus, contribute even more to the local economy.<sup>62</sup>

It appears that the first ‘Homecoming Year’ campaign was launched in Greece in 1951. Highlighted by a summertime program with cultural festivals and group tours, and described as an ‘odyssey in reverse’, the campaign particularly emphasized ‘the return to that country of persons of Greek descent from all over the world’.<sup>63</sup> Following the path of the Greek National Tourist Office, the tourism department in Lebanon announced 1955 as their homecoming year, seeking to attract some of their emigrants to visit the old homeland.<sup>64</sup> While most other European countries established programs to attract foreign tourists (for example targeting youths), including France, Italy, and the Netherlands, it is unclear whether they considered similar initiatives. The Greek and Lebanese campaigns notwithstanding, it was an Irish campaign, ‘An Tóstal: Ireland at Home’, that provided the inspiration and primary reference point for the STTF as they in the mid-1960s sought to repeat and refine the idea of ancestral tourism.

An Tóstal—which translates as ‘a gathering’—was organized every year between 1953 and 1958 by the Irish Tourist Board. The campaign was a spring-time tourism festival intended to attract Irish-American visitors in the off-season. The idea for An Tóstal came from Juan Trippe, the founder and president of Pan American Airlines. Eventually, the campaign did not manage to increase the number of tourists, and was in fact deemed to be a failure.<sup>65</sup> The STTF was well aware of the shortcomings of An Tóstal, declaring the ‘final assessment... [to be] utterly negative’, and considering the word ‘fiasco... too weak in this context’.<sup>66</sup> Undeterred by its outcome, An Tóstal provided the Swedish organizers with a template for what not do when they planned their own campaign.

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61 *Turisttrafiken från utlandet*, 53.

62 A. Perri, ‘Residential Roots Tourism in Italy’, in Zoran Roca (ed) *Second Home Tourism in Europe: Lifestyle Issues and Policy Responses* (Farnham 2013).

63 A. Ranft, ‘A Greek Odyssey’, *New York Times* (30 December 1951); D. Rice, ‘News and Notes from the Field of Travel’, *New York Times* (3 December 1950); R. Meyer Jr, ‘Festival Program for Greece’, *New York Times* (20 May 1951).

64 C.B. Squire, ‘Lebanese Reunion’ *New York Times* (27 March 1955).

65 E.G.E. Zuelow, *Making Ireland Irish: Tourism and National Identity Since the Irish Civil War* (Syracuse, NY 2009), 124–35; E.G.E. Zuelow, ‘An Tóstal: Ireland at Home (1953–1958)’, in J.P. Byrne, P. Coleman and J.F. King (eds) *Ireland in the Americas: Culture, Politics, and History* (2nd edn, Santa Barbara, CA 2008), 59–61. Juan Trippe considered Pan Am a ‘chosen instrument’ of the US government, see M. Bender and S. Altschul, *The Chosen Instrument: Pan Am, Juan Trippe; The Rise and Fall of an American Entrepreneur* (New York, NY 1982).

66 Unsigned [possibly U. Grönkvist], Memorandum ‘Irlands An Tostal 1953–1958’, 17 September 1965, Vol. 1966 65 (31/51), STTF.

The backdrop to this development was the Marshall Plan, which Sweden had signed in July 1948. In the Swedish government report on tourism from 1951, the committee underlined that the country had an obligation under the Marshall Plan to 'take such actions, [so] that the tourist traffic from the United States is facilitated'. This was one of the reasons, the report explained, for why STTF recently had intensified its propaganda campaigns in America.<sup>67</sup> The significance of attracting US travelers was emphasized anew in another government report from 1957, aimed at presenting suggestions for how to increase Swedish export to the United States and American tourism to Sweden. The report made clear that 'there is no doubt that also the latter generations of Swedish Americans constitute a clientele, which is and henceforth will be far more receptive of Swedish tourist recruitment measures than Americans in general'. It was therefore the committee's recommendation to the government to launch campaigns to attract Swedish American tourists.<sup>68</sup>

The Swedish 'Homecoming Year' was promoted as 'the year with 13 months'. Officially starting in December 1965 and ending in December 1966, it covered two Christmases in a strategic effort to attract increased visitor rates during two off-seasons. The campaign was touted as 'the greatest and gaiest Swedish campaign ever introduced abroad'.<sup>69</sup> The idea for Homecoming Year had been initiated by Åke Gille, the director of the New York office of the STTF. Gille was 46 years old and had spent his entire career in the tourism industry. A previous employee of SAS at their offices in London, Copenhagen, Cairo, Tel Aviv, and Athens, he had assumed his position in New York in 1963.<sup>70</sup> Shortly thereafter, he started planning for the Homecoming Year campaign. At a business meeting with the STTF, Gille argued that the campaign had several strategic benefits.

It is ancestral- and friendship connections among families in different parts of the world, it is the interest-inducing and knowledge-promoting element, that we hope to reach out with in the United States, it is the possibility of reaching new generations of Swedish Americans through the old emigrants, it is the economic aspect, it is the [tourism] season prolonging aspect. The Homecoming Year campaign is in other words a summary of our wishes and hopes for the work that we do within the frame of the Swedish Tourist Traffic Association.<sup>71</sup>

Most living first-generation Swedish immigrants had by the 1960s reached an advanced age. Rather than seeing this generational shift among Swedish

67 *Turisttrafiken från utlandet*, 124.

68 *Sverige i USA: Ett förslag till vidgad upplysningsverksamhet; Betänkande avgivet den 31 oktober 1957 av USA-kommittén* (Stockholm 1957), 50–1.

69 Press release, 'It is Homecoming Year... Welcome to Sweden', n.d. [March 1966], Folder 'Releaser' 1966 30 (12/1), STTF.

70 U. Grönkvist, obituary of Åke Gille, *Dagens Nyheter*, 20 July 2004.

71 Protokoll fört vid årsmöte med Svenska Turisttrafikförbundet, 3 December 1965, Folder 'Årsmöte', Vol. 'Protokoll: Årsmöte, styrelse, arbetsutskott, 1949–75', STTF.



Americans as a problem, it was now framed as a business opportunity. By way of ancestral relations, organizers hoped to create a new form of community based not on first-hand experience but on communicative memory. Gille's plan was to profit from transatlantic ancestral connections of Swedish Americans, and to make use of the first-generation immigrants as 'a bridge' to attract later generations.<sup>72</sup> The suggestion was based on the idea that 'there exists in Sweden a strong desire to maintain and strengthen ties with her former sons and daughters and their descendants and to further mutual understanding between people of Swedish ancestry and the people of Sweden itself'.<sup>73</sup> The campaign hoped to profit from the increased interest in genealogy and ancestry, while the emigrants of the mass migration were still alive and fit to travel.

While An Tóstal had been a top-down organization involving substantial economic investments over a period of six years, Homecoming Year was to be a temporally limited and decentralized event, with little economic risk on behalf of the STTF. The reception of the 'homecomers' was to take place locally, while the STTF-staffed campaign headquarters in New York and Stockholm would take care of advertisement and public relations, functioning as a clearing house for communication between tourists and local organizers throughout the country.<sup>74</sup> By the commencement of the campaign, committees had been formed in 500 municipalities spread across all counties of Sweden. A quarter of a million brochures had been distributed, much of it through cooperation with 3300 travel agencies in the United States and Canada. The campaign had been advertised extensively in American and Swedish-American newspapers, as well as on radio and television in Sweden and the United States. Organizers proudly noted that the campaign had been covered three times on CBS's the Ed Sullivan Show, one of the most-watched TV-shows in the United States.<sup>75</sup> The target of the advertisement—presented to the tourism industry as a 'wonderful sales opportunity for travel agents'—was the '3,000,000 Americans of Swedish descent for whom Homecoming Year is an effective allure'.<sup>76</sup> Organizers hoped that some 30,000 people would visit Sweden during the year, increasing the total number of Americans visitors to 200,000 (an optimistic, and seemingly unsupported, figure that likely did not differentiate between tourists, business travelers, and return migrants).<sup>77</sup>

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72 Å. Gille to E. Schulze, n.d., 'Utdrag ur protokoll fran konsulkonferensen i Washington den 21 april 1965', Folder '12/1 New York', 1965 22, (10/1–12/1), STTF.

73 'A Proclamation, By His Royal Highness Prince Bertil of Sweden', n.d. [October 1965], Vol. 1965 48, (35/11), STTF.

74 Unsigned memorandum [possibly U. Grönkvist], 'Irlands An Tostal 1953–1958', 17 September 1965. The deputy director of the STTF travelled to Dublin in the summer of 1965 to learn more about the Irish experience. See M. Nöjd to T.J. O'Driscoll, 23 August 1965, 1965 48 (35/11), STTF.

75 Press release, 'Homecoming Year i ett nötskal', n.d. [1966], Vol 1966 65 (31/51), STTF. See also U. Grönkvist, 'Plan över mottagarapparaten', 29 September 1965, Vol. 1965 48 (35/11), STTF.

76 Scandinavian Travel Facts: Agent's Manual 1966, Scandinavian Travel Commission, p. 161, Folder 'Agent's Manual and Travel Facts', Vol. 1966 55 (31/11), STTF.

77 'Nästa år kommer 200 000 amerikanare på besök', *Aftonbladet* (18 July 1965).

The basic tenet of the campaign was the claimed Swedish-American desire to return to Sweden as ancestral tourists. This supposedly natural state of mind was, however, continuously nourished by the STTF, making it difficult to ascertain what, in fact, came first: the perceived yearning or the projection of yearning. 'The Swedish American shall not be considered a tourist when he travels to Sweden', Åke Gille explained in an interview. 'When he comes here [to Sweden], he is still going *home*'.<sup>78</sup> The plan was for Swedish-American visitor to get a 'royal welcome at the place where he or his ancestors came from. He will be invited to church, to the events of athletic clubs, to the meeting of the local heritage movement, to the school, etc.'<sup>79</sup>

This ambition was presented in detail in the official brochure produced by STTF. It explained that Homecoming Year was 'dedicated to all those men and women of Swedish descent—numbering, perhaps half as many as those who live in Sweden itself—now residing in other lands'. It was an invitation to visit 'traditional' Sweden—with Midsummer, Lucia and Christmas celebrations, and the 'red little cottage by the lake'—but also 'modern' Sweden, with its business acumen of private enterprises, its advanced research, progressive labor relations and social services. Indeed, about one-third of the brochure was devoted to the section 'Meet Modern Sweden in Sweden'. The idea was for visitors to 'see how one of the world's most progressive welfare states operate on a private enterprise economy as well as to walk old roads their fathers and grandfathers knew'. The ultimate goal was to 'strengthen the ties between the old country and the other nation'.<sup>80</sup> The campaign's choice of language was not coincidental. According to historian Nikolas Glover, Swedish public diplomacy in the 1960s was market sensitive, and 'rested on identifying how Sweden was relevant in different contexts'. While Swedish agencies spread information about 'socialism in Sweden' in for example Africa, the messaging vis-à-vis the United States was as a country of flourishing business life.<sup>81</sup> In this way, the consensus-oriented 'Swedish model', combining a social democratic welfare state with market capitalism, could be selectively portrayed behind the veil of homeland nostalgia.

Ancestry constituted the fundamental adhesive of Homecoming Year. It was the historical dimension that motivated why individuals should seek an encounter with Swedish society, and foregrounded the meetings that was to take place. Regardless of where in Sweden the individual originated, the Swedish communities, large and small, would welcome them as 'an honored and most sincerely welcome guest and kinsman'. 'The home of your ancestors would naturally be your primary goal', a

78 'Vi skall rulla ut röda mattan för 30.000 svensk-amerikaner', *Sölvesborgs-tidningen*, (19 December 1964).

79 'Direktör Åke Gilles anförande vid STTF:s sekreterarkonferens över ämnet, Homecoming Year för svensk-amerikanare', 23 March 1965, Vol. 1965 48 (35/11), STTF.

80 Brochure, Welcome to Sweden, Homecoming Year, Vol. 1966 65 (31/51), STTF; 'Sweden Bids Homecomers a Warm Welcome', *Vestkusten*, 7 April 1966. The *Vestkusten* article originated in a press release from the STTF's office in New York.

81 Glover, 'A Total Image Deconstructed', 132.

promotional brochure explained, but ‘you owe it to yourself—and to your children—to see also as much as possible of the rest of the country, to broaden and enrich your conception of the exceptional background that is yours’. The level of ancestral awareness or knowledge was not an obstacle for coming home. ‘If you have lost touch with your relatives in Sweden, we will help you find them. If you have no more relatives in Sweden, we will help you find experts to trace your ancestry and find the old homeland’.<sup>82</sup> As a consequence, genealogy became an important aspect of the campaign.<sup>83</sup> It was a backbone in the very creation of the campaign’s target audience.

To accomplish the task of connecting Americans of Swedish descent with their Swedish ancestors—and thus also with organizers in the local communities that ostensibly constituted their specific ‘homeland’—the STTF solicited help from two professional genealogists. Their participation offered the campaign a public relations benefit, underlining for prospective visitors that their travels were indeed not mere tourism, but that it served as the acting out of innate family histories. The individuals who chose to contact the genealogists and proceeded with research (which at the campaign’s end turned out to be very few), did so for a set of purposes shaped by nostalgic longing: to visit living relatives, to visit the area from which they or their progenitors originated, to see the house or cottage of their childhood, visit the church where they were baptized or confirmed, or see the graves of their ancestors.<sup>84</sup> These motivations corresponded with the ones advertised by the campaign—attesting to the way that tourism associations tapped into existing popular feelings of longing while, simultaneously and by design, serving to forcefully calcify such longing.

At the campaign’s end, organizers of Homecoming Year claimed, contrary to previous promises, that it was not possible to produce reliable data on the number of Swedish Americans that had visited Sweden in 1966.<sup>85</sup> The best indication of the campaign’s result likely came from reports of local tourist associations around the country. These reports were anything but positive. While some noted a slight increase in the number of American visitors, others said that they had ‘not noticed any change at all’ in the visitor rate.<sup>86</sup> Despite the rather discouraging reports, the STTF persisted in their assertion that the year had been a success, regardless of how many visitors they attracted. According to organizers, Homecoming Year

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82 Brochure, Welcome to Sweden, Homecoming Year, Vol 1966 65 (31/51), STTF.

83 U. Grönkvist to E. Schulze, 11 February 1965, Vol. 1965 48 (35/11), STTF.

84 See incoming correspondence and bookkeeping of the two genealogists contracted by STTF for genealogical research, Yngve Fritzell and Ludolf Häusler: Reskontra I and Reskontra II, in Vol. 2–3, G1, 29:2, Yngve Fritzells arkiv, Swedish Emigrant Institute, Växjö, Sweden; Beställare, Homecoming Year, F1, Vol. 283, Forskningsakter, Ludolf Häuslers genealogiska samling, Regional State Archives in Uppsala, Sweden.

85 ‘Gästabud med småländsk ostkaka i slottsgemak Home Coming Year-final’, *Svenska Dagbladet*, 29 December 1966; ‘Slottsfinal i Växjö för Homecoming year’, *Sölvesborg-stidningen* (29 December 1966).

86 G. Flodell to E. Schulze, 31 August 1966, Vol. 1966 65 (31/51), STTF.

should 'primarily be viewed as a considerable PR success'.<sup>87</sup> By presenting their achievement in terms of public relations—regardless of the fact that public perception was equally hard to measure as travel statistics—organizers emphasized an immaterial measure of success. In this way, Homecoming Year became a parallel to the Irish An Tóstal; although the latter was a contemporary failure, it has been credited with solidifying the image of Ireland as 'a bright, welcoming, and cozy tourist paradise'.<sup>88</sup> Beyond the sheer number of visitors, the greatest value of both the Swedish and Irish homecoming campaigns was arguable as an idea.

The notion of homecoming tourism relied on two essential dimensions: the value of person-to-person contacts and the notion of co-descent. Together, they formed the idea of ancestral relations—that is, the proposition that blood relations, established through the dislocation of migration, form a natural and unbreakable bond between countries, and that these bonds are beneficial for both economic and political purposes. The proposition of ancestral relations was in the decades after 1945 produced by a network of actors that included state governments, semi-governmental agencies of cultural diplomacy and the tourism industry. In the case of the Swedish Homecoming Year, the promotion relied on two narratives with different temporal qualities; one that looked to the past and relied on tradition, the other taking aim at the future and relying on modernity. It was based both on a nostalgic longing to experience the place where ancestors lived, and the promise of being associated with societal progress.

There were, however, limits to the success of homecoming tourism as cultural diplomacy. As it turned out, it was not possible to foster ancestral relations through memories of a common past while shielding the more sensitive dimensions of the present. The Cold War context seeped into the 1966 campaign, creating a contrast to and potential conflict with the image of generational amity that Homecoming Year organizers sought to portray. 'How should we explain what is happening in Sweden to our relatives and friends who come here from the big country in the West?' asked a letter to the editor in the daily newspaper *Expressen* in December 1965, merely one month into the campaign. The writer criticized the fact that government ministers had expressed solidarity with the Viet Cong.

They might believe that they mistakenly have ended up on the wrong side of the Iron Curtain... Should the homecomers be met at the boat by communist propaganda, aimed towards the USA and paid for by all their relatives and friends in Sweden?<sup>89</sup>

The most illustrative intrusion of Cold War politics on the Homecoming Year celebration took place in late-May, as the first charter group of 165 Swedish Americans arrived to Arlanda Airport north of Stockholm. They were welcomed

87 U. Grönkvist, 'PM Homecoming Year—Ev fortsättning', 2 September [1966], Vol. 1966 65 (31/51), STTF.

88 Zuelow, 'An Tóstal: Ireland at Home', 60.

89 'Hem(ckt)', *Expressen*, 30 December 1965.

by family and relatives, as well as a delegation from the Homecoming Year organizations, accompanied by a musical band. At roughly the same time as the arrival of the Swedish-American flight, the Soviet Chief of the General Staff and Deputy Defense Minister, Matvei V. Zacharov, also landed at Arlanda Airport to meet with representatives of the Swedish military. Newspapers reported on the 'somewhat odd company' of the two DC8 airplanes from Chicago and the civil version of the Tupolev Tu-104 Soviet bomber. On the very same page as the reporting of this event under the headline 'Spring Flowers for the Homecomers' the daily newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet* carried the starkly contrasting headline '40 Young [People] Arrested in City Chaos' reporting on an anti-Vietnam war demonstration outside the US embassy where American flags had been burnt and clashes erupted between protesters and the police.<sup>90</sup>

The anti-Vietnam protests were considered by some to negatively affect the promotional value of the Homecoming Year campaign. A Swedish-American man in Boston wrote a letter to Åke Gille complaining of the spread of anti-Americanism in Sweden, the flag-burning and the demonstrations in Stockholm, asking 'How can the Swedes promote home-coming summer and expect Americans to visit them after this most extreme insult to our flag and our country?'<sup>91</sup> This sentiment was shared among representatives of the US foreign service.

During a visit to the southern city of Karlskrona, Marshall Swan, a public affairs officer from the embassy in Stockholm, warned that the anti-war protests could damage the country's relations.<sup>92</sup>

The adhesive of kinship, this ostensibly unbreakable bond, turned out to be double edged. Co-descent—individually, as well as transposed to the national level—is a powerful signifier of the social insider, showing that individuals or groups are part of the same family. At the same time, however, geographically dispersed people are by definition separated, which also grants them the role of the outsider. This duality, of simultaneously having relations as insiders and outsiders, is the double edge of transatlantic ancestry. As bonds of blood were unbreakable, kinship created an even greater stimulus for disappointment when relations became strained. For a country whose postwar cultural diplomatic effort was focused on gaining political standing with the United States, expressions of disappointment were not what Homecoming Year organizers had hoped for. Yet, to all involved in the 1966 organization and for generations to come, the practice of ancestral tourism remained utterly attractive, embedded in an international fabric of ideas about person-to-person contacts, tourism and cultural diplomacy, and the significance of close US relations.

90 'Vårblommor till hemvändande', and '40 unga greps i City-kaos', in *Svenska Dagbladet*, 29 May 1966; 'Sovjets generalstabschef studerar Svenska försvaret', *Svenska Dagbladet* (31 May 1966).

91 V.E. Emanuelson to Å. Gille, 31 May 1966, Folder 12/1 (korr.), Vol. 1966 29 (12/1), STTF.

92 'USA:s informationschef på besök i Karlskrona', *Sölvesborgs-tidningen* (11 November 1966).

Ancestral tourism was developed in postwar Europe under the influence of powerful political and economic actors. Rather than the common interpretation of homecoming as an existential pursuit, this article has demonstrated how ancestral tourism developed out of political considerations in the early-postwar era. The homecoming campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s were ideological heirs to the person-to-person programs first started in Denmark in 1945. Rooted in a liberal-democratic ideology that vested individual travelers with diplomatic agency, these programs operated largely, but not entirely, independent of each other. They were part of a European context where national tourist agencies observed and where inspired by activities of other nations.

Adding a layer of intergenerational complexity to the person-to-person programs, the attraction of ancestral tourism was its ability to combine the economic and political incentives that had been articulated in the Marshall Plan. With its combined promise of both economic and diplomatic rewards, homecoming campaigns of the early-postwar era thus foregrounded the contemporary appeal of 'roots tourism' as a way of both attracting international visitors and nurturing transnational ethnic communities. The interactive structure of person-to-person and homecoming campaigns, and the separation of cultural diplomatic agents from overt political or economic agendas, were factors that, over time, likely contributed to their popularity among European governments and tourist agencies.<sup>93</sup>

For the first time within the realm of Swedish-American relations, the 'Homecoming Year' campaign presented tourism and ancestry as being intrinsically connected, the former being portrayed as a direct consequence of the latter. It constituted a new step in the effort of Swedish government and semi-government agencies in making use of the memory of nineteenth-century Swedish-American mass migration for touristic and cultural diplomatic purposes. It was based on shared values of democratic liberalism—articulated by the free movement of individuals through tourism—and on notions of transatlantic co-descent as manifested through kinship relations.

By promoting tourism based on ancestry, tourist agencies in Europe contributed to the process of turning traveling into a naturalized way of acting-out knowledge of ancestry. In relief to its popularity today, however, it is striking to notice that ancestral tourism did not, in fact, become a widespread phenomenon in the 1950s and 1960s. This observation is especially curious in relation to the argument by Lowenthal, Hogan, and others, who have contended that postwar migrations and urbanization fueled a popular genealogical interest. It is always difficult to ascertain historical reasons for why something in the past did not happen, but two factors probably contributed to the lack of success for homecoming tourism in the mid-twentieth century. First, the changing pattern of tourism in Europe might have made ancestral tourism campaigns directed to North American markets less interesting for European tourism agencies. By the 1960s, every European country

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93 J.C.E. Gienow-Hecht and M.C. Donfried, 'The Model of Cultural Diplomacy: Power, Distance, and the Promise of Civil Society', in Gienow-Hecht and Donfried, *Searching for a Cultural Diplomacy*, 24.

had steady economic growth. Living standards had improved greatly since the war and almost all of continental Europe granted its citizens at least two weeks of paid vacation. With the volume of European tourism overtaking North American transatlantic travels by the early 1960s, it is possible that the appeal of American ‘homecoming’ tourism waned.<sup>94</sup>

Second, the cultural calcification and institutional facilitation of ancestral longing was not as strong in the 1950s and 1960s as it has been since the 1990s. Genealogical research was not a major phenomenon in the 1960s—neither in the United States or Europe. Genealogy was still a time-consuming effort pursued by relatively few enthusiasts. This began to change in the 1970s, partly because of the cultural impact of *Roots* in 1976, which stirred a considerable genealogical interest, and partly because of the developing technological and commercial landscape of genealogy shaped by the introduction of desktop computers and, in the 1990s, the Internet.<sup>95</sup> The more developed the infrastructure of ancestry has become—of archives, societies, journals, radio shows, TV-shows, online databases, and direct-to-consumer genetic genealogy tests—the larger the number of people who experience a longing for ancestry has grown. The individual longing for ancestry, and the translation of this longing into a desire to travel to ancestral homelands, has become much more widespread since the days of ‘Homecoming Year’. Indeed, notions of ‘common ancestry’ today appear as the very foundation of the ancestral tourism economy.<sup>96</sup> The efforts by state agencies and the tourism industry of capitalizing on the individual longing for ancestry—which, through the lineage of postwar ancestral tourism, can be traced to the economic rationale of the Marshall Plan—served to bolster the collective longing for roots and the popular notion of homecoming.

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94 Zuelow, *A History of Modern Tourism*, 159–60; S.D. Pack, *Tourism and Dictatorship: Europe’s Peaceful Invasion of Franco’s Spain* (New York, NY 2006), 7–8.

95 E.L. Ball and K. Carter Jackson, ‘Introduction: Reconsidering Roots’, in Ball and Carter Jackson, *Reconsidering Roots*, 6–7; F. Weil, *Family Trees* (Cambridge, MA 2013), 203–6.

96 Bhandari, *Tourism and National Identity*, 128.

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