



Landscape and landed estates east and west of the Sound

Nils Lewan

Abstract.

The paper is trying to do two things. The first part is a discussion about what the Swedish province of Skåne, east of the Sound, might have been like, if it had remained Danish after 1658. Both land use and settlements, communications and institutions might have developed otherwise. Secondly, a Swedish and a Danish large landed estate are compared, in order to highlight land ownership and its outcome under different political regimes.

Keywords

Land use, settlement, land ownership.

Nils Lewan: Department of Social and Economic Geography, Lund University, Sölvegatan 13, SE-223 62 Lund Sweden.

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What would Skåne have been like, if it had still been Danish? The shrewd question was put by a young student during a field trip in Skåne many years ago. Obviously there are many answers, although equally obviously no definite ones. It has, however, been a good exercise discussing possibilities and probabilities with students. Some of the answers are elaborated below. Among the important factors behind landscape change is land ownership and property rights, not the least the history of large landed estates, here discussed through two examples.

What about Skåne, if it had remained Danish?

Comparing Sjælland and Skåne, one will find the same climate and the same geological background, as regards bedrock, Ice Age history and soil deposits, i.e. as long as the northernmost parts of Skåne are not taken into account. The natural vegetation could also be looked upon as having the same history, although with at least one important difference: Spruce spread from the north and has become part of the natural forest in northern Skåne. That part of the province also has more in common with most of Scandinavia, and very little with the open north European plain, of which both southwestern Skåne and Sjælland are parts.

Turning from here to cultural changes in the natural flora and fauna, it is of course difficult to discern differences during the Danish times of Skåne, i.e. up to the mid-17th

century. The general outlay of the cultural landscape was the same, with nucleated villages dominating Sjælland and most areas of Skåne. Again, however, we should find a different pattern of settlement in the northern parts of Skåne, and on upland areas such as Linderödsåsen, Söderåsen and Romeleåsen. Because of open bedrock and topography, moorland and otherwise agriculturally difficult land, settlements here were much smaller, consisting of hamlets or scattered farmsteads.

Nature in Skåne might be said to have prevailed somewhat longer than Danish rule, as the first important period of diverging landscape on the two sides of the Sound seems to have been the late 18th and the early 19th century. Thus, the most important reform of land amalgamation (Danish: *udskiftning*, Swedish: *enskitte*) under Danish rule would have been carried through decades earlier in Skåne and, perhaps more important, it would have taken a somewhat different course. I.e., if still Danish, villages and hamlets might have remained more intact. Additionally, and not unimportantly, most cottagers would have received their own specified plots of land, if Danish rules had still been adhered to.

The 19th century saw the introduction of the railway (in Denmark in 1847, in Skåne in 1856). It is, however, highly improbable that the line towards Stockholm would have been a top priority in Skåne with Copenhagen as its capital. Thus, railway towns like Eslöv and Hässleholm might

not have come into being at all, or at least much later than they did.

Of course, the most important links of communication would have centred on the capital, i.e. Copenhagen. Today's important ferry links from southern Skåne are obvious reflections of the Swedish communication pattern. Thus, neither Trelleborg nor Ystad might have developed to the same extent under Danish rule. And, if we still look upon Malmö as the most important place east of the Sound, and upon Skåne as one of the old heartlands of Denmark, one might contemplate the possibility of a Sound bridge much earlier than in the year 2000. The possibility that this bridge also might have come into being earlier than the Store Bælt bridge, would not have been without its implications for other parts of the Danish realm. Summing this up, one might find that modern communication patterns might have developed quite otherwise under Danish rule. Also the need for an airport east of Malmö (today's Sturup) would have been almost nil, leaving these undulating, partly wooded areas undisturbed, to the pleasure of urban people from both Malmö and Copenhagen. Additionally, one also has to contemplate the possibility of a first bridge at the northern end of the Sound, where the water gap is just 4 kilometres between Helsingør and Helsingborg.

Turning from there to industrial life, it is perhaps more difficult to discern what would have happened under Danish circumstances. Besides the Klippan paper-mill from Danish times, other pulp and paper making facilities might have developed earlier than they did under Swedish rule. More certain, however, is that the main operator of the sugar-works and refineries in Skåne would have been the Danish predecessor of present Danisco much earlier than in 1993. And finally, would there ever have been a nuclear power plant at Barsebäck?

Looking back, we can also see the area on both sides of the Sound as one of the most important shipbuilding regions in the world, with at least five major contributors, viz. Kockums in Malmö and Burmeister & Wain in Copenhagen, and additional shipyards at Landskrona, Helsingør and Helsingborg. Would they all have come into being in a larger Denmark, and if so, would they have been almost gone by now as well?

Contemplating agriculture today, one could also find reasons for another type of landscape in a Danish Skåne. Among them we find differences in the general foreign trade policy of the two countries, but also in the domestic

agricultural policies. If still Danish, even Scanian agriculture might have been primarily centred upon the export of animal produce, and the very far-reaching amalgamation of farms which has taken place in Skåne would not have been possible. Thus, both the number of farms and the number of fields might have been bigger in a Danish Skåne. In addition to that, the areas of interest to the wild flora and fauna found in the open plains might have been more numerous, at least if one should judge from today's landscape.

Another aspect of Swedish farming is forestry, the general state being that most farms also include forest land. Of course, in Skåne this does not apply to the open plains, i.e. areas which have most in common with today's Denmark. It is, however, an interesting question whether the present number of small woodland farms would also have been found under Danish rule. One might well argue that the layout of the Scanian plains to quite an extent is a result of Swedish farm and forest policies, differing from Danish ones.

From there it is just a short step to the rural parish organisation, although just to state that most of the units from Danish times are still there, even after hundreds of years of Swedish rule. However, the current amalgamation of units might not have taken place under Danish rule. But what about the churches? Something like one third of the Scanian ones were replaced in the decades around 1900, giving an additional visual aspect to the countryside, with tall 19th and early 20th century spires mixing with much lower and more compact older, and partly really Danish towers. These are rich men's additions, which we rarely find west of the Sound.

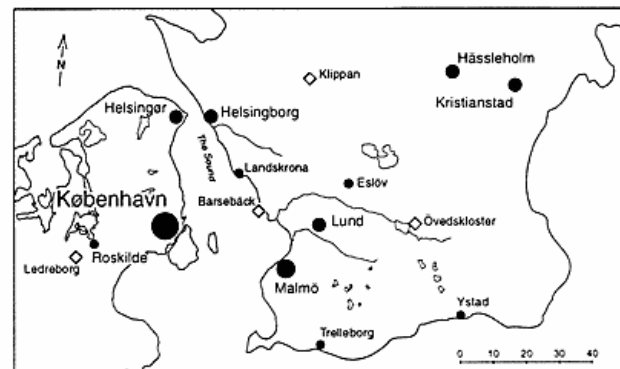


Figure 1: Location in NE-Zealand and Scania of places mentioned in the text.

Looking again upon urban places, Lund might have remained the seat of the archbishops of Denmark, although with much more limited powers than had medieval archbishops like Absalon or Asker. And contemplating higher education of today, we find the universities of Copenhagen and Lund by far the biggest ones, with post-WW2 additions in Roskilde, Kristianstad and, in 1997 only, in Malmö. Would it be far-fetched to think Kristianstad as the first university in a Danish Skåne, with Malmö as a good second and - a sobering thought for a Lund scholar - still no Lund University?

Two landed estates in retrospect and prospect

The exercise above indicates that the same kind of natural landscape might develop in different ways under different cultural and political circumstances. And, as large landed estates have been a very important part of the ownership system on both sides of the Sound, it would seem of interest to look specifically into their landscapes.

Because of their historical and cultural values, landed estates over the last few years have been in the centre of government investigations as well as other studies in both Sweden and Denmark. Patterns of development have been looked into, and difficulties have been investigated. Possibilities have been contemplated, and solutions have been proposed, although there has been little talk about the natural heritage (cf. Betænkning... 1987, Att förvalta kulturmiljöer 1991, Bavnshøj & Eriknauer 1995, Kulturgendomar och kulturföremål 1995, Raben-Lewetzau 1996, Lewan & Lewan, in preparation). Even this very limited presentation of the estates of Övedskloster and Ledreborg, primarily founded on interviews, might help to some understanding of what has been going on. While Övedskloster is found adjacent to Lake Vombsjön in south central Skåne, Ledreborg is situated close to Roskilde, some forty kilometres west of Copenhagen.

Although both estates have older roots, the 18th century was very important as their "modern" founding period. Ledreborg came into the Holstein family in 1740, and Övedskloster was purchased by the Ramel family in 1753, and both places still are in the same hands. The palaces or central manor houses were erected in the 1740s and 1760s respectively, and today they are well preserved and splendid examples of 18th century building. Very soon long avenues were planted, to quite an extent still intact, in

other parts renewed in recent years. Also, the middle of the same century saw the establishment of ownerships in tail, as Ledreborg became a "countship" (Danish: *lensgrevskab*) in 1746, while Övedskloster was made an entailed estate (Swedish: *fideikommiss*) twenty years later. This has, of course, helped to keep both estates intact.

Such information might give the impression that Danish and Scanian estates have many parallels in their history. This is also true. In both countries there still are estates within the same families as hundreds of years ago, in Skåne even a few within the same hands as during Danish time. But changes of ownership after a few generations seem to have been much more common, and quite a number of the estates have recently come into their present family of owners. Also, there are castles or manor houses from several centuries, although most of them have been rebuilt or added to since 1800. It should also be noted that in the old days estates in most cases consisted of a rather small core area, including just a few farms, but with additional estate land and tenant farms at shorter or greater distances. However, with detailed knowledge still being sparse, the 18th century might be hypothesised as an important period of consolidation into larger units.

At both estates the second half of the 18th century seems to have been a period of expansion, with economic modernisation and a lot of new building, but also with planting of parks and gardens. As regards parkland, the following centuries first saw an expansion and then reorganisation. Today's parks and gardens have become much simplified, as they have at most estates, if they have not been greatly reduced or done away with, as being too costly with today's wages.

The 19th century, by later generations often looked upon as a dark or backward period, saw a tremendous modernisation in agriculture, especially during its later decades. This is still easily noticed at Övedskloster, where modern forestry was introduced from the middle of the century with extended planting of beech, spruce and pine on poor grazing and arable land. But even farming was modernised, with the ploughing up of former meadows and grazing land, and with the huge number of small tenant farms being reduced to one or just a few although much bigger ones at each dependent village and hamlet.

In Denmark forest legislation was introduced in 1805, making an end to the age-old mixture of land use, and helping to protect and increase forest land (Fries & Møller 1995). Even here spruce became the new and preferred

forest tree, although usually much smaller patches were planted. The much preferred introduction of large tenant farms at Scanian estates, however, never became a fashion in Denmark (cf. Möller 1989).

Still another sign of the 19th century modernisation is found in the large number of farm buildings from that period all over the estates in both countries, also at our two places. This, of course, has very much to do with the introduction in animal farming of large milk herds. One of those we still find at Övedskloster, while Ledreborg no longer has any animals but pheasants, some sheep and a couple of horses. Animal husbandry, which a hundred years ago was an important economic leg of almost all farms, big and small, today is close to non-existent on the estates. Thus, the impressive brick buildings in many cases do not earn their upkeep any longer, being parts of the landscape furniture with an uncertain future, unless new uses can be found.

If the 19th century saw a large number of innovations, which also changed the landscape outside the estate cores with their palaces and manor houses, parks and avenues, the 20th century has witnessed additional changes. Increasing differences in the appearance of the landscape seem to have emerged between the estate or nobility-owned land, and the land of ordinary owner farmers. Modernisation of farming operations, with early amalgamation of strips of farm land and also relocation of farmsteads, started at the estates more than two hundred years ago. Later on, other innovations followed, and it is easy to understand that over the years the owners of both Ledreborg and Övedskloster have successively had to look for new solutions to the everlasting problem of creating an economy good enough to admit decent nobility life as well as the upkeep of both man-made and natural surroundings. Thus, we should also turn to present circumstances and problems.

With some 3300 hectares, half of which is woodland, Övedskloster has a huge homefarm with a 200-headed milk herd, plus additional younger animals. Today's economy has its mainstays in forestry and in milk production, while visitors to parks and garden, and to other parts of the estate, are welcome free of charge. The interior of the main building, with valuables from bygone centuries kept together through testament, is shown to groups. As at other estates, there is a big surplus of both farm buildings and other houses. Along the roads many of them have been sold, while others closer to the core are let permanently or as summer cottages. Such sellings are possible, if the

money received is used to improve other assets of the estate, and only with the consent of *fideikommissnämnden*, the board which 1963 got the task to superintend the estates still in tail.

Thus, much of the old built environment is kept intact, and the same goes for the mile-long avenues, some of them still as planted two hundred years ago, others renewed during the last couple of decades. In spite of thorough and continuous modernisation, stability in both the landscape and the built environment characterizes the Övedskloster estate to a larger extent than where ordinary owner farming prevails. The natural values in both woodland and the open landscape are well-known and also well tended. The future, however, is not without its problems. According to an act passed by the Swedish parliament in 1963, entailment is going out with the present tenant in tail, i.e. in a decade or two. After another generation general inheritance rules will be in force, putting the future upkeep of both cultural and natural values at risk. Planning must be done with one eye upon the near future, and the other looking a hundred years ahead. Thus, not even gentleman farming is a bed of roses.

The position of Ledreborg does not seem to be much easier. Just a few years ago ownership passed from one generation to the present, one sister out of seven and her husband. This has, of course, meant changes in ideas as well as in economic circumstances.

Even before that the 20th century involved profound change. In the beginning of the century a number of farms had to be sold, and later on other assets had to be given up, in order to turn the property into a fully private one. Behind this we find the established fact that Danish countships and baronies were looked upon as fiefs and not private properties, which was the case in Sweden. With the legislation in 1919 concerning their dissolution we find this kind of change all over Denmark in the 1920s, with many estates having to give up between one fourth and one third of their total area. The only equivalent in Sweden to this is the successive winding up of entailment since 1964, making it more difficult than before to keep a number of the most important and largest estates intact. Thus, the process of real reduction in size found Denmark in the early years of our century, while it is just about to hit Swedish estates still in tail. Thus, too, some problems new to Swedish estate owners are already part of history to Danish ones. And, while the process in Denmark included the establishment of vast numbers of small-holdings

(Danish: *husmandsbrug*), the current development in Sweden is not increasing the number of holdings, rather the opposite.

Still, although without specific investigations, it seems as if the landscape of the estates on both sides of the Sound is including very much of tradition and history as well as of modernity and change, and perhaps more of both than in areas owned and farmed in more normal farm units.

Ledreborg, however, is special in many ways:

It has been able to keep some 1700 hectares, out of which quite a proportion is woodland, and still a number of tenant farms. While the collections of coins, medals and manuscripts have been given up, the paintings and tapestries are still retained, the inventories of the manor made into a special foundation. Additionally, the estate has put land at the disposal of the archeological and historical experimental centre at Lejre, and close at hand there is also a restaurant.

The situation close to the capital is a kind of special invitation to visitors. The deteriorated garden and parkland has been renewed, and lots of visitors also come to indoor concerts, and when the interiors are shown. Dinners and other events are organized as well, and the present owners seem to seek all kinds of possibilities to make Ledreborg an important cultural place. Some public money helps to keep the interiors as well as the surrounding nature, but most of the money must be earned from the land, and from events which participants have to pay for. Any estate owner of today can tell you that this is not only convenient.

A brief presentation like this cannot do full justice to estate development over several centuries, nor to the problems and possibilities, which are facing the owners of today and tomorrow. It is, however, obvious that the future of important parts of the cultural and natural heritage to quite an extent is dependent upon the interest, knowledge and economy of the owners, be it in Denmark or in Sweden (cf. Stilling 1998: 14-15).

A concluding observation

With Skåne still part of the Danish realm, would there ever have been a reason for a Lund University? If not, there would not have been a Lund student to put the introductory question. The story of landed estates would not have been the same for both the studied places in the same country. Neither would I, as a Lund scholar, have been able to put pen to paper about these themes.

Interviews

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