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The Inclusive Museum in a Multiethnic Age

The role of the museum in a contemporary, multiethnic, social housing area in Denmark

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It is argued that in dealing with multi-ethnic users and topics the museum has the potential to act as an inclusive social agent in the integration of new citizens. This article discusses some of the practical and theoretical challenges that the museum meets in working across cultural and social borders. Based on a Danish research project focusing on the development of culture and identity in a multiethnic, social housing area south of Copenhagen, the role of the museum is discussed with reference to contemporary museological theories about the potential inclusivity of the museum. The overall questions are: How can the museum include multi-ethnic users? How does immigration and multiculturalism influence the meaning of the sources and how can the museum preserve contemporarily controversial issues such as integration in the collective memory.

Keywords: Social inclusion, contemporary history, immigration, new user groups, ethnicity, museology

In 2013, Greve Museum and the Danish Immigration Museum collaborated on a joint research and collection project in a multiethnic nonprofit housing estate in Greve Municipality, which is located approximately 30 km. south of Copenhagen. The two museums examined a housing area comprising approximately 1800 apartments distributed amongst two estates in two nonprofit housing associations commonly known as Greve Nord. In the 1970s, both estates were considered innovative architectural examples of the Danish Welfare State's housing dream. However, over the past 40 years, these housing estates have become increasingly characterized by their high concentration of non-Danish residents, not to mention their high proportion of residents who are not active within the labor market and a series of social problems. For a while, the high level of social and ethnic diversity within these housing estates meant that the Danish Government officially labeled one of them a ghetto. Since 2008, a community project has worked towards improving the joint image of the two estates. The project focuses on education and employment, health and cultural events and tries to view the resident populations' multiethnic composition as a positive point of departure.

The aim of the study was, amongst other things, to analyze the estates' transition from architectural innovation to socially deprived housing estate and towards turning their negative image. Furthermore, the study provided a reason for working with new user groups, not to mention for reflecting upon the role of museums in general in relation to the inclusion of multiethnic users. Based on the authors' presentation of the completed study at the seventh International Conference on the Inclusive Museum in Los Angeles in August 2014, the article at

hand discusses how cultural history museums can work towards the inclusion of citizens from multiethnic backgrounds, and the various challenges such endeavors can entail.

The article's point of departure consists of a portrait of immigration to, and multiethnicity in Denmark, as a whole, and Greve in particular. This leads us on to why museums, as inclusive institutions, have an important role to play, not to mention how this work is tackled: at national level, at the Danish Immigration Museum, Greve Museum and in our joint study of a multiethnic housing estate in Greve. Finally, we also discuss some of the challenges we were confronted with when working with multiculturalism and intercultural dialogue. In short, this article contends that the museum as an institution holds a unique potential for contributing to the creation of a sense of solidarity and inclusion amongst the residents of such housing estates.

Multicultural Denmark

In 2014, approximately 11% of Denmark's almost five million citizens, i.e. 626,070 individuals are immigrants or descend from immigrants¹. This proportion has grown explosively over the past thirty years, as immigrants and the descendants of immigrants comprised a mere 3 percent of the Danish population in 1980². The population has also become more diverse over the same period. Up until the second half of the 1970s, the largest group of immigrants to Denmark came from Germany. However, subsequent waves of refugees from various parts of the world and the immigration of mainly unskilled laborers from Turkey, Pakistan and former Yugoslavia have led to the present situation, where the five largest foreign groups consist of Turks, Germans, Iraqis, Lebanese and Bosnians. Hence, Denmark has undergone a transformation from having a stable and in cultural terms relatively homogenous population to becoming part of a global and multicultural world society. To the museums, this means that settings and user groups have become much more diverse than they used to be, and that they, the museums, have acquired an important role, in terms of audience development and social inclusion (Thorhauge et al. 2008:130).

Over the past 50 years, a number of nonprofit housing development projects have been built. They consist of densely built apartment complexes. A series of studies on the patterns of settlement of immigrants and refugees have shown that immigrants and refugees have settled in a number of these large-scale estates. Here, the members of different ethnic groups live in enclaves with culturally like-minded citizens (Pii Damm 2002; Skifter Andersen 1997, 2005, 2006, 2006a). Their concentration in these areas, however, is not solely due to their wish to live in close proximity to one another. Instead it is mainly due to the fact that over the past number of years, nonprofit housing has been more accessible than has the private housing market, i.e. financially and culturally speaking, (Schultz Larsen, Troels, 2013). This in turn means that a number of nonprofit housing estates have a particularly high concentration of so-called 'ethnic' residents who do not necessarily identify themselves with their local area, its history and the sense of community that joins other residents.

¹ According to Statistics Denmark immigrants and the descendants of immigrants are defined as individuals whose parents were both born outside Denmark and both hold a non-Danish citizenship. Meanwhile, the descendants of immigrants are born in Denmark.

² All the statistical data referred to in this article were drawn from Statistics Denmark's database at www.statistikbanken.dk.

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However, the extreme diversity of the user group in such areas poses a challenge for local museums whose objective it is to collect, preserve and communicate the history of a particular area. Typically, user groups in this type of setting do not see themselves as part of its history or consider the museum as a place of personal relevance. However, nonprofit housing estates are an important part of modern history, and, as such, they constitute a natural point of focus for museums.

Greve Nord – a social housing estate outside Copenhagen

The Greve Nord study focused on two social housing estates in particular: Firstly, Gersagerparken, built in 1972 – whose 913 apartments of up to 130 square meters in size with kitchen appliances and a utility room in each apartment constituted the dream housing for many in the 1970s. The largest apartments even had two bathrooms and one or more balconies.



Illustration 1: Gersagerparken built in 1972.

Photo: Greve Museum

Secondly, Askerød, inaugurated in 1975 and comprising of 600 apartments built using prefabricated concrete elements. A national newspaper referred to the project under the headline '*Askerød – the recipe for a housing success. Half of the 600 new apartments are already reserved*³. Teachers, lawyers, medical students, architects and other members of the well-educated Danish middle classes could see that the project made it possible to live separately while being part of a larger community.



Illustration 2: Askerød built in 1975.

Photo: Greve Museum

From the end of the 1970s, and from the mid-1980s in particular, the resident population's composition began to change dramatically. Huge increases in rent meant that many of the original residents moved out of the area. Greve Municipality subsequently used the empty apartments when allocating housing to individuals whom the municipality was obliged to help find a home: i.e. families with social problems, unemployed individuals and addicts along with newly arrived immigrant and refugee families. Hence, since the 1990s both housing estates have been renowned for the composition of their resident population with its high proportion of ethnic minorities, huge social problems, gang related crimes, etc. These problems resulted in one of the housing estates, Askerød, being placed on the Danish government's so-called ghetto-list in 2004. The list singled out a number of socially deprived housing estates with the result that, amongst other things, even more Danish residents and resourceful immigrants left the area.

³ Politiken 1974 (A national Danish newspaper).

The above-mentioned extensive community project was put into effect in 2008 – financed by a national fund, Greve Municipality and the involved housing associations. Provisionally set to run to the end of 2016, the project has involved the launching of a series of concrete initiatives aimed at creating a sense of community within the respective estates on the one hand, and at meeting the area’s social challenges on the other.

A multiethnic community in Greve Nord

Statistical data illustrates the way in which the proportion of immigrants in the two areas has risen dramatically from 1980 to the year 2000. Furthermore, it is clear that the proportion of non-Danish residents in the two housing areas is much higher than in both Greve as well as in Denmark as a whole. Gersagerparken rose from 2.9 percentage points in 1980 to 26.7 percentage points in the year 2000. In Askerød, this proportion rose from 11.2 percentage points in 1980 to 66.7 percentage points in the year 2000. In comparison, the proportion nationwide was 7.1 percentage points in the year 2000 and that in Greve Municipality as a whole was 4.9 percentage points.

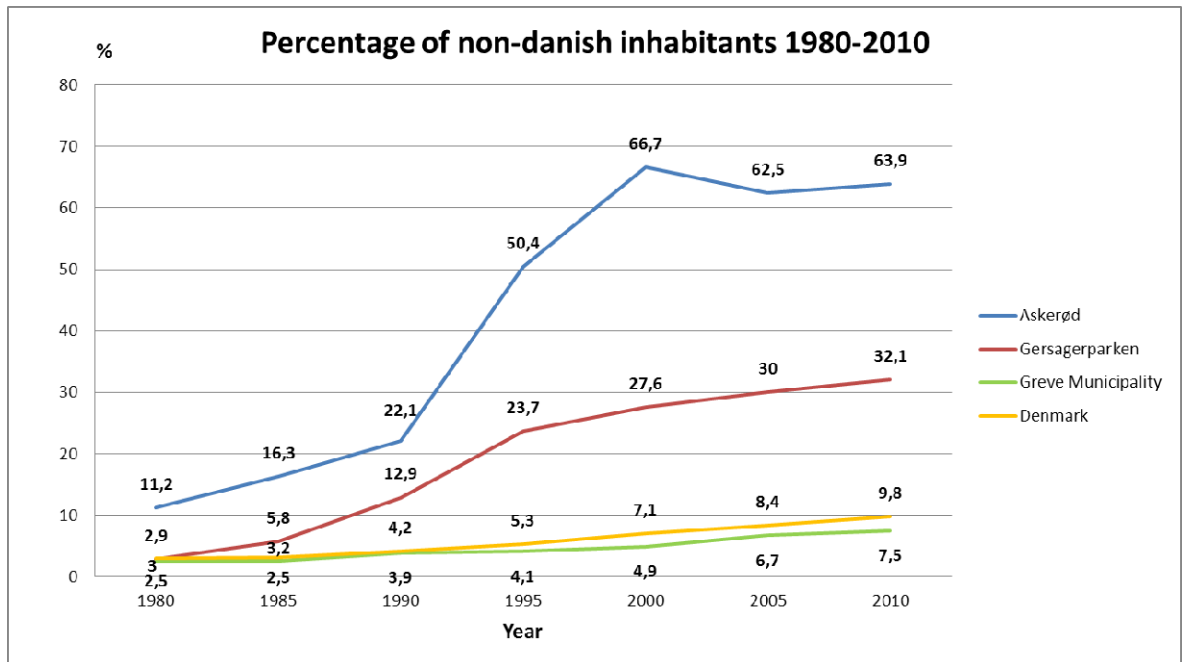


Illustration 3: The graph shows the development over 40 years of how many non-Danish inhabitants there live in the different social housing area in Greve Nord.

Source: Danish Immigration Museum, 2014

A listing of nationalities resident in Askerød and Gersagerparken indicates that while the two largest groups in both cases came from Turkey and the Lebanon in the year 2000. Furthermore, both estates also housed large groups of residents from Iraq, Iran, Bosnia, Pakistan and Poland. Following on from this, a 2014 census indicates that more than 100 nationalities are represented in the area as a whole. Hence, Greve Nord has become a particularly multiethnic area since 1980, providing Greve Museum and the Danish Immigration Museum with an opportunity to examine the development of identity within a multiethnic area and to collaborate with, to them, unconventional user groups. It also provided the museums with the opportunity to consider the role of the museum in an inclusive context.

How can the museums include multiethnic users?

In the year 2000, a national report on the contribution of cultural institutions to a culturally diverse Denmark noted that only a few cultural institutions in Denmark had incorporated cultural diversity in all levels of their endeavors (Hvenegaard Rasmussen et al. 2000). Since then, a huge amount of attention has been given to inclusion and intercultural dialogue, both ethnically and socially speaking, not to mention at both local and national political levels. Firstly, in recent years the partitioned city and the socially vulnerable housing estates have been the object of an increased focus: 'The increased partitioning of the cities led to (...) a risk that social life primarily takes place within closed communities of like-minded individuals, and that the city's residents seldom meet across social, economic and cultural divides!' (The 'Byen 2025' think tank. 2013:25, translation by the authors)⁴. Secondly, the 2012 Danish Museums' Act specifically demands that the museums' endeavors must be democratic, i.e. accessible to and considered relevant by the citizens.

The annual national user survey, conducted by the Danish Agency on Culture, shows that users of museums still to a large degree consist of the four Ws, i.e.: White, Well-off, Well-educated Women. However, since 2013 the survey has included a question regarding the users' cultural affiliation – showing that 32 percent of users resident in Denmark report being culturally affiliated to a country other than Denmark. The 32 percent of users, who report being culturally affiliated to another country, are distributed as follows: while 29 percent of them are culturally affiliated to the Nordic countries, 61 percent are affiliated to Europe. 15 percent report being culturally affiliated to North America, 10 percent report Asia, 7 percent Africa/Sub-Saharan, 6 percent Australia, 6 percent South America, 5 percent the Middle East/Maghreb, 4 percent the Arctic Region, 3 percent Russia and 2 percent the Pacific (Lundgaard et al. 2014:8,19).

Thus people from other cultures are already present at museums, the survey also shows that a number of other groups are under-represented in Danish museums, namely entrepreneurs, unskilled and skilled laborers, retired individuals, those employed within the private sector, youngsters, men under the age of 50, not to mention 1st, 2nd and 3rd generation immigrants, particularly those from 3rd world countries (Lundgaard et al. 2014:140).

The task with which the museums have been entrusted, is that they are to contribute to the development of active citizenship and to learn how to handle complexity and diversity, with the objective of freeing potentials that build upon collective intelligence. The most recent report from the Danish Agency on Culture speaks of [the] 'social poetry' that can emerge through intercultural

⁴ The Think Tank 'Byen 2025' was appointed in 2013 by the Minister for Housing, Urban and Rural Affairs. The Think Tank has published the report *Fællesskaber i forandring (Communities undergoing change) listing suggestions for changes.*

dialogue: 'when the differences and ways of living of individuals are acknowledged as a premise and a strength.' (Lundgaard et al. 2014:48). Thus, a national strategy entails anchoring cultural diversity within the museums and developing them as spaces in which intercultural dialogue can take place.

When looking at the Danish museums, it is clear that they are playing an increasingly active role in the integration of foreign cultures. The museums hold the potential to introduce refugees to Denmark and to form cross-cultural contacts, e.g. through city-walks tailored to new refugee and immigrant families, and through the museums' active participation in the integration policy of various municipalities and exhibitions expressly aimed at refugees and immigrants. In keeping with this, the Women's Museum in Aarhus has founded The Women's Museum's Cultural Meetings, i.e. a mentor network for women from a refugee or immigrant background and Danish women⁵. Likewise, in Aarhus, Gellerup Museum and 'The Old Town' – an open air museum - have worked on user involvement and ownership in relation to history in a socially deprived housing area called Gellerupparken. There residents are 'in charge', with narratives about the place in which they live and the life that is lived in their area (Guldman Sekwati 2013:25-29). In 2013, a new initiative 'Behind the block – from stigma to place', was developed in collaboration with local guides, including a large number of ethnic residents who presented their housing estate and shared how they see their relationship to the estate along with their narratives and experiences of everyday-life. The aim of the city-walks was to question some of the prejudices and counter the isolation and stigmatization of the area, i.e. an area that tend to be associated with high crime rates, low rates of education, the over-representation of ethnic minorities and pervasive insecurity (Poulsen-Hansen et al. 2013).

From 2009 to 2013, George E. Hein acted as a follow-up researcher in connection with a development project entitled 'Museums and cultural institutions as spaces for citizenship' otherwise known as the Citizenship project. Following on from this he writes that collaboration between Danish museums and language schools has proved to be a most promising approach in terms of introducing a new audience to the museum space (Hein 2014:22-23). Thus, Danish museums are already addressing the challenge of including new users at a local level.

The Danish Immigration Museum

Nationally, the cultural history of immigration in Denmark gained its own museum exhibition in 2012, when the Danish Immigration Museum, under Furesø Museum, opened a new permanent exhibition. The exhibition narrates the history of immigration to Denmark over the past 500 years through a number of comparative themes. Furthermore, the museum has also addressed issues such as integration and the reception of immigrants both in online projects and in temporary exhibitions. The museum's objective is to collect, document, examine and communicate migration processes and the reception of foreigners in Denmark down through history. In doing so, the museum focuses upon the personal story, not to mention past and contemporary events, in order to facilitate a sense of familiarity and cultural exchange. Prior to the emergence of the Danish Immigration Museum, documenting this part of history was left to cultural museums around the country.

⁵ <http://kvindemuseet.dk/dk/museet/om-museet/mentornetvaerk/> (as viewed on October 14. 2014)



Illustration 4: The Danish Immigration Museum opened its new permanent exhibition in 2012.
Photo: Danish Immigration Museum

In 2012, the Danish Immigration Museum carried out a survey amongst the state-approved museums in Denmark. This survey showed that the topics of immigration and integration had been treated either as a sub element of local projects in one of two ways. Some museums undertook projects focusing on the ‘foreigners’ history within the local area, while others focused on specifically defined outreach projects primarily aimed at bringing the museum’s work out of its normal physical setting. A number of these projects share the fact that they have treated individual ethnic or multiethnic groups by focusing on the differences and similarities that exist between them and Danish society. However, they have not systematically worked with a multiethnicity and the inclusive potential of history.

Greve Museum

Greve Museum, on the other hand, opened in 1988 as a local cultural history museum in Greve Municipality. In 2013, the museum inaugurated a new permanent exhibition on Greve in the 20th century, and the dreams, visions and stories that underlie Greve’s development as a suburb outside the Danish capital, Copenhagen. The museum’s target group is comprised of the suburb’s almost 48 thousand citizens, all of whom have a part in the history of the town. Between 2009

and 2013, Greve Museum carried out a public involvement project, whereby more than 75 citizens actively participated in a series of seminars, networks and focus groups over the years. Within the context of these fora, they contributed narratives from their lives along with photographs and their respective outlooks on historical events linked to development of Greve, etc. Together, this mosaic provided a number of different perspectives on and glimpses of the exhibition that the museum was in the process of developing (Buus et al. 2010:9-11). The museum had thereby acted as a cultural meeting-place, whose pivot was the sense of community that arose in relation to being a citizen within the same town. The citizens contributed to the project on a number of levels, in line with Nina Simon's idea of dividing public involvement projects between *contribution*, *collaboration* and/or *co-creation* projects (Simon 2010:187ff).



Illustration 5: Greve Museum's new permanent exhibition "Dreams of Welfare. Greve in the 20th century" opened in 2013. *Photo: Greve Museum.*

However, none of the participating citizens came from a non-Danish background, although this group in 2014 comprised 12.7% of Greve's population. Furthermore, Greve Museum was not particularly familiar with the ongoing development in Greve Nord. Therefore, the joint research and collection project between Greve Museum and the Danish Immigration Museum came to form a vital foundation for Greve Museum's endeavors in relation to the inclusion of multiethnic citizens within its exhibition. In the following, we will explain some of the challenges involved in the survey undertaken in Greve Nord.

Challenges in working with multiethnicity and a cultural mosaic

At the beginning of the project we already knew, that the participation of citizens in museum projects and exhibitions is not something that happens from day to day. The individual has to find participation meaningful. Nina Simon describes this in the following manner: ‘there are many visitors who will not choose to share their story, talk with a stranger, or consume visitor-generated content’ (Simon 2010:4). During the course of our fieldwork in Greve Nord, we experienced various barriers or challenges in relation to getting in contact with the residents. Basically a significant number of residents just wanted to live in their apartments without having to engage in any type of activity, be it in their housing estate or at a museum.

Hence, access to personal stories was limited. This, however, is not an experience which is limited to museological work. In connection with a 2009 study of the way in which immigrant families use and arrange their homes in nonprofit housing areas carried out by the Danish Building Research Institute, Phillippa Suenson from Aalborg University writes: ‘Gaining access to the homes of the various families was difficult ... The reason for this was that they felt insecure. But once the door was opened, the residents demonstrated a huge degree of openness and hospitality’ (Suenson 2009:6, translated by the authors). This was substantiated by our work in Greve Nord, where recognition, e.g. amongst a group of Arabic women, or amongst the family members of previous interviewees could have been used as a means of approach for the collection of further material, had the project’s finances allowed for this.

In Greve Nord, we mainly made contact with the residents through the staff of the local community project, who are in daily contact with the residents, and through word of mouth (i.e. the snowball effect). However, this means that the citizens we have been in contact with represent the more resourceful immigrants in the area, thus recognizing that it takes longer to gain contact to informants with greater cultural challenges.



Illustration 6: A group of women and children in one of the social housing areas in Greve Nord.

Photo: Greve Museum

What is a museum - Who is it for?

As a starting point, we expected to be working in housing estates, whose residents were not necessarily used to visiting museums. This was an expectation that was confirmed during our fieldwork. Greve Museum is situated seven and a half kilometers from the housing estates, and the Danish Immigration Museum is situated 33 kilometers further north. Hence, location proved to be a significant factor in relation to how many residents, and particularly ethnic residents, were familiar with the museums. Many of the residents we spoke with had never been to a museum, and had little idea of what museums do. This meant that we had to start out by explaining in general terms what the museum's mission is, and how it is relevant to their personal history.

This too is in keeping with Nina Simon's description of a translation of the rules of the museum. She compares cultural institutions to volleyball courts and points out how it is important that we, as museums, take new visitors by the hand: 'Cultural institutions are like volleyball courts. Expert visitors and staff already know how to play. They are confident about how to use the space, what's available and how to connect with content of interest. However, there are many casual and infrequent visitors, who would like to participate but don't know how to start. These people need friendly hosts (...) who can respond to them personally and help them find the activities, information, and people who will be most relevant to their needs. By welcoming people personally and responding to their specific interests, you can foster an environment in which everyone will feel confident and energized about participating with your institution and with each other' (Simon 2010:34).

However, in Greve Nord the individual residents were not alone in their skepticism towards the personal relevance of the museum. One of the participating housing associations we contacted was very reticent about handing documents over to Greve Museum, because its representatives preferred the idea of the complete collection of resident magazines from the 1970s and onwards being preserved within the association's office rather than in the museum. Thus, the foremost task of the museum becomes earning the trust of the potential informants and proving the relevance to them.

With over 100 different nationalities represented in the housing estates, it has not been possible to represent them all. Instead, we have allowed ourselves to be inspired by a non-ethnic approach, whereby one follows individual migrants and their descendants in the various networks and social relations in which they participate (Glick Schiller et al. 2006). We have thereby allowed ourselves to be guided by 'the field', the network and the key individuals who were prepared to share their stories with the museum, rather than targeting our efforts at particular groups. This has had the advantage that we have gained insight into life as it is lived in the form of personal stories. However, it has also had the disadvantage that our results are lacking in terms of representing the true constellation of the areas' residents.

As mentioned above, those who have been willing to be interviewed and contribute their (hi)story to the museum are the more resourceful and well-integrated immigrants and refugees. Language has been a decisive barrier. A number of especially female immigrants from e.g. Turkey are illiterate and do not have a proper command of the Danish language, even after having lived 20 to 30 years in Denmark. Their knowledge of key western languages that might otherwise have been put into use is similarly poor. Therefore, this group is difficult to access as informants – and it has thus been left out of our group of informants.

Besides exploiting the local community project, we have tested a number of different contact strategies, both by being visibly present in the area and through participant observation in connection with various events, word of mouth and through written communication. Written communication turned out to be a particularly unsuccessful approach in relation to the

linguistically weak target group. However, this strategy did bring us into contact with an Italian immigrant who sent us her story, after which some members of the museum's staff visited her in her home. Thus not surprisingly, involving a diverse group of informants requires a diverse strategy for contact.

Ethnic key individuals

Instead of targeting specific ethnic groups, we have interviewed a number of key individuals within the ethnic community, i.e. individuals who play an active role in influencing the area in different ways through various community projects. This has led us to interviewing Joumana and Reza, two so-called municipal health officers who come from a Palestinian and an Iranian-Afghan background, respectively. They help ensure that health related knowledge is passed on through 'peer education' to residents with non-Danish backgrounds. The health officers resemble the target group and as a result, they can act as reliable, and equal, sources of information. Characteristic of both health officers is that they are doing well within Danish society, in terms of language, education and employment, not to mention financially speaking. They navigate between two cultures, acting as voluntary bridge-builders between fellow compatriots from their respective countries of origin and Denmark.

We also interviewed Danielle, a Romanian woman, who fled to Denmark in 1989. She is a voluntary neighborhood mom in Greve. *Neighborhood Moms* (i.e. *bydelismødre* in Danish) is a network for ethnic women by ethnic women, the underlying concept being that they can ask for advice about anything and everything, e.g. child rearing, or life as recently settled in Denmark. It is a nationwide project, through which women can take a 15-week course. The neighborhood moms use a broad range of methods when reaching out to women, as quite often they are isolated from their surroundings. The purpose of the neighborhood moms is to help women from ethnic minority backgrounds who live in deprived housing estates become active citizens. Besides Danielle, there is also a Turkish and a Palestinian neighborhood mom in the area.

We have also been in contact with an Arabic woman, Nadia, who is part of a women's group in Askerød. She came to Denmark as a refugee from the Lebanon in 1994 and has been living in Askerød with her parents and her two young children since 1995. As a bio-analyst, her background as a health professional has in many ways acted as a springboard into the world of voluntary work. Her goal is to make Askerød an example of how residents themselves can change an area from being deprived and much criticized, to becoming a resourceful, calm and lovely place to live.

Finally, we have interviewed Abdul, an Iraqi refugee who is the Chairman of the Parents' Network (i.e. *Forældre- Netværket* in Danish) in Askerød. The Parents' Network facilitates the creation of various events and activities that bring children and adults together across family, language and ethnic divides. The goal is to be pioneers and to enhance tolerance and a wider sense of community. In short, our informants are part of a group that has already taken part in the community process – prior to choosing to participate in the museum's endeavors.

This group may function as a way to engage less well integrated individuals who in our experience require other means such as longer, personal presence in the area, interpretation, etc., if they are to begin using the museums.

The social role of the museum - Strategies in relation to ethnic inclusion on the part of museums

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The contact with the resourceful individuals, however, clearly suggests, that the museum as an institution holds a huge potential as a medium of social integration - solely by being interested in the narratives that are hidden behind the facades. This can be achieved, amongst other things, by using resourceful individuals as contact persons, interpreters, etc. Similarly, physical barriers can be dismantled by being visible within a given neighborhood; however, this takes time and could not be achieved within the confines of the project at hand. Nevertheless, Greve Museum aims to follow up on its engagement and visibility within the neighborhood in the years to come, and The Danish Immigration Museum continues to research integration and identity in multiethnic communities.

Identification is crucial for the inclusion of ethnic citizens. Bearing this in mind, Greve Museum and the Danish Immigration Museum used the vision that the visitor is to recognize his/her own history, while being challenged by that of others. In this way, museums can be used as a tool for integration as well as for inclusion.

We have therefore worked with follow-up visits, amongst other things, in close collaboration with the community project. Particularly, in relation to non-museum users from non-Danish backgrounds: 'Individual visits or transactions as 'pearls' of experience. Building strong relationships with visitors means providing a string to tie those pearls together' (Simon 2010:55). In this case, trips to the museum for special groups have been important in creating contact to, or just putting faces on, some of the residents who come from the area. In doing this, we have been inspired by Falk and Dierking's contextual model of the museum experience, taking the individual's personal, socio-cultural and physical context as our point of departure (Falk et al. 2000). The museum visits have primarily consisted of social excursions with a slight cultural history slant. The target groups have consisted amongst others of Arabic women's groups with an interpreter, or women who are provided for by their spouses and attending Danish- and/or societal comprehension course. Hence, the new museum users meet their surroundings in the museum, both historically and physically speaking, and are thereby included in the area's collective history and culture.

A multiethnic area – diversity in cultural heritage

Besides creating relationships with new, potential users, the project in Greve Nord has also had to deal with the challenge of collecting artifacts and photographs that can describe life as an immigrant in a multiethnic environment. This proved challenging – mainly because of the fact that multiethnicity, migration and integration are topics that only contain few artifacts. Many immigrants have not brought things or photographs with them on their journey, and what they have been able to bring with them tends to hold a particularly personal meaning, which they do not want to hand over to a museum collection. In the case of some immigrants, no artifacts or photographs exist that illustrate their migration story. For example, Danielle, a single mother, told us that the only things she brought with her when she fled from Romania were two small bags with a change of clothes for herself and her daughters. Most refugees only have the clothes they were wearing when they took flight. Joumana, a Palestinian informant, who grew up in Greve having fled to Denmark from the Lebanon as a child in 1990, told us that all she has left from her entire childhood is one photograph of herself. The reason for this being that the conditions her family was living under prior to taking flight did not allow them to take photographs.

Furthermore, the Greve Nord project also demonstrated how the testimonial value of artifacts across cultural divides constitutes a particular challenge in relation to the interpretation of such artifacts. Firstly, the collected interviews showed that the migration history took up a lot of space in the personal stories. Meanwhile, common human feelings, such as hope, fear etc. are often the

most difficult themes to convey to museum guests who have not experienced them. In other words, how does one depict the fear experienced on seeing one's family members' being shot, or, that experienced on seeing an individual who is emaciated and dehydrated following numerous weeks on the run? Or, the hope of a better life at the other end of a long journey? In Greve we focused on the personal, semi-structured narrative in order to convey these experiences as best as possible. Thus, the collected material is neither representative nor comparative. Instead, it aims at reproducing life as it is lived by those who have contributed their stories, thereby creating a universal mosaic of life in Greve that can also be communicated to outsiders by harnessing the empathy that is common to all humanity.

Museums and multiethnic inclusion

The article at hand opened with two questions. First of all that on how cultural history museums can work with the inclusion of citizens from multiethnic backgrounds, and secondly that regarding the possible challenges museums may find themselves faced with when trying to involve multiethnic residents in nonprofit housing areas? First of all it is clear that museums are in a unique position to include new users – a potential that they must strive to fulfill. We found that the research and collection project carried out in two multiethnic social housing estates in Greve constituted a mutual learning process. Both, on the part of staff from the two museums who gained contact with new citizens, and on the part of immigrants, who have become aware of their local museum and the Danish Immigration Museum. This means that especially Greve Museum has experienced an increasing interest in the museum, and that groups of immigrants have also begun to visit and use the museum.

The project demonstrated how intercultural dialogue with residents in a socially deprived area is not something that can be achieved from one day to the next. Rather, it is a process of change that takes time and a lot of work for both the museum staff and the residents with whom they are trying to come into contact. For the museum, commencing such an activity is a decision that must be anchored across an organization, and driven by the individual staff member's passion, not to mention his/her inherent curiosity and desire to make a change. Furthermore, it requires a number of conscious choices regarding the scope of inquiry, the available resources, the chosen target group and the goal – as do all work in cultural institutions it might be added. By being inclusive, open and accessible, space is created for everyone, i.e. across housing estates and neighborhoods. Over time, the museum will be able to transform itself into a social arena in which the various citizens of a town can meet and engage in activities across social, economic and cultural divides.

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