

Diversity and the Museum

The Swedish Exhibition Agency is charged with supporting museums and other bodies working in the exhibition field by promoting development and cooperation. Accordingly, we support the exhibition sector with global intelligence, advice and practical testing of new technology and methods as well as organizing appropriate training programmes, conferences and producing newsletters. The agency regularly produces penetrating analyses and development proposals based on specific questions or subjects. A task of this type, undertaken in 2014, was this analysis of how Sweden's museum sector can support and benefit from the development potential of our multicultural society.

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Preface

WHILE WORKING ON *Diversity and the Museum* the Swedish Exhibition Agency has come into contact with numerous people who have expressed a degree of hopelessness or anger that the changes necessary if museums are to support, reflect, include and make use of our society's ethnic, cultural, social and socioeconomic diversity, will not actually take place. Some earlier campaigners in this field have renounced their commitment, claiming that "museums and social power" can continue to rule while they proceed on their own way, and that *"the museums are welcome for a study visit when they have realized how serious the matter actually is"*. The question as to whether museums really want serious change has also come up in numerous different contexts. Some people maintain that the answer is negative, that too much of their past is at stake and that diversity is something that we can talk about in a positive manner but is not something that we are prepared really to invest in. One relevant perspective is the question as to whether this is really what the politicians, who are principals of most Swedish museums, really want. Can decision-makers really see a value in promoting diversity, greater inclusiveness and intercultural dialogue in society; or will the opposition that arises in connection with all change, and that is inevitable in conjunction with promoting diversity, cause them to question the policy?

But at various museums we met up with people who are deeply committed to these issues. People who, regardless of the support they receive or fail to receive, fight to break down the structures that have led to the current discrimination and alienation, and who seek methods for changing their own way of working and that of their institution. Some of these people are motivated by their own interest in the issue, others because they feel an obligation – that because of their background they often feel obliged to act as a spokesperson for issues that can be linked to their name or their skin colour.

There is a manifest intellectualization of the issue of diversity in Swedish museums. This is something that can be com-

pared with a psychological defence that individuals use to avoid emotional involvement while dealing with challenges or traumas. Focusing on theory and logic creates barriers that prevent us from exposing our innermost values; values that sometimes conflict with existing plans and decisions.

Intellectualization has also affected the discussion of diversity to such a degree that there are people who have begun to talk about theoretical anxiety, claiming that we who work in the museum sector have developed a tendency to blame each other when activities fail to take place, or when they are described in a manner that is not seen as quite correct. This last aspect was observed back in 2007 in a recently published government report: *"basing one's decisions on theories while constantly reflecting on one's choices is, naturally, desirable. Our impression is that people are sometimes 'too clever' for their own good, and that their reflections result in their not doing anything at all because they are frightened of making mistakes, of coming to the wrong conclusions and of saying the wrong things."*

With the present report, the Swedish Exhibition Agency aims to describe how Swedish museums can support and embrace the whole of society. This may be perceived as somewhat more agitational than reports of this type generally are. It should be seen as a reaction to our encountering people's resignation, but also as a sign of the enormous potential that museums have for strengthening democracy; an opportunity that must not be neglected.

Rebecka Nolmark

Director General

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Summary

GREATER POLARIZATION together with increasingly virulent xenophobic, racist and fascist voices have reminded us that we have a duty to protect our fundamental democratic structures. This responsibility devolves on specific museums, as their circumstances allow, in terms of contributing to a better understanding and greater tolerance through an extended perspective on human history and a greater diversity of narratives and viewpoints.

Boards and directors of museums need to understand and to explain why stimulating diversity, including intercultural dialogue, is important and they should be prepared to give this a high priority. Serious work in promoting diversity must necessarily create frictions at and in connection with the museums. A concrete proposal is that boards or principals of museums should take steps to clarify their goals and wishes, while being prepared to accept the consequences that may result from taking this position. Evaluation of these steps should be sharpened, and a lack of results should not be passively accepted. Museums need to be clear about the effects that different priorities will have on the organization as well as on the society that the museum serves. Tell it like it is and not how somebody wishes that it was!

At the museum there needs to be a well-defined vision and a management team that is dedicated to moving from merely talking about diversity to embracing ethnic, social, socio-economic or diversity in practice. This also means that museums need to establish clear boundaries for when discussion

of diversity must lead on to practical action. Museums must work with diversity issues as an aspect of the organization's fundamental values; and their vision for achieving diversity must be transparent. Museums need also to base their activities in this field on concrete plans for achieving diversity. A plan of this sort must be created with the help of people who have a practical understanding of alienation. Plans naturally need to be included in the organization's budget and its business plan; and they should be followed and not just vaguely decided. Museums also need managers who are committed, who can inspire staff, and who can change the way in which the institution functions. Managers who can make the difficult decisions and who can ensure that the mix of staff answers to the needs of the task. Museums should no longer see diversity as something that can be achieved through individual projects or specific members of staff.

Building relationships takes time and the ground needs to be prepared in an atmosphere of mutual respect and curiosity. The participation that the museum is seeking to establish needs clear rules that facilitate an open and equal participation at different levels of the museum's activities. To achieve this, museums should earmark resources whose principal aim is to create and nurture long-term relationships with various communities in society. Such activities must be an integral part of the organization's "normal" way of working. Museums should establish goals, strategies, plans and rules for participation and should be aware of the actual value of collaboration with individuals and communities. Invitations to partici-

pate must not be seen as a species of charitable handout. Museums also need to have the courage to let people contribute, both with regard to actively creating and being part of an institution.

That Swedish museums do not reflect “multicultural Sweden” – that is to say all Swedes – is not just the result of extensive structural discrimination, but is also a major hindrance to increasing diversity and participation in practically all of the museum’s activities. Many of the perceived, or even invented obstacles to dealing with this, can be solved as long as the courage to do this exists. Increased intramural diversity is not just an essential condition for being able to “make use of the potential existing in multicultural Sweden”, but will also give the museum a more wide-ranging quality as well as increased competence. In order to change representation, museums should invest in support and in developing expertise in order to eliminate institutional discrimination. Institutions should consider how their working environment can be made as inclusive and attractive as possible. Staff recruitment needs to establish new routines and to become part of a more sustainable plan. And people with many different backgrounds should be encouraged to pursue a museum career, while a study needs to consider how voluntary activities at Swedish museums can be developed.

A “museum for everyone” should include a diversity of narratives based on a perspective that embraces diversity. This should even include those that contradict each other, that

conflict with what is generally perceived as “right”, or who oppose the museum as an institution. A credible museum will also realize that there is a greater store of knowledge “outside” the museum than “inside” it, and that old truths and narratives need to be evaluated and extended. Accordingly, museums should consider whose history and contemporary status the institution is portraying, how this is portrayed and by whom. This frequently needs to be complemented by an increased range of narratives and of narrative treatments. Positive discrimination may be required. The institution should also look over the labelling of the collections before these are presented to the public. And museums should pay more attention to working with issues in society rather than the museum’s answer to these. We should listen rather than speak.

Museums need to adjust opening hours and see over their premises having regard to people’s needs. They should increase their presence where people actually are, regardless of where their premises happen to be. The fact that almost all museums, regardless of their location, have almost identical opening hours seems to be the result of traditions and norms rather than an expression of how a museum becomes a functional meeting place. Working outside the museum’s own buildings and at other venues than where the post arrives has been a notable success for numerous museums. Museums and their principals at national, regional and local levels should analyse how the museum’s admission charges encourage or hinder everyone’s participation in the museum.

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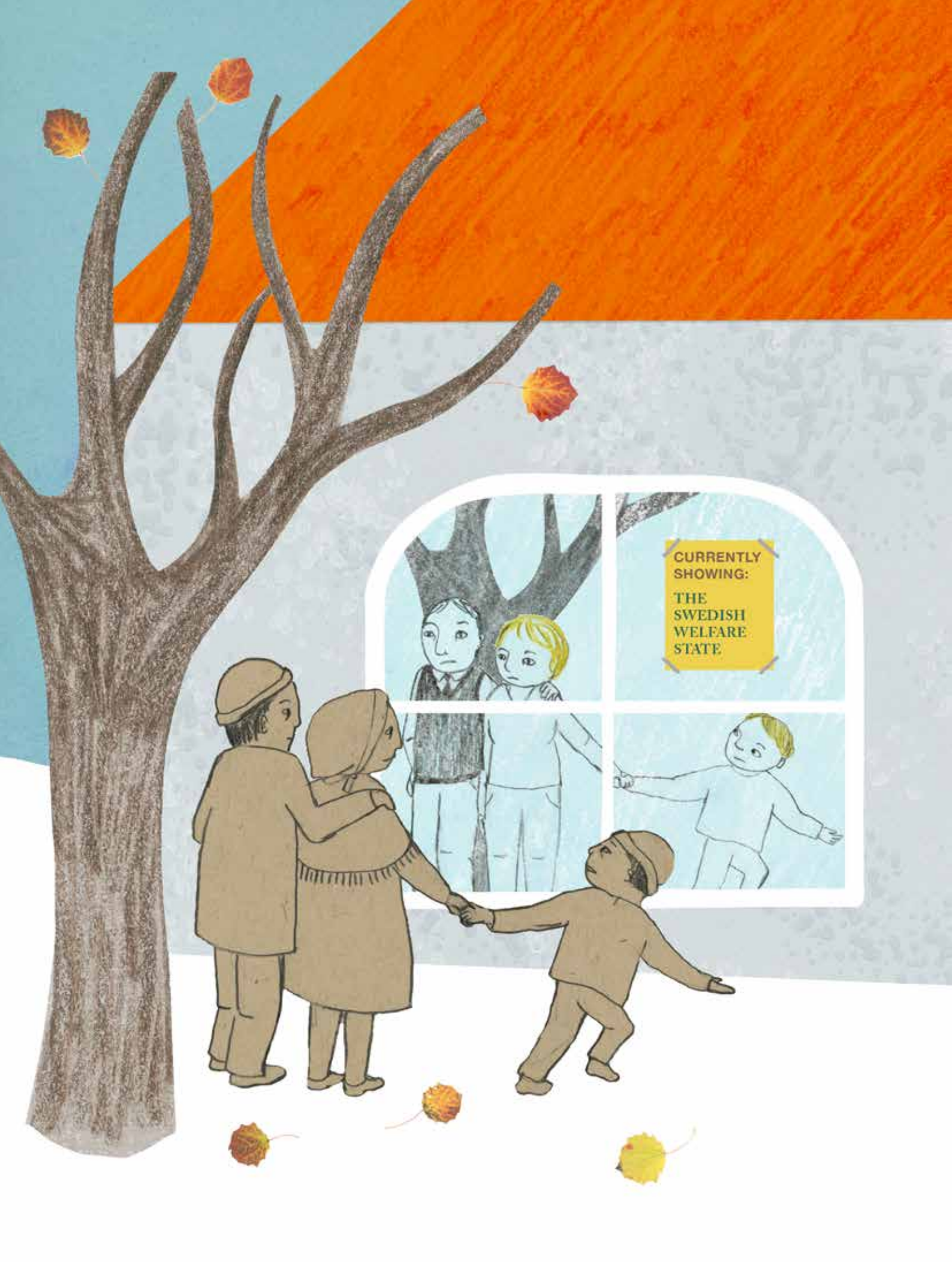
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CURRENTLY
SHOWING:
THE
SWEDISH
WELFARE
STATE

A view of Sweden

IN SEPTEMBER 2014 an exhibition entitled *National Psychosis* opened at the Multicultural Centre located in the Stockholm suburb of Botkyrka. The exhibition poses questions about Sweden, our cultural heritage and the diverse opinions about the country in which we live. The title of the exhibition, as well as its content, is based on the idea that there are important differences between how people living in Sweden experience their country, their history, their rights and their future; a point of departure that increasing numbers of us can agree upon.

For the fact of the matter is that, if we widen our vision beyond our own little neighbourhood, we soon discover that Sweden is a pluralistic society with regard to social, socio-economic and cultural aspects. It is a society of increasing ethnic and economic segregation,¹ in which more and more people are creating specific channels of information that confirm their own view of the world.² Not unexpectedly, this has led to an increased polarization of views about different social groups' cultural, linguistic and social rights. And even though a significant majority of the population is positive about diversity, the number of people with extremely negative views is increasing.³

It becomes increasingly difficult to paint a true picture of Sweden. In the Eurovision Song Contest Christer Sjögren sang about how Europe is home to all of us, where everyone smiles, everyone is included, and where everyone is part of a large family.⁴ At the same time the group known as *Kartellen* portray the future that faces youngsters who have grown up in high-rise suburbs where the fear of life is stronger than the fear of death.⁵ They present a vision in which Sweden is riven by alienation, violence, drugs and injustices. The truth is that both visions are probably true and that this, in turn, leads to serious inequalities and injustices. They describe a society in

which increasing numbers of people lack common denominators, in which understanding and tolerance are tested and in which human rights and democracy are threatened. Some may consider this to be a dystopian vision of Sweden; just as foreign as the riots in suburban Husby in May 2013.⁶ Others regard this view as a beautification of the reality of life in the poorer suburbs.

But the fact that Sweden is not a homogeneous country is nothing new. In spite of efforts at various times to use a historical narrative to create an image of national conformity, and despite periods of ethnic and cultural "cleansing", Sweden has always been home to a diversity of cultures, customs and traditions, religions, languages and folk groups.⁷ People who have lived in Sweden have been recognized, by themselves or by others, as Roma, Sámi, vegans, homosexuals, heterosexuals, believers, non-believers, poor or rich, and so on. Even the business of being Swedish – which once involved swearing allegiance to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Sweden – was transformed during the 19th century into a matter of the colour of one's hair, skin or eyes.⁸ If we are to break with the seemingly misguided picture of homogeneity we need simultaneously to recognize and understand how our museums and our cultural heritage play a part in this. We need to realize that the task of creating a collective heritage and a common narrative can actually have a divisive and discriminatory effect.⁹ Swedish diversity in the year 2014 is, on the one hand, far removed from the situation in South Korea in which racial diversity only applies to Asian women married to Korean men, male Asian workers and North Koreans, and where issues like sexuality are far from the agenda.¹⁰ As immigration policy in the USA became increasingly restrictive after World War II, Sweden changed from being a country that suffered

1 Biterman, Danuta et al. (2010) *Social rapport 2010* [Welfare report 2010], National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen).

2 The information about the development of the media landscape is taken from the website of the Swedish Media Council at <http://mik.statensmedierad.se/>

3 Ahmadi, Fereshteh, Palm, Irving & Mella, Orlando (2013) *Mångfaldsbarometern* [Diversity barometer], University of Gävle, Sweden.

4 The song *I love Europe*, with lyrics by Ingela "Pling" Forsman was performed by Christer Sjögren during the Eurovision Contest in 2008.

5 *Kartellen* is a much discussed Swedish Hip-Hop collective consisting of Leo "Kinesen" Carmona, Sebastian "Sebbe Staxx" Stakset, Kaka and Maskinisten.

6 The riots in Husby were reported in both Swedish and foreign media during the spring and summer of 2013. For example, in Swedish, <http://www.dn.se/sthlm/upplopp-och-brander-i-husby/>

7 Hagerman, Maja (2006) *Det rena landet – Om konsten att uppfinna sin förfäder* [The unpolluted country – On the art of inventing one's ancestors], Prisma.

8 Werner, Jeff & Björk, Tomas (2014) *Skiascope 6. Blond och blåögd. Vitthet, svenskhet och visuell kultur* [Skiascope 6. Blond and blue-eyed. Whiteness, Swedishness and visual culture], Gothenburg Museum of Art.

9 Svanberg, Fredrik in Furumark, Anna (ed.) (2013) *Att störa homogenitet* [Disturbing homogeneity], Nordic Academic Press.

10 Source: In-depth interview with Ysaac Kim, director of the Hello Museum in Seoul. 1 June 2014.

from serious problems on account of emigration, to becoming a nation with a net immigration rate.¹¹ Largely as a result of increasing strife in a variety of countries immigration into Sweden reached record levels in 2013 and, today, just over a fifth of the population was born in some other country or has two parents not born in Sweden.¹² In the context of this generalized description of people it is extremely important to emphasize the fact that people who immigrate to Sweden do so for many different reasons. People also move here from different social conditions and, just like the population in general, they represent a great diversity. For many people, perhaps it is the fact of having moved to Sweden, or moved back to Sweden again that is their only common denominator.¹³

People born in Sweden and people born elsewhere differ greatly in terms of education, work and health. People born in other countries generally have more difficulty in finding employment and earn less while their health is generally less good. Children from this group also perform less well at school than children born in Sweden.¹⁴

Diversity and the museum

During the past decade there has been a succession of studies, analyses and appropriate measures linked to society's ethnic, cultural, social and socioeconomic diversity. A number of these public programmes, studies, government measures and research reports are included among the references at the end of this report. Together with the in-depth interviews, roundtable discussions and telephone interviews that are described in more detail under the heading "Methodology", they have helped to give a general picture of the concerns of national, regional and other public museums with diversity. We have been able to complement the national museums' visitor demographics with the help of statistics from the pilot study of methods for qualitative visitor research which is currently being undertaken by the Swedish Exhibition Agency in collaboration with the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis in eleven of Sweden's national museums.

In spite of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights¹⁵ and Swedish and EU legislation pertaining to discrimination,¹⁶ as well as the fact that national goals for cultural policy maintain that everyone shall have the right to take part in the development of society, the actual state of things is bleak.¹⁷ Swedish museums do not reflect and embrace the ethnic, social, socioeconomic or diversity in Sweden.¹⁸ The majority of these museums lack any relevant policy or action plan for changing the situation.¹⁹ The outreach programmes aimed at "new" or hitherto underrepresented groups are also often linked to specific activities involving the official language tuition available to immigrants in the suburbs of the major cities.²⁰ The available visitor statistics suggest that only 10 per cent of Swedes visiting museums have an immigrant background.²¹ And visitors to museums are much better educated than the average citizen.²² Very few of the people working in museums – probably not more than 2 per cent – have an immigrant background.²³ And these people frequently have positions that give them a very limited opportunity of influencing the public, collecting and preserving operations. Changing this situation by means of internal activities in fields ranging from the working environment to altering recruitment procedures has a low priority.²⁴ At the same time, museums have a high level of expertise pertaining to diversity in matters such as gender theory, racification, intersectionality, and how social structures are formed and maintained. There also seems to be an awareness as to what needs to be changed and a claimed – though not necessarily an honest ambition to act on this.²⁵

The need for change

Many Swedes, regardless of origin, sexuality, religious beliefs, gender and so on are, today, excluded from a whole range of resources, arenas and networks. At the museums, which clearly are among these arenas and resources, there are dominant norms in the organizations and their working methodologies that have links with ethnicity, education and gender.²⁶ And these are probably reasons why people with a low socioeconomic status, foreign origin and minority gender are

11 Information about immigration and emigration in Sweden is available from the Swedish Migration Board's website: <http://www.migrationsverket.se/Om-Migrationsverket/Fakta-om-migration/Historik.html>

12 Information about proportion of Swedes with foreign backgrounds supplied by Statistics Sweden's data base available at <http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/>

13 According to Statistics Sweden the largest proportion of immigrants, almost one fifth of the total, consists of Swedish citizens returning after a period living abroad.

14 Forsberg, Ellen et al. (2013) *Integration – en beskrivning av läget i Sverige* [Integration – a description of the situation in Sweden], Statistics Sweden.

15 Information about human rights can be found at <http://www.ohchr.org/en/udhr/pages/introduction.aspx>

16 Information about Swedish legislation pertaining to discrimination can be found at <http://www.government.se/sb/d/574/a/118187>

17 Information about national goals for cultural policy (in Swedish) can be found at <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/1897>

18 Pripp, Oscar et al. (2004) *Tid för mångfald* [Time for diversity], Mångkulturellt centrum.

19 A survey of 73 museums conducted by the Swedish Exhibition Agency reveals that only 43 have a policy that they can reveal and share with others.

20 Swedish Arts Council (2005) *Om kulturell mångfald*. Kulturrådets omvärldsanalys 2005 [On cultural diversity. The Swedish Arts Council's intelligence report for 2005], Swedish Arts Council.

21 Swedish museums currently have very little demographic information about their visitors. The figure of 10 per cent is an estimate based on statistics in Pripp, Oscar et al. (2004) *Tid för mångfald* [Time for diversity], Mångkulturellt centrum, as well as the pilot study of qualitative visitor surveys conducted by the Swedish Exhibition Agency and others at various national museums.

22 Information about the population's educational levels and their participation in cultural activities comes from Statistics Sweden's surveys of living conditions, ULF at http://www.scb.se/en/_Finding-statistics/Statistics-by-subject-area/Living-conditions/Living-conditions/Living-Conditions-Surveys-ULFSILC/

23 Edström, Nina & Hyltén-Cavallius, Charlotte (2011) *Osmos: inkluderingsprocesser i kulturlivet* [Osmosis: inclusion processes in the cultural sector], Mångkulturellt centrum.

24 Pripp, Oscar et al. (2004) *Tid för mångfald* [Time for diversity], Mångkulturellt centrum.

25 Several of the people consulted in connection with this report, both museum professionals and people "outside" the museum sector, have questioned whether, in view of the situation in the museums, they really want to change or whether they prefer merely to talk about change.

26 SOU 2005:91. *Agenda för mångkultur. Programförklaring och kalender för Mångkulturåret 2006* [Agenda for diversity. Policy explanation and calendar for Multicultural Year 2006], Fritzes.

represented and participate unequally. With regard to gender at museums, representation among the decision-makers, and what we see reflected in action, also work together with factors based on social constructivism – that is to say, the differences, norms and values that we denote to gender roles, for example. Is it really OK for a real man to keep visiting museums? Nor does the fact that there are norms, social constructs and power hierarchies in museums prevent them – both as workplaces, meeting places and resources – from also contributing to structural discrimination of people with foreign origins and education, transgender persons, people

with disabilities of various sorts, and so on. Current research strongly supports the view that discrimination on the labour market, for example, is a reality. The unequal level of participation in the cultural sphere by different groups has, thus, not come into being nor has it been retained on the basis of a voluntary sorting based on individuals' own experience that non-participation leads to positive advantages.²⁷ Museums share a serious responsibility with the responsible politicians in finding ways to break down this discrimination. We must ask ourselves whether we are as faithful to our goals and our policies as we are to our traditions?

27 Nordström Skans, Oscar & Åslund, Olof (2010) *Etnisk segregation i storstäderna – bostadsområden, arbetsplatser, skolor och familjebildning 1985–2006* [Ethnic segregation in our major cities – residential neighbourhoods, workplaces, schools and family types 1985–2006], Institute for Evaluation of Labour Market and Education Policy (IFAU).

Our brief, how we interpret it, and questions it raises

ACCORDING TO the government's 2014 brief, "based on global intelligence and surveys, the Swedish Exhibition Agency is to show how the museum sector can develop and make use of the development potential of multicultural Sweden. The agency is charged with submitting an account of its actions to fulfil the brief to the Government (Ministry of Culture) by 1 November 2014 at latest."

Sweden is a country of social, socio-economic and cultural diversity – something that offers both challenges and opportunities. The challenges can involve such issues as polarization, alienation, inequality and limitations to democracy. The opportunities, in turn, concern people's intercultural exchanges and development as well as heterogeneous competences that lead to increased innovation and competitiveness in an increasingly globalized world. In working life, diversity has been seen to increase satisfaction with the workplace and to reduce absence due to ill health.¹

Taking this background into consideration, the Swedish Exhibition Agency has seen the aim of its brief to be, based on international experience and examples, to show how Swedish museums can support a sustainable society by opposing or bridging challenges, and how Swedish diversity can, in itself, present museums with opportunities to widen and develop their operations with new perspectives, new forms of participation and a broader range of skills.

During the course of 2014, the Swedish Exhibition Agency has studied how Swedish and foreign museums:

- See their role and their responsibilities in a multicultural society
- Strive to establish an awareness of these issues, through competent management for example, discussion of values, goals and policy documents
- Work to establish local operations, increased participation and creating values
- In their role as organizations, reflecting, incorporating and making use of ethnic, cultural, social and socioeconomic diversity
- Creating opportunities for a diversity of narratives and narration both in collecting and preserving, and in meeting the public
- Acting as a meeting place for distinctive people, perspectives and stories.

The Swedish Exhibition Agency has also studied how external control through, for example, instructions, statutes, directives and monitoring performance, influences a museum's efforts with regard to increased diversity, participation and intercultural dialogue.

¹ Mlekov, Katarina & Widell, Gill (2013) *Hur möter vi mångfalden på arbetsplatsen?* [How do we cope with diversity in the workplace?], Studentlitteratur AB.

Central concepts

IN THIS REPORT we use a number of variants of the concept of “multicultural” solely to refer to the wording of the government brief, or as part of a name or title to a quoted source. Since “multicultural” is often used as a synonym for “ethnic diversity” it is elsewhere replaced by the concept of “diversity”. Our view here is that “diversity” is a better term for describing people’s individual differences and circumstances – something that is considered a necessary condition for understanding an intersectional perspective for example, in considering Swedish society and the potential of the museums.¹ When the Swedish Exhibition Agency uses the concept of “social diversity”, or refers to “multicultural Sweden” we mean everyone and not just minorities viewed from the perspective of the majority.

The concept of ethnicity is used to describe people’s group affiliation based on a notion of a common origin such as geographical lineage and kinship and such cultural expressions as religion, values, language, customs and philosophy of life. But individuals may however not necessarily share their surroundings perception of their ethnicity. Nor is ethnicity the same as identity which is often based on various different properties such as gender, sexuality, occupation, interests, age, assets and so on.

Terms such as diversity, multiculturalism and ethnicity also have different meanings depending on the contexts in which they are used, the sender and the recipient.

¹ According to Nationalencyklopedin – Sweden’s national encyclopaedia – intersectionality is a scholarly term that aims to bring visibility to specific aspects of repression that are generated in the junctions of power relationships based on race, gender and class. The concept originated in anti-racist feminism in the USA.

Methodology

WHILE WORKING ON *Diversity and the Museum*, the Swedish Exhibition Agency has made use of a hermeneutic methodology. This means that we are not seeking to establish an absolute truth but, rather, an understanding of how attitudes, aims, strategies, methods and actions lead on to different results. In understanding different causations as, for example, how methodology and result relate to each other, the writer's interpretation is central. While working on an issue the researcher develops her or his understanding of the subject which leads to new interpretations and deeper comprehension. This "hermeneutic spiral" is often the result of interaction between the study's inner reflections and analyses and outward tests in the form of dialogue or comparisons of literature, for example. In order to avoid interpretations that are based on prejudices or generalizations, the collection of a broad range of basic data is decisive to the quality of the methodology.

The collection of material for this report has been undertaken with the help of a survey of global intelligence, a national questionnaire, comparisons of population figures and museum statistics, reports, research, perusal of literature, lectures, conferences, study visits and talks with museum directors, researchers, media personalities, lawyers, immigrants, activists, recruitment experts, people subject to racification, artists

and so on. Some of these talks have also taken the form of roundtable discussions in which all of the participants have the same status and every voice has the same weight.

Collecting global intelligence and monitoring the field has also included a comparison based on in-depth interviews with people working in the museum sector from five continents: North America, South America, Africa, Europe and Asia. The full list of organizations and people that the Swedish Exhibition Agency might interview was produced with the help of suggestions from people who had answered one of several appeals for "good examples". These appeals were sent out as emails to a large number of Swedish museums, embassies and cultural councillors and attachés, as well as existing international contacts and networks. The appeals were also distributed to smaller networks such as that for museums and diversity on Facebook. All of the participating museums and professional staff are listed as oral sources in the conclusion to this report.

The survey was administered for the Swedish Exhibition Agency by Exquiro Market Research. The target group consisted of 27 national museums, 24 county or regional museums, and 58 other museums or organizations of particular

interest. At each museum we sought to establish contact with the staff responsible for dealing with diversity issues. A total of 73 interviews were held with people from this target group. 67 per cent answered the questionnaire – a figure which, according to Exquiro, can be regarded as a “normal” and fully acceptable result. The questionnaire looked at *how* museums work with issues of diversity, in what areas and whether the museum has a policy with regard to diversity in written form. All of the data was collected through telephone interviews during the period 16 May to 17 June 2014. It is difficult to prove, but it may be that the response frequency was higher in organizations that are working actively with issues pertaining to diversity. The complete survey and a list of the participating museums can be found (in Swedish) at the agency's website: www.riksutställningar.se

Data was also collected from the Swedish Migration Board, Statistics Sweden, the Swedish Arts Council and the Swedish Agency for Cultural Policy Analysis. All of these sources of statistics are mentioned in footnotes at appropriate parts of the book. In the final part of the report there is a complete list of oral, printed and other sources. There are further sources that have not resulted in direct quotations or been mentioned in footnotes.

Roundtable discussions arranged by the agency in conjunction with this report have partially been a way of collecting material for future analysis and have also served as a way of testing a method of promoting real change. Roundtable discussions involved five museum directors and five other people who, thanks to their own history or characteristics, their research, their profession or other qualifications can complete the picture of “culturally diverse” Sweden's needs and potential and can give valuable explanations as to how the museum's role and function can be developed in relation to this. The discussions were in the hands of an experienced leader and the aim was that the museum directors would leave the discussions with a concrete impression of what needs to be done and how this might be achieved. Up until 22 December 2014 there have been seven such roundtable discussions. The names of participants in the discussions up until 20 October are listed among the oral sources in the final part of this report.

The report is authored by the responsible researcher Eric Fugeläng, Head of Communications and Research at the Swedish Exhibition Agency.



"WHAT'S MY
REAL TASK?"

Svensk Trafik
Förrättning med
instruktion



A museum for whom, how and why?

ACCORDING TO ICOM, the International Council of Museums a museum should serve society and its development.¹ Museums should, on behalf of us all, acquire, preserve, study, communicate and display material and immaterial testimony about human beings and their cultures. “Society” is here interpreted as the entire culture while “human beings” are synonymous with everyone and not specific groups of people. This represents a challenge to all of the 94 institutional and 605 individual members of ICOM here in Sweden.²

Citizens of Sweden have agreed, through their representative democracy, that the aims of an integration policy should be “equal rights, obligations and opportunities regardless of ethnic and cultural background”.³ One aim, prior to its being redacted in the Swedish government’s budget legislation in 2009, included the wording: “a social community with society’s diversity as a foundation and social development that is characterized by mutual respect and tolerance and that everyone, regardless of their background, should take part in and share responsibility for”. Government authorities in the cultural sector are thus responsible for continually concerning themselves with society’s ethnic and diversity both in structuring their operations and in their daily activities. Authorities are also responsible for promoting equal rights and opportunities for all, regardless of ethnic or cultural background, and are to work against all forms of ethnic discrimination.⁴ Among these ethical guidelines, laws and regulations, one must naturally also include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,⁵ legislation pertaining to discrimination,⁶ and cultural-policy goals while many museums have statutes and policy documents regarding social responsibilities linked to diversity.⁷

The idea that museums serve – or should serve – the general public is not unique to Sweden. In the favelas or slums

of Brazil’s major cities there are numerous museums which, through the way they work collaboratively, based on the local society’s resources and needs, have made a direct contribution to improving people’s lives in formerly rundown neighbourhoods. Neighbourhoods that have been characterized by poverty, prostitution and criminality. Examples include the Museu Eugênio Teixeira which, since it opened in 1984, has trained children in economics and in their rights and obligations to society. In Rio de Janeiro there is the Museu da Maré which was founded in 2006 in response to local people’s desire to preserve memories and stories. Today the museum is a place for encounters between the different realities that exist in Brazil, something that enables people to create different identities. The museum is run jointly by local people and institutions and this means that they are not merely tools representing the local reality, but that they also take part in dialogue and in cooperation with different parts of society. The geographical location of the museum is on the edge of one of the city’s poorest neighbourhoods. The museum thus serves as a unifying factor for people living in the area. The location not only contests the pattern of stigmatizing and prejudicial notions that are deeply embedded among the local inhabitants in this poor neighbourhood but also ensures that the area contributes to the diversity and complexity of the city of Rio de Janeiro in its entirety.⁸

At the Smithsonian’s Anacostia Community Museum, located in a suburb of Washington DC, head curator Portia James and curator Alcione Amos also stress the importance of reflecting on and re-evaluating the role and aims of the museum.⁹ Museums have a social responsibility to bring people in a society closer together. They give an example of how this has affected another of the Smithsonian’s museums, the Museum of Natural History in the same town.¹⁰ This has changed from

1 According to its own definition, the International Council of Museums is an international organization concerned with museums and their staffs. ICOM has almost 30 000 members in 137 countries. The aim of the organization is to develop and improve museums.

2 Information about membership of ICOM among Swedish museums (in Swedish) is available on the organization’s website: <http://icomsweden.se/>

3 Information about Sweden’s integration policy can be found (in Swedish) at the government’s website: <http://www.government.se/sb/d/2188>

4 Förordning (1986:856) om de statliga myndigheternas ansvar för genomförandet av integrationspolitiken [Regulation (1986:856) on government authorities’ responsibility for implementing the integration policy].

5 Information about human rights can be found at <http://www.un.org/en/rights/>

6 Information about legislation pertaining to discrimination can be found at <http://www.do.se/en/>

7 Information about national cultural goals (in Swedish) can be found at <http://www.government.se/sb/d/2149>

8 Source: In-depth interview with Cláudia Rose Ribeiro da Silva, coordinator at the Museu da Maré, 2 October 2014.

9 Source: In-depth interview with Portia James and Alcione Amos at the Anacostia Community Museum, 10 August 2014.

10 Read more about the National Museum of Natural History on their website at <http://www.mnh.si.edu/>

being a museum with a focus on plants, animals and fossils, to becoming a place that uses knowledge about these to provide opportunities for people to gather and talk about common challenges in the realm of the environment, technology and research. The Anacostia Community Museum was founded in 1967 and includes among its aims, using strong ties to the local populace to challenge, extend and deepen an understanding of the constantly changing views and realities that they have in common.¹¹

By Swedish standards these Brazilian and American museums are mere youngsters. Many Swedish museums grew up at a time when other concepts of the nation ruled and the aims were very different.¹² Their brief might have been, rather than emphasizing our diversity, to build a nation based on uniformity with regard to culture, social norms, ethnicity and tradition. And in spite of the fact that briefs change over time and cultural policy goals are replaced, there are often structures that give habit power over our actions.¹³ Tom Hennes, founder of Thinc Design,¹⁴ famous not least for its work on the National September 11th Memorial Museum in New York,¹⁵ stresses that the role of the museums today will be worthless if it focuses on strengthening the majority narrative rather than creating conditions for new encounters and relationships. *"Where such a museum is useful, in my view, is in contextualizing the narratives of the multiple cultures that make up society (or multiple views of events) that can make history more three-dimensional and authentic, can provoke inquiry, and can incite greater empathy for what might have previously seemed oppositional or contrary points of view."*¹⁶ In creating the Memorial Museum the designers held numerous meetings and consulted references in order to collect a multiplicity of perspectives on the events that took place on the day that the twin towers of the World Trade Centre collapsed. The underlying aim was to unite conflicting views where this was possible and to give recognition and visibility to whatever could not be agreed upon. The goal was to create a museum that was open to, and consisted of, different and even conflicting opinions about the historical event with a view to helping society to accept these opinions.

In an article published by the international museum periodical Museum-iD,¹⁷ Eva Hansen, strategic manager at the Malmö Museums, also writes that research in both Sweden and the United Kingdom reveals that visitors increasingly expect museums to interpret and to create narratives based on mul-

tiplé voices and perspectives. She suggests that this is probably because the more that society becomes diversified, the more we search for whatever it is that unites us as well as that which makes each of us unique. She concludes her article with a plea to the international museum field to take a stand on issues of human rights, and to make it easier for people to understand the long-term consequences of oppression. She wants to see museums generating discussion about citizenship, social justice, freedom of expression and democracy and to promote empathy and understanding between people. She maintains that, by changing how we view our history, museums can also influence society both today and tomorrow and that it is high time that museums take advantage of these hitherto relatively unexplored opportunities.¹⁸

Conclusions and advice to museums

During the roundtable discussions and the in-depth interviews undertaken in conjunction with writing this book, the question as to the roles and responsibilities of museums in a highly diversified society has become central issues.¹⁹ No one actually denies the fact that there is a de facto responsibility in the form of ethical guidelines, laws and political goals. Along side these somewhat more formal incentives there is also a succession of other arguments and inducements that influence the way in which the museums interpret their responsibilities towards society and the people who make up society. Many people agree with Toby Watley, Director of Collections, and Janine Eason, Director of Engagement, at the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery,²⁰ in maintaining that, given what our societies look like today, it is entirely natural for the museums to work for greater diversity including intercultural dialogue. And this holds true whether we are considering the museum as a workplace, or in its collecting, preserving and public activities. Increased polarization, hate utterances and ever greater support for right-wing extremist groups are also factors that cause many people not only to see diversity as a fact of life, but also as something that demands special measures.²¹ And it may well be that culture provides the right tools for these measures.

Sweden's new Minister for Culture and Democracy, Alice Bah Kuhnke²² in one of her first public pronouncements, claimed that what led to her to accepting the ministerial post was precisely the link between culture and democracy.²³ In her view, forceful measures are required now that we have come to realize that democracy is not something that can be

11 Read the Anacostia Community Museum's entire mission on their website at <http://anacostia.si.edu/About/>

12 Edström, Nina & Hyltén-Cavallius, Charlotte (2011) *Osmos: inkluderingsprocesser i kulturlivet* [Osmosis: inclusion processes in the cultural sector], Mångkulturellt centrum.

13 Duhigg, Charles (2014) *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business*, Random House.

14 Read more about Thinc Design on their website at <http://thincdesign.com/>

15 The museum is the principal memorial to the terrorist attack on 11 September 2001 which killed 1993 people on Lower Manhattan in New York.

16 Source: In-depth interview with Tom Hennes, designer of the National September 11 Memorial Museum, 26 September 2014.

17 According to its own definition, Museum-iD is an independent think-tank for museums and professional staff in the cultural sector. www.museum-id.com/home.asp

18 Source: Accompanying the article in Museum-iD är is an in-depth interview with Eva Hansen, strategic manager at the Malmö Museums, 12 September 2014.

19 Further information about the roundtable discussions and the in-depth interviews can be found under the heading "methodology". All the participants are listed in the "sources".

20 Further information about the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery can be found on their website at <http://www.bmag.org.uk/>

21 Arnstad, Henrik (2013) *Älskade fascism: de svartbruna rörelsernas ideologi och historia* [Beloved fascism: the ideology and history of the brown-shirt and black-shirt movements], Norstedts.

22 Alice Bah Kuhnke was appointed Sweden's Minister for Culture and Democracy on 3 October 2014.

23 Interview under the heading *Demokrati kan man inte ta för givet* [We can't take democracy for granted], published in the daily newspaper Svenska Dagbladet on 3 October 2014.

Source: http://www.svd.se/kultur/demokrati-kan-man-inte-ta-for-givet_3979735.svd

installed once and for all and then taken for granted.²⁴ Thanks to their specific situation and their credibility museums have a great potential to contribute to positive changes in society. Changes that increasing numbers of people claim to want to underwrite, though many fail actually to do so. Katherine Hauptman, who is responsible for R&D pertaining to communication and the public at the Swedish History Museum, and who is currently also secretary to a governmental report on public museums 2014/2015,²⁵ writes that she took with her from ICOM's 2013 conference in Rio the sense of a large gap in various museums' self images.²⁶ One dividing line that does not separate different countries but which runs between those who consider that there is a preordained task for a museum, and those who consider that one has first to look at the situation and then base the museum's task on the ways in which one can promote a more humane society. In spite of the fact that many people wonder how many museum profes-

sionals can really claim that their museums are currently run in accordance with the users' needs, or whether, in point of fact, they primarily work for society rather than for collecting and preserving, these two aspects should not be seen as contradictory. Rather, it is a matter of having a clear idea of what is collected and why it is collected, together with an understanding that the museum's role and function should always be seen against the reality of the day.

Museums should regularly evaluate and reflect on the museum's role and function. Does the museum want to act for the benefit of society and for all of the people who make up that society? If this is the case, museums can contribute to a positive and sustainable development of society by, for example, clearly working towards increased understanding and tolerance by widening their perspective on human history and by having a greater diversity of narratives and viewpoints.

24 Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke was referring to the election success of Sverigedemokraterna, the Sweden Democrats, a party which many people consider to be a nationalistic, xenophobic and racist party with non-democratic values.

25 According to the government's instructions to the committee 2014:8, the museum report is to undertake a survey of the government's museum policy. The committee is to report to the government by 15 October 2015 at latest. Further information (in Swedish) can be found at <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/18248/a/232819>

26 The collection of articles from the ICOM Conference (in Swedish) can be found at <http://www.riksutställningar.se/content/spana/svenska-highlights-från-icomsgeneralkonferens>

"BUT YOU WANTED A CHANGE?"

"NOT AT THE EXPENSE
OF WHAT WE ALREADY
HAVE!"



Goals, evaluations and policies

SEVERAL PREVIOUS STUDIES and reports in the cultural sphere have confirmed that the current goals of culture and integration policy have proved to be difficult for museums to reflect in their operations.¹ Countries like the UK are often held up as good examples of how more focused management has resulted in museums giving priority to promoting diversity. That the British Arts Council, for example, threatens to withdraw financial support from institutions that are not actively promoting diversity, or that fail to increase their efforts to reach and include underrepresented groups is confirmed by the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, for example. Their financial backers, including the Arts Council, require museums to survey and reflect on diversity among their staff.

Stricter new goals with clearer indications as to who is responsible for them, sharper dialogue and result reports, or earmarking certain items in the budget for working with diversity, are some of the proposals that are repeatedly stressed in this context. It seems almost certain that such wishes are based on a sense that museums currently fail to give priority to diversity,² as well as a lack of concrete results in previous reports and annual accounts. But this also depends on a desire for greater clarity on the part of politicians and other museum principals since many current goals are seen more as visions than as realistic objectives.³ That imprecise ideas and goals generate confusion that has a deleterious effect on results also became evident when the programme of cultural-diversity consultants was evaluated in 2006.⁴ The imprecise goals and the indefinite evaluation on the part of various principals testify to something that is just as worrying as the actual results or lack of results. They point to a potential gap between what the principals say they want and what they really want to happen as well as what they are prepared to pay to achieve this.

In a speech at the seventh international Inclusive Museum conference,⁵ held in Los Angeles at the beginning of August 2014, Nina Simon, executive director of the Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History and better-known to many as the author of *The Participatory Museum*,⁶ talked about how she had been personally hung out by the media. She was accused of dumbing down and thereby reducing the intellectual or artistic quality of the operation. She talked about how the reforms that she has promoted have not just led to some of the people who previously regarded the museum as “theirs” renouncing the operations, but that the move that was necessary for reaching out and including new target groups also led to the very core of the museum, its identity, being shifted and revised.

Some of the Swedish cultural institutions that the Swedish Exhibition Agency spoke to expressed their anxieties about directives that are not just imprecise but that lack any connection with what is seen as possible to achieve. Even institutions that are already making progress with regard to intramural representation or increased participation on the part of previously underrepresented groups claim that they could do more if their financial situation was different or if they felt secure in the knowledge that their principal would not criticize them, for example, if visitor numbers declined. The concept of quality constantly recurs, as well as the importance of measuring and following up other than quantitative aspects of the museum's operations.

Conclusions and advice to museums

Principals of museums, just like managers or directors, need to see, understand and clearly formulate why they want to give priority to working towards increased diversity including intercultural dialogue. Based on this understanding there then needs to be an insight *about* and an express acceptance of

1 See, for example, SOU 2007:50. *Mångfald är framtiden* [Diversity is the future] Fritzes. Pripp, Oscar et al. (2004), *Tid för mångfald* [Time for diversity]. Mångkulturellt centrum. Swedish Arts Council (2005) *Om kulturell mångfald. Kulturrådets omvärldsanalys 2005* [On cultural diversity, The Swedish Arts Council's 2005 survey], Statens kulturråd.

2 Pripp, Oscar et al. (2004), *Tid för mångfald* [Time for diversity]. Mångkulturellt centrum.

3 Swedish Arts Council (2005) *Om kulturell mångfald. Kulturrådets omvärldsanalys 2005* [On cultural diversity, The Swedish Arts Council's 2005 survey], Statens kulturråd.

4 Edström, Nina (2006) Har du sett på mångkulturkonsulenten - Utvärdering av verksamheten med regionala konsulenter för mångkultur [Have you seen the cultural-diversity consultant? An evaluation of the programme of regional cultural-diversity consultants], undertaken by Mångkulturellt centrum and the Swedish Arts Council.

5 The Eighth International Conference on the Inclusive Museum will be held in New Delhi on 7-9 August 2015. For further information see Inclusive Museum Knowledge Community <http://onmuseums.com/the-conference>

6 Simon, Nina (2010) *The Participatory Museum*. Museum 2.0

the consequences that such priorities engender. A follow-up programme needs to be sharpened and a lack of results should not be accepted without measures being taken.

Fundamentally changing an organization's way of working, breaking with existing structures, customs and hierarchies, or abandoning familiar paths for recruitment, public events and collaboration with citizens with regard to the museum's collecting, preserving and communicating will have obvious consequences for visitors, staff and principals. Initially all this may result in declining numbers of visitors, hate reactions, sick leave, changes of opinion, variations in quality and negative publicity. Museums need to make clear the effects that different priorities will have on the museum and the society that it serves.

Unchanging methods and structures will always lead to the same result. The museums that we have today are a product of our thinking and they are incapable of change as long as we fail to change our way of thinking.⁷ The museums cannot expect to be what they are at the same time that they are being asked to be something different.

In formulating the necessary tasks and goals there ought to be a dialogue between the principal and the museum that is to fulfil these. Together the parties can assess the priorities that arise and can create a consensus as to which changes need to be achieved. The museums and their principals need to be honest with each other.

⁷ Freely inspired by Albert Einstein.

"THAT'S DONE DIVERSITY.
NOW TO THE NEXT ITEM!"



Internal support, leadership, engagement, opposition and consistency

THAT THE SWEDISH museum sector has a positive attitude to discussing diversity is undeniable. Countless is probably also the number of trees sacrificed in order to produce not only the long rows of literature available on the subject but also the oceans of brightly colored post-it notes which over the years have been generated by various diversity workshops. In 2014 the Association of Swedish Museums, together with the Swedish Exhibition Agency, ran a visionary campaign entitled *Mångfaldens museum* [Diversity's museum] as one of four themes; one of many current notions.¹ Sadly, an issue is not solved just because it is raised.

More than half of the Swedish museums currently lack a plan or policy for promoting diversity. Several of the people that the Swedish Exhibition Agency contacted maintain that a policy may exist, but that they are not aware of it.² Some of the museums that do have plans and policies do not regard these as "living documents" but, rather, as something that is taken out in connection with specific measures. In the survey of international museums there is also a clear connection between express plans and successful work with diversity. But they also note that a positive result often means that there is a plan – not that a plan always leads to a positive results.

There can be a huge gap between goal, decision, plans and policies, and the final result may depend on a variety of factors. The more practical ones – such as the lack of a clear mandate, action plans, resources, schedules, evaluations, partial goals and expertise – can often be revealed by the organization clearly breaking down its own process from *decision* to *result*. Sometimes it is the goal, plan or policy itself that is at fault. This may be due to the fact that policies dealing with diversity and inclusion are often developed and written down without the participation of people who are currently excluded or who themselves experience the problems

that the policy is intended to deal with.³ If the museum lacks the competence to produce clear goals, concrete plans and policies for increasing diversity, the organization may need to start by seeking help.

The fact that a museum's intramural efforts to increase diversity, participation and intercultural dialogue do not proceed as expected may also be the result of more abstract, emotive or value-based factors. Relinquishing control, opening up and admitting more perspectives can, as well as being rewarding, seem much more of a challenge than solving matters by oneself. Most of the organizations that introduce a policy for change will almost certainly have to deal with discussions about whether this new way of working really is the right way. Continual dialogue and real responsiveness are required if staff are given new roles and when earlier routines, competences and experiences are called into question. Someone who was formerly aware of everything going on in the institution may find that no one asks their opinion any more. Pride in one's professional capacity may take a dent and matters of prestige and territorial possessiveness tend to show us from our worst aspects. And change sometimes necessitates members of staff having to be replaced. Staff who remain may find that, as a result of the new opening hours, they may have to work in the evenings, while racist comments and hate reactions rain down from sites on the internet. How can we motivate staff and management to take part in this?

Initially, discussion of essential values in the organization may be the best starting point for achieving diversity and participation. Bonita Bennet, director of the District Six Museum in South Africa,⁴ relates that they have recurring internal workshops and discussions to illuminate staff members' own experiences of discrimination, racism and classification as a way of creating a system of foundational values for the museum's

1 The Association of Swedish Museums is a membership organization which, in its own terms, concerns itself with the common interests of Sweden's museum sector. Further information is available at <http://www.sverigesmuseer.se/english/>

2 According to the Swedish Exhibition Agency's survey entailing 73 museums of all sorts, only 43% are able to show us a policy. 13% do not know whether a policy has been produced.

3 The museum sector is still very homogeneous. Edström, Nina & Hyltén-Cavallius, Charlotte (2011) *Osmos: inkluderingsprocesser i kulturlivet* [Osmosis: inclusion processes in the cultural sector], Mångkulturellt centrum.

4 Source: In-depth interview with Bonita Bennet, director of the District Six Museum in South Africa, 22 September 2014.

efforts in this field. Inviting people who are currently far distant from the norm that obtains at the museum can also lead to forceful and decisive meetings which shape how the staff view their museum and their undertaking; something that the Museum of Gothenburg witnessed while working with the exhibition *We are Roma – the people behind the myth*.⁵ That museums have clear and evident values regarding such matters as inclusiveness, accessibility and equal treatment are also decisive in giving people who do *not* share these values the opportunity to leave the organization.

From the surveys undertaken in producing this report, two factors for success have stood out as particularly significant over and above the task of establishing foundational values as reasons why the organization should strive towards greater diversity. One of these is concerned with leadership, while the other illustrates the importance of having a good plan. Portia James from the Anacostia Community Museum in Washington DC⁶ stresses the importance of strong management as well as a good understanding among the staff as to why the changes are being made. The management needs to be able to engage the staff, giving them a role for the future, despite the fact that the changes may seem scary initially. Portia James also stresses the importance, as director, of having a clear idea as to how this commitment can be created. Some staff are happy to participate as soon as they are asked to help, while others need to be pushed harder. At the Anacostia Community Museum they have even coupled certain aspects of working with diversity to salary criteria. Portia James likens this to working with both a carrot and a stick. Another decisive role for the management is that it is the management that has the mandate to give priority to diversity, to allocate resources and to demand systematic efforts in this direction.⁷

Museum plans for increased diversity and inclusiveness can naturally contain very different components, depending on the point of departure and the goal envisaged. Common success factors would seem to be that the institution has a clear vision of what the work is to lead to, a good understanding of the current situation and what needs to be rectified, as well as strategies for how and when this can take place. That essential resources and expertise are available, that the plan is rooted in or is a part of the organization's budget and operational plan, for example, and that activities are followed up, evaluated and adapted, as well as constant work on communicating ideas and establishing the task in the institution, are also important aspects.

Other valuable lessons are the need for development of competency for both managers and staff as well as for members of reference groups and juries, etc. Also important is developing new routines and new forms of collaboration. That organizations leave their work on diversity in the hands of just one or

two members of the staff, or merely rely on a separate project also represents a serious threat to long-term positive results. Finally, our advice is to ensure that there is some leeway in the museum's budget and planning. If every last penny of the funding has already been allocated, it will be difficult to take advantage of the possibilities that have yet to become apparent. Celebrating successes may also cost a small amount on occasions.

Conclusions and advice to museums

To move on from talking about diversity to actually doing something concrete about it requires not only competent management and decisiveness but also sound insights into how decisions are to be turned into reality. Museums need to set limits for when talk about diversity translates into action for diversity. This should be done against a continual analysis of the current situation for the museum and in the world in general. Museums also need to work with, and adhere to, concrete action plans for greater diversity. These plans should be produced with help from people who have an understanding of exclusion. The plans also need to be reflected in the organization's budget and business plan which must be continually evaluated and brought up to date. Friction will also be generated along the road and, depending on the size of the necessary changes, may require special measures. That all the people involved understand the importance of what is going on as well as the vision it represents is decisive in terms of creating commitment and participation. At times sharper methods may be needed and sometimes an existing member of staff may need to leave to make room for somebody new. This may seem hard, but the museum is there to serve the public, not the employees. And this includes the senior management too. Thus museums need to work with diversity as a fundamental aspect of the organization's foundational values. What the vision pertaining to diversity at the museum actually looks like must be apparent to all.

The management, as well perhaps as informal people with power and influence, needs to take responsibility for ensuring that the agreed goals are actually achieved. Carefully considered plans and strategies need to be matched by the necessary expertise and mandates. Promoting diversity is not something that can be dealt with casually or by only a few members of staff. And so museums need committed managers and directors who can change a museum's entire working methodology; managers who are capable of taking difficult decisions and ensuring that the organization has the right mix of staff and the right routines and methods that the task demands. Museums also need to stop trying to promote diversity using individual projects or relying on the work of individual members of staff. There is frequently a need for competency development on several levels.

⁵ Source: In-depth interview with exhibition producer Maria Forneheim at the Museum of Gothenburg, 29 August 2014. For further information about the exhibition *We are Roma* see <http://goteborgsstadsmuseum.se/en/exhibitions/we-are-roma>

⁶ Source: in-depth interview with Portia James and Alicone Amos at the Anacostia Community Museum on 10 August 2014.

⁷ Edström, Nina & Hyltén-Cavallius, Charlotte (2011) *Osmos: inkluderingsprocesser i kulturlivet* [Osmosis: inclusion processes in the cultural sector], Mångkulturellt centrum.



External support, creating trust, equal terms and building long-term relationships

TOWARDS THE END OF 2006, Queens Museum in New York appointed something as unique as a fulltime community organizer. Ever since then the museum's programme for and with the citizens has increased and Prerana Reddy, who is director of public events, explains that the museum now has an entire department which, using the museum as a resource, works outside the museum walls in order to confront issues that concern the local neighbourhood of Corona.¹ The local population has increased by more than 30 per cent since 1980 and the neighbourhood has long struggled with increasing unemployment, poverty and vulnerability, as well as crime and language barriers. In the last few years Queens Museum has headed a succession of initiatives intended to improve health, language skills, the standard of living and residential and business conditions in Coron. This initiative which is known by the name of Corazón de Corona – the heart of Corona – comprises everything from street parties and art projects, to the production of a cookbook and refurbishing and beautifying the public domain.² The initiative is led by working groups with participation from local organizations, care institutions, municipal councillors and local businesses. Queens Museum hopes that the long-term programme will contribute to establishing a cultural hub and a community centre encouraging social commitment and positive change. The aim is to create a place that local residents and visitors can feel proud of; a secure place for cross-cultural interaction and problem solving. The fact that other institutions in the city of New York have enlisted help from Queens Museum as coordinator for projects with similar ambitions also endorses the museum's success.

This description of how Queens Museum works with and for the local society only includes selected parts of its structures, strategies and projects. Yet it may well be so ambitious that many museums will find it difficult to relate to. In Sweden

co-creating and building relationships with the local society tends, regardless of how positive and ambitious the initiative may be, to take the form of a project or a special campaign and will not necessarily become a routine or a norm for how the museum will continue to work. The contacts that have been established frequently die out and old routines sneak back in. The fact that most museums, or more specifically their staffs, do not work with their surrounding neighbourhood, may also depend on the fact that the museum sector has become increasingly professionalized in recent decades. This has brought many advantages, but there is a risk that it will lead to the "experts" becoming increasingly distant from the man or woman in the street.³ A "we" and "them" situation can easily develop, a view shared by Mark O'Neill, formerly head of municipal museums and galleries in Glasgow and, since 2009, director of policy and research at Glasgow Life. In an interview with the UK Museums Association he maintained that museums face a choice of either working towards giving people access to the core of museum operations, or of contributing to the institution increasing the current inequality and injustice.^{4,5} O'Neill is openly critical of large parts of the museum sector, claiming that many museums which were initially founded to benefit society in general have now abandoned their basic principles and have been taken over by "professional and cultural elites". He explains that the central aim today seems to be to ensure that wealthy and educated people feel that they deserve their privileges and that it has become a norm and standard for curators to create exhibitions that exclude people. O'Neill also maintains that museums that, nevertheless, try to reach out to new target groups seldom go further than initiating symbolical projects and he claims that if the museums fail to work with participation as a core issue, then a project of this sort will not make much difference. In earlier reports O'Neill has been noted for his arguments pertaining to the difference between work based

1 Source: In-depth interview with Prerana Reddy, director of public events at Queens Museum, 13 August 2014.

2 Read more about how QMA works outside the museum walls on their community blog at <http://community.queensmuseum.org/>

3 Source: In-depth interview with Ebbe Westergren, Head of the Bridging Ages development centre at Kalmar County Museum. 19 September 2014.

4 The interview is available at <http://www.museumsassociation.org/news/10072012-mark-o-neill-conference-keynote>

5 The Museums Association is a membership organization for museums and their staff. For further information see <http://www.museumsassociation.org/>

on a “welfare” model, in which the museum wants to give something, to reach out with something, to offer something, and the “social justice” model that wants to tear down the barrier between the core and the circumference, and to make us realize that people have the right to both visit and take part in the museum.⁶

Some of the barriers to inclusion and participation that have become evident while working on this book have been concerned with the museum organizations’ own notions about “them” with regard to diversity in society. Others have been concerned with conflicts that have arisen on account of invitations that have lacked an honest intention. In the first instance, the attitude of the museums to diversity is not entirely dissimilar to what one finds in society in general, when what are seen as problems are foisted on selected groups, rather than recognizing that, in many cases, society has created the problems through structural, institutional and individual discrimination.⁷ The argument may claim that “they” lack interest, that “they” have problems with language, that “they” feel insecure when faced with institutions and grand public buildings, that “they” lack financial resources and give priority to other things, that reaching “them” requires marketing initiatives that the institution cannot afford, and so on. The same applies if there is an insight into how the museum has contributed to the creation of this sense of alienation.

To be invited as an alibi to represent a minority or to give the impression that the museum is rooted in a community often results in negative consequences for the museum and its efforts to increase participation. One example of this comes from a museum in the USA where the staff received a shock when a local Japanese community refused to take part in or support a public event that the museum was arranging.⁸ Members of the community saw the event as mere tokenism, that is to say purely symbolic measures, and they were deeply offended at being asked to sponsor, donate, participate and openly support the event merely because of being Japanese. They also felt offended at being asked to act in a Japanese manner merely to give the illusory impression that the museum had some form of roots within this group. One lesson from this is that a museum often has a greater need for participation from a specific group than the group has from the museum.

To achieve participation people naturally have to take part. In a discussion paper for the Platform for Intercultural Europe Joel Anderson, researcher in the philosophy department at Utrecht University,⁹ notes that participation follows certain specific rules.¹⁰ One of these is that it is not enough for a per-

son to wish to participate, but that the other participants, in this instance the museum, also has to recognize itself and the person concerned as being fellow participants, and there also needs to be agreement as to how joint participation is to function. Participation should also be free, extensive and equivalent. Free participation can only be achieved, in this case, if it is voluntary, free from formal or informal barriers such as membership requirements or excluding social norms, significant fees and so on. Extensive participation means that the organization accepts responsibility for enabling more people to take part and for increasing the extent of the current participation. There is an obligation here to monitor those factors that may contribute to the fact that participation from certain groups is lower than for other groups. In the third aspect, which deals with the importance of equal participation, Anderson notes the importance of creating the necessary conditions for equal participation in which people are not ranked as being superior or inferior based on social status, for example. That people should participate on entirely equal terms in equal conditions is incompatible with the notion of diversity. Compromises and balances between what is reasonable and what is possible in terms of facilitating participation will, therefore, always be necessary.

Museums that have been successful in promoting participation have often ensured that participation takes place at all levels of the organization; for example in reference groups, project groups and managerial committees. A shift in power has also taken place when participants have been given an essential mandate, and even a veto with regard to issues that are strongly linked to the group’s identity. Museums have also found ways of creating accepted, communal routines and modes of operation based on individuals’ norms rather than those of the institution. The museums appear to have listened rather than preached; a possibly decisive factor in that the sudden interest shown by a museum may give rise to a degree of suspicion.

When it comes to increased participation, relationship building and long-term operations are decisive factors. Museums need to have resources as well as a concrete strategy for how individual contacts and networks are to be built up and developed. In this instance, the resources are not just financial assets but can also include essential expertise, transportation, interpreters and much else besides. A strategy probably also needs to be developed with the help of the people whom the museum wants to engage. And just as with human relationships, they are most frequently established through one contact leading on to another, becoming enhanced in symbio-

6 Edström, Nina & Hyltén-Cavallius, Charlotte (2011) *Osmos: inkluderingsprocesser i kulturlivet* [Osmosis: inclusion processes in the cultural sector], Mångkulturellt centrum.

7 Sarnecki, Jerzy (ed.) SOU 2006:30 (2006) *Är rättvisan rättvis? Tio perspektiv på diskriminering av etniska och religiösa minoriteter inom rättssystemet* [Is justice just? Ten perspectives on discrimination of ethnic and religious minorities within the legal system]. Fritzes.

8 We have chosen not to identify the museum because it represents a negative example of efforts to stimulate participation.

9 The Platform for Intercultural Europe is a civil initiative and an association that developed in answer to 2008 European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. Further information is available at <http://www.intercultural-europe.org/site/>

10 Anderson, Joel & Kaur-Stubbs, Sukhvinder (2010) *Platform for Intercultural Europe Discussion Papers 1 & 2: Intercultural Dialogue. Enabling free, full and equal participation*. Alliance Publishing Trust.

sis and building on mutual respect and interest in each other. A common error that is certainly not exclusive to the museum sector is that organizations fail to realize in time that building relationships takes time and requires continuity. Calling in a collection of people who generously provide the museum with feedback on a specific question is a method that might help in putting out a fire, but this is not participation and definitely not co-creation.

A final piece of advice is to think through which groups the museum chooses to approach and the way in which these reflect diversity in our society. The people who ultimately choose to engage in the museum's activities are simply themselves. They are not a symbol or a spokesperson for some other group of individual.

Conclusions and advice to museums

Creating stable links, building relationships and working to increase participation are necessary and ambitious undertakings for any museum. The approach which the museums adopt in this matter is also decisive of whether barriers between society and the institution are torn down or are main-

tained. Together with civil society and private individuals the museum can also achieve its own potential in creating value for citizens and for society by means of projects that touch people and engage them. Many museums need also to see the role of their own institution in different forms of discrimination and to abandon the notion that their invitation to participate is a gift. Museums also need to realize the real value of their participation with individuals and communities in society. They need to understand that invitations to participate are not a form of charitable donation. Museums should also earmark resources whose primary task is to build and foster long-term relationships with different communities in society. This activity needs to be integrated into the organization's "normal" way of working.

Participation needs clear rules that facilitate a free and equal involvement at different levels of the museum's operations. Relations need to be built on a foundation of mutual respect and as part of a long-term commitment. Museums should produce goals, strategies, plans and rules for participation. Nobody should be expected to represent anyone other than her or his self.



"HAVE WE
THOUGHT THIS
THROUGH?"

I ❤️
MUSEUM

I ❤️
MUSEUM

SEUM

Recruitment, making differences visible, discrimination, competency development and volunteers

IN THE INTRODUCTION to this report there was a little statistical material regarding some aspects of intramural diversity at Swedish museums. The picture was not an encouraging one. Reading reports and speaking to representatives of various museums about intramural diversity over the years has not improved matters; rather the reverse. In all honesty this rapidly led to repeated comments about “representation” and recruitment being excluded from transcriptions of interviews and notes. It seemed as though there is not much more to be said about the matter than what has been quoted in manifestos for the year of diversity that were published more than nine (!) years ago – *“Stop surveying. Everyone knows it’s a disaster. Start doing something.”*

That intramural diversity is a decisive factor for the museums’ long-term qualitative development as well as for their ability to reflect and absorb Sweden’s ethnic, social, socio-economic or diversity is not in doubt. Porchia Moore, a doctoral student at the University of South Carolina whose work is concerned with Critical Race Theory as a framework for studying how the museum room can act as a tool for greater inclusion in the museum world and with a particular interest in the intersection between culture, technology, information and race raises the issue of representation from two perspectives. Porchia Moore claims that intramural diversity is entirely decisive, if one is to be able to send a signal to historically underrepresented groups, that the museum takes diversity seriously and that the organization is now dedicated to the task of breaking free from the museums’ damaging image of elitism and cultural oppression.¹ Tom Hennes from Thinc Design claims that his own experience is that without diversity within the organization it is almost impossible to authentically represent

diversity in the operations and that this becomes increasingly important when the work to be done is concerned with history or culture.² The internal norms will be reflected in the external results. Prerana Reddy at Queens Museum in New York stresses the importance of society being able to mirror itself in the organization and she adds that the more non-white people there are in the organization the more non-white people will be interested in working there³ Because the people working there will not always feel obliged to represent a group or become an alibi for something. Several international museums confirm the fact that a “critical mass” of people with different views is required if there is to be genuine change. A newly recruited member of staff is quickly eaten up by the existing culture and norms and then either adapts and keeps quiet, or leaves. Prerana Reddy is one of the people we interviewed in depth who testifies to the fact that staff diversity opens up for new skills, perspectives, contacts and networks, languages, public groups and partnerships, etc.

A frequent, initial barrier to increased intramural diversity and representation is concerned with institutional discrimination.⁴ We know from previous research and reports that managers prefer to recruit people with a similar background to their own.⁵ And how many disabled transsexual individuals work as directors of museums in Sweden or even in the entire world? When it comes to ethnicity we also know that people whose names suggest that their origins are in the Middle East, for example, have more difficulty in gaining a positive response to an application for a job than equally qualified persons whose names do not suggest a foreign background.⁶ When it comes to cultural organizations, these also recruit via informal networks and channels that seldom include people who

1 Source: In-depth interview with Porchia Moore, doctoral student at the University of South Carolina and regular contributor to the *inclusionum*, <http://inclusionum.com/>, 27 September 2014.

2 Read more about Tom Hennes and his work with the National September 11th Memorial Museum in New York and the exhibition design office Thinc at their website <http://thincdesign.com/>

3 Prerana Reddy is director of public events at Queens Museum, New York.

4 Sarnecki, Jerzy (ed.) SOU 2006:30 (2006) *Är rättvisan rättvis? Tio perspektiv på diskriminering av etniska och religiösa minoriteter inom rättssystemet* [Is justice just? Ten perspectives on discrimination of ethnic and religious minorities within the legal system]. Fritzes.

5 Hensvik, Lena et al. (2009) *Sådan chef sådan anställd?* [Are employees destined to mimic their boss?] Institute for Evaluation of Labour Market and Education Policy (IFAU).

6 Nordström Skans, Oscar & Åslund, Olof (2010) *Etnisk segregation i storstäderna - bostadsområden, arbetsplatser, skolor och familjebildning 1985 - 2006* [Ethnic segregation in our major cities - residential neighbourhoods, workplaces, schools and family types 1985-2006], Institute for Evaluation of Labour Market and Education Policy (IFAU).

find themselves outside the museums' own norms.⁷ In order to break with a recurrent pattern of institutional discrimination there needs to be a high degree of consciousness as to the mechanisms and values that influence the selection of staff and management. Some of the recruitment experts that the Swedish Exhibition Agency has come into contact with suggest that museums can try breaking down the recruitment process and ask themselves who the museum envisages when writing a job description, specifying the requirements and designing the advertisement. Which is the target group when spreading the information and which voices does the museum listen to when taking up references? Some people have even suggested that job applications should be anonymized, while others counter with how foreign educational qualifications are judged or what personal letters should look like. There is even experience of anonymized applications actually leading to increased inequality. This is probably the result of the fact that the basis of discrimination is to be found in the "content". That is to say, the way in which a person's background and education is described. Sooner or later there will be a face-to-face meeting and if the boss still prefers to recruit people like him or her self, the digressions serve little purpose.

Another obstacle lies in the difficulty of finding "other applicants" where many organizations have difficulty in reaching out to new people or groups. They do not know which channels to consult. The established channels offer a shorter route and less risk. This problem would seem to be universal in that even Ysaac Kim, head of the Hello Museum in Seoul, explains that there are not many people from other cultures who train in the art field and that, accordingly, it is difficult to find staff with the right skills. Kim tells me that they always write in their advertisements that they want applicants from a diversity of backgrounds and even that it will be an *advantage* if an applicant has some form of disability. They also send these advertisements for staff to a special community (for disabled persons) but that this has not yet led to anyone from that community applying.⁸ That this situation exists is probably due to the fact that, over a long period, museums have had norms that have excluded certain people. This has resulted in these people not seeing a career opportunity in the given sector as particularly likely or interesting. If they are to become more attractive employers, many museums need to consider everything from their basic values to their premises and their daily routines. The questions that the museum needs to ask itself might involve such issues as whether front-of-house staff are allowed to have facial tattoos, whether public holidays and free time are linked to specific religions, whether there is a prayer room and somewhere to rest, whether there is a hearing loop and other technical appliances, which languages are allowed, and so on. Ceylan Holago from Swe-

den's Multicultural Centre has proposed that museums should strive to create a broader base for recruitment. This might take the form of career days in which youngsters could see non-white museum professionals as inspirational models, or art camps in which institutions seek to increase awareness of art schools and future opportunities.⁹ Prerana Reddy from the Queens Museum in New York claims that museums need to be better at communicating their ambitions in these fields in order to create transparency, trust and expectations. "It is only when there are expectations that interest can be generated."

A third obstacle is concerned with the lack of mobility in the museum field.¹⁰ People working in museums tend to stay put for many years and generally only change their workplace if they gain a position at another museum or similar institution. The relatively low degree of mobility tends to mean that there are relatively few new recruitments which makes it all the more difficult to establish a diversity of staff through recruitment. The museums that have found ways round this problem have most often solved it by consciously exploiting more mobile types of employment such as temporary guides, project employment, interns, freelance producers and artists. Almost all of the museums in the international study stress the importance of volunteers in ensuring intramural diversity. Recruitment of volunteers makes it possible for the institution to gain new and diversified perspectives and skills. They also help to develop local roots, create new networks and to build bridges for new and previously underrepresented visitors. Many people find that working as a volunteer is a meaningful and engaging way of taking part in the museum's operations. That volunteers also mean greater capacity on the part of the institution as well as having positive effects on their health can be seen as beneficial side effects. In Sweden there are still very few projects involving volunteers. There is a volunteer project at the Foteviken Viking Town museum and, from January 2015, there is a three-year project at Jamtli in Östersund. The presence of volunteers in Swedish museums is by no means uncontroversial and a more serious study of how museums can develop volunteer activities is recommendable. In Sweden it might be wise to exchange the term "volunteer" for something that has fewer negative connotations. But it must be remembered that it is the management of the museum that has responsibility for seeing that the organization has the mix of staff that is required for the institution to be able to fulfil its task.

A fourth obstacle lies in the fact that diversity is seen as conflicting with other values, in particular quality. In the brief for the public report on equality in the theatrical sector from 2006 there is no mention of the word quality.¹¹ The principal task for the committee was to formulate proposals for how gender equality can become an accepted and positive force in the

7 Swedish Arts Council (2005) *Om kulturell mångfald. Kulturrådets omvärldsanalys 2005* [On cultural diversity. The Swedish Arts Council's intelligence report for 2005], Swedish Arts Council.

8 Source: In-depth interview with Ysaac Kim, head of the Hello Museum in Seoul, 1 June 2014.

9 Source: In-depth interview with Ceylan Holago, responsible for exhibitions and events at Mångkulturell centrum in Botkyrka, 18 June 2014.

10 The argument is based on views of people in the museum field. There are no statistics.

11 SOU 2006:42 *Plats på scen* [Room on the stage], Fritzes.

theatre sector. The brief also included analysing the existing gender-power hierarchy in the theatre sector, as well as in tertiary artistic education, and providing proposals for how these structures can be altered.¹² But in the committee's report the discussion of quality in relation to gender equality is so central that the term appears almost 350 times. Competence is also named alongside quality. But in producing this report, the Swedish Exhibition Agency has had difficulty in discovering that diversity in any way might stand in opposition to quality. The same applies to competence. There may be other qualities and other competencies in diversity than those that are normative today. What is considered to be of high or low quality in the cultural field is often subjective and contextual. Maria Lind, director of Tensta konsthall in Stockholm, claims that the hunt for the "very best" almost always leads to "somewhere else". At the moment, she suggests, one should be looking towards the Middle East, India and the former Soviet republics. She also relates that there is a wave of Afro-American feminist art which is among the most interesting art at the moment, while the best contemporary art is not produced by, nor is interested in, whiteness or the white man – i.e. the existing norm or authority.¹³

Other obstacles include an unwillingness to analyse the current situation. Few Swedish museums claim to be interested in mapping their intramural diversity. Indeed, there seems to be a reluctance to describing and monitoring the development of staff diversity. Gender and age are the most common, and almost the only exception; probably because of the employer's legal obligations. One explanation that has been noted above is that this can be seen as stigmatizing, that the staff are reduced to being regarded merely as categories. That museums do not like counting people is nothing unique to Sweden. The actual *need* to count staff is often an indication that there is a lack of equality. But for the same reason that we already count women and men, sick leave and parental leave with a view to righting inequalities so we also, unfortunately, need to monitor the museums' intramural diversity. All of these surveys also aim to provide an opportunity for considering whether further work should be undertaken on the organization's internal diversity and equality. It is not their function to put labels on individuals. At the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery the staff's ethnic and socio-economic background is noted in connection with the annual staff questionnaire. Staff have the right not to answer. The museum claims not to have experienced any problems with this approach. The museum also states that most of the people who apply for jobs are aware of the museum's concern with increased diversity and

regard it as something positive. For why should a museum wish to recruit people on the basis of diversity if it fails to value and give visibility to a diversity that already exists? Museums are, after all, known for a high degree of trust and professional competence. Such an institution ought to be able to make use of the strength inherent in people's differences without stigmatizing them.

The lack of time, resources and skills are other explanations as to why the mix of staff does not change. Museums often try to solve this by more careful planning and by additional analyses of risks and vulnerability which, for example, look at sick leave, terminations and other reasons why a lack of resources can appear without the institution taking on a "familiar face".

Conclusions and advice to museums

Staff at Swedish museums do not reflect or embrace the ethnic, social, socio-economic or cultural diversity in Sweden; far from it. In many respects the museum sector finds itself at the same place as more than ten years ago, at square nought, or possibly square one. Recruitment is the most frequent issue on the agenda, yet it clearly has low priority in the budget. Unequal representation is not just the result of an extensive structural discrimination but is also a major obstacle to increased diversity and participation in numerous aspects of the museums' activities. If they are to make use of the potential in multicultural Sweden, the museums need to give priority to their intramural diversity. This prioritization must also include valuing and giving visibility to the diversity that already exists.

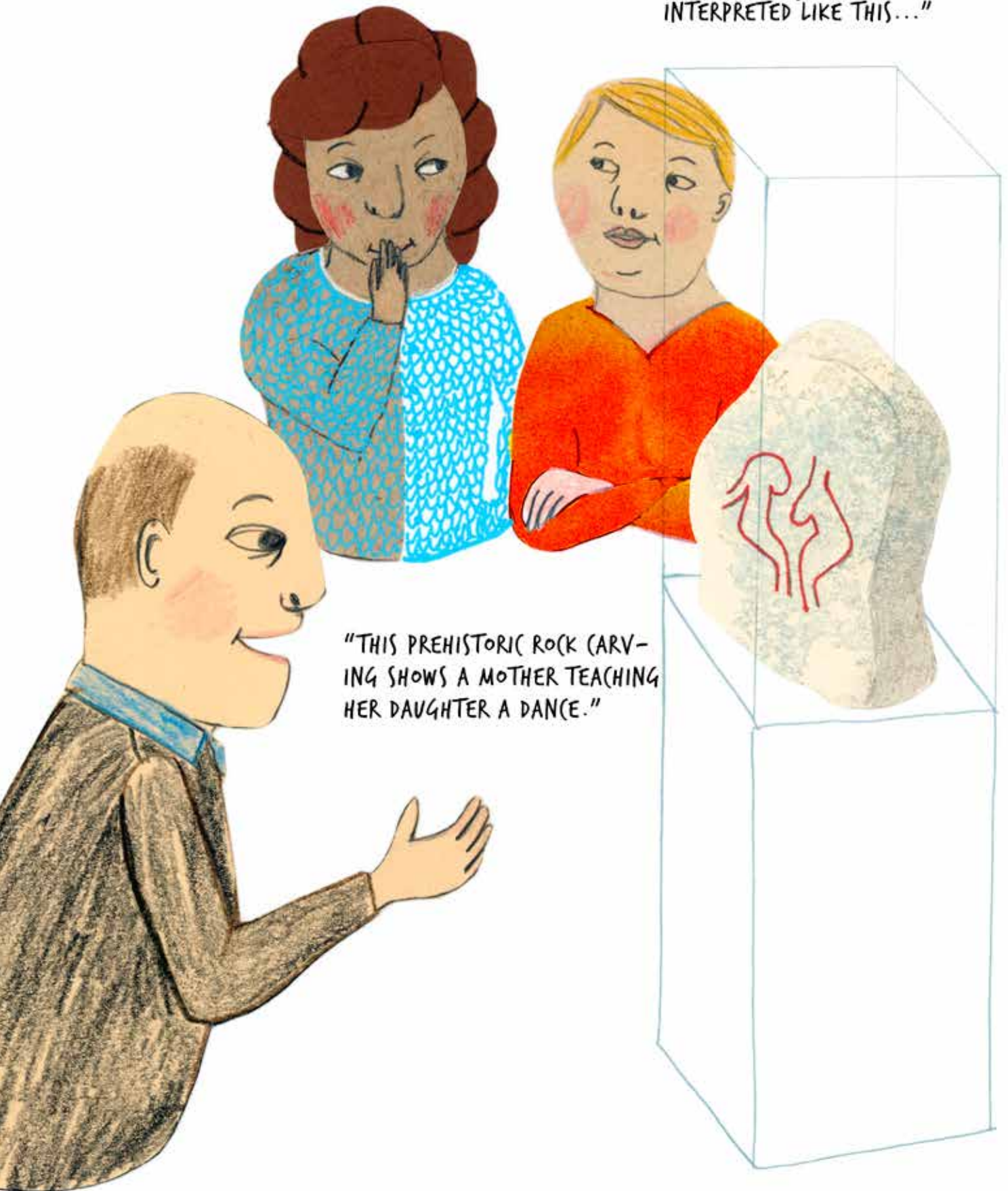
Common obstacles can be overcome with the help of external skills, for example. In Sweden today there are several innovative and highly competent recruitment agencies and consultants that are specialized in recruiting staff from diverse cultures. Museums also need to consider how their working environments can be as inclusive and attractive as possible and new recruitment procedures should become a routine and an aspect of more sustainable planning.

Proactive measures to generate greater interest in museums work as a career choice, changes in the working environment, planning, making visible and valuing existing diversity as well as assistance from volunteers are possible solutions. There needs to be a study as to how Swedish museums can build up a sustainable system of active volunteers. Quality and competence are not antagonistic to diversity; rather the reverse. Diversity offers greater quality and broader competence.

¹² Source: <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/6293/a/62902>

¹³ Source: In-depth interview with Maria Lind, head of Tensta konsthall, Stockholm, 25 August 2014.

"OBVIOUSLY IT SHOULD BE
INTERPRETED LIKE THIS..."



A wider perspective of, with and for society

“GIVE LIGHT, AND PEOPLE WILL FIND A WAY” is a quotation attributed to Ella Baker who was an influential activist in the American civil rights movement.¹ What museums do is to shed light on who we are, where we come from and whither we are going. This is a responsibility and a trust that rests on all of us in this sector.

Communicating history is also a matter of relating who we are or what we are expected to be like.² If we are to avoid norms and homogeneous views becoming cemented and reducing people's free choices, then the narrative has to include a multitude of stories and voices. And the voices need to be able to conflict with each other or with the museum as an institution. Whose story has hitherto been preserved has historically been a choice for a small number of people with similar backgrounds, education and social norms. When it comes to the museums' public activities we can see that the existing diversity is characterized initially by a diversity among visitors and, last of all and very seldom, by diversity among the museum producers.³ The description of an artefact and its context have seldom been in the hands of the person who once owned it. Tom Hennes from Thinc Design insists that museums need to change the way in which they produce exhibitions and public activities so that these not only serve visitors but also the people whose narratives and artefacts are presented. His experience is that museums have traditionally only invited people to participate for as long as this has seemed comfortable and never to a level where the museum's own authority can be challenged. Accordingly, he proposes that major museum organizations like ICOM, International Council of Museums and AAM, American Alliance of Museums, as well as private institutions, should consider rewriting their ethical guidelines in such a way that the museum's legitimacy, that is to say its right to exhibit artefacts and to relate stories, must, at least to an extent, build on active and voluntary participation from the individuals and communities from whom the artefacts and

stories actually stem. In his view, this is a fundamental democratic principle that, hitherto, has at best been ignored and, at worst, denied. In his view, museums need to climb down from their pedestals and realize that the society in which they are embedded has gathered more knowledge and more perspectives that should be rated more highly than the museum's own. Museums need to recognize the need of these and to abandon their role as communicators of right and wrong, of what is valuable or historically correct. Museums should, with help from their narrative techniques and the exhibition competence, rather focus on facilitating dialogues that lead to joint or multiple answers and approaches to current problems.⁴

Taking their point of departure in society and its voices, rather than in cultural heritage as such, or the idea that there ought to be a communal truth that can be narrated has led to success for many museums in creating activities that include numerous people. Ebbe Westergren, who is in charge of the development centre known as Bridging Ages, opines that the most important person with regard to cultural heritage is oneself, precisely in one's own place with one's own history and one's own viewpoint. She notes, as an example, that the cultural heritage that young people bear with themselves is more interesting than the sort of things that museums use to try to attract them.⁵ David Anderson, director of the National Museum of Wales, also remarked in a speech held at the National Gallery of Ireland in March 2012,⁶ that the knowledge that museums have to preserve is part of the public domain and has been created by numerous people. He maintained that all valuable knowledge, silent or publicly pronounced, also includes experiences and memories from people who are not historians or scientists. And that everyone is an expert at something – notably their own lives. Lucas Martins, director of the Museu Histórico e Arqueológico de Lins, explains that his museum has weekly meetings and discussions with different groups in society.⁷ The choice of issues that the museum

1 Ella Baker was born in 1903. Throughout her adult life and until her death in 1986 she actively promoted civil rights. Further information about Ella Baker and her struggle can be found at <http://ellabakercenter.org/>

2 Svanberg, Fredrik in Furumark, Anna (ed.) (2013) *Att störa homogenitet* [Disturbing homogeneity], Nordic Academic Press.

3 Pripp, Oscar et al. (2004) *Tid för mångfald* [Time for diversity], Mångkulturellt centrum.

4 Source: In-depth interview with Tom Hennes, designer of the National September 11 Memorial Museum, 26 September 2014.

5 Further information about Bridging Ages can be found at <http://www.bridgingages.com>

6 David Anderson's speech *What will the Museum of the Future be Like?* can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_R9RFA8rcFs

7 Source: In-depth interview with Lucas Martins, director of Museu Histórico e Arqueológico de Lins, 26 September 2014.

concentrates on is also based on what people and local communities are interested in engaging with. The museum continuously takes in artefacts, narratives and histories from people in the area and when a project manager is given a project the first thing that she or he does is to “leave the museum and link up with society”. Martins adds that it is extremely important that subjects that are connected with diversity with regard to issues like ethnicity, sexuality and religion are addressed with society and that they do something constructive together.

In order to ensure that a museum not only contains a multiplicity of voices but also a reasonably even distribution *among* the voices it may be necessary to positively discriminate some voices that are underrepresented today, or some perspectives that are lacking. This can involve museums taking in people from different LGBTQ communities so that stories that have hitherto had an exclusively hetero-normative viewpoint can be complemented with their help. In instances where history is missing, as is often the case, this can either be complemented with a newly written narrative based on contemporary knowledge, or the museum can choose to use the empty space – that is to say the shadow cast even by absence – to explain just why it is empty. In order to find “new” voices, the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, for example, work strategically at focusing on particular parts of society that characterize a wide diversity and they maintain a dialogue about how the museum can better represent the people who live in the area. Other museums have tried regularly making parts of their premises available to different communities to use as a stage for individual expression, narratives and meetings.

Over the last year many museums have stressed the importance of continually surveying their existing collections and archives to see how they are described. In many cases exist-

ing markings or descriptions can be directly hurtful or racist. Merely claiming that collections and digitalized texts are a product of their time and then dismissing the issue is really not much better than claiming the right to give racist names to sweets or cartoon figures. Given that Sweden is a highly ambitious country with regard to digitalization and digital conservation this ought to be an important issue for people working in this field.⁸ Expertise in understanding, interpreting and describing collections frequently needs completion.

Conclusions and advice to museums

A museum for everyone needs to be able to facilitate a diversity of narratives from a multiplicity of viewpoints. There need to be voices from individual witnesses that also need to be allowed to conflict with each other or with the museum's own views. There is more knowledge outside the museum than inside it. No single voice is more important than another and knowledge is a collective asset that is created by a diversity of people. Museums should consider whose history and whose contemporary world the museum is to portray as well as how this is to be done and by whom. This often needs to be complemented by a greater diversity of narratives and of ways of telling stories.

Gaps in historical narratives and a lack of viewpoints can be filled with the help of people who see and miss these voices. Old truths and old narratives need to be reviewed. New people need to give new perspectives on how artefacts have been presented. Positive discrimination with regard to staff may be needed. And museums need to work more with regard to society's questions than the museum's answers; to listen more than to speak. Museums also need the courage to let people in on their activities, in the creation of both artefact and life.

⁸ According to a government decision dated September 2011 regarding a digital agenda for Sweden, *It i människans tjänst - en digital agenda för Sverige*, Sweden is to become the world leader in making use of the benefits of digitalization. Further information (in Swedish) on strategies for digitalizing cultural heritage can be found at <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/14082/a/183172>



"CAN WE CHECK OUT
AN EXHIBITION
AFTER WORK?"

"I'M OFF HOME.
ALL THE MUSEUMS
CLOSE AT FIVE."

Getting ready for more visitors – on opening hours, free admission and working outside the box

IN THE REPORT ENTITLED *OSMOS* – inkluderingsprocesser i kulturlivet there is a section about working with public activities entitled “lower the thresholds”.¹ It concludes as follows: *“It is clearly evident that we need more information about what is being done and what is effective from the point of view of diversity. We believe that we have some evidence that many good experiences arise from being present in places other than one’s own institution. But it is partly a matter of expensive activities on the part of the institutions; like visiting a school with part of an orchestra or ensemble. There is testimony to stimulating encounters between professionals and pupils, but is this an effective way of guaranteeing more visitors in the long run?”* We hope that by reading this report you will have gained a certain amount of knowledge about what is happening at museums and what can be done to promote diversity, and that you will also have become acquainted with views and proposals about *what* and *how* one can achieve success. Without suggesting that the task is in any way simple. Sadly, there are no quick fixes for museums. In this final section we carry on from the point where Nina Edström and Charlotte Hyltén-Cavallius left us with their “Osmosis” study. We are going to look into experiences of working outside one’s own museum to see how this can become an efficient, long-term solution for attracting more visitors. In connection with working with this report we have also come into contact with a number of useful lessons regarding opening hours and admission fees at museums.

Most people who work in a museum have, on one or more occasions, used the term “meeting place” to describe or define what a museum actually is, particularly the person’s own museum. So what is a meeting place? Simply put, a place where people and narratives meet up. A place where individuals get closer to each other by sharing a physical space, an experience, an idea, something joyful, informative or perhaps even something sorrowful? A meeting can also be intentional or spontaneous, brief or extended, with someone one knows or with a stranger. In meetings between people distances are

eradicated, at least temporarily. So how well do the museums function as meeting places?

Publicly funded museums generally open at 10am and close at 5pm. On one day in the week, often on a Wednesday, museums stay open two or three hours longer. And on one day in the week they are closed; almost always on Mondays. Many museums also define themselves as a physical place, a place with a number of walls and a roof, always supposing that it is not an open-air museum of course. Open-air museums tend to consist of numerous small roofs with a lot of grass and gravel paths in between. Visiting a museum in Sweden costs money; sometimes quite a lot of money. Visiting a museum is not like going to the library. Libraries are free meeting places. Meeting at almost any museum entails not being at work between the hours of 10am and 5pm. You have to take yourself to a specific building and you have to pay a sum of money.

That museums have limited opening hours, are limited to a specific location, and make people pay for their services is not necessarily strange or wrong. But it does not necessarily mean that they are the best possible form of meeting place. The Hello Museum in Korea states that the location to which the post is addressed has about 50 000 visitors each year. But at their exhibitions and events held elsewhere than in the museum they have about 110 000 visitors each year. At the Anacostia Community Museum in Washington DC they have realized that the best place for meeting local citizens is along a road that runs a bit of a way from the museum. They also try to develop strategies for taking the museum to the visitors rather than visitors to the museum: what they call “out-of-the-box strategies”. While working on the exhibition *We are Roma*, the Museum of Gothenburg placed much of the activity in the suburbs with assistance from the “mobile museum” programme. They reported their experience in roughly the following terms: *“We reached entirely new target groups. Many of the people would not have come if we had not been out*

¹ Edström, Nina & Hyltén-Cavallius, Charlotte (2011) *Osmos: inkluderingsprocesser i kulturlivet* [Osmosis: inclusion processes in the cultural sector], Mångkulturellt centrum.

in the suburbs. Did it matter that the events were free? Yes, because children attended whom we would not have come into contact with otherwise."² At the Jamtli Museum in central Sweden for example, director Henrik Zipsane proposes that the museum should purchase a suitable vehicle so that it can come "out" and the visitors come "in".³ At some of the "favela museums" in Brazil the greater part of the museum's activities take place on the surrounding open squares. At Queens Museum in New York there is a whole department working with "not being at the museum". Experience of being present at other locations than that of one's own institution seem to be good. For many staff, being able to make the museum's activities accessible to new people and new communities has been decisive. Some museums have succeeded in totally breaking loose from the notion that a museum is a physical place to which people need to take themselves. They take the view that the museum is a bearer and communicator of knowledge and experiences rather than a postal address.

With regard to admission fees at museums it is difficult to say whether something is generally right or wrong. Admission fees can, on the one hand, be used to secure and develop the operations so that they are accessible to more people at the same time that the price of a service or good is central to many marketing strategies.⁴ In some instances it can be difficult to create experiences of any value in something that is free of charge. For many people, in particular people from socio-economic backgrounds that are already under-represented at museums, admission fees can be an obstacle to participation.⁵ At the Hello Museum in South Korea a number of free places are continually put aside for single parents so that they are not excluded from the activities. At the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery there are regular days with free admission at their various museums. They then notice a "remarkable difference" in who it is that takes part and their target groups become all the more diversified.

At Tensta konsthall in suburban Stockholm the director, Maria Lind, almost always says "yes" to people wanting to use the premises without charge.⁶ She maintains that this is a way of creating a resource and being part of a common surface. Room for a meeting.

Conclusions and advice to museums

The fact that almost all museums, regardless of their location have virtually identical opening hours seems to be part of a tradition or norm rather than reflecting an idea as to how the museum can become a functioning meeting place. Once again, if the museum is to serve society, one must ask when that society is free to visit museums. At what times is a meeting place needed? Where is it needed? Museums should, based on the needs of the citizens, consider their opening hours and their space for meetings.

Operating beyond the physical space and at places other than the location to which letters are delivered is a significant success factor at a range of museums. Being where local people actually are would seem to be a fundamental rule for greater participation and diversity. And so museums should increase their presence at places where people congregate; regardless of where the museum is located.

Depending on the perceived value of the visit as well as the visitor's ability to pay, admission fees to museums can represent a threat to a genuine level of equality among the people using the museum. There is, therefore, good reason to discuss whether admission fees at publicly funded museums conflict directly with the goals of official cultural policy and everyone's opportunities to take part in cultural affairs. At national, regional and municipal levels museums and their principals should jointly analyse whether the museum's admission fees support or conflict with free and equal participation in the museum.

² Source: In-depth interview with exhibition producer Maria Forneheim at the Museum of Gothenburg, 29 August 2014.

³ Source: In-depth interview with Henrik Zipsane, director of the Jamtli Museum, on 13 June 2014.

⁴ Lema, Chris (2014) *The Price is Right*, Kindle Edition, Amazon Whispernet.

⁵ Anderson, Joel & Kaur-Stubbs, Sukhvinder (2010) Platform for Intercultural Europe Discussion Papers 1 & 2: Intercultural Dialogue. Enabling free, full and equal participation. Alliance Publishing Trust.

⁶ Source: In-depth interview with Maria Lind, director of Tensta konsthall, Stockholm, 25 August 2014.

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The following either answered questions during an in-depth interview or took part in a roundtable discussion:

- Aida Paridad, founder and producer at Fembot. 16 October 2014.
- Alicone Amos, curator at the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum (USA). 10 August 2014.
- Behrang Miri, rapper, author and actor. 16 October 2014.
- Bettina Pehrsson, artistic director at Marabouparken (Sweden). 16 October 2014.
- Bonita Bennet, director of the District Six Museum (South Africa). 22 September 2014.
- Cajsa Lagerkvist, head of exhibitions and communication at the Museum of Gothenburg. 25 September 2014.
- Ceylan Holago, head of exhibitions and events at Mångkulturellt centrum. 18 June 2014.
- Cláudia Rose Ribeiro da Silva, coordinator at the Museu da Maré (Brazil). 2 October 2014.
- Ebbe Westergren, head of Bridging Ages development centre. 19 September 2014.
- Elfrida Bergman, culture analyst, photographer and joint project manager for Queering Sápmi. 25 September 2014.
- Eva Hansen, head of strategy at Malmö Museums. 12 September and 25 September 2014.
- Henrik Zipsane, director of the Jamtli Museum. 13 June 2014.
- Janine Eason, director of engagement at the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery (United Kingdom). 17 September 2014.
- Jeff Werner, professor of art history at Stockholm University and author of *Blond och blåögd: Vithet, svenskhet och visuell kultur* [Blond and blue-eyed. Whiteness, Swedishness and visual culture]. 16 October 2014.
- Lucas Martins, director of the Museu Histórico e Arqueológico de Lins (Brazil). 26 September 2014.
- Maria Forneheim, exhibition producer at the Museum of Gothenburg. 29 August 2014.
- Maria Lind, director of Tensta konsthall. 25 August 2014.
- Niklas Cserhalmi, director of the Museum of Work in Norrköping (Sweden). 25 September 2014.
- Nina Edström, project manager at Mångkulturellt centrum. 25 September 2014.
- Olov Amelin, director of the Nobel Museum, Stockholm. 16 October 2014.
- Othman Karim, producer, photographer, documentary filmmaker and board member of Kulturbryggan (Sweden). 25 September 2014.
- Parul Sharma, principal of the Academy for Human Rights in Business (Sweden). 16 October 2014.
- Porchia Moore, doctoral student at the University of South Carolina (USA) and regular contributor to the incluseum's blog. 27 September 2014.
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- Sarah Anwar, diversity strategist at the Diversity Group (Sweden). 25 September and 16 October 2014.
- Sergei Muchin, director of Jönköping County Museum. 16 October 2014.
- Ted Hässelbom, director of Sigtuna Museum (Sweden). 25 September 2014.
- Tina Karlsson, managing director of Kreativum (Sweden). 16 October 2014.
- Toby Watley, director of collections at the Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery (UK). 17 September 2014.
- Tomas Bokstad, formerly director of Interkult and departmental secretary and project manager at the Ministry for Culture and now a partner in TYP Kulturkapital (Sweden). 27 March 2014.
- Tom Hennes, founder of Thinc Design (USA) and designer of the National September 11 Memorial Museum (USA). 26 September 2014.
- Ysaac Kim, director of Hello Museum (South Korea). 1 June 2014.
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