

Chapter 8

Heritage and the New Immigrant Minorities: A Catalyst of Relevance for Contemporary Archaeology?

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The rise and early development of archaeology and prehistory in Scandinavia was intimately bound up with national agendas (Baudou 2004; Kristiansen 1981; Trigger 1989). This is also the case for Norway (though debated exactly in what way; Eikrem 2005; Østigaard 2001; Prescott 1994; Skre 2001), a small nation on the northern fringes of Europe. When Norway reemerged as an independent state in 1905 after centuries of being dominated by more powerful neighbors, prehistory, linguistic history, and archaeology served numerous purposes in creating a national history. Initially, it generated myths about the deep historical roots of indigenous settlement—whether back to deglaciation (Munch 1862), or later in prehistory (Gjessing 1945). In time archaeology served to establish histories of chronological depth, the unique qualities of the forefathers, but also (or alternatively) the integral participation of this periphery in European culture (Shetelig 1925), creating very different national narrative (but not *nationalistic*, Shetelig 1936).

After the Second World War the explicitly national agenda was toned down and transformed. In the course of the postwar era, it largely became implicit. Interpretative trends in Norwegian archaeology (initially explicated in Brøgger 1925)—e.g., the national distinctiveness, playing down migration, sometimes reversal of diffusionary direction—largely paralleled processual archaeology, but also general political trends. The best example is perhaps the campaigns in advance of the referendums in 1972 and 1994 concerning Norwegian membership in the European Union. Here, the common evolution, determined by the environment, of the landscape, people, and culture through time was sometimes symbolized with a Bronze Age boat from Nordic rock carvings. A similar strategy, using archaeology to create a narrative of heritage to argue chronological depth and uniqueness, and foster an ethnic identity and bolster claims to rights, has also been pursued by the largest indigenous minority,

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the Saami. Here, when protesting hydroelectric developments, a fish motive from the Alta rock carving site was chosen.

In terms of explicit nationalism archaeology has thus—for political and empirical reasons—toned down the rhetoric. Still, a primary objective remains to contribute through heritage to generating a continued perception of “identity”—concepts of determinative connections between landscapes, culture, history, and contemporary inhabitants. The “identity paradigm” remains fundamental to the heritage sector and the management of cultural resources and is defined as a national end in itself (Holme 2005:10) to the extent that it is expressed in the heritage legislation:

Cultural monuments and their environments ... must be protected, both as part of our cultural heritage and identity.

It is a national responsibility to manage these resources ... as a source for contemporary and future generations’ experience, self-understanding, well-being and activity.

The explication of the legislation states that it is an overarching statement of intent that emphasizes cultural recourse as scientific materials, a spring of experience, a source of values to generate identity, and a sense of security that is locally anchored. It is Norway’s contribution to world heritage (Holme 2005:25–27).

A Changing Northern Europe: Public Schools in Oslo

The strategy of binding archaeology and cultural heritage to identity, generating narratives of the interdependent evolution of the land, the people, and the culture, has been immensely successful for all parties—Norwegians, Saamis, and the cultural heritage sector. Various groups have been supplied with collective identities conducive for political projects like nation building or gaining recognition as indigenous people. Cultural–historical disciplines and the cultural resource management have gained public recognition and financial support. The national and ethnic “identity paradigm” as the basis of heritage management is still regarded as unproblematic and benevolent. When protests against hydroelectric development in Finnmark associate petroglyph motives with Saami ethnicity, or opponents of the EU use Bronze Age depictions of boats to symbolize resistance to globalization, many archaeologists probably recognize the mistaken use of the symbols and naïve perception of prehistory, but shrug it off as innocuous.

Of course, there is always the risk that national becomes *nationalistic*, and one ethnic group uses heritage to limit rights of others. Anders Behring Breivik, the perpetrator of the 2011 massacres in Norway, defended his actions in court by claiming to defend an indigenous population that immigrated to Norway at the end of the Ice Age 12,000 years ago. In principle his appeal to rights based on a popular, if scientifically flawed, perception of the descent of modern Norwegians is not that different from other narratives that we let slip by or even encourage based on more acceptable political sympathies. Identity and heritage myths might still represent a lethal concoction.

The lack of contention concerning aligning heritage with national and ethnic identity is probably related to the fact that Scandinavia has until recently been very homogeneous in terms of populations. Norway has been dominated by two major indigenous populations, Norwegians and Saamis. This situation is, however, rapidly changing. Non-European immigration took off in the 1970s with the first Pakistani labor immigrants. According to the City of Oslo's statistics of a population in 2011 of more than 600,000, 160,484 were immigrants or children of immigrant parents. Of these 117,489 were from Africa and Asia. The quantitatively most important immigrant nationalities are Pakistanis, Turks, Somalis, Iraqis, and Vietnamese. According to a recent reevaluation by Statistics Norway, approximately 24% of Norway's population will have an immigrant background in 2040. In the urban centers, the immigrant population will be more substantial. In Oslo, the government's "Statistics Norway" predicts an immigrant population between 40 and 56%.

The situation is illustrated by the ethnic makeup of the pupils in schools in the capital Oslo—perhaps the most important target groups for heritage outreach. Since the 1970s, the demography of Oslo's schools has become increasingly heterogeneous. From 1999 to 2011 the amount of students with a "minority language" background has increased from 29% to 40%. 58 of 136 primary schools have a majority of non-Norwegian speakers. Approximately 7% of the schools have a student body more than 90% "non-Norwegian" (Sletthom 2011). In short, these are demographically significant generations growing up with Norway as their homeland, with diverse backgrounds but without a background that ties into the identity-related nation building or indigenous rights agenda of cultural heritage narratives.

For the heritage sector this entails that up to a generation ago the sector catered to homogeneous populations that shared concepts of their historical roots and a thereto related identity, but now there is a heterogeneous population outside of the predominant ethnic and national storyline. There is a diversity of stories that can be told on the basis of cultural heritage. The narratives that are projected and used by the heritage sector not only represent objective analyses of the data but also result from choices to serve political agendas, and are tailored to be relevant and create interest. We may therefore ask if the traditional identity storyline is ready for revision.

Immigrant Minorities, Heritage Identity, and Politics

Scandinavian archaeology and the heritage sector have remained surprisingly unconcerned of the themes contemporary global-scale migration poses in terms of dissemination, public outreach, recruitment, research, and fundamental narratives we chose to tell. This is probably in part due to the demographic constitution of the relevant disciplines (white, middle class, and in Scandinavia increasingly female), the general skepticism within processual and post-processual archaeologies to pre-historic migrations, as well as the source materials we work with. It seems to me that this dis-contemporary aspect is also associated with the national mandate, the nation-state context, and the narratives we are used to telling.

Heritage and identity are particularly problematic when assertions of chronological depth, cultural and genetic continuity become inclusive/exclusive, and confer ethnically defined rights; these interpretations entail that a Saami in Troms or a Norwegian in Sogn has stronger inherent rights than a third-generation Pakistani or a child born of two Somali parents in Oslo. A first political step in a constructive right direction would therefore be to say that heritage confers no rights. For heritage practices this is problematic for three reasons. A significant point of the identity agenda is to create social cohesion and stakeholder relations to the landscape. In positive terms this creates solidarity, social responsibility, and environmental appreciation. The flipside is chauvinism, conservatism, and inequality. The other factor is the inherent tensions in affirmative discrimination: the preferential rights enjoyed by population groups who have been defined as *judicially* indigenous, i.e., ethnically based privileges that after all serve to include and exclude. Finally, would the heritage sector retain public support if it became substantially detached from any appeal to national identity?

Perhaps a goal should be to encourage interest in heritage, but to acknowledge the processes of globalization and urbanization that undermine the fundamental importance of heritage identities as an inclusive/exclusive principle. Heritage and the ethnic identities it generates would then primarily be activated as part of the lore, rituals, and décor on festive occasions, or as a part of general human experiences. An alternative, discussed below, is perhaps to vitalize a part of our knowledge concerning the complex path to the present-day world, and use this to choose narratives relevant in today's globalized world.

Impacting a New Generation: Two Recent Museum Surveys

Museums are an important and diverse part of the articulation and dissemination of cultural heritage. To better understand the relationship and future challenges between minorities and museums, two major institutions in Oslo have recently conducted surveys. As statistical studies these surveys are wrought with numerous problems. Still, even in the challenges of putting together a valid survey (simply getting a valid set of responses), in the statistics that do arise and through the qualitative interviews, an appreciation of the challenges and potential strategies can be gleaned.

The first study, *Innvandrerens bruk av museer—En undersøkelse* (Immigrants use of museums—survey, August 2011), was commissioned by *Oslo Museum* and *The Norwegian Folk Museum* with support from the *Norwegian Council of Culture*. It was conducted in 2010/11 among 411 respondents from four immigrant groups: Poles, Pakistanis, Vietnamese, and Somalis. The respondents were skewed towards the group 15–30 years, but also 31–45 and “older than 46” were interviewed. Though the respondents were varied in terms of education, there is skewing towards people with advanced education—a group interested in culture and likely to participate in the survey. The Polish participants, one of Norway's most recent immigrant group (and probably with a relatively large adult segment), stand out; the respondents are active museum-goers. Nearly 70% had visited a museum/participated in

cultural events more than twice in the preceding year. The other groups have a significantly longer history in Norway, but the majority (55–60%) had not visited museums at all. Considering that museum visits are part of school activities, many of the youths probably visited as part of an obligatory school excursion. The lack of interest and involvement among the major non-European immigrant groups is confirmed in the nine qualitative interviews (that did not include Polish participants and only a single Somali man). The selection of published responses pretty much indicates that cultural activities are not a priority compared to work, homework, Quran schools, resting, etc., and that children experience little encouragement from parents to use museums and culture institutions that are not ethnically specific. Though the interviewer's report concludes that there is no basis to conclude that minority groups are primarily interested in their own cultural background and history, the cited material pretty much points in that direction. Even then, a number of interviewees express concerns about politicization of exhibitions concerning "their" cultural traits. Interestingly and typically, the more "open" respondents (with positive experiences and suggestions, and critical of their elders' lack of interest) were in the youngest age segment.

The second survey, commissioned by the University's *Museum of Cultural History* in 2010 resulted in the report *Kunnskap om—medvirkning av—formidling for mangfoldige museumsbrukere* (Knowledge about—participation by—public outreach to multifaceted museumgoers). This study is particularly interesting because it targets a key demographic for cultural museums in Oslo: minority students at three advanced college institutions in Oslo. This group is of interest because they are educated, have a high degree of participation in contemporary society, have a foot both in modern Norway and their parents' ethnic background, and are urbane. An initial attempt at conducting the study was based on questionnaires sent to 5,130 students through various student societies. However, with a response rate of 2.7%, the results were invalid. A new strategy was adopted, actively recruiting students on the campuses and offering reward incentives (with the skewing that entails). 1,001 students were recruited, 317 responded. At the out start the survey indicates some cultural barriers and a generally low interest in cultural museums among minority students. It is also probably indicative of a respondent population that is skewed towards those who are unusually interested in museums. In general, the investigation results corroborate a low interest in museums. More interesting are some of the responses gathered in the course of the proceeding qualitative interviews of eight teachers (seven Norwegian) and six students (Morocco, Somalia, Pakistan, Vietnam, and Iraq). As far as themes are concerned, the teachers emphasized the importance of ethnic heterogeneity. The interviews among the students did not emphasize a desire for exhibitions concerning their own cultures, and some related concerns about the political agendas at the heart of previous "ethnic" and immigrant exhibitions, or questioned the relevance and accuracy of what they saw. Several students pointed out their position outside of the Norwegian-immigrant dichotomy and the wish to see their experiences contextualized in narratives of Norwegian history, or emphasized the history of hybridization (e.g., in themes concerning Norwegian culture)—i.e., a theme that mirrored their experiences.

Not Just Immigrants? Generating Stories for Our Era

The above discussion reflects the *a priori* dichotomy “non-European immigrants” versus “Norwegian/Saami,” and narratives that might appeal to various subgroups. Perhaps this portrayal is inadequate. Youth growing up in today’s Oslo, whether of Norwegian, Iraqi, or Somali descent, live in a world of globalized culture and communication, and a local multifaceted but hybridizing ethnic and cultural context. Surveys among native Norwegians would conceivably indicate a greater acceptance of museums, but would probably also identify the discrepancy between their perceptions of world outlook and the heritage sector’s narratives.

For the heritage sector it might therefore be defensible to replace the traditional identity narratives with a spectrum of equivalent modern narratives of hybridization. The nation state is still the most important political entity and point of reference, and it is valid, relevant, and productive to develop narratives that concern the nation state’s population. As an archaeologist, I’m aware that the archaeological record and material heritage is not simply evidence of a people’s peaceful and rational evolution within an ethnic isolate. It is the dramatic and sometimes brutal story of migration, violence, domination, innovation, diffusion, development, hybridization, imitation, and travels. It would seem that at least some of the respondents in the above surveys felt that emphasizing these elements, as opposed to ethnic immigrant stories or isolated national narratives, could create relevant and honest stories that would engage, and contribute to their understanding of who they are as members of a national state in a globalized world.

A Challenge for Cultural Heritage and Archaeology

The two surveys identified other factors that could help the heritage sector compete for attention, e.g., technical solutions, public activities, language, marketing strategies, and target groups. They also pointed out several immigrant groups’ priorities as far as education (directed towards professions) and academic interests (see Leirvik 2012). In a market that is increasingly competing for the public’s attention, presentation and packaging are important. However, a sustainable relationship between the heritage sector and the public must be based on valid, relevant, and engaging content—starting with the premise that to engage an increasingly diversified public, where diversified experiences are probably the common denominator, narratives that reflect this reality should be developed.

Engaging diverse populations is a professional obligation for the heritage sector whether involved in the research of prehistory, policy-making or CRM, public outreach, or education. In a population where a significant segment of the electorate defined as “immigrants” has increasing political clout, not creating an acceptance for the inherent value of cultural heritage can readily become more than a professional oversight. Resource appropriation and legislation, which are supportive of the sector today, could deteriorate if policymakers come to regard cultural heritage

as expensive, irrelevant, and obsolete. If young people do not perceive studies in cultural history and material heritage as interesting career options, recruiting competent students to relevant studies could dry up.

These are of course serious consequences. On the bright side: Creating a vibrant and relevant cultural heritage sector will probably reinvigorate the sector itself.

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