# Reaching Out to be in Reach

## Museum Communication in the Current Museum Zeitgeist

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**Abstract:** *This article focuses on art museums as multi-layered media- and event-makers. By discussing the National Gallery of Denmark's* Mysteries from the Museum *podcast series and the event* SMK Fridays, *Louisiana's digital platform* Louisiana Channel *and the Glyptotek's* Slow *arrangements, we scrutinise these museums' onsite and offsite outreach techniques and strategies. These are further discussed regarding the current museum zeitgeist, and how this relates to dominant cultural policy paradigms in Denmark. The article is based on interviews with museum professionals, observations of onsite events and document analysis; they indicate that museums constantly renew their outreach techniques and strategies, adding layers to their museum communication. While museums succeed in creating quality digital content and arranging events attracting attention and audiences, these productions do not challenge the power dynamics between museums and their users described in current literature on the museum zeitgeist, as in dominant cultural policy strategies in a Danish context.*

**Keywords:** Multi-layered museums, museums as media-makers, museums as event-makers, SMK, Louisiana, the Glyptotek, onsite/offsite outreach, museum communication, museum zeitgeist, cultural policy in Denmark.

On 24 April 2018, Jane Sandberg, director of the Danish museum ENIGMA, entertained the thought in an article that perhaps one could expand the understanding of museums to also consider museums as media (Altinget, 24.04.2018). She aired these thoughts during negotiations for a new Danish media agreement and suggested that museums should be able to apply for public media funding as there are several similarities between the work that museums and media do. A year and a half later, ENIGMA, along with other cultural institutions and regional radio stations, won an official bid to establish a new national radio station with public service obligations. Radio LOUD aired for the first time on 1 April 2020 with ENIGMA producing two weekly programmes.

Other Danish museums are also producing and distributing digital content. The National Gallery of Denmark (SMK) has produced a 12-episode podcast series called *Mysteries*

*from the Museum,* while the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art has developed a digital platform called *Louisiana Channel* that produces videos about art and culture. According to the channel, it is "an integral part of a museum for the 21st century, capable of engaging a new generation in our cultural heritage, in an intelligent present and an ambitious future" (Louisiana Channel, n.d.). While many museums are evolving in line with the current digital age in terms of their communication, others are also developing new analogue ways to communicate their knowledge and offer different experiences. In Copenhagen, SMK and the Glyptotek have developed concepts that encourage different ways of enjoying and engaging with museums by organising such events as *SMK Fridays* and *Slow.* Both are planned events designed with different experiences in mind such as talks, performance art, concerts, DJs and drinks.

In all of the aforementioned cases, the museums expand their communication; be it in terms of expanding the physical museum space to also include a digital museum space or the range of activities and experiences that the museums offer. However, as Parry (2007) rightly argues, there is nothing new about museums using technology to evolve their conservation methods, dissemination, and communication. Indeed, he refers to museums as "media museums" as the histories of museums and technology are closely interwoven. While certainly acknowledging museums as media museums, we still observe a certain transition taking place concerning not only the role of new technologies in terms of further advancing traditional roles of museums (collecting, registering, preserving, researching and disseminating) but also concerning the expanded role of the museum in producing media content and events.

Therefore, this article focuses on the museum as a *media-maker* and *event-maker.* By using *Mysteries from the Museum, Louisiana Channel, SMK Fridays* and *Slow* as our point of departure, we are particularly interested in examining these *offsite digital productions* and *onsite event productions* as dissemination techniques and communication strategies. Consequently, the aim of this article is to use the four cases to examine and discuss how SMK, Louisiana and the Glyptotek expand their communication and how this affects their roles as museums and cultural institutions. How do the techniques and strategies relate to the art museum's position in the current museum zeitgeist? What is the rationale behind the tactics, and how do they further relate to dominant cultural policy paradigms in a Danish context?

## Museums and the Methodological Framework

The museums in question are all highly profiled art museums within a Danish context and amongst those that have the highest numbers of visitors. This makes them convenient objects of study both in terms of levels of production and impact, but also in the way that they respond to the dominant paradigms within Danish and international cultural policy. Structurally, they are placed differently on the public/private axis, but they are all hybrid museums in terms of funding. To varying degrees, they all receive funds from the state, but are dependent on their income from tickets and sales, external financial sources and partnerships with businesses and funds. These external circumstances are typical for many other museums and thus as cases, they share similarities to other museums, also outside of Denmark. We have

10

chosen to focus on these museums because of their financial capabilities, popularity, prestige, and influence on the field of Danish cultural production and consumption. They constitute interesting cases in terms of how modern art museums are spatially moving with regards to their outreach strategies, how they vary their profiles as producers and in establishing new relationships with their users, both offsite and onsite.

The cases are collectively chosen as they demonstrate well the multi-layered dissemination and communication strategies which are taken up by the three museums, and which relate clearly to the current zeitgeist within cultural policy and new museology. To choose both digitally mediated examples and onsite examples allows us to further display what we term onsite outreach and offsite outreach. Furthermore, the cases are well suited to scrutinise how theoretical paradigms and cultural policy discourses fit the realities of museums and how this is perceived by museums professionals.

SMK is the largest art museum in the country. According to the Danish Museum Law, it is the main museum of art, and therefore possesses specific obligations that are further ascribed in the law, framework agreements and strategies. The two cases from SMK are the podcast series entitled *Mysteries from the Museum* and *SMK Fridays*. These are chosen as they demonstrate ways to reach out to and engage users in two different ways which we term *onsite outreach* and *offsite outreach*. The podcast series provides unique tales that can be pulled from the overall narrative of the museum and its wider collections. With titles such as *The Planet Book, The Rembrandt Police* and *Egyptian Blue*, users are introduced to narrative contexts which are meant to be experienced outside the museum space, thus being offsite outreach. This offsite

outreach differs from the onsite outreach of *SMK Fridays,* which the museum refers to as the city's most artistic Friday bar where guests can "expect a great blend of art, music, art talks, film screenings – and drinks and street food served in a friendly atmosphere" (SMK, n.d.). SMK Fridays is an event that takes place seven times a year with the purpose of offering an informal experience of the museum space where participants can stroll around the museum with a drink or enjoy the planned activities. Each event is organised around a specific theme and the activities take place in different corners of the museum.

Another example of such onsite outreach activities is the Glyptotek's *Slow* arrangement. As the name indicates, the focus is on elaboration and reflection and, like SMK Fridays, these are organised as themes such as *An Evening on Progress* and *An Evening on Bodies.* Guests are encouraged to enjoy a beer and attend the different activities, such as talks, lectures, performances, and concerts. The Glyptotek is a self-owned institution that receives funds from the State and the New Carlsberg Foundation. During both SMK Fridays and Slow, the museums specifically work with external partners such as B&O PLAY and the Bikuben Foundation.

The last case resembles SMK's podcast series, as in spatial terms the *Louisiana Channel* reaches out to users that do not need to physically be on the museum's premises. The scope, however, is quite different as the Channel hosts more than 900 videos on art, literature, music, architecture, and design. This is a vibrant platform that continuously produces new videos and "contributes to the permanent development of the museum as a cultural platform, expressing a desire to sharpen the understanding of the importance of culture and the arts" (Louisiana Channel,

n.d.). In its own words, Louisiana intends the Channel to provide culture to the internet and to extend "beyond the museum's own events" (Louisiana Channel, n.d.). The videos differ in length and format and provide features of artists, interviews, talks and performances. Similarly, to the other examples, Louisiana Channel is supported by external funds. The museum itself is a private museum but adheres to the Danish Museum Law.

In methodological terms, we conducted four participative observations (Kawulich 2005; Szulevics 2015) and five qualitative interviews (Gaskell 2000; Cresswell 2009) with museum professionals.[1] The interviews were conducted with Sofie Kønigsfeldt, Head of Marketing and Events at the Glyptotek; Jonas Heide Smith, Head of Digital at SMK; Christian Lund, Editor of Louisiana Channel; Daniel Smith Nielsen, Producer of Public Events at SMK; and Jane Sandberg, Director of ENIGMA. The purpose of the interviews was to get closer to the museums' intentions from a *sender* perspective and examine how these intentions further relate to the role of the museum as an institution, its role and obligation in reaching out to audiences and how they respond to reigning cultural policy discourses. The respondents were chosen as they serve key roles in shaping and realising the online and onsite activities and cases that we analyse, as well as informing how they perceive how theory and policy translates to concrete museum practices. Interviews were conducted and transcribed in Danish. Excerpts used from the interviews were translated from Danish to English by the authors. In addition, we conducted two participative observations at SMK (8 February and 15 March 2019) and two at the Glyptotek (17 January and 7 March 2019). The observations were useful to further our understanding of the governing principles

and the framing of the events from the perspectives of the museums, as well as how guests reacted to those principles. We therefore focused our observations and field notes on the organisation and use of space, guest demographics, experience/entertainment, knowledge/information/education, atmosphere, and guests/public. We will not refer directly to our fieldnotes but rather use them implicitly in our analysis, as well as in a methodological combination in forming the interview guides for our semi-structured qualitative interviews.

Finally, we pay specific attention to key documents that explain the museums' intentions and strategies, and how these relate to the dominant cultural policy paradigms in Denmark at the moment of writing. These documents are SMK's strategy for 2018-2021 (*SMK for All*), the framework agreement between the Danish Ministry of Culture and SMK 2018-2021, Louisiana's yearly reports spanning 2016 and 2017 and the Glyptotek's strategy for 2018-2020. Even though these documents have varying functions, they still present valuable information about how the museums in question discursively frame their activities and how these discourses feed into their offsite and onsite outreach strategies. To understand the current *museum zeitgeist* in which the three museums are infiltrated, a few lines about paradigm shifts within museology seem appropriate, and how these have become ingrained in Danish cultural policy.

## The Danish Museum Zeitgeist

Art museums expanding their communication with offsite digital productions and onsite event productions can be explained by the shift in the role of the museum as a cultural institution. The role of the museum has gone from being a

12  place that primarily preserves valuable objects of aesthetic and cultural historical significance to also being a place that has to make itself relevant and accessible to a more diverse audience. Anderson captures the essence of these shifts by opposing the *traditional museum* and the *reinvented museum*. According to her, the reinvented museum is audience focused instead of collection driven, relevant and forward looking instead of focused on the past, inclusive instead of exclusive, and offers accessible information instead of privileged information (Anderson 2012).

Other theorists also call for a paradigm shift from old to new museology, from Museum 1.0 to Museum 2.0. For some, this shift is designated as new museum theory, while others refer to new museology (Vergo 1989), post-critical museology (Dewdney *et al.* 2013), the post-museum (Marstine 2006) and the post-colonial museum (Chambers *et al.* 2014). An early and influential contender for this approach was Hooper-Greenhill (1992, 2000) who made a distinction between the modernist and the post-modernist museum. Another influential voice is that of Bennett (1995) who, in applying a Foucauldian governmentality lens, refers to populist and statist museum positions. Similarly, Vergo's (1989) anthology on new museology was a certain stepping-stone in further cementing such a break from old to new museology.

Since then, there has been no shortage of advancing the museological research field further towards new ways of perceiving and forming the museum's role in modern society. Henning (2006) draws attention to museums and media, while Gray (2015) focuses on the politics of museums, MacLeod (2005) on museum space, Black (2010) on museums' role in communities, Koster (2006) on the relevance of museums and Rentchler and Hide

(2017) write about museums from branding and marketing perspectives. The previously mentioned shift from collection-driven museums to audience-focused museums also represents literature including Falk (2009), Simon (2010), and Samis and Michaelson (2017). The same is true of inspections into museum and digital communications, introducing notions such as the media museum, the connected museum, museum 2.0, the mediatised museum and the digital museum (Parry 2007; Russo 2012; Drotner & Schroder 2013; Drotner *et al.* 2019). This enumeration is not meant to give a fulfilling review of all the research that has been published within museology in recent decades, but rather to point towards the current museum zeitgeist. What current tendencies demonstrate is a need to even out the edges of simple dichotomies and point towards complexity and contextual awareness.

Cultural policy plays an important role in providing for different contexts which museums are affected by, and in many cases need to respond to. Dominant cultural policy paradigms change over time, and from a Nordic perspective, Duelund (2008) accounts for four cultural policy strategies/paradigms spanning 1960-2007: democratisation of culture, cultural democracy, social and economic instrumentalisation, and economic and political colonisation. What these roughly indicate are moves from applying culture in terms of artistic and intellectual activities to a broader anthropological notion of cultural democracy, where cultural participation is heavily underscored. The third phase of social and economic instrumentalisation welcomes cultural investments for economic purposes. The latest phase, political colonisation, focuses on the construction of national identities and increased political regulation by means of

performance contracts, framework agreements and administrative centralisation.

While demarcations of this sort can be useful in detecting dominant discursive formations that characterise specific periods, or cultural policy zeitgeist, they also tend to exaggerate the differences between policy models rather than the differences *within* these models (Mangset *et al.* 2008). This is a vital observation as even though specific periods can be dominated by specific policies and strategies, others do not necessarily vanish. Certainly, strategic shifts towards merging cultural sectors and business sectors could be detected at the dawn of this century and for the next decade or so, as well as the implementation of new public management manoeuvres within public cultural governance. However, this does not mean that the ideas and policies associated with the democratisation of culture and cultural democracy have evaporated. This is a relevant discussion in terms of museums as media-makers and event-makers, as the dominant cultural policy discourses expand the historical roles of art museums and add new layers to their functions and operations. The modern museum can therefore be described as a multi-layered museum, one not only shaped by the dominant cultural policy discourses but also older ones. Museums are therefore like ever-expanding Russian dolls that face the task of constant renewal, without losing sight of their core.

An example of this is what Skot-Hansen (2008) describes as the experience economy perspective, which was a part of the discourses that looked favourably upon the interlinkages between culture and economy, and the constant demand of museums to reinvent themselves in order to compete with other cultural activities for users' time and attention. Therefore, to become more audience-focused and thus reach a more diverse audience, the museums can advantageously choose to add more layers to their dissemination and communication. This can include podcast series, digital content, talks, performances, concerts, and dining experiences, among others, that support the wishes and needs of museum users for a museum visit both offsite and onsite. The current zeitgeist in Danish cultural policy, which we choose to term cultural democracy 2.0, adds yet another layer to the workings of museums. This paradigm resembles the first wave of cultural democracy in the sense that it places emphasis on a broad understanding of culture for all, outreach strategies and active cultural participation. Digital media have been seen as ideal tools to reach these objectives and therefore concepts like digitisation, digital culture, engagement, participation and co-creation are often used simultaneously.[2]

Even though such reports are alight with empowering discourses which are meant to give increased agency to users and to even out the power relations between institutions and users, these discourses do not necessarily materialise in concrete actions and changes in institutional practices. What is interesting, however, about the art museums as multi-layered media- and event-makers is their characteristics as *charged spaces* (Valtysson & Holdgaard 2019) and the ability to give extra "charge" to onsite outreach and offsite activities and designs. The understanding of the museum as a charged space refers to the museum's historical, cultural, and political significance as an institution that produces, communicates and preserves our shared history, heritage and identity. Seen from this perspective, the art museum is a powerful *charged space* not because it lies at the forefront of innovations within digital communications, modern media productions or as a state-of-the-art event-maker, but rather because of its

14  historical position as an *art museum.* With this position comes expert knowledge, authority, prestige, artworks and products; tales and stories of great significance. This is what gives the three museums their status as *charged spaces,* and this is what they utilise to create *charged* digital offsite productions and *charged* onsite event designs.

Museums are central in promoting a collective belief (Bourdieu 1993: 35) and, from the viewpoint of cultural politics, museums are instrumental in deciding what is to be remembered, in addition to what will be forgotten (Jordan & Weedon 1995). In a Danish context, SMK, Louisiana and the Glyptotek are influential in forming such narratives as they are established and prestigious cultural institutions, with great remit in society. When these museums diversify their outreach strategies as media-makers and event-makers, they are not, however, challenging the power dynamics between museum professionals and museum users, as many advocates of the post-museum and new museology would. On the other hand, from the viewpoint of cultural policy and cultural democracy 2.0, no major changes are occurring in the dominant position of major art museums within the field of Danish cultural production.

Indeed, it is our claim that users are just being spatially governed in new ways; the digital offsite productions are carefully carved out audio and audiovisual productions with a clear narrative and authoritative voice, while SMK Fridays and Slow are carefully crafted onsite narratives that govern users through space with very specific aims in mind. There is no doubt that these events attempt to construct different interactions and atmospheres within the museum space but designing people's interaction differently does not necessarily mean that the museum becomes more democratic and inclusive. In fact, it could

easily be experienced in opposite terms; that the museums use their positions to cement their authority by bringing it towards new outreach strategies and communication techniques.

While this perhaps is counter to polarised discourses of some sort of "before" and "after", the modernist and the post-modern museum, old and new museology, it perhaps says more about the rigidness of such polarisation and less about the reality of museum practice and the cultural policy discourses which museums are affected by. For this reason, we plead for context awareness and to bring attention to the different and contradicting discourses that can reside within a specific zeitgeist. These contradictions are further verbalised by our respondents, which as *senders* and *producers* of media content and event productions are aware of how their designs form part of the new strategies of *expanded museums* that are *reaching out to be in reach.*

## Expanded Museums

The analysis is primarily based on the utterances of the five museum professionals and how these correspond to key museum documents. The interviews were thematically categorised using both pre-established codes that were aligned with the research questions, as well as codes that emerged from the interviews. The themes are *access and accessibility*, the *user-fixed museum,* and the *multi-layered museum.* The analysis is structured according to the themes and we refer to the museum professionals by surname and institutional affiliation.

### Access and Accessibility

The key documents scrutinised in this article place great emphasis on access to the museums. Indeed, access is often linked to the museums' dissemination techniques and communication

strategies, in addition to their relevance and role in society. When SMK, Louisiana and the Glyptotek expand their communication, they do so to become more accessible to users. In echoing the governmental cultural policy strategy from 2009, *Culture for All,* SMK refers to its strategy for 2018-2021 as *SMK for All.* According to the strategy, the vision is to "bring art and artistic reflections out to all people in Denmark and art lovers from all over the world" (SMK's strategy 2018-2021:2) and to "make the collections and knowledge about the collections accessible and relevant to as many users as possible" (3). To Heide Smith, there is an obvious gain in disseminating and communicating through digital platforms and services: "The big advantage of the digital is that you can add more layers to the museum experience so that you can experience the museum in many different ways" (Heide Smith, SMK). When *Mysteries from the Museum* solves the riddle of SMK's Rembrandt paintings and comprehensively details the colour pigment Egyptian blue, one can argue that the podcast series expands and unfolds SMK's collection by adding information and knowledge layers to the experience we would get by enjoying the artworks at SMK. With reference to Skot-Hansen (2008), this act of "layering" can also react to geographical restrictions. Heide Smith, in reflecting on why SMK developed the podcast series, points to these two factors:

Instead of putting all efforts on the museum itself, we thought, what if you don't know so much about SMK, what if you don't know what is interesting about the museum, for instance if you live far away, how can we make the museum and its collection and stories more relevant? (Heide Smith, SMK).

*Louisiana Channel* provides another perspective as they are interested in adding high quality content to a new generation of cultural users that are used to enjoying cultural products online. The Channel caters to a global public, and apart from being stored on its own online space, it also has a YouTube channel. This seems to be working as Lund reveals that 60% of their viewers are young males aged between 18-34 years. The aim of the Channel is therefore to provide qualitative material for a global niche audience and add an accessible offsite alternative to regular onsite museum guests. In both cases, the production of digital content is deliberately used as answers to challenges of access and relevance, be that in geographical or economic terms – or as part of a larger multi-layered dissemination strategy where onsite and offsite productions supplement each other.

Sandberg also reflects on institutional structures and relevance: "I don't think institutional forms of art and culture are for everyone. But I don't think anyone in Denmark can claim not being a culture-consuming person" (Sandberg, ENIGMA). Sandberg notes that there can be many hindrances to visiting a cultural institution and therefore it is crucial for cultural institutions to reach out through multi-layered dissemination and communication strategies. In a similar vein, according to Kønigsfeldt, the purpose of *Slow* is to provide an *entrance* to the arts, as well as a different museum experience that speaks to both familiar and unfamiliar museum users. In that sense, *Slow* supports the strategy of the Glyptotek: "The Glyptotek wants to change the perception of the museum from its current elitist, classical position to one that is relevant, vibrant, and proactive and accessible to the diverse audience of today" (The Glyptotek's strategy 2018-2020: 11). *SMK Fridays* and *Slow* are both preoccupied with providing different forms of access to the museums. According to Smith Nielsen, "there are as

many art experiences as there are people in the world" (Smith Nielsen, SMK) and therefore it is important that museums employ varied dissemination and communication strategies.

The level of self-reflexivity on the behalf of museum professionals and the museums' strategies and framework agreements corresponds well with the move from *old* to *new* museology. However, access does not necessarily equal *accessibility*. While there is no question that the museum professionals, leading strategies and framework agreements emphasise access, nor that the dissemination techniques analysed in this article correspond to such forms of access, the cases do not take a further step towards Andersons' claim of reinventing the museum. Providing access to the institutions through multi-layered offsite digital productions and onsite event productions does not automatically lead to inclusive, proactive shared visions and leadership. However, what it could potentially lead to is an audience-focused approach and multi-directional communication patterns, which, while not necessarily engaging users in the manner that strategies and theories on user-engagement indicate, can all the same provide for multi-layered communication techniques. The cases therefore demonstrate that while many elements of the theoretical paradigms of new museology certainly are present, such as emphasis on access, users, increased visibility, and relevant communication and dissemination strategies, they do not fundamentally change the power dynamics in terms of shared decision-making, organisation structures and democratisation.

*The User-Fixed Museum*
As media-makers and event-makers, SMK, Louisiana and the Glyptotek are reaching out to be in reach. The user-fixed museum is

oriented towards its users and it wishes to be democratic in its designs and to share power in terms of representation strategies and governance. According to Heide Smith, the production of podcasts is representative of such a move from the "traditional" towards opening up to the wider public: "Fundamentally, it is about being more oriented towards users – to listen to guests, to think about guests' needs, to examine guests' needs, to ask them questions regarding their needs and wishes" (Heide Smith, SMK). To achieve this, the museums wish, in their strategies, to increase diversity and reach out to different demographics. Museum researchers like Wright (1989) and Samis & Michaelson (2017) claim that to accomplish this, the communication needs to be clearer and easier to understand. This is in line with the strategies behind *SMK Fridays* and *Slow,* as their aim is to bring the respective museums closer to target groups that do not normally frequent the museum: "As it is now, it is primarily the well-educated that visit us, and we need to do something about that. So, it is all about communicating in a more present way and coming closer to the users" (Smith Nielsen, SMK).

Words like 'user-oriented', 'accommodating', 'relevance' and 'engagement' were frequently used by our respondents and the same is true of the museums' strategies and external communication. This goes hand in hand with the current cultural policy zeitgeist, as well as with how museum research has evolved over the past three decades. However, the user-fixed move also relates to the economy and in establishing partnerships with external funders: "Along with the money that we received for the purpose, we also had to commit to experimental communication and forms of dissemination" (Smith Nielsen, SMK). This indicates that despite the second wave of

cultural democracy zeitgeist, other strategies, such as economic instrumentalisation or political colonisation, remain present. In this case, the funders are not interested in investing in "traditional" forms of museum exhibitions, but rather in an alternative way of utilising the museum space and reaching out to people in different ways. This is why it is important to be attentive to the multifaceted discourses that reside within different cultural policy epochs and be attentive to the specific contexts in which these communication techniques find themselves.

Despite the multitude of occasionally contradicting discourses, our respondents still repeatedly emphasised user-focused views and the museum as a facilitator of democratic participation:

We tend to say that we want to make people better equipped to be humans in a democratic society. This is what we want to accomplish. All museums want this. The way that we do this is to equip people with concrete tools of action. (Sandberg, ENIGMA).

These goals are also found in the strategies of SMK and the Glyptotek as in both cases the museum as a visible, relevant, and proactive actor in society is emphasised. However, they claim to not only put these forward as ignited and empowering discourses, but also promise concrete tools of action. However, when these tools are scrutinised as user-focused, it is difficult to see how they equip users with concrete, participatory tools of action. In the two digital cases, the narratives are constructed by museum professionals in quite a stringent manner where the multi-directional communicative potentials of digital media are not put to use. For the *Louisiana Channel,* YouTube affords openings for users to interact by liking, disliking, commenting,

and sharing, etc., but these are not used by the museum professionals. Indeed, there is no attempt to enter any forms of discussions and deliberations with users. This attention on the user does not, therefore, correspond with Anderson's reinvention of the museum, Marstine's post-museum, Hooper-Greenhill's post-modern museum or Simon's museum 2.0.

The four cases illustrate the move from old to new museology and museums working on being more audience-focused than collection-driven. However, in some respects, SMK, Louisiana and the Glyptotek are user-fixed to a greater extent than audience-focused. It is a fixation that is primarily discursive and not empowering, nor even democratic in the sense that the literature on the *new* museum indicates. This is not to say that *Mysteries from the Museum, Louisiana Channel, SMK Fridays* and *Slow* are productions of poor quality; quite the contrary, these are wonderfully crafted, informing and professional productions made by top museum professionals with great authority. Despite this, this authority is not born from sharing the power of the post-museum, but rather from the museum as a prestigious and authoritative charged space. Again, the museum as a *charged space* corresponds to new museology in terms of onsite and offsite outreach, as it has diversified its professional museum communication. However, communicating through diverse channels and potentially reaching new audiences is not equivalent to allowing others to affect the content of such communication.

### The Multi-layered Museum

It is important to stipulate that our observations and interviews, in addition to our analysis of the documents, all head in a similar direction; the *multi-layered museum* is a museum that uses different dissemination techniques to

18

communicate its messages *out* and to create events *within*. The museums are expanding their arsenal of tools to be more relevant and reach a diverse audience. In this sense, they take advantage of what Gurian (2005), with reference to Jacobs, terms mixed-use spaces, i.e. spaces that are designed to provide multiple experiences and services and aim to involve large parts of the population. However, the four cases are not democratic in the inviting sense that the museological shift from the *old* to the *new* indicates. Communicatively, no changes can be perceived in any power dynamics. The digital productions do not take advantage of the multi-modal and multi-channel (Castells 2009) potentials that digital media afford and the spatial designs of *SMK Fridays* and *Slow* are carefully crafted narratives of control. Museum visits are social and most of the guests come to enjoy the space together with acquaintances. This was a vital observation in designing the events, as they are well equipped to facilitate such meetings, as Smith Nielsen highlights:

Almost every museum visit is a social event. So, what would happen if we would turn up this element during a visit to the museum and promote communication forms like performance, sound, and so on, which are supposed to be experienced together and preferably with many people? (Smith Nielsen, SMK).

Kønigsfeldt shares this emphasis on the social experience of a museum visit and the deliberate design of *Slow* to also include such opportunities for guests.

However, even though the strategies behind *SMK Fridays* and *Slow* are aware of the users' needs, they all represent a conscious governing of the space which never really challenges the authority of the "traditional museum", as Anderson (2004) states. Interestingly, none of our respondents buy into the empowering

discourses of the *new* post-museum. None of them discuss radical changes in power dynamics between museum professionals and users/guests. What they repeatedly refer to is the wider role and relevance of their museums and their obligations to reach out to as many individuals as possible; they do that not by inviting users to share in the decision-making or to make them a significant part of the event designs, but rather by adding layers to their already authoritative voice. Heide Smith earlier referred to the digital as providing more layers to the museum experience; a similar view is expressed by Lund who claims that *Louisiana Channel* brings users closer to the art and the artists. Indeed, the Channel adds an extra layer to the onsite spatial dimension of the museum itself. Smith Nielsen also refers to this as having different products on the "museum shelf", the need for "many different opportunities for museum visits" and to "make the framework around disseminating and communicating art lighter and more informal, without compromising the substance" (Smith Nielsen, SMK). However, these are essentially different *angles,* tightly designed by the same *senders.* This is not to say that the different angles of the museums' communication strategies do not serve an important purpose, because they do, for instance by focusing their event themes on relevant and current societal issues such as human rights, equality, sexuality, climate change, etc. It is the governing principle and the sharing of power that has not changed with these multiplicities of angles and layers.

## Conclusion

This article has outlined discrepancies regarding theoretically established discourses from old museology to new museology. These discrepancies are not only detected in relatively

recent museum literature, but also in the recent strategies and framework agreements of major Danish museums and in dominant discourses within Danish cultural policy. Our cases demonstrate that museums have answered the call of being more relevant for more diversified segments of the population. The dissemination techniques and communication strategies that museums have evolved as media-makers and event-makers are aimed to achieve just that, and they are successful as measures of such expanded roles of modern art museums. The cases therefore serve to exemplify certain dimensions of the dominant zeitgeist within museology and cultural policy. There does, however, seem to be a gap between the discursive potentials of the second wave of cultural democracy, the evening out of power relations concerning governing and user-involvement, and the actual work that museum professionals encounter at the museums:

About ten years ago, there was almost a religious way of talking about user-involvement which was extremely unfortunate because it was totally overrated how much the users actually wanted to be involved, and how much work it actually entails to involve users. (Heide Smith, SMK).

According to Heide Smith, user-involvement and increased interaction is positive as long as it does not negatively affect other guests, as there are numerous museum users that "still want to go to a museum and see some paintings on a wall in a traditional setting" (Heide Smith, SMK).

While Heide Smith is certainly correct in his observation concerning how user-involvement almost had "semi-religious" connotations approximately ten years ago, we also demonstrated that in theoretical terms, this has been a dominant discourse within

writings surrounding new museology for three decades. In addition, current strategies in a Danish context are still focussing heavily on increased user-involvement.

Museums, in these years, are working increasingly with user-involvement and the development of communication and cooperation tools. It is very important that this continues and will be further developed. The museums should involve the users both in their vision and strategy work, as well as in practice. User-involvement should be a part of the museums' daily work and a formally integrated part of their dialogue with the wider society. (Visions for future museums 2017: 6).

This vision from 2017 was issued by the Ministry of Culture in Denmark and marks a continuation in further developing user-involvement in the museums' work in practice. In terms of cultural policy and museums, we are therefore witnessing a strong and continuous move towards the dominant discourses of new museology. However, judging by the nature of the digital platforms and the events that this article examines, along with the utterances of the five museum professionals, this is not the case. Indeed, their communication strategies more accurately resemble what Hooper-Greenhill (2000) referred to as the transmission model, and even though the museums are reaching out to a more diversified population, the question still remains of whether these multi-layered communication strategies really represent more service to the already serviced? The *Louisiana Channel* claims to reach out to younger males who do not frequent the onsite museum premises, but their communication strategies are not democratic in the sense of encouraging discussions and deliberations, or of somehow changing reigning power relations. We observed that *Slow* and *SMK*

20 *Fridays* are popular events that attract a significant number of people. But in terms of demographics, we also observed "more of the same", meaning there is more service to the already serviced.

However, this should not be perceived as a failure in terms of the work that has been conducted by the museums and the four cases that have been scrutinised in this article. Rather, this should be perceived as a critique of the empowering and emancipative discourses put forward in much museum literature, dominant Danish cultural policy, and the current cultural policy zeitgeist. These art museums are professional, state-of-the-art cultural institutions with skilled professionals that are very much aware of the need to facilitate multi-layered communication and dissemination techniques to cater to larger audiences. In this sense, they are museums that *reach out to be in reach.* What they are not is omnipresent museums that can reach out to all, nor are they institutions suitable to sharing their organisational and governing power with the population. Taking such steps would entail answers to questions such as how would such sharing of power actually take form in practice, and by somehow doing that would the museums not be reduced as charged spaces, and thereby lose this "extra charge" that makes them so appealing in the first place?

## Notes

1. The observations and interviews were conducted by Sanne Lynge Nilsson and Christine Eva Pedersen.
2. The reports and strategies Culture for all (2009), Reach Out (2008), Digitalisering af kulturarven – Midtvejsrapport fra Digitaliseringsudvalget (2008), Digitaliseringen af kulturarven (2009), Reach Out – Inspirationskatalog (2012), Kultur-

og Oplevelsesøkonomien i Danmark (2012), and Visioner for fremtidens museer (2017) are central in this context.

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22

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