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This book contains the contributions to a conference on How to Integrate Minority Narratives into National Memory, held in Oslo on 15th – 16th May 2008. This followed on from another conference, held on 21st – 22nd May 2007 at the Alberto Benveniste Centre (EPHE-Sorbonne), which considered whether “the history of minorities is marginal history”.¹

The venue for this collective discussion was highly symbolic, the Norwegian HL-Senteret (The Centre for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities) is not only a Holocaust studies centre but also a site for wider “plural memories”; it therefore induces visitors to never forget either the genocide of the Jews or the massacres and persecutions of other peoples committed in the name of various nationalisms that, through their narrow exclusivism, became murderous. Such nationalisms need to invent a repulsive absolute Other, while at the same time they do not tolerate the actual existence of that Other, with the result that its a priori undesirability leaves it open to straightforward dehumanisation.

This Other is diminished and undervalued because it is a “minority” – or, should this not be the case, because it is perceived to be one. Women, for example, have been seen as “minor”, rather than as a minority in the strict sense of the word. In fact, the two words share the same Latin root: minor, “lesser” or “inferior”. While “majority” (from major, “superior”) has positive connotations; there is hardly anything in “minority” that is not negative. So, whether because of numerical imbalance or asymmetrical imagery, a status of inferiority is ascribed to the Other that renders it more vulnerable in relation to a powerful and “legitimate” majority. The Other is on the wrong side: the side of those who are without a voice and deprived of a history.

¹ The proceedings were published in 2008 as L’Histoire des minorités est-elle une histoire marginale?, Presses de l’Université Paris-Sorbonne, and were edited by Stéphanie Laithier & Vincent Vilmain.
The HL-Senteret does not exist solely for the study of the victims of the “strong” and “numerous”. It also concerns itself with minorities which, having no History, leave only traces behind them that are then transformed into memories that are often fragile because they have not been recorded. Such memories also tend to convey demands, since they flesh out endangered identities that are crying out for recognition. Sometimes they set themselves up as “victim memories”, destined to never achieve satisfaction.

The Oslo conference had the virtue of showing how not only the concept of “minority” but also ways of looking at the realities covered by it may vary according to whether one is in France or Norway. The organisers had timed the event to coincide with Norway’s National Day (17th May), which proved to be a remarkable experience for the young French academics in attendance. Whereas, in the stronger nation-states, national identity is a hard core that tends to incorporate anyone not of “original stock”; the situation seems to be different in Norway, a multicultural Nordic country where minorities make claims for themselves as such, without being required to blend into the “melting pot”. Although the question of Islam is shaking the well-known tradition of tolerance in the Protestant countries – in some cases has proved to be more a question of indifference –, non-Muslim or sexual minorities do in fact benefit from the greater openness to be found there.

Late 2009 and early 2010 witnessed a sometimes over-the-top debate in France about the definition of national identity. Some of the ideas that came up – including the idea that the government should itself introduce a debate on the question – aroused a sense of indignation among certain sectors of the population. They also, unquestionably, opened a Pandora’s box of racism as this focus on national identity served to define who was the Other – migrants, mostly Muslim, and their offspring – and was then used to brand them in accordance with that definition.

Tensions concerning Islam have been spreading all over Europe and few countries have escaped unmarked. Although it is interesting, or rather curious, that no author in this book discusses this in relation to Norway, as though the obsession with Islam is not also a live issue there.

Evidently the conference, and the book that has come out of it, had to try to define the concept of a minority. However, this is not exactly a new problem. The great empires of the modern age, from the Austro-Hungarian to the Ottoman, contained a large number of ethnic-religious “minorities” for centuries, which, despite mutual enmities, sought to live in relative harmony with one another. They were not bothered too much with who was a
“minority” and who a “majority”, as they mostly lived far removed from the centre of power, with their own customs, lifestyles and religious practices.

Nor did the central authorities – in the Ottoman Empire, for example – ask too many questions, especially as the “minorities” formed a de facto “majority”. The main issue at hand, rather, was that of clarifying and regulating the status of each religious tradition, in accordance with its “majority” or “minority” position. In the Islamic world, as long as a minority tradition belonged to one of the so-called religions of the Book, it enjoyed the legal status of a dhimmi group, which meant that it was protected by the payment of certain taxes and allowed a degree of autonomy in its religious practices and internal governance. The splits between “majority” and “minority” were thus primarily religious and did not entail particular territorial demands – at least, not until the development of various nationalisms in the nineteenth century whet the appetite for independence, ending centuries of compromise and coexistence, and dramatically altered the ways in which different groups perceived one another.

The break-up of the empires led to a shattering of the equilibrium because groups that had previously only belonged to a religious minority set themselves up as nations or national “majorities”, changing the former “majority” in their midst into a new “minority”. The Ottoman case is interesting in this respect: Muslim Turks became an ethnic-religious minority in a number of young Balkan states that had formerly been under Ottoman control. Moreover, such about-turns were accompanied by revolts, expulsions, nationalist fevers and murderous wars, the disastrous consequences of which, in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries, are well known.

In fact, nationalism reinvented nations and, along with them, minorities; these were now seen as exogenous, even if they had been living for centuries in regions where new nations born out of the empires hurried to lay down their law. Nationalist histories rewrote the story of the nations, in such a way that the others – the voiceless and barely visible – no longer had much of a place. Even today, in the age of the internet and globalisation, these would-be glorious histories efface their dark side, such as Europe’s sorry record of colonisation and slavery. Furthermore, although the Holocaust finally found a place in contemporary history, the route to this was strewn with obstacles for a long time.

Several contributors to this book dwell on this aspect by examining the school textbooks that shape and re-shape minority identities as much as they do majority ones. It is in such discourses that the future of nations – and the
repositioning of their various components – is settled. It is here that history
is made out of what once was and also where the history of what will be is
already in the process of being made. History the preserver, with a capital
"H", resembles those who choose to be included in it, through the exclusion
of other histories as different, non-normative and unhelpful in the consoli-
dation of the foundations of those modern inventions: nations and peoples.
Nationalisms, and the form of historiography they inspire, favour wars, bat-
tles, heroes, sound and fury; everything is called into service for the passage
from the imaginary to a reality that is constructed from start to finish. This
construct depends upon the family, authority, power and the state. Neither
non-reproductive sexuality, nor those destroyed through defeat (such as
the Jews during the Second World War), nor the losers, nor even old con-
querrors who then become losers, are associated with the national adventure.
This is because it is oblivious to anything that blemishes it, eager to remain
endogamous and to reject that which is foreign, immigrant, coloured, dark-
skinned, female and so on. The nation is something for men – white, prefer-
ably Christian, men.

Of course, nationalism has long been crumbling in the face of a world
where modern technologies erode the frontiers between states. History too
has consequently been shaken up. The Other increasingly rejects frontiers in
a movement towards the centre, where the lungs of the nation is to be found.
Societies that are increasingly plural, increasingly multicultural, can hardly
put up with invisibility that is imposed upon them. In Western societies, de-
mocracy makes possible – although not without difficulty – what used to be
considered transgressions. Resistance, however gradually, falls away by force
of circumstance; people who belong, or are said to belong, to minorities set
their sights on power and mingle amongst elites. Civil society, by nature al-
ready diverse, finds it easier and easier to accept conviviality; History under-
goes fragmentation. Thus, as a result of the new porosity, national memory
becomes impregnated with these developments. However, the more active
involvement of minorities in political life is the only road capable of breaking
down barriers and shaking the majority up enough to help build a multcul-
tural society and a hybridised national memory with multiple identities.

Although this book cannot put an end to prejudices and frozen terminol-
y, it does at least reflect upon the ongoing “decolonization” of intellectual
discourse, alongside the retraction of one-dimensional thinking in favour of
plural and questioning narratives.
Acknowledgements

The colloquium organised in Oslo in May 2008 was the result of a collaboration between the Center for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities and the Alberto Benveniste Centre (the Centre for Sephardic Studies and Culture, based in the Religious Studies Department of the École Pratique des Hautes Études at the Sorbonne). The meeting in Norway of over twenty researchers, teachers and students from France and Norway, is testimony to the progression and vigour of this collaboration. This work would never have seen the light of day without the passion and patience of Esther Benbassa, Director of Education at the École Pratique des Hautes Études (Sorbonne) and Professor of Modern Jewish History at the EPHE. Odd-Bjørn Fure, Director of the Holocaust Centre, brought his indefectible and steadfast support to this project and placed the financial means, as well as indispensable infrastructures for the realisation of this project, at the disposition of the latter. They are due many thanks for their wonderful help and thoughtful guidance. The employees of the Holocaust Centre deserve equal thanks for doing everything possible – and more – in order to welcome a large number of speakers to this colloquium over the course of two days.
Introduction

Cora Alexa Døving and Nicolas Schwaller

What is a minority? Who defines a minority, on what basis, and in what respect is someone a minority? What and who determines how minorities are presented in history and in the story of modern societies?

These are some of the questions that were addressed at the conference How to Integrate Minority Narratives into National Memory? at the Centre for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities in May 2008. The conference was arranged in cooperation with Centre Alberto Benveniste at Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes, Sorbonne University. This anthology is based on the papers held at the conference. The contributors are PhD. students and researchers from France and Norway. Their work ranges from historical studies based on material from archives or literature to contemporary fieldwork and analysis of public discourses. In other words, this anthology is interdisciplinary in a broad sense, the red thread is a focus on majority-minority relationships.

Minorities do not come preformed, they are, as the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai says, produced in specific circumstances in every nation and every nationalism: “No modern nation, however benign its political system and however eloquent its public voices may be about the virtues of tolerance, multiculturalism, and inclusion, is free of the idea that its national sovereignty is built on some sort of ethnic genius.”¹ The idea that a singular national ethos belongs to a certain geography has been naturalised at great cost for many minorities, one being the silencing of minorities narratives as part of a nation’s history. The project of the nation state in wiping out ethnic, religious or linguistic diversity is well illustrated by the different empirical examples in this book.

There is no generally accepted definition of the concept “minority” on an international level: none of the international legally binding documents

that grant the ethnic and national minorities with specific rights, in order to protect their cultural, language and religious uniqueness, provide any explanation regarding what should be understood as the "minority". So one of the essential problems of minority protection is the question of who is the subject or beneficiary of this protection (an individual or a group and what kind of group).

One central reason for the difficulty in arriving at a definition is, of course, the complexity and diversity of the minority phenomenon. Still, there seems to be a certain consensus regarding essential elements that are used to define a population as a minority, such as a non-dominant position and ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics that differ from those of the rest of the population. The most commonly used definition, especially when it comes to legal issues concerning minority rights, is the following one made by one of the UN sub-commissions special reporters:

A group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members – being nationals of the State – possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language.2

Minorities are, as in the definition above, generally defined as a distinct group within a larger group’s zone of influence or power. A variety of distinction criteria exist; including cultural, confessional, linguistic, ethnical and sexual orientation aspects. Making the distinction list longer, however, does not necessarily enable us to better apprehend the phenomenon as a whole. First of all, the concept of minority itself is a relative notion entailing that the so-called majority group recognises the minority as such, but also – and most importantly – that the minority regard themselves as being a group apart. It is therefore crucial to highlight “minority identities” in order to show how the category of “otherness” is constructed in the relationship with the “majority identities”.

The concept of Minority developed both as part of the language of Law (concerning the making of nation-states) and as part of the language of the evolutionary scientific paradigm (concerning the making of the perfect human race). Framed by the hygienist programmes of the 19th century, the concept of minorities seems to have been borne out by the merge between the ideas of degeneration, on the one hand, and the potential for progressivism, on the other. Still, it was not before the establishment of the League of Nations in the aftermath of the First World War that the issue of Minorities was really brought to the forefront. Religious minorities had been protected through bilateral treaties resulting from the religious wars both before and during the Reformation (the Treaty of Westphalia ending the Thirty Years War includes protection for religious minorities and illustrates how protection of minorities is connected to development of the concept of the sovereign state), but defining differences in the population according to ideas about race, religion or language were closely related to the territorial adjustments after the war. New borders and states induced a fear that certain population groups would imply a factor of national instability. So the idea behind giving minority groups certain legal protection was to "prevent the population groups concerned from developing into a factor of instability." The protection of the League of Nations aimed at giving minorities the nationality of the state, prohibiting discrimination and also giving the minorities the right to keep their mother language and separate cultural institutions. However, the system was mainly about securing rights for people who ended up on the wrong side of the border (the ethnic Hungarians who became part of Romania, ethnic Germans who found themselves living in Poland etc). Bilateral treaties were meant to ensure reciprocal protection of co-nationals in neighbouring countries (for example, Poles in Germany were given the same rights as Germans in Poland). The failure of the League of Nations’ minority protection is well-known, culminating in the Nazi politics where Germany justified its invasion

3 See the article by LeDref.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid p. 4.
8 Ibid p. 28.
of Poland and Czechoslovakia, with references to these countries’ violation of the treaty rights of ethnic Germans inside their borders.\footnote{Ibid p. 29.}

After the Second World War the UN adopted a different approach therefore, namely substituting universal human rights for specific minority rights.\footnote{Henrard 2000, Kymlicka 2007.} Groups would not be protected as groups but the minority population would be given basic civil rights, regardless of their group membership. In short, the idea of “minority rights” as group specific rights was discredited after the Second World War. There are no references to “minority rights” in either the Charter of the United Nations or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. According to the Canadian philosopher, Will Kymlicka this was connected to a desire to make the nation state secure and its institutions as homogenous as possible after many years of war: “The human rights approach seemed to fit the bill: it protected the members of minority groups as individuals, but did not protect their institutions, and so disempowered them as collective actors”.\footnote{Kymlicka 2007:30.}

During the 1980s, the United Nations changed its attitude towards the rights of minorities and made the issue of minority rights an inseparable component of human rights.\footnote{Ibid p. 7.} This was due to empirical evidence of the discrimination and poverty of some of the minority population; the unsuccessful assimilation politics; and the acknowledgement of ethnic diversity as a precondition rather than a threat for the integrated nation-state. Minority rights were now seen as an important part of a democratic society.\footnote{See for example statements from OSCE 1999, UNESCO 2001 or United Nations Development Program 2000.} Accordingly, both indigenous peoples and minorities in general were afforded special rights on an international level, to both practice and also protect their traditions, language or religion.\footnote{Article 27 of the ICCPR that secures the individual rights of minorities was for example gradually reinterpreted to encompass positive minority rights as well.} Today the International Human Rights concerning minorities are based on two basic principles: the prohibition of discrimination and measures designed to protect the identity of the minority group.\footnote{Article 27 ICCPR (UN declaration on Minorities from 1992).} The protection of minority rights, however, is not an easy matter and the questions concerning collective rights versus individual rights for minorities are the main issues in the current debates concerning multiculturalism: In
what ways should the state operate with special measures designed to protect the separate identity of minorities? This anthology is not directly focused on the debates concerning multiculturalism, nor the issue of collective rights, but the issue of minority narrative as part of a national history certainly addresses the question of the nation-state’s responsibility for maintaining the visibility of minority groups and pluralism of voices.

The establishment of international human rights and intergovernmental organisations have resulted in a radical change in the relation between minority groups and states. The treatment of minorities is not an internal matter between a state and a minority population, but a matter of international concern. Models of assimilation and the homogenisation of nation-states are (at least to a certain extent) replaced by a political will to accommodate diversity. Most West European countries have, through various forms of integrations politics, actualised the protection of minority groups. Collective rights given to minority groups allow them to retain their separate characteristics ("integration without forced assimilation"). In other words, modern democracies are obliged to create political and social conditions that guarantee a common ground for both minorities and majority. However, such a common ground seems to be marked by history. Many of the articles in this anthology show how boundaries between minority and majority have, over time, created a special asymmetric coexistence. A coexistence marked by a hierarchical division that seems to be continuing in spite of international legal norms, at least for some groups or at some levels of society.

So, in spite of international norms for the protection of minorities, the following question asked by Appadurai is highly relevant:

…. why the relatively small numbers that give the word minority its most simple meaning and usually imply political and military weakness do not prevent minorities from being objects of fear and rage. Why kill, torture or ghettoise the weak?16

This anthology provides some useful empirical examples of how the elementary sociological theory of “we/they” mechanisms are part of the “logic” behind silencing the narrative of minorities: how the strengthening of a “we” so often involves the extinction (symbolically or physically) of another collectivity.

16 Appudarai 2006:49.
Focusing on a minority population often leads to an overemphasis of the ethnicity of a group. A well-documented experience amongst minorities is that of being stripped of one’s individuality and clad in collectivism. Regardless of nationality, personality, profession or other relevant factors, the minority population is attributed particular traits that then become characteristic of a common “Minority” mentality. The concepts of a minority mentality and of groups is dangerous when it becomes part of identity discourse based on the idea that ethnic, cultural or religious differences constitute a threat. In this kind of discourse, the concept of minority easily becomes part of a security narrative, to borrow a term from Jef Huysmans. To refer to minorities as a security problem is not an objective description of reality but transforms the individual member of the minority population into a figure in a security drama: a process the users of the concept of minority should always be aware of.

France and Norway are two countries with different understandings of the term minority. Generally speaking, we can say that the French republican model defines “nation” as a political rather than a cultural unity and consequently the public sector is not responsible for the protection of cultural or religious minorities. The French Council for Integration has determined that integration should follow an equality logic and not a minority logic. Focusing on minorities would thereby signify a lack of integration in the nation. In Scandinavia, on the other hand, focusing on minorities is part of the politics for integration. According to such a difference in the politics of diversity, one could expect there to be a big difference in the use of the term “minority” amongst the contributors of this book. Interestingly this is not the case: the term “minority” is very commonly defined as a social construction closely related to power. The authors also stress the importance of not operating with an essential understanding of the concept. The concept of minority should always be seen in relation to society as a whole, and therefore as a phenomenon of change. Still, there is one major difference between the French and Norwegian contributors that can be explained by differences in the two countries: the place the issue of colonial history has amongst the French contributors.

The status of a minority is not directly linked to demographic realities. For instance, in South Africa during Apartheid, the group defined as a

minority, in fact, comprised 90% of the total population. In colonial Algeria, despite their large numbers, the indigenes considered themselves a minority. The issue of minority-majority-relationships in colonial history is the empirical background in many of the articles. Analysis of textbooks shows, for example, how the educational system has highlighted the uniqueness of European civilization and underplayed the achievements and contributions of minorities. However, the articles also show very clearly how the history of minorities, far from being a marginal history, provides new historical perspectives and methodologies for understanding the majority’s culture. For instance, studying the different memories of the colonized peoples does not only allow us to understand their particular history, but also to bring new insights to our understanding of the colonizers and their imperialist past.

We believe that the recognition of the role of minorities in history is important for the creation of an integrated society. This is the rationale for studying in depth, through both comparison and inter-disciplinary means, how the story and identity of minorities might become a more integrated part of the common history, for instance in museums, in history and school books, or simply as part of the way we construct the language of our everyday life.

**Memories of Plurality**

The title of this anthology refers to “national memory” as a framework for studying minority narratives. It somehow postulates a necessary connection between social integration on a national level and a national memory that includes the history of the whole nation – including its minorities. In other words, national memory is, in a rather doxical way, accepted as very important: the glue of societal integration. Yet is this necessarily so? Do inhabitants need to refer to a common understanding of the past? In the academic debates on the multicultural society, the concept “thin culture” has been launched. The philosopher, Jurgen Habermas thinks one solution regarding the relationship between the national state and minorities could be what he calls a “simple form of patriotism”, which requires participation and loyalty to the state’s law and political system without being necessarily part of a cultural heritage or national memory. It is possible that a “thin” and politicised

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culture lowers the threshold of inclusion in a nation, although so would the opposite perhaps: making cultural and national memory “thicker”, more complex, by including the minority narratives.

As an example of “how to integrate minority narratives into national memory”, we would like to end this short introductory text by inviting the reader to embark on a mental tour of the most “nationalistic” of the Norwegian Museums: The Norwegian Folk Museum.

The Museum is interesting here because of its “doubleness”: on the one hand it clearly actualises the history of a state-sponsored project to make an image of national ethnic and cultural homogeneity, on the other hand (and less clearly) it makes a change in the direction of presenting Norway as a multicultural society apparent.

In its early years, from 1894 onward, the Norwegian Folk museum’s task was to represent genuine Norwegian culture and to encourage a positive national feeling, at a time that Norway was looking for its own identity as a nation. This was through nourishing a preconception that Norway was a nation consisting of one binding homogenous culture, and at the same time a culture different from others. The exhibit of the “Norwegian Lifestyle” mainly came to represent an image of farming culture from inland Norway. The reason for this being that one believed the lifestyle least affected by interaction with other cultures could be found in these parts of the country.

In effect, this resulted in a biased representation of the Norwegian culture, where urban life and coastal lifestyles were not afforded a relevant role, and the indigenous Sami culture or other minorities were completely ignored. (Objects and findings from national minorities or from foreign countries were held at the Ethnographical Museum).

The Museum’s definition of who the Norwegians were and are has, of course, gone through changes over the years. Gaukstad points out in his article that a change in attitude from The Folk Museum’s understanding of what “folk” and “nation” is resulted in the Sami collection being moved from the Ethnographical Museum to the Folk Museum during the 1950s. With this said, it didn’t change a great deal before the general focus on a pluralistic society in the ’80s, led to political encouragement to make the museums more of a meeting place for all the country’s different inhabitants. This in turn led to a rewriting of the museums written objective from, “to collect

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and exhibit everything representing the Norwegian people’s cultural life” to the more inclusive statement, “peoples’ lives and the conditions of livelihood in Norway.”

The explicit rewriting to include all people living in Norway is in itself a good example of a shift in the awareness of history, in light of a multicultural society. In other words, a consequence of the multicultural perspective is a more honest attitude towards what Norwegian culture is and what cultural influence is: indeed a living and dynamic part of what “is” Norwegian.

The rewriting of the task resulted in certain obligations and, during 2001, the museum held a historic exhibition of immigration and, in 2002, it initiated a documentary project spanning a three-year period: “Norwegian yesterday, today, tomorrow?” The project’s goal was to collect and archive individual immigrant stories. The intention was to both archive and to shed light on newer Norwegian history. The same year a Pakistani home was exhibited in the “House block exhibition”, 15 Wessels Street.

15 Wessels Street, a rental housing complex from the end of the 18th century includes the following exhibits of accommodation: a doll’s house – 1870; a Norwegian home in a newer time – 1905; the maid Gunda Eriksen’s home (a typical working class flat) – 1950; a modern flat – 1979; Alvild’s flat (a typically student flat) – 1982, and a Pakistani home in Norway – 2002.

One of the exhibit apartments bears the label “a Pakistani home”. A visit amidst a brown leather couch, a prayer mat, curry boxes and plastic flowers can seem like a cliché representation, but this is perhaps the weakness of such exhibitions, whether it be the housekeeper or the immigrants’ aesthetics given form. What makes the exhibit a contribution to a new Norwegian awareness of history is not the attempt to capture Pakistani culture in this (perhaps static) way, but that the whole apartment block exhibition shows the pluralistic Norway of today. Exhibiting the Norwegian working-class maid side by side with the Pakistani family widens our national history. The obvious differences between the inventories of the apartments reflects shifts in time and era, rather than the degree of Norwegianhood or Norwegian-ness. The Pakistani home at The Norwegian Folk Museum, is a clear inclusion of a minority population’s history of establishment into Norwegian

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20 Ibid p. 192.
21 Mainly personal interviews from employment immigrants from Pakistan, Turkey and refugees from Bosnia. The project also included a broad collection of the immigrants’ photographs. Parts of this material are available at http://www.nyenordmenn.no.
national heritage. 15 Wessels Street can be seen as a metaphor of a national state where the inhabitant at any time is included in the Nation’s folk history.

Using 15 Wessels Street as an example, should not be read as an argument that all groups in a society should be represented at a museum. This would not only lead to a focus on society’s groups and the borders between them, but could also lead to unhealthy identity politics. Museums should not become an arena where representatives for ethnical groups can forward their own interests, but should instead focus on co-existence in a multicultural society, claims the museum conservator and anthropologist Thomas Walle who is in charge of the multicultural perspective at the Folk Museum. As such, it is multicultural Norway and not a Pakistani home per se, which is the focus of 15 Wessels Street.

The apartment building merges a diachronic and a synchronic perspective. The flats reflect differences due to historical time, social class and gender differences. This positions history as a causative and major explanatory factor, rather than culture alone, in terms of the differences between the flats’ interiors. The similarity between, for example “Gunda Eriksens home” and the “Pakistani home” is greater than that between “Gunda Eriksens home” and the flat of a radical student. By using an apartment building as a frame, the museum has managed to incorporate a multicultural perspective without essentialising Pakistanis as a group.

The importance of the changes at the Norsk [Norwegian] Folk Museum do not of course lie in the museum’s incorporation of aspects of different cultures, but in the novel manner of presenting a national history. The focus on recent immigrants as part of Norwegian history, made the museum revise their presentation of older cultural objects. Instead of labeling the objects as simply authentically Norwegian, the museum today highlights the international impulses behind the objects. An example is “Ampiansbråten”, a small wooden house made by poor Finnish immigrants. Until recently, the building was used to demonstrate that Finnish carpentry differed from Norwegian. Today the building is used to show that Finnish migrants are part of the Norwegian national history.

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It is a fact that the memory of suffering and degradation amongst minority populations has come to be excluded from the collective memory of the majority in most societies.\textsuperscript{24} Minority groups are often bearers of unwanted memories, such as acts of suppression or violence in the name of the nation-state. Therefore including their stories often implies a thorough process of historical consciousness on a national level. However, it is not enough to elaborate the history of the minorities exclusively through the persecution or genocide they might have experienced, it is also important to allow room for the various contributions they’ve brought to the civilization of which they are a part, and furthermore to not overemphasise distinctions between groups in such a way that intercultural contact or harmonious relationships between the majority and minority population becomes invisible. In dealing with the issue of minority narratives and national memory, it should be a goal to also identify the hybrid nature of identities and grey-zones of cultures, which, after all, is what dominates most of social life.

\textsuperscript{24} Responding to these facts, France established what could be roughly described as “memory laws” in order to combat the negation of the Jewish and Armenian genocides, while recognising slavery as a crime against humanity.