Reframing Islam?

Potentials and challenges of participatory initiatives in museums and heritage

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Over recent decades, the question of how to open up established heritage organisations – especially museums – to a greater range of contributing voices has resulted in numerous initiatives. Such initiatives aim in various ways to involve those who have previously been ignored or marginalised within existing representation, or who have only been the objects of representation by professional authorities, as participants in aspects of the work of organisations themselves. Often seen as a major shift in representational authority, reducing that of professional heritage staff in favour of according more to lay participants, this development has been variously hailed as ‘widening participation’, ‘inclusion’, ‘engagement’ or the ‘democratisation’ of museums and heritage. Such labels, however, cover a broad range of motives and aspirations, as well as practices and experiences. In this chapter, we consider some of these in relation to this book’s theme of Islam and heritage in Europe.

In examining the potentials and also challenges that may be involved in participatory heritage initiatives that relate – directly or indirectly – to Islam, we deploy the notion of ‘framing’. This allows us to come into discussion with previous work on Islam and museums, which has often used it, albeit typically with little theoretical elaboration, to draw attention to the contexts or narratives within which Islam is presented, and thus to how Islam is, variously, defined.¹ To attend to framing is not only to look at what happens around an already known subject – in this case ‘Islam’ – but also to investigate how that very subject is constituted. Throughout this chapter, when we refer to ‘Islam’ our intention is to consider what is invoked in specific uses and contexts rather than to predetermine what is meant. The recent research project, *Museological Framings of Islam* by Klas Grinell and colleagues, uses ‘framing’ to refer to many ways in which knowledge or expectations are structured and thus ‘shape the way in which humans enact or interpret their experiences’ (Fillmore, 2008, p. 1, cited in Grinell, 2019, p. 2).² Our understanding in this chapter, which also considers ‘framing’ as ‘ways of selectively carving up experience’ (Butler, 2016, p. 35), is broadly similar, though we find Judith Butler’s insistence that framing relates to what is even apprehended, not only to modes of interpretation, an important refinement (2016, p. 24). Regarding framing as concerning not only ‘conceptual forms of knowledge’ but also ‘sensing and perceiving’ (2016, p. 24), also means – to some extent contra Butler’s own argument – that it need not necessarily

be instrumental or instrumentalised. Certainly, it may be but, as our research suggests, it can also be inadvertent and collateral. To help grasp this, we not only consider the more ‘top-down’ societal and institutional framings identified in previous research but also others highlighted through our ethnographic approach. This entails extending the existing research concern with finished exhibitions to considering framing by various participants during the process of exhibition-making, as well as in other kinds of heritage and museum work, including that of participatory practices themselves. This allows us to address the important question of whether new participatory initiatives can break out of frames that previous scholarship identified as limiting, as well as to consider further frame effects that may arise.

In addition to drawing on existing studies and argumentation, this chapter presents research on three recent initiatives in major museums located in Berlin. Beginning in 2015 or 2016, all three initiatives were designed within a wider context of concern over growing Islamophobia in German society, amplified during and following the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ and ‘long summer of migration’ of 2015 and 2016.³ While not all of those who arrived in Germany in 2015 and 2016 were Muslim, they were often depicted as such in the media and even more so by anti-Islamist groups, especially Pegida, the Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident, that had been founded in 2014 (see Bock & Macdonald, 2019). Against this turbulent backdrop, we looked at a selection of participatory museum initiatives that in various ways related to it to see whether, and if so how, these had any implications for the issues of framing Islam in Europe that had been raised by previous research. Importantly, as we go on to explain, this included initiatives in which ‘Islam’ itself was not a specific or explicit focus – in which, in other words, it seemed ‘out of frame’. By bringing such different approaches together, we seek to highlight the various potentials and challenges involved, and thus to contribute to the development of future practice.

Changing museum approaches

The findings of the *Museological Framings of Islam* research project include the following. Firstly, that ‘Islam and Muslims are mainly represented in Islamic art collections’ (Grinell et al., 2019, p. 370) – in other words, they are primarily ‘framed’ within discourses of art and aesthetics. Secondly, that Islam is ‘generally (if not always) presented [‘framed’] as ‘a dead religion’ (ibid.). And thirdly, that there are very few exhibitions informed by ‘socially concerned’ approaches to contemporary Muslims and Islam in Europe (2019, p. 371) – that is, that take up the possibility of a more present-day and socially oriented framing. As the research also acknowledges, however, exhibitions that do not directly address contemporary social and political considerations may nevertheless be devised in relation to such concerns, especially by presenting ‘another face’ of Islam, intended to counter adverse stereotypes. Strategies and alternative modes of framing for doing so include emphasising Islam as a peaceful religion; exhibiting Islam within examples of flourishing multicultural and multireligious societies from the past; or highlighting migration as having occurred throughout history, bringing many benefits (see Introduction to

this volume). Indeed, simply showing the beauty of 'Islamic' objects is regarded by some curators as countering negative impressions (Reeve, 2018; Shatanawi, 2012b).

The idea that museums might more directly address questions of Muslims and Islam in contemporary societies has, however, been growing. It connects to wider trends towards museums explicitly being engaged in the work of social cohesion (e.g. Sandell & Nightingale, 2012; Silverman, 2010). The director of the Museum of Islamic Art in Berlin, Stefan Weber, for example, has recently argued that 'exhibitions of Islamic art are, whether we like it or not, sites of identity negotiation where relations to "me and my world" are established. This means that whatever we present also serves in forging identity and therefore has socio-political implications' (Weber, 2018, p. 238). That visitors hope or even expect to learn about contemporary Islam in Europe is backed up by visitor surveys, including one commissioned by Stefan Weber shortly after he took up the directorship in 2009 (Junod et al., 2012, p. 12). Earlier visitor surveys conducted by the V&A had shown likewise; and that visitors presumed that the term 'Islamic art' would mean they would be informed about religion (Fakatseli and Sachs, 2008; Moussouri and Fritsch, 2004; cf. Shatanawi, 2012a, 2012b). This, however, is only rarely the case – and usually only tangentially – in such museums.

A related trend in museums in many parts of Europe, is the growth of initiatives to engage with broader segments of society, in order to include those who are less likely to visit museums, such as local diasporic populations (e.g. Golding & Modest, 2013). One strategy for doing so, but also going a step further, entails involving non-professional participants in the making of exhibitions or other kinds of museum production (e.g. Lynch 2013; Mensch & Meijer-van Mensch 2015; Puzon, 2019). This takes a wide range of forms and goes under various names, including 'participation', 'engagement' and 'collaboration', with some commentaries and analyses making differentiations between these or constructing typologies within them (e.g. Gerbich, 2018; Goodnow, 2010; Graham, 2017; Simon, 2010). As yet, such participative initiatives are not widespread in relation to Islam, for reasons that include 'museum practices that focus exclusively on the object, on its provenance and its physical condition' (Junod et al., 2012, p. 12). Nevertheless, there have been some examples, mostly involving forms of consultation: notably, the early work of Nima Poovaya-Smith in the British cities of Bradford and Leicester, in the UK (Macdonald, 2003, 2013; Poovaya-Smith, 1988), as well as more recent initiatives within national museums, such as for the *Hajj* exhibition at the British Museum (see Berns, 2016; Frost, 2014); and at the Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg (Grinell, 2014). The project *Experimentierfeld Museologie* (Museological Experiment Field), initiated by Susan Kamel, comprised a raft of 'experiments' designed to increase inclusion and improve education at a range of museums in Berlin, including the Museum of Islamic Art (see Bluche et al., 2013; Kamel & Gerbich, 2014). At the latter, the innovative Museum Diwan (designed primarily by Christine Gerbich), brought together people from different backgrounds, including but not restricted to different migration backgrounds, to discuss ideas for the content and display of a new exhibition (Gerbich, 2014; Kamel, 2013, p. 76). Another example, which has been analysed in-depth, is that of *Urban Islam*, at the

Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam. We now turn to look at that in more detail as it highlights unusually well some of the key challenges – and questions of framing – that such initiatives may face.

Framing ‘Islam’ in *Urban Islam*

Opened at the Tropenmuseum in 2003 (and later also exhibited at the Museum der Kulturen in Basel, Switzerland), *Urban Islam* was the first concerted attempt to undertake participatory work with lay Dutch Muslims that the museum had undertaken. As one of its curators (and authors of the current chapter), Mirjam Shatanawi (2012a; see also 2012b), points out, the fact that the exhibition was framed as about ‘Islam’ from the outset itself constituted a problem. Having framed it this way made sense in a context of high levels of contested public debate about Islam. But that very fact also allied it to that framing, risking perpetuating a public discourse conducted in such terms, with an accompanying essentialisation and stereotyping. Early on in the making process, Shatanawi and her co-curator, Deniz Ünsal, found that some of the Muslims approached to participate in discussions about the future exhibition refused to do so on account of this framing (2012, p. 69). Invoking Muslim participants as ‘a community’ was likewise problematic, she argues. Again, being a top-down ascription, it can essentialise into ‘a collective’, ignoring both people’s own self-identifications as well as differences (e.g. of religious affiliations, migration histories and culture) between them. It also acts as a kind of shorthand for ‘others’ – a framing that in this case was influenced by the fact that the exhibition was in an ethnographic museum. As such, the exhibition’s attempt to deal with cultural diversity risked becoming a matter of addressing the difference of others, rather than creating ‘the opportunity to connect to heritage in multiple, less predetermined ways’ (2012, p. 77).

In order to try to counteract the problems of essentialising or ending up just working with those who present themselves as the official voice of ‘communities’, the Tropenmuseum curators worked with ‘Dutch Muslims of different backgrounds’, especially young adults (Shatanawi, 2012a, p. 69). On the one hand, this produced some marked divergences in perspectives about what it was important to say about Islam, especially on the question of whether religion or culture should be given most emphasis, and also on whether religion should be presented as ‘pure’ or not. On the other, however, all participants were in agreement with each other that the exhibition’s aim should be to ‘correct the public image of Muslims’ (ibid.). While this was understandable, especially in light of the contentious political context, it also meant that the mainstream public discourse was in effect the governing frame. Furthermore, Shatanawi points out, it positioned the Tropenmuseum as ‘a stronghold of mainstream discourse’ (2012a, p. 72), and, moreover, as one for which the audience would be non-Muslims rather than themselves (2012a, p. 70). And although the curators wanted to expand the visitorship, to include new participants, it was indeed the case that most of the audience would be – and was – non-Muslim.

To further try to address the plurality of Islam, as well as to deal with the fact that there were such different perspectives among those who participated, the museum curators decided to make the differences among participants a core aspect of the exhibition. While this tackled the issue of essentialisation, it also drew criticism from some of the participants, who felt that the presentation through complex individual stories failed to properly express 'true Islam' (2012, p. 74). For the curators, the idea that there was a single 'true' position was problematic. But in seeing it as such, and devising a more multiperspectival exhibition, thus taking a more relativistic stance, they asserted their curatorial authority, and consequently compromised the shift or sharing of authority to which they had aspired.

Alerted to these important challenges for participative museum work in relation to Islam, then, let us fast-forward over a decade since the making of *Urban Islam* and to a different national context, namely Germany. In addition, we will also shift our focus from an ethnographic museum to various other kinds of museums. These shifts of temporal, spatial and institutional frames open up the question of whether the same challenges will arise or not, as well as whether there are others that need to be addressed.

Recent participatory initiatives in museums in Berlin

Despite the shift of time and nation, it is clear that the wider contextual framing of public concern and debate over Islam in which *Urban Islam* was created similarly characterises the German situation over 10 years later. Here too, a tendency in public discourse to present Islam as a 'threat to ... society and values' (Shatanawi, 2012a, p. 68), though also 'with some forces actively contesting' (ibid.) this position, was evident. In Germany, as in the Netherlands, 'the debate on Islam [was] closely intertwined with the question of integrating immigrants. Migrant culture was equated with Islam' (Shatanawi, 2012a, p. 68), especially during and after 2015, when over a million people, mainly from the Middle East, especially Syria and Iraq, and North Africa, but also other countries including Afghanistan, arrived in Europe seeking refuge.⁴ Many were escaping war; others were fleeing violence and repressive regimes. Not all were Muslim, though a majority was, at least according to the official modes of classifying them. Germany's already diverse Muslim population – from Balkan as well as Middle-Eastern, African and former Soviet countries – was expanded, with some new arrivals, especially Syrians, becoming sizeable minorities, though with Turks remaining the largest 'Muslim community' by some margin.⁵ In 2016, the total Muslim population in Germany was estimated to be just under 5 million, 6.1% of the overall population.⁶

It was, then, within a prevailing context of longstanding public concern and negative stereotyping of Muslims, now intensified in the face of the new arrivals, that the three initiatives that we discuss below were realised. Launching in January 2016, the idea for the *TAMAM* project had been formed in a cooperation between the Institute for Islamic Theology (Institut für Islamische Theologie) in Osnabrück and the Museum of Islamic Art (ISL) in Berlin.⁷ It brought together various local youth workers and volunteers who played roles in what were called 'mosque

communities'. Not tied to a specific intended museum 'product' (such as an exhibition), it was nevertheless hoped that the project would bring new insights to museum practice. Primarily, however, as its website states, *TAMAM* 'is a project by Muslims for Muslims, to enable more cultural education in mosques'. In particular, it used the collections of the Museum of Islamic Art to produce materials for downloading to engage Muslim youth during religious lessons in mosque communities.⁸ As the website explains: 'the museum has made its frames [*Rahmen*] and objects available' to the service of the mosque cultural education programme. The full name of *TAMAM* was, thus, *Das Bildungsprojekt von Moscheegemeinden mit dem Museum für Islamische Kunst* (The Mosque Communities Education Project with the Museum of Islamic Art). Significantly, the name was also selected for its hopeful aspirations, *tamam* meaning 'OK' in Turkish and colloquial Arabic, and 'perfect' or 'complete' in more formal Arabic.

Officially launched just a month earlier, in December 2015, the *Multaka* project likewise took a name from Arabic, in this case, one meaning 'meeting point', as in the project's subtitle *Museum as Meeting Point*. According to its website, *Multaka* entailed 'Syrian and Iraqi refugees ... being trained as museum guides so that they can then provide guided museum tours for Syrian and Iraqi refugees in their native language'.⁹ The idea for the project came from people affiliated with the Syrian Heritage Archive, a cooperation between ISL and the German Archaeological Institute. The Museum's director secured government funding for it and also put the idea to three other museum directors, who also quickly agreed to host 'refugee guides'.¹⁰ Those other museums were the Museum for the Ancient Near-East, which like ISL is located within the Pergamon Museum; the Bode Museum – which houses a mix of collections but with a focus on European Byzantine, Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque art, much of which is often described as 'Christian'; and the German Historical Museum (DHM), which is Germany's museum of national history. All of these are in effect 'national' museums, being funded by the German Federal government in collaboration with the federal states;¹¹ and all are located near to one another on or next to the capital's central Museums Island complex. *Multaka*, then, existed in a range of organisational frames – albeit all within major museums – only one of which was explicitly labelled 'Islamic'. Unlike in *TAMAM*, whose members participated as self-identified Muslims, this was not the case in *Multaka*.

Our third initiative neither took place within an organisational frame marked 'Islamic' nor directly addressed Islam or the position of Muslims. We include it, however, like the range of *Multaka* cases, because it allows investigation of what, if anything, ensues for the representation of Islam and Muslims when these are not explicitly to the forefront but only more tangentially through wider societal representations of refugees and migrants as predominantly Muslim. In this case, another state museum was involved, namely the Museum of European Cultures (MEK), located in the Berlin suburb of Dahlem. Although the museum had conducted many other kinds of participation work previously, this project was the first time that the museum had undertaken a form of participation in which it primarily acted as a host (as it was described – and as some participation literature, e.g. Simon, 2010 and Mörsch, 2012, sees as especially advanced in its relinquishing of museum

authority). This was to a ‘participatory art and research project’ called *KUNSTASYL* (meaning ‘Art Asylum’)¹² which involved the residents of a shelter (*Heim*) for those who had become homeless, mostly due to fleeing their former homes during the refugee crisis (though not all had arrived at that time or were seeking refugee status). As such, being Muslim was by no means a criterion for participation, with at least half of the approximately 20-strong group being identified as such, though such identification, and questions of Islam more generally, were rarely discussed. As described by the director and a curator of the MEK, the group ‘took over the exhibition rooms of the museum’ to devise an exhibition documenting ‘the experiences, wishes, perspectives and lifestyles of refugees by artistic means’ (Tietmeyer & Neuland-Kitzerow, 2017, p. 4). The resulting exhibition opened in July 2016 under the title *daHEIM* – meaning ‘at home’ or ‘the home’ – and with the subtitle *Einsichten in flüchtige Leben*, officially translated into English as ‘Glances into Fugitive Lives’.¹³

All of these initiatives were researched as part of a multiresearcher ethnography of ongoing transformations in museums and heritage within Berlin: *Making Differences – Transforming Museums and Heritage in the 21st Century* – and specifically within a research strand within it called *Representing Islam*.¹⁴ Directed by Sharon Macdonald, three researchers conducted in-depth ethnographic research with each initiative. *TAMAM* was studied by Christine Gerbich, who helped to devise it as part of her existing long-term engagement with ISL and who worked as the official evaluator of the project over its initial 2-year phase. In this role, Gerbich participated in many of the project events and also undertook interviews with participants, and wrote a report for the museum that informed the subsequent development of the project. *Multaka* was researched by Rikke Gram, who over a period of a year attended a wide range of workshops and training sessions connected with *Multaka*, as well as attending tours, going with guides over their tour routes while discussing these with them, and conducting interviews. Katarzyna Puzon likewise investigated the *daHEIM* project through ethnographic approaches of participant-observation and interviews, as well as analysing the finished exhibition and participating in events that accompanied the project.

By looking at these three very different participatory initiatives together, then, we consider some implications of their various modes framing. Drawing on our discussion above, we consider the explicit framing of the initiatives involved, in terms of what we call ‘focal framing’, namely the focus under which the scope of an initiative is established, as well as ‘organisational framing’, the effects of the kind of museum/s in which it takes place. In both cases, however, we extend the consideration beyond the ‘top down’ framings, to also consider framing – or breaks with the existing framing – introduced by participants. We then turn to some implicit framing brought in by participatory models themselves.

Focal framing

All of the initiatives managed to avoid the problem (discussed above) identified by Shatanawi (2012a) of framing in terms of, and thus reifying an idea of, ‘a Muslim community’. They did so, however, through significantly different approaches. *TAMAM* deployed the notion but as already in use among Berlin’s Muslims to refer

to those within the constituency of mosques – the German term being *Gemeinde*, which can mean ‘parish’ as well as ‘community’. As such, the initiative could tap into existing structures within the city, linking with imams and others, who could act as what were called ‘multipliers’, taking the insights and ideas developed in and with the museum back out into local communities. While the fact that the multipliers were practicing Muslims meant that there was in effect a religious framing of the initiative, they were from various denominations; and the idea of the multiplier rather than the representative meant that rather than certain individuals ‘standing for’ a collective, they were to undertake the work of diffusion. Furthermore, although *TAMAM* was specifically framed in terms of ‘Muslims’, it did not reify ‘Muslims’ as a category of ‘Others’ because they were the actors – ‘by Muslims and for Muslims’ as the website put it. Indeed, to an unanticipated extent, the project itself strengthened not only ideas but also feelings of being part of a community. As participants commented to Christine Gerbich, they appreciated what they saw as a chance to ‘work together’, to ‘push things forward’ and to ‘become one’. This is a point to which we return in our discussion of participatory models below.

Neither of the other two initiatives deployed the terms ‘Muslim’ or ‘Islam’ in their framing. *Multaka’s* primary framing was in terms of ‘refugee’ – the project’s sub-subtitle being ‘Refugees as guides in Berlin museums’.¹⁵ That it is a refugee project is frequently mentioned on its website and in the press, as is its winning of prizes for its refugee work.¹⁶ Positioning it as such tapped directly into the concerns and also the funding opportunities of the moment.¹⁷ In fact, not all guides were necessarily refugees in a formal sense – many were students or even held work visas in Germany. As Rikke Gram found, some of them were uncomfortable with being framed as refugees, not only because of not holding this status formally but also because, as one explained to her, doing so turned them into a category, making them different from other people engaging with the museum. Referring to the refugee participants in tours, this guide explained: ‘They are just normal people, they’re just newly coming here. They just came here recently because of a certain, you know, uncontrollable situation. They didn’t choose it’. She preferred instead to refer to those on her tours as ‘our guests’. Nevertheless, this guide also recognised that there was the potential to do good under the label, and, amidst the considerable discussion of the term among the guides, there were some who embraced it, arguing that it should not be understood legalistically but as a more inclusive term for those, not least including themselves, ‘not able to be at home’ (as they put it). Not only were not all guides refugees in a formal sense, not all were Muslim, as with *KUNSTASYL*, and among themselves Islam was rarely mentioned.

This was despite the wider context of ‘moral panic’ over refugees and Islam (Kosnick, 2019). *KUNSTASYL* and its *daHEIM* exhibition worked carefully to devise a nuanced stance on this. Involving participants who might be classified as refugees, the project connected to the wider issues through its reference to a ‘Heim’ (shelter) and the word *flüchtige* (which can also mean volatile or subject to movement) in its subtitle, which contains the root term for flight (*Flucht*) as does ‘refugee’ (*Flüchtling*). It did so too through visual allusions such as the metal-framed beds that had been shown in many news reports of makeshift housing for refugees, and also the painting of a large wave on a main wall of the exhibition, which conveyed

Figure 10.1 Metal-frame bed in the exhibition *daHEIM: Glances into Fugitive Lives* at the Museum of European Cultures. Photograph by Katarzyna Puzon. Courtesy of Staatliche Museen Berlin.

not only the perilous sea voyages that had brought many refugees to Europe but also a prevalent metaphor of them as arriving like a great wave or surge.¹⁸

At the same time, however, the exhibition's creators were keen not to restrict the focus of the exhibition to the current 'crisis' and, indeed, were, like the *Multaka* guide quoted above, also critical of categorising people as refugees (Caveng, 2017). As one of the *KUNSTASYL* members said: '*Flüchtling* is a word indicating a permanent status... But when you find shelter, then you have a name'. To address this, the exhibition displayed the inscription 'call me by my name' and contained many historical as well as more recent life stories from around the world; for example, a communist writer who had to flee Germany from the Nazis in 1933. This mix of cases, with the focus firmly on individual experiences, meant that the experience of flight was not framed by ethnic or religiously affiliated categories. That also constituted a significant challenge to contemporary stereotypes in its severing of the widespread public elision of refugees with Muslims.

In what ways, then, did these framings interact with those of the organisations in which they took place? We turn to this next before then also considering how these were further shaped by features of participatory practices themselves.

Organisational framing

The role of ISL in the founding and running of both *TAMAM* and *Multaka* meant that 'Islam' was visible in their organisational framing, though in the case of *Multaka* there were also the organisational framings of the other museums too. What this

'Islamic' means, however, differs for participants. The opening text of ISL states that the term refers not to 'religious art... but to the art and architecture of the cultural region moulded by Islam in the broadest sense of the term'. As the visitor surveys noted above might seem to predict, the visibility of the term 'Islamic' did lead to expectations of a focus on religion. This was clearly the case among visitors on the tours, who often told the guides at the beginning that they wished to visit the 'Islam Museum', persistently leaving out the word art. Such an emphasis was not, in fact, absent from the organisational framing itself. On *Multaka's* website, for example, it is explained that the tours in the Bode Museum 'make reference to the inter-religious roots and the common origins of the three world religions of Islam, Judaism and Christendom'.¹⁹ It may also be a tendency towards religious framing that was involved in a guide at the DHM being criticised, as she explained to Rikke Gram, by some on her tours for talking a lot about Christianity and scarcely mentioning Islam. Yet this was something she saw no way out of, given that Christianity was so much part of German history. More generally, however, it was evident to Gram that neither guides nor visitors felt strongly constrained by the organisational framing of the museums in the narratives that they told. *Multaka* visitors seeing the Aleppo Room in ISL, for example, would often talk of the famous Arab dish, *foul*, that they had eaten in Aleppo – thus drawing neither on the 'Islamic' nor on the 'Art' of the Museum's title. And on tours, some guides, drew on various museum objects – such as nineteenth-century paintings of ships in stormy weather at the DHM – to talk about current migration, not least the perilous journeys to Europe undertaken by many of the visitors on the tours.

Figure 10.2 Participants in a guided tour of the project *Multaka: Meeting Point Museum* at the German Historical Museum. Courtesy of Staatliche Museen Berlin, Museum für Islamische Kunst / Milena Schlösser.

Even when Islam was directly discussed by Muslim participants, what it referred to and meant could vary significantly. In a *TAMAM* workshop in which museum objects were used as a focus for discussion, for example, the moderator showed a photograph of a small lead pendant and asked participants what they thought it might be, from where it might emanate and how old it was. Having identified it as a *khamsa*, a Hand of Fatima, a talisman to ward off danger, one participant stated emphatically: 'This is *not* an Islamic object! Orthodox teachers prohibit superstition. This object is the *opposite* of Islamic. We need to think whether we keep it in the project. The Fatimids were on the edge of what is allowed. In the Fatimid period, many things were problematic from a theological perspective'. While this participant tried to reject the object in the name of 'true Islam', to put it in terms of Shatanawi's discussion above, another participant insisted that it was relevant to the project because it is 'part of our culture'. Involved here, then, were alternative framings by different Muslim participants. What was against ('true') 'religion' for some represented an expression of piety for others. Here, it is also worth noting that while curatorial discourse typically makes a distinction between 'religion' and 'culture' or 'the sacred' and 'the profane' – a frame that is severely criticised by some scholars (e.g. Ahmed, 2016; Shaw, 2012) – this works differently from the way that these are mobilised by Muslim lay participants here (Shatanawi, 2012b, 2021).

In the case of the MEK, Islam was not part of the organisational framing, as well as being absent from the focal framing, and indeed most discussion, informal as well as formal, during the making of the exhibition. As we have emphasised, this was part of a laudable approach in which forced flight from one's homeland was represented through numerous individual stories, thus disconnecting it from any national, temporal, religious or other categorisation. As such, it was – even if not expressly stated as such – a significant alternative to the popular and media tendency to see those who were part of the ongoing 'refugee crisis' as Muslim. At the same time, however, it meant that Muslims were not made as visible in the MEK as they might otherwise been, thus not disrupting criticisms of their relative absence in this important institutional site for imagining Europe (De Cesari, 2017). Nevertheless, Islam was not entirely absent from the exhibition. Before describing its presence, however, we turn to how the participatory process itself – rather than some planned top-down edict by the Museum – framed what resulted.

Participatory framing

In the *daHEIM* project, not only was the exhibition created by the group *KUNSTASYL*, its making-process included devolving the creation of texts and other exhibition content to the different members, most of whom were from the shelter. In terms of participatory process, this showed a clear commitment to provide an alternative to established authority and to allow the participants to speak for themselves. Thus, various participants provided accounts of their stories of flight. Amidst these often harrowing recollections, the words 'Islamic' and 'Muslim' only appear in three instances in the exhibition's final text. Two concern individuals fleeing from the 'Islamic State' and one is an individual who due to the stigma

of their illegitimacy was seeking to move to 'a country in which no Muslims lived'. Clearly, including such mentions is entirely valid: this is these participants' experience and part of wider reality of the time. Equally clearly, for museum curators to have sought to 'balance' this with some kind of more positive examples of Islam – in order to try to avoid wholly negative ones – would have contravened the principles of the participatory process.

Our other case studies also highlighted ways in which the participatory framework could be bound up with certain 'apprehensions', which might be more felt than verbally articulated, and that could have unanticipated effects. In the case of *TAMAM*, the very fact that it generated such strong feelings of collectivity seemed to Christine Gerbich to contribute to participants being keen to aim for consensus, thus avoiding in-depth discussion of certain questions and topics. In the Hand of Fatima example above, despite the clear difference of views, the potential conflict was quickly damped down by a participant who moderated the discussion. On other occasions too, Gerbich witnessed swift conflict-avoidance or a sidestepping of topics that might have brought uncomfortable differences of view to the fore. Instead, as part of the desire to maintain what members of the group frequently praised as its 'good atmosphere', their tendency was to avoid voicing or addressing issues that might cause conflicting viewpoints regarding the Museum's representational strategies. As Gerbich makes clear in her own analysis (which she is developing further elsewhere), if we heed Chantal Mouffe's (1999) claim that raising, debating and enduring conflictual opinions is a fundamental part of democratisation, then participatory practice, in this instance at least, seems to be hampering its own democratising aim.

The avoidance of differences that might lead to conflict was evident in various other instances, including in relation to the museums and their staff. Reinforcing this was a framing in terms of hospitality. The language of 'hosting' in participation positions those 'invited in' to the heritage organisations as 'guests'. Visitors too are sometimes seen in such a way, as also by the *Multaka* guide quoted earlier. In many respects, this is a positive framing – one that challenges more instrumentalist or economic forms of transaction. In hospitality relations, hosts are supposed to take good care of their guests and exhibit generosity and good guests should respect the hosts' rules and show gratitude. It is a model that was widely invoked as part of the 'culture of welcome' in Germany during the refugee crisis. But although it was much praised, it has also been criticised for positioning the new arrivals as recipients of pity and contributing to a discourse of them being insufficiently grateful (Bock, 2019; Partridge, 2019). In the early days of the *daHEIM* project, some of these tensions emerged, with some museum staff feeling that some members of *KUNSTASYL* were behaving with a lack of proper respect and gratitude for the extraordinary leniency of being permitted to make an exhibition 'in our house', by, for example, doing things like eating in the galleries. At the same time, members of *KUNSTASYL* sometimes resented what they experienced as rules that seemed to run counter to what they expected from genuine hospitality. As time went on, each came to understand the position of the other, thus showing that these difficulties can be surmounted, especially when projects have enough time to evolve and sufficient avenues for ongoing communication.

In both *TAMAM* and *Multaka*, a sense of behaving as good guests may have contributed to the reluctance to voice criticism not only of the views of other multipliers but also of the museum and its staff. One area that this concerned was colonial provenance. During a workshop, for example, *TAMAM* participants were presented with some short information about ISL's famous Mshatta façade having been brought to Berlin due to the 'friendly relationship' between the German Emperor and Ottoman Sultan of the time. While Gerbich witnessed some strained facial expressions and ironic quips about this, there was little discussion and no direct criticism of the museum was uttered. When she asked one participant about this later, her interlocutor explained: '*TAMAM* is not the place to discuss this. If we open *this* box, and raise the issue of orientalism, it will really get messy'. Likewise, in *Multaka*, while the guides were given information about the colonial provenance of museum objects and there was no prohibition on talking about this, they generally chose not to bring it up themselves in their tours. As was expressed to Gram, there was a sense that it was a complicated matter, in which their own position might be misunderstood, but also a matter for which some guides felt themselves not sufficiently trained to steer the discussion. Thus, while some participants were sometimes critical of the international relationships that had brought certain objects to the Museum, they were also aware that the presence of the objects in Berlin provided the opportunity to do the work that they were doing – which was generally much appreciated. So too was the idea that the objects were, like themselves, now safe from the harm from which they had escaped; and that the objects afforded both guides and visitors possibilities for senses of affective connection. As one guide said to Gram of the project and the experience of guides and visitors:

I think it's giving a more strong way to connect to here, to the object itself, but to the place, when they feel there is a connection, not only with the object itself. With the object itself it means I have something similar, I have something I feel is like home.

Evident in all of these cases, then, is how participatory initiatives may raise a range of views and feelings, both 'recognised', in the sense of verbally acknowledged, and more diffusely experienced or 'apprehended', to deploy Judith Butler's distinction (2016). Not all of these are necessarily easily accommodated together, and some of them may even run against the grain of other explicit intentions.

Conclusion

As with earlier research that has drawn attention to framing in relation to questions of the representation of Islam and Muslims in museums, ours too shows that it is significant and worthy of detailed attention to the unanticipated, as well as more predictable, effects that it may have. Framing – both explicit and even that which may be only partially apprehended – infects upon experiences and outcomes of practical museum and heritage work, sometimes to the extent that it can

compromise explicit aims. As we have seen, participatory practice does not mean that framing, including questions of what we have called organisational and focal framing, becomes irrelevant. It does, however, to some extent shift these – and the authority for setting the frames – as well as bringing certain further framing through the model of participatory practice itself.

All of the cases that we have discussed here provide significant alternatives to the prevailing negative media and public framings of Islam and Muslims. None of them worked with essentialised or homogenised notions of ‘a Muslim community’. *Urban Islam* sought to directly counter this by working with participants with very diverse positions of what it meant to be Muslim. *TAMAM* involved a narrower range but one that drew on existing framing by Muslims in Berlin. *Multaka* and *daHEIM* eschewed a ‘Muslim’ framing altogether. Each of these, together with the focal framings that were instead deployed and the organisational framings involved, had particular implications. *TAMAM* and to some extent *Multaka* were self-bounded projects insofar as they were framed not so much for a general public as for their own specified group – ‘by Muslims for Muslims’, ‘by refugees, for refugees’. As such, the content of the initiatives was not intended, at least initially, to reach beyond these significant target groups. Nevertheless, the very fact of the initiatives – that Muslims or refugees were positioned as the authorities – itself constituted an important disruption of wider stereotypes. A next step, then, that our research suggests, is that such participatory initiatives extend further, to change reshape outputs for wider publics.

Our other case, *daHEIM*, did just that. It did so, however, not under a label of ‘Muslim’, which necessarily meant that it did not explicitly challenge stereotypes about Islam and Muslims. Nevertheless, in providing an alternative account of forced flight from that predominating at that time, in which Muslims were often negatively stereotyped, it acted as a significant counterpoint. Moreover, it disrupted the very category of refugee itself – instead emphasising shared humanity and individual life stories.

daHEIM might also be seen as an example of an approach discussed in the introduction to this volume, namely that of ‘mainstreaming’, in which Islam and Muslims are neither the organisational nor the focal frame but nevertheless are included where relevant. What the case discussed here shows is that if this is approached in terms of the selection of individual exhibits, this can lead to collateral effects, such as the adoption or exclusion of certain angles in unintended ways. On the basis of this research observation, we suggest that close attention to framing at such detailed levels – to which case studies such as this one can contribute – might help in future.

Our ethnographic research, with its attention to practice, made evident that there are aspects of participatory process that themselves can have collateral as well as intended effects. In the *daHEIM* example, the very giving of authority to participants (each wrote their own text) led to the effect involved (a limited representation of Islam). It should be noted that such an occurrence is not confined to participative exhibition-making – many exhibitions are made without extensive analysis of the way in which certain inputs will come together. More

specific, however, though also not absent from more conventional exhibition-making, is the idea that the participants' perspectives should not be questioned. The example of *Urban Islam* showed especially clearly how difficult that could be, particularly as participants had such different views and that even to show that went against the perspectives of some. This may well be an 'unsolvable puzzle' as Shatanawi suggests (2012b, p. 192). Nevertheless, bringing it to awareness – again, not least through such examples – might be of some assistance. In effect, this would be to develop a museological practice of co-criticality.²⁰ This might also be of relevance for addressing tendencies to avoid controversial topics that we have suggested that participatory practice might inadvertently encourage through its framing in terms of hospitality, as well as an emphasis on 'good atmospheres'.

In all of the cases discussed here, the lay participants brought their own perspectives – their own frames – to bear. They variously discussed objects and made inputs into the tours and exhibition that were rooted in their own experiences and ways of seeing things. As such, they broke with prior frames that had been set. This could even involve questioning categories in use, such as refugee.

There is even further that this could go – especially into more substantial and durable change to museums' collecting practices, permanent galleries and staffing. Here, we might also note that the very idea of an 'initiative' – rather like the visit from a guest in hospitality metaphors – is time-limited. Certainly, the hope is that it sets something in motion for the future. But longer production in which this can more substantially develop – providing the opportunity to go beyond the misunderstandings and heightened politeness that may characterise early encounters – is especially important in such work. This is already happening in some of the cases discussed above as they have progressed. Moreover, what may become even more possible over time is to engage in deeper reframing, drawing on alternative notions of heritage inspired by certain Islamic ideas or Muslim practices, including of the kind highlighted in other chapters within this volume. All of the cases discussed here – and participatory initiatives more generally – are important impulses towards reframing the diversity of Islamic arts, cultures, beliefs and life styles in museums and heritage in Europe. It is to further inspired and effective reframing that we hope our analysis in this chapter contributes.

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Notes

- 1 See, for example Bier (2017), Gonzalez (2018), Heath (2007), Naguib (2015), Spielhaus (2013), Winegar (2008).
- 2 The core of the project looks at the UK and Germany between 1945 and 2014, concentrating on permanent galleries, though it also entailed wider discussion with scholars (including Macdonald and Shatanawi, who were both members of its advisory board) working elsewhere. Grinell et al. (2019) is a short summary of the main results; see also Grinell (2020).
- 3 The phase 'refugee crisis' was widely used in the media and public discussion and continues to be referred to as such. Some have criticised its use, suggesting that it implies that the refugees are the cause of the problems or that it suggests a temporary difficulty, thus ignoring more long-term dimensions. See Bock and Macdonald (2019).
- 4 From the end of 2014 until July 2016, about 580,000 people were granted legal status as refugees in Germany, making the total number of refugees 1.1 million, not counting the 200,000–250,000 people whose status was still being processed (Brücker et al., 2016: 1). See also Wech (2016) for the situation Europe-wide.
- 5 See <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/auslaenderstatistik-stichtag.html> (accessed 27.4.2020).
- 6 See the Pew report: <https://www.pewforum.org/essay/the-growth-of-germanys-muslim-population/> (accessed 30.4.2020). In 2010 Germany's Muslim population was about 3.3 Million, 4.1% of the population. In 2016, 4.9% of Europe's population was estimated to be Muslim, with figures ranging from 0.2% or less in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and the Baltic states, to 11.1% in Bulgaria, 8.8% in France and 8.1% in Sweden (and figures not available for Balkan countries).
- 7 We use the abbreviations for the museum names that are already in use in Germany.
- 8 See the TAMAM website: <https://tamam-projekt.de/wer-ist-tamam/> (accessed 27.4.2020). The website is in German and translations are our own. For further information on the project, see <https://multaka.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Multaka-Concept-and-Content.pdf> (accessed 27.4.2020).
- 9 <https://multaka.de/en/project-2/> (accessed 30.4.2020).
- 10 The funding was from the Bundesministerium für Familien, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (BMFSFJ).
- 11 The DHM is a foundation directly under the Federal State, the others are all part of the State Museums of Berlin, which are governed by the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation.
- 12 <https://www.kunstasyl.net/en/eg/4> (accessed 30.4.2020).
- 13 See the exhibition's online website at: the exhibition on the museum website: https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/_wKCbLGQzCazKA?hl=de (accessed 4.6.2020).
- 14 See <http://www.carmah.berlin/making-differences-in-berlin/> (accessed 30.4.2020).
- 15 <https://multaka.de/en/project-2/> (accessed 30.4.2020).
- 16 <https://multaka.de/en/1031-2/> (accessed 30.4.2020).
- 17 The funding from the Bundesministerium für Familien, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (BMFSFJ) was specifically for a refugee-linked project (Stefan Weber, interview with Rikke Gram 25.11.2016).

- 18 As explained by the exhibition creators: <https://www.kunstasyl.net/en/eg/4a> (accessed 30.4.2020).
- 19 <https://multaka.de/en/project-2/> (accessed 30.4.2020).
- 20 As proposed in Sharon Macdonald's lecture 'When can museologists make a difference? Co-criticality and creative engagement', Reinwardt Academy 11.11.2016. See also Tinius and Macdonald (2020).

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