III. Challenging Neo-Colonial Museum Practices

8. Developing Infrastructures and Sustainable Ethics

The previous chapters draw together reflections from participants and practitioners in order to consider the outcomes of a selection of four participatory projects. These projects exhibit a great variety in approaches, highlighting the many aspects that impact participatory practice, as well as the different ways in which these practices can lead to sustainable outcomes or consequences. In this chapter, I discuss my findings in relation to the theoretical framework and methodologies. I assessed the participatory projects *daHEIM: Glances into Fugitive Lives* at the MEK, *Museum Takeover* at the Leicester Museum & Art Gallery, *So sehe ich das…* at Museum Friedland, and *Aleppo* at the Tropenmuseum by way of project documents and interviews with practitioners and participants. I defined the focus of my investigations according to the outcomes and consequences most prominently discussed by my interview partners. This approach recognises the fact that their considerations cannot be generalised into findings that apply to all participatory projects with forced migrants, or to all participants; instead, it provides insight into the observations from some of the people involved in the projects to show how different experiences tie in with potential project outcomes.

The analytical chapters are threaded together with a comparative analysis of the outcomes of participatory practices for the museum and of those that benefit the participants. I addressed the different goals and related outcomes of participatory museum work with forced migrants; a framing that highlighted the relevance of the social, organisational, spatial, discursive, material and digital dimensions of these practices. The chapters carefully examined the practices of inviting 'communities' to work with the museum and aspiring to create a network (Chapter 3), the difficulties of empowering participants (Chapter 4), the potential of creating and maintaining a 'safe

space' (Chapter 5), the museum's efforts to transform the discourse on forced migration (Chapter 6) and the preservation of material remnants as well as the online afterlives of projects (Chapter 7). These are outlined below in an overview of my findings, providing context for the discussion of their relevance for future approaches to working with forced migrants in museums.

After a summary of my findings, this chapter addresses three central aspects of participatory work that form common threads throughout the previous chapters of this study. These aspects – the sustainable outcomes and consequences of museum work; the changes in organisational infrastructure, in particular the aspects that facilitate participatory work; and the ethical questions that came up in relation to different parts of the participatory process – round out the project evaluation. By way of a more detailed assessment of these aspects, the next few sections consider how they relate to the relevant literature and the theoretical framework defined in the first part of this study.

8.1   Overview

Before returning to the aim of this study and further discussing a number of related problems, this sub-chapter summarises the findings thus far, outlining the focus and findings of the previous five chapters of the book, which analysed the outcomes of my four case studies.

In these chapters, I looked at how participatory projects start from an invitation, through which museums intend to reach out to a 'community' of forced migrants. Through a study of the museum's methods, I identified their use of an 'area of curiosity' (Lindström and Ståhl 2016) as a helpful way to steer clear of the assumption that forced migrants function as a uniform group. Rather than incorporating supposed communities into the museum's network, friendships and other informal relationships can result in a distributed network where the museum no longer sits at the centre of engagement. A revised approach to invitations and relations can support shared goals and redefine the museum's contribution towards them. I also found that empowerment is an important goal of participatory work, which is not necessarily dependent on power relations but rather on what these translate into in practice. Project roles, collaborative practices and methods of recognition are key for empowerment; however, they only function as such when the related processes are transparent. As outlined

by Heumann Gurian when discussing 'safe spaces' (1995), the relations and trust between participants and practitioners are very much affected by the relationships (and hierarchies) they see between practitioners. These relationships are paramount for the museum if it wishes to become a 'safe space'. Although breaking down barriers and presenting a more inclusive narrative are good first steps towards creating such a space, museums need to consider how to continue to maintain their 'safe spaces' when projects 'go public'. Should practitioners succeed, these become spaces to which participants want to return. Feeling included in the narrative, however, also depends on the museum's discourse and the ways in which the participatory project contributed to this discourse. In all of the projects, participants and practitioners collaborated to develop a narrative that was intended to challenge the dominant discourse on migration. With discursive outputs ranging from exhibition displays to marketing texts, the projects rarely managed to construct a discourse without stereotyping refugees and perpetuating practices of exclusion. Similar processes could be seen in the selection of project outputs for the museum's collection; with the museum failing to represent the history of the objects or the stories attached to these objects by the participants, instead framing them as representative of the refugee protection crisis and the museum's swift response. These aspects in particular – in addition to the careless approach to the contextualisation of the materials found online – perpetuate processes of 'othering' of forced migrants, and in particular of people who continue to experience structural discrimination due to their skin colour, ethnicity or religion.

These findings reveal the complexities of participatory work as well how fragile the sustainability of the outcomes of these practices can be. They suggest that the temporality of museum work may sometimes be a blessing, as suggested by Wonisch (2012); however, these case studies reveal that even temporary projects have long-term outcomes and consequences that need to be considered. Despite most of the outcomes serving potential goals of the participants, it is evident that none of these cases started by asking the participants about their goals. Instead, the goals were based on assumptions and often aligned with potential contributions that served the museum, and potentially a segment of society. Starting from a practical shift in the museum's role – one that is experienced and seen by the public and participants alike – the institution might be able to address three aspects most relevant for a practice of care: the potential to incorporate sustainable outcomes into museum practice; the development of

organisational infrastructures and an awareness of the role of the institution and its practitioners; and the practice of ethics within the neo-colonial 'contact zone'.

Through the ethical frameworks that defined the practices studied, the museum upholds the neo-colonial 'contact zone' as defined by Boast (2011). The ethics of collaborative work and collecting practices within this neo-colonial institution perpetuate an approach that no longer corresponds to the museum's revised role. Within the organisational infrastructure of the museum, practitioners are limited to certain approaches and restricted by their respective departments. Transforming and applying a more ethical practice, however, is dependent upon the practitioners who constitute the museum and define its outputs. A revision of these aspects of the institution provides the foundation for participatory processes that steer towards more sustainable outcomes. Through a discussion of these aspects, I will go beyond mere reflection on the processes and outcomes, allowing for an evaluation of the necessary changes to museums and their practices, as well as to the discussion and research surrounding participatory work with forced migrants.

8.2   Developing museum infrastructures to facilitate participation

Through this study of recent participatory museum practices, the limitations of museum infrastructures and their insufficient extension beyond museum spaces and allocated time frames become evident. In some cases, this has compromised the potential for more sustainable practices. The participatory work and the maintenance of its outcomes was moulded by the institutional frameworks, such as distinct divisions between different museum departments, as well as the restricted use of museum spaces, digital spaces, or limitations on human resources. The infrastructures underlying museum practices are fundamental to the way museum practitioners work, but also to the aspects that are neglected by the museum. While museum infrastructures are generally invisible, they were brought to the foreground by practitioners and participants in their accounts of the limitations encountered. Revealing these limitations or obstacles through practice underscores the developments these infrastructures require in order to adapt them to the task of facilitating participatory practices. It is these developments that are further teased out in this sub-chapter, as I bring

together the findings from my different chapters with the organisational developments that have occurred since.

In the case studies, it was evident that the practices and their potential outcomes were defined by the museum's organisational infrastructure, as well as the different roles and approaches of the people working within these structures. As identified in Chapter 1 (theoretical framework) and outlined for the different case studies in Chapter 2, many different stakeholders are involved in a participatory museum project; yet the process, as became clear from this study, is predominantly defined by the museum practitioners, project facilitators and (to an extent) the participants. These stakeholders interacted with, and relied on, the infrastructures in place, which, in some cases, turned out to limit the practices and the sustainable outcomes.

The participatory work at the Tropenmuseum and the Leicester Museum & Art Gallery was initiated by, and limited to, education and community engagement teams. *Museum Takeover* in Leicester was developed with external partners and it did not extend into other museum departments during or after the project. Since the project, the community engagement team has been expanded from one person – the person I interviewed about the project – to a team of four full-time and one part-time staff members, including a health and well-being officer, a young people's officer, and a community engagement manager (LM-MT02). These developments are enhanced by the museum's newly acquired status as a Museum of Sanctuary, which, as the community engagement officer explained, means that: "your [the museum's] commitment to engaging refugees and asylum seekers is written into your policies, your work plans, your future or your future planning" (LM-MT02). This has shifted the museum's focus and ensures participatory work with forced migrants will be a mainstay for the foreseeable future. The changes reveal, on the one hand, that community engagement or participatory work has become more embedded in the institution, yet on the other hand, it does not necessarily point to an increased integration of, or collaboration between, the different museum departments. As pointed out in Chapter 7 on the material and digital outcomes, the curatorial and collection management staff did not deem the project outputs relevant enough to be collected, which seemed to tie in with a hierarchical division between museum departments. These hierarchies, especially between curators and community-focused roles (McCall and Gray 2014) are embedded in museum infrastructures, and they continue to be negotiated within the museum.

A similar gap between different departments became apparent for the practitioners involved in the *Aleppo* project at the Tropenmuseum; the participatory aspect of this project was organised by one of the museum educators, who developed this separately from the exhibition. Due to the limited understanding about the project in other departments, administration processes felt more difficult than necessary (T-A03), and none of the objects (including those already owned by the museum) were accessioned into the collection afterwards (T-A06). The exhibitions manager pointed out that normally the curators or conservators decided whether to obtain input from outside the museum (following a contributory logic), but these practices are dependent on the individual staff members and their ambitions and ideas for working collaboratively (T-A06). Rather than merely identifying the infrastructures that support (or limit) participatory museum practices, it is important to emphasise the roles of the individuals involved, their willingness to navigate these infrastructures, and the position from which they do this. This also becomes clear from the disconnect between the exhibition team and the collection team at the Tropenmuseum, where participatory projects in one department rarely (if at all) stretch to the other departments, despite both curators and conservators doing participatory work. The gulf between these departments and their practices limits the possibilities for the museum to create a "network of engagement" as described by Morse (2021). A lack of communication across the museum's organisational infrastructure restricts its capacity to involve, widen and connect networks of (former) participants.

This brings me to the next aspect of this section, which addresses the potential of developing and maintaining networks (as discussed in Chapter 3). Despite a 'network of communities' being a common goal of participatory work, there are limited 'relational' infrastructures in place to support such networks or to maintain connections. None of the researched museums managed to maintain relationships with the participants, or at least, not through the available institutional infrastructures. The lack of a relational infrastructure became especially evident through one practitioner's attempt to maintain relationships through a privately used digital application. The practices of the museum educator at Museum Friedland revealed that a network can only be maintained in a sustainable way if it becomes an integrated part of museum work. Social media platforms provide the opportunity for continued personal contact, but they lack an institutional basis and eat into the practitioners' personal life. A participant from the

daHEIM project at the MEK also pointed to the need for a physical space to come together, particularly after the project ended. The lack of such a space meant that newly built relationships came to an end rather abruptly. These spatial infrastructures do exist and inform participatory practices, yet the access to museum spaces is limited to the project's duration. In the case of the MEK, the related use of the museum spaces did shift throughout the process: some of the museum's spaces were used as a studio space, and regulations were changed on a temporary basis to support a participatory process that was welcoming and made participants (initially) feel safe and secure. The project was an eye-opener for the museum practitioners, who learned about the potential obstacles of their spaces and the regulations that apply here. These lessons can feed into future participatory projects, and may remind the MEK to discuss the necessary adjustments to the space both during the preparation and delivery phases. A safe space remains in existence in the Nissenhütte, which is a separate building belonging to Museum Friedland. Workshops start and end here, and the project outputs were presented here to create a space with low barriers to participation and more flexibility.

Other infrastructures that were highlighted through the projects were those in place for (participatory) collecting and the organisation of the museum's database. The aforementioned examples of organisational infrastructure and their limitations also impacted the opportunity to collect outputs from the process, yet these do not apply to the processes that take place once the decision to collect certain artefacts has been made. Museum Friedland discussed the collecting process with the project participants, but the photographs were accessioned behind closed doors, and they are not accessible online today. The MEK did make the collected works available online, but this transparency pointed to another aspect that had been neglected: the participants were not involved in the selection process nor were they consulted about the meaning of the works they had created during the project. This resulted in limited and stereotypical representations of certain works and their (former) locations. In response to the unresolved conflict and aspects revealed through this research, the museum director pointed out that the collected outputs need to be revisited and expressed they were unsure how to go about this. I suggested that, in my capacity as a curator at the museum, I could reach out to the former participants to reassess the documentation of these works in the near future. This process identifies aspects that need to be integrated into the collection processes in the future, and therefore, slowly shift the ways in which the available infrastructures might be used.

Several previous studies have stressed the need to reinvent the museum (Labadi 2018) or called for organisational change in museums (Black 2021; Janes and Sandell 2019). As this section and the various examples mentioned throughout this study have made clear, changes are necessary if museums wish to expand their practices and outcomes so that they benefit participants and develop a more ethical practice in the long run. Most infrastructures, however, can be moulded and reconstructed to meet the needs of the practitioners and participants, and some of the projects already sparked small or large changes within the institutional infrastructures. Institutions are shaped by the people who work within them, and these people are key to changing common (unethical) approaches and finding ways to make projects worthwhile for participants. Museum practice is as reliant on the museum infrastructures as it is on the people who work within them, and their attitude towards participatory projects and the participants. An integrated participatory practice with more sustainable outcomes does not just rely on the work of community engagement officers or museum educators, but needs to be enacted by different practitioners across the institution.

8.3   Sustainable outcomes and consequences

As mentioned at the outset of this study, James Clifford referred to a collaborative project that he thought lacked long-term outcomes for the participants (cited in Boast 2011, 63), be it in the sense of ongoing relationships or other potential benefits of collaboration. Through the evaluation of the different projects and their outcomes for museum practitioners and project participants, I have found plenty of evidence to support Clifford's observation, as conveyed by Boast (2011). Boast points to a lack of long-term engagement and problematises the "conflict between two fundamentally different sets of assumptions about what the engagements were for" (2011, 63). Much like what is described by Boast, the projects at the centre of my study reveal the ways in which museums and participants engaged in the project with largely incompatible expectations. As such, museums failed to live up to the expectations of the participants, failing to engage in longer-term obligations towards the group they worked with. The projects demonstrate that shared expectations or goals are not the only path to positive outcomes for participants, and that many of the positive experiences reported were fostered through practices that facilitated dialogue and transparency, as well

as practices that made participants feel heard and valued. In this sub-chapter, I re-evaluate the notion of sustainable outcomes or consequences by way of examples drawn from the different case studies. Through this discussion, I identify the sustainability as an outcome in itself, and outline how this might serve the (former) project participants.

The study is organised around some of the common goals of participatory projects. These goals are set by museums, either for the participants (without consultation), such as creating a 'safe space' or facilitating empowerment; or for the museum, such as additions to the collection and developing a 'community' network. The chapter focusing on discourse addresses a goal that might serve both the participants (by developing a positive narrative on forced migrants) and the museum (by contributing to the contemporary debate to become more relevant). The ways in which the museum practitioners worked towards these goals differ from project to project, depending in part on their envisioned output. Outputs are direct, often material results of a project, whereas outcomes (and consequences) follow the process and are more often intangible. Not all outputs result in outcomes, but most projects are geared towards specific outputs, such as, for example, an exhibition. The case studies analysed in this investigation all worked towards a specific output: *Museum Takeover* developed additional labels for the permanent exhibition, *So sehe ich das…* resulted in photographs taken by forced migrants in Friedland, the *Aleppo* project added a personal narrative to a (nearly) finished exhibition, and *daHEIM: Glances into Fugitive Lives* led to a temporary exhibition at, and a publication edited by, the MEK. None of the projects allowed for a process that did not establish an output before engaging forced migrants; the museums defined what should come out of the projects, and did not provide much room for suggestions on what should be the result of the collaborative work. During some of the projects, however, further outputs were produced along the way. As the museum educator from Museum Friedland pointed out, there is not always a need for a tangible output (MF-S02). Rather than thinking about outputs when designing a new participatory project, museum practitioners could consider potential outcomes, ideally in consultation with the (envisioned) participants.

Participatory work with people who have been marginalised (but also participatory work more generally) should begin with a conversation with the envisioned participants to negotiate the anticipated outcomes and the projected sustainability or continuation of a project. Sustainability, then, is seen as an outcome in itself, or perhaps a tangible continuation of (some

of) the project outcomes. Together with participants, museum practitioners can identify the envisioned outcomes and discuss the steps necessary for achieving them within the scope of the project (or as part of the work of the museum). This is especially important *because* the participants invited to work in the museum are being marginalised; there are few structures and projects set up to prioritise *their* needs and benefit *their* well-being. The context of the participants is relevant in deciding how to frame (and sustain) a participatory project. One of the former participants I spoke to underlined the ways in which the temporality of the project was problematic for them, stating:

> We created and did a lot. We were the central focus of this, and now our stories, our pictures, our works have been the, kind of like the impact of the website of the project, and we have no access, no possibility to all of this. We are the ones who are being published and interviewed and written about, and this all goes again, for the – I don't know – Western white society and institutions and press and museums and artists. And we are just, again, who we are. We stay in this position, and nothing really systematically or in other ways changes about us or for us. (MEK-D08)

The participant identified an issue that is key to the premise of the present investigation; they emphasise that a participatory project can provide much needed structure or purpose, and could perhaps do so systematically. At the same time, the participant points out that they felt they contributed much to the museum without getting much in return. Their comment emphasises the problematic nature of practicing participation following a contributory logic (see Morse 2021). This logic was not necessarily very prominent in all of the case studies. At Leicester Museum & Art Gallery, the participants were invited to write labels that could be added to the existing displays in the museum; the project was not initiated from within the museum but framed as an intervention, serving as a means of supporting the participants' writing process first and as an addition to the museum second. This became especially clear through the framing of the intervention by the museum and the limited involvement from other museum practitioners in the project. However, as seen in the previous section, this also meant that the engagement with the participants remained far removed from other, 'central' museum practices such as exhibition-making and collecting; with the outcomes remaining limited in terms of potential contributions to the discourse. The connection to the museum was dependent on one practitioner and their dedication to collaborative work with forced migrants. Similar efforts were

seen by the museum educator at Museum Friedland, who supported the participants on a personal level and tried to remain in contact after the project ended. Despite the project's goal of developing an output for the museum's catalogue, both practitioners were dedicated to producing outcomes that were relevant for the participants as well. The fact that the museum educator had themselves arrived in Friedland after fleeing their home country some years earlier allowed for a more personal and empathetic approach to the project participants and their possible needs and interests, and especially a heightened awareness of what they do not need straight after arriving in Germany.

Through the evaluation process that shaped this study, it became clear that some of the envisioned goals did align with the some of the participants' goals; participants of the *daHEIM* project mentioned the importance of a 'safe space' and the project being a means of connecting with other people; a participant of the *Aleppo* project pointed to the exhibition as a way to share their story about their former home, contributing to the discourse; and a participant from *Museum Takeover* addressed the potential of breaking stereotypes, while other participants from the same project referred to the many friendships that formed during the project. This highlights that museums can often do both, and consider the outputs relevant for the institution, based on a process informed by the goals outlined by the participants. The problem underlying the processes studied here is that the projects did contribute to (some of) the participants' goals, but they failed to do so in the long run. The temporal solutions offered through the participatory project did not provide a sustainable answer; suggesting that sustainability does indeed constitute a relevant outcome in itself. This sustainability requires infrastructural shifts and the museum practitioner's dedication to the participants and their goals. These shifts themselves can be a result of another outcome that could be integrated sustainably: the lessons learned from a museum project and the ways in which these feed into future museum work. The sustainability of this outcome, as with that of the other outcomes, relies on the evaluation process and its connection to (further) practice.

It is of paramount importance that an evaluation, such as the one conducted for this study, forms an integral component of the process. Such an evaluation process provides the different stakeholders with the opportunity to outline (shared) goals, assess the progress made towards these goals, and evaluate the process and further steps towards the end of a project. This process might lead to participants expressing no interest in remaining in

contact, or in their work being collected by the museum, or it could result in a conversation about how the relationship could be maintained in a meaningful way for all involved. At the same time, it acts as a means to ensure that outcomes are not broken down before the end of the project is even reached, such as what was described by some of the participants of the *daHEIM* project in relation to the creation of a 'safe space' in the museum. The sustainability of the participatory project relies on these opportunities for shared feedback and reflection, as well as on an outcome-focused – rather than output-led – process. As I pointed out at the start of this book, a sustainable practice as I have framed it requires a careful and constant interrogation of ethics; it demands a future-proof approach that is the result of a non-hierarchical collaborative practice, which allows for input or changes even after the project has drawn to a close. This aspect is addressed in the following sub-chapter.

8.4   Ethics in neo-colonial museums

At the start of this investigation, I outlined the colonial framework that continues to define the museum today. Despite the practitioners' efforts to changing the institution (in part through participatory approaches), the inherent colonial nature of the museum, its infrastructures and spaces remains problematic (Wajid and Minott 2019; Kassim 2017). In assessing the practices of museums and their approach to forced migration, it has become evident that practitioners perpetuate the colonial practices that form the foundations of the museum. The colonial nature of the institution makes for a problematic environment to engage in participatory work with forced migrants, yet this work is important, and museums do have the opportunity to positively contribute to the lives of the participants. In order to transform these practices, museum practitioners need to reconsider their position in a participatory museum project, address the ethics of their practices and their focus on a so-called 'community', and make sure the outcomes of their practices will be considered ethical in the future, or can be adapted to align with future ethical frameworks.

Since their foundation, museums have been inherently colonial, and even today, the institutions' infrastructures and knowledge systems define what happens inside of the museum. Philipp Schorch and Conal McCarthy point out that colonialism is not a historical event; indeed, rather than being an event with a beginning and an ending, it is an ongoing process that

continues to inform museum work (2019, 11). As outlined by Boast, the nature and historical context of museums means that they can never be a site of reciprocity and mutual benefit. "They remain sites where Others come to perform for us, not with us" (2011, 63). Boast describes museums as neo-colonial rather than 'post-colonial' institutions, as their colonial frameworks and the inherent nature of their spaces and objectives are still very much present. I too use this description to describe the uncompleted process of 'decolonising' museums, and to highlight that in fact, the contributory logic that informed most of these projects bears similarities with a colonial approach. Informed by the ambitions of the museum rather than the needs of the participants, participatory projects that follow a logic of contribution extract information or input for goals that do not necessarily serve those involved. The case studies outlined in this study did not become 'contact zones' of reciprocity (Clifford 1997), however some aspects of the studied processes did have the potential to move the institution and its intentions away from its colonial past and present. In discussing ethics in museums, Macdonald refers to the potential of learning from history by accepting the museum's ownership of a negative history. I would like to extend this notion to the present, and suggest that in their work with forced migrants today, museums should acknowledge this negative history and how it continues to impact the lives of the people with whom they engage.

In order for museum work to positively contribute towards the lives of forced migrants, museum practitioners need to consider and address the ethical implications of such work, and be prepared to find themselves confronted with the museum's and their own colonial perspectives and discriminatory practices. Some of the participants made reference to stereotypical representations being used by the museum, not receiving credit for their work, not being paid fairly for their input, or not being included in important decisions about the project; these are all aspects that point towards discriminatory practices, even if they might not be intended as such. Bayer and Terkessidis point out that with a participatory process, "it is thus about the knowledge that, due to the marginalised perspective, can be expected to provide insight into the mechanics of objectification and racialisation" (2017, 62). As such, a participatory project – as suggested by Ahmed (2012) – is not merely about working in institutions, but also entails working *on* institutions. These practices themselves should be considered carefully, but also provide the institution with an opportunity to reflect on its infrastructures and related processes of discrimination or racialisation.

Despite the importance of this reflective practice and institutional learning, museum practitioners should also ensure that the evolution of the institution does not rely on the participants. This aligns with what Nora Berenstain suggested when describing epistemic exploitation as a process by which "privileged persons compel marginalized persons to produce an education or explanation about the nature of the oppression they face" (2016, 570). The process of self-reflection is, instead, the responsibility of the institution and its staff, who could benefit from an analysis "of the mechanisms by which power and authority are exerted *within* as well as beyond the museum" (Message 2018, 111, emphasis in original). The processes of decision-making, as discussed in Chapter 4, reflect these unequal power relations due to the lack of transparency and dialogue with the participants about decisions that affect them.

The complexity of the institution and its changing role require a clear ethical framework for future museum work. As pointed out by Marstine (see section 1.2.3), museum ethics rely on the idea that the institutions' ethics are based on a sense of "moral agency" (2011, 5). The case studies, however, underline that the practice of ethics tends to be dependent on the moral agency of the museum's practitioners. For participatory practices to become relevant to participants, practitioners should be able to apply an ethical framework that is understood as ethical by the participants themselves. In keeping with this, the collaborative process should be tailored to the participants, not based on ideas about a presumed 'community' but on a shared evaluation of the museum's supposedly ethical approaches and the position of the practitioners involved. At this stage in the process, all those who will engage with the work, communicate about the work and interact with the participants should be involved, in order to avoid future misconceptions or misguided practices (as was seen in the creation of the content for social media by an external company for the MEK). Additionally, as this study demonstrates, museum practitioners need to allow room for personal perspectives on ethical behaviours and be open to confrontations about experiences of discrimination. Participatory practices, as such, are intended as a means of eliminating a practice based on assumptions about personal or cultural truths.

The different studies assessed in this research were part of the museums' programmes several years before I conducted any interviews. This delayed evaluation process was important because since the project, many of the former participants have become more settled in their new country of

residence, enabling them to reflect differently on their situation from this new perspective. However, it proved especially interesting because the public discourse in countries in the Global North had shifted, leading to greater awareness about discrimination and structural racism. This became clear in the interviews with practitioners and some participants, who pointed out that they now saw the situation differently, or even displayed embarrassment about their own ignorance about the hierarchies that were part of the project at the time. This demonstrates that when considering an ethical framework museum practitioners need to allow for input to ensure a 'future-proof' ethical approach, and include a potential process of revision, in case future outputs or outcomes become outdated.

In moving towards bottom-up approaches, decision-making processes are only partially handed over, and potential ethical problems are dealt with during the process rather than predicted and confronted beforehand. Defined by the group that the museums have invited to participate, the projects cannot be treated like any other participatory project; the people the museum works with must be able to inform and draw out potential ethical concerns. This necessity to tailor project plans and processes according to the individuals involved (though this study only focuses on one so-called 'group') is most likely also applicable to participatory work with other 'communities'. In light of the processes and their consequences discussed in this study, ethical frameworks and their relevance for projects' future outcomes need to be reconsidered. In response to increased ambitions to decolonise the museum, a logic of care (as described by Morse 2021) would allow for an ethical practice that is not aimed at being for the museum's 'own good'. As neo-colonial institutions that aim to facilitate processes of 'decolonisation', museums have the ethical obligation towards forced migrants to consider and cater to some of their needs as part of a participatory project.