

Cultural enlightenment project

The meeting, the big one, you remember, don't you? Let me refresh your memory even though I don't have any recollection of attending any such meeting. So, dear reader, please, do not take me more seriously than I deserve.

On the 7th of April 2010, the record shows, the Red Cross staff in the refugee camp Sigerslev arranged a meeting for all its residents.

Residents were addressed by Pia Basie, social coordinator, who, on behalf of the entire Sigerslev Red Cross staff, wanted to stress certain issues, which may have caused some misunderstanding lately. Misunderstanding of what?, some may rightfully ask. Please, ignore and just keep reading.

Without starting a social or anthropological analysis, and disregarding common rhetorical ambiguity, it is fair to say that these misunderstandings have their roots in what is nowadays denoted by a fancy expression "cultural differences". This was, indeed the underlying motivation for calling the meeting.

Still, it is true that the initial intent on the side of the Red

Cross staff was to be instructive and constructive, although some people may have taken it as a rebuke or at least as an ungrounded criticism. However, I'll leave it for now in the hope of avoiding yet another misunderstanding.

The issues in question concerned mainly the residents' conduct in public places. There seems to be a clash, or at least it has come to someone's attention that there has been a clash between the expectation Danish community (local community in particular) has for the residents of Sigerslev, and the way (some of) the residents behave. Let's skip the unhappy episodes that bear witness to those clashes. They are after all misunderstandings of the differences between cultures, if anyone was really that naïve to buy this sort of excuse. Anyhow, I only want to write a reminder, and that, however, seems to be a good excuse. So let's continue.

It would be tiresome, if not a bit offending to the reader (whoever she or he may be) to repeat here all these "no's" and "must not's" that were spoken during the meeting. Therefore, we will settle with less and stress again some of the addressed

points in a rather civil manner.

Here it goes.

Residents of Sigerslev, newcomers, please pay attention to the landscape of public space, especially for those signs such as traffic signs, "*no trespassing*" signs, "*ladies room*" signs etc.. Please, observe signs that define the conduct in public places. And, of course, please, respect what these signs read.

If there are no such signs visible, remember then that politeness, good manners and respectfulness are considered virtues in this society. Be virtuous and live by them!

Of course, there still remain some tricky situations regarding cultural differences that may seem too hard to swallow. Take for instance my neighbor sunbathing topless (naked) in her backyard.

Please, remember, here it is still "*no trespassing*" and "*no staring*" that applies, and "*no peeping*" too, or I'm going too far. Anyway and more importantly, here in the backyard it is still respectfulness that counts.

If this cultural difference still tastes awful, consider then a Devils' tip, "if you can't help disrespecting at least disrespect in a gentleman's way". This is a

backside of tolerance and yet another virtue, or perhaps, just another sign.

Should some of these tricky situations put your tolerance and your broad-mindedness to the test, please refrain from falling. Stay virtuous! Be better!

Act responsibly! I had to say this although I know you always did. And if it is sometimes required, be also responsible for others. Dear Residents, please help those who do not understand this and make them virtuous, make them better!

Refreshed enough?

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