

STUDY OF ETHNIC DIVERSITY IN DANISH FILM

Summary

The board of the Danish Film Institute in 2013 decided to launch a diversity initiative focusing on ethnicity. In this initiative, the collection and sharing of knowledge about ethnic diversity in Danish film is an important link in the chain of forward-looking efforts with the industry.

On that backdrop, the Film institute launched an extensive process of collecting and collating data across the film industry. This report for the first time shares results that more broadly illuminate the ethnic diversity in Danish film as it appears behind the camera, in films and among the audience.

The diversity in Danish film is compared with the current national demographics.

In the majority of the report, the group of 'new Danes' (immigrants or descendants of immigrants) is organized by origin from Western or non-Western countries, respectively. Per 1 January 2014, the share of new Danes constitutes 11.1% of the general population, including 3.9% of Western origin and 7.2% of non-Western origin. The share of new Danes is greatest in the younger part of the population.

The share of employed new Danes of non-Western origin is lower in the Danish film industry as a whole than in the general population. The share of non-Western new Danes employed in production and post-production is particularly low.

The ethnic diversity among students in film education programmes and film-related education does not as a whole reflect Danish society – particularly considering the fact that the 22-35-year age group includes a large share of new Danes. There are major variations between individual programmes and schools. The animation and film-direction programmes in the 2009-2013 period had a significantly higher share of new Danish students than the other programmes. Especially in the scriptwriting and production programmes, the share of new Danish students is notably low in the reported period.

In the survey of Danish features released in the 2012-2014 period, the share of new-Danish actors corresponds to the current demographics. When it comes to the distribution of roles, however, the survey shows that non-Western actors appear in a lot more supporting roles than lead roles. When it comes to the nature of the roles, the distribution is particularly skewed: while the share of new Danish characters in supporting roles corresponds to the general demographic makeup, there are no non-western new Danish characters in lead roles in Danish films in the period. For Danish documentaries the picture is quite different. The share of new Danish characters is much higher and most are of non-Western descent, just as non-Western new Danes to an even greater extent appear as primary characters.

In terms of audiences, the share of non-Western, new Danish cinemagoers corresponds to the general population. Younger new Danes are particularly active cinemagoers, while the number of seniors who respond that they do not go the cinema is significantly higher among non-Western new Danes than among the population in general. It is notable that new Danish cinemagoers watch Danish films to a much lesser extent than the general population.

In focus-group interviews with groups of new Danes, a desire was voiced for increased identification by casting new Danish actors and for a raised awareness of avoiding the stereotyping of new Danish characters in Danish films.

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