



Only 28% of Danes use cars. Even that small percentage mostly relies on bicycles and public transport during the weekdays. Bicycle 'freeways' with 25 km/hr speed limit are common. You are more likely to be hit by a speeding bicycle in Copenhagen rather than a car or a bus. Denmark is so flat that it is often referred to as a pancake. The highest mountain or bump is about 500 feet in height.



Professor Jørgen Wadum, a leading heritage conservation scientist, Mrs. Ida Brændholt Lundgaard, Senior Advisor on Museums with the Danish Agency for Culture and Dr. Rick West Jr., Founding Director Emeritus of the National Museum of the American Indian at the Smithsonian Institution, observe the Mayor of Copenhagen as she receives feedback from citizens and experts on cultural infrastructure and programming during the International Conference on the Inclusive Museum chaired by your Heritage Matters Columnist (<http://onmuseums.com/>)

# HERITAGE MATTERS

## DANES, HYGGE AND HAPPINESS

I love Denmark. Yes, it gets very cold, in fact freezing well below zero C. There is very little light for several months of the year. It is a very expensive place. Yet, Denmark features for the seventh year in a row as one of the top three happiest countries in the world along with Finland and Norway. Copenhagen stacks high on the quality of life indicators as one of the most liveable cities on earth. Why? Needs deeper understanding of life itself!

I moved from Australia to live and work in Denmark for several years prior to moving to live in Amaravathi Heritage Town in the new state of Andhra Pradesh. What makes Copenhagen so liveable is the limit of five stories for buildings, balconies where everybody cultivates flowers, excellent public transportation, free healthcare and quality education, high levels of income, low levels of corruption, social security net, green and wooded areas, low levels of crime and day care for children.

I found the Danish penchant for civic engagement admirable. They are very loud around football matches. Not just in the stadia but also at home watching their national sport on TV. They are even louder concerning cultural rights and social and economic justice. It is one of the most conscientious countries about climate change and environmental conservation. The country is sophisticated to excellent in waste management, Selina Juul's no food waste movement and recycling.

Danes love waterfronts. They love winter swimming and I too got addicted to it as there is nothing like aroma therapy in a 90-degree sauna after jumping in below minus water through a hole in the ice. Danish beaches are littered with human bodies on summer afternoons. In fact, I have never seen a country where people go almost crazy when the sun comes out. Well there is so little of it.

The Black Diamond or National Library is more than a library. Together with the new royal theatre at the waterfront, Danish Centre for Architecture and Design Centre and all the museums and the National Art Gallery, you have one of the highest concentrations of intellectual activity in Europe within walking distance or accessible on the bicycle. Where else would you find new bridges being built for pedestrians and bicycles connecting different parts of the city? Copenhagen of course. So keen are the Danes on the two wheels that Copenhagen has also established and leads the

global bicycle cities index.

While all these factors contribute to happiness, no one can deny that Denmark has its fair share of challenges. Danes are positive about their lives. But they are passionate about safeguarding their quality of life and well-being. Well, it sounds like the perfect place to be in. Wait a minute, Danes have the highest taxation system in the world. As an Australian I had to live in Denmark to understand this aspect. But they are happy to pay for the quality of life and well-being that they enjoy.

So, why I did move to Andhra and not Australia from Denmark? The challenges faced by the new state of Andhra Pradesh need solutionaries and active citizenship. The Hon



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(Professor Dr. Amareswar Galla, an Indo Danish Australian, was a working group expert at the recent Happy Cities Summit)

Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has been more than welcoming to NRIs and OCIs to come back and help. In the recent Happy Cities Summit he emphasised that the goal is to create a happy new capital and state.

Being born and brought up in Andhra, I am the first one to point out that the Nordic countries such as Denmark and Finland have very small populations of around 5 million each. But then, these two countries do not have access to extractive resources like other countries such as Norway.

Helsinki and Copenhagen are creative hubs and vie with each other as the design capitals of the world. My friend Kigge Hvid, Founder of INDEX: Design to Improve Life, has estab-

lished the world's largest design award and promotes sustainable design worldwide. In fact, INDEX Biennale has pushed the boundaries of design in sustainable development across the world.

Andhra could consider the experiences of Finland and Denmark as to how to be innovative and inspirational in building towards addressing all the indicators mentioned above. Happiness itself is aspirational. Well-being is a state of everyday life and measurable. One of the important takeaways from the recent Happy Cities Summit is that participatory governance is critical for people taking ownership and as to how the pathways for happiness are chartered. More importantly as UNESCO has consistently pointed out culture in all its avatars is critical for development and well-being.

Australia has taken a focused approach to culture, health and well-being in several of its arts and heritage programmes and projects. I was privileged to chair the Joint Heritage Committee and other programs committees of the Cultural Council when Canberra got self-government. We researched and established a festival strategy to enhance the quality of cultural life of Canberrans – economic, social and environmental.

The National Folk Festival was given a permanent home in Canberra. I studied the Leiden and Ottawa experiences with flowers and we introduced one of the signature festivals of Australia and named it Floriade. A National Multicultural Festival was launched soon after based on the studio work of my graduate students in Canberra. There are many other initiatives based on quality research and indicator-driven evidence that Australia fosters.

The search for happiness by the Andhra people through its new greenfield capital formation is seminal. It needs to be backed with substantive research. It also needs to layer the new geometry of planning over the old geometry of the 27+2 villages that evolved over millennia.

Most importantly, the UNESCO Culture in Development frame and the Sustainable Development Goals in Agenda 2030 need to be addressed upfront. Perhaps understanding why Danes value 'hygge' would help. It is a quintessentially Danish cultural trait about having a balanced life and having an integrated community and neighbourhood experience of warm and cosy happiness, a sense of self and cherishing life.



Copenhagen is magical by night or day. The ambience of the city is characterized by the unique topography and typical Danish housing. The city will be carbon neutral by 2025 with total reliance on alternative or renewable sources of energy. It is one of the greenest cities of Europe. Green and clean environment contributes to happiness.



Public parks and spaces are nurtured with care and high regard for aesthetic values. Seasons are distinct, and the landscapes and waterscapes reflect the changes in brilliant colours. During my five years in Denmark before moving to Andhra Pradesh, I loved walking past some of the most amazing landscapes.



Copenhagen houses are liveable in all kinds of weather. Housing is regulated to minimise any negative impacts on the heritage values of streetscapes and neighbourhoods. This is the neighbourhood of what was once the workers quarters and protected for its historical and heritage values.



Danes love museums, heritage and contemporary art. While cultural and heritage values are cherished, contemporary art is a vehicle for them to relate to issues of the day, especially human rights. Lilibeth Cuenca Rasmussen, a performance artist is popular for her creative work such as the 'Afghan Hound'.

### NEXT WEEK

Heritage Matters will focus on the disappearing Indo Pacific bead heritage of India in the village of Papanaidupet, Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh.