

# Speech by the Danish Minister of Culture, Mette Bock on september 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017

Dear scholars, curators and participants at the conference “A Manorial World”.

It is a great honor and privilege to welcome more than sixty of the leading scientists and professionals working in this field.

Our rich European heritage of mansions, estates and country houses – and the history and culture associated with them – are a wonderful resource in so many ways.

For the next 3 days you are going to share your knowledge and ideas about both the heritage, we have in common and the challenges facing this field in the coming decades.

There will be intriguing highlights from European history. You will hear about the creation of manorial landscapes, and about the noble families and the social world of country houses.

While the feudal system is long gone, its heritage still has a lot to offer and fill an important role in the rural landscape of today. The ways we approach it illustrate different strategies in conservation and cultural development in a challenging time.

Standing here within the manor of Gammel Estrup, and traveling through the estate’s beautiful grounds on my way here, it strikes me, how this cultural heritage has very deep roots. Not only in the Danish history, but in our common European history.

In a time of Brexit, border control, refugees and terror it is important to be reminded of our common ground.

The facts of our shared past can offer us many potential ways to a shared future.

The world is changing fast. People seem to be losing track of whom and what they are. At the same time we seem obsessed with our identity. People search for their roots like never before.

The Encounter network has a lot to offer in this respect. Together you can make the history and the manorial heritage relevant and accessible.

Not only as a mass of beautiful houses and breathtaking landscapes – but as the remnants of a way of life and a culture of thinking that shaped us for hundreds of years.

There’s no need to celebrate the social model itself that came with the manors. After all, the feudal system was what the enlightenment and our modern democracy rebelled against. But we need to be aware of it, because it shaped who we are today – through our literature, our music, our social life, even our infrastructure.

We have to be aware of the great international networks that existed among the nobility before there were even nation states. And to some extent we can also celebrate the international traveling networks of craftsmen who built the manors.

In this sense globalization is old news. But it is not fake news.

It tells a story about the exchange of knowledge and ideas across borders.

This Conference makes it possible to keep exchanging knowledge and to revitalize our heritage and make it relevant for a wider audience.

I would like to congratulate Gammel Estrup and the Danish Research Centre for Manorial Studies for organizing this conference.

Since 2004, were the Centre was founded, you have had a great success in combining research and museum activities. It demonstrates a unique interdisciplinary cooperation between The University of Aarhus, The Architect School of Aarhus and the National Museum of Denmark.

It has been a center of development of new ideas and new knowledge and stories which have been implemented in museum activities in Gammel Estrup.

With the creation of the European Network for Country House and Estate Research – (Encounter) – Gammel Estrup wants to share their experience with professionals and scholars all over Europe.

This takes a lot of effort and cooperation. But it pays off, I think we can all agree.

I wish you all a good conference and inspiration on your further work.

Thank you.