

How to develop a common vision: what unites us ?

Kore Escobar Zamora (ICOM Spain)

According to Alberto Garlandini's introduction, it is clear that the major questions to be discussed and, if possible, concluded are the following: what unites us? What do we have in common? Would a modification of our statutes and code of ethics be advisable?

In the same introductory text, Alberto also points to a code, a common language that we museum professionals share regardless of where we come from and the institution in which we work; 'they share the same lingua franca: museology in all its variants and different approaches'.

This reflection by Alberto places us at the starting point, at the heart of our primary mission and founding impetus "ICOM sets the professional and ethical standards for museum activities, makes recommendations on them, promotes training, encourages knowledge and increases public awareness

Now, what are these museum activities today?

In my opinion, it is precisely in this changing, pluralistic, distance-free, live and ever-evolving world that we should, more than ever, turn our eyes to basic principles. Not because these should be immovable per se, but because in them we find the first seeds of a consensus born of the recognition of the 'universal' notions that unite and define us: the roots of our organization.

In this sense, under the headings of each of the sections into which ICOM's Code of Ethics is divided, we find some (all?) of them:

- Museums ensure the protection, documentation and promotion of the natural and cultural heritage of mankind
- Museums with collections preserve them for the benefit of society and its development
- Museums have essential testimonies to create and deepen knowledge
- Museums have resources that offer possibilities for other services and public benefits
- Museums work closely with the communities from which collections originate as well as the communities they serve

Moreover, this code defines itself as 'a minimum standard for museums', thus recognizing an essential character which, in its meaning of 'lower limit, or extreme to which something can be reduced', invites, rather than a modification, a development, or a revision that does not lead to the crossing of the red lines of its foundations.

In our view, debate, analysis and dialogue are necessary in order to continue to fulfil our mission in the current society, but this debate should not be based on fleeting or inconsistent intellectual currents of the moment or political correctness, but should be based on the universal minimums that identify all of us who make up ICOM and that differentiate us as museums or as institutions within the framework recognized by ICOM itself. To refer to museums as institutions, to allude to their permanent character and to the existence of heritage collections with communally recognised cultural values which are exhibited to fulfil a series of social and cultural functions, are some of the characteristics which differentiate museums from other heritage facilities.

And, if we do not feel capable or safe to maintain this defence of elementary principles or, even if most of us believe that it no longer makes sense to talk about museums or that it is necessary to dilute and "disguise" the term Museum or include within the association all other kinds of institutions

of a social and civic nature, perhaps it would be necessary to make an exercise in sincerity and modify our founding documents, our mission and our definition. If that were the case, perhaps we would no longer be ICOM, we would be something else.