

“Museum is in the Field!”

Museum & “Rurality”

Thursday 6 June 2024 – 18:00-20:30 (CEST)

Online platform

About the debate

Following the *France Ruralités* plan presented last summer by the Government, the Minister of Culture Rachida Dati called for the mobilization of cultural actors around the issue of "rurality". The *Printemps de la ruralité*, a national consultation on cultural offerings in rural areas, was launched last January.

This concept of "rurality," which emerged in the late 1990s and has been periodically reactivated for over a decade through various action plans, is now experiencing renewed relevance. But how exactly can it be defined? The rural world includes heterogeneous realities, depending on the geography or the history that has shaped these territories. The term now takes on an anthropological meaning, characterizing a specific way of life, or even a political dimension, widely echoed by the media. How can this notion be objectified? According to INSEE (*Institut National de la Statistique et des Études Économiques*), rural areas are defined by low population density. Until 2020, the organization defined rural areas as all municipalities not belonging to an urban unit, defined by the clustering of more than 2,000 inhabitants. Since 2021, the definition has evolved to break with this city-centred approach. Rurality now refers to all municipalities with low or very low density according to the communal density grid. These territories comprise most French municipalities (88% of municipalities in 2017) and a third of the population, which amounts to 22 million people.

The *Printemps de la ruralité* is based on a premise: cultural opportunities are more limited in rural areas than for the rest of the population; rural municipalities host 16% of cultural facilities nationwide according to INSEE.

What about our museums? The question of accessibility for the greatest number has long been at the forefront of museum professionals' reflections. The placement of museums at the heart of territories is, for example, one of the cornerstones of ecomuseology, conceived in the 1960s. If the question of the distribution of cultural institutions across the territory and their accessibility is still a subject of questioning, it is undoubtedly because it also reflects the tensions that permeate our societies today.

What role do museums have to play in achieving territorial equity and cultural democratization objectives, and how can they contribute to "build society", as close as possible to everyone? Elaborated scientific projects, cultural actions carried out within and outside the walls, itinerant projects, networking of establishments, partnerships bringing together museums and associative actors or educational structures, the establishment of residencies are all avenues of work to make the museum a place of revitalization of social ties that responds to the major missions set out in the museum definition. In the period of contemporary crises we are experiencing, how can museum professionals reaffirm this commitment?

Émilie Girard, Chair of ICOM France, May 2024

How to participate?

Online session on zoom

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82841647999?pwd=cmpaNWlYQ2t2TXF3SIFLZlozelpMz09>

ID: 828 4164 7999 // Code: 595698

The meeting is simultaneously translated in English, Spanish, and French with the support of the Ministry of Culture.