



Museums and cultural landscapes

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Advisory Committee - Paris 1-3 June 2015



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The theme of 24th **General Conference of ICOM Milan 2016** is, as it is known, «**Museums and cultural landscapes**».

A **new theme**, certainly, present for the first time in a General Conference of ICOM.

But also **related to others** debated in the past.

Landscape

“Landscape” is an **ambivalent word**, meaning – at the same time - a **picture** and an homogenous **part of territory**, the **reality** and its **representation**.

In its common use is often related to the **nature** or to something of **aesthetically exceptional**.

Proposing “**cultural landscapes**” we intended a very **different sense** of the word “landscape”.

Cultural landscapes

We used the **plural** for emphasise the **plurality** and **varieties** of landscapes present not only around the world, but also in a same country. The diversity is a quality of landscape.

The word '***cultural***' remember us that a landscape is always a result of an interaction between mankind and natural systems.

The European Landscape Conference

For the European Landscape Conference (Florence 2000) the landscape «means an area as is **perceived** by people, whose character is the result of **action** and **interaction** of natural or human factors».

And that means that landscape cannot exist without his perception by insider and outsider people.

And that landscape is always a human creation.

The Siena Charter (2014)

In the **Siena Chart** the landscape, the cultural landscape is proposed as «**the country where we live**, which surrounds us with the images and symbols that identify and characterize it».

In this vision the landscape is considered **the context** – the geographic, historic, economic, social, cultural context – **in which museums exist and operate.**

ICOM, museums and the context

Analysing the **Resolutions of General Conferences of ICOM**, we can observe that the interest for the **relationship between the museums and their context** is a part of his history itself.

In a very different way, it is obvious.

But also as a persistent tension to what happens and is **outside the walls** of museums, too.

From the nature to the environment

First at all the context interesting museums is the «**nature**» (1953) and this protection as a duty for science museums.

Then is the «**cultural and natural heritage**» (1956-1965) menaced from the industrial development, until to be the **environment**, before as a ecological problem (1971), then as a **territory** and **community** for all the Seventies.

From context to museum (1953-1968)

In a first time the relationship between museum and the context is exclusively “**museum oriented**”: the protection of nature don’t suggest to act outside museums, but to organise expositions and to realize educational activities inside of museums.

This attitude, present from the birth of modern museum until Sixties, can be considered as a “**First age of museum**”.

From museums to the context (1970-...)

In the Seventies the direction changed as a result of an enlargement of the **concept of cultural heritage** and of the **mission of the museums** to the heritage, territory, community.

And the **ecomuseums** are the most known example of the new museology, with other kind of museums, too, participant to this «Second Age of Museum».

From context to museums (again)

From the end of the Seventies the trend to act with an approach “**museum oriented**” starts again: it is not a way back, but the result of the new attention towards the museum communication and to the publics.

In the most of the countries **the heritage protection** is separate from the museum management and this distinction is present in the international organizations after the constitution of ICOMOS in 1965, too.

We can consider this time as a “Third Age of Museum”.

The museums in their forth age

The museums – for our *Code of Ethics* – are “responsible for the tangible and intangible natural and cultural heritage”.

Inside and outside of museums.

In different ways, but also extending their action to cultural and natural heritage.

The landscape as museum-object

If a museum-object is «any element belonging to the realm of nature and material culture that is considered worth being preserved, either in situ or ex situ or by documentation» (Van Mensch 1990), the **landscape can be considered a «museum-object».**

And museums can place in their duties the **responsibility of landscape.**

The cultural landscapes as a museum's responsibility

- Museums can assume this responsibility:
- enlarging their responsibilities to:
 - **territory and community** needs and problems
 - **natural and cultural heritage in situ;**
- promoting an **integrated approach** to the protection and valorization of heritage;
- Developing museums as a **centers of responsibility of heritage.**

Way to assume the landscape as a museum's responsibility?

- To respect their mission integrally .
- To open museums to territory, community and to the present needs and questions.
- To participate to protecting one of main elements of the heritage for the future of mankind.

What ICOM Italy is doing about the theme of General Conference?

We approved the **Siena Chart** during the Conference in Siena in July **2014**.

We are organizing a **Conference in Catania** about «Museums and the world heritage» in October **2015**

And the Conference of International Committees in **Brescia**, November 26th- 29^o, **2015**.

We are making an **enquiry** about the relationships between museums and cultural landscapes in Italy.