

MAPforID  
FINAL CONFERENCE

Workgroups

Conclusions

## WORKGROUPS

A cosmopolitan coexistence requires institutions that allow negotiation, dialogue between the differences so they can become enriching elements for society.

Museums as institutions of direct relationship with the citizen and at the same time administrative or financially dependent of public or private structures face a double challenge when establishing strategies to incorporate intercultural dialogue.

Debates were organised around five major topics in which experiences and opinions - about what are and can be the implications of the Intercultural Dialogue in the Museums -were compared.

The debates were celebrated during the mornings and afternoons.

#### MUSEUMS AS PLACES FOR NEGOTIATION

- Cultural heritage, meaning creation process and generation of knowledge.
- Museums as spaces for coexistence: recognition of the citizens and their opinions.

#### COLLABORATION BETWEEN MUSEUMS AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS

- Establishing new contacts, networks and collaborators: benefits of diversity.
- The interactions between museums and citizens.

#### MUSEUM COLLECTIONS AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

- The history of the collections and the decoding process of the objects.
- New approaches to the collection: new words and looks.

#### CITIZENS AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

- Extramural activities, new audiences and cultural diversity.
- The audience as co-curator and generator of the contents of the museum.

#### INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

- Intercultural activities in the context of the museum using different tools and strategies, collaboration between departments and development of the specialists of the museum.

# CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of the workgroups have been summarised in three parts:

1. The museum as a space of negotiation of meaning. The development of the image and social sense of the museum.
2. The audience as a necessarily active subject, interlocutor of an open dialogue.
3. The museum as institution, the building, its location, its specialists and its collections.

## 1. The museum as a space of negotiation of meaning. The development of the image and social sense of the museum.

Our societies in front of the tensions that global situations reflect upon local situations, need to answer to new cultural challenges and therefore to establish new relationships with its cultural heritage.

Applying a concept of culture as an instrument of relationship with the social and natural environment, the museums as cultural institutions must

- a. Be capable of becoming **spaces of negotiation and recognition**,
  - Be considered open institutions for all the society, which is why they have to set apart the image of elitist institutions.
  - Break up the physical and cultural distances between the museum, its specialists and the citizens.
  - Propose a real and active opening to society and especially to the “new neighbours”.
  - Develop its capacity to become spaces for recognition and construction of new identities as an antidote against labels or immovable essences.
  - Accept the challenge that implies the interaction between the museum and the cultural diversity of its local environment: age, gender, social class, religion, origins, to create a dialogue between the collection and the visitors.
  - Avoid the stereotypes, the simplified representations of the other that hide the real identities that everyone and every culture posses.
  - Deactivate the exoticism, making possible the sharing of memories and the strategies of knowledge and relationship of different cultural collectives.
- b. Redefine the scope of its competences according to its new social needs, so:
  - The museum becomes an instrument of social structuring of the city beyond the nationalistic and local discourses.
  - The museums do not ignore the contemporaneity, the everyday on its discourses about the past.
  - The museum becomes a place of reunion, of talks, to see and speak about the objects (Christina Kreps).
  - The cultural diversity of the environment is considered as a favourable situation, managed from concepts such as transculturation that Fernando Ortiz applied to Cuban cultural syncretism, or the *archipelago thought* that E. Glissant suggests against the identity fundamentalism as a thought open to change and to multiple possible combinations. Therefore, the

museum must facilitate different readings of its collection, avoiding administering absolute truths.

c. Value the narrative capacities of the Museum as:

- Ritual space where it is possible to recover a circular sense of time.
- Place of deposit not only for material culture but also for intangible culture that allow the gestation of new imaginaries related to new times, new concerns.
- Place of recreation of the social imaginary, in which to incorporate the memories of women and their world.
- Space of sensations, emotions, which stimulate knowledge, reflection and coexistence.
- Space of linkage to the death, the oblivion, the fragile, the memory, the ancestral, the territory.
- Space of experiences that generate community and create anchorage to the land as a space for shared memories between the local and the new neighbours.
- Space of memory that doesn't have to idealise the past making references to a happy Arcadia nor to project exclusive identity discourses.

d. Be a platform for recovering and creating practices and civic values

- Asking about the values developed by the museum.
- Including conflict and crisis in the construction of new answers.
- Facilitating a critical exercise that promotes freedom and citizenship.
- Offering all the resources available to favour the creation of opinions, the capacity of judgment avoiding that the expert knowledge limits the freedom of interpretation, on the contrary, making it possible.
- Stimulating encounters with the other without prejudices, as a healthy way to find ourselves.
- Stimulating the coexistence, creating citizenship.
- Being a place of hospitality, of generosity, of sharing of knowledge, of respect.

- e. The museum responds to the longing for the lost, it is the place of memory. Time is a factor of discrimination between what is preserved and what is not. The Museum as enterprise of management of time (Marcelo) can:
- Rescue the time to live, to observe, to facilitate a closer look.
  - Recover the circular time, anthropologic, in front of the current bet for linear historical time.
  - Show the eternal that can be obtained in the place, in the ancestral, an eternal time in front of the fear to death, to disease.
  - Highlight the continuity of cultures, facilitating the incorporation of the individual to the community.
- f. Being open to creativity. In UK the role of museums, the places of historic and cultural places have widened up with the change introduced in the national educational Syllabus that has emphasized the creative thinking.

2. **The audience:**

Recognizing the audience as a necessarily active subject, interlocutor of an open dialogue implies that:

- a. It is a fundamental referent of the work of the museum, the recipient of the interpretation of its collections.
- b. It needs to be incorporated as a carrier of a cultural baggage of its own, establishing with it more egalitarian relationships, less dominant in the construction of the museum's discourses and proposals.
- c. The museum has to be a habitable space in which the audience is not considered as a costumer with a determined consumption capacity but as a user, similar to the public of the libraries, with specific needs of understanding, location, enjoyment with its own concerns, therefore, one must:
  - Collect the feelings and thoughts of the citizens.
  - Get to know the people, listen to and answer to their demands.
  - Offer information for all sorts of audiences.
  - Update the information.
  - Lead a two-way communication: internal and external. Building a policy of attention to the audience considering the visitors' comments.
- d. Its expectations are taken into account beyond the traditional public studies, looking for new ways of knowing the visitors, more than simply age or gender.
- e. It is incorporated in the discourses of the museum not only the expert opinion but also that of the people who observe it, including the vision of the audience about the pieces, researching what people know about the exhibited, what can be of interest about our narrative proposals.
- f. It is favoured the social appropriation of the museum, recognizing to the non-experts their capacity to examine and interpret.
- g. It is set the interaction with the audience not only in the exhibition room but also in the ways of preserving the objects, building its meanings, activating and valuing the knowledge, gathering viewpoints and experiences from the participants in open labs in which the objects are observed not only through the lenses of specialized knowledge but more importantly as a catalyst of new approaches and relationships.
- h. It is given a special leadership to the migrant mediator, as in the Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Bergamo, where mediators have

become actors with full rights over the cultural and educational program of the museum.

- i. It is taken into account the communities of different origins that claim for their rights to a greater control over their heritage, the way to preserve it, interpret it and represent it.
- j. It is offered to groups or communities the possibility to use the spaces of the museums to carry out parties or ritual ceremonies.
- k. It is studied the different strategies to attract the audience, to make it loyal, renewing and adapting offers that connect with both the regular and the new audiences.
- l. The museum becomes an everyday place, where playful and festive offers are found as an open channel for communication.
- m. The possibilities offered by the organisation of theme visits are used to improve the dialogue between the visitors themselves.
- n. It is taken into account the use of new technologies in the process of uptaking and establishing links with the audience, especially the youngsters conceiving these tools as work instruments not as a goal itself.
- o. It is increased the effort devoted to the services of attention to the audience, increasing:
  - The role and training of the room invigilators.
  - The internal and external communication channels.
  - The quality of the information between the audience and content managers.
  - The operation of the internal and external signage.

Establishing communication bridges with the audience,

The incorporation of mediators from diverse cultural minorities is only an isolated fact at the moment that shows the distance between the declaration of good intentions and a reality that refuses transformation and refuses to make possible that the museum as a public institution responds to the obligation of being a space for the creative expression of the boundaries of belonging, open for discussion, for debate, for agreement and resolution of conflictive visions of controversial and sensitive topics such as conventions, norms, religious conflicts that should be considered contextualized within periods and historical circumstances, contributing with new points of view. This statement has nothing of revolutionary but it follows the spirit of the Human Rights Declaration that underlines in the article 27 the right of every individual to participate freely in the cultural life of their community as well as the ethic code of ICOM or the manifesto of Challenging History (<http://challenginghistory.ning.com>).

3. **The museum as institution, the building, its location, its specialists and its collections.**

The museums as other cultural institutions have wide resources to neutralize the exclusive looks, facilitating the approximation of citizens to other cultural realities. Every museum should question itself about which must be at an institutional level the previous, indispensable conditions to be able to become for real in a place of cultural inclusion. For the projects with vocation for Intercultural Dialogue not to become a foreign body or a residual topic, avoiding that the projects within MAPforID are considered episodic and without continuity:

- a. The required **institutional change** implies
  - To assume in all its complexity the implications of reinforcing the external projection of the museum.
  - To collaborate with other institutions so their plural knowledge and competences coincide in order to interact with a determined audience.
  - To make flexible the management and reformulate the criteria of conservation, restoration and security that occasionally limit the rational use of the collection and the space.
  - To reorganise the spaces within the museum to accommodate participative activities, disables audiences, audiences of people with different ages and formation, more openness to the migrant communities...
  - To endow with competences and human and financial resources the departments of Diffusion and Communication within the museums.
  - To integrate other specialists to complement the knowledge of the curators of the museum.
  - To adapt the schedule and services.
  - To add new languages in the communications of the museum.
  - To evaluate the higher capacity of small and medium museums in front of big museums to establish enriching relationships with the audience.
  - To be alert in front of
    - a. The culture of prestige
    - b. The culture of recognition and reinforcement of the elite and the power
    - c. The culture as a symbol of exclusive identity
    - d. The “policies of the brick”, the situational financial operations

- b. **The projection to the urban environment:** The museum is part of the network of public institutions with the capacity to improve the coexistence and welfare of the citizens. The museum to respond to the outer world carries implicitly:
- To promote its presence beyond the facilities, projecting active and effectively the museum to the exterior with concrete activities outside the walls of the building.
  - To program activities centred into presenting the institution to the society, especially to the local environment y particularly in those places or among those collectives that have no link with the museum to tell them *who are we and what we do*.
  - To map the territory and collaborate with different institutions by:
    - Studying the territory in which other institutions and social or educational agents perform.
    - To value the associative fabric of the environment and work in collaboration with other organisations.
    - To set up new contacts, networks and partners.
    - To take into account the economic conditionings of the maintenance of networks.
    - How, whom and what budget is available to establish the territorial relationships: mediator associations.
    - How to adequate the offer to a changing environment.
  - To consider the museum not only as part of the cultural or touristic equipment of the city but also as part of its social equipment.
  - That the museum stops being a self-referral institution, establishing empathetic and affective relations with the social groups of the environment.
  - To strengthen and favour the livelihood of the museum as a recognisable and own space.
  - To form anchorage platforms, places of reception, supported by a process of open dialogue in multiple directions.
  - To set complicity and ties with the audience recognising their interests.

- To add the use of the social networks in internet.
- To take the time to evaluate what has been done: “Stop for a second”
  - To evaluate frequently (not only those projects financed by the EU)
  - To make a final assessment and congratulate the colleagues to encourage them
  - To be conscious if the challenges
- The continuity of the initiatives supposes:
  - The public financing of the projects: no privatizations or outsourcings.
  - To debate in depth up to what extent the goals of the institution are connected to the audience’ satisfaction as the ultimate purpose or as desired but dispensable.
  - To avoid the confusion between the museum institution and other institutions linked to the cultural world.
  - To adopt tools from the XXI century.

c. **Professionals in crisis ¿Who are we, what do we do?** We all are and make the museum, therefore, we must:

- Enrich the professional profile of the curator of the museum. Define what professionals and with which attitudes and aptitudes are required to assume the tasks of creating and negotiating discourses and messages that have their referent in the collections and expectations of the audience.
- Enhance the multidisciplinary of the teams in the museums.
- Push forward the internal communication among departments.
- Establish a fluid and intercultural dialogue within the institution as the first step to define the role and position of the institution in relation to the environment and the society.
- Break the open breach within the walls of the department of collections and the departments of diffusion and education: the different conceptions of the museum and consequently the occasionally antagonistic positions about the way of relating with the audience.
- Not attempt to reach too many fields of work by wanting to be educators, social mediators, curators, cultural referents, centres for debate, critique and reflection all at the same time....Necessity to define strategic lines, hierarchies and roles according to the environment and social changes.

- Think about and get to know what is expected of us, professionals of the museums worried about the coincidence of concerns between us and them.
- Include in the departments those professionals known for their capacity to create dialogue and trust.
- Improve the creativity in the work of the specialists of the museums.
- Avoid outsourcing the services of diffusion since the essence of the museum is defined departing from its strategy and its exterior projection practices.
- Evade the difficulties coming from labour precariousness, the lack of material and human resources, political limitations ...

- d. **The collections:** The intercultural dialogue in the museum is worked departing from the objects, the collections of the museum and therefore we have to:
- Make possible a shared reflection with the audience, establishing a dialogue with the objects.
  - Develop appropriate practices so the museum can relate the collection and the audience.
  - Take into account the symbolic capacities of the objects that modify its meaning according to the context and the relation established with other objects.
  - Use the history of the collection and the process of decoding of the objects as keys to share with the audience a necessary information to make understandable the multiple meanings of a piece and become close to the collections.
  - Having clarity about the criteria used to select the pieces and the objectives of the discourse that is being constructed.
  - Neutralise the fear of some specialists about the loss of role of the objects and collections.
  - Show the way in which the interpretation of the pieces and the process of conservation gain from the incorporation of the expectations of the audience about the management of the collections.
  - Acknowledge that the research about the collections is widened up by integrating it with the contributions of the audience as a cultural resource.
  - Make other cultures speak about themselves with the collaboration of people linked to them in order to enrich the cultural offer of the institution.
  - Make the objects speak about previous technological, cultural, religious and intercultural contacts.
  - Keep the commitment with the intercultural dialogue that obliges to consider the museum not only as custody of the heritage but mostly as its interpreter by exhibiting, documenting, preserving and restoring it.