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WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear ICME members:

The 2003 conference

At the moment of writing, it is still 2003. The ICME conference of 2003 in Sibiu, Romania was another successful event, with fascinating papers and open and lively discussions. The setting was perfect for a discussion of the preservation of cultural traditions in a contemporary setting: what should be the role of museums? We had our sessions at the ASTRA open air museum, a museum that acts as a forum for living, rural traditions that nevertheless are becoming marginalized and "folklorified".

How important is it for the identity of a nation that such traditions are still enacted? For a Western European questions like these seem hardly relevant, since rural traditions of this kind disappeared as living ones many, many decades ago and the discussion is rather: How do we use old traditions in hybrid versions together with modern expressions and traditions from other parts of the world? But for many parts of Eastern Europe (and may I add: many other parts of the world) there is a real, rapid and dramatic change taking place NOW, creating a sense of alarm that is highly understandable.

Of course there was no agreement, neither among the participants in general, nor among the Romanians. Which is as it should be.

Thanks in innumerable ways to the staff of the Astra museum complex in Sibiu, with special thanks to the director Dr. Corneliu Bucur and our guardian angels Remus Iancu and Isabella Miclos. Thanks also to the staff of the museums that we visited, the Romanian colleagues and the participants from other parts of the world. For us non-Romanians, the experience was unique and inspiring.

The 2004 conference

AND it was a good prelude to ICOM's general conference in Seoul in the first week of October 2004, where the theme is intangible heritage. Several of the ICME 2003 papers touched on the concept of intangible heritage, among others, Daniel Winfree Papuga's paper "[Preserving intangibility: Who, What, Where?](#)" (available on the ICME2003 web site)

I urge as many as possible to come to Korea. They have a distinct and fascinating culture, beautiful and very modern museums and it is a special opportunity to experience a country that is undeservedly a bit outside the common tourist routes. Our specially appointed host in Seoul is the new and large National Folk Museum of Korea, and we can be sure to be received as special guests of honour.

There is every reason to believe that that the conference in Seoul is going to be special. We are working on a detailed programme that we will present to you in the next issue.

I hope we can have a pre-debate on the ICME-L about intangible heritage before as many as possible of us meet in Seoul.

The future of ICME

Going into my last year as president of ICME, I would like to re-raise the debate on ICME's future. I asked: Should ICME be dissolved?

The answer to that question was a massive NO! from all over ICME. Let me re-phrase my question: Should ICME be re-defined? I must honestly say that I am not sure what to conclude myself.

The problem is that it is really tough work for every ICME conference to attract participants from outside the host country. Every time I wonder whether there will be more than ten. Generally we end up with 10 to 17-18, sometimes a little bit into the twenties. This is in contrast to the quality of the conferences: We raise important issues, the papers are excellent, discussions are really fruitful and open.

But it is a fact that the concept of museums of "ethnography" is a loose one - it can be almost any kind of museum - and the expectations of what we are, varies considerably from country to country. Like in Mexico where what we in western Europe would call The ethnographic museum were not even invited to our conference because it was not seen in Mexico as "ethnographic". No harm done - we had a very good conference in Mexico - but it illustrates how differently concepts like ethnographic, ethnologic, anthropologic, folkloric, etc, etc, etc. can be used.

And to illustrate the confusion furthermore: ICR, the international committee for regional museums seem to have as members the "folk museums" (museums dealing with their own culture) of western Europe, while ICME seem to have as members the same kind of museums from Eastern Europe. Can this partly be because studies of your own culture in Western Europe is often called ethnology, while it is called ethnography in the East? ICME's members in Western Europe are to a large extent museums for foreign cultures, which in the West is called ethnographic and in the East called ethnologic.

Now, it must be said that the difference between these two kinds of museums in the modern multicultural society is getting less and less significant. Parts of us will all be multicultural after a while. I will come back to that.

It seems to me that the smaller, thematically more focused international committees of ICOM attract a larger number of international participants to their yearly conferences and it is easier for them to enjoy the continuity from year to year of a broad, but nevertheless well-focused theme. This is my impression, and I must confess that this impression is not based on real research.

Let me present a thought:

What if ICME redefined itself to be The international committee dealing with cultural diversity? To become for instance "ICCD" - International Committee for Cultural Diversity. Not a committee for a specific type of museums, but for the issue/theme of cultural diversity. It would include museum professionals working with cultural diversity in museums dealing with their own culture(s), in museums dealing with cultures from all over the world (like in the former colonial museums), in museums taking up the aspect of cultural diversity as a side theme, in museums working on cross-cultural understanding, even - as we discussed in Romania this year - taking up the theme of what constitutes the worthy roots of a modern nation, seeing cultures of the past and present as expressions of cultural diversity. The concept of cultural diversity sometimes also includes gender questions, sexuality, class, accessibility, etc. And themes such as illicit traffic and repatriation should be important, because it has to do with the ownership of one's cultural difference.

An "ICCD" (or CDC or ?) would be more focused and it would be easier to have a natural continuity of themes. I also think it would attract quite a few active new members.

We would of course lose many members. Many would go to ICR, which I think would be good for ICR. And to others. But the number of members on a list is far less important than the number of active members. Admittedly, with fewer members, we will get less money from ICOM centrally since they pay pr. member, but I do think that would be a passing problem.

This is a thought. Part of me (perhaps most of me) thinks this thought is good.

What do you think?

Per B. Rekdal

ICME President

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ICME 2004 - CALL FOR PAPERS

The ICME 2004 sessions in Seoul, Korea will be held on October 4-6, 2004, during the middle three days of the ICOM general conference. ICME welcomes presentations discussing the main conference theme "Museums and Intangible Heritage".

WHAT IS INTANGIBLE HERITAGE?

[UNESCO](#) defines intangible cultural heritage as "embracing all forms of traditional and popular or folk culture, i.e. collective works originating in a given community and based on tradition. They include oral traditions, customs, languages, music, dance, rituals, festivities...". These traditions may be manifested either through forms of cultural expression, or as cultural spaces which bring together various cultural activities. A focus on intangible cultural heritage must focus on social contexts, showing traditional and popular culture as life-ways, sets of interrelationships and shared knowledge systems.

This is a focus which ethnology, anthropology and other fields have long had as their research goal. But how much of this is reflected in our ethnographic collections and exhibitions? Are we merely documenting and exhibiting objects, or are we showing how living traditions are formed, evolve and perhaps die out?

Call for papers on "Museums and Intangible Heritage"

ICME invites papers on the main theme, or any of the following sub-themes, as well as suggestions for additional themes:

- Diversity and intangible heritage: (both in regard for ethnicity, and for differences between rural and urban traditions)
- Intangible change: Should we "conserve" heritage, or look toward its dynamic aspects? What time frames do we use when describing culture?
- Institutions of intangible heritage: What are the roles of museums, schools, government or civil society in the reproduction of intangible culture?
- Intangible NATURAL heritage: Ecological relationships between humans and their environment.
- Intangible presentation: What special needs develop in museum presentations of intangible heritage (such as collaboration with tradition bearers, eco-museums, living history programs, performances, scenography, exhibition design, multi-media)?
- Copyright and intangible heritage: Who owns traditional knowledge, and who has the right to promulgate it?

Please send abstracts and sub-theme suggestions to ICME president Per B. Rekdal before June 1st, 2004:

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The ICOM 2004 general program runs from October 2-8:

- October 2: Registration, ICOM Executive Council Meeting, Welcome Reception.

- October 3: Forum Discussion on "Museums and Intangible Heritage", Keynote presentations, Opening Event and Gala Dinner.
- October 4-6: ICME sessions
- October 7: Excursion day
- October 8: General Assembly of ICOM, Final Plenary Session, Farewell party

Conference registration, hotel booking and general information is available on the main conference web site: <http://www.icom2004.org/>

POST-CONFERENCE TOURS

A number of post conference tours are proposed. ICME doesn't plan on organizing a post conference tour of it's own, but instead encourages members to join one of the official ICOM tours. Information on these tours is available at http://www.icom2004.org/tours_conference.htm

TRAVEL GRANTS

Most participants wishing to attend next years ICOM general conference in Seoul, Korea will be looking for extra funding in order to pay travel, hotel, conference fees and other expenses. The deadline for applying for travel grants directly from the ICOM secretariat has passed, but there are many other possibilities for financing. Use your local network, and your imagination!

Many National Committees are providing expanded travel grants for participation in ICOM 2004. Contact the committee in your country concerning details and application deadlines: icom.museum/nationals.html

ICOM members from the Asia-Pacific region may apply within February 15th 2004 for the Grace Morley Research Fellowship. This fellowship covers expenses for ICOM 2004, and will be awarded by ICOM India Trust: http://icom.museum/morley_fellowship.html

The American Association of Museums provides a number of fellowships for it's members, some of which might be applicable to ICOM 2004:

ETHNOLOGICAL EXPOSITION IN CENTRAL EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVES



ICME PAPERS 2003



24 papers were presented at the conference "Cultural Traditions in Danger of Disappearing in Contemporary Society - A Challenge for Museums", Sibiu, Romania. September 26-30, 2003.

The following papers are available for downloading from the [ICME 2003 web site](#) - with accompanying illustrations.

- Vanessa Kredler:
- Daniel Winfree Papuga: [Preserving intangibility: Who, What, Where?](#)
- Dr. Beate Wild: [Dead-end-road or turn-table between yesterday and tomorrow? New aims for museums](#)

Other papers are currently being submitted to the [ICME editors](#), and will also soon be on the web site. In addition, Astra museum is planning to publish a printed volume of conference proceedings.

We include Dr. Beate Wild's paper in this issue of ICME news:

DEAD-END-ROAD OR TURN-TABLE BETWEEN YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW? NEW AIMS FOR MUSEUMS

By Dr. Beate Wild
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At least there have never been so many discussions concerned with the purpose of museums and with their right to exist. Are they superfluous, meaningless? Are museums possibly a mirror to society itself, which is undergoing an extreme revolution of its economy, its technology and its sociology at the moment?

Exhibiting has turned into perfect staging. Artefacts seem to be not attractive enough in themselves. They need a more promising wrapping, a framework, an event, a mediator. It almost seems to be more important to arouse the attention of visitors, than to make them pay attention to the artefact. Exhibitions are less cultural than social events.

st century. The more rapidly things are changing its coming about, the more people are trying to find security in an unchangeable past. The more our present seems to be but a fleeting moment, people flee into the past in retreat. In the year 2000 in Germany alone 200 new museums opened! All in all there are more than 5,400 museums in Germany, today!

Hanno Rauterberg, a German journalist (writing for the weekly magazine DIE ZEIT), figured that if someone wanted to visit all German museums, it would take about 16 years visiting one a day. And if the number of museums kept growing as rapidly, soon a lifetime would not be enough to visit all museums in Germany alone! Within 100 years we would face 24,000 museums! This would make one museum for every 2,500 people in Germanyⁱ.

Please let me take a short detour in my remarks and let us consider some reasons for the development of museums as we know them today. They developed in the 18th century following the radical and complete turnover of society. The dissolving of royal systems and ways of living, new scientific findings, but more than anything technical and economic innovations that brought about the industrialisation of the 19th century also had a decisive side effect: at the same time, almost as an antidote a new historic consciousness grew. This was the ideological basis for museums and other means of remembering, such as historic sciences, protection and curators of monuments, etc. The loss of tradition and the loss of conscious use of tradition was compensated by bringing to mind the past.

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circulus vitiosis

But is there a way out of this dead-end-road?

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In Transilvania, firms still process local wool into blankets and carpets (for example COVTEX in Heltau). But it certainly is a declining business for large factories as well as small manufacturers. The same goes for the use of wool in households. Thus raw, unfinished wool will barely make any profit. On top of this, keeping sheep has become more difficult. Negotiating rights for grazing pasture and rights for the passing through of herds has become extremely complicated. Pastures and watering places are not being cared for anymore so that water has to be transported over long distances. Due to dry weather over the last years prices for winter fodder (hay, etc.) have risen extremely. On night-pastures fencing or protection against wolves and bears is inadequate or priceless. Wages for shepherds are in no relation to their extremely hard working conditions.



As opposed to this, the international demand for raw wool is still undiminished and this goes for the textile industry (clothing, textiles for the home) as much as for the building industry (insulation for buildings).

But to return to our initial question: how could or should a museum react to this situation? Should they just document the imminent loss of sheep-keeping and wool-manufacture? Or should they seek new possibilities for a culture to revalue the wool-industry. This, though, could only be accessed by an holistic, interdisciplinary, inter-institutional and international approach, which I will briefly describe. In a preliminary, rough draft, I see tasks within three main areas:

- Sheepkeeping
- Wool-manufacture and handcrafts
- Museums and media

Museums could participate in motivating, counseling and coordinating during the process of re-activating traditional techniques (cf. the fulling machine project of Lisa, directed by the Brasov ethnographic museum). By all means, museums with their particular scientific competence should accompany the development of the production line. The efficiency of such a project, though, is only secured by informal organisational networking, which should inter-connect the various wool-centres and the museums.



ⁱ Hanno Rauterberg, Musealisiert Museen! In: museumskunde 67/2/2002, p. 34-40.

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^v Gottfried Korff, Staging Science. In: museumskunde 68,1, 2003, 67-72, 68.

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UP-COMING CONFERENCES

December 31: Paper and poster presentation deadline for "Oral History on Display: Presenting personal testimonies for exhibitions, presentations and publications" Annual Conference of the Oral History Society, to be held 12-13 June, 2004, Bournemouth University, Dorset, UK.

<http://www.oralhistory.org.uk/>

February 9-10 2004: "The Roth Family, Anthropology and Colonial Administration" Conference, Coffs Harbour NSW Australia.

February 27-28 2004: "Ethnography as scientifically based research: Implications for educational policy and practice", 25th Annual Ethnography in Education Research Forum, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA <http://www.gse.upenn.edu/cue/forum.php>

<http://www.comite-film-ethno.net>

March 24-27, 2004: "INTERPRETING NARRATIVES", Fifth European Social Science History Conference, Oral History and Life Stories Network, Berlin. <http://www.iisg.nl/esshc/>

March 29-April 1, 2004: "Locating the Field: Metaphors of Space, Place and Context in Anthropology" Association of Social Anthropologists annual meeting, Durham, UK. <http://www.theasa.org/asa04/>

April 15-17, 2004: "Native Photographs as Survivance", Native American Literature Symposium, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA.

April 22-25, 2004: "CRISES" Annual Meeting of the AMERICAN ETHNOLOGICAL SOCIETY, Atlanta, GA, USA.

http://adam.mmsh.univ-aix.fr/AmongOthers/index_eng.htm

<http://www.museums.ca/conferences/default.htm>

May 3-5, 2004: "Making it explicit: Presentation and representation of Native North Americans", 25th annual meeting of the American Indian Workshop, Leuven, Belgium. Deadline for abstracts: 30 Oct 2003. <http://www.psy.kuleuven.ac.be/AIW25>

June 12-13, 2004: "ORAL HISTORY ON DISPLAY: Presenting personal testimonies for exhibitions, presentations and publications" Annual Conference of the Oral History Society, Bournemouth University, Dorset, UK. <http://www.oralhistory.org.uk/conferences/>

June 18-21 2004: "Hierarchy and Power in the History of Civilizations" Third International Conference organized by the Russian Center for Civilizational and Regional Studies in cooperation with the Institute for African Studies, Moscow, Russia. Deadline for abstracts: November 1, 2003.

<http://civreg.ru/english/conf/hierarchy2004.html>

<http://www.international.ucla.edu/monument/>

July 19-30, 2004: "Rewriting History: Emerging Identities and Nationalism in Central Asia". Course at Central European University, Budapest, HU.

[http://www.ceu.hu/sun/SUN_2004/brief_course_descriptions.htm#Rewriting History](http://www.ceu.hu/sun/SUN_2004/brief_course_descriptions.htm#Rewriting_History)

September 8-12, 2004: "Face to face: Connecting distance and proximity", European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA), 8th bi-annual conference, Vienna, Austria.

<http://www.easaonline.org/>, <http://www.univie.ac.at/voelkerkunde/easa/>

September 27th - October 3d, 2004: 15th International Ethnological Food Research Conference (in association with SIEF), Dubrovnik, Croatia, Theme: 'Mediterranean Food And Its Influences

Abroad'http://www.meertens.knaw.nl/sief/dnl/15th_IEFR-Conference.doc

October 2-8, 2004: "Intangible Cultural Heritage", ICOM General Conference, Seoul, Korea.

<http://www.icom2004.org/>

December 14-18, 2004: "Post Traditional Environments in a Post Global World", Ninth Conference of the International Association for the Study of Traditional Environments, Sharjah/Dubai, UAE.

<http://www.arch.ced.berkeley.edu/research/iaste/2004%20conference.htm>

December 15-19, 2004: "Strategies for Development of Indigenous People" and "Mega Urbanization, Multi-ethnic Society, Human Rights and Development": IUAES 2004 Inter-Congress, Kolkata and Ranchi, India.

<http://www.leidenuniv.nl/fsw/iaes/10-01-CALCUTTACONGRESS.HTM>

ICME - International Committee for Museums and Collections of Ethnography

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