



STANDING COMMITTEE FOR MUSEUM DEFINITION, PROSPECTS AND POTENTIALS (MDPP)

PREFACE

This document contains the recommendations and the report submitted by the Standing Committee for Museum Definition, Prospects and Potentials (MDPP), in accordance with its mandate, to the ICOM Executive Board regarding the needs for a potential revision of the museum definition.

The ICOM Executive Board unanimously accepted the report and adopted the recommendations.

The final section contains a framework on the process up to the ICOM's 25th General Conference in Kyoto in September 2019.

Minor grammatical corrections have been made to the current version, in order to reflect that the original report was approved by the Executive Board.

Jette Sandahl, Chair, MDPP, December 2018

RECOMMENDATIONS ADOPTED BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Recommendations from the MDPP committee to the ICOM Executive Board regarding a potential revision of the current museum definition, approved on December 9th, 2018.

1. ICOM should initiate a process of reinterpretation, revision, rewriting, and reformulation of the current museum definition to be proposed for debate and decision at the 25th ICOM General Conference in Kyoto in September 2019
2. This process should start immediately at the beginning of 2019, ensuring that there is time for a broad and global anchoring and involvement of the membership as a whole
3. The MDPP is asked to initiate and organize this, in the first part of 2019, as a participatory process through structured dialogic methods
4. The process may result in a number of different proposals to be brought to the Executive Board in June 2019, and one or more proposals to be brought to the general conference in September 2019
5. The following parameters are set for proposals for a new definition:
 - the museum definition should be clear on the purposes of museums, and on the value base from which museums meet their sustainable, ethical, political, social and cultural challenges and responsibilities in the 21st century
 - the museum definition should retain – even if current terminology may vary - the unique, defining and essential unity in museums of the functions of collecting, preserving, documenting, researching, exhibiting and in other ways communicating the collections or other evidence of cultural heritage

 - the museum definition should acknowledge the urgency of the crises in nature and the imperative to develop and implement sustainable solutions
 - the museum definition should acknowledge and recognise with respect and consideration the vastly different world views, conditions and traditions under which museums work across the globe
 - the museum definition should acknowledge and recognise with concern the legacies and continuous presence of deep societal inequalities and asymmetries of power and wealth - across the globe as well as nationally, regionally and locally

 - the museum definition should express the unity of the expert role of museums with the collaboration and shared commitment, responsibility and authority in relation to their communities
 - the museum definition should express the commitment of museums to be meaningful meeting places and open and diverse platforms for learning and exchange
 - the museum definition should express the accountability and transparency under which museums are expected to acquire and use their material, financial, social and intellectual resources

REPORT FOR THE ICOM EXECUTIVE BOARD, DECEMBER 2018

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THE MUSEUM DEFINITION AS THE BACKBONE OF ICOM

Founded in 1946, ICOM is the global organisation of museums and museum professionals, with 40.000 members from 140 countries from all continents. ICOM provides a shared ethical framework for museums, a forum for professional discussions, and a platform for questioning and celebrating heritage and collections in museums and cultural institutions.

As a backbone for this global organisation sits a shared definition of what museums are and what they do. The latest version is from 2007.

*The museum is a non-profit, permanent institution
in the service of society and its development,
open to the public,
which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits
the tangible and intangible heritage
of humanity and its environment
for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.*

While this definition is meant to define the essence of what constitutes a museum, it is also understood as an ideal, which is interpreted somewhat differently by museums, and ICOM recognises as members also institutions which only partially or to varying degrees fulfil all the criteria or functions.

Over the decades minor adjustments have been made to this definition. In December 2018 the ICOM Executive Board decided to develop an alternative definition which will be more relevant and appropriate for museums in the 21st century and future museum landscapes. It should be a definition which recognises the dissimilar conditions and practices of museums in diverse and rapidly changing societies, and supports museums in developing and adopting new scientific paradigms and addressing more adequately the complexities of the 21st century.

The museum definition is a core document in ICOM's relationships with partner organisation and in the museum legislation of several countries, and all deliberations of changing it must include carefully weighing and balancing the gains of a revision against the complications of a

change. However, the costs of not revising should also be considered, not least in the ways museums are perceived to be bound by their allegiances to former centuries.

Following exploratory work by a Working Group of around 25 ICOM members during 2015-16, in 2017 a new Standing Committee, the Museum Definition, Prospects and Potentials committee (MDPP) was appointed by the Executive Board of ICOM. No clear consensus had emerged in the working group as to whether the definition should remain as is, change in limited ways, or change radically, in substance. But the initial discussions, supplemented by a survey which did a word to word, phrase by phrase analysis, illuminated core challenges in the current definition. The MDPP has included these analyses as well as the extensive debates around a new museum definition during 2003-04 in its work.

The MDPP differs categorically from these previous discussions of the museum definition in ICOM, in its formal dual mandate, on one level to document and analyse prevalent societal trends and how these impact museums, how museums anticipate them, resist them, and adapt to them, and, on another level, on this background to make recommendations to the Executive Board and Advisory Committee of ICOM about the potential needs for a revision of the current definition.

The Committee for Museum Definition, Prospects and Potentials explores the shared but also the profoundly dissimilar conditions, values and practices of museums in diverse and rapidly changing societies.

Combining broad dialogue across the membership with dedicated expert fora, the committee will address the ambiguous and often contradictory trends in society, and the subsequent new conditions, obligations and possibilities for museums, and advise the Executive Board and Advisory Council on these issues.

Approaching the ICOM general conference in 2019, on the background of information gathered, new trends observed and documented, and discussions conducted through its various working groups, the committee will advise the Executive Board and the Advisory Council on museological and epistemological problem areas in the existing museum definition.

It will make recommendations regarding the potential gains as well as the complication in revising the definition, as a shared, international framework, to reflect and include more current conditions, potentials and priorities for museums.

WORKING METHODS FOR THE MDPP

A fundamental challenge for ICOM, as for other organisations aiming for a global presence, is to counter the systemic European and Western dominance in the development of its strategies and policies, and to create and ensure a real global representation and participation in its central strategic processes.

A discussion of the definition of museums inevitably involves a set of assumptions and projections about the future of museums and of museums in different and rapidly changing societies. To adequately reflect not just the shared, but also the profound differences in the conditions and the purposes of museums, important discussions must, in basic ways, reflect the breadth of the ICOM member countries.

That there should be or could be a shared definition for museums across the world can in no way be taken for granted, desirable as it may be from a professional point of view. Universalizing can serve to hide and obfuscate differences, as also the recent ICOFOM conferences on the museum definition have accentuated, and, if at all possible, any attempts at universalism must be carefully negotiated or earned.

At the centre of the MDPP committee is a core coordinating group, with representation from all continents, which sets the direction for and coordinates the work in the Committee, and around which circle a series of thematic working groups, with different content and somewhat different approaches, but all attempting a global participation.

Jette Sandahl chairs the committee

Richard West leads the theme of changing epistemologies, world views and museum typologies

Margaret Anderson leads the theme of cultural democracy and cultural participation

Kenson Kwok leads the theme of new trends in museum partnerships, ownership and governance

George Abungu leads the theme of geopolitics, migration and de-colonisation

David Fleming leads a theme of global trends

Lauran Bonilla Merchav leads the area of the round tables on challenges for societies and for museums

Francois Mairesse bridges to the discussion in ICOFOM on the museum definition

Alberto Garlandini has participated from the ICOM Executive Board

Afşin Altaylı participates from the ICOM Secretariat

The core group of the MDPP met in Paris in June 2017 and June 2018, although not in full. None of the working groups have had the opportunity to meet in person, but have communicated and functioned digitally only. Around 50 people have been involved in close consultations.

The MDPP has presented its work and time lines to the Executive Board in December 2016, in June 2017 and June 2018, and to the Advisory Council in June 2017 and June 2018 as well as in a number of national and international committees. Through the Round Tables conducted by the MDPP an additional estimated 850 ICOM members and other museum professionals from across the world have been involved in the discussions of the committee. The ICOFOM conferences on the museum definition have drawn close to 1000 participants, also spanning different continents. There is clearly a great interest among ICOM members and in the ICOM committees in discussing new societal trends and challenges, the future of museums and the definition of museums.

The MDPP has approached the subject of the museum definition from the outside in. Attempting to sidestep the given mold, there has been less focus on critiquing and revising words or paragraphs in the current definition, and more on historicizing and contextualizing it, on de-naturalizing and de-colonizing it, and on anchoring the discussion of museums and the futures of museums in a larger framework of general societal trends and issues of the 21st century.

The MDPP reported and gave its recommendations to the ICOM Executive Board in December 2018, in time for involving and engaging the membership in preparing proposals for a revision or new definition for Kyoto 2019.

Whatever the final result of this process will be, reassessing the museum definition has proven to be an important occasion to re-examine the core values, the priorities and actual practices of the sector and see whether, how or to what extent they align.

VALUES AND PURPOSES

A definition of museums should be clear and easy to understand and should convey the spirit, the essence, the overall purposes of museums, as well as the values from which they operate.

A definition obviously cannot name and list all aspects of the wide and complex field of museums. However, it should be kept in mind that absences in core areas and on core subject matters in the definition, will leave these voids to be filled with the values of the status-quo and the powers-that-be. Identifying and locating what is silent in the current definition and assessing the impact of this silence are part of the preparation for a revision, as are uncovering and interpreting the values embedded in or behind the choice of words.

As an organisational tool, for ICOM, its partners and for museums, the ICOM museum definition is inevitably both descriptive and prescriptive.

The museum definition delineates the purposes, responsibilities and functions of museums – the why and what of museums – and is supplemented and supported by the ICOM Code of Ethics in a description of the standards under which these responsibilities should be carried out – the how of museums.

The current definition contains different, and unmediated, levels of purposes: museums should be *‘in the service of society and its development’*, and fulfil its specific functions *‘for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment’*.

While in 1974 the immensely significant insertion of *‘in service of society and its development’* was contentious and considered an inappropriate politisation of the purpose of museums by sections of the museum community, at the current point of time there is a need for a critical appraisal of the lack of specificity and the almost naïve singularity of the term ‘society’ as well as of the questionable ambiguity of the term ‘development’.

While the intended content of the phrase remains essential for current museum analysis and policy development, its openness signals an easy homogeneity, harmony and stability within and between the two terms ‘museums and ‘society’. Societies, however, are ever changing, conflicted and contested contexts within which museums live and act, and which need to be explored in dynamic terms, to understand the diverse and contradictory developmental trends.

The ICOM museum definition and the Code of Ethics offer scant support for museums in understanding or defining their ethical, social or political place in relation to their close communities or the world at large, leaving individual museums to seek guidance outside the museum field, in other global organisations and documents like the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and UNESCO’s *Declaration of Cultural Diversity* to embed the museum in a clear set of values and system of ethical accountability.

Through ICOM’s relationship with UNESCO, and documents like the UNESCO *Recommendation concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections*, ICOM is included in a world view and values of justice, liberty and peace, of solidarity, social

integration and cohesion, sustainable development – reflecting, as it is, major concerns and priorities of the present time.

It seems, however, untenable in a contemporary and future context for ICOM to uphold this ethical vacuum or void in its own definition of museums. While ICOM has, for decades, assumed a position of advocacy around museum collections, historic monuments and even cultural landscapes, there seems to be a need for a framework of value-based advocacy or activist positions relative to people, to human rights and social justice, as well as to nature as the – increasingly threatened – source of life.

Furthermore, also absent from the definition is any reference to the accountability of museums towards the societies and the communities, which they serve, and to the means by which societal needs are reflected in museum strategies and policies, in core museum functions of research, collecting, preservation and exhibition.

Museums are not freestanding, sovereign, unfettered institutions, but are shaped by and deeply embedded in multiple economic and political intentions, in nation building and the shaping of national identities, in regional and municipal revitalisation, regeneration, urban renewal – and of course, these days, significantly in the tourism market. There needs to be much more extensive accountability and transparency than the simple term '*non-profit*' to clarify how museums address their purpose, define and adhere to their principles, and acquire and use the material, financial, social and intellectual resources at their disposal.

When asked, in the round tables of the MDPP, about the most important contributions museums could make to society, the responses by museum professionals, while containing the purposes and functions of the current museum definition, went way beyond those into a strong and impassioned commitment to the broader and deeper, social and humanitarian potential of museums. These included bringing people together in purposeful convening, to exchange ideas, to create a sense of belonging and identity, to build empathy, understanding and sensitivity towards differences, to promote reflection and critical thinking, and to create spaces for reconciliation. To improve quality of life. Improve health.

It seems essential that a museum definition should contain this commitment as an overarching frame of values and purpose.

GLOBAL TRENDS AND THEIR REFLECTION IN MUSEUMS

Museums grow and multiply, significantly, across the world. Current trends and changes in societies directly and indirectly impact, frame and affect museums and museum work. In adapting to the new conditions and new possibilities museums stretch, bend and reinvent the known institutional formats of what a museum is thought to be. If the concept of '*permanence*' is relevant in a museum definition, it should be in relation to the life of collections as such, rather than to the specific institutional or organisational forms around them which are continuously changing.

Societal changes are complex, contradictory and uneven. However, major global surveys and analytical forecasts seem to point to some pressing issues and vital concerns facing the world today and in the near future, which, with some regional and other demographic variations, are broadly shared across the world. These include climate change and the destruction of nature, inequality, lack of economic opportunities, migration, discrimination, large scale conflicts and wars, government transparency and accountability.

Observing societal trends like these can provide useful tools for navigating and charting the potential relevance for the sector, for organisations like ICOM as well as for individual museums.

Museum professionals in the MDPP round tables voiced very similar concerns to those of respondents to global surveys. They also identified some of the challenges, which these issues pose to museums, and which underline the importance of developing more inclusive methods, open to the involvement and participation of communities, and addressing themes of inequality and human rights, globalisation and migration, climate change.

While new museums, specialist museums and museum-like initiatives are created specifically to address some of the contentious issues of ethnicity, human rights, gender, sustainability or even the future, in response to expressed societal, governmental and community needs, there remains a gap between these core concerns and the themes dominating the research, the collecting, the exhibitions and events in traditional, mainstream museums.

As each year there are palpable increases in, for instance, the extinction of species and the permanent disappearance of arable soil, in the inequalities in class-based life expectancies, and in the millions of people displaced by conflicts and wars, for museums to claim neutrality in relation to urgent societal issues is increasingly perceived, by both museum professionals themselves and by the wider society, as an abnegation of societal responsibilities. It is not a question of whether, but rather a question of which values and which world views museums reflect or represent, and how transparent they are about acknowledging them.

While there are obviously places in the world, where actively addressing contentious issues is highly risky for a museum, in other parts of the world the dangers of being too outspoken should be measured and balanced against the dangers of being perceived as irrelevant, by their communities as well as by their funding authorities.

The disconnect, the hesitancy and reticence with which museums stay away from societal conflicts, contentious content and contemporary dilemmas, even when these relate closely to their defining subject matter, seem rooted both in the epistemological traditions and the historic positions museums have held within the power structures of their societies.

EPISTEMOLOGIES, WORLD VIEWS AND MUSEUM TYPOLOGIES

Intuitively the word museum is easily understood in its manifold complexity, with a stable core concept of a collection, of objects bearing information and transmitting emotions, memory and knowledge to those who view, contemplate and connect with them.

But it takes little unpacking or scratching beneath the surface of the museum definition for the scientific, social and political roots in the value systems and systems of thought of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries to emerge.

From the logics of the earliest, private Wunder- and Kunstkammern through the development and consolidation of the binary hierarchies of Western rationalism, museums represent tangible evidence of how societies in different historical periods organize their knowledge and the principles behind this knowledge. Gradually, over the centuries, museums have been shaped by the splitting of culture and nature, of art and culture, of art and ethnography, of

history and technology and art, into discrete departments in larger museums, and into the formation of scores of new, single-disciplinary museums in the late 19th century.

As the detrimental, long-term, in some cases irreversible, consequences of the so-called scientific revolution and interventionist philosophies of nature become increasingly tangible in the 21st century, the problematic character of the 20th century language of '*humanity and its environment*' of the museum definition – as is the case with '*in the service of society and its development*' – is equally manifest.

The isolation and elevation of humans from the rest of nature and the corresponding reduction of nature to being part of humanity's environment, in the museum definition, leave no conceptual or principal place for the important natural history museums collections. And conversely, cultural history collections are divorced from responsibilities relative to nature. The museum definition thus provides no ethical or intellectual guidance or support for museums trying to address the multipronged current crises in the bifurcated relationship of humans in nature, and for museums trying to contribute to a critical exploration of sustainability with the level of authority, the collections could actually merit.

New museums, often driven by strong indigenous presences, in particularly the Americas, the Pacific and now also the African continent, are developing inter-, trans-, and multidisciplinary, holistic approaches and methods, and embracing world views, cosmologies and epistemologies, which understand and interpret objects and collections within a framework of a fundamental connectivity and interrelatedness of all things, all beings. These paradigms provide powerful alternatives for museums, when they, faced with the complexities of the 21st century, re-examine their lock-down in the single disciplinary methods and approaches.

A museum definition should be rooted in a plurality of world views and systems of knowledge, rather than in a single, Western scientific tradition.

Knowledge is, to an important extent, situated. Increasingly museums come to realize, often under pressure from people whose points of view and experiences are underrepresented, that the demographic composition of staff impact the kind of knowledge and perspectives the museum can create, and its ability – or inability - to meet the different, and often conflicted, gender, class, ethnic, or racial perspectives of its communities. A major shift in the 20th century was the recognition, not least in countries with strong indigenous voices, of the needs and rights of a primary setting to interpret its culture and objects.

A museum definition should speak from a position of respect for this basic principle of self-representation.

Throughout the history of museums, their unique and defining quality lies in uniting functions and dimensions, which are most often split in institutional settings – in bringing together research and ideas with material evidence and culture, ideas with physical Gestaltung, scientific knowledge production with the general public, documentation with communication.

The fundamental and inbuilt educational and social purpose of museums is well documented through museum history. The relationship between collections and people is the constituent one, when collections make the leap from private passion to public museum.

It seems essential, at a time of reassessing the basic definition of museums and at a time when the sector is often restructured, to never lose sight of or let go of this fundamental unity and interconnectivity of the various functions of a museum, the '*acquires, conserves, researches,*

communicates and exhibits' of the museum definition – even if the language for and around the functions may need to be updated. These functions and their integrated whole remain principally and categorically essential for the museum field and for a museum definition.

However, how these basic museum functions enter into a closer, more accountable relationship with the general public, with communities and stakeholders, represents a new challenge, as the expectations towards cultural participation take hold and spread in the 21st century.

POWER, ETHICS AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

The global geo-political context, conflicts and balances of the 21st century differ categorically from the centuries in which the museum as a paradigm and institutional model was formed. They also vary greatly from the 20th century in which the ICOM museum definition was developed.

Museums as institutions were shaped at the intersection of a spirited quest for knowledge and new scientific paradigms with the extreme violence employed by European powers in the colonisation of the Americas, in the enslavement of populations in Africa, in religious persecutions and expulsions within Europe. They were also shaped within and at the time of a paradigm which defined rights through ownership, thus denying the full humanity of large populations, globally and locally, and excluding them from citizenship.

Absent, however, in the current museum definition is any reference to colonial or other legacies of power and wealth, which have been constitutive for the principles of how Western museum collections were formed, with ethnographic collections shaped through the notion of hierarchies of civilisation and (racial) inferiority, and national collection shaped through the hierarchies of property and wealth, class, ethnicity and gender.

The museum definition thus, again, leaves an ethical vacuum as the legitimacy of the amassing of cultural property from other continents in European museums is persistently and more widely interrogated in a contemporary geopolitical context, and as museums on all continents engage in the fraught, political, intellectual and emotional processes of de-colonisation, be it in terms of processes of repatriation, of recontextualizing collections, of developing methods of cooperation and consultations, or in ensuring the diversity of staff and in governance.

Critiquing and protesting the way museums, monuments and sites perpetuate traditions of power is not an attempt to rewrite history, but a demand, in the present time, to right historic wrongs.

The absent thematisation, in the museum definition, of the asymmetries of power and wealth leaves museums without an ethical framework within which to explore and expand the unique potential – and obligations - of museums relative to current societal issues of mass displacement and migration. As a global professional organisation ICOM needs to provide points of reference, which can name, contain and provide guidance in the conflicts between what is currently often called the Global South and Global North, and make 'de-colonisation', in the widest sense of the word, a mutual and shared need and commitment.

Likewise, a definition of museums needs to recognise the general, national and local issues of privilege and inequality which mar most or all countries and cultures, and be sensitive and open to the emergence of new museum paradigms which do not mirror the traditional mold.

Museums try, some would even claim that they do their best, to direct their resources towards the needs of the people they serve. However, even the most basic audience research will show the uneven pattern of museum audiences, least pronounced in natural history museums, most pronounced in contemporary art museums. Museums tend to serve the well-educated audiences far more than other demographic groups. And this does not begin to address the questions of how privilege manifests itself behind the scenes of museums, in the prioritizing of themes, methods, content, or in recruitment and governance.

The high visitor figures in museums are put in perspective by this skewed composition towards privilege, and by the failure to provide equal and real access for all, even in countries where legislation, a broad political will and public funding support this. Taking a commitment to equal rights to culture seriously, transcending the economic, social and cultural barriers of power and privilege and bridging the sense of disconnect, requires more than the mere being '*open to the public*' of the current museum definition indicates. It requires a proactive engagement with and responsiveness to the diverse needs of diverse constituents.

CULTURAL DEMOCRACIES AND CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

In the broadest meaning of the word, as the possibility for people, as individuals or collectives, to participate in the planning, steering, and governing of their own lives, democracy is a concept of hope, of aspiration, of striving, never complete, never fully realized.

The history and processes of democracy have always been defined as much through *what* and *who* they exclude as by what and who they include. The 19th and 20th centuries saw fierce and successful struggles to expand who—in terms of class, gender and race—was to be enfranchised and included in the processes of governing societies. The 21st century is marked by important expansions in *what* is included – which areas of life are to be considered part of a political realm and included in shared public decision making. At the same time, in the Global North and West, neo-liberalist economic developments of the 21st century are narrowing and restricting the areas within which government and general society can actually exert real control.

Formal representative democracy is increasingly supplemented by informal local processes to shape and govern everyday quality of life, in neighbourhoods, at work, in places of education, in city development and planning. In museums, likewise, the expectations for influence, participation and direct involvement are growing amongst constituents. The '*education, study and enjoyment*', which is allocated to '*the public*' in the current museum definition, wants to blend into the active verbs of '*acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits*', which have been hitherto reserved for the museum itself.

Learning is increasingly understood as active, self-directing and self-selecting processes, in which knowledge, aided also by digital technologies, is discovered, developed, and constructed. Public expectations of participation, collaborative processes and cocreation begin to reach behind the traditional public scenes of exhibitions, education and events, into the back-of-house functions of collecting, documentation, research and general policy making. Across the world, museums are experimenting with expanding their realms and methods to include and support new paradigms of public participation, in a positive, productive tension between being both an expert institution and a community platform.

A museum definition needs to recognise these paradigmatic shifts towards a relational framework, in a conceptual language of involvement, of mutuality and reciprocity, exchange, equal partnership, outreach and inreach, cooperation, collaboration, shared responsibility, shared purposes and collective authority.

Democracy – if that word or concept will survive much longer in the 21st century – is ideally about empowerment of individuals and communities as well as about processes for peacefully negotiating and mediating differences and divergent points of view. The last quarter of the 20th century saw the emergence of a new generation of museums defining themselves as places, where a plurality of voices can speak, and where strangers can safely interact.

Among the MDPP round tables the democratic functions and purposes of museums were given a primary importance. Creating museums, as they say, as places for critical thought and pluralist views in an increasingly polarized world, calls for methods that strengthen community participation and access to heritage for all citizens.

While a language which transcends the binary hierarchy between the museum and its constituents, communities or audiences is not readily at hand, a future museum definition must, inevitably, define, reflect and support these broad democratic purposes as an overarching framework for museums, their purposes and functions as well as for their professions and governance.

CONTINUED PROCESS

The mandate of the MDPP does not call for the committee to propose new or revised definitions, but only, at this point, to advise the Executive Board and Advisory Council on the needs for a revision, and the MDPP has resisted the pressures and temptations to develop any such proposals.

Following the Executive Board's decision approving the recommendations made by the MDPP in order to create a new definition that better expresses and addresses the values and commitments, the purposes, functions, and methods of museums in the 21st century, the MDPP will begin to structure and organize such a process.

The discussion of the museum definition in ICOM in 2003-04 provides important experiences to be remembered. In embryonic form those discussions contained a number of the themes, which have grown into principle points for the current analysis. The need for the definition of museums to name the increasingly important social and community role of museum was underscored then, as was the need for museums actively to provide access to heritage, not just passively have their doors open. The need to understand visitors as active, intelligent beings as well as the 'mutuality' in the relationship between the museum and its users and communities were brought up as issues. There was already then a call for the museum definition to address the issues of sustainability. Little of this, however, found its way into any profoundly new proposal for revision of the definition, as the discussion got stuck, as they self-critically said at the time, within the existing framework.

Another important experience from 2003-04 is the critique of the narrow discussion fora and the lack of broad participation among ICOM members.

Currently about 2000 ICOM members and museum professionals have already been directly involved in the preliminary discussions around a possible revision, and it is considered an absolute priority to ensure a high involvement in the continuing process, if it is to succeed in channelling the excitement, enthusiasm and positive energy in the membership into generating definitions which reflect the new aspirations, responsibilities and possibilities for museums, in a much more mutual relationship with their surroundings.

The statutes of ICOM set a formal framework, which needs to be observed and followed:

- The museum definition is Article 3, section 1 of the ICOM statutes, and a change in the museum definition is thus a change in the ICOM statutes
- Article 3, section 2 makes it possible to recognise additional institutions which carry some but not all of the characteristics mentioned in the definition in Section 1
- Article 23, section 3 stipulates that amendments to the statutes can be proposed by the Executive Board, Advisory Council, National Committees and International Committees, Regional Alliances and Affiliated Organisations. Standing Committees are not included.
- Article 10, section 3 stipulates that amendments to the statutes can only be decided by an Extraordinary General Assembly. An Extraordinary General Assembly can be called by The President, on the recommendation of the Executive Board, the majority of the Advisory Council or one-third (1/3) of the National Committees. The quorum for an Extraordinary General Assembly is a two thirds (2/3) majority held between Voting Members. The decisions are taken by a two thirds (2/3) majority of the members present and represented for amendments of the Statutes.

- Article 10, section 4 calls for an official invitation to an Extraordinary General Assembly to be sent at least sixty (60) days before the date of the meeting on amendments of the Statutes. An announcement is to be published on the ICOM website and communicated in a manner deemed most efficient. The official invitation must include the date, time and place of the meeting, as well as the assembly's agenda. Documents must be made available in sufficient time for reflection and debate among ICOM's members, preferably at the time of the official invitation.

This sets a basic framework around a revision of the museum definition and amendment of the statutes. Below is a draft plan for how the process towards a possible new definition will be conducted between December 2018 and September 2019.

- December 2018. Decision by the Executive Board to enter a process of a possible revision
- December 2018. Creation of a platform or a method for positive development of a new definition, citing the most important arguments and basic elements to be thought about or included, to be used by individuals, committees or other collective gatherings to encourage and support new proposals. The format for proposals should be free, but it could be encouraged that new definitions contain, in any order and in any type of language from the poetic to the terse, references to the values and purposes, the functions, modes and methods as well as the accountabilities of museums.
- December 2018. Development of a simple website, the ICOM Museum Definition webpage, which promotes and explains the process and the methods, and to which *all* new proposals are to be submitted. This is not meant as a discussion site, and will not be a truly interactive site, but is monitored by the ICOM secretariat/MDPP.
- January 2019 – September 2019. Publication on the ICOM website and social media platforms of the report and recommendations of the MDPP and of the decision by the Executive Board, accompanied by short video interviews with selected EB and MDPP committee members on the need for a change, to be released at intervals to focus attention on the question leading up to Kyoto September 2019
- January 2019 – April 2019. Publication of a special Museum Definition page on the ICOM website to which *all* proposals are to be submitted during the months January - April 2019. Proposals can be submitted in any language, as long as they are accompanied by a provisional translation into English. Proposals can be submitted by individuals, groups, committees. Contributors will receive a thank you response to the proposals, but proposals will remain anonymous, when they are made public on the site.
- January 2019. Letter to all national, international, standing and affiliated committees plus assorted museum associations and partner organisations encouraging them to join the efforts to generate proposals for a new definition, following the parameters of the MDPP recommendations
- January – August 2019. Offering MDPP core members as participants in national and international meetings to clarify basic arguments for a revision and facilitate the creation of new proposals
- February – April 2019. Continuous monitoring, compilation and sorting of all incoming proposals by the ICOM secretariat/MDPP.

- May 2019. Selection of two to five proposals, including possible MDPP edits and creations, for new museum definitions to be presented to the Executive Board meeting in June 2019
- June 2019. Decision by the Executive Board of one to two new proposals to bring to an Extraordinary General Assembly as alternatives to the existing definition
- June - July 2019. Call by the President/Executive Board for an Extraordinary General Assembly in Kyoto September 2019 with an agenda of a possible revision of the museum definition and thereby a change in the statutes of ICOM. The selected proposal(s) will be included as documentation.
- June 2019. Renewed publication on the ICOM websites and social media platforms along the lines of January message, but with only the new proposal(s) and the key arguments around it/them
- June 2019. Publication of *Museum International* with the MDPP report, recommendations, the thematic articles by the working groups as well as a series of thematic articles addressing current societal trends and issues by writers from outside the museum sector
- September 2019. Plenary of the General Conference presenting and discussing the MDPP analysis, the new proposal(s) and why this/these are valid and interesting alternatives to the current definition at this historic point in time
- September 2019. Workshops at the General Conference for interested members, going into more depth on the issue, the analysis and the alternative proposals for new definition – a forum for expressing one's doubts and hopes and fears before the voting and decision process
- September 2019. Decision by an Extraordinary General Assembly re a potential adoption of a new museum definition
- October 2019 onwards. If a new definition is adopted, formal implementation of the new definition in related ICOM documents and policies as well as in agreements and documents with partner organisations and in national museum legislations. Exploring and monitoring how the new definition can support ICOM committees and ICOM members in clarifying and consolidating their purposes and commitments, and can serve as a new backbone for museums in future challenges, in their activities and responsibilities in the 21st century