

Invitation to participate in the ECSITE Nature Group Pre-conference - June 10th 2015

In 2015, ECSITE* will organize its annual conference at MUSE, in Trento (Northern Italy). MUSE is not only the new version of the former natural history museum of Trento, it is also innovative and collection based. Thanks to its overall renewal, it now showcases the link between nature, techno-scientific application and society, by means of a new architecture and new museology, that allows to display various approaches in one place. MUSE is a blend of different contents and styles: it is a natural history museum for the treatment of Alpine nature topics, it is a science museum for the attention to research, and it is also a science center for the interactive approach and hands-on experiences.

This is a wonderful opportunity for the ECSITE Nature Group to focus the pre-conference on subjects that are pertinent to **natural history museums** (NHMs) particularly, whilst resonating strongly with other scientific institutions serving visitors. The ECSITE Nature Group gathers members of ECSITE, NHMs and other institutions, to investigate together the best ways to communicate about environmental concerns.

The NATURE Group will find at MUSE the ideal site to tackle questions such as how to redevelop museums, renovate galleries, or plan new temporary exhibitions and innovative public programmes. The stunning building, unique concept and the innovative museology will foster discussion and inspire participants.

Hear about the journey MUSE has taken and how their ideas have been manifest with all the pros and cons to taking a new approach. To get a hint of it, please look at this video trailer:

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=fqynIzabVlw>

This pre-conference workshop will provide unique opportunity to discuss together the main questions we share, and to look for possible solutions: What can NHM mean for society? What is the best way for a contemporary museum to provide interpretation and to display? How to increase and broaden our audiences? How to contribute for ameliorating the STEM approach and adapt it to current multiple needs? How could NHMs help identifying the criteria to evaluate the quality of local and planetary development models? What new ways to explore to raise awareness of science and how to manage the wider role museums are called to perform by society?

Communicating our science to a wide range of people is at the core of our mission. You will see and hear the new ways that our colleagues are developing to explain and demonstrate the rich knowledge that NHMs generate and hold. You will hear how other NHMs are taking their museums to new audiences, interacting with more difficult to reach groups and



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enhancing their programmes to attract those who did not know how interesting natural history museums are.

A detailed programme for the pre-conference will be available in early November 2015. (See ECSITE website).

The pre-Conference takes place over one day just prior to the ECSITE CONFERENCE - June 10th 2015. Participants should make arrangements to arrive the evening before so that they can enjoy the full experience.

On behalf of the ECSITE Nature Group,
the Chair,

Henrik Sell
Deputy Director
Natural History Museum, Aarhus, Denmark

***About ECSITE**

Ecsite is the European network of science centres and museums, linking science communication professionals in more than 400 institutions in 50 countries. Founded 20 years ago, Ecsite connects member institutions through projects and activities and facilitates the exchange of ideas and best practice on current issues.

Members include science centres and museums, natural history museums, science festivals, zoos, aquariums, universities, research organisations and companies communicating and engaging the public in science through accessible, interactive exhibits and programmes.

About MUSE

The new premise of Trento science museum opened at the end of July 2013, thanks to the important investment in culture made by the Autonomous Province of Trento. It is the result of a mature and conscious vision of this land that considers cultural marketing one of the main tourist levers on which to invest resources to benefit current and future societal needs. As a matter of facts, MUSE became from its opening the spearhead of the local museums network, aiming to become an internationally-known cultural destination. More than half million visitors in the first year of opening testify the interest aroused by MUSE: children, families adults and youths have been attracted by the programs and contents, while



new audiences not directly interested in science, were also reached thanks to the architecture. The overall organization of MUSE has a strict and consistent relationship between container and contents. An "internal grammar" allows to read the spatial organization of the exhibition: the vertical arrangement of the central space refers to the galleries, which content is related to the Alpine local environment; the horizontal spaces match the content related to global themes.

The building designed by the Renzo Piano Building Workshop is a major landmark of Italian architecture. The outline simulates the slopes of the surrounding mountain peaks and the internal layout of the exhibition, arranged on various floors, is a metaphor of the mountain environment. Built to eco-compatible criteria, is an exhibit in itself: MUSE is certified by LEED Gold standard for energy saving and use of renewable energy sources. The galleries are characterized by the distribution of empty and full spaces, and the concept of "Zero Gravity", based objects and exhibits suspended from ceiling, as if they were floating in the air. A large central open space, named Big Void, creates visual continuity between the floors. The building is situated on a shallow water pond which multiplies the impact and vibration of light and shadows. Transparency, light, lightness and sustainability are the basic principles leading the design of the museum's building and the interior. The entire project focuses on multimedia exhibits, immersive experiences and hands-on, interactive games and experiments.

With its exhibitions, public programs, research laboratories and collections, MUSE generates curiosity for science, attention to controversial issues, fascination for research and appeal for the surrounding world. The visiting experience of each person is what makes the difference: the inquisitive mind, the interacting hands and the emotions will transform visitors into active explorers. At MUSE leisure meets intelligent entertainment, generates thoughts and reflections in the audience, stimulates dialogue among family members, transforms a school class trip into an exploration, always highlighting the relationship between nature, science and society.