

Participatory Exploration for Inspiration and Education (12)
Engaging Citizens: Results and Future Concepts (1)

Author: Mrs. Paola Antolini
France, p_antolini@hotmail.com

Mr. Marcello Coradini
European Space Agency (ESA), France, Marcello.Coradini@esa.int

ANTHROPOLOGY OF EXPLORATION

Abstract

Exploration is discovery through disciplined, diverse observations and the recording of findings. Exploration can also be considered an early component of the research process. In some disciplines, the system under investigation is so vast, complex and remote that any research must first involve exploration. The oceans, the human genome and outer space are excellent examples. The definition of exploration can also be much broader. The anthropological concept of exploration plays a central role in our cognitive lives, constituting the first preoccupation of human beings since the dawn of time. Long before mankind thought of conquering space, space had conquered mankind; exploration is our universal heritage. The history of human evolution is one of migration. Civilization is a story of exploration, migration, settlements and resettlements. In order to comprehend the present and anticipate the future, we must understand how exploration has functioned as a force of change, transforming social landscapes, human topographies while creating civilizations. Our “heroes” are all European Explorers: among them we can refer to Columbus, Balboa, Magellan, Cook, regarding the seas; Copernicus, Galileo and Kepler regarding the heavens; Paracelsus, Vesalius and Harvey regarding human body; Ray and Linnaeus, Darwin and Pasteur regarding plants and animals; Newton and Dalton and Faraday, Clerk Maxwell and Einstein regarding the physical world and the atom. A case must be made for the significance of space exploration as the logical evolution of the human condition. An understanding of the way in which space exploration transforms individual and social relations, cultures and civilizations, would add significantly to our understanding of the past, present and future. To this goal a survey was conducted, on behalf of ESA, through an interdisciplinary approach, focused on the interactions between exploration, space exploration and societal values. The purpose of this survey is to provide an example of an innovative approach to opening up the dialogue between the European scientific and technological community and the wider European civil society. Nine highly respected and internationally known European personalities have accepted to answer ten pertinent questions on exploration, space exploration and societal values. The principal purpose of this survey was to produce a document underscoring three major objectives: (i) To provide guidelines to interested European entities and agencies at various levels, for identifying and eventually prioritizing and promoting actions to facilitate an innovative dialogue with civil society;