Archaeologically rich and economically poor

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As an archaeologist and young researcher from the University of València (Spain), as a theme and session co-organiser and as proxy junior representative for Southern Europe at the Council of the World Archaeological Congress, WAC-5 has been an important contribution to my professional experience.

From an integrative perspective WAC intend the participation of archaeologists, ethnologists and other professionals related with the study, diffusion and conservation of the archaeological heritage world-wide, as well as members of Indigenous communities who own an important part of that heritage.

In order to guarantee the participation of countries with unfavourable economic situations, WAC developed an extensive program of funding. This was an important success because during WAC-5 more than 1000 presentations were carried out by people from more than 65 different countries.

Although the high number of participants suggests a limitation of the available time for each presentation and the simultaneity of themes and sessions made it impossible to attend all the sessions that could interest a single researcher, these limitations were compensated by the fact that an event of these characteristics provides the participants a global approach to recent research trends, different educational proposals, problems with aboriginal communities or with heritage laws and so forth.

At the same time, as proxy junior representative for Southern Europe I had the opportunity of learning about the internal structure of WAC and its role and objectives in defending heritage throughout the world and in denouncing the violation of heritage laws. Representatives of countries were chosen democratically during WAC-5, which means that all countries could exercise their right to talk and to be heard. All the resolutions signed by WAC-5 were previously voted on and discussed by members of WAC structure in a democratic way.

The only problem in that sense was that no translations were available which meant people who did not have fluent English were at a disadvantage and had to do a big effort to continually understand the discussions. Despite this limitation, the possibilities opened by WAC have to be stand out because countries with big archaeological and ethnographical richness but weak economies get the chance to make their contributions to archaeological research, and young researchers like myself have the opportunity to be part of the administrative structure and to meet people from all over the world, who are carrying out parallel research from different perspectives.

The increasing specialisation of archaeology inclines us to go to congresses that specialise on the analysis of specific topics, but we should keep in mind that each component of the material culture is only one part of a whole and is involved in global processes.

This is why I encourage researchers to go to WAC congresses, where they can obtain a global perspective on archaeology and have personal contact with archaeologists from all over the world.

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