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Professor Dr. Amareswar Galla, an Indo Australian, is the Founding Chairperson of the Inclusive Museum Research Network and he presided over its 11th Annual International Research Conference in Granada, Spain. (www.onmuseums.com)

Granada and its World Heritage sites of Alhambra, Generalife and Albayzin are a welcome relief from the increasingly overcrowded tourist destinations in Europe. Spain has managed to disperse visitors across the country with multiple destinations centring around its rich history and heritage. Granada in the Andalusian region is impressive. Why? Visitor circulation is excellent. Visitor management is seamless. It is clean. Interpretation of heritage values at different levels is accessible to the multiplicity of publics. Local cuisine is scrumptious. Everything provides an experience that is memorable. Heritage conservation and values provide the bedrock.

The 11th Annual International Conference on the Inclusive Museum and the Inclusive Museum Research Network met in Granada last week. It was established more than a decade ago as a knowledge community for rethinking the institution of the museum, as to how best it could become inclusive, and its future role in culturally and linguistically diverse contexts of the world. Research directions adhere to the Code of Ethics and the Cultural Diversity Charter of the International Council of Museums.

The themes, scope and concerns each year are largely guided by the range of transformations and evolving complexity of museology and museography. The focus is on the core business of museums: Collections - on the practices and processes of collecting and curating; Visitors - on the relationship building of museums to their communities of users; and Representations - on museums as repositories and communicators of culture and knowledge.

The research conference meets in a different part of the world each year with a special focus. It is relevant to the time and context of the gathering. In 2018, the 11th International Conference on the Inclusive Museum has the focus on Inclusion as Shared Vision: Museums and Sharing Heritage. This is to provide a space for learning from the range of discursive encounters that the EU focus on the theme has been enabled in 2018.

Revisiting Europe mandates the consideration of the decolonisation of the multiple discourses of museums. This process has been one of the most intellectually stimulating in recent times. Europe in all its diversity is a microcosm of the world - socially, economically, culturally, environmentally and spiritually. Hence, our meeting in Granada was very timely and important.

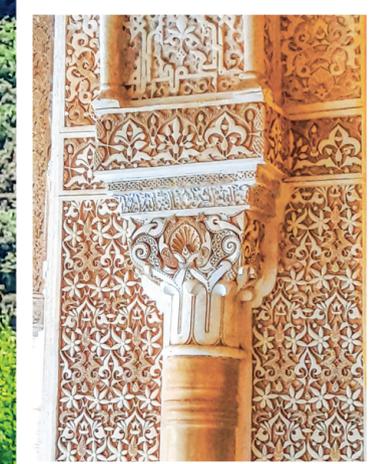
Museums stand at the crossroads of climate change, social transformations and processes of community building among diverse peoples. As civic spaces, they have increasingly become sites for people/community groups to explore their sense of place and self-esteem. Museums as agents of change provide for intercultural dialogue and active citizenship as we pursue sustainable economic and social development building on productive diversity.

Some of the salient directions promoting the Inclusive Museum that have emerged over the past decade and addressed in depth in Granada are as follows:

- Processes of inclusion through active participation and engagement of all the stakeholders.
- Synergies in collaborative collective action through strategic and productive partnerships.

HERITAGE MATTERS

Artistic techniques of the Hispano-Muslim world depict unique aesthetic values of western humanism.



The layered historical cultural landscapes of the Alhambra, Generalife and Albayzin, Granada, are perched on adjacent hills separated by the River Darro with lush green vegetation.

PROMOTING INCLUSIVE MUSEUM

Images: International Institute for the Inclusive Museum

- Spaces for mediation enabling 'reflective, revealing and confronting' intercultural dialogue promoting mutual respect and reconciliation of differences.
- Access for all respecting the diversity of abilities.
- Intergenerational transmission and research challenges by new and emerging scholars.
- Convergence of communications and the digital domain to maximise on knowledge generation and affordable accessibility.

The co-optation of the subaltern discourses and a perceived regression in the way we engage with diverse peoples, has provided for critical reflections. It is always good to take a step back and reflect, on how far we have come and from where, in dealing with changes. I can assure you that we are in a spiral and moving forward. It is within this context that the 11th International Conference on the Inclusive Museum has been developed and facilitated in partnership with our local hosts: Department of Didactics of Language and Literature, University of Granada, The Council of the Alhambra and Generalife and Caja Granada Cultural Centre.

Through case study analysis, presentations and facilitated dialogue researchers from 41 countries explored how museums can transform their operations and practices to meet the changing and complex needs of society in a rapidly globalizing world. What are our current museological approaches to cultural and linguistic diversity and should they be re-envisioned? What practices and strategies do we employ to be inclusive? What are the challenges and benefits? How can museums measure their relevance? How can we vision and re-envision the way forward for promoting the Inclusive Museum?

Granada provided a range of contexts for the delegates to reflect on inclusive approaches to museum development. Collections and content, including artistic and architectural elements, their conservation in situ has become a critical concern. The role of contemporary museums and art in reanimating the large heritage spaces and their use for public forums was discussed. There were a substantial number of doctoral candidates who brought new perspectives and challenging hypotheses to the sessions. One of the underlying themes was the understanding of all forms of access that need to be provided in museums and heritage sites. It became evident that such access issues are poorly researched and understood in most parts of the world.

Museo Centro Cultural Caja Granada - Memory Museum of Andalusia, provided the provincial context for the researchers. In its high tech and interactive galleries, the museum provided for visitors to understand the past with background projections of the changing landscapes of the region over several centuries. The transformations incorporated the changing lifestyles and integration of externalities, including impacts from engagements with the Americas and Africa. Discussions focused on the use of a range of technologies across the world in museums and that in such use content development and discursive narratives that are evidence based should be foregrounded.

Deep understanding of the complexity of the layers of significance of the history of the World Heritage sites of Alhambra, Generalife and Albayzin enables appropriate and sensitive conservation and interpretation. It is an excellent illustration of a Hispano-Muslim urban centre in the South of Spain and its formation during the Nasrid dynasty. The contributions of Christian Renaissance and Spanish Baroque culture in Albayzin are exceptional. The Arab and Hispanic Christian traditions in architecture, symbolism and place making created a harmonious blend of traditions and contemporary heritage. It is fusion or hybridity that results in unique cultural elements that offer lessons to India here about conserving and interpreting the coexistence and layering of a diversity of heritage inheritances. Inclusive safeguarding of all forms of heritage is pleasurable and productive.

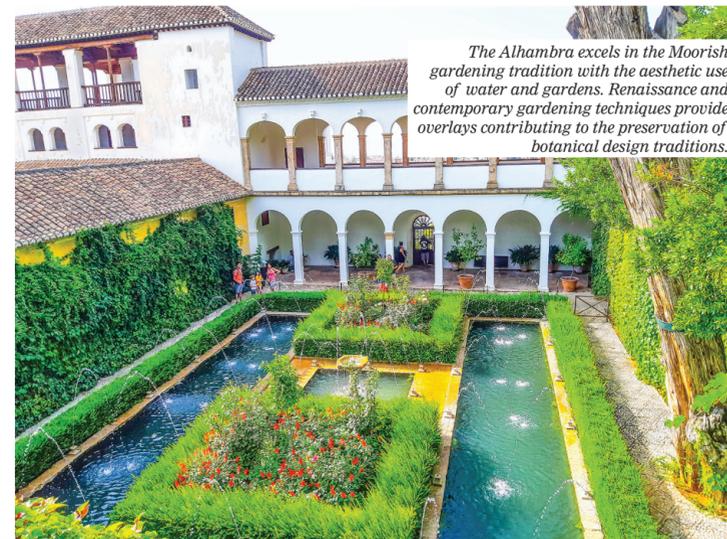
NEXT WEEK Heritage Matters next week will take you to the World Peace Summit in Korea



Palaces and cathedrals stand as sentinels to the rich legacy of Moorish town planning and architecture with Nasrid buildings and constructions of Christian tradition that coexist harmoniously.



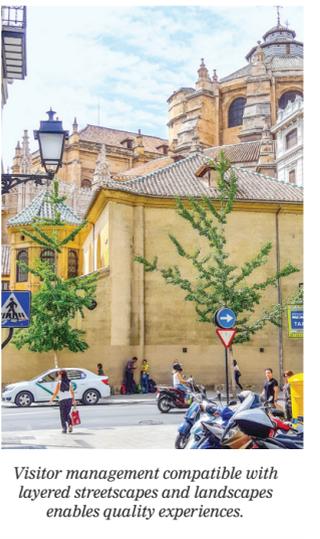
The residential district of the Albayzin is impressive in its medieval town plan with narrow streets and small squares along with the relatively modest houses in Moorish and Andalusian style.



The Alhambra excels in the Moorish gardening tradition with the aesthetic use of water and gardens. Renaissance and contemporary gardening techniques provide overlays contributing to the preservation of botanical design traditions.



The fountains and gardens of medieval Arabic design provide fragrances from flowerbeds, pleasing sound from the ever-flowing water systems and aesthetic immersions on the heritage walk.



Visitor management compatible with layered streetscapes and landscapes enables quality experiences.