CONTROVERSY IN SCIENCE MUSEUMS
FIRST...

What does controversy have to do with Science Education?
Science Education = Sustainability

Sustainability = Social issues

Social issues = Controversy
Controversy in Museums
Gender discrimination, Poverty, Migration...

All are part now of museological culture, but not necessarily Science Center Culture.

And they are all part of the Sustainability paradigm
We have done some good and successful efforts but is it enough?

Are we afraid of political and social repercussions?

Are we afraid of funding withdrawal or audience alienation?

*Photo: Emilio Sánchez*
But why?

Controversial topics are:
- unpredictable
- involve conflict
Controversial topics represent: alternative views, beliefs, ideologies.

Besides this being maybe problematic, how do you create a narrative that considers all the voices of the world.

*photo: Emilio Sánchez*
New museology considers complex political and social issues: a forum for debate and critical thinking.

But there is a reluctance in conversing deeply with these issues.

Could it be because of a limited understanding of the role our museums play in contemporary society?
What does this have to do with Science Centres?
We have created a world of facts. Somewhat separated from human concerns, desires, conflicts.

Can we keep on going like this without loosing our purpose? Or do we have to reevaluate our purpose, the role we have in our community?

We are MIDE, think we do
Controversy at MIDE
Re-think the long established practice of exhibiting “facts”.

Science as a common language, technology as a humane tool, innovation as an attitude

Science is political, technology is political. Why should science centers not be? We need to take a stand.
So, what are we doing at MIDE?

We are trying, slowly but trying.

Our sustainability Hall- Our Climate Change Forum
Welcome to our International Climate Change Forum

You are now the leader of 1 of 8 countries. You must consider your country’s resources, needs and future. Together we must reach an agreement for the planet.
The science about climate change = migration, inequality, justice, poverty...

Sustainability
By creating a link between science linked to daily life, we create dialogue about controversial issues. This is how we talk about sustainability.

Success!!!
Space with credibility

Space of trust

Space of freedom
But also...

Taking a stand, sharing opinions, by expressing our own vulnerability.

We are asking tough questions, and are open to eager answers.
Now, this experiment has led us to try it some more, on other halls, and other venues.

Our visitors asked us to bring the CCF outside the museum walls, so we did!

Isn´t this part of what science museums/centres should do?
What does this have to do with science education right?
We must break the notion that we as museums cannot have opinions and be a valuable part of the dialogue.

We must integrate the social and political contexts of our visitors in the way we talk about science and the experiences we create.

*photo: Emilio Sánchez*
Using different perspectives to talk about science, embracing social issues, and controversy, can encourage a more inclusive science education, one of the highest quality.
Controversy is a naturally occurring state in wider public culture, and therefore the ability to express and embrace ideological diversity is a requirement for relevance in 21st century museums.

*Photo: Elis Monroy*
If we truly want science education to thrive, we have to talk about sustainability.

To truly talk about sustainability, we have to talk about social issues, economics, controversy that surround us.
Create spaces to **share** the complexity of our **identities**, and analyze **science** but also those concepts that have now become unclear.