

On Levels, (Politics of) Scale, Cases and Networking

“Operational Directive 14. The Committee encourages the submission of (...) programmes, projects and activities (...) undertaken jointly (...) in geographically discontinuous areas. States Parties may submit these proposals individually or jointly.”

In this article, I reflect on a number of issues related to scale, territories and alternative trails. The *Intangible Cultural Heritage and Museums Project* (IMP) is an intangible cultural heritage safeguarding policy-oriented project, co-financed by the European governance level; it is an exception. In Hanna Schreiber's article in this journal, it becomes clear that safeguarding intangible cultural heritage is, at present, not at all high on the agenda of European institutions. The fact that the Council of Europe had to make a recommendation in 2019 to consider the potential of policies for and via safeguarding intangible heritage is a sign that there are problems, and a lack of investments or understanding, at least among policy makers and in particular the ministers responsible for heritage and active on the 'European level' (up to now, usually the ministers responsible for monuments and landscapes). Even if most countries on the European continent, in particular the Member States of the European Union, have ratified the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, a powerful Eurocentric effect is lacking: an effect in the sense of real strong centripetal or centrifugal forces or investments in a jointly undertaken European policy as part of the global endeavor for safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage of humanity. The IMP swallow does not yet make summer. Also the European Year for Cultural Heritage in 2018 opened a few doors, including towards UNESCO and the 2003 Convention, but the impact or follow-up remains to be realized.

Probably the strongest contemporary impulse for some Euro(ex)centricity in ICH safeguarding policies and practices comes from the global level (and, of course from a few NGOs 'on the ground', next to entrepreneurs in tourism or agriculture).

Paradoxically, it is actively facilitated from 'above' (UNESCO Headquarters) in order to monitor the effects of an instrument that is sometimes seen as counter-Eurocentric. It found its origin, so the diplomatic mythology goes, in trying to find an alternative for the (centripetal) Eurocentric dominance that people detect and 'feel' in the World Heritage List. The antidote was the 2003 Convention. The Overall Results Framework and the way it is now

used to structure the system of periodic reporting of Member States of the 2003 Convention, might have an interesting effect: to bring European administrators together to organise themselves, to compare, to learn and to anticipate. They might realize that these questionnaires will come (back) and that they can share efforts. Periodic reporting nation state per nation state, but geo-politically synchronized and organized by joining two clusters inherited from the Cold War era: UNESCO's Electoral Groups 1 and 2. It is their turn, as 'Europe', in 2021.

The 2003 Convention and the way it is implemented by UNESCO keeps on being an *Unvollendete* Symphony of Double Binds. How to embrace some, but to avoid other effects of Eurocentric and non-global, non-hyperlinked impulses, without just favoring or stimulating the new empires or neo-colonial trajectories that operate under the North-South mist (from East to West and the other directions). What about communities, groups and individuals (CGIs) and other networks? Is it possible to move across and beyond the "subregional and regional levels" when considering Operational Directive 86 in the Basic Texts of the 2003 Convention: "States Parties are encouraged to develop together, at the subregional and regional levels, networks of communities, experts, centres of expertise and research institutes to develop joint approaches, particularly concerning the elements of intangible cultural heritage they have in common, as well as interdisciplinary approaches."

Questioning levels and scales matters...

One of my favorite books, ever since I discovered it in 1989 when I was working and living in Florence, is *L'Eredità immateriale. Carriera di un esorcista nel Piemonte del Seicento*, a well-documented, confusing, strange publication composed by Giovanni Levi. In 1990, I published a review in Dutch of the French translation, which was introduced by Jacques Revel with a brilliant essay *L'histoire au ras du sol*.¹ These awkward publications helped me to see and understand an interesting series of experiments that were going on in Paris in the next years around the journal *Annales. Histoire, Sciences sociales*, the *École des hautes études en sciences sociales* (EHESS) and scholars like Luc Boltanski, Bruno Latour, Susan Leigh Star and Michel Callon. Thirty years later, it seems a game of Destiny that I was swept away by a Italian book of a non-conformist economic historian, with the title *The immaterial inheritance* (not intangible heritage as the 2003 Convention constructs, but as Jacques Revel explained, a "(...) formule cristalline et secrète, c'est (...) celui du pouvoir au sein d'une communauté villageoise replacé dans ses divers contextes (...) Le parcours sinueux, compliqué, proposé par Levi me paraît en outre avoir le mérite de (...) jouer de façon raisonnée sur ce que l'on pourrait nommer des variations d'échelles d'observation."² Jacques Revel published other volumes, like *Jeux d'échelles* (playing with scales), where a

1 M. Jacobs, 'G. Levi, Le pouvoir au village. Histoire d'un exorciste dans le Piémont du XVII^e siècle', Paris, Editions Gallimard, 1989', *Oostvlaamse Zanten* 65, 1990, p. 65-67.

2 J. Revel, 'L'histoire au ras du sol', [introduction] in : G. Levi, *Le pouvoir au village. Histoire d'un exorciste dans le Piémont du XVII^e siècle*. Paris, 1989, p. I-XXXIII, p. I & XXXII.

number of ideas formulated in his 'skimming the ground' (as the world wide web was not yet invented, he did not use the surfing metaphor) introduction to Giovanni Levi's book. I picked up several insights. One of them is to follow the actor (the scholar, the heritage worker, ...) across fields and disciplines, contexts and frames, over time... (which is also one of the Actor-Network Theory methods). Another is the incentive not to be satisfied with the scales or frames that seem evident in your discipline (in my case for instance a study of XXX in that 'local museum', or in Bruges, or in Flanders, or in Belgium, or in Europe...) but to vary, question, combine, transgress the levels, boundaries, ... like networks, actors or the components of their *eredità immateriale* do. Why do many scholars seem to take the scales handed to them by teachers and peers for granted? What are alternatives?³ This new academic historic path emerging in France was not the one I further pursued (and the sudden death of Bernard Lepetit in 1996 nipped this promising transdisciplinary development in historical sciences in the bud). I took another by-path that grew into a highway, that of *patrimoine*.

In the field of Critical Heritage Studies, David Harvey published an eye-opening article in 2015 about scales. Using two fascinating case studies, one about a problematic tradition and feast (Darkie Day in Padstow, Cornwall) and one about the National Museum of Scotland, he warned not to take levels for granted or just as "the background" or "a neutral frame" but to ask questions about effects and bias. He recommends working with the oeuvre of Doreen Massey and to think and look twice and deeper: "however real, authentic or democratic such public performance might appear to be, it is crucial that we should understand the spatialised geometries of power rather than be blinded by any warming glow of localness." Harvey's article is a must-read, also for museum and intangible heritage experts. What to do with the argument that:

"Localness, as a bounded space, (...) is not a defensible category on which to construct a politically aware and progressive argument. (...) Such a place is never politically neutral, and neither can it be located without reference to a much larger set of relationships. An active and processual notion of heritage, therefore, must cut free from assumptions about the stability and essential characteristics of scale, just as the validity of places must not be left to rest upon an uncritically cast and one-dimensional appeal to 'real heritage'"⁴

Harvey does not shy away from also pointing at several political implications and effects of a critical analysis of heritage discourses and spatial frames. Just like creating awareness and insights about the authorized heritage discourse

3 See M. Jacobs, 'Actornetwerk. Geschiedenis, sociale wetenschappen. De nieuwe Annales en het werk van Boltanski en Thévenot: een (re)view-artikel', *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis* 22:3, 1996, p. 260-283, p. 273, 278 & 288.

4 D. Harvey, 'Heritage and scale: settings, boundaries and relations', *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 21:6, 2015, p. 577-593, p. 589 and *passim*.

(AHD, Laurajane Smith's classic concept), it is important today to be aware about the politics of scale.

“Under the present circumstances of economic crises and global uncertainty, there is a danger that certain constructions of heritage might be used to support the would be excluders and boundary builders (...) This is particularly important in a world in which the very nature of the nation state is becoming more fluid. In the vacuum that has been created by the undermining of old national certainties, must come something better and sharper than a fuzzy ‘glocalism’, in which everything that is local is sacrosanct, as long as it refers to some warm universal messages about the authenticity of a community. (...) while people might recognize their sense of identity through a complex web of multiscalar, contingent and relational axes of place, it might well be the case that the (re-thought) nation state can act as the most suitable arbiter and distributor of social justice.”⁵ Or not...

Politics of scale

In 2019 a special volume was published with a title that speaks volumes: *Politics of Scale. New Directions in Critical Heritage Studies*. In the introduction, Tuuli Lähdesmäki, Yujie Zhu and Suzie Thomas gave many reasons why “scales and politics of scale” should be on the agenda today. It is related to several other hot topics in heritage studies and practice, like the expected breakthrough of significance assessment in heritage management. For instance in dealing with the effects of the 1972 UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, it is important to realize that “the world heritage status that is bestowed upon them gives a site significance at different scales. The site’s value locally may be transformed by the world heritage status, while it also gains a global ‘outstanding universal value’. The relationship between this status and nation states – especially with sites that have contested histories or heritage – can also lead to experiences of transnational conflict and contestation.” And these kinds of phenomena and effects, and the different kinds of capital it mobilizes and generates, have an influence on how the safeguarding intangible cultural heritage paradigm develops. “Thus, the same heritage practice, object or site can have several scalar meanings and be used to foster and promote several scalar identities or feelings of belonging to different scalarly organized communities. In diverse processes of heritage making, the idea of heritage is commonly fixed to both real and imagined scalarly structured and defined territories: heritage is perceived and narrated as reflecting not only locally, regionally and nationally framed meanings but also those of supranational entities, such as cross-border or transnational regions or continents. However, scale does not only determine the relationships of

5 Harvey, *Heritage*, p. 590.

territories and territorialized cultural features and identities. It also influences non-territorial social and cultural divisions.”⁶

Lähdesmäki suggested taking into consideration several interpretations of scale. Classic are the *matryoshka* (a Russian nesting doll) models of scale as a nested hierarchy.⁷ “In this kind of scalar hierarchy, local, regional, national, continental and global levels form a spatial system in which each ‘broader’ scope is understood as transcending the previous ‘narrower’ scope.”⁸ Heritage items can function on all those levels, sometimes, as the quote about items on the world heritage list mentions, generating opportunities or tensions. But often policy makers try to make a distinction between these levels for organizing legislation and administrations, and for distributing work, power and resources. In the European context, this is related to ideas about subsidiarity. In the Treaty of the European Union, as amended by the Lisbon Treaty (17/12/2007), the Preamble states the intention to be resolved “to continue the process of creating an ever closer Union among the peoples of Europe, in which decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity.”⁹

It is also linked to power struggles, discourses and perceptions, in terms of ‘top down’ or ‘bottom up’. As Harvey demonstrated, the notion of scales can also be approached as processes, for instance as “social production of space.”¹⁰ Another way to deal with this is to think in terms of networks, for instance by using Actor-Network Theory instruments. This can help to see and deal with “the flow of people, ideas, objects and resources as ‘interconnected complexity’”,¹¹ in terms of connectivity and boundary work.

In the networks of Critical Heritage Studies, a series of case studies is now being conducted to explore the consequences and lessons of working with these questions and tools. In the oeuvre of Lähdesmäki for instance, these concepts are used for studying how heritage policies and practices in Europe evolve. Other authors like myself focus on the impact and evolution of the UNESCO (or ICOMOS, ICOM, etc.) related heritage paradigms.

In scholarly research of cultural heritage, there have been paradigmatic changes, digesting, being sensitized by and taking into account major transformations in societies. These evolutions are described with words like globalization, decolonization and sustainable development agendas. They have, according to Lähdesmäki, been challenging so-called core functions of heritage “as a bedrock of monocultural nation-building projects, a continuation of elitist cultural canons, and as upholding Eurocentric cultural values. As a part of this transformation, consensual heritage narratives about the nation

6 T. Lähdesmäki, Y. Zhu and S. Thomas, ‘Introduction. Heritage and Scale’, in: T. Lähdesmäki, S. Thomas and Y. Zhu (eds.), *Politics of Scale. New Directions in Critical Heritage Studies*. New York & Oxford, 2019, p. 1-18, p. 3.

7 Compare to R. During, ‘European heritage discourses, a matter of identity construction?’, in: R. During (ed.), *Cultural heritage and identity politics*. Wageningen, 2011, p. 17-30.

8 Lähdesmäki, Zhu and Thomas, *Introduction*, p. 3.

9 [http://data.europa.eu/eli/treaty/teu_2012/oj\(1/8/2020\)](http://data.europa.eu/eli/treaty/teu_2012/oj(1/8/2020)).

10 Lähdesmäki, Zhu and Thomas, *Introduction*, p. 6.

11 Lähdesmäki, Zhu and Thomas, *Introduction*, p. 7.

and national identity have been questioned and contested through various identity claims below and above the national narrative – and within it.”¹²

But, one could argue, these are precisely considerations that are linked to the emergence and proliferation of the safeguarding intangible cultural heritage paradigm, as empowered by the 2003 Convention; at least as some activists try to cultivate it. Apparently it is high time to emphasize this more, as I did in the reply to museologist Serge Chaumier,¹³ as the IMP-trajectory tried to do and as many other commentators argue. The editors of the *New Directions in Critical Heritage Studies* contribution on *Politics of Scale* decided to end the book with an essay of Kristin Kuutma that spells out such points, and in the meantime also emphasizes the power play and dangers in that new UNESCO Convention.

In her subtle analysis, Kuutma explained how, on the one hand, the 2003 Convention tried to make a difference in comparison to the 1972 Convention: “(...) the new convention argued for an altered politics of scale. Its provisions foreground the role of communities and negate the scales of significance, as they are pronounced by the terms of ‘universal value’ or ‘authenticity’. Although the official UNESCO discourse in the intangible heritage framework shuns such external evaluative categorization, it need not be the case on the ground. Local scales are associated with authenticity, while branding in tourist industry requires both singularity and authentic heritage.”¹⁴

But on the other hand, some of these official tools ‘in the (policy) cloud’, were right from the start infected by implicit hierarchies and politics of scale in denial, like the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding or the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Kuutma hits the nails on the head: “The practice of listing effectuates the notions of scale, territory and boundedness.”¹⁵ Referring to the critique of authorized heritage discourse and the scalar power mechanisms involved in implementing it, as being predominantly higher-classes and ‘Western’ specific, Kuutma also invited to keep looking at “the more universal sanctioning with authority that emerges in various scales.” She detected AHD in contexts where national identity is built on folklore collections, like post-soviet Eastern European countries. According to Kuutma: “In the intangible heritage configuration, power hierarchies in AHD that are sanctioned by state authority valorize the scale of ‘local’ as a spatial and moralizing denominator for a particular purpose.” But, it is complicated if you persist in systematically following and disentangling the lines: “Community participation – that is, mobilization around intangible cultural heritage – favours the emergence of a clearly bounded and targeted group, who would be easier to administer. And

12 Lähdesmäki, Zhu and Thomas, *Introduction*, p. 1.

13 M. Jacobs, ‘Pourquoi? – Why Museology and Museums Should – more than ever – be Part of the Heritage Paradigm...’, in: *Volkskunde. Tijdschrift over de cultuur van het dagelijks leven* 121:3, 2020, p. 381-388.

14 K. Kuutma, ‘Afterword. The Politics of Scale for Intangible Cultural Heritage. Identification, Ownership and Representation’, in: T. Lähdesmäki, S. Thomas and Y. Zhu (eds.), *Politics of Scale. New Directions in Critical Heritage Studies*. New York & Oxford, 2019, p. 156-170, p. 159.

15 Kuutma, *Afterword*, p. 159.

yet (...) the scalar structure plays its role also internally, because the grass-roots level in the intangible heritage framework is multifarious with different social layers and strands involved.”¹⁶

Levels in the Blue Book of the 2003 Convention

The word ‘scale’ is not used in the Basic Texts of the 2003 Convention.¹⁷ It could have been included a few years ago, related to a specific problem that preoccupied many delegations, experts and advisers in the years after the introduction of the Operational Directives in 2008. But it wasn’t. In order to avoid ‘inflation’, ‘work overload’ for the Secretariat and ‘inscription bulimia’, the access to inscribing elements on the international lists of the 2003 Convention was limited more and more. State Parties had to wait turns, whatever the size of the country or population, to get elements inscribed on the Representative List of Intangible Heritage of Humanity. China or India or Luxemburg or Monaco: (in principle, and not taking into account multinational nominations) one item each every two years in the present system. In the first years of using the criteria proposed in the 2008 version of the Operational Directives, a series of discussions and problems emerged.

There were extensive debates about the inventories of intangible cultural heritage, not only as foreseen in article 11 of the Convention (“Member States should (...) identify and define the various elements of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory, with the participation of communities, groups and relevant non-governmental organizations”) and article 12, but also for the new lists based on articles 16 and 17. How ‘big’ and ‘extended’ can an element to be inscribed in the Representative List be(come)? Singing one song or a repertoire of songs of a group or even a country? Cooking and enjoying one dish or a whole national cuisine? Or even Mediterranean, and why not a Pacific or Atlantic (or, to go all the way a ‘Global Seas’) diet? Making one specific type of beer like faro? Or can ‘Belgian beer culture’ also be an element on a list? (It is). And after the ‘Belgian beer culture’ is inscribed on the Representative List, can then specific nominations of brewing a specific Walloon abbey beer or organizing and enjoying one special Flemish beer museum festival be submitted by Belgium and inscribed separately in a next round? What if similar parades in two locations in a region were presented in two separate nomination files, and eight other, also very similar parades in the same region not (yet)? Would then preparing a joint nomination of parades’ culture in that region not be more appropriate? Of course, there was a lot at stake, e.g. as being on the Representative List could mean a world difference for tourists in their choices where to go and visit and spend money. It was not only a question of geographic scales, but also thematic scaling. How can one deal with *portemanteau* elements?

On 22 and 23 October 2012 an *Open ended intergovernmental working group* of experts was convened in the Paris Headquarters of UNESCO, sponsored by

16 Kuutma, *Afterword*, p. 161.

17 https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/2003_Convention_Basic_Texts-_2018_version-EN.pdf (28/7/2020).

Japanese funds. The problem was framed by a question: ‘What is the right scale and scope of an element?’ Several analyses and reports were made but of course it was not possible to reach consensus about the ‘right scale’. It was argued that it was impossible, and not desirable, to give a good answer to a bad question, except, as the wise Brazilian expert Maria Fonseca proposed: “It depends” and “What do the CGIs find appropriate and what do other stakeholders think? Can consensus be found so it can be put on a list as an item and ‘continue’ ‘living’ as ‘an element?’” It was not possible to agree among the delegations so the Intergovernmental Committee decided not to decide upon determining ‘right scales or scopes’ for ‘elements’ (of intangible cultural heritage) and relevant ‘communities’. In the final decision 7.COM 13.b, all that could be agreed upon was the fact that the Intergovernmental Committee “notes that the ‘right’ scale or scope of elements of intangible cultural heritage depends on the diverse contexts of the implementation of the 2003 Convention and its mechanisms at the national and international levels; and recommends that States Parties be attentive as to what scale is appropriate for what purposes.”¹⁸

Trying to find a ‘simple’ or ‘right’ solution for dealing with scale or scope of ‘an element’ of ‘intangible cultural heritage’ was off the agenda for several years. But notice how the discussion might return the next decade, if you consider the assessment factor 7.2 for core indicator 7: “Extent to which inventories reflect the diversity of ICH and contribute to safeguarding” in the Overall Results Framework: “7.2 Specialized inventories and/or inventories of various scopes reflect diversity and contribute to safeguarding.” Or the assessment factor “8.2 Inventorying process respects the diversity of ICH and its practitioners, including the practices and expressions of all sectors of society, all genders and all regions”; or for core indicator “8. Extent to which the inventorying process is inclusive, respects the diversity of ICH and its practitioners, and supports safeguarding by communities, groups and individuals concerned.” Do notice how the focus is shifted towards ‘the process’ and to challenges of managing and combining different scalar systems. When these complex and (economically, socially, ecologically and culturally, hence politically) sensitive issues would be put on the UNESCO agenda again, hopefully more scholarly solutions and insights will be available to feed and enrich these debates, as well as the experiences and solutions of heritage brokers and mediators surfing on and connecting these different levels and contexts.

At the moment, the word ‘border’ is used only once in the Basic Texts of the 2003 Convention, and once in an assessment factor of the Overall Results Framework: “24.2 Bilateral, multilateral, regional or international cooperation is undertaken to implement safeguarding measures for specific elements of ICH, in particular those in danger, those present in the territories of more than one State, and cross-border elements.”

The word ‘level(s)’ is used dozens of times in the 2018 version of the Basic Texts of the 2003 Convention, introduced in a foreword by director-general Audrey Azoulay, announcing that: “In its annex, this 2018 edition of the Basic

18 <https://ich.unesco.org/en/7com>; <https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/7.COM/13.b> (28/7/2020), for the discussions do see the documents and reports, <https://ich.unesco.org/en/7com-wg>.

Texts includes the overall results framework for the Convention, which was approved by the General Assembly of the States Parties to the Convention in June 2018. The framework should make it possible to measure and monitor the impact of the Convention at various levels, in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”¹⁹

The concept of levels is already used in article 1 of the Convention text itself. The purposes of the 2003 Convention are not only to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage and ensure respect for the communities, groups and individuals concerned, and to provide for international cooperation and assistance but also “1 (c) to raise awareness at the local, national and international levels of the importance of the intangible cultural heritage, and of ensuring mutual appreciation thereof.” And article 19 states that “the States Parties recognize that the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage is of general interest to humanity, and to that end undertake to cooperate at the bilateral, subregional, regional and international levels.” Article 20 (c) even makes an opening for supporting “programmes, projects and activities carried out at the national, subregional and regional levels aimed at the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage.”

Level discourse is strongly linked to awareness-raising, following the Living Apart Together arrangements of Member States and the nested structures of their internal households, abstractly captured in ‘local, national and international levels’-figures of speech. But there are also possibilities of inter alia exchanges, collaboration, cooperation and joint adventures at more levels (including bilateral, in principle between any two countries in the world).

A new line of research is investigating how and to what extent actors try to refashion and re-frame themselves and (e.g. the name of) their intangible heritage. Bernard Debarbieux and Hervé Munz demonstrated to what extent actors in France, Italy and Switzerland were prepared to accommodate in order to fit in a desired format or on a ‘level’. The call for research in other nomination files, on how each “(...) stakeholder or set of stakeholders copes with the scalar systems used by the others and how this diversity can lead to conflicts, trade-offs or compromises in the adoption of a common scalar framework. More specifically, within the ICH realm, we address the skill implemented by ICH bearers in order to adapt to UNESCO’s own scalar systems and to negotiate scalar framings with state administrations and heritage experts.”²⁰ A fascinating line of research will be to investigate how the Overall Results Framework will provoke or facilitate civil servants and government to answer appropriately according to the scalar system in the 2003 Convention, and how much space there will be to also show alternatives.

19 UNESCO, *Basic Texts of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Paris, 2020, p. 1.

20 B. Debarbieux & H. Munz, ‘Scaling heritage. The construction of scales in the submission process of alpinism to UNESCO’s intangible cultural heritage list’, *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 25:12, 2019, p. 1248-1262.

The official story on the effect and implementation in Member State Bulgaria: intangible heritage, museums and community cultural centres.

An eye-opening example to understand how the politics of scale in the 2003 Convention is implemented and works is the official story presented by member state Bulgaria. Since 2009 the project of a UNESCO Category II Centre, the Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe, was launched. In 2016, at the occasion of the 70th birthday of UNESCO, the Centre published an overview on the contribution of the Balkan countries to the development and implementation of the 2003 Convention. The first contribution was signed by prof. dr. Ventzislav Velev, who also works in the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Bulgaria. The title of his article tries to speak volumes: *The Contribution of the State, Academic and Local Government Institutions, as well as of the Network of Museums and Chitalishta (Community Centres) to the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Promotion of Its Transmission to the next Generations*. The frame in Bulgaria is a special Cultural Heritage Act in 2009, amended in 2012: “Within the territory of the country the government policy for the safeguarding of the cultural heritage is implemented by the Minister of Culture in collaboration with the relevant state and municipal authorities (...) The vision of the state proceeds from the understanding that, especially at local level, government policies should be realized with the active involvement and assistance of the regional administrations and the municipalities (...) From the perspective of the local authorities, the policies in this area should proceed from the assumption that any actions for the safeguarding of the ICH should be based on the understanding that the ICH is instrumental for the upholding of the identity of the population, its connection with the particular territory and its adherence to the local traditional culture as an important part of daily life.”²¹ Museums are consolidating the vistas: “An important factor for the development of processes pertinent to the safeguarding and promotion of the ICH within the territory of Bulgaria is the wide network of museums, among which specialised ethnographic ones stand out. Within the framework of general museum exhibitions, there is designated space for showcasing the ethnographic and folklore peculiarities of the particular region or of the country as a whole. (...) The promotional factor is also very important, not least because of its educational effect, especially where the younger generation is concerned.”²²

21 V. Velev, ‘The Contribution of the State, Academic and Local Government Institutions, as well as of the Network of Museums and Chitalishta (Community Centres) to the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Promotion of Its Transmission to the next Generations’, in: *The Contribution of UNESCO Member States of South-Eastern Europe to the Implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. A Jubilee Edition Dedicated to the 70th Anniversary of UNESCO*. Sofia, 2016, p. 17-31, p. 21.; https://www.unesco-centerbg.org/wp-new/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/izdanie_UNESCO_print-last.pdf (15/07/2015).

22 Ibidem, p. 26-27.

And then, last but not least, there is “yet another Bulgarian institution, which is unique for the country: the *chitalishte*, or community centre. This prototype of self-organised civil society has already 160 years of history behind itself (...) Today the *chitalishta* are autonomous, self-governing cultural and educational associations set each within a population centre, which also pursue cultural and educational functions entrusted to them by the Bulgarian State.” The importance of this formula had been assessed by scholarly research, according to Velev: “The government policy with respect to the development of the *chitalishta* is based both on an internal evaluation of their significance for the social and cultural life of the country and on their international reputation. An emotionally candid, ethnically neutral team of British scholars led by Charles Landry and Robert Pulford examined the role and place of these popular institutions within the Bulgarian culture and their significance in the context of preservation of cultural and historical heritage in Bulgaria. As a result of that, Landry and Rulford unreservedly proclaimed the need for the *chitalishta* to be rediscovered as a main anchor of both the cultural development and the advancement of civil society.”²³ On the basis of the 1995 study by the independent scholars from the UK, it seemed to make sense in 2016 to contemplate giving this network a prominent role.²⁴

This official account is compatible with the last periodic report, submitted in 2012 by Member State Bulgaria and examined by the Intergovernmental Committee in Baku in 2013.²⁵

The ‘case’ of Nadezhda Savova-Grigorova

In another contribution in this volume,²⁶ I start by presenting an interesting case of a ‘hybrid institution’, in Bulgaria, building on the community cultural center model and taking, among others, the form of a museum. The cultural broker behind it is Nadezhda Savova. She is not mentioned in the 2016 overview by professor Velev or professor Santova, nor in the successful UNESCO nomination file 969, on *Bulgarian Chitalishte (Community Cultural Center): practical experience in safeguarding the vitality of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, that led in 2017 to the inscription of the community cultural centres in the UNESCO list of good safeguarding practices. Will she and her projects be mentioned in the next country report, due, together with all other European reports, in 2021? Perhaps this article can be a reminder. In any case, in this special issue it is interesting to discover an alternative approach that was and is grounded in the 2003 UNESCO paradigm.

23 Ibidem, p. 28.

24 Ibidem, p. 29. Reference: C. Landry, R. Pulford et al., *The Cultural Policy of Bulgaria. A Report by an European Team of Experts*. Sofia, 1995. Do note: the 2013 Princeton PhD on this topic by the Bulgarian scholar Nadezhda Savova-Grigorova, <http://arks.princeton.edu/ark:/88435/dsp01qn59q403h> is not mentioned.

25 <https://ich.unesco.org/en-state/bulgaria-BG?info=periodic-reporting>.

26 M. Jacobs, ‘Words matter... – The Arsenal and the Repertoire: UNESCO, ICOM and European Frameworks’, in: *Volkskunde. Tijdschrift over de cultuur van het dagelijks leven* 121:3, 2020, p. 267-288.

As a young anthropologist, after moving from Bulgaria to the academic networks in the United States, Nadezhda Savova wrote an unusual, widely circulated scholarly paper. In the title she presents a surprising combination of words: ‘museum’, ‘favela’ (slum-neighbourhood), ‘local constructivism’, ‘UNESCO’s Intangible-Tangible Politics’ and a new concept she coined ‘Heritage Kin(a)esthetics’. The ‘museum’ was something ‘under construction’, a mental construct and a development project, explored while she did fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro in 2006 and 2007. Her research method was walking, looking, and doing interviews. She tried to understand an experiment that was part of a bigger social development project, the Slum-Neighborhood Project (*Projeto Favela-Bairro*), a 300 million-dollar project of the Municipality of Rio to improve living conditions, the reputation and visitability of 160 favelas. One of the ideas was to launch a heritage project in the first favela in Rio, Providencia (more than a century old). The plan was to present a historic trail to boost tourism. Project developers and artists decided to declare the favela “an open-air museum”/“living museum (*museu vivo*).” It was also intended to counterbalance huge museum projects (in buildings that had to be designed and constructed) in other parts of the city. Framing and promoting a crowded, vibrant, poor, dangerous (due to drug and gang related violence), unruly slum as a ‘living museum’ was easier said than done. In 2007, Savova wondered if calling an urban zone ‘a living museum’ and trying to act on that idea, would be compatible with (safeguarding) ‘intangible cultural heritage’, the new buzzwords the anthropologist read and heard about. The scholar invented a word to make a contrast with ‘aesthetic heritage’ (like you find in museum buildings for fine arts): ‘heritage kinaesthetics’. This refers to the embodied practices (walking, dancing, feasting ...) that (could) “set the built environment – to be revitalised – alive and are a counterpart of heritage aesthetics, or the immobile quality usually ascribed to a historic site.” People living in the favela and visitors of Providencia’s Museum, according to her, would have to apply several senses and explore methods that are visual (photographing; seeing), ambulatory (walking around as exploration), performances (samba, capoeira, football, and music; tour guides’ performances), oral (telling stories/imagining history), and acoustic (creating and listening to place-specific sounds).²⁷

Savova brings together a wide variety of references to debates in UNESCO, theories, and observations on the role of cybercafés, photographers, tourists and samba. Her article is what Simon Schama called “shamelessly eclectic.” In 2020, it is included in the database about safeguarding intangible cultural heritage on the UNESCO ICH research webpage and, right from the start in the online IMP database. It is interesting but unusual, different in comparison to other articles in those domains.²⁸

Between 2007 and 2013, Savova had the chance to live and study in Princeton. She could also work for several months at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris in 2008, in the year the first set of the Operational Directives for the

27 N. Savova, ‘Heritage Kinaesthetics: Local Constructivism and UNESCO’s Intangible-Tangible Politics at a “Favela” Museum’, *Anthropological Quarterly* 82:2, 2009, p. 547-585, p. 553.

28 <https://ich.unesco.org/en/2003-convention-and-research-00945>;

2003 Convention landed. In her PhD, golden nuggets of her personal history are scattered around, stories that throw a new light on several issues in the history of the development of the 2003 Convention, the first set of Operational Directives in 2008 and 2010, and even the Historic Urban Landscape Recommendation in 2011:

“While doing research at UNESCO, I started calling the ‘houses of culture’ ‘Living Houses’, echoing the ‘Living Human Treasures’ concept, in order to be able to translate for people at UNESCO in their own language and recognizable categories what I meant by ‘community cultural centers’, where people usually engaged in folk activities such as folk dance and music ensembles, or what UNESCO would have termed ‘intangible cultural heritage transmission’, particularly since often the teachers would be old masters, musicians or craftsmen, and even if these people were often not officially recognized as ‘Living Human Treasures’, many of the people practicing the traditional cultural activity as hobby would often become ‘Living Human Treasures’ themselves through regular engagement, performing as folk ensembles at world-class festivals. These ‘living houses’ are particularly intriguing sites for the negotiation of concepts, practices, and meanings of what constitutes living heritage and what is its role in the daily life of the modern city landscapes (with the evolving UNESCO notion of ‘historic urban [cultural] landscape’ [H.U.L], stressing the intertwining of tangible and intangible heritage, which I have elsewhere analyzed as heritage kinaesthetics.”²⁹

In Paris, Nadezhda Savova grabbed the chance of setting up a global network, the International Council for Cultural Centers (I3C): connecting national networks/associations of community cultural centers (3c-s), including *pontos de cultura* (bridges or hubs for culture), initiatives in Africa and UNESCO-coordinated community learning centers (CLCs) in Thailand and Vietnam. The formula she applied was to connect relatively disconnected local cultural systems and their national and regional networks and weaving a global network connected to the UNESCO apparatus. The example of the *chitalishte* ‘community cultural centers network’ that had functioned since the middle of the 19th century in Bulgaria had sensitized her, in an age of the internet and UNESCO networks. She discovered similar institutions all over the world. The principles of the *chitalishte* movement (Self-sufficiency, Self-governance and Self-motivation (volunteer work)) were also compatible with what small museum projects seemingly needed.

One of the assists I noticed while analyzing the Operational Directives for the IMP-project, was the link between Operational Directives 108 and 109 (prepared in the UNESCO Secretariat) and the recent invitation in the Overall Results Framework (with ghostwriters like Frank Proschan and Janet Blake) via assessment factor “1.5 Cultural centres, centres of expertise, research

29 N. Savova-Grigorova, *Braed and Home: Global Cultural Politics in the Tangible Places of Intangible Heritage*. (Bulgaria, Cuba, Brazil). Princeton, 2013, p. 5.

institutions, museums, archives, libraries, etc., contribute to ICH safeguarding and management.” Savova was there when the link between 108 and 109 was made on paper, waiting to be discovered and developed later. Do notice the thank you note in her PhD thesis for “the whole Intangible Heritage Section team and in particular Franck Proschan and Cesar Moreno-Triana for our multiple lunch-break discussions about the tangibility and intangibility of heritage, letting me experience UNESCO’s ICH Convention right from the kitchen where it was cooked.”³⁰

Nadezhda Savova mixed the aforementioned impressions and developed it into the core argument of her PhD in Cultural Anthropology at Princeton University. She combined this with work at the Princeton Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies, and with a training in the Keller Center for Innovation focusing on social entrepreneurship. And she discovered the power of making and enjoying food, in particular bread. After founding the International Council for Cultural Centers (www.international3c.org) in 2008, she also created a spin-off, the Bread Houses Network (www.breadhousesnetwork.org), based in Bulgaria. Here again she applied techniques, picked up at UNESCO, by establishing a central hub, constructing an arsenal of stories and aspirations, and training a series of facilitators with the mission, in casu, “to ‘knead’ peace and friendship among isolated and even feuding communities around the world by inspiring them to make, bake, and break bread together.”³¹

Nadezhda also developed toolkits with documentation, methods and games (www.thegame.bakerswithoutborders.net). She returned to Bulgaria to set up a hybrid organization and a network. She is still active, not so much in academia, but in several locations in Bulgaria and elsewhere: “coming down to the local level and especially working with large groups of people and with cultural institutions made me come down from the clouds of imagined networks and the beautiful worlds depicted by UNESCO’s narratives, yet rarely made material, and plant myself in the communal reality faced with entangled webs of bureaucratic miscommunication and impossible hygiene regulations.”³²

Way forward

Nadezhda’s work is not (yet) on the register for good safeguarding practices, but ‘the Bulgarian *Chitalishte* (Community Cultural Centre): practical experience in safeguarding the vitality of the intangible cultural heritage’ was inscribed in 2017 on the UNESCO Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. In section D of the nomination form, there is the chance to tick ‘one box to identify whether the geographic scope of the programme, project or activity is essentially national, sub-regional, regional or international (the last category includes projects carried out in geographically non-continuous areas)’. The first box ‘national’ was ticked. In the file there is a strong emphasis on the relevance in

30 Savova-Grigorova, *Bread*, p. vi-vii.

31 Savova-Grigorova, *Bread*, p. iv-v.

32 Savova-Grigorova, *Bread*, p. 323.

Bulgaria, referring to the different levels of governments and museums. But should it not be international, such an article 18 file, as Savova demonstrated?

How can one fit 'without borders' initiatives or a shameless eclectic approach, hip-hopping between levels, scales and disciplines into nested scalar systems/reports? What will it take to avoid that impressive reports, like the ones produced by the official Bulgarian administrative levels in a UNESCO context, would let interesting brokers and cases like the tweaked community cultural center model of Savova-Grigorova fall through the mazes of the net? This is not a challenge just for our esteemed colleagues in Bulgaria, but for every country. As we argued in the special issue in *Volkskunde* in 2014, cultural brokerage, translation and cultural brokerage are critical success factors. Of course the most important aspect is that CGIs and other stakeholders get connected, make relevant and empowering projects and plans, and can make a difference for many people. But the politics of scale, and the way official monitoring, reporting and overall results collections and processing is organized, should not overshadow, but also not ignore these insights and initiatives, if the 2003 Convention is to be fully developed and the role of UNESCO as a global clearing-house would really function. The story of the safeguarding ICH paradigm should not just be a story of compliance but also inspiration and aspiration. If the scalar system sticks to the official, states-centred version and nested structures, it will be very hard to pick up these traces. This is in particular the case for detecting contact zones and boundary spanning.

In the Council of the European Union conclusions of 21 May 2014 on cultural heritage as a strategic resource for a sustainable Europe, there are challenges concerning "5. the increased recognition at European, national, regional and local level of the social dimension of cultural heritage and the importance of activating synergies across different stakeholders to safeguard, develop and transmit cultural heritage to future generations" or "12. develop multilevel and multi-stakeholder governance frameworks which recognise cultural heritage as a shared resource by strengthening the links between the local, regional, national and European levels of governance of cultural heritage, with due respect to the principle of subsidiarity, so that benefits for people are envisaged at all levels." How will they be picked up?

It will be necessary to critically assess and discuss the results yielded by the operations in 2021 by 'Europe' with the Overall Results Framework and to not take the (politics of) scales and levels for granted, as well as not taking the organization of Electoral Group per Electoral Group for granted, but as something to be corrected with supplementary research with a broader and deeper scope.

More incentives can be given. This is why I plead to reconsider and take serious the potential of article 18 of the 2003 Convention, and in particular a suggestion in Operational Directive "14. The Committee encourages the submission of (...) programmes, projects and activities (...) undertaken jointly by States Parties in geographically discontinuous areas. States Parties may submit these proposals individually or jointly." The intentions are good but formulated in an unfortunate way. Why not change the wording in Operational

Directive 14 to “The Committee encourages the submission of (...) programmes, projects and activities (...) undertaken jointly (...) in geographically discontinuous areas.” When guideline 14 is changed, then there could be specific calls, as they are foreseen in Operational Directive 4. “At each session the Committee may explicitly call for proposals characterized by international cooperation, as mentioned in Article 19 of the Convention, and/or focusing on specific priority aspects of safeguarding.” And there is Operational Directive 6: “In its selection and promotion of safeguarding programmes, projects and activities, the Committee shall pay special attention to the needs of developing countries and to the principle of equitable geographic distribution, while strengthening South-South and North-South-South cooperation.” If this is not possible via the UNESCO procedures, then let us go for stimulating ‘lighter ways of sharing’ good practices, in the light of the disappointment of how the crucial article 18 has functioned up to now. And of course if the criteria would be optimized, it is time to finetune criteria like “P.2 The programme, project or activity promotes the coordination of efforts for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage on regional, subregional and/or international levels.” The word “on” can be replaced or complemented by for instance “over” or “beyond.”

But there is also work to be done concerning other instruments “on the international level” (articles 16, 17, 19 ...). Kristin Kuutma emphasized that, in the first decades of the history of UNESCO’s heritage convention(s), a front zone of the politics of scale resides in inventorying and listing: “The scalar structuration and politics find instrumental mediation through the two lists established by the 2003 Convention, the Representative List and the List of Urgent Safeguarding (...) Inventorying reflects interests and ideologies that are often driven by external agendas; it is rarely taken up on the initiative of cultural communities themselves, but assumes a brokerage and mediation role (see Arantes 2009).”³³ Indeed, the role of cultural brokers, translators and mediators is a critical success factor.³⁴

As I learned in 2002 and 2003 during the meeting for the drafting of the 2003 Convention, from talks with my neighbor Maria Fonseca (Brazil is often seated next to Belgium, in particular when Belize is absent), one of the most important reasons to make those inventories in the first place, is that it is an occasion and even an obligation for experts, brokers, governments, and UNESCO networks to start and keep the dialogue and conversation going with the communities, groups and individuals ‘on the ground’. She explained to me why in the future it would become so important that in article 12 we were drafting, that little phrase “These inventories shall be regularly updated” is there, in particular in combination with article 15. Not inventories, encyclopedias, websites, maps

33 Kuutma, *Afterword*, p. 164.

34 Next to A. Arantes, ‘Heritage as Culture: Limits, Uses and Implications of Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventories’, in: T. Kono (ed.), *Intangible Cultural Heritage and Intellectual Property. Cultural Diversity and Sustainable Development*. Antwerp, 2009, p. 51-75, the special issue in *Volkskunde*, introduced by M. Jacobs, J. Neyrinck & A. Van der Zeijden, ‘UNESCO, Brokers and Critical Success (F)Actors in Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage’, *Volkskunde. Tijdschrift over de cultuur van het dagelijks leven* 115:3, 2014, p. 249–256.

(brochures of travel agencies) or atlases, on whatever scale were crucial, but the 'connectivity' and 'networking', the dialogue and the obligation to go back and explain, again and again, what the consequences and effects are, first to the people directly involved, and then, via periodic reporting to the rest of the world. It is about assuring there is free, prior and informed consent and co-management among the partners and the stakeholders.

I still remember these insights from my Brazilian colleague, about the different layers of the components of the Convention and how the levers and the checks and balances might work. These deeper truths re-emerged during the exercise to explain the 2003 Convention in other words, yielding the Twelve Ethical Principles: "All interactions with the communities, groups and, where applicable, individuals who create, safeguard, maintain and transmit intangible cultural heritage should be characterized by transparent collaboration, dialogue, negotiation and consultation, and contingent upon their free, prior, *sustained* and informed consent." It can even go further, beyond the politics of scale that even the use of a concept or perspective of 'consenting' CGIs in a UNESCO Convention implies. The juxtaposition of actors in the ninth ethical principle is significant: "Communities, groups, local, national and transnational organizations and individuals should carefully assess the direct and indirect, short-term and long-term, potential and definitive impact of any action that may affect the viability of intangible cultural heritage or the communities who practise it." Museums can be those organisations (or members of those communities) and their networks too. All museum workers, brokers, researchers and other people are individuals. All are actors, with networks, and agency, and they can cultivate the skills to deal with scales.