E V D O K I A   T S A K I R I D I S ,   M A R C   J A C O B S
A N D   J O R I J N   N E Y R I N C K

Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage and Museums

A Special Issue

Can museums be actors in processes of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (ICH)? Can museums play several roles, ranging from identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization, of such intangible heritage? (How) Can museums in these processes be stimulating active partners for communities, groups and individuals (CGIs)? And the other way round? Can museum interventions be part of supporting processes of transmission from generation to generation – constantly recreating the ICH in response to the environment, in interaction with nature and their history, hence transforming and not freezing, saving or fixing – and still allow CGIs to cultivate a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity?

Could museum professionals be(come) white angels, thanks to and even in intangible cultural heritage?

And is it possible for buildings that are designated and protected as world heritage to be shrunk, year after year, and be transformed into moveable parts of intangible cultural heritage? Can the result – a mix of monuments, landscapes of imagination, moveable and intangible heritage – subsequently become part of (the collection of) a museum? Could this collection be digitized, e.g. via 3D scanning and printing, and again be musealized? Is it do-able for the making process of the ICH itself to be visualized with several devices and turned into alternative ways for transmitting embodied skills, in or outside a museum?

Would the Intergovernmental Committee of UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, in a meeting on an island in the Indian Ocean, positively sanction and applaud all such 'transgressive' actions by putting 'it' on the Representative List of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity?

The answer is yes.

Figure 1. Anna Szałapak performing on the Main Market Square in Kraków (photo: Józef Korzeniowski, Museum of Kraków)

Figure 2. Museum expert and cultural broker Anna Szałapak presenting a version of her PhD, published by the Museum of Kraków, about the intangible cultural heritage, *szopka krakowska* (photo: Andrzej Janikowski)

Figure 3. *Szopka krakowska* made by the Dumański family in 2017 (photo: Andrzej Janikowski, Museum of Kraków)
Do you spot the inclusion of a new singing angle (with microphone) on this composition of miniaturized buildings (some included on the world heritage list) in Kraków? It is a tribute to Anna Szałapak, who passed away that year, before she could celebrate the inscription of the *szopka krakowska* on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Figure 4. Detail of Anna Szałapak in the *szopka krakowska* made by the Dumański family in 2017 (photo: Andrzej Szoka, Museum of Kraków)

Figure 5. You can spot, elevated on the left below, the figurine of the museum collaborator Anna Szałapak added to the *szokpa* of Anna and Rozalia Malik, 2017 (photo: Jurek Łobaza, Museum of Kraków)
This *szopka*, features the crib, world heritage buildings and a series of characters, including Anna (who is now part of the intangible heritage and of an exhibited object).

A white angel, CGIs, museums, collections, documenting and (in the future) digitizing, cultural brokerage, living heritage and UNESCO World Heritage: *bien étonnés de se trouver ensemble*? That they can be creatively combined is one of the many lessons to be learned when enjoying the contribution by **Andrzej Iwo Szoka** together with several other articles in this special issue of *Volkskunde* on safeguarding intangible heritage and museums. Szoka focusses on the Christmas tradition of *szopka krakowska* before and after the UNESCO phase in the 21st century.

How then precisely can a museum worker become a white angel via safeguarding intangible heritage? Let us reveal the secret: it refers to a significant anecdote[1] and the cultural biography of Anna Szałapak. For the broader public in Poland, Szałapak was renowned as a singer and performer in a literary cabaret, on the radio and on television. But her day job was being a professional museum worker. She was responsible for historical and ethnographical research in the Historical Museum of Kraków. She worked as a curator of exhibitions and as a co-organizer of the yearly Cracovian Crib Competition. In a later phase of her life, she obtained a PhD in ethnography. As a topic she chose to study the history and practice of the traditions of building elaborate Christmas cribs in monumental, though miniature, settings. A selection of the results is stored in the depot of the museum every year, to be preserved forever. Szałapak defended her thesis in 2012 in the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, a study published in Polish by the Museum.

Her work (and that of many colleagues) was a building block for the next phase in the history and cultural biography of *szopka krakowska*: the plan to embed the December ritual in the paradigm of the 2003 UNESCO Safeguarding ICH Convention and its implementation in policy and regulations on an international, national (Polish) and municipal level. This also implied a demonstration of sharing the methodologies, experiences and lessons of what a museum can do in relation to safeguarding intangible heritage. Unfortunately, she did not live to experience the emotions and impact of the recognition of the *szopka* tradition by the UNESCO Convention, at the Intergovernmental Committee meeting on an island in the Indian Ocean, Mauritius, in November 2018. Anna Małgorzata Szałapak (born in 1952 in Kraków) passed away on 14 October 2017.

But the CGIs in the city decided that this museum worker would immediately live on as part of a living tradition. In Kraków in December 2017, several builders of the special nativity scenes added a new figurine, a white angel, to the flock of figures around the crib of the Child Jesus, against the background of miniature monuments and other elements of the world heritage cityscape of Kraków. It was a way to show respect, kudos, mourning and regrets for the head of the Traditions department of a major museum in the Polish city.

This is a cautionary tale in many ways, illustrating (the relativity of) boundaries, evolutions, emotions and the liminal power in repertoires that are now qualified as intangible heritage. Intangible cultural heritage, safeguarding and museums are not only question of institutions, policy levels, performances

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1   J. Gallop, *Anecdotal Theory*. Durham, 2002.

and texts, but also a matter of persons and the multistranded networks they are active in. And an example of how living human beings can move, combine, connect and transform (and be affected and empowered) in the process.

With the *Intangible Cultural Heritage and Museums Project* (IMP) and in this volume, we try to build and cross bridges between the living heritage field and the museum sector and museology, identifying intersections and occasions where the twain can ever meet. In the end, it should not be forgotten that both are just analytical distinctions, a question of projections and constructions, and that heritage *as such* does not exist, or is not based on intrinsic qualities or wrong dichotomies like intangible and tangible values.[2] The classifications are the result of actors recognizing a phenomenon, a thing (which is a slow process anyway) or a performance as 'part of their cultural heritage'.

Transform: why case studies?

In this special issue on intangible cultural heritage and museums, we intentionally embrace a series of case studies. In her beautiful book on heritage and other concepts in Norway in the last three centuries, Anne Eriksen mobilized the work of Jacques Revel and Jean-Claude Passeron to explain the difference between an example and a case (study). *An example* is an illustration of a theory, a category or some other overarching idea. "Even if the example itself is specific, local and concrete, what makes it relevant and illuminating will always be its reference to some generality or ambition of such. Examples can be used to explain, persuade or instruct, and their unique energy comes from the way they make the general specific and let the specific reflect the general."[3]

On the other hand, there is *a case*. It "represents a challenge to generalizations, existing theories, dominant categories or habits of thought. It will often originate from a conflict between established rules and the expected outcome of their application. This conflict will produce considerable ambiguities and ambivalences, and the case thus represents a situation which is 'provisoire, mais intolérable.'"[4] In this lies also its productivity. The case is "an enigma to solve, a question to interpret. (...) It is just because the case represents a challenge to existing theories and dominant norms that its existence – and interpretation – supplies a unique possibility to develop theory and explore norms. This dialectic relationship between the normal (or normative) and the 'case' is fundamental and is also what makes the case an important epistemic tool. The case supplies a site for reflection, interpretation and the development of new insights. (...). When the enigma has been solved, insights gained and new theories or ideas developed, the case will be reinserted in history and contribute to improved understanding, not merely of its own particularity."[5]

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2   L. Smith and G. Campbell, 'The tautology of "Intangible values" and the misrecognition of intangible cultural heritage', *Heritage & Society* 10:1, 2017, p. 26-44.

3   A. Eriksen, *From Antiquities to Heritage: Transformations of Cultural Memory*. New York, 2014, p. 10.

4   J.C. Passeron and J. Revel (eds.), *Penser par cas.* Paris, 2005, p. 16.

5   Eriksen, *From Antiquities*, p. 10-11.

You can find an example of the difference between the two in the contribution titled *On Levels, (Politics of) Scale, Cases and Networking* by **Marc Jacobs** in this volume. The official Bulgarian report from 2012 as a Member State to the UNESCO 2003 Convention, the Velev contribution or even the good practice nomination (file) of the Bulgarian community cultural centres are *examples* of the effects of the scalar system in the UNESCO 2003 Convention, of interpretations of folklore in some states in Eastern Europe and of classic scalar heritage policy with museums and traditional culture. The story of the trajectory of Nadezhda Savova-Grigorova and her projects are used as a case to explore these issues in the study of the paradigm of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and the relation to museum studies.

A series of cases and essays shed light on and create entrances for interpretation, and for the growth of insights into the core questions (mentioned in the introduction of this article) addressed in this collaborative effort around museums and intangible cultural heritage.

In the introduction we already briefly explained the fascinating and instructive case on the Christmas tradition of *szopka krakowska* shared with us by **Andrzej Iwo Szoka.**

Sophie Elpers discusses four cases of museums in the Netherlands shaping, each in a different way, diverse multidirectional relationships between the past, present and future, supported by their engagement with intangible cultural heritage.

Valentina Lapiccirella Zingari, **Pietro Clemente** and **Tommaso Lussu**, **Alessandra Broccolini** and **Claudio Gnessi** present two experiences with a small museum and an ecomuseum in Italy, detecting therein as a crucial challenge the building/acquiring of legitimacy for such civil society initiatives. In these processes the dialogue between cultural bearers and brokers and the scientific community appears as a key-factor in the process of heritage-making.[6] The authors touch upon the dimensions of human, intellectual and affective relations between the social scientists and the CGIs becoming a powerful factor of sustainable heritage-making processes, through a co-creative approach to ICH safeguarding.

Sergio Servellón and **Leen Van de Weghe** present the case of an art museum in Belgium trying to reinvent and reposition itself when confronted with a whole series of internal and external impulses, including impulses from the paradigm of the UNESCO 2003 Convention.

In yet another (type of) approach and contribution to the topic, **Sarah Kenderdine** illustrates and discusses what the future of using ICT can bring. Using a number of her own experiments, she pleads for considering new strategies for embodiment and transmission in museums, as ways to work towards the future of safeguarding intangible heritage.

Filomena Sousa elaborates on cases from Portugal, reflecting about the words that are used in relation to safeguarding intangible cultural

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6   M. Jacobs, J. Neyrinck and 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.

heritage. While a practice of participatory inventorying and stakeholder involvement is experienced as good and careful practice, more can be done. Today, the sensitivity revolving around the 'correct' choice of words is very present. Which words are used and what does this reveal? Using 'bottom-up' practices and wording as a good alternative to 'top-down' procedures seems the right thing to do. Should the choice of words be taken for granted? Top and bottom metaphors can raise questions about how communities, groups and individuals are treated and thought about in practice. Similar questions pop up when following one of those CGIs on their trajectory to the UNESCO Headquarters at the occasion of the performative moment of an international inscription of an item on a list. How are these CGIs perceived, treated and 'used'? A lesson is that we should continue to question words, situations and power structures, and not take them for granted. We should continue to be reflexive and critical and, if possible, explore how our words and concepts can create (even by questioning them) room for further manoeuvres and continue working towards the real intent of the objectives once formulated in our shared arsenal of texts with view to safeguarding heritage/our world.

Politics of scale and the European dimension

IMP was a path-breaking project in Europe, bringing together experiences on the topic of ICH and museums through networking actors in five countries with diverging museological context and heritage policies. The project was supported, among others, by EU funding.

ICH in Europe is one of the topics **Hanna Schreiber** is working on. In Poland, she is both active in the academic and in the policy world. She was also directly and actively involved as a heritage broker to knead, polish and guide the nomination file of *szopka*, and hence of making it possible for the Evaluation Body and the Intergovernmental Committee to recognize it as an exemplary dossier. She has explored several questions related to Europe, ranging from an analysis of the number of inscriptions stemming from European countries (and separately from the EU member states) in the Representative List of ICH. In those nomination files she devoted attention to the roles ascribed to museums in nomination files. Do projects revolving around safeguarding ICH have a place in European funding schemes and calls?

In his article on the politics of scale, **Marc Jacobs** explicitly points out that the recently launched instrument of the Overall Results Framework – the global monitoring framework for follow-up on the UNESCO 2003 Convention's impact and evolution – which will be rolled-out in six-yearly cycles via the UN structured geopolitical scales of six 'Electoral Groups'[7] (three decades later yet still 'Iron Curtain' based). This will probably need to be complemented with other studies and themes, in order to overcome the Electoral Group framework or 'bias', so that more transcontinental and transversal networks and issues may be identified and to grasp the wider picture of what is really happening

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7   *What is an electoral group?*, https://en.unesco.org/executiveboard/inbrief#member (10/08/2020).

in the slipstream of the UNESCO 2003 Convention and around safeguarding ICH in the world.

To the World

Starting in (five countries in) Europe, the aim of the initiators from the onset was to reflect on how the contents and results of the *Intangible Cultural Heritage and Museums Project* could also be useful more widely. How could the fruits of having had the chance to run a networked learning trajectory possibly resonate more broadly? To this aim, NEMO – the Network of European Museum Organizations – as well as ICOM – the International Council of Museums – and the ICH NGO Forum of UNESCO accredited NGOs, active in Europe and/or worldwide, were involved in the IMP process from the start. A global network with both geographic and thematic axes was compiled and the *Intangible Cultural Heritage and Museums Project* was rolling out.

Evidently, the intent and the potential of such global outlook is being mirrored in the contents and approaches within this publication.

The contribution of **Cécile Duvelle** in this special issue firstly captures both the core ideas and sensitivities of the initial generation of experts making and interpreting the UNESCO 2003 Convention. As a former Secretary of that convention (from 2008 to 2015), and reflecting on the intentions and instruments associated therewith, Duvelle sets out her lines of thought around (safeguarding) ICH and its relationship to the museum.

Another protagonist on the global heritage policy, practice and theory scenes goes even further back in time, recollecting and reconnecting four decades of personal experience and commitment in the worlds of museums and ICOM, UNESCO and heritage practices in at least three continents. **Amareswar Galla** offers deep, reflexive and observing participant's memories and perspectives on debates in and about museums, heritage and international organisations. He also urges to include networks and realities in India more in the global heritage debates (and vice versa). Galla explicitly addresses challenges and opportunities offered by the shocks of the Covid-19 pandemic. And he draws attention on what is at stake in the recent ICOM museum definition discussions, confronting the potential of the safeguarding intangible cultural heritage paradigm and the liminal spaces of the museum worlds.

Janet Blake then takes museums and ICH as the subject of interrogation from the viewpoint of international law. In her article, she locates the role of museums in the context of human rights and the Convention itself. Putting the aspirations of the 2003 UNESCO Convention into practice can prove challenging in particular with regard to the notion of participation promoted by the Convention. Museums then have the potential to play a very specific role in ensuring that this aspect of the 2003 Convention is put into practice. A more recent policy instrument of UNESCO that has a significant bearing on this matter is the Recommendation concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections, their Diversity and their Role in Society (2015). Its potential impact on how museums contribute towards participatory forms of ICH safeguarding is also examined.

In his contribution, *Words Matter*, **Marc Jacobs** dives further into UNESCO's, ICOM's and European policy texts. He highlights these international reference texts as a whole set of tools: an arsenal of so-called "boundary objects."[8] In his article, Jacobs also evokes the recent discussions on the museum definition within ICOM. On the one hand the emphasis put on societal and planetary challenges, on participation and multivocality are interesting.[9] On the other hand one of the newest heritage policy babies – safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, as incorporated in the 2007 edition of the ICOM museum definition – might be thrown out with the bathwater. With the outcomes of the *Intangible Cultural Heritage and Museum Project* and with the contributions in this special issue, we hope we can contribute to signaling that would be a bad idea.

In a subsequent contribution **Marc Jacobs** argues *Why Museology and Museums Should – more than ever – be Part of the Heritage Paradigm*. He questions the idea proposed by the French museologist Serge Chaumier, that it would be time for museums to leave the heritage paradigm. On the contrary, according to Jacobs it is high time to join forces to defend and cultivate a number of positive evolutions that have been going on among different actors – including museums, CGIs and others – in the heritage field(s).

Tamara Nikolić Đerić touches upon the heritage sector experiencing constant change and on its quest for relevance in today's societies. The field is facing challenges in adopting interdisciplinary, holistic and participatory approaches in preserving and safeguarding heritage. Wishing to contribute to the reinforcement of future-oriented heritage practices, Nikolić Đerić addresses some key issues and thresholds she identified. She further explores the ICOM *Code of Ethics for Museums* and the UNESCO 2003 Convention's Operational Directives as starting point to disclose the intersections and thus meeting points of the museum and intangible cultural heritage sectors on a theoretical and practical level, framing it within the 'third space'[10] concept.

Florence Pizzorni Itié eloquently, and sometime poetically, shares phrased theoretical contemplations about museums and intangible heritage. She explores the subject of ICH and the museum as a political space, and as a space open for cultural diversity. Using the imagery of the 'palaver tree', Pizzorni Itié imagines the museum in its new forms of heritage institution: the museum becoming a space for co-creation, exchange, for sharing and expressing thoughts around the future, based on interconnecting minds and bodies. According to Pizzorni Itié, the cultures expressing themselves in such museum context develop a "directory of possibilities for social mobilization."

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8   G. Bowker e.a. (eds.), *Boundary Objects and Beyond. Working With Leigh Star*. Cambridge MA and London, 2015.

9   See the advocacy by Jette Sandahl: *The challenge of revising the museum definition,* https://icom.museum/en/news/the-challenge-of-revising-the-museum-definition (10/08/2020) and the special issue edited by J. Sandahl, 'The Museum Definition as the Backbone of ICOM', *Museum International* 71: 1 & 2, 2019.

10 Referring to: J. Rutherford, 'Interview with Homi Bhabha: The Third Space', in: J. Rutherford (ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference.* London, 1990, p. 211.

Jorijn Neyrinck and Marc Jacobs, finally, share their reflection on the journey travelled through changing landscapes in heritage and society, in their contribution bearing the title of this special issue: *Transforming, Not Saving: Intangible Cultural Heritage, Museums, and/or the World*. Will the – former and future – 'epistemic communities' who are embodying, impacting and activating the heritage paradigms from preach to practice, enable and embrace transformation?

The way forward ...

... is to read these contributions and to check out the toolkit[11] that is the result of the IMP project, in order to take a step further in safeguarding ICH. In 2017, the famous Belgian *muséologue* André Gob wrote: "À bien des égards, les concepts de musée et de patrimoine immatériel sont antinomiques, tant le musée paraît fond*é sur l'objet matériel* et sur la collection. Cette assimilation rapide du musée à sa collection est tout à fait abusive et néglige la diversité des missions de l'institution."[12] He goes on to quote the 2007 ICOM definition of a museum and refers to the rapid inclusion of the new policy concept, launched by UNESCO in 2003. He emphasizes the early adoption by ICOM; their 2004 General Conference in Seoul was even titled *Museums and intangible Heritage*. But after this the ICOM engagement faded away, painfully illustrated by the retraction in December 2015 of the accreditation as a relevant NGO for the UNESCO 2003 Convention. When they (successfully) reapplied in April 2017 and eventually got their accreditation in 2018, they explicitly referred to the IMP project to prove they had resumed embracing and engaging with safeguarding intangible heritage. The IMP project, of which NEMO, ICOM and many museums, next to the ICH NGO Forum and other stakeholders from the cultural heritage sector were part of, has delivered the deliverables promised. It even generated extra output, not yet foreseen in the project application dating back to 2016, among others this scholarly volume of *Volkskunde*.

We hope it will be the incentive for a second wave of attention and commitment of the museum sector, as part of the heritage sector and hence society and the planet, to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.

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11   *Toolkit*, https://www.ichandmuseums.eu/en/imp-toolkit (11/08/2020).
12   A. Gob and J.-L. Postula, 'Patrimoine culturel immatériel et musée. Acquérir, conserver, étudier, exposer et transmettre', in: F. Lempereur (ed.), *Patrimoine culturel immatériel*. Liège, 2017, p. 135-145.