MARC JACOBS AND JORIJN NEYRINCK

Transforming, Not Saving

Intangible Cultural Heritage, Museums and/or the World

A sequel…?

A previous special issue of *Volkskunde* we co-edited together in 2014 drew attention to the role of cultural brokers, mediators and translators in processes of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (ICH). If you reread the introduction, you will discover that it was published just after the tenth anniversary of the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the publication of the fourth version of its Operational Directives (ODs). It was in part a collection of papers of an international colloquium on ICH brokers, facilitators, mediators and intermediaries, organized by FARO, tapis plein and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (UNESCO Chair on critical heritage studies and the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage)[1], on November 6th, 2013.

It also had the explicit intention to influence debates in the broader cultural heritage sector: "This new focus on cultural brokerage is also important for other sectors as is illustrated in the discussion about community involvement in museums and other heritage institutions."[2] This sentence was accompanied with a reference to a volume, edited in 2013 by Wayne Modest and Vivian Golding, on museums, mediation and community involvement. One of the contributions in that book eloquently captured what was going on:

> "Since the 1990s, there has been increasing discussion about community involvement and participation in museums and, to a lesser extent, art galleries, giving rise to terms such as consultation, outreach, inclusion, engagement, inreach, co-curation, and co-production. (…) Each of these terms has different connotations and politics in terms of how much control is retained, ceded, or shared by institutions and individuals. (…) This gives new impetus to the long-standing question within new museology of how to deal with conflicting perspectives,

---

1 M. Jacobs e.a., 'Internationale netwerking, duurzame ontwikkeling en evoluerende kaders. Het programma van de UNESCO-leerstoel voor kritische erfgoedstudies en het borgen van immaterieel cultureel erfgoed aan de Vrije Universiteit Brussel', *Volkskunde. Tijdschrift over de cultuur van het dagelijks leven* 119:2, 2019, p. 179-191.

2 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. 251-252.

competing agendas, issues of control, and who has the authority to speak on behalf of others."[3]

The focus of the special issue in 2014 was on heritage brokerage and safeguarding intangible heritage, not specifically on museums. Several contributions dealt with anthropology and folklore studies and their relation with the safeguarding intangible heritage paradigm.[4] They brought the strong influence of some of the biggest museums in the world, in particular the Smithsonian institution and cultural brokers like Richard Kurin, into the spotlight, and by extension the work of American public folklorists and museums in the two decades before the *'shrinking the USA'*-era under Donald Trump.[5] One of the other contributions, by Veronika Filkó, described how in 2009, hence before the arrival into power of Viktor Orbán (prime minister of Hungary since 2010), a department of ICH was installed in the Hungarian Open Air Museum and assigned the responsibility for the 'national' inventory of ICH. The work done by this ICH department from within the museum was deliberately connected to a networking policy in the country.[6] How this functions today, what the effects are, and in which policy context this system evolves, ten years later, would deserve an independent critical study. If we look back we can only regret that in a decade the policy of some of the best pupils in the class (also think of the Brazil of Gilberto Gil, Maria Fonseca and Antonio Arantes) could become so problematic under specific forms of right-wing populist leadership. It is also a lesson that periodic upgrading and reconsidering is crucial in assessing heritage politics and policy and choosing examples to follow; a lesson that still is very hard to digest within the UNESCO system, of – for instance – the 2003 Convention. Do also note that the brokerage roles of NGOs were discussed in that special issue of *Volkskunde* (and in other places, like the ICH NGO Forum symposia). These themes will not be discussed in detail in this volume.[7]

3   R. Mason, C. Whitehead and H. Graham, 'One Voice to Many Voices? Displaying Polyvocality in an Art Gallery', in: V. Golding and W. Modest (eds.), *Museums and Communities, Curators, Collections, and Collaboration*. London, 2013, p. 163.

4   M. Jacobs, 'Cultural Brokerage, Addressing Boundaries and the New Paradigm of Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage. Folklore Studies, Transdisciplinary Perspectives and UNESCO', *Volkskunde. Tijdschrift over de cultuur van het dagelijks leven* 115:3, 2014, p. 265-291. Compare with M. Jacobs, 'Bruegel and Burke were here! Examining the criteria implicit in the UNESCO paradigm of safeguarding ICH: the first decade', *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* 9, 2014, p. 100-118.

5   R. Kurin, *Reflections of a Culture Broker. A View from the Smithsonian*. Washington and London, 1997; R. Baron, 'Public folklore dialogism and critical heritage studies', *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 22:8, 2016, p. 588-606. See also on the topic of museum festivals and good practices in the USA, O. Cadaval e.a. (eds.) *Curatorial Conversations: Cultural Representation and the Smithsonian Folklife Festival*. Jackson, 2016.

6   V. Filkó, 'Using Networks in the Process of Developing the National Inventory of ICH in Hungary', *Volkskunde. Tijdschrift over de cultuur van het dagelijks leven* 115:3, 2014, p. 379-385.

7   Among other contributions in that issue, see D. Lewis, 'Understanding the Role of Non-government Organizations (NGOs) as Cultural Brokers', *Volkskunde. Tijdschrift over de cultuur van het dagelijks leven* 115:3, 2014, p. 293-298 and J. Neyrinck, 'Beyond the Conventional. How to Foster Co-production for Safeguarding ICH', *Volkskunde. Tijdschrift over de cultuur van het dagelijks leven* 115:3, 2014, p. 319-338.

In other words, in particular these two special issues – 2014, 2020 – of *Volkskunde* should be combined as part of one bigger, ongoing conversation, in and beyond the 2003 Convention's paradigm.

Let us use two quotes to provide insight in what has happened and what is at stake. In Dutch, we have a nice expression of '*voortschrijdend inzicht*', literally 'insights striding (or treading) further'. In this special issue, ongoing discussions about vocabulary and discussions about for instance the museum definition get much attention. In the contribution of Filomena Sousa, even a word pair like 'bottom up' and 'top down' is being questioned. In 2014, the importance of *translation* for brokers was emphasized. It is a key skill for operating at and with intersections, and for transformation processes:

> "The brokers have to be able to address the power-holders, to be flexible enough to deal with different actors and to package it in a convincing manner. This includes 'translation' into the correct jargon and register (avoiding taboo words, sticking to the vocabulary of the 2003 Convention and the 2014 operational directives, i.e. as long as the 2016 version, which may contain new words regarding sustainable development and … brokerage, is not yet available). The 2003 UNESCO Convention on the one hand involves a top-down reboot operation by means of a severe limitation of vocabulary, but on the other, thanks to article 15 of the Convention, it is an invitation to devise bottom-up solutions and approaches. This is why brokers who are also 'translators' are so crucial."[8]

The self-fulfilling prophecy came true. Since 2016 the Operational Directives contain not only some suggestions but a whole new chapter on sustainable development, directly inspired by the United Nations' *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.* It also contains the word 'brokers' in crucial places.[9] As they cannot be quoted enough, to generate impact, OD170 and OD171 are keys to make the title of this article and this volume come true:

> "[OD]170. With a view to effectively implementing the Convention, States Parties shall endeavour, by all appropriate means, to recognize the importance and strengthen the role of intangible cultural heritage

8   M. Jacobs, 'Development Brokerage, Anthropology and Public Action. Local Empowerment, International Cooperation and Aid: Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage', *Volkskunde. Tijdschrift over de cultuur van het dagelijks leven* 115:3, 2014, p. 299-318, p. 310-311. For a case study, see M. Jacobs, 'Domesticating and harvesting shrimps – Fisher communities and the sea: Blue Ocean Strategies, translation processes and the UNESCO paradigm of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage', in: F. Barata e.a. (eds.), *Heritages and Memories from the Sea: 1st International Conference of the UNESCO Chair in Intangible Heritage and Traditional Know-How: Linking Heritage.* Évora, 2015, p. 174-189.

9   Note that this impact on an international policy text is also illustrating the relativity of the general measuring systems in academia in the Western world in the recent past like impact factors of scholarly journals: that of a journal like *Volkskunde* that is usually not published in English for instance but in Dutch flirts with between impact factor zero and 0.5. By influencing the Operational directives of the 2003 Convention, the global impact should not be underestimated.

as a driver and guarantee of sustainable development, as well as fully integrate the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage into their development plans, policies and programmes at all levels. While recognizing the interdependence between the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage and sustainable development, States Parties shall strive to maintain a balance between the three dimensions of sustainable development (the economic, social and environmental), as well as their interdependence with peace and security, in their safeguarding efforts and shall to this end facilitate cooperation with relevant experts, *cultural brokers and mediators through a participatory approach.* States Parties shall acknowledge the dynamic nature of intangible cultural heritage in both urban and rural contexts and shall direct their safeguarding efforts solely on such intangible cultural heritage that is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development."

[OD]171. Insofar as their development plans, policies and programmes involve intangible cultural heritage or may potentially affect its viability, States Parties shall endeavour to:

(a) ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and involve them actively in elaboration and implementation of such plans, policies and programmes;

(b) ensure that those communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals concerned are the primary beneficiaries, both in moral and in material terms, of any such plans, policies and programmes;

(c) ensure that such plans, policies and programmes respect ethical considerations and do not negatively affect the viability of the intangible cultural heritage concerned or decontextualize or denaturalize that heritage;

(d) facilitate cooperation with sustainable development experts and cultural brokers for the appropriate integration of the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage into plans, policies and programmes, both within and outside the cultural sector."

Museums: places, spaces, homes, contact zones

As we explained in the institutional introduction to this special issue, this publication is concluding a multiannual and largely networked project, researching and developing the convergence of museums and safeguarding

intangible cultural heritage.[10] There was a whole series of conferences and meetings with dozens of papers and lectures presented during the last three years. Some were processed in the book *Museums and Intangible Cultural Heritage: towards a Third Space in the Heritage Sector. A Companion to Discover Transformative Heritage Practices for the 21st Century*. Other papers were included in the line-up for the present scholarly publication. More than in the 'Brokerage'-issue, spaces and places are in the focus here. Not just (who or what is on) the museum floors or walls, in front or back-office rooms, but also metaphorically. "Contact zones"[11] or "boundaries" are just two of the trendy and useful terms to think this through, just like "liminal", "liminoid" or, even "fluid", like Léontine Meyer-van Mensch explained.[12] In her PhD, Nadezhda Savova tried in turn, unsuccessfully until now, to pitch a new concept to interpret safeguarding from the perspective of for instance a museum or another community center with a building and a (semi-)public space that citizens (communities, groups and individuals - CGIs) can physically enter and use: 'heritage house-guarding':

> "Yet the question of 'where' or of the very 'how' of transmission of heritage within a particular group was very generally asked and hardly practically responded in the hundreds of pages of UNESCO documents and conference follow-up notes (...) as interpreters and sometimes implementers of UNESCO's discourses, (...) these houses of different sizes, design, participants, and politics, offer much more tangible options than the long documents filled with generic terms and wishful talking. Indeed, the (...) multifunctionality turns them into polyphonic spaces for both modern and traditional arts through heritage houseguarding (Savova 2011c) – again, a term by which I denote the processes that have been securing heritage safeguarding in transmission across generations through activities hosted regularly by the house/cultural center."[13]

The historian/anthropologist James Clifford imported and propagated the contact zone metaphor in his *Routes* book in 1997, also to counter and broaden ideas about the museum as (just) a 'safe', where objects could be saved, kept, more or less protected from deteriorating forces in 'the outside world'. He developed his ideas in a more recent book, *Returns*:

10 M. Jacobs, J. Neyrinck and E. Tsakiridis, 'Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and museums. A crossing of several projects and trajectories', in: *Volkskunde. Tijdschrift over de cultuur van het dagelijks leven* 121:3, 2020, p. 241-248.

11 J. Clifford, 'Museums as contact zones', in: J. Clifford, *Routes: travel and translation in the late twentieth century*. Cambridge MA, 1997, p. 188-219.

12 L. Meijer-van Mensch, in T. Nikolić Đerić e.a. (eds.), *Museums and Intangible Cultural Heritage: Towards a Third Space in the Heritage Sector. A Companion to Discover Transformative Heritage Practices for the 21st Century*. Bruges, 2020, p. 68-71.

13 N. Savova-Grigorova, *Bread and Home: Global Cultural Politics in the Tangible Places of Intangible Heritage. (Bulgaria, Cuba, Brazil)*. Princeton, 2013, p. 144.

"(...) the chronotope of the (...) 'museum' (including a range of sites, like the 'archive,' the 'monument,' etc.), where valued memories and objects are gathered, rescued from a forward-rushing, linear progress that never turns back on itself. A permanent home for things worth keeping, the museum is a last destination—thus its association with immobility, death. Things in museums or archives, deposited there by history, come to stay—or so it seems (...) today (...) the chronotope (...) museums everywhere, under pressure from cultural property claims, repatriations, marketing, and commercialization, are in flux, unstable and creative 'contact zones' (...)".[14]

Clifford shared also another insight and message, which resonates in several contributions in this special issue of *Volkskunde*. It is becoming more and more pressing as this century progresses:

"But little by little the presence of Asia, the long history of north/south movements in the Americas, and influences from culturally rich Island Pacific worlds made themselves felt. In a decentered, dynamic world of contacts, the whole idea of the West, as a kind of historical headquarters, stopped making sense. (...) But the shift was also the work of newly flexible and mobile forms of capitalism. I was caught up in the double history of two unfinished, postwar forces working in tension and synergy: decolonization and globalization."[15]

All these forces and evolutions are also relevant for the topics we are trying to tackle, even if they are not all discussed as profoundly in this issue.[16]

In an earlier article on ICH in times of superdiversity, Jorijn Neyrinck described how one could – as well – consider the UNESCO and its 2003 Convention as such a 'contact zone' in which many peoples and cultures with different backgrounds come together, and by which they can see their (hybrid and fluid) 'cultural identities' supported in a rapidly changing global context as a sort of 'platform in the world' from which one can always depart. She made a plea to see the UNESCO 2003 Convention as a democratic space for active pluralism and social arbitration, a context that makes dis-sensus and agony/strife possible in and among the divergent visions and approaches to interaction with heritage practices.

---

14   J. Clifford, *Returns: Becoming Indigenous in the Twenty-First Century.* Cambridge MA, 2013, p. 184.

15   Clifford, *Returns*, p. 3.

16   For decolonization debates, see the special issue of *Volkskunde,* introduced by J. van Beurden, K. Adams and P. Catteeuw, 'Returns Unraveled. Reflections on Museum Objects in an Age of Repatriation and Restitution', *Volkskunde. Tijdschrift over de cultuur van het dagelijks leven* 120:3, 2019, p. 325-339. Another topic that deserves a discussion, is yielded by the work on collections, heritage and value creation: L. Boltanski and A. Esquerre, *Enrichment. A Critique of Commoditie*s. Cambridge, 2020, although it focusses on an aesthetic approach and on world heritage.

"Or, would it be better if we continue to strive for total decolonisation, and continue to fight over the custodianship of ICH in order to free it up and let it evolve separately, alongside the dominant heritage discourse that takes material culture and logics, a western historical perspective and its presumed superiority, as a starting point? Yet, most surprisingly, within international fora such as UNESCO, (…) the southern regions (…) are now situated in a sort of overhaul movement—that strive the hardest for canonical forms of recognition on lists and the like. Reality is complex, full of paradoxes and ambivalences. It is not uncommon for experts, NGO's, researchers and a handful of bold policy representatives, as ICH brokers, to try to engage in debate with the current discourses and imaging and add reflexivity and keying to these debates. Rodney Harrison writes about … *the potential to reorganise relationships between experts, politicians, bureaucrats and laypersons, which rather than suppressing conflicts, make use of the overflows and controversies that emerge as a result of conflict and uncertainties over heritage in productive and innovative ways.*" [17]

It was no coincidence that in the *Intangible Cultural Heritage and Museums Project* (IMP), at one of our passionate discussions with several of its Think Tank members[18] early in the morning at breakfast, a lively debate took place where it was argued that the UNESCO 2003 Convention is actually better understood as a global movement and an internationally adopted instrument of/for decolonizing heritage, which was moreover from its very onset profoundly participatory in the definitions and Operational Directives. It was found all the more striking how especially 'the West', along large segments of the institutionalized heritage sector (professionalized around monuments, museums, archives…) seems to have a hard time embracing and appropriating the ICH paradigm.

During the final months when the IMP project was wrapping up, intense societal debates over decolonizing heritage and the museum rose. Florence Pizzorni Itié rightly touches on this question in her essay in this journal:

"Ce n'est sans doute pas un hasard si l'interrogation sur les interrelations entre le patrimoine culturel immatériel et les musées se présente au moment même où les musées, à l'initiative d'ICOM, repensent leur propre définition. Poussée par la vague d'expression mondiale des revendications mémorielles et de la quête d'identité, l'institution muséale plus que bicentenaire en Europe se voit dans l'obligation de remettre en cause ses principes fondamentaux. Elle se pensait universelle et se réveille coloniale dans ses transposition extra-européennes.

17   J. Neyrinck. 'ICH in Times of Superdiversity: Exploring Ways of Transformation', *International Journal for Intangible Heritage* 12, 2017, p. 157-174, referring to R. Harrison, *Heritage. Critical Approaches*. Abingdon and New York, 2013, p. 225.

18   *Team,* https://www.ichandmuseums.eu/en/about/team (05/08/2020).

(…) Le concept de patrimoine culturel immatériel invite les musées à repenser leurs pratiques et leur inscription dans la citoyenneté. Le musée n'est plus seulement un lieu d'histoire mais entre de plein pied dans le présent et dans la perspective de la construction du futur. Dans ses formes nouvelles d'institution patrimoniale, il devient espace de co-création, d'échange, de partage, d'expression pour penser l'avenir basé sur l'interconnaissance des esprits et des corps. (…) Les cultures qui s'y expriment et s'y entrecroisent élaborent un 'répertoire de possibilités pour la mobilisation sociale'. C'est la recombinaison d'éléments de ces répertoires qui constituera le modus vivendi des territoires et des villes-monde de demain."[19]

The making of the UNESCO 2003 Paradigm: the first epistemic generation (1990s-2015)

Peter Haas defined an epistemic community as an (international) network of professionals with expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy relevant knowledge within that issue-area. In several case studies Haas identified such networks in international negotiations between groups of people who often did not have any specific history together before and were brought together from a wide variety of disciplines and backgrounds. They construct something consisting out of sets of rules, a vocabulary and guidelines for policy and then function a while together, sharing a history, to cultivate that paradigm. They work together trying to build consensus, in a common policy enterprise. They foster a set of common practices associated with problems to which their professional competence is directed, believing that human welfare will be enhanced as a consequence. That for instance intangible heritage of CGIs and, *en passant*, the world, will be transformed, for the better. They constitute, in a certain period, a global network of professionals in scholarly and evidence-based development areas that often affect policy-making.[20] If you add the time dimension, you could speak about an 'epistemic generation'.

To understand the emergence and the dynamics of the UNESCO 2003 Convention, the Operational Directives, the core scholarship networks and discussions on these topics in the first fifteen years of the 21st century, it is important to understand that an 'epistemic community' was operational and effective. It is a population of (depending on how you count) between a hundred and two hundred people worldwide, actually taking the floor in UNESCO

---

19   See the contribution by Florence Pizzorni Itié in this special issue.

20   See P. Haas, 'Introduction: epistemic communities and international policy coordination', *International Organization* 46:1, 1992, p. 3 and M. Cross, 'Rethinking Epistemic Communities Twenty Years Later', *Review of International Studies* 39:1, 2013, p. 137-160.

meetings during the first fifteen years of the Convention (and then publishing, debating and meeting outside the UNESCO arenas).[21]

In the case of the 2003 UNESCO Convention, the successive secretaries of the Convention and heads of the competent UNESCO section linked with that normative text, play an important role. Up to now, dr. Noriko Aikawa-Faure, dr. Rieks Smeets and Cécile Duvelle, all key-players in the first epistemic generation of the Convention, held this position that is now occupied by dr. Tim Curtis, who is embodying and assuring the transition and transformation to a next phase. The contribution of Cécile Duvelle in this special issue captures both the core ideas and sensitivities of that first epistemic generation. So does the article by Janet Blake, who was the legal consultant and key person not operating inside the Secretariat, but acting as a – hardly hidden – ghostwriter, guardian angel and a cornerstone.

The story of that epistemic generation is relevant in many senses, here in particular when exploring the relation with the world of museums.[22] Let us give two examples of people who are each, (also '*bien étonnés de se trouver ensemble*') in their own way, bridge figures and representatives of regional divisions in ICOM and illustrate the diversity of forces, perspectives and other issues in the international network of museum professionals.

One of the hypotheses which needs further investigation is that there was a strong peak in the connection between 'museums' and the 'safeguarding ICH paradigm' in the four years before and the four years after 2003 (before fading away for a few years). The crucial meeting in the Smithsonian Institution in 1999, to assess the failure of the 1989 UNESCO Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore and to chart the way forward is already part of the official story of the trajectory towards a Convention.[23] But there have been other episodes. It would take a book to reconstruct this and

---

21 There are a series of 'histories' or 'genealogies' available, official versions written and published, over and over again, by protagonists and key figures of that first epistemic generation, like Noriko Aikawa-Faure or Janet Blake: see N. Aikawa-Faure, 'From the Proclamation of Masterpieces to the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage', in: L. Smith and N. Akagawa (eds.), *Intangible Heritage*. London, 2009; and the oeuvre of Janet Blake, including for instance J. Blake, *Commentary on the 2003 UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Leicester, 2006; J. Blake, 'UNESCO's 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage: the implications of community involvement in safeguarding', in: L. Smith and N. Akagawa (eds.), *Intangible Cultural Heritage*. London, 2009, p. 45-73, and her contribution to this volume.

22 The story of that epistemic generation still has to be written, in particular as time passes and when it will become possible to move beyond the loud voices and pens of the Secretariat, Janet Blake and a handful of prolific authors. The challenge is to reconstruct (via oral history and data mining the documents and recordings) the puzzle or prosopography of the first generation, the 2003 Convention text and the first three versions of the Operational Directives.

23 See for instance R. Kurin, 'Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage: Key Factors in Implementing the 2003 Convention', *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* 2, 2007, p. 10-20.

to discuss the many interesting initiatives, ranging from realizations of Öcal Oğuz in Turkey to the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology.[24]

One of the members of that epistemic community, the Bulgarian (folklore studies) professor Mila Santova, was impressively present in the first decade of the 21st century in the governmental expert meetings and later in the Intergovernmental Committee and the General Assembly of the 2003 Convention. She embodied a traditional folklore studies approach, Eastern Europe branch/style, in the meetings. The last few years she is internationally active in ICOM. In a retrospective article about the relation between the 2003 Convention and museums, she chooses interesting points of reference in the first period: a process leading from the Shanghai Charter in October 2002 at the meeting of the Seventh Regional Assembly of ICOM for the Asia-Pacific Region on 'Museums, Intangible Heritage and Globalisation', via a UNESCO meeting in Oud-Poelgeest in the Netherlands in 2004 to the ICOM General Assembly in 2004 (and then the 2007 ICOM Museum Definition).[25]

The meeting in Oud-Poelgeest in the Netherlands is largely forgotten today, but it is significant that a Bulgarian key-player singled it out. It was an important meeting for pleading to introduce 'intangible living heritage' in the ICOM definition of the museum. Unfortunately the author(s?) of the position paper immediately introduced the bias of the 'local community' discourse, instead of keeping it dynamic and closer to the Convention text itself: "Bearing in mind these complexities in the relationships between local communities and public culture, it is important to consider how local museums might function as intermediaries in safeguarding both local interests and those of UNESCO regarding cultural diversity, while taking into account the intervening interests of the state involved. The positioning of local museums among the various fields of interest that converge upon a particular form of living heritage, mean that they may be key players in the complex processes of identity negotiation between the various levels and parties involved." In that 2004 document many questions were asked that would resurface more than fifteen years later: "Museums are already, in this sense, involved with living heritage: collections that look dead to us in their depots and showcases may be very much alive to descendants widely separated in space and time from this material and conventional ways of dealing with it. And here is a conundrum: if the dead collections in museums (dead, anyway, except to the few who can lay hands on them!) can 'come alive' under certain circumstances, can currently 'living cultural heritage' die (inadvertently) if it is musealised in a certain way?

24 See N. Van Huy, 'The Role of Museums in the Preservation of Living Heritage: Experiences of the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology', *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* 1, 2006, p. 36-41; compare to M. Jacobs, 'Immaterieel-erfgoedbeleid, het Vietnamees etnologiemuseum en het loslaten van en terugkijken op de 'subsidie-economie', *faro | tijdschrift over cultureel erfgoed* 2:2, 2009, p. 42-55.

25 M. Santova, 'Intangible Cultural Heritage and Museums: Challenges and Issues', in: M. Santova, I. Todorova-Pirgova and M. Staneva (eds.), *Between the Visible and the Invisible. The Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Museum*. Sofia, 2018, p. 7-13.

What does it mean to speak of 'safeguarding' living heritage when the outcome of musealisation is so unpredictable?"[26]

In the final IMP symposium, in Brussels, another bridge figure, Amareswar Galla, brought an eye-opening presentation in which he narrated his version and interpretation about the link between museums and intangible heritage and how it was put on the agenda of the ICOM meetings, from an insider perspective. His contribution to this special volume of *Volkskunde* is both a testimony and a sharp reflexive achievement. The video of his crucial talk in Brussels in 2020 is available online.[27]

Do note in the episodes Galla is describing, the launch in 2006 of the *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* (IJIH), as a refereed academic journal. It is coordinated by the National Folk Museum of Korea and ICOM, in particular the Korean National Committee of ICOM. The president of ICOM at the time, Alissandra Cummins (the successor of Galla as editor-in-chief of the IJIH), explicitly anchored the endeavor of linking the connection between safeguarding intangible heritage and museums to the oeuvre of French museologists and former presidents of ICOM:

> "In leading ICOM as its first Director from 1948 to 1965, Rivière developed a cogent theory and practice of the importance of traditional folklore and values. This was carried forward through the Ethics of Acquisition (1970), forerunner to today's ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums (adopted in 1986, most recently revised and unanimously approved in Seoul in 2004, and published in 2006). Indeed, the practices of acquisition, documentation, and exhibition were, in great part, the bases for the world's first international museum organisation with expressions of traditional culture (both tangible and intangible) in mind."[28]

Alissandra Cummins then goes on to explicitly attach the initiative of the IJIH and the 2003 Convention to the movement of ecomuseums:

> "Furthermore, Rivière, along with Hugues de Varine, (…) promoted very actively the value and potential contribution of museums and the wider cultural sector in community development and empowerment (…) 'ecomuseums' (…) were seen as expressions of a 'new museology', providing facilities for housing, and promoting equally, much more than what is typically seen within the walls of a traditional museum (…) The 2003 Intangible Heritage Convention's commitment to communities,

---

26   *The Roles of Museums in Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO Convention, October 2003) Position Paper for the Expert Meeting April 5 – 7, 2004*, https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/00085-EN.pdf (25/07/2020).

27   *IMP 2020 – Full Symposium (Livestreaming)*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zuIyEzcECJI&feature=youtu.be (05/08/2020). Go to the start after 2 hours and 50 minutes.

28   A. Cummins, 'Welcome', *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* 1, 2006, p. 7-8. For a critical assessment of the MATP and ecomuseums, although written in the era of 'patrimoine ethnologique' and before the 'patrimoine culturel immatériel'-era, see M. Segalen, *Vie d'un musée*. Paris, 2005.

groups and in some cases individuals who recognise the value of the intangible cultural heritage is identical to that of those who create, devise and run these museums and other such 'community' and 'site' museums. This new Journal of the Intangible Heritage will therefore provide a major service to cultural and community development within the field of museums, but also of course far beyond these."[29]

If you look at the impressive amount of studies published in the journal, you do notice a very broad interpretation of the notion of 'intangible cultural heritage'. Some are far away from what the first epistemic generation of the 2003 Convention cooked up and what the 'Basic Texts' try to create as an obligatory passage point. Other articles do try to make a closer fit between museum studies and the development in and around UNESCO and the 2003 Convention. One of the most powerful attempts is an article by Richard Kurin in the second volume of the IJIH yearbook. He seems to assertively claim a central position for museums in this paragraph (but do read to the end):

"Perhaps the most appropriate type of organisation to take the lead role in the realisation of the Convention is the museum, or a museum-like cultural organisation (Kurin 2004b). Content-wise, they often cover the areas included in the Convention - they are cultural preservation institutions by their very definition. Like universities, they are 'official' without being overly governmental. Like universities, they usually have staff expertise in varied areas of cultural heritage research and documentation. They may also have access to students, interns and highly-motivated volunteers who can perform tasks related to research and documentation. Museums are masterful in providing public and even official recognition and respect for traditions and cultural practitioners, and also, generally, adept in matters of public presentation and educational programmes. However, unlike universities, most do not have the depth nor range of disciplines required for the full measure of ICH work envisioned and encouraged in the Convention. Unlike governments, they do not usually command the resources needed to mount large-scale national efforts in the cultural arena. Museums are also generally oriented toward the collection of objects, not the documentation of living traditions. They usually deal with things inanimate or dead, and while many museums – at national, regional and local levels – have increasingly become quite skilled in relating to and partnering their constituent cultural communities, it is something fairly new in their orientation and practice. More than anything else though, museums are mainly concerned with the survival and preservation of their collections - items of culture taken away and

29   Idem, p. 8. As it becomes apparent in several contributions, the ecomuseums movement was quite influential. See http://www.hugues-devarine.eu/, including Hugues de Varine, "*écomusées et communautés. Le patrimoine immatériel du territoire et de la communauté : cadre, inspiration et ressource du développement local*" in http://www.hugues-devarine.eu/book/view/37 (05/08/2020).

alienated from the community settings and social matrix within which they were created and used. That is to say, as I have written elsewhere, museums tend to like their culture dead and stuffed (Kurin 2004b). They are not very experienced in ensuring that culture is safeguarded as a living, dynamic, sustainable process in situ."[30]

So Kurin – in 2007 – is not immediately sure which roles the museums will actually take up. He does venture to predict what might happen:

> "Most likely, I expect it will take a combination of organisational types to implement the Convention successfully within the signatory States (…) Museums can be used as the loci of activities - storehouses of archives and related collections, venues for the public presentation of ICH and public education - as well as for their expertise, frameworks for dealing with cultural heritage, and, in the best of cases, vehicles for community interaction. Other organizations – including NGOs, cultural advocacy groups, and local level project groups – would also rightly be brought into the mix to do the work of the Convention."[31]

The circle is (for the time being) closed when cultural brokers from an ICH NGO were invited thirteen years later (2020) by the *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* to share the results of the IMP trajectory – one of the first systematic attempts to explore what museums might do in a more mature version of the 2003 Convention's paradigm.[32]

Intangible Heritage and the Museum

On the website of the IMP project,[33] a number of relevant bibliographic references have been brought together. There are several articles but only a limited amount of books available, combining the words 'museum' and 'intangible cultural heritage' (but not often including the crucial concept of safeguarding). The title of this paragraph is the main title of the book that Marilena Alivizatou published on the topic in 2012. The subtitle is *New Perspectives on Cultural Preservation*. In this book she brought together several examples and insights on the topic. Alivizatou inspired the IMP project directly and she was also one of the speakers and discussants at the IMP conference in Rotterdam in 2017.[34]

30   Kurin, *Safeguarding*, p. 14.
31   Ibidem, p. 14.
32   J. Neyrinck, E. Seghers and E. Tsakiridis, 'At the interface between living heritage and museum practice: dialogical encounters and the making of a "third space" in safeguarding heritage', *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* 15, 2020, p. 61-85.
33   www.ICHandmuseums.eu
34   M. Alivizatou, *Intangible Heritage and the Museum. New Perspectives on Cultural Preservation*. Walnut Creek, 2012; M. Alivizatou, 'Contextualising Intangible Cultural Heritage in Heritage Studies and Museology', *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* 3, 2008, p. 44-54.

The book, defended as a PhD thesis in 2012 at University College London, captured the spirit of the early years of the Convention, as also evoked in the contribution of Cécile Duvelle in this issue. One of the recurrent patterns when looking at a number of the most influential studies of the previous decade, is that they were written by scholars connected to the 'epistemic community' or first 'epistemic generation' of the 2003 Convention. There are several subgroups that can be distinguished. A limited number of scholars among these had the chance to work as an intern or temporary collaborator in the Section of Intangible Cultural Heritage, today the 'Living Heritage Entity' at the UNESCO Headquarters, and to process that 'behind-the-screens experience' in their doctorates. Next to the trajectory of Nadezhda Savova-Grigorova discussed in this issue, there is of course the work of Sophia Labadi.[35]

Alivizatou had the chance to do an internship at UNESCO in 2004 while the 2003 Convention was still hot from the oven and then to go and study projects of museums in New Zealand (National Museum Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington), Vanuatu (Cultural Centre in Port Vila), the United States (the Living Memorial of Native Americans /the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C. and New York), the UK (Horniman Museum in London) and France (Musée du quai Branly in Paris). They were approached as "zones of contact and conflict", applying the metaphors introduced by James Clifford. This happened before the first batch of Operational Directives of the 2003 Convention was launched. Rather than exploring the full innovative potential of 'safeguarding', she explored the possibilities of a "museology of intangible heritage" and tried to expand both the notion of preservation and empowerment of communities. As part of that 'new museology' she traced a genealogy leading to Skansen and open air museums, and to the ecomuseums movement of Georges Henri Rivière and Hugues de Varine. Other museum projects also experimented with participation and community engagement, in particular so-called 'source communities' and participation.[36]

In the 2014 issue of *Volkskunde* on cultural brokerage, one book review was included, precisely of Alivizatou's PhD. One of the critical remarks was about that concept of 'source communities', which was critiqued as being too easy or even a blind spot. They should not be considered as homogenous and well-defined groups, as a result of identity politics for groups of migrants, but as formations (to underscore the temporality) or as networks. Notwithstanding this caveat, useful for follow up research, Ramon de la Combé emphasized that the mixing of the 2003 Convention and museums can generate "a possibility

35 S. Labadi, *UNESCO, cultural heritage, and outstanding universal value: Value-based analyses of the World Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage Conventions.* Lanham, 2013; S. Labadi and W. Logan, *Urban heritage, development and sustainability: international frameworks, national and local governance.* London, 2015 and S. Labadi, *Museums, immigrants, and social justice.* London, 2017. She is now working on (world) heritage and sustainable development.

36 See Alivizatou, *Intangible Heritage*, p. 18-21.

to reconnect the peoples with the objects, to revive living culture, with the reinvented museum as a cultural broker."[37]

One of the key figures in the decolonization movement that Alivizatou also mobilized in the debate is Christina Kreps. Kreps elaborated concepts like 'Indigenous curation', in practices and discourses about the 'preservation' and 'interpretation' of collections in ways that can, according to her, be conceptualized as "an expression of intangible heritage, which ultimately liberates culture from the oppressive, exclusive, and authoritarian articulations of Western museology."[38] One of the significant lines of research Kreps launched, is the attempt to question working with what she called "a Eurocentric museum model" outside Europe. Considering this topic is resurging profusely and pressingly until today, one of the follow-up trajectories after IMP could be to look at a number of these possibilities; but it seems obvious to us that these experiments should not be limited to 'museums' but also 'archives' and 'libraries', as well as cultural centers and other types of cultural organisations. We do advocate for building on the results of IMP, for broadening the scope beyond the museum, and to include other memory institutions, e-platforms and hybrid organizations and formats.

After the first 'epistemic generation': the ORF lever

When one observes the people in the delegations and UNESCO Secretariat in the meeting rooms of the Intergovernmental Committee, the ICH NGO Forum or other arenas, one notices that – as the years go by – more and more of the people who had been drafting, negotiating and interpreting the Convention texts and the 2008 version of the Operational Directives, are no longer there – often retired, replaced, some already deceased. The 'members' of the first epistemic community or generation present in the UNESCO meetings are fewer every year. In many delegations and in the Intergovernmental Committee, notwithstanding article 6.7 of the 2003 Convention, diplomats have taken over, changing the group dynamics and increasing the amount of wheeling and dealing, geopolitics and diplomatic trade-offs. By 2030 most of the first group of experts will have disappeared.

UNESCO has set up a whole system of capacity building. In the first years, this amounted to transmitting specific interpretations of the Convention texts and procedures, often using tools developed by protagonists of the first epistemic generation (like Rieks Smeets, Harriet Deacon, Janet Blake, etc.) and trained new people and actors around the world. As time goes by, one can see a shift going on, expressed in the Basic Texts, 'called the Blue Boundary' Arsenal in the contribution titled *Words Matter* by Marc Jacobs in this journal. The inventories and international listing craze continues with all the politics

---

37   R. de la Combé, '(review of) Marilena Alivizatou, Intangible Heritage and the Museum. New Perspectives on Cultural Preservation', *Volkskunde. Tijdschrift over de cultuur van het dagelijks leven* 115:3, 2014, p. 417-420.

38   Alivizatou, *Intangible Heritage*, p. 21. C. Kreps, *Liberating Culture: Cross-cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation, and Heritage Preservation.* London, 2003.

of scale involved. But an increasing amount of critical reports on the negative effects of listing are published, combined with inflation effects of the listing process. The first *parcours de route* accidents and conflicts (like Alost Carnival) have happened and triggered a delisting/de-safeguarding action by UNESCO.

Yet, there are also potentially positive evolutions. Since 2016, there is the growing impact of the United Nations' Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, and a growing need to legitimize, hence document, monitor, inspire and guide the impact, effects and policies of the safeguarding ICH paradigm in and between States Parties. A key tool for the second phase (2016-2030) of the 2003 Convention is a policy instrument, called the 'Overall Results Framework' (ORF), in which many challenges are, or could be, ambitiously and pragmatically managed, monitored and inspired. The ORF has been designed to act as a global monitoring framework for follow-up on the 2003 Convention's impact and development. The framework will become operational and will be rolled out from 2020 onwards, continent by continent (in Europe in 2021). This will create a huge need in the 2020s for consultancy and cultural brokerage, for follow up and feedback, both within the organs of the 2003 Convention and accredited NGOs, in States Parties and on a global level. It also raises new needs for heritage training programs, both in and outside academia. A well informed, reflexive brokers' perspective is needed in the growing stream of studies and publications, after the phase of scholarly production with a core dominated by members of the first epistemic community.

In several publications and in the IMP project, and in particular in the actions on the ground, you can detect the visions of the members of a new generation. As Marc Jacobs points out in his article on the politics of scale in this special issue, the monitoring and reporting systems might fail to capture interesting initiatives that also operate outside the box. Will, for example, transnational networking initiatives engaging strongly in the ICH safeguarding effort developed in the wake of the 2003 Convention, such as the IMP project itself, be captured in such a reporting format processed through national administrations? Or (how) will 'virtual communities' active around living heritage – such as for example Demoscene,[39] or the 'ICH researchers network' of the Association for Critical Heritage Studies[40] – find their way to inspire and to be monitored in the overall results processed through the existing framework and levels? This could, in the next years, become a challenging focus for the 'second epistemic generation' to take care of, and to watch over.

It may be assuring, meanwhile, that the (approach of the) actors mobilized around the work of the Convention itself appears to be evolving. The Capacity Building Programme[41] of the 2003 Convention in recent years widened its scope (away from the type of unidirectional training for adequate implementation

---

39   *Demoscene - The Art of Coding*, http://demoscene-the-art-of-coding.net (11/08/2020).

40   *Intangible Heritage (ICH) Researchers Network*, https://www.criticalheritagestudies.org/intangible-heritage-network (11/08/2020).

41   *Global capacity-building programme*, https://ich.unesco.org/en/capacity-building and *Living Heritage and Capacity Building*, https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/45455-EN.pdf (11/08/2020).

of the Convention's targets on policy development, inventorying, etc.), as well as the types of profiles of new facilitators being trained by UNESCO, ranging from academic researchers over independent heritage consultants to ICH NGO professionals.[42] The accredited facilitators are now intended to form a global network and a community of practice, to respond effectively to emerging capacity-building needs and challenges. On the one hand, the network is aiming to provide a vital resource of knowledge and experience that all stakeholders can turn to when requesting training and advisory support for the effective implementation of the Convention. On the other hand, it provides network members with support to empower them to play their different roles as facilitators, mediators, trainers or advisors.

The 'second epistemic generation' in itself appears – compared to the first generation – to be also evolving with regards to e.g. the (profile of) people and actors that are being engaged or engaging themselves. The number of academic experts and researchers working around the 2003 Convention remains quite limited, though fostered by the Convention's Secretariat[43], but the number and the diversity of accredited ICH NGOs have been significantly growing and widening in the past ten years[44], just like their collaboration through the ICH NGO Forum, its working groups, symposia, etc.[45], and the roles they play.[46] All of the actors – researchers, accredited NGOs, Category II Centres, etc. – related to safeguarding ICH and/or the 2003 Convention, function more and more through modes and approaches of networking. They are easily connecting and combining diverse entrances: thematic, methodological, advocacy-related... They form a community of practice and an adaptive learning network, according to Etienne Wengers' theory of learning in landscapes of practice. In this same line of analysis, they may even, at least partly, be understood to be 'system conveners' for the ICH paradigm. System conveners act to reconfigure the landscape by forging new learning partnerships across traditional boundaries.[47]

One of the initiatives already in the pipeline and directed to complementing the expected reporting on the overall results of the Convention, is a working group on the ORF within the ICH NGO Forum.[48] What kind of actions and

42 *Global network of facilitators,* https://ich.unesco.org/en/facilitator (11/08/2020).

43 *Research references on the implementation of the 2003 Convention,* https://ich.unesco.org/en/2003-convention-and-research-00945 (11/08/2020).

44 *Non-Governmental Organizations accredited to provide advisory services to the Committee,* https://ich.unesco.org/en/accredited-ngos-00331 (11/08/2020).

45 *About us,* http://www.ichngoforum.org/about-us/ (11/08/2020).

46 C. Bortolotto and J. Neyrinck, 'Article 9. Accreditation of Advisory Organizations', in: J. Blake and L. Linxinski (eds.), *The 2003 UNESCO Intangible Heritage Convention. A Commentary.* Oxford, 2020, p. 153-163. See also: *Reflection on the role of accredited non-governmental organizations within the 2003 Convention,* https://ich.unesco.org/en/reflection-on-the-role-of-ngos-01037 (11/08/2020).

47 E. Wenger-Trayner e.a., *Learning in landscapes of practice: boundaries, identity, and knowledgeability in practice-based learning.* Abingdon, 2015, p. 97.

48 *Overall results framework,* http://www.ichngoforum.org/wg/global-results-framework/ (11/08/2020).

formats will really cover and capture the interesting initiatives and/or worrisome evolutions happening 'out there in the world' around the 2003 Convention remains to be seen in the next few years.[49]

And, of course, there is no such thing as a hard line to be drawn between the so-called first and second epistemic generation. Some of the protagonists of the first generation – such as Janet Blake, Kristin Kuutma, Diego Gradis – have been very much involved and have hence already been transmitting their memories and legacies, fluidly and 'intersecting' (to express it in the buzzwords of IMP). Even if the next generation can maybe play more future-oriented serious games or operate more eclectically, being freed of the weight of the making of the first texts, the still active people of that first generation have also been evolving through ongoing actions and reflections in the epistemic network. So do we, authors of this contribution and both part of those first and second epistemic generations. We share the gaze of many years of connected trajectories, bridging perspectives as well as generations, and have been engaging jointly for safeguarding the 'spirit of the Convention'.

Towards a new wording of/by/for/beyond museums

In our encounters with the worlds of museology, we witnessed heated debates in the ranks of international organisations. In 2019 and 2020, and the following years, the quest for a new ICOM museum definition has been generating sharp and emotional controversies. It shows divisions but also many living-apart-together relationships between different schools and networks in museology.

The Brazilian professor Teresa Scheiner flagged both the difference and the dominance of English and French (that deserve their own decolonization debates in the intangible heritage of international diplomacy) as a problem. It is linked to old Empires (and of course Portuguese or Spanish, or today Chinese also have those links to former or contemporary empires). Scheiner referred to a "développement d'une polarisation de la production théorique dans et sur la muséologie, où des auteurs de langue francophone et anglophone semblent s'être fixés eux-mêmes la mission d'expliquer à leurs collègues d'autres cultures ce qu'est vraiment ce champ disciplinaire (…) Ceux qui ne sont ni anglophones ni francophones doivent forcément rédiger dans une de ces deux langues, au risque sinon de n'être jamais lus ou considérés."[50] One of the consequences is that the themes or urgencies in those two languages, and in particular in English, are said to be 'high on the agenda'. But the risk is that items got overemphasized and others debunked.

---

49   Inspiration to the global reporting through (States Parties of) the Convention, as well as to complement the reporting, can be found in the context of to the 2005 Convention on the diversity of cultural expressions – see e.g. *Global Report 2018,* Https://En.Unesco.Org/Creativity/Global-Report-2018 (11/08/2020) and the website and reports by IFCCD: *IFCCD 2019 Report on Civil Society Activities,* https://ficdc.org/en/publications/ifccd-2019-report-on-civil-society-activities/?sf_action=get_data&sf_data=all&sf_paged=2 (11/08/2020).

50   T. Scheiner, 'Réfléchir sur le champ muséal : significations et impact théorique de la muséologie', in: F. Mairesse (ed.), *Nouvelles tendances de la muséologie.* Paris, 2016, p. 41.

High on the agenda, according to Scheiner, are on the one hand debates on the inclusive museum theme in English museum studies and on museum terminology in French on the other hand: "(…) par le biais de la traduction dans d'autres langues, constitue une preuve incontestable de l'hégémonie de la production dans ces deux langues et du désir d'imprimer, dans d'autres cultures, une certaine influence de la pensée anglophone ou francophone sur le champ."[51]

The two topics mentioned by Scheiner are of course very relevant. In one of the strongholds of museology in the world, the School of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester, activist practices, intending e.g. to act on climate change, injustice and inequalities, are promoted today for museums. The protagonists Robert Janes and Richard Sandell see it as their task to wake up what they perceive as a sleeping giant, the global museum community. It is time, so they claim, for "museum activism", a practice "shaped out of ethically-informed values that is intended to bring about political, social and environmental change." Is a museum today more than a mall? Is it not time to abandon myths of neutrality and to embrace and use the status of trustworthiness? Many thought-provoking questions and interesting examples are presented in a special volume entitled *Museum Activism*, published by Routledge in 2019. But it is telling that the safeguarding intangible cultural heritage paradigm is not yet included in the program!

This issue of *Volkskunde* was intended to be published following the adoption of a new ICOM museum definition, and hence to include reflections and mirror its impact towards future museum policies and practices at all levels. It turned out differently. The launch of this journal instead falls fully amidst still ongoing discussions on the museum definition. Indeed, a Committee on Museum Definition, Prospects and Potentials (MDPP, 2017-2019) was set up within ICOM to explore the shared but also the profoundly dissimilar conditions, values and practices of museums in diverse and rapidly changing societies. The Committee wished to address the ambiguous and often contradictory trends in society, and the subsequent new conditions, obligations and possibilities for museums, and set up a wide process of dialogue around the reinterpretation, revision, rewriting, and reformulation of the museum definition.[52] In the resulting 2019 proposal for a new museum definition, the emphasis on societal and planetary challenges, on participation and multivocality was particularly interesting.[53] But on the other hand, one of the newest heritage policy babies, safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, that was just accepted and incorporated in the 2007 version of the ICOM museum definition, seems to have evaporated in the stream of global

---

51 Scheiner, *Réfléchir*, p. 41.

52 Read more on ICOM's website: *Museum Definition*, https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/ (11/08/2020).

53 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 (11/08/2020) and the special issue edited by J. Sandahl, 'The Museum Definition as the Backbone of ICOM', *Museum International* 71:1&2, 2019.

discussions around a new definition. With the IMP project and this volume we hope to contribute to signalling that this would be a bad idea, and to put the safeguarding ICH, participation, empowerment and sustainable development potential and paradigm more on the radar.

A Wor(l)d for Participation

On the basis of academic field schools (for anthropologists) in museums in Lamphun (Thailand), Alexandra Denes discerned how challenging it is to correlate core museum activities with the core activities of safeguarding intangible heritage as defined in article 2.3 of the 2003 Convention. Trying to implement article 15 of the 2003 Convention particularly proved to test the limits of anthropological training, and the skills of museum professionals and heritage managers.[54] A similar exercise was attempted in the IMP framework, in an operation called 'intersections', and resulting in a tool for heritage workers.[55] IMP explored the ICOM *Code of Ethics for Museums* and the 2003 Convention's Operational Directives as a starting point to disclose the intersections, and thus the meeting points of the museum and intangible cultural heritage sector on a theoretical and practical level, framing it within the 'third space' concept.[56]

One of the recurrent buzzwords is: 'participatory'. Richard Sandell and Robert Janes rightly remind us that participation is not necessarily easy, not for individuals nor for institutions: "(…) we cannot ignore the fact that the Western world's, citizen-based democracy (the commons personified) is dependent upon participation, and to participate is to be permanently uncomfortable – emotionally, intellectually, spiritually. Museums will need to embrace this discomfort and uncertainty in order to become the authentic participants they are equipped to be, and to make good on their singular combination of historical consciousness, sense of place, and public accessibility."[57]

Especially in European policy jargons, concepts like 'citizen science' and the related 'citizen humanities' are hot today thanks to their participatory approach. In the context of museums what is meant with the term participation has strongly evolved in the past fifty years: "Over time, understandings of public participation shifted from 'cultivating impressed spectators' (…) to the democratic models of public engagement currently framing national and local

---

54   A. Denes, 'Acquiring the Tools for Safeguarding Intangible Heritage: Lessons from an ICH Field School in Lamphun, Thailand', in: M. Stefano, P. Davis and G. Corsane (eds.), *Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Woodbridge, 2012, p. 165-176.

55   *Toolkit,* https://www.ichandmuseums.eu/en/imp-toolkit (11/08/2020).

56   T. Nikolić Đerić e.a. (eds.), *Museums and Intangible Cultural Heritage: Towards a Third Space in the Heritage Sector. A Companion to Discover Transformative Heritage Practices for the 21st Century.* Bruges, 2020 and the contribution by T. Nikolić Đerić in this issue.

57   R. Janes and R. Sandell, 'Posterity has arrived. The necessary emergence of museum activism', in: R. Janes and R. Sandell (eds.), *Museum Activism*. London and New York, 2019, p. 17.

cultural policy in countries worldwide (…) with technological developments in digital communication platforms often viewed as a crucial driver of change."[58]

Under the umbrella of 'citizen science' several approaches can be distinguished: 1) a contributory model, 2) a collaborative model, and 3) a co-creation model. In the first model scientists design, plan and manage the project and 'the public' can help to collect, validate or 'process' data. In practice, it is seen that most of the work is done by an active minority of participants. In the second model, the project design is still in the hands of scientists, but participants can voice their opinions on interpreting the data and the conclusions. In the last co-creation model, projects are usually "initiated by local communities, and which may include experts and scientists, but often originate outside academic institutions and most of their funding structures."[59] All of these models can be applied, by museums or other research institutions in relation to intangible cultural heritage, but the co-creation model is the one most compatible with what 'safeguarding' is about.

The models are types in a continuum. While the first is more oriented towards large volumes of data and is most productive in yielding peer-reviewed publications, the collaborative and co-creation models are smaller in scale, with fewer participants, requiring repeated measurement or tending to focus on specific problems relevant for specific groups. Along the continuum there are differences in the role and authority of the experts, the validation and relevance assessment of the results, ownership, or even benefit sharing. All of these issues are relevant in the discussions in IMP and other projects. Here the influence of article 15 of the 2003 Convention, emphasizing the involvement of CGIs, is important.[60] It is one of the most explicit mentions of expectations of participatory heritage work. But this has implications on the words used in the world and discourses of museums, where concepts as 'the visitor' or 'the public' abound. This is causing a lot of debate and discussions, e.g. about the use of concepts such as 'users', 'public(s)' or 'audience(s)', or for instance 'prosumers' (actors in whom the roles of consumers and producers are blurring or merging).[61]

As repeatedly stated earlier in this issue (as in many other publications), the 2003 Convention is profoundly participatory in its principles. In the Convention's framework, 'participation' appears to be inextricably linked in particular to the 'communities, groups and individuals' involved with ICH. However, when we allow ourselves to further elaborate on these ideas and combine it to what the 2005 Faro Framework Convention on the Value of

58 P. Pierroux, P. Hetland and L. Esborg, 'Traversing Citizen Science and Citizen Humanities. Tacking Stiches', in: P. Hetland, P. Pierroux and L. Esborg (eds.), *A History of Participation in Museums and Archives. Traversing Citizen Science and Citizen Humanities.* London and New York, 2020, p. 3.

59 Pierroux, Hetland and Esborg, *Traversing Citizen Science*, p. 9.

60 M. Jacobs, 'Article 15. Participation of Communities, Groups, and Individuals. CGIs, not Just 'the Community'', in: J. Blake and L. Linxinski (eds.), *The 2003 UNESCO Intangible Heritage Convention. A Commentary*. Oxford, 2020, p. 273-289.

61 See the overview in P. Hetland and K. Schrøder, 'The Participatory turn. Users, publics, and audiences', in: P. Hetland, P. Pierroux and L. Esborg (eds.), *A History of Participation in Museums and Archives. Traversing Citizen Science and Citizen Humanities.* London and New York, 2020, p. 168-185.

Cultural Heritage for Society has to offer in this regard, or the Flemish policy adaptation, there are promising applications in which a '(cultural) heritage community' consists of organizations and people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage, which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations. In such an approach we imagine 'heritage communities' in the sense of networks of different actors, both (groups of) living human beings and organizations as well. One of the consequences is that some museums (networks) can, as organizations, be(come) part of the (heritage) community, and this changes the perspectives, alliances and assemblages. It really can help to think outside the 'museum' or 'community'-boxes, and to embrace co-design strategies and practices. In addition, if you allow yourself to also think 'museums' when CGIs are mentioned in the 6th chapter on sustainable development in the Operational Directives of the 2003 Convention, and how it turns everything into an open invitation to act, then much more becomes possible.[62]

Or, to conclude by the appeal expressed in the title of this special issue: "Transforming, Not Saving: Intangible Cultural Heritage, Museums, and/or the World."

---

62 M. Jacobs, 'CGIs and Intangible Heritage Communities, museums engaged', in: T. Nikolić Đerić e.a. (eds.), *Museums and Intangible Cultural Heritage: Towards a Third Space in the Heritage Sector. A Companion to Discover Transformative Heritage Practices for the 21st Century.* Bruges, 2020, p. 38-41.