

Editorial



Much of the research presented in Volume No. 8 of the *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* adds, as one author says, to the growing body of literature calling for a re-examination of the tangible/intangible dichotomy in policy and protocol. The 10th anniversary of the 2003 ICH Convention brings with it heightened advocacy by proponents, greater agency by communities but also and ultimately, deeper questioning. Clear threads running through these presentations as another writer evokes [are the] *strong connections of local identity, past experience, sense of place, and historicity* which recalls Stuart Hall's thesis that 'the Heritage' is *a discursive practice, one of the ways in which the nation slowly constructs for itself a sort of collective social memory...so nations construct identities* (Hall 2000, 5)*

Several articles illustrate the increasing value and reliance placed on the *ICH Convention* and demonstrate how, when, where and why its core principles could or should be applied. Others assess the *Convention* in relation to its 'older sister', the 1972 *World Heritage Convention*, as well as its younger sibling the 2005 *Cultural Diversity Convention*. The challenges of intellectual property management and the deployment of new web-based resources, add yet other dimensions to this increasingly complex 'cocktail' of conventions.

Culture re-engineering takes pride of place in two cases examining the reconstruction and reorientation of performance culture and the various mechanisms of control and compromise used to keep it on the national agenda. Masquerade has been central to the African-Barbadian historical narrative and lived experience through almost four centuries of slavery, emancipation, colonialism, and eventually independence. In **Losing our masks** the author explores the evolutionary journey whereby various cultural forms were 'corralled' into the nationalist agenda of illustrating a quintessentially Barbadian cultural identity that in 1970s became a summer festival, Crop Over. Yet the ancient masking traditions that remain at the core of these performances and even the dried banana leaves used to hide the performer's identity, were first deemed subversive, then anachronistic and later problematic and were eventually marginalised in the Barbadian national narrative. The article's thematic twin **The intangible cultural heritage of Wales** reveals the *Mari Lwyd* (Grey Mare/Holy Mary), a winter tradition based around the decoration of a horse's skull, and competitive verse and song which the writer opines should be acknowledged and celebrated as Welsh intangible cultural heritage. The Westminster government's reluctance to ratify the *Convention* leaves this unique cultural form vulnerable to commercial exploitation and degeneration. Ironically in both instances, what determines their survival or sustainability are laws and policies executed with unintended consequences.

In **Putting intangible in its place(s)** the writer bemoans the divide between tangible and intangible heritage where the essence of intangible heritage is firmly rooted in a specific location and is diminished if the space disappears. The author advocates for the establishment of effective public policies to assure host communities' participation in safeguarding their intangible heritage. The imperative of 'place' also takes centre stage in **Air today, gone tomorrow** arguing that the phenomenon of the *haar* as an atmospheric process, merits recognition as part of Scotland's intangible heritage. The author provides compelling evidence through the poetic and historical evocations, visual culture and attitudes which enshrine this transient phenomenon in the national psyche and support his claim that the importance of microclimates should be given space at the ICH table.

By serendipity, two of the articles presented examine the impact of changing lifestyles on the intangible heritage of fishing, fisheries and fisherfolk in two very different parts of the world, the Mediterranean and the Caribbean. Both refer to highly specialised methods of food preparation based on intimate knowledge of the physiology of specific fish species (blue fin tuna or flying fish) for their unique local cuisine. The authors advocate for the establishment of the kinds of safeguarding policies and strategies which the 2003 *Convention* espouses. However, while **Tuna-trapping in Andalusia** sets out a conceptual framework for the heritage, stressing its ethnological value, the author also offers strategies through classification (and validation) in virtually every arena, from building restoration, to recording oral testimonies and celebrating its undeniable fascination for generations of writers and other artists. In **Barbadian bio-cultural heritage** on the other hand, the vulnerability of the flying fish as a quintessential aspect of Barbados' intangible heritage is vividly illustrated. Species reduction and climate change, price controls and maritime boundary disputes all threaten its viability both as a food source and ultimately as a national icon, because there is no regulatory framework to protect it.

A sense of place resonates with several of the volume's articles which focus on the bonds people form with places and heritage which 'authenticate' and enhance the visitor experience in Wales. The article provides a concise compendium of heritage strategies, professional practice and production, applying digital technology and internet tools to create high quality, interpretative, digital content, whilst offering new models for increasing public engagement with historical research. This allows for the recovery and 'reconstitution' of missing aspects of the heritage landscape. The whole matter of the development and management of Intellectual Property residing in a country's intangible cultural heritage finds resonance in **The role of Intellectual Property**, but whereas **A sense of place** illustrates the fruitful results of partnerships between practitioners, researchers and producers **The role of Intellectual Property** speaks to the other side of the coin, showing how technological globalisation, if not carefully deployed, can prove a threat to the cultural diversity of a nation. The author exposes the vulnerability of some examples of community-based intangible cultural heritage when exhibited in museums, and examines the unanticipated risks associated with this most essential of museum functions. While identifying some effective IP regimes which would ensure museums' ethical management while respecting ICH holders' rights, she reminds us that museums also generate intellectual property, which requires careful management to reconcile both the roles of producer and protector in one entity.

The inherent contradictions between the IPR and the ICH approaches and the impact on the 'lived consciousness' of a place, are interrogated in **'Community' as a landscape of intangible cultural heritage**, a case study of a traditional textile woven from banana leaves, *Kijoka-no-Basho-fu*, demonstrating the Japanese government's initiative in protecting a community's Intellectual Property Rights through the establishment of traditional craft associations and certification of collective authorship through the Den-Mark. Kimono production is also addressed in another article examining the transformation of textile production in Kyoto, but it approaches from the opposite end of the spectrum. While *Basho-fu*, was originally produced as everyday clothing for the rural Okinawan community, and later as tribute for Chinese Emperors and trade goods for feudal clans, ironically its present emanation enjoys tremendous popularity on Japan's luxury market. Quite the opposite picture emerges in **Nishijin silk weaving in Kyoto** of the vulnerability of the refined

woven silk after more than 500 years of exclusive production for the Imperial Court and aristocracy in Kyoto. Here the contemporary picture is one of relentless decline due to the disintegration of an intricate pattern of inter-generational transmission. Recent decades have seen the continuity of the craft jeopardised as a result of a complex amalgam of economic recession and changes in fashion following changes in lifestyle, resulting in the rapid and unsustainable attrition of a lineage-based apprenticeship system. While the rurally-based *Basho-fu* in the 1970s suffered similar problems, these were addressed through Japan's policy of codifying specific modes of production and trade, although this '*production of locality*' was geared largely towards tourists. The author argues that there is urgent need for a reconsideration of this '*commodification of tradition*' as a means of preserving handicrafts in the modern world and urges instead processes that valorise the spatial inter-relationships of people within and outside the communal space of traditional production.

The word 'community' is infused with many different meanings in various of our articles, suggesting that 'community' allows practitioners to embody the time-space configuration of their intangible heritage and also frames the public perception of this work as 'tradition'. What constitutes the 'community' is the focus of **A community convention?** where the authors interrogate the meaning and intent of 'community' as enshrined in the 2003 *Convention*, created largely to place communities at the centre of its processes. However, their focus on both the role of the named community in the determination and preparation of candidature files for the *Convention's Intangible Heritage Lists* and the means by which their free, prior and informed consent was established, afford intriguing insights into the cultural politics associated with this process. The authors' examination of a series of case files raises questions as to who constitutes the 'community' in the context of participatory approaches to safeguarding ICH, but they are equally determined to find sustainable solutions which meet the needs of such communities through adherence to the spirit, if not the intent of the *Convention*.

An ineluctable finding by all in this volume is that UNESCO's *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage* complements but also challenges the concepts laid out in its earlier *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*. The conjunction and artificial divide between the tangible and the intangible is brought tantalisingly into focus, calling attention to the need for policies which address the chasm that opens up between these two definitions of heritage where, as one author puts it, *logic and experience tell us that important heritage values disappear into the voids left by such a fragmented approach*.

Recent publications on various aspects of intangible heritage have continued these questionings in much the same way. The reviewer of **Intangible Heritage in the Museum** muses that while appearing a contradiction in terms this actually foregrounds museums as 'archives of culture' as well as emergent 'social spaces'. The author's goal to *provide a critical examination of intangible heritage on both conceptual and practical levels* finds fertile ground in alternative museum models revealed variously as a bicultural national dialogue, a living memorial, or an anthropological survey

either empowering or examining indigenous and immigrant communities alike through the continuity of intangible heritage. **Touching the Intangible** approaches the mission of safeguarding the ICH from quite a different viewpoint. What resonates for the reviewer are the inherent tensions of 'Negotiating and Valuing the Intangible' and the need to acknowledge culture as *a dynamic system rather than as a reified compilation of resources* in applying the intangible heritage concept. Equally emblematic of the current discourse is the insistence that *universalising concepts must be tempered with local needs and interests*. Ultimately, both publications vividly elucidate what one of this Volume's contributors terms *the paradox of heritigisation*.

The result for Text Editor Pamela Inder and I is indeed a '*mixed essence*'-*infusing the physical qualities of places with the intangible values ascribed to them by local communities, blending the flavours: tangible and intangible, monumental and quotidian, permanent and fleeting*, to produce the exciting and challenging result which is **Volume 8**.

Alissandra Cummins
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Editorial Board

*Stuart Hall, 'Whose Heritage? Un-settling 'The Heritage', Re-imagining the Post-Nation', keynote address given on November 1st, 1999 at the national conference *Whose Heritage? The impact of Cultural Diversity on Britain's Living Heritage*, Manchester, England, in *Third Text*, vol.49, Winter 1999-2000.