Contextualising Intangible Cultural Heritage in Heritage Studies and Museology

Marilena Alivizatou

Contextualising Intangible Cultural Heritage in Heritage Studies and Museology

● **Marilena Alivizatou**
Doctoral Candidate, University College London, UK

ABSTRACT

With this paper I make a proposal for the contextualisation of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in the interdisciplinary field of heritage studies and museology, drawing on early research conducted during my internship at UNESCO and the first years of my doctorate. I examine emerging conceptualisations of the term starting with the national legislation of Japan and Korea in the 50s and 60s, and more recently with the interventions of UNESCO. In addition, I assess the development of ICH in terms of the academic/intellectual discussions around the 'alternative heritage discourse' and the 'new museological discourse'. Finally, drawing on interviews with Professor Patrick Boylan, Dr Richard Kurin and Mr Ralph Regenvanu, conducted in 2006-2007, I draw some preliminary conclusions as to the wider impact of ICH on heritage and museum theory and practice. What emerges is a critical examination of the diverse conceptualisations and appropriations of ICH, and of its potential to constitute a new heritage discourse at the interface of 'universalism' and 'particularism'

Introduction

The concept of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is probably not only the most recent, but also the most popular, of the latest additions to the heritage lexicon. A great wealth of conferences, symposia, seminars and publications has been dedicated to the subject[1]; something that demonstrates its relevance to specialists from all sorts of disciplines, from archaeologists and anthropologists to legal experts and natural scientists. While this new interdisciplinary field of study and practice

is gaining more and more momentum around the world, there seems to be a lack of a substantial body of holistic approaches theorising the concept and anticipating its broader intellectual and operational implications in the areas of heritage studies and museology.

Much of the research on ICH has been concerned with the activities of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), one of the major international cultural brokers that in 2003 adopted the *Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Inspired by this, the 2004 General Conference of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in Seoul provided the floor for the museum professionals of diverse specialities to engage with the subject. Many of the contributions to that conference were published in the first volumes of IJIH and provided practical examples and case studies of how museums and cultural institutions around the world interpret and operate *vis-a-vis* ICH. Against the backdrop of a more practical framework, this paper makes an effort to approach ICH critically, and to situate it in contemporary academic discussions in heritage and museum studies. The main research questions are: How has ICH emerged internationally and with what moral/ethical implications - What is its place in the cultural heritage arena with respect to the 'alternative heritage discourse' (Butler 2006) and the 'new museological discourse' (Kreps 2003)?

Initially, I rehearse key stages in the emergence of the concept within official UNESCO memory-work. I trace the intellectual development of ICH through the interventions of UNESCO that are entrenched in Japanese and Korean heritage conceptualisations. The aim is to tease out some of the early theoretical underpinnings of ICH related to the UNESCO paradox: the organisation's call to reconcile

'cultural relativism' and 'global ethics' (Eriksen 2001) that has often been compared to 'salvage ethnography' (Alivizatou 2007). I then juxtapose these institutional approaches to ICH with more recent discussions taking place in the field of heritage studies and museology. The key theoretical models used are Butler's 'alternative heritage discourse' (2006) and Kreps' 'new museological discourse' (2003). Here, ICH is analysed in the light of current academic/intellectual frameworks in order to bring in a more critical perspective to its theoretical conceptualisation. Finally, the examination of these theoretical underpinnings is followed by an assessment of the impact of ICH on traditional museum and cultural heritage institution roles. I venture to do this through a brief presentation of the opinions of three key actors, Prof. Patrick Boylan of City University, Dr Richard Kurin of the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage and Mr Ralph Regenvanu of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, as recorded in interviews conducted in Leicester, Washington DC and Paris in 2006 and 2007. What emerges is a critical and multifaceted examination of the different conceptualisations of ICH and their interconnections.

Part 1: ICH and UNESCO Memory-Work

Although the first country to request the establishment of legal and administrative measures concerning ICH from UNESCO was Bolivia, in 1973, there is little doubt that the main source of inspiration and guidance for the organisation's engagement with ICH was the legislation developed in Japan and Korea in the 1950s and 1960s. The 1950 *Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties* in Japan along with the protection of tangible heritage in the form of movable and immovable monuments, sites and works of art made a particular reference to the protection of 'intangible cultural

properties' that were threatened by the post-Second World War westernisation of the country (Saito 2005: 3). A similar law that made special provisions for the protection of ICH under the title *Cultural Heritage Protection Act* was passed by the Republic of Korea's government in 1962 (Yim 2004: 11). In this respect, living traditional culture, and the knowledge and skills associated with it, were acknowledged as a constituent element of national heritage and identity, and therefore subject to preservation for future generations.

Underlying the philosophy and rationale of the Japanese and Korean legislation on the protection of cultural heritage, is the idea that the national heritage not only consists of monuments, objects and sites, but also of living cultural expressions. These expressions that have been maintained through the past and into the present, are threatened by modernity and, consequently, state intervention is required in order to ensure their safeguarding and continuation. In this context, in 1966 the National Theatre was founded in Japan for the preservation and promotion of the country's traditional performing arts of *Nogaku, Bunraku and Kabuki* (Saito 2005: 6). Clearly, then, one of the characteristics of the conceptualisation of ICH as developed in Japan and Korea was not only its significance in terms of defining national and cultural identity, but also its fragile nature and the threat from modern ways of life. These approaches to the protection of ICH echo strongly in UNESCO programmes and activities developed in the 1990s. One such example is the Living Human Treasures Programme established in 1993 and inspired by Japanese state programmes for the continuation of traditional skills.

With respect to UNESCO's involvement with ICH, the terms that were initially used in the institutional glossary were 'traditional culture' and 'folklore'. In 1989 UNESCO adopted the *Recommendation for the Protection of Traditional Culture and Folklore*, the aim of which was to sensitise governments towards the threats posed to traditional culture. However, the *1989 Recommendation* was not successful in influencing the activities of Member States (Aikawa 2004: 140). Among the reasons for this was the terminology employed. More precisely, the term 'folklore', that was invariably used alongside the term 'traditional culture', was considered as having pejorative connotations for many non-European UNESCO Member States (Seeger 2001) and as being

reminiscent of colonial thought and domination. Moreover, it was regarded as superficial because it focused on the result of the social process, rather than on the cultural or social activity that produced it (McCann et al. 2001). In this sense, the *Recommendation* was criticised for being focused on the 'product' rather that the 'producer' (Aikawa 2004: 140).

During the 1999 Conference on the 'Safeguarding of Traditional Cultures' organised by UNESCO in collaboration with the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage in Washington, the weaknesses of the 1989 *Recommendation* were underlined, as was the need for a more holistic and dynamic definition of the subject matter. In addition, it was argued that UNESCO should not only focus on the archiving and documentation of cultural expressions, but primarily on gaining the support of *local communities so that they can sustain cultural practices* (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004: 58).

Subsequent consultations on the subject of the definition of ICH, such as the Turin Round Table in March 2001, the Expert Meeting in Rio de Janeiro in January 2002 and the publication of the 2002 Glossary on ICH, revealed the breadth of the area covered by the term in different geographical and cultural contexts, its relation to the tangible heritage, as well as the need to stress the importance of the people that create and sustain cultural expressions (van Zanten 2004). The end product of the above-mentioned meetings was the expanded definition of ICH in the *2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage*, whereby,

-- intangible cultural heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills - as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith - that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. It is manifested inter alia in the following domains:

a. *oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of intangible heritage;*

b. *performing arts;*

c. *social practices, rituals and festive events;*

d. *knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;*

e. *traditional craftsmanship' (UNESCO 2003 2§1).*

UNESCO's adoption of the *2003 Convention* has been heralded as an event of great significance (Matsura 2004: 4; Bouchenaki 2004: 6) for the international understanding of cultural heritage. While according to the *1972 World Heritage Convention*, the definition of cultural heritage included primarily *monuments, groups of buildings* and *sites*, as well as *natural sites* as demonstrative of natural heritage, the new definition of ICH reveals a shift from 'static' and 'monumental' to 'dynamic' and 'living' understandings of heritage. The Head of the Intangible Heritage Section has acknowledged that the 2003 Convention is a *sister legal document* to the *1972 World Heritage Convention* (Smeets 2004: 39). However, the existence of two separate instruments for the protection and safeguarding of cultural heritage reveals the institutional dichotomy between the Tangible/World Heritage and the Intangible Heritage Section. While efforts within UNESCO have taken place in order to provide for more integrated approaches towards tangible and intangible heritage, like the Yamato Declaration (UNESCO 2004), the distance between the two - even within the physical space of the Parisian UNESCO Headquarters - is still quite big.

Influences and Concerns

The broader way in which UNESCO has conceptualised and operated *vis-á-vis* ICH can be assessed in the light of the organisation's wider stance in the field of Culture. In this sense, the ICH discourse has emerged within the sphere of UNESCO's strategic planning in the field of Cultural Diversity[2]. As such, the international organisation is faced with the paradoxical challenge of reconciling its universalistic vision, rooted in the respect and protection of human rights, with the particularities and plurality of the world's different cultures. While this contradiction has been assessed critically by anthropologists[3], what remains to be seen is how ICH balances between 'cultural relativism' and 'global ethics' as a new heritage discourse. This, then,

raises a set of questions as to whether the ICH discourse is rooted in an understanding of culture as tradition in need of protection, or in an understanding of culture as dynamic and continuously evolving.

So far, what emerges from the above is that ICH has been conceptualised in Japanese, Korean and UNESCO legislation primarily as an aspect of cultural heritage that, due to its 'living' and 'evanescent' nature, is in need of safeguarding from modernisation and globalisation. In this sense, UNESCO programmes and activities are often compared to 'salvage ethnography', a popular practice among early 20th century ethnographers who claimed that traditional cultures would disappear with the advent of Western civilisation and that it was their moral duty to preserve them (Penny 2002); ideas that today are hotly challenged by native groups celebrating the dynamism and continuity of their culture (Hendrix 2005).

Inherent in 'salvage ethnography' and more generally, in the idea of 'safeguarding', are the notions of 'fixity' and 'fossilisation'. In this sense, fears have been expressed that the adoption of measures for the protection of living cultural expressions may possibly hinder their further development and make them less relevant to contemporary communities. Despite the acknowledgement by UNESCO that ICH is in *constant change and evolution*, the institutionalisation of living culture through state programmes, archives and recordings could possibly 'freeze' it in space and time. In order to counteract such a scenario, during the 1999 Smithsonian Conference the opinion of James Early that *there is no folklore without the folk* was recognised as an important step in dealing with ICH in the future. The participation of 'practising communities' in the safeguarding processes has thus been acknowledged as a fundamental principle for UNESCO activities, and a way for ensuring the viability of living heritage.

A further characteristic of the UNESCO conceptualisation of ICH is an institutional separation and dichotomy between tangible and intangible heritage. Although the interconnectedness between the two terms is highlighted in the *2003 Convention's* definition of ICH, there is a lack of a broad vision regarding a more holistic approach to cultural heritage. This leads to an institutional compartmentalisation and polarisation, whereby tangible stands for dead or monumental

civilisations, and intangible for living cultures. Clearly, then, it seems that within UNESCO, ICH discourse and programming reveal a 'conservationist' approach to culture that needs to be safeguarded out of fear that it will disappear.

Part 2: ICH and the 'Anthropologisation' of the Heritage Debate

The emergence of ICH within the operational grounds of UNESCO in the 1990s demonstrates an understanding of cultural heritage that is based on an 'anthropological' approach to the notion of culture (Bouchenaki 2004; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004). As such, it seems to emerge in tandem with the academic/intellectual call for 'anthropologising' and 'humanising' the heritage debate (Butler 2006; Rowlands 2002).

Such calls became stronger after the publication of David Lowenthal's book *The Past is a Foreign Country* and the ensuing debate (Ingold 1996: 201-245) that brought an 'anthropological' perspective to the understanding of cultural heritage that was chiefly dominated at the time by the mainstream Western heritage canon embodied in the 'historical approach' (Ingold 1996: 202). Butler uses this debate in order to further explore the 'anthropological' or 'memorial' approach to notions of cultural heritage and experiencing the past, and thus to provide alternative approaches to the Eurocentric understanding of heritage (2006). As such, the concept of ICH is offered as an alternative conceptualisation of culture and in opposition to the preoccupation of the West with the preservation and conservation of the material traces of the past. In other words, by being *constantly recreated by groups and communities* (UNESCO 2003), ICH seems to attest that the past is a *renewable resource* (Holtorf 2001). As a consequence, it emerges as an alternative discourse to the preoccupation of the Eurocentric heritage norm which is constructed on the values of authenticity, and the irreparability of cultural heritage.

In this sense, ICH is related to the 'alternative heritage discourse' or the 'memorial approach' (Ingold 1996: 202) that acknowledges the importance of 'memory', 'oral transmission' and 'performance' as ways for experiencing and comprehending the past. According to this perspective, the past is not a foreign country, but

rather it exists in living people, in their bodies and minds, through memory. To support this argument Feeley-Harnik refers to non-Western approaches of experiencing the past, such as *the weeping 'bird sound word' songs of Kaluli funerals and gisalo ceremonies that evoke images of landscapes, paths and places through which — living people reconnect with their ancestors in seen and unseen worlds* (1996: 215-216).

Moreover, the 'memorial approach' is related to the interpretation of cultural objects. For example, Suzanne Kuechler's research on the New Ireland funerary effigies, known as *malanggan,* reveals that these objects, by being abandoned in the forest or exchanged

effect remembering in an active and continuously emerging sense as they disappear from view (2002: 7). Almost as if their materiality is not as important for their creators, as their ability to represent 'named images that define their access to the past as a vision for the future (ibid.).

Clearly, then, the 'durability' of the object is less important than its 'performance' during the ritual ceremony, and its 'renewing' potential in terms of remembering the past in the future. As such, the materiality and the performance of the object are inseparable.

Within the 'memorial' heritage discourse, therefore, ICH expressed through 'memory', 'performance' and 'oral culture' seems to support alternative ways for interacting with the past. Departing from the Western preoccupation with the conservation and preservation of the material heritage for future generations, it introduces the idea of 'living heritage'. As such, it does not envision cultural heritage as a dead relic of the past, but as a corpus of processes and practices that are constantly recreated and renewed by present generations effecting a connection with the past. A shift can be observed from the preoccupation with the 'object' to an increased interest in the 'person'. Therefore, in answering the question of what constitutes heritage and heritage value, ICH would favour 'transformation' over 'authenticity', and 'renewal' over 'conservation'.

Discussions around the need to 'humanise' cultural heritage can also be traced in the world of museums.

André Malraux's *Musée Imaginaire* first published in 1947, was one of the first works to acknowledge how individuals appropriate museums and museum collections. The emergence of the *New Museology* in the UK (Vergo 1990) and the *Nouvelle Muséologie* in France (Riviere 1989) in the 1980s and 1990s further questioned the traditional role of museums by acknowledging their occasionally exclusive character, and underlining the need for more people-centred museum practice. This shift of museums towards people has also been connected to the concept of the 'ecomuseum' (Davis 1999; Poulot 2006). Developed in France in the 1970s, 'ecomuseums' aimed at relating people to their environment, cultivating their cultural identity, conserving their heritage and instigating local concern for sustainable development (Fernandez de Paz, 2003: 39). Prof. Boylan has observed how ICH can find fertile ground in 'ecomuseums', since they are not primarily concerned with objects, but with *cultural environments* (2006a: 57).

Inspired by the 'new museology' and 'ecomuseums', alternative museum concepts such as the 'post-museum' (Hooper-Greenhill 2000) and the 'poetic museum' (Spalding 2002) emerged at the dawn of the 21st century as a substitute for the 'classic' or 'modernist' museum. While the first one is concerned, among other things, with *the memories*, *songs and cultural traditions* related to artefacts (Hooper-Greenhill 2000), the latter is concerned with drawing out *the profounder, more elusive meanings of museum collections* (Spalding 2002: 9). In this sense, both museum concepts are concerned with exploring and bringing out the intangible dimensions of objects; elements that are not embodied in material form. This will to move beyond the material properties of artefacts reveals the potential of ICH to offer new approaches in understanding and interpreting collections.

Christina Kreps has further explored the possibilities offered by ICH in museology through *the new museological discourse* (2003: 145) and alternative modes of museum 'curatorship' (2005). As such, she uses ICH to refer to traditional knowledge concerning the conservation and preservation of objects that constitute people's cultural heritage. She also acknowledges that *indigenous curation* as an expression of ICH constitutes *a bottom-up, participatory approach* to heritage preservation that invites

museums to become *stewards and curators of intangible, living and dynamic culture* (2005: 7).

Drawing on the above, it becomes evident that there are discernible differences between the conceptualisations of ICH by institutional and academic/intellectual 'heritage discourses'. While within UNESCO there is a dichotomy between tangible and intangible heritage, according to the academic/intellectual discourse objects, spaces and human expressions are regarded as interconnected and interdependent. Moreover, while the UNESCO discourse demonstrates a 'conservationist' approach to culture, academic/intellectual discussions acknowledge a variety of hybrid and diverse modes of cultural transmission not necessarily confined in 'traditional' frameworks.

Part 3: ICH as a New Conceptual Framework for Heritage Studies and Museology

While in the previous parts I examined the broad theoretical context of the emergence of ICH within the institutional discourse of UNESCO and academic/intellectual discussions, in this last part, I expound the opinions of three men who have starred in the ICH debate over the last years: Prof. Patrick Boylan, Dr Richard Kurin and Mr Ralph Regenvanu.

I met Prof. Boylan in October 2006 at Leicester Museum. His involvement with UNESCO, ICOM and the international heritage scene dates back several decades; this is the reason why his comments on the emergence of ICH were of particular significance for my research. Prof Boylan claimed that *there is nothing particularly new about the ICH discourse as such* (2006/10) referring to early 20th century cases of collecting songs, hymns and dances by different individuals, such as the Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould, Cecil Sharp and Vaughan Williams in the UK, and Bela Bartok in Hungary. He added that the reason why it has come to the fore now is that UNESCO has been trying to complete the portfolio Cultural Protection (2006/10), making special reference to the key role of UNESCO's Secretary General Koitchiro Matsuura and the Japanese Trust Fund for Intangible Heritage. However, he remarked that during the ICOM General Conference in Seoul in 2004 *many of the ICOM Committees found that there was something on ICH that could relate to their work* (2006/10). In this sense, he acknowledged that the Conference *was a wake up call to*

the museum community as to the tremendous potential of ICH for museum work (2006/10).

Dr Richard Kurin is the Director of the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage (Folklife Center) in Washington DC. Our meeting took place in his office at the Center's new headquarters at L'Enfant Plaza. Dr Kurin described very eloquently the dynamics of the collaboration between UNESCO and the Folklife Center, by highlighting that *this partnership provided not only a lot of thinking around ICH, but also legitimacy and prestige* (2007/05). He also attributed the abstention of the US from the 2003 Convention to the fear by the Pattern and Trade Office that *intellectual property rights would go down a slippery slope* (2007/05). Concerning the ICOM 2004 General Conference he commented that *most of the talks and speeches in Seoul were almost cheerleady!* (2007/05), adding that *dealing with ICH is going to be hard work for museums* (2007/05). According to him, it is not about conserving and exhibiting artefacts, but an *act of social engineering* (2007/05), meaning that museums need to look beyond their walls and into the communities that they are trying to represent.

Mr Ralph Regenvanu, the former Director of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, answered my questions during his visit to Paris in May 2007. One of the first things that he remarked with respect to the emergence of ICH was that *it reflected the concerns of the non-European world* (2007/05) as opposed to the previous UNESCO Conventions that were informed by the Western historical tradition (2007/05). As such, he acknowledged the broad concept of ICH as inclusive of objects, monuments, cultural or natural sites and related the emergence of ICH to a postcolonial turn for UNESCO. As far as museums and heritage institutions are concerned, he remarked that *for museums to engage with ICH, this requires a complete and total transformation* (2007/05). Talking about European museums he confessed that *I do not hold hope that they can deal with ICH adding that they have so much colonial baggage that it is going to be very hard for them to move on and transform all that* (2007/05). As opposed to that, he referred to the practice of Pacific museums that *are dealing with ICH by becoming cultural centres* (2007/05).

Summing up these interviews, several key themes emerge relating to the potential of ICH to constitute a new conceptual framework for cultural heritage and museum studies. Firstly, all the interviewees underlined the inclusive nature of the concept. It is not focused on single items, such as a musical performance or a song, but on broader processes. In this sense, Mr Regenvanu observed that *we should not speak of ICH simply as cultural expressions or traditional knowledge, but as a process, a lived, evolving interaction* (2007/05). In the same tone, Dr Kurin remarked that ICH should not be treated in isolation, because *it is not just about art and crafts, but it is really about peoples' lives* (2007/05), adding that Australian Aboriginal knowledge of the land has to do with Australian Aboriginal land rights. *It is not just a custom; it has to do with their lives* (2007/05). Prof Boylan's observation that *you can't really separate tangible and intangible heritage* (2006/10) alludes not only to the inseparability of the material and the immaterial in terms of conceptualising the notion of cultural heritage, but also to the more complex understanding of cultural heritage that informs peoples' identities.

A second theme emerging from the interviews was the engagement of communities as a defining element of the conceptualisation of ICH. A consensus prevailed among the interviewees that state involvement could lead to the 'formalisation' and the 'bureaucratisation' of ICH and the subsequent alienation of the communities. Prof. Boylan observed how *UNESCO's narrow view on authenticity* (2006/10) could make communities become disaffected. In this sense, Mr Regenvanu quite provokingly remarked:

> *If the community who is the bearer and practitioner of a tradition decides to alter the tradition for the purpose of making money, is that a distortion? Or maybe is the intervention of museums, UNESCO or anthropologists saying that they can't do that the real distortion? (2007/05).*

In this context, Dr Kurin's opinion that *culture is not preserved because someone put it in a museum or an archive; it is preserved because it lives in the society; it is real and it is living* (2007/05) reveals how intimately related are the concept of ICH and the broader socio-political context in which it exists.

This leads to the third theme emerging from the interviews and concerning the impact of ICH on museum

work. Dr Kurin's call for museums to become enmeshed in 'social engineering' indicates new roles and directions *for doing cultural representation* (2007/05). He claimed that the uncritical way in which ICH was endorsed and celebrated in ICOM's 2004 General Conference revealed the failure of museum professionals to distinguish the challenges stemming from their involvement with ICH. According to him, dealing with ICH is not about preserving artefacts in storerooms, but *helping people continue their culture* (2007/05). Mr Regenvanu talking about the inabilities of Western museums to deal with ICH commented that *ICH is tied to place, resources and obviously communities and communities do not live in these museums* (2007/05). As an alternative he referred to the practice of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre that is 'out in the community' and concerned not only with collecting and recording different aspects of living culture, but also with informing and educating *ni-Vanuatu* about the benefits of sustainable development and the need to combine traditional and Western knowledge. Along similar lines, Prof. Boylan acknowledged that ICH suggests new roles for museums not only in terms of collecting living culture and contextualising collections, but also with respect to *treating real contemporary-like issues* (2006/10).

Conclusions

With the above in mind, several conclusions can be drawn relating to the intellectual and operational challenges raised by the examination of the appropriations of ICH and its potential to constitute a new heritage discourse. The assessment of the different approaches reveals the contradictions embedded in its broader conceptualisation: on the one hand, it is regarded as something fragile and endangered and on the other as something in constant change and evolution.

In part one, within the official UNESCO memory-work, ICH emerged initially as a 'euphemism' for the pejorative and parochial term 'folklore'. However, following the broader definition adopted in the *2003 Convention* after consultations with academics and communities and making reference to *cultural objects and spaces*, it came to encompass a lot more than what traditionally would be considered as 'folklore'. Interestingly, the adoption of the new, inclusive terminology by UNESCO still remains to be implemented through more integrated tangible/intangible heritage projects and operational frameworks.

Alternatively, within the recent academic/intellectual discourses that I rehearsed in part two, ICH seems to obtain a more expanded significance. It emerges as a process in constant evolution that cannot be 'frozen', nor separated from its context, the latest being aspects of both 'material culture' like the *malanggan* mentioned earlier, and of 'living culture'. In terms of contemporary museological approaches, ICH has been related to the idea of 'indigenous curation', in other words to the inclusion of traditional knowledge systems in museum work, such as the conservation and interpretation of collections. Therefore, ICH is not envisioned as a category of cultural heritage that is endangered and as such, in need of safeguarding, but rather as an intellectual framework from which new roles for heritage institutions and museums can be envisaged.

These new roles and directions for museums and heritage institutions were also underlined in part three, via the brief presentation of the perspectives of Prof. Boylan, Dr Kurin and Mr Regenvanu. Although all of the interviewees agreed that dealing with ICH would involve new directions and fundamental changes in how museums perceive their role in society, it was agreed that it could also signify a new period in museum work by opening up to communities. As such, the idea of the 'museum as a palace for collections' is substituted for the idea of the 'museum as a dynamic cultural centre' (West 2007). The implementation of the new roles for museums as 'social engineers' requires a fundamentally different museological approach, focused not only on artefacts, but also on people. For this reason, in an earlier paper on the impact of the *2003 Convention* on museum training, Prof. Boylan acknowledged that

> *the initiative will require museum personnel to possess new and different knowledge, skills and attitudes, just as its corollary, staff training and professional development offerings and programmes, will be obliged to revise their contents and methodologies (2006a: 63).*

What remains to be seen is, on what terms ICH will evolve as a new heritage discourse; in other words, which elements of its conceptualisation will prevail: 'tradition' or 'change', 'relativism' or 'universalism'. From the above, it

becomes clear that while UNESCO is trying to balance the two within the ethical sphere of universal human rights, the intellectual/academic world is interested in the more hybrid, contested and changing components of living culture that are often at the margins of the UNESCO governmental policies. Although it is still too soon to tell whether this new ecumenical discourse on ICH will effect any change, the interest with which museums around the world approach it and endeavour to incorporate it into their practice reveals their willingness to identify and undertake new roles and responsibilities *vis-á-vis* the curation of living culture. In this sense, it is quite possible that as the cultural heritage discourse has been significantly enriched by the concept of ICH in terms of providing a more inclusive and people-oriented understanding of conceptualising the past, so can the world of museums potentially benefit from this new approach with respect to establishing profound and long-lasting relations with extra-museum communities and making cultural representations reflecting not only artefacts, but real people and their lives. ▦

NOTES

1. For example, in 2006 the Museum Ethnographers Group Annual Conference on 'Feeling the Vibes: Dealing with Intangible Heritage', the 7th Annual Heritage Symposium at the University of Cambridge on 'Tangible - Intangible Cultural Heritage: A Sustainable Dichotomy?', in 2006-2007 the seminar series organised in Paris by the Laboratoire D'Anthropologie et D'Histoire de l'Institution de la Culture (LAHIC) on Intangible Cultural Heritage and different publications, such as: Deacon, H., Dondolo, L., Mrubata, M. and Prosalendis, S. 2004, *The Subtle Power of Intangible Heritage: Legal and Financial Instruments for Safeguarding Intangible Heritage*. Cape Town: HSRC Publishers. Jade, M. 2006, *Patrimoine Immateriel: Perspectives d'Interpretation du Concept de Patrimoine*. Paris : L'Harmattan.

2. Among other activities the adoption of the 2001 *Universal Declaration on the Protection of Cultural Diversity* and the 2005 *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.*

3. For example, see the critique by Thomas Hylland Eriksen of the report on O*ur Creative Diversity.*

LIST OF INTERVIEWS

- Boylan, P. 2006. Interview conducted by the author on October 7th, at the Leicester Museum and Gallery.
- Kurin, R. 2007. Interview conducted by the author on May 18th, at the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, Washington.
- Regenvanu, R. 2007. Interview conducted by Ana Maria Stan on May 21st, at UNESCO Headquarters, Paris.

REFERENCES

- Aikawa, N. 2004, 'An Historical Overview of the Preparation of the UNESCO International Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage', *Museum International*, pp.221-222, 137-149.
- Alivizatou, M. 2007, 'The UNESCO Programme for the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity: A Critical Examination', *Journal of Museum Ethnography* pp.19, 34-42.
- Bouchenaki, M. 2004, Editorial, *Museum International* pp.221-222, 6-10.
- Boylan, P. 2006a, 'The Intangible Heritage: A Challenge for Museums and Museum Professional Training', *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* 1, pp.54-65.
- Butler, B. 2006, 'Heritage and the Present Past', in Tilley, C., Keane, W., Kuechler-Fogden, S. and Rowlands, M. (eds) *Handbook of Material Culture*, London: Sage Publications, pp.463-479.
- Davis, P, 1999, Ecomuseums: *A Sense of Place*, London; New York: Leicester University Press.
- Eriksen, T. H. 2001, 'Between Universalism and Relativism: A Critique of the UNESCO Concept of Culture', in Cowen, J.K., Dembour, M.B. and Wilson, R. (eds) *Culture and Rights: Anthropological Perspectives, Cambridge*: Cambridge University Press, pp.127-148.
- Feeley-Harnik, G. 1996, 'Against the Motion' in Ingold, T (ed) *Key Debates in Anthropology* ('Debate: Is the Past a Foreign Country?') London, Routledge, pp.201-248.
- Fernandez de Paz, E. 2003, 'La Museologia Antropologica Ayer y Hoy', *Cuadernos Tecnicos: Antropologia y Patrimonio: Investigacion, Documentacion e Intervencion* 10, pp.30-47.
- Hendrix, J. 2005, *Reclaiming Culture*, Oxford, Palgrave.
- Holtorf, C. 2001, 'Is the Past a non-Renewable Resource?' in Layton, R., Stone, P. and Thomas, J. (eds) *Destruction and Conservation of Cultural Property*. London, Routledge, pp.286-295.

• Hooper-Greenhill, E. 2000, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture,* London, Routledge.
• Ingold, T (ed). 1996, *Key Debates in Anthropology* ('Debate: Is the Past a Foreign Country?')
  London, Routledge, pp.201-248.
• Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, B. 2004, 'Intangible Heritage as a Metacultural Production', *Museum International*, pp.221-222, 52-65.
• Kreps, C. 2003. *Liberating Culture: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Museums, Curation and Heritage Preservation.* London; New York: Routledge.
• Kreps, C. 2005, 'Indigenous Curation as Intangible Heritage: Thoughts on the Relevance of the 2003 UNESCO Convention', *Theorizing Cultural Heritage* 1 (2), pp.3-8.
• Kuechler, S. 2002, *Malanggan: Art, Memory and Sacrifice*, Oxford, Berg.
• Matsura, K. 2004, Preface, *Museum International*, pp.221-222, 4-5.
• McCann, A., Early, J., Horowitz, A., Kurin, R., Prosterman, L., Seeger, A., Seitel, P. 2001, 'The 1989 Recommendation Ten Years On: Towards a Critical Analysis', in Seitel, P. (ed) *Safeguarding Traditional Cultures: A Global Assessment*, Washington: UNESCO; Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, pp.57-61.
• Penny, G. H. 2002, *Objects of Culture: Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany*, Chapel Hill; London, The University of North Carolina Press.
• Poulot, D. 2005, *Musee et Museologie*, Paris, La Decouverte.
• Riviere, G. H. 1989, *La Museologie selon George-Henri Riviere : Cours de Museologie/ Textes et Temoignages*, Paris , Dunod.
• Rowlands, M. 2002, 'Heritage and Cultural Property', in Buchli, V. (ed) *The Material Culture Reader*, Oxford, New York, Berg Publications, pp.105-114.
• Saito, H. 2005, 'Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Japan', in *Sub-regional Experts Meeting in Asia on Intangible Cultural Heritage: Safeguarding and Inventory Making Methodologies, Bangkok, Thailand, December 13-15, pp.1-14.*
  http://www.accu.or.jp/ich/en/pdf/c2005subreg_Jpn2.pdf [Accessed on 3 Dec 2006]
• Seeger, A. 2001, 'Summary Report on Regional Seminars', in Seitel, P (ed) *Safeguarding Traditional Cultures: A Global Assessment, Washington,* UNESCO, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, 36-41.
• Smeets, R. 2004, 'On the Background, the Interpretation and the Implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage', in *Promotion of Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage: Final Report of the 2004 ACCU Regional Meeting in Asia and the Pacific, Osaka, Japan, 26 February-1 March, 2004, Osaka,* Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU), pp.37-48.
• Spalding, J. 2002, *The Poetic Museum: Reviving Historic Collections,* Prestel, Munich.
• UNESCO 2003, *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.*
  http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001325/132530e.pdf [Accessed on 1 Dec 2003]
• UNESCO 2004, *Yamato Declaration on Integrated Approaches for Safeguarding Tangible and Intangible Heritage.*
  http://portal.unesco.org/culture/admin/file_download.php/Yamato_Declaration.pdf
  [Accessed on 3 Dec 2006].
• Van Zanten, W. 2004, 'Constructing New Terminology for Intangible Cultural Heritage', *Museum International* pp.221-222, 36-44.
• Vergo, P (ed), 1989, *The New Museology*, London, Reaktion Books.
• West, R. 2007, Paper presented at the Symposium 'Memory and Universality: New Challenges Facing Museums', UNESCO, Paris, 05 February 2007.
• Yim, D. 2004, 'Living Human Treasures and the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage: Experiences and Challenges', *ICOM News* 57 (4), pp.10-12.