

Editorial



In a sense Volume 12 of the *International Journal of Intangible Heritage* represents a shift (almost on the level of climate change), focusing not so much on intangible heritage itself, but on the social space that ICH occupies, whether virtual or real, evoking instead the importance of the associated cultural spaces acknowledged under the 2003 *Convention*. Several other 'S' words are pronounced upon in the 11 articles sharing room in this volume (Soft power, Super-diversity, Sustainability) some invoked for the first time for our audiences in these pages, others for the umpteenth.

Space is however, what underpins all these terms, duly acknowledging the true meaning and import of Paul Sapho's prescient statement that *The rarest and most valuable commodity in the internet environment would not be the content or the means by which to distribute it, but instead would be the contextualisation of the content.*¹ It is this latter point of contextualisation (or space), whether real or virtual, whether traditional or contemporary, whether intuitive or interpretive, which has articulated the reflective discourse in virtually all of the papers in this volume.

Flooded lands, forgotten voices speaks to the loss of ancient Nubia's traditional space in the Nile Valley following the construction of the Aswan Dam, and thus by extension the loss of its intangible heritage. Building capacity for safeguarding practices amongst the communities displaced by the building of dams and disconnected from their heritage, has focused on the documentation, protection and promotion of Nubian languages and intangible heritage, and highlights current initiatives to foster efforts by the Nubian community to keep their heritage alive.

Many of the same issues were the focus of another paper. In **Inhabiting a language** the author explores similar considerations in which traditional knowledge of ecosystems is embedded in the languages of the people who speak them – evoking a kind of linguistic ecology where language bears the stamp of the speakers' physical setting. The author casts a critical eye on UNESCO's insistence on the centrality of ICH inventorying in safeguarding traditional culture which *runs a risk of essentialising culture and 'fixing' cultural practices in time and, asserts that while the forms of cultural expressions may change with time, the meaning of those practices should be protected, for in it lies the cultural value of heritage.* She subscribes to Bourdieu's theory of practice and sees language as a vehicle of culture that gives meaning to people's experiences, which can itself be considered an organic inventory system for the linguistic interactions of the people who produce it.

In **The digitisation of Intangible Cultural Heritage** the author reflects on the complex balancing act between academic attitudes towards technology and respect for generations of indigenous (intuitive) knowledge, essential for sustainable interaction with the surrounding environment. Conscientiously combining these perspectives in the conceptualisation of new design systems can have a major impact on the authenticity of the end product. The author advocates for the respectful interplay of Participatory Design between co-designers to ensure the integrity of the resulting digital 'artefacts' constructed to represent aspects of the intangible heritage of the OvaHerero and the OvaHimba.

This Namibian case-study, which aims to ensure the continued 'ownership' by the indigenous community of its digitised ICH resonates elsewhere in this volume. *When he considers how the preserved material can become embedded into technical systems and ... will be handled in future digital applications. When the ICH becomes digital, turned into bits and bytes, it undergoes a transformation from one form to another, the author insists that this ... transformation ... must be scrutinised and be a process involving [indigenous] curators.*

It is precisely these transformational processes which have engaged the attention of the author of **Copyright and Data Authenticity in the Digital Preservation of Heritage: the Case of OAPI States**; however her primary starting point is not so much the technologies employed within the cultural continuum of the OAPI States, but the engagement of ministries and institutions in the fields of culture and tourism which have adopted digital heritage as a tool for both safeguarding and commercially exploiting their communities' cultural patrimony. Data authenticity in heritage digitisation has aroused many concerns. Can digital copyright provide the kinds of protection needed? How will the sustainability of copyright affect the capacity of states to protect the shared heritage of their communities? The author concludes that the value of what can be gained must be balanced by the risks of digitising heritage if the OAPI States consider that the establishment of legal protocols for ICH digitisation can serve the same purpose.

In **Liquid Gold** the delicate balance between the commercial production of argan oil to meet the demands of a global market, and the retention of indigenous knowledge amongst Berber women has caused disruptions to the traditional processing of the oil using ancient millstones, declining levels of local consumption and to the processes of transmission to younger generations who have yet to see the value in engaging in such gruelling physical labour. While the endemism of the argan tree to Morocco has kept the oil's production closely tied to this particular space, there has been a gradual decline in both the craft of millstone-making and the number of working millstones. Argan oil production is increasingly reliant on access to co-operatives where only the widest possible community participation can achieve sustainable growth, while at the same time retaining the many traditional uses of the argan oil and fruit as an essential part of Moroccan identity.

Women's groups and alliances are also essential in the production of Cyprus' **Lefkara Lace**, a highly-prized traditional type of embroidery. Here again the author's focus is on the many different strategies and programmes which both government and the local community have put in place to ensure the transmission of traditional designs and craftsmanship to younger generations, and increasingly, to visitors. However, the success and potential of these different programmes very much relies on the engagement of local craftsmen, artists and collaborative workshops in creating an environment of appreciation for tradition, and inspiration for new designs and forms of creativity.

While traditional craftsmanship and community engagement have often been the subject of offerings in this journal, conflict resolution has not. The authors of **Crafting Collaboration** in Hangzhou, China, have provided an intriguing glimpse into the complex nature of participation and collaboration between artisans and museum professionals. In the context of contemporary Chinese museums, promoting and presenting craftsmanship rather than curating it, the authors posit that, as proposed in Jackson and Kidd's (2011) *Performing Heritage*, museums are like the theatre, where heritage is performed by actors (curators, heritage experts, tradition-bearers, visitors) each with their own expectations, and where the authenticity of heritage is constantly (re)negotiated and (re)constructed. The different interests and motivations of the various parties resulted in several conflicts; the shift in environment from traditional shops and rural villages to the more rarified atmosphere of museums raised expectations and changed the interactions between curators and craftspeople. Resolving these issues required negotiation and compromise between the craftspeople and those who sought to curate their 'performance' (of craftmaking).

Nye's **Soft Power** concept, and its relationship to ICH, makes its first appearance in the pages of this journal. The author proposes that the level of involvement of States Parties with the implementation of the 2003 *Convention* and inscription of their elements on the *Representative List*, might provide a measurable point of reference when analysing the position of particular countries in the 'soft power' rankings in selected indices. Member states of the European Union, as well as countries occupying significant standing in these rankings like China and the U.S.A. are, she considers, of particular relevance. The author also proposes that we now consider the existence and relevance of the emerging 'Intangible Heritage Discourse' to stand alongside the now ten-year-old 'Authorised Heritage Discourse' first articulated by Laurajane Smith, and argues that UNESCO plays the role of arbiter in both of these discourses. Of equal importance is the potency of this new nuance in the language landscape of ICH and its capacity for disruption or change.

'**Super-diversity** in West- Kruiskade' the author suggests, presents the 2003 *Convention* with new dilemmas for safeguarding intangible heritage where the nominations for the national inventory have a specific link to the social spaces associated with them. This new terminology emerging from the 'philosophical cultural laboratory' of the Netherlands reconsiders such assumptions and suggests that the impact of the influx of migrants in/to Western Europe has completely altered the ethnic composition of major cities. It turns on its head notions of defined communities, permanence, and the centrality of location. Here the author references instead the *interactive creation of space focused on political arenas where inclusion/exclusion and transformation processes are negotiated as a means for strengthening the historical awareness of a shared past to enhance a shared future*. The traditions which the newcomers introduced to West-Kruiskade are indeed rooted in an historical past - but in historical pasts located in many different regions of the world. 'Super-diversity' the author proposes, creates new forms of social belonging in which the diversity of ethnic or religious festivals such as *Diwali*, *Keti Koti* and the Chinese New Year have evolved into communal festivals shared by all, in a dynamic, culturally-diversified environment.

In **Inventorying Intangible Cultural Heritage on the web** the authors take a more conformist approach to the core processes prescribed by the 2003 *Convention*. They present in detail the skills, methodologies and tools required to design and implement an integrated management platform for the ICH multimedia information systems for the Lombardy Region in Italy, and describe the characteristics that distinguish their unified approach, emphasising the innovative features of the online systems developed, presenting in exhaustive visual detail the environments for managing, searching and browsing ICH data.

In a different approach to the issue of **Intangible cultural heritage in times of 'Superdiversity'** the author reflects on policy and practice concerning ICH from the perspective of cultural diversity, as a part of the framework of appreciation and objectives relating to the UNESCO 2003 *Convention*. In the first decade of its implementation the *Convention* has held to the core concept of source communities shaped by a shared *sense of identity and a shared historical relationship that is rooted in the practice and transmission of, or engagement with, their ICH*. However, the larger Western European cities are trying to come to grips with processes of migration which have completely problematised questions of social cohesion and community, and have impacted on the proliferation and dynamic change of intangible heritage. The author poses a series of questions and proposes that UNESCO and States Parties should be striving towards *a more shared understanding and exchange, and enrichment of cultural diversity and human creativity*.

The cornucopia of offerings in the book review section signal the burgeoning growth in the literature not just in the heritage sector, but more explicitly in the ICH sector, as both academics and administrators move to position themselves as actors in the ICH arena. Through a series of case studies and interviews **Engaging Heritage, Engaging Communities** interprets various meanings of heritage, community and even engagement, while at the same time it examines approaches to what one author terms *collaborative archeology, collaborative museology, and collaborative curation...* and the role, as another author points out, of two players in this game, the 'doers' and the 'thinkers'. **Intangible cultural heritage and digital tools** in a sense continues this trend combining *theoretical reflections and testimonies about the links between intangible cultural heritage and digital tools*. This publication also reflects on the impact of the simultaneous emergence of ICH alongside the increasing availability of ICTs. This coincidence, as the reviewer points out, has frequently provoked confusion *due to a homophony in the French language, ... between intangible cultural heritage on the one hand, and on the other hand the dematerialised heritage ... arising from the digitisation of collections of objects and documents*. Collaborative management, diversity of expertise and participatory policies seem to hold the key.

Perceptions of Sustainability on the other hand, contributes to the discussion *by elaborating on the boundaries of sustainability as a concept and convention as it affects the heritage of traditional peoples who are especially connected with natural areas*. Although the focus of the offerings tends to be grounded in UNESCO's 2001 *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, each section of the book has utility for ICH considerations, but of particular interest

is the section on 'Sustainability in Heritage Management Strategies', *which discusses the recent emergence of a post-colonial cultural pluralism that celebrates those heritage voices marginalised during the colonial eras....* **The Routledge Companion** complements all of the other compilations, as a general survey considering the issues, challenges and factors involved in the practices, the places, the people and the politics of ICH safeguarding. A case in point as the reviewer points out is the *confrontation of ICH as an unproblematic gift from the past versus ICH as an instrument in the postcolonial settling of the bill and making the past pay.* The *Companion* is likely to function as a textbook reference tool for the next decade.

More than ninety percent of the content of this volume is concerned not so much with ICH itself, but rather with 'inventorying' safeguarding practices and approaches, reconsidering perspectives and repositioning the various responses to the 2003 *Convention*. Underlining them all is the fact that a community has acknowledged these particular expressions as evidence of shared characteristics or values at the centre of their identity, whether in the past or the present, and that the evolution of cultural creativity tends to replace the language of dynamism with that of destabilisation when it comes to conserving ICH. Whatever the agenda, a global conversation has unexpectedly emerged in this volume that points to markedly differing perspectives when balancing economic and social development with freedom of cultural expression as a fundamental human right. According to the World Bank, one out of every seven people in the world today is some form of migrant, whether internal or international, voluntary or involuntary, learning to live with diversity. This is the challenge of the day, a situation which has brought into focus the rights of displaced and diasporic communities to invoke their humanity and practise their cultures, reclaiming their heritage no matter which space they inhabit.

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1. Paul Sapho, *It's the Context, Stupid*, 1994.