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Ideas: W. H. Auden on art and freedom

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Editorial

"We want to write an encyclopaedia on our water issues. Could you help us?" It was with this request that a delegation representing the Mayangna community from the Bosawas rainforest in Nicaragua, visited UNESCO in the mid-2000s. Also known as the Heart of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor, their forest joined UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves in 1997. In 2002, the Organization had launched the Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) programme, and it was the right time to start an innovative project: registering the holders of indigenous knowledge, in order to publish all the know-how that the Mayangna had on fish and turtles. A book of over 450 pages, in two volumes and in two languages (Mayangna and Spanish) was published in 2010, marking the completion of the first stage of a larger project on Mayangna knowledge about nature in general.

The Mayangna knew that if they did not urgently document their knowledge in a book, it would gradually disappear – just as their forest was disappearing under the pressure of the illegal logging of trees and the development of intensive agriculture. These two methods of exploiting nature are in contrast to the traditional way of life of the indigenous peoples of the Bosawas Biosphere Reserve – based on hunting, fishing, fruit and vegetable harvesting, and breeding livestock, all of which are self-sustaining.

UNESCO has helped the Mayangna to safeguard their knowledge, so that they could pass it on to future generations, but also to make it available to the international scientific community. This is one of the main functions of LINKS, which aims, in particular, to ensure an equitable role for indigenous knowledge in formal and informal education and to integrate it into scientific debates and policies.

2019 | INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF Indigenous Languages

This knowledge, which contains essential information on the subsistence, health and sustainable use of natural resources, is conveyed and transmitted by only one means – language. This is why the safeguarding of indigenous languages – a growing number of which are now threatened – is crucial not only for the maintenance of linguistic diversity, but also for the world's cultural and biological diversity.

While indigenous peoples make up only 5% of the world's population, they speak the majority of its 7,000 languages and "own, occupy or use resources on some 22% of the global land area, which in turn harbours 80% of the world's biological diversity", according to the book *Weathering Uncertainty*, published by UNESCO in 2012.

With the designation of 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages (IYIL2019), officially launched at UNESCO on 28 January, the international community reaffirms its commitment to supporting indigenous peoples in their efforts to preserve their knowledge and enjoy their rights. Since the adoption of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the United Nations General Assembly on 13 September 2007, considerable progress has been made in this regard.

Nevertheless, indigenous peoples still have a long way to go before they emerge from marginalization and overcome the many obstacles they face. One-third of the world's people living in extreme poverty belong to indigenous communities, just as in a number of countries, legislation that promotes the rights of indigenous peoples remains incompatible with other laws that deal with issues such as agriculture, land, conservation, forestry, mining and other industries, according to Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Wide Angle section in this issue of the *Courier* is dedicated to these indigenous peoples. It takes its title from the Chinese proverb: "When you drink water, think of the source", to remind us that indigenous knowledge, the source of all knowledge, deserve a prominent place in modernity. The issue also marks the celebration of International Mother Language Day, 21 February.

Vincent Defourny and Jasmina Šopova

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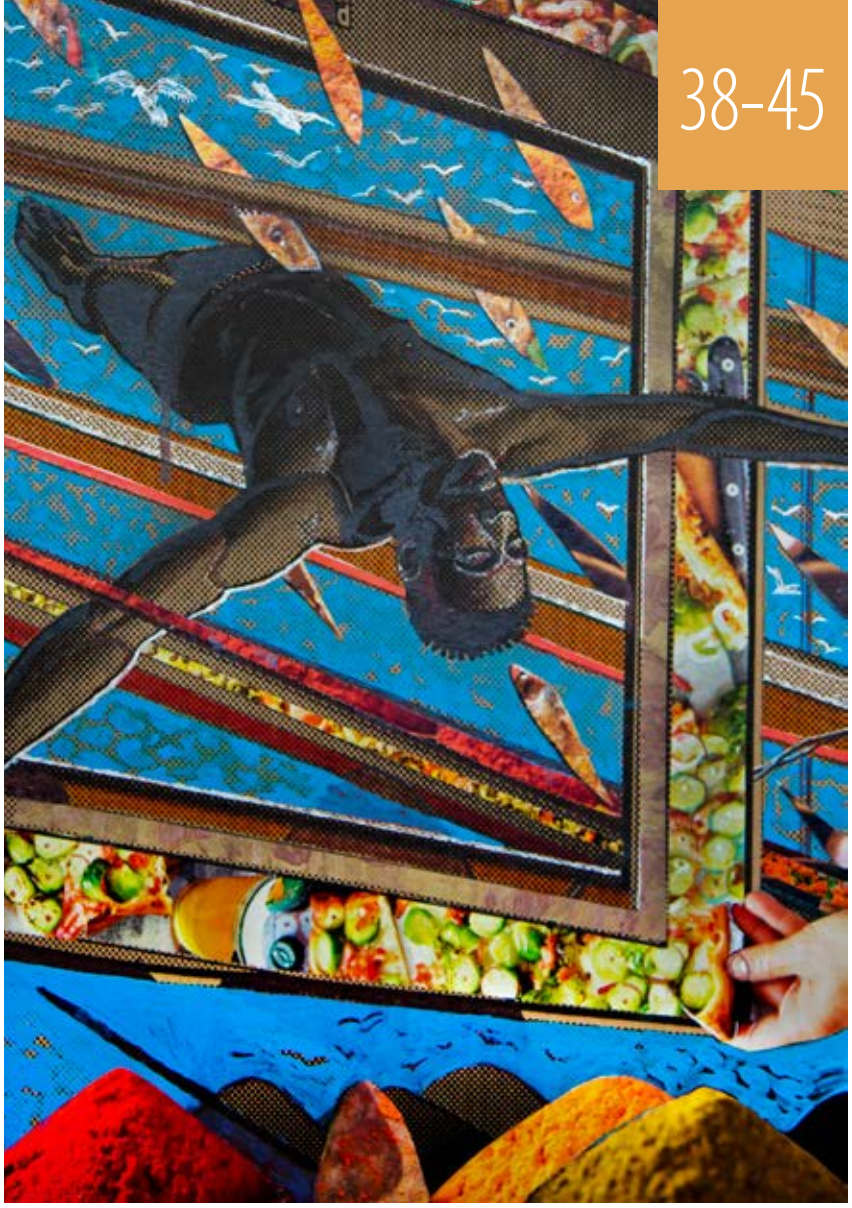

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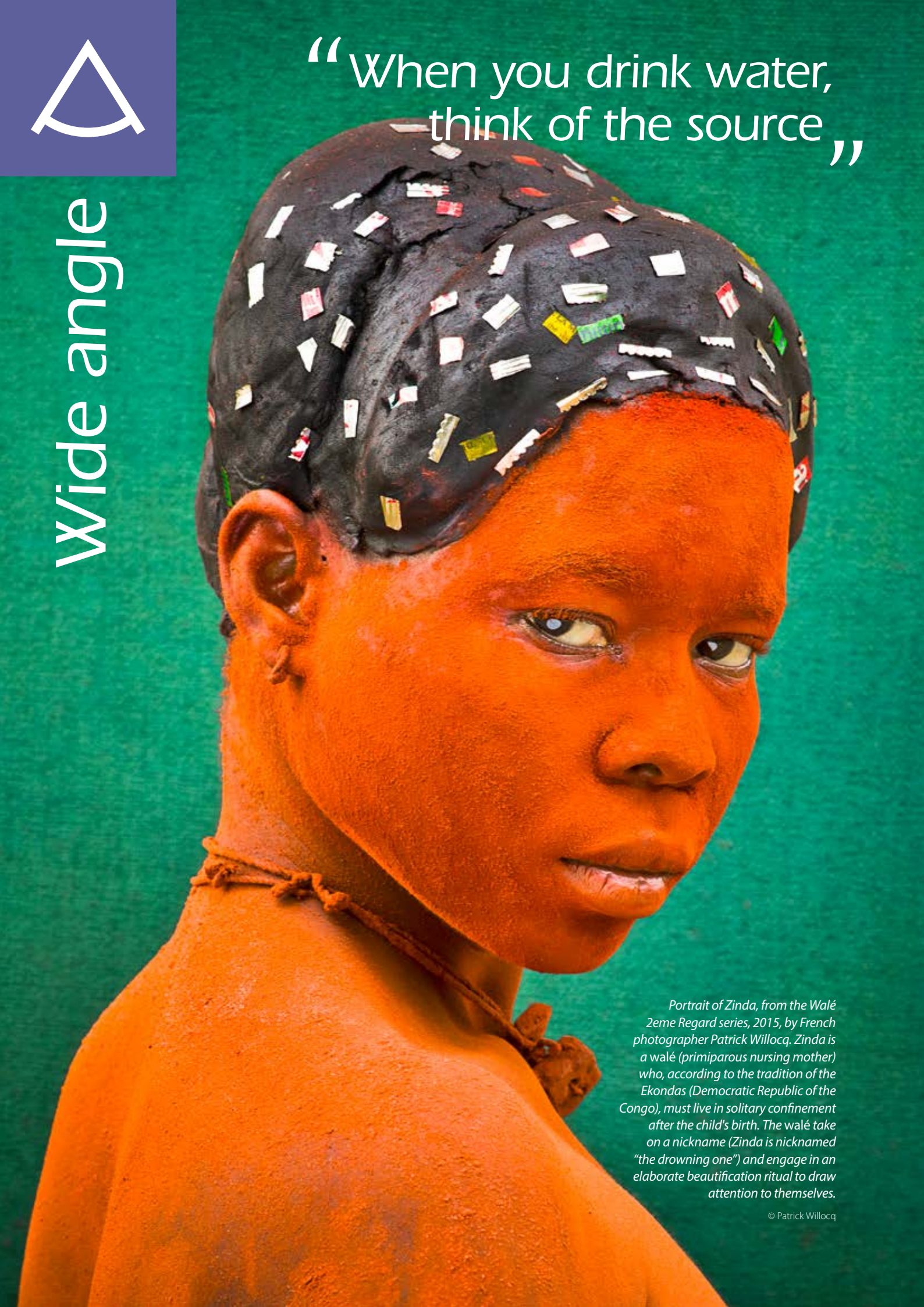

Portrait of Zinda, from the Walé 2eme Regard series, 2015, by French photographer Patrick Willocq. Zinda is a walé *(primiparous nursing mother) who, according to the tradition of the Ekondas (Democratic Republic of the Congo), must live in solitary confinement after the child's birth. The* walé *take on a nickname (Zinda is nicknamed “the drowning one”) and engage in an elaborate beautification ritual to draw attention to themselves.*

Indigenous languages: Knowledge and hope

Minnie Degawan

For indigenous peoples, languages not only identify their origin or membership in a community, they also carry the ethical values of their ancestors – the indigenous knowledge systems that make them one with the land and are crucial to their survival and to the hopes and aspirations of their youth.

The state of indigenous languages today mirrors the situation of indigenous peoples. In many parts of the world, they are on the verge of extinction. The biggest factor contributing to their loss is state policy. Some governments have embarked on campaigns to extinguish indigenous languages by criminalizing their use – as was the case in the Americas, in the early days of colonialism. Some countries continue to deny the existence of indigenous peoples in their territories – indigenous languages are referred to as dialects, and accorded less importance than national languages, contributing to their eventual loss.

But today, the major influence on the sorry state of their languages is the fact that indigenous peoples are threatened themselves.

Grave threats

The biggest threat comes from climate change, which is gravely impacting their subsistence economies. So-called development projects such as dams, plantations, mines and other extractive activities are also taking their toll, as are government policies that minimize diversity and encourage homogeneity. There is an increasing propensity of states to criminalize any dissent, resulting in more and more rights violations. We have witnessed an unprecedented rise in the number of indigenous peoples harassed, arrested, imprisoned, and even summarily executed for daring to defend their territories.

What is often overlooked in discussions on these concerns is the impact of these threats on indigenous cultures and values. Indigenous peoples derive their identities, values and knowledge systems from their interaction with their territories, whether forests or seas. Their languages are shaped by their environment – it is their attempts to describe their surroundings that forms the bases of their unique tongues. Thus, when the territory is altered, changes also occur in the culture and eventually, in the language.

The Inuit, for example, have more than fifty terms for snow, each appropriately describing different types of snow, in different situations. Snow is a prime element that the Inuit live with, and therefore have come to know intimately. The same is true with the Igorot of the Cordillera in the Philippines when describing rice – from when it is but a seed ready for planting to when it is fully ripe and ready for harvesting, to when it is newly cooked and ready to be eaten and when it takes the form of wine.

While new information and communication technologies could be used to enhance the learning process and provide tools to preserve indigenous languages, this is sadly not the case. Because indigenous peoples are considered minorities, their languages are often overlooked in positive efforts by governments to protect languages. For instance, in the Philippines, the government has launched the use of mother tongues in schools, but no resources are available in terms of teachers and learning materials to allow for indigenous children to be taught in their mother tongues. As a result, they end up mastering another language and eventually losing their own.

Notions and values lost

In addition, because of years of discrimination, many indigenous parents choose to teach and talk to their children in the dominant languages – in order to create optimal conditions for their social success. Since their mother tongue is often used only by older people, an entire generation of indigenous children can no longer communicate with their grandparents.

In my community, the Kankanaey Igorot, we have the concept of *inayan*, which basically prescribes the proper behaviour in various circumstances. It encapsulates the relationship of the individual to the community and to the ancestors. It goes beyond simply saying "be good"; it carries the admonition that "the spirits/ancestors will not approve". Because many of the young people now no longer speak the local language and use English or the national language instead, this notion and value is being lost. The lack of dialogue between elders and the youth is exacting a toll, not just in terms of language but in ancestral ethical principles.

Indigenous knowledge and climate change

Indigenous knowledge provides a valuable resource on traditional ways of observing global climate change and on adaptation measures that various peoples have invented over time. How can this knowledge be used in the debates about the climate threats we are currently facing?

This is the question at the heart of the book, *Indigenous Knowledge for Climate Change Assessment and Adaptation,* co-published by UNESCO and Cambridge University Press in 2018. It underlines the need for dialogue between climatologists and traditional knowledge holders for a better understanding of our environment in order to achieve sustainable development.

Based on research papers and expert reports, the book provides a global overview on the subject – starting with seasonal environmental practices in Melanesia and climate knowledge in Micronesia, the north-western Amazon and Chiapas in Mexico.

It explores how indigenous peoples are coping with climate change in Blue Mud Bay in Australia, eastern Papua New Guinea, south-west China, the Bolivian Andes and coastal Kenya.

The book provides testimonies on how indigenous peoples in the southwestern United States and on the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua cope with extreme weather events. It includes accounts from pastoralists – from the Arctic to the semi-desert lands of south-west Ethiopia and South Sudan.

Also discussed are the effects of climate change and the resilience of the indigenous people of the Small Island nations, the peasants of the Amazonian Andes, the Iñupiat of Alaska and the Sámi in northern Sweden (p. 26).

This transdisciplinary publication is the result of collaboration between UNESCO's Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LINKS) programme, the United Nations University's Traditional Knowledge Initiative and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

© Jacob Maentz

Celebrations to mark the end of the rice harvest season in the paddy fields of the Philippine Cordilleras, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Keeping languages alive

However, with the growing global recognition of indigenous knowledge systems, the hope that indigenous languages will thrive and spread in spoken and written forms is being rekindled. Many indigenous communities have already instituted their own systems of revitalizing their languages. The Ainu of Japan have set up a learning system where the elders teach the language to their youth. Schools of Living Tradition in different indigenous communities in the Philippines similarly keep their cultural forms, including languages, alive.

This edition of the *Courier* is a welcome contribution to the worldwide effort to focus more on indigenous languages. It is a valuable companion to the UNESCO-Cambridge University Press book, *Indigenous Knowledge for Climate Change Assessment and Adaptation*, published in 2018. The book illustrates the importance of indigenous knowledge in addressing contemporary global challenges.

A Kankanaey Igorot from the Cordillera in the Philippines, **Minnie Degawan** is Director of the Indigenous and Traditional Peoples Program at Conservation International, based at its international headquarters in Virginia, United States. She has years of experience advocating for the greater recognition and respect of indigenous peoples' rights, and has participated in various policy-making processes, including the drafting of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

> “The greatest threat to the survival of indigenous peoples comes from climate change”

Ndejama cuia chi ini zaza

Mexico’s Mixtec people know how to speak the language of nature

The Mixtec of Mexico have long known how to predict changes in the weather from the behaviour of birds and plants. When they hear the first grave and sad notes of the *chicucu* bird, for example, they know that it heralds the end of the rainy season. As long as the *chicucu* sings, farmers know that the dry season will be prolonged, and that the time has not yet come to plant their beans and pumpkins.

To determine the right time to plant maize, the farmers rely on the juniper tree. If they see that the leaves are beginning to turn to dust, it means that the rainy season will be late, and that, if necessary, they should delay planting until mid-June, or even later.

In fact, in recent decades, the rainy season – which usually lasts from May to August in the Mixteca Baja region – has become increasingly late. And farmers can often be heard saying, “*ndejama cuia chi ini zaza.*”

Ndejama means “change”, while *cuia* has many meanings – the expression can be used to designate the changes of the month, the year, or the season. The phrase *ini zaza* designates one of the four types of heat (*ini*) distinguished in the Mixtec language: *lo´o* (mild), *keva kandeinio* (bearable), *kini* (great), *zaza* (unbearable). The frequency with which we now hear of *ini zaza* – which used to be an exceptional phenomenon – has been increasing. That is why farmers now associate this phrase with climate change. What scientists today define as “climate variability”, the Mixtec have always called *ndejama cuia*.

The Mixtec have been in tune with nature for centuries. Today, as in olden times, they interpret the signs that nature sends them to make the right decisions. Their language contains a great variety of information that could provide solutions to the current problems raised by climate change.

In 2019, UNESCO’s LINKS programme on Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems will publish a glossary of Mixtec expressions and terms related to climate phenomena in the Mixteca Baja region, to facilitate discussions between experts and the holders of traditional knowledge.

Aracely Torres Morales,
Mexican linguist of Mixtec origin

Manon Barbeau: A camera in her heart

Interview by Saturnin Gómez

Manon Barbeau, it has been said, holds the camera in her heart the way others hold it in their hands. For the last fifteen years, she has invested all her enthusiasm and know-how in Wapikoni, a project that provides young people in indigenous communities with mobile audiovisual production tools. More than a thousand documentaries have been produced as a result, giving visibility to these stigmatized communities. But the achievements of Wapikoni go far beyond the cinema – and beyond Canada.

How did you come up with the idea of meeting the indigenous peoples of Canada?

It goes back to my youth. I think I inherited my father's interest in images, and my mother's spirit of activism. My father was a painter and one of the sixteen signatories of the Refus Global (total refusal) Manifesto in 1948, that opposed the influence of the clergy in Quebec and advocated a free society. My parents have separated. My mother left for the United States, where she was involved in the civil rights movement for black Americans.

Years later, I became interested in what had become of the children of that generation, and directed the film *Les enfants de Refus global* (The children of total refusal). That experience made me realize how art, and especially cinema, has a transformative power. When you get involved in a film the way I did, you're not the same person at the beginning and at the end of the shoot.

I wanted to share this feeling of transformation with those who undoubtedly need it most – the marginalized. I gave a voice to street youth and to prisoners, by holding up a mirror to them – that, instead of reflecting an image of prejudice and fear, allowed them to see beyond.

Then, in the early 2000s, I went to meet the most marginalized of the marginalized – Canada's indigenous communities.

Could you tell us about your first experience with them?

I decided to write the screenplay for a film, *La fin du mépris* (The end of contempt), with fifteen young Atikamek people from Wemotaci, a reservation located between Manawan and Obedjiwan, in Haute-Mauricie, Quebec. I admired their talent and, at the same time, I discovered the wounds they bore within them as part of a painful legacy that is passed down from generation to generation.

Among the young screenwriters, one girl stood out for her intelligence, her dynamism and her generosity. She was a leading figure in her community. Her name was Wapikoni Awashish. One day, her car hit a logging truck on the road. Her life was felled by the very people who cut down the trees on her land. She was twenty years old. It was a terrible shock! In her memory, we conceived the idea of a place where young people could gather and create. That was how the Wapikoni project started. It was set up in 2004 by the indigenous community itself, with the support of the National Film Board and various public and private partners.

Since then, caravans converted into film studios have been traversing Canada. How is this working out in the field?

Indeed, we created our first mobile audiovisual production unit, Wapikoni Mobile, in a ten-metre-long trailer – the bedroom became an editing room and the shower a sound studio. We have five of these mobiles today. They visit communities at their invitation. The work is supervised by filmmakers who are trainers – teachers who specialize in working with young people with difficulties, and local coordinators who schedule our visits.

We stay in the community for a month. On average, five short films are produced during this time, on topics chosen by the young people themselves. At the end, the films are screened for members of the community. Later, these films are screened at hundreds of events and festivals around the world – helping to promote this rich and often unknown culture.

What do these young people talk about in their films?

Everything! Love, family, nature, territory… Many talk about traditions, of their identity, of the rupture between tradition and modernity.

An introductory workshop on filmmaking, organized in 2017 for indigenous youth from Lac-Simon, Canada.

© Michael Dupont

© Véronique Lanoix

Photo taken during the shooting of the film Madezin*, directed by Édouard Poucachiche of the Anishnabe Nation of Lac-Simon.*

But they also produce contemporary creations, such as videos of community singers, often in indigenous languages. Elders also take this opportunity to transmit their knowledge in front of the camera, with complete confidence, because it is often their grandchildren who are interviewing and filming them.

Are these young people transformed by this experience?

Certainly. In general, this contributes to the affirmation of their pride in their identity and culture. It also revives the hope of finding a place in society, other than that of a consumer. There are also those who discover their vocation for cinema or music and who continue their training.

Wapikoni also serves as an educational intervention project. The team collaborates with local community resources to prevent dropping out of school, addiction and suicide – by helping youth to develop self-esteem and independence.

Can this approach be replicated in other communities around the world?

It can be, and we have more than one example as proof. Our pedagogical method of learning by creating has proven to be applicable elsewhere in the world, with adaptations to local conditions.

We have established partnerships in South America (Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Panama and Chile). We've also worked with the Sámi [see our article on p. 26] in Norway, and more recently, I went to Budapest to develop a project to break the ostracism that affects Roma youth.

Other vulnerable populations have also been included in our programme, such as Syrian refugees in Turkey, or Bedouin communities in the Palestinian Territories and Jordan. In 2014, Wapikoni founded the International Network of Aboriginal Audiovisual Creation (INAAC), with the objective of exchanging experiences and developing co-productions.

You have been involved with Wapikoni for a long time. What has the project achieved in concrete terms?

On the individual level, it has helped save some lives. It's not me who says this, it's those who believe that they were saved who do.

Collectively, it has helped to restore hope and self-confidence to indigenous communities, and to highlight them and give them international visibility. Finally, I also see Wapikoni as a caravan that is slowly but surely moving towards realizing a dream that I have cherished for a long time – the birth of indigenous cinema.

Canadian screenwriter and documentary filmmaker **Manon Barbeau** co-founded Wapikoni in 2004 with the Atikamek Nation Council, the First Nations Youth Council and the support of the National Film Board of Canada. She has received numerous awards for her film work and for her commitment to the indigenous peoples in particular. On 16 November 2018, she was awarded the UNESCO-Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-Violence.

Rapa Nui:

Back from the brink

Interview by Jasmina Šopova and Carolina Rollan Ortega

Isolated in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, midway between the coasts of Chile and Tahiti, the young people of Rapa Nui (Easter Island) use Spanish to connect to the world. They have almost lost the use of their mother tongue, Rapa Nui, which is of Polynesian origin. Only ten per cent of youth master the language today, compared to seventy-six per cent forty years ago. María Virginia Haoa of the Rapa Nui Language Academy sounds the alarm.

Why is the disappearance of a language a problem?

Language is inseparable from our way of being, our thoughts, our feelings, our joys and much more. It is through our language that we show who we are. If our language disappears, the whole socio-cultural foundation of our community of speakers is put at risk.

On Easter Island, the Rapa Nui language no longer has a place in the socio-economic development of our community. Discarded by public services and tourist activities, the Polynesian language is being swallowed up at a dizzying speed by Spanish, with significant negative consequences on the community's values.

For example, family farming has been abandoned in favour of the consumption of national and transnational products, the origin and manufacturing methods of which are unknown. In the past, farmers observed the phases of the moon to determine when to plant their crops. Today, this is a lost art.

© Eric Lafforgue

Outdoor games at the traditional Tapati Rapa Nui festival, one of the largest cultural events in the Pacific, featuring indigenous music and dance.

> “On Easter Island, the Rapa Nui language no longer has a place in the socio-economic development of our community”

Practices such as sharing produce between families and neighbours – a traditional form of solidarity and interaction – have disappeared, even as intergenerational dialogue is dying out. Young people spend their time playing video games and on social media, reducing the amount of time they spend interacting with their elders. Sometimes it is the parents – who are too busy working to improve their material comfort – who neglect the most important task: educating their sons and daughters, including about their own culture.

What is the current status of Rapa Nui as a living language?

According to a sociolinguistic survey conducted in 2016 by the Ministry of Education of Chile (MINEDUC) and UNESCO, half of all Rapa Nui speakers are concentrated in the age group of over 40.

In the 20- to 39-year age group, only about thirty-five per cent speak Rapa Nui. When they become parents, the vast majority do not transmit the vernacular language to their children. The daily language used by mixed-couple families (Rapa Nui and other) is generally Spanish.

It is becoming increasingly rare to find native-language speakers under 18. In 1976, when the language was introduced as a subject in the school curriculum, seventy-six per cent of schoolchildren spoke Rapa Nui. In 1997, this fell to only twenty-three per cent. In 2016, the figure was reduced to ten per cent. This is an alarming figure for all of us who are concerned about the future of our language and our culture.

What have you done to preserve the linguistic heritage?

In 1990, we created the Department of Rapa Nui Language and Culture at the Lorenzo Baeza Vega school. With the support of CONADI [the indigenous development agency within the Ministry of Social Development] and the Ministry of Education, we – with the school’s Rapa Nui teachers – have produced primary education texts for science, history, mathematics, and for learning to read and write.

Since its inception in 2004, the Rapa Nui Academy has created pre-primary teaching materials and re-published reading and writing texts for the first two years of primary school. It has also produced two interactive CDs presenting the concepts of culture, mathematics and geometry.

The Academy devoted the year 2011 to conducting a survey, with the aim of expanding to three other schools and a public kindergarten on the island. In 2012, it participated in the evaluation of the law – passed in 2011 – to create an Indigenous Language Sector (ILS) in all schools attended by students of the indigenous peoples of Chile.

What is the current situation of the language in the educational system?

When formal education was introduced on the island in 1934, Rapa Nui was not part of it. The students learned everything by heart, in Spanish, without understanding anything. It made no sense to them. In addition, they had to learn from content that was completely foreign to them. To take just one example, when we heard the phrase, “the sun rises in the cordillera”, we had no idea what it was about, because none of us had ever seen or heard of a mountain range.

The Rapa Nui National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is an open-air archaeological museum. Within it, Lake Rano Raruku is surrounded by moai, *gigantic monolithic statues carved from the area’s volcanic stone. About 900* moai *were carved in this exceptional quarry between the tenth and sixteenth centuries.*

Eight decades later, only one school, Lorenzo Baeza Vega, has a Rapa Nui immersion programme, which runs from pre-primary to fourth grade (ages 5 to 9). During its eighteen years of existence, this programme has had its ups and downs, depending on the changes in the number of hours allocated to the teaching of Rapa Nui. Because the school administration is obsessed with students scoring well on the SIMCE (a national test), it has added hours of Spanish instruction in mathematics, language and physical education.

© Eric Lafforgue

In 2017, we created the non-governmental organization (NGO) Nid Rapa Nui, which takes in about twenty children aged 2 to 3 years. It is autonomous, but we receive support from government institutions to pay teachers and to improve our infrastructure. In 2018, we also received support from the Ma'u Henua Polynesian indigenous community, which helped pay teachers' salaries. This association was founded in July 2016 with the aim of establishing a new management system for the Rapa Nui National Park, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

We are developing a teaching programme for the Nid Rapa Nui, which incorporates philosophical guidelines specific to the local culture, since the NGO's objective is to start a school where courses will be taught entirely in the vernacular language.

Are there enough people capable of teaching in Rapa Nui?

No. We have enlisted several community leaders and employed traditional teachers. All of them bring the know-how acquired within their families – and it is precious. But they need to be trained in planning and methodology, to improve the teaching of the Rapa Nui cultural content.

To remedy the shortage of teachers, I believe that young people should be motivated to study to become teachers. This could be done by increasing the number of scholarships to encourage them to enroll in universities such as Waikato, in Aotearoa (New Zealand), or in Hilo, Hawaii, in the United States, which have extensive experience in teaching Polynesian languages.

Finally, we hope to convince a Chilean university to take on the training of Rapa Nui teachers remotely, through online courses.

Co-founder of the Rapa Nui Academy that she headed from 2004 to 2010, **María Virginia Haoa** is president of the NGO Nid Rapa Nui. She was awarded the Chilean government's Gabriela Mistral Order of Merit in 2004 for her efforts to revitalize Rapa Nui. Haoa also goes by the name of Viki Haoa Cardinali.

Radio: A lifeline for indigenous peoples

Avexnim Cojti and Agnes Portalewska

As the preferred media for defending the rights of indigenous peoples, community radio stations are not necessarily easily accessible, in spite of commitments made by the state. Many indigenous radio stations have no option but to operate illegally.

There are some places in the world where broadcasting your voice can render you illegal, just as defending your rights as an indigenous person can cost you your life. On 21 September, Juana Ramírez Santiago, a 57 year-old Mayan Ixil community leader, became the twenty-first human rights activist to be assassinated in Guatemala in 2018. She was one of those leaders who have a political vision and a desire to change society to ensure a better life for their families and communities. Most Guatemalans believe her murder, like many others, will go unpunished.

Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – who visited Guatemala in her official capacity twice in the same year – expressed concern about the forced evictions, criminalization and violence against indigenous peoples who defend their rights and their lands. Referring to the killings of seven defenders during and shortly after her visit in May 2018 [eleven defenders were killed between May and July that year], she observed, "All were representatives of two indigenous farmers' organizations advocating for land rights and political participation. The killings took place in a broader national context of a pernicious closing of spaces for civil society."

In her Report to the thirty-ninth session of the Human Rights Council (10-28 September 2018), she wrote: "Added to this situation is the escalating number of criminal charges – reportedly in the hundreds – being filed in Guatemala against indigenous leaders and community members. The active participation of private entities in pressing charges implies that prosecutors and judges are colluding with companies and landowners in some of these cases."

The role of radio

Indigenous community radio stations play a crucial role in defending the right to freedom of expression of indigenous peoples. Providing the most effective way of disseminating information on issues affecting the communities, they also reveal news of the violence that hits them. They are the first to broadcast information about the incidents, and to interview and air the views of community leaders on these acts of violence.

The Ixil Mayan community actively defends its cultural and linguistic identity.

The radio stations publicly support land and human rights defenders, and raise public awareness about their criminalization. This was the case with Radio Xyaab'Tzuul Taq'a, a radio startup of the Maya Q'eqchi in El Estor, which supported several defenders who have been arbitrarily accused and imprisoned by the government for their human and land rights activities.

A thwarted right

Many Latin American countries have enshrined in legislation the right of indigenous peoples to have their own media. But although many states have committed to assigning frequencies to these media, this is often not implemented. Numerous indigenous community radios are forced to broadcast without a licence even after requesting a frequency as required by law – and see their volunteers prosecuted for their radio activities.

In Guatemala, for example, the right of indigenous peoples to their own media is guaranteed by the Constitution and the Peace Agreement signed in 1996, ending a civil war that lasted over thirty years. But the licences are so expensive that non-profit community radios do not have enough money to pay for them. In 2003, a frequency cost two million quetzales ($274,000), for a modulated frequency (FM) in areas outside Guatemala City and Quetzaltenango, the country's second-largest city. The current cost is unknown as public auctions have been stopped in recent years, though frequencies are still sold illegally by their owners. For small farmers this amount is more than they can afford. With a salary of $80 to $120 a month, purchasing a frequency is an unattainable dream.

Decolonizing minds

Radio has proven that it is able not only to mobilize indigenous peoples, but also to influence policies and to hold governments to account. Radio stations organize social audits on the budget expenses of municipal governments in indigenous communities, for example. They also organize campaigns about the conscious vote. At election time, candidates are invited to hold debates on the air and to receive questions from the public. This public space for politicians to be accountable reduces the margin of manipulation of the vote.

Community-based indigenous media is a powerful means to decolonize minds and create a sense of cultural and linguistic pride. Radio can be effectively used to highlight ancestral music and knowledge, and to inform people of the local forms of organization that are today threatened by globalization and the world-view imposed by major international media corporations.

The medium has particularly proven itself in the remote areas of Latin America, where the scourge of illiteracy prevents indigenous populations from accessing information from print sources and where older people, especially women – who very rarely know the dominant language – are unable to get information from mainstream radio stations.

Last but not least, the survival of indigenous languages depends to a very large extent on native speakers and their ability to speak them fluently. In this respect, indigenous media can and must play a decisive role.

Avexnim Cojti, from the K'iche' Maya community in Guatemala, is a Community Programme Manager at Cultural Survival (www.cs.org). **Agnes Portalewska** (Poland) is a Communications Manager at the indigenous peoples' rights non-profit. Headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts (United States), Cultural Survival has supported a global network of more than 800 indigenous radio stations since 2005.

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UNESCO's support to indigenous community radios

In spite of the advances that have been made in the promotion of indigenous peoples' media and rights, there are many examples around the world affirming that the mainstream media generally continues to discriminate against indigenous peoples.

Community media, in many cases, helps fill this gap. Produced by and for indigenous peoples, these media demand political inclusion, transparency and accountability, strengthen international solidarity and draw critical attention to human rights violations.

Recognizing the importance of community radio, UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) has funded approximately thirty indigenous people's projects, since 2000. In addition, every biennium, UNESCO supports, on average, fifty community radio stations.

The UNESCO Office in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, has organized and provided training on implementing community media projects and indigenous language radio programmes since 2007. UNESCO also donated essential radio equipment, and young indigenous producers were trained to design radio programmes, which are being broadcast on a daily basis for one hour per day in the Kreung, Tompon, Jarai and Brao languages. In response to the success of the project, an additional partner donated over 100 solar battery-powered radio receivers to the indigenous communities in May 2010, allowing some 400 families to access community radio and national channel programmes without purchasing batteries.

Source: Indigenous Peoples and the Information Society, Paris, UNESCO, 2016.

Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim: Speaking up for the rights of the Mbororo

Interview by Domitille Roux

Recognized internationally, the indigenous peoples of Africa cannot always count on being granted the same recognition in their own countries. The Fulani Mbororo community, for example, is a long way from fully enjoying its rights, according to one of its strongest advocates, Hindu Oumarou Ibrahim. She is coordinator of the Association des Femmes Peules Autochtones du Chad (AFPAT, the association of indigenous Fulani women of Chad).

What is the status of the Mbororo in Chad?

Thanks to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we have regional recognition from the five countries in which we are distributed: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Niger and Nigeria. However, at the national level, there are no laws that protect or recognize indigenous peoples.

In 2014, the current President of Chad, Idriss Deby Itno, who was then president of the Economic Community of Central African States, participated in the Third Edition of the International Forum of Indigenous Peoples of Central Africa (FIPAC 3), held in Impfondo, Republic of the Congo. At this international meeting on traditional skills and the green economy, he gave a speech in support of indigenous peoples. It was a considerable political endorsement and a very strong message in our favour. But the impact of this speech fizzled out – it was not published afterwards and remained ineffective.

How would you describe the living conditions of the Mbororo?

As unacceptable. At the very least, members of my community should be recognized as citizens of a country. However, half of them – particularly the women and children – do not even have a birth certificate. How then can they have rights?

Without this essential document, it is impossible to obtain identity cards, passports, or access to education and health care. If a patient comes to the hospital without a birth certificate, not only is he the last to be examined, but he also risks receiving inappropriate care, since his age and needs are not known to the doctors.

Though many papers and directives do exist, in actual fact, we are on our own. We do not even have access to safe drinking water. The Mbororo drink the same water as animals – this promotes diseases that make them even more vulnerable.

Could you tell us more about AFPAT? What are the association's projects since its creation in 1999, and especially since it obtained legal status in 2005?

Our main objective is to improve the living conditions in our community, and our work is supported by two programmes. The first focuses on the protection and promotion of human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples, in line with national and international declarations on the subject. The second concerns the protection of the environment, as provided for by the three Rio Conventions, which emerged from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, 1992). They focus on climate change, biodiversity and desertification.

In practice, we raise awareness of basic social rights through training sessions in education or access to health care. We also educate communities about access to justice – given their marginalization and the violence they suffer, it is essential to tell them that they have the right to justice and equity.

With regard to the protection and promotion of the environment, we organize training sessions and discussions with communities on adaptation to climate change and the importance of traditional knowledge and know-how for adaptation.

What results have you achieved through these awareness campaigns?

One of our successes is the creation of health centres adapted to nomadic communities, for example. We have also succeeded in integrating women into community debates. Now, women and men sit together to discuss their future.

At the legislative level, we contributed to a reform of the pastoral code, which dated back to 1958 and had become obsolete: the demography and environment have changed enormously since then. We are not entirely satisfied with the reform, but it is already a kind of victory for our association.

With regard to education, it must be understood that nomadic communities do not reject school, contrary to what is often thought. They simply want a school with programmes and schedules that are adapted to their way of life.

Habituated to the livestock market in the border village of Gbiti (Cameroon), the Central African Mbororo herders took refuge there in 2014, fleeing the violence in their country.

© UNHCR / Frederic Noy

Nomadic children have less need to know the history of world wars or the history of France than to learn how to manage natural resources, such as water, or about conflicts between communities. They also need teachers who understand their culture and master their language, which is essential for learning.

The creation, in 2012, of the directorate for the education of nomadic children was very encouraging news. This body took into account the needs of nomadic communities and set up pilot programmes adapted to the lives of their children. But for now, the Mbororo do not benefit from it.

What do you think of the Biosphere and Heritage of Lake Chad (BIOPALT) project*?

The project holds great promise for the restoration of the ecosystems of Lake Chad, the preservation of its resources and relations between the peoples of the neighbouring countries. What worries me is that it takes time to establish priorities, create protected areas, put in place pilot projects – time is running out and the budget is being used up before any concrete results are delivered.

In my opinion, this project will make a difference if the experts in charge of it establish a relationship of trust with the indigenous peoples. They have lived in these places for centuries; they are not just passing through, like some politicians. It is with, and for these populations that the project must be successfully completed.

** Launched in February 2018 by UNESCO, the project is designed to strengthen the capacity of the five states where the Mbororo live, to sustainably manage the hydrological, biological and cultural resources of the Lake Chad Basin, which supports more than 40 million people.*

Born in Chad in 1984, **Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim** travels to international summits to raise awareness among the world's leaders about the rights of indigenous peoples and climate change. In 1999, she helped found AFPAT, an association of the indigenous Fulani women of Chad, to improve the living conditions of her community, the Mbororo.

Siku: Mixing high-tech with ancient know-how

Joel Heath, with Lucassie Arragutainaq

An Inuktitut word for sea ice, SIKU today refers to a web platform that is revolutionizing access to the ancient knowledge and current research of communities living in Canada's Arctic zone. A story that began modestly with a few snap-shots of eider ducks struggling for survival on the ice floe has evolved into an extraordinary project over fifteen years, combining the oldest knowledge with the most modern technologies.

© SIKU

It was colder than ever that winter day of 2002, in the Qikiqtaaluk region in Nunavut, Canada. Not far from the community of Sanikiluaq, a group of Inuit with harpoons led the way over the thin, newly-formed ice. A team of biologists cautiously and literally followed in their footsteps. The ice fog rising from the open water made the scene particularly dramatic.

A large floe edge on the east side of the Belcher Islands had recently frozen over, and a group of eider ducks were struggling to keep the remaining open water from freezing. This was critical for them to dive and access the mussels and sea urchins they relied on for food.

The edges of the ice were littered with the carcasses of dead ducks that had become frozen into the advancing ice.

The Inuit leading the expedition, active hunters from the community – Simeonie Kavik, Elijah Oquaituk and Lucassie Ippak – turned to the biologists and said, "This is what we've been telling you about. In the early 1990s, one of our elders noticed that there were as many dead eiders on the ice as there was gravel on the beach". The hunters and elders of Sanikiluaq did alert the Canadian authorities at the time, but the phenomenon escaped the attention of the scientific community.

One of the biologists on the 2002 expedition to study the eider die-offs had designed an underwater camera to film the eiders as they dove under the sea ice to forage in winter. I was a Ph.D. student at the time, and spent the next two winters at the edge of the sea ice – under the guidance of Kavik and Oquaituk – collecting footage tracking eider survival methods.

The footage was unprecedented. After seven years of working closely with almost all the families in Sanikiluaq, the project resulted in the documentary, *People of a Feather* (2011). The film, which went on to win a dozen awards, highlights the community's unique relationship with eiders, and the shared challenges of environmental change that they face.

The Inuit of the Belcher Islands are not just interested in eider ducks – their life depends on them. While most birds, including eiders, migrate south, Hudson Bay eiders remain around the Belcher Islands through the winter. The community use eider skins to make traditional parkas and their meat is critical to food security year-round, in the absence of caribou here.

An eider duck hunter probes the condition of the ice.

Putting together the puzzle pieces

It was in the wake of the film's release that the Arctic Eider Society (AES) was formed in 2011. The groundwork was already well-prepared, thanks to the community-driven research programmes developed with the support of the Canadian government's International Polar Year (2007–2008) and to their mobilization, dating back to the early 1990s. Around the same time, the Sanikiluaq community launched a programme bringing together twenty-eight Inuit and Cree communities across Hudson Bay and James Bay, to synthesize their knowledge of environmental change. The project resulted in the 1997 publication, *Voices from the Bay*, which to this day remains a definitive source for knowledge on the region.

An Inuit-driven charity, AES aims to empower local people to take charge of research, education and stewardship of their environment. The early programmes focused on assessing changes in oceanography and sea ice – training hunters and youth to use salinity and temperature profilers; establishing time-lapse monitoring stations and carrying out ice-core and water sampling.

The creation of AES's Community-Driven Research Network was given top priority. It includes Sanikiluaq (Nunavut), Inukjuak, Umiujaq, Kuujjuaraapik (Nunavik region of Quebec) and Chisasibi (Cree community in the Eeyou Marine Region of Quebec).

Each of these neighbouring communities held a different piece of the puzzle, and by working together they could finally provide a larger picture of environmental change in the region.

Drawing academic expertise from the University of Manitoba, Carleton University and ArcticNet and funding from the Nunavut General Monitoring Plan (NGMP), the Nunavik Marine Region Wildlife Board (NMRWB) and the Cree Nation of Chisasibi, the network has been able to develop partnerships. The increased capacity has allowed the tackling of new priorities, including those with the Northern Contaminants Program, and expanding to new regions with funding from Polar Knowledge Canada.

New priorities

As capacity continued to grow, the communities identified three new priorities – increasing youth engagement, helping bridge the larger-scale jurisdictional challenges faced by the region, and sharing results and coordinating in near-real time.

To involve youth, the network has partnered with Kativik Ilisarniliriniq, the Nunavik School Board, to develop a holistic Inuit-centred approach to training and education in the sciences. This has resulted in the Arctic Sea Ice Educational Package. Using interactive multimedia tools, it allows young people to partner with hunters and to become directly involved in local research.

Regarding the second priority, the first-ever Hudson Bay Summit was held in 2018. It brought together twenty-seven Inuit and Cree communities from James Bay and Hudson Bay, and representatives of ninety-seven organizations, to form the Hudson Bay Consortium – a forum for collaboration and coordinated stewardship for a region with complex inter-jurisdictional governance.

Transformations *by the Inuit artist Qavavau Manumie, Cape Dorset, Canada, 2011.*

To address the third priority of sharing data in near-real time, the five communities in the network created a web platform in 2014. A simple base map and corresponding timelines were built, with profiles for community researchers where the results of salinity profiling, ice-core sampling and contaminants-monitoring could be shared online.

Not only did this prototype platform – initially named IK-MAP – prove compelling for data management among so many collaborators, it allowed each community to use its own knowledge systems to interpret data and see how their results fit into the bigger picture. In the past, the results of research programmes would end up, far too often, in an academic's file cabinet down south, never to be seen again.

Today the information is accessible to everyone, including tech-savvy Inuit youth. New features have been added, allowing photos and posts to be tagged – not just for individuals, but also for wildlife species and the Inuktitut terminology for ice types, and for measurements, remarks and observations of all kinds.

Google Street View of the Arctic sea ice

In 2015, AES partnered with Google Earth Outreach to develop the first-ever Google Street View of remote sea ice – mapping not only the Sanikiluaq community, but also polynyas and floe edges in winter. The platform provided new ways for northerners and southerners to explore the Arctic sea ice.

The next step was to create a social media network and mapping platform, specifically by and for the Inuit. SIKU: The Inuit Knowledge Wiki and Social Mapping Platform was born, and came to life with new funding after winning the 2017 Google.org Impact Challenge in Canada. *Siku*, the Inuktitut word for sea ice, is itself a metaphor of ice as the structure of connectivity and change in the north.

Currently in beta mode, the platform has brought together a wide range of tools and services important to the Inuit. Profiles for each community provide local weather, tides and sea-ice imagery from multiple satellites in near-real time. Its official launch is scheduled for late 2019. A mobile app has also been developed to significantly expand the scope of systematically documenting indigenous knowledge and observations.

A new era

Of course, the mobile app is no replacement for using a harpoon to check the ice or for experiential learning through elders. But by combining the best of recent scientific approaches and centuries of indigenous knowledge, it is now possible to monitor dangerous sea-ice conditions, using Inuktitut terminology around the classification of ice, for example. It is hoped that this terminology will one day be integrated into machine learning approaches (artificial intelligence), so that indigenous communities can access relevant information remotely – in real time and in their own language.

Organizations and communities can now share their news, reports and blogs. Young people can immerse themselves in local culture by sharing hunting stories and traditional place names. Observations that were once typically written off as anecdotal by scientists can be systematically documented and quantified. The data management and permissions approach protection policy means local populations can now be in charge of managing their data, intellectual property and how they choose to share it.

The project, which began about fifteen years ago with a few snap-shots of ducks on the ice floe, is now flying on its own – well beyond the winter ecology of the Hudson Bay eiders.

A Canadian scientist and filmmaker, **Joel Heath** has spent twenty years in the Arctic with Inuit communities, combining his expertise in ecology, sea-ice dynamics and mathematical biology with Inuit knowledge. He is Executive Director and co-founder of the Arctic Eider Society (AES), an Inuit charity based in Sanikiluaq, Nunavut, Canada.

A co-founder and Board Member of the Arctic Eider Society (AES), **Lucassie Arragutainaq** (Canada) is Director of the Sanikiluaq Hunters and Trappers Association. A co-author of *Voices from the Bay* (1997), he is responsible for many initiatives to mobilize indigenous knowledge.

The umbilical cord

The Tuawhenua explain their attachment to the land

A tree trunk in the wild, carved by the Maori.
© Matias Dandrea / Shutterstock.com

The notion of *tătai whakapapa* is fundamental to the world-view of the Tuawhenua. These Maori of New Zealand believe that everything that exists in their world is genealogically connected – bats, lizards, birds, insects, trees, plants, mountains, rivers and lakes. This connectedness provides strength to the ecosystem. As these elements are eroded, so is the resilience and integrity of the environment and the tribe.

For the Tuawhenua, it is the *whenua*, or the land, that defines who you are and where you come from. The word also means placenta. In both cases, *whenua* refers to your beginning and to your connection with your mother – the one who gave you life.

When Tuawhenua women give birth, wherever they are in the world, the placenta must be brought back home and be buried on the tribal lands.

The same tradition applies to the *pito*, or umbilical cord – the action of burying it on your lands signifies your permanent connectedness to *Papatŗănuku*, Mother Earth. It connects you to your place in the world.

Maintaining ties to the land and its resources is critical to the Tuawhenua, as this is perceived as an expression of their *mana*, authority or power. Regardless of hardships and downfalls and whatever was happening in the world, the Tuawhenua elders recognized the need to always uphold the *mana* of the individual, of the *hapŗ* or the sub-tribe, and of the *iwi*, the tribe.

The elders understood it was hard for some to keep ties and bonds to the land, the waterways, the animals and the birds – but these were all seen to be part of what it means to be Tuawhenua.

The elders recognized that *mana* was one of the most important principles for their people. But it was reinforced by the concept of *mauri*, the life force or essence of life. When the Tuawhenua refer to the purity in their culture, it reflects the *mauri* of the environment. For them, the *mauri* of the forest can never be taken away. As long as the rivers flow, as long as one tree stands, the life force cannot be extinguished – every element of the world has a certain level of *mauri*.

Kirituia Tumarae-Teka and James (Tahae) Doherty (members of New Zealand's Tuawhenua community), with Phil Lyver (a researcher from New Zealand).

Source: Indigenous and Local Knowledge about Pollination, UNESCO, 2015.

Of rice, fish, ducks and humans

Dai Rong and Xue Dayuan

The Dong people, a Chinese ethnic minority who have lived for thousands of years in Congjiang county, in the heart of Guizhou province, were ecologists before their time. Centuries ago, they invented an agricultural system that we would term "green" today – producing organic food while preserving the stability and diversity of local ecosystems. The "Rice-Fish-Duck" Symbiotic System is the direct result of their ancestral wisdom.

© Kuang Huimin

Inhabited mainly by the Dong, the Miao, and thirteen other ethnic minorities, Congjiang county is lacking in arable land. Faced with a hostile environment, the Dong have shown genius by inventing an agricultural production system that provides economic, ecological, social and cultural benefits.

Relying on their ancestral practices to this day, they allow the ecosystem to recycle the flow of energy and material. Traditional varieties of glutinous rice have been preserved, and are cultivated on terraces where they also breed fish. When the fish grow to ten centimetres in size, ducklings are introduced to the terraced fields for breeding.

Dating back to the Eastern Han dynasty (25 AD to 220 AD), the "Rice-Fish-Duck" system is based on the biological and ecological characteristics of the various organisms, where the needs of each are respected. This is done making full use of the available solar energy, water and mineral resources – creating a production structure that benefits all.

Covering an area of approximately 12,600 hectares, the rice shoots provide shade and organic food for the fish and ducks, who in turn, feed on pests and produce an excellent manure – thus playing a major role in weeding, fertilizing and oxygenating the rice fields. The varieties of rice, ducks and fish are all local and do not require any pesticides, because the system offers them excellent protection against diseases. This effectively preserves the diversity of local agricultural species and ecosystems, and also considerably reduces animal feed and labour costs.

For the villagers of Congjiang county who live in isolation in the mountains, these rice fields are the main source of food. Over a hundred kinds of edible wild plants including fern, bamboo shoots and funghi co-exist with the rice varieties – as do taro, lotus root, water celery and plantain. Aquatic animals such as snail, eel, and loach are also eaten, providing the inhabitants with high-quality protein. The organic farming model increases the market value of the fish and ducks, which sell for twice as much as conventional products.

> "The traditional agricultural system is threatened by globalization and the efficiency of modern agriculture"

In China's Congjiang county, all hands are at work to harvest rice in the autumn.

Recognizing this agro-ecosystem as "an extraordinary living model of water and soil resources", the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) designated it as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) site in 2001. This outstanding example of Chinese alpine agriculture was included by the Chinese government in the first round of the country's Important Agricultural Heritage Systems in 2013.

A new lease of life

Nevertheless, this traditional agricultural system is threatened by globalization and the high productivity and efficiency of modern agriculture. The indiscriminate introduction of exotic high-yield crop varieties has caused the area under the system to decrease each year. Also, the large-scale use of pesticides and fertilizers over several decades has caused serious farmland and water pollution in the region, threatening food security.

An increasing number of Chinese citizens are becoming aware of the shortcomings caused by modern agricultural production, and realizing the importance of healthier and better-quality food for their societies. They have started advocating the use of traditional practices in the future development of agriculture. This should ideally protect ancient agriculture systems – ensuring higher incomes for farmers, and the protection of the environment. It would also help promote tourism to the region and the preservation of the country's cultural heritage.

This new awareness is expected to provide a fresh lease of life for the "Rice-Fish-Duck" system, which could serve as an inspiration for modern agriculture in China and other parts of the world where similar natural conditions prevail. It is an invaluable resource that could help provide solutions to the problems caused by agricultural and environmental degradation worldwide.

Chinese specialists in the field of traditional knowledge of ethnic minorities, **Dai Rong** and **Xue Dayuan** have contributed to the work of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). Dai Rong, an ethnoecologist from the Tujia ethnic minority, works at the Nanjing Institute of Environmental Sciences. Xue Dayuan is a professor at the Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences of the Minzu University of China.

Recognizing indigenous knowledge

Traditional knowledge encompasses the understandings, skills and philosophies of the ecological, cultural and social systems that have developed throughout the world over millennia. However, it is often absent from scientific debate, just as its holders are often excluded from political decisions on the access, use and management of land and resources, which are crucial to their economic, social and cultural well-being.

An integral part of the intangible heritage of humanity, indigenous knowledge began to be recognized as an intellectual system in the 1950s, notably through Harold Conklin's work on the ethnoecology of the Hanunoo people of the Philippines. But on an international level, recognition came only in 1992, during the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil – shortly after the 1989 UNESCO Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore.

UNESCO defends the right of local and indigenous peoples to participate in governance processes – advocating for the full recognition of their proven knowledge, experience and practices in biodiversity management. This is one of the objectives of LINKS, its programme on local and indigenous knowledge systems. Launched in 2002, the programme also aims to ensure an equitable place for indigenous knowledge in formal and informal education and to strengthen its transmission.

The Sámi of Jokkmokk:

Challenging modernity

Marie Roué

The territory in Swedish Lapland, where the indigenous Sámi raise their reindeer, is threatened by logging, the railway, dams and urban growth. To survive, the herders have adopted a variety of strategies that range from the partial adaptation of an urban lifestyle, to using their traditional knowledge to accurately understand the state of their pastures.

The Sámi, previously known as the Lapps, have lived in Europe's Arctic Circle for thousands of years. It is estimated that there are now nearly 80,000 of them, the majority of whom live in the far north, in Sápmi (Lapland), which spans four countries – Finland, Norway, Russia and Sweden. Some have settled further south, notably in Oslo and Stockholm.

The indigenous people have set up a Sámi Council, which allows them to think about the future of their nation together, beyond the national borders that have never prevented them from feeling that they are one people. They have always had the remarkable ability to embody modernity while remaining rooted in tradition. They gave the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) its first president and are actively involved in the Arctic Council.

Regarding their political representation, the Sámi Parliament of Finland was created in 1973, followed by the Sámi Parliament of Norway in 1989 and the Sámi Parliament of Sweden, in 1993.

The Sámi practise many trades. Some of them are well-known artists or intellectuals, painters, sculptors, journalists, writers, filmmakers or singers – such as the Finnish writer, musician and artist Nils-Aslak Valkeapää (1943-2001) or the Norwegian musician Mari Boine. However, the traditional Sámi profession par excellence remains that of reindeer herding.

A tremendous capacity to adapt

Let's take the example of Jokkmokk. This major centre for reindeer husbandry in Sweden, in Norrbotten (which covers 100,000 square kilometres, or a quarter of the country), is home to some 4,000 Sámi reindeer herders. They face many threats to their territory but at the same time, have an extraordinary capacity for resilience. Did they not adapt the first time, by inventing reindeer husbandry – even though they were fishermen, trappers and wild reindeer hunters – when the arrival of the first Scandinavian settlers four or five centuries ago caused a drastic decrease in the population of wild animals?

The Sámi also managed to overcome the devastation caused at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the English and the Scandinavians exploited their rivers – by creating dams to generate electricity – and dug their mountains to extract iron ore and produce steel.

The reindeer herders resisted again in the 1960s, when forestry became an industrial activity in Sweden and Finland at the expense of forest biodiversity.

Later, in the 1970s, the Sámi created one of the first environmental alliances in Alta, Norway – bringing together human rights defenders and indigenous peoples to oppose the dam that would have led to the demolition of an important winter village.

The advance of colonization increasingly threatened their fishing and hunting rights and their rights to the land. Yet the reindeer herders are still there.

Facing serious threats

The Sámi of Jokkmokk take their reindeer to spend the summer in the mountains, descending to the forests in the plains in autumn. These forests are now being exploited industrially and the pastoralists are forced to share their usufruct rights with forest landowners. This coexistence poses a considerable challenge because the timber growers practise clear-cutting the forests before reseeding them, and their heavy machinery degrades the soil and destroys the lichen that reindeer feed on, by digging snow. It takes thirty to fifty years for the lichen to grow back!

And that's not all. The breeding territory for the reindeer is now traversed and divided by a railway line that transports iron ore and passengers. Dams and artificial lakes obstruct the herders' migration routes, while roads, cities and mines further reduce the grazing pastures.

Today, the Sámi must overcome a new challenge: climate change. In the north, it is not so much the global warming that is feared, as its consequences on the instability of winter temperatures. When the snow is covered with a layer of ice after successive heating and cooling, the reindeer can no longer dig for food.

Modern and ancient survival strategies

When reindeer can no longer feed themselves, the herders are forced to buy hay or dry food pellets (which are expensive and not always tolerated by the animals), or better still, bags of lichen. Sometimes they gather lichen in areas where the reindeer cannot go, such as around an airport, for example. These are part of the new survival strategies adopted by the Sámi.

In addition, to supplement their income, they now try to sell reindeer meat directly or resort to temporary work in tourism. Women often turn to permanent employment as teachers, doctors, journalists, dressmakers or shopkeepers to balance the family budget – which has been weakened by the fall in their reindeer-herding income.

But the Sámi's best weapon is their traditional knowledge. With a precise and detailed vocabulary, their knowledge of snow and metamorphism allows them to constantly monitor the condition of the pastures.

Unlike Western science, which has a static vision of load capacity (the number of animals that a given territory can support) based on a quantified botanical analysis, Sámi science is the science of immanence.

To assess the condition of a pasture, they dig and examine the layers and crystallography of the snow, thus estimating successive events through the seasons – the evolution of wind, temperatures, forest, ground vegetation – and their interrelationships with reindeer. Therefore, they may not know the richness of the pasture in absolute terms, but are experts at gauging its condition at the time and place of their analysis, which allows them to act in the most appropriate way.

As climate change specialists, the Sámi base their resilience on their knowledge and practices, even if their capacity for action is limited by the severity of global change.

A French-Canadian researcher at the Laboratory of Eco-anthropology and Ethnobiology at the National Museum of Natural History (MNHN) in Paris, **Marie Roué** is Senior Research Director at the National Centre for Scientific Research (Centre national de la recherche scientifique, CNRS).

> "The Sámi examine the snow to estimate the evolution of the wind, temperatures, forest and ground vegetation"

To gather his reindeer, this Sami herder from Kautokeino, Norway, uses a long band of jute cloth.

Returning to the Lau Islands, all sails out

Fuluna Tikoidelaimakotu Tuimoce

"For thousands of years our parents have taught us to respect and care for the ocean. But the forces that attack and damage our ocean today are beyond our control to manage," declares Fuluna Tikoidelaimakotu Tuimoce, a young sailor from Fiji. This is his testimony.

My name is Fuluna Tikoidelaimakotu Tuimoce. It tells you who I am and where I am from. I come from a small country, Fiji, in the middle of the world's greatest ocean, the Pacific. I live in a small village, Korova, near Suva, the capital. But my people are from an even smaller island, Moce ("mo-they"), in the Lau group.

We are an ocean people. For most of our history of millennia living on the Pacific Ocean, the land is a place we go to rest. The ocean is our real home. The ocean has always provided for us, fed us and protected us.

It is our highway and our supermarket. Today our ocean is a shadow of its former self – increasingly polluted, acidified, overfished, warmer and rising.

For thousands of years our parents have taught us to respect and care for the ocean. But the forces that attack and damage our ocean today are beyond our control to manage.

We are a sailing people. We have always sailed and our 'canoes' were the fastest and largest sailing ships in the world when the Europeans first sailed into our ocean.

In the eighteenth century, Captain Cook described how the Tu'i Tonga "sailed around our ship as if we sat at anchor". The Tu'i Tonga was a drua [a double-hulled traditional sailing boat] built in my home of the Lau Islands. It was bigger than Cook's ship, with more men, three times faster than Cook's and capable of sailing as close to windward as a modern yacht.

Pinnacle of technological achievement

The drua was the pinnacle of technological achievement. They were built without metal, using only wood, grass, nuts, stone, bone and sharkskin. Using all the learned knowledge of thousands of years of ocean sailing, our ancestors in our tiny islands built thousands of these great craft and exported them throughout the central Pacific. Every island had its own transport, powered by free and continuously available renewable energy.

The reports of all European explorers described the Pacific as an ocean covered by sails. We were a *mobile* people.

Despite the cyclones, tsunamis and other natural disasters, which are common in the Pacific, our ancestors never saw the ocean as a barrier. They never talked about being 'vulnerable', 'isolated', 'remote': our drua – our ability to sail at will – meant we were always connected. We were not "small", "islands" or "developing" countries. We were – and still are – large ocean communities.

The islands of the Lau group are often described as beautiful, idyllic, unspoilt and our people as one of the most hospitable and friendly in the world. And so we are.

Thirty "Pacific Climate Warriors" representing twelve island nations, joined hundreds of Australians, to block the world's largest coal port in Newcastle, Australia, to protest against climate change and its effects, in October 2014.

© Jeff TAN

A train wreck

But the reality is more complex: our Pacific countries are on the frontline of climate change. Not that it's any fault of ours, but we are on a slow-moving train wreck that now drives us from our coasts and atolls, that turns our oceans to an acidic, plastic-filled soup, that bleaches our coral and destroys our water and food supplies. For some of us, it will entirely destroy our homes, our countries and our cultures. For all of us, it means unprecedented change, often beyond the capacity of our elders to guide us or our children to prepare for.

My village has never had an outboard motor. We are one of a handful of communities that still sail on our ocean. My elders are the last that still know how to build and maintain sailing canoes. My own father died when I was three years old, sailing one of the last drua from the Lau to Suva.

My community is a remnant of what it once was. Our canoes are small – only shadows of the giant drua our grandfathers and their fathers built. We use them every day to go to the reef, to fish and forage for our supplies. But we can now only dream of the day when our chiefs send us out to sail in great fleets to other countries on the other side of our known world.

A child's dream

So what can be done? We are not accepting our fate passively. There is a renaissance of our seafaring heritage occurring across our ocean. In the last few years, I have been fortunate enough to sail with a small fleet of ocean-going canoes from across the Pacific.

We have crossed our ocean repeatedly – from island to island and now from continent to continent – America and Australia – spreading our message of hope that the world can wake up from its self-induced globalization and consumer-good driven coma in time to stop the senseless destruction of our ocean and our planet.

There are signs that the revitalization of canoe culture is now happening in every small corner of our ocean – from Manus Island in Papua New Guinea to Namdrik Atoll in the Marshall Islands to the archipelagos of French Polynesia. We know it is only a small step, one that is not likely to be enough to turn back the rising tide.

But if we lose our sailing culture, we surely lose everything. Our canoes were once called *Waqa Tabu* – sacred ships. They are our icons, our heritage, our definition of who and what we are. They are symbols of a time when we did live in tune with wind and wave, when we were truly big people on a great ocean.

The linkage with the past that our canoes provide is not quite severed. Although we have little resourcing, we are moving now to ensure the knowledge that is still held by our elders does not pass from this earth when they do – but that it is recorded for generations to come. We are building new canoes, only small ones at first, but we continue to plan for the day when we launch our drua upon the waters of the Pacific again.

We must start from the beginning. Preparation for the future begins with the lessons of the past. When we were children, our parents taught us to make Bakanawa – model drua that we raced after school and on weekends. I consider myself to be the most fortunate of my generation – one of only a few that grew up sailing on the ocean the ways my ancestors have done for thousands of years.

So what can I do in the face of climate change? It seems the best thing I can do is to build a drua and sail it back to the Lau.

A young sailor from the Republic of Fiji, **Fuluna Tikoidelaimakotu Tuimoce** has become the voice of the peoples of the sea. He delivered a vivid testimony at the conference Indigenous peoples on the front lines of climate change, held at UNESCO on 26 and 27 November 2015.

Zoom

After losing his home to the river for the fourth time, Montu Shadhu was forced to find refuge on his brother's land.

In the land of wild rivers

Father and son on one of the ephemeral islands, where the abundance of grass makes it conducive to dairy farming.

Photos: Protick Sarker

Text: Katerina Markelova

With this photo-reportage, the *Courier* marks World Water Day, celebrated on 22 March.

Bangladeshi photographer Protick Sarker was still a high school student in the 2000s when he discovered the novel *Padma River Boatman* by Manik Bandopadhyaya – a classic of twentieth-century Bengali literature. The very special relationship between people and water – bringing both prosperity and destruction – depicted in the book, is familiar to him. Born in the land of wild rivers, Sarker, like his 162 million fellow citizens, lives to the rhythm of the monsoons – which inundate a third of the country every year, between May and September.

These floods have devastating effects, both on the land and the people, as does the river erosion, which causes the loss of between 1,500 hectares and 3,500 hectares of arable land each year*. But it is these same floods that make the fields of the Bengal Delta, which Bangladesh shares with India, so fertile.

*In 2017, some 950,000 people were displaced due to extreme weather events, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC).

Composed of sediments carried by Bangladesh's 230 rivers, these well-aerated and irrigated lands attract farmers to settle along the riverbanks in spite of the risk. "The king in the morning becomes a beggar in the evening," sing the peasants who have lost everything, and yet return to the riverside to rebuild their lives.

The incredible ability of his people to live on these lands that are built and destroyed by the floods, had fascinated Sarker as a young student. Becoming a professional photographer a few years later, he set out on a journey along the majestic Padma river, starting from the border between Bangladesh and India, where India's Ganges surges into the Bangladeshi river.

And then, as the day of 3 November 2011 was coming to an end, he witnessed the abrupt collapse of a stretch of riverbank, engulfed by the waters. "Suddenly I saw the river erosion which I had read about at school, happening brutally before my very eyes," said Sarker. The event occurred in the Ishwardi *upazila* (district subdivision). "Seeing these people lose their homes, their land, everything… and at the same time seeing them remain strong and optimistic, and still going on with their lives, touched me deeply." The man from Dhaka kept returning to the area for seven years to complete his photographic series, *Of River and Lost Lands*.

"It is the story of the places that have disappeared, which have been taken by the river. I wanted the images to convey a certain melancholy, a sense of loss," says Sarker, who photographed Ishwardi only under foggy monsoon skies. "The series shows how vulnerable we human beings are to nature. But it also shows the cycle of the perpetual renewal of life, which I was keen to explore in my work." Ephemeral islands, called *chars*, emerge from the waters after each monsoon and welcome thousands of people left without land**.

The adversity of the elements, to which humans seem to have adjusted as best they can, is worsening day by day due to climate change.

Young Brishty finds herself alone, after her family was forced to relocate because of river erosion.

Shom Nath Kumar has permanently left his village after losing everything to the river.

Fishing is one of the main sources of subsistence for the villagers.

Bangladesh, which is predominantly flat and low-lying, is particularly exposed to rising sea levels. The multiplication and intensification of extreme weather events and the increasing melting of the Himalayan glaciers, where the rivers of the delta originate, make the nation one of the world's most vulnerable.

The fragile balance that can be observed in Sarker's photographs is being severely put to the test.

**According to the French magazine *Hommes & migrations*, five million people were living on these ephemeral islands in 2010.

Remaining landless, this family arrives from the mainland to settle on a river tank, or island that emerged from the water after the monsoon.

Ephemeral islands, or river tanks, attract farmers in spite of their unpredictability.

Rahima and her family do not live on an ephemeral island, but they cultivate peanuts there.

Two men advance cautiously along a river bank that has collapsed.

Returning home from school.

The hand of a boat-builder.

Liberation, *by the French-Bosnian artist Slobodan K. Bijeljac. Collage and gouache, 2018.*

Reflections on freedom and art

Wystan Hugh Auden

"Poets are not the unacknowledged legislators of the world, and never were and it is a good thing that they should be made to realize this," writes W.H. Auden, dismissing the famous claim by English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. Here, in this text written in 1947, the English-American writer questions the limits of freedom and art, their potential and their interactions. Far from the Romantic vision of art that gives it more importance than it actually has, Auden advocates the Shakespearean vision: art holding a mirror to nature.

"Reflections on Freedom and Art" by W. H. Auden is reprinted in the *UNESCO Courier* by permission of the Estate of W. H. Auden.
This text is the writer's response to UNESCO's 1947 survey on the philosophical foundations of human rights. The survey featured in the Wide Angle section of the *Courier's* October-December 2018 issue: Human Rights: Back to the Future.
"Reflections on Freedom and Art" was first published in 2018, in *Letters to the Contrary: A Curated History of the UNESCO Human Rights Survey*, by Mark Goodale.

Freedom means freedom of choice. A man exercises his freedom when, confronted by two or more possible alternatives, he realizes one and excludes the rest. Free choices are definite choices. Liberal theologians were foolish to get excited over Heisenberg's Principle. Vagueness of behaviour may be good enough for electrons, it is not good enough for free men.

Choices are of three kinds:

- choices of action. A thirsty man in a desert is unfree, not because he cannot satisfy his craving for water, but because he cannot choose between drinking and not drinking.

- choices of value judgement; good or evil, true or false, beautiful or ugly, absolute or relative, required or forbidden.
A man who has seen only one picture is unfree to decide whether it is beautiful or ugly. A man in a passion of anger or fear is unfree because he is no longer conscious of any alternative state and so cannot judge his anger or his fear.

- choices of authority: this God or man or organization is to be believed or obeyed, that is not. Here again, if there is no consciousness or possible alternatives, there is no freedom.

The cravings of man's spirit are totally unlike the appetites of his nature, such as hunger and sex. There are two of them: to be free from conditions and to be important. These can and often do conflict, for the former senses anything that is "given" whether by his own nature or by the world about him as a limitation on his freedom and longs to act gratuitously, yet it is precisely and only from the "given" that he can derive a sense of importance. Absolute arbitrariness would at the same time be absolute triviality.

Art as play

One of man's attempts to satisfy both is the criminal acte gratuit, the breaking of a given law for the sake of breaking it, where the law supplies the importance, and the act of breaking it asserts the freedom. Another is play where the laws governing the game are kept by the player because they are chosen by him. At bottom, all art, all pure science, all creativity is play in this sense. The question What is Art? and the question Why does the artist create? are different questions.

It seems to me that the basic impulse behind creativity of any kind is the desire to do something that is quite necessary: the desire that the result should turn out to be important comes second.

The rules of a game give it importance to the player by making it difficult to play, a test and proof of an inborn gift or an acquired skill. Given that a game is morally permissible, then whether or not one should play it depends simply on whether or not it gives one pleasure, i.e., whether or not one is good at playing it. If one asks a great surgeon why he operates, if he is honest, he will not answer: "Because it is my duty to save lives" but "Because I love operating". He may perfectly well hate his neighbour and nevertheless save his life because of the pleasure it gives him to exercise his skill.

One must say therefore that, in the profoundest sense, art and science are frivolous activities for they depend on the chance possession of special talents. The only serious matter is concerned with what every human being has alike, a will, namely that one shall love one's neighbour as oneself. Here one cannot speak of a talent for love, nor in terms of pleasure and pain.

> If there is no consciousness or possible alternatives, there is no freedom

If one asks the good Samaritan why he rescues the man fallen among thieves, he cannot answer, except as an ironical joke, "Because I like doing good" since pleasure or pain are irrelevant and the point is obeying the command: "Thou shalt love".

A common love

There are three kinds of human groups.

- *Crowds*, i.e., two or more individuals whose sole common characteristic is togetherness, e.g., four strangers in a railway carriage.
- *Societies*, i.e., two or more individuals united for the purpose of carrying out an action which requires them all, e.g., a string quartet.
- *Communities*, i.e., two or more individuals united by a common love for something other than themselves, e.g., a room full of music lovers.

Societies have a definite size and a definite structure and the character of the whole is different from the simple sum of the characters of the parts. Consequently the will of the individual member is subordinate to the general will of the society, however that is established.

© Pejac

Someone in the string quartet must have the authority to decide whether it is to play Mozart or Beethoven and the rest must obey whether they agree with the choice or not. A society may at the same time be a community but not necessarily. It is quite possible that the cellist of our quartet hates music and only plays to earn his living. A society is a free society as long as the member who exercises authority does so with the free consent of the other members.

> "The world of art is a looking-glass world, a possible image of the actual world where emotions are observed, divorced from their origin in immediate passion"

Vandal-ism, *a tribute to Édouard Manet by the Spanish artist Pejac, 2014.*

Societies function best when they are free, but in certain cases coercion can, and indeed must, be applied to compel a recalcitrant member to contribute his partial function, the moral justification depending on two factors:

- the importance of the function the society discharges
- the degree to which the recalcitrant member can or cannot be replaced by another more willing individual.

Communities, like crowds, have no definite size. It is impossible therefore to speak of the "general will" of a community since the individuals who belong to it cannot disagree; they are a community precisely because as individuals they all love the same thing (unlike members of crowds who have no love in common). In *Time Magazine*, of June 23[1947], Mr Vladimir Koretsky was reported as having said at the United Nations Conference on Human Rights: "Man should have no rights that place him in opposition to the community. Man opposed to the community is nothing". If the translation is correct, Mr Koretsky was talking nonsense.

An individual can be in opposition to a society, e.g., if the cellist plays out of tune, but if the rest of the quartet love the music of Mozart and he detests it, this simply means that there are two communities, a community of Mozart lovers and a potential community of Mozart haters, for a community can begin with a single individual, while a society cannot exist until all its members are present and correctly related.

There are two kinds of communities: closed or unfree, and open or free. The members of a closed community have a common love but they have not chosen it for they are unaware of any other love which they could prefer to, or reject for, the love they have. The members of an open community have consciously chosen their love out of two or more possible loves.

Art as looking glass

If I understand either the myth of Orpheus or Aristotle's doctrine of catharsis correctly, the Greeks held what is, to me, a false theory of art which has plagued the world ever since, namely, that art is a magic device for arousing desirable emotions and expelling undesirable emotions, and so leading to right action. If this were so, then I think Plato's censures of art in *The Republic* and Tolstoy's in *What is Art?* are unanswerable.

For me the correct definition is Shakespeare's holding the mirror up to nature, i.e., art does not change my feelings but makes me conscious of what I have in fact felt or what I might feel, and of actual or possible relations between my feelings. The world of art is a looking-glass world, i.e., a possible image of the actual world where emotions are observed, divorced from their origin in immediate passion. It is the business of the artist to make a mirror which distorts the world as little as possible and reflects as much of the world as possible. Bad art distorts; minor art reflects only a small or trivial corner of the world.

Art does not judge

Art has two values: firstly it gives pleasure, the pleasure of idle curiosity; secondly, it enlarges the field of freedom. If man had no imagination, he could not make a choice between two possible courses of action without taking both, or make a value judgement about a feeling of his until he had felt the opposite.

Art does not and cannot influence the choice or judgement man actually makes, it only makes it more of a conscious choice.

Reading *Macbeth*, for instance, cannot prevent a man from becoming a murderer, but the man who has read *Macbeth* knows more about what becoming a murderer would be like than the man who hasn't, so that, if he chooses to become one, he is more responsible.

Art, in other words, is never a means for converting a bad community into a good one, it is one of the great means by which closed communities are turned into open communities.

Art can do harm in two ways. Firstly by failing to be good art and giving the wrong kind of pleasure thereby. If the reflection of the world which it offers is distorted, if it flatters the spectator by omitting the possibilities of evil or draws him to despair by denying the possibilities of good (which, surprisingly enough, can also give pleasure), then it injures him.

Secondly and more seriously, because the better the art the greater the danger, it may ensnare the spectator in the luxurious paralysis of self-contemplation so that, like Hamlet, he fails to choose at all. The danger of great art is narcissism. Narcissus does not fall in love with his reflection because it was beautiful but because it is his own in all its endless possibilities.

One can tell the myth in another way: Narcissus was a hydrocephalous idiot; catching sight of himself in the pool, he cried: "On me it looks good".

© Monika Nikolic

Or again: Narcissus was neither beautiful nor ugly but as commonplace as a Thurber husband*; catching sight of himself in the pool, he said: "Excuse me, but haven't we met before some place?"

Art can encourage the formation of two kinds of bad communities, the community of those with false pictures of themselves, and the parody of a free community in which the knowledge of good and evil is turned against the will, till it becomes too weak to choose either.

Every work of art is the focus of the potential community of those individuals who love it or could love it. Such a community is free if the artist could have created something else but chose to create this work, and vice versa, the spectators or readers could have chosen to look at or read another work but chose to look at or read this. If the artist creates a work which no one but he appreciates or a spectator cannot find any work which he likes, there is no lack of freedom, but simply no community.

Freedom can be curtailed in two ways; the artist may be forced to alter his work so that the character of the community is other than it would have been if he were left alone; or people may be prevented from becoming acquainted with his work so that the community is smaller than it might have been.

Censorship

Censorship can be of two kinds, an unplanned economic censorship where the artist cannot afford to create as he wishes or the public cannot afford to become acquainted with his work, and the planned censorship of authority. Economically the freedom of art is best attained if there is as great a variety of publishers, booksellers, libraries, galleries, etc. as possible and if some, but not all, of these are large-scale organizations.

* "The Thurber husband" refers to several weak and harried male characters who figure in the work of the American writer and humorist James Thurber (1894-1961).

The Parthenon of Books, *an installation by Argentinian artist Marta Minujín, presented at Documenta 14, at Kassel, Germany, in 2017. Made with books that were formerly or are currently banned in some countries, this monumental replica of the Parthenon takes a stand against censorship.*

> "Art does not change my feelings but makes me conscious of what I have felt"

If there are too new agencies, above all, if there is a state monopoly, the variety of works distributed invariably declines even if there is no deliberate censorship. If all are on a small scale, costs are too high for some of the potential public.

The obstacle on which liberalism has so often come to grief is the fact that we find it easier to respect the freedom of those to whom we are indifferent than the freedom of those we love. A parent or a government who believes something to be good or true knows well enough that it is possible for their children or their people to choose what, to them, is evil or false, and that, if the wrong choice is made, those they love will suffer and they themselves will suffer with them; further, they and those they love will no longer belong to the same community.

However, to love one's neighbour as oneself means precisely to be willing to let him make his own mistakes and suffer with him when he suffers for them, for no man can himself consciously wish not to be responsible for his thoughts and actions, at whatever cost. Every man knows for himself that right and duty are not identical, that he has a duty to choose the good, but a right to choose the evil, that, as Kafka says: "A man lies as little as he can when he lies as little as he can, not when he is given the smallest possible opportunity to lie".

Authorities who are more concerned that their charges should do the right thing than that they should choose it are always tempted to look for a short cut. In the short run, a man in a passion acts quicker and more effectively than a man who has reached the reflective stage of desire. Usually therefore, authorities would like the artist to arouse in others a passion for the good instead of making them conscious of good and evil; they would turn him, if they could, into Plato's Noble Liar.

Art has hardly ever been censored for aesthetic reasons because artists have rarely been in authority, which is perhaps just as well. In my own daydream state, for example, people caught reading Shelley or listening to Brahms are sentenced to the salt mines, and the possession of a juke-box is a capital offence.

The usual reasons for censorship are two: either that the work is immoral, i.e., will incite the public to act immorally or illegally so that society ceases to function properly; or that it is heretical, i.e., will induce the public to adopt other values than those held by the authorities, causing them to desert the latter's community for a new one. Censorship always implies two things: that there is a potential public for the work and that its members are incapable of making a responsible choice. It is therefore only permissible under two conditions: for minors who are legally presumed to be as yet incapable of responsible choice; and for adults who have chosen their censor and are free to disregard him if they cease to believe in his authority.

The Roman Catholic Church, for example, does not violate the freedom of its members by putting books on the index, because no one is obliged to be a Roman Catholic and to choose to be one necessarily implies believing in the authority of the Church to decide what the faithful may read.

No State has such a right because one becomes a member of a political society by being born, an act of chance, not a choice.

Revolutions and human freedom

Each major revolution in history is concerned with some particular aspect of human freedom, and has its representative human type. Each establishes its kind of freedom once and for all.

The success of each is threatened by its own false claim to be *the* revolution, i.e., that the aspect of freedom with which it is concerned is the only freedom that matters.

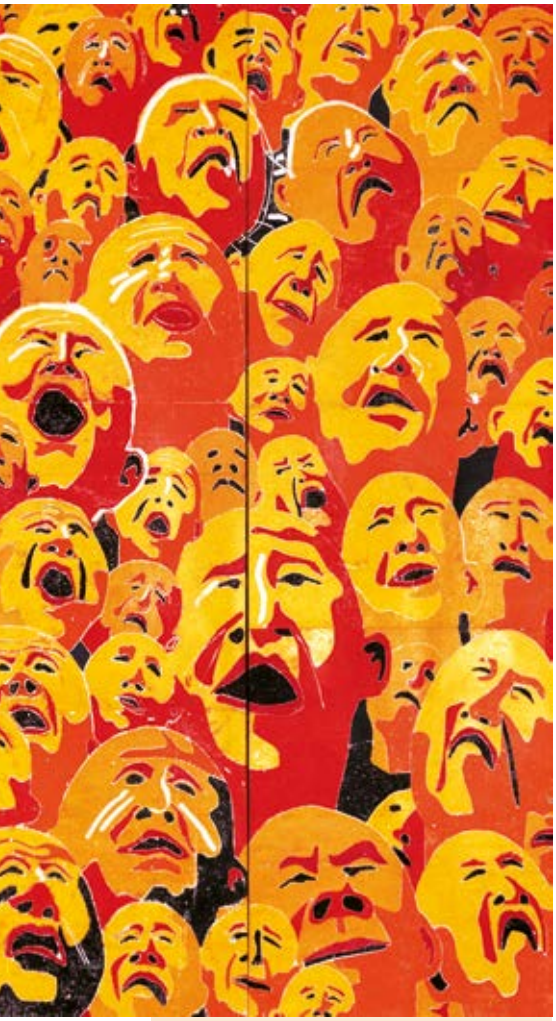
Since the particular aspect with which any revolution is concerned is one conspicuously ignored by the revolution before it, it is apt in its just criticism of the latter's failing to be hostile to the freedom for which it fought. Nevertheless the fates of all revolutions are bound up with each other; they stand or fall together: if the preceding revolution had not won its battle, its successor could not be fighting its own. In any revolution, therefore, the gains of the revolutions before it have to be defended if the present revolution is to succeed.

The Papal Revolution of the eleventh and the twelfth centuries established the freedom of an individual to choose between loyalties, his right to leave one community and join another, his right to belong to two communities at the same time.

Its typical figures are the contemplative international priest and the activist local soldier.

The revolution of the Reformation in the sixteenth century established the freedom of the individual to choose his career, his right to leave the society to which his father belonged and join another. Its typical figure is the professional man.

The French and Industrial Revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries established the freedom of the individual man of talent to develop himself freely and compete for public attention, the right of the individual mind to change the community or lead a society if he can. The typical figure is Figaro. *L'esprit seul peut tout changer. / De vingt rois que l'on encense / Le trépas brise l'autel / Et Voltaire est immortel*. (Only wit can make a difference. / Out of twenty kings who wear a crown / Death breaks the altar, / But Voltaire is immortal.).



Work by the Chinese artist Fang Lijun, untitled, woodcut, 2003.

One of the world crowd

Our revolution of the twentieth century is trying to establish the freedom of the individual body to determine its satisfactions, to grow and be healthy. Its typical figure is the anonymous naked man with a dog-tag number, not yet a member of any society or any community, but simply one of the world crowd.

Hence the preoccupation of our time with medicine and economics, its activism, its hostility to the achievement of the French Revolution, freedom of speech and thought, which it sees as a threat to unanimous action. At the physical level all are really equal in their needs and individual differences of temperament or talent are irrelevant.

> "The modern censor and the romantic artist are alike in thinking art is more important than it is"

In our revolution, therefore, focused on winning freedom from physical want**, all the freedoms gained by preceding revolutions are threatened as never before. The French Revolution is denied wherever there is a controlled press and a censorship of art and science; the Reformation is denied wherever a state dictates what career an individual citizen shall follow; the Papal Revolution is denied wherever a monolithic state claims unconditional authority.

The talented individual today is being punished for the airs he gave himself in the past two centuries. Poets are not the unacknowledged legislators of the world and never were and it is a good thing that they should be made to realize this. Those who preached a doctrine of Art for Art's sake or Art as a luxury were much nearer the truth, but they should not then have regarded the comparative frivolity of their vocation as a proof of their spiritual superiority to the useful untalented worker. In actual fact, the modern censor and the romantic artist are alike in thinking art more important than it is.

**Freedom from want was the primary objective that needed to be addressed if Britain's major social and economic challenges were to be resolved, according to the British economist and reformer William Beveridge. The 1942 Beveridge report paved the way for the British welfare state; a series of reforms were introduced by Clement Attlee's Labour government in the years after the Second World War.

What role for the poet?

"Once he looked rosy, now he looks blue. / Nurse is wondering What shall I do?" sings the poet in the sick room. If patient or nurse were to say to him "For God's sake, stop humming and fetch some hot water and bandages" it would be one thing. But neither says this. The nurse says: "Tell the patient I am the only one who can cure him and I will give you a passport, extra ration cards, and free tickets to the opera. If you tell him anything else, I shall call the police". And the poor delirious patient cries: "Persuade me that I am looking and feeling fine and I will give you a duplex apartment and a beautiful mistress. If you can't do that, I shan't listen to you".

Perhaps the poet, if he really loved the patient and the nurse as himself, would be silent and fetch the hot water, but as long as he continues singing, there is one commandment which his song must obey, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour".

English-American poet, playwright, critic, and librettist, **W. H. Auden** (1907-1973) was one of the leading literary figures of the twentieth century. He emigrated to the United States in 1939, where he taught at several universities and took US citizenship in 1946.

Our guest

One of the hundred posters produced on the theme "One for all, all for one!" by a hundred graphic designers from all over the world to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The campaign was launched by Poster for Tomorrow.

Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im

On human rights, the secular state and Sharia today

Interview by Shiraz Sidhva

An expert on human rights in cross-cultural perspectives, An-Na'im has sought to reconcile his identity as a Sudanese Muslim with his staunch commitment to universal human rights. He argues that human rights should be people-centred, not state-centric. Explaining his controversial views, An-Naim says that he expects opposition to his ideas. "If I'm not resisted, I'm not relevant," he insists.

Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im.
© Photo courtesy of Emory University School of Law

When you refer to the three "Cs" of human rights, what exactly do you mean?

I sometimes speak in terms of the three "Cs" of human rights – the concept, the content and the context.

The concept is universality, as we talk about human rights as the rights of the human, but do we really mean that? Are we really capable of protecting the rights of the human as such? Which state does that? Sadly, the truth is to the contrary – human rights rhetoric is used by states as a weapon to demonize each other in their power politics, instead of being universal principles of public policy to protect the dignity of all human beings.

The second "c" refers to what these rights are, and here we must admit that it is a work in progress rather than already implemented as public policy on the ground.

The third "c" raises the question whether human rights principles are operationalized on the ground, and made accessible to people whose rights are at stake. What does human rights mean to a person living in extreme and permanent poverty in Cairo, Karachi or Lagos – what difference has human rights made in their lives?

What should the role of the state be in the protection of human rights?

I find that the protection of rights anywhere happens at the level of civil rights, not at the level of human rights – in other words, protection is granted by the states to citizens and so-called "lawful residents," never to human beings as such.

That is why refugees and migrant workers, for instance, do not enjoy protection of their human rights as proclaimed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Even the rights of citizens and lawful residents are determined by the state every step of the way. It is always states which decide to negotiate treaties with other states, ratify or ignore relevant international treaties, and determine the manner and scope of protection of the rights of any person subject to their jurisdiction.

The entire human rights field is under the authority of state sovereignty. Global international law does not pretend to force any state to do anything. The United Nations and all other international organizations are constituted and governed by states, they can only do what states permit them to do, and in the scope and manner authorized by the states.

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All this may be appropriate for the present state of human development, but these principles are not good for the protection of human rights. That is why I speak of the paradox of self-regulation by states, in contradistinction to entrenched fundamental rights which are supposed to be beyond control and manipulation by the state.

But then, how do we ensure respect for human rights?

I do not mean that we don't need human rights, or that their protection cannot be realized in practice. The point I do wish to emphasize is that we must be clear on where human rights come from and in which manner – including questions such as how these rights are defined and how they are operationalized.

In my view, human rights should be defined by the people who accept and live by them on the ground, and not imposed by former colonial powers on their former colonies or by delegates of post-colonial states, and international bureaucrats.

Second, human rights norms must be implemented through realistic contextual steps that are suited to the needs and resources of relevant communities, and not by enacting high-sounding legislation to be presented at sanitized meetings of international organizations, and diplomatic or academic conferences.

Third, strategies of implementation must be deeply contextual, and under the control of the human subjects of these rights everywhere.

Could you give us an example of this?

If I want to combat female genital mutilation (FGM) in Sudan, for example, I can't do it by having a declaration issued in Geneva. I can't do it by even Sudan issuing a statute. But I can do it by changing attitudes in the communities. That is the key.

In Sudan, the British amended the Penal Code to make FGM punishable by two years' imprisonment in 1946, the year I was born. I am now 72, and FGM still exists, for more than ninety per cent of the population. To my knowledge, there has not been a single prosecution. "Honour" killing is a similar problem. These are clear areas where we have to have transformation.

What is the best way to bring about change?

We need to go beyond bureaucratic, formulistic ideas – to inspire the imagination of people, and to drive change.

Sometimes people don't try to bring about change because they don't think it's possible. But they are wrong. See how transformative thinking has worked in the gay rights movement, for example, within a short span of twenty years. When I moved to Atlanta, Georgia, in the United States, in 1995, sodomy was a crime for which you were sent to prison. In 2015, it became a constitutional right for same-sex couples to marry.

When you think of the speed by which this transformation happened, it shows that you don't have to start with legal change. In fact, if you start with cultural and social change, the transformation in a community is really the driving force of change – not the consequence of change.

When you refer to the culture of human rights, which can be promoted through internal discourse and cross-cultural dialogue, what do you mean?

By human rights culture, I am referring to internalized values – since early socialization of children – which are reinforced throughout our lives. These values tend to support respect for and protection of the human rights of others, though they may not be identified in these terms.

The Mosque, *by the Sudanese painter Ibrahim El-Salahi, oil on canvas, 1964.*

> "The transformation in a community is really the driving force of change – not the consequence of change"

Within human beings, and among their communities, there are impulses for respecting the dignity of the other, and also striving for inter-communal harmony, co-existence and mutual interdependence.

All these are human rights values, in my view, though they are not represented as such in common discourse. I have argued since the 1980s for cultivating the culture of human rights for each community, as the basis of deepening and expanding international consensus within cultures, and by dialogue among different cultures. The 1992 book *Human Rights in Cross-Cultural Perspectives: A Quest for Consensus*, which I edited, expands on this.

On a more personal level, how did you start taking an interest in human rights from an Islamic perspective?

As I struggled with my own conflicting belief in Islam and opposition to Sharia in the 1960s, I was fortunate enough to encounter *Ustadh* (revered teacher) Mahmoud Mohamed Taha. It was his innovative interpretation of Islam which helped me reconcile my belief in Islam and commitment to upholding human rights.

Ustadh Taha was a Sudanese engineer by profession, and a Muslim Sufi reformer by religious orientation. He participated in the struggle for independence in Sudan of the 1940s, and was a political prisoner under the Anglo-Egyptian colonial administration of Sudan. He was the founder and president of the Republican Party, which agitated for independence of Sudan as a democratic Republic, hence the name. After an extended period of imprisonment, continued into a period of religious discipline, *Ustadh* Taha emerged in 1951 with a reformist interpretation of Islam.

Following his tragic execution in January 1985, and the suppression of his reform movement in Sudan, I left my home country but continued to develop my own understanding and application of the reform methodology of my teacher, and striving to live by his model.

Tell us about your "Future of Sharia project".

My current "Future of Sharia" project combines several themes of my academic work and advocacy for social change, as these elements have evolved in my thinking since my law student days in the 1960s to the present time.

In terms of Islamic reform and scholarship, I have managed to reconcile my commitment to a secular state from an Islamic perspective, as I have done regarding human rights earlier, with my religion.

Through my website/blog, I have called for a global public debate on the ideas based on my 2008 book, *Islam and the Secular State*.

I am convinced that ideas of human rights and citizenship are more consistent with Islamic principles than with claims of a supposedly Islamic state to enforce Sharia. In the book, I present Islamic arguments for the separation of Islam and the state, while regulating the relationship between Islam and politics. I argue that the coercive enforcement of Sharia by the state betrays the Koran's insistence on the voluntary acceptance of Islam. Individual piety can be reconciled with collective religious identity – in order to be a Muslim by conviction and free choice, which is the only way one can be a Muslim, I need a secular state, one that is neutral regarding religious doctrine, and promotes genuine religious observance.

An internationally renowned Sudanese-American legal scholar and author, **Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im** is the Charles Howard Candler Professor of Law at Emory Law in Atlanta (United States), associated professor in the Emory College of Arts and Sciences, and a senior fellow of the Center for the Study of Law and Religion of Emory University.

Current affairs

Eternity, *a sculpture by the Armenian artist Gevorg Tadevosyan.*

Hovhannes Tumanyan

A passion for storytelling

Krikor Beledian

It has been nearly a century since Hovhannes Tumanyan lived, but his poems have lost none of their originality, their emotional charge, or their ability to stimulate reflection. Using the form of narrative poems in rhyming verse almost exclusively, the writer forged his own style in the early 1900s, drawing inspiration from the Armenian oral tradition. His work inspired two operas – *Anoush* by Armen Tigranyan and *Almast* by Alexander Spendiaryan.

With this article, the *Courier* joins UNESCO in the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Hovhannes Tumanyan, and of World Poetry Day on 21 March.

Hovhannes Tumanyan in the 1910s.

Evoking his childhood in his autobiography, Hovhannes Tumanyan (1869-1923) presents his father, Ter Matheos, not just as a priest of the Armenian church – who sang the usual repertoire of liturgical songs – but also as a bard who recited epic poems, accompanying himself on a *tchonkour*, a popular plucked-string instrument. It is in this familiar setting that the source of the fascination for narrative poetry in the child's imagination should be sought.

As for the image of his mother, Sona, it evokes in the child the somewhat wild alpine landscape of Dsegh, his native village. "My mother was born and raised in the mountains, she was a daughter of the mountains," the poet who gave us the beautiful verses on the steep mountains of Armenia, would later write at the end of this portrait.

Added to this idyllic image is the family tradition that Tumanyan's ancestors belonged to the great princely family of the Mamikonian dynasty, who for centuries had served as chief generals of Armenian armies. A family fiction or mythified story, the writer believed in it – even if his genealogical research did not quite produce the desired result.

From childhood, the future poet was immersed in the wonderful world of tales and legends, transmitted by his father – himself surrounded by a double aura, both sacred and profane. We understand that telling stories will become for Tumanyan, a way of thinking and of transmitting ancestral and folk material.

Discovering other literary worlds

Born in February 1869 in Dsegh, a village in Lori province, in the north of what is today Armenia, the young Hovhannes had to leave this primordial Eden – first to study in Stepanavan, about forty kilometres from his village, and then in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia. He would spend most of his life in this great cultural centre for all Transcaucasia (made up of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia).

The death of his father prevented Tumanyan from completing his formal education at the Nersessian high school, one of the country's best schools at the time. Obliged to support his family, he began working as a secretary at the bishopric of the local Armenian church in 1887. But, stifled by the restrictive atmosphere there, he left the post. He then worked at odd jobs, struggling to support his growing family – because in the meanwhile, the young man had married and fathered ten children.

An enlightened self-taught man, this avid reader plunged into both Armenian and foreign culture. He read poets who were Russian (Lermontov, Pushkin), German (Goethe), English (Byron, Milton, Shakespeare), American (Longfellow) and many others – translating and "Armenianizing" them. He absorbed both Western and Eastern folklore.

At the Tumanyan House-Museum in Yerevan, the Armenian capital – where his library and some of his manuscripts are preserved today – we can measure the extent of his reading, and consult some of the documentation that the poet considered essential for the composition of his poems and prose narratives.

Reading Pushkin is likely to have reinforced his ideas on the formal elaboration of narrative, while it was probably Shakespeare's "ghost" that dissuaded him from publishing his plays, which he eventually destroyed. Apart from this indirect influence, foreign literature appears very little in his own texts. They represent "reading contacts" that were essential to the development of a poet whose immediate environment offered few innovative literary models.

The right word

Tumanyan's first collection, *Poems*, published in Moscow in 1890, was a great success with literary critics. Subsequently, all his collections would have the same generic title, with the exception of *Harmonies*, published in Tbilisi in 1896. Each volume included a number of previously published poems, to which new ones were added.

Following this lyrical interlude of the years 1890 to 1896, a completely new tone can be heard in his narrative poems – that cannot easily be classified into any established literary genre. A narrative that is versified, rhymed and structured in episodes – this is the common denominator of his new literary pieces, in which the author revisits famous Armenian or Caucasian fables, legends and tales, reworking them with a clearly allegorical aim.

A performance of Armen Tigranyan's opera Anouch *at the Théâtre Nanterre-Amandiers, France, in 2013.*

When Tumanyan writes *The Dog and the Cat, The Unlucky Merchants, The Convent of the Dove* – or other tales that every Armenian has known by heart since childhood – his inventiveness lies less in the material used than in the way the action is staged. This action corresponds perfectly to an underlying idea, unveiled only at the end of the story. The narrative involves animals or humans in an ongoing plot with cleverly orchestrated twists culminating in a climax. The central message is expressed at the end, in one or two succinct phrases.

This literary technique, unique to Tumanyan, makes him an outstanding storyteller, who masterfully commands verse and word. It is the result of hard work, traces of which can be found in a multitude of drafts and successive versions of the texts. The poet often rewrites even texts that have already been published, transforming them in depth with the obvious aim of achieving as simple and effective an expression possible. In contrast to many of his colleagues who favoured being more prolific, Tumanyan used understatement, allusion, the right word, and in the literal sense, a true poetic method.

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The age of literary maturity

It was at the very beginning of the twentieth century that Tumanyan achieved perfect mastery of the poetic narrative in verse, notably in *Anoush* and *The Siege of Tmouk Castle*. A pastoral epic set in idyllic Lori, *Anoush* is composed of six songs, beginning with a prelude. This story of thwarted love, with all the ingredients of a tragedy in verse, inspired Armen Tigranyan (1879-1950) to write his eponymous opera, which is still performed around the world today.

The Siege of Tmouk Castle recounts an episode in eighteenth-century Armenian history, in which Princess Almast, enticed by the false promises of the Persian king, Nadir Shah, betrays her husband, Prince Tatul, and delivers the fortress to the enemy. After destroying everything, the conqueror turns against the traitor and has her beheaded. The political significance of this poem is much more explicit than that of *Anoush*. It inspired *Almast*, the opera by Alexander Spendiaryan (1871-1928). Today, bronze statues of the poet and the composer stand in the foreground of the Yerevan Opera, a highly symbolic site in the Armenian capital. They remind us that the stories immortalized by them are still relevant today.

Around the same time, Tumanyan began writing the folk epic, *David of Sassoon*, of which he would publish only a fragment. In it, he revisited a famous work of the Armenian literary tradition, to convey messages that were close to his heart – mutual respect among peoples, rejection of violence, and the rejection of all oppression.

Poet and man of action

This work remained unfinished, as did his poem *The Firebird*, because his public activities took up more and more of his time. Because, alongside the poet, there was in Tumanyan a real man of action, who had always refused to be a mere literary figure – even when he created the literary circle, Vernatun (the upper chamber), in his own home, with a group of writer friends, including Avetis Aharonian, Alexander Shirvanzade, Avetik Issahakian and Nikol Aghbalian.

Substantially different from the many literary and artistic salons of Tbilisi, Vernatun's main objective was to offer writers – including those passing through the city – a place to meet and exchange ideas.

Pursuing the same goal, Tumanyan also founded an association of Armenian writers from the Caucasus. It remained the epicentre of Armenian literature until the October Revolution of 1917.

Tumanyan exhibited the same enthusiasm when he was involved in politics. During the Armenian-Tatar conflict in 1905, he played the role of negotiator between the parties and succeeded in preventing the hostilities from spreading to Lori province. He tried to do the same during the short Armenian-Georgian war in 1919, when the first symptoms of the evil that would prevail in March 1923 appeared. This activism led him to be arrested twice, in 1908 and 1911.

During the genocide of 1915, he organized relief efforts for Armenian refugees fleeing the devastated towns and villages. This painful experience is at the heart of two of his finest poems, 'Rest in Peace' and 'With My Fatherland'– which have the merit of being free of both pathos and resentment, so widespread at that time in this kind of literature.

If it is true that "the poet is first and foremost the heart of his people", as Tumanyan wrote, it is also true that the Armenian people will always carry his immortal poems in their hearts. Many years after the poet's death, we still hear his voice echoing in the steep mountains of our country:

The way was heavy and the night was dark,
And yet we survived
Both sorrow and gloom.
Through the ages we go and gaze at the stark
Steep heights of our land –
The Armenian Highlands […]
And we gaze with dolorous, longing eyes
At the earth in its gloom,
At the distant stars;
Ah, when will the dawn break at last
Over our green
Armenian Highlands?

A French poet and novelist of Armenian origin, **Krikor Beledian** was born in Beirut, Lebanon, and has lived in Paris since 1967. He is the author of numerous collections of poems and essays, and a series of autobiographical stories in Western Armenian. His work has been published in Armenia, France, Lebanon and the United States.

Nowruz:
The seeds of a new day

Salvatore D'Onofrio

From the cult of the vegetation god Osiris in ancient Egypt to the summer solstice celebrations in Sardinia, Italy, to the Maronite feast of Eid el Burbara in Lebanon and the ceremonies of the Piramalai Kallar in Tamil Nadu, India, the symbol of the sprouted seed plays a central role in many rituals. Wheat, barley, or lentil sprouts are also at the heart of Nowruz – the New Year of the peoples who were once part of the Persian Empire – celebrated each spring by around 300 million people worldwide. But why are the shoots thrown into the water?

Nauryz, Navruz, Nawrouz, Nevruz, Nooruz, Novruz, Nowrouz, Nowruz! So many ways of writing the same word for this new year and spring festival celebrated notably in Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In 2009, the festival was inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, before this inscription was extended to new countries in 2016. Since 2010, 21 March is celebrated as the International Day of Nowruz.

In the belief systems of all the world's peoples, as time completes its annual cycle, there is a great risk that humankind will perish. They believe that performing rituals will allow them to go beyond this cycle. The New Year festivals, often celebrated to usher in spring, herald the rebirth of nature.

Nowruz, which literally means "new day", is one of these. Its origins, which date back at least two thousand years, are unclear, but the tradition is alive and well and celebrated in all the countries that were once part of the Persian Empire.

In Iran, the centre of ancient Persia, preparations begin two or three weeks before Nowruz. Women begin to "shake" their houses – performing a massive spring cleaning. On the Tuesday before the festival, the men organize games which involve jumping over fires. Meanwhile, children put on masks and go from house to house in small groups, knocking on doors, hoping to receive cakes or coins. This tradition is reminiscent of Halloween, a holiday now associated with All Saints' Day in the English-speaking and Celtic worlds; and Koliada, a Slavic winter solstice festival, which has, over the years, become part of Christmas celebrations.

Going back to Iran: when the day of the vernal equinox dawns, the beginning of the festivities is announced by the sounds of the drum of Haji Firouz, a kind of king's jester with a blackened face.

Every home – including Iranian households in the diaspora – sets up a table with *haft sin*, or seven items, all beginning with the letter 's' (*sin*). They are the *sabzeh* (sprouts of wheat, oats, lentils and other seeds), *sir* (garlic), *sib* (apple), *summak* (sumac), *senjed* (the jujube fruit), *serkeh* (vinegar) and *samanu* (a wheat pudding made by slow-cooking ground wheat sprouts).

Sometimes a mirror (*aine*), cakes or coins are added. The Koran may also be placed on the table (having replaced the Avesta, the sacred book of the Zoroastrians), and even some poetry. For example, *The Divan of Hafez*, by the Persian mystic poet famous for memorizing the Koran, is often used for divination.

The family meal includes fish and rice, but the centrepiece of the table is always the *sabzeh*. The seeds have been sown by women, on plates inside the house at the beginning of the festivities, and constantly watered so the young green shoots are ready on Nowruz.

Why these shoots?

The origins of the sprout ritual are difficult to determine. The oldest references go back to the Germinating Beds of Osiris of Ptolemaic Egypt – a tradition in which soil was moulded into the shape of figurines, representing the god of the dead and resurrection to eternal life. The pottery bricks, made of earth kneaded with water and barley grains, were placed in tombs in a reclining position.

In Ancient Greece, in the fifth century B.C., seeds of spices, corn and grains were planted in terracotta or basketwork containers. Called Gardens of Adonis, they were germinated to honour the mortal lover of the goddess of love, Aphrodite during the festival of Adonis, held in mid-July every year.

In contrast, there is no mention of ritual sprouts in the Avesta, or in Persian writings on Nowruz. Nor are sprouts a part of the rituals observed by the Parsis, the followers of the Zoroastrian religion who fled from Persia in successive waves to India between the seventh and tenth centuries, following the Arab conquests of their country.

Yet the custom of sprouted seeds endures, as the centrepiece of the *haft sin* table, around which some 300 million people across the world gather each spring to celebrate Nowruz.

The sprouts tradition might have spread from South India, where they are still used in ceremonies. According to the French ethnologist Louis Dumont, women belonging to the Piramalai Kallar community in Tamil Nadu, who want to fulfil their vows, balance pots on their heads – filled with various items, including sprouts obtained by "germinating seven or nine seeds in a container in the dark for a week."

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A Nowruz celebration at the foot of the Hisor Fortress, Tajikistan, in 2018.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition

In Europe too, the new shoots are central to various festivals. In Provence, France, on 4 December, Saint Barbara's Day, it is the custom to germinate wheat grains from the previous harvest in three cups and to place them on the table of the "grand supper" on the twenty-fourth. They are then placed in the crib of the Nativity scene. The same tradition exists in Lebanon among the Maronite Christians of Arab ethnicity, and in Sicily, Italy, among the inhabitants of Castelbuono in Palermo.

On 19 March, Sicilians also decorate Saint Joseph's Table with shoots, along with up to 101 delicacies. This is to celebrate both the virtues of poverty, represented by the saint, and those of wealth, represented by the wheat – in particular by the bread, baked for the occasion using elaborate recipes.

In southern Italy, on the Holy Thursday before Easter, shoots are placed on the altar in the oratory where, according to Catholic liturgy, the Eucharist is kept. Meanwhile, the Jewish community in Rome maintains a ritual custom of shoots that dates back to the Middle Ages, during the festivals of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Our European tour ends on 21 June, the summer solstice, in the small town of Bari Sardo in Sardinia, Italy. Here we can witness a procession of women carrying *nenniri*, or shoots, on their heads in containers – topped by an impressive cane structure, decorated with delicately-shaped breads and seasonal fruit. The women walk through the streets to the sea, into which they throw their *nenniri*.

The thirteenth day

In South India, too, the Kallar women form a procession, carrying shoots on their heads. They end their ceremonial journey by dancing around the shoots before flinging them into the water.

In Ancient Greece, the Gardens of Adonis were also consigned to the water, in fountains or the sea, after being carried over roof terraces – just as Mazdaean Iranians still do today in Yazd, and elsewhere in Iran.

In Iran, on the thirteenth day after Nowruz, everyone spends the day outdoors – eating, playing, singing and performing the final ritual: throwing the shoots into running water. But not before the girls have braided a few strands of the shoots, making a wish to find a husband in the coming year.

Nowruz is one of those celebrations that bring together societies that are distant from each other, both in space and time – the periodic return of vegetation is seen as a symbol of a new beginning of life. But while their germination symbolizes a renewal, the seeds also carry within them, all the troubles of the year that is ending. This ambivalent nature of the shoots makes it necessary to get rid of them, letting the waters carry our ills far away from us.

Italian anthropologist **Salvatore D'Onofrio** is a professor at the University of Palermo and a member of the Laboratory of Social Anthropology at the Collège de France, where he coordinates the *Cahiers d'anthropologie sociale* collection and is part of the "New Year Archives in Paris" working group. He is the author of *Le matin des dieux. Du Norouz persan aux Pâques chrétiennes* (The Morning of the Gods. From Persian Nowruz to Christian Easter, 2018).

Delivering water security in a changing world

Howard S. Wheater

Eighty per cent of the world's population is exposed to high levels of threats to water security and a severe water crisis is looming by 2070. Faced with these alarming estimates, the author argues that a business-as-usual attitude will not work. Water management is a scientific issue, but it is also a matter of politics, governance and societal values. A new transdisciplinary science is urgently needed.

With this article, the *Courier* marks the celebration of World Water Day on 22 March.

The world's freshwater environment is facing unprecedented pressures in the twenty-first century. A growing global population and economic development have led to increasing demands on water resources. The overuse of water is widespread; consequences include reducing river flows, the loss of lakes and wetlands and falling ground-water levels.

The most dramatic example of this is the loss of the Aral Sea in Central Asia, which used to be the fourth-largest saltwater lake in the world, but has become a desert in forty years, shrinking to barely ten per cent of its original size due to upstream water withdrawals.

More generally, human impacts on natural systems are so extensive that the term Anthropocene has been used to describe the current geological epoch [see Welcome to the Anthropocene, *Courier*, April-June 2018]. The increasing pressures on water resources are set against this backdrop of extensive anthropogenic change.

Urbanization (more than half of the world's population now lives in cities), deforestation and the extension of cultivated land (1.5 billion hectares worldwide) have had a significant impact on hydrology and water quality.

Threats on a global scale

Nearly eighty per cent of the world's population is exposed to high levels of water security threats. Urban areas and agriculture are important sources of water pollution, threatening aquatic life and increasing pressures on freshwater ecosystems. In 2010, experts estimated that 10,000 to 20,000 freshwater species were extinct or at risk.

Inevitably, pressures on the hydrological environment to meet the food and energy needs of a growing global human population will only increase. Food production will have to rise by seventy per cent by 2050 to meet projected demand, according to a 2012 estimate of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

A 2013 study on water scarcity published in the *Hydrology and Earth System Sciences* (HESS) monthly concluded that about half of the world's population will experience severe water stress between 2071 and 2100.

The changes wrought by human actions to the environment have also increased water-related risks to life, property and infrastructure associated with extreme events. This was illustrated by the 2017 flooding of Houston, Texas, in the United States.

Work from the series Find a way or make one, *by the Swiss-Russian photographer Anastasia Mityukova, made using only materials she could find at home: old photos, webcams, books, newspapers and ice.*

> “The engagement of all stakeholders is a necessity, not an option”

In an area where development had proceeded in spite of known flood risk, 300,000 structures were inundated, causing the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of people, with flood damage estimated to exceed $125 billion.

In an increasingly interconnected world, the impact of floods and droughts is not limited to local consequences. The 2011 flooding in Thailand caused economic losses estimated at $46.5 billion by the World Bank, due to the disruption of global electronics supply chains. And the heat wave in Russia in 2010, which affected wheat production and global food prices, was said to be a factor in the social unrest associated with the Arab Spring, *The Economist* reported in 2012.

Recent global warming has led to profound changes in the hydrological environment. The glaciers in the Canadian Rocky Mountains, for example, are rapidly retreating. They are expected to be largely lost by the end of the century – yet they feed major rivers draining into the Pacific, Atlantic and Arctic oceans.

The forests in western Canada are also receding, largely because they have been infested by bark beetles, whose proliferation is associated, in part, with warmer winters. While Western Canada is a regional example, it is worth noting that half the world’s population depends on water from cold regions, where warming can be expected to have similarly severe effects.

Enhancing the science-policy interface

Ensuring access to water and sanitation for all is the sixth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 6) of the 2030 Agenda adopted by the United Nations in September 2015.

As part of its action to achieve this Agenda, UNESCO organized the First Water Science-Policy Interface Colloquium (SPIC Water) on 14 June 2018, which brought together eleven ministers and parliamentarians, and other representatives of Member States and water experts.

The aim was to identify how the UNESCO International Hydrological Programme (IHP) could better assist countries to formulate a scientific, technological and capacity development agenda to accompany them in their endeavours. IHP is the only intergovernmental programme of the UN system devoted to water research, water resources management, and education and capacity building.

This symposium is the first of a series to be held every two years as part of the IHP's Intergovernmental Council sessions.

A holistic Water Conference is being organized at UNESCO in May 2019.

A study published in the journal *Climatic Change* in February 2016 states that by 2050, between 0.5 billion and 3.1 billion people will be exposed to an increase in water scarcity caused by climate change.

New strategies

How can the water science community best respond, to provide the understanding and decision-support tools needed to address these challenges? Incremental science, inching forward in small steps, is not up to the task, and a business-as-usual attitude cannot be tolerated. A more holistic scope, on a global scale, and strategic focus is needed.

Firstly, there is an increasing need for better scientific understanding of the water environment in the face of unprecedented environmental and societal change. These issues cut across disciplinary boundaries. For example, to predict future river flows in western Canada requires an understanding of how ecosystems and agriculture will respond to climate change.

In turn, the prediction of future climate depends on understanding the changes in land-atmosphere feedbacks – such as the greening of the shrub tundra in the North, or the proliferation of vegetation, especially shrubs, that will absorb more and more solar energy, thus contributing to global warming.

The only certain thing about the future is that it will be highly uncertain, when it comes to climate and human socio-economic development – and interactions between the two.

This uncertainty must be managed. Given the complexity of water systems and their interdependence with land, energy and food systems, at scales from local to global, managing uncertainty will require more adaptive and flexible strategies than those of the past. The past can no longer serve as a reliable guide to the future.

We need to analyze vulnerability and adopt strategies that foster *resilience* – the ability of a system to absorb shock and continue to regenerate without changing to a new state.

An interdisciplinary approach

It is widely recognized, for example, that there has been a disconnect between the science produced for climate impact assessment and long-term water planning or climate adaptation. In general, for science to be effective in delivering solutions, it must address problems that are deemed relevant to decision-makers, to deliver tools to users in a timely and useful format, and to include user input. The latter provides the credibility and legitimacy needed to resolve the politically contentious and socially significant issues that surround water resources management today.

This illustrates how important it is for scientists to recognize that the engagement of all stakeholders is a necessity, not an option.

The new research paradigm should include a thorough knowledge of the social processes that accompany the effective – and reciprocal – engagement of science and policy.

It is crucial to recognize that local stakeholders are an important source of knowledge. Indigenous communities, for example, have a wealth of multi-generational knowledge of their land and its interactions with natural forces [see the Wide Angle section of this issue]. This knowledge must be used for the benefit of science. That is why – as part of the Global Water Futures (GWF) programme in Canada – we launched a project with Canada's Aboriginal peoples in April 2018, to work together on a research strategy that can help solve the water problems facing these communities.

Ultimately, the major challenges of water security lie with governance. The question of who has the power to make decisions (and how these decisions are made) is therefore crucial.

If the scientific understanding and prediction of water changes pose significant scientific challenges, so does water management. Water security in the twenty-first century is both a scientific and a social issue. Therefore, a new transdisciplinary approach is needed that will establish links between the natural and social sciences.

To summarize: to prevent a major water crisis, we need to develop new scientific knowledge to understand the evolution of water systems that involve the relationship between man and nature; to establish new interdisciplinary modes of scientific collaboration to understand the interconnections of these systems and their societal implications; to integrate local knowledge into scientific research to address user needs; and to put in place more effective mechanisms to translate scientific knowledge into societal action.

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World Heritage No.89

Wetlands

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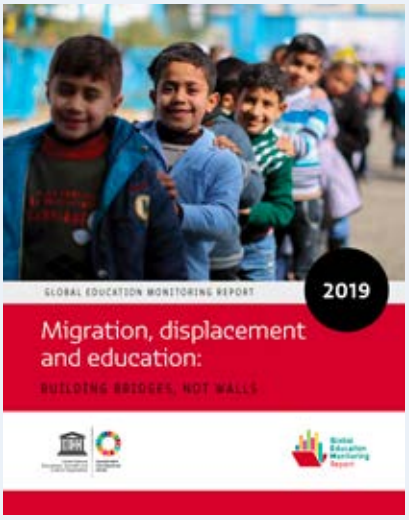
Wetlands are biologically diverse ecosystems that include lakes and rivers, swamps and marshes, wet grasslands, estuaries, deltas and tidal flats, mangroves and other coastal areas.

The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands supports the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. Around seventy sites are protected by both the World Heritage Convention and the Ramsar Convention. This issue takes a look at the collaboration between the two Conventions.



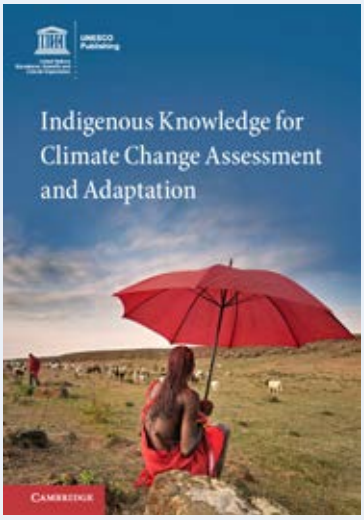
Global Education Monitoring Report 2019

Migration, displacement and education: Building bridges, not walls

ISBN 978-92-3-100283-0
384 pp., 215 x 280 mm, paperback, €45

The 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report shows that the number of migrant and refugee school-age children around the world today has grown by twenty-six per cent since 2000 and could fill half a million classrooms.

It highlights the achievements and shortcomings of countries in ensuring the right of migrant and refugee children to benefit from quality education, a right that serves the interests of both learners and the communities they live in.



Indigenous Knowledge for Climate Change Assessment and Adaptation

ISBN 978-92-3-100276-2
298 pp., 174 x 247 mm, paperback, €69
UNESCO Publishing/Cambridge University Press

Many indigenous peoples and marginalized populations live in environments that are highly exposed to climate change impacts – such as arid zones, small islands, high-altitude regions, and the Arctic.

Chapters – written by indigenous peoples, scientists and development experts – provide insights into how diverse societies observe and adapt to changing environments. A broad range of case studies illustrate how these societies – building upon traditional knowledge handed down through generations – are already developing their own solutions for dealing with a rapidly changing climate and how these solutions might be useful on a global scale.

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