ICH Definitions, Domains and Communities

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Definitions: article 2

The "intangible cultural heritage" means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.

This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development.

Key points

- Intangible heritage gives us an opportunity to celebrate aspects of heritage (practices, ideas) that were not included in the traditional western model of great buildings and artworks

- It is not separate from 'tangible' heritage, as it can include the meanings associated with material objects and places. World Heritage Convention could cover places that are significant for their ICH.

- Definitions of intangible heritage place great value on the significance of the heritage to communities, groups or individuals who practice that heritage.

Example: the Kuomboka

Libakeni 2004

In Zambia, the Kuomboka ceremony takes place at the end of the rain season, when the upper Zambezi River floods the plains of the Western Province. The festival celebrates the move of the Litunga, leader of the Lozi, from his compound at Lealui in the flood plain of the Zambezi River to Limulunga on higher ground. Kuomboka means 'to get out of water'.
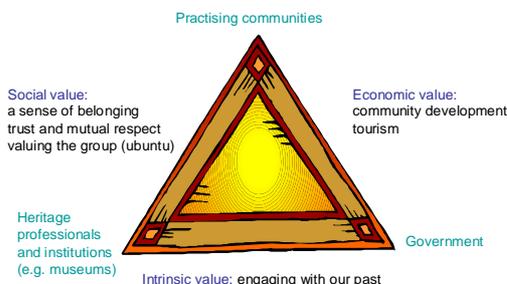
The ceremony is preceded by heavy drumming of the royal Maoma drums, the day before Kuomboka, announcing the event.
The King's barge is called Nalikwanda and is painted black and white, like Zambia's coat of arms. On the barge is a replica of a huge black elephant, the ears of which can be moved from inside the barge. There is also a fire on board, the smoke from which tells the people that the king is alive and well.
His wife is in a second barge with a huge black chicken on top. The wings move like the ears of the elephant, up and down.

Wikipedia 2006

Aspects of heritage value

Practising communities

Social value:
a sense of belonging
trust and mutual respect
valuing the group (ubuntu)

Economic value:
community development
tourism

Heritage professionals and institutions (e.g. museums)

Government

Intrinsic value: engaging with our past

Adapted from Hewison & Holden 2006

Why is ICH important?

- ICH is important because it provides practising communities with a sense of 'identity and continuity' – practising it is a responsibility to the group, and may be integral to its wellbeing

- Thus, ICH can, but does not have to be:
  - practiced by everyone, even within a community
  - available to everyone, even within the community
  - known to everyone, outside the community (and layers of knowledge within the community)
  - significant to everyone, outside the community

ICH in context

- ICH is not important just because of the objects, or the rituals themselves, but because of what lies behind them – their meaning for the practising community over the generations

- ICH can be used / applied in other cultural contexts, but in so doing it may gain other values (including monetary ones) and other meanings

- Change and communication between various cultural practices is positive, but so long as we do not lose the core significance of the ICH – that's why defining this significance is so critical

Domains: article 2

1. oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
2. performing arts;
3. social practices, rituals and festive events;
4. knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
5. traditional craftsmanship

Example: the Mbende / Jerusarema Dance

The Mbende / Jerusarema Dance is a popular dance style practiced by the Zezuru Shona people living in eastern Zimbabwe.

The dance is characterized by sensual and acrobatic movements by women in unison with men, driven by a single polyrhythmic drummer accompanied by men playing woodblock clappers and by women handclapping, yodelling and blowing whistles. Unlike other drum-based East African dance styles, the Mbende / Jerusarema does not rely on intricate foot stamping or many drummers. Instead, the music is performed by one master drummer, and no songs or lyrics are involved. A rich material culture, including drums, clappers, whistles and costumes, is associated with the dance.

Before colonial rule, this ancient fertility dance was called Mbende, the Shona word for "mole", which was regarded as a symbol of fertility, sexuality and family.

UNESCO Masterpieces 2005

Inclusions and exclusions

- Prioritisation generally extended to:
  - ICH threatened by colonisation / political marginalisation
  - ICH threatened by globalisation
  - ICH that reflects national / regional identity

- Main exclusions:
  - organised religion (but could be included under (d))
  - language (except as a vehicle for ICH)
  - human rights violations (process for decision-making?)
  - environmental non-sustainability (process for decision-making?)

Key points

- The 'domains' of the Convention provide a very broad framework for defining ICH at a national level: this provides flexibility for communities to define their ICH.

- The main problem is deciding what to inventory and what to fund at a national level, and what to list at an international level.

- Because communities define their own ICH it is better for governments or heritage managers to restrict what gets funded or prioritised for funding rather than what gets defined as ICH.

Community

- Communities are networks of people whose sense of identity or connectedness emerges from a shared historical relationship that is rooted in the practice and transmission of, or engagement with, their ICH;

- Link between defining heritage, minority identities and land claims
- Defining the boundaries of communities: recent and political inclusion and exclusion of community members
- Choosing representatives: the unequal nature of access to knowledge and power within communities

Example: Bark cloth in Uganda

Bark cloth making is an ancient craft performed by the Baganda people who live in the Buganda kingdom in south Uganda. For over 600 years, craftsmen of the Ngonge clan have been manufacturing bark cloth for the Baganda royal family and the rest of the community, headed by a *kaboggoza*, the hereditary chief craftsman, who lives in the Nsangwa village in Mawokota, situated in Mpigi District.

The inner bark of the Mutuba tree (*ficus natalensis*) is harvested during the wet season and then, in a long and strenuous process, beaten with different types of wooden mallets to make its texture soft and fine and give it an even terracotta colour.

Bark cloth is worn both by men and women like a toga, with a sash around the waist for women. While common bark cloth is terracotta in colour, bark cloth of the kings and chiefs is dyed white or black and worn in a different style to underline their status. The cloth is mainly worn at coronation and healing ceremonies, funerals and cultural gatherings but is also used for curtains, mosquito screens, bedding and storage.

UNESCO Masterpieces 2005

Role of the community

- The practicing community is the key point for heritage recreation. They have to be involved in the inventorying and listing processes, and in heritage management.

- Who 'owns' the heritage and what does 'ownership' mean?
- Who has the right to speak for the community?
- Who should define its meaning?

Resolving key issues

- 'We can't apply standard authenticity measures to ICH because it always changes' ; 'All traditions are invented'

- 'Because we can't define the community, we can't assign rights to the correct people'.

- 'Community identity is constructed' vs. 'community is easy to delineate: organic, even genetic'

- Although traditions change, something similar gets transmitted every time – what is that, and how has it changed over time? We can develop an archaeology of intangible heritage, with both outsider and insider involvement

- We can help communities to negotiate who has access and what this means. We need to recognise the politics of identity, not be overwhelmed by it

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Resolving key issues

- 'Heritage experts can't help taking over, and they are not even experts' vs. outsider 'heritage experts know best'

- 'Heritage for everyone' vs. 'It will reveal secret knowledge'

- BUT outsider heritage experts can work with communities and government. Roles can be defined and limited, capacity can be built

- BUT there are ways of protecting levels of knowledge

Safeguarding ICH
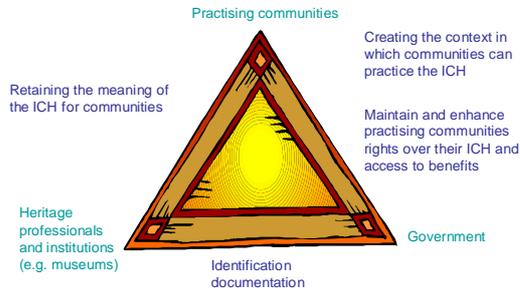
Legal, financial and administrative measures

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Safeguarding measures

- Article 2: "Safeguarding" means measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage.

Safeguarding heritage value

Practising communities

Creating the context in which communities can practice the ICH

Retaining the meaning of the ICH for communities

Maintain and enhance practising communities rights over their ICH and access to benefits

Heritage professionals and institutions (e.g. museums)

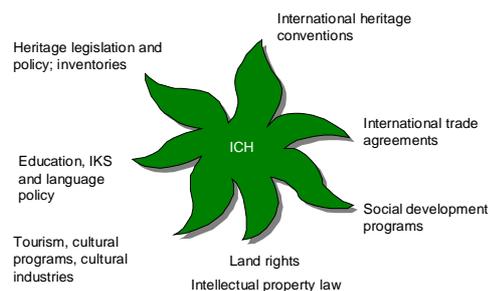Government

Identification documentation

A three-way task

- identify and safeguard important / threatened ICH
- develop funding strategies to support community-based management of ICH
- negotiate who belongs to and who represents the community
- negotiate what ownership of the ICH by a community implies
- protect community IP rights over the ICH
- channel benefits related to ICH back into communities

Government's role

- Develop and integrate (where necessary) legal and financial instruments for safeguarding heritage
- Enable and encourage communication between different government departments, agencies and NGOs working with heritage
- Maintain and administer inventories of ICH
- Make independent decisions around the compatibility of intangible resources with human rights codes
- Prioritise representative, neglected or at risk ICH for support
- Help communities to develop additional capacity to document and manage their own ICH, where necessary
- Manage the relationship between external heritage professionals and communities

Different policy contexts

International heritage conventions

Heritage legislation and policy; inventories

International trade agreements

Education, IKS and language policy

ICH

Social development programs

Tourism, cultural programs, cultural industries

Land rights

Intellectual property law

Heritage legislation

- AU Charter for the Cultural Renaissance of Africa 2005:
  - affirmation of cultural identity
  - essential to carry out 'a systematic inventory *in view of preserving and promoting* the cultural heritage'
  - 'ensure the promotion of African languages, mainstay, and media of material and immaterial cultural heritage'
- Trend towards developing broad cultural policies
- Much of the heritage legislation in Africa still only protects objects and places: 'monuments, relics and antiques'. This presents an opportunity to broaden the definition and democratise the management of both tangible and intangible heritage.

Key issues: national

- How to include ICH in national legislation;
- How to make different government departments work together on ICH;
- How to conduct an inventory of ICH at a national level;
- Where to put prioritise national resources for the safeguarding of ICH

Key issues: global

- Do you use the new ICH-friendly World Heritage list or the ICH list?
- How does trade protection / patent law relate to protection of ICH in the face of globalisation?
- How does the country develop ICH safeguarding in relation to international tourism?

Example: Robben Island

- World Heritage site inscription 1999

- Inscribed primarily for symbolic significance (ICH) linked to national identity in post-apartheid SA (triumph over oppression)

- Involvement of former political prisoners –given the moral right to speak for the site, and some benefits

- Protecting the spirit of the place through programs for continuing education on human rights, for example, just as important as protecting the fabric of the place

Basic principles

- Heritage resources can have tangible or intangible values – most have both;
- To be safeguarded, we need to carefully define what is important about our intangible heritage and who is responsible for passing it down the generations;
- Re-enactment, re-creation, practice and community ownership are crucial ways of safeguarding heritage significance;
- Boundaries around secret and sacred knowledge can be protected, if we are proactive;
- Sometimes heritage management does not require outsiders to intervene, but they can be helpful;
- Different kinds of experts understand heritage resources in different ways. All can be valuable, but we need to know what their roles are