



Appendix

Rapporteur's Report
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Rapporteur's Report
Networking—A Critical Pathway for
Safeguarding Intangible Heritage

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An eminent gathering of experts and the diversity of their knowledge based on first-hand efforts at safeguarding intangible heritage makes the task of a rapporteur daunting. Please allow me to share some reflections from a day of intense discussions. Rather than a summary of presentations, which are already provided by the organisers, I beg your attention to the following.

The Director-General of UNESCO, Madame Irina Bokova, has consistently emphasised the critical role of a culture in peace and sustainable development. She says that it 'is a source of identity and dignity for local communities, a wellspring of knowledge and strength to be shared'. The safeguarding of intangible heritage is critical to the viability and sustainability of this 'source of identity and dignity'. Safeguarding is a process that informs intercultural, intergenerational, interagency, and interdisciplinary dialogue.

First of all, UNESCO, ICHCAP, the Korean government, and all the States Parties from the Asia-Pacific region command admiration for the support and constructive input in the birthing of ICHCAP, a UNESCO Category 2 Centre. The mandate of ICHCAP to facilitate networking and capacity building in the

Asia-Pacific region is significant, and we all have a responsibility in ensuring cooperation and coordination for sustainable outcomes from the diversity of activities of ICHCAP. It is also important to note that the Directors of the UNESCO Category 2 Centres in China and Japan are generous to share their time and knowledge with us here today.

Networking has emerged in the twenty-first century as a science of the study local, regional, national, and international—or ‘beyond the border’, if you will—engagement in a world where globalisation has picked up an unprecedented and accelerated pace, economically, culturally, socially, and digitally. Transcending borders, both physical and cultural, has become imperative. At the same time, the caution is to minimise the transgressions across traditional and recently framed borders. Mutual respect and cross-cultural understanding are bedrock elements in safeguarding intangible heritage.

At the very outset, Mr Chan Kim, Administrator of the Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea, underlined dialogue and information sharing that characterise the operationalisation of ICHCAP. This is lucidly illustrated in the strategic planning and action programming documents of ICHCAP that are distributed here and posted on the web page. Dr Tim Curtis, Chief of the Culture Unit at the UNESCO Office in Bangkok, called the attention of all to the importance of maintaining a focus in the operationalisation of ICHCAP so that it has a clear Convention basis. Professor Dawnhee Yim, distinguished scholar and colleague, reflected on the importance of intercultural and interfaith dialogue in safeguarding intangible heritage.

Today’s roundtable of presentations and discussions have been organised around the Asia-Pacific’s sub-regions. Several presenters, especially our dear colleague and mentor Professor Noriko Aikawa, pointed out the sub-regional disparities in the engagement of States Parties and various stakeholders and actors in the Asia-Pacific region. A significant proportion of the ICH elements on the 2003 Convention’s Representative List are from North-East Asia. It is not surprising that three out of the four UNESCO Category 2 Centres dealing with the safeguarding of intangible heritage are from this sub-region, with the fourth one in Iran proposing to address the interests of West and Central Asian cultural regions.

The recent democracies of the past two decades in the Central Asia Republics

provide exciting and new opportunities for frameworks and networking in safeguarding intangible heritage. As is evident from the key players from Central Asia here, ICHCAP is already actively engaged in this sub-region. South Asia has a strong legacy basis for linguistic and cultural histories that inform a significant diversity of intangible heritage elements. The situation is similar in South-East Asia. The Pacific poses a distinct challenge, as an aqua continent located in one third of the oceans of the world, with dispersed islands that share the dynamic and yet most endangered intangible heritage elements rooted in the rich inheritances of trans-oceanic voyaging, *Voka Mona*.

In the above sub-regional context, there is also a disparity of engagement with international heritage law, whether the hard law of conventions and treaties or the soft law of declarations, charters, recommendations, and codes of ethical practice. It is envisaged here that ICHCAP could be an important vehicle for networking and information sharing to increase the number of States Parties to the 2003 Convention. This expansive and inclusive engagement is critical for addressing the linguistic and cultural diversity of the Asia-Pacific region as a contextual arena for effectively safeguarding intangible heritage elements. We all noted that one of the key concerns that have come up in discussions today is the non-duality of linguistic and intangible heritage.

Then there is the common ground between different conventions, for example, safeguarding local intangible heritage elements, such as the *hudhud* chants of the Ifugao landscapes within the framework of the 2003 Convention and preserving the rice terraces of the Ifugao world heritage. A different dimension to all the conventions is the need to interface and address the standard setting in the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The Ifugao, as indigenous people, command the attention of the world as one of the few indigenous communities that are engaged with both the intangible heritage and world heritage conventions. One of the challenges for ICHCAP that has come out of today is the need to address networking and information sharing with the largest number of and most diverse groups of the world's indigenous peoples who live across the Asia-Pacific region.

There has been considerable discussion today on inventorying. Case studies and challenges have been presented from the different Asia-Pacific sub-regions. Inventories are critical for implementing the 2003 Convention. The Convention

does not prescribe or define inventories. However, community participation is imperative in making inventories. The following are some of the essential areas where community participation needs to be ensured in the implementation of the Convention:

- Identifying and defining (Art. 11(b))
- Inventorying (Art.12, 15)
- Awareness raising (Art.14 , 15)
- Capacity building (Art.14 , 15)
- Safeguarding, management (Art.15)
- Nominations (OD 1, 2, 7)
- International assistance requests (OD 12) and
- Periodic reporting (OD 157, 160)

The key question is who does the inventorying. Community-based inventorying needs to be promoted, and this ultimately ensures the role of communities in the safeguarding process, without which there will be no viability and sustainability of the intangible heritage elements. The situation becomes even more complex when you are dealing with multinational nominations. How does one facilitate community-based inventorying while advocating and promoting multinational nominations?

The Pacific does have excellent models for community-based inventorying. The fieldworkers' network in Vanuatu has become one of the most significant mechanisms for community-driven intangible heritage inventorying in the first voice of the bearers and transmitters.¹ This is done within the respective community's own language. It is being adapted elsewhere in the Pacific. In fact, the Vanuatu model is also influencing methodologies in South Asia and elsewhere.

Given the primacy of the bearer and transmitter communities, groups, and individuals in safeguarding intangible heritage elements, the safeguarding-planning approaches taken involve full participation by the local community,

1 'Ralph Regenvanu and Kapila Vatsyayan - A Dialogue' in Amareswar Galla (ed.) *Proceedings of the International Workshop on Traditional Knowledge Systems, Museums & Intangible 'Natural' Heritage in South Asia*. Hyderabad. 3-7 February, 2008

drawing on local skills and expertise and providing for empowerment of the local community through the plan's development and implementation. In developing a community-based safeguarding plan, the opportunities to include strategies that empower local communities are prioritised, making them better able to provide for their own needs. The goal is to contribute to more effective community building by strengthening local capacity for action. The empowerment model for local planning is useful in these initiatives as it

- recognises that local people are well placed to know what they need,
- recognises that values and priorities vary from place to place,
- strategically places resources to maximise access by local people,
- gives local people resources to meet their own needs,
- gives control over resources to local communities, and
- develops the management skills of the local community.

Professor Dawnhee Yim emphasised in her opening keynote address today that it is 'important to construct a stable local collaborative system since collaborative efforts are necessary to create an environment for ICH Safeguarding'. Inventorying and safeguarding plans require a seamless engagement community to secondary stakeholders that are beyond the localities of the ICH elements. Abhimanu Singh from UNESCO Office in Beijing calls for a collaborative multi-stakeholder participatory framework in recalling Mahatma Gandhi's, 'no culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive'. I would add to it another of my own favourite Gandhi quotes, 'to believe in something and not practice it is a crime'. The gulf between rhetoric and reality of safeguarding intangible heritage can be bridged through inclusive practices and effective networking and sharing of information based on case studies and methodologies of inventorying would be extremely useful. This is even more important in the face of the shortage of experts that has been brought to our attention today.

Finally I would like to draw your attention to the opportunities presented today on the appropriate and effective use of technologies in intangible heritage safeguarding. The endeavours are cross-disciplinary in scope, bringing together technologists with a concern for the social, and social scientists with a concern for the technological. The need to scope the potential is primarily, but not exclusively,

on information and communications technologies.²

Apart from the mechanics of social technologies and the social impact of technologies, we need to address the way technology is used to address human needs and serve community interests in intangible heritage safeguarding. We need to address values of intergenerational transmission, translation, creativity, innovation, access, equity, and personal and community autonomy. In this space, commercial and community interests at times complement each other; at other times, they appear to be at odds.

Over the past four decades, digital technologies have become signature change agents in all aspects of our domestic, working, and public lives. Whether it is our awareness of the world through the media, formal or informal learning, shopping, banking, travelling, or communicating, digital technologies are everywhere. The hardware is getting less expensive relative to the power of the technology. Meanwhile, battles loom large in the domain of intellectual property.

How do we understand and evaluate the workings of these technologies in safeguarding intangible heritage? To answer this question, we need to recruit the disciplines of computer science, software engineering, communications systems, and applied linguistics. We need to develop and apply the conceptual tools of cybernetics, informatics, and systemics and the theory of distributed networks. And how do we understand their effects? Here we may consider the impact of the new media, intelligent systems, or human-machine interfaces.

The earlier information and communications technologies of modernity centralised power, knowledge, and culture. They were built with heavy plant and physical infrastructure—the printing presses, the transmission stations, and the transport and distribution systems—that only the larger corporation or the state could afford. They were centralised, driven by economies of (large) scale and dominated on a day-to-day basis by those with economic resources, political power, and elite cultural networks.

The new digital technologies are free or cheap, instantaneous, and global.

2 The Social Ecology of Digital Technologies as the overriding theme was debated and illustrated through case studies in the Technology, Knowledge and Society International Research Conference in Hyderabad in December 2005. (<http://t06.cgpublisher.com/welcome.html>) The material here is derived from my inputs as the President of the Conference immediately after the adoption of the UNESCO 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage.

They are decentralised and distributed. And so, it is argued that they open out and provide broader access to the means of production and communication of meaning. They are the bases for an electronic democracy, participatory design, and communities of practice. They allow myriad cultures, interests, and knowledge communities to flourish. Or at least, this is one interpretation. In bleaker views, they add a digital divide to older historical cleavages of inequality; they daze us into passivity; they place our every movement under surveillance; and they enforce a sedentary compliance.

There is little doubt that e-learning is destined to become a larger part of the experience of learning at school, in universities, on the job, and at home—indeed, in lifelong and life-wide learning. Technology is now a central concern of education, not only from the point of view of preparing students for a world of work where networked computers are pervasive, but also from the point of view of community participation and citizenship. Learners who are excluded from the new information spaces will clearly be economically, socially, and culturally disadvantaged.

The capacity of the new information and communication technologies to transform learning relationships, networking, and information sharing in safeguarding intangible heritage is yet to be adequately explored. Instead of being the conventional recipients of transmitted knowledge (syllabuses, textbooks, and information resources), communities of learning might become places where teachers and learners develop knowledge banks, and where traditional classrooms, dominated by teacher-researcher talk, are replaced by open learning in which groups of learners work autonomously and collaboratively on knowledge projects within a structured content-management environment for safeguarding intangible heritage.

The world is moving into a phase that is widely, and perhaps too glibly at times, referred to as a ‘knowledge economy’ or ‘knowledge society’. Information and communications technologies, and their human effects, play a central part in this development. How does ICH safeguarding sit within this framework?

These digital technologies allow new, bottom-up structures of knowledge to emerge, building from the collaborative endeavours of knowledge transmitting/creating/generating communities—in, for instance, community learning centres, workplaces, schools, and associations of common interest. In each case, they provide the means by which personal and group knowledge may be shared and

transformed into common knowledge. From being receptors of knowledge, persons, organisations, and communities become makers and publishers of knowledge, reversing, at least in part, the fundamental epistemic flows of modernity and replacing this with a new ‘dialogics’ of knowledge. The perspectives presented range from big-picture analyses that address global and universal concerns to detailed case studies that speak of localised social applications of technology.

In conclusion, may I draw your attention to three principles that underpin today’s deliberations on networking? The first and foremost is *cooperation* and *coordination* in all our endeavours at safeguarding ICH where the basis of the Convention is axiomatic. *Information sharing* is our ability to respect and value our cumulative and collective efforts in ICH safeguarding so that this new field of endeavour in implementing the Convention benefits from the collective wisdom of all stakeholders and concerned agencies. Finally, *networking* is the science of seamless interactivity to further the implementation of the Convention, and the role of the digital domain needs to be fully explored so as to maximise the opportunities provided and minimise the negative impacts of globalisation as well as digital, economic, cultural, and social change. Thank you and I wish you my heartfelt gratitude for bearing with me at the end of a long day in our commitment to safeguarding intangible heritage.