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# Re-totalizing Culture
## Breathing the Intangible into Museum Practice?

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Résumé de l'article

Dans une inquiétude grandissante devant l'amenuisement de la diversité culturelle, l'homogénéisation et la sauvegarde du patrimoine matériel, l'UNESCO a de plus en plus assumé une position directrice dans la conception des nouveaux instruments législatifs – programmes, déclarations, conventions et traités – pour la sauvegarde et la règlementation en matière de patrimoine culturel. Cette politique culturelle a été réorientée au cours des deux dernières décennies par un bloc politique cosmopolite émergent et décidé, qui a tenté d'inverser le biais occidental de cet organisme pour qu'il étende sa protection non seulement au patrimoine matériel, mais également aux expressions culturelles immatérielles. Ce nouvel intérêt politique coïncide avec de nouvelles exigences de considérer comme un tout ces deux aspects de la culture afin d'encourager l'utilisation institutionnelle des interprétations vernaculaires au lieu des classifications typologiques imposées de l'extérieur et d'en haut. Bien que ces mouvements aient un intérêt commun pour la décolonisation de la culture institutionnelle, il n'existe pas de consensus global au sujet des moyens par lesquels l'autorité interprétative pourrait être rendue aux communautés et aux praticiens d'origine et être exercée par ceux-ci. Afin de répondre à ce mandat culturel relativement nouveau, l'UNESCO a révisé ses définitions de la culture. Ces ré-articulations – inspirées en grande partie de discours anthropologiques spécifiques – élargissent le concept de culture pour y inclure ses manifestations matérielles et immatérielles, et procurent une autorité morale et intellectuelle légitime à la promotion d'une plus grande acceptabilité. Cet article représente une modeste tentative de définir et de suivre l'influence d'une partie des discours générés par des cultures institutionnelles mondialisées sur la pratique muséale et de soulever des questions au sujet des choix que les musées sont actuellement amenés à faire.

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# Re-totalizing Culture

*Breathing the Intangible into Museum Practice?*

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> The entanglement of the global and the local, and the problematic position of nation states in globalization must not be examined only as political questions. They are first and foremost questions of image and technologies of representation. (Yoshimoto, 1996: 109)

With the growth of concern over diminishing cultural diversity, homogenization, and the preservation of tangible patrimony, UNESCO has increasingly assumed a lead position in devising new legislative instruments – programs, proclamations, conventions, and treaties – for the safeguard and regulation of cultural heritage. This cultural policy has been re-directed in the last two decades by a newly emergent and confident cosmopolitan political bloc that has attempted to reverse the organization's Occidental bias by extending the protection it gives to tangible heritage to include intangible cultural expressions.

This new political interest coincides with wider demands for the re-totalization of both aspects of culture aimed at encouraging the institutional use of vernacular interpretations in place of typological and externally imposed classifications. While these movements share a common interest in the decolonization of institutional culture, there is no overarching consensus on the means by which authority over interpretation can be returned to and exercised by originating communities and practitioners. Superficially, these new currents appear to be aimed at the empowerment of a large, but marginalized number of less developed nation states or internally colonized peoples, that are rightly demanding control over the interpretation of their cultural practices which are globally recognized as indices of ethnic identity. On closer examination however, the discourse and policy of some of these decolonization strategies appear to be compromised by their intimate linkage to globalization, thus forcing intangible cultural

policy issues into an acutely politicized arena of contestation.

To support its relatively new cultural mandate, UNESCO has revised its definitions of culture. These rearticulations – largely appropriated from specific anthropological discourses – expand the concept of culture to include its tangible and intangible manifestations and provide a legitimating moral and intellectual authority to promote its wider acceptability. This essay represents a modest attempt to define and trace the influence of part of the rhetoric generated by globalized institutional cultures on museum practice and to raise questions on the current choices museums have been called to make.

## The Internationalized Politics of Culture

Derrida, in *The Rights to Philosophy*, proposes that international organizations, like UNESCO, and their associated instruments, derive an extraordinary power from being constituted by, what he calls, philosophemes:

> They are philosophical acts and archives, philosophical productions and products, not only because the concepts that legitimate them have an ascribable philosophical history and this a philosophical history that finds itself inscribed in the charter or the constitution of UNESCO; rather because, at the same time, and for this reason, such institutions imply the sharing of a culture and a philosophical language, committing themselves consequently to making possible, by means of education first of all, the access to this language and to this culture (2002: 331).

He goes on to argue that while philosophy through its institutionalization has been narrowed to its modernist lineage – ultimately traceable back to the Greco-Roman world – it is nevertheless 'in-itself' essentially irreducible to any one language or specific national origin, or to any singular codification or institutionalization (Derrida, 2002: 340).

Despite Derrida's concerns over the persistence of its institutionalized meta-narrative, UNESCO's advocacy and leadership role in the struggle for the inclusion of intangible expressions, as an essential and legitimate manifestation of cultural heritage, has been paramount (Arizpe, 2004: 134). Since 1972 the organization has attempted to forge international consensus over the definition and conservation of cultural heritage. The 1972 Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage largely defined culture following well-established tangible or material criteria. These were pragmatically applied resulting today in

the definition and designation of 981 world heritage sites spread across 160 countries. However, partly due to political impediments as well as disagreement and uncertainty around its definition, intangible cultural expressions were ignored in the majority of national and UNESCO heritage related instruments prior to the 1990s (Blake, 2000: 72; Bedjaoui, 2004: 151; Munjeri, 2004: 13; Aikawa-Faure, 2009: 14). At the national level only Japan (1950), The Republic of Korea (1962), The Philippines (1972, 1988), Thailand (1985), and France (1994) had designated protective measures to safeguard and acknowledge the bearers of the intangible heritage. Not until 1989, at the 25th Session of the UNESCO General Conference, was agreement reached to extend the concept of culture to include intangible heritage (The Recommendation for the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore). The recommendation was intended to encourage the development of national inventories, archives and documentation centers and promote incorporation of intangible manifestations into existing museum displays. Unfortunately, no organization was mandated to enforce or recommend mechanisms for the instrument's adoption, leaving its implementation to ad hoc measures devised by individual member states (Aikawa, 2004: 138-140). In 1999 the conference, *A Global Assessment of the 1989 Recommendation: Local Empowerment and International Co-operation*, jointly hosted by UNESCO and the Smithsonian Institution, examined the influence of the earlier proposal and concluded there had been "too much emphasis on documentation and archiving and on the products rather than the producers of traditional culture" and recommended better acknowledgement and support of "grassroots practitioners in the production, transmission and preservation of their cultural expressions" (Aikawa, 2004: 140).

The second legislative instrument pertaining to the intangible heritage grew out of the 1993 Paris forum on *International Consultation on New Perspectives for UNESCO's Programme: The Intangible Cultural Heritage*. The 1993 program and the 1999 reassessment of the 1989 convention, based on Japan's and the Republic of Korea's earlier successful preservation programmes that designated practitioners as 'living treasures' (Kurin, 2004a: 68; Lee, 2004), substituted a more dynamic and socially relevant perspective on the nature of cultural heritage than had previously been accepted. By focusing on its intangible qualities, culture was redefined as a living and vital organism constantly undergoing renewal and revision whose preservation and definition could only be accomplished by the participation of communities and practitioners. The 1999 Washington Conference

reaffirmed the definition of culture, already instituted in the 1993 UNESCO program Living Human Treasures and the 1998 Proclamation of Masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Heritage. The 1993 and 1998 programs encouraged member states to bestow greater acknowledgment on 'Living Human Treasures' by giving official recognition to individuals with outstanding artistic skills in intangible forms of expressive culture. Between 1999 and 2003 various workshops were convened across the continents to share different experiences of intangible heritage conservation, the preservation of performance arts, implementation of the living human treasure system, and the role of education and training; all of which guided the drafting of the third instrument, the 2003 International Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage.

By addressing intangible heritage the 2003 Convention broadened and significantly redirected the concept of cultural heritage (Lee, 2004: 3). It broke new ground in its definition, terminology and vocabulary; it described intangible heritage as universal; it agreed on new criteria for its protection and it gave the responsibility for its preservation to its practitioners, creators and communities of origin (Bedjaoui, 2004: 153; Blake, 2009: 46). As recommended by the 1999 conference, heritage was viewed as "process and practices" rather than products; it became recognized as "a source of identity, creativity, diversity and social cohesion"; it acknowledged the specificities of its constantly evolving creative elements; it recognized the interconnections between tangible and intangible cultural heritage; it enhanced respect for culture and its practitioners, and it guaranteed the primary role of its creators, practitioners and communities. The preservation of intangible heritage, acknowledged as dependent on its effective transmission between generations, was made into one of its major defining characteristics. Finally, by linking intangible heritage to the ascription and expression of specific cultural and inalienable identities, the 2003 Convention, defined culture as a fundamental human right (Aikawa, 2004: 146; Blake, 2009: 53; Nafziger, Paterson and Renteln, 2010: 66-67). As Kreps (2009: 199), succinctly reminds us, although the museum might be a Western invention, "museological behavior is an ancient, cross-cultural phenomenon." In short, the 2003 Convention situated intangible cultural property within a new, though still precarious, dichotomous political culture of local interpretations, responsibilities and implementation, and international mandates for its definition, ascription, adoption, and enforcement, generated by UNESCO.

UNESCO based instruments, programs, reports and discourses on intangible culture consistently draw together the diffuse anthropological characterization of culture with a specific political meta-narrative that receive their final legitimation by valuing cultural identity as a universal and inalienable human right. However, the link these instruments make between the nature of intangible cultural heritage and personal, cultural or national identities is fundamentally unstable and unendurable. This instability can be attributed to two possible causes. First, following Derrida (2002: 338), such structural instability may be the product of the success of the UNESCO philosopheme in exploiting its endemic propensity towards hybridity and consequently constantly exceeding and transforming its original Greco-Roman structure in new and unpredictable ways. Contrarily, and more pessimistically, the philosopheme infringes, naturalizes and appropriates its institutionalized 'others' through its assimilative propensities. In such cases, UNESCO's sometimes ambiguous credibility among parts of the national populations of its member states and its failure to guarantee new rights and obligations clearly compromises the organization's legitimacy and competence in policy implementation.

UNESCO's formulation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage complements some of its other policies and directives regarding the contemporary role of museums. Key UNESCO reports such as Our Creative Diversity (1995) and Cultural Diversity, Conflict and Pluralism (2000) explicitly acknowledge the effects of globalization on the erosion of the nation state and the shift of power to transnational institutions that base their legitimacy on multiculturalism. Such changes acknowledge the fundamental rupture between cultural identity and its ascription by increasingly debilitated nation states and underline the urgency to recognize and develop alternative loci of identity formation based on notions of regional or global citizenship. Arizpe urges the construction of such alternative sites to avoid cultural and cognitive dissonance that threaten psychological well-being (2004: 133).

Joxe argues that despite its dominance, the American entropic model of globalization coexists with an alternative European formulation that supports the survival of viable nation states and regions as primary loci for cultural identification and stability.

> The American school assumes globalization as a smoothing over of all political territories as non-sovereignties (except the territory of the United States). The European school on the other hand looks to cover the globalized economic world with sovereign socio-historical political identities (Joxe, 2002: 87).

Both schools foresee the inevitable rise of a supra-national cosmopolitan elite that distinguishes its values, tastes and interests from those of localized populations. In the American model, local populations would be increasingly marginalized and disengaged from their rights as citizens (Bourdieu, 2003: 96; Bauman, 1998: 60-61; Joxe, 2002: 170). While the relations between the local and global are complicated by the pervasiveness of digital technologies that rearticulate the linearity of time and rephrase the distinction between the real and imaginary as the plausible and implausible or the actual and the virtual (Yoshimoto, 1996: 111-112), the co-existence of distinctive loci and levels of identity formation are well recognized. Arizpe distinguishes three levels: place based identities, nation state based identities and regional identities. She argues that any move from national to regional based identities will only occur, as in the European model, if it is accompanied by an increase in democratic rights, including that to the exercise of intangible cultural expression.

Most authors agree that global culture, following Yoshimoto's insistence that both its spatial and temporal effects require equal attention, is and will remain essentially eclectic and operative at several coexistent levels: "as a cornucopia of standardized commodities, as a patchwork of denationalized ethnic or folk motifs, as a series of generalized 'human values and interests', as a uniform 'scientific' discourse of meaning, and finally as the interdependent system of communications which forms the material base for all the other components and levels" (Smith, 1990: 176). Much of the UNESCO legislation on intangible culture to date has been aimed at protecting and tying it to specific sites of identity formation and clearly shows its affinity with European conceptualizations of globalization and the continued importance of local and national affiliations. Culture, according to the European Union's "Communication on a European Agenda for Culture in a Globalising World," declares: "lies at the heart of human development and civilization. Culture is what makes people hope and dream, by stimulating our senses and offering new ways of looking at reality" (Corsane and Mazel, 2012: 249). "The challenge," Arizpe argues "for international organizations like UNESCO, is that all individuals or societies must be provided with the enabling conditions to re-present and to negotiate their cultural locations within this new multi-tiered cultural cosmopolis" (2004: 134).

This large-scale worldwide re-articulation of identity inevitably questions the 19th and 20th century organization, cultural politics and missions of museums that historically have been deeply implicated in the

imagining of the nation state, and demands they re-focus their presentations in accord with one or other versions of these new globalizing ideologies. These wider political attenuations in inclusionary politics, particularly in the multicultural societies of northern Europe, have played a direct role in re-forming previously nation-centered institutions into a new genre of world culture (but not cultures) museums, such as those in Stockholm, Rotterdam, Cologne, Vienna, and Liverpool, that clearly express the European model of globalization. In contrast, the exclusionary political projects that Joxe identifies with the USA are, with the exception of Native American exhibitions, implicit within the new technologies of representation found in assimilative institutions that continue to appropriate and expropriate culture following a long established and essentialized philosopheme.

## The Limitlessness of Culture

Limitations on the interpretation and implementation of the instruments and programs for the protection of intangible cultural heritage are rooted in two deficiencies: the first centers on the highly charged nature of the key definitive terms, 'culture,' 'heritage,' 'community' and 'property'; while the second stems from the ambivalent source of UNESCO's institutional authority and legitimacy.

Intangible cultural heritage is, by its ephemeral and distinctive non-material expression, difficult to define. It includes everything, "the immaterial elements that influence and surround all human activity" (Stefano, Davis and Corsane, 2012: 1). Moreover, the relation between intangible and tangible cultural expressions, despite generalizations about their unity, is complex and multi-relational. Different types of intangible cultural expressions, including some that are outside the 2003 Convention's definition, are related in different ways to the tangible heritage. Nowhere are these contradictions better evidenced than in Bedjiaoui's paradoxically sophisticated view of intangible culture and his conservative notion of its function. Bedjaoui (2004: 153), one of the main protagonists behind the 2003 Convention, rightly insists: "Intangible cultural heritage, living heritage par excellence, cannot be controlled, frozen and finally trapped in a legal mould that would eliminate its vitality and flexibility. Living, it must imperatively stay that way. As its distinctive mark demonstrates, whether ordinary or exceptional, it must remain between tradition and innovation."

Nevertheless, given its elusive, dynamic and sometimes atavistic or transgressive qualities, he fails to explicate how intangible heritage

supports the concept of nationhood that he remains committed to defend. "Heritage," he insists, "is to the nation what the soul is to human beings. It must stay at the crossroads of codes, at the intersection of moral law, religious norms and legal regulations."

Bedjaoui acknowledges the complexity, ambiguity and paradoxical nature of intangible culture while at the same time, contradictorily, arguing for protection of this indefinable legacy to maintain the discrete identities of nation states faced with global integration, trivialization and international homogenization. The same contradiction is also found in other authors. Blake (2000: 4) and Munjeri (2004: 15), for example, acknowledge the capacity of intangible cultural property to mix 'tradition with modernity' as the source of its essential vigor and dynamism, but remain silent on how, if it is to be retained, such a transformative and creative quality can be harnessed to establish fixed national or local identities. Byrne (2009: 229), suggests UNESCO policies and instruments reify culture by selectively ascribing and fixing their immutable value and treating them hierarchically, while Tauschek (2012: 196) emphasizes the bureaucratic force behind international organizations and the drive to legitimate and expand their fields of action. The essentializations of culture, which certain anthropological definitions allow, permits its use within the formulation of legislative and legal instruments as "the underlying 'spirit' of a cultural group," and enable its subsequent valuation as a basic and universal human right. The resulting merger between anthropology and the new international politics of culture has produced a fundamental contradiction between the agreed, if imprecise, definitions of culture and the realization of its prescribed political function to fix and express local and national identities and project them to the wider world. This contradiction stems from the adoption of a particular closed and static anthropological concept of culture, compounded by the lack of clarity on the nature and relationship between tangible and intangible, or material and immaterial culture.

Traditional anthropological definitions of culture are notoriously general and as the legal profession notes, ill-defined and contradictory (Nafziger, Paterson and Renteln, 2010: 64). Edward Tylor, in 1871, wrote: "Culture … taken in its wide ethnographic sense is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (1871: 1). Some anthropologists might exclude behavior, but not the norms governing it. French structuralism, such as that of Claude Levi-Strauss, would limit its definition to the deep linguistic-like structures underlying narrative

and social expressions. Differences of emphases between the social and cultural characterize American and British anthropology. Clyde Kluckhohn and Alfred Kroeber attempted a more objectivist definition of culture by describing it as "collective symbolic discourse that included knowledge, beliefs and values" (Kuper, 1999: 16), while Kluckhohn and Kelly, more precisely suggested: "A culture is a historically derived system of explicit and implicit designs for living, which tends to be shared by all or specially designated members of a group" (In Nafziger, Paterson and Renteln, 2010: 117). The concept was inflated by later American anthropologists, Clifford Geertz, David Schneider and Marshall Sahlins, who conflated culture with the spiritual aspects of being (Kuper, 1999: 16). Geertz saw culture as comprising all those resources that individuals use to create significant meanings at specific places and times. Neither a totalizing nor a clearly bounded whole, or a coherent or codified system, culture provides the means through which we create our existential 'home'. It is noteworthy that anthropology often excludes tangible culture form its definition of culture in general. Even Kurin, despite his experience in museums only equates culture with its intangible manifestation. For him: "It is the culture that people practice as part of their everyday lives. It is beliefs and perspectives, ephemeral performances and events that are not tangible qualities of culture" (2004: 67). For anthropology, at least until Wagner defined the discipline as "the study of man 'as if' there were culture" (1975: 10), culture has either been regarded as a social endo or exo-skeleton that supports and gives meaning to a wide ensemble of practices and constructs.

These vague anthropological definitions are made even more elusive when melded to political discourses. The World Conference on Cultural Policies (Mexico City, 1982) proposed that culture: "In its widest sense, (is) the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, … value systems, traditions and beliefs" (In Blake, 2002: 3). Munjeri (2004: 18) envisages that the definition of cultural heritage could be expanded still further to include spiritual and intangible natural heritage, but even without this revision and despite UNESCO's contrary intention, its current definition, by encompassing intellectual culture, already enables it to closely conform to the totality of our imaginative and lived experience. UNESCO acknowledges only a depoliticized, asocial concept of culture to avoid the inconvenient implications of the argument that once culture is made synonymous with lived experience, and equal value ascribed to

the culture of all social groups living within a nation state, the support given to uphold the way of life of those groups might conflict with the very authority or sovereignty of the state itself. The 2003 Convention situates culture firmly within 'communities' despite the vagueness of the term (Hottin and Grenet, 2012: 103), and the illusiveness between social entities defined by their specific knowledge, know-how and way of life, and their essential unboundedness due to their heterogeneity and frequent lack of spokespersons or representatives (Blake, 2009: 53).

Blake (2000: 62; 2009: 46) believes heritage legislation has always been influenced by the specific historical circumstances of the period in which it was enacted and that issues around the preservation of intangible culture have exacerbated the politicization of the field even further. It comes as little surprise therefore that the intention behind the 1998 Proclamation and the 2003 convention to safeguard the world's intangible culture was motivated by insecurity over the fate of local cultural identities and diversity caused by the acceleration of globalization and the perceived cultural trivialization that accompanied it (Aikawa, 2004: 140; Arizpe, 2004: 132; Blake, 2002: 2; Kurin, 1997: 275; 2004: 68; Nas, 2002: 142 and Bedjaoui, 2004: 152). Such concerns were evidenced in the 2002, 7th Convention of ICOM-ASPACA (Asia-Pacific Regional organization) on Intangible Heritage and Globalization, which resulted in the Shanghai Charter, a list of guidelines intended to assist museums to deepen their presentation and protection of intangible heritage. More generally however, the issue has become a persistent theme in contemporary anthropology and cultural studies, and a principal divide between critics and supporters of globalization (Arizpe, 2004: 133; Bourdieu, 2003: 67; Bauman, 1998: 100; Friedman, 2001: 264; Smith, 1990: 177).

The second problem surrounding UNESCO's position on intangible culture stems from the much more general lack of consensus and clarity over any identifiable and convincing institutional meta-narrative by which it legitimates and consecrates its authority. Legislation, although incapable of breaking free from the Eurocentric philosopheme, rejects the presuppositions of the US model of globalization. This philosophical core needs neither affirmation of the classical mode of appropriation (making for oneself what belongs to the other) or its refutation and substitution by new ways of thinking (Derrida, 2002: 336). This binary construction is "symptomatic of a missionary and colonial structure," that fails to win legitimacy or instigate efficient organization uniformly throughout the world's diverse populations. UNESCO's ambivalence becomes apparent

in its legislative instruments: they are intended to support localities and national states but, at the same time, they constitute a crucial part of the larger regulatory apparatus of globalization. While defining the local singularity and specificity of intangible cultural heritage and acknowledging that it can only be protected at its roots, these instruments universalize the particularities of cultural expressions redefining them as part of a common human patrimony. More often than not the ascription of heritage status results in the disconnection between culture and local territory, commodification and its incorporation into global culture (Skounti, 2009: 74). UNESCO invents the local in order to become conscious of the universal. "Culture is made visible by culture-shock, by subjecting oneself to situations beyond one's normal interpersonal competence and objectifying the discrepancy as an entity; it is delineated through an inventive realization of that entity following the initial experience" (Wagner, 1975: 9).

The fundamental founding principle of UNESCO is the promulgation of human universality. Following Article I of its Constitution, its purpose is:

> to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, the rule of law, and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations.

The organization accepts a common universal and naturalized concept of history that binds people and nations together, and which it increasingly identifies with a process of globalization that the majority of people in the world experience negatively. For the present at least, UNESCO accepts the coexistence of nation states, and with it the right of their populations to a distinctive cultural identity. This balance between global and (globalized) local cultures aims to preserve what Arizpe calls "a golden cultural proportion":

> conserving intangible cultural heritage and cultural diversity implies preserving a certain harmony, a kind of 'golden cultural proportion' whereby people safeguard intimate cultural roots, whether originally ascribed or adopted, while feeling free to embrace whatever they have reasons to value from other cultures (2004: 133).

Through its bureaucratic structure UNESCO helps control the ascription of the definition of intangible culture and the ensuing modulation of rights, privileges and universal human values. To be listed under the

terms of the Proclamation of the Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, national governments name the candidates from nominations they, intergovernmental organizations and NGOs put forward. Member states prepare the required description (including documentation and identification), justification, and a preservation management plan, which are evaluated by experts before being submitted to an eighteen member international jury (Nas, 2002: 139). Theoretically, the process minimizes any undue influence from specific member states, but nearly one-third (6) of the 19 cultural expressions accorded protection in 2001 had been nominated from the countries represented on the jury (Olwig, 2002: 146). Nevertheless, the political machinations, rhetoric and sometimes banality behind the nomination and evaluation processes and action plans have been well documented (Hafstein, 2009; Seeger, 2009; Ballachina, 2012). The political determination of the legislation also underlies the choice of what a country defines as heritage and what it excludes (Blake, 2000: 68). Furthermore, the majority of listed and protected intangible cultural expressions come from the southern hemisphere, from what Olwig describes unfairly as 'peripheral' countries that he wrongly surmises have minimal effect on the economics or politics of western nations.

Munjeri accepts the subjective indeterminability that results from the use of ill-defined constitutive terminologies as unavoidable to correct the bias of the 1972 Convention on tangible heritage (2004: 16). Nevertheless, the tendency to dichotomize culture into its tangible and intangible aspects, and equate these principally with the northern and southern hemisphere respectively can easily reproduce the assumption of a cognitive divide between written and oral cultures. As Kurin (1997: 109; 2004: 69) and Ames (1992: 111) point out, intangible cultural heritage is also a characteristic of developed northern hemispheric societies. Positions like that of Munjeri may increase the profile of the south, but they also re-inscribe hierarchy, marginalization and political subservience to the non-west and reconstitute them as the other through which the Occident constantly redefines itself. Munjeri is right when he intimates that the values on which the privileging of the tangible cultural heritage rest needed themselves to be deconstructed (2004: 13). Nevertheless, a similar deconstruction must also be applied to definitions and uses of the intangible heritage.

A further paradox stemming from the indeterminate relation between the two types of heritage leads some to claim that in order to safeguard the intangible it must necessarily be transformed into tangible records, a process that is achieved only by irredeemably altering that which it strives

to preserve (Goody, 2004: 91-2). This epistemological and ontological transformation of intangible cultural heritage appears to have been ignored by policy makers when extolling the benefits of museum intervention in this area. Lee, for example, challenges museums to reinvent themselves:

> after the collection of the intangible cultural assets and the investigation of its historical context, museum(s) should be concerned with (their) transcriptions and interpretations to transform intangible cultural assets into tangible cultural assets… the task that (the) museum has to do today is to transform intangible culture into tangible for an embodiment in flesh; it is an enterprise to give intangible power to tangible cultural heritage by inoculating it with human soul (2004: 4).

This transformation of the museum's traditional territory is to be accomplished through technology. It need not be only recording and documentation or the creation of a virtual reality as Lee suggests, but by locating the portals to this interactive medium in communities it can serve to reactivate real, lived experiences rather than simply simulating them.

UNESCO's programs and instruments on tangible and intangible heritage are intended to intervene in situations that the larger organization of which it is part, supports. These instruments and interventions are aimed at the symptoms of the condition rather than the problems that have created and sustained it. By abstaining from intervening in the terms of globalization, UNESCO clearly demonstrates a political position, closely allied to the European Union, which limits it from doing more than implementing short- or at best medium-term social engineering projects. The culture and heritage which it defines, classifies, validates and seeks to preserve, is assimilated into an official bureaucratic canonical matrix, which must be distinguished from unofficial heritage that continues to subsist and sometimes flourish outside its regulatory frameworks (West, 2010: 1).

## Cultural Retotalization. Political Acquiescence or Resistance?

Over the past two or three decades there has been a strong reaction against essentializing culture led by intellectuals from those countries that have suffered most the effects of objectification. Bhabha proposes:

> The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation. The 'right' to signify from the periphery of authorized power and privilege does not depend on the persistence of traditions; it is resourced by the power of

> tradition to be reinscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attend upon the lives of those who are 'in the minority' (1994: 2).

Older anthropological definitions of culture, and those at the core of UNESCO's own definition, gloss over its sociological specificities, variations and its relations to specific classes, groups, professions and institutions. Once re-embedded in its sociological context, culture soon loses its synthetic appearance and as Bourdieu (1977; 1993; 1996), Plattner (1996) and Myers (2002), among others, demonstrate, dissolves into its constituent levels, markers and practices that are closely associated with the social positions and struggles of specific individuals and groups. Bourdieu insists:

> The selection of meanings which objectively defines a group or a class's culture as a symbolic system is sociologically necessary insofar as that culture owes its existence to the social conditions of which it is the product and its intelligibility to the coherence and functions of the structure of the signifying relations which constitute it (1977: 8).

Refuting closed, static and essentialist concepts he argues: "Culture is not what one is but what one has, or rather, what one has become" (Bourdieu, 1993: 234). The acquisition of high or dominant culture is reserved for those who have been inducted, through education, in the code to its understanding and appreciation; who have the necessary economic capital to acquire, appropriate or experience it, and who consciously or unconsciously have distinguished themselves through their social uses of culture to signal their position and status. With the dissolution of the appearance of culture as a zeitgeist, its supposed inner essence also appears less convincing. Culture, far from being removed from social life, politics and economics, is demonstrated to be an active agency of formulation, affirmation, critique and contestation. De Certeau argues that culture has to be seen as a process of social and historical actions, "a way of doing things," a "style of actions," with clear revolutionary potential rather than a given set of representations (1986: 228). Bourdieu and Passeron are more explicit still:

> The selection of meanings which objectively defines a group's or class's culture as a symbolic system is arbitrary insofar as the structure and functions of that culture cannot be deduced from any universal principle, whether physical, biological or spiritual, not being linked by any sort of internal relation to 'the nature of things' or any 'human nature' (1977: 8).

A museum that takes seriously this sociological concept of culture over the closed and static model inherited from an older anthropology would be

a very different, even dangerous institution that, far from participating in the legitimation of social relations, would provide an ongoing dialogical critique and contribute to the constant renewal of practice. It might curate exhibitions on international elite and local urban cultures, on child prodigies and child soldiers; on women and gender; on cultural and ecological sustainability; on frontiers and exiles; on international and vernacular architecture; on mass media and popular expressive culture. Not a museum as a "library on display, turned inside out," as Pieterse (2005: 163) characterized it, but a museum like a library of sanctioned, prohibited and marginalized texts which are forever being combined and recombined by distinct users in multiple and different ways to disclose more surprising relations and expressions of the world than ever previously imagined. A museum that is not dependent on the effect of culture shock, but of intercultural dialogue.

Critiques and alternative positions taken against the closed, static and abstracted anthropological concept of culture have multiplied in the past two decades. Abu-Lughod (1991) has called for native anthropologists to "write against culture" (in Hastrup, 1995: 154). Post-colonial critics like Jean Fisher, Sarat Maharaj and Hommi Bhabha locate the sites of cultural generation on the peripheries and interstices between social formations, rather than at their hearts as most traditional anthropologists have argued. Wallerstein (1990), Canclini (1995) and Appadurai (2000), to name but few, propose alternative anthropological conceptualizations of culture. These reformulations of culture, and the rise of cultural studies more generally, occurred in response to anthropology's earlier inability to understand modern cultural processes (Denning, 2004: 3; Geertz, 2000: 248). Anthropologists, like Hastrup, accept that earlier formulations of culture "leveled individual differences and blurred internal inconsistencies and disorder" (1995: 154). So strong has the critical turn against culture become, particularly within anthropology, that Marshall Sahlins felt compelled to express trepidation that just as culture is being widely adopted as a positive term attracting greater respect, identification and support by many present and previously subordinated or marginalized peoples, it is, at the same time, losing its value as a key concept underlying anthropological analysis (1996: 13).

'Heritage,' defined here as a partial and reductive expression of an historical culture to its instrumental and commoditized form, discloses an equally problematic usage. 'Heritage' provides the discursive link that connects the abstract concept of culture to individual and group identity.

It gives culture specific shape and definition, converting, though not exhausting it, into tidier jurisdictions that can more easily be defined, standardized, limited and policed and whose preservation can be planned and managed (Bourdieu, 2003: 75; Smith, 1990: 176; Bendix, 2012: 18).'Cultural property' is used interchangeably with cultural heritage in this new political culture (Blake, 2000: 66), further disclosing the close links between heritage and commodity culture and intimating the whole, highly charged discourse of property and ownership and emerging rights and obligations that could be mobilized to increasingly define, standardize, limit and prescribe its deployment. Coombe (2012: 378) links heritage regimes directly to the extension of neo-liberal market ideologies with their focus on investment and economic returns, and audit culture, while Bendix *et al.* (2012: 13) and Tauschek (2012: 196) underline the shift in heritage management from national states to new forms of governance (joint partnerships, NGOs and transnational and international authorities and agencies), and subsequent bureaucratic expansion and self-legitimatory practices.

Through the concept of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, global institutions like UNESCO are themselves implicated in cultural commoditization. By dissecting and classifying cultural heritage, whether by using emic or etic criteria; identifying it with discrete territories associated with nation states, and then displaying it through subsidized performances or other events, intangible culture loses its partial autonomy and becomes reoriented away from localized social practices towards the satisfaction of external markets (Bourdieu, 2003: 67; Smith, 1990: 176; Skounti, 2009: 74). Intangible culture is depoliticized to become part of the eclectic mosaic of global commoditized culture that is easily adapted to the tourist and leisure markets. The integration of a global tourist economy that through its sponsorship of spectacle helps capitalize developing countries, also brings the additional potential benefit of institutionalizing depoliticized domesticated identities – traditions and life styles – free of oppositional political dogmas while locking communities into the wider international organization of culture that it authorizes (Nas, 2002: 143).

While receiving prominent attention in many southern hemispheric countries and from ethnic minorities elsewhere, cultural heritage is not everywhere perceived as positive. In former colonial nations like Britain, France and Portugal, it has been criticized for its nostalgic and romantic image of culture and even dismissed as a symptom of post-Imperial decline (Lumley, 2005: 18). Consider the much-quoted intimation of the essence of British cultural heritage written by Patrick Cormack:

> When I am asked to define our heritage I do not think in dictionary terms, but instead I reflect on certain sights and sounds. I think of a morning mist on the Tweed at Dryburgh where the magic of Turner and the romance of Scott both come fleetingly to life; a celebration of the Eucharist in a quite Norfolk Church with the Medieval glass filtering the colours, and the noise of the harvesting coming through the open door; or of standing at any time before the Wilton Diptych. Each scene recalls aspects of an indivisible heritage, and is part of the fabric and expression of our civilization (In Lumley, 2005: 16).

Cormack's sentimental expression of the essence of British cultural heritage, one that is found in many other influential contemporary writers including Roy Strong (2000: 1-2) and Peter Ackroyd (2002: xix-xx), is clearly partial and would attract minority recognition. Not only does this view of culture obfuscate its class based origins and affiliations by being presented as an essential part of the national zeitgeist, but its inclusion and reproduction excludes or subordinates alternative and different articulations held by other ethnic groups and classes within British society. For the above authors, British national heritage is primarily defined by its intangible expression and its effect on individuals, while the tangible heritage is relegated to the technology for their activation. This preoccupation with national roots and origins was until recently a preponderantly Occidental obsession, but the effects of massively increased migration and the growth of diasporic populations have transnationalized the common malaise and trauma of cultural dispossession and nostalgia (Lowenthal, 1996: 9). Blake (2002: 8), de Certeau (1986: 232) and Matsuzono (2004: 2) remind us that the dichotomy between tangible and intangible cultural heritage is misleading, firstly, because, as we have seen, all tangible heritage enshrines intangible heritage values that carry their own effects and secondly, because such a binary opposition is ethnocentric and ignores alternative cultural definitions that refute the validity of separating such categories.

The conception of tangible heritage as a medium or vessel to contain its intangible counterpart was repeatedly articulated in the keynote addresses during the 20th General International Council of Museums (ICOM) Conference (Seoul, 2004). For one proponent " the visible heritage comes to contain the invisible spirit (intangible cultural elements" (Lee 2004: 4), Kim similarly opened his presentation by noting that: "Tangible heritage is the very embodiment of intangible heritage" (2004: 18), while Matsuzono, acknowledging that some manifestations of intangible cultural property in fact have no tangible expressions, concluded the tangible is "always embedded in the intangible" (2004:2). It was taken up again and reaffirmed

forcefully during the 16th General Assembly of the International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) held in Quebec City (2008) in article 1 of the final declaration: "We declare that intangible cultural heritage gives a richer and more complete meaning to heritage as a whole and it must be taken into account in all legislation concerning cultural heritage, and in all conservation and restoration projects for monuments, sites, landscapes, routes and collections of objects" (Turgeon, 2009: 479). Heritage therefore, although clearly ideologically conditioned, suffers the same semantic inflation and definitional problems as 'culture'. Both terms are diffused until they fuse together, obfuscating any concept of culture outside the bounds of 'heritage' and opening the way for any 'deflections to be rendered invalid by re-classifying them as ideology or terrorism or using other strategies of dismissal. The romantic associations that heritage evokes identify it as a particular expression of a desocialized past which when mediated through the lens of modernity, has been used for the construction of a series of cultural differences on which national identities are standardized, validated and re-articulated at a world level by organizations like UNESCO. Not only can the relationship between institutional or official heritage and the heritage that falls outside its purview become sites of intervention and contestation (Harrison, 2010: 240), but different official heritage agencies or regimes provide no necessary coherency in policy or implementation (Bendix *et al.*, 2012: 16; Leblon, 2012: 98, Sanchez-Carretero, 2012: 141).

Ironically, in the interplay between the global and the local, the very people who have defined intangible culture heritage, reproduced the dichotomy between tangible and intangible and attempted to define its national or local specificities, are themselves the most removed from it. These are members of what Featherstone has termed 'third cultures' and who Hannerz (1990: 237) and Friedman (2001: 262) refer to as 'cosmopolitans'. They work for 'trans-societal institutions', share "sets of practices, bodies of knowledge, conventions, and lifestyles which have developed in ways which have become increasingly independent of nation states" (Featherstone, 1996: 60). They may even be antithetical to the nation while attempting to impose new conditions on the majority populations they have helped define and that are increasingly excluded from the financial, status, intellectual and security benefits that such an order promises (Bauman, 1998: 22; Friedman, 2001: 261; Joxe, 2002: 105).

Museums are undeniably problematic institutions that too often fail to win public conviction partly because they appear to be the product of a

dualism that neither corresponds to our experience of the world nor satiates our desires and expectations for novelty within it. While most contemporary museums seem to have reached a consensus on the necessity of conjoining the tangible with intangible cultural heritage, there is less agreement on whether the resulting, supposedly more popular, policies are the product of intellectual engagement with the malaise that museums face, a cynical response to sustaining the existence of the institutions in the face of growing criticism or an appeal to popular fads and fashions. Moreover, it is equally unclear whether the idea to extend the museum's field of operations to incorporate intangible cultural expressions offers any original program to help rethink such basic problems as the nature of culture, the validity of its current political inflections, or even help supersede the much criticized 19th century ethnographic salvage paradigm that under a new guise is attempting to incorporate and alienate the as yet unfettered fields of expressive culture. Kurin (2004b: 1) is one of few writers who questions whether museums really can protect intangible cultural expression, and asks whether they want to and if so, whether they must be reconceptualized and reconfigured to do so. In many ways, he argues, museums are ill equipped to assume such responsibilities. Countering Lee (2004: 5), Kurin sees intangible heritage as the very opposite of a recording, videotape, written transcription or photograph. Nevertheless, he concludes, that although museums specialize in dealing with objects, accessioning, numbering, measuring, cataloguing storing, preserving, exhibiting, deaccessioning or repatriating them, and not with social practices, folkways or tradition, they may be the only institutions existing to assume this wider responsibility (Kurin, 2004b). Lastly, Kurin acknowledges that there remain important differences between the management and deployment of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Museums assume responsibility themselves for their collections, while intangible culture resides under the authority of the people that practice or create it. Intangible culture is by its nature dialogical not passively inert as museums have rendered tangible heritage. Curatorship of intangible cultural expressions is not so much based on command of knowledge but engagement with communities and therefore requires diplomacy, knowledge of local history and psychology. By adopting this wider purview of culture, museums will, of necessity, transform themselves.

As Kurin and many others, including Ames (1992: 15), Lorente (2006: 25) and Shelton (2013: 8), recognize, a new or critical museology is beginning to emerge that is engaged with the implications raised by the problem of culture. Kurin (2004b: 7), identifies this new thrust with the

recently opened National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC, but it is much older than this in Europe and Canada (Lorente, 2006: 26). Many of the progressive museums which have adopted more critical positions are located in Canada, Australia, New Zealand or, increasingly, in the world's largest globalized cities where: "What has changed is not the fact of diversity but its geographical distribution" (Friedman, 2001: 258). Museums, like anthropology itself, are slowly striving to understand and represent the new social realities that both bring together and oppose peoples from diverse cultural backgrounds and the intellectual, cultural and material products that their interactions engender. Difference is no longer modulated by external and peripheral spaces but is present at the centre and, institutionally, has given rise to specific values and worldviews associated with particular versions of cultural pluralism that are attaining international acceptance. Nevertheless, nationalities incorporate differences within and between themselves and it is these characterizations rather than those based on monolithic national or ethnic identities that museums better need to represent. International legislation that distinguishes between tangible and intangible culture and separates culture from the remainder of life disfigures holistic views of 'objects' expressed, for example, by indigenous peoples throughout the Americas and the Pacific (de Certeau, 1986: 232). For them, 'objects' are considered alive, they require talk, feeding and respect, they are efficacious and are part of living cultures that link the past with the present.

We are never told for whom culture is being salvaged, nor for what reason and what conditions have made it or its repatriation necessary so the whole project of preserving intangible cultural expressions can easily appear as another re-colonization of thought and practice within existing and newly emerging global economic and political forms. The 2003 UNESCO Convention was applied differently in the various countries that adopted it, as has been aptly demonstrated by the contributions to Bendix, Eggert and Peselmann's 2012 edited volume, *Heritage Regimes and the State*. Bodolec (2012: 249) and Bortolotto (2012: 277) both identify the different processes through which the Convention was filtered and incorporated and domesticated into the Chinese and French state apparatuses, while in Italy, for example, Broccolini (2012: 284) argues that national cultural policies and agencies were superseded and transformed by the adoption of international instruments.

In countries like Congo, Indonesia and Mexico, after objects have been repatriated from former colonial powers, they have been retained by

centralized national state institutions instead of being returned to the ethnic groups or the geographic region from which they were originally taken. In this way, repatriation can be a transfer of cultural objects from a former external colonial power to a state that can sometimes be characterized as practicing a form of internal colonization. What we need are new 'museum' media that retotalize tangible and intangible culture and incorporate them into the living fabric of communities and cities. If culture was transformed into a third expression, that of digitalized information flows, it might be reincorporated through electronics, into the fabric of the localities from which it originated, tracing multimediated past resonances of a place. By replacing the dichotomous terms of the tangible and intangible with a third expression, culture would be distinguished from its captured forms and reincorporated as part of an evolving whole. Moreover, the rearticulation of culture as electronic information flows might even lead to the definitive break with the Greco-Roman philosopheme and inaugurate a world of new epistemological possibilities freed from institutional, linguistic and political constraints. Despite its subsequent fixation and impoverishment, Derrida insists that European philosophy has always been "bastard, hybrid, grafted, multilinear, polyglot" (2002: 337), a view recently applied to reconfigure other established fields of knowledge (West, 1990: 20). Philosophy could still reassert its essential character once freed from its institutional constraints and with it, as Derrida suggests, help free the concepts of 'right' and 'democracy' (2002: 337).

What position therefore should museums assume at a time when some of the world's most powerful international cultural organizations, influential developing countries and many cultural minorities have supported a particular anthropological concept of culture, which is analytically flawed and has been appropriated, as we have argued, by a 'third culture' cosmopolitan elite identified with the same forces of globalization that are threatening the heritage they claim to be committed to preserving?

At the outset we need to affirm that museums and their partners do not simply represent culture, but always inevitably transform it. Whereas until the mid 1950s museums saw their responsibility as classifying and arranging the world's many cultures in the terms of that espoused by the dominant society, in the 21st century institutions recognize the singularity and irreducible validity of defined cultural expressions. Accepting these changes, museums can and have assumed one of two positions. They can divide cultures according to established classificatory criteria such as territory, nation states, or culture area, but give renewed and equal

emphasis to intangible as well as tangible expressions, irrespective of the political forces that position and legitimate them. Alternatively, and less neatly though more accurately, museums can excavate and make visible the complex reality of competing unequal intercultural relations that enmesh locality, nationhood, the region and the world and problematize perhaps the very sustainability of culture across a networked and commoditized earth.

Each position carries its own political implications for the future of museums and their relations with wider national and international institutions. The first model will likely create openings which will encourage collaboration with originating communities without transforming the museum's political and organizational constitution; while the second may nurture a full recognition and democracy of cultures that exercise pluralistic control over the means of representation capable of enhancing the possibilities for divergent, critical and dialogical practices. A good example of the former type of museum may be the Musée du quai Branly in Paris, while the latter is perhaps best represented by the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. Most museums however, will fall somewhere between these two models. The majority of museums will undoubtedly choose the former model and in so doing help consecrate the emerging globalized view of the world in which most states have lost part of their symbolic capital and much of their financial and coersive capital to non-accountable and occulted international agencies. A minority of the remainder, many of which will be contemporary art museums, together with biennales and Documentas, may interrogate such conditions and stimulate, beyond the representation of essentialized localisms, debates about these redirections of political power and both the resulting benefits and insecurities they generate for the people whose lives they affect.

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