Community Involvement in inventorying intangible cultural heritage
Outline

• Revisit and build upon the critiques of inventorying

• Community Involvement: recommendations

• Community Involvement: Vanuatu

• Travel back to Scotland (ICH in Scotland Project)
Critiques:

- **Itemization** of cultural practices
  - Separate source communities, groups and individuals (significance, values and meanings) from their expressions
  - Added values can serve to **decontextualize** ICH expressions (dilution of source values with new values)
  - Loss of specificity/uniqueness
Valorization / Decontextualization

YONG WEAVING
(CAN ONLY REPRESENT ITSELF!)
How does specificity / locality / uniqueness get ‘transferred’ into a database/ inventory / list?
Name: The Rapper Dance

Location: North East England

Practitioners: Tom, Jenny, Kate, Ruth, Chris, Pip, Sam, Robert, Marianne, Kelly, Brian, Craig, ...

Significance: Tom says: “I love the dance because it makes me feel like I’m part of a team…”

Marianne says: “It’s important because I remember learning it when I was 16….”
Since identification/inventorizing is the ‘first step’ toward safeguarding ICH,

We run the risk of itemizing ICH from the very start!

- promotes a non-holistic view of ICH

- isolates ICH from the social, political, cultural, environmental contexts in which it has evolved and from which it gets its life (e.g. female participation in Rapper dance)
The holistic viewpoint of ICH
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Can community involvement provide a way forward for invigorating ICH with local-level significance, values and meanings?
Community Involvement

2006 Expert Meeting on Community Involvement in Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage

UNESCO-ACCU (Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre)

Involvement of communities in inventorying their ICH (Section 3.2)

• ‘Exclude exclusive top-down approaches’
  (Since national governments have considerable amount of control)
Community Involvement

• Identify communities/groups/representatives

• Only ICH that is recognized by communities/groups is inventoried

• Permission granted

• Consent when involving non-community members

• Respecting access issues to ICH (e.g. privacy, secrecy, etc.)

• Consent for international lists
• Negotiation between all stakeholders
  – Keep in mind: UNESCO can only negotiate with national governments
• Involving local / regional administration may help to promote a bottom-up approach
• Code of Ethics? (reduce possible conflicts between stakeholders)
• Advisory bodies / support teams (community members, NGOs, researchers, civil society, etc.)
Community Involvement

2004 UNESCO-ACCU Workshop on Inventory-making for ICH Management

Section I Community inventory-making

“It is important that communities themselves define and identify their own ICH, and governments, institutions and NGOs should be ready to assist them in doing this”
Community Empowerment / Engagement

• Empowerment is a prerequisite to making their own inventories
  – Ongoing training of community members in cultural documentation methods / technology
  – Creation of forums/centers for ICH expression, representation and access

• Bottom-up (participatory) Methodologies
  – Pilot workshops of inventorying to determine ‘best practices’
  – Support communities to select teachers and create schools for transmission of ICH
Benefits of Inventory-making

- Can raise awareness of ICH
- Can become part of school projects
- Utilizes all forms of media (contemporary and fun)
- Can be used for national awareness-raising campaigns (see Scotland example)
Cultural Mapping (2004 UNESCO-ACCU workshop)

- Attributes ICH to geographical locations
- Identifies communities
- Based on existing data (scholarly research, fieldwork, etc.)
- Open-ended exercise – data can be re-evaluated to reflect the ‘dynamism of ICH’
- Can also assist governments in understanding the ICH of their territories, which can help establish timelines, budgets and strategies for working with communities
Lewis (2007)

Government and NGOs monitoring local level

Website updated by GPS technology

Local level communities monitoring their surroundings with GPS units
• Technology allows for up-to-date information to be exchanged

• Reflects the dynamic nature of ICH

• Especially ICH that is threatened (e.g. Urgent List)
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Key thought: ‘Asia Pacific region countries have different historical backgrounds, cultural heritage situations (and views), stages of development, and approaches to heritage management’ (Regenvanu, 2004).

- 2003 Convention is flexible in this respect
Vanuatu: Community Involvement

Experts = ICH practitioners

Involving communities, groups and individuals:
- Heighten effectiveness of inventories
- Helps to raise awareness of the importance of safeguarding ICH
- Helps to revitalize and transmit ICH
Fieldworkers in Vanuatu

Community Fieldworkers Program

• Based in the Vanuatu Cultural Centre (VCC)

• Selected community members

• Trained in recording cultural information
  – Ethnographic methodologies
  – Cultural heritage management aims/methodologies

➔ Present in-depth research at annual workshop where it is recorded (22 years worth of info)
Fieldworkers in Vanuatu

Community-based fieldworkers are helping to identify, document and archive:

- Languages (cultural concepts, worldviews and knowledge)

- Map and national database of Vanuatu’s languages / cultures

- Audio, audiovisual and photographic information about rituals, practices and traditional knowledge
Summary

• ‘Network’ of community liaisons / ethnographers

• VCC recognizes their expertise and ability in identifying, recording and, eventually, helping to inventory the ICH of Vanuatu
  – Trust
  – Sense of pride? Empowerment?

• Geographically-spread: VCC is engaging with living heritage outside of its walls, out in the communities
  – Reduction in the top-down UNESCO approach
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ICH in Scotland History

FIRST STAGE: January, 2008 report commissioned on scoping, mapping and safeguarding ICH in Scotland

- Museums Galleries Scotland
- Scottish Arts Council
- UK National Commission for UNESCO
  • Napier University

→ ‘Routes’ for creating a network with communities
→ 32 Local Area Authorities = routes
ICH in Scotland History

SECOND STAGE: Report presented to Museums Galleries Scotland
- identified practical steps needed to safeguard ICH
- identified ‘richness and diversity’ of ICH in Scotland

RECOMMENDATION: Online database in the form of a customized wiki

⇒ August 2008 Launch with UNESCO
Wiki = a website that allows the easy creation and editing of any number of interlinked web pages via a web browser using a simplified markup language.

- Data to be inputted at geographically dispersed locations
- Organically grow over time
- Limited training needed
- Through Local Authorities across Scotland
- October, 2009 first training session for wiki (pilot)
- Promotion: media coverage, website, twitter, FB…
Get short, timely messages from ICH Scotland.

Twitter is a rich source of instantly updated information. It’s easy to stay updated on an incredibly wide variety of topics. Join today and follow @ICHScotland.

Sign Up

Get updates via SMS by texting follow ICHScotland to 40404 in the United States

Codes for other countries

ICHScotland

about 9 hours ago via bitly
Retweeted by ICHScotland

EdinSpotlight All our #edfringe 2010 coverage is in one handy place http://bit.ly/c2etsY #edinburgh
about 10 hours ago via HootSuite
Retweeted by ICHScotland

Watsonscotland Lots of new content added in Perthshire for September today. lots more coming soon! http://t.co/yNOtomS via @AddThis
about 9 hours ago via Tweet Button
To think about:

• Does the use of new technologies and social media democratize the identification and inventorying of ICH?

• The more it grows, how can this information be managed? (Will it just be too much information?)

• How does the wiki page (or inventories) translate into actions that aim to safeguard ICH? (What’s the next step?)

• Should inventories be divorced from the idea (or burden) of safeguarding ICH?
The ICH Scotland video tutorial provides a step-by-step visual guide to using the wiki. Although we recommend that you obtain a personal user name before adding and editing articles, this is not obligatory.

- A high definition ICH wiki video tutorial can be found [HERE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d71PhnAWj3U)