CHALLENGES AND ADVANTAGES IN CARRYING OUT MUSEUM’S INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE SAFEGUARDING PROJECTS
(three examples of the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology)
1. The exhibition *Voices through photos of people from Hanoi Ancient Quarter*

**Context**
- Pilot Project *Sustainable development of Hanoi Ancient Quarter* (2006-2009)
- Research and exhibition done from 10/2005 to 6/2006

**Purposes**
- establish general vision into Hanoi Ancient Quarter’s future and feasible preservation and development mechanism
- identify goals and strategies for sustainable development with traditional values that need to be preserved for future
1. The exhibition *Voices through photos of people from Hanoi Ancient Quarter* (cont.)

**Scale**
- 20 participants (5 female, 15 male) of Hang Buom Ward
- the eldest 75 years, youngest 20 years
- pensioners, soldiers, traders, government officials, sales people, students
- originate from Hanoi and other locations
1. The exhibition **Voices through photos of people from Hanoi Ancient Quarter (cont.)**

**Methods**

- Historical research methodology
- Methods of anthropology
- Photovoice
1. The exhibition *Voices through photos of people from Hanoi Ancient Quarter* (cont.)

**Result**

- nearly 6,000 photos taken
- 9 themes:
  - Commercial cultural space
  - The diversity and connoisseurship in foodway and clothing
  - Knowledge of natural environment
  - Knowledge of culture and folk arts
  - Knowledge of social behavior and management
  - Awareness of origin
  - Lifestyle and moral standard
  - Religious belief
  - People who keep intangible cultural heritage
2. The project “Community Visual Education and Communication: A collaborative Vision”

**Background**
- cooperation between the VME and the BAMA Mountain Cultural Research Institute (Yunnan Province, China) (2006 – 2009)

**Goals**
- build individual and institutional capacities in collaborative visual media methodologies and visual documentary skills;
- pioneer community based video methods to empower community voice;
- advocate trainings for participants including indigenous peoples about cultural and biodiversity awareness as well as cultural preservation;
- build a platform of exchange to share ideas and research between Chinese and Vietnamese partners.
2. The project “Community Visual Education and Communication: A collaborative Vision” (cont.)

**Methods**

- group discussion
- in-depth interview
- oral history
- Process of making community-based video
  
  core team imagines seed ideas → sow core team’s seed ideas into specific community → discover seed ideas with the community → collect and organize stories → set up the layout → community feedbacks → revise and finalize
The film *We, the Thai people*

- Participants: 12 (blood relationship)
- Age: 14 years – 75 years
- Occupation: scientists, architects, governmental administrators, students, artists/singers/dancers, retired people, and house workers
The film *We, the Thai people* (cont.)

- 3 community meetings: 1) discuss about seed ideas; 2) show 2-hour footages to get feedback; 3) show the draft video
- 9 themes
  - Thai people’s different reasons of moving to Hanoi since 1945;
  - Different ways to integrate into Kinh community’s lifeway in Hanoi;
  - Difficulties to face with during the integration into Hanoi life;
  - The affirmation of some Thai people;
  - The preservation of Thai identity;
  - Conflicts in intermarriage families, differences and adaptation;
  - Concern about the loss of language in the 3rd generation;
  - Expansion of Thai community;
  - Strong attachment to homeland
The film *We, the Thai people* (cont.)

- negotiation about the choice between new and traditional way of making film
- feeling of being discriminated when they first migrated to Hanoi in the 1970’s
- worry of loosing language in the next generations of Thai people
The film Tham Ve Village, nhay boi Festival

- Site: Tham Ve Village, Cao Bo Commune, Vi Xuyen District, Ha Giang Province
- Community group: 10 Yao men

SEED IDEAS
Yao initiation ritual and nhay boi festival
The film *Tham Ve Village, nhay boi Festival* (cont.)

- active discussions brought the villagers back to the sharing about original names of Tham Ve Village, which inspired people with the awareness of a strong connection they have had through the history of the village.
- add a short clip of each interviewee showing one of her/his daily activities before her/his first appearance in the video
3. Advantages of intangible cultural heritage safeguarding projects

**Bottom-up approach**

- instead of imposing ideas on community, allows community members to discover by themselves intangible cultural values within their community
- the stories being told were first voice stories, which were honest, authentic and more convincing

In the past I thought that intangible cultural heritage was something very sublime and bookish, and common people as we could not understand and approach. After participating in this study I have further understood about it. (*Mr. Nguyen Van Hoanh, 70 years old, No. 71 Hang Buom Street*)

It is difficult to live in the mostly original Hanoi family, thus I had to take care of everything in daily life in order to teach my children when they were small, such as please, yes please and something like this because we did not pay much attention to these behaviors when we stayed at homeland. The old women praised me as a good mother in teaching my children. It is true that I tried to educate them in the Hanoi way of life though it was strange to me. I thought it was a hard time for me to follow this new and different life style. (*Interview with Mrs. Vuong Thi Thai, 58 years old, Thai ethnic group, Lai Chau Province, get married to a Hanoian, and lives in Hang Bong Street in the Ancient Quarter, centre of Hanoi*)
3. Advantages of intangible cultural heritage safeguarding projects (cont.)

**Positive impacts on communities**

- community members became more confident and active during the whole implementing process of project
- the power of decisions made by community members made them proud of their cultural values
- enhancement of people’s awareness of responsibility towards their intangible cultural heritage
- Intensification of community unity

The bustling atmosphere of the Ancient Quarter is so unique. When I was away, teaching in Ninh Binh Province, I did not miss my home, but longed for the sounds of the Hanoi night life. (*Ngo Quang An, 67 years old, No. 8 Dao Duy Tu Street*)
Trustworthy source for policy makers
• Collective opinions given local knowledge
• Audio-visual evidences for policy reference

This family has six people with three generations living in an area of 10m². The parents and their son sleep on their only bed. The grandmother and her two granddaughters sleep on the house’s floor” (Banh Hong Diep, 24 years old, No. 34 Ma May Street)

I remember from the past that Hanoi Ancient Quarter used to celebrate many festivals. Today, I only see formal ritual celebrated, rather than festive activities. I take pleasure in participating in the spiritual atmosphere of these festivals, it helps reduce the stresses of work. Foreigners enjoy experiencing our festivals” (Nguyen Van Thanh, 26 years old, No. 3 Ta Hien Street)

the Hanoi Ancient Quarter Information Center was launched at Quan De Temple (No. 28, Hang Buom Street) early 2010 to honor tangible cultural heritage (architecture) and intangible cultural values (traditional crafts, festivals, customs, daily lifeway, Hanoi foodway…)

plan of reducing population density of the Quarter from currently 840 people/1ha to 500 people/1ha (in 2020), which means more than 20,000 people will have to move out of the area
4. Challenges of intangible cultural heritage safeguarding projects

- Balance between process and product
- Balance between ideas of communities and those of researchers/film makers/curators
- Other challenges
5. Conclusion

- Museums are doing well in reaching to various communities, bringing communities’ voices to the public, and creating dialogues between communities and the public.
- Intangible cultural heritage safeguarding is an issue that has become more and more imperative to many communities in the general context of globalization and economic integration.
- Investment from the State and governmental agencies as well as cooperation among museums within museum network on national and international scale will intensify the role of museums in ICH safeguarding.
THANK YOU !