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RESEARCH ARTICLES

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Museums, Dance, and the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage: "Events of Practice" – A New Strategy for Museums?

Abstract: This article proposes to view the present actions regarding cultural heritage through the prism of two different paradigms: the paradigm of preservation and the paradigm of safeguarding. The question posed is whether and how these two paradigms can work together and support each other. The article is written as a dialogue between Tone Erlien, initiator, curator, and project manager of the

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project "Interactive dance dissemination", who takes the perspective of the museums; and Egil Bakka, professor emeritus serving on UNESCO's Evaluation Body for the 2003 Convention, who takes the perspective of this normative instrument. The Norwegian project "Interactive dance dissemination" is used as a point of departure for our discussion, and as an example of how the Convention has inspired and influenced the work of museums. We find that museums are signalling a strong wish to include the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in their portfolios, even if they still mainly work within the preservation paradigm. As museums normally combine many approaches in their work with immaterial culture, many of them may not belong to a full-fledged "safeguarding" of ICH. In this article we posit that exhibitions and performances certainly can support safeguarding in important ways, but that full safeguarding projects would need to include the practitioners. The New Museum wave has reached out towards safeguarding, and the dance project described in this article elaborated several solutions to allow museums to embrace safeguarding, emphasizing the method we call "events of practice". A basic challenge is whether museum staff are willing to give practitioners the lead, and if so, whether the practitioners themselves are able to take the lead.

Keywords: safeguarding, museum, intangible cultural heritage, cultural politics, dance traditions

Introduction

This article proposes to view the present work with respect to cultural heritage as reflecting two different paradigms: the paradigm of preservation and the paradigm of safeguarding. The question posed is whether, and how, these two paradigms can work together and support each other. Museums' work is based on the paradigm of preservation. The ICOM Code of Ethics states that a museum "acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits" heritage. The basic idea is to secure and preserve objects and knowledge from the past. The knowledge is then documented and preserved in material form. The paradigm of safeguarding deals with Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and is a term coined by the 2003 Convention. The idea here is to support people who have a practice they value, so that they can continue this practice. In this way, the main task is taken out of the hands of the experts in museums and left in the hands of the boat builders, the craftsmen, the singers, and the dancers. This article discusses three important issues that are closely connected with the main question examined: Are museums equipped and prepared for safeguarding?

The safeguarding paradigm in principle places the right of control in the practitioners themselves. They should decide whether and how they wish to safeguard their practice, and they should play the key role in the safeguarding process. According to the 2003 Convention, museums should not appropriate practices, but rather support the practitioners. But are museums ready for this? Can exhibitions be exchanged with respect to events of practice? Museums have long used exhibitions as their main tool for presenting the objects and knowledge that they have preserved. The safeguarding paradigm is about continuing practice, so the question is whether ordinary, maybe even voluntary, dancers, musicians, or artisans can connect the events they create and wish to continue in their practice to the work of museums, and then partly replace or contribute to the practice exhibitions? How can practitioners and museum staff negotiate representations of the past? A museum staff documents and studies the life of the past, and then presents this life in a research-based and authoritative form. Practitioners realize practices that have a past, but that are adapted to the present. How can the realization of present "non-authorized" practices be harmonized with the carefully-researched representations of exhibitions focusing on the past?

This article is written as a dialogue between Tone Erlien, initiator, curator, and project manager of the project "Interactive dance dissemination", who takes the perspective of the museums; and Egil Bakka, professor emeritus serving on UNESCO's Evaluation Body for the 2003 Convention, who takes the perspective of this normative instrument. The Norwegian project "Interactive dance dissemination" is used as a point of departure for their discussion, and as an example of how the 2003 Convention has inspired and influenced the work in museums.

Are Museums Equipped for and Ready for Safeguarding?

Egil: As an outsider to the museum world and as an enthusiast of the radical paradigm shift represented by the 2003 Convention and the idea of safeguarding, early on I was very dubious about the role museums could and should play in this new field. The discussion on the 2003 Convention was lively right from the beginning. In 2004, just a year after its adoption, the American cultural anthropologist Richard Kurin (Smithsonian Institution) wrote an article about the safeguarding of ICH and museums.[1] As a representative of the museum world and close to the work with the new Convention, he asked critical questions that seemed provocative for the museums, but that were well informed:

> Can museums really safeguard intangible cultural heritage? Do they want to? And if so, must they be re-conceived and re-configured to do so? […]

[1] R. Kurin, *Museums and Intangible Heritage: Culture Dead or Alive*, "ICOM News" 2004, Vol. 4, p. 7.

> The primary difference in dealing with intangible cultural heritage is that the "thing" or "object" is the social practice or tradition – not a material object, recording, written transcription, photograph or videotape. It is the singing of songs in the community, the spiritual beliefs of a people, the knowledge of navigating by the stars and weaving meaningful patterns into cloth.[2]

Kurin also claimed that "Museums are generally poor institutions for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage – the only problem is that there is probably no better institution to do so".[3] The questions asked by many were: Why do museums not just stay out of this field? What can they offer and how can this benefit the safeguarding of ICH?

Tone: The museums would obviously not want to be left out of a brand-new field dealing with cultural heritage, nor of work with a Convention that has attracted considerable interest and coverage. The formal guidelines made to regulate museum activity show how museums define themselves and describe their tasks. The International Council of Museums (ICOM) is an important forum for the museum world, and their webpage should be an updated and solid source for the developments in this field. Their definition of a museum shows that they see intangible heritage as part of their responsibility: "A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible *and intangible* heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment".[4]

A formulation from ICOM's Code of Ethics corroborates and strengthens this statement: "Museums are responsible for the tangible and intangible natural and cultural heritage. Governing bodies and those concerned with the strategic direction and oversight of museums have a primary responsibility to protect and promote this heritage as well as the human, physical and financial resources made available for that purpose".[5]

Open-air museums, for example, declare that they are indeed protecting and promoting intangible culture, as they work explicitly with intangible traditions as live content in reassembled old houses that are open for the public to visit. Articles 13, 14, 15 and 18 of the 2003 Convention focus on extroverted strategies for the promotion of the Convention's aims and values. It can be raising awareness, encountering and interacting with the audience and communities, and/or establishing programs and activities.

[2] Ibidem.

[3] Ibidem, p. 8.

[4] ICOM, *Museum Definition*, http://icom.museum/the-vision/museum-definition [accessed: 18.11.2017] (emphasis added).

[5] ICOM, *Code of Ethics*, http://icom.museum/the-vision/code-of-ethics [accessed: 18.11.2017].

Egil: The 1972 Convention[6] does not mention immaterial or intangible culture, and the formulations above seem to weave in the term "intangible heritage" in response to the 2003 Convention in order to make a claim in this new field, but without taking into consideration how the Convention defines it. In particular, the latter statement from ICOM cited above claims a responsibility for museums that has hardly been given to museums in general. It seems that the actions defined also signal that museums still place themselves within the preservation paradigm of documenting the intangible and exhibiting it in a tangible form. This is definitely important work in supporting the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, but it does not include actions for the continuation of these practices. In other words, the activities that ICOM defines for museums does not satisfy UNESCO's understanding of the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in its most decisive point.

Tone: Yes, I can see that there may be many problems for museums to embrace the full consequences brought about by the 2003 Convention. But on the other hand, it seems clear from my experience that the workers in museums consider it self-evident that they should be in charge of all cultural heritage, even that which is intangible, or at least be central contributors in the safeguarding process. I would like to hear your main reasons for challenging the museums' ambition in this respect.

Preservation and Safeguarding – Incompatible Paradigms?

Egil: The 2003 Convention presented some concepts, together with definitions, which introduce a whole new approach to intangible phenomena. The main difference between the 2003 Convention and the 1972 Convention is not that the Conventions deal with different material. It is true that the 1972 Convention has a focus on monuments and that the 2003 Convention deals with practices, but the principle difference is in the way that they preserve/safeguard, and here we can talk about two paradigms:[7] the 1972 paradigm, based on expert work in documenting and preserving the material in a tangible form; and the 2003 paradigm, which has as its main goal to help practitioners continue their practices. The main point here is how to make the intangible tangible for storage and preservation, and how to help practices continue. A practice is intangible, but it often uses tangible tools and creates tangible products. Since the core of intangible cultural heritage is practice, and the ultimate aim is to provide ICH bearers with conditions for continuing their practices, hence the paradigm of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage

[6] Convention Concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage, 16 November 1972, 1037 UNTS 151.

[7] E. Bakka, *Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage – The Spirit and the Letter of the Law*, "Musikk og tradisjon" 2015, Vol. 29, p. 138.

necessarily moves the main focus away from museum experts and towards including, in principle, the whole population of a country in brainstorming and in identifying ICH. Most members of a population have practices that can be classified as ICH, but not all these practices are so important for the practitioners that they feel the need to promote them. There are, however, groups of practitioners who count their practices as heritage of great importance, and they may want help from the 2003 Convention for their continuation and safeguarding. Museum experts will of course be practitioners just like the rest of the population, but they will not be able to make up the broad movement of practitioners which the 2003 Convention is hoping to mobilize.

The 2003 Convention is both a practical and political tool to improve the esteem of popular practices, and to highlight their importance as cultural heritage. It hopes to do so by mobilizing large parts of the population, who will then be encouraged to run their activities and projects according to the definitions contained in the 2003 Convention.

There is of course the possibility that a museum staff can also be practitioners of a practice that they keep up for, or in cooperation with, members of the community, but this is hardly a usual situation in accordance with a strict interpretation of the 2003 Convention.

Tone: I initiated the project that we are going to use as an example here to explore what possibilities there are to work with the principles of the 2003 Convention in museums. It was also an attempt to find ways that museums could work with dance, which is relatively rarely found in museum contexts.

Practical Example: A Project to Work with Dance as ICH in Museums

Tone: "Interactive dance dissemination"[8] is an ongoing three-year project. It is based on a study of methods for dissemination of dance in ten European museums, as debated in my dissertation.[9] The project consists of a collaboration between the Norwegian Centre for Traditional Music and Dance (Sff) and MiST – Museums of South Trøndelag. It will develop and produce three interactive dance exhibitions in the trilogy *Museene danser* and curate several meeting places at three of the largest museums in Trondheim: the Ringve Music Museum; the Sverresborg Trøndelag Folk Museum; and Rockheim – The National Museum of Popular Music. It is supported financially by the Trondheim Municipality, Sør-Trøndelag County, and the Arts Council Norway.

[8] www.museenedanser.wordpress.com [accessed: 18.11.2017].

[9] T. Erlien, *A Dance Museum – Museums and Institutions in Europe Promoting Dance and Intangible Cultural Heritage* [MA thesis], "Choreomundus – International Master in Dance Knowledge, Practice and Heritage" 2014.

The project was confronted with the standard preservation paradigm at the Museene i Sør-Trøndelag (MiST)[10] right from the beginning.[11] The institutions' regulations do not refer directly to ICH, but to actions within the preservation paradigm and to the vision of ICOM. The initiating institution, the Sff,[12] is a research and archive institution whose main activity is to provide support for practice, even if the safeguarding of ICH is not explicitly mentioned in its bylaws. It does not have any exhibition or presentation activity as a main goal, which, together with its engagement in practice, gives it an unusual profile. The project was established within the framework of these two institutions, and therefore could more easily reach beyond the conventional methods of a museum.

Bylaws were not mentioned specifically when we first started the project. Nevertheless, conversations discussing the regular work of museums became a topic early on. Discussions arose about how this dance project would be a different method of implementation of a museum exhibition than what was typical for each of the three museums in the project.

Egil: What constituted this novelty?

Tone: Our first work consisted of stating the factors of dance that contributed to doing the usual work of designing the exhibition room and installations differently, based on the fact that dance is an intangible asset. Quite early in the project I realized that the concept of a curator of dance as intangible cultural heritage, and of practices in general, would challenge the mind-set of museum workers. I saw that this would be a difficult challenge, but also great opportunity to develop the curating conventions in museums in terms of strategies and procedures. As I was trained in the visions of the 2003 Convention, I insisted on a discussion about how representatives of users could be involved in the making up of the exhibition content and the methods of dissemination. This brought about discussions about who has the rights to define what in a museum, as well as about the work with editing the content into the curated room. This discussion made it clear that the museum workers had not read the 2003 Convention.

Before we started working, I noticed two inscriptions of good museum work in the Register of Good Practices in the Safeguarding of ICH.[13] The register is meant to give good models that promote appropriate, successful, and effective measures in the nominating country and that can serve as a model for other States Parties to the 2003 Convention as well.

[10] MiST is an umbrella for nine individual museums, and the project would work with three of them.

[11] http://mist.no/ [accessed: 18.11.2017].

[12] http://folkemusikkogfolkedans.no/ [accessed: 18.11.2017].

[13] https://ich.unesco.org/en/register [accessed: 3.12.2017].

Egil: Do you have any favourite example from this register?

Tone: Well, the most interesting one for us was the inscription of the Fandango Living Museum in Brazil,[14] opened by an NGO and 300 local dancers. Their model promotes a local initiative that establishes a place where local practices can be continued within the framework of a museum, with cooperation as the functional basis. According to the Committee, the museum ensures continuity and strengthens the practice, which is related to cooperation and the cultural space on the local level.

Exhibitions, Performances, and "Events of Practice" as Museum Strategies

Egil: It seems to me that the Fandango museum was made to house what I would call "events of practice". I interpret that term to mean events where practitioners of a (potential) ICH can continue their practice in their own way and for their own sake. So, Tone, if you were to describe the work you have done so far as a curator in the project, how do you distinguish between the established concepts of exhibitions and performances as compared to our proposed term "events of practice"?

Tone: Exhibition and performance are well established strategies, with clearly different functions in a museum context, whereas the idea of "events of practice" is new, at least in the Norwegian context. The main, distinguishing characteristic of an exhibition is that it puts artefacts on display in a systematic way. The exhibitions have an audience looking at the objects and technology. A performance has an audience looking at performing people. Both strategies can engage the audience to participate in some way or another. For example, an exhibition can include a treasure hunt, finding hidden objects, competitions in answering questionnaires, or interactive games on computers which are part of the displays. A performance can include interaction between the performers and the audience, letting members of audience try a simple craft activity or join in the dancing.

The idea *to exhibit* is the basis upon which museums developed. A group of experts will select objects based on their contexts, mainly of the past, and display them together with explanations and often in a contextual reconstruction. An exhibition is made for a public to come and look at it, and an exhibition could remain unchanged for long periods of time. Little by little, exhibitions came to be more advanced. They could introduce changes or movement through lighting, sound, film, or technology making objects move, but still the experts would be in full control.

A *performance* is a very different principle, one that Nordic open-air museums started using around 1900. The museum would invite people to demonstrate

[14] UNESCO, *Fandango's Living Museum*, http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/BSP/fandango-s-living-museum-00502 [accessed: 18.11.2017].

handicrafts and other skills as illustrations of the past. The performance would still be made for an audience, but the experts would lose some of their control, as the performed repertoire is curated by the expert performers, and each performance would have to be paid for if it is not voluntary work. Folk dancing for tourists in museums has already been carried out for more than a hundred years.

Several open-air museums in Scandinavia have a long museum tradition of listing folk dance performances on the daily program for tourists to see when visiting.[15] In my master thesis, I criticized the folk dance groups for performing a choreographed repertoire of more or less invented dances.[16] The open-air museums try to represent a trustworthy picture of life in rural communities of the past, whereas much of the folk dancing in museums does not mirror the same past.[17] The groups defended this museum practice by saying that they presented a hundred-year-old history of the practice of folk dance groups, rather than the history of traditional dancing in the rural communities.

The technique of performance is often related to large museum days, with people brought in to demonstrate skills still used in the local community, like bread baking, traditional handcraft, knitting traditions, and many more.

Egil: Exhibitions and performances may inspire interest in a culture of the past, and might give people with specific skills the possibility to continue certain practices, and perhaps thus contribute to or support the safeguarding activities outside of the museum. I am not sure, however, how important they are for safeguarding. How do you think they can contribute to that, and are there any ideas about how to renew them?

Tone: These two concepts, of exhibition and performance, are – as you point out, Egil – not the same as the work museums do with the preservation and presentation of immaterial cultural elements.[18]

But there are tendencies toward new thinking in museums about how to engage the audience in activities related to exhibitions in a way that might give them positive experiences and help them understand the content exhibited. For example, when it comes to performances, visual art exhibitions make a concerted effort to substitute the theatrical aesthetical principles of performance with other types of aesthetics. Georgina Guy tests how the conventional ontologies of a theatrical event might give birth to new ideas for the curatorial concept of an exhibition.[19] As exhibitions are linked with descriptions of things, Guy asks what happens to our

15 T. Erlien, op. cit.

16 Ibidem.

17 E. Bakka, *Norske dansetradisjonar,* Det Norske Samlaget, Oslo 1978; T. Erlien, op. cit.

18 We use immaterial here to stress that immaterial elements are not necessarily ICH, and to document or perform them are not necessarily safeguarding.

19 G. Guy, *Theatre, Exhibition, and Curation: Displayed & Performed*, Routledge, London – New York 2016.

understanding of the form and realization of the performance of embodied knowledge when that is the optic and directive of the curatorial concept. Guy suggests that a good basis for curation of a performance in an exhibition setting is the examination of events, by which she means the direct interaction between the two fields of exhibition and theatre performance, as it is a practice that involves both presentation and experience.

One concern which has been stated, is that when a live performance enters art collections as an established system, it cannot be repeated and reactivated in the future with other artists, as it will depend on the actual performer. Let me evoke here the opinion of Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett:

> In contrast with the tangible heritage protected in the museum, intangible heritage consists of cultural manifestations (knowledge, skills, performance) that are inextricably linked to persons. It is not possible – or it is not as easy – to treat such manifestations as proxies for persons, even with recording technologies that can separate performances from performers and consign the repertoire to the archive.[20]

The project "Museene danser" had higher aims than just to develop exhibitions and performances as a means of dissemination. The goal we were aiming at was to help practices enter museums in an informal way, which could be a museum's contribution to the safeguarding of knowledge. The custom of dance parties is the most widespread framework for social dancing in the Nordic countries, so could museums simply open their doors to dance parties?

Egil: Much of the above is a discussion about performance as an addition or illustration to museum exhibitions. A performance usually splits the people present into performers and audience, and the usual aim is that performers are to entertain the audience. The core model of traditional social dance does not include this performer/audience dichotomy. There may be onlookers, but dancing does not take place for them to see; the dancers dance for their own pleasure. Nearly all ICH in the form of dance in Norway would be of this kind, which we call events of practice. So then, is it your idea that intangible cultural heritage could be represented inside the museum walls, not only through exhibitions and performances, but also as events of practice, in this case dance parties?

Tone: Yes, and I think we ended up with fairly good "events of practice", particularly in the second exhibition we created. An event of practice, as we understand it here, should be wished for by dancers of a specific dance tradition, and they should be encouraged to promote their practice on their own terms. They could come to the museum for help in curating the frames for the event, and the museum could offer space and time suitable for the dancers and make available the equipment needed. The museum could also promote the dance event, document

[20] B. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Intangible Heritage as Metacultural Production*, "Museum International" 2004, Vol. 56 (1-2).

it on film, and offer to exhibit photos, texts, and films to complement the learning environment. An event of practice can also easily become a tourist attraction, even if this is not the main aim.

I will describe several of our events as events of practice and draw a detailed picture, but let me first start with the origins of the project.

The Project "Interactive Dance Dissemination"

Tone: The project discussed here, "Interactive dance dissemination", aims to create, test, and facilitate different innovative practices, techniques, and methods of interactive dissemination of intangible dance heritage in museums. The project plans to make its three exhibitions at three of the nine MiST museums. At present, two exhibitions have been completed and the third is in the planning stage. Each exhibition is planned, designed, and takes shape in cooperation between a dance specialist, a museum exhibition designer, and a museum communicator. The exhibitions are built on very different concepts and designs, based on the arena and the topic of each museum.

Exhibition 1 "Dances in Norway" was a typical museum gallery exhibition in its layout, with photos, text, videos, old dance films from the archives of Sff, and a few hands-on installations. The content, however, was co-produced with dance enthusiasts from all over Norway. Individuals, groups, organizations, and educational programmes with dance as a major activity sent in their photos, texts, and videos to be the fill-in content of already curated spaces. A central aim of the project was to involve practitioners in the production of content. The architectural design of a large wooden half-open barn and the space was drawn to illustrate the distinction between theatre dance spectator *versus* social dance participant.[21] It also offered the option for visitors to either participate, or be spectators, or a little of both. People were encouraged to use the interactive installations and actively partake in the dance invitations inside the room. One installation was a box of buttons to play music to five different dances and to see short video instructions of how to dance them. The open floor next to it was meant to resemble the dance floor of a community hall. Visitors did dances on the dance floor and in other interactive installations, which confirmed that the invitation to perform was well-received.

Exhibition 2 "Dances of life" took place inside an old community house from the Sokndal valley in the Trøndelag region. The house was reassembled at the Sverresborg Trøndelag Folk Museum in 2012. The house was built in 1934 and had its peak period in the 1960s. It used to host bingo nights, Christmas parties, debates, political meetings, and above all regular dance evenings organized by the neighbouring communities in the region. The curated house was divided into two

[21] T. Erlien et al., *Danseformidling på museum – et interaktivt møte mellom arkivmateriale, tradisjonsutøvere og publikum*, "By og bygd" 2018, Vol. 47.

sections. One small hall was equipped with standard AV media and a place to sit and watch the archive films and photos. The permanent exhibited objects in the community house were archive films, sound recordings of dance stories, and old photos of dance in community houses. A brochure in the shape of a magazine presented information about dance traditions, dance parties, and dance in everyday life in the Trøndelag region. In addition, furniture and musical instruments from the 1950s and 1960s and a typical backstage room from the period could be found in the house. The main dance hall was left untouched, except for one installation that projected dancers in real body size on three walls, with speakers in each corner. Visitors could experience dance in the house at any time by turning on the sound film projection and dancing along. Experiencing the film recordings of dancing projected on the walls resulted in one man in his fifties dancing the traditional local dance "*pols*" for the first time in 30 years. He danced with his daughter, who had no knowledge that her father was such a great dancer! In this way, the visitors to the relatively conventional museum exhibition were able to spontaneously introduce an event of practice.

Is There Room for Events of Practice at Museums?

Egil: The episode of the man who had his dance skills triggered shows the power of films that are relevant for members of the audience, and is testimony to the kind of impact museums would like to see. It is an event of practice, but hardly repeatable. Did you manage to facilitate events of practice in a more systematic way?

Tone: Yes, the project also worked with planned events of practice, and included a list of programmed dance events during the time that the exhibitions were on display. The aim was that these should be events of practice rather than performances. In order to achieve that, I tried to send out open invitations and only partially decided which type of dancing the events were to include. It was important that practitioners from a variety of dance traditions and genres in Trondheim were allowed to use the dance space as they wished for their dancing. They would promote and expose themselves to the public, as they would do elsewhere, and some of that might come close to performance, but not all of it.

At the first museum, the events happened on the dance floor in the middle of the exhibition and in the room next door, and they were as important as the exhibition itself. The museum aimed to create live dancing and events that would bring new groups of visitors to the museum, which complied nicely with events of practice. As a curator trained in the 2003 Convention, I am equally interested in building networks with the broad dance community in Trondheim.

All five events during the three months brought practitioners onto the dance floors. The level of exchanging knowledge from practitioners to non-practitioners was best at informal traditional dance parties on a Saturday night and a drop-in day on a Sunday afternoon, and these functioned as real events of practice.

As many as 350 people visited at the same time, and among them were dance practitioners and other visitors. For this event we invited all dance organizations in Trondheim to perform and compete for a small amount of money in the cafeteria. Additionally, we gave dance groups a chance to teach their dance styles on the exhibition dance floor. For five hours one Saturday the whole exhibition area was made into a large dance house, with dances exchanged in all corners. So I think that the dance events that the project arranged in the exhibitions were real events of practice, or at least very close to such and this proves that they are realistic working methods for museums.

Egil: And what about the earlier-mentioned dance competition?

Tone: A dance competition was also included in the programme, and in its aftermath we asked the question whether this was an event of practice or one of performance. A dance competition is to a large extent curated and programmed, even if the practitioners contributed with self-determined dance choreographies and dance types. I would argue that this curated event worked well as a museum activity, and if it is planned and set up with the full participation of the practitioners it could become a good event of practice for them as well.

For the second exhibition, I decided to test another concept, a new approach called "occupation", which we hoped would meet the wishes and needs of dance practitioners in Trondheim. They were invited to come and "occupy" the exhibition house and use it as a dance arena, and we hoped that this would be an incentive to meet for "events of practice". The museum workers in the team did not have much to say about the dance content we should include. The first and foremost rule of safeguarding is that actions should benefit the practitioners, and we made that into a challenge to see if dance practitioners would want to occupy this open place with dance.

As the concept for this exhibition was to fill the house with life and people, this allowed the curators to leave the large dance hall open for different types of informal dance events. To guarantee that the house was not left unused, an open invitation to all dancers, dance organizations, dance companies, and dance groups in Trondheim was sent out. They were invited to book time for their "occupation" and use the house as they saw fit – for a rehearsal for a competition or show, social dancing, a dance party, or teaching. One requirement was put on the "occupants": visitors had to be allowed and they should invite the visitors to join in, try for just a short time, or just sit and watch. A museum guide operated in the back to explain the concept when visitors came. This placed today's dance practices of dancers and organizations from Trondheim into a dance hall that typically served local dance parties in the 1960s. I consider this idea to be even closer to an event of practice.

During the exhibition's two-month run, eight different constellations occupied the house. In addition, we promoted seven large, but informal, dance events based on specific topics. These events were open to everyone but had specific dance

themes. One Saturday afternoon over 100 participants from Syria and Norway wanted to share and teach each other social dance traditions as they were practiced informally in parties, weddings, celebrations, and dance gatherings with live music. Four weeks later, four dance instructors from Kurdistan, Uganda, Norway, and Belarus wanted to share their dances and dance together, eat and play traditional music. This gathered 50 people together. The success of these events resulted in requests from other local communities in Trondheim to come and share their intangible cultural heritage and learn Norwegian traditional dances, among others from the Turkish people in Trondheim. The museum workers now experienced the old community house being filled with dance each opening day, which were Saturdays and Sundays for ten weeks. Visitors could experience open and informal dance events, and the old community house gained a new relevance and use as a multicultural local community of dance enthusiasts in Trondheim.

Egil: Did you manage to collect the opinions of the visitors about this event?

Tone: Dancers that joined the events and others that used the exhibitions regularly appreciated the possibility to participate, or to sit with a cup of coffee while watching the dance. They reported that they needed places to gather to dance. Enthusiasts that usually organize dance events were tired of planning and managing the events. Our approach made it easy for them to come and practice dance, with everything already arranged and ready for use. Since it took place in a museum, they could come without including a large group in the planning and engage in their practice without paying large bills for renting space. The guide helped by mediating to the visitors what the practitioners did and putting everything in context. The guide also facilitated the promotion of the heritage through dialogue during times when the execution of practice was not enough.

As visitors are the main users of museums, it is important for a museum to know what they get out of an exhibition, and museum workers were concerned about how the visitors felt. Occupying dancers had to report back to me after each visit, and reported that some visitors did join in for a while, a few came and stayed the whole afternoon, many sat down and watched and asked them questions about what they danced. Reports from the guides were drawn up as well, specifying the numbers of visitors, how many visitors participated in the actual dancing, and how many visitors they chatted with. The guides reported that they talked with almost all visitors, and that most visitors enjoyed the informal atmosphere, and expressed how "cozy" it was to come in and see the house full of life. For the days featuring an "occupation", a total of 15-20 guests popped by each day. Many remembered the "old days" when they went to a dance at the community house (Norwegian: *dans på lokalet*) every weekend. As the exhibition was open every weekend for two months, we also experienced visitors coming regularly to join the different events, which was a very good result for a temporary exhibition.

Egil: This shows that dance practice can be given room in a museum without taking the form of a performance, and therefore contribute to the continuation of

a practice in a way the 2003 Convention would recognize. It is, however, still only a one-time effort and effect, and the question arises whether it is realistic that it could become a permanent arrangement, similar to the work in the Fandango Living Museum in Brazil.

Division of Power Between Curator and Practitioner

Egil: If the museums want to follow up their work with events of practice, they will have to continue inviting practitioners into the museum on a more permanent basis, and also give them a quite important say in how their events should be organized and function. Are there any discussions about opening up the doors in such a way?

Tone: We could ask if the well-used term "dialogue", especially found in New museology theory, can be seen as a way to put some of the control in the practitioners' hands in a museum context. New museology trends underscore that museums should take on a new role as a dialogue institution. It is now an aim of museums to engage in a dialogue with their users, which somehow is a step in the same direction as that of the 2003 Convention. A real dialogue museum has a democratic framework, where power is distributed evenly between the participants.[22] The keywords are engagement, involvement, and participation.[23] The methods used are often dialogue, co-creation, or other forms of cooperation towards a goal. A dialogue can create new knowledge. This can reduce the gap between the private area of expertise of the museum conservators and the public knowledge and experiences, by creating spaces where visitors and tourists can participate in knowledge production. In some museums, they go as far as producing the exhibitions during the actual encounter of experts and audience.[24] Also, Kurin points to the possibility of attaining good results through local engagement in community-based museums, local initiatives regarding tourist presentations, and cultural institutions on the local community level. This may help diminish the gap between experts, public officials, and practitioners.[25] But the opposite is unfortunately more common in museums. This is because museum professionals are often frightened by this type of relationship to the practitioners. Questions of-

[22] H. Mellemsether, I. Müller, *From Audience to Participants: Engaging Through Dialogue*, in: H. Mellemsether, M. Iancu (eds.), *Open Heritage. Changing Museums – Changing Communities – Changing Traditions*, Astra Museum, Sibiu 2016.

[23] S. Krankenhagen, *Prosumers, Likers and Do-It-Yourselfers – Sketching a Genealogy of Participatory Culture*, lecture held on 2 October 2013 at the Museum of World Culture, Gothenburg, Sweden, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_6HjB25NU68 [accessed: 15.04.2017].

[24] E. Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Shaping of Knowledge*, Routledge, London – New York 1992; eadem, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, Routledge, London 2000.

[25] R. Kurin, *Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in the 2003 UNESCO Convention: A Critical Appraisal*, "Museum International" 2004, Vol. 56(1-2), p. 72.

ten arise concerning the integrity of collections, trustworthiness, and the truth, which museums wish to have control over.[26] As Mellemsether and Müller argue, museums have always involved external people in different types of work, and "the other" usually is assigned the role of helping the museum professional and has to answer to the needs of the museum.

Egil: I think the dialogue approach is certainly a way in which practitioners can be included. It is important not to forget that the staff of a museum already have assigned tasks that take their time, and that these tasks still have to be done, even if the museums want to expand into the new field of ICH. It seems hardly doable or efficient only to retrain the existing staff for new tasks, but perhaps better to educate new experts for this new field.

A Museum Facilitator – A New Role?

Tone: Yes, I've already described such new roles and new tasks. The "occupation" concept in the second exhibition posed a challenge to the museum workers. They did not have the knowledge and the training to fill the role needed to allow the practitioners to be in charge of their events when they moved to the museum. During these events of practice, I had the role of facilitating the events and curating the right environment for dance to be practiced. At the same time, I had to promote the events in such a way that did not change them into either pure performances or exhibitions. The museum depended on my knowledge, which was fundamental for facilitating events of dance practice: knowledge about dance history, knowledge about the dance field and the dance genres in Trondheim, and about what dancers needed at a site to practice their dance.

Egil: Thus it seems that your project suggests that the museums who want to work with events of practice need a facilitator for that, am I right?

Tone: Definitely. A facilitator is a neutral person that helps a group of people understand their common objectives and assists them in planning and how to achieve their objectives. The facilitator is not in a position of authority, nor imparting knowledge which he or she holds alone. They are, instead, putting in place structures and processes which will assist the group in communicating their own ideas.[27] Several researchers in museum studies suggest that curators, who are cultural content specialists on tangible assets, should rather become facilitators. A related concept is that of a cultural broker. Kurin states that: "Culture brokers study, understand, and represent someone's culture (even

[26] H. Mellemsether, I. Müller, op. cit.

[27] C. Gray, *St. Mungo Museum of Religious Life and Art – A Space to Speak, Discuss and Be Heard*, in: D. Clover et al. (eds.), *Adult Education, Museums and Art Galleries. Animating Social, Cultural and Institutional Change*, Sense Publishers, Rotterdam 2016, p. 19.

sometimes their own) to nonspecialized others through various means and media. 'Brokering' also captures the idea that these representations are to some degree negotiated, dialogical, and driven by a variety of interests on behalf of the involved parties".[28]

A museum facilitator can help the practitioners who are working with intangible cultural heritage by promoting and incorporating their practice into an organizational system, without interfering with the execution of the intangible heritage itself. For a group of local practitioners, this would mean that they do not need to do all the work of arranging the dance events themselves, applying for funding to cover the costs of professional musicians, dance instructors, and paying for the dance arenas where they can execute their intangible dance heritage.

Egil: Folk dancers in Norway are used to interacting with experts and expert knowledge. Many leading dancers also have an education in traditional dance, and integrate their practical and their educational knowledge. I think that if museums are going to employ facilitators, it is vital that they employ these kinds of people, who have at the same time a solid background in the practice and an education in the field, rather than someone with knowledge mainly in administration or mediation. The practitioners have for a long time wanted to strengthen their traditional transmission with knowledge from education and archives.

Negotiating the Past and Present

Egil: The 2003 Convention states that ICH is "transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity". The 2003 Convention does not aim to safeguard new creations of the present or cultural expressions from the global mainstream. On the contrary, it is meant to support local expressions threatened by globalization.[29] This is nevertheless a difficult balance, because cultural expressions with the strength to conquer the world are powerful symbols for their countries of origin, and even for the UNESCO ICH lists. We have seen several examples of globalized practices which make it onto the lists, for instance the Tango[30] and Capoeira circle.[31]

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[28] R. Kurin, *Reflections of a Culture Broker: A View from the Smithsonian*, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC 1997, p. 30.

[29] "**Recognizing** that the processes of globalization and social transformation, alongside the conditions they create for renewed dialogue among communities, also give rise, as does the phenomenon of intolerance, to grave threats of deterioration, disappearance and destruction of the intangible cultural heritage, in particular owing to a lack of resources for safeguarding such heritage". Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, 17 October 2003, 2368 UNTS 1, Preamble.

[30] UNESCO, *Tango*, http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/tango-00258 [accessed: 18.11.2017].

[31] UNESCO, *Capoeira Circle*, http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/capoeira-circle-00892 [accessed: 18.11.2017].

Further developments in this direction, where countries to a large extent wish to market their most famous expressions, would seem to be contrary to the aims of the 2003 Convention. It is an interesting question how the museums negotiate the past and present; and this difficulty can also be seen in the description of the exhibitions above.

Your project did not, as far as I can see, check or even wish to check if the dance genres you invited had the potential to fall within the definition of ICH for the purposes of international listing under the 2003 Convention. Some of it, I suppose, definitely resulted from the globalization that the 2003 Convention wants to counteract in order to maintain the cultural diversity. Do you see any possibility to prioritize the typical traditional material of the region?

Tone: The idea of "occupation" during the second exhibition was first and foremost intended for dance groups, though the museums wanted large groups that resulted in increased ticket sales. This would then mean that the large hip hop dance organizations and competition dances would be the right profile to fill the exhibition with. But groups like this probably do not want to comply with ideas of safeguarding, nor do they need it.

Egil: The idea of inviting anyone who wants to see themselves as part of the safeguarding idea to the museum is a good idea in accordance with the 2003 Convention. Those interested could, however, be asked to apply to be accepted, and then the Museum could select those who fall within the framework and give them the benefits available. In this way museums could support the work of the 2003 Convention by applying their expertise. The museums could still invite others for other reasons.

An underlying challenge for combining exhibitions with events of practice is the question of historicity: A specialist is needed to ascertain if a coin is really made in the Viking age. A specialist can also tell if the dance on a film is really a *springar* performed by dancers in the rural community of Ål. Historicity is a central task for the museums; to evaluate if a button was really worn on a soldier's uniform or if the signature from a famous person is authentic. The museums have well tested methods for this. The work with historicity is more difficult when it comes to practices. While an object often remains relatively stable, and has a time when it was made, a practice is changing, and in most cases it is not possible to identify a time when it was created, but rather came into being. The folk-dance performances were in most cases not checked by museum staff for their historicity, but rather seen more as an attraction for tourists than a part of a serious museum exhibition, as we have discussed before. A practice is hard to fix to a point in the past, and is also not fixed in the present. Therefore, the 2003 Convention discarded the preservation paradigm. It has a vague take on historicity and has totally abandoned the term "authenticity", replacing it with a stress on the changing continuity and on leaving control with the practitioners.

Tone: A Norwegian folklorist Audun Kjus states that museum work embraces intangible cultural heritage with a few different approaches.[32] He argues that museums try to work within the 2003 Convention, but also work on the edges of and outside the 2003 Convention's aims of safeguarding the heritage. The last two approaches concern the work with immaterial practices that no communities practice anymore, but that museums can and have a responsibility to bring back to people's consciousness, and practices that are not ethical or not appreciated as heritage. These perspectives prove that museums do much good work for immaterial practices, even those that are not in need of safeguarding. The challenge with the first approach is, according to Kjus, the need for normal people to realize that museums have collections and artefacts that are sources of valuable knowledge with respect to today's immaterial practices and processes, and that by opening these sources up for visitors, museums work within the 2003 Convention. Kjus also states that the question of authenticity and value should be left with the practitioners instead of museum researchers, but still has some way to go within the museum field. A combination of working with practices, research, documentation, and exhibiting collections that are sources for intangible cultural heritage, is a method that museums are well suited for.[33] We also see a need to stress that museums should continue the work they are already doing, regardless of whether it is serving the 2003 Convention *sensu stricto*.

Conclusions

Egil: Museums have signalled a strong wish to include the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in their portfolios, even if they still mainly work within the preservation paradigm. Museums normally combine many approaches in their work with immaterial culture, some of which may not belong to a full-fledged safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, but they may still be important contributions.

Tone: This is precisely why we have discussed whether, and how, museums can find a way to include the core of the safeguarding paradigm in their work. I think we have shown that exhibitions and performances, which are well-established methods of Museums, can certainly support safeguarding in important ways, but that full safeguarding projects would need to include the practitioners. The New Museum wave has reached out towards safeguarding, and the dance project described here included a wide-ranging discussion of various solutions to enable museums to embrace safeguarding, emphasizing the method we call

[32] A. Kjus, *Utøvelse og dokumentasjon. Museets rolle i arbeidet for den immaterielle kulturarven*, paper presented at the Arts Council Norway's ICH Conference on 19 November 2014, https://www.academia.edu/9343117/Utøvelse_og_dokumentasjon._Museets_rolle_i_arbeidet_for_den_immaterielle_kulturarven [accessed: 24.08.2017].

[33] Ibidem.

"events of practice". A basic challenge is whether a museum staff is willing to give practitioners the lead, and if so, whether the practitioners themselves are able to take the lead.

Egil: The project discussed has shown that in order to obtain really strong participation from practitioners it was not possible to prioritize only dance practices with a sufficiently long transmission period and sufficiently local roots to be counted as ICH.

Tone: The question of how to prioritize is a difficult one. One reason for safeguarding ICH is that it is often threatened by a lack of esteem and popularity in the present, and is about to be wiped out by globalization and popular mainstream culture. It is risky and costly for a museum to prioritize the less popular practices, but at the same time it is also an obvious task within the framework of the 2003 Convention.

Egil: The idea of fairness also comes into play. If the State, the competent institutions, and the experts view their task as being to grant the status of ICH and to promote for nomination the elements they considered the most deserving, then fairness seem precarious, and we can understand that they feel the need to play safe. As I see the 2003 Convention, the role of States and experts is to serve as evaluators of applications from practitioners, and the applications only, and not the virtues of elements. The same could be said when it comes to how museums should prioritize their engagement in ICH. It is all too easy to select the popular, non-controversial practices, something shared by "the whole nation", such as the Gastronomic habits of the French, which came from the State Party and not from practitioners.[34]

Tone: Fairness and efficiency are much easier achieved by letting practitioners propose their own practices, so that museums, and at later stages also experts and States, can treat such proposals as applications, evaluating them based on whether they are a good fit to the idea of safeguarding. It is crucial for the continued success of the 2003 Convention that attention is focused on the needs of the practitioners and their communities. This has been stressed repeatedly in Committee meetings as a basic intention,[35] which seems to be a promising development.

Egil: The principle of practitioners' and communities' involvement needs to permeate the work with safeguarding in museums, as well as among experts and States. The same goes for respect for the text of the 2003 Convention. There was a backlash during the last meeting of the 2003 Convention in Addis Ababa in 2017; a strong lobbying activity on the part of countries which were not happy with the

[34] UNESCO, *Gastronomic Meal of the French*, http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/gastronomic-meal-of-the-french-00437 [accessed: 18.11.2017].

[35] See UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Section, *Aide-Mémoire for Completing a Nomination to the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding for 2015 and Later Nominations*, 1 July 2014, www.unesco.org/culture/ich/doc/src/ICH-01-aide-mémoire-EN.doc [accessed: 18.11.2017].

expert evaluators led to overturning a very large portion of the unfavourable recommendations from the expert Evaluation Body, ignoring the text of the 2003 Convention. There is always a danger that serving goals of institutions, or on a higher level national pride and national interests, may become more important than playing by the rules and helping practitioners.

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