

MUSEUMS AND INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE: RULES OF THUMB

Numerous museums have long since included the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) into their practices. Some are still looking for ways in which to engage with the participatory and future-oriented approaches that are central to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. This might mean enriching existing museum practices in order to adjust them to the needs of the communities, groups and individuals (CGIs) that embody intangible cultural heritage. This tool presents some rules of thumb that might be worth exploring in relation to participation, superdiversity and sustainability.



SOME RULES OF THUMB ON HOW TO START WORKING TOWARDS PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES THAT ADDRESS INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

- Make people feel comfortable and 'at home' in the museum
- Consider the ambience of the museum building
- Start to use museum spaces for transmission and on-site training by community members
- Provide workshops and studios on a continual basis for the practice of a variety of ICH elements
- Key to successful participatory programs with ICH and its CGIs is engaging in an on-going dialogue that is predicated on equity.
- Take the view that the CGIs involved are experts in relation to the ICH element. Avoid assumptions of – sole or imperative – expert knowledge on the side of heritage professionals.



SOME RULES OF THUMB ON HOW TO WORK WITH DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS IN SUPERDIVERSE SOCIETIES

- Deconstruct the homogeneous perspective of communities.
- Embrace the multifocality within a certain person and within yourself.
- Reflect and act on the talents and perspectives of your museum staff
- Become a network museum. Do not only work with other museums, archives or libraries, but build active collaborations with different community organisations. Build new alliances that go beyond the cultural heritage sector.
- Embrace the concept of hospitality, not in the neoliberal sense, but hospitality as part of intercultural communication as well as in the context of the leisure industry.



SOME RULES OF THUMB ON HOW TO PROMOTE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN MUSEUMS AS A DRIVER OF SUSTAINABILITY

- ▶ Putting into light, in a public space, the living expressions of CGIs – the custodians and bearers of ICH – museums can contribute to acknowledge their manifold roles, and raise awareness about their value to society as resources from an environmental, social and economic point of view.
- ▶ As documentation and research centres, museums can promote participatory methodologies to inventory ICH, stressing the importance of community-based knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe as sources of sustainability.
- ▶ By recognising social practices, rituals and festive events as cultural expressions, and by improving the link between social groups, museums can contribute to reconciliation and social cohesion.
- ▶ Highlighting the cultural value of traditional craftsmanship, museums can promote, and even accommodate, alternative, sustainable economies.



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