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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Repurposing Intangible Heritage – Convergence, Creativity and Community Empowerment Post Covid–19

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Abstract
In a report following the outbreak of the Covid–19 pandemic, UNESCO urged its member states to "take advantage of digital technologies to increase the visibility and understanding of living heritage" (UNESCO 2021). Drawing on the growing dialogue about new media technologies and cultural heritage, the paper examines the repurposing of intangible heritage from an initial framework of safeguarding anxiety to more recent calls for sustainable development, cultural creativity and community empowerment. Through a discussion and analysis of three community–based and ethically–informed non–profit initiatives of community art archives, digital storytelling and data visualisation from the Western Balkans, Greece and Palestinian diaspora, the paper argues that the convergence of science and technology with cultural heritage can offer new ways for engaging with and transmitting intangible heritage as living heritage and along the themes of impermanence, difficult heritage, reuse and citizen empowerment.

Keywords: intangible heritage; safeguarding anxiety; sustainable development; digital storytelling; digital archives; data visualisation

Introduction

In April 2020 UNESCO launched an online survey to assess the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on intangible heritage. With responses from cultural practitioners and heritage professionals from 78 countries, the survey resulted in three recommendations for post recovery plans, one of which was to "take advantage of digital technologies to increase the visibility and understanding of living heritage"[1] (UNESCO 2021). The question of how new and digital technologies can contribute to the safeguarding of intangible heritage has been the subject of heritage research and practice for the last decade (see Sousa 2015; Severo and Cachat 2016; Majewski 2019; Alivizatou 2019; Underberg-Goode 2020; Hou et al. 2022). Yet, the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing global measures of social distancing intensified discussions about the ways in which new and 'contactless' technologies can enable cultural transmission and creativity, a theme that was also discussed at the 2021 *World Forum for Intangible Cultural Heritage* [2] (see also Damodaran 2022 regarding the impact of new technologies on the performing arts, including expressions of intangible heritage, in the post-pandemic world).

The aim of this paper is to build on these discussions and further examine some of the implications of the convergence of science and technology with cultural heritage. Rather than just "increasing visibility and understanding", I explore the potential for new technologies to enable different ways for engaging with cultural heritage, ways that are inclusive, democratic, ethically-driven and raise further possibilities for cultural creativity and

social action. To support this argument, I discuss three digital platforms from the Western Balkans, Greece and the Palestinian diaspora that in mobilising information and communication technologies (ICT), ultimately challenge mainstream understandings of intangible heritage and contribute to the dialogue about the value of heritage in sustainable community development.

The article is divided in three parts. The first part looks at changes in the discourse of intangible heritage from an initial phase of safeguarding anxiety primarily focused on inventorying and documentation to more recent discussions about sustainability and the role of living heritage in community development. Building on the theme of safeguarding anxiety and sustainability as a conceptual backdrop for the development of digitisation initiatives, the second part examines different cases of digitisation. Starting with early efforts to digitise intangible heritage in archiving and documentation platforms, the paper then discusses in more detail three community-based and participatory projects: The Biennale of Western Balkans (Bowb.gr 2023), Istorima (Istorima.org 2023) and Visualizing Palestine (Visualisingpalestine.org 2023). In so doing, the paper traces this repurposing shift from documentation per se to ethically-driven social action and sustainable community development. Drawing on these three cases, the third part provides an analysis of four main themes along which intangible heritage can be repurposed in the era of convergence and creativity: impermanence, the transmission of difficult heritage, reuse and citizen empowerment.

From safeguarding anxiety to sustainability

In the last decade a shift has taken place in discussions about intangible heritage. What could be described as an anxiety to safeguard has gradually given way to a quest for sustainable futures. Safeguarding anxiety is primarily related to themes of heritage endangerment and cultural loss and has been a key motivating factor in the global movement surrounding the adoption of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (On loss and heritage, see Lowethal 1985; Butler 2006; Holtorf 2001, 2014; Harrison 2013; Vidal and Dias 2015; for intangible heritage and endangerment see Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004; Brown 2005; Hafstein 2007, 2015, 2018; Alivizatou 2012, 2021). Indeed, since the 1990s the identification of threats to the viability of intangible heritage has informed the international safeguarding framework and could be exemplified in programmes such as the *Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*, which stipulated endangerment as a requirement for a cultural expression to gain international recognition (Nas 2002; Aikawa 2004; Alivizatou 2007).

Safeguarding anxiety is embedded in the 2003 Convention. According to the preamble, "…globalisation and social transformation…" could pose threats to intangible heritage and hence, the adoption of "legal, technical, administrative and financial measures" (UNESCO 2003) is necessary in order to avert its loss. To this end, governments and relevant cultural institutions are urged to take appropriate 'safeguarding measures', including activities aimed at the "identification, research, documentation, promotion, enhancement, education and revitalisation of intangible heritage" (UNESCO 2003). The fictional dialogue between heritage doctor and patient, where intangible heritage is the 'diagnosis' and safeguarding the 'treatment', provides a humorous interlude to Hafstein's analysis of the discourse of endangerment and cure (2015). Questioning the impact of such programmes, Hafstein ultimately suggests that safeguarding is "dispossession by another name", since "… as part of the safeguarding of intangible heritage local actors are asked to surrender to experts and councils and administrators the control over their own cultural practices" (2015: 156).

Over the years, references to loss and endangerment within the UNESCO apparatus seem to have toned down. In 2006, as the 2003 Convention came into force, the List of Masterpieces was replaced by the less hierarchical Representative List of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity and through subsequent amendments in the Convention's Operational Directives, endangerment is no longer a prerequisite for nomination. And yet, safeguarding anxiety is still manifested in the multitude of inventories, international, national and regional, compiled most typically by trained professionals and governmental bureaucrats working to different extents with local communities of cultural practitioners (see Adell et al. 2015 for a discussion of different safeguarding initiatives). The standardisation of such safeguarding practices invites, again, everyone involved to be mindful of power imbalances, the ethics of collaborative work and the unintended consequences of top-down interventions (see also Bendix et al. 2013; Coombe 2013; Gilman and Foster 2015; Bortolotto 2021; Alivizatou 2021).

A turning point in the international dialogue on intangible heritage was the publication of the UN framework *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* in 2015 (UN 2015). When the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 were published there was a prevailing sense of missed opportunity to include a goal specifically about culture, heritage and the arts (Logan and Larsen 2018). Instead, what ensued was a recommendation for other UN agencies, including UNESCO, to interweave the SDGs in their activities. Although the 2003 Convention made a brief reference to sustainable development in the Preamble, it was not until the updated Operational Directives of 2016 that a more thorough engagement with sustainable development was made. Among others, the Operational Directives describe intangible heritage as "strategic resource for sustainable development" (UNESCO 2016 paragraph 173) and more precisely in inclusive social development, inclusive economic development, environmental sustainability, peace and security (UNESCO 2016 paragraphs 170-197). As such, intangible heritage was no longer conceptualised as endangered traditions but instead as precious knowledges that could help tackle major issues, such as food security, health care, quality education, gender equality, sustainable water use, sustainable livelihoods, decent work, natural disasters and climate change (UNESCO 2016). It is also from this period onwards that the term 'living heritage' is introduced within UNESCO activities and used interchangeably with intangible heritage.

It should be noted that although intangible heritage is nowadays well-established as a term in international heritage policy and heritage studies, even before the adoption of the 2003 Convention concerns had been expressed as to the use of the term 'intangible' to refer to traditional cultural knowledges and practices (see McCann et al. 1999). McCann et al. note that intangible heritage "makes sense in the administrative logic of UNESCO" but is rather technical and difficult to relate with cultural practitioners and communities (1999: 60). The use of 'intangible cultural heritage' as an official term by UNESCO could be traced to the pre-existing term of 'intangible cultural property' in 1970s Japanese legislation (Aikawa-Faure 2014). Ishimura (forthcoming) provides an excellent account of the differences between the term 'intangible cultural heritage' in the 2003 Convention, which emphasises change over time, and 'intangible cultural property' in Japanese law, which emphasises the preservation of cultural authenticity. Although it is not entirely clear why 'intangible heritage' was chosen by UNESCO, Van Zanten who edited the Intangible Heritage Glossary of 2002 noted that 'living culture' was frequently used as an alternative to intangible heritage (2004: 38). The recent widespread use of 'living heritage' in UNESCO intangible heritage publications (UNESCO 2021) and the UNESCO website underlines themes of cultural resilience and adaptability in the face of change and how intangible heritage is constantly recreated by living practitioners. This marks a departure from the

notions of endangerment and cultural authenticity which characterise the Japanese law and informed early work around the implementation of the 2003 Convention.

While work was under way to mainstream intangible/living heritage with sustainable development, the Covid-19 pandemic had a major impact around the world on how local communities interacted and transmitted intangible heritage (UNESCO 2021). Findings from UNESCO's survey reveal that the pandemic had a negative impact on local communities and ways in which intangible heritage expressions were performed and carried on. Yet, the survey also revealed that during the pandemic intangible heritage became a "powerful tool for resilience and recovery" and that many local communities came up with new ways for interacting and transmitting cultural knowledges and practices, often with the use of new media and technologies that enable remote interaction (UNESCO 2021).

What also became clear was that intangible heritage expressions are not just important for peoples' identities and the world's cultural diversity but also as a source of livelihoods that were severely affected by the upheaval and disruption caused by the pandemic. This further reinforced earlier discussions about the role of intangible heritage as a 'resource' for sustainable economic development (On heritage for sustainable development see papers in Logan and Larsen 2018; Labadi 2022; on intangible heritage and the market see Hafstein 2007; Coombe 2013; Testa 2016; Bortolotto 2021) and the need to further explore the links with the creative economies and cultural industries (see papers in Labadi 2020; Istvandity 2021). Through this process notions of authenticity and endangerment that dominated understandings of intangible heritage in the early years of the 2003 Convention have become less prominent than ideas of convergence, fusion and cultural creativity which have emerged more pressingly during the pandemic. It is no coincidence that the 2021 *World Forum for Intangible Cultural Heritage* addressed exactly this topic of convergence and the links between intangible heritage and the creative economies in a post-pandemic context.

How, then, can we envision intangible heritage through the lens of convergence and creativity in an increasingly digitised and mediated world? In the rest of this paper, I would like to explore some ways in which new media technologies and the internet enable different uses and engagements with intangible heritage offering an alternative framework for the safeguarding paradigm and sustainability. In the last decade the digital revolution has had a noticeable influence on the way people interact with the world around them. Even before the pandemic, efforts to digitise intangible heritage had led to interesting experiments (see Underberg 2006; Kenderdine 2016; Kenderdine and Shaw 2017; Alivizatou 2019; Hou et al. 2022). The next part of the paper looks at three projects that show how new media technologies are renewing efforts to safeguard intangible heritage by enabling open and participatory processes. Digitisation and information and communication technologies offer a series of different methodologies for recording and transmitting embodied knowledges often with a diverse range of aims and possible uses, from education to entertainment and preservation. After reviewing some main tendencies in digital documentation, the paper will examine three initiatives from the Western Balkans, Greece and Palestinian diaspora that in mobilising digitisation foster creative dialogue, community empowerment and social action as core aspects of living heritage.

Convergences of New Media and Intangible Heritage

Digital Documentation

Digital catalogues and repositories of different data (audio/visual documentation, written sources) are a key aspect of digitisation of intangible heritage. This is most typically epitomised in the Representative List of Intangible Heritage, available on the website of UNESCO, but also in the digital national inventories, which combine multimodal technologies in order to present and interlink various sources of information. More often than not, these resources are sponsored by governmental agencies with the mission to define, identify and showcase expressions of intangible heritage present in each country. For example, the inventory of Switzerland created by the Swiss Ministry of Culture in partnership with the National Commission of UNESCO, local authorities from each canton and members of local communities presents an overview of the living traditions of the country (Lebendigetraditionen.ch 2023). Although the content of most of these websites is managed by governmental agencies, some websites take the form of wikis which allow for registered users to add content and contribute to the catalogue. One of the best-known examples is the ICH Scotland Wiki, which presents in an inclusive way the cultural diversity of Scotland's different communities through direct input from local community members (Ichscotland.org 2023).

Recently launched as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the portal *Transmedia Intangible Heritage* by UNESCO Quito is a digital resource containing information about intangible heritage in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru and how it links with sustainable development (UNESCO 2023). Rather than presenting a list of expressions according to geographic or thematic classification, the platform interlinks themes of sustainability under the topics of 'planet', 'people', 'prosperity' and 'peace' and combines podcasts, video recordings and images together with recordings of public online events. In this way, it proposes a transborder approach to how local communities maintain cultural practices and engage in transmission in the face of broader challenges, such as food security, risk disaster management and the conservation of marine ecosystems. For example, under the theme of 'prosperity' the resource presents different community-based alternatives to 'economic growth and consumption'. One of these is the Barter of Exchange of San Pedro de Pimampiro from Ecuador, which is an expression of the South American notion 'buen virir' (living well) and includes traditional bartering practices supporting solidarity and reciprocity.

A second area where new technologies and intangible heritage meet is in the field of ICT research and is usually driven by university researchers and multimedia labs working with a group or community that are regarded as holders of special knowledge and skills related to intangible heritage. Such initiatives could be described as scientific experiments in capturing live information derived directly from physical movement of the human body. This information is then processed and configured in new ontologies that can be used to transmit the captured knowledge to learners.

In this category the i-Treasures project which was funded by the European Union FP7 Programme between 2013-2017, used tools and sensors from the fields of virtual reality, facial recognition and motion capture to create a series of educational scenarios in a virtual learning environment for intangible heritage (Dimitropoulos et al. 2014; Alivizatou 2019). The educational scenarios ranged from virtual sensorimotor learning games to teaching resources and learning modules for schools and covered different cultural expressions in the fields of dance, traditional craft and singing practices. Similar motion capture technologies were used in the Living Archive of Martial Arts which was a collaboration between university researchers and kung fu masters from Hong Kong that started in the early 2010s

(Chao et al. 2018). The project has resulted in the collection of a large amount of motion capture data from kung fu masters which were archived and annotated. Some data were used to create immersive installations for museum exhibitions about martial arts in Hong Kong and internationally (Kenderdine 2020).

Both projects offered important insights into the documentation of data related to body movement and raised awareness about intangible heritage. Their primary purpose though seems to have been more to answer scientific questions about live data capture and the creation of new modalities. Local communities were involved as sources of data and experts in their fields imparting information. Moreover, a key motivation in both cases was the urgency to document this knowledge before it disappears and could therefore be considered as a response to the discourse of safeguarding anxiety.

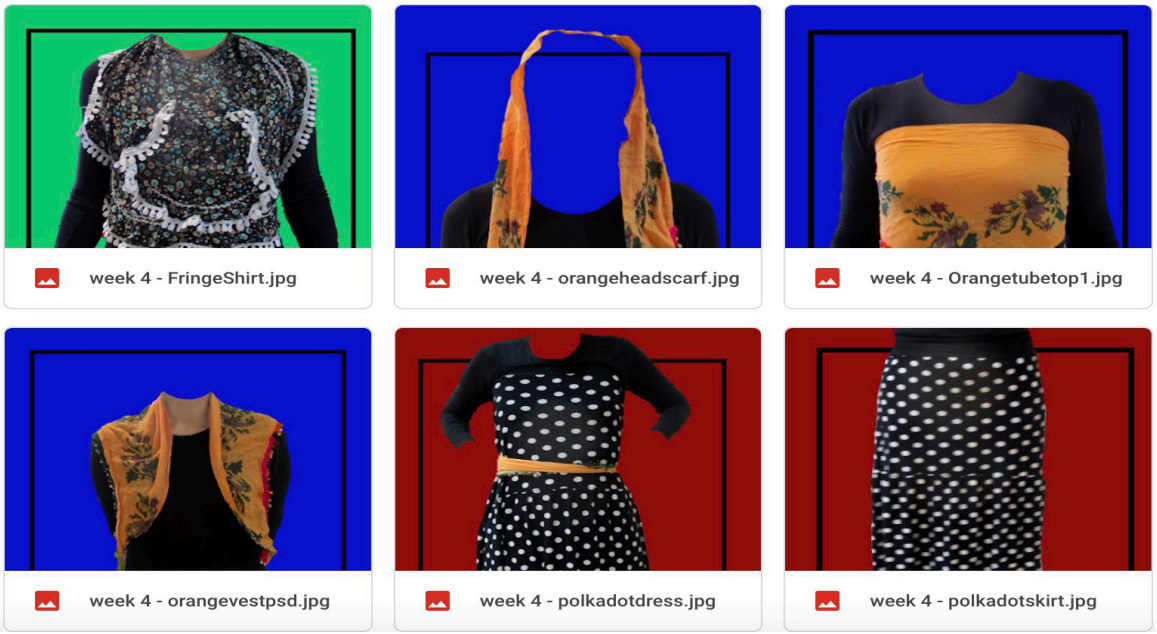
The three cases discussed below, which are more recent and date from 2018 to 2022, demonstrate a more noticeable emphasis on community-based approaches and active participation of different stakeholders.

Creative Dialogues: Biennale of Western Balkans – Art Pluriverse

The Biennale of Western Balkans is a cross-disciplinary and cross-border initiative led by the University of Ioannina in Greece with a focus on knowledge sharing, collaboration, and dialogue on intangible heritage between a diverse group of communities. Its work includes the biannual curation of Art Pluriverse, a community science series through art, research and open access. The project is inspired by discussions around post-development and the pluriverse (Kothari et al. 2019) and informed by the Draft Declaration on Open Access for Cultural Heritage (Heidel and Wallace 2020) while making a call for a FAIR/CARE and ethical use of new media and technologies, issues that are further discussed in Part Three of this paper. At the centre of Art Pluriverse is the aim to experience 'tradition anew' through community archives and an online platform than facilitates creative dialogue and a fresh outlook on knowledges and practices inherited from the past.

In December 2020, at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, the first Art Pluriverse took place on the topic of textile crafts through a series of five online synergies between artists, researchers and textile communities from the Balkans. The aim was to facilitate a creative dialogue between contemporary artists and heritage communities and at the same time build digital archives that would then be made available online in a Virtual Reality exhibition and through different modalities via the European Union's online database for cultural heritage, Europeana. Among others, an interesting synergy developed between fashion artist Marina Juliana Byck and members of the Roma Community of Aliveri, near the town of Volos in Greece. In describing her collaboration with Roma women, Byck notes: 'Although we did not share language, culture, internet connection or geographic location, we connected through the memories and the stories of the thread, needlework, weaving and everyday clothing. We relied on the universal bonds forged between women through textiles for generations' (Ziku et al. 2021). The creative dialogue between the artist and Roma women, which are socially marginalised in Greek society, used clothing and traditional Roma textiles to explore issues of identity, belonging and reuse of old garments. The digital archive (Roma Textiles 2023) which was curated by a university researcher contains weekly notes from the artist about the creative and collaborative process and the difficulties encountered during the pandemic, together with their joint efforts to reuse old textiles in new ways (pic. 1).

Another original collaboration took place between digital artist Konstantinos Garametsis and students of the Rizarios Crafting School for the preservation of traditional crafts of embroidered and woven textiles and rugs in the area of Zagori, North Greece. The aim of the Crafting School is to maintain traditional, local crafts associated with weaving and embroidery in Zagori by providing craft training to young generations. The creative



Pic. 1: Roma Textiles Digital Archive (Roma Textiles 2023)

process, which was documented by a university researcher and presented in a digital archive (Zagori Crafts 2023), consisted of a series of online meetings between the artist and the craft students. Through the partnership between the students and Garametsis traditional grids and motifs used in handwoven textiles were explored from the perspective of the digital matrix (Ziku et al. 2021). Initial meetings involved transferring the loom grid into the design software Inkspace with Garametsis coding the traditional patterns into HTML and CSS format. At the same time, students wove on the loom digital designs by the artists.

In his diaries which are available through the digital archive, Garametsis notes how he and the students were "inspired by tradition to create contemporary designs using

Pic. 2: Rizarios Crafting School (Zagori Crafts 2023)

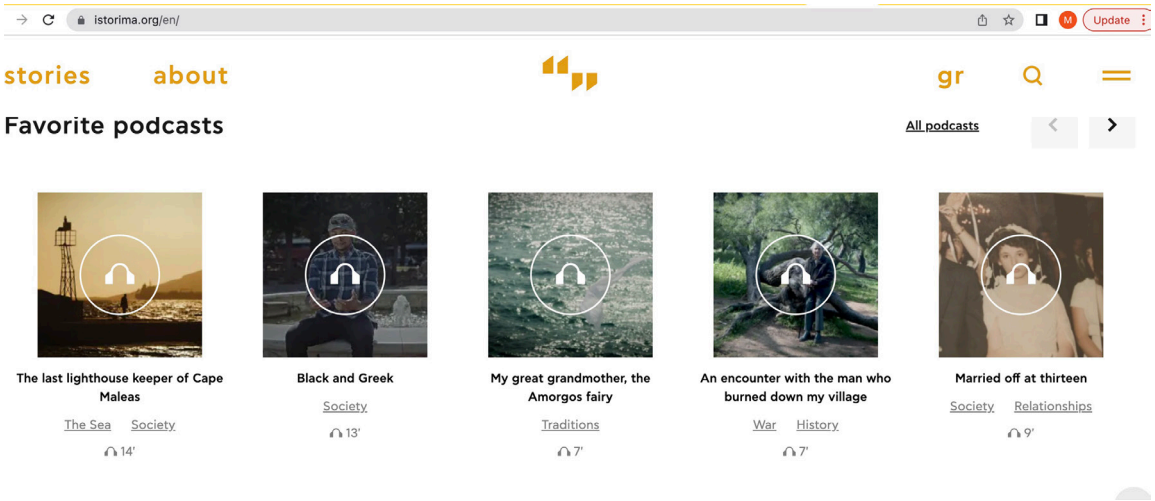
traditional techniques" but also experimenting with new colour composition and vector graphics. The outcome of the creative process was a series of new textiles, rugs and design patterns co-created by all the participants (pic. 2).

The case of the Biennale of Western Balkans finds resonance with earlier discussions about how intangible heritage expressions as living heritage can transform and adapt in response to changes and influences in broader social environments. At the same time, traditional textiles from the Roma community obtain new meanings as 'recycled' fashion items and statements on social and women's rights and inclusion echoing sustainability themes of circular craft production. New technologies are mobilised by digital artists to reinvent century-old textile craft practices in Zagori and during the pandemic enable new forms of communication and dialogue to take place between individual and communities in different, often distant, locations. Digital archives put together with FAIR and CARE principles allow for the dissemination of knowledge through multiple platforms and create new opportunities for interaction. Following on from two years of Covid-19 pandemic, the heightened need for wellbeing led the second Biennale to explore the topic of traditional medicinal knowledge through the theme of Iatrosophia (Bowb 2023).

Youth and Community Empowerment through Oral History: Istorima

Istorima is another Greek non-profit initiative co-created by historian and New York University academic Katherine Fleming and journalist Sofia Papaioannou and supported by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Youth Recharge Initiative. After years of economic recession and youth unemployment in Greece, efforts have been made to develop educational and training programmes providing young people with transferable skills and practical work experience. The aim is to "help young Greeks find employment" and "connect them more deeply with their home and their history". Following an open call inviting young people aged 18 – 35 to receive training in oral history methods, a young team of oral historians was formed tasked with documenting "stories and histories" from different parts of Greece "that are not written down in books" (Istorima.org 2023).

The result is a bilingual, Greek and English, online archive of podcasts (Istorima.org 2023) that present edited parts of interviews from Greece and the Greek diaspora on a broad range of themes from traditions and society to history and war. This archive is hosted on



Pic. 3: Screenshot from Istorima (Istorima.org.2023)

a visually engaging platform built as a single-page application which enables a rich user interface. Each podcast has been created by a team of a researcher, podcast editor, sound and video editor as a short video provides a visual backdrop to the main podcast (pic. 3).

At the time of writing, 371 young people from 23 regions of Greece had been hired to receive oral history training and conduct on site research. The goal is to employ a total of fifteen hundred researchers from every region of the country who will put together the largest oral history archive in Greece. The researchers are young people, students and university graduates with a genuine interest in their local history and heritage who are contracted to work on the project for 6 – 9 months. Each researcher is presented on the online platform explaining why they became researchers and what they have learned through the process.

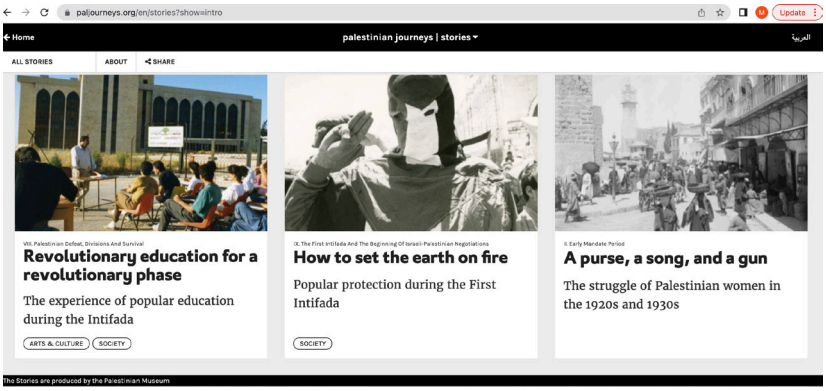
After receiving training in conducting oral history interviews and research ethics, researchers are invited to go out, explore and document stories from their local communities. There are no limits to the stories that have been collected: recipes for traditional pies with greens foraged in South Peloponnese, folktales and legends from the Cyclades, testimonies of nurses during the Covid-19 pandemic in Athens and life stories of trans and queer people. "We believe that by listening to stories, we become wiser" explains the website. For a country where history tends to be written from the top-down and heritage is often the well-marked field of government experts, Istorima provides an alternative framework for caring and valuing the past and empowering young people to tell and write down stories of their choice.

Istorima is part of a bigger picture of convergence for new technologies and heritage in the field of interactive data visualisation, combining data science, technology and design. Such initiatives are developed by ICT specialists working together with social scientists, third sector actors and relevant communities and often aim to create visual narratives of historic or statistical information and in so doing raise awareness about a social and humanitarian cause (Visualising Impact 2023). This approach is further illustrated in the non-profit initiative Visualising Palestine.

Social Action through Interactive Data Visualisation: Virtual Palestine

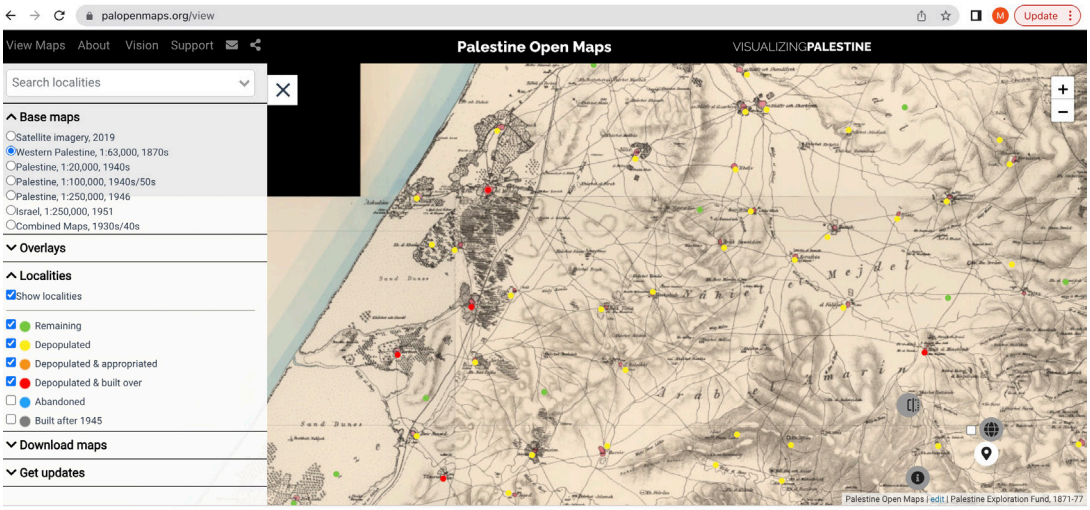
A further case of data visualisation is the non-profit initiative Visualising Palestine, which aims to create data-driven visual stories about the history and culture of Palestine in order to serve human rights and social justice (VisualisingPalestine.org 2023). It supports different platforms which render accessible historical sources, statistical information, images and audiovisual files about the history, culture and society of Palestine. One such platform is Palestinian Journeys (Paljourneys.org 2023), a collaboration between Visualizing Palestine, the Palestinian Museum in Birzeit and the Institute of Palestinian Studies in Lebanon. The platform contains two interconnected ontologies – the Timeline, which presents in a chronological and thematic order important historical events and biographies of public figures and has been curated by the Institute of Palestinian Studies, and – Stories, a collection of lesser known "stories of resistance, persistence and hope" that highlight the "role of Palestinian people in crafting their own history", which was curated by the Palestinian Museum. Such stories range from the emergence of feminism and women's political and social action in the 1920s and 1930s to the development of popular education during the first Intifada in the late 1980s (pic. 4).

Another platform supported by Visualizing Palestine is Palestine Open Maps (Palopenmaps.org 2023), a web-based resource that presents historical and more recent maps of Palestine and Israel in order trace stories of dislocated or erased Palestinian communities. In 1948, the war between Israel and Palestine, led to the eviction and forced dislocation of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homelands. This massive



Pic. 4: Screenshot fromVisualising Palestine (VisualisingPalestine.org 2023)

exodus is widely known as Nakba, the Arabic word for Catastrophe. The subsequent expansion of Israel into Palestine resulted in the loss and destruction of Palestinian communities, with villages being completely erased and wiped off later maps. By superimposing historic maps from the pre-Nakba years over modern satellite maps, the platform puts back on the map, places and communities that had been eradicated. Colonial maps drawn by the Survey of Palestine and the Palestine Exploration Fund between the 1870s



Pic. 5: Screenshot from Palestine Open Maps (Palopenmaps.org 2023)

and 1940s become powerful tools for the reclamation of memory of a community of first and second generation of Palestinian refugees and the Palestinian Diaspora, most of which have never been to their homelands. Using information from the pre-Nakba maps project researchers have marked the names of villages and settlements and whether they are still remaining, or have been destroyed, depopulated or built over (pic. 5).

A series of mapathons organised in universities and research centres in Europe and North America, but also refugee camps in Jordan in 2018 and 2019 presented the maps to communities of researchers, activists and members of the Palestinian diaspora. Majd Al-shihabi, systems engineer and one of the founders of the platform spoke about the profound feelings that descendants of refugee communities feel when they interact with the platform:

> 'All of them know the name but they don't know where it is geographically. It could be in the north, it could be in the south, they don't know. I take my phone and I show them, this

> is what it was like. People are kind of shocked and taken aback. They spend a surprisingly long time just navigating their map, zooming into details like, you can see where the school was. I was looking for another map and it had a museum there. It's a small village that has a museum — why? There are all of these nuances about our lives as Palestinians that have been systematically erased that we can actually extract again out of these maps and reconstruct' (Al-shihabi 2022).

Majd has also talked about mapping Lubya, the village his grandmother was born and raised in and from which she was forcibly removed when she was 11 years old. The village appeared in colonial maps of the 1870s and 1940s with a significant amount of detail, but it had been completely removed from Israeli maps of 1951. Today, where the village stood stands a South African pine forest. Majd described how his grandmother reminisced about her village and her house, when showed the maps to her:

> So, she started describing and she was like, oh, it's on top of the hill called El Khirba. And I looked at the map and there it was: El Khirba. It was labelled on that map. Then she was like, if you look from our house qibli (in the direction of Mecca, south) you would see Esh Shajara, the other village, and sure enough it's on the map. If you go there right now, you wouldn't see it but on the map it's right there. It's directly south. She would describe all of those landmarks and those features and, sure enough, they're on their map. (Al-shihabi 2022)

In a further effort to repopulate these maps with communities that were uprooted, Majd's partner, Ahmad Baker, and his colleagues created the Palestinian Oral History Map (Poha 2023). This is a bilingual, English and Arabic, platform which presents interviews from the Palestine Oral History Archives (POHA) of the American University of Beirut in Lebanon. POHA is a collection of about 1.000 hours of oral history interviews with the generation of Palestinians who settled in Lebanon after the war. The project ran from the 1990s until 2006 and employed a team of ten researchers.

The main focus of the archive is the personal account of people surrounding Nakba but also folktales, storytelling, poems, proverbs and songs. The Palestine Oral History Map platform only contains a small part of these interviews. Interviews appear as marks on the digitised maps and are connected to places of historical and cultural significance, many of which no longer exist. The interviews can be explored both in terms of their geographical references to the location of landmarks, buildings, sites, places or villages, or in terms of references to historical events of battles and massacres between 1947 to 1948. Although the platform is bilingual, the interviews are only in Arabic.

Through the use of multi-modal technologies, ICT researchers have created new ways for combining a diverse range of data (oral histories, maps, statistical information) and making them accessible on user-friendly platforms to a global public. In this active process of reuse, these historical materials are repositioned in the present to serve a purpose of raising awareness about the legacies of Nakba and bringing together a global diaspora of people in exile. In a Sunoikisis Digital Cultural Heritage webinar discussing Palestine Open Maps, Majd stressed the importance of such initiatives in order to prevent a second Nakba, which would be the young generations of Palestinians growing up in different parts of the world, Europe and North America and forgetting about the past (Sunoikisis 2023).

Repurposing Intangible Heritage – Main Features

The above cases bring to light some main directions along which intangible heritage is repurposed in the age of new technologies and sustainability. These could be examined along the themes of impermanence, the transmission of difficult heritage, reuse and citizen empowerment.

Heritage of Impermanence

By heritage of impermanence, I refer to the theme of change and transformation as a conceptual framework for understanding intangible heritage (see also Holtorf 2001; Heinich 2009; Smith and Akagawa 2009; Arizpe and Amescua 2013; Harrison 2013) and that I have previously discussed in terms of the 'politics of erasure' (see Alivizatou 2011, 2012). Offering a critical view of 'cultural authenticity' inherent in cultural preservationism and safeguarding anxiety, I explored impermanence, change and transformation as heritage values. These ideas, which can be traced back to Buddhist philosophy and the 'panta rei/ πάντα ρει' dictum of Ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus (Plato/ Πλάτων 1994), imply a life-cycle approach, whereby like everything living, living heritage too follows a course of birth, growth, decline, death or reincarnation (see Analayo 2013). In this sense, rather than 'in stasis', intangible heritage is 'in flux', always becoming.

The cases discussed above show how new technologies and digital methods can give new meaning and purpose to past knowledges, practices and experiences, reflecting further how heritage is 'the past in the present' (Lowenthal 1985; Butler 2006). Traditional woven crafts are reinterpreted through digital grids and patterns and transformed into new types of textiles, enabling a creative dialogue between past and present. In Istorima, oral histories and tales are narrated, recorded and edited in order to reappear as podcasts in an interactive digital portal and through other channels, like Apple Podcasts. This new form of digital storytelling makes these stories accessible to a national and international audience and at the same time gives them new meaning for a generation growing up in the 21st century. A common concern among oral historians is how to process and make accessible to the public hours and hours of audio or video recordings. The production of short podcasts, professionally edited and curated in a visually engaging digital platform offers a new framework for doing oral history for the public. In that sense, living heritage departs from the notion of 'safeguarding anxiety' inviting the creation of new relations with and representations of the past in the present.

Passing on difficult intangible heritage

Similar concerns about the use of oral history data are further addressed in the Palestine Oral History Map platform. The POHA collection of testimonies of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon which were recorded in the 1990s and 2000s was repurposed to provide social depth and context to places that may now only exist on historical maps. While these collections were available online on the POHA website, this was mainly addressed to researchers and it was arguably difficult to navigate 1.000 hours of recordings, access and retrieve information. The new platform, although selective in terms of interview content, enabled the team to thematically arrange and code testimonies, according to date and place which made it more accessible to the public.

A new generation of Palestinian researchers, part of the global Palestinian diaspora, has repurposed historical maps and linked them to testimonies from previous generations of survivors of Nakba. In this process, they have made a choice about what they want to safeguard and transmit to the future. This is a rich heritage of oral traditions, tales, poems and proverbs but it also includes testimonies, personal and collective accounts of painful memories of war and exile. For many communities, heritage is not only defined along the

domains recognised in international conventions, like the 2003 Convention. The research supported by Visualising Palestine, at the interface of heritage and data science, suggests that what communities hold dear and what keeps communities together is often 'difficult intangible heritage' (see Byrne 2009; Butler 2011; McCarthy 2017 and Alivizatou 2021).

Stories of war, conflict and uprooting told by people caught up in historical events form a significant part of the narrative of the podcast platform Istorima. The stories that 'make us wiser' are not only the ones that celebrate history and local culture but also stories that shed light on contested or dark parts of Greek history and heritage. Such events, like the years of German Occupation in the 1940s, the ensuing Civil War (1944-9) or the military dictatorship (1967-74), are mostly absent from the public heritage sphere. The testimonies of these events through self-told stories recorded by a young generation of researchers in the 2020s offer unique vantage points into a difficult heritage that is carried forward in a people-centred and shared platform.

Reuse, FAIR and CARE principles

An important question concerning these platforms is the use and reuse of data and metadata once they are available online, as well as broader issues of intellectual property rights and copyright. Discussions about cultural heritage and the creative commons raise questions about ownership and ethical use (see Lekakis 2020). The recent movement of Open GLAM (Gallery, Library, Archive and Museum) Collections with the Draft Declaration on Open Access for Cultural Heritage stresses the need to create an equitable operational framework for digital collections management under the motto "everyone should be able to access and reuse cultural heritage in the public domain" (Openglam 2023). While open access is strongly supported by current digital heritage practice in order to ensure widest possible dissemination, the publication of FAIR and CARE principles stress the need for such processes to take place within an appropriate framework (Go-fair 2023, Gida-global 2023).

FAIR stands for Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable and aims to optimise the reuse of data by allowing computational systems to find, access, interoperate and reuse them with minimal human intervention (Go-fair 2023). This involves, among others, the use of vocabularies that follow FAIR principles, meet domain-relevant community standards and use clear and accessible data usage licenses. CARE, on the other hand, recognise the central role of heritage communities that create and make these data available. CARE stands for Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility and Ethics and was developed as principles for Indigenous Data Governance taking into consideration how FAIR ignores "power differentials and historical context among different entities" (Gida-global 2023). For this reason, CARE is "people and purpose-oriented, reflecting the crucial role of data in advancing Indigenous innovation and self-determination" (Gida-global 2023). Although primarily developed in the context of Indigenous Data, CARE principles provide a moral compass for the reuse of data derived from cultural groups and local communities.

These principles have informed the development of the three digital heritage resources as they have shaped the Biennale of Western Balkans platforms and community archives, and also permeate the processes of Visualising Palestine and Istorima. Nevertheless, questions can be raised regarding issues of ownership and commercial development of products and crafts resulting from the artists/ community synergies. Moreover, further developments of traditional medicinal practices within creative and cultural economies necessitate the implementation of appropriate ethical frameworks to ensure respect of traditional knowledges and equitable distribution of potential economic and other social benefits. Within this context, the UNESCO Ethical Guidelines for Safeguarding Intangible

Heritage stress the importance of 'transparent collaboration' and 'free, prior and informed consent' of communities, while further noting that communities should benefit from the 'use, research, documentation, promotion or adaptation' of intangible heritage (UNESCO 2015).

Citizen Empowerment

The framework of CARE and the 2015 UNESCO Ethical Principles underline the central role of people and communities as informed subjects in research and as active researchers. The use of new technologies in heritage work enables members of communities to become actively involved in research, documentation and exchange processes and in this way gain knowledge, skills and better awareness of their situation, which are fundamental principles of participatory research (Kindon et al. 2010). The Istorima project, for example, involves an important amount of knowledge transfer to young people who become equipped in oral history research, documentation and podcast production. Through this participatory process of interviews, members of local communities from all around Greece are invited to share their story and contribute to the writing of a collective and diverse peoples' history. This bottom-up approach to writing history and making heritage finds resonance with wider processes and methodologies of citizen science as research conducted by the public, which is gaining ground across social, economic and environmental research fields (for an overview of citizen science see Vohland et al. 2021).

The same process of community empowerment has driven the Biennale of Western Balkans, which is also centred on direct interaction with local communities and groups. The creative dialogue developing between artists, researchers and communities provides opportunities for knowledge exchange and new outputs, like the production of new textiles or craft products. Beyond the opportunities for income generation within appropriate IPR and copyright frameworks, such initiatives stress the value inherent in traditional knowledge and the sensitisation of local communities towards the safeguarding of such knowledges and practices. When such collaborations involve work with marginalised or disenfranchised groups, like the Roma community, they raise further opportunities for combating social stereotypes and inequalities.

Community empowerment is a driving force of the Palestine data visualisation projects. Conceptualised and implemented by members of the global Palestinian diaspora, Palestine Open Maps and the Palestinian Oral History Map are not only cross-disciplinary research and technology projects. They become tools of social activism connecting displaced communities to their lands and reiterating calls for social justice. The histories of displaced Palestinian people provide new generations with knowledge and data to debate the past and seek a fair future and, in so doing, constitute a living heritage by mobilising the past to challenge the present.

Conclusions

The Covid-19 pandemic had a major impact on how communities, groups and individuals transmit intangible heritage and participate in cultural practices (UNESCO 2021; Roige et al. 2021; Damodaran 2022). One of the outcomes of the pandemic was an increased recognition of the role of new technologies in presenting and understanding intangible heritage. Much as a response to UNESCO's report, the 2021 World Forum for Intangible Cultural Heritage addressed the topic of safeguarding in the era of scientific convergence and creativity heightened by the pandemic. Social distancing measures put in place on a global scale in 2020 and 2021 had a direct impact on the viability of cultural practices and made 'contactlessness' part of peoples' lives. The Forum examined how science and technology could converge with heritage work and offer new ways for communities to "approach,

utilise, transmit… and rediscover…" intangible heritage. Indeed, an important focus of discussions was how intangible heritage can contribute to the creative economies and sustainable community development with several speakers looking at the economic potential and cost of technological developments. The rapid growth of ICT technologies and further introduction in the field of cultural heritage both in terms of learning and documentation create opportunities for product development and innovation. While these developments raise discussions about commercial opportunities and the potential to 'increase visibility' of intangible heritage, in this paper I have explored some further conceptual and practical implications for repurposing intangible heritage as living heritage through digitisation.

The paper has underlined a shift in conceptualisations of intangible heritage from endangered knowledges and practices to a living heritage that is continually renegotiated and reused by a broad range of heritage communities. While this shift has been the outcome of wider processes in international safeguarding actions towards the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Agenda rather than exclusively a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, it can be argued that the pandemic contributed to the uptake of digital and new technologies in heritage actions. Intangible heritage as living heritage can play an important part in community development, resilience and recovery and new technologies can increase this understanding by leading to new ethically-informed creative outputs and collaborations. By using three examples of digital engagements with intangible heritage and local communities that emerged around the time of the Covid-19 pandemic, I have attempted to reflect the shift in how intangible heritage can be a tool for community development and action beyond the context of safeguarding anxiety and loss aversion.

The cases of the Biennale of Western Balkans, Istorima and Visualizing Palestine demonstrate how technology-based initiatives repurpose the discourse of safeguarding and highlight ethically-informed paths for heritage practice. By creating opportunities for communication, participation and access, new media technologies, such as community archives, data visualisation and digital storytelling enable a more democratic involvement in the making and passing on of living heritage by communities, which are often at the margins of dominant discourses. Rather than the exclusive domain of heritage or technology experts, this type of heritage actions invites the collaboration and participation of a wide range of groups and ethically-minded, cross-disciplinary approaches with a view of sustainable community development and social action in the present.

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Notes

1. The two other recommendations included in the report are: "Recommendation 1: Help communities build back better by strengthening recovery support mechanisms to living heritage bearers at the local level, including through local governance and structures' and 'Recommendation 3: Strengthen and amplify the linkages between safeguarding living heritage and emergency preparedness, response and recovery plans and programmes" (UNESCO 2021)
2. The World Forum for Intangible Cultural Heritage is an annual conference organised by the International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia/ Pacific Region (ICHCAP). Since 2011 ICHCAP is a category 2 Centre in the cultural heritage field of the Republic of Korea that works with UNESCO for the promotion of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage in the Asia and Pacific region. Further details about past World Forum themes can be found at: https://ichworldforum.org/ [Last Accessed 10 May 2023]
3. The preamble of the 2003 Convention recognises intangible heritage "as a mainspring of cultural diversity and guarantee of sustainable development" (UNESCO 2003)

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