

Synergies Between UNESCO's Conventions of 1972 and 2003: **Protecting and Safeguarding Cultural Heritage**

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This year, the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage celebrates its 20th anniversary.

Twenty years is a relatively short period of time, yet through its implementation the Convention has already managed to leave a profound impact on culture. One of its most important contributions is undoubtedly the broadening of the notion of "cultural heritage" to include the vast range of intergenerational practices, expressions, knowledge systems and cultural skills of communities, groups, and individuals. With the advent of the 2003 Convention, the meaning that people attribute to their heritage has been brought to the fore, and communities placed at the heart of the definition and safeguarding of living heritage.

Today, with 181 States having ratified the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the safeguarding of living heritage is generally recognised in national and regional policies and programmes. This progress shows that one of the main objectives of the Convention - to raise awareness of the importance of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage - has undoubtedly been achieved on a global scale.

At the same time, much more remains to be done. Living heritage is subject to threats from outside communities of practice, including demographic change, economic pressures, environmental degradation or simply changing values, with negative consequences for cultural diversity and human well-being in general.

To face these challenges, we do not have any directives. But one of the areas that I feel should be worked on as a priority is undoubtedly synergy with the World Heritage Convention. It is directly in line with the Declaration adopted at the end of the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development - MONDIACULT 2022, which advocates an integrated approach that focuses on issues relating to cultural rights, access and social and economic inclusion for all.

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The World Heritage Convention, with its 195 States Parties, also has a history of great success. However, the assessment made on its 50th anniversary, celebrated last year, shows that this extraordinary international standard-setting instrument today faces major challenges in terms of credibility, resources, and balance in terms of representativeness. More than ever, the World Heritage Convention needs to evolve and adapt to the current context, which is profoundly different from the one in which it was conceived and created.

Of course, talking about synergies between the 1972 Convention and the 2003 Convention is not self-evident. These two regulatory instruments were drawn up at different times in history, and have specific systems of governance and resources, as well as their own States Parties and areas of intervention.

There is, however, a real interdependence between intangible cultural heritage and tangible cultural and natural heritage, which needs to be recognised and explored if we are to develop more effective safeguarding practices.

World Heritage sites are places where living heritage is practiced and passed on. And these sites simply cannot be thought of in isolation from the values that underpin their construction, enhancement and management, and from the perspective of the well-being and dignity of the people who live there.

Safeguarding living heritage must therefore be integrated into the management of World Heritage sites, with a view to ensuring complementarity between the tangible and intangible spheres. This approach needs to be further developed, as part of a systematic promotion of holistic methodologies for heritage protection, with coherent national public policies and programmes that integrate the principles and provisions of the 1972 and 2003 Conventions in a complementary and harmonised way.

This approach must, of course, be reflected at all levels of application of heritage policies. Inventories, for example, must reflect the practices of safeguarding the living heritage of the inhabitants of World Heritage sites.

On the other hand, site management systems should take greater account of intergenerational community practices and values, where this is not already the case. Similarly, in the sustainable management of tourism, priority must be given to strategies that focus on the joint safeguarding of tangible and intangible heritage. In this context, it is important to ensure sustainable livelihoods for the well-being of the communities that practice and transmit their intangible heritage on the sites.

It is in this context that greater synergies with the world of education can be developed, through both formal and non-formal education, in order to strengthen the knowledge, skills and practices needed to pass on the various forms of heritage to future generations. Greater recognition of the intangible heritage at the heart of built and natural heritage sites would facilitate the development of innovative, community-based, and culturally rooted responses

to the challenges facing heritage sites, such as disaster risk management, the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Safeguarding heritage in all its forms, in a more integrated way, is thus likely to promote responsible behaviour towards the environment, the sustainable use of resources, and inclusive, rights-based approaches and holistic practices in site management. This would strengthen the vital link between culture and sustainable development.

With this in mind, it is perhaps time to consider the possibility of setting up a mechanism for exchanges - ethically sound and rigorous - between the technical bodies responsible for evaluating submissions to the 1972 Convention and 2003 Convention lists and the UNESCO Secretariat, in order to give greater solidity to the technical examinations that precede applications.

In conclusion, the 20th anniversary of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which almost coincides with the 50th anniversary of the 1972 Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, should not just be an occasion for celebration.

It must mark a major milestone in its historical development. By joining hands and reinforcing each other where possible, the two Conventions can face the challenges of the 21st century with greater strength, credibility, and effectiveness. This is not only desirable, but also an ethical imperative.