Intangible cultural heritage and digital tools: passing on, participative management, issues at stake,

(eds.) Marta Severo and Séverine Cachat,

(Paris, Editions L'Harmattan, coll. 'digital humanities', November 2016)
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Le Patrimoine Culturel Immateriel Et Numerique (Intangible cultural heritage and digital tools) is the continuation of an international meeting organised on the 8th and 9th of September 2015 in Vitré, Brittany (France), by the Maison des Cultures du Monde - French Centre for the Intangible Cultural Heritage, (CFPCI) with the support of the French Ministry of Culture and Communication, as part of an annual symposium dedicated to the policies of intangible cultural heritage held since 2012.

Led by Marta Severo, Associate Professor in communication sciences at the University of Paris Ouest Nanterre, and Séverine Cachat, PhD in cultural anthropology and director of the Maison des Cultures du Monde, the publication combines theoretical reflections and testimonies about the links between intangible cultural heritage and digital tools, and the issues these raise.

The book, which is over 200 pages long, contains 14 contributions, 10 in French, 4 in English, and some black and white illustrations. From a critical and comparative perspective, it questions and confronts the views of researchers from different disciplines (information and communication sciences, history, anthropology, economics, musicology, didactics, etc.), documenters, lawyers, heritage professionals, representatives of cultural institutions and members of communities of practice from several regions of France and several countries (Italy, Scotland, Canada).

At the very beginning of the twenty-first century, the emergence and the success of intangible cultural heritage, as defined by the UNESCO *Convention* adopted in 2003, went hand-in-hand with technological development and the increasing availability of digital communication tools. This coincidence, due to a homophony in the French language, provokes frequent confusion between intangible cultural heritage on the one hand, and on the other hand, the dematerialised heritage arising from the digitisation of collections of objects and documents, or the born-digital heritage consisting in particular of data from the internet, or between ICH and the audio-visual archives which can, of course, serve documentation and research by contributing to its safeguarding. While examining the relationships between those various domains, the book makes it possible to understand their limitations.

Thus, digital devices, which offer unprecedented possibilities for collaborative management, seem to fit in with the singularity and the needs of this living heritage, constantly evolving and recreating, and whose safeguarding is based on the communities and people who recognise it as such, who make it, live and transmit it. By fostering the diversity of expertises and the networking of ICH stakeholders, these tools, such as open and shared online applications or platforms, offer new opportunities for the development of participatory policies, which complement the dynamic nature of ICH, for the purpose of identification, knowledge, promotion and mediation, by encouraging bottom-up approaches while avoiding 'freezing' the form of these elements.

The increased use of digital technology in the field of ICH, however, raises a number of questions and challenges, including the linkage between institutional arrangements implemented by governments and community-driven initiatives, related for instance to Wikipedia or respect for the rights of individuals and groups whose heritage is thus disseminated, in particular through commercial platforms such as YouTube.

To address those various aspects, the book is organised into three parts:

1. Transmission, valorisation, mediation.
2. Legal and ethical issues.
3. Participation and feedback.

In his opening speech at the Vitré meeting, Milad Doueihi, holder of the Chair of Digital Humanism at the University Paris-Sorbonne, reconsidered the relationship



between memory and forgetting, and questioned the materiality of the immaterial. Other contributors to this first section envisage the use of digital technology by the actors of ICH and the opportunities this opens up, notably in terms of participation policies within the framework of the UNESCO *Convention* and in various fields.

In the second section, researchers, lawyers and archive specialists examine the risks associated with the development of new technologies with respect to the rights of individuals and groups (right to the image, copyright, community law, etc.), and discuss the very complex issue of legal protection in the case of ICH. They set out certain ethical principles that should guide the dissemination of this heritage.

The last section presents several experiments involving the use of digital technologies for the archiving, documentation or inventorying of ICH, allowing and promoting the participation of its actors and holders. These include the Scottish Wiki, created at Napier University in Edinburgh and now run by the Museums and Galleries of Scotland, the European i-Treasure project which allows very precise recording of movements and sounds for a better understanding of practices, and the PCILab developed by the Occitan Institute of Aquitaine (InOC) with the French Ministry of Culture in order to enhance the French inventory of ICH and encourage its appropriation by communities through the semantic web.

This book appears to be the first, in French, devoted to this new field the quick development of which has raised numerous hopes but also a number of reservations. By combining the approaches and the views of specialists and actors of ICH and related sectors, operating in countries with different cultures and political traditions, it offers a rich and stimulating perspective to guide actions in the recording of ICH. We might, however, note that the enthusiasm widely shared by the authors in regard to the prospects opened up by the digital sector should not make us forget the risk of 'gadgetisation' which would be to the detriment of the primary purpose of these tools which is the safeguarding of ICH.