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Youth and Living Heritage: new approaches in a comparative perspective

**International Brainstorming
on the occasion of the 19° session of ICH Committee**

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Gran Bourbon Hotel – Fifa Room – h 1.15-2.15 pm**

Concept note

Summary

This paper is an informal analysis on the relationship between living heritage and youth, examining the existing relationship between young generations and ICH according to available data and information. At the same time the paper tries to prospect a new scenario and a more active role of young generations in ICH practice and safeguarding.

The paper represents a starting point for initiating a more structured reflection on the topic.

Background

1. According to the information provided by the website *ich.unesco.org*, below the “Dive into Intangible Cultural Heritage” section, out of 730 elements inscribed on the ICH UNESCO Lists and Register, **3 are identified as directly related to “youth”, 4 to “youth participation”, 2 to “youth activities”, 1 to “disadvantaged youth”**.

More in detail, “youth” must be linked to:

- *Septennial re-roofing ceremony of the Kamablou, sacred house of Kangaba*¹ (Mali), as young men of 20-21 years of age play an active role in taking down the old roof and putting in place the new one under the supervision of the elders;
- *Festivity of ‘la Mare de Déu de la Salut’ of Algemesí*² (Spain), since young boys and girls climb the human tower to the top to complete it, and children perform religious theatrical pieces for accompanying the celebration;
- *Programme of cultivating ludodiversity: safeguarding traditional games in Flanders*³ (Belgium), as it is specified that a special attention is devoted to attracting young people.

“Youth participation” is directly connected to:

- *Feast of the Holy Forty Martyrs in Štip*⁴ (North Macedonia), since young people coming from Štip but also from neighbouring cities are the most involved in the festivities;
- *Oshituthi shomagongo, marula fruit festival*⁵ (Namibia), as young people help gathering the ripened fruit and participate to the processing activities of the fruit;
- *Portuguese-Galician border ICH: a safeguarding model created by Ponte...nas ondas!*⁶ (Portugal and Spain) given that the project creates spaces in which the heritage can be practiced and transmitted to younger generations;
- *Strategy for training coming generations of Fujian puppetry practitioners*⁷ (China), to highlight the estrangement of new generations from the practice.

“Youth activities” is linked to:

- *Land-of-Legends programme, for promoting and revitalizing the art of storytelling in Kronoberg Region*⁸ (Sweden), in which joint camps for Nordic youths have been organized, younger generations and children are well represented.

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¹Inscribed in 2009 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. See: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/septennial-re-roofing-ceremony-of-the-kamablou-sacred-house-of-kangaba-00190>

²Inscribed in 2011 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. See: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/festivity-of-la-mare-de-deu-de-la-salut-of-algemesi-00576>

³ Selected in 2011 on the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. See: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/BSP/programme-of-cultivating-ludodiversity-safeguarding-traditional-games-in-flanders-00513>

⁴ Inscribed in 2013 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. See: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/feast-of-the-holy-forty-martyrs-in-stip-00734>

⁵ Inscribed in 2015 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. See: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/oshituthi-shomagongo-marula-fruit-festival-01089>

⁶ Selected in 2022 on the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. See: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/BSP/portuguese-galician-border-ich-a-safeguarding-model-created-by-pontenas-ondas-01848>

⁷ Selected in 2012 on the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. See: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/BSP/strategy-for-training-coming-generations-of-fujian-puppetry-practitioners-00624>

⁸ Selected in 2018 on the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. See: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/BSP/land-of-legends-programme-for-promoting-and-revitalizing-the-art-of-storytelling-in-kronoberg-region-01392>

- *Nijemo Kolo, silent circle dance of the Dalmatian hinterland*⁹ (Croatia), as it represents a way for young women and men to meet and get to know each other.

“Disadvantaged youth” leads to:

- *Filete porteño in Buenos Aires, a traditional painting technique*¹⁰(Argentina), given that it represents a working opportunity for young people who are at risk of social exclusion.

2. Aside from the classification made by "Dive" tool on UNESCO ICH website, the analysis of the nomination forms and the videos related to the 730 elements of the ICH Lists and Register shows that **the vast majority takes younger generations into account to highlight the criticalities related to the transmission**. Considering the elements inscribed on the Representative List of ICH, it is possible to identify at least 86 elements in which it is clear the young have an active role and their participation is essential in practicing the element. Here below the identified elements, divided by Lists and electoral group.

3. At least **68 of the elements inscribed in the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage explicitly refer to the young** and specify they have an important role in practicing the element. More specifically:

	Elements on the Representative List of ICH
Group I	Craftsmanship and performing art of balaban/mey (Azerbaijan – Türkiye, 2023); Iftar/Eftari/Iftar/Iftor and its socio-cultural traditions (Azerbaijan – Iran – Türkiye – Uzbekistan, 2023); Rotterdam Summer Carnival (Netherlands, 2023); Bear festivities in the Pyrenees (Andorra- France, 2022); The practice of Modern Dance in Germany (Germany, 2022); Corso culture, flower and fruit parades in the Netherlands (Netherlands, 2021); Kaustinen fiddle playing and related practices and expressions (Finland, 2021); Namur stilt jousting (Belgium, 2021); Musical art of horn players, an instrumental technique linked to singing, breath control, vibrato, resonance of place and conviviality (France – Belgium – Luxembourg – Italy, 2020); Traditional intelligence and strategy game: Togyzqumalaq, Toguz Korgool, Mangala/Göçürme (Kazakhstan – Kyrgyzstan – Türkiye, 2020); Wine Horses (Spain, 2020); Holy Week processions in Mendrisio (Switzerland, 2019); Ommegang of Brussels, an annual historical procession and popular festival (Belgium 2019); Winter festivities, Carnival of Podence (Portugal, 2019); Hurling (Ireland, 2019); Basel Carnival (Switzerland, 2017); Spring celebration, Hidrellez (North Macedonia – Türkiye, 2017); Marches of Entre-Sambre-et-Meuse (Belgium, 2012); Equitation in the French tradition (France, 2011); Chant of the Sybil on Majorca (Spain, 2010); Human towers (Spain, 2010); Kırkpınar oil wrestling festival (Türkiye, 2010)
Group II	Kochari, traditional group dance (Armenia, 2017); Chidaoba, wrestling in Georgia (Georgia, 2018); Grass mowing competition custom in Kupres (Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2020); Polonaise, traditional Polish dance (Poland, 2023); Lad's dances in Romania (Romania, 2015); Kopachkata, a social dance from the village of Dramche, Pijanec (North Macedonia, 2014); Feast of the Holy Forty Martyrs in Štip (North Macedonia, 2013); Cultural Heritage of Boka Navy Kotor: a festive representation of a memory and cultural identity (Montenegro, 2021)

⁹ Inscribed in 2011 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. See: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/nijemo-kolo-silent-circle-dance-of-the-dalmatian-hinterland-00359>

¹⁰ Inscribed in 2015 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. See: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/filete-porteno-in-buenos-aires-a-traditional-painting-technique-01069>

Group III	Junkanoo (Bahamas, 2023); Wititi dance of the Colca Valley (Peru, 2015); Joumou soup (Haiti, 2021); Practices and traditional knowledge of Terere in the culture of Pohã Nana, Guaraní ancestral drink in Paraguay (Paraguay, 2020) La Romería (the pilgrimage): ritual cycle of 'La llevada' (the carrying) of the Virgin of Zapopan (Mexico, 2018); Ritual and festive expressions of the Congo culture (Panama, 2018); Traditional system of Corongo's water judges (Peru, 2017); Carnival of El Callao, a festive representation of a memory and cultural identity (Venezuela, 2016); Rumba in Cuba, a festive combination of music and dances and all the practices associated (Cuba, 2016); Pujllay and Ayarichi, music and dances of the Yampara culture (Bolivia, 2014); Venezuela's Dancing Devils of Corpus Christi (Venezuela, 2012); Ritual ceremony of the Voladores (Mexico, 2009)
Group IV	Gamelan (Indonesia, 2021); Talchum, mask dance drama in the Republic of Korea (Republic of Korea, 2022); Tugging rituals and games (Cambodia, Philippines, Republic of Korea and Viet Nam, 2015); Gesar epic tradition (China, 2009); Chinese paper cut (China, 2009)
Group V(a)	Hiragasy, a performing art of the Central Highlands of Madagascar (Madagascar, 2023); Shuwalid festival (Ethiopia, 2023); Sona, drawings and geometric figures on sand (Angola, 2023); Malagasy Kabary, the Malagasy oratorical art (Madagascar, 2021); Moutya (Seychelles, 2021); Budima dance (Zambia, 2020); Nsima, culinary tradition of Malawi (Malawi, 2017); Oshituthi shomagongo, marula fruit festival (Namibia, 2015); Coming forth of the masks and puppets in Markala (Mali, 2014); Tchopa, sacrificial dance of the Lhomwe people of southern Malawi (Malawi, 2014); Septennial re-roofing ceremony of the Kamablou, sacred house of Kangaba (Mali, 2009); Cultural space of the Yaaral and Degal (Mali, 2008); Gule Wamkulu (Malawi – Mozambique – Zambia, 2008); Kankurang, Manding initiatory rite (Gambia - Senegal, 2008); Makishi masquerade (Zambia, 2008); Polyphonic singing of the Aka Pygmies of Central Africa (Central African Republic, 2008); Vimbuza healing dance (Malawi, 2008)
Group V(b)	Raï, popular folk song of Algeria (Algeria, 2022); Sbuâ, annual pilgrimage to the zawiya of Sidi El Hadj Belkacem in Gourara (Algeria, 2015); Traditional craft skills and arts of Al-Mudhif building (Iraq, 2023); Traditional weaving of Al Sadu (Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, 2020)

- Among these elements, *Junkanoo*¹¹ (**Bahamas**), inscribed in the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2023, seems paradigmatic. The Nomination form and the video show that young people actively participate and it lives through and thanks to them. They are protagonists of the ritual as well as transmitters: as the entire community plays a part in the whole preparation, they learn every step of the process and their role changes when they gain new knowledge. Moreover, a “feeder system” allows the community to maintain the practice and at the same time to make it evolve by attracting new artists and engaging with their artistic, musical and dance skills.
- At least **11 elements inscribed in the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding** show an immediate connection with new generations. More in detail:

Elements on the List of ICH in Need of Urgent Safeguarding	
Group V(a)	Seperu folkdance and associated practices (Botswana, 2019); Dikopelo folk music of Bakgatla ba Kgafela in Kgatleng District (Botswana, 2017); Shuwalid Festival (Ethiopia, 2023); Ingoma Ya Mapiko (Mozambique, 2023); Xeedho (Djibouti, 2023); Aboxan Musik IŌb ðÂns tsí IIKhasigu,

¹¹ <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/junkanoo-01988>

	ancestral musical sound knowledge and skills (Namibia, 2020); Sega tambour Chagos (Mauritius, 2019); Enkipaata, Eunoto and Oling'esherr, three male rites of passage of the Maasai community (Kenya, 2018); Male-child cleansing ceremony of the Lango of central northern Uganda (Uganda, 2014); Empaako tradition of the Batooro, Banyoro, Batuku, Batagwenda and Banyabindi of western Uganda (Uganda, 2013) Secret society of the Kôrêdugaw, the rite of wisdom in Mali (Mali, 2011)
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6. Out of these elements, *Xeedho*¹² (**Djibouti**), inscribed in 2023 in the List of ICH in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, shows peculiar aspects. The Nomination Form emphasizes the specific reasons why new generations show less and less interest in practicing it, without condemning them but instead highlighting their crucial role in continuing *Xeedho*. The Form clarifies that the practice originated for and by young couples and that the emergence of a new lifestyle and the many easier alternatives are the core reasons for their estrangement.
7. Among the **programmes selected for the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices, at least 7** aim at actively involving new generations in continuing and reinterpreting the practice.

Programmes on the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices	
Group I	Portuguese-Galician border ICH: a safeguarding model created by Ponte...nas ondas! (Portugal, Spain, 2022); Polyphonic Caravan, researching, safeguarding and promoting the Epirus polyphonic song (Greece, 2020); Programme of cultivating ludodiversity: safeguarding traditional games in Flanders (Belgium, 2011); Centre for traditional culture – school museum of Pusol pedagogic project (Spain, 2009)
Group II	Táncház method: a Hungarian model for the transmission of intangible cultural heritage (Hungary, 2011)
Group III	Program for the safeguarding of the Bandos and Parrandas of the Holy Innocents of Caucagua: nuclei of initiation and transmission of wisdoms and community councils (Venezuela, 2023)
Group IV	Strategy for training coming generations of Fujian puppetry practitioners (China, 2012)

In its 2024 Report, the Evaluation Body recommends the inscription of *Oman Youth Sail Training Ship (Safinat Shabab Oman) programme for peace and sustainable cultural dialogue*¹³ in the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices.

8. More in detail, *the Strategy for training coming generations of Fujian puppetry practitioners (China)*, selected for the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices in 2012, aims to safeguard the transmission of the practice and to enhance its sustainability through professional training of new generations, compilation of teaching materials, setting up of performing venues, sensitization of people through non-formal and formal education, regional and international cooperation; and artistic exchange. In section 5, the Nomination

¹² <https://ich.unesco.org/en/USL/xeedho-02001>

¹³ See: https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-24-19.COM-7_EN.docx

Form explains the many initiatives to attract young people's interest, involving schools and kindergartens and allowing them to perform puppetry shows themselves.

9. This preliminary examination highlights the importance of involving new generations in ICH recognitions. The topic has been addressed by UNESCO in at least 7 **thematic initiatives** across a timeframe of 12 years have been explicitly devoted to grasping the relationship between youth and Intangible Cultural Heritage, comprising:
- 24-25 September 2012, Workshop on “**The role of youth in the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage in South-Eastern Europe**”, Sofia (Bulgaria), organized by the Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe;
 - 19-23 November 2012, “**Youth Forum in Central Africa: awareness-raising on Intangible Cultural Heritage**”, Brazzaville (Congo), organized and coordinated by the UNESCO office in Yaoundé in close partnership with the Intangible Cultural Heritage Section at UNESCO headquarters;
 - 20-24 November 2012, “**Caribbean Youth Forum on Intangible Cultural Heritage**”, St. George's (Grenada), organized by UNESCO, through its Intangible Cultural Heritage Section, with the contribution of Bulgaria and the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund;
 - 1 august-5 September 2022, “**Second workshop on capacity-building for intangible cultural heritage (ICH) safeguarding for youths**”, Beijing (China), organized by UNESCO Beijing Office and the International Training Center for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (CRIHAP);
 - 13 february 2024, “**Integrating Intangible Cultural Heritage in Education: Sharing Experiences and New Perspectives**”, Abu Dhabi (UAE), side-event on the occasion of Abu Dhabi World Conference on Culture and Arts Education, organized by UNESCO Chair on ICH and Comparative Law, Unitelma Sapienza University of Rome;
 - 17 october 2024, **ICH Youth Forum**, Manama (Bahrain), organized by the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities (BACA);
 - 17 october 2024, “**Living Heritage goes to School**”, a toolkit on how to teach Living heritage in primary and secondary schools, organized by UNESCO Chair on Intangible Cultural Heritage and Comparative Law, Unitelma Sapienza University of Rome.
10. UNESCO promoted or financed at least 5 safeguarding **projects** which directly involve young people, requiring their active participation or initiative to find innovative and various ways for reaching the main aim:
- *Educational toolkit for safeguarding living heritage in Egypt*, **Egypt** (1 January 2019 - 31 December 2019)¹⁴;
 - *Intangible Cultural Heritage, Education and Innovative Technologies in Peru*, **Peru** (1 January 2019 - 31 December 2019)¹⁵;
 - *Heritage Hubs – Enhancing Intercultural Interaction in Schools through ICH*, **Spain, Finland, Serbia** (1 January 2018 - 31 December 2020)¹⁶;

¹⁴ <https://ich.unesco.org/en/project-education/educational-toolkit-for-safeguarding-living-heritage-in-egypt-00456>

¹⁵ <https://ich.unesco.org/en/project-education/intangible-cultural-heritage-education-and-innovative-technologies-in-peru-00494>

- *Samabue Indigenous School, a youth educational movement for safeguarding living heritage in Indonesia, Indonesia* (1 February 2016 - 31 December 2021)¹⁷;
- *Safeguarding and promoting intangible cultural heritage and supporting creativity of young people in the field of the music industry in the eastern region, Morocco* (30/10/2024-ongoing)¹⁸.

11. In the **Overall Reports presented by the Evaluation Body** to the Intergovernmental ICH Committee in the last five years, **young are not mentioned** other than to shed light on the problems related to transmission. It appears that no specific section is devoted to the topic of the relationship between youth and heritage, no invitation is made to deeply analyse it or to explore the possibilities of a more proactive engagement in heritage safeguarding. Similarly, it is possible to notice that **no expert meeting has been held on the theme**, whereas the analysis of the meetings on climate change, sustainable development and economic dimensions of ICH show that:

- the Expert Meeting on “*Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development at national level*”¹⁹ does not consider youth involvement as a topic at all;
- the Expert Meeting on “*Safeguarding Cultural Heritage and Climate Change*”²⁰ collaterally consider the topic to emphasize criticalities in transmission;
- the Expert Meeting on “*Economic Dimensions of Intangible Cultural Heritage*”²¹ takes the young into account also to ponder the existing and future economic opportunities, concluding that low income is a strong reason for new generations to lose interest in ICH.

12. It appears that all the **SDGs 2030**²² preliminarily require the adoption of a different and more horizontal approach and the creation of an increased sense of responsibility, aiming at strengthening sense of belonging as a key tool to reach each goal. Some of the goals, especially the goal n.11, call for reflection and fight against the consequences of extreme urbanization and rapid development of infrastructures and services that cities around the world are facing. Young people seem to be directly linked to the challenges arising in safeguarding **ICH in urban contexts**. A survey on this topic was conducted by UNESCO in 2022²³ and a NGO Forum meeting was held in Bogota in 2019²⁴ to deeply explore the problems and consequences related to the theme. In both occasions, youth involvement emerged as a key element, especially when they contribute through youth associations.

¹⁶ <https://ich.unesco.org/debug/en/project-education/heritage-hubs-enhancing-intercultural-interaction-in-schools-through-ich-00490>

¹⁷ <https://ich.unesco.org/en/project-education/samabue-indigenous-school-a-youth-educational-movement-for-safeguarding-living-heritage-in-indonesia-00440>

¹⁸ <https://ich.unesco.org/en/projects/safeguarding-and-promoting-intangible-cultural-heritage-and-supporting-creativity-of-young-people-in-the-field-of-the-music-industry-in-the-eastern-region-00470>

¹⁹ <https://ich.unesco.org/en/events/expert-meeting-on-safeguarding-intangible-cultural-heritage-and-sustainable-development-at-the-national-level-00454>

²⁰ <https://ich.unesco.org/en/meeting-of-experts-category-vi-on-safeguarding-intangible-cultural-heritage-and-climate-change-01353>

²¹ <https://ich.unesco.org/en/expert-meeting-on-economic-dimensions-01316>

²² <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/>

²³ To know more about the survey, see <https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/56686-EN.pdf>

²⁴ To know more about the meeting, see https://www.ichgovernance.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Intangible-Cultural-Heritage-in-Urban-Contexts_def-5-9-2020.pdf

13. In order to understand the accuracy of this and to better comprehend what young people think and how they feel about ICH a few countries conducted **research**²⁵, which do not seem to be mentioned on UNESCO website. No comparative research seems to have been conducted on education systems adopted by Member States to understand whether and how living heritage is integrated in the national education policies.
14. In the Final Declaration adopted on the occasion of **2022 UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development (MONDIACULT)**, held in Mexico City from the 28 to the 30 of September, great importance is given to the role of a high quality education in shaping the future cultural policies²⁶.

Raising issues

15. The analysis that has been developed seems to show that the most direct and frequent link, within the nomination forms and the meetings on the theme, concerns young people's interest, or lack thereof, in maintaining the practice. However, it is also necessary to **highlight that some initiatives encourage young people to take a leading role** in the reiteration and preservation of the element, thereby offering the possibility of their more active involvement. As a result, 4 issues emerge:
- a. **Attention to the topic.** Looking at the number of initiatives and at the reports provided for Intergovernmental Committee meetings dedicated to the young, it seems that this theme is not given the necessary attention.
 - b. **Passive role.** The prevailing narrative adopted by Member States about the relationship between young people and ICH focuses on a "passive" view of their role. There is no specific section in the nomination forms on youth participation and in several nomination files young people are not mentioned at all, even when it would seem obvious otherwise²⁷. When a reference to young people is made in the nomination forms, it is generally meant to emphasize their disinterest towards ICH²⁸. Moreover, the vast majority of related initiatives and safeguarding projects involves them exclusively as passive recipients in the process of education and transmission of the element. Their main aim is to ensure continuity of practice, hence they do not provide for their active role in designing, managing and implementing these programs. Urban-related challenges represent an exception: youth involvement is identified as necessary to trace the right path.

²⁵ Among all, see BAJEC F.J., *The interpretation and utilization of cultural heritage and its values by young people in Slovenia. Is Heritage Really Boring and Uninteresting?*, Etnološka tribina, 42, 2019, pp. 173-193; HU J., NOOR S., *Knowledge, attitudes and practices of intangible cultural heritage among youth in Sichuan, China: a cross-sectional study*, in Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development, 2024.

²⁶ See: <https://www.unesco.org/en/mondiacult/2022/workingdocuments?hub=758>

²⁷ The above mentioned could be confirmed, for instance, for dances and music such as *Reggae music* (Jamaica) and *Flamenco* (Spain), which have recently been rediscovered by the younger generation and are spreading beyond their countries of origin thanks to them."

²⁸ Among all, see *Ala-kiyiz and Shyrdak, art of Kyrgyz traditional felt carpets* (Kyrgyzstan), *Oral and graphic expressions of the Wajapi* (Brazil), *Cultural practices and expressions linked to the M'Bolon, a traditional musical percussion instrument* (Mali), *Chopi Timbila* (Mozambique).

- c. **One-way relationship.** It is often emphasized that new generations are necessary for the preservation of heritage. This implies a one-way relationship: new generations can be of great benefit for the continuity of the traditions of their home group. There seems to be no investigation on whether heritage can contribute to the lives and futures of young people.
- d. **Perception.** All the above strongly influences the general perception of youth participation and interest in ICH but also the perception young people have about ICH items, as heavy burdens to carry throughout their lives.

Key considerations

16. It seems increasingly evident that the relationship between youth and heritage has multiple implications and can have repercussions for the local area and the entire community. Therefore the 4 raised issues lead to consequent considerations.

- a. **Attention to the topic.** Research should be conducted to disseminate positive models and to investigate further possibilities for a better and deeper contribution of the young to heritage safeguarding. Greater attention should be paid to the efforts made - or not made - by Member States, encouraging them to do more and creating more opportunities to reflect on the numerous and complex aspects related to the matter. A comparative analysis on the educational policies adopted by governments should be conducted to investigate how, if at all, ICH is integrated into formal and informal education systems.
- b. **Passive role.** Youth participation in the preservation and practice of intangible heritage is necessary, but it needs to be supported by the adoption of a different and more flexible perspective. First of all, learning processes and tools are changing: hand-to-hand transmission appears not to be aligned anymore with the values and expectations of the new generations, which seem to no longer be willing to sit next to the “bearer” of knowledge to be “educated”: a more horizontal approach, based on “learning by doing” could perhaps be more attractive and could meet the necessities of young generations. Thus, means of transmission themselves might need to be reconsidered to develop a new and contemporary approach.

All this given, young people still cannot be reduced to “receptacles” of ancestral knowledge and skills, as passive cogs in a mechanism of continuous transmission necessary for their survival. They can, and for the continuity of living heritage they *must*, become protagonists in the process of recreating and revitalizing the elements, and interpreters of contemporaneity. Some programs for the development and preservation of tangible and intangible heritage show that young people can play a significant role and in some cases they already do. Among them, the case of the *Táncház Method* (Hungary), listed in the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices, seems exemplary. The method combines traditional forms of learning with modern pedagogical and academic models, enabling neo-practitioners to use their creativity to develop the skills and abilities required for traditional dance, which thus becomes a “canvas” on which to write, a veritable channel for the expression of one’s individuality subject to the changing times

and circumstances in which it is embedded. While maintaining its fundamental elements, the dance is enriched and renewed precisely during the process of transmission, which therefore is not reduced to a mere “passing of the baton” and avoids the danger of “museification” of the element by making it as vital and dynamic as possible. In addition, some very recent projects explore the participation of the young components of the community, recognizing in this relationship a great opportunity. For example, the project *Safeguarding and promoting intangible cultural heritage and supporting creativity of young people in the field of the music industry in the eastern region* intends to invest in safeguarding the ICH of the eastern part of Morocco in order to create an employment opportunity and a source of income for younger people, who would therefore enter the working world precisely through a component of their heritage. More can be and needs to be done to distance ourselves from the view of the young as a mere medium of transmission, since many and varied opportunities arise.

- c. **One-way relationship.** Acknowledging a greater role of the young increases their sense of belonging and rootedness in the territory²⁹. Moreover, it represents a powerful antidote against depopulation and unemployment that affect all countries, especially smaller towns and economically more fragile contexts. The awareness generated by this process also appears to be directly linked to the sustainable development of the territory, generating a virtuous circle in which a two-way relationship is established between heritage and younger people. Heritage-led regeneration programs and safeguarding projects could greatly benefit from youth involvement, especially to face the challenges arising from the urban environment, of which the youngsters are active inhabitants and play the most important role in defining its future.
- d. **Perception.** The way forward for greater involvement undoubtedly goes through a deeper understanding of how young people perceive the elements and the safeguarding projects. Where young people have been recognized as active and creative protagonists of heritage it has positively influenced their perception of the elements and their role.

Way forward

17. Given the considerations made above, it is necessary to **question which steps to take and to trace a path for the future**, perhaps beginning with the issues that follow.
 - a. Language and narratives have direct repercussions on the perception of the topic. That said, could an updated narrative foster the role of young people in the practice and transmission of the elements? Can ICH thus be an expression of past, present and future generational identities, without aggravating the generational conflict or reducing the prestige of the holders of previous generations?
 - b. In contexts of fast-evolving urban environments, where multiple challenges emerge when it comes to safeguarding ICH, youth involvement appears to be crucial. Could it help fighting depopulation and eradication of the youngsters therefore contributing to meet 2030 SDG? What could be done to increase their engagement?

²⁹ Among all, see RÖLL, VERENA, MEYER, *Young People's Perceptions of World Cultural Heritage: Suggestions for a Critical and Reflexive World Heritage Education. Sustainability*, 2020.

- c. Would it be useful to modify the ICH nomination forms in order to better define the role of the younger generation and introduce, for example in criterion 2, an analysis of the impact of the candidate element's practice on the younger generation?
- d. As learning strategies and teaching approaches are changing, could the process of handing down the practice of the elements be rethought based on the emerging needs of the youngest? How to integrate ICH in formal and informal education without "crystalizing" the topic thus creating further distance between young people and living heritage?
- e. Given the multiple experiences of using technology, new forms of direct communication (i.e. social networks) and AI for the transmission and preservation of cultural heritage including intangible heritage, would it be possible to think about the role of this new forms of expressions and AI in the greater involvement of young people? Could it be useful to adapt and align the ICH transmission to youth's needs and current fields of interest?
- f. Since the implementation and diffusion of AI is not the only major innovation that young people are facing, it could be said their whole future is imbued with uncertainty and changes. Does ICH play a role in their facing uncertain and multiple possible futures? Could it help planning new ones? Would it be an "anchor" or a "boat" in this storm?