

## **Museum transformation - from the keeper to the active participant in the shaping of the cultural identity of the local community, in the context of treating the intangible cultural heritage: documentation, presentation and the transfer of the traditional intangible cultural patterns**

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### ABSTRACT:

The intangible cultural heritage is the most vulnerable segment of the overall cultural heritage in a community. The globalization and the lifestyle changes make it hard to preserve it in the unchanged traditional patterns. The experience tells us about the frequency of the presentation of the redesigned traditional cultural patterns, in accordance with the new understanding of its role in the context of the cultural tourism. Eventually, the community forgot about the original elements in the cultural patterns, and the redesigned patterns became the new originals.

This threat made us think about the position and the importance of the intangible heritage as well as the understanding of the role of the institutions (museums) in the preservation and the shaping of cultural identity of the community. They are expected to have more dynamic and more visible role in documenting, educating and presenting cultural patterns. The relation between the community and the heritage involved institutions is based on the circular interaction, where the roles of the bearer, the keeper, the intergenerational and intercultural mediator, the carrier and the presenter of the cultural identity, alternate and complement each other.

The museums become the homes of ideas that actively participate in shaping and transferring identity traits of the community, by using various educative and presentational methods: from the archive materials they take and shape the identity patterns, giving them back to the community. The interaction is also visible in the resources that the community provides for the regular museum functioning. The quality of the preservation and the interpretation of the heritage depend on the totality of the cultural, social, physical and economic environment.

The aim of this work is to show the history of interaction between the museum and the community, overviewing the applied methodology in documenting, preserving, shaping and presenting cultural

identity based on the intangible cultural heritage.

**KEY WORDS:** *intangible heritage, identity, culture, museum, Turopolje, local community*

Globalization instigated by the technology development, especially by the development of telecommunication and IT, homogenizes and unifies economic, political and cultural processes within communities. At the same time "globalization brings much more awareness of cultural identity than before" (Wang, 2007:85). As a reaction to globalization trends many processes and movements going "back to the roots" emerge (Hoelscher&Alderman, 2004: 349), is tendencies to preserve and revitalize local and/or regional identities (Geiger&Zeman, 2008:238).

Preserving the local identities within the context of cultural diversity and cultural development places the heritage at the center of the cultural politics interests, because it is "the identity holder of the specific social community", it is its past, and "it implies its present and its future."(Jelinčić, 2010: 17-18). Its highest value is "in the latency and complexity of the answers given to the basic humanistic questions: the origin of human species, its culture and identities" (Vuković, 2011:102).

The incidence of heritage manifests itself in two forms: material and intangible cultural heritage. Lately, the ubiquity of the term "intangible cultural heritage" is based on the belief that it is endangered and that it will vanish. At the same time it is traditional and still living, which implies that it is susceptible to transformations or complete disappearance due to modernization, migration, and lifestyle changes in the local communities. That can cause the loss of interest with the young population and the intergenerational transfer of traditional cultural patterns is interrupted.

The increase of interest in the intangible cultural heritage is related to the development of cultural tourism. Cultural management promotes the local traditional cultural patterns as tourist attractions. Heritage becomes economic category because "in the global economy full of consumers wanting exotically experiences, folklore is the cultural resource comparable to the natural resources..." (Yúdice 2003 in Noyes, 2013:258) and as any other resource it is susceptible to the negative effects of the market, like overexploitation and undesirable market adjustment (constructing and reconstructing new traditions).

Intangible cultural heritage is recognized as "the identity and the resource" (Noyes, 2013:258), it is important to an individual and to the community, to the society and to mankind. It contributes to the

cultural diversity of the mankind, it is an expression of human creativity, and it has mobilized the entire political, economic and cultural public to deliberate on its sustainability.

With the goal of preserving cultural diversity and human creativity, and considering the fact that there was no organized safeguarding on the international level, in 2003 UNESCO brings the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage which defines the intangible cultural heritage as "the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage" (UNESCO, 2003:2). The process of safeguarding the cultural heritage is designed through national and international census lists of the most valuable intangible cultural goods. The focus is on the local community, because there is a proposition that "each State Party shall endeavor to ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management."(UNESCO, 2003:2) According to the definition, the intangible cultural heritage is self-defined, transferable from generation to generation, living and constitutive component of the identity (Crofts, 2010: 2).

People have always had the need to safeguard the representative patterns of the material and the intangible cultural heritage for the future generations. Memory warehouses store the objects, detected as the permanent value, that shape the identity card of a community, the objects "that testify the overall activity over the past time, where they live their identity and without which they would not be what they are today" (Vuković, 2011: 103). Today we refer to them as the heritage institutions: archives, libraries, museums. Ever since the founding of the first museums in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was expected that they would teach and culturally enrich the public in an interesting and an engaging way, and the basic museum activities are to be collecting, documenting, preserving, publishing and exhibiting the objects.

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the paradigm of museums and museum activities changes together with the paradigm of heritage and identity. Museums become active creators of the local and the international cultural politics. It is expected that "they provide creative presence of collective memory – to help us live with our identities that make us equal but also different from others." As such, they are incessant deliberation of the past experiences and events, thus they are the possible correctives of the present, and the usable projections to the past. Museums contribute to the self-knowledge and are effective means through which we meet the world around us in its space and time dimensions. In that sense, the museums are the driving force of any society. Without them and

without the related institutions we would be exposed to the loss of the living forces of identity that shape their own process and give reason to, and enable the quality and sustainable development. The absence of museums and related institutions as workable collective memories would bring to the loss of identity with fatal consequences that would lead to decadency and disappearance” (Sola, 2003:18).

In the context of preserving the intangible cultural heritage is also the change in the understanding its determination - in the early phases it was seen as the folklore heritage and the modern understanding takes into consideration both the work of art and the artist. Changing the understanding of the intangible cultural heritage also changes the methodology of preserving it: from documenting and safeguarding the written cultural traditional patterns, to supporting the living heritage, that is, creating the conditions that will ensure its sustainability. In order to sustain the intangible cultural heritage it is necessary to provide the communicational channels that will enable the intergenerational transfer of the cultural patterns onto the new generations. Mere collecting and documenting is insufficient because "mere documentation cannot guarantee the transfer of knowledge, except maybe in simple examples (i.e. Making the crepe paper decorations or making jewelry with beads...). When it comes to tradition it is more important to transfer knowledge from person to person” (Hrovatin, 2012:132). One of the possible ways of transferring the knowledge needed for the cultural reproduction is designing "the projects that would make the traditional knowledge applicable to modern living (planned tourist offer, souvenirs, different workshops)” (Hrovatin, 2012:132).

Cultural tourism is suitable for valorizing the intangible cultural heritage, especially features such as dance, language, music, customs... Cultural tourism also makes the heritage vulnerable and the subject of negative impacts such as adjustments, fabrications, and the production of heritage. Preventing these negative impacts is one of the main tasks of a museum through organizing different forms of education, making the promotional material, through exhibitions, manifestations, lectures, workshops, movies etc. The museum aims to build a relationship towards our own heritage and a positive attitude towards the collective heritage. Education is the basis for every prevention, and “the people, that is the community are the best censors, but only if they know enough about their own culture and tradition" (Jelinčić, Žuvela Bušnja, 2008:63).

The idea of the threat and the saving of the intangible cultural heritage has encouraged the ethnographers to research, write down and save on the available audiovisual media; monographs were published, and if the conditions were good the local museums were founded, with rich

ethnographic collections obtained from the local community. The new paradigm shifts focus on the creators, and the museum becomes the place where collective memory is being created "because choosing an object from the museum fundus, the memory becomes visible and tangible through an imaginative (re)collection, (re)presentation at the exhibitions. The objects present the sort of materialization of memory. The primary task of the museum is to preserve the object and the memory related to it. It creates and transfers certain stories about the groups, the individuals, or about some past" (Bingula, 2012:137). Along with other creators and holders of heritage: institutions, associations, groups and individuals the museum is the key participant in the shaping of cultural identity of the community. This is based on the good organization and professionally structured work and activities, as well as on the respective collections. Compared to other holders and presenters of the intangible cultural heritage in the community (associations, traditional trades, individuals...), the museum "can help prepare the programs to apply for the various local and state competitions and financial supports, in establishing international cooperation, etc". (Hrovatin, 2012:132).

Today, the positioning on the market is an imperative for an individual, for a place, community, city, and state, and in order to succeed you need to have good image, you should be recognizable and different. In a globalized world you should "have a brand" and "the point of the new programs in creating a brand is catching the spirit of time and place" (Mihevc, 2015). In self-presentation and in presenting to the others every community will "from the overall historical heritage ... choose those elements that in a certain moment match its interests and values in the present" (Čapo Žmegač, 1998:17). Whether it is the scientific, cultural or touristic context, the museum has experts that have the knowledge to recognize, select and present the representational cultural patterns or cultural attractions, within national and international boundaries, and present/show/exhibit them in the most desirable way. The museum of today is completely integrated in the overall life of the closer and the wider community, it is the link to other organizations and institutions in the society that serve and help develop the local community. It instigates the preservation of the identity of the local community and it participates in constituting/creating social memory, its role is to be "the interpreter of history and cultural heritage"(Vrkljan Križić, 2004:355), and its power is in the richness of presentational and interpretational possibilities of the registered cultural patterns. Modern technology and IT gave us numerous possibilities to communicate and interpret cultural heritage. According to Guy Hermann: "If the web is the strongest media that we have ever had to tell stories, and the museums are the institutions that tell them, then the web is the strongest media the museums have ever had at their disposal" (Hermann 1999). The possibilities to present and interpret the heritage on the web have not yet been explored or exploited to a sufficient extent.

Mostly presented are the collections and the activities of the museum, but the interpretation of the intangible heritage not as much (Šojat-Bikić, 2011).

### **Instead of conclusion: The activities/role of the Museum of Turopolje in the shaping of the cultural identity of the local community**

The Museum of Turopolje operates in the local community, neighboring the Croatia's capitol, the city of Zagreb, with about 30000 residents in the rural area, and 35000 in the urban parts. The Museum was founded in 1960, in the time of increasing industrialization and urbanization and the increased migration of population from the other parts of the former Jugoslavija. Sudden changes in lifestyle of the native people caused suppression of the traditional culture and the negative public image about the folk culture that became the measure for backwardness. Those were some of the reasons for opening the museum that would be the savior and the keeper of the material and the intangible cultural heritage of the community. Over the years a great fundus was created, organized in four collections: ethnographic collection, archaeological collection, art collection and a history collection; and the traditional cultural patterns are recorded and saved in printed and audiovisual media, thus organizing photo archive, sound recordings and film library, and in 1969 a movie "One day in the Turopolje cooperative (large family)" won the first price in the International contest of the ethnographic film in Florence (Modrić, 2009:68). Changing the public discourse about the social and the integrative role of the museum and about the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage and the construction of local identities, the Museum of Turopolje adjusts its actions to the new propositions and intensifies the methodology of promoting and presentation of the intangible heritage, taking the role of the holder of traditional patterns and of the co-creator of the identity. By organizing the educational programs, such as making of the traditional head coverings, lace, decorating Easter eggs etc., the Museum is taking over the role of the transferor of the traditional knowledge and customs, and by interpreting museum's collection the role of the creator of cultural identity. It gathers and involves local participants - institutions, associations, individuals - in designing and conducting the projects for safeguarding the intangible heritage. It organizes the events such as *Perunfest*, *Pastime in the manor*, *European Heritage Days*, Traditional knowledge/trades workshop for the renovation of heritage, where the knowledge and traditional ways are presented, performed by the local holders of tradition. Using the stored knowledge from the collections, the museum takes over the role of an advisory body for the local actors in reconstructing traditional customs, directing them and protecting from negative impacts that could, due to insufficient knowledge about the heritage, turn it into kitsch.

Integrative role of the museum manifests itself in connecting the heritage holder to the expert and political institutions at the local, national and international level in the processes of safeguarding and preserving the heritage. This fact is underlined by two processes of safeguarding two intangible cultural goods: the Turopolje dialect and St George's procession, listed on the List of protected cultural goods in the RC. The role of the museum in this process of safeguarding was to detect and abstract the intangible cultural good, define its specifics and initiate and/or participate in preparing the proposal, together with the rest of the local culture holders and state institutions. The custom of St George's procession was also proposed to be on the UNESCO's World heritage list.

The museum currently operates on four locations, waiting to take over three new ones. Even this space dispersion is a form of ubiquity and involvement in the local community. Every location is available and open for the individuals and various associations to use and hold cultural projects.

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