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Concluding words

Webinar of Nordic Museums and Intangible Cultural Heritage

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From COVID endangered Belgium HELLO! I want to personally grant 12 points (douze points) to Finland, for creating this safe place today. **But what is this place? A Webinar of Nordic Museums and Intangible Cultural Heritage?** When I see the number of people, from all over the world, who shared and gathered together for this webinar, it seems to me the Finnish Heritage Agency did an incredible 'tour the force' in creating **a forum** for the whole sector. NEMO, as an international network of museum associations representing more than 30,000 museums in 40 countries across Europe, can only support, engage, and help disseminate this endeavor.

I will be brief. We have heard so many inspiring things today that I am sure you, as for me, are eager to put these ideas into practice as soon as you can. If not tomorrow, today perhaps. That is the sentiment with which I would like to begin this conclusion remarks. To not let the words fade, to not let the inspiration faint or the examples bleach, **we need to act and translate ICH into our work. This session encourages us, heritage professionals, to use the proposed resources valuating ICH within the museum work.** I say this, not as a board member of NEMO, nor as a president of ICOM Belgium Flanders, but as a director of a 'regional' museum, the FeliXart Museum; thus, as a museum professional.

By presenting concrete tools for the museums, thanks to the collaborating Workshop intangible heritage of Flanders-Belgium (and no - I am not biased, they did a great job, you must agree!), this indeed helps professionals all over the world to, as the organizers of this webinar proposed, **dive deeper into living heritage and engage** with the whole of society. What does ICH mean for museums, and vice versa

remains the starting point of this adventure. But with the tools presented today, **we have entered a new stage, a next step is made.**

The case examples from the Nordic museums only contributed to this feeling. The hands-on way of the workshops expressed the evolving nature of the discussion: **practice itself helps to shape the paradigm shift that ICH represents to museums.** It gives a hint into how to bridge an 'old' practice with a 'new' impetus. Cocreation takes place when you don't have all the expertise. Museums broaden their 'core' by searching for new methodologies, by searching for expertise within the engaged communities and stakeholders. And from the workshop that I followed, I learned that ICH was for many a way to broaden the museum's public. But also: the reason for including ICH in the museum work was because of a link with the own collection.

Some thoughts. I saw a call for redefining the definition of the own museums. A very trending polemic nowadays, as you know, and one that shows that we maybe are 'regionalizing' a previously 'universal' concept. To 'use as it fits'. An example of the fluid period we may be heading to is the evolution in the ethical guidelines and conventions from pure object-oriented to an ICH-proof one. Still, this evolution should at a certain point also press us as museum professionals to maybe look at potential threats. I raise the question, for instance, about the limits of political activism within museums.

But also the UNESCO definition on ICH, when read strictly as a convention and definition, could be seen as restricting the ways for museums to handle ICH. For instance, when museums identify and work around 'lost practices'. These practices are something that strictu sensu don't fall within the definition of a living tradition supported by communities. But when this 'recreation' of lost practices is embedded in a shared goal with its communities it becomes relevant within the 'spirit' of the convention.

A last critical thought. From all the examples I heard today, one big elephant stays in the room unspoken: How to involve the big fine arts museums? This remains a big question for me. **But what is sure is that the fundamentals for an attitude change,**

at the same time while respecting the 'old' museum work, is being constructed right now. As the concluding declaration after the international IMP project stated: Tangible and intangible cultural heritage are intrinsically linked. There is a new attitude by which shared concerns and aspirations of the actions in museums and in intangible cultural heritage can be addressed. Intangible cultural heritage is indeed a bridge between traditional and contemporary cultural values. ICH not only promotes participation as a method, it defends also diversity and inclusion as such. And with this, it makes museums part of the changing actors for a more just and sustainable world.

As said, NEMO operates internationally, and this workshop inspires concretely. It would be a recommendation to raise awareness in networks and associations, all over the world, and to create similar webinars. If COVID has taught us something, as president Tiina Merisalo pointed out in her introduction, it is that we don't have to create huge ecological footprints to share and learn from each other. Of course, we would like to meet physically and acquainting new colleagues. But to learn and be inspired we can create this kind of enlightening, yet practical, sessions in all continents and benefit all from shared knowledge. NEMO for sure is willing to help spread **this bridging word and world.**

Concretely, maybe NEMO can be of use motivating the different national museum sectors to advocate for decrees that help to safeguard ICH within the museum work, like the Museum ACT in Finland Leena Marsio presented. This of course also means creating financial consequences for this.

Confucius said: 'What I hear, I forget. What I see, I remember. What I do, I understand.'

We've heard what we have to do. We've seen what we need to do. Now is the time to do it and together we can.