

A Ética nas Políticas Públicas do Patrimônio Cultural Imaterial: Entrevista com Marc Jacobs

Ethics in Intangible Cultural Heritage Public Policies: Interview with Marc Jacobs

Enviado em: 28/01/2017

Aceito em: 28/01/2017

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Resumo:

Desde que foi adotada (2003), a Convenção para a Salvaguarda do Patrimônio Cultural Imaterial da UNESCO continua a suscitar interrogações e a constituir um campo de negociação quanto à sua implementação nas políticas públicas do patrimônio cultural dos países que ratificaram o documento. As questões éticas estão atualmente no centro da discussão com a recente adoção de 12 princípios éticos que pretendem guiar as estratégias de salvaguarda do Patrimônio Cultural Imaterial. Nesta entrevista com Marc Jacobs, realizada durante a sua visita à Universidade de Évora, refletimos sobre o impacto da Convenção para a Salvaguarda do Patrimônio Cultural Imaterial nas políticas nacionais, os seus problemas e oportunidades. Marc Jacobs (1963) é Professor de Estudos Críticos de Patrimônio na Vrije Universiteit Brussel. É desde 2008 director da Faro (Flemish Interface Centre for Cultural Heritage), uma organização belga para o setor do patrimônio cultural (material e imaterial). É desde 2014 o coordenador da UNESCO Chair em Critical Heritage Studies na Vrije

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Universiteit Brussel. Participou na qualidade de representante da Bélgica na redação da Convenção para a Salvaguarda do Patrimônio Cultural Imaterial (2003) e em vários grupos de trabalho durante o primeiro Comitê Intergovernamental da Convenção (2006-2008).

Palavras chave: Convenção para a Salvaguarda do Patrimônio Cultural Imaterial da UNESCO, ética, públicas políticas do Patrimônio Cultural Imaterial, Patrimônio Cultural Imaterial

Abstract:

Since its adoption, UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage has evoked interrogations and constituted a field of negotiation, concerning its implementation in the cultural heritage public policies of the countries that ratified the document. Ethical issues are now at the centre of discussions, after UNESCO adopted 12 ethical principles to guide strategies for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. We took the opportunity of Marc Jacobs' visit to the University of Évora to do this interview and discuss the impact of UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) in national policies, its problems and opportunities. Marc Jacobs (1963) is the director of FARO: Flemish Interface for Cultural Heritage (www.faronet.be) and holder of the UNESCO Chair in Critical Heritage Studies and the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (www.vub.ac.be). He holds a MA in History from the University of Ghent (1985) and a PhD in History from the VUB (1998). Jacobs has been involved in drafting, elaborating, implementing, and analysing the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage since 2002. He was a member of the Belgian delegation to the Intergovernmental Committee of that Convention, from 2006 to 2008 and from 2012 to 2016. Marc Jacobs is a Professor of critical heritage studies at Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Since 2008, he has been the Director of the Flemish Interface for cultural heritage (FARO), an accredited organization specialized in the safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. He participated as Belgium's representative in drafting the Intangible Heritage Convention, in many expert groups and in the first Intergovernmental Committee of the Convention (2006-2008).

Keywords: UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, ethics, intangible cultural heritage public policies, Intangible Cultural Heritage

**Marc Jacobs, 13 July 2016 Colégio do Espírito Santo, Universidade de Évora,
Portugal**



Photo by Ana Carvalho

Ana Carvalho – When did you start collaborating more closely with UNESCO and the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage (2003)?

Marc Jacobs – It began in 2001, when the discussions in UNESCO started about making the Convention, and they were looking for experts from several countries. There was a first meeting organized by Chérif Khaznadar – he was in the French UNESCO Commission – and he wanted to assemble a number of people from the Netherlands, Belgium, and France. At that time I had left the University, I had just done my PhD, and I become director of the Flemish Centre for Popular Culture and they were looking for somebody who knew something about this strange thing called Intangible Cultural Heritage. That’s when they sent me to that meeting. I was there together with my French-speaking colleague Jean-Pierre Ducastelle, who is the chairperson of the Walloon organization for popular culture. From that time on, we kept on going to every expert meeting that was organised, and the Flemish government and the administration, any time they had to reflect about Intangible Cultural Heritage, they sent me, not really knowing what was going on there, which was very interesting because, together with my French-speaking colleague, we had a lot of freedom to speak and to participate in the discussions. They let us work in all those negotiations leading up to the Convention in 2003. In Belgium, we really badgered politicians and policy makers to ratify the Convention, and then we kept going to the Intergovernmental Committee of the Convention.

And especially after 2008, the politicians woke up to the fact that this was really a Convention, and then more diplomats and people from the administration joined our Belgian team. But, especially in the first years, we had a lot of liberty. This was interesting because we saw a lot of other delegations that, from the start, included diplomats and politicians, so they were very restricted in what they said. We could speak as experts and that was nice.

I worked in that Flemish Centre for Popular Culture and the first thing I did when I become director was to put “popular culture” between inverted commas, because it

was a politically dangerous concept – folk culture. Especially for extremist parties, this was a very hot topic. So, that was one of the things I talked about first, we had to make it more complex, make it vaguer so it could not just be used by politicians. That’s why I really like the concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage, because political parties cannot really use it, it’s so intangible and vague. Eventually “Intangible Cultural Heritage” replaced the concept of “popular culture”. “Intangible Cultural Heritage” being a more neutral term, it is something that from a scholarly point a view, and from a politically active point of view, I really like.

Filipe Themudo Barata – We have had the Convention for 13 years now. In your opinion, what has been done right and wrong?

Marc Jacobs – I think it made sense, it still makes sense, because it’s kind of an open battle. Something I learned is that it’s not something like UNESCO, that all the other actors are co-responsible for what they are doing. You can have a kind of line and defend it and I am quite convinced of the way that I think is consistent. If you stick to that, you can have a lot of impact and influence, and that’s what I’ve been trying to do right from the beginning: to have a kind of – you can call it my own agenda –, which is the agenda of the Flemish policy makers, luckily, to have this kind of... On the one hand to really go for recognition of those non-elite forms of culture, which were called popular culture, that they should deserve a place and should be recognised, that the concept of heritage is more than monuments and landscape. That’s something I believe in.

And I noticed the concept of Intangible Culture Heritage/*Patrimoine Culturel Immatériel* – or however you translate it – is a concept that you can debate. There can be a lot of problems with the notion, but it works for policy makers, it works in society, people take the concept seriously and want to think about it. So, that’s one of the things that happened.

What I like about the Convention is article 15, mentioning communities, groups, and

individuals, without having a definition of any of these, especially communities and groups. That is very flexible and open, and it is empowering communities and groups and that is something I like about it.

And another point, which I find is extremely important, is that it opens a possibility to organise transfers from rich countries to developing countries. It's a possibility from a geopolitical way of looking at things, to organise capacity building and transfer of funds.

Also, something that is happening now with the Convention is, there is a lot of money in the Intangible Heritage Fund, and one of the things which I, and therefore Belgium, could help influence, by participating, is that, in addition to making lists and all those other non-interesting things, at least these capacity-building programs are organized and money is flooding there. Especially in Flanders, we managed to help develop a policy around safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage. But at the same time, ratifying the Convention helped convince our government to invest in the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund and they basically donated in the last five years 600,000 euros to invest in Southern African countries. For me, that already legitimises all the energy that has been put into all the game of the Convention. At least, I am glad about that.

Filipe Themudo Barata – But if you could change something, what would you change in the 2003 Convention?

Marc Jacobs – In the Convention I would get rid of article 16, the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (hereafter referred to as the Representative List). That's a problem.³ What a lot of actors, countries and experts wanted was a kind of alternative to the world heritage list, which was also part of the Masterpieces program. What I've been doing right from the start is trying to get rid of the masterpieces and world heritage list and promote a kind of list of important things or important events. There was a debate, especially between 2001 and 2003 and also

³ There are now (July 2016) 337 elements inscribed in the Representative List and 43 elements inscribed in the Urgent Safeguard List. And the Register of Best Safeguarding Practices has only 12 projects.

afterwards. It was clear that a lot of powers wanted that kind of list, so a lot of specialists counterbalanced and made this kind of Representative List, but nobody knows what that really means. This has been a negotiation process, for the last 15 years, to make this kind of Representative List.

It functions for drawing attention, but not for the safeguarding. I don't believe in it because there are case studies about the masterpieces program that demonstrate that proclaiming something as a masterpiece or putting something on the Representative List has a negative effect in most cases. If you really go and look, it has not helped the local communities. I am critical of that, but apparently, it is something you need to do to convince the press, the media, and others.

Ana Carvalho – And you can't go back, can you?

Marc Jacobs – No. I have a twofold strategy. On the one hand, the Representative List is there. Right from the start, I said we should have a Wikipedia kind of thing, feeding the whole system by entering thousands and thousands of things, which through a peer-review process can yield a kind of encyclopaedia. That's what I've been saying right from the start, and that's also an argument when they wanted it. There's been a kind of discussion or game as to what criteria should be used for the Representative List, and a lot of people wanted the kind of world heritage light list, they wanted to have easy criteria to put things on that list but still have all the effects of world heritage status. And every time they wanted to make really easy criteria, then Belgium intervened and said – well, let's go for really interesting things with no criteria, Wikipedia, and let everybody decide – and then the discussion stopped, because we didn't want to go that far. So, I will keep on repeating – let's go for a Wikipedia list. There was a lot of resistance, but if you hear the new secretary of the Convention, Tim Curtis⁴, he too is already using that concept of Wikipedia.

⁴ Tim Curtis started as secretary in beginning of 2016. He has PhD in Cultural Anthropology and has worked for UNESCO since 2000. Curtis has more than 11 years in the field, first at UNESCO Office in Dar-es-Salaam

Ana Carvalho – Scotland initially had a project like Wikipedia, and then changed to another kind of platform.

Marc Jacobs – In Scotland it was Napier University, they had funding for a year, they haven't been able to develop it, and Scotland hasn't ratified the Convention because the UK hasn't ratified it.

But now Finland has launched a Wikipedia, their official inventory is a Wikipedia and they are making real publicity also in the Intergovernmental Committee for that wiki. So, I think that's possible. I am in favour of a Representative List fed into the Wikipedia. But if there is no Wikipedia, then, from my point of view, we should follow the rules, make an agreement on the criteria.

Belgium, and I am partially responsible for this, takes a very tough position. If for instance an evaluation body concludes that an element of Intangible Cultural Heritage does not satisfy the criteria, then we should not put it on the list. And this is a minority position among the 24 countries. We are often two or three countries trying to defend an objective evaluation: if it doesn't apply, we can't inscribe it. I have the reputation of being extremely tough on this – you have to follow the criteria. But if they want to change the criteria, then let's go for a Wikipedia list. And they find it very difficult to argue with Belgium. But that has been our strategy in the last few years. If you take that position, you can influence the debates.

Ana Carvalho – One of the aspects we are seeing in Portugal is some confusion about which Intangible Cultural Heritage can be representative, because the criteria for inscription on the lists are quite vague. How are the elements on the

(Tanzania) and then as head of UNESCO's Cultural Unit in Bangkok (Thailand). He succeeded Cécile Duvelle who was secretary between 2008 and 2015.

Representative List being selected in Belgium⁵?

Marc Jacobs – Belgium is a difficult country because we have different regions. Each is fully autonomous and competent, and functions at the level of a nation state. We have Flanders, the Walloon part, the German-speaking part and Brussels. Each has its own list, and each has their own strategy. We have a kind of agreement that everybody takes turns, but the Flemish region was faster.

And we have different policies. Our Walloon colleagues have legislation on masterpieces, so they were very active in the masterpieces program but now they have to change their legislation, and they are still in doubt whether they should be doing something about the Representative List.

Flanders has submitted several elements to the Representative List, but now our official policy is that if you submit something it should be for the Register of Best Safeguarding Practices.

The German-speaking part has its own strategy. There is a file coming now on Belgium beer, that is, the art of producing and consuming Belgian beer. The kind of strategy adopted was: the file was sponsored by the Belgian brewers' association.⁶ The association was looking to see where could they go, they were set in Flanders but in Flanders they had difficulties. In the Walloon part, too, so they went to the German speaking community, which is a small community – 60,000 people – but autonomous. They introduced the Belgium beer file through the German-speaking community. So, from a strategic point of view these are groups in society that can use this Belgian system to make changes. So, we have four different strategies.

The Flemish strategy, in the beginning (2009), was rather easy: there were no upper

⁵ Belgium has now (July 2016) 10 elements inscribed in the Representative List and two projects on the Register of Best Safeguarding Practices.

⁶ The file for the beer culture in Belgium as an element of Intangible Culture Heritage is at the moment (July 2016) under process by UNESCO for the Representative List.

limits. What we did – I was also partially responsible – was to present four files, and they were accepted. It was easy to submit a file then, now it's much more difficult. And our strategy is: we have an inventory at the Flemish level, but we use a calling system. Twice every year there is a call – who wants to present something for that list in Flanders? But if you want to apply as a community or a person, you have to connect with an official active heritage organisation - this could be a centre of expertise, or a museum, or an archive. You have to team up with them and present a safeguarding plan for the next five years. And when you submit something on that list – which is now a database –, you have to submit that file with a safeguarding plan, and the whole strategy – and this is evolving – is to make an inventory of safeguarding plans that are updated every five years and then you are on that list.

Ana Carvalho – Are the safeguarding plans a set of intentions, or do they have to be already implemented?

Marc Jacobs – They have to report every year on what they have done. But until now, that's the same as with UNESCO, there is no sanction, there is a kind of moral obligation, and together with the idea – and that's what people are starting to realise – it's easy to put something on the list, if you write a nice file and describe it, but it's a hard job to propose something every year. So, that's an idea that has been on the minds of people, it's very difficult to get out and you have a lot of obligations. The stream flowing into the inventory has stopped, and now some people are really active. What you see now through that process, calling for nominations together with safeguarding plans, is that you really have those forms of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which are either in danger or there is a very active heritage community behind it. So, in the Flemish inventory you see the active networks emerging, and that's what policy makers want to do.

Ana Carvalho – And where do you get the resources to draw up these safeguarding plans?

Marc Jacobs – Sometimes it is our local government that sponsors them. In the case of the Belgian beer it was the brewers, they have a lot of money. But, for instance, there are also the people from travel, people from trade, and entrepreneurs who do it. But mostly, when they team up with the subsidized and officially recognised heritage institutions, a lot of the work and follow-up is done there, through those brokers and mediators. That's where they are active, but the pressure comes from other people, often volunteers. That's a way to activate things, like in a museum, it is part of their job to take care of tangible and intangible heritage, and through that system you see outside people coming to the museum and say – we want this and we want you to help us.

Ana Carvalho – Who are these organizations recognised by?

Marc Jacobs – In practice, they are in most cases recognised by a local government or by the Flemish government.

Filipe Themudo Barata – So, to be included in the regional list you have to present a safeguarding plan and inscribe it on a database.

Marc Jacobs – We have two deadlines every year – May and September –, you have to fill out a form (4-5 pages: who you are, contact persons, what it is about, describe it, and what the safeguarding plan is). It's very easy. At the beginning, we started with just a list with a name of the phenomenon and place, but now it's been put in a database.

The procedure is as follows: the file is sent to a commission which includes experts, people that are already on the list, and volunteers. They examine it and give feedback, and then they send it to the Ministry of Culture, which always officialises the decision of that commission. Then, it's put on the inventory or the list and is sent to an NGO called Tapis Plein (Bruges), which is responsible for developing that database. Originally it was the government, but they outsourced it. What Tapis Plein does is to put the safeguarding plan on the inventory – there are about five people working there – and

then they try to understand the safeguarding plan and document it on the website. It's their responsibility to get that information, they actively document changes in the safeguarding plans. The government intervenes only once, to put it on that list, but for all the rest it's the whole dynamics of civil society that keeps working.

For resources, we have project funding. Once you are on that list, it is much easier to get project funding. That's an incentive, but you have to do really interesting things to apply. It's a mechanism designed to have all those institutions (heritage organisations) involved and working, and they put pressure on each other to do a better job.

Filipe Themudo Barata – Do you think this is a fair system, at least?

Marc Jacobs – I think so.

Filipe Themudo Barata – Do you think that outside Europe it is possible to organise a system like that?

Marc Jacobs – I think you can organise it like that, and the key is updating. What happens also in UNESCO is that you inscribe an element on the list and nobody asks questions about what happens afterwards. But recently, in the meeting in Paris ([Sixth session of the General Assembly of the States Parties to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage](#), 30 May to 1 June), and in the [Windhoek](#) meeting (Nov-Dec. 2015), for instance, a lot of emphasis was put on updating. Because in the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding List – the first file was from Vietnam – it was said that after four years of urgent safeguarding it was time to move our urgent safeguarding to the Representative List, and they managed to set up the procedure. So, these things are moving from one list to another, and this causes questions on how, when you are on the safeguarding list, you cannot remain on urgent safeguarding forever. But there are no mechanisms to check this. There are also the periodic reports; a lot of countries are very hesitant to submit those reports. It's a kind of moral pressure on the country, but UNESCO is

moving toward a new submission mode for the Lists. They will make a rule saying that, to obtain money, first you have to submit the periodic report.

Filipe Themudo Barata – What is your opinion on the UNESCO programme Human Living Treasures?

Marc Jacobs – It's a programme that is partially on the website of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Originally it was on a different part of the website, now it is partially on the website. The Secretary doesn't really know what to do with it, but they are interested because, among other things, it is about crafts and, in the context of sustainable development goals, it's becoming an important programme.

This programme was originally sponsored mainly by South Korea and Japan, but there is a very interesting article by Noriko Aikawa-Faure (2014), who is the person behind the Convention, and who is a consultant. At this moment, she is making a very critical analysis of how this programme is used in South Korea and Japan. She says: do not follow that example. But in a lot of countries they are examining how to do something with the notion of recognition, the apprenticeship system, and so on.

I think it is a valuable formula. In Flanders, in Belgium, we managed to convince the Ministry of Culture to try to examine and set up a similar system. This was in September 2015, there was a big meeting organised by the French UNESCO Commission about this living human treasures programme – how it can be implemented and improved. I think there is some potential there.

The original programme sponsored by Japan and South Korea backfired, because it became a system of recognition with the main effect that the price of products by those masters skyrocketed. It became a very exclusive programme, not about transmission but about exclusiveness. A lot of countries are struggling with it. It's an interesting programme, it should not be just passively accepted but something could be done about it. There is potential, and that's one of the issues for the coming years, especially

the connection with economy, tourism, transmission, and education. There is a lot of potential there for crafts and arts. I believe in it, but I haven't seen a good formula developed anywhere yet.

Ana Carvalho – France has the [Les Maîtres d'Art](#) (since 1994), for instance.

Marc Jacobs – There is a PhD thesis that analysed that programme, discovering a lot of flaws. The programme is not always used in the spirit of the Convention. Something else should be developed, I think.

Ana Carvalho – In 2015, UNESCO adopted [12 ethical principles](#) regarding the safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. What was the motivation behind this initiative? Aren't there ethics codes already, for each field of research? Anthropology has one, museums have another, and so on. What's your view on this issue?

Marc Jacobs – Doing something about ethics was a question launched by a lot of countries, Belgium among them, and I was one of the people asking for that. If you look at the Museum Code of Ethics of ICOM, on one hand, it is a very unbalanced code of ethics. In my view, it's not very useful for dealing with Intangible Cultural Heritage. From the anthropological point of view, I like the notion of brokerage and mediation very much, and there's not a lot of it there. And there is no universally applicable code of ethics – anthropologists are just one of the actors.

The basic idea was to examine whether it would be sensible to make a kind of global code of ethics. Upon reflection, it was said that it was not a good idea, because it's impossible to apply something to the whole world. The option was for two solutions. On the one hand, it was the solution of the 12 principles, and basically that's an exercise in rephrasing or formulating the spirit of the Convention, what the Convention is about, in different words. If you look at the 12 principles, these are very general ideas, but the main characteristic is that, if you put them all together, they occupy only a few pages,

which you can translate and distribute all over the world. And this will be the effect, because the Convention is too long to read. This document of the 12 principles has a chance of being seen by many eyes and of explaining what the Convention is all about – and that’s already sufficient.

There are some things that have been *smuggled* into the 12 principles, which are interesting and new, because it’s a question of working with the vocabulary. One of the things is that, instead of “prior and informed consent” there is now “prior and sustained informed consent” (principle n.º 4). So, the idea is that, if you want to do something, prior and informed consent is one of the criteria for the Representative List – and for the other list too. But by using the word “sustained” we stress the idea that every five years you have to check whether there is still consent within the community.

Ana Carvalho – But that can still be manipulated.

Marc Jacobs – Yes, but at least the word is there. I am also partially responsible, it was my proposal to have “sustained” in there, so we *smuggled in* that small word, and now it depends on how countries will use it.

There is another concept – “access and benefit sharing” – which is important in the Diversity Convention. It was *smuggled* into one of the 12 principles. It’s also there in the UNESCO official document, so it can be used. It’s about rephrasing the spirit of the Convention and *smuggling* in a few new concepts. *Smuggling* in the sense that people don’t notice what they accepted.

And the other part is that UNESCO will set up a database with all kinds of ethics tools, e.g. forms and professional codes, and this is a website that has to be developed inside the UNESCO framework. They have set it up, but we are not satisfied yet. Because, and that’s another principle that was accepted last year, UNESCO has to do that with accredited NGOs, they have to involve NGOs in building up that database. That’s another example of *smuggling* things in through those conditions. Normally

NGOs are kept at a distance, they can be in the evaluation body but... Through that mechanism, they are obliged to do something with them. And that's one of the points Belgium will make every two years – where are the NGOs?

Ana Carvalho – The notion of “community” has created several misunderstandings. If I understood well, you prefer the notion of “heritage community” in the Faro Convention (Council of Europe, 2005), which says: “a heritage community consists of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations”. Could you explain your perspective regarding this notion?

Marc Jacobs – On the one hand, it's also a very open definition. If you see how heritage community is defined, you don't have to be the owner of the heritage, so it can be anyone that has a special interest in it and wants to go for public action around that heritage. I translated “heritage community” as a network of actors around heritage – and these could be private persons, they could be museums or other organisations. The heritage community is this kind of network.

Basically, we are thinking in terms of network and not in “community” as a village community, a small, supposedly closed community. By using the word “network”, you can move it to include also experts, centres of expertise and so on. That's how we also implemented it in our decrees and legislation in Belgium: to use the concept of “heritage community” with all the nice associations people make around “community”, but basically it is a network of people involved in heritage.

Ana Carvalho – So, Belgium uses and adapts the concept but hasn't ratified the Faro Convention.

Marc Jacobs – Absolutely. Our legislation contains the definition of “heritage community” that we copied from the Faro Convention, but we adapted the definition by adding “organisations”. Personally, I think that by having persons and organizations we can get that network idea – the word “organisation” was *smuggled* into that definition. It is in our legislation, and probably politicians think they are quoting the Convention of Faro, but they are quoting it with an addition. By adding this you can have a whole network structure, and it completely changes the way we can work with this.

The advantage of the Convention of Faro is that it is the only European Convention that actually recognizes Intangible Cultural Heritage, as a whole. So, it’s our Trojan horse in the heritage field, to have Intangible Cultural Heritage included. I like most of what is written in the Convention of Faro. I only have problems with the notion of European heritage, I don’t believe in that construction.

Filipe Themudo Barata – Which construction do you believe in?

Marc Jacobs – If there are actors with enough energy and plans to call something “heritage” and develop a heritage program, then it’s fine. If you fix it or reify it, if you essentialise it, then it becomes very dangerous. That’s my popular culture approach. In a network, you have to make it so that no one can possess it, so that it’s all over the place: a lot of energy but nobody can control it. It’s always a process of finding consensus or a power play, but at least it is something that can change over and over again. That’s what heritage is. And sometimes you have to help by creating or using the definitions, and especially the definition of the Convention of Faro: how they define heritage in this kind of flexible way. That’s why I like the 2003 Convention – what communities, groups and individuals think is their heritage and the way they manage to convince other people. It’s a very relativistic approach.

Ana Carvalho – You are the holder of the UNESCO Chair in Critical Heritage Studies and the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage at Vrije Universiteit Brussel. What are your main goals for the near future?

Marc Jacobs – On the one hand, I want to work on the topic of sustainable development, a new chapter on sustainable development in the 2030 Agenda of the UN. I want to think about a few consequences, a number of difficulties, things that a lot of people take seriously. For instance, the role that safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage can play for peace processes – let’s take this seriously, how this could happen. And also, I want to organise a number of seminars, meetings, and publications around this.

On the other hand, in Belgium, or in Flanders, I want to develop more research and get a number of people who are starting their PhDs, to build up some research capacity in order to help reflection.

Another goal is to find some international networks of exchange and do projects together. In the coming years, there are several new chairs that are already emerging, one in Turkey, one in Latvia (Anita Vaivade, she is a very strong legal scholar but with great ambition and I really believe in what she is doing). In the Netherlands there will be one, and there are several others. If these plans work out, we will have about ten chairs and it will be a good way to work together.

I also think a connection can be made with the UNESCO Secretariat, to see what can be done. For instance, the UNESCO Secretariat wants to set up a worldwide monitoring programme on the impact of the Convention. They want to develop a kind of monitoring system over national committees – they will implement this programme in the coming years. I think the Chairs could play a role in this case, to actually follow it up or make it happen.

There are several possibilities, and it’s always a challenge to see how independent your work can be, and how critically you can work from the UNESCO point of view. I was actively involved in the intergovernmental committee of the Convention until last June. From now on I will just be observing, and that’s something I look forward to.

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Acknowledgements

This text was produced with the support of CIDEHUS – UID/HIS/00057/2013 (POCI-01-0145-FEDER-007702)