INVENTORYING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN FLANDERS: THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS AND A GLIMPSE INTO THE FUTURE

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ABSTRACT
After a decade of inventorying intangible cultural heritage in Flanders (BE), this article offers a state of affairs and an insight in the policy choices being made since 2006, as well as its instruments, effects and evaluation after 10 years of implementation and experience in the field. It also brings a glimpse into the future and possible developments. The Flemish ICH Policy opted to remain closely to the objectives and mechanisms presented in the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the safeguarding of the ICH. In the article observations are made and lessons learnt related to this policy application in the context of Flanders. Due consideration is given to questions of diversity and sustainable development, being indirect values and aims underlying the Convention. The authors formulate a plea to develop perspectives on ICH and diversity as a part of the policy framework and related tools for inventorying and safeguarding ICH, and opening up the thinking around ICH and diversity, to approach it as diversely as possible.

1. The UNESCO 2003 Convention & ICH inventorying

The UNESCO 2003 Convention for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage is likely best known for its List(s) for Intangible Cultural Heritage[2], though the objectives of this Convention are about more than making inventories or lists, much more. In the first place, this international policy instrument is concerned with the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). In addition, the Convention strives for respect for the ICH of communities, groups and individuals involved; wishes to raise awareness at the local, national and international level of the importance of this heritage, and generates

[1] Tapis plein is an accredited NGO to the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of ICH since 2012. See http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/accredited-ngos-00331 and http://www.ichngoforum.org/tapis-plein/ (both retrieved April 10, 2017).
[2] See Lists and Register UNESCO 2003 Convention: http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/lists (retrieved April 10, 2017).

international collaboration and support[3]. The Convention, and States Parties who implement it, recognise ICH as an important source for the well-being of communities, the sustainable development of societies and mutual understanding within and between countries.

Nonetheless, in current practice significant attention thus seems to go to *one* aspect within the UNESCO Convention: formulating inventories and lists. Indeed, the Convention mentions the drawing up of one or more inventories on ICH as one of the State obligations[4]. Inventorying implies that ICH elements are identified and that their main features, meaning, functions and status are represented in writing and/or audio-visual. The primary purpose of inventorying ICH in the context of the Convention is safeguarding. As States Parties, which have ratified the Convention, acknowledge the value of ICH, they are committed to ensure the viability thereof. In other words, they are committed to ensure that communities involved, who so desire, can continue to transmit their cultural practices, expressions and knowledge to the next generation.[5] Therefore, inventorying under the Convention is considered an important first step towards a dialogue on safeguarding ICH. This is a process that engages the State and communities of tradition bearers and practitioners, as well as relevant NGOs, researchers and academics[6]. The identification of ICH on an inventory can furthermore be done with the purpose of making ICH visible, informing the general public and sharing information. Inventories are also expected to be amended on a regular basis[7], given that ICH consists of living heritage practices and thus, just as with the communities involved, are dynamic and subject to change.

1.1. Community-based inventorying

When inventorying ICH, an important condition is that communities are intensively involved in the entire process. First of all, communities reserve the right to determine whether or not to be identified as ICH on an inventory, according to the 'free prior and informed consent' principle.[8] A State Party may meet this obligation under the Convention in a number of different ways. Community-based inventorying is one of the

[3] Article 1 of the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of ICH lists four objectives.

[4] Each State Party must draw up, 'in a manner geared to its own situation, one or more inventories of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory' (Article 12), identifying the elements concerned 'with the participation of communities, groups and relevant non-governmental organizations' (Article 11(b)) - http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/convention (retreived April 10, 2017).

[5] This process is dynamic and creative, since the bearers and practitioners of ICH constantly recreate their ICH in response to the changes around them.

[6] See also: http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/materials-repository-00417 : U018-v1.0-FN-EN_Workshop_on_community-based_inventorying-_introduction-

[7] See UNESCO 2003 Convention, Article 12 – Inventories: 1. To ensure identification with a view to safeguarding, each State Party shall draw up, in a manner geared to its own situation, one or more inventories of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory. These inventories shall be regularly updated.

[8] See for example http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/basic-texts-00503 and http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/doc/src/01853-EN.pdf - p. 6-9: "The role given to communities and groups in the Convention is reinforced in the Operational Directives: for instance, inscription on the Lists of the Convention or inclusion in the registry of good practices cannot be done without the free, prior and informed consent of the community or group concerned."

many approaches to inventorying, and an emerging practice. However, as such, there is not one single formula. It can be based upon various experiences and tools in areas such as participatory rural appraisal and other participatory development tools; participatory ethnography; folk art surveys; oral history research; and participatory spatial information management and communication. Community-based inventorying employs techniques that are part of the methods mentioned, such as individual and group interviewing, participatory mapping, photovoice and participatory video, as interactive vehicles to generate and systematise knowledge about the ICH of the community[9].

1.2. Inventorying and Questions of Diversity

[Fig 1 near here] Another aspect of inventorying ICH is the question of diversity and representativeness. In the preamble to the Convention, the importance of ICH is positioned as a main source of cultural diversity and as a guarantee for sustainable development. The Convention came about after UNESCO had also made the analysis that globalisation and social transformation often create situations in which ICH declines or disappears, due to the lack of tools that could help protect and strengthen ICH in these circumstances. Conversely, globalisation can also offer opportunities to fully experience the diversity of cultures.[10] Given their connection, ICH and cultural diversity as such are pushed to the fore in their interdependence within the context of UNESCO objectives. The Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity is thus to be understood as an instrument that 'was established to ensure better visibility of the intangible cultural heritage and awareness of its significance' (Article 16). The List is directly linked to the representation of world-wide cultural diversity and the illustration of human creativity.[11]

2. Inventorying ICH, why and how? Perspectives from Flanders (Belgium)

2.1. A Policy for ICH in Flanders

Belgium ratified the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in 2006 and thus made the commitment of maintaining one or more inventories of Intangible Cultural Heritage for the territory. That same year, the ICH policy in Flanders, one of the three communities in Belgium, began. In 2008, the Flemish Community initiated the 'Inventory for intangible cultural heritage in Flanders'.

In 2010 the Vision Paper 'The Government of Flanders' policy on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage' was subsequently presented by Joke Schauvliege, the Minister of Culture at the time. In the Vision Paper, a long-term vision was elaborated for the intangible cultural heritage policy that the Flemish Government shall implement. Based on the analysis and arguments that were written out in the vision paper, the Flemish Community determined its own role as governing authority: 'The policy must

[9] Idem footnote 6.
[10] See the text from the UNESCO Convention at: http://unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00006 (retrieved April 10, 2017).
[11] Criterion R.2 for Inscription reads, 'Inscripton of the element will contribute to ensuring visibility, awareness of the significance of the intangible cultural heritage and dialogue, thus reflecting cultural diversity worldwide and testifying to human creativity.'

provide the very instruments and set up precisely those actions that allow the intangible cultural heritage to continue to develop. The policy is thus about creating preconditions. The authority can, however, assist, guide and support groups and communities in transmitting intangible cultural heritage. The Flemish authority safeguards ICH by giving heritage communities opportunities to transmit the ICH. (…) The emphasis is therefore not so much on *the element* of intangible cultural heritage, but on the system as a whole; the methodology of the transmission and *the process*.' (Van Den Broucke 2012: 160)

The Vision Paper thus signalled the start of an innovating ICH policy, in which the heritage communities[12] are central and supported in their efforts to recognise, identify, develop, transmit and share ICH. The Flemish policy has introduced quality monitoring, moderation and guidance for safeguarding practices by establishing a network of support of professional heritage organisations, and the creation of the website and database www.immaterieelerfgoed.be (cfr. 3), among other things. This policy-vision and practice of safeguarding ICH, which was gradually rolled out in Flanders in the last decade, also worked inspiringly within international contexts over the years.

2.2. Inventorying ICH in Flanders

[Fig 2 near here] From the start of the Flemish Inventory for Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2008, the Flemish government opted for a preliminary *ad hoc* regulation with criteria that are closely aligned with the approach of the UNESCO Representative List. The recommendation must meet the definition of ICH; there must be consensus within the cultural-heritage community to place the element in the inventory[13]; and the community needs to demonstrate by measures that are and will be set up as to how it actively participates in safeguarding and transmitting the ICH. Complementary to this, the Flemish cultural-heritage policy emphasis on the requisite of support by a subsidised cultural-heritage organisation. (Van den Broucke 2012: 182)

Since 2010, the Flemish policy places the emphasis, as put forward, very explicitly on the involvement of the heritage communities and consequently extends this within the

[12] One of the innovations in 21st-century Flemish tangible and intangible heritage policy is the notion of a 'heritage community'. The concept is inspired by and adopted from the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society. In the most recent version of the Flemish Cultural Heritage Act (2012) a heritage community is defined as '*a community that consists of organizations and/or individuals who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations*.' It is operationalised in heritage policy by connecting specific, subsidised or specialised anchor organisations working around a theme or e.g. a type of intangible cultural heritage and the whole network ('heritage community') of organisations, institutions, groups and other actors working with the same heritage. Half a decade of working with these formulas and forms of collaboration shows great potential. The Flemish Vision paper about safeguarding intangible cultural heritage advances the notion of heritage community to address the challenges presented in the 2003 UNESCO convention and its operational directives. It is integrated in the general cultural heritage policy with the formula of calling for strategic plans for several years and subsidising the positively advised plans.

[13] The choice for the all-or-nothing identification of a tradition, custom or usage as intangible cultural heritage is the responsibility of the community, group and even involved individuals. In addition, it is asked to strive for a consensus in the identifying and recognising of intangible cultural heritage. Consensus ought to be sought out within the heritage community. (See definition of ICH in the Flemish Policy, and the notion of Consensus , Vision Paper: 157).

inventorying process of ICH, both in relation to the Flemish Inventory as well as the Platform www.immaterieelerfgoed.be. The heritage communities are the most important and central actors in identifying, inventorying and safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage. The instruments that the Flemish Community brings into play must thus make this bottom-up approach possible. In addition to the Flemish Inventory, the Flemish Government has set up the digital database and website www.immaterieelerfgoed.be in 2012, which not only inventories elements of ICH, but also the methodologies used to transmit it and the communities involved. In keeping up with the definition of ICH and the emphasis on the participation of ICH-communities, the registration in the database is done by the heritage communities themselves. (Vision Paper 2012: 170).

2.3 Inventorying ICH and Diversity in Flanders

For the Inventory of intangible cultural heritage in Flanders, which has been expanding since 2008, the realisation of a diverse inventory has not been presented as an explicit objective or task.[14] As already mentioned, the primary efforts are for making intangible cultural heritage in Flanders visible and the qualitative facilitating thereof, on the initiative of the heritage communities. Diversity, however, is also in Flanders a key concept in the policy for intangible cultural heritage. Cultural diversity does indeed feature as a central role in the objectives and initiatives elucidated in the Vision Paper of 2010, by analogy with the UNESCO Convention for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (2003) (Vision Paper 2012: 152).

2.4 An ICH Network in Flanders

[Fig 3 near here] The past 10 years, various subsidised cultural-heritage organisations gradually developed an ICH-practice, under the impulse of the ICH policy in Flanders. In 2013, the ICH-'coordinating network' was established as a cooperative entity around the Platform. The network supports the various ICH-domains in a coordinated and structured collaboration and works throughout the region of Flanders. At the local level, this network cooperates daily and structurally with the so-called Cultural Heritage Cells, units who operate in a city or in a cluster of towns and villages, and have worked on ICH since the start of the ICH-policy in Flanders[15]. Furthermore, the ICH coordinating network also engages with other subsectors in setting up ICH-practices throughout Flanders: for example museums, archives ... This crossing, bi-dimensional (thematic—geographic) network has proven to be a powerful model of cultural brokerage for the support of ICH-communities in the field.

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[14] http://www.kunstenenerfgoed.be/nl/wat-doen-we/immaterieel-cultureel-erfgoed/opname-de-inventaris-vlaanderen (retreived April 10, 2017).

[15] A **cultural heritage cell** aim is to raise awareness about the tangible and intangible heritage in their region. A heritage cell is a local interface that encourages sharing and pooling information and expertise, stimulates innovation and collaborations between holders of collections, associations of volunteers and/or communities and groups that wish to safeguard intangible cultural heritage. It also helps to set up new projects and tries to draw the public's interest and – where possible – include inhabitants and visitors in the projects it sets up. In the first years of the inventarisation of ICH in Flanders (2008) the cultural heritage cells had a big role in the support of ICH-communities towards an application for the Flemish Inventory for Intangible Cultural Heritage. (Casteleyn, Janssens, Neyrinck 2014: 388-389)

The partners of the **ICH coordinating network** (for the period 2012-2018) are CAG, ETWIE, LECA, Het Firmament, Resonant, FARO and tapis plein[16]. The goal of the network is to assist and monitor the different ICH-domains as a coordinated network of expertise and support. Each partner organisation applies its specific expertise in addressing global needs regarding ICH, and supports the digital Platform and its operation[17]. The network regularly assembles to follow-up on general network developments, to delegate tasks, collaborate in the support of ICH-communities, as well as follow-up on the digital Platform. Each of the domain partners additionally organises fora per ICH-domain for exchange in the broader heritage field, in which collaboration and sharing of experience and knowledge are key. Tapis plein in turn takes on a transversal coordinating role for (the development of) the broad ICH-network in Flanders, as a sort of hub.[18] This organisation develops and implements network-enhancing and methodologically orientated initiatives. Tapis plein stimulates and assists heritage actors in Flanders with their ICH-practice, and provides tools and methods for safeguarding ICH, inspiring formats and expertise, and interesting or educational practices. Tapis plein, commissioned by the Flemish Government, also takes on the moderation of the digital Platform www.immaterieelerfgoed.be (cfr. 3, p…) The partners in the ICH-coordinating network also actively integrate the ICH Platform in their practice. For each of these organisations, inventorying ICH thus is an integrated part of a broader support in safeguarding ICH.

3. An instrument for digital inventorying intangible cultural heritage: www.immaterieelerfgoed.be

[Fig 4 near here] In this section we zoom in on the implementation and operation of the digital medium that was developed for the inventorying of ICH in Flanders, following up the Vision Paper of 2010: the Platform www.immaterieelergoed.be. In 2012, tapis plein took on the task from the Flemish Government to host the new database and website for ICH. From the beginning, the Minister of Culture, sharply delineated the framework and the goals for this so-called Platform. The Flemish Government initiated the Platform with the goal of a general and uniform approach for the inventorying and documenting of ICH in Flanders. The Platform was expected to have an impact on the diversity of the Flemish inventory and have a positive effect on the safeguarding of ICH. As a point of reference, the Minister turned to the UNESCO Convention of 2003: participation of the communities in the inventory process, the safeguarding of the ICH and the development of a network were at the top of the list (Vision Paper 2012: 170-171). As a model for the

[16] Overview organisations: * Faro. Vlaams steunpunt voor cultureel erfgoed vzw – www.faronet.be * Het Firmament, Expertisecentrum voor het erfgoed van de podiumkunsten – www.hetfirmament.be * Het Firmament, Expertisecentrum voor het erfgoed van de podiumkunsten – www.hetfirmament.be * Landelijk Expertisecentrum voor Cultuur van Alledag (LECA) – www.lecavzw.be * Expertisecentrum voor Technisch, Wetenschappelijk en Industrieel Erfgoed vzw (ETWIE) – www.etwie.be * Centrum Agrarische Geschiedenis (CAG) – www.cagnet.be * Resonant vzw – www.muzikaalerfgoed.be * tapis plein vzw, Expertisecentrum erfgoedparticipatie –www.tapisplein.be.

[17] The Platform www.immaterieelerfgoed.be is being realised in close collaboration with the ICE-coordination network. http://www.immaterieelerfgoed.be/topmenu/colofon (retrieved April 10, 2017)

[18] Tapis plein is recognized and supported by the Flemish Government as a Centre of Expertise for heritage participation & ICH (2012-2018) within the Cultural Heritage Decree of 2012.

database, a Collective-Access database with an interactive website in Drupal (phase 1: 2012-2014) was chosen[19], and in a second phase with a website in Pawtucket (phase 2: 2015-…) (Janssens 2012: 53).

For tapis plein, this project represented a challenge in which we were happy to engage. First of all, because of the participatory approach of the ICH policy in general and the digital Platform in particular. It was also an opportunity to make a difference on the level of image forming, the safeguarding of ICH and the evolvement of a learning and sharing network. Moreover, it was pioneering work on an international level, because the Platform was one of the early databases being set up in the framework of the UNESCO 2003 Convention. Aside from the ethnological and ethnographical inventories and mapping, and a few examples and experiments in places like Brazil[20], Canada[21], Portugal[22], and Scotland[23] (via a wiki formula), there was still rather little experience built up as to how the Convention could translate itself into the digital participatory inventorying of ICH (Jacobs 2011: 55-69).

3.1 A Database and Website for ICH in Flanders

[Fig 5 near here] Central to the Platform is the inventorying and documentation of ICH, the persons and organisations involved—from communities to professional heritage actors—and the safeguarding measures. The content of the database is collected, written and imported by one or more persons from the heritage community. Via input fields they are asked for, *inter alia*, a description of the ICH-element—from the current practice and not from a historical perspective—links with 'ICH domains', socio-cultural meaning ... In addition, they are also asked for their actual safeguarding practice. Which actions are they undertaking at the level of documentation, research, raising awareness and transmission? And which actions are they planning for on the basis of identified needs? The inventory process is thus coupled to an increasing awareness of the community for its heritage practice. This awareness is even presented as a precondition for the inventorying in the database. Through the inventory process of various aspects in relation to ICH and by making the information available for consultation online, the Platform

[19] The inventorying of ICH using information technology signified an experimental approach in 2011. Because the community-based aspect and bottom-up approach are important issues as well, the Department of Culture, Youth, Sport and Media joined forces with the Agency for Arts and Heritage, FARO (Flemish Interface Centre for Cultural Heritage), PACKED (NGO) and tapis plein (NGO) to implement this project. In this constellation, partners from different angles brought together expertise in the areas of networking, participatory processes, knowledge sharing, digitisation and ICH. By setting up a user group that all professional actors working on ICH in Flanders could join, a network for this interactive website with database was created. Open-source applications were chosen in order to increase opportunities for sharing experiences as well as the tool itself. The platform consists of an interactive website linked to a powerful database, based on open-source software such as the collections management system Collective Access, Drupal (website CMSf) and Apache Solr (a powerful search platform). (Janssens 2013: 96)

[20] http://portal.iphan.gov.br (retrieved April 10, 2017)

[21] http://www.mun.ca/ich/inventory/ (retrieved April 10, 2017) / www.ethnologie.chaire.ulaval.ca (retrieved April 10, 2017)

[22] http://www.matrizpci.dgpc.pt (retrieved April 10, 2017)

[23] http://www.ichscotland.org (retrieved April 10, 2017) (before: http://www.ichscotlandwiki.org)

stimulates the exchange of experience and interaction within the broad network of professionals and heritage communities.

In 2013, in a subsequent step, the Flemish Inventory was also integrated within the digital Platform. In order to be taken into consideration for recognition (by the Minister of Culture) on the Inventory, the requesting community must first of all be registered in the database, and must describe the element, community and safeguarding practice here. Likewise, the annual reporting occurs via the database. The integration of the Inventory was initiated by the Flemish Community and runs parallel to the increasing emphasis on the safeguarding practices and measures, initiated by the Vision Paper. This growing emphasis on safeguarding also comes to the fore in the practice of support of the heritage professionals and in the work of the Commission of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Communities that submit a request for the Inventory are expected to some degree to take on a role as ambassador at the level of safeguarding, and to share their experience with other communities. Meanwhile, the Platform makes their actions and safeguarding process digitally available.

3.2 What does the current state of affairs of the Platform teach us?

The Platform has been operating for 5 years now. Where do we stand at the level of the inventorying of intangible cultural heritage in Flanders? What does the input in de database teach us about the current tools and practices? And where do we see opportunities for improvement? In 2016, in collaboration with the ICH-coordinating network, we performed a SWOT analysis of the Platform as a tool. At the beginning of 2017, we also carried out a quantitative analysis of the current input, including the Flemish Inventory. These analyses bring out interesting (numerical) data that are to a large extent in accordance with our experiences and observations.

3.2.1. Current state of affairs: inventoried ICH and actors involved.

The Platform consists of three major pillars: WHAT (ICH elements), WHO (involved organisations and persons) and HOW (safeguarding measures). The analysis of these pillars provides us with relevant information about the current heritage practice. Within this section we shall leave aside the subject of safeguarding and primarily focus on an analysis of the inventoried heritage (WHAT)[24] and the actors involved (WHO)[25].

WHAT

[Fig 6 near here] At the beginning of 2017, there are 76 ICH-elements described in the database, amongst which are 45 elements that are enlisted in the official Inventory for Intangible Cultural Heritage in Flanders.

When we look at the links with the various ICH-domains within this total, we notice an inordinate presence of elements that fully fall under the category of domain 3—social practices—or have a link with it, namely 78,95%. This is followed by the crafts (domain 5: 21,05%), nature and universe (domain 4: 11,84%), performances (domain 2: 10,53%)

[24] http://www.immaterieelerfgoed.be/Browse/wat (retrieved January 9, 2017)

[25] http://www.immaterieelerfgoed.be/Browse/wie (retrieved January 9, 2017)

and oral practices (domain 1: 3,95%). If we examine only the Flemish Inventory, as part of the totality of input from the database, the abovementioned statements appear to manifest themselves even more patently. More than 85% of the elements fully fall under domain 3, or have a link with it. This is in contrast to only 22% for domain 5, and 18% for domain 4, and 6,5% for both domains 1 and 2.

Among the inventoried elements in the database, 38,16% have no specific local anchorage. About this heritage we can presume that it is present over the whole of the Flanders region. In addition to this, we see a rather parallel inventorying of elements per province. Only the provinces of Limburg and Flemish Brabant are out of synch. Regarding geographical distribution, we can indeed ultimately determine that only 8,77% of the ICH-elements thrive within an *urban* context (>100.000 citizens), more specifically in the provincial capitals of Leuven, Bruges, Ghent and Antwerp. Also, the superdiversity in society, at the moment mainly present in large cities but becoming more and more reality in society in general (Geldof 2016), is almost not reflected in the Platform. Only 4 of the 76 inventoried ICH-elements have an ethnic-cultural background.

WHO

Currently there are 129 'actors' described in the database of the Platform with a link to ICH. The term 'actors' is interpreted broadly. It can, for example, be ICH practitioners, individuals or associations, researchers, professional heritage organisations, and so forth. Amongst the 129 registered actors, we see in 2017 that 48,06% are volunteers (associations and individuals), 27,9% professional heritage organisations and 23,25% are professional organisations that are not subsidised under the cultural heritage decree (i.e. local administrations, socio-cultural associations, etc.).

3.2.2 Current state of affairs: the Platform after 5 years of Operation

With the Platform, the Flemish government extended the participatory approach also to a digital level. A progressive concept, but in practice it quickly became clear that the bottom-up approach, in combination with the current instruments and target groups involved, demanded a moderated and slow process, supported by professional heritage organisations. The communities are indeed challenged in many ways. Safeguarding demands an active approach focused on the current and future practice. Furthermore, how they are asked to describe the element from a current perspective challenges them. This vision, approach and accompanying terminology appeared to be a major mental shift, as much for professional heritage actors. In addition to this, the process of entering content into the database also appeared to be a threshold for many communities. Through the years, experience has been built up, guidance has been fine-tuned—individually and via workshops—but these partial aspects have, without a doubt, had an impact upon the inventory process. After the first years of operation of the digital Platform we see various challenges.

We consider a central online spot for ICH in Flanders as a considerable potency. The demand for visibility for ICH remains and the potentially large public offers opportunities to valorise the role as a central digital platform. However, at the same time, we have determined that there is a need for the adjusting and further refinement of the Platform's

profile. In the Platform, various objectives currently come together—inventorying, quality monitoring, practice guidance, exchange of experience …- and various target groups are addressed (heritage communities and volunteers, professionals, public, press, and so forth). Consequently the further differentiation and prioritising of the different objectives and target groups is high on the agenda 5 years after the launching of the instrument.

[Fig 7 near here] Despite the opportunities to realise a socially very wide impact with the Platform, up until now the circle of users involved remains rather limited. As cited, it is presumed from the users to already deploy and also document safeguarding measures when entering content on the element into the database. In other words: it is presumed to already have developed a comprehensive ICH-practice. This process naturally causes delay for the process of broad identification and inventorying of the ICH in Flanders. The first step of the inventory process could though also be a simple registration of ICH. After all, it is the intention of the ICH policy to raise awareness about ICH, as well as possible, within various potential ICH communities. This process can already start with the identification and understanding of the notion of/as ICH. Once started with an initial registration of ICH in the database, the involved parties can gradually participate in the Platform by building up experience in an ICH-practice and in time further elaborating and completing the online description.

Finally, the need for an update and optimisation of the IT infrastructure *and* communications became apparent. Low-threshold digital participation, and clearer language, guiding and input fields are the keys here. The current IT-developments already offer many opportunities for taking on this challenge.

3.3 A General Evaluation

It was progressive and bold choices a decade ago from the Flemish Community to broadly implement the principles from the UNESCO Convention within the ICH policy in general as well as in the inventorying process of ICH in Flanders (participative, bottom-up, digital, etc.). It made experimentation and experience building regarding ICH work in the spirit of the Convention possible within the region, and with this pioneering role the government could inspire others in the international networks around the Convention. But, how can the choices and implementation of the ICH policy, the developments in the field and the effects on the practice in the previous years be evaluated in the light of the objectives that are presented as priority by the Convention and the Flemish ICH policy?

From the experience garnered since 2008 with the Inventory for ICH in Flanders a number of lacunae have as well come to the surface. After five years of inventory operations (2008-2012) it was evaluated, for example, by the authorised committee in 2012 that the Inventory appears thus far to be very limited to a modest number of so-called usual suspects, primarily rural traditions and social events and festivities. The heritage communities behind this heritage practices apparently recognise themselves more easily than others in the current heritage discourse. This should come as no surprise, as there are rarely unknowns. Usually these communities are already entrusted with the

professional cultural-heritage sector for years and the existing networks, and they thus grew with the evolutions in policy and discourse. To break out of this circle of usual suspects appears to be a monumental challenge in the praxis in Flanders.

The Platform that was developed in 2012 was hoped to become a tool that could contribute to a further expansion of the inventorying by way of its digital bottom-up approach. Again, after 5 years of operations (2012-2016), we evaluate that the potential of this intent has not been exploited to the full, due to different reasons mentioned above. (cfr. 3.2.2.) Although in Flanders there are various ICH practices, the threshold to register on the platform and identify the practice as an ICH practice still appears to be (too) great. The step towards conscious safeguarding lies even further down the road and, as mentioned, takes time and in that way delays the inventorying process at the moment. More contemporary, urban, culturally diverse and not much (formal/in associations) organised ICH practices are currently less actively involved with the ICH network and operations. A consequence is that the ICH policy at present does not reflect the societal and cultural diversity of society.

3.4 #IKSCHRIJFGESCHIEDENIS[26], an initial step in the diverse direction?

[Fig 8 near here] The image of ICH that gradually grows through bottom-up inventorying, does not automatically offer a reflection of the living (super)diversity of cultural traditions and practices in our society: from old and young, from near and afar, the city to the suburbs, and all hybrids and multifaceted combinations that come with it. The ICH that lives in Flanders is without a doubt much broader and diverse then what is inventoried in a bottom-up manner by the existing instruments. However, what does not come about on its own, one can naturally also provide a helping hand through heritage work. Here, the role of mediators, or ICH 'brokers' comes into play (Jacobs, Neyrinck, Van der Zeijden, 2014). On our own initiative and based upon the experience of practice, we started experimenting in the field since 2015 with the Platform as a response to the illustrated challenges. We set up '#ikschrijfgeschiedenis' as a large-scale public action regarding the objective of the diversification and actualisation of inventoried ICH in Flanders.

#ikschrijfgeschiedenis focuses on the richness and diversity of the living traditions, (practical) knowledge and usages and wants to provide a current, vibrant and diverse image of the multitude of ICH in Flanders. The action departs from an individual approach (the 'ik/I' in 'Ikschrijfgeschiedenis'): it places people in the spotlight who, with heart and soul, participate in and transmit traditions and techniques, up front and behind the scenes, in any manner possible and speaks to them about their passion. With their actions, small and large, each one contributes to the transmission of ICH.

#ikschrijfgeschiedenis is based on the idea that ICH has a place in everyone's life. It calls for everyone to send in a photo or short film. This can be done via a simple entry form on www.ikschrijfgeschiedenis.be or via social media with #ikschrijfgeschiedenis. Both the procedure and the language usage are consciously kept at a lower threshold. In addition, we also engaged in approaching people proactive regarding their heritage, and collaborated with actors in and outside the heritage sector as regards to communication.

[26] '#Iwritehistory'

[Fig 9 near here] The low-threshold approach already led to a total of 550 submissions in 2016[27]. In regard to the representation of the different ICH-domains, we see an increase in the inventorying of primarily domains 4 and 5 with respectively 20% and 30% more submissions (in contrast to 11,84% and 21,05% in the database of the Platform). The reflection of ethno-cultural and societal diversity, however, remains a challenge here. The lowering of the communicative and technical threshold appears to be a step in the right direction, but not yet sufficient as the answer to all challenges when it comes to inventorying ICH. More substantial policy-based and proactive initiatives seem to be in order to broaden the process of inventorying and diversification. The acquired experimental experience in this action can already be optimally implemented in the formation of adjusted tools and media.

4. A Future Vision for the Inventorying of ICH in Flanders

4.1 Updating the ICH Policy in Flanders

The most recent years (2015-2016) in Flanders—after a first decade of experiences with the implementation of the 2003 Convention—there has been intensively evaluated and reflected on an update of the ICH policy, in a dialogue with heritage workers and organisations, ICH communities, experts, committee members, policy workers, and so forth. And recently, in 2017, Minister of Culture Sven Gatz announced a global update of the ICH policy. The ICH-policy vision from 2010 shall be updated in line with the general 'Conceptnota Cultureel Erfgoed', which was approved by the Flemish Government in 2016 as a long-term vision for heritage policy. Naturally the update will also be in line with the accumulated experiences and evaluations such as have been explained above.

The Flemish cultural-heritage policy wants to pay (more) attention to heritage in all of its manifestations and from all societal echelons, and places 'safeguarding a varied presence of cultural heritage', representing the diversity in society, high on the agenda. From this line of policy the Flemish Community consequently also strives for the broadening and deepening of the inventorying of ICH in Flanders. The necessary update of the ICH policy is foreseen for 2017. Moreover, in 2017, the Flemish Community is preparing its (second) contribution in the context of the 6th annual reporting as a member state of the UNESCO 2003 Convention.[28]

Within the framework of the new cultural-heritage decree, which was also recently approved in Flanders (24 February 2017), the formulation of the 'Functions'[29] of heritage

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[27] http://www.ikschrijfgeschiedenis.be (retrieved January 9, 2017)

[28] 'Periodic Reporting' and the previous report form 2012: http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/state/belgium-BE?info=periodic-reporting#pr-2013-2013 (retreived April 12, 2017).

[29] The functions of heritage work are inspired by and constructed from the international museum definition of ICOM. These basic functions in the cultural-heritage decrees of 2008 and 2012 were broadened with a view towards other subsectors. In the Platform of Intangible Heritage, the safeguarding regulations are divided into five categories, which in part also are in agreement with the four basic functions: identification and documentation, research, communication and awareness, transmission and re-launching. In the renewed policy of Flanders the Functions were now adjusted to the current challenges of heritage operation, by which the summarised heritage tasks are valid for all sorts of heritage (tangible (including digital) and intangible). A Function in the Cultural heritage decree of 2017 is now defined as a basic task in

work is also adjusted. The heritage work on tangible as well as intangible heritage should henceforth also be better integrated in all (types) of cultural-heritage organisations that are active in the heritage sector: museums, archives, heritage libraries, mediating heritage organisations ... The work on ICH thereby also becomes henceforth (beginning in 2019) steadily more of a self-evident part of the cultural-heritage processes that *all* cultural-heritage organisations can maintain.
All of these policy developments and the general framework form opportunities for also re-drafting the processes regarding the inventory processes of ICH in Flanders in the coming years.

4.2. Ideas for a Future Vision for the work on ICH and inventorying: fuel for the future

> 'The new wording of the goal for the 2003 Convention must be changed from 'keeping an intangible cultural heritage from the past' to 'reconfiguring a past practice as a source of meaning, creativity, and know-how for the future. (…) Thus, intangible cultural heritage programmes are no longer an end point of practices of the past but the starting point for cultural innovations in plural societies.' (Arizpe, 2015: 98).

4.2.1. Upcoming & New Policy Frames

With the Conceptnota cultureel erfgoed, the ICH 2010 Vision Paper and the previous evaluations, there are already sturdy foundations to give form and content to the vision of ICH policy and inventorying in Flanders for the coming years. The general point of departures of ICH policy and inventorying undoubtedly can be further grafted on to the UNESCO 2003 Convention and the main strengths from the Vision Paper of 2010 with the safeguarding of ICH by communities as central, supported by the policy and heritage sector. In the meantime, the experiences and insights on working with ICH have also grown and matured. In the framework of inventorying, new and different instruments are necessary in order to be able to conduct an up-to-date and focused ICH policy. These new instruments must be in line with the needs of dynamic ICH inventories, lowering the threshold (via simplification, but also via support and education, awareness raising and communication); increased societal visibility and awareness regarding ICH; the implementation of a set of instruments for Urgent Safeguarding policy (≈ art17 UNESCO), and the implementation of a framework for good or Best Safeguarding Practices (≈ art 18 UNESCO 2003); the elaboration and establishing of ethical principles regarding all of these instruments;… Perhaps there is also an opportunity for the establishment of a Living Human Treasures programme in an ICH framework for individual ICH knowledge and master-student transmission, etc.

4.2.2. A Pilot for ICH in Assessment of Significance

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cultural-heritage operation, in the care for and interaction with cultural heritage. The five functions encompass all identified heritage tasks with attention to a tangible and intangible approach of the heritage. It concerns the following functions: Recognition and collection, Conservation and safeguarding, Research, Presentation and guidance, Participation

An additional, interesting opportunity that presents itself is the interest and efforts that currently are being developed in Flanders[30] regarding 'assessment methods of significance' for heritage[31]. Heritage Values and the assessment of significance have made an entrance from Australia (Burra Charter, Significance 2.0, …) and the Anglo-Saxon world and are slowly reaching Flanders. There is, however, so far internationally little experience and research regarding assessment methods for ICH available. Tapis plein thus is taking the initiative to start a preliminary study of the existing methods as how these methods can be used as a basis for the experimental development and testing of an adjusted method for ICH. The pilot trajectory shall at the same time be able to provide input for the update of inventorying and assessment of heritage with respect to intangible cultural heritage, leading to the adaptation of the digital Platform (cf. in relation to input fields, etc.). This is challenging, exciting pioneering work and new experiences that we shall gladly share later with colleagues in the international ICH field.

4.2.3. ICH Brokerage & Proactive Approach

[Fig 10 near here] In order be able to realise identifying, collecting and assessing ICH in Flanders in all of its breadth and diversity, after a decade of praxis we are also convinced that we can no longer only rely on bottom-up participatory processes, as brought forth by the early ICH-policy since 2008—with the best intentions and extremely politically correct. On the basis of the previous first decade of ICH-policy practice, we have ultimately encountered and evaluated the fact that the Inventory processes in this manner remain too limited and experience a distorted influx. The premised 'safeguarding of a varied presence of intangible heritage' shall then also require a more proactive and mediated approach towards involving and working with diverse (possible) heritage communities, groups and individuals that exercise living practices with roots in the past, and that do not always spontaneously find the way and connection with the heritage practice and networks. ICH brokerage and a proactive approach will be critical success-factors for future elaboration in diversity (Jacobs, Neyrinck, Van Der Zeijden 2014).

4.2.4. ICH & Diversity

For the broadening and deepening of the Inventory for ICH in Flanders, a series of initiatives are also already formulated in the Conceptnota for further development (pp. 48-49). This has been positively welcomed in the ICH network. In order to realise the objectives, adaptation of the tools is necessary so that the current model and instrumentation regarding the inventorying of ICH (Platform and Inventory) receive a re-launch that can in an effective manner *on the one hand* inventory the breadth and diversity of ICH in Flanders, *and on the other hand* generate attention for good safeguarding practices. At tapis plein, we see a future in an inventory process with various layers, by which the broad and diverse identification of ICH offers an initial form

[30] http://www.kunstenenerfgoed.be/nl/pilootprojecten-waarderen-van-cultureel-erfgoed (retreived on April 12, 2017)

[31] More on value assessment for heritage? See general introduction via: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Values_(heritage); On the Burra Charter (Australia): http://australia.icomos.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Burra-Charter-2013-Adopted-31.10.2013.pdf ; On the Significance Method: https://www.arts.gov.au/sites/g/files/net1761/f/significance-2.0.pdf ; On 'Op de museale weegschaal': https://cultureelerfgoed.nl/publicaties/op-de-museale-weegschaal-collectiewaardering-in-zes-stappen; (retreived on April 12, 2017).

of inventorying. A number of other ICH and inventorying operations can plug into the process with other and supplementing partial objectives adding to the general goal of lively practices relating to (safeguarding) intangible heritage (safeguarding plans of ICH communities, inspiring good practice examples, urgent safeguarding, master-student register, and so forth).

[Fig 11 near here] We are making a plea to open up the thinking around ICH, and thus to approach it as diversely as possible. Often in current inventories easily recognisable elements are to be found, with elements of heritage that *support the self-image of one's own group* (Kurin: 2005: 70), often socially desirable and broadly supported traditional customs and festivals from nation states, or other specific traditions from minority cultural groups. This selection of elements not only impacts on the general image people have of ICH, but it also affects the formation of present-day and future heritage practices. Thus, processes of *Inventorying and Listing* risk resulting into a fossilising effect. This effect originates from the recognition given to the nomination files. It does not happen opportunely, or at least not from a collective expediency. On the contrary even, this effect seems to come about rather despite the explicit and formal mentions of the importance of cultural diversity or of the dynamic character of ICH in the *Convention* and national policies all over the world.
This potentially creates the contrary effect from what the intention of the entire ICH discourse and ICH policy development was: a striving towards a more shared understanding and exchange, and an enrichment of cultural diversity and human creativity. Therefore, we need to shift our focus from ICH-elements to be nominated, listed and 'recognised', to the value of ICH as a source of cultural diversity and as a guarantee for sustainable development in changing times. It is an approach of the living culture of ICH as a series of contextual solutions that people from all around the world have formulated over time in response to their social environments. In a global world where cultural practices and groups are interacting more than ever before, there are also more possible solutions than ever before, as the many elements can be collated and combined in various ways. We no longer see ICH as protecting the past inheritance of one group, but see it as a potential reservoir of human knowledge and know-how that we can draw upon for sustainable development—and thus progress—for all. With such an approach, a preservation-focused perspective shifts towards an open, transformative and development-orientated one. Such a development-orientated perspective brings means of safeguarding—from modernising, to cross-pollinating and intercultural learning and sharing—to the fore. By thinking in terms of connectivity, multiplicity and transformation in the 21st century, we can further realise the value of ICH as a source of cultural diversity and as a guarantee for sustainable development in changing times. (Neyrinck, *to be published* 2017)

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