



KREATIVITET OCH MÅNGFALD

Kulturarvs pedagogik för ett nytt decennium

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MANAGING DIVERSITY AND CREATING A NEW CULTURAL HERITAGE

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Cultural heritage is not something that is simply bestowed upon us. It is created through complex societal processes in which, ideally, all of us equally can partake. As our societies are becoming more culturally diversified, so is our cultural heritage. While some welcome these changes others tend to view the cultural heritage as being under threat. How can we mediate between these views, manage diversity and create a new cultural heritage? This is the subject of this paper.

Defining cultural heritage

Let us start by preliminary defining what is meant by cultural heritage. The meaning we assume is double and concerns both:

- identification, interpretation, maintenance, and preservation of physical heritage assets, and
- intangible aspects of heritage, such as traditional skills, cultures and languages, embedded in the lives and living conditions of local communities

This definition was supported by the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development (Stockholm, 1998) which also adopted the definition of culture as signifying: "not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs".

The Unesco Convention goes more into detail about safeguarding the intangible aspects of heritage. According to the Convention "intangible cultural heritage" is manifested inter alia in the following domains:

- oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;

- performing arts;
- social practices, rituals and festive events;
- knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
- traditional craftsmanship.

What is fundamental from my point of view is to admit that the intangible cultural heritage produced not just by historical actors from the past or from the present, but also by the actors living in our land and building the common future. The Unesco Convention conveys this fact in the following way

This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. (Unesco, MISC/2003/CLT/CH/14, Paragraph 17 October 2003).

Community dimension

Everyone who lives in a territory, belongs to an organisation or is connected to different networks, takes part in the production and reproduction of cultural heritage of this territory/organisation/network. But a phenomenon or an artefact which we at first glance would classify as originating from one specific region or country, might just as well have been invented somewhere else. Pasta – this ever so important part of Italian cultural heritage – but one example of this. For ethnocentric Europeans, who believe spaghetti is Italian (or crayfish Swedish), it should be interesting to learn that the first writings about the dry pasta used in Italy today came from Ziryāb (in arab زيرز), whose real name was Abū l-Hasan al-Ālī b. Nāfi (Iraq, 789 – Cordova, 857).

Like this happened in the past, we are – in fact – now building our future on diversity. The statistics and prognosis about EU population and immigration are very clear on this point. For example, research from 2008 concerning Germany predicted that in 2010, 50 per cent of the country's population under 40 years of age, and 60 per cent of all children and teenagers living in urban areas, would have a migrant background. It is self-evident that society's cultural offers need to be adjusted accordingly and for this reason it is now obligatory for German libraries to provide multicultural services (Hauke, P.; Busch, R. (ed.). *Brücken für Babylon: Interkulturelle Bibliotheksarbeit*. Bad Honnef: Bock-Herchen, 2008: 177).

Cultural diversity as fact and strategy

Cultural diversity basically means having to recognize and promote cultural pluralism in the broadest sense of the term. Yet equating human identity with cultural diversity equally means having to recognize that the very concept of diversity itself involves the presence of unity, without which diversity itself would merely amount to multiplicity.

As suggested in the quotation above, the concept of cultural diversity is a means to promote and recognise that culture is a multifaceted phenomenon. However, cultural diversity should also be perceived as a strategy to promote awareness, acknowledgement and implementation of diversity within institutions.

Human beings are different in age, social and national background, gender, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability as well as religious belief. By acknowledging diversity we also embrace the range of individual skills, educational qualifications, work experiences and backgrounds, languages and other relevant attributes and experiences which differentiate between individuals.

Potential ambiguity of the concept

But the connection between social progress and respect for diversity is neither automatic nor obvious. Diversity can both create cultural richness and be the breeding ground for exclusion and marginalization.

If diversity is a concept that is inclusive to all individuals, it will become very difficult to identify discrimination practices [...]. Diversity studies would then only reach the reductionistic conclusion that 'everyone is different' and, if this conclusion is accepted, the concept of diversity may become "nothing more than a benign, meaningless concept" (Nkomo, "Identities and the complexity of diversity" in Jackson, S. E and Ruderman M. N (eds) (1995) *Diversity in work teams*. Washington DC: American Psychological Association: 248.

Ambiguous presumptions about diversity produce ambiguous strategies of diversity management like for example:

- Assimilation (to enforce adaptation to the customs and attitudes of the prevailing cultural majority)
- Capsulation (to segregate or seclude people in villages or quarters)
- Safeguarding (to transform human beings into protected species, like American Indians)

Cultural diversity does not presuppose a widened participation in the creation of cultural heritage. However, cultural diversity *legitimizes* the widening of such participation. In this regard, the distribution of the power to create, recreate and legitimate cultural heritage is vital and can be exemplified by the following examples of how the occidental "nose" has been culturally constructed throughout history: In ancient Rome and 18th century Paris, through the promotion of public policies of personal and public hygiene (Vitruvius, *Architectus sit medicus*; Jean-Noël Hallé, *Mapping the smells of Paris and of different illness in 1790*). In modern times, by the discovery of pathogenic microorganisms and their production of smell. And finally, today, by local and global rules of etiquette and by all those with power to create the Western European cultural heritage of scenting.

By introducing a power relation dimension and, in particular, the right and freedom of access to existing cultural opportunities and of individual cultural expression, Unesco's general principles make it possible to look at these processes in a more realistic and democratic way.

For example, The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (UNESCO General Conference, Paris, 2 November 2001) states that:

[...] All persons have therefore the right to express themselves and to create and disseminate their work in the language of their choice, and particularly in their mother tongue; all persons

are entitled to quality education and training that fully respect their cultural identity; and all persons have the right to participate in the cultural life of their choice and conduct their own cultural practices, subject to respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (Article 5 - Cultural rights as an enabling environment for cultural diversity).

and in the article about the freedom of expression.

Freedom of expression, media pluralism, multilingualism, equal access to art and to scientific and technological knowledge, including in digital form, and the possibility for all cultures to have access to the means of expression and dissemination are the guarantees of cultural diversity (Article 6).

The only thing which needs to be stressed here is that the rights and freedom of expression is not just for artists, intellectuals, producers of material cultural goods, but for everybody producing... scent.

Building the new cultural heritage through cultural infrastructures

Managing diversity and creating a new cultural heritage requires comprehensive approaches. What is needed is a complex set of measures, the outcome of which will increase employability of diverse labour force and citizenship. However, deliberate efforts are necessary to avoid turning a vulnerable group into an underclass group.

The intercultural city

If we were to envision a city striving to combat the above mentioned scenario, what would that city be like? The intercultural city has a diverse population including people with different nationalities, origins, languages or religions/beliefs. The city officials publicly advocate respect for diversity and a pluralistic city identity. Moreover, the city actively combats prejudice and discrimination and ensures equal opportunities for all by adapting its governance structures, institutions and services to the needs of a diverse population. In partnership with the business sector, civil society and public service professionals, the intercultural city develops a range of policies and actions to encourage greater mixing and interaction between diverse groups.

Building the new cultural heritage in the workplace

The workplace has always been a focal point for the creation of cultural heritage. The process of creating cultural heritage in the workplace can happen both through what Hattie Hill Enterprises describes as an "inclusive process of appreciating what individuals with different backgrounds bring to the organisation" (Hattie Hill Enterprises, Inc.), and through innovative products and processes, which interpret culture and its values as well as update them.

Diversity management also affects several fields of the workplace, for example recruitment, interviewing, disciplinary actions, rules of conduct, dress codes, perceptions of time, work procedures, motivation for professional development, counselling, work schedule, and the prevailing role of women.

Taken together, a commitment to diversity management affects the skills developed by the personnel (how many languages that are spoken by the staff, for instance). In addition to this, a multicultural approach enhances the organisation's capability to promote networking and

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co-operational relations between official authorities and foreign institutions. Finally, it is important to submit each cultural infrastructure to evaluation, based on criteria capable of showing the variety of fields and devices, thus making it possible for new target groups to be addressed by the cultural services and opportunities.

The cultural heritage we are building for the future have to be open to the global world and intercultural thinking. By deliberately managing diversity in a manner which is respectful to the differences discussed in this paper, stronger, safer and more democratic societies will be possible.