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**Picturing Intangible Heritage: Challenge for Visual Anthropology
Vision of an Intangible Heritage Media Institute**

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Picturing Intangible Heritage: Challenge for Visual Anthropology. Vision of an Intangible Heritage Media Institute

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ABSTRACT: Those cultural phenomena that UNESCO has declared Intangible Heritage do not exist *as such* – they need to be mediated to come into being. Naturally, Intangible Heritage is mediated by humans acting as mediums. Audiovisual means, however, enable cultural expressions to transcend space and time. Visual Anthropology is the academic discipline that deals with the many and various processes of picturing culture. It challenges their diverse epistemological assumptions and has constructed its own framework of questions pertaining to “why to” and “how to” mediate culture with audiovisual means. In this article I try to develop a special approach for picturing Intangible Heritage. The basic ideas derive their epistemological substantiation from contemporary Visual Anthropology. However, they go a step further by adapting some thoughts and applying them to the problem while taking into account new technical means such as the internet. Key ideas for this visionary undertaking are multivocality and multisitedness, empowerment and experiment, cooperation and co-production.

1. MASTERPIECES OF THE ORAL AND INTANGIBLE HERITAGE OF HUMANITY

The Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage¹ was created by UNESCO's general conference in 1997.² Subsequently the proclamations of 2001, 2003 and 2005 resulted in a list of 90 outstanding cultural traditions. The list is to be augmented in summer 2009. UNESCO Intangible Heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural Heritage. This Intangible Heritage 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. The purposes of the Intangible Heritage convention are: (a) to safeguard the Intangible Heritage; (b) to ensure respect for the Intangible Heritage of the communities, groups and individuals concerned; (c) to raise awareness at the local, national and international levels of the importance of the Intangible Heritage, and of ensuring mutual appreciation thereof; (d) to provide for international cooperation and assistance. The proclamations main objectives were:

to raise awareness on the importance of the Oral and Intangible Heritage and the need to safeguard it

to evaluate and list the worlds Oral and Intangible Heritage

¹ In the following I will refer to these phenomena simply as “Intangible Heritage”

² For this section see UNESCO 2006: Brochure on the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. See also: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=home> (last visited: March 2009)

to encourage countries to establish national inventories and to take legal and administrative measures for the protection of their Oral and Intangible Heritage

to promote the participation of traditional artists and local practitioners in identifying and revitalizing their Intangible Heritage

to raise awareness at the local, national and international levels of the importance of the Intangible Heritage, therefore ensuring mutual appreciation

to provide for international cooperation and assistance³

Originally the depository of this heritage is the human mind, the human body being the main instrument for its enactment, or – literally – embodiment. The knowledge and skills are often shared within a community, and manifestations of Intangible Heritage are often performed collectively. Many elements of the Intangible Heritage are endangered, due to effects of globalization, uniformization policies, and lack of means, appreciation and understanding which – taken together – may lead to the erosion of functions and values of such elements and to lack of interest among the younger generations.⁴

Culture “as such” does not exist, there are only representations of culture. Since the proclamation aims at raising awareness for Intangible Heritage not only at local, but also at national and international levels, it is evident that Intangible Heritage needs to be mediated in other forms than by human mediums, audiovisual media being the most adequate form. Thus, the Intangible Heritage proclamation presents several valuable chances both for anthropological research and its audiovisual adaptation – which is the main focus of Visual Anthropology. After taking a brief look at what audiovisual media on Intangible Heritage can be found today, I would like to turn to two questions that are of particular interest to me in this context. Firstly: what are the specific requirements for picturing Intangible Heritage? Secondly: what can Visual Anthropology contribute to these processes?

2. INTANGIBLE HERITAGE MEDIA – WHAT IS TO BE FOUND NOW?

2.1. *Internet*

By googling key words on the internet such as “Intangible Heritage” or “Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” or even “Intangible Heritage Media” one will most likely be guided to the Intangible Heritage section on the UNESCO website. It’s relatively difficult to navigate through the many different layers of the UNESCO site and finding audiovisual media on Intangible Heritage turns out to be impossible – there is none. There are documentaries and educational programs listed on the UNESCO media library page, but there is no section for media on Intangible Heritage.⁵ By searching further, one may get to the ACCU, the Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO. The ACCU is a non-profit organization for UNESCO regional activities in Asia and the Pacific, working for the promotion of mutual understanding and cultural cooperation among peoples in the region.⁶ Today ACCU is probably the only institution that has at least a small number of Intangible Heritage media freely available online for download. However, the quality of the content is often “amateurish”, and while most listed cultural traditions do not come with any audiovisual content, the ones who do are represented by one short video. All audiovisual content on this site has been produced by the Japanese broadcaster NHK.⁷ Where else can media on Intangible Heritage be found? YouTube is by far the largest video archive on the internet. Searching for the above mentioned key words results in finding about 250 video clips that deal with Intangible Heritage. By looking further, one may eventually get to a small section containing media on Intangible Heritage on the relatively new Vis.Wiki platform, an audiovisual version of wikipedia.⁸ In April 2009, several dozen short amateur videos as well as parts of related TV news programs were available for a live stream.

³ c.f.: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00022> (last visited: March 2009)

⁴ <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?pg=00002> (last visited: March 2009)

⁵ <http://creativecontent.unesco.org/media-library/> (last visited April 2009)

⁶ <http://www.accu.or.jp/jp/en/index.html> (last visited April 2009)

⁷ <http://www.accu.or.jp/ich/en/arts/arts1.html> (last visited April 2009)

⁸ http://viswiki.com/en/Intangible_Cultural_Heritage (last visited April 2009)

Neither YouTube nor Vis.Wiki created an alphabetical or/and thematical order. If one knew exactly what to look for, there might be a chance to find material on a specific Intangible Heritage. However, to gain an overview of existing Intangible Heritage media is entirely impossible because there exists no systematic order. There are other, even smaller sites and interest groups on the internet dealing with special Intangible Heritage issues. To list all of them here would take too much time. What I wanted to show is that trying to find audiovisual material on Intangible Heritage turns out to be rather unsatisfying. A few first conclusions can be drawn:

1. Generally speaking: there are hundreds of millions of websites on the internet. To succeed in finding specific information they must be found easily. Right now, there is no easy to find, specific portal for Intangible Heritage media on the internet.

2. If audiovisual content on Intangible Heritage can be found at all, for instance on the above indicated sites, the material consists mostly of short video clips that are seldom more than a few minutes long. Often these clips are composed of video footage by amateurs who witnessed and filmed a cultural performance. Ethnographic expertise on the cultural performances shown, filmic quality, or artistic value are rather low.

3. Sometimes parts of TV news programs on Intangible Heritage can be found online, for instance on YouTube or Vis.Wiki. While these programs may be more “professional” in terms of basic production value, they will most likely be biased by the conventions of highly standardized television narrative or instrumentalized by political interests. Feature length and more carefully produced 30 to 60 minute long documentaries on Intangible Heritage could, in entire length, not be found anywhere on the internet to be watched or downloaded. However, such films do exist and are being produced for broadcast.

2.2 Television

Television is still the most widespread and most dominant medium of our time (cf. Plake 2004). It's therefore necessary to look at audiovisual programs on Intangible Heritage that have been produced especially for television. I have constantly been doing research on the production of such programs in Germany and France since 2003 and will therefore focus on the situation in these two countries.

Public television in Germany has the obligation to inform, entertain and educate and even though Germany has not yet ratified the proclamation, more than a dozen feature length films on Intangible Heritage have been produced and aired here since 2004. Among the twenty or so German public TV channels, SWR was involved in a series on Intangible Heritage between 2003 and 2005. SWR is a regional channel that covers Southwestern Germany while contributing programs to the federally structured first national program ARD. Between 2004 and 2005 SWR, together with the “Bavarian Film and TV Fund” (FFF) funded three films on Intangible Heritage in Asia and South America. They were produced by “filmquadrat”⁹, a small production company in Munich. The series came to a quick end, however, due to a lack of ongoing financing and because SWR already produces a rather expensive series on the (tangible) UNESCO World Heritage and did not want to get involved into a project of similar size again.¹⁰ Another series of nonfictional films on Intangible Heritage is produced since 2007 by “filmhouse”, a small production company based in Berlin.¹¹ Filmhouse has so far created a dozen 30 minute long documentaries on Intangible Heritage in Europe, America, Africa, Asia and the Pacific. The project is funded by the German/Swiss/Austrian channel 3sat and ZDF theaterkanal.¹² In France the situation is a bit different. Here, the Paris based production company ZED¹³ (ZOO Ethnographic Documentaries) produces a series on Intangible Heritage since 2005 called “Living Cultures Collection”. Partners are the private owned, largest and most popular French TV channel TF 1,

⁹ <http://www.filmquadrat.de/> (last visited April 2009). Filmquadrat has recently been divided into three new companies, one of them being fimquadrat.dok, the new company of the Intangible Heritage series producer, Thomas Wartmann: <http://www.filmquadrat-dok.de/> (last visited April 2009);

¹⁰ see: http://www.schaetze-der-welt.de/sdw_index.html (last visited April 2009)

¹¹ <http://www.filmhouse.org/de/> (last visited April 2009)

¹² Since theater performances make up a high percentage of Intangible Heritage, the ZDF theaterkanal (a public channel especially dedicated to theatre) got involved and is today a main partner for the series.

¹³ <http://www.zed.fr/> (last visited April 2009)

the Argentinian Ushuaia TV and Equator TV from the U.S. The French production house ZED is far better funded than the two smaller German production companies, their budget for one 52 minute “Living Cultures” documentary is an average of EUR 350.000,00 (cf. Ecran Total, No. 579, October 2005). Between 2005 and 2008 half a dozen films on Intangible Heritage have been produced.¹⁴ I know from personal communications with the CEO’s of both German production companies that funding for their series was, compared to ZED, rather poor and allowed an average of 14 days shooting on location. Even though ZED is considerably better funded, they too, spend only two to three weeks in the field.¹⁵ I also know from personal communication that none of the production companies have worked with anthropologists. Given their high budget, at least ZED could have employed anthropologists or even visual anthropologists before and during the production process to carry out an in depth on location research, guide the team while shooting and try to incorporate “local knowledge” into the narrative. This can not be done in two or three weeks. If really taken seriously, it would take several months¹⁶ To my knowledge a research of that kind never happened.¹⁷ In terms of production value (technical standards, filmic and editing quality) all three series comply with the standards of professional contemporary nonfictional television production and are frequently called “high gloss” TV documentaries.¹⁸ The ZED films, however, are clearly the most sophisticated productions if one looks at the international marketability. The narrative form of all of these Intangible Heritage films derive from what British filmmaker John Grierson was the first to call “documentary” in the 1930s (Barsam 1992:89). Since then, powerful institutions such as the BBC, the Discovery Channel, or National Geographic have turned this narrative form into *the* global prototype for highly formatted, feature length, nonfictional TV programs. In all documentaries (mostly omnipotent) commentary is used to provide information. In most cases a plot is constructed into (a plotless) reality, extra added music enhances the drama and beautifying photography presents exciting and exotic, yet “clean” unknown worlds exclusively for a Western audience that is used to Western conventions of TV storytelling. As a result, the TV documentaries on Intangible Heritage that I am referring to here, come with a highly standardized narrative form that leaves very little room for e.g. an in depth coverage of personal stories, an adequate explanation of the intricate cultural techniques that are shown or a reflexive approach of the filmic process. The viewer is entertained by easily digested information, stunning photography, fast and elegant cuts and colorful pictures in high definition. Other dramaturgical tools such as direct cinema, observational cinema, cinéma vérité or other forms of more creative, unconventional experiments that, for instance, indigenous filmmakers or video artists have developed over the last five decades, are completely missing in existing Intangible Heritage TV productions.¹⁹

¹⁴ Both filmquadrat in Munich and ZED in Paris produced a documentary on the Kallawayá healing tradition in the Andes. Both films look almost exactly alike in terms of narrative form and camera/editing techniques.

¹⁵ I happened to be on site when ZED was filming a documentary on land diving in Pentecost, Vanuatu and on shark calling in Papua New Guinea. The film is called “Becoming a man in Melanesia” and has been broadcast all over the world. The land diving is however clearly NOT an initiation ritual., (see Lipp 2008).

¹⁶ This model of cooperation between filmmakers and Anthropologists was very successfully exercised in the famous British “Disappearing World” series that was started by Granada Television in the 1970’s and produced some of the best ethnographic TV documentaries ever (see Singer & Woodhead 1988).

¹⁷ However, it is only fair to mention that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to survive as a small production house or a freelancing filmmaker, producing exclusively “ethnographic” programs. More often than not, small production companies do not have, due to lack of funding, the means to do what could be done under ideal circumstances (see Ruby 2000: 34-38).

¹⁸ “High gloss” refers exclusively to technical and certain dramaturgical aspects of the film (excellent picture quality, use of dolly, jib and cranes, aerial photography, refined editing, compelling storytelling etc.) whilst e.g. ethnographic expertise (that only specialists are able to verify, anyway) is of much less concern. In other words: “high gloss” means international marketability.

¹⁹ Producers and filmmakers would certainly be willing to expand these standardized narrative forms. But more often than not they are either stopped by the fear to lose their commission or they are “convinced” by their commissioning editors to stick to “proven dramaturgical models”. To cut a long story short: the small and financially very vulnerable freelancing production companies need to fulfill the commissioning editors expectations to get funding. The commissioning editors themselves, on the other side, are often under pressure from their head of the department to deliver programs that generate high ratings – even though within the public TV systems ratings are not supposed to be the most important indicator for the quality of a program.

3. VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY

I would now like to take a brief look at the potential that Visual Anthropology has to offer in dealing with picturing Intangible Heritage. According to Marcus Banks (1992), it is neither the events that are shown in a filmic text nor the viewers' reaction to what is shown that constitutes the "ethnographicness" of a film.²⁰ In other words, films that picture exotic peoples doing exotic things that the viewers may categorize to be "ethnographic" are probably not what the discipline would consider "ethnographic" - unless the actual *discourse* supports the claim. And that is exactly the point that needs to be made here. The concepts visual anthropologists came up with have changed considerably over the last 50 years. Today Visual Anthropology is neither what Karl Heider (1976) put down in his milestone work "Ethnographic Film" (film and show the wholeness of events), or what Peter Fuchs (1988) demanded in the 1980's (unity of place, time, group and action, obedience to chronology of action, no staged scenes) nor even what Ruby (2000) has recently thought to be essential (reflexivity), even though reflexivity remains probably the most important concept for Visual Anthropology. Jay Ruby, a retired professor of Anthropology at Temple University in Philadelphia, has been exploring the relationship between cultures and pictures for the past thirty years. Ruby certainly does not represent Visual Anthropology in its entirety, but his influence on the discipline has been considerable. In his latest book "Picturing Culture" (Ruby 2000) he summarizes what he thinks lies at the heart of an anthropological cinema: "If ethnographic filmmakers were to produce films that tell the story of their field research, and the story of the people they studied, in a reflexive manner that permitted audiences to enjoy the cinematic illusion of verisimilitude without causing them to think they were seeing reality, then an anthropological cinema would be born" (Ruby 2000: 278). It can certainly be said that the reflexivity that Ruby every so often demands from anthropological cinema and that is derived mainly from Jean Rouch's vision of a *cinéma vérité*, was an extremely important discovery at its time and rightly had a huge impact on the discipline of Anthropology as a whole (and far beyond). *Cinéma vérité* has reshaped not only nonfictional filmmaking, but filmmaking as such (cf. Barsam 1992:300). Its influence on the *nouvelle vague* is but one example.²¹ From an anthropological perspective it seems safe to say that the positivist assumption that an objective reality is observable has come to an end. However, the need to picture culture remains and is, under global circumstances, probably greater than ever. Some of the old and known problems within that process are that by researching and picturing cultural phenomena we influence and shape them, we build assumptions and come to conclusions about (foreign) cultural phenomena that are based on our own culturally shaped preconceptions. Most contemporary culture theorists therefore emphasize the socially constructed nature of cultural reality and the tentative nature of our understanding of any culture (cf. Ruby 2000:ix). Most picturing culture media professionals are unimpressed by this discourse, or might never have heard of even its most basic questions, approaches, and findings. They happily continue to squeeze a confusing reality into culturally shaped narrative forms without revealing either the filmic process or the biased assumptions that constitute it. Media professionals more often than not think that audiences are not supposed to see "backstage" since this would destroy the much sought after filmic illusion (cf. Ruby 2000:156; see also Goffman 1959). What are the underlying, more fundamental reasons for this deep split between the media industry and Visual Anthropology? While written texts work better syntactically, filmic texts rely much more on their semantic capacities. It is my experience of meandering 15 years between academia and filmmaking that the academic world, and that does include Visual Anthropology, is still deeply sus-

²⁰ I understand „ethnographicness“ here as the sum of attributes that Visual Anthropology would like to see realized in a film that deals with picturing (foreign) culture (see Banks 1992:117pp.). The term ethnographic film, however, should probably be avoided altogether these days. When it is applied to anything related to the exotic Other, it is merely another manifestation of orientalism commonly found in popular parlance (see Ruby 2000:27).

²¹ While it is true that "pure" *cinéma vérité* approaches have always been rare, some elements of it, such as the idea of the camera as catalyst, are used by both anthropologists and "professional filmmakers" since almost five decades.

picious about the emotional potential and mythological functions of film. Today, the basic question seems to be, if it is possible at all to make films that tell their stories “in a reflexive manner that permitted audiences to enjoy the cinematic illusion of verisimilitude without causing them to think they were seeing reality” (Ruby 2008:278). I would argue that while including (and even overstretching) reflexive elements will work in academic writing, it will more often not in an audiovisual text. A result is, as even Jay Ruby has to admit, that today films produced by visual anthropologists form a cinema that occupies a relatively marginal position (Ruby 2008:4). As a consequence we are clearly observing that the theoretical concepts of visual anthropologists and the actions of media professionals are more apart than ever before.²²

To come to a conclusion: it’s evident that reflexivity, revealing the filmic process and the constructed nature of any filmic text forms a core belief of Visual Anthropology. As both a visual anthropologist and a filmmaker I would like to stress, however, that this central claim is very, very hard to come by with: the role of an author in selecting, shaping and thickening his data and his role in reflecting them and the process of getting them passed on within the audiovisual text are almost contradictory and extremely hard to master. What is the consequence of this dilemma? Should Visual Anthropologists stop producing audiovisual media and confine themselves to writing about it? Certainly not! Today, audiovisual media are the most privileged places of the construction of social and cultural reality. Media and culture are so strongly intertwined that even in - or especially in - traditional cultures they play an ever increasing role in the cultural process.²³ Especially for matters pertaining to Intangible Heritage, theoretical concepts of how to picture it that result in practical projects, are urgently needed. I suggest to come up with a new picturing culture approach that builds up on the existing body of thought in Visual Anthropology while developing it a step further. I am convinced that some of the basic findings of Visual Anthropology could be made very fruitful for picturing Intangible Heritage. I would argue, however, that a contemporary picturing culture project needs to embrace the semantic capacity and the filmic quality of audiovisual media much more than this was the case in the last few decades, while incorporating reflexive elements in an institutionalized multivocal *form*. This would also reflect the epistemological changes that have taken place since the introduction of the World Wide Web that has rendered the concept of the “master narration” to be an idea of the past. Some basic thoughts:

1. There are no media monopolies anymore. In theory almost anyone can produce and distribute audiovisual texts. However, there clearly is a “digital divide” between developed and less developed regions in this world. This is a problem because if Intangible Heritage is supposed to be an exemplary archive of cultural achievements of humanity as a whole, it should not be almost exclusively represented by a few privileged, mostly white and western TV producers. If only they have the financial means, the technology or the skills to picture their own and other peoples Intangible Heritage, then it is clearly necessary to alter this imbalance and empower those who are underprivileged to come up with their own interpretation of Intangible Heritage phenomena. This is not to say that films such as the above mentioned TV productions should not exist or should not be valued. They must be complemented, however, by different narrative forms produced by e.g. indigenous filmmakers, video artists, or even fiction film directors from the regions involved and other parts of the world.

2. In a world where cultures merge and many aspects of our lives change at growing pace, the idea of master narrations that cover all aspects of a phenomenon has become obsolete. As a consequence, only ongoing efforts to re-read Intangible Heritage traditions can prevent the

²² A personal survey of participation patterns in film festivals in Germany underlines my point. Visual Anthropologists and their films are screened almost exclusively at the special interest ethnographic film festivals (e.g. Freiburg and Göttingen). While in the past commissioning editors and other documentary filmmakers attended these festivals to find out what the Anthropologists were doing and if there were interesting new films that could be bought, that is not the case anymore. And in the much bigger festivals of the global nonfiction scene, where the “media professionals” meet, visual anthropologists are practically never present.

²³ For a controversial discussion on indigenous people’s media use in the digital age see: Ginsburg 2008. See also: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_digital_divide (last visited April 2009)

process of rendering an Intangible Heritage into a folklorized piece of art apt for the museum.

3. The medium is the message. The World Wide Web is in principal a much more democratic medium than, for instance, television, because everyone can send and receive. Only a comprehensive web-based database, that complements TV broadcasts, DVD editions and other media, can fulfill the high expectations that the UNESCO proclamation has awakened. Such a database enables consumers, artists, scholars, media professionals etc. to access Intangible Heritage traditions in a systematical manner without having to face limitations of space and time.

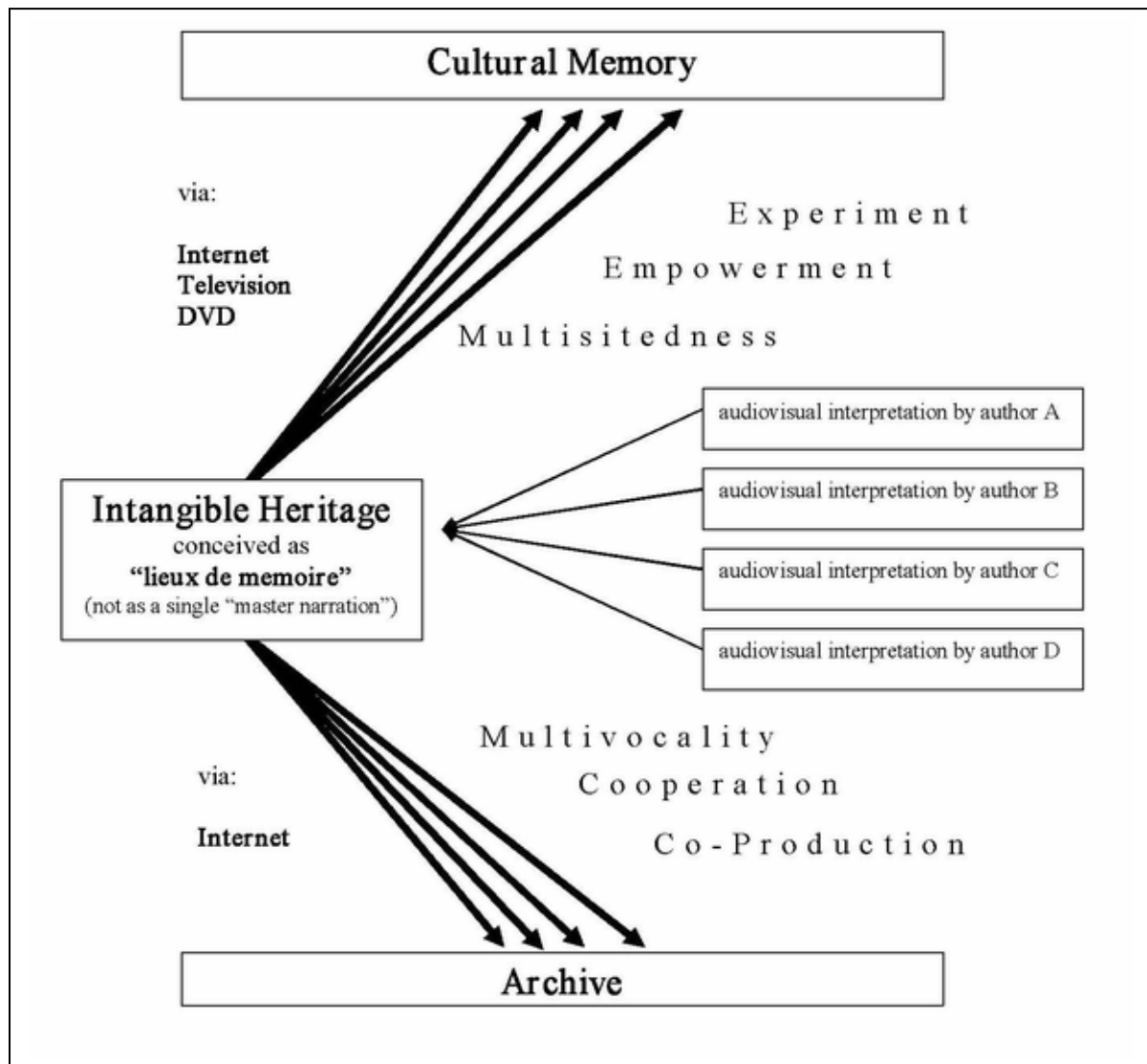
4. NEW WAYS OF PICTURING INTANGIBLE HERITAGE? VISION OF AN INTANGIBLE HERITAGE MEDIA INSTITUTE

The whole idea of the Intangible Heritage proclamation in general and of picturing Intangible Heritage in particular, aims at influencing the cultural memory not only of certain special interest groups, such as visual anthropologists, but of local groups, nation states, and even of humankind as a whole. Cultural memory does not automatically come into being. It is shaped by the cultural, social, political, and economical will of people and institutions and of their actions (see: Assmann 1999). To achieve the vision of having an impact on cultural memory, Intangible Heritage media needs to be seen and valued by large audiences. The creation and dissemination of documentaries on Intangible Heritage via TV does reflect the values and experiences of local communities and cultures and is one necessary part for the preservation of cultural diversity. Cultural identity and expression may, in turn, foster harmonious and equitable development of all sections of humanity. It should be clear by now that I disagree with Ruby when he takes a strong stand against “professional filmmaking”: “The need to make something the film world calls a good film with commercial potential and that qualifies for the increasingly common market-based festivals should be abhorrent to scholars.” (Ruby 2008:4)²⁴ Especially in dealing with Intangible Heritage this conclusion must be dismissed. Because whatever one may want to criticize from an anthropological perspective about high gloss TV productions on Intangible Heritage, one important point remains: these films are being watched by millions of people throughout the world, *because* they adhere to certain forms of established, conventional narrative. However standardized these forms may be, it is a fact that they have an impact on cultural memory and do raise an awareness about (foreign) cultural phenomena that remind us of different modes of “being in the world” – to put it in very general terms.²⁵ Among other issues it remains problematic, however, that highly formatted TV documentaries present Intangible Heritage as “master narrations”. As such they are for many people, due to their professional make and their conventional, yet suggestive and appealing dramatic form, very credible representations of reality. It is thus very easy to mistake them for “the one and only representation” of an Intangible Heritage. This is clearly a danger and complementing these grand master narrations with other forms of narrative are clearly an essential task for the future. I argue therefore, that picturing Intangible Heritage must become a much more democratic and multivocal process. Empowerment of unprivileged media producers and distribution of their interpretations is necessary. Another key for the success of any Intangible Heritage media is, as I have already indicated, the necessity to be able to retrieve it as easily as possible. Probably the only way to achieve this task is to establish an easy to find and easily accessible web based platform. This idea is certainly not new in its entity an excellent example for such a multivocal platform, where very different narratives contribute to the same overall topic, is Canada based *isuma.tv*, a very well designed and internationally successful portal for indigenous filmmakers from the arctic region (www.isuma.tv). These two core assumptions build up the idea of an Intangible Heritage Media Institute that should stimulate interest in both Intangible Heritage and in Intangible

²⁴ http://www.media-anthropology.net/ruby_anthrocinema.pdf (last visited in April 2009)

²⁵ I personally would welcome if visual anthropologists would take part much more in the process of shaping cultural memory than leaving that to the media professionals while concentrating on special interest film festivals instead, where visual anthropologists watch the films made by other visual anthropologists.

Heritage media production. Such an institution derives its epistemological substantiation from contemporary Visual Anthropology while adapting some basic thoughts a step further by simply applying them to the problem and taking into account new technical means such as the internet. It should be clear by now that instead of trying to implement all of the central findings of Visual Anthropology in one single filmic text I argue that many of them could be implemented by picturing Intangible Heritage in a different institutionalized *form*. My key ideas are multivocality and multisitedness, empowerment and experiment, cooperation and co-production.



Multivocality and multisitedness

The main goal of an "Intangible Heritage Media Institute" is to collect and produce Intangible Heritage media on the assumption that Intangible Heritage is to be presented not as a single "master narration" but as a "lieux de memoire" (see: Assmann 1999). Instead of limiting the dramatic capacity of an audiovisual text by overloading it syntactically while undervaluing the semantic qualities a film needs to possess (which was maybe a downfall of Visual Anthropology during the last decades) this concept will put emphasis on multivocality. This way, an Intangible Heritage Media Institute will show the many limitations of any single audiovisual text by juxtaposing it with others that simply focus on other aspects of it or apply a different narrative or aesthetic concept. Ideally several authors from different cultural backgrounds using various forms of narrative will be invited to work on picturing on single Intangible Heritage phenomena. This way, a challenging competition of different aesthetic concepts, innovative forms of narrative, the most surprising point of view, the most sensitive and precise insight on the cultural phenomenon etc. will raise interest and foster further development not only of audiovisual representations but also of the phenomenon itself. Ideally, these diverse audiovisual representations open up entirely new horizons of these traditions and show how

multifaceted and up-to-date they really are. Reflexion within this multivocal approach lies obviously much more within the concept of multivocality as a whole and is less the burden of one single author and her audiovisual text. Multisitedness supplements the general concept of this approach, because contributing institutions, such as universities, film schools, production companies, broadcasters etc. will be positioned in every part of the world.

Empowerment and experiment

Another main task will be the empowerment of media professionals, media artists, indigenous filmmakers, or media and visual anthropologists from countries where media infrastructure is not as readily available and where knowledge transfer and reflexive approaches to both use and agency of media needs to be fostered. "Professional" does not mean that emphasis is placed only on "production value" as sketched above. Experimental explorations of narrative forms will be a key concept of the institutes work.

Cooperation and co-production

The Intangible Heritage Media Institute will be operated in a joint effort by media professionals, media artists, indigenous filmmakers, or media and visual anthropologists. Its main goal will be to collect, produce and distribute audiovisual adaptations of the UNESCO Intangible Heritage over internet, DVD and television. At the same time, ongoing research will be carried out as to how this picturing culture undertaking can be refined.

An Intangible Heritage Media Institute will

1. create a multivocal and multisited internet platform, where existing Intangible Heritage media will be collected and produced and made available online
2. develop this multisited internet platform in close cooperation with international partners and in consideration of intercultural differences within different learning processes
3. conceive Intangible Heritage not as static and unchangeable but rather as a "lieux de memoire" that allows for and demands different and changing perspectives
4. allow multivocality. In principal every user of the Intangible Heritage internet platform can become a producer of Intangible Heritage media and publish it online. To include interactive "peer review" rating systems is an option
5. carry out own audiovisual productions. This should happen in close cooperation between anthropologists, media anthropologists, media professionals and media artists (especially from involved countries) as well as local artists performing their heritage
6. develop and carry out research programs that will accompany the institutes practical mission
7. carry out workshops for media professionals from countries where media infrastructure is not as readily available and where reflexive approaches to both use and agency of media can be fostered
8. found an International Film Festival on Intangible Heritage media to foster interest both in the production of audiovisual representations as well as awareness of the phenomena themselves

5. CONCLUSION

This paper shows that adequate audiovisual representations of Intangible Heritage do not exist today, whether on television or on the internet. There is an urgent need to create an institution where Intangible Heritage media is collected, produced and made available so that it can be easily accessible online. The processes of picturing Intangible Heritage will be guided by the assumption that the phenomena are presented not as a single "master narration" but as a "lieux de memoire".

An empowerment of media professionals, media artists, indigenous filmmakers, or media and visual anthropologists from countries where media infrastructure is not as readily available is necessary, and will foster both interest in and respect for Intangible Heritage. Ideally, diverse audiovisual representations open up entirely new horizons of these phenomena and show, how multifaceted and up-to-date they really are.

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