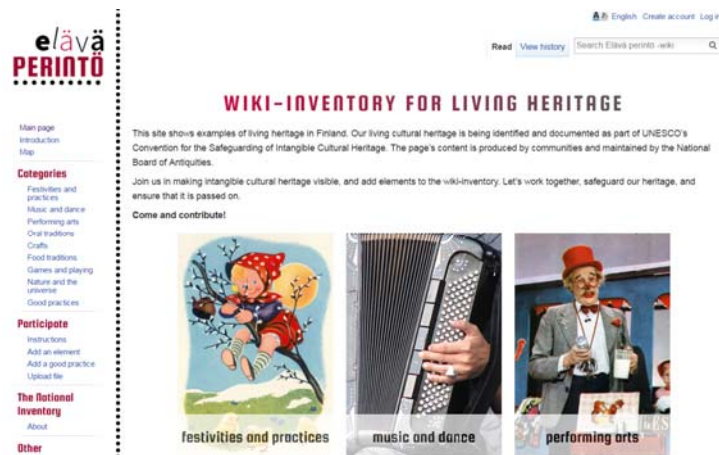


Safeguarding living heritage with participatory Wiki-inventorying in Finland

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Online archive:



<https://Wiki.aineetonkulttuuriperinto.fi/>

Finland ratified the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in 2013. As part of the implementation of the Convention, the Finnish National Board of Antiquities launched a Wiki-Inventory for Living Heritage in February 2016. An open inventory offers different communities an opportunity to present their own intangible cultural heritage. By April 2017, there were already 100 submissions from over 120 communities in the platform. The traditions included can relate to celebrations, food, crafts, performing arts, games, nature, or oral traditions. Good practices, projects or methods for the safeguarding of ICH can also be presented. The Wiki-inventory works in three languages (Finnish, Swedish and English) and in additional languages. The Wiki-Inventory is constantly supplemented and updated. The platform has become a place of interest and an avenue of expression for many heritage communities and groups.

Wiki-inventory for Living Heritage

The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was ratified in Finland in May 2013. The purpose of the Convention is to safeguard intangible cultural heritage and to raise awareness at the local, national and international levels of the importance of ICH. In the heart of the Convention are the practitioners and communities of ICH (UNESCO, 2003). Due to the participatory spirit of the Convention, Finnish National Board of Antiquities launched a Wiki-Inventory for Living Heritage in

February 2016. An open inventory offers different communities an opportunity to present their own intangible cultural heritage.

At the time of its opening, it included 20 examples of intangible cultural heritage in Finland. By April 2017, there were already 100 submissions from over 120 communities in the platform ranging from small local or area-specific hobby groups or NGO's to national institutions with tens of thousands of members. The submissions from various domains have been received

from all over the country. The traditions included can relate to celebrations, food, crafts, music and dance, performing arts, games, nature, or oral traditions. Good practices, projects or methods for the safeguarding of ICH can also be presented. The Wiki-inventory works in three languages (Finnish, Swedish and English) and in additional languages. The Wiki-Inventory is constantly supplemented and updated. The platform has become a place of interest and an avenue of expression for many heritage communities and groups.

Finland is a country of 5 million people, two official languages, old and new minorities and diverse subcultures. Festivities related to four seasons of Nordic environment, local bread baking recipes, music or proverbs – living heritage is present in people's everyday lives, encompassing all forms of human activity. The aim of the Wiki-inventory for Intangible Cultural Heritage was to create a participatory, low-threshold tool for inventorying and presenting intangible heritage in Finland. The tool makes this entry-level inventory as simple and as participatory as possible, in order to provide the possibility for various groups, associations, and other communities to display, present and make known such intangible heritage that is living, important and meaningful for them.

The Wiki is an inclusive way of presenting diverse intangible cultural heritage and making it visible. Its ultimate benefit is the enhanced protection and safeguarding of cultural heritage. However, multiple other benefits are evident. The inventory not only raises awareness on cultural heritage, but it also supports local cultural heritage communities in networking and self-expression. By raising awareness and comparability of the heritage, the Wiki provides an excellent platform for both cultural heritage communities and academic field for further projects on the subject. Discussions about the Wiki raises wider thoughts on cultural heritage as an asset and its meaning to the society in general.

The process

Inventorying and the model for the Wiki-Inventory of Living Heritage has its firm background on research work. The National Board of Antiquities partnered with CUPORE – The Finnish Foundation for Cultural Policy Research for 12-month pre-project research phase in 2014-2015. Within the context of this phase, the team published two studies. The first study looked on the implementation of the Convention in 15 countries and examined what kind of measures the selected countries have carried out in implementing the Convention (Marsio, 2014). The other one analyzed the 2 surveys taken and the 10 group discussion held in the field of ICH, combining this data with expert articles that reflect on the analyses in more depth and clarify the definitions and concepts in the Convention (Kanerva & Mitchell, 2015). Based on the research conducted and hearing of stakeholder groups, the National Board of Antiquities published the Plan for National Implementation in June 2015. This was supplemented in June 2016 with the Action Plan for 2016-2018 (National Board of Antiquities, 2015 and 2016).

The planning of the Wiki-Inventory of Living Heritage was realized between August 2015 and February 2016. The platform was designed and implemented by the National Board of Antiquities in collaboration with active members of the Finnish Wiki-community and in consultation with the heritage communities.

The Wiki is moderated by the National Board of Antiquities, but all the contents on the inventory is produced by communities. The publishing process of a Wiki is instantaneous. The coordinator of ICH reads and comments the texts added by the communities and if needed, asks for assistance from experts in the respective fields.

The Circles of Living Heritage are an important partner in the Wiki. These multi stakeholder networks have been established in Finland as part of the implementation of the Convention. Circles act as coordinating organs and hubs where the actors of each field can meet each other and act for

safeguarding their common intangible heritage. The handicraft Circle was established in 2015 and the nature Circle and Circle for folk music and folk dance were established in 2016. All of the Circles have around 20 NGO's and other organizations involved and they are also open to new members. In practice, Circles have been organizing seminars and events and made publications. They also play a role in spreading the message of the Wiki. A similar concept has been in use in Sweden in the implementation of the 2003 Convention.

Awareness-raising and new audiences

The Wiki-inventory for Living Heritage has proved to be an efficient tool in awareness-raising and gaining new audiences. It is a concrete tool that makes the UNESCO Convention and the safeguarding of ICH more comprehensible. It also provides an easy way to participate in the process of making ICH more visible.

The Wiki-Inventory has attracted wide interest in the public. In 14 months the Wiki-inventory has had over 37.000 visits, from 30.000 individual visitors who spend in average over 2,50 minutes at the site. 25% of them are returning visitors and 25 % of these visits come from outside Finland. Follow-up of visitors of the Wiki is done with Google Analytics. The web use metrics alone show that the Wiki-Inventory of Living Heritage has managed to find a vast interested and international audience, and contributed in a significant way to the visibility of intangible heritage in Finland.

The Wiki-platform for Intangible Cultural Heritage has gained a lot of attention in both regional and national media with tens of articles and radio programs all over the country.

The Wiki-Inventory is visible in social media too. The Facebook-page (Elävä Perintö) of the implementation of the Convention in Finland has 550 followers to date. The pages publish approximately three times per week and reach 80 to 3.000 viewers per publication. Twitter is another form of social media which have been actively used during the project. Communities taking

part of the presenting their traditions in Wiki are also sharing news on the Wiki. In this way, we have reached new audiences and further raised awareness of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

It has also attracted new kinds of participants. It is significant that different areas of spending leisure time – regardless of age and gender – can also be seen in the context of cultural heritage and this idea is shared widely among different communities. For example, hobby horses are a wonderful example of a flourishing form of ICH among Finnish children and summer theatre of a thriving youth movement.

One effective tool in promoting the Wiki and ICH in general are the regional or thematic seminars arranged in connection with the Convention. Regional seminars have been held so far in six different provinces and the number of seminars is constantly growing. Thematic seminars have been organized in crafts, nature and circus and also with the Sami, Roma and Swedish-speaking minority of Finland. These one-day events gather together 50 to 100 participants from practitioners, NGO's, museums, training institutions and civil servants.

All of the events are organized in close cooperation with other operators in the respective fields, and in cooperation with local and regional institutions: Regional boards, Arts Councils, regional museums and universities. Through these networks the message of the Wiki reaches in the regions to hundreds or even thousands of individuals. All of the seminar materials (presentations and videos) can be found from the "Elävä perintö" webpage and "Elävä perintö" Youtube channel" which has currently 6.500 visits.

Intercultural dialogue

Special attention has been paid to emphasize the diversity of intangible cultural heritage in Finland. Though being a relatively homogeneous society, Finland has a Swedish-speaking minority (290.000 people), indigenous people Sami (10.000) and the Roma people (10.000). People with foreign

nationalities form around 4% of the population (over 200.000 people).

Cultural diversity has been an issue that National Board of Antiquities has stressed in the work with the Convention right from the start. For example, when the national plan was developed, group discussions were held among Sami and Romani people as well as the Swedish-speaking population. One discussion group was with the title "Diversity" where participants discussed also gender, sexuality, age, physical properties, disability, religion, language and ethnicity in relation to intangible cultural heritage.

There is continuous cooperation between respective NGOs with all of these groups related to the Wiki and seminars. Among the first entries on the Wiki were the Romani song tradition, Sami handicrafts, the minuet tradition in Finland's Swedish-speaking community, and African dance and music in Finland.

Impacts of the Wiki-inventory

The Wiki has been up and running only for one year. So far has activated numerous local communities to take part, define and present their ICH in the Wiki platform. It has caused discussions among the communities of what their intangible heritage is and what it means to their identity and sense of place. On a national level, awareness about and understanding of intangible heritage is growing. The first 100 examples - coming from over 120 communities all over the country, including both local, regional and national actors and even including the biggest minority groups – are one sound indicator of this.

One of the reasons we think the Wiki is such a good example of awareness-raising, is the cost-effectiveness of the Wiki system. As an option, photos from Wikimedia Commons may be utilized as a source of illustrations. Likewise, the participants are encouraged to openly license their media contributions and sharing them in Wikimedia Commons, thus contributing to a global resource of cultural heritage media. The Wikimedia movement has a shared vision with UNESCO, that of preserving

and making accessible the knowledge of the world. Engaging with Wikimedia communities, found in most of the countries in the world, can be an opportunity for establishing new ways of cooperating between the civil society and civil servants.

A MediaWiki platform provides many accessibility tools readily, as it is developed with a focus on equal access. The development of further functionality will benefit a large global community. Instead of offering selected knowledge on ICH derived from top to bottom, it engages and encourages people to participate in a wide range of societal dialogues about intangible cultural heritage.

Future Follow up

At the moment, the Wiki-Inventory of Living Heritage is a fully functional and growing platform. The National Board of Antiquities is committed to the long-term sustainability of the Wiki.

The next step in the inventorying process in Finland is the National Inventory of Living Heritage, where communities, associations or groups of private individuals that participate in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and practice traditions can propose elements that are already in the Wiki-inventory. The categories for the National Inventory are the same as in the Wiki-inventory for Living heritage. Good practices will only be collected in the Wiki-inventory for Living Heritage. The first call was open in March-April 2017 and the next one will be open in 2019 the earliest.

The decision which elements are entered the National Inventory is made by Ministry of Education and Culture, based on a proposal by the National Board of Antiquities and the expert group on intangible cultural heritage. Other actors in the field of living heritage also have an opportunity to comment on the applications. It is later possible for the elements listed in the National Inventory to be nominated for inscription on UNESCO's international lists of intangible cultural heritage.

It is truly interesting to see how the process of the National Inventory affect the Wiki-inventorying. The call was open for seven weeks and it produced nearly 70 submissions to the inventory. The launch gained big media visibility from national to regional and local newspapers, radio and social media. This has attracted thousands of new visitors to the Wiki.

One open question is related to the status of the elements. All applications to the National Inventory will feed into the Wiki platform, but in communication the elements in the National Inventory will be highlighted. However, will traditions listed in one inventory be seen as “more valuable” than on the other?

However, there is a need for monitoring and development of the Wiki. Are we getting new input from different domains? Are all parts of the country represented? Is the diversity of heritage reflected in the contents? In this way it is possible to find new partnerships, arrange workshops or seminars with the relevant groups.

Conclusion

The Wiki-Inventory of Living Heritage stands out as an example of open, participatory and community-led way of inventorying. National Inventories have been made or are underway in almost all of the 170 State parties of the Convention. However, the processes are not always very open to the communities. Making inventories accessible and usable for grass-roots communities has been a true challenge.

Due to the participatory nature of the implementation process, the Wiki-inventorying includes a lot of collaboration with cultural heritage government and the grass root level. Networking in the field of ICH and forming partnerships is an obligatory key to success. Many seminars organized, speeches given at other seminars or workshops moderated has offered possibilities to meet people and tell more about the Wiki and to encourage them to take part in the process. The effects of the seminars can be seen in the number of contributions to the Wiki: in those regions and thematic areas where seminars are held, there are submissions in the Wiki.

The ultimate goal is that the practitioners of ICH feel the Wiki is their own tool to take and present their heritage. The challenge lies in widening the audiences beyond the “usual suspects” and turning an eye into directions where there certainly is intangible heritage, but traditionally it has not been seen as such.

The Wiki-inventory is a working tool and a good example of participatory governance. In the future it would be most wonderful to have similar tools in other areas on heritage governance. For example, in Finland, the protection of cultural environments is part of the working scope of museums. There a challenge lies in making the processes more accessible and more participatory in nature. Intangible cultural heritage is precisely the area in cultural environments that can offer new ways and methods for working together. It is living, in the present and also something that is experienced on a personal level.

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