

ACTIVITY 23: AUTHORIZED ONLY? EXPLORING THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN EXPERTISE AND INCLUSION IN HERITAGE

Overview of the activity

Using embodiment, storytelling and Forum Theatre, participants explore the origins and aspects of inclusion in heritage, also learning about immaterial heritage.

Objectives

- Connect with authorized heritage personally and emotionally
- Experience/explore what happens on the boundary between authorized and unauthorized heritage
- Experience/explore how authorized heritage makes the diversity within a territory invisible, and the emotional triggers behind this process
- Reflect on who is allowed to have heritage and who is not, and the role that the symbolic idea of origin has in these dynamics of inclusion and exclusion
- Learn about immaterial heritage

Duration (in minutes)	Min/max number of participants	Room/space requirements
2.5 hours	• Recommended: 16 • Minimum: 8 • Maximum: 25	The activity can be done indoors or outdoors, online as well as face to face

Minimum knowledge requirements of participants	Materials needed	Preparation
No requirements	A printed or digital copy of the UNESCO Convention's definition of immaterial cultural heritage (see instructions for Part I) and the 'dramatic pretext' (see instructions for Part III) (i.e. if you do not want to print it, you can email participants the text and they can then consult the text on their phones).	It is useful to do an icebreaker before and during this activity. You can use any of the proposed icebreakers you will find in this Activity Book .

Instructions

Part I. Embodiment: Connect to your immaterial heritage

- Sit in a circle, provide participants with the text of the UNESCO Convention's definition of immaterial cultural heritage and read it together (e.g. out loud, taking turns, etc.):

'To help people understand intangible cultural heritage, the UNESCO Convention describes it in terms of five broad categories:

– Oral traditions and expressions. This can mean proverbs, riddles, tales, legends, myths, epic songs and poems, charms, chants, songs, and more.

– Performing arts. This can include music, dance and theatre, pantomime, songs and other forms of artistic expression that are passed down from generation to generation.

– Social practices, rituals and festive events. These are the activities that structure the lives of

communities and are shared by members—for example, initiation rites, burial ceremonies, seasonal carnivals and harvest celebrations.

– Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe. These refer to know-how and skills that communities have developed by interacting with their natural environments, and may be expressed through language, memories, spirituality or worldviews. Traditional methods of architecture, agriculture, cattle-breeding, and cuisine are among the related elements.

– Traditional craftsmanship. This may sound ‘tangible,’ but it really refers to the skills and knowledge involved in craftsmanship rather than the products themselves. Examples include pottery, wood work, jewellery and precious stones, embroidery, carpet weaving, musical instrument production, weaving and fabric production, etc.

– It’s not meant to be an exhaustive or exclusive list. Different countries may use other systems to identify or classify intangible cultural heritage.’

(Extracted from: <https://en.ccunesco.ca/blog/2019/10/understanding-intangible-cultural-heritage>)

- Ask participants to stand up and close their eyes. Then read to them the following instructions softly and slowly, as if you were guiding a meditation (participants should stay silent throughout):

‘Think of an immaterial heritage practice you are close to, which means you experience it often in your life or it has often been present around you and to which you have a strong emotional tie (you feel protective of this practice). It must also be a practice that is recognized by ‘your community’, whatever that community may be. [Give them a minute to choose a practice in their heads.] Imagine this practice in your head. What is happening? Where is it happening? What are you doing in it? Who else is there? [Give them a minute to envision their chosen practice.] How are you feeling? What is the energy that this practice transmits to you? [Give them a minute to identify and connect to the energy.] Lift your right arm and make a movement with your arm that embodies that energy. [Let them try out the movement.] Now pass that energy to your left arm, so that both arms are moving with the energy. Now to your torso, to your hips and legs, to your neck and head, until the entire body is moving with the energy you have envisioned. [Allow them a moment to experiment with the movement of their bodies]. Slowly bring the energy to a halt. Keep your eyes closed. Breath deeply, in and out, in and out, in and out. Without opening your eyes, take one minute to think of a concrete personal story or anecdote related to your practice’.

Part II. Storytelling: Connect to your immaterial heritage

1. Ask everyone to sit in a circle.
2. Invite everyone to share their story with the rest of the group. Make sure you have enough

time so that everyone who wishes to share their story has time to do so.

3. After everyone has shared their story, ask participants if they need a break. Give them 15 minutes to relax, have a snack, chat amongst themselves, etc.

Part III. Dramatic pretext: REBELAH's heritage inventory

1. Ask participants to sit in groups of 3 people and provide each group with the following text to read:

'We are all residents of the European region of Rebelah, which is in the midst of a process of self-determination. In order to be recognized as an independent state in accordance to the [Montevideo Convention](#), the Rebelah nation has to prove that it has the following:

- (a) a permanent population*
- (b) a defined territory*
- (c) a government*
- (d) capacity to enter into relations with the other states*

We were close to self-determination, but in 2020, the United Nations made an amendment to the Convention to add a new prerequisite:

- (e) an inventory of the region's natural, material and immaterial heritage*

As part of Rebelah's urgent efforts to comply with the UN's requirement to create a heritage inventory, the government launched a programme for the identification, recognition and certification of natural, material and immaterial heritage. There was one committee created for each type of heritage:

- The CIRC�H – Committee for the identification, recognition and certification of natural heritage*
- The CIRCMH – Committee for the identification, recognition and certification of material heritage*
- The CIRCIH – Committee for the identification, recognition and certification of immaterial heritage*

The Rebelah government decided to base the procedures for the identification, recognition and certification of natural and material heritage on international conventions.

However, in the case of the CIRCIH, they decided to go in a different direction based on the recommendation of diverse European heritage experts, who now resided as expats in the Rebelah region, given their love of relaxed work atmospheres, lovely weather and easy access to beaches.

The procedure established is as follows:

Any person who wishes to propose a practice to be considered for the inventory:

- *Must be a resident of Rebeleh*
- *Must get the support of two other Rebeleh residents. The Rebeleh residents who support a practice cannot present any other practice to be considered.*
- *Must determine the following aspects concerning the practice:*
 1. *What is the practice about?*
 2. *What is the origin of the practice? Where did the practice come from?*
 3. *How long has the practice been in place?*
 4. *For whom is this practice relevant and why?*
 5. *What values does this practice convey to future generations?*

The practice must then be presented based on the above aspects, to the CIRCIH judge, who will decide whether the practice:

1. *Is identifiable*
2. *Is recognizable*
3. *Is certifiable*

Only certifiable practices will be considered part of the inventory prior to the examination of the GEEH Committee (Group of Experts for the Examination of Heritage), which will be put together based on the specific needs of the assessment of the concrete practice’.

2. Choose one of the groups and ask one of the participants in the group to be the CIRCIH judge and the other two participants to be the GEEH Committee. Ask the group to make a list of criteria for a practice to be ‘identifiable, recognizable or certifiable’. They can use any criteria they want for each of the three categories, and the criteria can be as ‘crazy/illogical’ as they wish. For example, only immaterial heritage that is over 2000 years old is identifiable; or only immaterial heritage that involves food is recognizable; or only immaterial heritage where people dress up is certifiable, etc. There must be two criteria for each category.
3. Give the other groups 15 minutes to choose the immaterial heritage element they will present. They can only choose from the elements they each brought up during Parts I and II of the activity and they cannot change the element.
4. Once all groups have chosen their elements and prepared their arguments by answering the questions above (What is the practice about? What is the origin of the practice?, etc.), sit the group with the CIRCIH judge and the GEEH Committee in three chairs at the front of the classroom. They should act very serious and knowledgeable. The rest of the participants must sit in ‘the audience’.
5. Ask a group to come up to present their heritage element (they can present it as a group or

choose a speaker to do so). The CIRCIH judge and the GEEH Committee will listen and take notes, taking the matter very seriously. After all, the self-determination of the Rebellah nation depends on the list they have to decide on.

6. After all groups have presented their heritage element, the CIRCIH judge and the GEEH Committee will decide which practices are 'identifiable, recognizable or certifiable' based on the criteria they developed. In order for a practice to be certifiable, it must comply with the criteria for identifiable and recognizable categories.
7. The CIRCIH judge will present the results of the evaluation to the rest of the group.
8. Ask participants if they agree or not with the ruling of the judge and the committee, and invite participants who do not agree to stand up and make their case. Facilitate the debate so that everyone who wants to speak out can do so.
9. The CIRCIH judge and the committee can decide whether they wish to change their ruling after the debate has taken place.
10. Ask everyone to sit back in a circle, no longer in character (they are no longer citizens of Rebellah) and debrief about the exercise from the beginning (Part I) until the final debate. For the debrief, you can follow the evaluation cues below.

Learning outcomes evidences to be collected

The list of practices and their categorization as 'identifiable, recognizable or certifiable' or not

Evaluation

In order to evaluate this activity, you may ask the participants the following questions:

- What was difficult? What surprised you? What did you enjoy? Did you learn something new about yourself? About others?
- What happens at the border between authorized and unauthorized heritage?
- How should unauthorized heritage be defined? Should all heritage be authorized? Does each category play a role? Are there other categories that make sense?
- Can you think of other ways of authorizing heritage that does not involve list making by experts?
- What parts of the process felt inclusive? What parts felt exclusionary? Why?
- In what way was the 'origin' of the heritage element present throughout the exercise?

Teaching tips, stories and experiences during piloting

- This activity was tested online during the pandemic. It is very easily adaptable to online settings.
- During Part III, Step 3, when deciding what element to choose, groups might show a tendency to create a new element out of the three to avoid 'leaving anyone out', but it is important to insist that they can only choose one. This process of negotiation is itself important for reflecting on what happens during heritage 'list making', and the feelings involved in the process of negotiation over elements that have a personal and emotional value and are key to who we are.
- It is important that during the role playing the participants do their best to remain in character, as the more they remain in character, the better they will be able to construct the power structure behind heritage 'certification' by experts.

Additional resources

Montevideo Convention <https://en.ccunesco.ca/blog/2019/10/understanding-intangible-cultural-heritage> https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montevideo_Convention (previously mentioned in the activity)

Questions for self-reflection in the teaching practice

- What parts of your heritage do you feel are authorized in your current place of residence?
- What parts of your heritage do you feel are unauthorized or marginalized?
- Do you have participants who might have aspects of their heritage marginalized by the social context you are all in?
- To what extent is the origin of your heritage shared with the origin of the heritage of the participants?