



## Safeguarding Dance Heritage: Interventionism versus Facilitation?

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*Egil Bakka<sup>□</sup> and Georgiana Gore<sup>△</sup>*

<sup>□</sup>Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway

<sup>△</sup>University of Clermont Auvergne, France

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9959-1474>; <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-0123-2937>

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This chapter examines the terminology of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage from a dance-specific perspective. Focusing on dance as a distinct phenomenon, it identifies challenges differing from those in safeguarding music, craftsmanship, or social practices. By analysing the Convention's terminology and safeguarding measures, it proposes refined distinctions relevant to dance heritage. Drawing on professional experience and academic initiatives, including the international master's programme Choreomundus, it argues that these insights may have broader applicability.

**Keywords:** ICH, dance, safeguarding, terminology, intervention, facilitation

## Introduction

This chapter revisits the text of the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage<sup>1</sup> (Bakka 2015; Bakka and Karoblis 2021; Erlien and Bakka 2017; Gore and Bakka 2009; Gore and Grau 2014). We depart from an analysis of terms used in the Convention text and in some supporting documents. After a brief general review of terms, we focus on the terms for what safeguarding can be and how those are used. One aim is to examine them from a dance perspective. While most general discussions on the Convention cover the whole broad range of intangible cultural heritage (hereafter ICH) domains (Blake and Lixinski 2020; Waelde et al. 2018; Smith and Akagawa 2009; Bortolotto and Skounti 2024), a few larger domain-specific discussions also exist (Petkovski 2021; Molina et al. 2021). We believe that these latter approaches become increasingly important for practical work, enabling more precise and narrow distinctions and a deeper understanding. Domains of crafts or music face different challenges to those in the domain of dance. The core of this chapter is a discussion of five pairs of contrasting terms, which we propose in order to achieve sharper distinctions and a deeper understanding of mechanisms and strategies underlying the safeguarding of dance. The most overarching of these pairs is that of intervention and facilitation, which forms the focus of our discussion. We then present examples from our personal experiences of practising and safeguarding dance as ICH in order to contextualise the issues under consideration. As summary, we refer briefly to our collaboratively founded Erasmus Mundus masters programme, Choremundus – International Master in Dance Knowledge, Practice and Heritage, in which we maintain that intervention and facilitation in safeguarding dance as ICH have been realised.

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<sup>1</sup> For this chapter the authors have quoted from the 2022 version of the Convention, access to which may be found in the References. The current 2024 version may be found on the following webpage: <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>.

## The Terms Used in the Text of the Convention

This chapter takes a systematic approach to discussing the words and terms used in the ICH Convention text. We will categorise them, analyse their function, and explore how they contribute to the overall understanding. We have extracted from the Convention text all words related to the management of the ICH but have not included terms about the organisational framework, as these are beyond the scope of our discussion. To categorise terms, we have organised them into seven clusters: Documents, Actions, Types of heritage, Kind of groups, Relations, Global Context, and Results.

1. *Documents*: Conventions refer to international agreements of a certain status and function; other kinds of agreements within the UNESCO system are Recommendations and Resolutions. The ICH Convention also refers to different kinds of other documents, such as educational programmes or material organised into dynamic databases, such as inventories, which are tools in the work of safeguarding and, therefore, close to the cluster of Actions.
2. *Actions* constitute a cluster referring to measures that the Convention recommends or proposes to be taken.
3. *Types of heritage* include the domains or main fields of ICH, different modes of expression such as practices or representations, outdated terms such as folklore and masterpieces, and terms for heritage covered by other Conventions.
4. *Kinds of groups* list groups that the Convention proposes should undertake action of some kind.
5. *Relations*: The actions recommended by the Convention are often specified or narrowed down. They are required to be done “as a response to”, “with a sense of”, “in interaction with”, “with the participation” of, and so on. The phenomena to which the action should be connected are, for instance, environment, history, nature or human rights. They are in other words limited by legal, moral or political constraints.
6. *Global context* lists aspects of the global situation that the Convention takes into consideration and favours or fears.
7. *Results* are a cluster, listing what the Convention hopes can come from its work regarding an improved world.

This survey might be condensed as follows. The Convention situates itself as a document recommending actions by certain kinds of groups to benefit certain kinds of heritage. It specifies and narrows down the actions by requiring them to be seen in relationship to their environment. It situates itself and its role in the global context and indicates how it aims towards an improved world.

In the following, we will mainly classify and group terms for action. In the process, we will discuss the terms transmission and education, which are central to the Convention's recommendations for safeguarding, and we will ask which groups can or are meant to undertake the various kinds of actions that the Convention proposes. The Convention is an agreement between state parties to support certain kinds of practices. How are the actions, expected from each state party, divided between the state party's political level, the experts of the field and the practitioners who are evaluated as candidates to produce nominations to lists?

### *The Who, What and How*

The main elements of the ICH Convention might be explained with respect to the following:

1. Who are its stakeholders, and what roles do they have? These include the practitioners, the community members of the ICH communities, NGO members, experts, and state representatives.
2. What items or elements does the Convention aim to safeguard? Those are systematised in the list of domains and defined in Article II.
3. How is the main action of the Convention, the safeguarding, meant to be undertaken?

Our chapter concentrates on the third question about safeguarding, even if it necessarily touches upon issues related to who and what as well. We will, therefore, begin with the cluster we have called Actions and present a table that shows the frequency of some Action terms in the four most significant documents used by those who implement the Convention: the Convention text; the Operational Directives; the Aide-Mémoire; and the Nomination Form for the Representative List.

## *The Frequency of Terms*

We know, of course, that mere frequency and distribution will not result in a simple mirroring of each term's importance. Many technical, linguistic, and coincidental aspects of word usage interfere with such mirroring. Some words, for instance, will often be repeated in the text because they occur in names or in titles. Constructions such as "formal" and "non-formal education" do not allow a search for "formal education", and so on. In order to include relevant derivations of terms, we have searched by only parts of the word and marked the unused part by brackets e.g. "identifi(cation)"; or we have searched using only one of the words of expressions, as for instance "(build) awareness", checking that the hit refers to the same basic idea. As example, we, searched for the word "respect" and counted "respecting", but not "respectively".

The table (see Figure 1) shows how often an expression or its derivatives were found in the documents. The numbers will mirror the difference in word count in each document, so we have added the word count for each. It is the order of words as they come out on the table that might suggest their significance. The table is sorted according to the column "Total", but there is a difference in the order of words between the columns. As we are neither statisticians nor textual analysts, we employ the numbers to sort and support our discussion and as an illustration and visualisation. Since the Convention text does not change, unlike the other documents, the results hint at the terminology that remains in comparison with the practice of the 2020s. For example, "revitalisation" is rare in more recent texts or there is a tendency to use the term "sustainability" more than "viability".

Text	Convention text	Nomination form	Aide-Memoire	Operational directives	Total
Word count	5 007	1 179	21 202	18 867	
Safeguarding	44	4	172	156	376
(ensure) respect	10	2	43	36	91
sustain(ability/able)	2	3	29	45	79
(build) awareness	5	2	19	31	57
financial	4	0	0	23	27
research	4	6	6	32	48
legal (measures)	2	1	0	10	13
administrative	1	0	0	15	16
documentation	4	0	11	6	21
technical (studies)/(measures)	3	0	0	4	7
transmission	2	1	33	12	48
(ensure) recogn(ition)	8	1	0	47	56
scientific (studies)/(measures)	3	0	0	19	22
management	3	0	0	11	14
identifi(cation)	3	2	9	4	18
(measures ensuring) viability	1	0	19	12	32
(research) methodologies	1	0	0	17	18
economic	2	1	4	10	17
protection	6	0	3	10	19
enhance(ment)	2	0	2	11	15
protection (education)	2	0	2	10	14
artistic (studies)/(measures)	1	0	0	2	3
create (heritage)	3	0	0	11	14
promotion	2	0	4	6	12
transmit (heritage)	3	0	0	23	26
maintain (heritage)	1	0	0	8	9
involve (in ICH management)	1	0	0	9	10
production	1	0	0	6	7
formal (education)	3	0	2	12	17
maintain (heritage)	1	0	0	6	7
capacity-building (activities)	0	0	1	0	1
express(ing ICH)	6	0	1	17	24
preservation	1	0	2	2	5
revitalization	2	0	2	0	4

Figure 1. Expressions and their derivatives.

## *Terms for safeguarding measures*

The Convention text gives a condensed but still broad and open definition of terms for safeguarding measures, pointing to those measures usually undertaken mainly by experts outside the practitioners' communities. We could ask, does the Convention effectively propose safeguarding only as being the measures taken by the state party, its institutions, experts, and NGOs? One might argue that the Convention is an agreement between states and lists what each state could and should do. That may be a rationale for not mentioning the most straightforward and ideal kind of safeguarding: the practitioners continuing their practice. This is not something the state, its institutions, and experts can do or demand from others. The Convention offers the following definition.

'Safeguarding' means measures aimed at ensuring the viability of intangible cultural heritage, including identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, and transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage. (UNESCO 2003)

Let us examine the terms used in the text above. The expression "ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage" includes a long series of measures identified by nouns. The words "identification, documentation, research" point to the expert's work mainly for inventory-making and refer to the most obvious benefits of inventories. This is just what professionally staffed archives for traditional dance have done, since at least the 1950s. Hungary's Traditional Dance Archive of the Institute for Musicology RCH, HUN-REN, for example, has a long and complex history. Hungarian experts were already filming traditional dances in the late 1920s. The dance researchers György Martin and Ernő Pesovár were active in the 1950s at The Institute of Folk Art (from 1956 Institute for Folk Education) (Felföldi 2024; Dóka et al. 2016). The Norwegian Centre for Traditional Music and Dance was established in 1973 to support safeguarding of traditional dance and music, while the English Folk Dance and Song Society had already been established at the beginning of the 1930s.

The terms "preservation and protection" have mostly been used for objects, monuments and sites and could be understood as referring to the ma-

terial aspects of many ICH elements. If ICH is the making and playing of a musical instrument, some of the instruments played need to be preserved, a task most often taken on by museums. Dance on the other hand does not require so many material objects to serve its practice, even if there are in some cases special costuming. In traditional communities in Europe, there were dress codes depending on the importance and solemnity of the event, and people danced in the clothes they wore for the event. Therefore, clothes speak more about the event and customs of dress than about dance. In the contexts of ritual dance worldwide, special costumes are worn which identify key players/participants with masks and other paraphernalia as additional elements. These also have been the purview of ethnographic museums and even of the more theatrically oriented Dansmuseet in Stockholm. Dance costumes have developed and gained increasing importance with the rise of presentational dancing, which has required the visual effect of identically dressed groups or of identification of a character playing a theatrical role. Specialist museums such as the short-lived Theatre Museum in London and the French Centre National du Costume et de la Scène (CNCS) in Moulins were established to house and promote these.

The term “promotion” seems to have many references, be it a promotion for sale or for building fame or esteem. The term “enhancement” (of the ICH) is less clear to decipher. It may also refer to rendering an element more attractive, but we fear that it may be taken to echo the conception of traditional culture as something that requires improvement.

The final terms are “transmission” and “revitali[s]ation”. In the case of the former, the definition distinguishes formal and non-formal education, while no such distinction exists for revitalisation. Regarding the latter, a sharper and more appropriate distinction could have been drawn between a practice intentionally moved from one group of practitioners and from one context of practice to another for the purpose of safeguarding. There is an essential difference between transmission or revitalisation as something happening 1) in a community where the practice has been rooted and continued through its own strength and 2) as the transposition of the ICH element to a new location and into the hands of new practitioners unrelated to those from whom it was moved for the specific aim of safeguarding. We will return to this issue in a discussion of a pair of new contrasting terms which we propose: stationary and relocated. Relocated safeguarding is often done for the sake of creating a national repertoire as compared to local ones.

## Application of Terms in the Other Main Documents

The practical application of the terms discussed above may be studied in other central texts regarding the work with the Convention. We will examine three of them in brief and highlight points that we find significant.

### *Operational Directives for the Implementation of the Convention*

The introduction states: “The Operational Directives for the Implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage are periodically revised to reflect the resolutions of the General Assembly of the States Parties to the Convention.” It is a tool which the legislative organ of the Convention revises when rules and procedures for the implementation of the Convention are changed. Therefore, the Directives will show how some terms in the Convention text are not or are barely mentioned, how some become more important and how new terms are adopted. For the purpose of this chapter, this changing focus is crucial.

### *The Aide-Mémoire*

This document systematises and makes available the decisions made by General Assemblies. The most recent version at time of writing mirrors the decisions of the fifth session of the General Assembly in June 2014 and the ninth session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in November 2014. One particularly interesting element is that which sets out to purify the language in the nominations. Point 14 in the first section “General Observations” in the Aide-Mémoire has the title “Inappropriate Vocabulary” and includes the following statement. Most recently in 2014, the Subsidiary Body explained that

expressions such as ‘authenticity’, ‘pure’, ‘true’, ‘unique’, ‘original’, ‘essence’ ‘masterpieces’ found in the nominations are not compatible with the spirit of the Convention and should be avoided. [...] On the other hand, States are encouraged to carefully use concepts and terminology that may lead to multiple interpretations, such as ‘ritual’ vs ‘festival’, ‘popular culture’ vs ‘folklore’, and so on. (UNESCO 2015, 10)

### *The Nomination Form for the Representative List*

The nomination form, in one of the main questions in section B, asks for the “Name of the communities, groups or individuals concerned”. This is a reference to the practitioners. Given this formulation, the form stresses that practitioners do not function independently but as members of communities and groups, from whom the nomination is supposed to emanate, even though such a nomination must be accepted by the national bodies in charge of safeguarding. If the point is to name a community or a group of practitioners, what is the difference between practitioners being many or just one individual? In question C 1.2, the practitioners are explicitly identified in the question, “Who are the bearers and practitioners of the element?” It is also interesting to note that the latest version of the nomination form at time of writing does not ask to which domain(s) the element nominated belongs. The domains, however, are an essential part of Article 2 Definitions, a core point of the Convention. We find a possible explanation for this omission in the above Aide-Mémoire point 19 with the title “Check Boxes”.

With regard to the check-boxes in several sections of the ICH-02 form (domains and the safeguarding measures of communities and of States), the Subsidiary Body concluded that they “may have created as many opportunities for confusion or contradiction as they offered possibilities for greater clarity”. (UNESCO 2015, 12)

We suggest that another reason could be that many countries are shifting focus from endangered traditional expressions of small local communities towards more prestigious, popular and homogenised, indeed often national expressions. The latter are often not adapted to the idea of domains or to the systematised set of safeguarding measures. From a longer-term perspective, it is worth noting that the main intention of the early work with the Convention was to help folklore “expressions”. With the above-mentioned development, such “expressions”, which we would now call practices, face even less chance of being supported, particularly in industrialised countries.

At the same time, a new set of checkboxes to prove that ICH contributes to sustainable development has been added to the form and constitutes Section 2. These boxes are “Food security”, “Health care”, “Quality educa-

tion”, “Gender equality”, “Inclusive economic development”, “Environmental sustainability including climate change”, “Peace and social cohesion”, and “Others (please specify)” (UNESCO 2024, 3). This is no doubt a follow-up to the United Nations 2015 General Assembly resolution on sustainable development “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”<sup>2</sup> as well as increasing concern over the impact on ICH of war, genocide and other atrocities committed during armed conflict.<sup>3</sup>

## Four Pairs of Contrasting Terms

The ICH Convention has been designed to be all-inclusive and to cover the diversity of ICH, from performative practices to the skills and knowledge required to build material artefacts, such as musical instruments, stone walls or boats. It is, therefore, understandable that the terms used in the Convention text are broad and may, in many cases, hide differences in the safeguarding processes rather than bring attention to them. In the following, we discuss significant terms from a dance perspective. We examine two contrasting pairs used in the Convention text first, and then propose three new ones that we think could be helpful in discussions on dance heritage.

### *Transmission and Revitalisation*

Transmission is an overarching and frequently used term for a safeguarding action, as indicated both in our table above and in the Aide-Mémoire. It could be seen as contrasting with the term revitalisation, which is rarely mentioned except in the check-lists. Indeed, it is not clear if any such contrast is intended in the Convention text.

We may define transmission as a concept for continuing a practice in a community where the practice has been rooted and maintained through its own strength. Revitalisation would then refer to an ICH element that has fallen out of use for some years and that the community then begins to re-enact. More typically, it might refer to the shift of the ICH element to new locations and to practitioners unrelated to the people from whom it was moved. Filip Petkovski provides an example from North Macedonia:

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<sup>2</sup> For access to the original resolution and further information on this see United Nations 2015.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Nafziger's 2020 contribution on the relation between cultural heritage protection and cultural genocide within an international legal framework.

“Once these dances (documented in a folklore archive) ceased to exist as living cultural practice, they were revived in order to be included in stage repertoire” (Petkovski 2021, 173). In this instance of establishing and teaching national repertoires, it would be a question of revitalisation, and the ongoing local practices would be referred to as transmission. Judging by the Aide-Mémoire, the transmission concept does not clearly distinguish between transmission among traditional practitioners and a case of transmission being taken over by others. In certain situations, it may seem that the latter is considered disqualifying for an ICH.

### *Formal and Non-Formal Education*

The Convention uses formal and non-formal education as a pair of contrasting terms to distinguish between two different kinds of transmission. This distinction first appears in the Convention itself in Article 2.3 on Definitions (UNESCO 2022, 6) and a whole section of the Operational Directives is devoted to “Formal and non-formal education measures” (UNESCO 2022, 64–65). However, no precise definition is given of each, but formal education is explicitly programmatic taking place in institutions of varying kinds (educational, associative and so on) while the non-formal clearly occurs in other contexts even if systematised, as may be gleaned from a later section on “Quality education” (UNESCO 2022, 85). The former section provides thirteen examples of how both kinds of education might be undertaken with only one explicitly mentioning the non-formal. As indicated earlier, the Convention only mentions revitalisation once, also in Article 2.3, as a kind of afterthought without any qualifying comments. Therefore, the definition of safeguarding does not explicitly use the two kinds of education for revitalisation but could have done so. Formal transmission would typically be a systematic interaction between teacher(s) and student(s) or apprentice(s). Non-formal transmission would mean a learner picks up knowledge and skills through regular participation in a community and its practices. Such processes can include situations in which a more or less experienced practitioner helps or assists a learner. The difference would be that formal learning is systemically recurring, and the relationship between a teacher and a learner is clearly defined. An apprenticeship, therefore, could also be seen as a formal transmission. The formal transmission is more typically based in schools, institutions and organisations, and often, it can target broader groups than the members of a practising community. Non-formal

learning, that is, learning through participating in a practice, often without any explanation or advice from experienced practitioners, may be qualified more generally as experiential learning (Bergsteiner, Avery and Neumann 2010).

We quote the most comprehensive discussion of the topic from the Aide-Mémoire:

64. A topic that has repeatedly attracted the attention of the Subsidiary Body is that of the transmission of intangible cultural heritage, and particularly how the processes of transmission may have changed over time. For instance, in 2012 it observed that several nominations ‘raised important questions about transmission, including several cases in which a formal transmission system appears to have largely or entirely supplanted a prior system of non-formal transmission. For some members of the Body, the absence of functioning transmission within households and families or within other community-based contexts in which the element was traditionally passed on gave rise to concern about the real viability of the element. Others responded that the formalization and even the institutionalization of transmission is often part of the evolution of intangible cultural heritage and of its constant recreation, and the existence of formal and institutional transmission should be seen as a positive factor, even if it was often accompanied by an attenuation or even disappearance of the non-formal modes of transmission’. In 2014, the Subsidiary Body also remarked ‘the existence of customary practices governing access to the element that are mentioned in connection with criterion R.4 but are not mentioned when describing the element in connection with criterion R.1. In this regard, States are encouraged to maintain coherence in the information included throughout the nomination’. (UNESCO 2015, 28)

65. Formalized systems of transmission are not necessarily a recent development, as the Body noted: in some cases, ‘the practice and transmission of the element were situated within highly organized institutions or undertaken by professionals. Alongside informal modes of transmission there also exist hi-

ghly formalized modes'. In such contexts, the Body called particular attention to the risk of 'excessive professionalization, sometimes with international competitions and huge funding, [that] made it difficult to identify the community concerned or feel confident that they were the agents and beneficiaries of the inscription process'. (UNESCO 2015, 28–29)

### *Stationary and Relocated ICH*

The contrasting pairs of terms discussed above are, as already indicated, more or less explicitly presented as such in the Convention text. In the following, we propose some distinctions that would be helpful for understanding the safeguarding of dance ICH. As previously mentioned, we may distinguish between stationary and relocated items, the former not meaning fixed or unchanging but quite simply located in one community. The question of relocating heritage has been discussed, with reference to the moving of historical buildings (Gregory 2008):

1. A stationary practice remains with the same community members who have actively used it for a long time. It can also spread to new practitioners without it being part of safeguarding interventions and then become “stationary” in larger areas.
2. A relocated practice occurs when an ICH item is taken to other people and places in the name of safeguarding.

A typical example of the stationary is the traditional dancing in a community that remains there and is not actively exported. Such dances may be diffused from place to place as new fashions, without being moved as a safeguarding measure. This is true for popular dances, and recipients do not pay attention to where they come from nor to any “original” version. A typical example of relocated practices is dances collected, documented and distributed to people not connected to the practitioners from whom they were collected. This is the case for many European folk dance revivals (Stavělová and Buckland, 2018). In this context, dance teachers also actively relocate dances and bring new dances as fashionable activities to new places and new people, but hardly with the intention of safeguarding (Fiskvik 2024).

The latter case is characteristic of large parts of the various European folk dance revivals of the twentieth century as noted above. Some of the

early collectors included Yngvar Heikel and Anni Collan in Finland, Klara Semb in Norway, Cecil Sharp in England, and Raimond Zoder in Austria. They were idealists of urban origin who went to the countryside to collect folk dances. They published the dances in manuals for revival folk dance groups, and the dances became national folk dance repertoires. In Central and Eastern European countries, the revival movements worked more through staging than through the revival of social dancing, and a kind of national repertoire, to some degree, could be seen in national professional folk dance ensembles.

The first case can be seen in communities that continued their practice and often became famous as strongholds of tradition. Examples from Western Europe include the Danish community Sønderho and Fanø (Grüner-Nielsen 1920), communities in Swedish Finland such Vörå or Jeppo (Biskop 2024), the Faroe Islands (Thuren 1908), Norwegian Røros (Okstad 2002), and Slovenian Val de Resia (Dunin 2015), and several communities of French Brittany (Guilcher 1963). Large parts of rural Central and Eastern Europe retained traditional dance practices much longer, which we would designate as stationary ICH.

The difference between stationary and relocated dances is not absolutely clear-cut, and dances shift from one status to the other. In the work with safeguarding dances, however, there is an important and often clear difference between the two processes.

### ***Local versus National Dance Repertoires***

A local dance repertoire mainly refers to stationary practices. Such local practices contrast with the strategy of safeguarding dance by creating repertoires designed to be used throughout a nation. Discussions have taken place on this issue regarding ICH in general and in the French context by Laurent-Sébastien Fournier (2013, 327).

The creation of national folk dance repertoires was, and still is, often used as a tool in nation-building. If the whole population of a country, or at least those doing folk dancing, may meet in a shared dance repertoire specific to that nation, national cohesion may be strengthened through collective practice. One strategy for achieving a national repertoire has been producing manuals and teaching from them. This was the strategy in, for instance, the Nordic countries throughout most of the twentieth century. Another would be to select dances to be taught for annual national compe-

titions, such as in Zimbabwe or Cameroon. In this way, all a nation's ethnic groups have an opportunity to highlight their dances through teaching and performance in the national competition.

The relationships between local and national safeguarding are complex. In some cases, national safeguarding would support and promote local safeguarding as being of particular importance. In other instances, dances undergoing national safeguarding may overshadow and replace the local ones. Nonetheless, their relations are complex and different from country to country and between different cases in the same country. In some cases, a dance went out of use in its community of origin and has been retained only as part of a national repertoire. In other cases, a dance has remained only in its community of origin, and, in the last instance, a dance may be used in both contexts. Additionally, new dances or dance genres have been created, inspired by an often blurred or idealised past to help nation-building. Examples are the Norwegian song dance (Semb 1985), the Israeli folk dance (Kadman 1952; Gibert 2007) and the Catalonian Sardanas (Perez 1994).

### ***Intervention versus Facilitation***

The core idea behind the ICH Convention is to assist practitioners in continuing a practice that is important to them. Since it is an agreement between state parties, the states take the ultimate responsibility, first of all, to fund the Convention and the actions proposed. For most of the other tasks, the states call upon experts, NGOs and other stakeholders engaged in ICH. The practitioners are seen as recipients of help rather than as active agents in the work proposed by the Convention. This may be a logical consequence of the perspective from which the Convention's agency is formulated: being an international agreement between states about their duties. Nonetheless, it seems paradoxical that while it is the practitioners' continued actions that are required, they are hardly mentioned as independent agents in the Convention text. We would propose that the distinction between intervention and facilitation might increase our understanding of the importance of local communities' roles in safeguarding and give them greater focus in the process.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the most basic meaning of the verb "to facilitate" is to make something easier, whereas "to intervene"

is to take part in something so as to prevent or alter a result or a course of events. They are not a usual pair of oppositions, but we believe that they can be useful in the analysis of the cluster of Actions. Which of the Actions proposed belong to the one or to the other? Neither of these terms, however, can be found in the Aide-Mémoire about safeguarding measures.

Safeguarding plans very often stress the writing of books and production of films to be used in formal education. The aim may be to relocate an item from a stationary existence in a small community into a regional or national school system, to bring in experts to teach the practice or to establish organisations to support the item on a national level. These are heavy interventions, often fully in the hands of external experts, but perhaps, particularly in the short run, efficient to raise awareness and popularity of an element.

A facilitation approach, by contrast, might be when experts support and encourage the local community to maintain occasions for practice, negotiating with schools to let the children of a heritage community have time off to participate in such a practice rather than bringing it into the schools and the hands of teachers or external experts. Local authorities could find ways of subsidising events, for example, with free, suitable venues, and support for food and refreshments. They could write and talk laudably about the practice and the practitioner. In this way, external people, organisations and institutions could avoid interfering in the practice, yet still provide support to the practitioners and their activities. Such facilitation may not bring quick and easily noticeable results, but it might be more sustainable in the long run rather than heavy external intervention.

A practice primarily depends upon the skill and knowledge of its bearers. The intangible cannot be kept for posterity in the same way as tangible heritage elements. Objects can be cared for and kept in museums so as not to deteriorate. Intangible elements can only be preserved thus when they have been converted into tangible documentation, be it written descriptions, notations or recordings. This is very different from keeping a practice ongoing, and stressing the latter strategy is the most radical reorientation that the ICH Convention brought to the management of heritage.

## Examples

In the following, we describe some of our own experiences with heritage and safeguarding. These demonstrate how the concepts discussed in the chapter may play out in concrete cases. Underpinning Egil's examples is the fact that popular culture among the rural population was a resource to safeguard and it provided a basis for the huge movement of the folk dance revival. The movement was typically carried by voluntary amateur experts not only in his home country of Norway, but in most other European nations. The movements were highly diverse in political affiliation, in the ways in which they handled the relationship between the participatory and the presentational, and in how the traditional, rural material was dealt with in the name of safeguarding. Georgiana's examples stem from her time abroad in Nigeria, during which time traditional heritage was still abundant, although also inscribed in the nation-building processes. We then briefly describe how we met, related to and engaged with the idea of safeguarding.

### *The European Folk Dance Revival Movement and Sauda, Norway*

Egil grew up immediately after World War II<sup>4</sup> in the rural parts of the community, Sauda, which had been heavily industrialised some twenty years earlier. A liberal youth club affiliated with a national organisation working for nation-building and the "emancipation"<sup>5</sup> of rural youth was established there in 1909. It gave room for the revival of folk dancing, which was well established in 1958 when Egil enrolled. The club promoted a national dance repertoire used at the club's parties and performed on Norway's Constitution Day on the 17th of May and for tourists at the local hotel in the summer. The folk dance instructor, who came from another part of Norway, had, typically for many such instructors, no knowledge of traditional dancing in the actual community in which he worked. He taught dances from the national folk dance manual. Egil wrote about the youth club's history in his special assignment at the end of high school (Bakka and Eiesland 1964).

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<sup>4</sup> World War II, for most European nations, began in 1939 and ended in 1945. For Norway, however, the beginning was in 1940.

<sup>5</sup> The term emancipation here refers to rural youth becoming educated and demanding the same rights for their culture as those granted to the country's élites.

While interviewing elderly members, he found traces of a forgotten local traditional dance and started questioning the relationship between national and local dance repertoires. This caused him to start documenting traditional local dances that were not part of the national repertoire due to their complexity and variability.

The Norwegian national repertoire was established mainly through the efforts of Klara Semb, a woman from the capital city. She travelled the countryside to teach the song dance to liberal youth clubs and, at the same time, collected suitable traditional dances (Sælid 1964). The song dance was a partly invented tradition, based on steps and principles from the chain dance in the Faroese Islands but adapted to Norwegian songs and dancing. It was the ideological wish to reconnect to Norway's glorious medieval past and erase the influences of four hundred years of Danish rule that made the song dance so important. Another kind of dance, mainly of contradance type, was collected in the countryside. They had to be simple and easy to teach rather than representative of local traditional dancing to fit in the clubs. This was the purpose of Semb's manual, first published in 1922 (Semb 1922). In this manner, Norway had a folk dance revival movement dominated by a national repertoire and youth clubs. In addition, there was a smaller branch established by traditional folk musicians to promote the complex and locally diverse music. Dance was included here, and the work mostly happened through competitions (Mæland 1973, Ranheim 1998). Norway has one item on the Representative list where dance is at the core – Practice of Traditional Music and Dance in Setesdal (UNESCO 2019). Setesdal is a small valley in Southern Norway, a stronghold of traditional expressions, and the nomination is clearly an example of stationary local safeguarding, very different from folk dancing in Sauda.<sup>6</sup>

### *The Christmas Tree Party*

When Egil was a child, his mother would take him and his brother to Christmas Tree Parties during the festive period, which lasted from the first to the thirteenth or even the twentieth day of Christmas. What follows is a description of the conventional Norwegian party.

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<sup>6</sup> Egil has described the difference in attitudes of heirs and users, a distinction which has not, however, been discussed above (Bakka 1994).



Figure 2. A Christmas tree party for employees and their families at the Norwegian Centre for Traditional Music and Dance, Trondheim, 1994. Photo: Sff.

Christmas parties are held during Christmas or in the New Year. The third day is in many places a day for traditional Christmas tree parties, a custom which became widespread around the beginning of the twentieth century. In the early days, the teachers were often in charge in collaboration with the villagers and the schoolhouses were frequently used as a venue.

Common features of a traditional Christmas tree party are the serving of coffee and soft drinks, Christmas biscuits and pastries, further games or competitions, walking around the Christmas tree and singing Christmas carols, and a visit from *nissen* (a local version of Santa Claus), who distributes goodie bags to the children.

When Egil settled down in Trondheim and had children, the family would go to Christmas Tree parties arranged by the club for the local rural youth, and which were held by and for members with children or grandchildren. Sometimes, the family went to a party arranged by the university for staff members. The Norwegian Centre for Traditional Music and Dance also arranged a party one year when many staff members had children of suitable age, and for a few years, when many friends had grandchildren of suitable age, he arranged a private party. Most of these parties gave pos-

itive experiences for children as well as for grown-ups, attracting some thirty to eighty participants. The parties would be held in rooms which could easily accommodate seating with tables along the wall and sufficient space for a Christmas tree and concentric circles, allowing most of those present to participate.

Egil's family also attended a few Christmas tree parties arranged by the suburban school in Trondheim, Tonstad Skole, where his children went in 1980. The school had some four hundred and fifty to five hundred pupils, but those parties did not work well primarily because too many people turned up compared to the size of hall available. There were all too few seats and tables, so the people needed to stand. There was little space for the circles around the Christmas tree, and few parents participated in the singing and walking around the tree. Instead, they remained standing around the room talking to each other, creating a noise that totally overwhelmed the singing of the children and teachers. The feeling of togetherness was lost; the parents hardly knew each other and did not feel comfortable participating. This example shows the vulnerability of informal customs where in this case, numbers of participants, space and social cohesion were critical factors. It seems that facilitating the work to keep these parties running would only require simple measures of supporting and promoting them as important.

### ***Facilitating the Safeguarding of Nigerian Edo Ritual in the 1980s<sup>7</sup>***

In January 1980, Georgiana arrived in Benin City, Nigeria, to take up a position as researcher-lecturer in the Department of Creative Arts at the University of Benin in order to establish a dance section. This was three months after the return to short-lived civilian rule and democracy after a military regime lasting thirteen years. More importantly, for this example, it was nineteen months after Akenzua II, Oba of Benin, the Edo monarch, had died and ten months after his eldest son Oba Erediauwa had been enthroned after an elaborate series of succession rites (Nevadomsky 1983/1984; 1993). His father had been a moderniser encouraging his people to obtain Western education, changing the traditional costumes of chiefs to

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<sup>7</sup> In the following sections on Georgiana's experiences in Nigeria diacritics have not been used in Edo, Yoruba or other African language words.



Figure 3. Chiefs dancing at Igue Festival, Benin City, 1980s. Photo: © Georgiana Gore.

make them more dignified and so on. Oba Erediauwa, his name translated as “I have come to settle my people” or more loosely as “he who has come to put things in order” was what one might call a cultural conservationist. He not only upheld but consciously revitalised the palace ritual traditions amongst which the grand festival held over the Christmas period, Igue. So, it was in December 1980 that Georgiana first witnessed, Emobo, one of the seven public ritual events comprising Igue.

The main aim of Emobo is to ward off the remaining evil spirits from the land after the central rite of Igu’Oba while also commemorating the defeat of a neighbouring rival by a former king. This is the only ritual during Igue when the Oba leaves the palace grounds to enact the requisite propitiatory activities in front of a tree shrine by the main palace entrance. To this end, accompanied by his chief priest the Isekhure, he performed, to the rhythms of the Ogbelaka royal drummers, a “spiritual” dance while beating an ivory gong. This first experience of Igue was to lead to progressively more intense fieldwork during which Georgiana documented the other six events over the following nine years until December 1989 (Wierre-Gore 1998) prior to her departure in January 1990. During her stay in Benin City, she was informed through hearsay that discussions were held each year

not only to determine the exact date of Igue and its rituals following the lunar calendar, but also to determine the order of events – Emobo, for example, was not always performed at the same point in the ritual cycle – and other aspects of festival. Moreover, rehearsals were also held, the details of which were not revealed.

Georgiana returned, in 2013, to tracking Igue online both during Oba Erediauwa's time and under the reign of the new monarch, his son, Oba Ewuare II, as well as in the Irish diaspora where it had taken root since at least 2008. She only discovered in 2024 that no non-Edo is permitted to be in the presence of the Oba during Igue and, therefore, to assist in any capacity in the festival. But more importantly, since Erediauwa's demise and no doubt that of many of the chiefs performing at Igue during her stay, Igue appears to have changed, becoming a more popular festival and perhaps losing some of the traditional details, though it may only be that they are no longer shown online to a heterogeneous non-native public. Safeguarding of Edo culture and values certainly was and, according to online reference still is, at the heart of Igue's annual festival. While the term safeguarding was not explicitly used, Oba Erediauwa, his chiefs and the other participants by "doing Igue" annually were engaging in a process of facilitation thus ensuring the festival's sustainability. For the Oba and his close associates this was indeed part of palace policy supported by Benin's Traditional Council. For others, it was part of customary practice related to Edo identity. Revitalisation of some aspects of Igue, already performed by his father, was related to the highly formal monarchical and presentational aspects of the festival, requiring attention to detail, although it was also a popular participatory event for many.

### ***Dance Teaching in Nigeria as Interventionist Safeguarding***

During the ten years mentioned above during which Georgiana established a dance section in the University of Benin, she contributed to developing an undergraduate curriculum in Theatre Arts by designing the dance courses therein. These courses included practical classes in dance and choreography as well as those more theoretical such as Dance and Society. The final year Dissertation was produced by all students whether they were majoring in Theatre Arts, Music, Film or Dance. Practical classes were taken by all students in their first years of the programme and they had to participate in

the annual departmental performance given publicly at the end of the year. This could be a dance performance or theatre including dance and music.

When she arrived, the head of Theatre Arts, who had established what later became a department, was a North American. The general curriculum as with others in the country was based on Euro-American ideas so there was, for example, a first-year course taken by all in the History of Theatre, which needless to say was Western theatre. Plays studied were nonetheless those of the best Nigerians including the elder Hubert Ogunde, the 1986 Nobel prize winner Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi and the younger Femi Osofisan, who for two years was the head of department, as well as other Africans such as the Kenyan Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o and South Africa’s Athol Fugard. In practical dance classes, Georgiana opted to train students in two orientations. Although she had no experience in her native English folk dancing being an enlightened amateur post-modern choreographer with a training in physical theatre and what today qualify as somatic techniques, the focus of her dance classes with all first or second year students was on traditional Nigerian dancing. She identified the most skilled representative of a specific tradition, mostly Southern Nigerian, who became the “teacher” under Georgiana’s attentive guidance. On the other hand, in the final year dance/choreography classes for those specialising in the subject, she used the eclectic array of techniques learnt over years but especially Don Oscar Becque’s work<sup>8</sup> adding much improvisation. Working without music and doing floorwork were totally anathema but she persevered at least in the first years. For their solo or group practical assignments, students chose either to present a traditional dance or a choreography based on popular dance, mostly break dancing seen on television or video.

From the outset in her own choreographic ventures over the ten years, Georgiana derived inspiration from her reflections on and experiences in Benin City in which tradition and modernity intersected. She thus combined traditional dancing with the more contemporary, sometimes delving into local myths and cosmology. Safeguarding or rather preservation was certainly present in her approach through the emphasis on transmitting traditional dancing. However, it is evident that the context and methods

<sup>8</sup> Georgiana studied in the USA with Don Oscar Becque, a pioneer in the dance world who had for a year been Director of the Federal Dance Theater Project. He had developed what he called in the 1970s “the work” designed to be a movement training for all dance techniques. It was based on his work with Mabel Elsworth Todd of *The Thinking Body* (1972) fame and drew upon Feldenkrais, Alexander and Release (Ideokinesis) techniques as well as Laban’s movement ideas. See Gore 2014.

by which this was done were interventionist, even if through the work on dissertations in which students undertook fieldwork in a location and on a dance of their choice usually related to their own heritage, some degree of facilitation was present.

## Conclusion: the Choreomundus Venture

Rather than conclude by summarising the contents of this chapter, we wish to examine briefly how the international master's programme which we co-founded with other colleagues, has contributed to some of the actions of safeguarding that we have addressed as we propose that it combines aspects of interventionism and facilitation in a unique way.



Figure 4.  
*Choreomundus students  
enjoy a bal breton, Maison  
des Cultures du Monde,  
Vitré, October 2023.*  
Photo: © Egil Bakka.

Georgiana and Egil met during the 1990s in the symposia of the International Council for Traditional Music and Dance Study Group on Ethnochoreology with many other colleagues from ethnochoreology and the anthropology of dance. A series of bi-annual seminars for young and then new ethnochoreologists starting in Hungary, continuing in Britain and France, then came to Norway and remained there for nearly ten years as a series of Erasmus Intensive Programmes, funded by the European Commission. At most they brought together some twenty teachers and sixty master's and PhD students from Europe. Four teachers from these courses, their host, Egil Bakka, Norway, Georgiana Gore, France, Andrée Grau, UK, and László Felföldi, Hungary, with their universities, then formed a consortium and managed to obtain in 2011 co-funding for the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master (EMJM) programme *Choreomundus – International Master in Dance Knowledge, Practice and Heritage* (Gore, Grau and Koutsouba, 2016: 184–188).<sup>9</sup> The programme has education of dance scholars with specific competence in ICH as one of its main pillars. After having admitted thirteen cohorts with some two hundred students from eighty countries, there would be good reason to reflect on how the programme has situated itself in relation to work with safeguarding but it would be beyond the scope of this chapter.

We will, however, briefly comment on how the work within *Choreomundus* relates to the terminology we have proposed. Some students have become experts in specialist institutions working to safeguard ICH or even specialist institutions for dance heritage. Others engage in facilitating dance and other forms of ICH in communities within their home countries or in diasporic communities abroad – some approaches being more interventionist depending on the local context. During the programme, we hope that, by discussing and analysing the terms of the Convention in general, seen more particularly from a dance perspective, this may secure knowledgeable and reflective experts. Even if the programme has and had teachers who conducted research on most continents of the world, the teaching is necessarily based on European perspectives. This may be regarded as a case of intervention, whereas enabling students to learn about theories and perspectives originating in other parts of the world might be viewed as facilitation. Students are, nonetheless, encouraged to analyse and write about dances from any part of the world more especially in the Disserta-

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<sup>9</sup> See [choreomundus.org](http://choreomundus.org)

tion fieldwork and modules. We consider this feature of the programme to be an element of facilitation. Viewed from the perspective of decolonisation, an aim would be to enable all parts of the world to develop theory and perspectives in relation to their own countries and regions. A vital question then is if and how European-based education for students from other parts of the world can achieve a balance between, on the one hand, teaching foreign students about European perspectives and, on the other, facilitating the possibility for students to access and engage with theory and perspectives from elsewhere, and more particularly from the countries and regions where they were raised.

We hope that through this investigation of the terminology employed in the text of the 2003 Convention and the discussion and examples related to our proposed alternative pairings of terms - especially that of intervention and facilitation - we may spark debate on how best the safeguarding of dance as ICH may be best characterised and effected.

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