Taking Cultural Heritage Seriously. Sociological Theory, Emotions and Human Rights. Niklas Luhmann in Memoriam[*]

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Abstract

This study focuses on the communication of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), defined to include the scientific production of researchers across both the hard sciences and the humanistic and social realms. Considering museums as institutions of memory undergoing transformation due to new technologies, we analyse institutional definitions of ICH and museums from a global perspective. We also examine the languages, technologies, and contexts suitable for communicating ICH in museums.

Our analysis is based on an empirical study conducted in Germany, exploring the use of digital technologies to transmit and valorize ICH through museum initiatives, with a focus on the emotional aspect. In addition to its theoretical background, this study reflects on the roles of law, human rights, and emotions in defining cultural identity, concluding with a provocative proposal on enhancing cultural communication.

Keywords: science communication, conservation of cultural heritage, critical museology, emotions, digitization, human rights.

1. Introduction: scientific knowledge and humanistic culture

In recent years, there has been a shift in the understanding of cultural heritage, leading to significant changes in conservation and enhancement methods. The emergence of digital technologies has also profoundly affected heritage treatment. These technologies have created a new form of heritage that

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[*] November 2023, when we closed this article, marks the 25th anniversary of his death.
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falls between tangible and intangible, often referred to as digital heritage. This has fostered a new culture in practices and content, where existing legal principles both facilitate and impede digitization and access.

Developing cultural policies requires interaction between disciplines in the humanistic-social realm. This interaction is crucial for determining a common culture in defining historically conditioned concepts and constructing practices that promote sharing and participation. Furthermore, the definition of culture must encompass the medium of expression, which applies to our ability to communicate science and share knowledge resulting from our research activities.

We emphasise the importance of science communication, practised both within the academic system and to the general public (Kulczycki, 2013). In principle, we believe that both activities, particularly in the Humanities and Social Sciences, could use a different language. However, it is often the hard sciences that find expression in unformalized language in communication activities outside academia and are in high demand by the general public. Communicating science outside the academic field should include both hard sciences and the Humanities and Social Sciences. It is not about popularising or sensationalising but about fostering a culture of communication, building, and sharing knowledge that ultimately becomes a shared legacy (Bo, 2007).

This shift is occurring at a time when humanistic subjects are gradually disappearing from school curricula and universities in favour of technical knowledge, which is considered more useful in the employment market (Nussbaum, 2017). This scenario affects the popularisation and cultural debates outside the world of education. While philosophy appears to be gaining ground, it remains another instrument for transmitting hard science and technical content, often through media such as photo contests, public speeches, and theatre (Gauß & Hannken-Illjes, 2013/2012)[1].

This perspective is significant when considering new ICH categories. The inheritance we define as the "evolution of thought", linked to our work as researchers, finds a possible place within the culture of our time, along with the ideas and writings that define our disciplines. We must not forget the knowledge we contribute to creating, which can and should be represented and valued in new forms. Humanities and Social Sciences research shows that a researcher can create culture in a broader sense beyond disciplinary boundaries and the academy. This enhances the importance of the science-society relationship, as the term "science" fully encompasses human and social sciences. From this perspective, The Internet and digital content now offer an opportunity, as the

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[1] Science Slams, for example, contrasted with more explicit artistic formats such as Lecture Performances and Action Teaching.

Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities points out, to build "a global and interactive representation of human knowledge, including cultural heritage." It could be viewed as the initial stage of a process rather than its culmination. The subsequent step would be to create a novel method for exchanging and encountering this knowledge.

Based on the survey results, we can observe that digitization offers a valuable opportunity to modernize the presentation of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in museums, emphasizing cognitive and emotional impacts. From this point of view, museum environments provide a basis for using artistic and visual languages in ICH valorization and knowledge exchange. On the other hand, Critical Museology suggests rethinking cultural property classification and redefining museum roles in knowledge management and research. Our framework thus will try to integrate Museology, Social Sciences, and Digital Humanities to assess the value of digitized scientific legacies (ICH) in museums. It highlights the importance of this heritage in understanding contemporary society, where Social Systems Theory provides tools to create a knowledge experience through dialogue with Critical Museology and Digital Humanities, offering unique perspectives on the discussed concepts and methodologies.

2. Social memory and cultural heritage

Sociology of memory had to wait until the 1980s for the link between social memory and identity to become a central theme, writes Carbone (2009), who then quotes Olick and Robbins: "Memory is a central, if not the central medium through which identities are constituted. Inquiries into identity and memory are … related." In their extensive commentary on social memory, they quote a significant passage that seems to reintroduce Tönnies' concept: "Communities…have a history - in an important sense are constituted by their past - and for this reason we can speak of a real community as a 'community of memory', one that does not forget its past" (Olick and Robbins as cited in Carbone, 2009, pp. 89-90).

The theme of identity in reference to communities is a central assumption in thinking about cultural heritage, particularly intangible cultural heritage. The theme of memory is also presented as inseparably linked to the concept of culture. We briefly address this with reference to a controversial text by Niklas Luhmann (1999) on culture as a historical concept. In this text, the German sociologist examines the birth and evolution of the modern concept of culture, which had defined elsewhere (Luhmann, 2000) as one of the worst concepts ever invented. For a closer look at the meaning of this statement, we refer to Luhmann (1999) and Schaffrick (2016). Here, we want to observe the social

dimension added to the historical-functional definition that characterises this contribution. In the same text, where Luhmann refers to Aleida and Jan Assmann, he states that culture is the memory of social systems, primarily the system of society. It is precisely his definition of memory that interests us in this regard, which we will explore in a broader context that draws on the conception of the function of cultural goods. As Matthias Schaffrick (2016, p. 277) writes in his contribution to the discussion of Luhmann's essay, "since the operations of social systems always take place as events that 'with their appearance immediately return to disappear,' a mnemonic function develops in social systems, which 'compensates' for this minimal actuality. For memory, remembering [...] is just as important as forgetting." In fact, memory for Luhmann (1999, p. 41) "is not an archive in which what is past is stored and can be found again; memory instead makes available in the present pasts that serve as a backdrop for the design of a possible future."

On the other hand, as anticipated, we find that the German philosopher Thomas Ebers (2022, pp. 60-61) effectively portrays the link between memory, cultural heritage, and identity, starting with his definition of cultural goods as "deliberately selected markers that open and make possible memories and represent points at which cultural origin and identity are condensed." From this point of view, it is no coincidence that our reflections are articulated in a particular cultural sphere. One only has to look at the peculiar trajectory of the concept of cultural heritage in Germany compared to other European countries, other traditions, and other linguistic usages to realise the plausibility of the discourse. Compared to the terms cultural heritage and *patrimoine culturel*, in Germany we talk about *kulturelle Erbe*[2], with additional specificities regarding the historical moment in which the term was born and began to spread, the 1980s, thus lagging behind the international context, and in reference to its diffusion in the international scholarly debate. The cause is probably due to the problematic legacy of Germany's past, ethnologist Bierwerth (2018) tells us again. Similarly, we point out, with the Italian scholar Marilena Vecco (2010), how the triad mémoire-identité-patrimoine that emerged in the French debate in the late 1990s has no German correspondent. On the other hand, it is also interesting to point out how, in contrast to the French term *Patrimoine*, in the English-translated texts we find the terms *Property* and *Heritage*, the former with a clear meaning oriented to possession, ownership, while the latter term rather indicates the action of inheriting and will be the one that becomes established in the international arena.[3]

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[2] The term *Erbe* means both heir and inheritance.
[3] The French language also has the term *Héritage* but its meaning differs considerably from the term *Patrimoine* (Vecco, 2010).

Let us return to the German philosopher's proposal (Ebers, 2022) and the opening statements on memory in connection with cultural heritage. The English term cultural heritage was codified in the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in the Event of Armed Conflict. This origin would indicate that cultural heritage has somehow been shaped by the fear of loss. In parallel, we might say, Attila Marton (2011) points out that one of the reasons that have increased interest in the study of memory is the traumatic experiences resulting from events such as the Holocaust and the Vietnam War, or even the struggle of states to reclaim their past after the fall of dictatorial regimes and colonialism. More abstractly, Marton (2011, p. 25) adds that "the increasing interest in social memory is connected with the deconstruction of the grand narratives of national identity but also of historiography's mission to uncover a 'true' memory." In this regard, Marton expresses himself along the same lines as Ebers by concluding that, "traces of the past are obsessively archived due to an increasing anxiety of losing the past into oblivion - an anxiety brought about by the rapid acceleration of everyday life" (Kallinikos as cited in Marton, 2011, p. 25). On the other hand, Ebers (2022, p. 60) states, if "memory conditions the possibility for the appropriate dealing with the lost and the dead ones," then, "the protection of cultural heritage is no other than a mnemotechnique that is established in international law."

Based on these considerations, we arrive at a different conception of cultural heritage and its function. The German philosopher's thesis linking memory, cultural heritage, and identity is not substantiated by the need to remember cultural goods, whether movable or immovable, and cultural heritage as a whole, in its tangible or intangible components. Rather, referring to a certain consideration of memory, identity and dignity that we will take up later, we find that: "Cultural heritage not only bundles the collective memories of humanity and the expressions of our ancestors. It also positively represents the dignity, uniqueness, and identity of humans, peoples, groups, and communities living today" (Schorlemer as cited in Ebers, 2022, p. 61).

3. Scientific heritage as intangible heritage

What is the future of scientific knowledge in the Humanities and Social Sciences? What happens to a "scientific" work after its author's death? A sort of permanence is guaranteed within the academic debate, with distinct peculiarities among the disciplines. While the hard sciences have spearheaded the digital transition in scientific publishing due to the extensive use of the English language and the preference for paper-based formats, the soft sciences have predominantly relied on paper publications, preferably books. Only

recently have they transitioned towards the virtualization of their scientific production (Longo & Magnolo, 2009). Moreover, the Digital Humanities revolution connects the hard and soft sciences, raising the question of whether this has bridged the gap between the two and, as a result, whether the soft sciences can be considered fully-fledged "sciences."

However, there is a noticeable divide in the popularisation of science between the hard and soft sciences. Hard sciences have received considerable attention from individuals and institutions, including political entities. The dissemination of scientific knowledge primarily focuses on hard science research, intended, practised, and expected to be so.[4] Taking an evolutionary perspective on modern science, one wonders whether the distinction between natural sciences and human and social sciences still holds or if we are observing an adaptation of science to society, thanks to technological advancements. Ultimately, it is not just the general public who struggles to incorporate the human and social sciences into the science concept: even science sociologists, for instance, focus solely on hard sciences.

In this article, we refer to a project, still in its early stages, whose aim is to recognize the immaterial and museological values and enhance the value of scientific production in the Social Sciences. Our reference for the project is Niklas Luhmann's social systems theory, one of the most significant sociological works of the 20th century. His theory, along with that of Parsons, constitutes one of the few efforts to provide a comprehensive model of society. This is one reason for our choice. The other is the project "Niklas Luhmann - Theorie als Passion," with which Bielefeld University is digitising Luhmann's opera omnia (Luhmann Archive[5]) and its file cabinet (Der Zettelkasten Niklas Luhmanns[6]). This allows us to refer to Luhmann's entire scientific production as a unified theoretical corpus.

From this perspective, social theory can be viewed as a form of Cultural Heritage in a scientific and academic sense, which is currently in the process of digitization. The digitization process contributes to both conservation and restoration requirements. Considering the digitization project's objective of enhancing heritage accessibility for academic research and the public, it is important to consider appropriate preservation and appreciation methods for the intangible heritage represented by this theory. Additionally, considering that the scientific work we are discussing presents a general theory of modern society, understanding this theory would benefit specialists from other disciplines and members of the non-specialist public by providing a deeper

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[4] For the opposite trend, refer to Banas (2018).
[5] Http://niklas-luhmann-archiv.de/.
[6] Http://ds.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/viewer/collections/zettelkasten/.

understanding of contemporary central issues such as equality, love, power, money, and the functioning of institutions such as democracy, human rights, and the relationship between science, politics, and mass media, among others. How can this added value be communicated effectively?

Digitization within the human and social sciences framework strengthens the recognition of scientific production as exceptional. This deserves consideration for its preservation and enhancement actively and socially as part of our shared heritage. However, our analysis of the scientific heritage of researchers reveals a scarcity of mentions of scientific production in the heritage sense. While UNESCO's definition of ICH includes the "practices, expressions, knowledge, or techniques transmitted by communities from generation to generation," it primarily pertains to cultural practices, traditional knowledge, and skills specific to ethnography and anthropology. Where is the intangible scientific heritage (Boudia & Soubiran, 2013; Muñoz Viñas, 2023)?

The analysis of scientific productions within the social and human sciences involves an interdisciplinary examination of the nature of this heritage and its preservation and dissemination. This also extends to the study of museology and museography in modern terms, which encompasses leveraging patrimonial tools via digital technologies and artistic and visual language to enhance its presentation. Conversations from diverse fields such as sociology, communication studies, and heritage conservation provide a new perspective. This perspective exposes, debates, and communicates previously unknown concepts, terms, and methodologies.

This project seeks to answer questions about the treatment of scientific knowledge in the Humanities and Social Sciences by examining the contexts in the scientific field related to cultural heritage, communication, and the role of museums in relation to this knowledge, which is considered a unique intangible heritage according to the new definition and its digitization. The relationships among knowledge production in universities, museums, and society must be reconsidered. The project reflects on a specific case – the scientific production of a social theorist – and seeks to generalise these reflections to broader scientific issues. Every act of scientific communication can be deemed a cultural heritage, as it is rooted in the existing scientific discourse. This notion is particularly relevant to our proposal because, with respect to this recognition for scientific research achievements, in the specific case we are talking about, it is a scientific production that collectively represents a comprehensive theory of modern society.

4. Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and museums: international definitions and scientific debate

Heritage conservation presents complex definitions of intangible assets that are not always reflected in legislation. Enhancing intangible scientific heritage is not yet widely understood due to factors linked to the traditional consideration of cultural and scientific heritage as tangible. We will return to this issue later. For now, we would like to highlight how some authors (Smith & Campbell, 2017, p. 26) support the thesis that the now widespread use of neologisms such as "intangible value" and "tangible value" is a symptom "of disquiet among heritage professionals in the face of challenges to traditional ways of assessing the significance of heritage sites, objects, and places offered by the increasing international acceptance of the concept of intangible cultural heritage." Referring to the Spanish Law 10/2015, dated May 26, for preserving ICH, the Preamble mentions the Franceschini Commission's proposal of an open cultural asset concept, which includes "everything that integrates a connection to the History of Civilization…" and intangible scientific heritage can be a part of it.[7] The 2003 UNESCO Convention for Preserving Intangible Cultural Heritage limits this concept. However, it recognizes the "interconnection between intangible cultural heritage and tangible cultural and natural heritage."[8]

Recent research highlights a shift in the interpretation of heritage from material to intangible aspects. This has led to a significant expansion of the concept (Vecco, 2010). This expansion is controversial, particularly among German authors (Bierwerth, 2018) who argue that the interpretation of cultural heritage can vary widely and that broadening the concept risks inflating it, reducing its ability to safeguard designated goods. From a certain perspective, nearly anything can be considered cultural heritage, or the opposite. However, the German authors' reflections show that this broad conception of cultural heritage, which characterises the non-German linguistic sphere, allows for more subjective interpretations. Some even speak of identifying with cultural heritage, as people experience distinct emotions and memories connected to it, even though this is a collective inheritance by definition. We refer to a "personal cultural heritage" to underscore an individual's interpretation of cultural heritage: "In this scenario, even a world cultural heritage can be transformed into a personal cultural heritage if the observer associates personal emotions and memories with it" (Bierwerth, 2018).

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[7] Https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2015-5794.
[8] Http://es.unesco.org/themes/patrimonio-cultural-inmaterial.

From a different perspective, it must be acknowledged that all international definitions, including UNESCO, endorse a unified notion of cultural heritage as the ultimate possession of humanity. Despite this, as per Article 2 of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of 2003[9], the reference to individuals is not eliminated but rather resurfaces specifically regarding ICH, where people's crucial role is acknowledged: "Thus, it is highlighted as a characteristic that intangible cultural heritage is always tied to the people who practise it" (Grotz et al., 2023). This reference is indispensable and will characterise future reflections.

Despite recent developments, much remains to be done, considering that the intangible aspects are often related to culture as linked to places and a certain habit of thinking of heritage as a legacy from a distant past (Assmann, 2008). Among the few attempts available in the literature to consider the evolution of thought as intangible heritage, we know the work of some Spanish researchers (Arcos-Pumarola, 2022; Arroyo Serrano, 2022; Bermúdez Vázquez, 2022; Sillero Fresno, 2022) and a German one (Ebers, 2022) on the idea of philosophical heritage. Although this concept is linked to the place of production and primarily aimed at cultural tourism, it has the advantage of overcoming, even if not expressly thematized, the limitation of scientific discourse to the "hard" sciences only. Another interesting approach, also due to its geographical spread, is the idea of the Scientific Heritage of Scientists. This idea has spread almost exclusively in Eastern European countries, the Balkans, and the former Soviet Republics, establishing a connection between scientific heritage and scientific work, confirming the heritage character of the scientific production of research in academic fields. The intangible value, although not established, is also recognized for disciplines in the humanistic-social area (Grebnev, 2004). The impression remains, however, that the expression "Scientific Heritage" is used broadly, especially outside the heritage disciplines, or that it is only spoken of when the intangible heritage has generated material developments.

Regarding museums, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) approved a new definition of a museum in Prague in 2022 after a lengthy consultation phase. The definition states, "A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability.

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[9] "The 'intangible cultural 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."

They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing."

Meanwhile, a study conducted by a Spanish colleague (Arcos-Pumarola, 2016) on exhibition offerings of philosophical heritage in Europe revealed that Germany has the highest number of museum centres devoted to this theme, recognized as an integral part of the ICH domain and closely aligned with our conception of intellectual heritage in the Humanities and Social Sciences. From the perspective of educational museography, this survey examined three types of museums: those centred on significant figures in the history of philosophy, those dedicated to a particular historical period, and those focusing on philosophical concepts or themes as their primary attraction. Some travelling exhibitions were also considered, as they are among the most highly regarded. In 2016, a survey documented that Germany had eight significant museum centres and one noteworthy travelling exhibition. However, it is important to note that most museum institutions that focus on philosophical themes revolve around the biography and persona of the authors, neglecting the crucial aspect of conveying the ICH inherent in the authors' thoughts as expressed in their writings.[10]

5. Between definitions and practice: the ICH in museums and the digitalization of the intangible

Let's stay in Germany, then. We have seen how museums should be emphasised to contribute to diversity and sustainability through various modes of action, operating and communicating through community participation. They also aim for reflection and knowledge sharing, exceeding traditional core activities. Germany has experienced remarkable development over the past 40-50 years with the construction and establishment of new museums, offering new exhibitions, seeing record numbers of visitors, and receiving extraordinary public and media attention. Currently, museums face a crisis of legitimacy, as expressed by criticism of collection activities with no defined strategy. Graf and Rodekamp (2012) emphasised research activity and research networks, which are crucial for museums to evolve their profiles.

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[10] Therefore Arcos-Pumarola (2016) suggested implementing educational museography to fully communicate the intangible value of philosophical heritage; see also Galán-Pérez (2014).

The Institut für Museumsforschung in Berlin has undertaken the interdisciplinary project "Materialisierung des Immateriellen"[11] within this landscape and the museum activities highlighted above for the transmission and valorization of the ICH. This project examines the use of digital technology in presenting ICH by museums. It analyses the strategies adopted by museums for ICH communication and enhancement, focusing on the role of emotions in knowledge transmission, and the connection between cognitive and emotional processes, emphasising the use of emotional stimulation and cognitive mediation. The guiding question is: "How can digital formats contribute to the preservation, presentation, further development, and transformation of ICH?" The study was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, a survey of 101 museums was conducted to assess their engagement with ICH presented in digital format. The second phase involved in-depth interviews with selected institutions to obtain more detailed information concerning the function and efficacy of these digital offerings in presenting ICH. The Institute's primary responsibilities include collecting and assessing statistical data on all museums and temporary exhibits throughout the country and managing this information through databases. Beginning in 1981, the Institute conducted annual statistical collections that consistently updated the available records. The institute selected 101 museum institutions from a database of 6,800 complete files. The selection was based on the museums' proximity to ICH and the use of digital technology. The museum selection criteria focused on the cultural-historical perspective of their collections, considered an essential aspect of ICH. This perspective accounted for 80% of the sample. The final list was composed considering various museum offerings in Germany and digital applications in the six categories of ICH defined by UNESCO in 2019[12], such as oral traditions, performing arts, customs and habits, knowledge related to nature and the universe, traditional crafts, and forms of the organisation of society.

A final in-depth study was conducted on the psychological aspects of digital media use by the four users of one of the initiatives considered in the

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[11] https://www.smb.museum/museen-einrichtungen/institut-fuer-museumsforschung/forschung/forschungsprojekte/materialisierung-des-immateriellen/.
The project is part of a larger project entitled museums4punkt0, to whose platform we also refer for references to the document containing the results of the survey, which we quote:
https://www.museum4punkt0.de/ergebnis/recherchieren-austauschen-mitmachen-die-web-plattform-materialisierung-des-immateriellen-zur-digitalen-vermittlung-von-immateriellem-kulturerbe-ike/.
[12] This text refers to work by the German Commission for UNESCO:
https://www.unesco.de/en/culture-and-nature.

second phase of the study. As in the previous phase, this in-depth study focused on the functions and mechanisms of digital offerings.

The survey conducted by the German Institute revealed that many museums view intangible heritage as an indispensable facet of cultural heritage. Moreover, these institutions consider themselves pivotal in safeguarding and disseminating ICH knowledge. The transmission occurs via various means such as exhibitions, online platforms, and outside museums, enabling museums to foster links with urban spaces and other actors within the cultural sphere. One concern raised in the survey was the level at which digital content engages users, whether on the planes of intellect, emotion, or physicality. Although the transmission of knowledge and comprehension are fundamental, developers of digital applications contend that emotional dimensions are equally significant. ICH is closely associated with emotions and the stimulation of emotions is gaining recognition as a key factor in capturing interest and facilitating effective knowledge transmission. Interaction and participation are crucial elements and fundamental pillars of ICH that play vital roles in exploring the workings and mechanisms of digital applications. This relevance is particularly evident in its impact on cognitive and emotional processes (Berlekamp & Piesbergen, 2022).

Based on the survey results, the question of digitization presents a valuable opportunity to modernise the presentation of ICH in museums, focusing precisely on the impact at the cognitive and emotional level. Museum environments provide a theoretical and practical basis for using artistic and visual languages in the context of ICH valorization and knowledge exchange. An experimental component can be suggested within the confines of the theoretical framework of Critical Museology. This entails contemplating the conventional classification of cultural property and formulating a fresh definition and functionality for the museum, and its connections with communities, the general public, and the social milieu. In this context, examining the mission and vision of museums and heritage institutions in terms of their roles in knowledge management and research is crucial to the objectives of this study. The Digital Humanities should be included as a theoretical reference for Critical Museology, particularly concerning the utilisation of digital/virtual tools, the potential for data loss, the risk of a digital dark age due to computer obsolescence, and the importance of sustainability for information preservation and its impact on the environment.

This theoretical framework emphasises the integration of Museology and Humanities with Social Sciences. The objective is to assess the potential for enhancing the value of a digitised scientific legacy in a museum environment. It is crucial not to overlook the contents of this heritage, in view of its value in terms of the evolution of thought and as a theoretical tool for understanding present-day society. In this particular case, we think that Social Systems Theory

provides methodological and conceptual tools for proposing the creation of a knowledge experience, where theory functions as both a medium and content through dialogue with Critical Museology and Digital Humanities. The intersection of sociology and heritage conservation offers an unprecedented view of the concepts and methodologies discussed and debated.

6. Sociology, emotions, art and science

To complete our proposal and before coming to conclusions, let us supplement the path seen so far with some reflections on the relevance of emotions in social dynamics. A German author (Wiebel, 2017, p. 91) writes that "progress in the study of the link between politics and emotions is mainly due to two paradigm shifts." The first, the "linguistic turn," occurred in the 1960s, while the other, identified as the "emotional turn," took place in the 1980s. The latter caused "emotions, previously neglected by many scientific disciplines, to assume central importance in philosophy, psychology, medicine, neuroscience, and cognitive science."

Even sociology, we add, renewed its interest in emotions only in the second half of the 20th century, following the classic authors (Cerulo, 2018; Longo, 2020; Rossi, 2024). In particular, we note a salient point that marks the intellectual climate in which this interest matured: "The cultural-historical background in which all this took place is represented by the 1970s, in which a new intellectual perspective emerged, linked to a cultural and social climate in complete change […] in perfect agreement with what was summarised by Jean-Paul Sartre, who considered 'emotion as a magical transformation of the world' " (Galimberti as cited in Rossi, 2024, p. 71).

The investigations of the German author cited in the opening are valuable for our discourse, as they allow us, without delving into the neurocognitive and neurolinguistic aspects of emotions, to highlight some convergences in social research and hint at some interdisciplinary developments that converge in the conclusions of our discourse. Both the German and Italian authors, moreover, converge on the relevance of emotionality in reference to social dynamics.

According to Longo (2020), studying emotions from the perspective of sociological theory means studying the social nature of emotions and the emotional nature of social reality. The reference for this statement in the Italian author's work, Rossi (2024, p. 72), points out, is the work of Norbert Elias: "Elias' effort in all his works is to emphasise the existence of a close relationship between the social and psychological dimensions, as well as to make explicit the existence of an unbreakable link between the individual and the society of which he is a part." At the same time, the German scholar Wiebel (2017, p. 92),

introducing ICT as a third relevant paradigm shift with respect to emotions and social transformations, a point we will take up later, states that emotions drive human activity and that "positive emotions are particularly effective for the evolution of human societies." Similarly, Castells (as cited in Wiebel, 2017, p. 92), to underscore the importance of ICT in contemporary society, describes the Netzwergesellschaft as "characterised by the fact that information is an integral part of all human activity. 'All the processes of our individual and collective existence are shaped directly by the new technical medium,' of which information is the raw material and information processing the technology." This would be the result of a process begun in the 1930s and described in reference to human development as the co-evolution of brain and society, which now stands for the need to use new technologies if one is to keep up. Basically, then, for the purposes of our theme and before taking up further aspects of this perspective, we can conclude with the German author Wiebel (2017, p. 97) that "all forms of information processing are dependent on emotions" and, from another point of view, highlight how (Cerulo, 2022, p. 250) "all literary media, both those of the past and more recent, continue to affect the quantity and quality of our experiences, and contribute to the reconfiguration of how knowledge is stored, reproduced, and created."

There is one more aspect we would like to add at the end of the paragraph before reknitting the issues addressed so far. This is a different perspective on the emotional datum, with no pretence of exhaustiveness, which brings us closer to the starting theme.

In the context of the reflection around truth and interpretation, and to return to the dialectic between hard and soft sciences, philosopher Gianni Vattimo, in reference to the work *Wahrheit und Methode* by Gadamer, tells us that according to Gadamer (as cited in Vattimo, 1991, pp. 61-62) in modernity the cognitive model of the physical sciences is imposed, a model that "identifies the truth of knowledge with the quality of a proposition proved according to the methods of physics." With respect to the validity of all other forms of knowledge such as art, history, psychology, morality, and religion, to those who think that we cannot use the notion of truth in these cases, Gadamer opposes "an extramethodical experience" of truth, asserting that "even the encounter with a work of art is an experience of truth, on the basis that encountering a decisive text, such as *The Magic Mountain*[13] or the *Quartets* of late Beethoven, produces a transformation in the person who has this experience. A truth

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[13] It is only coincidental, we realize now, that one of the museums that entered the Institut für Museumsforschung survey, in the previous paragraph, is the Buddenbrockhaus in Lübeck, dedicated to the work of Heinrich and Thomas Mann: https://buddenbrockhaus.de/.

experience is a true experience. So there are methodical, physicalistic truths, and then there is a different kind of truth experience. There are the natural sciences and the humanities, epistemology and hermeneutics, causal explanation and interpretation."

Let us briefly summarize here to tidy up the suggestions we have seen so far and before moving on to the conclusion, where we will address an issue that we have so far left unresolved.

Improving scientific communication and expanding its accessibility to the public and academia are crucial for strengthening the bond between the scientific community and civil society. This can be achieved by implementing new communication methods for scientific research (Landow, 2006). Establishing conversational relationships with the public through tools that enable the use of languages other than those traditionally used for scientific research communication is also essential. This perspective allows for rephrasing the distinctions between hard and soft sciences and the relationships among science, technology, and art. It also permits exploration of the contrast between rationality and creativity, a rational language suitable for scientific investigation, and other languages that may be more advantageous for presenting scientific research to the general public and for systematization. Indeed, current scientific research and publication systems risk a utilitarian interpretation of reality and hinder innovative and creative ideas, which are essential for research to have a social impact. The ongoing debate on Open and Citizen Science highlights the need to change the current system.[14]

This study explores the idea that the scientific work of social scientists should be viewed as intangible cultural heritage, given the unique nature of general societal theories. However, current digitization efforts are inadequate in enhancing the value of this heritage due to the complexities of theoretical language and the necessity of treating this heritage as a unified theoretical corpus. From a museological standpoint, digitizing this heritage equates to its musealization, which serves to safeguard and preserve it. This process aligns with traditional archival activities of museums, which have historically functioned as repositories. However, this approach does not fully embrace the contemporary role of museums as defined by ICOM and observed in practice.

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[14] "Public communication of science and technology is a very distinct form of communication" (Maeseele, 2007, p. 7); see the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA): https://sfdora.org/.

7. Conclusion: is then a universal dimension for intangible cultural heritage possible?

We have witnessed profound and rapid changes affecting the qualifications of cultural heritage, along with changing institutional and individual sensitivities regarding what is considered worthy of preservation and how to preserve and enhance it for future generations. Changes that affect the distinction between tangible and intangible heritage are increasingly delicate in this sphere. Many scholars (Smith & Campbell, 2017) have expressed concerns about the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention, particularly in European and other Western contexts, for several reasons. The Convention emphasises the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, which can sometimes clash with universal human rights principles by protecting, for example, traditions that conflict with gender equality. At the same time, the protection of ICH may restrain or hinder economic development in some countries, where a choice must be made between maintaining traditions and progress. Their thesis, which we discussed earlier, is confirmed and clarified in the sense that "while the convention's preamble and various commentators have argued for the 'deep-seated interdependence' between intangible and tangible heritage […], the relationship between the two categories remains, as we argue, unstable and poorly theorized. This instability and continuing conceptual discomfort is, no matter how inadvertently, actively maintained by the 'intangible/tangible value' motifs" (Smith & Campbell, 2017, p. 27). The new centrality of the plurality of emotions, and thus the elaboration of possible individual experiences, is assumed in scientific research of a humanistic-socialist bent, together with the increasingly refined tools - almost violent in their effectiveness - offered by new digital technologies, confronting us with possibilities and scenarios unsuspected until recently. Whether society can afford such rapid technological development is becoming increasingly relevant. Additionally, new scenarios that neuroscience has opened up with research on mirror neurons, which invest in emotional responses to certain stimuli, need to be considered for future developments (Falletti et al., 2016; Ribagorda, 2022).

From another point of view, our "problem" is not "only" that of remembering and forgetting, protecting and enhancing, but can be seen in a twofold perspective. On the one hand, the issue of mere digitization of intangible scientific heritage says nothing about the forms of information processing that we have seen (Wiebel, 2017, p. 97) are dependent on emotion. On the other hand, the tensions that have arisen regarding the recognition of intangible cultural heritage, especially with regard to respect for human rights (Smith & Campbell, 2017), seem to once again propose a tension between global and local. And this is a point that also pertains to the first perspective.

Indeed, we are talking about a tension between the universal dimension of human rights and the localist dimension of intangible cultural heritage, linked as it is to identity and territory.

Is ICH truly anchored in the local? This perspective might undermine our proposal to consider the results of scientific research, across all disciplines, as ICH. We argue that such research constitutes a heritage of humanity due to its contribution to the evolution of thought and the global nature of the scientific community. This reintroduces the tension between the global and the local.

The concept of cultural rights, which emerged prominently in the 1960s, is rooted in the principle of cultural identity. Although cultural rights were mentioned in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 22) alongside economic and social rights, it was not until the 2007 Fribourg Declaration that cultural rights were broadly defined as "rights essential to human dignity." This development has led many to view the recognition of cultural differences and the protection of human rights as irreconcilable. However, it is possible to reconsider the opposition between the universalist dimension of human rights and the localist dimension of cultural plurality. Following Parolari (2016), we challenge several underlying assumptions: a) the notion that the post-World War II affirmation of human rights represents Western neo-imperialism; b) the view of cultures as monolithic, closed, and static entities; and c) the overemphasis on cultural belonging in defining individual and collective identities (Parolari, 2016, pp. 7-8).

Our choice to use Germany as a reference for discussing and analyzing theoretical arguments and practical experiences aligns with our aim. It is not about establishing cultural specificities but about demonstrating the necessity of questioning the definitions of concepts, particularly those of culture and identity. As Parolari (2016) notes, law itself is a culturally connoted phenomenon, highlighting "the interdependence between the right to cultural diversity and other fundamental rights enshrined at the national and international level" (Parolari, 2016, p. 2).

Returning to our initial dimensions, we conclude by revisiting a theoretical position that often stands apart, particularly regarding the concept of dignity, which we have seen constitutes the reference for the definition of cultural rights along with the closely related concept of identity. Luhmann (2002) argues that human dignity is enshrined as inviolable precisely because it is continually violated. The sphere of dignity is characterized not by objective recognition but by its subjective dimension, linked to emotions and our capacity to be moved, both positively and negatively, often in opposition to the culture of reference. We saw how, on the contrary, this capacity is anchored to a cultural identity defined in strict reference to the group or community to which one belongs.

In light of this, we question whether, rather than doubting the effectiveness of a human right to cultural identity (Sutter, 1998), we should instead reverse the terms of the question. We propose considering dignity, emotions, and human (and cultural) rights as a heritage of humanity.

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