

On the role intangible cultural heritage could play in the future national museums and a suggestion to take an example from the festival model in Morocco regarding local traditional music genres as well as the work of the AMAR foundation in Lebanon.

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The national museums in the Gulf and possible innovative practices to preserve and further develop intangible cultural heritage of the region.

At the moment huge national museum projects are on the way in several Gulf states. Qatar will have a National Museum designed by Jean Nouvel. Abu Dhabi will have a Sheikh Zayed Museum. Bahrain already has a national heritage museum and there plans on the way to build a larger one. Efforts are on the way to create a content for these museums. This is a region which is not known for a rich or monumental tangible cultural heritage. The museum where we are now, the Museum of Islamic Art, collects the legacy of Islamic Art from all over the Islamic world but there are no artefacts from this side of the Arabic or Persian Gulf. In an interview that is on the NYTimes website Pei, the architect of this museum, almost rejoices in the fact that he was able to create a museum that showcases art from all over the Arabic world. I think by the way that Pei is architect who always is able to emulate, even sort of 'listen' to the environment he is working in. In that same NYTimes documentary Jean

Nouvel designer of the Qatari national museum tells frankly that he was troubled by the question of what was going to be shown in his museum. For the tangible we leave that to the experts, but it is worth to note that a valuable part of the cultural legacy of the Arab peninsula consists of immaterial outings. Poetry, music, storytelling, customs. Part of this is still living culture. However due to modernisation and globalisation this is gradually making place for dominant cultural phenomena from elsewhere. This is not new, large swaths of immaterial cultural expressions from human history have virtually disappeared, often leaving hardly any trace except when parts of old cultures were absorbed into new cultures, in an evolutionary process. But probably it is going faster now.

Let us take music as an example.

In my introduction which is in the booklet I have given some examples of how not only the Western culture but also an in fact maybe for decades even more the culture from Egypt and Lebanon have been gradually marginalising local cultures.

This process comes from inside as well. A few years ago in Abu Dhabi I programmed the Sounds of Arabia Festival and had proposed to include a 'gala of the music of the Gulf'. The idea was to make an alliance between indigenous music from this region and indigenous music from Morocco and from upper-Egypt. At first this idea was welcomed, but then somebody realised Imagine if our Sheikhs would attend and the Lebanese or Egyptian ambassador would be present, wouldn't our primitive music be an embarrassment?

Recording and filming such intangible cultural expressions have changed the evolution of popular music. It secured that certain outings would be preserved. But it also focused on the culture of the major Arab cities that had the most direct connections with the European and American media industry. We are talking about Cairo in the first place, which took a leading in fact dominating role, in connection with its emerging film industry, and then Alexandria, Beirut, Damascus, Aleppo, Baghdad and the major cities of the Maghreb. Commercial demand propelled the development of music forward. At the same time certain registrations became so popular and influential that they became standard reference points, which had a fixating effect, and also had the effect of pushing certain genres forward at the expense of other developments, and at the expense of interest for the music of the past.

Let us now look at the Arabian Peninsula. While in the whole Peninsula there is a vast array of local musical styles, and some are still very much alive, they have been marginalised during the last decades the past century, and in a modernising world these are on the brink of being further side-lined. I will provide some examples of the music, and dance, of Qatar, Bahrain and Saudi-Arabia. With the opening of all various national museums there is an inspiring challenge to include this heritage, to document, archive and show it. But wouldn't it even be more tempting to do this in a way that it is not presented as just recorded remnants from the past or a at its best a marginalised present.

Yet now still there is a lively practice of the local indigenous musical culture. In weekends one can find groups of friends gathering to practice songs and poetry that were taught by them by their ancestors who were pearlfishers, Bedouin, tradesmen from India and Persia or even descendants from slaves from Africa, who have brought their own instruments like the African harp which still also exists on the African East coast and the Nile basin down to upper-Egypt and their own rhythms and even original African religious practices like the zar.

I will now play an example from Bahrain, in which all these elements are mixed in fact.

Last year for the Abu Dhabi Book Fair I did organise a festival of indigenous music from all of the Gulf states. Here is an example of the Qatari contribution.

What to do with all this in these upcoming museums. Of course it is possible to make beautiful exhibits, audiovisual presentations with beautiful audiovisual films, recordings of songs and storytelling and everybody who takes the time listening to and

watching all of this through headphones and videoscreens, with some instruments, costumes and pictures of famous performers from the past.

We can find some examples of successful ways in doing so inside the Arab world, both in innovative ways of preserving the recorded material as well as in keeping it alive.

But perhaps there are different ways of presenting this.

The AMAR foundation in Lebanon is archiving a wide range of music recordings of the past and turning them into material that can help to keep them alive in public memory. It releases thoroughly researched restorations of rare recordings from the past. Its musical researcher Mustafa Said meanwhile is a virtuoso performer and composer himself. In various ensembles he recreates music from the past and he presents it in a way that conveys its vitality and its potential for being unearthed as a lively music tradition. The Sharjah Art Foundation and the Sharjah Biennale have adopted the AMAR foundation not only by funding the archive work, and showing it but also by commissioning lead curator and musicologist Mustafa Said with performing new works, and entering cooperations with contemporary Lebanese audiovisual artist Tarek Atoui for a new performance based on the principles of classical Arabic music. For time sake I am not going to show examples of the efforts of the AMAR foundation and of Mustafa Said's music.

After this conference I will rush to Morocco to attend the Fes Festival of Sacred Music.

Morocco leads the way in combining festival policy with notions about preserving traditions, and even making the combination economically viable, through the attractiveness the festivals, in combination with the architecture of its cities, have for 'quality' tourism. This enables masters of the trade to continue their practices in a respected and economically viable way. Festivals like those of Essaouira, Fes and Agadir are examples. India and Pakistan by the way show good examples of such practices too.

The good things about such approaches are that they help to preserve the traditions in a way that they can keep on permanently evolve, like they have done for centuries under foreign influences. Moreover they give the opportunity for local communities to keep on finding pride and joy in their own traditions.

Meanwhile these traditions tell a lot about the mixed history of a region. In Morocco they are typically used as well as a touristic asset. The festival draw thousands and thousands of national and international visitors. And new music arises from it as we will see.

I would recommend setting up a project to study and emulate the models as developed by the likeminded festivals in Pakistan, India, Egypt and Morocco, with for instance Faouzi Skalli from Fes founder of the Festival of Sacred Music (which has now Björk, Teresa Berganza, Assala, Kazem Saher, Patti Smith, Archie Shepp and what's her name the daughter of Ravi Shankar as well) and André Azoulay (former mayor of Essouaira, Minister in the Moroccan cabinet and representative of the Jewish Moroccan community, and founder and still everyday inspirer of

the Essaouira festival), and people from the Rafi Peer organisation in Pakistan and the Maharaja of Jodhpur from the Jodhpur festival in Rajasthan, India).

Thus the newly built museums perhaps could also become canters for lively practice of the traditions, partly taking examples from practices like those at the AMAR foundation and Morocco and the others.

Neil van der Linden

Neil van der Linden, agent in culture exchange with North-Africa, Middle-East, Central

An example of a modernisation. Renowned Austrian jazz keyboard player Joe Zawinul (Miles Davis, Weather Report) with Hamid Kasri and his gnaoua ensemble at the Festival of Gnaoua Music Essaouira Morocco 2004.

<http://www.mondomix.com/video/hamid-el-kasri-avec-joe-zawinul-festival-gnaoua-d-essaouira-juin-2004>

Examples of a well-elaborated formula based on indigenous music, the Festival of Gnaoua Music Essaouira Morocco

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ipaNBKaPSo8>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pi_xucLSlvo

Another festival in that vein the Busara Festival of Zanzibar

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W68nLct_rn0

Fes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=igGHjXsnPoM>

Jodhpur

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iAYmDN3Ivxo>

Naguar

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4VM4VMjI9Y>

Bahrain

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZNzHvIHLCS>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RvyjUJyCKiE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-77M2dPk4U>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVmkFbcbrac>

At the Abu Dhabi Book Fair

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNNzS24G8TM>

Kuwait

Bin Hussein Sea Band

At the Abu Dhabi Book Fair Gulf music festival

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgHHVZngnUk>

Susan Day from Kuwait mentioned how programming such ensembles at the museum draws large crowds to come and see.

Sharjah

At the Abu Dhabi Book Fair Gulf music festival

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VqWair4un_4

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SArbjI0jP0Y>

Asir Saudi Arabia

At the Abu Dhabi Book Fair Gulf music festival

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8M17EjZ0a5c>

Sensational. From Jizan (opposite Djibouti and Eritrea)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6icxsMmjVw&list=PL633DDFE33EE8355C&index=6>

From the Hijaz two opposite styles

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YjQvy4RDNMI>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R87weWxadkc>

Oman ensemble from near Sur

At the Abu Dhabi Book Fair Gulf music festival

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DfdFCDdZdvQ>

Qatar's Faisal Al Timimi Band

At the Abu Dhabi Book Fair Gulf music festival

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03VSYxiYt98>

Example from Egypt

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-bZDCbbxoRo>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-8uSdpiRKVc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LaEUXnsrDp0>

Below in the view pictures mode a picture from the Qasr Al Hosn museum in Abu Dhabi showing a traditional dance.



Photo: Al Jazeera / Al Jazeera Media Network / Al Jazeera Media Network / Al Jazeera Media Network

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احتفالات العيد أمام قصر الحصن
Dancing outside Qasr al Hosn

ظلّ قصر الحصن مقر احتفالات الأعياد والمناسبات الوطنية،
وهنا تظهر مجموعة من الفتيات وهن يؤدّين عرضاً شعبياً
على أصوات الأهازيج الإماراتية.

Qasr al Hosn has always been the place where
people gather to celebrate. Here, girls dance at
a religious festival to the music of the drums.

