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Picturing Intangible Cultural Heritage

The vision of an easily accessible “cultural memory of the world” is very near. But cultural memory does not automatically come into being. It is shaped by the (social, political, economical etc.) will of people and institutions. The UNESCO Intangible Heritage convention is an example for the attempt to influence cultural memory.

Archiving and digitizing Intangible Cultural Heritage is an intricate task because these cultural expressions do not exist *as such*. They need to be mediated to come into being. Naturally, Intangible Heritage is mediated by humans acting as mediums. It is with the aid of audiovisual means, however, that cultural expressions are enabled to transcend space and time and become part of global cultural memory.

I would like to present some thoughts about questions pertaining to picturing Intangible Heritage. I stress that there is a need to move away from the classical discourse on ethnographic film and its ever present idea of representing culture as a master narrative. Instead we need to take into account today's and tomorrow's internet technology as the most powerful tool for disseminating and archiving cultural expressions. Key ideas for desirable future actions are multivocality and multisitedness, empowerment and experiment, cooperation and co-production.