

# Musical Heritage and Social Heritages. What is Woven in the Mediterranean (In Praise of the Tribe)

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The Mediterranean, a sea that unites and divides, a sea that creates and extinguishes, is an area for understanding what we have been and what we are today as a society. And for building a renewed area in which we can all feel welcome, an area that, for the moment, “has moved from being a cradle of civilisations to a damaged and threatened ecosystem, with the northern and southern countries in crisis.”<sup>1</sup> This is how it was defined this year in the 4th Rencontres Internationales Monaco et la Méditerranée (RIMM), in which participants highlighted its current state of emergency and discussed the fact that it has evolved from a solar Mediterranean to a dark and sterile Mediterranean, from being a source of inspiration to a source of rejection, and the urge to recover it as an area of fruitfulness.

## Communicating Vessels and Overall Solution to the Imbalances

It is meaningless to talk about culture without at the same time talking about the society supporting and giving birth to it, giving birth to it and supporting it in an endless circle of agreements and disagreements, of loves and hates. In fact, it is this balance between the factors, sometimes extreme and sometimes distant, that we must find the necessary corrections in the (local and global) policies for the communities to be physically and emotionally inhabitable. However, on

many occasions we realise that the creative block of art seeks to compensate for the social failures to meet up, which still have not found an effective and stable solution. This is an exercise in survival on the path of aesthetics, sometimes useless or discouraging in its results but completely necessary as a basic civilising principle.

So necessary that over the last twenty years the successive governments of central Europe have attached an almost urgent importance to rescuing and promoting intangible heritage while seeking to preserve the tangible and monumental heritage on their sites. It is not

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1. [www.rimm-mc.org](http://www.rimm-mc.org), Rencontres Internationales Monaco et la Méditerranée, March 2018.

only about cataloguing (which UNESCO has been doing since 2003<sup>1</sup>) but maintaining and recovering its intrinsic value as a reflection of the personality of the community and, at the same time, as a cohesive element and, last but not least, as a source of work and local wealth.

Today we can sense the struggle between progress and regression everywhere. Politics has moved significantly backwards in terms of tolerance, respect and social justice; in fact, what we have supposedly fought for since our generation developed awareness. Fifty years of mirage that, seemingly, have taken us back to the starting point. We still have a dream, and this dream obligatorily involves advocating what makes us a community.

### Heritage Legacy, the Reflection of Society's Sensitivity and Idiosyncrasy

Heritage is a whole. Dividing it into compartments means pigeonholing traditional culture. Perhaps at first it eases consumption but it also prevents us from understanding it as a single entity and in depth. Sometimes we tend to make lists, often preventing us from enlightening overall readings of situations in society that need to be analysed appropriately.

To socially advance we not only have to focus on parliamentary politics and macroeconomics but also to look at something more quotidian that is usually mere distraction, innocuous and insignificant, as happens with art. In this respect, and concerning the role of art in the analysis of the environment, in 2015 we said:

“Taking a prospective view, aware of the social de-structuring that threatens us, the role played by art at the vanguard of the interpretation of the events has been notable. It has be-

come almost ostentatiously present [...] pushing those with the power and the obligation to take sides and act in consequence. A call for attention, sometimes brutal, which (Oh! Surprise?) has been skilfully and quickly absorbed, trivialised and snubbed by the corridors of power almost to the point of taking all its potential for condemnation. Art is not allowed to be social. It is allowed only certain levels of protest: just enough to make it spectacle, mere graffiti that has paid the toll (more or less expensive, according to the countries) of submission.”<sup>2</sup>

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Something similar happens with heritage legacy, which some seek to dispossess of any power of social construction. Aware of this reductionist (and, indeed, annihilating trend), the principles and recommendations of safeguarding and promotion programmes go in one direction but the policies concerning them go mostly in the opposite direction.

The problem posed by the conservation of heritage, be it musical or any other kind, lies in society's capacity not only to experience and enjoy it as a spectacle that is given to us but to love and protect it as if it were our own. And this will not be possible if the link between manifestation and collective spirit is broken by the aforementioned inclination to compartmentalise.

The traditional manifestations of heritage – and music is one the main ones – are factors of universal integration and should be used to remove barriers but not differences between diverse communities and social sectors.

2. <https://whc.unesco.org/es/list/> and <https://ich.unesco.org/es/listas>

3. M. E. Morató, “Art... What for?”, *Quaderns de la Mediterrània*, No. 22, 2015.



Path in Siurana (Maria Elena Morató).

## The Role of the Cultural Regions and Overall Development of the Territories. On Culturicide

Universality, globalism (not globalisation) as an opportunity, is a factor of rapprochement: as a regulatory framework, it can easily be transformed into a joke that seeks to impose a restrictive and particular line of some visions over others, which is sheltered in practice in the supposed moral superiority of some societies, cultures and languages over others. It would be something similar to making the virtue of variety and cultural richness a defect to be eradicated. A casual glance at our most immediate surroundings will reveal these attitudes almost every day.

For this reason, we want to stress the regional field, which has proved to be the most efficient

unit, both in the detection of problems and conflicts and in the appropriate management of solutions. The centralised management of the states that administer diverse cultural regions tends to standardise them for the sake of comfort. On the pretext of advocating a supposed equality between people, they finally eradicate languages and rights and ridicule the different cultures of the regional minorities (whether they are recognised as nations or not).

Generally, in official statements the plural identity of some communities is asserted as undeniable, as an asset, but no action is undertaken to preserve it but rather to minimise it as much as possible and make it vanish. If people understood the importance of culture and diversity as a source of richness of societies,<sup>4</sup> there would be no attempt to sideline it. Eliminating difference, cultural variety, means

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4. Although perhaps it is understood, and the seriousness of the stances against that we see every day would place us at another level of analysis.

de-personalising and standardising. This is very serious because, on the pretext of seeking equality between citizens, standardisation usually obeys the desire of the dominant groups to perpetuate it. Reductionist maximalisms are responsible, with a greater or lesser degree of awareness, for advancing the culturicide of minorities. Plainly, they continue to be colonialist and imperialist attitudes, despite the excuse of the supposed “equality” they claim to pursue. Culturicide involves the demonisation (yes, demonisation) of what is different. It is not about perpetuating traditions (for the simple fact of being so) contrary to any peaceful logic but about ceasing to see differences as an enemy to be fought against and eliminated. A warning call: this is happening here and now. Culturicide is underway.

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Focusing on the issue of traditional culture, for centuries we have been fleeing from the fossilising trend of the heritage corpus in its living expressions (dance, music, song, theatre) avoiding as much as possible its excessive decontextualisation of society, at least in the theoretical field. However, it is much more difficult to see its recontextualisation; in other words, reclaiming what is ours as an asset for the present and future. Fortunately, the cultural regions are gradually becoming aware of all their values and are increasingly striving towards the creation of integral action

programmes that link environment and culture as a potential for social and economic growth.

In another article<sup>5</sup> we pointed out that since 2003 (when the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was approved) UNESCO has recognised the importance of this heritage as part of the sustainable development of societies. In that article we spoke of what heritage is, the features that define it, how it emerges, how we classify and analyse it and how we recognise these cultural treasures all over the Mediterranean. But at this juncture, it seems more interesting to broaden the perspective of the analysis by approaching it from a social context and as a justification for the future.

### **Attitudes in Favour of an Integrating, Responsible and Progressive Future**

In October 2018, the European Year of Cultural Heritage, we attended the European Heritage Days.<sup>6</sup> Inspired by the Open Door Days that the French Ministry began in 1985, since 1999 it has been an initiative of the Council of Europe and the European Commission with the participation of 50 signatory states of the European Cultural Convention. It is the most important participatory event in Europe on heritage. Its objectives are mainly to raise awareness among citizens about cultural richness and diversity and combat racism and xenophobia, encouraging greater tolerance beyond national borders. A form of promoting the possibilities provided by cultural heritage for the development of a society: a legacy of the past that enables us to look at the future with an unquestionable educational value and an asset of economic growth.

5. M. E. Morató, “Musical Heritage in the Mediterranean: Continuity Challenges”, *Quaderns de la Mediterrània*, No. 13, 2010.

6. [www.europeanheritagedays.com](http://www.europeanheritagedays.com) and [www.coe.int/fr/culture-and-heritage/european-heritage-days](http://www.coe.int/fr/culture-and-heritage/european-heritage-days)

Also coinciding this year with the presentation of the candidacy of the Priorat region<sup>7</sup> as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the reflection on heritage provides us with an extraordinarily dynamic and enlightening example of what heritage is today, how we can conserve it and what doing so in coordination with the diverse social and economic sectors means for a society. Framed within the same programme, the Terrer Autumn Festival (music, wine, architecture and landscape) held in the last quarter of 2018,<sup>8</sup> although focusing on “grassroots” music and dance, is an example of the integral and integrating territorial promotion work we mentioned.

In the Festival’s programme Rosa Vernet points out: “The candidacy of El Priorat as candidate for UNESCO World Heritage Site lies at this crossroads of multiple and constant diversities (geology, climatology, orography, history, language, customs and knowledge). A landscape based on a land but which does not exist without the people who experience it, work on it, make it grow, and extract minerals, water and life from it. The landscape is the result of this relationship between people and their piece of land. A relationship that may be rich and harmonious or predatory and aggressive. The result will always be a landscape, but the landscape will never be the same. A landscape, therefore, reflects, gives a face to the relations of all kinds taking place in a physical, social, political, economic and cultural space. [...] In this mosaic, intangible heritage is the mortar and the patina that unites and unifies each and every one of the pieces of all types that make it up.”

It is similar what in the southern Mediterranean Territor established as fundamental

starting points for action, an imaginary experimental territory conceived by the Tunisian filmmaker Samy Elhaj, who spoke of Utility Values:

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“Cinema is useful; films are useful; the media is useful. In our opinion, the purpose of films and the mass media is not to impose a ready-to-eat thought but to give the audience cinematographic, audiovisual and multimedia products, as well as textual, photographic and sound products that elevate their beings and their intelligences to inspired contemplation at the service of productive reflection. Without social and political justice, without ecological justice and above all without cultural justice, there are no economic or production cycles.”<sup>9</sup>

We generally see this trend to enhance heritage in all the riparian Mediterranean countries and, although it is not the object of this article to look at the causes of this attitude, it will be interesting to read some of the articles dealing with processes of heritagisation and those derived from political regionalisation and management of cultural institutions, mainly in Europe.<sup>10</sup>

## Heritage and Cultural Ownership. A Belligerent Vindication

“The challenges today involve recognising not only in theory but also above all in practice

7. Region chosen for emotional closeness.

8. Terrer and heritage, Rosa Vernet. Terrer Autumn Festival, October/December 2018, [www.terrer.cat](http://www.terrer.cat)

9. [www.territor.tn](http://www.territor.tn).

10. [www.cairn.info](http://www.cairn.info), the only collection of francophone publications in social sciences and humanities, and M.-A. Guerin, “Le patrimoine culturel, instrument de la stratégie de légitimation de l’Union Européenne”, *Revue Politique Européenne*, No. 25, 2008 (for example).

the determining role played by creation and, consequently, by art in the development of a mentally healthy, balanced and creative society, free to find new solutions and new practices, and with the courage to apply them,” as we also said in 2015.<sup>11</sup> Art and thought are not unproductive; they are our best tool for peace and progress. We must encourage education in art, not as history but as a method of knowledge and ownership of reality. In this respect, art and heritage play a similar role.

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We have seen how the protection and promotion of heritage is to a certain extent linked to a given model of open and decentralised society. Similarly, the scorn for it (insulted with words such as parochial, provincial or tribal) is rather related to political culturicide attitudes in countries that are disinclined to diversity or

dissidence and tend towards centralism at all costs and totalitarianism. The restrictions on information derived from this would be like the medieval burning of books.

Luckily, the “tribe” (in the sense of minority cultural community) seems to emerge from its lethargy and gradually abandon the complexes it had taken on. And remembering last October, when the Day of Indigenous Resistance was held in many parts of the world, we can argue that the “tribe” is the only one that breaks the global monopolies, for which it is endlessly attacked (from Amazonia to the heart of Europe) and labelled as contrary to progress, when what the word “progress” really meant was mental and cultural impoverishment, standardisation of criteria and common-or-garden tagging along thanks to the very powerful and modern opi-ums of the people.

Culture and its artistic expressions are the visible face of a community, so that its survival will have to face up to both the corporations that will try to take power from it and the multinationals that will try to steal its soul and appropriate its cultural traits... to destroy them.

Senators: we are tribe.

11. M. E. Morató, “Art... What For? A Reaction to Failure”, *Quaderns de la Mediterrània*, No. 22, 2015.