

Musealising hope: reflections on the saga of an artistic installation of human solidarity ¹

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“Musealising hope” reflects on the trials and tribulations of an installation designed as a tribute to the struggle for survival of African peoples who dare make the long trek to Europe by sea. Its accomplishment involved a number of players whose conduct and reactions to events bear witness to the manner in which artists, the media, heads of cultural institutions, museologists, welfare institutions, and politicians cope with the phenomenon of immigration and with our present-day multicultural societies. In turn, this artistic endeavour and its symbolic signification highlight the changes which art and culture have undergone over the past few years and the kind of transformation which new inter-ethnic communities have brought to bear on concepts such as national heritage, identity or memory.

This paper aims to analyse those developments from the perspective of Sociomuseology and to frame them within the context of some reflections, while suggesting a number of action guidelines for museums which may place such institutions on a proactive footing when tackling the phenomenon of the interculturality of the communities of our day and age.

The importance, to the future of Europe and the world at large, of consolidating a vision of cultural solidarity and cultural multi-

¹ First published in Spain by RDM – Revista Española de Museología nº 46 - 2009, Published in Italy by NM – Nuova Museologia nº 22 - 2010

ethnicity demands of us all, in general, and of cultural agents who work with heritage, very much in particular, that we ponder this theme, strive to understand its implications, and give thought to novel ways in which to act. In their capacity as mediators between the community and its cultural heritage, museums and museologists may not shirk their respective responsibilities.

This paper was compiled based on perusal of the files of Emilio González Núñez, an artist from Spain's Extremadura region who designed the installation in question and plays a leading role in this saga. His files record and document in minute detail all facts surrounding the events described herein and we thank him for having kindly provided them to the effect.

1 – MIGRATION, IDENTITY, AND MULTICULTURALISM

A shipyard in some African country tends to be the point of departure on a long trek that may lead to a new life with dignity or to misery and loss of the hope to ever return, or, tragically, to loss at sea, dead and forgotten. At many locations along the coasts of Africa neighbouring the Canary Islands or the beaches of Southern Spain, people build “cayucos”, also known as “pateras”, which are small barges a little over 6 metres in length for purposes of transporting people from the African continent to several European countries on an apocalyptic voyage rife with uncertainty.²

Among all phenomena associated with immigration, the one which perhaps most impresses modern society, given its dramatic profile, involves illegal immigrants who reach the southern coasts of a few European countries on a daily basis, standing as further evidence of the inequalities brought about by the phenomenon of globalisation at its worst.

² - Front page of the “El Periódico Extremadura” newspaper of 26 July 2006



Cover photo from “El Periódico Extremadura” of 27 July 2006

Adding to the almost daily drama of arriving African immigrants who reach the Mediterranean shores of Spain after spending their entire life savings and risking their lives by braving the sea on inadequate boats that offer neither safety nor a guarantee of success, is the number of dead by drowning, of hunger, or cold during voyages which often are also made by children, pregnant women, and babies little older than a few months. Almost on a daily basis, national and regional papers publish articles on the stubbornness of those immigrants and echo the misery and hope that motivate those men and women to brave such dangers.³

Political leaders move for the striking of repatriation agreements and prepare facilities to shelter and integrate those people but remain overwhelmed by the emergence of novel developments arising around this phenomenon day in and day out, given a lack of definition in EU legislation, the notion of social injustice which this problem entails, and the realisation that, despite all of the above, the fact is that the jobs which many of those immigrants perform do fill the gap caused by the trend of negative population growth which besets the countries of the Northern Hemisphere since the middle of the 20th century. To date, developed societies have been unable to adequately address a flow that will only cease when a new economic model and world order capable of

³ - Suárez, V.- *El Drama de la inmigración ilegal*. “El Periódico Extremadura” of 12 August 2006.

fostering the necessary development in those immigrants' countries of origin emerges.

Spain is one of the European countries forced to deal most closely with this phenomenon. According to M. Carrero, over three million immigrants boosted Spain's population over the past 10 years taking up low-paid jobs that have been indispensable to power the economy's growth in recent years, while studies conducted by Caixa de Cataluña indicate that immigrant labour has prevented the emergence of recessionary conditions in Spain over the past ten years.⁴

At present, immigration is of major concern to European governments and has forced change in those countries' social and labour relations. Africa's progressive impoverishment over the last few decades and the continent's burgeoning ethnic refugee problem in the wake of recurrent wars have led to a deluge of immigrants seeking the shores of Southern Europe. On the other hand, the prevailing global economic and financial crisis and the recent collapse of the real estate market, which had been absorbing significant numbers of workers from this human pool, makes it increasingly difficult to manage their integration. The sudden marked slowdown in building and construction growth has brought acute concerns on widespread unemployment among the more underprivileged classes to the fore and may lead to the dangerous temptation of giving preference to nationals for jobs formerly done by foreigners.

In their analysis of immigration to Spain, Iglesias Machado and Becerra Domínguez⁵ rank it as a leading concern among the Spaniards:

España, que constituye parte importante de la frontera sur se ha convertido en un país receptor preferente de los flujos migratorios,

⁴ - Carrero, M. (2006). *Coladero de inmigrantes?* El Periódico Extremadura of 25 – 08 – 2006 – Opinión.

⁵ - Iglesias Machado, S. and Becerra Domínguez, M. (2007). [La inmigración: el reto del siglo XXI](http://vlex.com/vid/inmigracion-444175). Dykinson. Published on-line. <http://vlex.com/vid/inmigracion-444175>

pasando a situarse el fenómeno de la inmigración en los primeros puestos de las preocupaciones de los ciudadanos y, últimamente, en un verdadero problema de Estado. Hemos pasado a situarnos a la cabeza de los países de la Unión, con una inmigración neta de 29,9%, seguidos de Italia y Alemania.

[Spain, which occupies a significant portion of Europe's southern border, has become a preferred destination for migratory flows, while the phenomenon of immigration now ranks as one of its citizens' main concerns, and, ultimately, it has become a problem for the Spanish State indeed. We've risen to the top of the European Union's chart with net immigration gains of 29.9%, followed by Italy and Germany.]

In contrast, and as a natural consequence of those new citizens' progressive integration into Spanish society, little by little immigration has been leading to change not only in the economy but also in the patterns of social behavioural of the host human group, resulting in a beneficial miscegenation of cultures and traditions that are becoming increasingly internalised, as is particularly evidenced by the younger generations. It may be noted that the customs, dietary habits, style of dress, and daily habits of the new arrivals do manage to impact and modify the cuisine, culture, and leisure habits of the autochthonous populations to produce a more open and tolerant multicultural society, the presence of isolated acts of racism and xenophobia notwithstanding. Domestic job creation programs and the on-going efforts of cultural and welfare institutions and NGO's, which have been engaging in initiatives to raise awareness of Multiculturalism that often find favour with the youth, are no strangers to those trends for progressive integration. In that regard, the findings of the *Juventud en España 2008* [2008 Spanish Youth] survey conducted by *Instituto de la Juventud*, as published in the *El País* newspaper, raise concern, and yet are also encouraging.

The survey found that the Spanish youth prizes those institutions and tries to get involved with them, ranking them, together with the UN, above their own country's governmental systems.⁶

This transformation, which is grounded on the integration of different cultures, has led to the emergence of novel concepts, such as Interculturality or Inclusion, and to a change in the traditional meaning of other concepts. The value of the word Identity, for instance, which characterised one of the strongest attributes of culture relative to the sense of nationhood or territory, as derived from an historicist vision of the 19th century, is now being put into question in light of the presence of other identities within modern nations which manage to invade and break down formerly consolidated cultural identities. As noted by Pereira Bastos:⁷

In the Immigration Wars that follow the Cold War, the West has been patently defeated by its "Other". As was previously the case in the USA, with or without walls and patrolling troops, Europe is condemned to **multiculturalism** from now on, and to religious relativism, cultural syncretism, tolerance to a wide variety of diverse customs and values, and the kind of sexual miscegenation it has battled for so long. Europeans, Europeans from Chinese extraction, Europeans from Indian extraction, Orthodox Christian Slav Europeans, Muslim Europeans, Europeans from South-American extraction, and Maghrebian Europeans

⁶ - Sahuquillo, M. A. (2008). *Los jóvenes se emancipan antes y son desinhibidos*. Article published in "El País" on 10/12/2008. Madrid: El País. Published on-line.

http://www.elpais.com/articulo/sociedad/jovenes/emancipan/desinhibidos/elpepisoc/20081210elpepisoc_6/Tes

⁷ - Bastos, J.P. (2007). *A Changing Culture - Identity, Interculturalism, and Cultural Hybridisation*. 12th International MINOM Workshop. September 2007. Lisbon: ULHT- Universidade Lusófona de Humanidade e Tecnologias. Published on-line.

<http://www.minom-icom.net/PDF/PB-INTERCUL.pdf>

will increasingly walk alongside local immigrants who abandoned their rural world to jointly confront the world of white pride with their endeavours and demands, as much as with unfulfilled promises of respect for human rights.

This new concept of Multiculturalism cannot be dissociated from the Northern Hemisphere's current Culture which thrives in cities that appear as a patchwork quilt made of widely diverse societies commingling, miscegenating, or confronting each other, where cultures, religious beliefs, dietary habits, and customs stand, at times, in direct opposition to each other and sometimes intermingle, all having to voluntarily or compulsorily deal with each other in those new urban areas and territories. A recent phenomenon, arising as a result of Globalisation and never before experienced under circumstances where all human beings are declared equal under the law,⁸ multiculturalism has not yet been fully assimilated by the public authorities or by civil society itself, which is being overtaken by developments, cultural and social novelty, and behaviours with which it has not yet learned to cope. Transnationality, Interculturality, or Social Diversification are concepts still in progress within the broader evolutionary process of our present-day societies.

2 – ART AND CULTURAL DEMOCRATIZATION AND DEMOCRATICITY

Emilio González Núñez is an artist from Spain's Extremadura region whose artwork aims to commit to human solidarity and social intervention. His artistic designs and

⁸ - Up until now, conditions under which people of different ethnicity were forced to live side by side in a shared territory have always involved slavery, colonisation, or social and economic dependence enforced by the rule of law and the social standards ruling at the time. Worldwide approval and formal acceptance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by most countries, even if only on paper, in many instances, and the end of colonial states have radically changed the position.

*installations, which are often based on symbolic patrimonialization, invite reflection on current social themes. He's already done some work on globalisation, world peace, and on the Extremaduran victims of terrorism. When he decided to create an installation that paid homage to African immigrants, he wrote to the Red Cross of Algeciras – Spain, in August 2006, to the effect of requesting them to kindly cede him one of the barges or pateras which the Spanish Guardia Civil confiscates and delivers to municipal dumps as a matter of routine, and further, whether they could also let him have some of the clothing left behind by immigrants. The installation was due to be exhibited in front of the Municipal Museum of Cáceres to stand as a token of the denunciation of injustice and the condemnation of social inequality, a bridge to a new era of more dignified living, and an artistic endeavour of educational value capable of raising society's awareness of that theme.*⁹

Under our society's latest trends, Artistic Production is no longer the result of commissions from the wealthier classes and the work of particular creators selected by the elites. Art has been progressively migrating from ateliers and studios out into the streets, cultural associations, and ateliers dedicated to popular production. Right from the moment that Art and Culture began to be made available to the masses through the major media and the highly lucrative business conducted by cultural industries, their creation and fruition began to bypass their former traditional circles.

The issues that characterised the debate held by twentieth-century thinkers and sociologists such as Weber, Simmel, and Adorno, on Art and Culture, on rationalising the attitudes of social groups, on the cultural signification and selection of human facts, or on the difficulties of choosing between a refined, superior culture yet a positively elitist and unjust one and a popular, democratised culture, are far from being resolved.

⁹ - Escolha e transporte da *Patera* até Cáceres. Fotografias de Emilio Núñez.



Selection and transportation of the *Patera* to Cáceres.
Photos by Emilio Nuñez

As Fleury (2008)¹⁰ pointed out, the debate is still centred on a tripartite metamorphosis: on-going revolution in the contributions which particular individuals add to Culture; the changes introduced by the public authorities through their contributions to cultural democratisation and to cultural democraticity; and persistent rekindling of the kind of issues sociologists keep on raising about cultural practices and the aesthetic experience. When it comes to Cultural Democratisation – i.e., making all forms of superior culture available to all – and to Cultural Democraticity – accepting and fostering the manifestation of basic culture as a means of social acculturation – the contradiction between selection and the need for acceptance remains very much alive.

But this whole phenomenon of indispensable pondering and searching seems to have lost its value for weighting purposes in light of the indifference with which novel forms of Art and Culture are being experienced by modern societies, together with the most representative examples of traditional intellectuality.¹¹ What seems undeniable indeed is that Culture

¹⁰ - Fleury, L. (2008). *Sociologie de la Culture et des Pratiques Culturelles*. Paris: Armand Colin

¹¹ - Rock concerts where opera solo singers and Rock stars perform together on stage to a diversified range of spectators – intellectuals of the traditional sort, middle-class families with children on their laps, and

has definitely ceased to be a product of and for the elites to transform itself into a hodgepodge of creations and interpretations of reality where creative originality or the public's appetite often constrains cultural production itself, which thus becomes bound by the rules of the leisure consumption market itself.

In parallel, and now from the standpoint of Personal Creation, the traditional sectors of Art, Music, or Literature have also changed their production and performance principles and paradigms. The number and variety of artists, musicians, and writers have steadily been on the increase thanks to the role played by the mass media, the cultural industries, publishers, television producers, and moviemakers, art galleries, and marketing companies. This novel artistic and cultural living experience has produced idols revered by the masses which become permanent guest speakers of the media or objects of cult who feature in lucrative advertising campaigns. Artistic production itself cultivates the sacralisation of the ephemeral and of awe and the more shocking and surprising cultural products, of which many "installations" stand as an example, become to the public at large the more they're actually appreciated¹². These days, Art Fairs and Galleries are veritable stages for lucrative trade where, undoubtedly, genius does emerge and is nurtured, but, every so often, they also engender production of artworks and artistic endeavours of questionable depth.¹³

teenagers wearing the symbols of their street culture: jeans, Rasta hairstyles, tattoos, and piercings – are a standard example of cultural miscegenation.

¹² - One of the most representative examples of this novel way of producing art are the works of constructivist Christo Javacheff, who has been literally "wrapping" whole buildings and large structures since the 1960s, such as Chicago's Contemporary Art Museum or Berlin's Reichstag, using this type of artistic creativity as a form of protest action or for purposes of political and environmental intervention.

¹³ - ARCO, one of the most prestigious Art Fairs of worldwide acclaim which is held every year in Madrid – Spain, has repeatedly come under fire for the manner in which artists "are born" in its wake through indiscriminate use of economic or social might or of the power to intervene in the Art trade.

Hand in hand with this type of formally accepted activity, creativity has reached thresholds of realisation that are much more widespread and democratised within society while the concept of a work of art in music or literature has widened in scope, both as regards acceptance of new themes and as regards novel forms, creators, or chosen contents. New cultural paradigms that were formerly decried as vulgar or inferior are now being produced and consumed in every type of environment based on acceptance of the emergence of a new, previously denied, social and cultural diversity that recognises those forms of art and cultural assertiveness as valid and respectable¹⁴.

On the other hand, in Joint Creation, and over and above previous expressions produced by traditional means such as theatre, music, and dance, major inroads have been made to accept cultural processes that develop as a result of a specific social group's willingness to assert their own models, even when such models do not conform to accepted concepts and paradigms. Since the 1970's, the phenomenon of Alternative Cultures has been introducing movements such as rock, punk, heavy metal, rap, or graffiti into the mainstream cultural domain where they compete freely on the streets with the cultural movements deemed socially "legitimate". These cultures, whether rising in the street, the attic, the home, or the "screen", have been taking advantage of the phenomena of the Internet's Blogs, Chatting, and Websites which provide participant or spectator societies with the opportunity to get acquainted with different cultural realities sustained by the market itself and with free, uncontrolled communications that bypass the disciplined social reality to thrive, heedless of commentary or criticism.

¹⁴ - These new expressions take inspiration from and are often engendered by the influence of migrant communities. The Cultures of Rasta dreadlocks, Tattoos, and Piercings have engendered new consumers, new artists, and new travelling artworks that are built on traditional customs hitherto considered to be the preserve of primitive societies, sailors, or freaks.

Naturally, the novel means of producing culture impact the output to some extent, for good and for evil – they popularise processes and choices; they question the concepts of selection and ownership; and they blur the distinction between culture and entertainment. However, it appears evident that Culture can no longer function as an element of differentiation which is sometimes consumed more on account of social imperatives and prestige than because of one's likes and dislikes but must rather act as a contributor towards the personal and social uplifting of all, desired by the citizens that consume it for personal enrichment or simply for entertainment. And if meeting those new demands for cultural action and production may lead Culture to fall into excessive popularisation, it is also certain that the magnitude and extension of these new cultural offerings is actively contributing towards wider and better culture and towards an increasingly knowledgeable and aware society. Yet, we're left wondering which of the two components – the intellectual and elitist or the popular and democratised one – should be credited as the leading cause for that trend. Therefore, we tend to agree with López de Aguilera (2000)¹⁵ when he stresses that Culture is a contradictory domain under constant stress where tradition battles renewal, academics combats popularisation, family culture clashes with street culture, and personal identity is at odds with group identity.

3 – NATIONAL HERITAGE, MUSEUMS, AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

When submitting his project brief¹⁶ on the artwork to the Cáceres City Council, a city located in Spain's Extremadura region, the artist described the steps required to complete the work, which included discussions with the Head of the Museum of Archaeology of Cáceres, Juan

¹⁵ - Lopez de Aguilera, I. (2000). *Cultura y Ciudad. Manual de política cultural municipal*. Gijón: TREA.

¹⁶ - Nuñez, E. (2006). *História de la Patera e La Patera de la Esperanza*.

Valadés, who had offered to assist with the patrimonialization of the patera. The completion of this artwork, which entailed restoring the barge and entirely covering it with old, worn-out clothing, the objective was to contrast the emptiness and the shedding of a past rife with sadness and deprivation against the symbolic effect of entering naked a brand new world in the hope of embracing a better fate.

*According to the project, the patera was to be installed in Plaza de las Veletas, fronting the Museum, and its inauguration was scheduled for November 28th, later on that year. By the end of the exhibition, it was to be auctioned and the money obtained was to be donated to the Red Cross of Algeciras, to aid the immigrants. The brief also made an appeal to the memory of Extremadura's migratory past and to the need to welcome new residents with a spirit of solidarity, while further emphasizing their contribution towards economic growth by paying their social security contributions and performing jobs that fostered the region's development.*¹⁷



Execution of the installation for an artwork titled "Patera de la Esperanza". Photos by Emilio Nuñez

Throughout the course of many decades of political and social depression which saw the region hostage to an

¹⁷ - Execution of an installation for the "Patera de la Esperanza" artwork. Photos by the artist.

economic structure based on a model of land ownership characterised by large estates, the Spanish Extremadura region featured strong emigration. Emigration bled the region of its population and it is estimated that up to a million people left Extremadura in search of a better life elsewhere. In more recent times, economic and social progress has made it possible to reverse that trend and to significantly improve its standard of living. At present, the region gains immigrants from other countries who are mainly employed in agriculture. In co-operation with welfare organisations, the region has put in place a program to provide temporary shelter to Sub-Saharan immigrants and assists them until they find jobs or shelter with family in other regions of the Iberian Peninsula, or elsewhere in Europe. A number of cultural and social integration and awareness-raising programs are also run by the Government of Junta de Extremadura, NGO's, and other cultural and museological institutions. In general, the region seems to play a proactive role vis-à-vis this phenomenon and immigration-related themes are covered by the local daily and weekly press¹⁸, often, on a regular basis, as is the case with "El Periódico Extremadura" or the "Hoy Extremadura papers, which report on the activities of the migrant flow and carry stories on the life of those new citizens and on the actions implemented to support them.

An example of this attitude was an itinerant exhibition¹⁹ which the Largo Caballero Foundation originally hosted in Madrid titled "De la España que emigra a la España que acoge" [Going from an emigrant Spain to an immigrant-hosting Spain]. When touring other Spanish regions, the Government of Junta de Extremadura sponsored its exhibition at the Contemporary Extremadurian and Iberian-American Art

¹⁸ - Armero, A.J. (2006) *Los Cayucos también Llegan a Cáceres*. Cáceres hoy. November 19th; Fernandez, M. (2006). *Caritas inaugura por sexto año el Taller de Integración Cultural para inmigrantes*. Cáceres Hoy. September 19th; Garcia Calle, Z. (2006). *Los cayucos de Cáceres*. El Periódico Extremadura. October 18th.

¹⁹ - Invitation to the exhibition: *De la España que emigra a la España que acoge*.

Museum of Mérida, in November 2006. The exhibition addressed current immigration trends to Spain and recalled past reality for many Spanish populations that had been forced to emigrate and face much hardship in host countries, at the time. When covering the event in the local press,²⁰ Ramírez Durán also reminds readers of this issue in his editorial, calling for a State Pact on Migration. The exhibition had also been educational for society, especially the younger generations who thoroughly mix, at school and in cultural and leisure spots, with the children of the new ethnic communities which have gathered in the cities of Europe.²¹

This type of initiative reports us to the key role which museums can play as centres for active patrimonialization of a country's heritage and as places that invite reflection on a people's memory, thereby adding an essential contribution towards an issue that makes reference to the diversification and resignification of Heritage and to intercultural dialogue. If, through miscegenation and cultural democratisation, the social and symbolic character of Art and Culture have been strengthening and widening in scope, so has Heritage been broadening its concept with ideas, images, territories, and selections of much wider breadth than what its former definition and boundaries allowed it. Representational heritage, oral memory, or the world of virtual reality, among other ways of reading cultural representation, have changed our ability to be and to represent personal or collective traditions, knowledge, memories, attitudes, know-how and arts and crafts, as reported to both work and play.

One of the main missions of a Museum is to endow Heritage with signification and to keep abreast of its evolutionary process through time, on an on-going basis. During the twentieth century, consolidation of Democracy,

²⁰ - Ramírez Durán, A. (2006) *Pueblo emigrante que acoge*. Opinión: Tribuna Extremeña. El Periódico Hoy.

²¹ - F.S. (2006). *Historias de emigración y acogida*. Cultura Sociedad. Unidentified newspaper article.

provision of affordable education to all, the demise of former colonial empires, and the progress of Ethnology have enabled Heritage and Museums to progress towards the valuing of a culture that is much broader in scope and more respectful. Above all, it was mainly after the launch of UNESCO, after the end of World War II, and thanks to its intervention, from the 1950's onwards, that the issue of Heritage began to be addressed in studies and seminars which explicitly defined and broadened its multiple facets, comprehensiveness, and function. Similarly, the launch of ICOM and its action, together with the changes fostered by cultural and social renewal movements, from the late 1960's onwards, have brought radical change to the social reading of the role of museums and curators.

The main concern of the Santiago de Chile Round Table Talks of 1972, which gathered under the auspices of ICOM, was to consolidate the social role which museums play and to redefine the role of museologists vis-à-vis the public and the areas that surround them, being features which had been hitherto completely ignored. In their Resolutions, as contained in a document that is still surprisingly current in our day and age, those Talks bequeathed us a clear and simple definition of the kind of legacy museums should preserve and their staff, the communities, and the relevant government agencies should work with in order to achieve cultural development and sharing: "...representative testimony of the evolution of Nature and Mankind."²²

The introduction of New Museology theories in the 1980's added further impetus to a fresh approach to museological thinking by allowing a novel reading of the traditional elements that constitute a museum's world – its

²² - ICOM – UNESCO (1972). *The Santiago de Chile Round Table Talks*. Translated by Araújo, Marcelo, e Bruno, M. Cristina. In: A memory of contemporary museological thinking 1995. Subtitles: Base Principles for a Holistic Museum. Resolutions adopted at the Santiago de Chile Round Table Talks.

Collection, which was redefined as a new concept of Heritage, at once more comprehensive and more representative of a population's culture and identity; the museum's Building evolved into a museological Territory that extend beyond the boundaries of a museum's walls; and Visitors, with a call for increased focus on the role of the Community, which now evolved from passive spectator to actor and user.

A museum without exhibits that prioritises the representation of memory in its broadest variety of representations and symbolic interventions was one of the cultural options of New Museology and Community Museology. However, its insistence, sometimes excessive, in awarding an inferior status to a museum's exhibits curtailed the importance of the role of near exclusivity which artistic exhibits had played in the traditional exhibitor model and insured the introduction of the patrimonialization of ideas in museum communication programs, which play such a key role in these New Social Culture trends.

The thinking and the field work being developed by New Museology and the Social Museology and Ecomuseums experiments have contributed, at UNESCO and at ICOM, towards the introduction of complementarity and representative intangibility values to Heritage. In 2001, at its Piedmont Round Table Talks, in Italy,²³ UNESCO began to formally include memory, know-how and art and crafts, and their authors within the scope of Heritage, together with culture' social frameworks, when it defined Intangible Heritage as:

“...les processus acquis par les peuples ainsi que les savoirs, les compétences et la créativité dont ils sont les héritiers et qu'ils développent, les produits qu'ils créent et les ressources, espaces et autres dimensions du cadre social et naturel nécessaires à leur durabilité. Ces processus inspirent aux

²³ - UNESCO (2001). Round table Talks on the theme “Intangible Heritage – Operational Definitions” held in Piedmont – Italy. Published on-line http://www.unesco.org/bpi/intangible_heritage/backgroundf.htm

communautés vivantes un sentiment de continuité para rapport aux générations qui les ont précédées et revêtent une importance cruciale pour l'identité culturelle ainsi que la sauvegarde de la diversité culturelle et de la créativité de l'humanité. "

[... the processes acquired by peoples, together with the know-how, skills, and creativity they inherit and develop further, the products they create, and the resources, spaces, and other dimensions of a social and natural nature they require in order to endure. Those processes inspire living communities with a sense of continuity relative to the generations that preceded them and play a crucial role in the formation of their cultural identity and in the preservation of the cultural diversity and creativity of humankind.]

In turn, ICOM, selected the theme "Museums and Intangible Heritage" for its 2004 General Conference held in Seoul, highlighting the importance of the role of museums in gathering, preserving, and disseminating this type of heritage. Taking inspiration from the UNESCO definition, Giovanni Pina (2003) ²⁴, in an editorial written to promote the event, classified Intangible Heritage into three categories: the expression, materialised in tangible forms, of the culture of a certain community, such as its religious rituals, traditional economies, and lifestyles; personal or collective expressions without tangible form, such as language, memory, oral tradition, songs, and unwritten traditional folk music; and, lastly, the symbolic and metaphorical signification of objects that constitute its Tangible Heritage. The last of those categories added further significance to exhibits by attributing to them two dimensions of appropriation: their material aspect and their meaning. In turn, the latter dimension derives from their historical background, the kind of interpretations they

²⁴ - Pina, G (2003) « Le Patrimoine immatériel et les musées ». In: *Journée internationale des musées 2004 et patrimoine immatériel*. Magazine: Nouvelles de l'ICOM, Musées et Patrimoine immatériel no. 4. Paris : ICOM

evoke, or their ability to act as a link between the present and the past.

The current social role played by museums, a role that is indispensable if they are to integrate into the community they serve, requires them to remain in tune with the social changes that happen around them at all times and to implement actions and programs that are geared to raise awareness of new trends in cultural inclusion and miscegenation. Exhibitions, colloquiums, and meetings on this theme, or workshops attended by a multicultural audience, may speed up the process of integration, prevent the kind of racial confrontation that hovers in the background as a permanent threat to multiethnic cities, and complement the educational work being developed by the schools where youngsters of different national and foreign ethnicity currently share the same educational courses. In this regard, in an article titled "*Educación para la integración*" [Educating for integration] published in June 2003 in "*El País*"²⁵, Sami Naïr, a professor, politician, and scientist, wrote that:

...la escuela tiene como objetivo formar a los ciudadanos del mañana, permitiéndoles acceder a la identidad cultural común de la sociedad de acogida. El "multiculturalismo" no debe servir de excusa para formar unos grupos culturales "tolerados" y con tendencia a ser estigmatizados. El objetivo fundamental de la escuela es la identidad ciudadana, construida no a partir de una política de reconocimiento de las especificidades, sino de una concepción de la transmisión de los valores de razón, igualdad y tolerancia. La escuela debe difundir unos saberes para una identidad compartida. Cualquier experiencia de la inmigración en Europa

²⁵ - Naïr, S. (2003). *Educación para la integración*. Opinión. Article published in "*El País*". June 2003. Madrid: El País. Posdatas. Artículos en la Red.

<http://es.geocities.com/posdatas/articulos.html>

demuestra que lo que desean los hijos de inmigrantes es aprender y aprender, ya que saben que para ellos es el medio de tener éxito en la sociedad de acogida. La escuela tiene como primera función garantizar la igualdad de posibilidades a todos. Es su misión sagrada al servicio de la humanidad civilizada.

...the goal of schools is to groom the citizens of tomorrow by enabling them to tap into the shared cultural identity of their host society. "Multiculturalism" should not serve as an excuse to groom "tolerated" cultural groups that tend to be stigmatised. The key goal of schools is to aim for a citizenship identity which is not to be built based on a policy of recognising specificities, but rather based on concepts of rationality, equality, and tolerance. Schools should disseminate knowledge of a shared identity. All immigration experiences in Europe demonstrate that what the children of immigrants wish is to learn and learn, as they are fully aware that education is the means by which they may succeed in their host country. The first and foremost function of schools is to guarantee equality of opportunity for all. That is its sacred mission in the service of civilised humanity.

Naïr is spot on when he draws attention to one of the most serious problems which integration and inclusion are causing when it comes to Europe's education courses. When educating immigrant kids, should priority be given to their original values or should the aim rather be to foster social integration with regard to the values of their host society? Which of those options leads them to acquire better and greater rights of equality vis-à-vis the nationals? What is the meaning of historical identity heritage in a multicultural society? Naïr supports joint education subject to goals that prioritise integration into the host country, as he firmly believes that that policy fosters equality, but the lack of definition on this

theme and of a response to those issues and to many other questions that arise when communicating with the minorities which have settled in Western Europe require thought, action, and welfare practices that reach out to all structures, in a changing society.

Attempts to interpret the new paradigm of a blending of cultures by artists, museum staff, or museographic initiatives have managed to secure the introduction of means of appropriation of new tokens of heritage through their symbolic interpretation. An old barge, clothing, and objects left behind or a cardboard suitcase full of labels may end up as elements of a transient identity and as bridges that link departure points to the regions of destination, in the new crossroads of Culture.²⁶

It is with reference to this new vision of what constitutes heritage and to its unifying meanings that museums, namely local museums, can contribute towards a new approach to resignification in the world of social inclusion and in the defence of Multiculturalism. Work programs and cultural initiatives that foster the finding of new ways in which to communicate may help in educating better human beings who think freely and are imbued with a spirit of tolerance, regardless of which country they live in, religious beliefs, or social and ethnic origin.

As far as this field of action is concerned, the Michel Giacometti Labour Museum has been engaged with the community of Setúbal County, in Portugal, in developing a cultural integration and blending task that may well become a paradigm for reflection and action when devising projects of this nature. In Setúbal, a port city, several ethnic communities live close to each other on account of that city's past of

²⁶ The inauguration of *Musée de l'histoire e des cultures de l'immigration* in Paris and the publication of its initiatives in an on-line magazine and newsletter formats stands as an attempt to interpret and frame these new phenomena with the co-operation of resident immigrants through programs that aim to reflect on their life experience from the moment of departure from their countries of origin to their full integration in their host country.

http://www.histoire-immigration.fr/index.php?lg=fr&nav=446&flash=0&id_actu=1106

extensive industrial tradition, namely industries associated with the sea, such as canned food and ship repair industries. More recently, the city has seen degradation of the local corporate sector and this has served to highlight some of the contradictions which the mingling of cultures introduces cities: enrichment of the social fabric, hand in hand with increased risk of marginalisation, delinquency, and misunderstanding associated to poverty and to poor urban organisation. Given that context, the museum has been recently been organising an integration initiative called “Intercultural Afternoon Sessions” on the last Saturday of the month, whereby the museum’s halls are made available to every community in turn for purposes of their engaging in joint creation of tokens that value each community’s specificities, thereby putting it in touch with the remaining population. According to Isabel Victor, the Head of that institution, the museum transforms itself into “...an arena for self-representation that inspires dialogue and a stage for identity expression”.²⁷ Subscribing to similar goals of fostering integration and by means of organising personalised visits, an initiative called “Hello Neighbours” aims to reach out to people who live in the vicinity of the museum but traditionally stay away from it, experiencing it as an entity that has nothing to do with their daily routines and interests. In cases like this, it is a museum’s ability to mobilise and act that is being engaged in order to stage meetings of generations, ethnicities, and social groups. These and many other efforts being currently pursued by a variety of museums, such as national language courses for foreigners or programs to assist immigrant children with their homework or help adults resolve legal issues, stand as examples of new guidelines on the action of museums which fits them to our present space and time and strengthens the need to employ museums as a privileged conduit whereby people may communicate with each other.

²⁷ - Victor, I. (2009). “Intercultural Afternoon Sessions” reports. Setúbal: Armazém dos Papeis do Sado.

4 – MEMORY, PATRIMONIALIZATION, AND SOCIAL INTERVENTION

The cayuco, which had been collected in October that year and towed all the way to Cáceres thanks to sponsorships provided by local companies, was cleaned, repaired, and covered with worn-out clothing, as projected. A key, a set of hooks, and a few coins were also found inside it, pointing to the possible country of departure of the barge²⁸. In a letter dated November 7th, Emílio Núñez requested the City Council to authorise the installation of the Patera²⁹ for public display and to consent to its envisaged auction, to be held on the Net at the Ebay.es website.³⁰ Expecting his requests to be duly authorised, and in co-operation with the Municipal Museum, which was organising the event³¹, invitations were sent out and the event was advertised in the usual media.

The social and cultural worth of the initiative and the goodwill which all who were aware of and supported the project had expressed led one to believe that an interesting educational and welfare initiative was on the go. However, from a certain point in time, the entire project and its execution began to suffer one setback after another which apparently put its mission and objectives in jeopardy and, ultimately, compromised the entire project. An identification of the patera with immigration, an issue that is sometimes thorny, and exacerbation of its symbolic value, as it lent itself to a variety of interpretations ranging from mere human solidarity to the most extreme form of protest action about the manner in which the political powers act when dealing with that issue, may have influenced the Council's decision to revoke its consent to erect the artwork on the Plaza fronting the Museum.

²⁸ - Items found inside the barge.

²⁹ - Núñez, E. (2006). Letter addressed to the Cáceres City Council, dated November 7th.

³⁰ - Núñez, E. (2006). Letter addressed to ebay.es, dated November 7th.

³¹ - Invitation and Poster advertising the *Patera's* inauguration ceremony.

*A week prior to inauguration day, a letter from Junta de Gobierno Local of the Cáceres municipality withdrew its consent to exhibit the piece at Veletas Square due to “...no ser viable la misma dadas sus dimensiones, así como por el emplazamiento propuesto...”[the fact that its assemblage was unfeasible, given its size and proposed location]*³² A brief written by Emilio Nuñez to notify the City Council’s decision bears witness to his disappointment at a refusal he’s unable to understand, being the first time something like that had happened to his work. He further advises their justification for such treatment, as personally conveyed to him by the Mayor and the Councillor in charge of that portfolio, whose reasons he neither believes nor accepts as valid.³³



Abandoned clothing and personal items found inside the barge.
Photos by Emilio Nuñez

Bringing symbolism and memory into the fold of Heritage has further introduced a broader, more comprehensive sense to cultural selection and representation, as the scope of heritage was opened to include vaster domains, encompassing recovery of a community’s spirit and

³² - Cáceres City Council. (2006). Letter from the local government authority to Emilio Nuñez with acknowledgement of receipt.

³³ - Nuñez, E. (2006). Brief on the refusal of consent to install the *patera* in Veletas Square.

accomplishments. For long, the option to select what should or shouldn't be classified as heritage was and often still is the sole preserve of the cultured upper classes and of the manner in which they perceive Culture relative to what is to be preserved and what is best forgotten.

The widening and extension of citizen rights and the democratization of thinking have enabled symbolic representation in historical, artistic, or museological production to cease being solely the result of the choices of dominant or triumphant societies and increased its ability to recount other perspectives of events and to exhibit alternative heritage items. Thus, it has been possible to reconstruct parts of history which had not yet been told, especially where wars in which one of the warring parties held a monopoly on power for a long time subsequent to victory are at stake.³⁴

Items that may appear commonplace but which symbolic power frames events deserving of remembrance have increasingly been utilised by museums to reconstruct memories and facts which importance they aim to highlight, either for reasons of historic assertiveness or for purposes of recreating moments with special meaning. This type of exhibit has enabled the actors in those events to get closer to the exhibit's end product and to the message they intend to convey. We're dealing with a new type of heritage asset that benefits the population, whose references have now been musealised and thereby often serve to restore to them the sense of pride and of belonging their social marginalisation had stolen from them.

In Brazil, the Maré Museum was built in one of Rio de Janeiro's shantytowns, having been inaugurated by [Gilberto](#)

³⁴ - The efforts of many personalities and NGO's who doggedly fought for equal rights in Spain enable the Spanish Parliament to approve the "*Ley de la Memoria Histórica*" on November 1st, 2007, a piece of legislation ruling on the recovery of the memory of the victims of the Spanish Civil War and subsequent dictatorship. That Act was lauded as a hard political and cultural strike against the period of Franco's rule and it has allowed the history of a period of almost 50 years to be rewritten to include a large segment of the population which had been hitherto deliberately excluded and ignored.

Gil, Brazil's Minister of Culture, on 8 May 2006. This museum reconstructs the memory and the presence of immigrants from the country's interior who settled in the only area where they were allowed to build their shacks, a swampy, unwholesome region where they built the shacks on stilts that today stand as the core of a city of over 300,000 inhabitants. Its collection, which consists of a variety of items used by people on a daily basis, recounts the origin of the local community with photos and documents which are under constant renovation thanks to the contributions of residents who think of it as their property. Several of its halls exhibit a variety of themes that focus on the resilience of the early settlers and on the shantytown's lifestyle and trade. Branding it an historical landmark in Brazilian museology, Eduardo Sales de Lima explains what the museum means:³⁵

...The Maré Museum is Brazil's first museum to operate in the periphery. The residents of the shantytown themselves are the ones who act as curators and donors of its collection of photos and documents. "It stands as a landmark, the achievement of a community's wish to interact with its own history; "the residents themselves have literally put the museum together", says Luiz Antônio de Oliveira, the Head of the Museum. Oliveira stresses the importance of the role played by the museum in upholding the identity of the community: "Children need to be aware of the struggle of their parents and grandparents. And the folks are happy that youngsters get acquainted with their roots because that helps them to build their identity".

³⁵ - Lima, A. S. (2006). *Memory of the Excluded: Residents help put the Maré Museum together*.

Brasil de fato. On-line edition.

<http://www.brasildefato.com.br/v01/impreso/anteriores/170/cultura/materia.2006-06-05.2163508242>

The musealisation of memory through the role played by the population of the Maré shantytown in their struggle for survival evidences that it is possible to transform symbolic objects into cultural life experiences and thereby contribute towards their achievement of a dignified social status and to its historical projection on the future of the community's youth.

That is also what Mário Chagas³⁶ is hinting at when interpreting a museum as a working tool and a space of creation and resignification where new temporal relations are established.

Museums are undergoing a process of democratisation, resignification, and cultural appropriation. It is no longer just a matter of democratising access to established museums but rather of democratising the museums themselves. They are to be understood as a technology, a working tool, and a strategic device to introduce an entirely new form of relationship with the past, the present, and the future that is at once creative and participative. It is a matter of a tough battle to democratise democracy; it is a matter of viewing a museum as a pencil, a modest tool that requires a modicum of ability to be employed.

5 – MEDIA, HERITAGE, AND POWER

The circumstances surrounding the cancellation of the Exhibition and its causes were extensively covered by the local press, which echoed the dissatisfaction many people and the cultural establishment felt over the Council's refusal to authorise the exhibition of the artwork on the square and went on to support the initiative in the defence of the immigrant groups of Spain's Extremadura region.

³⁶ - Chagas, M. (2009). *Museums, Memories, and Social Movements*. Revista Museum magazine. Culture taken seriously. Published on-line <http://www.revistamuseum.com.br/18demaio/artigos.asp?id=16512>

Reports on the event showed photos of the author and his artwork and criticised the City Council's decision, having namely reported that bulkier artistic pieces had been erected at the same location before. Their news stressed the identity and symbolic value of the patera and the importance of the goals that stood "...against racism and xenophobia and in favour of manageable, controlled emigration..." and unconditionally supported the struggle of the artist on behalf of the causes of minorities, and his courage and dedication to human solidarity.³⁷ The papers reported further that the Head of the Museum, who had supported the initiative from inception, offered to erect it in the gardens of the Museum as a means of salvaging the project's continuity, despite the fact that the barge would be much less visible in that area and that its impact, as originally intended through its public exposition, would be lost.

It is rather curious that one of the papers went as far as reporting its inauguration at the Plaza on the 28th as a given fact, which implies that the article was written before the day scheduled for the inauguration ceremony and prior to its writer becoming aware of the Council's prohibition.³⁸ In this instance, the information was possibly provided with the best of intentions and this case of happenstance only serves as evidence of a status quo which the heads of museums and cultural organisations have become accustomed to: "news" are routinely produced in the absence of reporters and, more often than not, the interested organisation is the one that must supply the news releases, together with photos, to the paper in question if it wants to see it published. It is regrettable to notice how frequently news of a cultural nature score poorly in the

³⁷ - Redacción Cáceres: *Deniegan al artista Emilio González el permiso para exhibir una obra en la Plaza de las Veletas*. November 24th; Redacción Cáceres: *Emilio González instalará su patera de la Esperanza en el Jardín del Museo de Cáceres*. November 25th. Ortiz, C. (2006). *Una Patera llega a la parte antigua*. Reportaje. November 29th. Cáceres hoy, El Periódico Extremadura - 2006.

³⁸ - Gudiel, Toni. (2006). *Muestra-exposición en Cáceres com la "Patera de la Esperanza"* - Redacción Cáceres. Cáceres Hoy, Cultura: November 2006.

ranking of newspaper editors' choices because they are neither considered popular nor appealing from a sales perspective.



*Hoisting and installation of the barge in the gardens of the Museum.
Photos by Emilio Nuñez*

The patera was at last installed in the gardens of the museum, again thanks to sponsorships granted by local companies. In an editorial titled "Abrir la calle al arte solidário" [Opening the door to tributes to human solidarity] published in a Cáceres newspaper, the writer laments that, in a matter of a few days, the City Council had barred both this initiative and another artwork commemorating World Aids Day from being displayed on the street.³⁹

While the exhibition ran its course, and taking also advantage of the Christmas Season's festivities, a number of initiatives involving the patera⁴⁰ were actioned in Cáceres and at the museum, while an Internet page - Yahoo! Noticias – advertised those events and the E-bay.com.sg website carried on with its intended auction. Over the following weeks and months, Emilio Nuñez tirelessly pursued his mission to raise people's awareness by writing about the initiative with the support of several papers in his struggle to find a permanent home for the barge.

³⁹ - Editorial (2006). *Abrir la calle al arte solidário*, Opinión, El Periódico Extremadura.

⁴⁰ - Yahoo Noticias España. (2006). *El Museo de Cáceres expone una recreación artística de una patera como símbolo de esperanza para muchos inmigrantes*. December 17th. Published on-line.

In our day and age, the media are recognised to stand as a veritable fourth power and it is easily admitted that what is not seen, disseminated, or digested in the various media, including the Internet, simply does not exist. This fact leads public and private entities to somehow constrain and tailor their action as a function of the information that the public at large may gather from those media. Some public authorities go as far as setting out and implementing their policies as a function of the poll findings and forecasts the media often makes it its business to publish. Under such circumstances, only professional journalists of good socio-cultural standing who hold steadfast in their independence from the corporate groups that manage them may eliminate the risk of the kind of social manipulation of political and cultural feelings and choices it is in their power to permit.

The kind of changes which the emergence of multicultural societies have brought to bear are clearly visible in all quarters: change in family composition, such as mixed-race marriages or the adoption of children by couples of different ethnicity; cultural changes, such as language diversification and miscegenation or the mixing of habits and traditions; and political changes, which materialise in changes to social and labour relations and in successive amendments to legislation. But in the Western world, the new social and cultural models and paradigms which arose in the wake of migratory movements have not yet secured an adequate, uncontroversial frame of reference in the environments where they've been developing. Despite the evidence of goodwill patented in amendments to legislation and changes in the conduct of a fair portion of society it has not yet been possible to fully transform mentalities and customs developed over centuries of colonial, patronising attitudes. Even if the legal appropriation of certain countries by other countries has ended, it has not yet been possible to "decolonise the minds", an expression invented in the African continent as a challenge to its own sense of dependence. It may well still be applied to the way in which a fair part of the Northern Hemisphere thinks,

as many people remain formatted by centuries of that Hemisphere's global domination of other peoples.

The media's power to influence public opinion may lead one to believe that the manner in which they use and disseminate the information they gather on the new phenomena of ethnic mingling in city life may serve to speed up or delay the process of adaptation to the new circumstances of a multicultural society. In an address presented in September 2008, in Madrid, at "*Foro Social de las Migraciones*" [Social Forum on Migration],⁴¹ Harresiak Apurtuz, the Head of an Immigrant Support NGO of the Basque Country we find reflections on how the media performs this key role:

"...Los medios de comunicación, uno de los principales agentes de socialización en la actualidad, se hacen eco de todo lo que afecta a la convivencia intercultural, pero hasta ahora, el tratamiento mediático acerca de la inmigración ha sido discriminatorio y etnocéntrico, como demuestran diferentes investigaciones. En torno a los medios de comunicación hay un debate permanente que afecta a lo que podríamos llamar sus responsabilidades sociales. Es obvio que los medios son hoy los principales constructores de sentido, quienes abastecen al conjunto de la población de los modelos de interpretación de la realidad, de los estereotipos, de los datos que alimentan, configuran, confirman o desmienten las visiones del mundo. Por lo tanto, los medios participan decisivamente en la construcción de los valores sociales, en una relación dialéctica, de permanente ida y vuelta de la realidad: por un

⁴¹ - Apurtuz, H. (2008). "*Inmigración y Medios de Comunicación: Manual Recopilatorio de Buenas Prácticas Periodísticas*". Keynote address presented within the scope of "Foro Social de las Migraciones", Madrid September 2008. Published on-line.

http://www.fsmm2008.org/media/ponencias/ponencia_71.pdf

lado, los médios son un espejo de los valores de una sociedad y de sus relaciones internas y, por otro, son fundamentales en la definición de valores y actitudes...

[...The media, which act as a leading agent of socialisation in our modern societies, echo everything that impacts on our intercultural living; however, as research has shown, till now the manner in which they've been handling immigration has been discriminatory and ethnocentric. There is on-going debate about the media which bears on what we may term their social responsibilities. It is obvious that, these days, the media are the main builders of sense, the ones which feed the entire population with models on how to interpret reality, with stereotypes, and with the kind of data that supports, configures, confirms, or denies its view of the world. As such, the media play a decisive role in the building of social values, in a dialectic relationship that constantly moves back and forth, to and from, reality: on the one hand, the media mirror the values of a society and its internal relations, but on the other they play a leading role in shaping those very values and attitudes.]

Studies conducted by Margarida Carvalho⁴² in Portugal, as part of her research for her Master's thesis in Sociology, on the manner in which news on immigrants were being reported by two Portuguese newspapers – namely “O Correio da Manhã” and “O Público” – confirm those reflections. Her research allowed her to establish a dangerous relationship between the need to produce news with guaranteed impact on sales and the dissemination, with a lower or higher degree of

⁴² - Carvalho, Margarida. (2009). *Immigrant and ethnic minority image building in the Portuguese press*. Address to the 10th Portuguese-African-Brazilian Congress for Social Sciences. 4 to 7 February, 2009. Braga

conscientiousness, of information of xenophobic content or information relating to deviant practices pursued by ethnic minorities residing in Portugal. One of the newspapers, which is reputed to be of a more “popular” flavour, disseminated news on those issues by presenting the phenomenon of immigration in a personalised way and in an unfavourable light much more frequently than the other newspaper, reputed to be a newspaper “of choice”, which approached such news in a much more respectful manner and from an analytical standpoint.

The manner in which the media handle the theme of migrant communities and ethnic minorities may not be held hostage to values that are merely profit-oriented and to a lack of sensitivity or rectitude on the part of its journalists, or to their feelings of xenophobia or marginalisation when confronted with reality. The risk of a lack of the sense of social responsibility which behoves us all in the process of transformation currently on course is far too high and ought not to be forgotten by such powerful distributors of information and opinion-makers.

GOODWILL AND POLITICAL CONTRADICTIONS

Many upstanding citizens and journalists commented the City Council's decision to bar the exhibition of the patera in the press, attributing it political connotations and criticising the liberal party which led the Council at the time for its conservative stance. Albeit acknowledging the work that that political party had already done to embellish the city, they stressed that its involvement with the community was poor at best, especially as concerned social causes such immigration and Aids.⁴³

In the meantime, in his search for a permanent home for the patera, the artist came across Talayueta, a small town of 10,400 residents whose Mayor showed interest in the

⁴³ - Jiménez, J. (2006). *PP, Mission Accomplished*. Solilóquios. El Periódico Extremadura, of December 3rd.

artwork. The Councillor in question had already acquired a reputation of being sympathetic to immigrants, who, in the case of Talayuela, originated mainly from the Maghreb and accounted for up to 40% of its population. His sympathetic views, which included his request to build a mosque in Talayuela, had already won praise from the media and been also the object of criticism and even death threats from extremist factions. On April 2nd, the patera hit the road again to make the trip from Cáceres to Talayuela where it was delivered to its Town Council for installation in that area's Nature Park as a tribute to Immigration.⁴⁴

However, the advent of local government elections for councils and autonomous regions in May 2007 determined a different fate for the cayuco. A change in the balance of political power in the Council following hard-fought elections put the project's execution on hold and, in a letter addressed to Emilio Núñez dated November that year,⁴⁵ the Town Council eventually informed him that the project was no longer on the cards and ordered him to remove the barge from the municipal warehouse where it stood⁴⁶.

When another mayor finally showed interest in the project, Emilio Núñez, in May 2008, wrote a writ of ...Donacion de la Patera al Pueblo de Aldeacentenera [Donation of the patera to the People of Aldeacentenera]⁴⁷..., where he narrated the trials and tribulations of the barge from inception of his creative project right up to the day scheduled for its delivery to this small town of the Cáceres District.

The patera was installed at one of the town's rotundas in May 2008 and it appeared to have finally reached its ultimate destination at long last. Its exhibition lasted only a

⁴⁴ - Armero, A. J. (2007). *Talayuela se queda com la patera de la esperanza, instalación de Emílio González*. Cáceres Hoy. January 28th.

⁴⁵ - Talayuela Town Council (2007). Letter addressed to Emilio Nuñez requesting the removal of the *patera* from the municipal warehouse.

⁴⁶ - Núñez, E. (2007). *La patera de la esperanza varada en un cuarto oscuro*.

⁴⁷ - Nuñez, E. (2008). *Certificado de Donación de la Patera, al Pueblo de Aldeacentenera*. 4 May 2008.

fortnight. Three unidentified individuals set the unfortunate “cayuco” on fire late one night, utterly destroying it.⁴⁸

Again the community and public opinion reviled that act and the media again reported developments,⁴⁹ this time accompanied by statements from many representative of the cultural community. A complaint was also lodged with the Guardia Civil by the Aldeacentenera Town Council to the effect of prosecuting the persons who had set it on fire. Later on in the year, in November, a news item published in the HOY Extremadura newspaper informed that the Juzgado de Instrucción nº 1 of Trujillo was conducting a preliminary inquiry into the matter given that an individual had been imputed to be the alleged perpetrator of the barge’s destruction.⁵⁰



Photo published in the cover page of “El Periódico

⁴⁸ - Photo of the front page of “El Periódico Extremadura” of July 8th, 2008.

⁴⁹ - News ítem on the burning of the Patera (2008): MP – *Queman la patera que homenajea la inmigración*. El Periódico Extremadura, July 8th, P19 / J.S.P. – *Calcinan una patera destinada a un monumento a la migración*. Hoy, Ciudades e Municipios, July 8th, P20 / M.P. – *Gonzalez dice que la quema de la patera “es un acto xenófobo”*. El Periódico Extremadura. Cáceres, July 9th. P21 / Editorial Opinión - *Queman una Patera*. El Periódico Extremadura, July 10th, P4 / Redacción Caso del Monumento - *El alcalde de Aldeacentenera lleva a juzgado opiniones racistas*. El Periódico Extremadura, July 10th P4. / Jiménez, J. - *La esperanza quemada*. El Periódico Extremadura, July 13th, P6. / Gutiérrez, J. – *Salvajada en Aldeacentenera*. Tribuna extremeña. Hoy Diario de Extremadura, July 16th, P28.

⁵⁰ - Pablos, J. (2008). *Imputada una persona por quemar la patera de Aldeacentenera*. Hoy Región. November 27th, P17.

Extremadura" of 8 July 2008

Politicisation of artistic and cultural phenomena is by no means a rare event, especially when concerning local government bodies which elected Councillors and their constituents, and their public reactions to issues, become highly visible and are fairly immediate. Resort to organising events of all sorts just prior to an election is a fairly common practice and cultural initiatives do not escape that practice. Exhibitions, shows, and museum inaugurations are actually often postponed or brought forward in order that their timing may coincide with particular times of convenience for purposes of canvassing votes.

At present, cultural activities clearly accrue a dimension of economic benefit and prestige to their sponsors which government authorities, particularly at local government level, are sure not to wish to overlook. In local government circles, projects that involve restoration of monuments or renewal of cities and historical villages, or of territories that were patrimonialized as heritage on account of their natural and cultural worth for the tourism industry are increasingly seen by Councillors as a sound investment and a job-creation opportunity in areas which have hitherto been looked at as non-refundable grants. The new Cultural Polices often elect to sponsor landmark national and international projects such the hosting of World or Universal Expositions, the promotion of Cities of Culture, or the achievement of UNESCO recognition for their regions and monuments on account of their inherent grandiosity and ability to capture the interest of the masses, hand in hand with the kind of global notoriety that territories that organise such events stand to gather.

As cultural activities become increasingly more widespread, more in demand, and more profitable, joint public and private interest on them has been on the rise and, at present, there are a number of reasons why private initiative should get involved with Culture, over and above the financial benefits it may possibly obtain. On the one hand, these days, Sponsorships are shared by small and large economic

organisations alike thanks to specific legislation that allows them to allocate spend to sponsor artworks or the construction and preservation of monumental and cultural heritage and to cultural activities they pursue of their own initiative or in response to requests from third parties. Those actions are not solely motivated by financial benefit. Ever more, a company's prestige and honourableness appears to be tied to the manner in which it employ its revenues and it often allocates a portion thereof to sponsor social or cultural initiatives. Other valid reasons may be raised, such as the emergence of a higher degree of conscientiousness among individuals and entities towards their responsibility to contribute towards social uplifting and towards the operation of a real market that demands Culture out of an appetite for enrichment or as a means of entertainment.

Naturally, those organisations employ selection criteria that stem from a host of factors – a guarantee of success, fashion, awe, political, economic, or social expediency, or merely the fact that the selected option will find favour with the masses or with their customers.

Therefore, and when it comes to this cultural sharing, it falls on the public authorities to strive for compensation and balance by channelling their support and gearing their action towards fields that ensure comprehensiveness, democraticity, and inclusion in their cultural options, both by facilitating broad access by the community at large to the major cultural phenomena such as shows and art and heritage exhibitions and by fostering development of novel creativities and the emergence of new cultural values across the entire spectrum of civil society.

In the case we have been reviewing, an artistic creation that paid homage to human solidarity managed, unwittingly, to enter the fray of political confrontation as reflected in the press, which commentary clarified both their views of the events and the positioning of a variety of political forces on the issue of the phenomenon of Immigration, more proactively, in the first instance, and in a more subdued manner, in the second instance.

If the use of Culture, or of any other activity, for electoral ends is a pernicious, negative way of asserting a party's political dogma, then inadequate handling of the sensitive theme of ethnic minorities and their social integration may well become a road fraught with danger of confrontation and hostility among communities, with unforeseeable consequences. The presence of different ethnicities in a city's social landscape now starts to call for measures from government authorities, within the scope of their duties, which go way beyond the kind of measures that central government and applicable legislation already cater for at present. Social integration and cultural enrichment, together with awareness-raising policies, are indispensable means to engender peace and human solidarity when dealing with new situations and with the kind of possible conflicts they may generate. The need to effectively deal with those citizens on the basis that their rights and obligations are equal to the rights and obligations of a country's nationals requires on-going attention from all local government authorities and the support of all non-governmental institutions, whether they engage in cultural or in welfare activities. Perhaps the recent election of a Black man for President for the first time in the United States' history may positively influence the promotion and acceptance of social miscegenation and the manner in which this new paradigm should be dealt with by government authorities, the media, and society itself.

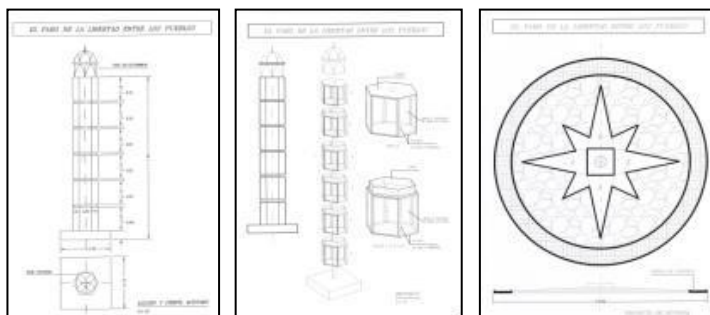
Correct, inclusive cultural policies applied by government authorities and cultural partners may act as an excellent means of communication and may provide an opportunity to dignify the social status of those communities, thereby acting as a major contributor towards their integration and to the achievement of locally sustained development. Given their proximity to their constituents, Councillors, in particular, stand as both spectators and privileged agents of cultural and social change and need to pay great attention to it, since the success of their initiatives and efforts will depend, to a large extent, on their ability to understand the nature of

the cultural values that the society they serve may come to recognise as theirs, at any particular point in time.

MULTICULTURALISM GOING FORWARD

Emilio González refuses to give up. He's currently working on a project to build a lighthouse which he calls "El Faro de la Libertad entre los pueblos" [The Shining Light of Freedom among Peoples].⁵¹ If he manages to have it built, and he's banking on the support of the Mayor of Aldeacentenera to the effect, a 6-metre high lighthouse tower will be housing the ashes of the patera to stand as a tribute to hope for a society that has no qualms about its approach to human solidarity and its stance on the eradication of racism and xenophobia.⁵²

The local press continues to cover his interventions, local residents support him, and everybody's sure that González will achieve his goals.⁵³



Designs for the "El Faro de la libertad entre los pueblos"
Art Project. Drawings by Emilio Nuñez

In a world that keeps on changing at a fast pace, everything changes, and what is produced by every human being and by every social group reflects, influences and is

⁵¹ - Nuñez, E. (2008). *Descripción del proyecto del Faro de la Libertad*.

⁵² - Nuñez, E. (2008). *Proyecto para o Faro de la Libertad entre los Pueblos*.

⁵³ - Armero, A. (2008). *Un faro mariner en plena llanura*. Hoy Cáceres. 27 de Outubro, P7.

itself prey to the influence of the social conduct of others, and mirrors its contradictions in a mix of unconscious selfishness and of conscientious solidarity to which the new missions of heritage and of museums may not remain indifferent. The *Patera* of Hope stands as an example of the numerous ways in which creative endeavours and active participation in the exercise of citizenship may act to the benefit of social integration when duly supported by the political and cultural establishment. As far as inclusion is concerned, we all have an active role to play in our modern multicultural societies: immigrants, hosts, artists, theoreticians, the media, politicians, and museologists. And from among all of them, perhaps the leading role still falls to hope.

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La Fábrica de cayucos. Cover photo from "El Periódico Extremadura" of 27 July 2006

Selection and transportation of the *Patera* to Cáceres. Photos by Emilio Nuñez

Execution of the installation for an artwork titled "*Patera de la Esperanza*". Photos by Emilio Nuñez

Leftover clothing and personal items found inside the barge.

Photos by Emilio Nuñez

Hoisting and installation of the barge in the gardens of the Museum. Photos by Emilio Nuñez

La patera quemada. Cover photo from “El Periódico Extremadura” of 8 July 2008

Designs for the “*El Faro de la libertad entre los pueblos*” Project. Drawings by Emilio Nuñez

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