Unesco Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage – Concepts and Implementation

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Unesco adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003. Finland ratified the Convention in 2013 and the Finnish National Board of Antiquities is currently planning the national implementation. In the Convention ICH is defined as the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. In this paper I will discuss the main concepts of the Convention, including intangible cultural heritage and its domains, safeguarding, communities and groups and the process of inventorying and inventories. How the concepts are and can be defined and how is the idea of cultural sustainability woven into the concepts? I will especially concentrate on the challenges the main concepts present in the context of the national implementation of the Convention. In addition, I will also briefly map how the concepts have been used in other state parties to the Convention, especially in countries with similar heritage management structure as in Finland.

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