

Looking towards the Past, Looking towards the Future: Three Examples of Cultural Cooperation

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Intercultural dialogue generally raises dilemmas of a theoretical kind, essentially relating to the relative levels of participation of the various parties involved or to the methods of financing the proposed activities. In the case, however, of the Mediterranean arena with its North-South axis, these difficulties are further complicated by the logistics of putting such dialogue into practice. Through reference to three different examples, we will see how projects are set out and how they develop, as well as what cooperation strategies they draw on, what key problems they face and what the end results can be.

In spite of the considerable differences that exist between them, the three examples share a number of points in common: the clear need for intervention because of the reality on the ground; the level of interest and enthusiasm in the particular field that serves as a catalyst; the requisite involvement of political players to initiate the project and the need for the different parties to sign implementation agreements or protocols in order to ensure its viability and

the accomplishment of medium- and long-term goals.

Saving the *Imzad*: A Project to Recover an Intangible Heritage

When UNESCO's General Conference set the wheels in motion for their "Sahara of Cultures and Peoples" project in 2001, with the aim of backing strategies for sustainable development and the fight against poverty that were based on protecting physical as well as less tangible forms of heritage, an ambitious project was launched from Tamanrasset by the Save the Imzad Association¹ – with the support of UNESCO, who included it in its own programme. This project focused on the preservation and promotion of the symbolic instrument of Tuareg culture: the *imzad*.

This monochord viola played by women and accompanied exclusively by the male voice is much more than a mere instrument: it is intimately entwined with the oral tradition of

1. Association Sauver l'Imzad: www.imzadanzad.com.

Tarzagh from Djanet (M^o Elena Morató).

a people whose social dynamics had brought them to the brink of demise. A last-ditch response by a number of public figures in the Hoggar region came in 2003 with the founding of the Association, which brought together the most eminent artistic authorities in the Hoggar and Ajjer regions: the nine last-surviving female masters in the art of the *imzad* (from the instrument's construction right through to playing the various melodies of the traditional repertoire), all of whom were around eighty years old, and a number of poets who knew the classical oral tradition well. With their valuable input, and thanks to an agreement with the National Institute for Vocational Training, a school was founded in 2004, with forty female students graduating from its first class, the Dassine.

The Dassine group signified the rebirth of the *imzad* and, propelled by an increasing wave of social demand, rediscovered how to manufacture it and began the work of compiling

and transcribing poetry in song with the aid of a specific computer program. These efforts culminated, in 2005, in the First International Imzad Symposium held in Tamanrasset, representing the validation of the programme's work by the participating ethnomusicologists. The Symposium's success led, furthermore, to the creation of two new schools in Ideless and Tintarabine. This also served to achieve UNESCO's objectives: to restore cultural heritage; to implement strategies of benefit to local populations and their most disadvantaged groups (women and young people) through encouraging their participation in economic life, and to contribute towards the development of sustainable tourism that draws on and adds to the area's cultural riches.

Nowadays the Association focuses its efforts on two fronts: on the one hand, on increasing its level of collaboration with Tamanrasset's and Illizi's authorities around actions to promote Tuareg culture and, on the other, on establishing

Dar el-Imzad, the base for the future Institute of Training and the international centre for the creation, documentation and investigation of heritage, which seeks to become a reference point along this “trans-Saharan cultural route” that crosses Algeria’s Great South.

Mediterrània FM: A Joint Strategy Project

Mediterrània FM² is the Mediterranean Festivals and Music Network, which was founded with the aim of helping the variety of festivals organised in this large geographical area join forces with a view to minimising costs, streamlining work and increasing media coverage through use of a joint strategy. The realisation that all the different elements involved in planning an event of this type (the search for new artists and contacts, organisation of travel and accommodation, promotion) are logistically very costly and could be greatly reduced with improved information sharing and a degree of shared management culminated in 2004 in an initial meeting that took place in Barcelona. The first edition came the following year during The Mercè Festival with the support of BAM (Barcelona Acció Musical), and by 2006 enjoyed the backing of the Institut de Cultura de Barcelona, the IEMed and the Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional.

A number of representatives of both partner and invited festivals participated in the 2007 meeting (from Algeria, Oran’s Festival National de la Chanson Rai; from France, Les Méditerranéennes and Marseille’s Fiesta des Suds; from Morocco, Essaouira’s Ganoua Festival, the Casablanca Festival and Chaouen’s Alegria Festival; from Spain, the Mercat de Música Viva de Vic, Vilaseca’s Fira de Música al Carrer, the Festival



de Música Popular i Tradicional and Manresa’s Mediterrània; from Greece, the Yakinthia Festival; from Italy, Florence’s Musica dei Popoli Festival; from Lebanon, the Beiteddine Festival; from Mali, the Festival au Désert; from Tunisia, El Jem’s Découvertes Tunisie Festival and Cartago’s Ness El Fen Festival). It is important to note that these meetings offer sessions that are open to professionals and also admit individual members (journalists, music critics), whose input without doubt ensures that the activities enjoy greater success and are more widely disseminated.

The exchange of experiences and views served to underline the not inconsiderable difficulties faced by organisers – in some countries more than in others. These are not only apparent in the area of budgets (funding, discord between the official sponsor and other companies and multinationals backing the event), but also in the continual struggle to maintain the

viability of the project in the face of opposing demands from different elements of the host society, sometimes even at the expense of safety. Indeed, they are equally evident in the area of physical mobility in the southern countries (it is a well-known fact that musicians can have great difficulty getting to scheduled concerts, which ultimately often do not take place). If problem solving is one of the practical goals, the most challenging and exciting objective is to find innovative methods of collaboration and musical experimentation among the different traditions and new languages. Mediterrània FM's key challenge is to ensure smooth communication between its members and to channel their shared needs, thereby encouraging a clear sense of momentum for the benefit of all.

A Guide to the Musics of the Maghreb: An Open Editorial Project

Last January, Madrid played host to the unveiling of the first musical guide³ to introduce the extraordinarily rich, lively and constantly evolving musical world of the Maghreb to the Spanish public. The fruit of several years' labours and born of the interest of the cultural association Fabricantes de Ideas, the project garnered, over the course of time, the enthusiastic support of other keen aficionados of this musical genre. The guide ultimately appeared as an extensive, weighty tome – published thanks to the support of the Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional and the Casa Árabe.

It comprised a theoretical section containing individual experiences alongside introductory articles on different musical realities and styles (from the *gnawa*, the *shaabi* and the *haul* right through to the latest offerings from the genres of fusion rap and rock), as well as a practical section comprising more than 250 entries on artists, festivals and concepts, not to mention an invaluable list of recordings, bibliographical references and websites.

One way in which this guide stands out is that it offers perspectives from both sides of the Mediterranean through the contributions of a wide range of experts, from journalists and historians to programmers, promoters and musicians (Amel Abou el Aazm, Yolanda Agudo, Badre Belhachemi, Zina Berrahal, Luis Calvo, Rubén Caravaca, Manuel Domínguez, Javier Losilla, M^a Elena Morató and Ferran Morillas). It also boasts sponsorship from FEVE (Ferrocarriles de Vía Estrecha [Narrow-Gauge Railways]) and the support of the Pirineos Sur Festival, Qadar and Casablanca's Boulevard des Jeunes Musiciens.

The ambitious nature of the plan has led its promoters to make it an ongoing and wider-reaching project: a second phase, via its website, will involve turning the guide into a virtual meeting place open to new contributions that will serve to make it more complete, give it greater depth and raise awareness of both old and new developments. On balance, this is a project that draws on a whole host of different sources to serve a public that, although disparate, is extraordinarily large.

3. www.musicasdelmagreb.com.