



# Rural Space as Cultural Heritage



festivities and  
events

agri-food  
traditions

landscapes sculptured  
by man  
and time

long-held  
productive  
identities



HELLENIC MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND SPORTS  
DIRECTORATE OF MODERN CULTURAL HERITAGE



## **What is cultural heritage and how is it perceived?**

**C**ultural heritage comprises material as well as intangible manifestations of the past, which are preserved in the present and safeguarded for the next generations, as they are deemed common good. Cultural heritage is related on the one hand to the way communities wish to be recognized by others and on the other hand to their collective memory, as it shapes a sense of belonging. We consider heritage comprising of not only the great monuments or significant archaeological sites, but also of the “smallest”, the “humblest” or less known remainders and traces of the past that form bonds among the members of a community.

The concept of cultural heritage entails choice, conscious or not. People choose what constitutes their cultural heritage, what deserves to be preserved and promoted and what not. The criteria might change depending on the historical and social conditions of the time, the cultural and social changes and their impact on institutions (state, social, religious, formal or non-formal) that regulate memory and heritage. Cultural heritage is always subjected to adjustments and conscious decisions that are taken today to affect the future. The rapid economic and social changes of our times make it all the more important to focus on the criteria that define choices societies make when it comes to identifying the elements that constitute their cultural heritage. Protection, safeguarding and promotion of cultural heritage serves as an identity marker locally and nation-wide, contributes to the sensitization of the people regarding the cultural values of their land and, furthermore, enhances cultural diversity and mutual understanding.

## Protection and safeguarding of cultural heritage

The **protection** of tangible cultural goods entails conservation, restoration and museum exhibiting. Every change or transformation of material heritage is considered damaging, since it reduces or even compromises integrity and authenticity. The responsibility for the protection of tangible cultural heritage belongs mainly to the states that have institutionalized rules on a national and international level.

The **safeguarding** of the intangible cultural heritage requires a holistic approach that integrates the views and the aspirations of the communities of the bearers. In other words, it is required for the communities themselves to recognize its value so as to act for its safeguarding and transmission to the next generations. Planning and implementing public policies aiming at safeguarding and at promoting intangible cultural heritage is always necessary, but only as complementary to community self-awareness.



## What is intangible cultural heritage?

**T**he way people perceive the world, their relationship with nature, the universe, other people is imprinted on tangible objects. It is also imprinted on intangible facets of culture as they encompass and express values, ideas, choices and feelings that cover every aspect of social life. Oral traditions, music, dances, customs, rituals, traditional techniques and knowledge, culinary habits, as they were formed by past –mainly agricultural– societies are parts of the collective experience and memory of every society and benchmarks of its identity. With its living and dynamic nature, Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is transmitted from generation to generation and it is constantly recreated by the communities of its bearers according to their needs, their interaction with environment and their historical trajectory.

Intangible Cultural Heritage is a living tradition. The bearers of its elements are people. Intangible Cultural Heritage cannot exist without its bearers.



Intangible Cultural Heritage is recognized as such when communities are being formed through its performance, when people consider it an expression of their identity and when it provides a sense of belonging to a community.



According to the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003) the main domains of ICH are:

a. **oral traditions and expressions** (tales, myths, storytelling, narrations, epic poems etc.) including language, but not as an element per se, rather as a vehicle for intangible cultural heritage

b. **performing arts** (dance, music and songs, folk theatre, etc.)

c. **social practices, rituals and festive events** (folk rituals, customs in the annual cycle and customs for the main life-events of the people, etc.)

d. **knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe** (ethnobotanical knowledge, folk meteorology, etc.)

e. **traditional craftsmanship such as traditional arts** (weaving, pottery-making, vernacular architecture, vernacular boatbuilding, etc.) and handicrafts (embroidery, etc.)

## Why is ICH important?

Cultural heritage and especially ICH has been subject matter not only for UNESCO and other international organizations (Council of Europe, ICOM, ICOMOS etc) but for many disciplines as well (folklore, social anthropology, architecture, geography, psychology, medicine, biology etc).

Some of the expressions of ICH include masterpieces of art and culture, formed by accumulated experience and knowledge about life and the universe (e.g. traditional arts and crafts, oral traditions etc).

Integrating ICH into strategic planning of public policies has recently entered public debate.

ICH is valuable for contemporary societies because:

- ▶ It plays an important role in maintaining cultural diversity in a globalized world. Cultural heritage encompassed in rural landscapes reveals models of natural resources management, the value of which is priceless not only for the local communities that practice them but for humanity in general, particularly nowadays, when we face the effects of climate change. ICH provides ideas, knowledge and inspiration for the sustainable management of these resources, prioritizing the wellbeing of the community and future generations. Moreover, it provides models of development that can be combined with preserving and enhancing biodiversity.
- ▶ It enhances citizens' right and engagement in the cultural agenda. People can find parts of their identity in manifestations of intangible cultural heritage and they may realize that by safeguarding it, by creating and enjoying cultural goods, they also contribute to social cohesion. Cultural heritage, especially intangible, provides us with a sense of continuity, connecting us with the past as well as with the future. ICH contributes in raising community self-awareness and social cohesion, helping individual practitioners feel important within the community they live in.
- ▶ It promotes communication and dialogue be-

Two inherent features of ICH are particularly important nowadays:

- its **collective nature**, which promotes solidarity and collective action
- its **experiential and participatory character**, which is of particular value at a time when passive consumption of images and a culture of the spectacle seem to dominate.



tween peoples as it highlights their common values and heritage but also their fascinating diversity.

- ▶ It can highlight the cultural wealth and the history of local communities.
- ▶ It constitutes a subtle power that contributes in preventing conflicts as well as in the integration of immigrant or refugee populations in new places of settlement. Performing ICH elements provides immigrant or refugee people with a sense of identity and belonging, which helps immensely in healing the trauma of expatriation.
- ▶ Knowing and practicing sustainable natural resources' management is an invaluable guide for preventing natural disasters.
- ▶ Promoting ICH can also be economically beneficent for the communities of the bearers. Various cultural or alternative forms of tourism testify to this. If it wasn't for culture, tourism may have not been invented, in the sense that tourism responds to a deeply rooted desire to experience new and diverse environments, tastes, music etc. It is worth pointing out, however, that aspects of intangible cultural heritage with a positive economic contribution are in no way confined in tourism.
- ▶ ICH can highlight local agri-food products as cultural goods, promoting the feeling of pride of the producers for their work and boosting local economies.



Just like any heritage, agricultural heritage itself is an economic resource: its use must be appropriate and offer vital support to its long-term sustainability.

*(ICOMOS-IFLA Principles Concerning Rural Landscapes as Heritage)*

## **CULTURAL LANDSCAPE: Another aspect of cultural heritage?**

**T**he landscape could be defined as the way people perceive with all of their senses the works and the traces that have been left on the land by previous generations: images, feelings and impressions from tangible and intangible vestiges of habitation, diverse buildings, but also music, ritual practices, arts and crafts, flavors and many more, all connected with the experience of living in a particular space.

Inevitably, landscapes are never static, they are closely related with human activities and the multiple and diverse changes that people constantly bring.

People cultivate an experiential relationship with the landscape. They live and create within it, they talk about it and they also represent it in various artistic forms.

Without human activity, the notion of landscape cannot be conceived. In this sense, the landscape constitutes cultural heritage, since it is a testimony of human history and a benchmark for the interpretation of the evolvement of culture throughout the ages.



## Is rural space cultural heritage?

**T**he concept of rural space is rather broad and by no means limited to primary sector, i.e. the production of agricultural products. It has historical and sociological dimensions and it is connected with cultural practices that are deeply rooted in time. It encompasses a wide gamut of cultural experiences, a lasting stock of intangible cultural heritage. These cultural expressions were initially formed by preindustrial societies and they have been imbued by their values, but they were transformed over time, and they have acquired a new meaning.

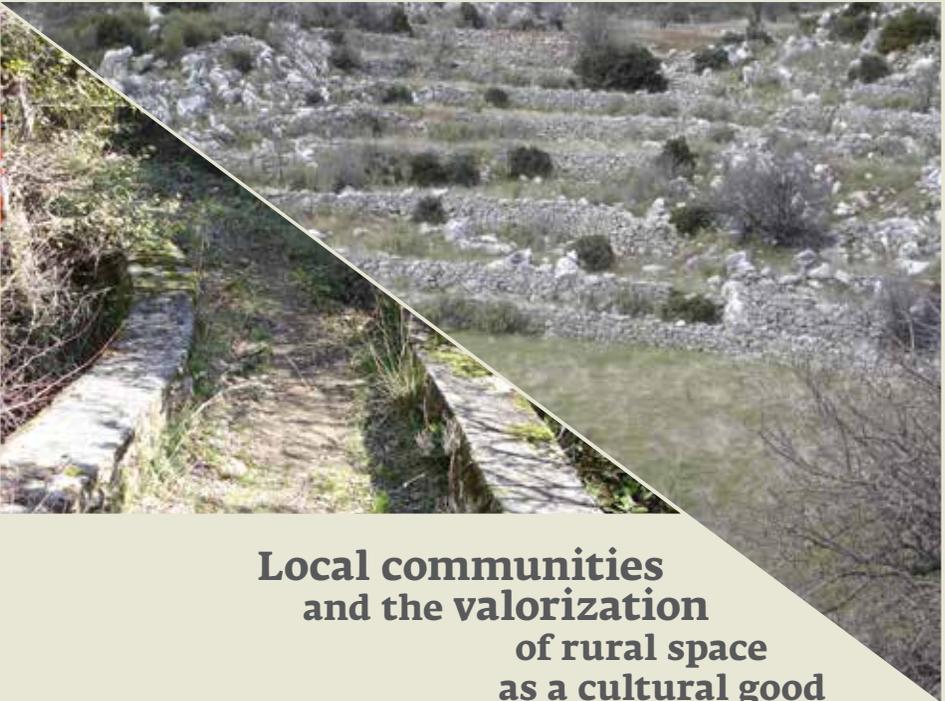
As a cultural good, rural space includes:

- ▶ **rural landscape**, as it is shaped by the interaction of people with the environment, the development of productive activities (agricultural production, livestock farming etc.) and of traditional arts and crafts (vernacular architecture, drystone walling etc.) and in general the historical configuration of various experiences of habitation (planning of residential areas, designation of sacred areas, land plots etc.),
- ▶ **agri-food traditions** (cultivation knowledge and techniques, livestock farming, cheese making, fishing etc.) which are still practiced in rural spaces and which are almost always linked to long-held identities and cultural structures,
- ▶ **traditional craftsmanship** and arts, techniques, expertise and professions that were historically and specifically (but not exclusively) linked to the rural space (vernacular shipbuilding, vernacular architecture etc.),
- ▶ **customs and cultural practices**, feasts, festivals, which are also strongly linked to local identities and the sense of belonging in a place.



## Greek rural landscape as a cultural good

Olives, wheat, grapevines, the trinity that shapes the land and the history of the Mediterranean are the most prominent features of the Greek rural landscape, since they are linked to the productive identity of this land. Markets, bazaars, squares, threshing floors, wellsprings and fountains, local management systems of natural resources (of forests, of water, of vegetation etc.), pastures, paths, drystone terraces, masterpieces of vernacular architecture, humble rural buildings and many festivals, festivities and feasts -“panegyria”, along with local culinary traditions compose a cluster of material and intangible cultural expressions thus forming productive identities deeply rooted in space and time.



## Local communities and the valorization of rural space as a cultural good

Over the last years, a wide range of activities promoting cultural tourism and agritourism—feasts and festivals for the promotion of local products and local gastronomy etc.—are strongly endorsed by local communities and authorities, along with programs for designating productive areas and residential complexes as places where new land uses are applied. Rural space is now considered as a public good, that the local communities (through their administration) must take care of within the framework of sustainable development. Local identity is considered to be a factor of development.

However, a lot more than the aforementioned is necessary for the full appreciation of rural space as a cultural, environmental and aesthetic good. Rural space should rather be the fulcrum of a wider strategy, which will foster synergies and networking

between **local communities** (local administration, folklore and other museums, cultural associations, agricultural associations), **administration** (coordinating ministries, i.e. the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, the Hellenic Ministry of Rural Development and Food, the Hellenic Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change) and the **scientific community**. Sustainable development and the well-being of the communities living in rural spaces can be supported if rural heritage, in all its multifaceted expressions, is taken under consideration.



## Strategies of intervention

**T**he Directorate of Modern Cultural Heritage (DMCH), considering the value of intangible cultural heritage and the necessity of its safeguarding, develops and implements activities that

- ▶ stem from an interdisciplinary approach to heritage,
- ▶ integrate the expertise accumulated through the progress of related scientific disciplines, as well as the results and the evaluation of major international and European conventions for cultural heritage and
- ▶ use this knowledge and policies, in cooperation with local communities, local administration and civil society, in order to safeguard and promote the communities' heritage, both for their benefit and for the benefit of society in general.

Cultural heritage and especially intangible cultural heritage provides key insights that may ensure quality of life in local societies and promote products and services of high quality to those who wish to experience the countryside in all its dimensions, as a cultural good that belongs to all.

## The institutional framework International and European Conventions

**T**here is a detailed and far-reaching legal framework, formed by the relative international and European conventions (which are Laws of the Hellenic Republic, after their ratification), that can be taken into account for the protection, the safeguarding and the management of cultural heritage.



- ▶ The Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO 1972) which was ratified by Greece in 1981 and aims at the protection of the cultural and natural heritage which is of outstanding universal value.
- ▶ The Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2003), which was ratified by Greece in 2006 and provides the institutional framework for the inventorying, safeguarding and promotion of the intangible cultural goods, as principal identity components. It should be noted that the Law for the protection of antiquities and cultural heritage (3028/2002), which precedes the Convention, made an explicit reference to safeguarding ICH.
- ▶ The Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of the Cultural Expressions (UNESCO 2005), which was also ratified by Greece in 2006. The Convention focuses on the

The Directorate of Modern Cultural Heritage is the competent body of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports for the implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003), while it is also responsible, in collaboration with the Directorate for the Development of Contemporary Culture, for the implementation of the Convention on the Protection and on the Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expressions (UNESCO, 2005).

binary nature of the cultural goods, services and activities as entities bearing values, cultural meanings and identities, as well as important factors of social and economic development.

- ▶ The Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Council of Europe, Faro, 2005), a holistic approach to all the expressions of cultural heritage, emphasizing on the participatory approach to culture.
- ▶ European Landscape Convention – Florence Convention (Council of Europe, 2004), the first International Landscape Convention, which constitutes the common agreement of the Council of Europe member States, for sustainable management and protection of the identity and the diversity of the landscape throughout Europe.
- ▶ European Agenda for Culture (European Union 2007), which recognizes the significance of culture for prosperity, solidarity and security.
- ▶ The New European Agenda for Culture (European Union 2018), which promotes the social and economic aspect and the participatory approach to culture and cultural heritage.
- ▶ European Cultural Heritage Strategy for the 21st century (Council of Europe 2017), which promotes an extensive and non- excluding participation of local societies in the development of relevant policies.
- ▶ The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN 2015), according to which, culture constitutes one of the main pillars of development.

According to the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage three International Lists have been established and are regularly updated:

**Representative list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**

**List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding**

**Register of Good Safeguarding Practices.**



## Key objectives: Policy making for the cultural heritage of rural space

**O**n the basis of the directions given by the international and the European Conventions for the promotion of the cultural dimension of rural space and the management of cultural heritage in general, the Directorate of Modern Cultural Heritage aspires to contribute to:

- ▶ the promotion of the cultural and social value of rural space, as they are defined by the interaction between human and the environment,
- ▶ the safeguarding of traditional arts, craftsmanship and knowledge, which contribute to sustainable development of local societies,
- ▶ the promotion of professions (eg. mountain guides, specialists in cultural interpretation) which promote the cultural dimension of rural space,
- ▶ the highlighting of agri-food traditions of rural space: common meals –symposia and the concomitant socialization and bonding, the frugality of dietary habits, local agricultural products of high cultural value and quality as well),
- ▶ safeguarding and highlighting of those customary practices that form local identities and the sense of belonging, while also fostering equal participation of different social groups and encouraging free expression of their own culture,
- ▶ the collaboration of all the relevant cultural agents, aiming to promote, safeguard and protect the cultural heritage of rural space, based on values, priorities and choices that enhance sustainability and quality of life,
- ▶ the empowerment of local communities, so that they become aware of, recreate and safeguard their heritage, identities and history,
- ▶ the upgrading and the innovative orientation of local folklore museums, so that they become spaces of dialogue and exchange of ideas, democratic participation, cultural and economic development of local societies,
- ▶ the use of digital and other means of safeguarding and promoting the cultural heritage of rural space.

## Activities and projects of the Directorate of Modern Cultural Heritage for the promotion of rural space as cultural heritage

**T**he Directorate of Modern Cultural Heritage (DMCH) is responsible for the planning and implementation of activities for the safeguarding of intangible cultural goods. The Directorate keeps and updates the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Greece, which is hosted in the official website <http://ayla.culture.gr>, while at the same time it organizes ICH awareness raising events, such as info days, workshops and lectures.

The Directorate

- ▶ encourages synergies among all the agents and entities that are related to ICH and act for its safeguarding and promotion,
- ▶ promotes networking on local, national and international level,
- ▶ fosters collaborations with universities, museums, institutions of local administration, cultural associations, agricultural and women associations etc.,



- ▶ participates in awareness raising events all over Greece aiming at the valorization of cultural and productive local identities and their integration to contemporary projects of cultural heritage management.

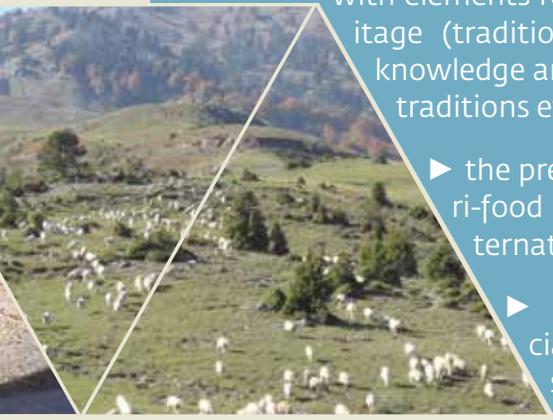
DMCH is promoting digital publications about the Culinary Cultural Heritage as one of the priority elements of **Intangible Cultural Heritage**. So far, the first volume about the Greek Pie has already been published, while the second one will be dedicated to the vine and wine making traditions in Greece.

### Collaboration of the Directorate of Modern Cultural Heritage with the Agricultural University of Athens

In March 2016, on the initiative of DMCH, a Memorandum was signed between the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports and the Agricultural University of Athens, aiming at:

- ▶ the cooperation of the two entities for the enrichment of the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Greece with elements related to the agri-food cultural heritage (traditional farming products, cultivation knowledge and techniques, local knowledge and traditions etc.),
- ▶ the preparation of nomination files on agri-food traditions for inscription on the International Lists of ICH,
- ▶ public awareness campaigns, especially targeted to young people, on issues concerning the knowledge and the traditions of rural space, the traditional dietary systems etc.,
- ▶ highlighting the importance of the agri-food traditions as part of the collective self-awareness and the identity of local societies.

This cooperation has already motivated many entities, who are involved in relevant networks.



## Summer Schools

In 2018, the Directorate of Modern Cultural Heritage, introduced a new project, a Summer School on ICH, starting in Dimitsana, a small town in Central Peloponnese. The Summer School project is compatible with the cultural valorization of rural space. Moreover, hosting the event in a small town encourages the participation of local community and serves as an ethnographic exercise for documentation and safeguarding the rich cultural resources in the area.

The main objective of the project is to form a working link among the professionals in cultural heritage management (local museums' staff, local administration executives, freelancers in cultural interpretation etc.), public administration and researchers-academics.

The Summer Schools project may become a platform where local communities and the three main agents in cultural heritage management (as described above) could exchange good practices and innovative ideas, experiment in documentation and safeguarding of ICH in rural areas.



However, Summer Schools are not standalone events. DMCH organizes regularly meetings with stakeholders and professionals related with ICH expressions. In February 2018, the Directorate organized two such meetings: one with practitioners in the art of weaving and one with NGOs and freelancers specialized in the interpretation of the environment, so as to trace the possibility of support and promotion of their work, both for their benefit and for the benefit of local societies.

Since 2016, DMCH in collaboration with the Athens Ethnographic Film Festival (ETHNOFEST) implements an educational programme for students of primary and secondary education. Screening ethnographic films that present various ICH aspects of rural space and encouraging the school students to make their own ethnographic short films are at the heart of the educational programme. The accompanying educational material, approved by the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs, is available on the website for the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Greece: <http://ayla.culture.gr>. It includes ethnographic films, useful texts and tools for the students, as well as teaching plans for teachers.

The ethnographic documentary is used as an innovative pedagogic tool. Both the educational material and the programme aim at attracting the students' interest and familiarizing them with a more pluralistic approach to cultural heritage and the way it is functioning in the present, far from stereotypical, idealized and romantic representations of the past.



## The official website of DMCH for the intangible cultural heritage

**O**n the website <http://ayla.culture.gr> visitors can obtain information about ICH, the implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Greece, the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage (inscribed elements, pending files, procedure of inscription etc.). Moreover, visitors get informed about all the activities of DMCH and some of other entities related to ICH safeguarding.

## The National Inventory of ICH

**T**he National Inventory provides a valid and up-to-date picture of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Greece. The Greek National Inventory of ICH is built through the collective effort of the bearers of ICH (communities, groups, even individuals) and enables them to share their own cultural experience with the domestic and international public, to talk about their collective identity, to formulate proposals for the study and, above all, the safeguarding of their intangible cultural heritage.

22 elements have already been inscribed on the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Greece so far -February 2018 (also available online: <http://ayla.culture.gr>).

### Useful links and websites:

<https://ich.unesco.org/en>

<https://en.unesco.org/creativity/convention>

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>

<http://www.fao.org/giahs/en/>

<https://www.icomos.org/en/about-icomos/governance/general-information-about-the-general-assembly/future-annual-general-assemblies-2016-2017/38497-18th-general-assembly-of-icomos-2>



We would like to thank Kostas Damianidis, Kalliopi Stara and the photo gallery by ΚΕΘΕΑ, for their kind concession of photographs.

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