

Tangible and intangible Cultural Heritage

'Tangible Cultural Heritage' refers to physical artefacts produced, maintained and transmitted intergenerationally in a society. It includes artistic creations, built heritage such as buildings and monuments, and other physical or tangible products of human creativity that are invested with cultural significance in a society. 'Intangible Cultural Heritage' indicates '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' (UNESCO, 2003). Examples of intangible heritage are oral traditions, performing arts, local knowledge, and traditional skills.

Tangible and intangible heritage require different approaches for preservation and safeguarding, which has been one of the main motivations driving the conception and ratification of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The Convention stipulates the interdependence between intangible Cultural Heritage, and tangible cultural and natural heritage, and acknowledges the role of intangible Cultural Heritage as a source of cultural diversity and a driver of sustainable development. Recognizing the value of people for the expression and transmission of intangible Cultural Heritage, UNESCO spearheaded the recognition and promotion of living human treasures, 'persons who possess to a very high degree the knowledge and skills required for performing or recreating specific elements of the intangible Cultural Heritage'.

Sources:

UNESCO (2003) Convention for the safeguarding of the intangible Cultural Heritage. Paris: UNESCO.

UNESCO (n.d.) Guidelines for the Establishment of National 'Living Human Treasures' Systems. Paris: UNESCO.