

Webinar Series

Intangible Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development

Organized by the UNESCO Chair
on Intangible Cultural Heritage and
Sustainable Development

2024/2025 Program

CY Cergy Paris Université
CY Advanced Studies - CY Initiative of Excellence
UMR Héritages : Culture/s, Patrimoine/s, Création/s

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PRESENTATION

As a reservoir of experiences, developed across different cultures, Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) offers inspiring examples of alternative ways of understanding the relationship with the nature and the environment, of healing and taking care of each other, of strengthening social bonds and sustaining livelihoods. In this sense, ICH can be an agent for change and a resource for imagining alternative ways of living on an endangered planet, what is conventionally referred to as “sustainable development”.

The webinar series “Intangible Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development” brings together the UNESCO Chairs on Intangible Cultural Heritage to tackle the concept of “sustainable development” from the particular perspectives and field of expertise of each Chair (i.e. cultural diversity, education, comparative law, policy and law, applied studies, critical heritage studies etc.).

Discussants from a variety of disciplines will join the sessions with the aim of decompartmentalizing the debate following each presentation.



December 16th 2024 | 14h00 - 16h00 (CET)

THIAGO BURCKHART, Indigenous Intangible Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development in Latin America

The safeguarding of indigenous intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in Latin America plays a pivotal role in promoting sustainable development. These cultural elements contribute, directly or indirectly, to biodiversity conservation, natural resource management, and climate resilience, particularly in regions like the Amazon Rainforest, one of the world’s key biodiversity hotspots. Taking this into consideration, this contribution seeks to critically examine the intersection between indigenous ICH and sustainable development, focusing on a case study of the “Oral Heritage and Cultural Manifestations of the Zápara People”, who inhabit

bit areas along the borders of Ecuador and Peru. It will examine the challenges and opportunities involved in the integration of indigenous ICH into national and local sustainable development strategies, as well as the importance of inclusive policies that foster indigenous cultural autonomy and intercultural dialogue. This analysis is divided into three parts: I – Intangible cultural heritage and indigenous rights; II – the case of the “Oral Heritage and Cultural Manifestations of the Zápara People”; III – challenges and opportunities for indigenous ICH in promoting sustainable development.

Thiago Burckhart is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the “UNESCO Chair on Intangible Cultural Heritage and Comparative Law”, University of Rome Unitelma Sapienza, Italy. He holds a Ph.D. in Comparative Law and Processes of Integration from the University of Campania “Luigi Vanvitelli” (Italy) and a Master of Research in Constitutional Law from the Federal University of Santa Catarina (Brazil). He was a Visiting Researcher at the Department of Law and Political Science at Aix-Marseille University, France (2022). His research and publications focus primarily on cultural heritage law and policy, comparative constitutional law, indigenous peoples’ rights, international human rights law, and biodiversity protection.

January 23rd 2025 | 14h00 - 16h00 (CET)

JIYUN (JUNE) ZHANG, Nomination Videos as Archives of Cultural Continuity and Transformation: Framing Sustainable Development in ICH Nomination Videos of the 2003 Convention

As the world recognizes culture—especially Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)—as a vital component in sustainable development, the 2003 Convention takes on a pivotal role, promoting practices that align with the 2030 Agenda and foregrounding a participatory approach. However, questions remain: to what extent do local communities, groups, and individuals (CGIs) actively engage? How effectively does ICH intersect with sustainable development goals (SDGs)? Additionally, the expanding global media landscape accelerates cultural exchanges, generates new forms of digital mediation in heritage-making, and shapes perceptions of reality. In this context, UNESCO faces a growing challenge in managing and interpreting its vast, complex audiovisual archive of ICH.

This webinar addresses these questions by examining UNESCO’s operational audiovisual archives of ICH nomination videos. By analyzing submissions from China, Turkey, and Japan, we investigate how these videos reflect the ambitions of the 2022 Mondiacult strategy to enhance culture’s role in long-term sustainability. Applying insights from media archaeology, we will discuss how these videos document and reframe heritage to address both present and future SDG-related themes, particularly around CGI participation. This session offers a nuanced perspective on how safeguarding ICH can serve as a dynamic force for sustainable development, blending tradition with aspirations for a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable future.

Jiyun (June) Zhang is a PhD in cultural heritage studies and an independent animation filmmaker. She works as a research associate for the UNESCO Chair on Critical Heritage Studies and the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Brussels Heritage Lab and as a post-doctoral researcher in the ARCHES research group in the University of Antwerp. Current research projects: comparative study of ICH nomination videos, audiovisual interpretation and representation of ICH, media archaeology, and shamanistic expressions of groups in northern China.

February 11th 2025 | 14h00 - 16h00 (CET)

QIAONI ZHANG, ICH for Sustainable Development—A Case Study of the Sijingche Festival in Beishe Village in Shanxi

Beishe village, located in the eastern part of Changzhi, Shanxi Province, along the western side of the southern Taihang Mountains, is a typical dry farming community with scarce water resources. Each year before spring cultivation, the vibrant Sijingche Festival is held to pray for fertile land, bountiful harvest and favorable weather. This centuries-old tradition not only unites villagers to collectively withstand harsh conditions but also serves as an in-built financial mechanism for village mutual aid, supporting public affairs.

The Sijingche Festival shapes the village's historical and current social fabric and significantly influences its future development plans. This presentation stems from the project "Training Program for Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritage Inheritors". This program, jointly launched by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Human

Resources and Social Security of China, aims to promote the direct participation of university researchers and students in the protection and inheritance of ICH. Since its implementation in 2015, more than 100,000 people have been involved in this program. In 2024, more than 20 teachers and students from the Department of Folklore at Beijing Normal University, along with 30 local elites and ICH inheritors from the Shanxi Province, conducted a one-month joint fieldwork investigation in the southern mountainous areas of Shanxi.

In this presentation, Qiaoni Zhang, will represent some findings from this collaboration, not only narrating how ICH promotes sustainable development in the drought-stricken mountains but also discussing the role of the «Training Program for Chinese ICH Inheritors» in the protection and inheritance of ICH through his special form of cooperation.

Qiaoni Zhang, after obtaining her Bachelor's degree in Sociology from Beijing Normal University, continued her academic Master's studies in the field of folklore studies. Her research interests focus on the knowledge and practical heritage of how local communities in the mountainous areas of northern China coexist with drought. In this field, she has conducted some fieldwork not only in the Taihang Mountain area in northern China but also in other regions, such as the mountainous areas along the southeast coast of China (Ningde, Fujian) and the plateau mountainous areas in southwestern China (Tongren, Guizhou).

March 25th 2025 | 14h00 - 16h00 (CET)

ANATOLE DANTO, ICH through the prism of Nature/Culture controversies: implications for "knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe"

The 2003 UNESCO Convention on ICH allows the emergence of a heritage subcategory dedicated to «knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe». This subcategory sometimes comes up against the controversies between Nature and Culture that are shaking up our contemporary world.

This communication aims to produce an overview of this issue, based on ten years of work:

drafting of ICH inventory documents, in conjunction with the French Ministry of Culture, conducting research projects devoted to this subject, observation of pre- and post-classification situations in France and abroad (Europe). It is particularly interested in local uses described as «traditional» or «subsistence» in local environments, notably around the question of conservation and the heritage oppositions that result from this.

Anatole Danto is a maritime anthropologist. For 10 years, he has been conducting immersive research in European and Arctic coastal communities. He has led several classification projects in the French ICH inventory, and participated in numerous research projects around Nature-Culture controversies, indigenous issues, heritage conflicts, and socio-environmental changes.

April 8th 2025 | 14h00 - 16h00 (CET)

ELO-HANNA SELJAMAA, Intangible cultural heritage for a sustained presence of minorities in Estonia?

Since their emergence in the late 1990s, Estonian integration policies have been dominated by an ethnic understanding of nationality. "In addition to Estonians, there are almost 200 nationalities living in Estonia, although three quarters are in very small communities of less than 100 people," reads the outline provided by the Cultural Diversity Department of the Ministry of Culture on the website of the ministry. The most obvious outcome of state support for national minorities are cultural societies of which there are around 300.

Though many of these organisations have been around for decades and engage in what could be described as safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage of a given minority, other vocabulary and categories have been used to describe and ad-

minister their activities and goals. Only recently have state actors began to invite these societies and their representatives to think of their pursuits in terms of intangible cultural heritage and to inscribe their practices on the Estonian national inventory for intangible cultural heritage, which has precious few contributions from ethnic minorities. The presentation draws on ethnographic fieldwork to provide preliminary insights into these circumstances, asking how the concept of safeguarding has been presented to the representatives of national minorities and how it could be used to envision the futures of these minorities in Estonia: their continued, sustained presence in Estonia as they image it.

Elo-Hanna Seljamaa is Associate Professor of Estonian and Comparative Folklore at the University of Tartu and affiliated with its UNESCO Chair on Applied Studies of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Having a long-standing research interest in Estonian integration policies and in quotidian experiences of living with difference, she is curious about how the concept of intangible cultural heritage could be used to advance inclusivity and participation.

