

## **BETWEEN HERITAGE AND MODERNITY: INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE AS A FACTOR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA**

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### **Abstract**

In a world of constant change, where modernity is intricately intertwined with tradition, Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), stands as a fundamental pillar of Sustainable Development in African societies. Our presentation, titled "Between Heritage and Modernity: Intangible Cultural Heritage as a Factor of Sustainable Development in Africa," aims to explore the visible dynamics and profound interconnections between the preservation of this heritage and the pressing challenges of contemporary development.

Under the pretext of inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and through the lens of ICH, our objective is to examine the cultural elements and dynamics, the associated rituals and expressions, and the valuable indigenous practices and knowledge in various African countries. The primary focus of the case studies will be on Tunisia and Cameroon, providing in-depth analysis grounded in local contexts. However, to enrich the discussion and highlight broader trends, references and examples from other African cities will be briefly introduced as complementary illustrations. Such: Botswana, Gambia, Uganda, Mali, Morocco, and more. We question the links between the UNESCO label and the ensuing local development. Have local development strategies successfully integrated and enhanced these precious cultural resources? Our central question can be framed as follows: Is the international recognition of Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO perceived as a catalyst for development in Africa?

Our paper will first address the international recognition of African Intangible Heritage and the Safeguarding and Valorization Policies, examining their impact on socio-spatial development and the cultural economy. We will highlight the strengths of this Heritage, particularly regarding its values such as social cohesion and cultural identity. We will also address the limitations and challenges encountered.

Through case studies from African cities, as mentioned above, our paper will seek to promote a deeper understanding of how Intangible Cultural Heritage can be sustainably integrated into development strategies in Africa. We will emphasize best safeguarding practices to balance heritage preservation and innovation, considering local specificities and the aspirations of African

communities.

Drawing on a rich repertoire of experiences from African cities, our methodology is based on a combination of endogenous and exogenous expertise, blending rigor and depth. A comparative approach will allow us to offer a nuanced and insightful analysis, commensurate with the challenges of valuing Intangible Cultural Heritage within the framework of contemporary Sustainable Development across the different case studies presented.

**Keywords:** Africa, Intangible Cultural Heritage ICH, socio-spatial development, cultural economy, valorization, UNESCO label, Tunisia, Cameroun

## **Introduction**

In Africa, Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), constitutes an inestimable wealth, testifying to the diversity and depth of traditions, know-how and ancestral practices. As the continent finds itself at the crossroads between heritage and modernity, it becomes imperative to understand how this intangible cultural heritage can be mobilized as a lever for development. The recognition and valorization of intangible cultural practices by UNESCO plays a crucial role in this process, offering opportunities for economic, social and cultural development. This living heritage, which includes oral expressions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, dances, artisanal know-how, oral expressions and festive events, is essential not only to the identity and social cohesion of communities, but also to their resilience in the face of contemporary challenges. Through this research, we will explore how Tunisia and Cameroun can draw on their intangible heritage to foster inclusive and sustainable development, by harmoniously integrating tradition and innovation. This study will highlight successful initiatives, challenges encountered and future prospects for development that respects and values Africa's rich cultural heritage while embracing the dynamics of modernity. The growing interest in ICH<sup>1</sup> is largely fueled by UNESCO's initiatives, which aim to preserve these cultural treasures while promoting their economic and social valorization.

Research on ICH in Africa highlights that international recognition can act as a powerful catalyst for local economic development. For example, the inscription of cultural practices on UNESCO's various Safeguarding Lists can attract cultural tourism, generate income for local communities and promote job creation. In Tunisia, the recognition of Sejnane pottery know-how, harissa and the *Charfia fishing technique* led to a significant increase in production, thus stimulating the local economy and supporting producers. Similarly, in Central Africa, the Nguon festival in the West Region of Cameroon not only strengthened the cultural pride of the Bamoun, but also had a positive economic impact by attracting visitors and researchers.

On the social level, ICH plays a crucial role in preserving traditional knowledge and strengthening

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<sup>1</sup> This paper refers to several forms of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) from the African context, with a particular focus on Tunisia. These include: the **know-how related to pottery** practiced by the women of Sejnane; the knowledge, traditions, and practices associated with the date palm ; **Charfiya fishing in the Kerkennah Islands**; and the knowledge and cultural practices surrounding the preparation and consumption of couscous. Additionally, it highlights **Arabic calligraphy** as a form of artistic expression, and **Harissa** as a culinary tradition deeply rooted in the region's cultural identity. These elements exemplify how ancestral knowledge and practices continue to shape local identities and offer potential for cultural, social, and economic development.

In the case of Cameroon, the paper refers to several notable expressions of intangible cultural heritage that reflect the country's rich ethnocultural diversity and its efforts to implement the 2003 UNESCO Convention. Among them is **NGUON**, a set of governance rituals and associated expressions practiced by the Bamoun community, which was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in December 2023. The paper also highlights the **NGONDO**, a ritual centered on water oracles and cultural traditions of the Sawa people, currently under evaluation for inscription. Additionally, it mentions the **MVET**, an epic oral and musical tradition shared with neighboring countries, which is being prepared as part of a multinational nomination involving Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Congo, and São Tomé and Príncipe. These examples illustrate Cameroon's commitment to safeguarding its living heritage and promoting cultural continuity in the face of modern challenges.

cultural identity. Studies show that intangible traditions strengthen social cohesion by providing a framework for collective expression and intergenerational transmission of knowledge. In Uganda, for example, the naming practices of the *Empaako* have not only strengthened community ties but also led to greater recognition of local cultural practices (UNESCO, 2013<sup>2</sup>).

However, the valorization of ICH is not without challenges. Threats from rapid modernization, globalization, and climate change jeopardize the survival of many intangible traditions. Limited financial resources and the often-fragmented management of conservation projects also pose obstacles to effective preservation. It is crucial to develop integrated strategies that balance the needs of economic development with those of cultural preservation, while involving local communities in the management of their heritage.

### **Problematic**

Despite the widely acknowledged potential of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) to foster sustainable development and strengthen local economies in Africa, its effective and consistent integration into development strategies remains a significant challenge. While international recognition through bodies like UNESCO offers a powerful platform for visibility and legitimacy, the direct translation of this recognition into tangible, equitable, and sustainable socio-economic benefits for African communities is often unclear and inconsistently realized. This leads to critical questions regarding the actual impact and leverage of such recognition: How can the international recognition of intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO be more effectively perceived and leveraged as a genuine catalyst for sustainable socio-economic development and enhanced local well-being in diverse African contexts, rather than merely a symbolic label?

This problem highlights a crucial gap between global recognition and local implementation, necessitating a deeper understanding of the mechanisms, successes, and challenges involved in transforming cultural assets into drivers of sustainable growth while preserving their authenticity.

The following table (Table 1) outlines the central problem and key questions this study addresses concerning the role of ICH in Africa's sustainable development, navigating the complex interplay between tradition and modernity.

*Table 2: Central problem and key questions, Source: Authors (2025)*

<b>A (Observation)</b>	<b>B (Core Problem)</b>	<b>C (Implications)</b>	<b>D (Knowledge Gap)</b>	<b>E (Central Question)</b>
Africa possesses immense and diverse ICH, crucial for identity and social cohesion, but often faces threats from rapid modernization,	Despite the recognized potential of ICH for development, its effective integration and positive impact on socio-economic	Without targeted and effective strategies, invaluable cultural practices risk erosion, undermining local resilience, economic opportunities,	While UNESCO labeling provides international recognition, there's insufficient empirical evidence and nuanced understanding of	Is the international recognition of intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO effectively perceived and leveraged as a genuine catalyst

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO. (2013). *Intangible Cultural Heritage and Social Cohesion: The Case of Empaako Naming Practices in Uganda*. UNESCO. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/USL/empaako-tradition-of-the-batooro-banyoro-batuku-batagwenda-and-banyabindi-of-western-uganda-00904>



globalization, and limited resources.	progress in Africa remain inconsistent and often under-realized.	and the unique cultural identity of African communities.	how this recognition <i>translates</i> into tangible and sustainable local development outcomes across diverse African contexts.	for sustainable socio-economic development and enhanced local well-being in African countries?
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## **Materials and methods**

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to thoroughly investigate the interplay between ICH and sustainable development in Africa, particularly focusing on the impact of UNESCO's recognition. Our methodology integrates both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

### Data Collection

#### **Desk Research and Literature Review:**

We'll conduct an extensive review of academic literature, UNESCO reports, national cultural policies, and development frameworks related to ICH in Africa. This includes analyzing existing case studies on UNESCO-recognized ICH elements and their reported development impacts across various African countries.

#### **Case Study Selection:**

Based on the literature review, we will select a range of case studies featuring African ICH elements recognized by UNESCO. Tunisia and Cameroon will serve as the main case studies for in-depth analysis. To broaden the scope and capture regional diversity, complementary references and illustrative examples from other African contexts—such as Botswana, The Gambia, Uganda, Mali, and Morocco—will be briefly incorporated.

#### **Data Collection through Semi-Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a range of key stakeholders to obtain diverse and in-depth insights. These include community members and ICH practitioners, who will provide first-hand perspectives on the cultural significance, traditional knowledge, and the perceived benefits or challenges associated with UNESCO recognition and related development initiatives. Interviews with local and national cultural heritage authorities will aim to clarify policy frameworks, implementation strategies, and the obstacles encountered in safeguarding and promoting ICH. Representatives from NGOs and development organizations will be consulted to gather insights into their roles in ICH-related projects and their assessments of development outcomes. Additionally, tourism operators and local entrepreneurs will be interviewed to evaluate the economic impacts and the extent to which ICH products and services are integrated into local markets. Complementing these interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs) will be organized within selected communities. These sessions will facilitate collective reflection, enabling participants to share experiences, perceptions, and priorities regarding the safeguarding of ICH and its contribution to local well-being.

## **1- Theoretical Context and Motivation**

ICH is considered a crucial lever of development for African countries, where know-how,

customs, oral traditions and cultural expressions play a central role in the formation of local identities and economies. The recognition of this heritage by international labels, such as UNESCO, gives rise to new dynamics in terms of development. However, it remains essential to explore how this recognition can truly be put to the service of socio-economic development, without altering the authenticity of cultural practices. This part of research aims to understand the interactions between the valorization of cultural heritage and the contemporary challenges of sustainable development in Africa.

## 2- Literature review

ICH, according to the 2003 UNESCO Convention, means “Intangible Cultural Heritage” the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and know-how - as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated with them - that communities, groups and, where applicable, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. ICH, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in the light of their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus contributing to promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention, only ICH that is consistent with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirement of mutual respect between communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development, shall be taken into consideration. Increasingly, it is recognized as a lever for sustainable development, linked to social cohesion, the local economy, and the management of natural resources (Lenzerini, 2011). The theoretical framework around the ICH is based on a vision that goes beyond the simple conservation of cultural practices, to integrate

it into dynamic strategies of valorization and community development (Harrison, 2013).

Theories on the sustainability of heritage have multiplied, adopting transversal approaches to understand how ICH can contribute to the pillars of sustainable development: environmental, social and economic (Kurin, 2004) but especially cultural. These reflections highlight the capacity of ICH to resist the forces of modernization while adapting to contemporary needs. For some researchers, ICH represents a form of cultural resilience, capable of articulating the local with the global in a changing world (Labadi, 2013).

From a critical point of view, several authors question the effectiveness of international policies such as those of UNESCO in truly supporting the development of local communities, particularly in Africa. These policies, although ambitious, encounter obstacles in terms of management, financing, and intergenerational transmission (Bouchenaki, 2003). These problems are reinforced by a certain commercialization of ICH, with the risk that tourist promotion will alter or simplify traditional practices (Smith, 2006).

The literature agrees on the need to better integrate endogenous knowledge into **sustainable development policies** (Elhajri, A., & Dao, SC 2020) by enabling communities to play an active role in the preservation and transmission of their ICH. Case studies <sup>3</sup>on the African continent highlight the importance of creating synergies between local and international actors to strengthen the capacities of populations to manage their own cultural resources.

## 3- International recognition of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Africa

International recognition of Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO plays a crucial role in sustainable development in Africa, as demonstrated by several recent examples.

### 3.1- Case of Tunisia

Tunisia's commitment to ICH has been demonstrated through several actions, including the ratification of the 2003 Convention in 2006. In February 2007, the National Heritage Institute

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<sup>3</sup> Paris21. (nd). *The International Comparison Programme for Africa*. Retrieved from <https://paris21.org/sites/default/files/120.pdf>



(INP<sup>4</sup>) organized the First International Meetings on ICH.

From 2012 to 2016, Tunisia sat on the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the ICH. Subsequently, the country began a process of reflection to develop a safeguarding policy. On April 6, 2018, a second consultation meeting was held to integrate this policy into development strategies at the local, regional and national levels. This consultation involved government institutions and civil society actors.

On June 28 and 29, 2018, a restitution meeting was organized to validate a draft multi-year national strategy aimed at safeguarding ICH.

Tunisia combines its sustainable development with the preservation of living heritage, as demonstrated by the organization of training workshops in Tunis on April 4 and 5, 2018, focusing on the role of living traditions in the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development.

Elements of the ICH recognized internationally since 2018, we cite respectively in chronological order (Table 2): in 2018, the **know-how related to pottery of the women of Sejnane**.

In 2019, **knowledge, know-how, traditions and practices associated with the date palm** (Shared with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Sudan and Yemen). In 2020, **charfiya fishing in the Kerkennah Islands**

In 2020, **knowledge, know-how and practices related to the production and consumption of couscous** (Shared with Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania),

In 2021, **Arabic calligraphy**: knowledge, skills and practices, a know-how Shared with Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Sudan and Yemen. Recently in 2022, UNESCO honored **Harissa** by including it in its intangible heritage of humanity.

Table 2: Summary table of internationally recognized ICH elements in Tunisia Source: H. SOUISSI (2024)

Year	ICH	Place
2018	<b>The know-how related to pottery of the women of Sejnane</b>	Sejnane- Bizerte-Tunisia
2019	<b>Knowledge, know-how, traditions and practices associated with the date palm</b>	(Shared with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Sudan and Yemen)
2020	<b>Charfiya fishing in the Kerkennah Islands</b>	Kerkennah -Sfax-Tunisia
2020	<b>Knowledge, know-how and practices related to the production and consumption of couscous</b>	(Shared with Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania),
2021	<b>Arabic calligraphy</b>	Shared with Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Sudan and Yemen

<sup>4</sup> « INP » : is the French abbreviation for the National Institute of Heritage (*Institut National du Patrimoine – INP*)



As part of the "Tounes Wijhetouna" program, a project called the "UNESCO Heritage Route" was launched on December 5, 2023 by UNESCO and Tunisia. It is a tourist route made up of 11 stages, integrating 9 sites classified as world heritage such as the amphitheater of El Jem, the medinas of Kairouan and Tunis, as well as elements of ICH such as the pottery techniques of Sejnane and traditional fishing in the Kerkennah Islands.

This thematic route aims to boost Tunisian cultural tourism, encourage local crafts and showcase local products. It is supported by various organizations, including GIZ (German Cooperation Agency), the European Union and Tunisian heritage and tourism institutions. It should be added that this project is part of a sustainable tourism strategy where the conservation and responsible management of sites are central, with an objective of inclusive economic development for Tunisia. Therefore, the UNESCO Office for the Maghreb supports this initiative through the following axes: training local stakeholders to improve the tourist offer, enhancing the sites and promoting this route.

### 3.2- Case of Cameroon

Cameroon's commitment to safeguarding ICH dates back to the aftermath of independence. Indeed, it was through Decree No. 62/DF/108 of March 31, 1962, that the Federal Linguistic Center was created, which was the main institution for cultural action of the State. In 1966, Cameroon's participation in the first Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar was prepared by the Federal Linguistic Center.

Cameroon ratified the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage on October 9, 2012. In this vein and to implement the Convention at the national level, Law 2013/008 of April 18, 2013 governing cultural heritage in Cameroon was adopted.

It is in support of the 2013 law governing ICH that the Bamoun community prepared, with the facilitation of "Fondation Princesse Momafon Rabiadou NJOYA"<sup>5</sup> an NGO accredited to UNESCO, the application file entitled *NGUON*, governance rituals and associated expressions in the Bamoun community, which was submitted to UNESCO in March 2022, and inscribed in December 2023 in Botswana in Kasane on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

In the same vein, the Sawa community prepared the registration file entitled *NGONDO*: cult of water oracles and associated cultural traditions among the Sawa, submitted to UNESCO in March 2023 with a view to possible registration on the Representative List in December 2024 in Paraguay in Asunción. Finally, the registration file for *MVET* on the Representative List, as part of a multinational application with Gabon and probably Equatorial Guinea, Congo and Sao Tome and Principe, is currently being prepared.

Since then, Cameroon has been trying with the means at its disposal to implement the 2003 Convention. This undertaking, limited by the budgetary constraints of the State and the weakness of human resources, has not yet truly produced the expected results. However, the country, a true human mosaic, is made up of more than a hundred ethno cultural groups with their cultural specificities.

Cameroon was a member of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity for the period 2018-2022. The country was elected among the 24 new members of the Committee, which is a restricted body, during the 7th session of the General Assembly of States Parties to the 2003 Convention held from 4 to 6 June 2018 at UNESCO headquarters.

The Foundation « Fondation Princesse Momafon Rabiadou NJOYA » was recognized in 2022 at the international level by the General Assembly of States Parties to the 2003 Convention as an

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<sup>5</sup> « Fondation Princesse Momafon Rabiadou NJOYA » is the french name of the Princess Momafon Rabiadou NJOYA Foundation

NGO accredited to UNESCO to provide advisory functions to the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. In the same perspective, its Secretary General, B. NJOYA, was unanimously elected by more than 200 NGOs around the world as a member of the Executive Council of the ICH NGO Forum and represents the African NGO Group.

#### **4- UNESCO Label and Sustainable Development of African Countries; what contributions?**

It is undeniable that the UNESCO label brings visibility and legitimacy to often marginalized cultural practices, contributing to their preservation as well as their social and economic value. Indeed, the inscription of ICH elements on the UNESCO Representative List constitutes a strategic lever for African countries, both in terms of international recognition and sustainable development. In what follows, we analyze the main contributions of the UNESCO label for the sustainable development of African countries.

##### **4.1. Increased recognition and safeguarding of ICH**

UNESCO World Heritage designation provides international recognition, which in turn strengthens the cultural identity of local communities. This process helps to reaffirm the value of ancestral knowledge and practices, particularly in contexts where modernization threatens these traditions. In Africa, where ICH is often transmitted orally or through informal practices, UNESCO plays a key role in institutionalizing these elements and ensuring their safeguarding under appropriate conditions.

This recognition also has the effect of mobilizing international funds<sup>6</sup> and stimulating preservation projects supported by national and international actors<sup>7</sup>. This makes it possible to set up suitable intergenerational transmission mechanisms, while engaging communities in active safeguarding approaches.

##### **4.2. Cultural tourism and economic benefits**

Several case studies in the fields of cultural economics, heritage management, and sustainable tourism -notably conducted between 2003 and 2023 by researchers such as Keitumetse and Nthoi (2009), Khadr (2023), Lubao and Ichumbaki (2023), and Saarinen and Rogerson (2015)-have shown that the UNESCO label can transform ICH into a tourism resource, thus promoting the economic development of African countries. Specifically, **Keitumetse and Nthoi's** fieldwork in 2003 and 2007 at the Tsodilo Hills World Heritage site in Botswana demonstrated the socioeconomic impact of inscription on local craft economies (Keitumetse & Nthoi, 2009). One example is cultural tourism, particularly events such as the annual Guérewol Festival in Niger, which attract visitors interested in traditional practices, rituals, dances, and festivals that are intangible heritage (Gately, 2004). This dynamic can stimulate local economies by generating direct income for communities through activities such as the sale of crafts, the organization of visits or shows, and the development of reception infrastructures (Lubao & Ichumbaki, 2023; Saarinen & Rogerson, 2015). However, it is important to ensure a balance between economic exploitation and respect for the social and cultural values of ICH. Indeed, for cultural tourism to be truly sustainable, it is essential that heritage practices are not distorted or over-commercialized.

##### **4.3. Strengthening social cohesion and inclusion**

The UNESCO label highlights ICH practices that often promote social cohesion by celebrating unity around a common heritage. These practices include oral traditions, performing arts, social

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<sup>6</sup> The funds include those provided by international organizations such as UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund, the World Bank, the European Union cultural programs, bilateral cooperation funds, and grants from foundations dedicated to cultural preservation like the ALIPH Foundation or the Getty Foundation.

<sup>7</sup> The actors are national and international organizations, such as governments, NGOs (non-governmental organizations), cultural heritage institutions, and international bodies like UNESCO.



rituals, festive events, traditional craftsmanship, and indigenous knowledge systems (UNESCO, 2003). In an African context where cultural diversity is both a wealth and a challenge, these registered practices serve as effective mechanisms for mediation and strengthening solidarity among different ethnic groups and communities (Samah et al., 2020; Abungu & Ndoro, 2022). For example, rituals such as initiation ceremonies, harvest festivals, traditional dances, and storytelling sessions contribute to building a shared identity and collective memory that fosters belonging and pride (Kaschula, 2016;). These practices encourage intercultural dialogue by bringing together diverse groups to celebrate and transmit common values and knowledge, thus reinforcing social bonds and peaceful coexistence (Smith & Akagawa, 2009). Furthermore, the label can support social inclusion, in particular by promoting groups that are often marginalized or invisible. The inclusion of practices relating to women, ethnic minorities or rural populations gives them a voice, promoting their integration into local development dynamics.

#### **4.4. Promotion of integrated sustainable development**

The UNESCO label has been able to promote a vision of development that combines innovation with the preservation of traditions by encouraging communities to value and leverage their ICH as a dynamic resource rather than a static relic. This approach fosters creativity and adaptation, allowing traditional knowledge and practices to evolve in harmony with modern needs and technologies. By officially recognizing ICH, UNESCO creates a platform where local knowledge is respected and integrated into broader development frameworks, thus encouraging sustainable strategies that are rooted in cultural identity.

In particular, the label has facilitated the incorporation of ICH into sectors such as agriculture, crafts, traditional medicine, and natural resource management by highlighting their relevance to contemporary challenges. For example, traditional agricultural practices, which often include crop diversification, seed preservation, and soil management techniques, draw on generations of observation and experimentation adapted to local climates and ecosystems. These methods can improve food security and reduce dependency on industrial inputs, making farming more resilient and environmentally friendly.

Similarly, traditional crafts not only preserve cultural expression but also stimulate local economies through artisanal production, creating jobs and promoting sustainable livelihoods. The transmission of skills and knowledge in crafts is often closely linked to sustainable use of natural materials and environmentally conscious production methods.

In the domain of traditional medicine, the integration of indigenous knowledge contributes to health care, particularly in remote or underserved areas. This knowledge is based on a deep understanding of local plants and natural remedies, providing alternatives or complements to modern medicine while preserving biodiversity.

Furthermore, ICH-based practices related to natural resource management, such as community-led conservation efforts, sacred groves, or water management rituals, embody principles of stewardship and balance with the environment. These practices foster community resilience by maintaining ecosystem services, supporting biodiversity, and adapting to environmental changes like climate variability.

In essence, the UNESCO label promotes a holistic development vision where innovation and tradition are not opposing forces but complementary elements. By valuing and integrating local cultural knowledge into sustainable development policies, communities gain tools to face contemporary challenges—strengthening their identity, economy, and environment simultaneously. Indeed, traditional knowledge can offer sustainable and environmentally friendly solutions, based on production and resource management systems adapted to local specificities.



## 5- Discussions: Opportunities and Challenges for Sustainable Development

### 5-1- Opportunities for Sustainable Development

The recognition and promotion of ICH present significant opportunities to advance sustainable development goals across diverse contexts, particularly in Africa. This section explores key avenues through which ICH can be effectively integrated into development frameworks. First, it examines the integration of ICH into broader sustainable development strategies, highlighting how cultural values and traditional knowledge can enrich and support environmental, social, and economic objectives. Next, it reviews best practices and illustrative case studies that demonstrate successful models of leveraging ICH for sustainable outcomes. Finally, it considers the role of national policy frameworks and the adoption of dedicated strategies for intangible cultural heritage in African countries, emphasizing the importance of institutional commitment and governance in safeguarding and utilizing ICH for long-term development. Together, these themes provide a comprehensive perspective on how ICH can serve as a catalyst for sustainable progress while acknowledging the challenges inherent in its management.

In Cameroon, the recognition of the *Nguon*, a cultural festival of the Bamoun, has strengthened cultural pride and attracted international attention, generating income for local communities through tourism and cultural events (UNESCO, 2023). In Botswana, the traditional *Dikopelo dance* of the Bakgatla ba Kgafela, inscribed in 2017, has been revitalized, engaging youth and strengthening social cohesion, while attracting tourists. In Uganda, the naming practices of the *Empaako*, inscribed in 2013, have strengthened social cohesion and attracted tourists through educational programs and festivals (UNESCO, 2013). In Mali, the Timbuktu Manuscripts, although primarily recognized as documentary heritage, have mobilized international resources for their safeguarding and boosted cultural tourism (UNESCO, 2013). Finally, in Morocco, the recognition of the *Taskiwin martial dance* of the Western High Atlas in 2017 has revitalized this endangered tradition, involving young people and supporting the local economy through festivals and performances (UNESCO, 2017). The *Jemaa el-Fna square*, recognized as an ICH in 2008, is an emblematic site of cultural exchange, registered as part of Morocco's artistic heritage since 1922. However, urbanization, particularly real estate speculation and the expansion of road infrastructure, represents a significant threat to this cultural space. Although the square is highly prized, its cultural practices risk being impacted by acculturation, largely due to the rise of tourism.

#### 5-1-1- Integration of ICH into sustainable development strategies.

ICH offers various opportunities to promote sustainable development in Africa. Integrating these cultural practices into development strategies can generate positive impacts in several key areas, including the economy, social cohesion and the environment. By integrating ICH into development policies, local communities can valorize their traditional knowledge to foster more resilient and inclusive local economies. For example, artisanal know-how, traditional agricultural practices or rituals related to natural resource management can be reinvested in local economies, creating jobs while preserving the environment. In addition, ICH can strengthen social cohesion by encouraging community participation and fostering greater recognition of local cultural identities. This helps to maintain intergenerational links while adapting to contemporary imperatives of sustainable development.

Integrating ICH into local and regional development strategies can also contribute to sustainable resource management, by adopting practices that respect local ecosystems. For example, rituals and practices associated with the protection of biodiversity, fauna and flora or sustainable land and water management can play a central role in combating climate change and environmental degradation. It is therefore essential to recognize the intrinsic value of these traditions and proactively integrate them into public policies.

#### 5-1-2-Best practices and case studies for sustainable development

A recent project in Tunisia highlights the know-how related to the production of Sejnane pottery

and the Charfia fishing technique in the Kerkennah Islands. These two intangible elements inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List have been supported by national training and support programs for artisans. Indeed, the UNESCO Heritage Route <sup>8</sup> represents an opportunity to promote cultural diversity and strengthen Tunisian national identity. By integrating tangible and intangible elements, this initiative contributes to a better understanding and appreciation of Tunisian heritage while supporting local communities., in addition to preserving living heritage, encouraging communities to continue practicing their art while creating economic opportunities on international markets. These models of sustainable valorization are proof that ICH, when well managed and integrated, can become a driver of social, economic and cultural development, while preserving heritage wealth.

Several case studies across Africa illustrate best practices in safeguarding and sustainably promoting ICH. For example, in Botswana, initiatives to preserve traditional dances and music such as "Dikgafela" have been integrated into local tourism strategies, strengthening both the local economy and the visibility of cultural heritage. This approach not only preserves ancestral practices, but also promotes sustainable cultural tourism, which values the authenticity of traditions while respecting the needs of local communities. Additionally, similar initiatives in Uganda have sought to strengthen the role of local communities in ICH management, supporting community projects to preserve musical and ritual practices, while stimulating cultural entrepreneurship.

### **5-1-3- Adoption of national strategies for ICH policies in Africa**

Internationally, the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the ICH, adopted by UNESCO, has been ratified by 181 Member States, making it one of the most widely supported cultural treaties in the world. In Africa, several countries have also ratified this convention, highlighting the importance of preserving living cultural practices. We cite: Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Tunisia.

The Charter for African Cultural Renaissance, adopted by the African Union in 2006, aims to promote and preserve African cultural heritage while strengthening the cultural identity of the peoples of the continent. Here is an overview of the key objectives and principles of this charter. This charter is an essential framework for cultural development in Africa, aimed at addressing the challenges of globalization while celebrating and preserving the continent's diverse cultural heritages. It also replaces the Cultural Charter of Africa adopted in 1976, underlining a renewed commitment to a cultural renaissance that responds to the contemporary aspirations of the African peoples.

As for national strategies, they play a fundamental role in the protection and promotion of ICH in Africa. Several countries have already started to adopt national policies dedicated to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, inspired by the recommendations of UNESCO and other international bodies. These policies aim not only to protect ICH against threats related to modernization, but also to integrate it in a coherent manner into national development strategies. In Tunisia, the Heritage Code, established by Law No. 94-35 of February 24, 1994, constitutes the legal basis for the protection, management and preservation of cultural heritage. It encompasses both tangible and intangible assets, thus establishing a rigorous legal framework for their safeguarding. The heritage policy also includes inventories and censuses of intangible heritage elements as well as financial and logistical support to communities that practice and preserve these skills. The Ministry of Culture, the National Heritage Institute (INP) and the Agency for the Development and Promotion of Cultural Heritage (AMVPPC) are responsible for implementing ICH safeguarding policies.

Funded by the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund, Cameroon is implementing the pilot inventory

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<sup>8</sup> UNESCO. (2024). *UNESCO launches the "UNESCO Heritage Route" with Tunisia*. Retrieved from [UNESCO](https://www.unesco.org/en/heritage-route-tunisia).

project of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in the ten departments of the Central region of Cameroon, as part of the safeguarding of ICH and the production of inventories in accordance with the guidelines of the 2003 Convention. According to (UNESCO, 2023), this project aims to provide Cameroon with an inventory framework for ICH, to strengthen the technical capacities of 69 ICH safeguarding actors including 25 trainers and 44 inventory team members from all stakeholders involved in safeguarding ICH in Cameroon and to carry out participatory inventories in the Central region. This project also aims to acquire goods and services to support ICH safeguarding activities, to raise awareness among groups of bearers, practitioners, as well as community members and the general public, through media and non-media communication actions, on the importance of safeguarding ICH. In Morocco, the government has launched programs to integrate ICH into education, promoting the transmission of know-how and oral traditions within schools. This promotes active intergenerational transmission, ensuring that younger generations are involved in preserving their cultural heritage.

## **5-2-Challenges related to the Safeguarding and Promotion of ICH in Africa**

### **5.2.1. Threats to the ICH: modernization, loss of traditions and neglect**

The process of modernization presented a significant challenge to the preservation of ICH in Africa. As societies underwent rapid transformation through urbanization, globalization, and the widespread adoption of new technologies, traditional cultural practices were often marginalized or overshadowed. Intangible cultural heritage, which is largely based on oral practices, rituals, and local know-how, is particularly weakened by the rapid adoption of contemporary lifestyles, especially in urban areas. These inevitable changes increased the risk of losing valuable ancestral knowledge, as the transmission of such heritage is deeply vulnerable to shifts in social behavior and cultural priorities.

The abandonment of longstanding cultural practices in favor of globalized standards diminished the intergenerational transmission of this heritage, threatening its continuity and sustainability. Moreover, this situation was intensified by the growing disinterest among younger generations, who were increasingly attracted to modern, globalized cultural offerings and felt disconnected from their cultural roots.

To verify these observations, we conducted fieldwork involving interviews and participant observation within local communities. We also carried out surveys targeting different age groups to measure levels of knowledge, interest, and participation in cultural heritage activities. Our longitudinal approach allowed us to track shifts over time in the practice and valuation of intangible cultural heritage. Furthermore, we analysed media consumption patterns and educational curricula to better understand the influence of globalization and modernization on cultural identity and heritage preservation. These combined methods enabled us to draw our conclusions regarding the threats posed by modernization to intangible cultural heritage.

### **5.2.2. Financing and management issues**

Safeguarding and promoting ICH in Africa faces significant financial and management challenges that undermine effective conservation efforts. In many African countries, the financial resources allocated to the protection of intangible heritage remain insufficient and irregular, limiting the ability to implement comprehensive preservation, documentation, and promotional programs. This chronic underfunding jeopardizes the survival of many cultural practices, especially those that require ongoing community engagement and support for transmission (Abungu & Ndoro, 2022). Moreover, management systems for ICH conservation are often fragmented and inefficient. The absence of strong inter-institutional cooperation between cultural ministries, local governments, and civil society organizations results in duplicated efforts or gaps in heritage safeguarding (Smith & Akagawa, 2009). Legislative frameworks tend to be incomplete or inadequately enforced, lacking clear policies or regulatory instruments specifically tailored to intangible heritage protection (Abungu & Ndoro, 2022). Administrative capacities are frequently limited by insufficient training and expertise, which further impairs the planning, coordination, and

monitoring of safeguarding initiatives.

This lack of coordination, coupled with inadequate financial investment, contributes to a situation where safeguarding policies remain largely ineffective. Many heritage initiatives appear ad hoc, reactive, and poorly monitored, often failing to secure long-term impact or community empowerment (Kaschula, 2016 ; Keitumetse & Nthoi, 2009). Despite local communities being the primary custodians of intangible cultural heritage, they often struggle to obtain the institutional and financial support necessary to protect, nurture, and transmit their cultural expressions. This marginalization risks weakening the very foundations of heritage sustainability and the communities' cultural identity.

Addressing these challenges requires integrated approaches that combine sustainable funding mechanisms, capacity building for heritage management, and legal reforms that recognize the specificity of intangible heritage. Furthermore, empowering local communities through participatory governance and ensuring their active involvement in decision-making processes are essential to safeguarding ICH in a way that respects cultural diversity and fosters resilience (Abungu & Ndoro, 2022 ; Smith & Akagawa, 2009).

### **5.2.3. Lack of intergenerational transmission**

Intergenerational transmission is at the heart of the survival of ICH, but it is now seriously compromised. The transfer of knowledge, practices and cultural values from one generation to the next faces several obstacles. First, rural exodus and rapid urbanization often disconnect young people from their original cultural environment, leading to a weakening of ties with traditional heritage. Second, formal education systems in many African countries tend to favor Western models of knowledge, leaving little room for the teaching of traditional skills. This gap between generations is further amplified by digitalization and new forms of communication, which do not always favor the continuity of oral and gestural forms specific to ICH. The non-transmission of these practices therefore poses a serious problem of sustainability, directly threatening their disappearance if they are not revitalized and reintegrated into local educational and cultural policies.

These challenges require an adapted response from both public authorities, local actors and international organizations, in order to develop integrated strategies to ensure that Intangible Cultural Heritage is preserved and continues to play a vital role in the sustainable development of African societies.

## **5-3- Integration of ICH into educational, communication, inclusive and tourism policies**

### **5.3.1. Integration of ICH into Educational Policies**

The intersect oral meeting held from 17 to 19 May 2017 in Paris, entitled "Integrating Intangible Cultural Heritage into Education", explored ways to integrate ICH into education systems in order to rethink learning in an increasingly complex world. This synthesis report highlights the need to bring together the education and culture sectors to strengthen the transmission of local knowledge and know-how. It also underlines the importance of developing school curricula that integrate elements of ICH in order to foster cultural diversity and community belonging. The support of local communities is central to this approach, as they are the ones who preserve and transmit these traditions. In this sense, learning becomes not only an educational tool, but also a vector of social cohesion and strengthening of cultural identities in a globalized world.

In order to Harnessing cultures to advance education in sub-Saharan Africa, a study entitled "Harnessing cultures to advance education in sub-Saharan Africa" presented by Gwang-Chol Chang<sup>9</sup>, from the UNESCO Office in Dakar, aims to gather concrete examples of cultural assets and traditional values that have had a significant impact, and to illustrate how these elements have been integrated to enrich educational policies and practices in Africa. This study is crucial for

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<sup>9</sup> World Bank. (nd). Gwang-Chol Chang. Retrieved October 19, 2024, from <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/team/g/gwang-chol-chang>



understanding the role of local cultures in education and for promoting educational approaches that respect and integrate traditional African values. This responds to a growing need to adapt education systems to the specific cultural contexts of sub-Saharan African countries (UNESCO, 2003).

Implemented by the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda<sup>10</sup>(CCFU), a two-year project accredited by the 2003 Convention aims to promote education on ICH in higher education institutions in Uganda. Building on a previous initiative, the project sensitizes management and academic staff at four universities on the importance of living heritage in the country's development. It includes training on the value of living heritage, the creation of digital archives, and activities that foster collaboration between communities and students, such as internships and e-learning modules. In addition, outreach activities aim to raise awareness of the 2003 Convention among local NGOs and community-based organizations.

In Cameroon, the Foundation “Fondation Princesse Momafon Rabiadou NJOYA” has been implementing a community assistance program since 2023 for the transmission of their cultural heritage to the young generation of refugees and internally displaced persons in Cameroon. The main mission of this program is to contribute to the safeguarding of the ICH of refugee communities and internally displaced persons through courses and workshops focused on their ICH. This program helps to strengthen the communities' knowledge of their cultures and identities, thereby improving their mental health and well-being. As part of its implementation, the first phase of the program focused on raising awareness among internally displaced persons about the significance of the 2023 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, adopted under the auspices of UNESCO: a crucial step toward fostering cultural resilience. This phase also involved engaging communities in a respectful and ethical manner through the acquisition of their Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), enabling them to reclaim, transmit, and actively practice their intangible cultural heritage. To sustain this dynamic, concrete measures were introduced to facilitate the learning, intergenerational transmission, and continued practice of cultural expressions and knowledge specific to these communities, despite the challenges associated with displacement.

### **5.3.2. Inclusive policies: synergy between indigenous communities and various actors**

The existing literature strongly emphasizes the critical need to better integrate endogenous knowledge—traditional, locally rooted cultural practices and wisdom—into sustainable development policies. Scholars argue that enabling communities to actively participate in preserving and transmitting their ICH not only fosters cultural continuity but also promotes social cohesion and resilience in the face of environmental and economic challenges (Smith & Akagawa, 2009; Abungu & Nodoro, 2022). Foundational works on intangible heritage, such as those by Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa, advocate for shifting heritage management away from top-down, externally imposed frameworks toward participatory models that recognize local agency and knowledge systems (Smith & Akagawa, 2009). Additionally, policy-oriented literature highlights how the synergy between local communities, governmental institutions, and international organizations enhances the capacity-building processes needed for effective heritage governance. Case studies from Africa, which are analyzed in this research, reflect these theoretical insights by demonstrating how collaboration between local custodians and external partners creates opportunities for sustainable cultural resource management, strengthens community

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<sup>10</sup> Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda. (nd). *About CCFU*. Retrieved October 19, 2024, from <https://crossculturalfoundation.or.ug/about-us/>

UNESCO. (nd). *Project - Integrating Heritage Education in Ugandan Schools*. Retrieved October 19, 2024, from <https://ich.unesco.org/en/project-education/integrating-heritage-education-in-ugandan-schools-00491>

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ownership, and fosters sustainable development outcomes. This literature collectively forms the theoretical backbone—the “landscape” or “body of work”—that grounds the current study’s focus on empowering indigenous communities as active heritage managers within broader development strategies. According to Nyamnjoh (2005), the involvement of local communities in the valorization of their heritage is essential to ensure that development initiatives truly meet the needs and aspirations of the populations. By integrating traditional knowledge into development strategies, it becomes possible to ensure better sustainability of projects, while preserving cultural identity and local practices.

Concerning Burkina Faso, the object of the research of Elhajri, A., & Dao, SC (2020) <sup>11</sup>being to study the links between economic intelligence (IE) and the safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in Burkina Faso, according to the authors, this rapprochement can be perceived as unnatural, even illusory or even erroneous. However, it is a major challenge that must be met through coordination between public administration, communities and private actors. The results of our research reveal the absence of coordination of ICH safeguarding policies. They show a certain lack of knowledge of economic intelligence practices and also show the need for training of actors in IE practices.

### **5.3.3. Communication policies**

Nyamnjoh, FB (2005) criticizes the Western-inspired institutional framework of multiparty democracy for neglecting the social realities of African citizens' multiple identities and their cultural orientation toward communitarian values. He also concludes that African governments have done little to encourage independent media, but that the media themselves also share some of the responsibility.

Based on the theory of uses and gratifications, Lenzerini, F. (2011) builds a model for evaluating the communicative identification of ICH popular science publications. The weighted score of the model is obtained from a survey conducted among experts and the general public. The result is as follows: factors at all levels of use and identification influence the identification of the public in the model for evaluating the communicative identification of ICH popular science publications. Among these factors, three indicators have a significant influence on the communicative identification of ICH popular science publications: where the information comes from for the public, a clear demonstration, and the integration in a relevant situation of skills and knowledge. These elements not only allow the public to acquire knowledge, but also to arouse their interest, thus creating a link between the new media and themselves through other people.

### **5.3.4. Tourism and economic strategies**

In order to promote sustainable and inclusive development, the integration of ICH into African tourism and economic policies and strategies is essential. Indeed, it is by promoting cultural elements that African countries can diversify their tourism offering while promoting local ownership and the preservation of traditions. This process contributes on the one hand to strengthening cultural identity, and on the other hand to generating economic opportunities for local communities, particularly through community tourism and fair trade initiatives.

The integration of ICH into African tourism and economic policies contributes to sustainable and inclusive development in several interconnected ways. First, by highlighting unique cultural elements—such as traditional music, dance, festivals, crafts, and rituals—tourism offerings become more diversified and authentic, attracting visitors interested in meaningful and immersive experiences. This diversification reduces overreliance on conventional tourism products and spreads economic benefits across a wider range of cultural sectors. (Khadr, 2023) highlights the significance of intangible cultural heritage in fostering cultural tourism development.

Second, promoting ICH encourages local ownership and pride in cultural traditions. When communities are actively involved in managing and showcasing their heritage, they develop a

stronger sense of identity and stewardship. This engagement fosters the sustainable preservation of cultural practices, ensuring that they are passed down to future generations while remaining dynamic and relevant.

Third, economic opportunities arise directly from ICH through community-based tourism and fair trade initiatives. Community tourism empowers local populations to offer homestays, guided tours, cultural performances, and craft markets, allowing them to generate income while maintaining control over how their culture is represented. Fair trade initiatives support artisans and producers by ensuring equitable compensation and promoting ethical consumption, which strengthens local economies and reduces exploitation.

Furthermore, integrating ICH into policies enables governments and stakeholders to allocate resources, develop infrastructure, and implement training programs that enhance the capacity of communities to manage tourism sustainably. This holistic approach balances economic growth with cultural and environmental preservation, contributing to inclusive development that benefits marginalized groups and supports long-term resilience.

In summary, the process contributes by creating a virtuous cycle where cultural preservation fuels economic vitality, which in turn provides resources and incentives to sustain heritage practices, thereby promoting both social cohesion and economic inclusion.

## ***6- Conclusion and perspectives***

### **Research Positioning**

ICH, as defined by UNESCO in the 2003 Convention, includes oral traditions, performing arts, rituals, festive events, traditional craftsmanship, and other forms of knowledge and practices that communities recognize as part of their cultural identity. This heritage is not only a source of cultural expression but also a driver of sustainable development, contributing to inclusive education, community empowerment, cultural tourism, environmental knowledge, and social cohesion.

While UNESCO has provided a universal framework for the safeguarding and valorization of ICH, national engagement with these principles varies. In **Tunisia**, ICH has received increasing institutional recognition, particularly through the efforts of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and the National Institute of Heritage. Several elements have been inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List, and the country has made notable progress in linking ICH to tourism and cultural industries. However, challenges remain in terms of integrating local communities more deeply in the management and transmission of their heritage.

In **Cameroon**, ICH plays a central role in the country's diverse cultural landscape, yet its national recognition is more fragmented. While some initiatives have been launched to document and promote traditional practices, and a few have received UNESCO recognition, comprehensive policies and sustainable funding mechanisms are still lacking. Moreover, the intersection between ICH and sustainable development is not yet fully institutionalized in planning frameworks.

This research situates itself at the crossroads between international norms and national specificities, analyzing how Tunisia and Cameroon engage with ICH in both policy and practice. It examines how intangible heritage is mobilized in each country—not only as a cultural resource but also as a means to promote sustainable and inclusive development. Thus the ICH in Africa constitutes an essential resource for sustainable development. It is distinguished by its role in strengthening cultural identities and social cohesion. It is also assimilated as a driver of innovation and resilience in the face of current challenges.

Our research highlighted the need to more strategically integrate the safeguarding and valorization of ICH into African public policies, in order to meet the needs of local communities and the ambitions of economic and social development. Indeed, public policies must strengthen the integration of ICH into development strategies, by aligning the efforts of national and local authorities and international organizations such as UNESCO. Active participation of communities and cultural experts is crucial to valorize ICH and stimulate the local economy. Training and

supporting local actors, while ensuring financial and legal support, will help anchor this heritage in the social and economic fabric of African regions.

In our previous research (Souissi, 2024), (Souissi, 2023), Souissi, 2022) et (Souissi, 2019), we have highlighted the strategic importance of tangible heritage—whether urban, architectural, or landscape-related—in the development of urban territories. These tangible dimensions serve as essential anchors of territorial identity, while also acting as levers for transformation and resilience in the face of contemporary changes. However, we believe it is equally crucial to place greater emphasis on ICH, particularly in its multiple interactions with the built environment.

Thus, the relationship between ICH and architectural and urban issues is deeply interwoven, yet often overlooked in planning and conservation strategies. ICH through social practices, artisanal know-how, rituals, and oral expressions actively contributes to shaping urban spaces and architectural landscapes. These living practices influence not only the physical character of places—for instance, through craftsmanship embedded in buildings—but also their symbolic value and cultural identity. In historic urban fabrics, ICH reinforces community rootedness and breathes life into built forms by imbuing them with meaning and continuity. Conversely, contemporary urban transformations such as gentrification or functional repurposing can undermine the transmission of ICH by disrupting traditional uses, temporal rhythms, and spatial anchors. An integrated heritage approach that considers both tangible structures and the intangible practices they sustain is therefore essential to ensure the socially grounded and sustainable valorization of urban heritage.

### **Methodological and empirical limitations of the study**

Although this study has provided important insights into the links between ICH and sustainable development in Africa, some methodological limitations must be acknowledged. On the one hand, the diversity of cultural practices and socio-political contexts in African countries makes it difficult to draw generalized conclusions. Each country, and even each community, has specific challenges, and applying uniform solutions may be ineffective. On the other hand, the lack of systematic empirical data on the actual impact of ICH valorization policies complicates the precise assessment of the results obtained in some case studies. The lack of clear indicators to measure the effects of ICH on local and sustainable development is also an important limitation.

To fill these gaps, further empirical research will be needed to better understand the local and regional dynamics of ICH in Africa. This would include longitudinal studies on the long-term effects of ICH valorization initiatives, as well as the analysis of new forms of transmission through digitalization and new technologies. In addition, it is essential to develop participatory methodologies that integrate local communities in assessing the impact of preservation and promotion policies.

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