

“Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage through Participatory Approaches: The Case of Jezzine, Lebanon”

Researcher:

Marie-Claire ANDRAOS

PhD Candidate, University of Saint Joseph, Beirut, Lebanon



<https://doi.org/10.36571/ajsp8518>

Abstract:

The safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) has become a global priority since the adoption of the 2003 UNESCO Convention, yet its practical implementation remains uneven, particularly in rural and fragile contexts. This article explores the case of Jezzine, a mountainous region in South Lebanon, where communities face the dual challenge of preserving their living traditions while coping with migration, socio-economic decline, and weak institutional support. The study applies a participatory safeguarding approach that combines community-based inventories with GIS mapping to document and spatialize ICH elements. Data was collected through surveys, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups with residents, artisans, associations, and municipal representatives.

The results highlight that residents perceive ICH as both a cultural marker and a resource for social cohesion and resilience. Among the elements most frequently cited, traditional cutlery craftsmanship and culinary practices emerged as priorities for safeguarding. Culinary traditions, though widely practiced, are threatened by generational changes and the absence of protective measures; participants proposed digital archiving, gastronomic events, and integration into education as solutions. Cutlery craftsmanship, once a flourishing artisanal activity, is endangered by market decline and reduced transmission, with community members debating between preserving exclusivity for Jezzine families and opening training to wider youth. The participatory mapping exercise further revealed clusters of practices in village centers and fragile zones in peripheral areas, making vulnerabilities visible and actionable.

This study demonstrates that communities are not passive bearers of heritage but active agents in proposing safeguarding strategies. It also shows that participatory inventories combined with mapping provide low-cost, innovative tools that can bridge the gap between local knowledge and policy frameworks. Beyond Lebanon, the findings contribute to international debates by illustrating how bottom-up approaches can strengthen safeguarding, foster cultural resilience, and inform sustainable development in marginalized rural regions.

Keywords: Intangible Cultural Heritage; Participatory safeguarding; Rural heritage; Community-based approaches; Cultural resilience; Lebanon.

1. Introduction

The safeguarding of **intangible cultural heritage (ICH)** has become one of the central challenges of heritage studies and policies since the adoption of the **UNESCO 2003 Convention**. The convention marked a paradigm shift by recognizing living traditions and by emphasizing the role of communities in their definition and transmission (Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003, 2003; Kurin, 2004). Scholars have welcomed this innovation, yet they have also pointed to ambiguities in how “community” is understood and represented. While the convention highlights community participation, implementation often remains mediated by state and expert structures, which raises questions about inclusivity and agency (Blake, 2008; Lixinski, 2013; Smith & Akagawa, 2008)

At the same time, safeguarding efforts are confronted with risks of **folklorization, commodification, or freezing of traditions**, particularly when practices are recontextualized within heritage frameworks (Bortolotto, 2010; Hafstein, 2018). Rural contexts face additional challenges: despite sustaining deeply rooted traditions linked to everyday life and local landscapes, they often remain **underrepresented in national inventories** and marginalized in policy priorities (Munjari, 2004; “Urban Heritage, Development and Sustainability: International Frameworks, National and Local Governance,” 2016). These gaps are even more visible in fragile contexts such as Lebanon, where decades of conflict, displacement, and economic decline have placed rural ICH under significant pressure.

Jezzine, a mountainous rural region in South Lebanon, offers a valuable case for examining these dynamics. The area is renowned for its **culinary know-how, artisanal cutlery craftsmanship, religious festivals, and oral traditions**, yet these practices are increasingly endangered by outmigration, market decline, and generational shifts. This study therefore applies a **participatory safeguarding approach** that combines **community-based inventories with GIS mapping**. By documenting community perceptions and spatializing ICH elements, the research not only identifies priorities and vulnerabilities but also proposes safeguarding strategies rooted in local knowledge and transferable to other rural and fragile contexts.

The research problem

Although Lebanon is rich in intangible cultural heritage, most safeguarding efforts remain centralized, top-down, and selective, often privileging urban or nationally visible practices. Rural communities such as Jezzine are rarely represented in official inventories, despite their cultural richness. Consequently, many traditions risk disappearance due to weak intergenerational transmission, marginalization from national frameworks, and lack of sustainable safeguarding strategies. The problem of this study can therefore be formulated as follows: **How can participatory methods, including inventories and mapping, contribute to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in Jezzine, Lebanon?**

That's why, we fixed the following **Objectives of the Study:**

1. To document the main intangible heritage elements in Jezzine through community-based inventories.
2. To analyze community perceptions of heritage value, threats, and safeguarding strategies.
3. To spatialize ICH elements using participatory mapping to identify clusters, hotspots, and vulnerable zones.
4. To propose community-driven safeguarding measures that can inform local and national policies.

The Hypotheses of the Study are the following:

1. Communities in Jezzine perceive intangible heritage as vital for identity and resilience but also recognize its fragility.
2. Culinary know-how and cutlery craftsmanship represent priority elements requiring urgent safeguarding.
3. Participatory inventories and mapping can serve as low-cost and effective tools to visualize and prioritize safeguarding needs.

2. Literature Review

2.1 International Debates on Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage

The **2003 UNESCO Convention** marked a paradigm shift in heritage governance by recognizing that heritage extends beyond monuments and artifacts to encompass living traditions and practices. It consists of 5 domains:

1. oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
2. performing arts;
3. social practices, rituals and festive events;
4. knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
5. traditional craftsmanship (Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003, 2003).

In Lebanon, the 5th domain is divided by 2:

- 5.1. The traditional culinary practices
- 5.2. The traditional craftsmanship practices

The safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage is a process consisting of including identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage (Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003, 2003).

A central innovation of the convention is its emphasis on the role of communities as custodians of heritage. However, the definition of "community" remains contested. While the convention highlights community involvement, in practice states and experts often mediate which groups and practices gain recognition (Blake, 2008; Lixinski, 2013). This raises questions about whose voices are heard and whose practices are excluded.

Scholars have debated whether the convention truly democratizes heritage management or reproduces existing hierarchies. Smith and Akagawa (2008) argue that the participatory rhetoric of the convention sometimes clashes with the bureaucratic and legal frameworks that structure implementation. Kuutma (Kuutma, 2017) further highlights the tension between international standardization and the diversity of local contexts, pointing to the risks of imposing global categories on locally meaningful practices.

2.2 Risks and Tensions in Safeguarding Practices

Safeguarding is often presented as a neutral process, but scholars note that heritage interventions can reshape the very practices they aim to protect. Once included in inventories or heritage programs, living traditions may become subject to **folklorization, commodification, or “freezing”** into static forms (Bortolotto, 2010; Hafstein, 2018). This process can distort community relationships to heritage and reduce practices to performative displays.

In politically fragile or conflict-affected states, ICH has also been mobilized as a tool of **identity politics**, reinforcing dominant narratives while marginalizing minority groups or rural voices (Scovazzi & Westra, n.d.). Such selective recognition creates imbalances in whose heritage is valued and safeguarded. Moreover, official heritage agendas often prioritize elements that are visible, marketable, or compatible with tourism development, leaving many localized traditions outside formal safeguarding measures (Munjeri, 2004; “Urban Heritage, Development and Sustainability: International Frameworks, National and Local Governance,” 2016).

The invisibility of rural practices within national frameworks is particularly problematic because these practices are frequently tied to **landscapes, livelihoods, and everyday survival strategies**. Their loss is not only cultural but also social, eroding identity and resilience in already vulnerable communities.

2.3 Participatory Approaches and Methodological Innovations

To address these challenges, scholars and practitioners advocate for **participatory safeguarding approaches** that position communities as co-creators rather than passive informants (Deacon & Smeets, 2013; Smith & Akagawa, 2008). Participatory inventories, when designed collaboratively, can reveal how communities themselves prioritize heritage and strengthen local agencies in decision-making.

At the same time, there is growing interest in using **innovative tools** to support safeguarding. Digital platforms, mobile applications, and online inventories have expanded possibilities for documentation, while **GIS and participatory mapping** have emerged as valuable methods to spatialize intangible heritage. These tools not only make ICH more visible to policymakers but also help communities themselves to reflect on the distribution, vitality, and vulnerability of their practices (“Urban Heritage, Development and Sustainability: International Frameworks, National and Local Governance,” 2016). However, such tools remain underutilized for ICH compared to natural or built heritage, and few empirical studies show how they can be integrated into community-driven safeguarding strategies.

Finally, the literature increasingly connects safeguarding ICH with broader concerns of **cultural resilience and sustainable development**. Heritage is seen not merely as a symbolic resource but also as a means of fostering social cohesion, transmitting knowledge, and strengthening adaptive capacities in times of crisis (Bortolotto, 2010; Hafstein, 2018). This perspective highlights the urgency of developing safeguarding methods that are both **locally grounded and globally relevant**, particularly in rural or conflict-affected settings.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a **participatory and bottom-up research design**, consistent with the principle of community involvement emphasized in the 2003 UNESCO Convention. The approach combines **qualitative methods** (interviews, focus groups, observations) with **participatory inventories** and **geospatial mapping**. Such a mixed design allows both the exploration of community perceptions and the production of tangible outputs (inventories and maps) that can support safeguarding strategies. Similar approaches have been recommended in heritage research for their ability to bridge the gap between local knowledge and policy frameworks (Deacon & Smeets, 2013; Smith & Akagawa, 2008).

Fieldwork was conducted in the **Jejjine region of South Lebanon** between 2022 and 2023. The research included:

- **Surveys** distributed to households (n = 293) to collect perceptions of heritage value, threats, and safeguarding needs. Questions focused on identifying locally valued ICH elements in the region, after explaining their different categories, and identifying their locations.
- **Focus groups** (n = 130) that enabled collective reflection on heritage elements and their significance. Discussions were made about selecting the most important intangible heritage asset in their eyes and planning their safeguarding measures.

Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups were coded thematically, focusing on selected elements, perceived threats, and safeguarding practices. This participatory orientation ensured that data collection was not extractive but engaged residents in co-producing knowledge. The participatory inventories stress community validation and iterative feedback to ensure relevance and legitimacy (Kurin, 2004; Deacon & Smeets, 2013).

To complement the inventory, the study used **participatory mapping** to spatialize ICH elements across the region. Community members were invited to identify the places associated with festivals, culinary traditions, crafts, and oral practices. These were plotted using **Geographic Information Systems (GIS)** to produce thematic maps.

The Study Significance and limitations:

This study is significant on multiple levels:

- **Academic significance:** It contributes to heritage studies by developing a methodological model that integrates participatory approaches with mapping, a combination underexplored in ICH research.
- **Practical significance:** It provides Jezzine's community and policymakers with concrete safeguarding proposals for culinary traditions and cutlery craftsmanship.
- **Societal significance:** It highlights how safeguarding ICH can strengthen cultural resilience, foster social cohesion, and contribute to sustainable rural development.

The study faced several limitations:

- **Geographical scope:** It focused on the Jezzine region and therefore does not represent all rural areas of Lebanon.
- **Temporal scope:** Fieldwork was conducted between [insert dates], and changes since then (e.g., economic crisis, migration) may have further affected ICH practices.
- **Methodological limitations:** While participatory mapping provided valuable insights, the number of participants was limited, and results reflect community perceptions at a given moment rather than exhaustive inventories.

4. Results

4.1 Most Frequently Cited ICH Elements

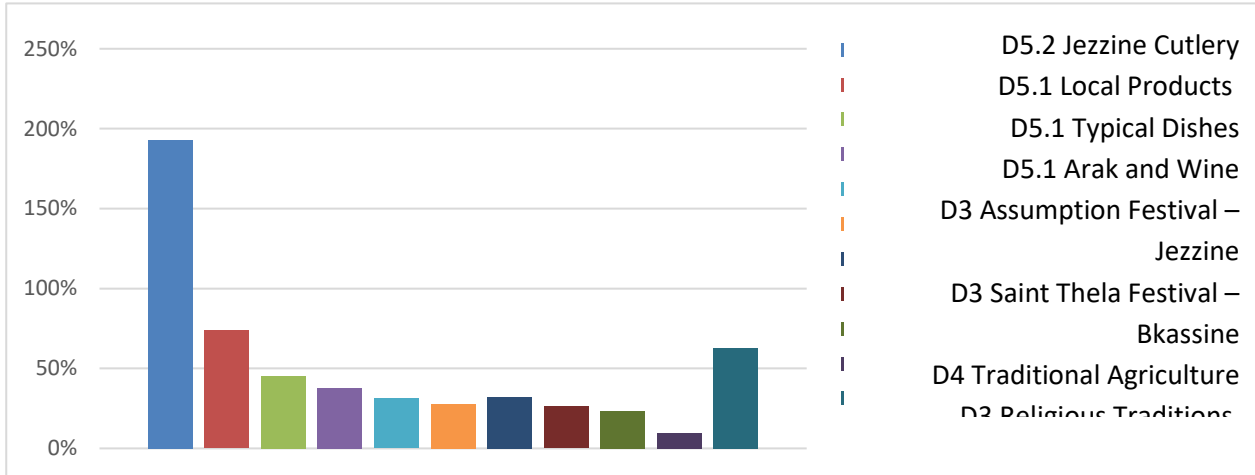


Figure 1. Most Frequently cited ICH elements

The survey and inventory process revealed that among the **10 most frequently cited intangible heritage elements**, the **traditional cutlery know-how of Jezzine** emerged as the most emblematic (Figure 1). This unique artisanal tradition, monopolized by a handful of families and renowned nationally, was consistently described as a marker of local identity and pride. Other elements ranked almost equally in importance: **religious customs and festivals**, **ancient agricultural practices**, the **al-Karma festival**, and a set of **gastronomic specialties** such as Jezzine kibbeh, Zahka bread, Assalieh dessert, and Layali Bkassine. By contrast, activities such as **stone extraction** and **product packaging** were less cited, as participants did not perceive them as part of their cultural heritage.

4.2 Spatial Distribution and Continuity

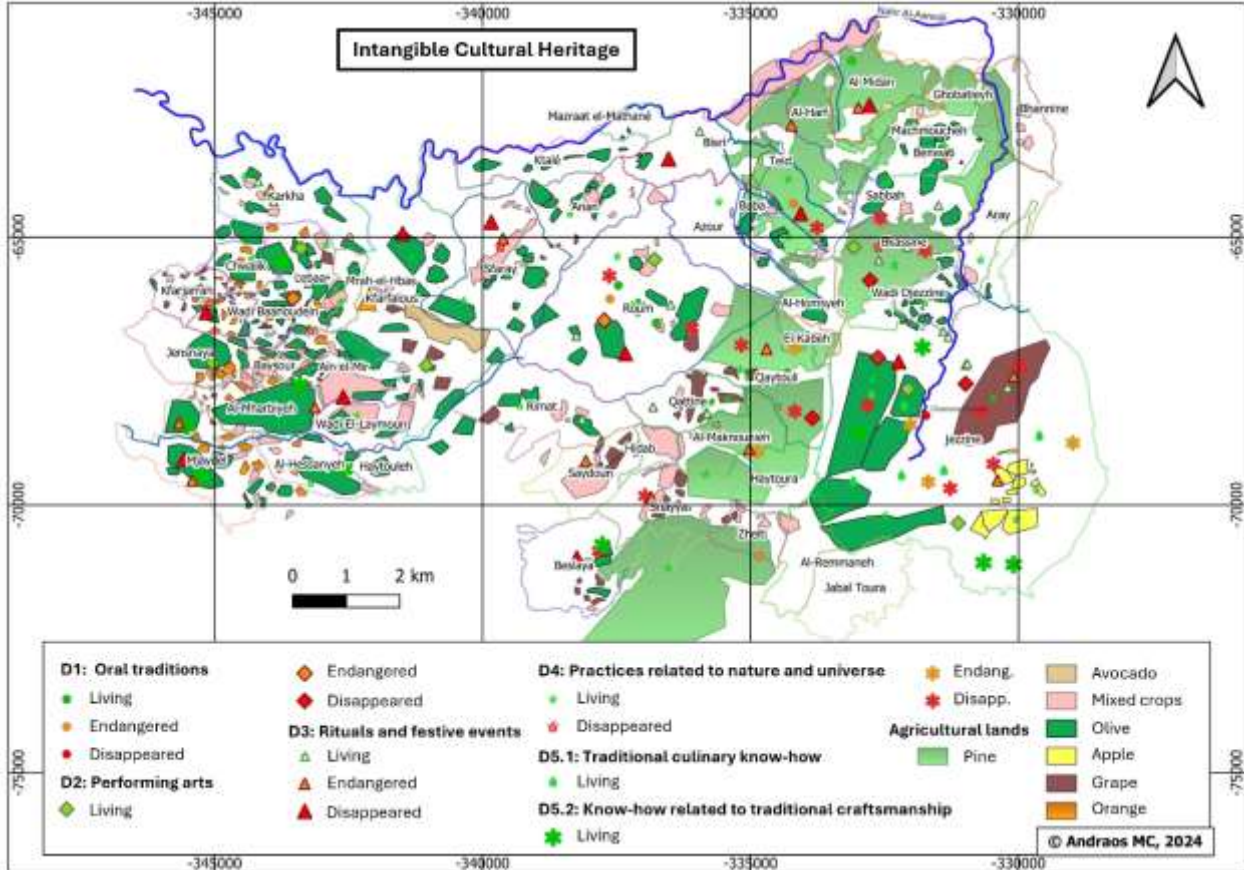


Figure 2. Spatial Distribution of the ICH elements in the Jezzine Region

Participatory mapping highlighted both the vitality and vulnerability of ICH in Jezzine (see Figure 2). While many elements remain alive and practiced, others have **gradually disappeared or evolved**, such as cutlery techniques that adapted to new raw materials and market demands. The maps revealed a **concentration of festivals and crafts in village centers**, with peripheral areas showing signs of decline, especially where agricultural traditions were once strong. This reflects the broader dynamic of ICH as defined by the 2003 Convention: constantly recreated and transmitted between generations, yet also subject to erosion when socio-economic conditions change.

4.3 Priority Elements for Safeguarding

When asked to prioritize elements at risk, participants selected two domains:

- **Traditional culinary know-how (D5.1):** Although widely valued, typical dishes of Jezzine are endangered due to generational shifts in diet and lack of legal protection for recipes or product names. No safeguarding measures currently exist, apart from informal household practices.
- **Traditional cutlery craftsmanship (D5.2):** Once a flourishing artisanal activity, cutlery-making is now endangered by reduced material supply, market decline, and waning interest among youth.

These two elements were consistently identified as requiring urgent safeguarding measures.

4.4 Proposed Safeguarding Measures for Culinary Heritage

The typical dishes and local products of Jezzine (Domain 5.1) are increasingly threatened, as no legal framework protects their names or recipes and a draft law was never adopted. With the decline of household transmission and the youth's preference for fast food, safeguarding measures are urgently needed. We propose the **digital archiving of recipes** and the **mobilization of families**, in collaboration with initiatives such as The Culinary Passport.

Promotion could take the form of a **table d'hôte or traditional restaurant** in natural surroundings like Jezzine's Krum, offering local dishes with updated presentations, accompanied by regional poetry and Jezzine cutlery. The venue could also host a **museum space** on culinary traditions and a **shop** selling labeled products, while kiosks or food trucks would complement festivals.

An annual "**Gastronomic Day/Week**", organized with the Union of Municipalities, could combine farm visits, workshops, and participatory activities for locals, tourists, and the diaspora. Finally, to ensure intergenerational transmission, these recipes should be integrated into the **Hotel Management curriculum** of the Jezzine Technical Institute, creating both preservation and employment opportunities.

4.5 Proposed Safeguarding Measures for Cutlery Craftsmanship

Jezzine cutlery, a traditional craft transmitted within five families, is today highly endangered (Domain 5.2). Safeguarding this know-how requires first raising awareness among youth about its cultural and economic value, while ensuring a regular supply of raw materials. Protection can also be strengthened through **product labeling and state registration**, supported by collaboration between artisans, ministries, NGOs, and donors.

Promotion should rely on **marketing and advertising campaigns**, the inclusion of Jezzine cutlery in local restaurants, and partnerships with global brands to diversify products into jewelry, decorative objects, or limited editions. Exhibiting this craft in a **small museum or eco-museum** would further valorize its history and techniques.

To guarantee transmission, **training workshops** are essential for both local youth and interested newcomers, addressing the declining interest caused by perceptions of low profitability. Modernizing techniques, while respecting tradition, could attract new artisans and open market opportunities. A precedent exists in the UNIDO–UMJ–Municipality project (2018–2019), which aimed to make cutlery attractive while retaining its identity, but was halted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Reviving such initiatives, with community participation, remains a promising path for continuity.

5. Discussion

5.1 Community Perceptions as a Basis for Safeguarding

The findings confirm that residents of Jezzine perceive intangible heritage both as a cultural marker and as a resource for social cohesion and development. Their emphasis on culinary know-how and cutlery craftsmanship demonstrates how heritage is embedded in everyday life and local identity. Conversely, practices such as product packaging or stone extraction were excluded from community definitions, underlining the selective nature of heritage-making. This resonates with the UNESCO Convention's view of ICH as "constantly recreated" within lived contexts (Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003, 2003) and echoes the argument that safeguarding must begin from community-based definitions rather than top-down classifications (Blake, 2008; Deacon & Smeets, 2013).

5.2 Culinary Heritage: Fragility and Innovation

Culinary know-how emerged as particularly fragile, due to the generational decline in transmission, the attraction of international fast foods among youth, and the absence of any legal framework protecting traditional recipes. Although a bill had once been proposed, it was never ratified, leaving Jezzine's dishes vulnerable to disappearance. In response, participants proposed measures such as digital archiving, family mobilization, gastronomic events, and integration into local curricula. These proposals demonstrate how communities envision safeguarding not as static conservation but as a dynamic process

that combines preservation with reinvention, making heritage both meaningful and economically viable (Bortolotto, 2010; Hafstein, 2018).

At the same time, the proposals highlight well-known tensions in heritage studies: culinary traditions are celebrated for their authenticity, yet their transformation into products for tourism or diaspora audiences' risks commodification or "freezing" (Munjeri, 2004). In Jezzine, however, communities themselves actively negotiate these risks, seeking to balance intergenerational transmission, innovation, and economic sustainability.

5.3 Cutlery Craftsmanship: Tradition, Market, and Generational Divide

The safeguarding of Jezzine's cutlery know-how illustrates the complexity of transmitting artisanal skills in contemporary contexts. Once monopolized by five families, this craft now suffers from declining interest, scarcity of raw materials, and lack of profitability. Preservation was seen to require awareness-raising, guaranteed access to materials, and product labeling with state registration, alongside stronger collaboration with ministries, NGOs, and donors.

Promotion proposals — marketing campaigns, collaborations with restaurants and global brands, and exhibitions in small museums or eco-museums — reflect a community-driven effort to adapt heritage to modern markets. While scholarships often warn of folklorization (Bortolotto, 2010), the Jezzine case shows how selective adaptation (e.g., diversification into jewelry or decorative objects) can be embraced pragmatically to keep traditions alive.

Transmission also revealed a generational divide: older artisans favored restricting training to Jezzine families to preserve identity, while younger residents advocated for inclusive workshops open to all regional youth. This tension illustrates the broader debate between exclusivity and inclusivity in safeguarding, echoing Kuutma's (2017) observations on how heritage policies can either reinforce boundaries or foster openness. The interrupted UNIDO training project (2018–2019) further demonstrates both the challenges (COVID-19, limited participation) and the potential of training initiatives that modernize techniques while respecting traditional value.

5.4 Participatory Tools and Policy Implications

The participatory inventories and mapping methods proved effective in transforming local perspectives into concrete safeguarding measures. By spatializing ICH, maps made visible the vulnerability of specific practices and sites, raising awareness among residents who noted that "seeing our traditions on a map" clarified what is at risk. This confirms the empowering role of participatory visual tools ("Urban Heritage, Development and Sustainability: International Frameworks, National and Local Governance," 2016).

At the policy level, the Jezzine case suggests that bottom-up safeguarding can generate practical roadmaps for action. Communities already hold clear strategies — from digital archives to training workshops — but lack institutional support and financial resources. Integrating these initiatives into Lebanon's national safeguarding frameworks would not only protect ICH but also contribute to cultural resilience, economic development, and social cohesion in a region marked by fragility and displacement.

6. Conclusion

The safeguarding of **intangible cultural heritage in Jezzine** demonstrates both the vitality of community traditions and the fragility of their transmission in a context marked by migration, socio-economic decline, and weak institutional support. By engaging residents directly in inventories and participatory mapping, this study highlighted how communities define their heritage, the threats they perceive, and the strategies they propose to ensure its future.

Two priority domains emerged clearly: **culinary know-how** and **cutlery craftsmanship**. Culinary heritage was recognized as central to communal identity yet endangered by changing diets and lack of formal recognition. Community proposals—ranging from **digital archiving** to **gastronomic events and educational integration**—illustrate that safeguarding is understood not as static preservation but as **creative reinvention**, ensuring continuity while responding to contemporary needs. Cutlery craftsmanship, by contrast, revealed a **generational divide**: older artisans advocating exclusivity as a means of identity protection, while younger participants emphasized openness and innovation as conditions for survival. This tension reflects broader debates in ICH safeguarding about the balance between tradition, inclusivity, and adaptation.

Methodologically, the integration of **participatory inventories with GIS-based mapping** proved particularly valuable. These tools not only produced visual evidence of distribution and vulnerability but also empowered community members to see their practices in new ways. By making heritage visible and spatially grounded, mapping facilitated dialogue between local actors and offers a replicable model for safeguarding in other rural or crisis-affected regions.

At a policy level, the Jezzine case demonstrates that communities are not passive recipients of safeguarding but active agents who already propose **feasible and innovative measures**. What is lacking is institutional recognition and support. Incorporating such bottom-up initiatives into national frameworks could enhance both cultural resilience and local development. More broadly, this study contributes to global debates by showing how **participatory, low-cost, and transferable methods** can bridge the gap between community knowledge and policy action, ensuring that ICH remains a living, evolving resource for future generations.

References:

- Blake, J. (2008). UNESCO's 2003 Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage: The implications of community involvement in 'safeguarding.' In *Intangible Heritage* (pp. 59–87). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203884973-8>
- Bortolotto, C. (2010). Globalising intangible cultural heritage? Between international arenas and local appropriations. In *Heritage and Globalisation* (pp. 111–128). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203850855-14>
- Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003, UNESCO (2003). <https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention>
- Deacon, H., & Smeets, R. (2013). Authenticity, Value and Community Involvement in Heritage Management under the World Heritage and Intangible Heritage Conventions. *Heritage & Society*, 6(2), 129–143. <https://doi.org/10.1179/2159032X13Z.0000000009>
- Hafstein, V. (2018). *Making Intangible Heritage*. Indiana University Press. https://iupress.org/9780253037961/making-intangible-heritage/?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Kurin, R. (2004). Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in the 2003 UNESCO convention: A critical appraisal. *Museum International*, 56(1–2), 66–77. <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1350-0775.2004.00459.X/ASSET//CMS/ASSET/063FFD61-AF75-453A-89D8-541974BD3018/J.1350-0775.2004.00459.X.FP.PNG>
- Kuutma, K. (2017). Between Arbitration and Engineering: Concepts and Contingencies in the Shaping of Heritage Regimes. In *Heritage Regimes and the State* (pp. 21–36). Göttingen University Press. <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.gup.367>
- Lixinski, L. (2013). *Intangible Cultural Heritage in International Law*. *Intangible Cultural Heritage in International Law*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ACPROF/OSO/9780199679508.001.0001>
- Munjeri, D. (2004). Tangible and Intangible Heritage: from difference to convergence. *Museum International*, 56(1–2), 12–20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1350-0775.2004.00453.X>
- Scovazzi, T., & Westra, L. (n.d.). *The Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage According to the 2003 UNESCO Convention: The Case of First Nations of Canada* *. 2017 *Inter Gentes*, 1.
- Smith, L., & Akagawa, N. (2008). Intangible heritage. *Intangible Heritage*, 1–312. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203884973/INTANGIBLE-HERITAGE-LAURAJANE-SMITH-NATSUKO-AKAGAWA/RIGHTS-AND-PERMISSIONS>
- Urban heritage, development and sustainability: International frameworks, national and local governance. (2016). In S. Labadi & W. Logan (Eds.), *Urban Heritage, Development and Sustainability: International Frameworks, National and Local Governance*. Taylor and Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315728018/URBAN-HERITAGE-DEVELOPMENT-SUSTAINABILITY-WILLIAM-LOGAN-SOPHIA-LABADI/RIGHTS-AND-PERMISSIONS>

"صون التراث الثقافي غير المادي بالمقاربات التشاركية: حالة جزين في لبنان"

إعداد الباحثة:

ماري-كلير أندراوس

طالبة دكتوراه، جامعة القديس يوسف في بيروت، لبنان

الملخص:

أصبح صون التراث الثقافي غير المادي قضية عالمية منذ اعتماد اتفاقية اليونسكو لعام 2003، غير أن تطبيقها العملي لا يزال متفاوتاً، لا سيما في المناطق الريفية والهشة. تستكشف هذه الدراسة حالة جزين، وهي منطقة جبلية في جنوب لبنان تواجه مجتمعاتها تحدي الحفاظ على تقاليد الحياة في ظل الهجرة، والانحدار الاقتصادي، وضعف الدعم المؤسسي. اعتمد البحث مقارنة صون تشاركية تقوم على الجرد المجتمعي مدعوماً بأدوات الخرائط الجغرافية (GIS) لتوثيق عناصر التراث الثقافي غير المادي ورسم توزيعها مكانياً. جمعت البيانات عبر استبيانات، ومقابلات شبه مهيكلة، ومجموعات نقاش مع السكان المحليين، والحرفيين، والجمعيات، وممثلي البلديات.

أظهرت النتائج أن سكان جزين ينظرون إلى التراث غير المادي بوصفه علامة للهوية ومورداً للتماسك الاجتماعي والقدرة على الصمود. ومن بين العناصر الأكثر ذكراً، برز فن صناعة السكاكين التقليدية والممارسات الغذائية كأولويات ملحة للصون. فالتراث الغذائي، رغم حضوره الواسع، مهدد بسبب التحولات الجيلية وغياب التدابير الحمايية؛ وقد اقترح المشاركون حلولاً مثل الأرشيف الرقمية، وتنظيم فعاليات فنون الطبخ التقليدية، وإدماج هذه المعارف في التعليم. أما صناعة السكاكين، التي كانت حرفة مزدهرة سابقاً، فهي مهددة بانكماش السوق وضعف انتقال المهارات، مع وجود نقاش مجتمعي بين الحفاظ على حصرية المهنة داخل عائلات جزين وفتح التدريب أمام الشباب الأوسع. كما كشفت الخرائط التشاركية عن تركيز للممارسات في مراكز القرى، مقابل هشاشة في الأطراف، ما جعل نقاط الضعف أكثر وضوحاً وقابلية للمعالجة.

تُظهر الدراسة أن المجتمعات ليست ناقلاً سلبياً للتراث، بل فاعلاً أساسياً في اقتراح استراتيجيات صونه. كما تبرهن أن الجمع بين الجرد التشاركي والخرائط يوفر أدوات مبتكرة ومنخفضة الكلفة تربط المعارف المحلية بالأطر السياسية. وتؤكد النتائج، بما يتجاوز الحالة اللبنانية، أن المقاربات التصاعدية قادرة على تعزيز الصون، وتدعيم القدرة على الصمود الثقافي، والمساهمة في التنمية المستدامة في المناطق الريفية المهمشة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التراث الثقافي غير المادي؛ الصون التشاركي؛ التراث الريفي؛ المقاربات المجتمعية؛ القدرة على الصمود الثقافي؛ لبنان.