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DEBARBIEUX, Bernard, *et al.*

### Abstract

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### Reference

DEBARBIEUX, Bernard, *et al.* Sharing heritage?: politics and territoriality in UNESCO's heritage lists. *Territory, politics, governance* [2162-2671], 2021

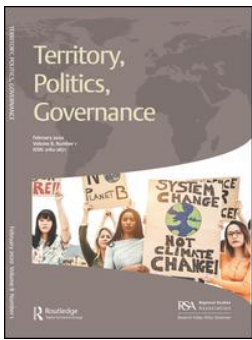
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To cite this article: Bernard Debarbieux , Chiara Bortolotto , Hervé Munz & Cecilia Raziano (2021): Sharing heritage? Politics and territoriality in UNESCO's heritage lists, Territory, Politics, Governance, DOI: [10.1080/21622671.2020.1854112](https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2020.1854112)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2020.1854112>



Published online: 15 Feb 2021.



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# Sharing heritage? Politics and territoriality in UNESCO's heritage lists

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## ABSTRACT

UNESCO heritage policies encourage the idea that heritage should be 'shared' at the international scale, and invite states and the involved actors to adopt this vision. Yet, 'sharedness' can be understood in many different ways. This paper explores several territorial and political issues related to this notion of sharedness. A focus on the uses of a particular UNESCO tool – 'multinational nominations' – sheds a light on transnational cultural practices and examines forms of cooperation within communities and between states in the framework of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). Specifically, it analyses the work of a French commission for the ICH as well as the nomination processes of three different cultural practices to the ICH lists: flamenco, falconry and alpinism. It is argued that 'shared heritage' is interpreted in a variety of ways, leading to contrastive appropriations and competing territorial scenarios among the various protagonists.

## KEYWORD

heritage; scale; sharedness; transnationalism; UNESCO flamenco; falconry; alpinism

**HISTORY** Received 24 February 2020; in revised form 18 August 2020


## INTRODUCTION

In November 2010, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereafter, the ICH Committee)<sup>1</sup> inscribed 'Falconry: a living human heritage' on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (ICH RL).<sup>2</sup> The file was submitted by 11 states, from Mongolia and the Republic of Korea to Spain and Morocco, with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as coordinator. Since then, seven additional states have joined the inscription.


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The ICH Committee was highly satisfied with this nomination. The body in charge of examining nominations to the ICH RL described the submission in its report as ‘an outstanding example of cooperation between States’.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, at the time of its submission, and still to this day, this is the inscription involving the greatest number of states ever made under the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereafter, ICH Convention). During its fifth session, the ICH Committee justified its decision in the following terms: ‘While falconers come from different backgrounds, they share common values, traditions and practices. ... Its inscription on the Representative List could contribute to fostering cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue worldwide’.

Several falconers played a major role in the inscription. In fact, the ICH Committee expects that it is the community linked to a cultural practice that initiates a nomination process, or is at least strongly involved in the latter. The submitted falconry file mentions dozens of local groups of practitioners, as well as regional and national associations. Among these, the International Association for Falconry (IAF) indubitably played the most important role. From 2004 to 2009, it worked closely with the various state administrations for cultural heritage, including that of the UAE, helping to draft the multi-states ICH application.

A few months after the inscription, the *IAF Journal* published a testimony written by a falconer (who had been deeply engaged in the nomination process) after having attended an international meeting of falconers: ‘all those falconers in their national dress, with their hawks and falcons, gathered together in the brotherhood of falconry, sharing a common passion’ (Fox, 2011). Some years later, an expert who had participated extensively in the falconry application for the French Ministry of Culture wrote: ‘All the falconers I met have a common definition of falconry.’ She highlighted the fact that they ‘share a common sense of belonging’, and then quotes a French falconer she had interviewed:

What is fascinating in falconry is that you can find the same practices, almost the same equipment ... at all ages. ... Therefore, when one falconer meets another one, even from a remote country, one immediately understands the other, even if he does not speak the same tongue. (Grenet, 2019, p. 6)

### ‘Sharedness’ as a territorial and political issue

UNESCO language, as spoken within the organization or used in its official documents, as well as by those seeking to inscribe an element on a UNESCO heritage list (i.e., diplomats, experts in the preparation of nominations, spokespersons of the practitioners of a cultural practice, etc.) abundantly employs the words ‘shared’, ‘sharing’ and ‘common’. The ways the various protagonists of the falconry ICH inscription wrote and spoke about their practice echoes this general trend. Yet, this pattern begs the question: What do ‘sharedness’ or commonality actually mean for these different protagonists of UNESCO heritage-making? What are their objectives in referring to these ideas?

We address these questions through an analysis of the ICH Committee’s adoption of a specific tool: ‘multinational nominations’, that is, applications submitted by two or more states for inscription of an element on the ICH RL. Specifically, we assess several projects that either employed this tool or deliberately decided not to make use of the latter. In doing so, we highlight the various usages of ‘sharedness’ adopted by the diverse stakeholders, shaped by territoriality, political alliances and controversy over the spatial dimensions of sharedness within this institutional context.

For most people, the words ‘shared’ and ‘sharing’ form part of a mundane vocabulary. They are frequently understood as a synonym for ‘having in common’, except when indicating the action of dividing something in pieces (e.g., a cake among several guests, or land between different owners or states), which would seem, at first glance, to mean quite the opposite. Many

academic publications, especially in the field of spatial and territorial studies, similarly employ the term rather ambiguously. Compared with 'commonality' – and related words such as common, commons, communal, community, etc. – 'sharedness' as a concept has been adopted much less, with the exception of certain authors in very specific fields.<sup>4</sup> We argue, however, that the notion of sharedness begs further attention. Indeed, the words 'share' and 'sharing' appear abundantly in UNESCO discourse. Their recurrent use hints at contested visions of that which is at stake in 'sharing heritage'.

## Two interpretations of sharedness in territorial studies

Spatial and territorial studies that address sharing largely revolve around two interpretations of the term. One likens 'sharing' to 'common' and sharedness with *sameness*, while the other focuses on the *constitutive diversity* of people interacting or building projects together.

The first interpretation is exemplified by the large body of work questioning that which constitutes a people, a nation or a community, and what their members share or have 'in common'. This literature has mainly focused on understanding how multiple individuals come together to form a group, their initial diversity being neutralized by a nation- or community-building process. Such studies emphasize the key role of shaping a (common) territory in processes where a multiplicity of diverse individuals become a homogenous entity. This view dates back to Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651), in which he frequently employs the word 'common' (though never 'shared' or 'sharing') and argues that the 'multitude' turns into a 'people' when adopting a social contract within a specific territory. His reasoning was later theorized in classic writings of modern sociology (e.g., Ferdinand Tönnies or Max Weber) and again taken up and critiqued by the literature on nation- and state-making in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g., Gellner, 1983; Scott, 1998). These investigations mainly focused on the drivers and (partly territorial) modes of the political making of cultural homogeneity.

The sharedness/commonality these scholars envision evokes a degree of *sameness*, where the resultant social and political group is seen as a body of (similar or homogenized) individuals. At the heart of this conception of sharedness is an identity, a language, a culture and/or a territory, that is, a set of attributes that are the defining features of the people/nation/community. Such forms of sharedness have also fuelled localist/nationalist narratives for decades, and contributed to defining the differences between neighbouring people/nations/communities (as well as ethnic groups; Barth, 1969), seen as acting as self-enclosed collective beings.

The second interpretation instead highlights the *constitutive diversity* of individuals and groups in the making of a socio-spatial collective. This view has emerged in academic debates over the last several decades, along with a rediscovery of the work of philosophers such as Baruch Spinoza or Hannah Arendt. Its expression can be found in many fields, including critical literature on globalization (e.g., Negri & Hardt, 1999, who evoke Spinoza's concept of 'multitude') and studies on multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism (e.g., Beck, 2006). Such studies rely on an understanding of sharedness that takes into account various degrees of difference among protagonists involved in day-to-day interactions or the building of projects. Rather than tangible attributes, it is mainly responsibilities, duties or commitments that are shared among individuals or constitutive groups.

There are various spatial and territorial implications of this alternative interpretation. Take, for example, the *Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (2000), chaired by Bhikhu Parekh. It reflects on the present and the future of a nation-states hosting ever more residents of different origins. In doing so, it repeatedly invokes the importance of 'shared memories', 'shared understanding', 'shared meanings' or 'shared values' among these residents, inviting the development of 'each separate region, city or borough as a community of interacting and overlapping communities' (p. 3). Other scholars have examined policies that promote 'shared spaces' in cities (e.g., Moroni & Weberman, 2016), such as Belfast (McKeown, 2013), where

constitutive diversity is a daily issue, especially in public places. In both examples, the main territorial challenge is to find ways that a place, a city or a national territory can welcome and cultivate social and cultural diversity through interaction and shared understanding.

Spatial issues related to this ‘constitutive diversity’ notion of sharedness also bring to the fore the very nature of that which is shared in transnational (e.g., global social movements) and inter- or supra-state (e.g., institutional regional agreements) practices and arrangements. This is particularly evident when ‘a community of communities’ is established, or a combination of different national territories occurs. Take, for example, the long-lasting debate over the desirable extent of the European Union, where projects and criteria based on sameness (e.g., cultural elements such as Christianity) have frequently been opposed in favour of constitutive diversity and moral responsibilities on the part of the states and people.

In this paper we are particularly interested in the kinds of sharedness involved in the institutionalization of the ‘heritage of humanity’, and its political and territorial implications. *Sharedness* here encompasses both of the interpretations outlined above and thus all forms of the notion of sharing. Rather than a normative concept, it is used as an analytic tool. In this perspective, our methodology relies on actors’ diverse *emic* uses and meanings of the concept of ‘shared’. A focus on the multiplicity of perspectives borne by the different stakeholders sheds a light on the combined or competing spatial strategies employed when defining a specific heritage element. We draw on ethnographic observations of the discussions of key actors in the governance of ICH, at both the UNESCO ICH Secretariat and Committee level (in the second section) and at the state level (in the third section). Three empirical case studies – falconry, flamenco and alpinism – conducted collaboratively or individually by the authors, offer further insight. Specifically, they reveal the different ways of thinking, practising, institutionalizing or denying the ‘sharedness’ of a given transnational practice on the part of states (in the third section) or groups or organizations of practitioners (in the fourth section).<sup>5</sup>

## UNESCO’S VISION OF SHARED HERITAGE AND THE PROMOTION OF MULTINATIONAL NOMINATIONS

### ‘Shared’ and ‘common’ heritage in UNESCO discourse

The usage of ‘shared heritage’ and ‘common heritage’ in UNESCO discourse is complex and diverse. A first meaning uses ‘shared’ or ‘common’ as equivalents, emphasizing the moral responsibility of all human beings vis-à-vis their natural or cultural assets, called the ‘common heritage of humanity’.<sup>6</sup> Since its founding in 1945, the statutory mandate of UNESCO has been ‘to build peace through international cooperation in Education, the Sciences and Culture’ (UNESCO, 1945, art. 1) and to promote collaboration and dialogue among its member states in order to reach this objective. Beginning in the 1960s, international campaigns to rescue sites in danger popularized UNESCO and mobilized public opinion around the idea that all member states should, as later written in the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (hereafter, WH Convention), ‘share responsibility’ for heritage protection and ‘express a shared commitment to preserving our legacy for future generations’. Accordingly, each site inscribed on the World Heritage List (e.g., the Palace of Versailles or Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park) and each cultural practice (e.g., the Carnival of Basel or Irish harping) inscribed on the ICH RL is supposed to be the concern of all humanity. In focusing on humanity and the world as a whole, while also celebrating their diversity, this first use of sharedness aligns with UNESCO’s cosmopolitan and intercultural outlook.

A second meaning arises where shared heritage indicates a site or cultural practice found across different countries, which several states may propose for nomination to the UNESCO lists. Different tools have been adopted for such cases in the framework of the WH Convention. These include ‘transboundary properties’ for continuous sites found on both sides of an

inter-state border (e.g., Waterton Glacier International Peace Park inscribed in 1995 for the United States and Canada), 'transnational serial properties' for sites scattered across different countries expressing a similar cultural or natural feature (e.g., the work of the Swiss architect Le Corbusier inscribed in 2016 for Germany, France, India, Switzerland, Belgium, Argentina and Japan), as well as 'cultural routes' crossing several state territories (e.g., the 'silk roads' inscribed for China, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan in 2014; Wang, 2019). Meanwhile, in the framework of the ICH Convention, the 'multinational nominations' instrument refers to multi-state projects on a given cultural practice, such as those on falconry or alpinism. That which is 'shared' in such cases are the sites or practices themselves, for which states decide to cooperate through coordinated initiatives and, later, to commit to 'shared management'. This involves an inter-territorial approach.

Finally, a third meaning, specific to World Heritage sites and therefore beyond the scope of this article, closely ties the notion of 'shared heritage' to issues related to heritage-making in post-colonial contexts. This entails a recognition that a given place has a variety of heritage values, related to local society, the former colonial power and the post-colonial state, which should necessarily be understood as 'shared'. For example, 'Rabat, Modern Capital and Historic City: A Shared Heritage' (nominated by Morocco and inscribed in 2012) is home to an architecture that blends various cultural influences. Meanwhile the Netherlands, in seeking to inscribe sites located in the former Dutch colonies, proposed specifying this type of shared heritage with a suitable designation: 'mutual heritage'. This kind of sharedness highlights the mixture of spatial influences of various societies and states within a same site.

While the words 'mutual', 'shared' and 'common' are arguably used in UNESCO documents somewhat ambiguously, an overall vision does emerge. As a UN agency promoting an intercultural vision of humanity, where decisions are made by consensus of its 193 member states,<sup>7</sup> sharedness underlines the constitutive diversity of its members (states) and objects of concern, operationalized through an inter-state commitment (meaning 1) and cosmopolitan vision.

Certainly, the two Conventions differ significantly, primarily due to the nature of that which they aim 'to protect' (sites for the WH Convention) or to 'safeguard' (cultural practices for the ICH Convention). The WH Convention seeks to help states protect sites with 'outstanding universal value', that is, sites having 'cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity'.<sup>8</sup> Most WH sites are located in a single state territory. In the 1990s it became evident, however, that the majority of the cultural sites listed under this Convention were old monuments located in Western states. Several states that had few monuments of this kind (e.g., Sub-Saharan states) or which placed more importance on the know-how related to building the monuments than on the monuments themselves (e.g., Japan), requested that UNESCO pay more attention to cultural practices in its heritage policy (Aikawa-Faure, 2009; Bortolotto, 2013). This ultimately led to the adoption of the ICH Convention in 2003. Not all these cultural practices could, however, be spatially framed within a single state territory. Multi-state nominations have consequently emerged, where endeavours to safeguard the transnational character of such practices have made the ICH Convention's promotion of 'shared management' (meaning 2) particularly relevant.

### 'Multinational nominations' and the ICH convention

Indeed, while many cultural practices are local (e.g., carnival of Basel) or nationwide (e.g., Irish harping), others are much more difficult to map precisely and can be found across different state territories. They sometimes cross borders, or are found in a more dispersed manner, the result of cultural diffusion (e.g., falconry), historical collective resettlements or recent migrations. For the ICH Committee, the safeguarding of such practices requires inter-state cooperation. In the Operational Directives for the Implementation of the 2003 Convention (hereafter, ODs), the

Committee encourages ‘submission of subregional or regional programs, projects and activities as well as those undertaken jointly by States Parties in geographically discontinuous areas’ (ODs, p.14). They furthermore invite states parties:

to develop together, at the subregional and regional levels, networks of communities, experts, centres of expertise and research institutes to develop joint approaches, particularly concerning the elements of intangible cultural heritage they have in common, as well as interdisciplinary approaches. (p. 86)

Regional UNESCO offices and centres also contribute to promoting cooperative initiatives in the heritage field. For example, the Regional Research Centre for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in West and Central Asia, created in 2010, invited 11 states in the region to ‘focus on conducting research for safeguarding and on coordinating activities related to what is called shared ICH, including the preparation of joint nominations’ (UNESCO, 2010, p. 8). From time to time, inter-state cooperation in the safeguarding of cultural practices is presented as a major symbol of the UNESCO philosophy: the UNESCO Director General was personally involved in the promotion of a multinational nomination, Korean wrestling, separately nominated by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (Ssirum) and the Republic of Korea (Ssireum). She facilitated the merging of these proposals into a single nomination, eventually jointly inscribed under the name ‘Traditional Korean wrestling (Ssirum/Ssireum)’ in 2018. Qualifying this inscription as ‘an important symbolic step’, she described the collaboration as an example of how ‘culture can be the vanguard of peace’.<sup>9</sup>

In the field of ICH, UNESCO promotion of multi-state cooperation clearly indicates that the kind of sharedness mainly at stake relates to the *constitutive diversity* of the state parties, where the latter should undertake ‘shared management’ of cultural practices across different territories. Yet, whether the transnational or transboundary cultural practice itself should be viewed in light of the *sameness* or *constitutive diversity* of its expressions remains open to interpretation. One document published by UNESCO to assist applicants in framing their ICH project highlights the *constitutive diversity* of certain cultural practices:

We may share expressions of intangible cultural heritage that are similar to those practiced by others. Whether they are from the neighbouring village, from a city on the opposite side of the world, or have been adapted by peoples who have migrated and settled in a different region, they all are intangible cultural heritage.

Ultimately, however, the ICH inscription procedure tends to rely on the way communities themselves qualify the sharedness of their practice. Notably, the third meaning of sharedness in UNESCO language mentioned above (‘mutual heritage’ comprising both colonial and indigenous influences) is absent in ICH-related guidelines. This last interpretation remains specific to the WH Convention, as if mutual heritage could only apply to *places* shaped by various states and societies at different times, and not to *cultural practices*. Yet, there is no doubt that creolization processes occur in this latter field.<sup>10</sup>

Over the last few years, UNESCO’s efforts to encourage multinational nominations for the ICH RL have proved successful. The number of such nominations has risen strongly. In April 2020, 42 out of the 545 elements inscribed on the ICH list resulted from a multi-state initiative. Interestingly, most were submitted after the 2012 General Assembly’s<sup>11</sup> decision to define priorities and examine only some of the nominations received; a choice made to lighten the heavy workload of the Secretariat. First, it was first determined that single-state nominations would be examined only every two years (which fuelled a certain degree of frustration among communities and states), and then that multi-states nominations<sup>12</sup> would be prioritized in the selection of files to be assessed and evaluated. Such prioritization in turn increased the number of inscriptions per



state. Indeed, those engaging in multi-state initiatives can have multiple nominations in a given year, beyond the quota set for single-state nominations. As will be seen in the following section, this has strongly incentivized states to use the multinational nominations tool.

## HOW HAVE STATES USED (OR NOT) THE INSTRUMENT OF MULTINATIONAL NOMINATIONS?

What has been the strategy of state representatives and administrations when submitting ICH nominations liable to be carried out with other states? States parties may interpret the principles of the Convention very differently and have preferences for aligning (or not) their own policies with UNESCO's recommendations. While some alignments are required,<sup>13</sup> it is ultimately up to the states parties whether (or not) they would like to use certain specific instruments such as multinational nominations.

Indeed, nationalist claims and diplomatic tensions have, on various occasions, prevented states from considering multinational applications. For example, in 2009, the inscription of *Karagöz*, a form of shadow theatre, was a source of disagreement between Turkey and Greece when the former applied for a nomination without involving the latter, despite the fact that a version said to be similar and even more lively exists in Greece (called *Karagiozis*; Aykan, 2015). During the same Committee session, Malaysia contested the legitimacy of the inscription of *Batik* on the ICH RL under the single-state application of Indonesia, arguing that *batik* is also a strong and popular tradition for its people (Winn Chong, 2012). In such cases, single-state nominations seemingly instrumentalize the ICH inscription, using the latter as an 'official' means of exclusively appropriating the cultural element.

In other cases, the territorial dimension of inter-state disputes has taken a different form. In 2018, China inscribed a traditional Tibetan health practice (*Lum medicinal bathing of Sowa Rigpa*). The following year, India nominated 'Sowa-Rigpa, knowledge of healing or science of healing', said to be a 'traditional medical system of communities that inhabit the Himalayan belt in India'. During the 2019 Committee session, China lobbied in order to have the proposal rejected. Rather than focus on the nature of *Sowa-Rigpa* as described by India, China claimed sovereignty over some regions mentioned in the Indian file as places where *Sowa-Rigpa* is practiced.<sup>14</sup> While the issue of appropriation is also at stake here, its territorial dimension is not hidden behind a cultural argument but expressed directly as a geopolitical issue.

A recent dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan is particularly illustrative to this regard, as well as highlights the ICH Committee position. In 2013, Armenia nominated 'Lavash, the preparation, meaning and appearance of traditional Armenian bread as an expression of culture'. The Azeri delegate claimed that the same cultural expression was alive in Azerbaijan, and requested and obtained a change in the name of the element to 'Lavash, the preparation, meaning and appearance of traditional bread as an expression of culture *in Armenia*' (added emphasis) (Aykan, 2016; Borlototto, 2016). The ICH Committee eventually inscribed the practice in 2014, though in its final decision specifically recalled its deterrent of any kind of nationalist appropriation:

The Committee takes note that *lavash* is shared by communities in the region and beyond, (and) recalls that inscription on the Representative List does not imply exclusivity and encourages the submitting State when implementing safeguarding measures to remain conscious of the element's larger cultural context in the region; recalls the importance of using vocabulary appropriate to the spirit of the Convention and avoiding expressions such as 'unique' and 'original'.<sup>15</sup>

Two years later, Azerbaijan returned with its own nomination file, called 'Flatbread making and sharing culture: Lavash, Katyrma, Jupka, Yufka', officially submitted together with four other countries (Aykan, 2016). The ICH Committee inscribed the practice in 2016, concluding in a

final comment that: '[it] takes note that the culture of making and sharing flatbread is shared by communities in the region and beyond'.<sup>16</sup>

These examples show that inter-state visions of sharedness in heritage-making are, in some cases, influenced by a desire to strengthen territoriality (through nationalist rhetoric or attachment to territorial sovereignty), and in others the will to activate regional cooperation through diplomacy. The sameness, similarities or differences of a given cultural practice existing within or between the respective state territories are invoked in support of the strategy adopted in the nomination file.

While defining a typology of state strategies or tactics is beyond the scope of this paper, in what follows we present three case studies analysed over the last few years, allowing us to delve deeper into state approaches. Specifically, we explore the French implementation of the Convention as observed through the debates of France's National ICH Committee; the inscription of flamenco as an example of a regionalist–nationalist strategy; and the nomination of falconry as an illustration of the adoption of UNESCO language.

### The French Ethnological and Intangible Heritage Committee: a blend of opportunism and idealism

This ethnographic account investigates the case of a state administration – specifically the French Ministry of Culture – where a mixture of realism, opportunism and idealism triggered several multi-state nominations. One of the authors had the opportunity to take part in the work of the Ethnological and Intangible Heritage Committee (*Comité du Patrimoine Ethnologique et Immatériel* – CPEI), established to advise the French Minister of Culture on the implementation of the ICH Convention. Participant observation of the meetings of the CPEI since its establishment in 2012 revealed that the number of files for multinational nominations has been constantly on the rise.

In the last two years alone, France participated in six multinational nominations. In fact, whenever possible, often thanks to previous joint efforts with their counterparts abroad, the French officials in charge of the nominations to the UNESCO lists have opted for a multi-state collaboration as opposed to a single-state endeavour. They explicitly stated that 'in the restricted context of national applications' they would 'systematically' recommend the internationalization of ICH files, whenever possible. The option of 'sharing' a nomination with other states has thus recently become a new implicit criterion for assessing potential new submissions to the ICH lists.

During a CPEI meeting held in 2018, an official in charge of the implementation of the Convention explained that seven files were ready and waiting to be nominated for inscription on the UNESCO lists. He said, 'This is a very positive result in itself, but also a concern in that it will generate frustration,' referring to those files sitting on the waiting list sometimes for several years. In a discouraged tone, he commented, 'it's hard to keep the Convention alive at such a slow pace. There is a jam'. The 'jam' or bottleneck he referred to are the limits established by UNESCO in order to ensure a realistic amount of work for the Committee, its evaluation body and the Secretariat (see above). By engaging in multinational nominations, driven by pragmatism, the French heritage administration has at least partially been able to bypass the ceiling established in 2010 and obtain several inscriptions every year.

Observations indicated, however, that this increase is also explained by other factors. First, French officials displayed an obvious pride, and a sort of idealism, in actively promoting UNESCO's values by initiating partnerships with other states. 'Multinational nominations are the most interesting' objected one official in reaction to the considerations of a CPEI member who felt that such files are much more complex and difficult to prepare. Through inter-state collaboration, French officials saw themselves as strong advocates of the organization and its intercultural ambition, and a dedicated actor of a regional, European and Mediterranean<sup>17</sup> approach, conform to its diplomacy.

Second, the CPEI strove to respect the spatial features of the cultural practices being nominated and ensure that this aspect was reflected in the file. For example, on several occasions they asked the project bearers of alpinism, inscribed in 2019 (see below), why only three states were involved in the first step, pushing the latter to consider whether others, such as Germany, Austria or Nepal, might join in order to better reflect the spatial extent, worldwide, of the practice. Thus, while the French case illustrates the tactical reasons that may motivate states to adopt the multi-national nomination tool, it also reveals the idealism of heritage administrators willing to promote a non-nationalist idea of heritage. The CPEI therefore bases its conception of sharedness on the *constitutive diversity* of the state parties involved in the same nomination. In this view, each state may either see itself as forming part of a single transnational community, or as a 'community of communities' adopting a similar cultural practice.

### From Arab-Andalusian classical music to flamenco: regional nationalism makes sharing heritage with others difficult

Flamenco was inscribed on the ICH RL in 2010, after two previous unsuccessful attempts in 2004 and 2005. The *Junta de Andalucía*, or the government of the autonomous region (*comunidad autónoma*) of Andalusia, in southern Spain, has been the main driver behind all these efforts. It has been eager to take advantage of the democratic transition and quasi-federalization of Spain for conceiving and implementing autonomous cultural and economic policies. To this end, the region has been using flamenco as an important element of Andalusian cultural identity and economic development. The presentation of flamenco in the three successive projects for an inscription on the UNESCO lists, and more specifically, the ways this cultural practice is said to be shared (or not) with complementary or similar practices elsewhere, has thus largely been motivated by the desire to achieve the inscription of this element, with or without partners depending on the expected added value of the latter.

The first attempt in 2004<sup>18</sup> failed due to partisan disagreement between the Andalusian Ministry of Culture and the Spanish Ministry of Culture, as well as because the latter preferred to prioritize the Catalan popular festival *Patum de Berga*. This prompted the *Junta de Andalucía* to turn to Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria for a second effort in 2005, which combined flamenco and *Música Andalusí* (Arab-Andalusian classical music). The nomination of 'Flamenco and Andalusian music: from the local to universal syncretism' was mainly tactical. The Junta hoped that a multinational nomination would be easier to obtain. But the UNESCO Committee again rejected the nomination, arguing that the two, quiet different, practices were not presented in a balanced way, flamenco being over-represented compared with Arab-Andalusian classical music.<sup>19</sup> In the third attempt, the Spanish state required the integration of two regions bordering to Andalusia – Murcia and Extremadura – where flamenco was said to be 'naturally' present. Spain thus expressed its own conception of the transregional spatiality of flamenco, and in so doing implicitly recognized that flamenco as practiced in other Spanish regions and major cities such as Madrid or Barcelona is mainly commercial.

Meanwhile, the argumentation used in the nomination files did not deny the fact that flamenco is played and danced in many other regions of the world. Yet, the imagined geography of the practice expressed in the files explicitly underlines the centrality and 'authenticity' of the practice in southern Spain. The 2010 nomination file reads: 'Andalusia is the heartland of flamenco', and Andalusia is its 'place of origin'. The worldwide spread of flamenco is acknowledged, but its variants found abroad are said to be different, 'open to new trends' but non-pure forms despite 'clear cultural and musical ties to flamenco'. Thus, driven by the desire of the *Junta de Andalucía* to assert and display a regional identity, flamenco was inscribed in the name of Spain alone. No other country where strong flamenco tradition exists (such as Japan, the United States or France) was invited to join the nomination. The sharedness of flamenco was therefore exclusively argued, according to a Spanish conception of the practice.

### Falconry: the sharedness of a cultural practice as a tool for heritage diplomacy

Though warmly welcomed in 2010 by the ICH Committee as ‘an outstanding example of cooperation between States’, the falconry nomination process initially started as a single-state project of the UAE, soon after the adoption of the 2003 Convention. At the time, the narrative used for promoting the inscription of falconry was explicitly nationalist. Though mainly practiced by wealthy families, the proposal focused on its Arab/Bedouin significance in the Gulf region, guided by ‘an ethnicized and gendered vision of a primordial Arab homeland’ (Koch, 2015, p. 522). Further, falconry was emphasized in the writing of a ‘national story of the UAE’ (Wakefield, 2012, p. 280), and was a major component of the proposed Zayed National Museum in Abu Dhabi, used as the main reference of the ‘invented tradition’ (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983) of the new state. At the time, the International Association of Falconry (IAF) was already collaborating with the Abu Dhabi emirate in conceptualizing falconry heritage-making. In fact, this led a former president of the IAF to say that the UAE, with its single-state initiative, ‘kidnapped’ the project for its own sake.

Yet, the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage (ADACH) struggled to align falconry with ICH requirements. It consequently decided to adopt an alternative strategy and hired an anthropologist to work with the IAF on a multi-state project. In doing so, a new discourse emerged where a will to reframe the activities of the ADACH according to UNESCO objectives and wording was expressed:

our activities are informative, enlightening and a true reflection of our culture and heritage ... they not only have an impact on our local and regional society, but also have an international dimension based on the inclusive appreciation of human culture, of which our own is an essential component. (cited by Wakefield, 2012, p. 10)

More fundamentally, this shift reflected the intense diplomatic activity the UAE was engaging in at the time in an effort to become an active multilateral partner. The strategy worked quite well, at least within UNESCO: the UAE became a member of the Committee from 2006 to 2009, and Abu Dhabi hosted the 4th Session of the Committee in 2009. Thus, the UAE’s invocation of a ‘shared culture’ between falconers, and its gathering of an initial 11 and later 18 states into an inter-territorial complex (only partly matching the geography of the cultural practice),<sup>20</sup> was both a tactical move to align with UNESCO priorities and a global diplomatic strategy. Moreover, the falconry inscription clearly illustrates the will of the 18 states to promote a shared management of the practice.

These three case studies (the French CPEI, flamenco and falconry) as well as the other examples addressing similar issues (on *batik*, flatbread and *Karagöz*) show that the sharedness invoked by states in developing ICH nominations is mainly fuelled either by nationalism (when arguing for a single-state application, with a cultural practice at the country level) or by diplomacy (when arguing for inter-state ties at a regional or global scale). Sharedness here is thus closely linked to contrasting conceptions of territoriality: one oriented toward internal issues, and the other aimed at cultivating cultural continuity between peoples and institutional partnerships in neighbouring states. However, these nationalist and diplomatic strategies do not seriously consider the question of the self-definition of the communities.

## SHAREDNESS IN THE MAKING OF COMMUNITY THROUGH ICH MULTI-STATE NOMINATIONS

Contrary to the WH Convention, which invites state, regional or local administrations to play a leading role in the nomination process, the ICH Convention instead insists that it is the

'communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals' who are the actors in charge of recognizing a particular cultural expression as their heritage, based on the 'sense of identity and continuity' that these practices provide (2003 Convention, art. 2). Thus, it is expected that they will be the main contributors in defining the kind of commonality or sharedness characterizing a given multinational nomination. This raises the question, however, as to the actual extent of communities' autonomy, in a process where only states have the power to submit proposals to the UNESCO and – as members of the ICH Committee – to decide on the inscriptions.

Though omnipresent in the UNESCO documentation, the term 'community' has never been formally defined by the ICH Committee. Ordinary use of the word in this context encompasses the adepts of a cultural practice, but also those closely related to it, as well as specialized organizations. Yet, the academic literature frequently reminds us that a group of practitioners does not necessarily make up a community (Brubaker, 2003). Others argue that there is, in fact, no such thing as a community at the beginning of the ICH inscription process, but that the process itself may produce the latter (Adell et al., 2015).

Whatever the degree of initiative on the part of the ICH practitioners or communities in the nomination process, the file must clearly depict the nature of the practice, its heritage value and spatial extent. Yet, the geography arrangement is often smaller than that which the experts and practitioners know to be true about its location. This occurs for two reasons: some states where the practice exists are not allowed to submit a proposal since they have not signed the ICH Convention; and not all of those who have signed it are invited or willing to participate in the multinational nomination. Thus, the actual geography arrangement of a nomination might be different from the 'imagined geography' of the practitioners. This makes the depiction of the commonality or sharedness of a practice, as conceived by the so-called community, a challenge. It necessarily involves a mixture of expertise (anthropologists are often called upon), reflexivity (scholars such as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004, describe how intense the work done by practitioners' representatives can be in this domain), and adaptability (the UNESCO forms can only mention countries and practitioners of the involved states).

To gain a sense of the kind of sharedness invoked here, we assessed the files of some of the multinational nominations mentioned, examining the vocabulary used relative to the communities. While the files rarely use 'common', they often employ 'shared' or 'sharing' and 'mutual'. For example, when asked to define the 'community of falconers', the file reads: 'Falconers regard themselves as a group, thus reinforcing the cultural values of sharing, interdependence and mutual support', and then later mentions the 'mutual respect for cultural diversity' witnessed during falconry events. The file also remarks that 'while falconers come from different backgrounds, they share universal values, traditions and practices'. In this insistence on sharedness, all the groups mentioned – beyond international associations such as the IAF – are local, subnational or national ones. Thus, the community required by the ICH Committee here consists not of 'a body of individuals' defined by common attributes, but rather 'a community of communities'. To deepen this analysis, we conducted ethnographic studies of the nomination processes of two cultural practices for inscription on the ICH RL: flamenco and alpinism.

### Flamenco: the shaping of a community of practitioners and aficionados by a political institution

For flamenco, the practitioners themselves never initiated any of the nomination attempts and their involvement in the long run proved to be weak or non-existent. All three applications (see above) were begun and carried out by the Council of Culture of the *Junta de Andalucía*, in charge of heritage and flamenco. In other words, the community was shaped by the process itself. On its third and successful bid, the regional government hired a communications scholar and specialist in flamenco issues in the media, Francisco Perujo. He was asked not only to write

the nomination file but also to set up a promotional campaign that would accompany the redaction and submission of the file.

The approach implemented was based on a dual conception of the flamenco community. First, the section of the form called ‘Identification of the communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals concerned’ reads: ‘Flamenco identifies. It is the badge of identity of numerous formal and informal communities and groups.’ Perujo specifically refers to a typology of seven groups: gypsies; flamenco families and dynasties; flamenco clubs or *peñas* and associations; performers; critics and researchers; flamenco schools and academies; and the cultural industries around flamenco. This categorization is further attested to by the 156 letters of support aiming to express the ‘consent of the community’, required by UNESCO for any application.

While some of these letters were sent by individual flamenco musicians, dancers and singers, others came from representatives of associations, *peñas*, schools, etc. Taken together, these groups are meant to comprise the flamenco community, and although never explicitly stated, most are linked to places, cities and regions of Andalusia. Only those connected to the two other autonomous communities (Murcia and Extremadura) are explicitly presented as such in order to fulfil the request of the Spanish state to include both *comunidades autónomas* in the project.

Second, the nomination process highlighted another type of community: flamenco aficionados. After sending the application to UNESCO in late summer of 2009, Perujo worked with the Andalusian Institute of Flamenco (*Instituto Andaluz del flamenco*) on a campaign to promote the UNESCO application. According to him, the particularity of this campaign, called *flamenco soy* (I am flamenco), was to bring flamenco identity back to ‘I’, or to its smallest identity – the body. It was launched on 28 February 2010 on the *Día de Andalucía* (Day of Andalusia), which commemorates the referendum held in 1980 deciding the autonomous community status of the Andalusian region. The idea was to reach out to Andalusians as they went about their daily lives in order to raise awareness about flamenco’s candidacy to UNESCO. Stands were set up on the streets, in shops and malls, and goodies were distributed with the ‘*flamenco soy*’ campaign logo. The aim was to collect signatures from supporters of the inscription of flamenco on the UNESCO List.

Practitioners located outside southern Spain, quite numerous in countries such as Japan, France or the United States, as well as links and networks existing between Andalusian artists and performers elsewhere in the world, are barely mentioned. Yet, through its website, the ‘*flamenco soy*’ campaign invited people from all over the world to submit their electronic signatures in order to express their backing of the regional candidacy. In doing so, the campaign thus asked for support for the inscription, while simultaneously distinguishing itself from the rest of the community.

Although a nomination to the ICH RL is supposed to come from the community itself, the inscription of flamenco was a very top-down process. Indeed, the government of Andalusia organized each step and means of identifying of the community, regardless of the commonality or sharedness actually felt by the practitioners. Thus, the community described in the form precisely aligned with the regional framing of the project.

### Alpinism: a strong sense of sharedness among practitioners, but a tactical rescaling around the Mont Blanc massif

Unlike what happened with flamenco, the definition and declared geographical extent of the community of alpinists for its successful ICH application in the 2018–19 cycle was largely carried out by the initial promoters of the project themselves, all amateur alpinists or professional mountain guides of the Mont Blanc region (Debarbieux & Munz, 2019). The ICH form reads:

Alpinism emerged in 1760 in the Mont Blanc massif. ... The Mont Blanc massif is part of the Alpine arc. ... Alpinism is also practiced in other parts of the Alps (Austria, Slovenia) and in other European mountain ranges ... as well as in areas outside of Europe.

Though not included in the file, the promoters of the project were well aware<sup>21</sup> and eager to recall that Western alpinists were the main protagonists of the globalization of this practice, though they have since been joined, since the beginning of the 20th century, by Russian, Japanese, Korean and later Chinese, Nepalese and Latin American alpinists.

Initially strongly driven by nationalist ambitions, embodied by various Alpine clubs born in the second half of the 19th century, starting in the mid-20th century such organizations began to cultivate 'numerous and intense exchanges between guides and enthusiasts, mountain and city dwellers, of all ages and from different countries, who share the same passion'. They also started providing assistance in building such associations in developing countries. Nowadays, two main international organizations, one for professional guides and one for alpine clubs whose members are mostly amateurs, gather dozens of national, regional and local associations. The feeling expressed by alpinists of belonging to a global community, practising an activity 'characterized by a shared culture', and experiencing 'a common history and values', as described on the ICH form, is quite strong.

The initial promoters of the project, all being familiar with the Mont Blanc region (France, Italy and Switzerland) and 'sharing the same (French) language' were particularly experienced in various forms of transboundary cooperation. In discussions with the relevant national administrations responsible for implementing the ICH Convention, they agreed to ask the French, Italian and Swiss Alpine Clubs as well as the three national associations of mountain guides to become the official bearers of the nomination. In so doing, they sought the institutional support of the national associations of practitioners and state administrations, all framed at the scale of the three state territories.

This led them to mention, in both their respective national inventories and the nomination for inscription on the RL, certain Italian, Swiss and French regions other than those of the Mont Blanc massif where alpinism is common (central, eastern and southern Alps, Pyrenees, Apennines, etc.). This ultimately meant that the community to which the files referred broadened from a local, transboundary one (around the Mont Blanc massif) to three national ones, along with their respective organizations of professionals and amateurs or, as described in certain versions of the file, a single 'transnational community'. Therefore, the spatial and social framing of the project was upscaled in order to reflect the organizations' respective perimeters of action, and allow national administrations to involve, at least formally, alpinists living and active in various parts of their respective territories.

Some of these bearers had been, or were at the time, involved in the executive bodies of national organizations of alpinists. Moreover, all were already strong advocates of the 'universality' of the practice and the worldwide connection of practitioners. Submitting the application on behalf of only three European states represented somewhat of a compromise for these actors. It was viewed by many as a first step, centred on the Western Alps where the practice was born and where it continues to be most concentrated (and thus likely to attain the inscription at some point), but leaving room to eventually 'add' other states and groups of practitioners elsewhere in the world. The grounds for this aggregation were prepared through intense communication in meetings organized by international organizations of alpinists.

This case study highlights several issues related to the sharedness of heritage within a multi-national ICH nomination. Here, boosted by strongly motivated individuals who knew one another quite well from the outset, the community of alpinists has been defined through the invocation of various qualities: several physiographic regions where alpinism was born, before spreading worldwide (the Mont Blanc massif, the Alps, etc.); social features (such as the global network of places of practices and national associations), strong attachment to core practice values and a multi-scale collective sense of belonging (references to a global community, or sometimes to an ensemble of communities). Neither the French, Swiss nor Italian administration had a specific political agenda for this nomination beyond the desire to frame the practice at the scale

of their respective entire territories. Though the Swiss did articulate a desire to introduce sustainable development issues, the states parties mainly expressed mutual goodwill built on a long history of partnership within the UNESCO organs.

These different case studies clearly show that the modalities of defining and involving communities in the ICH inscription process are diverse, where various forms of territoriality come into play. Some communities have been instrumentalized by a political will to use cultural heritage as a resource for institutional territorialization. Others, thanks to a strong internal organization, have maintained an evident autonomy when dealing with state administrations. The sharedness invoked in the nomination files thus appears in part dependant on the specific context. The flamenco community is fuelled by a regional sense of belonging and a view of the fundamental alterity of flamenco practiced abroad. It is, however, also made up of dozens of local and urban groups of practitioners cultivating specificities of the practice. Meanwhile, the falconry and alpinism communities are quick to define themselves as global, invoking shared knowledge and a specific set of values, though they also make constant references to local and regional features of their practice.

## CONCLUSIONS

This article explores how ‘sharedness’ is constructed, defined and experienced in the heritage-making of cultural practices within the context of the UNESCO ICH Convention. We focus specifically on the spatial, territorial and political issues that arise in collaborations between the various protagonists of multi-state partnerships – that is, the governing bodies of the ICH Convention, states and communities.

We show the ways in which ‘shared’, ‘common’ or ‘mutual’ heritage is a leitmotif in UNESCO action, in line with its global, cosmopolitan and intercultural project: guiding states and adepts of cultural practices towards a common understanding of the heritage of humanity, respectful of their diversity and autonomy. The introduction of a specific tool – multinational nominations – has proved to be an effective bureaucratic strategy for working towards this objective. That said, it has not prevented the adoption of alternative conceptions and tactics by some.

Our case studies reveal that use of the multinational nomination instrument on the part of states party administrations has been driven by a mixture of idealism (the zeal to promote a shared responsibility for the heritage of humanity), realism (a commitment to respect the geographical extent of cultural practices), opportunism (an eagerness to have more elements inscribed on the ICH lists) and political concerns (the alignment of heritage policies with diplomatic priorities through shared inscriptions).

These different motivations have resulted in a wide array of spatial arrangements, revealing much about the role of ICH multi-state inscriptions in states’ heritage-policy strategies and inter-state relations. While the sharedness invoked by these states highlights the sharing of responsibility, duties and tools associated with common cultural practices, the idea that each multi-state arrangement builds on its *constitutive diversity* remains central. Furthermore, when prioritizing a single-state nomination for a cultural practice that also exists beyond its borders, states express a strong desire to cultivate territorial sovereignty and nationalist pride.

Communities associated with an inscription are largely shaped by the inscription procedure itself. Where they do play a decisive role, local, national and international associations engage in a reflexive process, aimed at producing a cultural and spatial understanding of their practice that aligns with the geographical imaginary of their ‘community of communities’. Such an approach often combines a sharedness-*sameness* (when a cultural practice is perceived as being the same for its practitioners) and a sharedness-*constitutive diversity* (when striving to gather various collectives of practitioners located in different contexts). Meanwhile, when communities are defined and spatially delineated according to the objectives of the state, the sharedness involved either emphasizes a high degree of sameness among practitioners, or internal diversity that conforms to political objectives.



Our analysis of ICH nominations provides an illustration of the variety of forms of spatiality and territoriality that emerge in this process. We show that states may implement, on the one hand, a nationalist strategy that aims to use cultural practices in service of a state imaginary and territorial sense of belonging. On the other hand, they might adopt a diplomatic strategy where heritage serves as a tool for promoting regional or global cooperation. Meanwhile, when communities have a certain degree of autonomy in the process, an ICH nomination provides an opportunity to engage in a reflexive and constructive process relative to their own social territoriality and the spatial geography, within which their practice is framed and developed.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors are grateful to Ellen Hertz (University of Neuchâtel) for the constant support she provided to this research project, Maya Judd, etc.

## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## FUNDING

The authors thank the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) [grant number 100016\_169535] for providing financial support for the research project.

## NOTES

1. The ICH Committee is composed of representatives of 24 states parties to the Convention, elected by the General Assembly of the States Parties for four years based on equitable geographical representation (UNESCO, 2003, Arts 5–6).
2. The ICH Convention establishes two lists: the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. The first aims to illustrate the diversity of the ICH and raise awareness about its importance. The second aims to mobilize international cooperation and assistance to undertake safeguarding for cultural expressions considered in need of urgent measures to keep them alive. Additionally, the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices contains programmes, projects and activities that best reflect the principles and the objectives of the Convention.
3. ITH/10/5.COM/CONF.202/INF.6.
4. These include philosophers who work on collective intentionality (e.g., Schmid et al., 2008), social psychologists, sociolinguists, cultural anthropologists, and communication or cognitive scientists who analyse forms of intersubjectivity involved in dialogue, or group decision-making when 'shared' forms of understanding are necessary.
5. B.D. and H.M. followed the preparation of the alpinism nomination (2010–19). B.D. investigated the falconry nomination through interviews, document analysis and a review of the available literature. C.R. did the same for flamenco (2017–19). C.B. has conducted ethnographic observation of the meetings of the Statutory Bodies of the ICH Convention since 2009, as well as participant observation of its implementation in France as a member of the French Ethnological and Intangible Heritage Committee.
6. This notion, introduced in the 1970s outside of UNESCO, initially concerned natural resources in areas outside of national jurisdictions (Baslar, 1998). Certain UNESCO cultural policy documents refer, however, to this idea of a common moral accountability for heritage protection and safeguarding, including the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity: 'cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations' (art. 1).

7. All being signatories of the WH Convention and 178 of the ICH Convention.
8. *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.
9. Fieldnotes of the 13th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Port Louis, Republic of Mauritius, 26 November–1 December 2018.
10. Such a reflection is under way, at least in the context of national inventories. The French National inventory, for instance, includes certain cultural practices of the Mexican, Indian and Italian communities in France, and the Dutch Center for the ICH has taken a similar view of the cultural heritage of migrants from Suriname in the city of Arnhem.
11. Resolution 4.GA 5.
12. ITH/10/5.COM/CONF.202, DECISION 5.COM 7.
13. For example, state parties must develop their own inventory(-ies) of ICH elements before submitting one or more as nominations to the ICH lists.
14. Fieldnotes of the 14th session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Bogota, Colombia, 9–14 December 2019.
15. Decision of the ICH Intergovernmental Committee: 9.COM 10.3.
16. Decision of the ICH Intergovernmental Committee: 11.COM 10.B.2.
17. To date, all the multi-state ICH inscriptions involving France (five) have been built exclusively with other European states, with the exception of falconry, where only 10 of the 18 states are European or Mediterranean.
18. This application was carried out for the ‘masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity’, a programme run by UNESCO between 2001 and 2005, before the ICH Convention entered into force.
19. This argument was not, however, taken up by the *Junta de Andalucía* in media coverage of the rejection. For the *Junta*, the refusal derived from the vitality of flamenco, which was thus not in danger of disappearing.
20. The form mentions ‘about 60 countries’ where falconry is identified as being practiced. Some of these nations have not signed the ICH Convention and therefore were not allowed to participate in the nomination, while others lacked the resources or motivation.
21. We rely here on the discussions observed during the nomination process.

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