

# **Intangible heritage: definition and examples from Valais**

Léa Marie d'Avigneau  
Cultural heritage advisor, canton of Valais

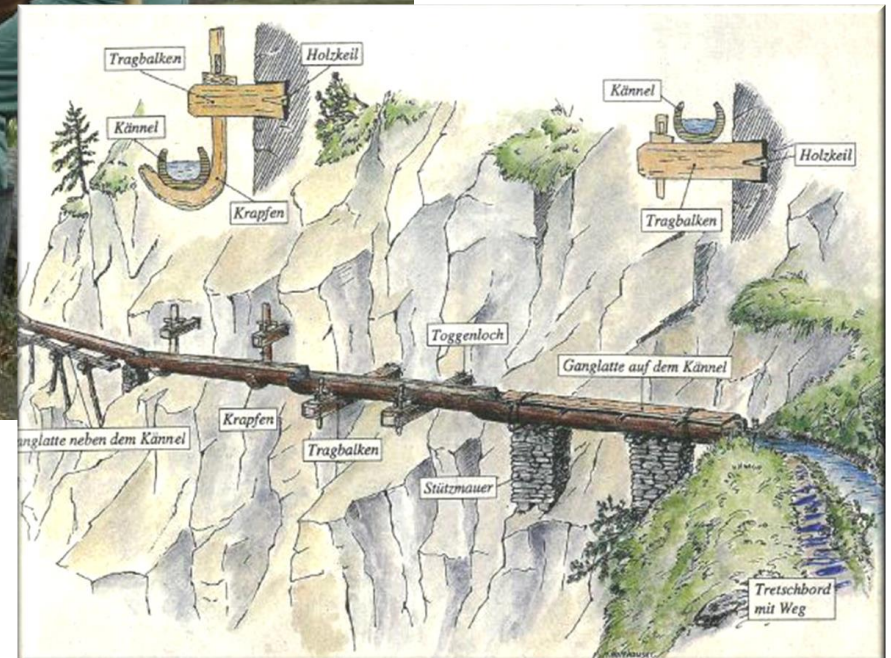
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# History of the concept of intangible heritage

- ▲ 1972: World Heritage Convention (world's natural and cultural heritage)
- ▲ 2003: Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage
- ▲ Tangible and intangible heritage are **complementary**
- ▲ 2018: Inclusion of the safeguarding of intangible heritage in the law on the promotion of culture in the canton of Valais



# An example of complementarity



Traditional irrigation,  
international application  
to UNESCO



# Definition of the concept of intangible heritage

“Intangible cultural heritage consists of the **practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills** - as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated with them - that **communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals have recognized** as part of their cultural heritage for **several generations.**”

Law on the promotion of culture in the canton of Valais



# Application of the convention

- ▲ Inventory of intangible heritage of cantonal and national interest (representativeness rather than exhaustiveness)
  - 199 traditions of national interest
  - 17 traditions of cantonal interest
- ▲ Financial support to projects of institutions committed to the safeguarding of intangible heritage
  - Documentation project on the Valaisan carillon tradition
  - Support for an institution preserving the old Valais rye varieties
- ▲ Awareness-raising actions on intangible heritage
  - Organisation of events during heritage days





# Examples of intangible traditions from the Valais

## ▲ Avalanche risk management

1. Chronology of the recognition process
2. Description of the tradition



# Application process

- ▲ 2012: recognition at national level
- ▲ 2014: selection for inclusion in the Swiss indicative list for UNESCO candidatures
- ▲ 2016: working group with tradition bearers for the preparation of the UNESCO candidature file; integration of austria
- ▲ 2018: recognition at international level on the UNESCO list of intangible heritage



# Swiss tradition bearers

- ▲ Swiss Alpine Club, 150'000 members, 152 huts
- ▲ Swiss Mountain Guides Association, 1'500 members
- ▲ WSL Institute for Snow and Avalanche Research SLF
- ▲ Swiss Association for Mountain Regions SAB
- ▲ Swiss Alpine Museum
- ▲ Department of culture and Departement of forests and landscape of the canton of Valais
- ▲ National platform "natural hazards" of the Federal Office for the Environment





# Report of the Swiss jury of experts

- ▲ The originality in relation to the definition of intangible cultural heritage
- ▲ The link between nature and human beings
- ▲ The combination of ancestral knowledge with modern scientific techniques
- ▲ The involvement of a large part of the population



# Integration into the structure of the territory



Wall above the  
railway station  
in Goppenstein



# Impact of the avalanche winter of 1951

- ▲ 98 deaths in Switzerland
- ▲ walls or terraces replaced by steel, aluminium, wire rope or concrete constructions





# Integration into the structure of the territory



Paravalanche church,  
Grisons, Thusis





# Legislative anchorage

## ▲ Federal constitution of 1874: measures for reforestation



Andermatt  
village protection  
forest

# Legislative anchorage

- ▲ Federal subsidies for avalanche control structures: 500 km of structures installed since 1950





# Scientific research



Federal Institute for Snow  
and Avalanche Research  
in Davos, founded in 1936



# Prevention



Artificial avalanche



# Managing the consequences



# Managing the consequences





# Managing the consequences



# New technologies





# Religious practices



Popular saying:

"Avalanches happen where they have always happened, but also where they never happen".

