

The popular reaction in front of the COVID-19 in the Intangible Heritage of UNESCO in the member cities of ICCN

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Abstract

ICCN, Interurban Cooperation Network for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, is an international organization of local governments and cultural institutions which includes 31 states, 29 cities and 34 associations. Its main objective is the protection of the intangible cultural heritage around the world and the promotion of sustainable local development. Moreover, it also seeks to achieve cultural peace through mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue between the different populations that are part of it.

Annually, the organization celebrates the General Assembly or Round Table of Mayors. So as to coordinate the work of all members and organize the activity of ICCN, the Executive Committee and the Secretariat were created, apart from the General Assembly. The first of these institutions, with a maximum of ten members, represents the cities of Gangneung (South Korea) Isfahan (Iran), Beit Sohour (Palestine) Flokland (India), Slovakia and Algemesi (Spain) and it has the main function of setting the ICCN's annual agenda. On the other hand, the daily work of managing the activity of the ICCN is carried out by the Secretariat, which has its physical headquarters located in the Spanish city of Algemesi, the previous headquarters was located in the Korean city of Gangneung.

The assemblies were held at: Gangneung 2012 (South Korea), Dubrovnik 2013 (Croatia), Isfahan 2014 (Iran), Slovakia 2015, Sicily 2016 (Italy), Beijing 2017 (China), Algemesi 2018 (Spain) and Beit Sahour 2019 (Palestine). The 2020 Assembly should had been held in the Korean city of Gangneung between the last 22 and 25 of June, but it had to be cancelled due to the international sanitary situation that we are suffering.

All the intangible heritage celebrations in our cities and communities have been cancelled for this reason and at the 2020 ICH NGO Conference Secretary, we would present the current status of all our intangible assets, after having a virtual assembly next October by the ICCN members.

The UNESCO Intangible Heritage Festival of Algemésí, the host city of the ICCN Office, and the community I represent, which was to take place on September 7 and 8, have also been suspended. But this suspension, as well as that of the rest of the ICCN member cities, does not alter their heritage essence, since the invisible force of the tradition that from generation to generation has maintained our celebrations is stronger, at this time, than the external problems that may affect them.

Concretely, in the case of Algemésí, the confinement to which we were subjected during the months of March, April and May, has served to keep the tradition more alive on dates that did not involve so much activity in the rituals.

The "dolçaina y tabal" school and the music band have continued their online lectures and preparations and rituals such as the two "Muixerangues" and the "Tornejants" have also followed their preparations through the network, with preparations open to the general public, which have contributed even more to publicizing these activities that take place behind closed doors.

The Bell Ringers Guild has performed the manual ringing of bells, with the necessary precautions, sometimes as a contribution to some crucial moments lived during lockdown. As in many other Spanish and worldwide towns, the balconies have been adorned with images of our immeasurable heritage, the celebration of which, as we all know, is declared Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

To sum up, after having our virtual assembly with ICCN, we will present the popular reaction in the assembly due to the temporary suspension of our tradition.