Shifting Scenes of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the United Arab Emirates

Working Towards Building a New Heritage in the Arabian Gulf Region

By

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ABSTRACT

Intangible cultural heritage as a concept, a policy, and a practice has increasingly become a matter of value and recognition for individuals, governments, and various international communities. Such growing significance has facilitated new safeguarding approaches to manage the impacts of modernisation on traditional practices of heritage, raising questions about nationalism and the critical role of state power in the process of building national identity. The role of nationalism is further complicated by the need to negotiate a multitude of local traditions and cultural expressions in a cosmopolitan nation-state. Thus, this thesis aims to examine the shifting role of intangible heritage from a community-based practice into a state-sanctioned process of selection in the United Arab Emirates through three perspectives: local, national, and international. Data was collected using qualitative methods (mainly observations and interviews) that aimed to explore the new and traditional forms of safeguarding intangible heritage among the top-down and bottom-up levels. The thesis demonstrates the need to understand intangible heritage as a social activity at these two levels in order to identify the challenges present in a diverse and modernised nation-state that is trying to mediate its traditions. Further, this thesis argues that some traditional practices should be understood and approached beyond UNESCO's universal definitions. This thesis contributes to knowledge concerning the reconciliation of the role of intangible heritage in a modernised nation-state while recognising both its potential and its limitations. The exclusion of the local heritage practitioners is challenged in this thesis against state-driven approaches aimed at selecting certain heritage elements or narratives as representatives of a broader national identity of nation-states.

Keywords: *Intangible cultural heritage, cultural and creative industries, 2003 Convention, modernisation, safeguarding, commodification, heritagisation, nationalism, national identity, United Arab Emirates*

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Abbreviations

AHD Authorised Heritage Discourse

BIE Bureau International des Expositions

CCI Cultural and Creative Industries

CGI Computer-Generated Imagery

DCAA Dubai Culture and Arts Authority

DCT Department of Culture and Tourism

DEZ Dubai Educational Zone

DHD Dubai Historical District

DTE Department of Economy and Tourism

ERM Emirati Red Crescent

FBMI Fatima Bint Mohamed Initiative

FCS Framework for Cultural Statistics

FSC Federal Supreme Council

GCC Gulf Countries Council

GDP Gross Domestic Product

HDC Heritage Development Centres

HHC Hamdan Bin Mohammed Heritage Centre

ICCROM The International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural

ICH Intangible Cultural Heritage

ICOMOS The International Council for Monuments and Sites

ICSICH International Centre for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

MCD Ministry of Community Development

MCY Ministry of Culture and Youth

MENA Middle East and North Africa

MOE Ministry of Education

NCECS National Commission for Education, Culture and Science

NGOs Non-Governmental Organisations

PNBA Public non-Benefit Associations

SIH Sharjah Institute of Heritage

UAE The United Arab Emirates

UK The United Kingdom

UN The United Nations

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

USA The United States of America

WCCE World Conference on Creative Economy

Overview of Arabic Glossary

Abu Dhabi **أبوظبي**	The largest Emirate and the capital city of the UAE.
Aflaj **أفلاج**	Traditional irrigation system in the Arabian Peninsula.
Ajman **عجمان**	The smallest Emirate.
Al-Ain **العين**	A town in Abu Dhabi, it means 'the spring'.
Al-Fakhar **فخار**	Pottery.
Al-Ghadeer **الغدير**	A rivulet, and it also means the depth or gravity of something.
Al-Hiraf Al-Emaratiyya **الحرف الإماراتية**	The Emirati crafts.
Al-Khatt Al-Araby **الخط العربي**	Arabic calligraphy.
Al-Majalis Al-Thaqafiya **المجالس الثقافية**	The cultural councils.
Al-Mawrooth **الموروث**	A wide collection of specific inherited intangible customs and practices that are passed on from one generation to the next.
Al-Qatt Al-Asiri **القط العسيري**	An ancient artistic form of interior decoration practiced only by Asiri women.
Al-Wasl **الوصل**	A connection, corelation, or a relation. This term is widely used in the local context of the UAE.
Arish **عريش**	A traditional method of building coastal houses that is based on palm tree trunks and fronds.
Ayyala **عيالة**	A traditional dance performance that is mainly performed by males on special occasions.
Azi **عازي**	A traditional form of chanting poetry in a collective manner.
Bab Al-Bahrain **باب البحرين**	The gate of Bahrain, a heritage site.
Bait Al-Gahwa **بيت القهوة**	The House of Coffee, a space dedicated to fully demonstrate the making process of traditional Arabic coffee in the local and Bedouin context of the UAE.
Bait Al-Hirafiyyin **بيت الحرفيين**	The House of Artisans.
Bait Al-Khanjar **بيت الخنجر**	The House of the Dagger, a museum located in Dubai.

Bait Al-Qufl **بيت القفل**	The House of the Lock, where the mountain-dwellers used to live.
Barjeel **بارجيل**	A traditional form of cooling system that was imported from the Persians who lived in the coastal area prior to the union of the UAE, and who later became locals.
Barzeh **برزة**	A place of presence, usually where the Sheikh or ruler is present to hear the issues, requests, or needs of his people.
Bedu **بدو**	The nomadic people of the desert or the Bedouins.
Bid'ah **بدعة**	Originates from the word emergence, it refers to any emerging or innovative practice that has no roots in the traditional practices within the Muslim community.
Bida Bint Saud **بدع بنت سعود**	An archaeological site located in the UAE, known for its ancient old burial tombs, irrigation system, and caravan route.
Bidwa **بدوة**	Originates from the syllable 'Bedu' and is equivalent to the term Bedouin.
Bisht **بشت**	A traditional light gown worn only by men on top of their clothing, specifically for formal occasions or official ceremonies.
Bukhoor **بخور**	A traditional incense that results from burning fragments of agarwood (known as *Oud* **عود**) that are either dry, soaked in perfume oil, or processed into round-shaped drops of fragrant paste.
Burdah **بردة**	The name is derived from the *Burdah* poem that was written by Al-Busiri, a *Sufi* figure in the twelfth century, it also refers to papyrus.
Burqa **برقع**	A traditional form of veil that is significant in shape.
Dag Al-Habb **دق الحب**	Grinding the crops.
Dallah **دلة**	A traditional thermos.
Dubai **دبي**	The second largest Emirate and known for tourism.

Duff **دفّ**	A musical instrument similar to the tambourine.
Etihad **اتحاد**	Unification, confederation, or federation.
Fahidi **فهيدي**	A historical neighbourhood and key heritage site located along the old district of Dubai creek.
Fujairah **فجيرة**	The only Emirate located entirely on the eastern coast.
Gargur **قرقور**	A traditional tool specifically used for fish trapping.
Ghaf **غاف**	The national tree of the UAE.
Hadhar **حضر**	The 'urbans', a name that is given to the people living in cities, towns, or the coastal urban areas.
Hafit **حفيت**	Name of a mountain in the UAE.
Haq Al-lailah **حق الليلة**	'For this night', and refers to a traditional form of trick-or-treating that is practised in the middle of *Sha'ban*, the 8th month of the Islamic Hijri calendar.
Hijri **هجري**	The Islamic lunar calendar.
Hili **هيلي**	An archaeological site located in the UAE known for its ancient housing, burial sites, and agricultural grounds.
Hirfati **حرفتي**	My craft.
Iftar **إفطار**	A term that describes the moment when the fast is broken, which is at sunset during *Ramadhan* or any other fasting day.
Irth **إرث**	Old matters, heirloom, or inheritance.
Irthi **إرثي**	'My legacy', in the local dialect it implies my heritage, tradition, heirloom, or inheritance.
Janadriyah **جنادرية**	Name of a part of a valley located in north-east Riyadh.
Jemaa el Fna **جامع الفنا**	The courtyard assembly, the main square of Marrakesh.
Kandurah **كندوره**	A traditional gown that is mainly worn by boys and men in the Arabian Peninsula.
Khanjar **خنجر**	A dagger.
Limwayah BelKhushoom **لموايه بالخشوم**	'Confrontation with noses', a traditional form of greeting in between the male Arab Bedouins.
Lisaili **لسيلي**	A rural area located in Dubai.

Majina **ماجينا**	Consists of two syllables, *Ma* **ما** which means 'not', and *Jina* **جينا** which means 'come', and in the Arabic context it means 'we would not have come'.
Majlis **مجلس**	A place of sitting, and a key sociocultural feature in the Arabian traditional context of sociocultural gathering.
Malid **مالد**	Refers to a significant socioreligious practice that is often articulated to celebrate the Prophet Muhammed's date of birth.
Maliki **مالكي**	One of the four main Islamic schools of thought.
Masajid **مساجد**	Mosques, and in Islam it refers to the places of conviction, preaching, praying and/or worshiping.
Mawlid **المولد**	The 'birth', it specifically refers to the Prophet Muhammed's date of birth.
Mawruth **موروث**	What is inherited as heritage in its intangible form.
Menasa **منصة**	Platform.
Mukhawwarah **مخوره**	A traditional gown for girls and women of the UAE.
Muntajat Emaratiyya **منتجات إماراتية**	Emirati products or what is referred to as a product that is made by the Emiratis.
Na'ashat **نعاشات**	Metaphorically, it refers to the leaning palm fronds. It is also a form of local traditional performance mainly presented by females and incorporated today as an aesthetic factor in *ayyala* dance.
Nadba **ندبه**	A significant sharp vocal performance that used to be an emergency warning to the rest of the tribe in the case of any form of danger, and is usually led one of the *Shihuh* people.
Qasr Al-Hosn **قصر الحصن**	The Fort Palace, in the past it was a name given to the ruler's or sheikh's whereabouts in Abu Dhabi.
Ramadhan **رمضان**	The 9th month of the Islamic Hijri calendar, also called the holy month and the month of fasting.
Ras Al-Khaimah **رأس الخيمة**	The fourth largest Emirate.

Razfa **رزفه**	The first performing line in *ayyala*.
Ruwah **رواح**	A traditional performance considered to be unique to the *Shihuh* tribe and other mountain-dwellers in the UAE who have preserved the tradition to date. It includes a mix of poetry and is performed by up to fifty men standing in a straight line, holding drums and moving according to the melody.
Sadu **سدو**	A hand-woven horizontal technique using a ground loom, practiced by the Bedouins in the Arabian Peninsula, portraying geometric and shapes patterns.
Saff Al-Khous **سف الخوص**	A traditional braiding technique using mainly dried palms fronds to make all sorts of baskets and light kits.
Sahwa **صحوة**	The 'awakening', it refers to an ideological movement that was founded by a variety of *Salafi* Islamic clerics in Saudi Arabia.
Salat Al-Jumu'ah **صلاة الجمعة**	The Friday prayer.
Sana' **سنع**	Codes and ethics of the groups, communities, and tribes of the Arabian Peninsula, often referred to as etiquette.
Saruq Al-Hadid **ساروق الحديد**	An archaeological site located in Dubai.
Sha'ban **شعبان**	The 8th month of the Islamic Hijri calendar.
Shari'a **شريعة**	Refers to the everyday religious regulations that govern Muslim life on all levels. Originates from the word *Shara'a* **شرع** which means the straight way, source, or religion.
Sharjah **شارقة**	The third largest Emirate and known for arts, culture and heritage.
Sheikhs **شيوخ**	The plural of Sheikh, which means the head of the tribe or the ruler of a country in the Arabian Gulf context.
Shihuh **شحوح**	The name of a tribe in the UAE.
Shindagha **شندغة**	A historic district located in Dubai that used to be the centre of ruling, trade, and social wellbeing of residents.

Sibag Al-Hijin **سباق الهجن**	Camel racing.
Sidr **سدر**	A local and well-known tree among the Emiratis.
Sigarah **صقارة**	Falconry.
Siyaghat Al-Fiddah **صياغة الفضة**	The craft of traditional silversmithing.
Sougha **صوغة**	A traveller's gift or souvenir.
Sufism **صوفية**	A religious movement that emerged in the history of Islam.
Sunnah **سُنّة**	Any religious matter that could be an expression, practice, saying, meaning, or value, among other matters, that was undertaken by the Prophet Muhammed and his followers in its original form to date.
Tagrooda **تغرودة**	A traditional form of chanting poetry usually recited during journeys to encourage nomadic pastoralism or for the camels to walk systemically during the long desert journeys.
Talli **تلي**	A traditional embroidery technique that results in making adornment colourful textile for women clothing.
Tawrith **توريث**	A heritage-making or inheriting process.
Turath **تراث**	Heritage.
Umm Al-Quwain **أم القيوين**	The second smallest Emirate.
Urf **عُرف**	The 'known', it generally refers to the tribal linguistic and social particularities in Arab culture.
Wahhabism **وهابية**	Originated from its founder Muhammed Ibn Abd-AlWahhab, and it refers is a revivalist ideological movement that emerged in the eighteenth century in Saudi Arabia.
Yowla **يوله**	A modern form of art performance with firearms that is practiced solo, in groups, or alongside the *ayyala* dance.

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Chapter (1)

Research Introduction



Burqa Traditional Veil-Making

Research Rationale

Local communities – including the heritage practitioners within them such as craftspeople and performers – continue to practice and revive their traditional sociocultural practices; not only as a defining feature of their distinctive origins, but also for practical lifestyle reasons. These practices are part of the intangible manifestations of heritage which include customary knowledge and the living traditions of people's cultural expressions within communities (Lenzerini, 2011). As such, heritage practitioners are best placed to identify and safeguard what they perceive to be intangible cultural heritage[1] (ICH) (Skounti, 2008). However, the functions, meanings, and values of these practices no longer rest solely with their practitioners.

In many countries around the world, including the United Arab Emirates[2] (UAE), the impacts of modernisation followed by nationalism and social transformation have introduced and exchanged new ideas, industries, movements, and technology (Spillman, 1997). Thus, the scale of social change within local communities due to modernisation seems inevitable: the contemporary nature of modernisation often reflects continuous changes in their cultural or economic locality and privacy (AlHasani, 1996; Harrison, 2010b; Daugbjerg & Fibiger, 2011; Fox, 2016; Mylonas & Tudor, 2021). Hence, this thesis attempts to identify these influences and address the challenges that often lead to changes in the traditional functions, meanings, and values of cultural expressions and practices, and thus the present role of intangible heritage. Focusing on this particular context – the shifting role of intangible heritage at present – provides in-depth insights into the tensions between modernity and tradition, while synthesising the heritage-making and safeguarding

[1] In this study, intangible cultural heritage is referred to as intangible heritage.
[2] The UAE is a federation of seven Emirates that has grown from a tribal system in a remote place to one of the Middle East's most important cultural and economic centres. Retrieved from https://www.government.ae/en/about-the-uae

processes that instigated state-sanctioned processes of selection beyond the understandings of local communities, specifically the bearers of heritage.

The increasing effects of modernisation have directed international and national bodies and actors (consisting of individuals, communities, governments, and world organisations) towards safeguarding endangered traditional cultural expressions or practices among local communities around the world. Some of these expressions or practices are recognised as intangible heritage according to the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage[3] of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation[4] (UNESCO), which is manifested collectively through customs, events, rituals, traditions, and the know-how associated with cultural spaces or objects that are acknowledged, practised, and transmitted by communities as part of their heritage (UNESCO, 2003b). The inclusion of specific intangible heritage practices transforms their value into elements of world recognition and they become 'representative' elements used to build and promote national identities of nation-states, and thus must be safeguarded. The 2003 Convention encourages its member-states to involve the local communities in implementing safeguarding methods that may include traditional or contemporary preservation practices. However, the Convention does not clearly state which approaches should be implemented, as long as they are aimed at ensuring the visibility of intangible heritage through safeguarding and transmission approaches (UNESCO, 2003c).

[3] In this study, the 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage is referred as the 2003 Convention, which is a universal measuring instrument that consists of specific inclusion criteria and guidelines for the safeguarding of intangible heritage. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention

[4] An international non-profit organisation aimed at promoting shared understandings, knowledge, and solutions through transnational collaborations, including its variety of world conventions related to arts, education, culture, heritage, and science.

UNESCO has three different lists of cultural heritage, each devised to address a specific purpose, as follows:[5] 1) the Representative List raises awareness of the diversity of intangible heritage around the world; however it also has a strong emphasis that the inscribed elements suggest a 'shared' culture for humanity; 2) the Urgent Safeguarding List is composed of the cultural practices that are at risk of loss due to factors related to modernity, and conflicts, among others; and 3) the Safeguarding Practices List consists of approaches (such as preservation activities or programmes) that address the objectives and safeguarding measures of the 2003 Convention (UNESCO, 2003a). These lists are considered significant because they produce three outcomes: 1) the influence of the 2003 Convention over member-states according to the number of inscribed 'shared' elements in these lists that apply to each member-state; 2) a sort of universal status and/or recognition of the inscribed elements – known as 'representatives of intangible heritage' – compared to those not yet inscribed in these lists; and 3) device immediate safeguarding methods (by all necessary means) that are often state-sanctioned to the endangered 'representative' elements, however often implemented by the local communities due to the 'participatory' mandate of the 2003 Convention.

The 2003 Convention influenced the development of the concept of nation-building through giving a sort of priority to safeguarding the inscribed elements in member-states. Nation-building refers to the process of constructing or structuring a national identity and cultural cohesion within a nation-state (Skey, 2011). This involves creating a sense of belonging and unity among citizens through the promotion of shared (or selected) values and traditions. Intangible heritage, as recognised by the 2003 Convention, plays a crucial role in these processes by providing a tangible connection to a nation's historical continuity: it provides a link between past and present,

[5] Purpose of the 2003 Convention Lists of intangible heritage. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/purpose-of-the-lists-00807

reinforcing a nation's cultural roots and emphasising the safeguarding of traditions amidst modernisation (AlHasani, 1996). As the focus of this research, the UAE's ratification of the 2003 Convention took place in 2005[6] and the inscribed intangible heritage consists of fifteen elements[7] from 2011 to 2023, two of which are on the Urgent Safeguarding Lists while thirteen elements are on the Representative List, as shown in Figure 1.1 (below). An important aspect of this process of building a national identity through the UAE's intangible heritage is the fact that Emiratis (and their different social groups) make up approximately 12%[8] of the entire UAE population, hence the focus of this research is Emirati intangible heritage.

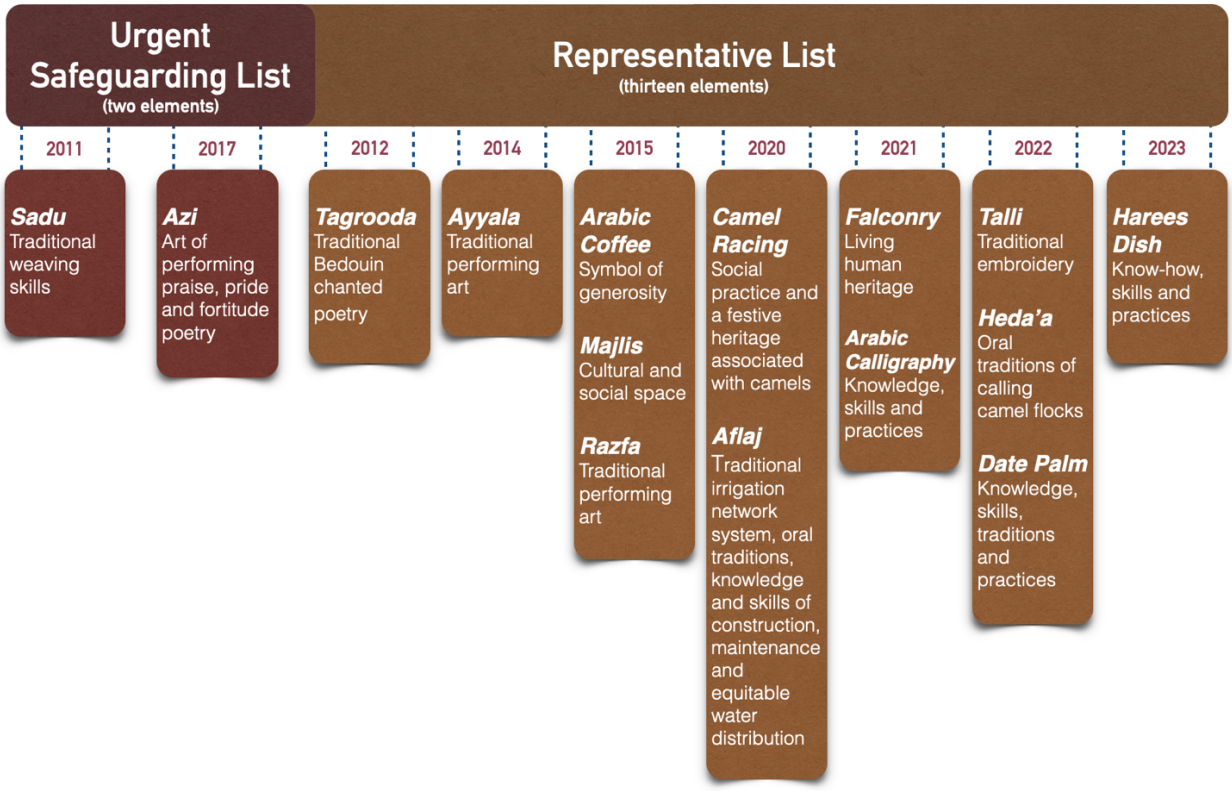


Figure 1.1: *The UAE's listing of intangible heritage in the 2003 Convention.*

Source: Author 2024, based on UNESCO, 2024.

[6] The member-states of the 2003 Convention and their type of instrument. Retrieved from https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/convention-safeguarding-intangible-cultural-heritage#item-2

[7] Listing of intangible heritage in the UAE. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/state/united-arab-emirates-AE

[8] Demographic summery of the UAE. Retrieved from https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/united-arab-emirates/summaries

Noticeably, only four of the fifteen inscribed elements (i.e. *aflaj* **أفلاج**, *azi* **عازي**, *talli* **تلي**, and *sadu* **سدو**, as seen in Figure 1.1 above) are specific to the UAE, while the rest are considered shared intangible heritage with other countries from and outside the region. Regardless of their belonging to the UAE, these elements are practiced in other Arabian Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Oman, and considered an integral part of their cultural and national identities. This raises questions about the uniqueness of the inscribed elements as representatives of specific national identity: what makes them distinct from other traditional practices, and who decides such important criterion of cultural distinctiveness? Al Mheiri (2013) examines how the Representative List has been used in nation-building efforts through the inclusion of falconry[9] (*Sigarah* **صقارة**), a traditional practice that is important in nation-building in four ways: symbolic, relevance to modernity, identity impact, and shared value. Falconry, a practice with deep historical roots in the UAE's Bedouin culture, is not just a sport, but a symbol of Emirati heritage and national pride. By showcasing falconry as part of their intangible heritage, the UAE promotes an image of cultural continuity and historical wealth. Falconry continues to be relevant: festivals and events such as the Abu Dhabi International Falconry and Hunting Exhibition[10] not only celebrate this tradition, but also reinforce national identity among Emiratis and raise international awareness of Emirati culture facing the impacts of modernisation. As an impact, this practice connects modern Emiratis with their Bedouin practitioners, fostering a sense of belonging in their heritage and reinforcing national identity. Lastly, twenty-four UNESCO member-states (including Belgium, Hungary, Italy, Kazakhstan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the Syrian Arab Republic, led by the UAE) cooperated to nominate falconry as a shared living human heritage.

[9] Inscribed in 2021, falconry as a multinational element has the highest number of member-states involved in the nomination process. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/falconry-a-living-human-heritage-01708

[10] An annual exhibition that showcases hunting products associated with falconry that merges modernity with tradition. Retrieved from https://www.adihex.com

To support this rationale, Tunbridge's (1984) theory highlights the importance of asking ‘whose heritage?’ when discussing the complex and often contentious shifting nature of heritage ownership and representation. Such heritage is not static but dynamic, continually evolving as societies change. Tunbridge emphasises that heritage is not a neutral or universally agreed-upon concept, but is instead subject to contestation and varying interpretations depending on the stakeholders involved. This question is crucial because it acknowledges that different groups may have competing claims and interests regarding the ownership, representation, and management of heritage. Tunbridge provides an example in the context of post-colonial societies, in which heritage sites that were once celebrated by colonial powers may be reinterpreted or even contested by indigenous populations seeking to reclaim and reframe their own history and identity. By questioning ‘whose heritage’ is being represented, and what makes heritage distinctive from others, Tunbridge’s theory reflects a more inclusive approach to the distinctiveness between heritage ownership and representation. It encourages the inclusion of diverse voices and perspectives, particularly those of marginalised or grass-root groups who may have been historically or politically excluded from heritage narratives that are considered one of the main components to build cohesive or ‘national’ narratives.

Influenced by Tunbridge's understanding of ‘whose heritage’, Winter (2015) refers to this process of world recognition as a ‘nationalistic practice’ (p. 334) to create a form of cohesive national identity through politics, thus developed a pre-determined use of heritage. Neal (2015) argues that wider social participation (including active and/or passive safeguarding measures) created a shift of heritage use in the light of processes of selection such as the Representative List. Hence, it is important to provide a clear distinction between the terms ‘safeguarding’ and ‘representative,’ because elements of heritage inscribed in the Representative List are used in

nation-building in this research, whilst safeguarding is subject to: formal and informal recognition of heritage; state-sanctioned and practitioners' understandings of cultural identity; and top-down and bottom-up approaches of heritage transmission.

In this light, a number of heritage experts discuss the intersection in practice between traditional safeguarding measures and contemporising these methods in order to meet the present challenges and demands of heritage production and preservation (see for example Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004; Bortolotto, 2007; Alivizatou, 2011; Graham, Ashworth, & Tunbridge, 2016; Akagawa & Smith, 2018). Traditional safeguarding measures of intangible heritage often refer to the preservation methods and practices that have been in place for a long time in a particular local cultural context of groups or communities, and which have developed a transgenerational effect and are deeply rooted in the cultural traditions and customs of a wider society (Bortolotto, 2007). On the other hand, contemporary safeguarding measures of intangible heritage have emerged in response to the changing social, economic, political, and technological dynamics instigated by the impacts of modernisation (Alivizatou, 2011). Some examples of contemporary safeguarding measures include policy and legal frameworks, documentation and archiving, capacity-building and training, and the commodification of heritage. These contemporary measures are closely affected by the international commitments and collaborations between countries, organisations, and stakeholders such as policymakers, practitioners, and communities on a global scale. These aim to exchange experiences, share practices, and collectively address the present and changing challenges of safeguarding intangible heritage (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004).

Although the nexus between the continuity of intangible heritage and safeguarding practices is important to the development of the 2003 Convention and much implementation is being undertaken in this direction, this thesis argues that traditional heritage practices should be

conceptualised based on the local context of communities, beyond the definition, the representative recognition, and safeguarding implementations of these conventions. Further, the thesis aims to demonstrate the need to understand intangible heritage as a sociocultural activity and/or a process that relies on the involvement of the heritage practitioners during the selection process of intangible heritage. In other words, understanding what is practiced and valued as heritage by the local communities in the UAE and associated problems of a diverse modernising nation-state trying to redefine its heritage – including the exclusion of traditional practices and their practitioners from the sanctioned selection processes. This may, for instance, imply that the time has come to revisit current cultural policies associated with processes of selection; thus, to respond to the present local understandings of intangible heritage. This include assessing the contribution of these Conventions to the safeguarding of intangible heritage according to the local, cultural, and social contexts of nation-states, including the UAE.

Problem Statement

During the twentieth century, traditional practices were increasingly marginalised in colonised and/or modernised nation-states, threatening the continuity of many distinctive traditional practices which are at risk of decline or complete loss among local communities (Berger, 2003). Such threats triggered contextual understandings of nationalism in modern societies and developed a formal form of heritage management and safeguarding that constructed their national identity. This type of 'official' heritage discourse is now influenced or managed by the governments of nation-states that often overlook the local traditional approaches. These contemporary consequences have caused traditional cultural processes among these local communities to change, leading to new forms of safeguarding heritage (such as using heritage as

a commodity), or the decline of certain traditional practices that have no present functions, meanings, or values to sustain their continuity (Winter, 2011). The problem with this formal form of heritage is that local communities often do not have the knowledge or skills to manage state-sanctioned mechanisms of heritage safeguarding. As such, the traditional role of intangible heritage (which gives a sense of community cohesion, inclusion, and identity among its individuals and associated practitioners) is directed towards a specific state-sanctioned heritage-making context for building a national identity, at the expense of local cultural practices (Mules, 1997; Tutchener, 2013; Shahzad, 2012; Smith, 2017).

It is important to note that state-sanctioned and community-based safeguarding measures are not mutually exclusive: they have the capacity to complement each other in terms of preserving the present functions, meanings, and values of intangible heritage in the face of evolving societal, economic, or political dynamics (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004; Logan, Nic Craith & Kockel, 2016). Thus, traditional safeguarding measures are often affected by the impacts of modernisation, including contemporary approaches to safeguarding endangered heritage by 'all possible means', as encouraged by the provisions of 2003 Convention (Article 2, UNESCO, 2003c). These new safeguarding means tend to be a consequence of emerging international cultural commitments, cultural and creative industries (CCI),[11] which promotes creative economic benefits to justify the processes of heritagisation and to reform traditional forms of intangible heritage as a commodity. For example, modernising the techniques or the production of traditional crafts is important for managing the present creative economic aspects of the cultural industries.

In the UAE, processes of modernisation began during the discovery of oil in the Emirates, particularly in Abu Dhabi **أبوظبي**, Dubai **دبي**, and Sharjah **شارقة** accompanied by economic,

[11] In this study, the cultural and creative industries are referred to as cultural industries.

industrial, and urban developments, leading to social and political changes in the country. The UAE was unified in 1971, when the seven Emirates[12] came together to form a new country situated on the eastern side of the Arabian Peninsula. This official unification was a significant milestone in the region because it brought together a few Bedouin Arab tribes to work collectively for the formation and development of one country. The UAE is constituted as a federal system which allows the independent governance of each Emirate with the aim of sustaining unity, stability, and cooperation among the seven Emirates, and creating a stronger presence within the regional and international communities. Since the union, the country has diversified its developments beyond the reliance on the oil industry, and focused on areas such as cultural heritage, commerce, and tourism, while ensuring a unified approach to international cultural and economic policies. As such, 'Emirati' intangible heritage is enmeshed in tensions between what the local communities continue to practice and value as traditions, and how the government of the UAE understands intangible heritage as a component that builds national identity and/or as a commodity that contributes economically to its cultural industries.

Part of the problem lies in the complex sociopolitical system of the UAE, and who decides which specific elements of intangible heritage should be a representation of national identity. In 2011, the UAE pledged to implement the guidelines of the 2003 Convention in terms of safeguarding its intangible heritage. International cooperation in the context of safeguarding heritage often raises awareness about world recognition of intangible heritage, its significance, and the need for its preservation across the local, national, and international levels (Akagawa, & Smith, 2018). In its implementation in the local context of the UAE, it became clear that the establishment of the cultural industries, such as the commodification and the heritagisation of heritage, were

[12] In 1971, six of the seven emirates, namely Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman **عجمان**, Umm Al-Quwain **أم القيوين**, and Fujairah **فجيرة** formed the UAE. A year later, Ras Al-Khaimah **رأس الخيمة** joined the federation in1972.

prioritised over the traditional safeguarding methods (Mirgani, 2017). Heritagisation is a contemporary form of heritage-making that often transforms traditional elements of heritage into a commodity, and its production process became closely related to the creative industries, for instance, the development of staged heritage for tourism purposes (Nic Craith, 2007; Winter, 2011). In this light, world-recognised intangible heritage often becomes a national asset, a commodity, or a property of the country rather than a form of cultural or social identity for the local communities. This approach complicates the means to safeguard traditional practices of heritage in a way that often leads the decision-makers in the country to exclude traditional presentations or productions of their intangible heritage.

In the UAE's local context of heritage management, safeguarding refers to the methods of preserving intangible heritage, while conservation refers to methods of protecting tangible heritage. Conservation and safeguarding are two related concepts that involve the protection and preservation of the tangible, intangible, and natural forms of cultural heritage, but there are distinct differences between the two terms in relation to their contextual understandings (Harrison et al., 2020). According to Jokilehto (1999), Bouchenaki (2007), Galla (2008), De la Torre (2013) and Lesh (2020), 'conservation' is generally understood as the management and preservation of tangible and natural heritage assets, including archaeological artifacts, objects, and sites; heritage buildings and monuments; and wildlife sanctuaries and ecosystems. 'Safeguarding', on the other hand, has a broader scope and encompasses the protection of intangible expressions, forms, and practices of cultural heritage such as oral heritage and traditional cultural practices associated with processes of knowledge and skills transmission. Hence, this research adopts the concept of safeguarding rather than conservation because of the local contextual understanding of intangible heritage protection in the UAE. The term 'safeguarding' is articulated in the 2003 Convention, and

is thus employed by the official and non-official bodies and actors in the UAE when it comes to the preservation and presentation of intangible heritage.

The value of intangible heritage is collectively identified and selected according to the cultural linguistics and social particularities of local communities within their specific social context (Nic Craith, 2008; Larsen & Wijesuriya, 2017). Hence, one critical endeavour of the safeguarding measures within the provisions of the 2003 Convention is to involve local communities in the safeguarding processes of intangible heritage, such as documentation and inventorying. However, the lack of the heritage practitioners' awareness and involvement in safeguarding processes problematises the heritage process of selection between the official and non-official bodies and actors in the UAE. This process of selection become a normative state-sanctioned exercise through the inclusion of a range of nominated traditional cultural practices in the Representative Lists[13] of the 2003 Convention. In order to understand the normative heritage process of selection, Sousa (2021) analysed the results of a transnational survey conducted in 2020 by 'Digital ICH Observatory' on the opinions and practices of the users of intangible heritage inventories. A total of 246 individuals from different world regions – such as Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Arab States – participated in this survey. Among those who are 'intangible heritage practitioners and/or people curious about intangible heritage', 48% responded 'don't know or know little' about the 2003 Convention, while 53.8% of respondents have never been consulted in building inventories. This exercise raises questions about the nature of community engagement in this process of selection, because it reveals poor levels of awareness and involvement of the local

[13] Overseen by the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the 2003 Convention consists of three main lists: the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding (referred to as Urgent Safeguarding List), the Representative List for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (referred to as Representative List), and the final list is the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices (referred to as Safeguarding Practices List). Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists

communities in the nomination process of the Convention, which includes building heritage inventories as one of the safeguarding methods. The result is often an escalating struggle for the recognition of intangible heritage as a cultural asset that is worthy of safeguarding, compared to the limited tangible forms of heritage such as the products of the crafts, museums, historical buildings, and natural and archaeological sites in the country. This form of exclusion is problematic because it leans towards an ambiguous positioning of heritage practitioners and their traditional practices in building the country's national identity that mainly focuses on the economic and political benefits.

Laurajane Smith (2006), in the Introduction to her *Uses of Heritage*, describes the exclusion and inequality of present forms of cultural heritage through the concept of authorised heritage discourse (AHD).[14] This exercise of exclusion favours an 'old way' of looking at heritage by privileging the protection of historically and aesthetically material places, monuments, or objects that maintains and protects Western narratives of nation-building, which are described by Lowenthal as 'the language of heritage that suffuses the world is mainly Western' (1998b, p. 5). According to Smith, authorised heritage forges a sense of 'shared' universal identity based on the past in which heritage critics, experts, and professionals feel confident in coming together to form international understandings of heritage, such as the UNESCO Conventions, to promote this universal view of preserving heritage. Thus, Smith describes authorised heritage as 'a consensus version of history … a recourse used to redefine values and identities'; a way of 'reworking the meanings of the past as the needs of the present change and develop'; as 'a consolidation of national and international technical processes of management and conservation'; and as 'acts of remembering and commemoration' (2006, pp. 3-5).

[14] In this study, authorised heritage discourse is referred to as authorised heritage.

At this point, if safeguarding intangible heritage knowledge and skills is important for shaping a nation's cultural identity, then why is it so difficult to make a case for preserving the existence of what local communities perceive to be heritage? Hence, the thesis is motivated by this interdisciplinary gap in cultural governance, which is implemented by the official bodies of cultural heritage, while its knowledge is owned by non-official actors. In this light, the thesis continues to consider how the local cultural context poses a challenge to the official implementations of safeguarding heritage, such as documentation and inventorying, and why the different community stakeholders (i.e., public associations, practitioners, among other people involved) should intervene in the discourse of authorised heritage. This gap is related to the reasons behind developing an intangible heritage selection process that is carefully governed to promote the UAE's national identity.

Research Scope, Purposes, and Questions

The main purpose of this thesis is to examine the shifting role of intangible heritage from a community-based practice into a state-sanctioned process of selection in the UAE as a means to enhance the national identity of the country. This purpose comprises of three main objectives: first, to identify existing policies and implementations of official intangible heritage management in the UAE. Second, to investigate the social understandings of these policies and the level of their engagement in safeguarding and selection processes of intangible heritage. Third, to explore the influence of international heritage discourse on the representation of Emirati intangible heritage at an international megaevent: specifically, the 2020 World Exposition held in Dubai as this example illustrates how international settings influence local understandings of heritage, in contrast to the official understanding of presenting 'Emirati' intangible heritage in an international megaevent.

In order for the objectives to meet the scope of this research, it is important to define the role of the international, national, and local stakeholders in documenting, preserving, transmitting, and commodifying local intangible heritage in the UAE. It is also necessary to identify the responsible bodies and actors in safeguarding heritage in relation to the effects of modernisation and nationalism on the perception and the management of heritage, which have constituted the development and implementation of UAE's cultural governance in the last five decades. This specific context related to the management and safeguarding of intangible heritage led to the development of the research questions for this thesis through three perspectives: international, national and local.

Figure 1.2 (below) demonstrates the scope of this research, which includes exploring the context of the UAE's cultural governance to understand official and non-official roles and perspectives towards the implementation of the 2003 Convention. Considering the three perspectives (international, national, and local), the scope is designed to reflect the impact of these international commitments on the traditional safeguarding approaches of heritage. The implementation of these Conventions often influences the management of intangible heritage and the cultural industries on the national level, which consists of frameworks, strategies, and policies. The scope also aims to identify the corelation between intangible heritage and the cultural industries between the top-down and bottom-up levels in terms of safeguarding social practices, crafts, and traditional performances.

The scope of this research includes investigating the institutionalisation of intangible heritage in the UAE in order to enhance the country's national identity and contribute to its creative economy. Figure 1.2 (below) also reflects how the international frameworks of UNESCO's conventions provide guidelines and/or recommendations, thus helping member-states to shape

their cultural policies and/or institutional frameworks that develop cultural heritage selection processes, including in the UAE. Therefore, it is important to address issues in the management and safeguarding of intangible heritage and the uses of its knowledge or practices that may construct a 'new heritage' identity in the UAE. In other words, how these processes coexist in relation to specific selections of intangible heritage elements and why their particularities have influenced the building of the UAE's nation brand.[15]



Figure 1.2: *Scope of research.* **Source**: Author, 2024.

Between these conflicted perspectives lie the bearers of heritage, who struggle to comprehend these new cultural policies (whether managing or safeguarding heritage) in relation to their individual understandings and perceptions of heritage preservation over generations. Bearers or practitioners of heritage, perhaps, are a key medium for specific knowledge transfer

[15] The UAE's official Nation Brand is an instrument to introduce the country's image to the world, including its cultural heritage. Retrieved from https://www.nationbrand.ae/en/about

that has the ability to contribute significantly to the development of their cultural identity. However, this medium can also be misrepresented or misused due to a lack of understanding of how local perceptions of heritage add value to the development of cultural policies. Clearly, this gap relates to the limited documentation and research on heritage – including theory, literature, management, safeguarding practices, and the institutionalisation of heritage in the UAE. Investigating the role and the influence of different heritage discourses (international, national, and local) in relation to the management and safeguarding of intangible heritage in young and fast-growing countries such as the UAE fosters the following questions:

RQ1 what are the existing cultural and heritage policies focusing on intangible heritage and the role of cultural industries in the process of safeguarding heritage?

RQ2 to what extent do local communities manage to preserve and present their intangible heritage?

RQ3 how can an international cultural commitment develop or enhance the national heritage identity of nation-states?

The first question addresses the role of the top-down levels in developing the cultural policies and intangible heritage institutional frameworks of the UAE. Their role includes official directions, policies, and initiatives on mapping local cultural expressions and traditional practices. This top-down approach is divided into two levels: the federal and local governments. This question provides an insight into how official heritage discourse is developed and constructed in the UAE, and to what extent cultural governance matters in shaping the national identity, despite the understandings of heritage within local communities.

The second question explores the nature of the involvement of local actors (heritage practitioners in particular) in developing the cultural policies, and the level of their contribution to the heritage-making and safeguarding processes. The investigation includes the local artisans who

own the knowledge and skills related to their traditional social practices or crafts, and who are facing the challenges of internationalisation and modernisation. The intention is to understand to what extent the local communities can practice and present what they perceive as heritage in the context of international and national processes of safeguarding heritage. In addition, what are the circumstances that dictate presenting specific intangible heritage elements over others? This process of selection includes examining the influence of modernisation and how it affected the continuity of traditional heritage practices in the UAE.

The third question explores the influence of the international cultural commitments on the representation of UAE's intangible heritage and how they have redefined uses of local heritage on an international platform. The aim is to understand who decides what to present or what traditional cultural practices to revive as national heritage in universal settings. As the literature suggests, the concept of intangible heritage, associated with the cultural industries, became instrumental in changing the political relations and economic structures of developed countries in the twenty-first century. Thus, this question explores to what degree the UAE government has managed to present local traditional aspects of intangible heritage in opposition to naturalising the idea of shared heritage for humanity. Specifically, how the impact of the political and economic pressures to implement these understandings – such as 'new heritage' and 'universal heritage' – has impacted local intangible heritage through a process of selection in the UAE.

It is important to note that at the time of the union of the UAE in 1971, this urgent need to safeguard local intangible heritage was not a priority, due to the fact that tangible heritage, such as historical buildings, was dominant and seen as crucial for the viability of national identity. Customs and traditions among communities often revolve around cultural commonalities that connect its individuals and groups within their local context as part of a nation. Many of these traditions share

underlying meanings and values that provide a sense of cohesive identity which become an integral part of their everyday nationhood, and which therefore did not require sanctioned safeguarding measures. However, the leap of modernity in the UAE, followed by the speedy implementation of industrial and urban developments, created a need to preserve the history of the country and its past ways of life, which is rather distinctive and different from how young Emiratis live today. In the 2000s, the UAE government became aware of the changes brought about by modernisation, such as the disappearance of traditional crafts due to increasing demands related to modernised ways of living, and how the consistency and sustainability of the country's intangible heritage was being affected. As a result, it accelerated the need to preserve and present traditional practices of the past, since the historical traces of its sociocultural life are transforming both gradually and quickly (Erskine-Loftus, Al-Mulla & Hightower, 2016). The documentation of intangible heritage nationally has been conducted rather poorly, except for in the Emirates that hold political weight (such as Abu Dhabi) or in informal articles or by the media that are interested in covering a particular heritage event or trend in the country (Picton, 2010; Heard-Bey, 2017). However, with the establishment of the Etihad Museum[16] in 2017, a first-of-its-kind historical/political institution that narrates the story of the founders and the chronology of events that culminated in the unification of the UAE in 1971, the museum's collective national content reflects the significance of documenting and persevering local heritage for future generations.

The lack of understanding of how to safeguard 'remaining' aspects of intangible heritage due to the sociopolitical or urban developments of the UAE leads to difficulties in conducting consistent knowledge-based research in the heritage field. Hence, the Ministry of Culture and

[16] In the local dialect, Etihad إتحاد means union. Retrieved from https://etihadmuseum.dubaiculture.gov.ae/en/About/Pages/default.aspx

Youth (MCY)[17] launched the Cultural Councils in 2019. These councils are sector-focused platforms aimed at driving discussions and participation amongst the related state and non-official actors to further develop the cultural policies of the UAE. The platform includes three councils: the Heritage Council, the Arts Council, and the Cultural and Creative Industries Council.[18] In the institutionalised approach of these three councils, the emphasis on safeguarding heritage specifically has been highlighted: 'Promoting our national heritage and preserving and documenting our history and traditions for future generations is of utmost importance to preserving our national identity'. [19] It is critical to understand that such determination failed to account for the lack of empirical studies on the impacts of economic, sociopolitical, industrial, or urban change on the safeguarding of Emirati intangible heritage. Cultural governance and knowledge-based approaches are addressed through the strategic framework of UAE 2021 Vision,[20] which includes the pillars of being 'United in Responsibility' and 'United in Knowledge'. Both point to national identity to preserve the traditional and social fabric of the country. The first pillar, 'United in Responsibility', points to a significant promise: 'The UAE's distinct culture will remain founded on progressive and moderate Islamic values and endowed with a rich Arabic language, to proudly celebrate Emirati traditions and heritage while reinforcing national identity'.[21]

At this point, investigating related capacity-building programmes through the documentation, inventorying, and preservation of local intangible heritage is essential for this

[17] In this study, the Ministry of Culture and Youth is referred to as the Ministry of Culture.
[18] The Cultural Councils' first joint platform aimed to highlight discussions amongst the UAE's federal and local cultural partners to further develop the UAE's cultural agenda. Retrieved from https://en.unesco.org/creativity/policy-monitoring-platform/cultural-councils-initiative
[19] 'Preserving our national heritage of utmost importance: Maryam Bint Mohamed'. Retrieved from http://wam.ae/en/details/1395302775214
[20] By the golden jubilee of the 1971 union of the UAE in 2021, the Vision aims to make the UAE among the top countries globally in terms of the visibility of its national identity through six national priorities, including cultural heritage, which represent the key focus sectors of government. Retrieved from https://www.vision2021.ae/en/uae-vision
[21] Quote retrieved from https://www.vision2021.ae/en/uae-vision/list/united-in-responsibility

research in order to identify how and where the local community plays a role in these programmes. This process includes building socioeconomic cohesion to enhance the country's nation brand through both intangible heritage and the cultural industries. As part of the process of building national identity, the concept of 'nation brand' emerged in the early twenty-first century as a means to enhance the reputation of countries on an international scale (Kotler & Gertner, 2002). The universal perception of a nation's culture and heritage is included within the nation brand concept, in addition to cultural industries' framework that acknowledges intangible forms of heritage such as the traditional crafts and social practices (Dinnie, 2014). This recognition shifts the use of intangible heritage into an economic tool used by the cultural industries to enhance the nation brand of countries. This realisation created the basis of the creative economy in nation-states through the commodification and heritagisation of traditional cultural practices. Driven by this international economic demand, contemporary safeguarding approaches that accommodate heritagisation as an economic tool have shifted traditional practices of heritage into a commodity; thus commercialising a form of 'new heritage' to enhance the universal cultural image of nation-states.

Theoretical Approach

This research is grounded in a theoretical framework consisting of the concepts of intangible heritage, authorised heritage, modernisation, and heritagisation of heritage, which are associated with international cultural commitments. This is relevant to the scope of this research because it aims to enhance understanding of how the local communities preserve and present heritage as they perceive it, in the contexts of national and international management of heritage. Such observations allow for the improvement of analysing the level of awareness and the

contribution of heritage practitioners: in this case, the Emiratis. It is worth noting that the theoretical framework of this thesis is influenced by Smith's (2006) authorised heritage rationale in her book *Uses of Heritage*. The discourse of authorised heritage challenges Western understandings of heritage conservation and management. Smith argues that heritage is constructed according to the authorised heritage discourse paradigm (Smith, 2006). Smith argues that 'there is no such thing as heritage' (p. 11), as she considers the processes of thoughts and actions concerning how and what is commonly or individually identified as heritage. Heritage researchers have presented in-depth critical analyses of the development of cultural policies and their theoretical functions in modern societies (Johanson & Rentschler, 2002; Strom, 2003; Lee, 2004). These processes of sanctioning heritage aim to naturalise universal understandings of preserving and transferring heritage practices to future generations, and to gradually validate the means and methods of destruction, construction, and reconstruction of heritage (Lowenthal, (1998a), Viejo-Rose, 2011; Holtorf, 2020).

To integrate Smith's understandings of authorised heritage into this research's theoretical framework, Figure 1.3 (below) illustrates the influence flow of international dynamics (such as modernisation) and associated cultural commitments across three levels: international, national, and local. Figure 1.3 reflects how international policies regulate regional cultural climates, with a focus on the national and local efforts in the safeguarding of intangible heritage. International policies wield the ability to steer direct or indirect influences according to the given policy. In this context, UNESCO's cultural proclamations directly impact national institutional frameworks, while the indirect impact revolves around incorporating soft power dynamics within cultural industries, such as tourism and commerce. Moreover, the framework reflects on the relationship between modernisation, and the forming a national identity as a consequence of nationalism, which

is a give-and-take effect of the three dynamics of culture, economy, and political where value is not allocated; but rather embedded within a given sociopolitical context.

Figure 1.3 (below) also demonstrates the research's theoretical approach to address the integration of authorised heritage in relation to nationalism through the inclusion of selected intangible heritage in the 2003 Convention, turning them into elements of world recognition as a result, thus requiring safeguarding for building the national identity of nation-states. Indeed, nationalism in the context of modernisation has played a pivotal role in the selection process of heritage, which projects issues of authenticity, commodification, and heritagisation within the new practices of safeguarding local intangible heritage, as demonstrated in Figure 1.3 (below). The framework above also demonstrates how the international commitments, exemplified by the 2003 Convention, have played a significant role in introducing new safeguarding practices, including the heritagisation of traditional practices.

One of the contributions of UNESCO is the universal representation of intangible heritage, which has provided a broader definition of intangible heritage, which is manifested in the cultural industries and tourism. A key point about understanding intangible heritage as a process of selection is that it: 1) naturalises universal values of preserving and transferring traditional cultural practices to future generations; 2) homogenises the bearers of heritage in local communities as practising 'representative heritage' within their nation-state; and 3) gradually validates specific safeguarding practices for the purpose of building the national heritage of a nation-state.

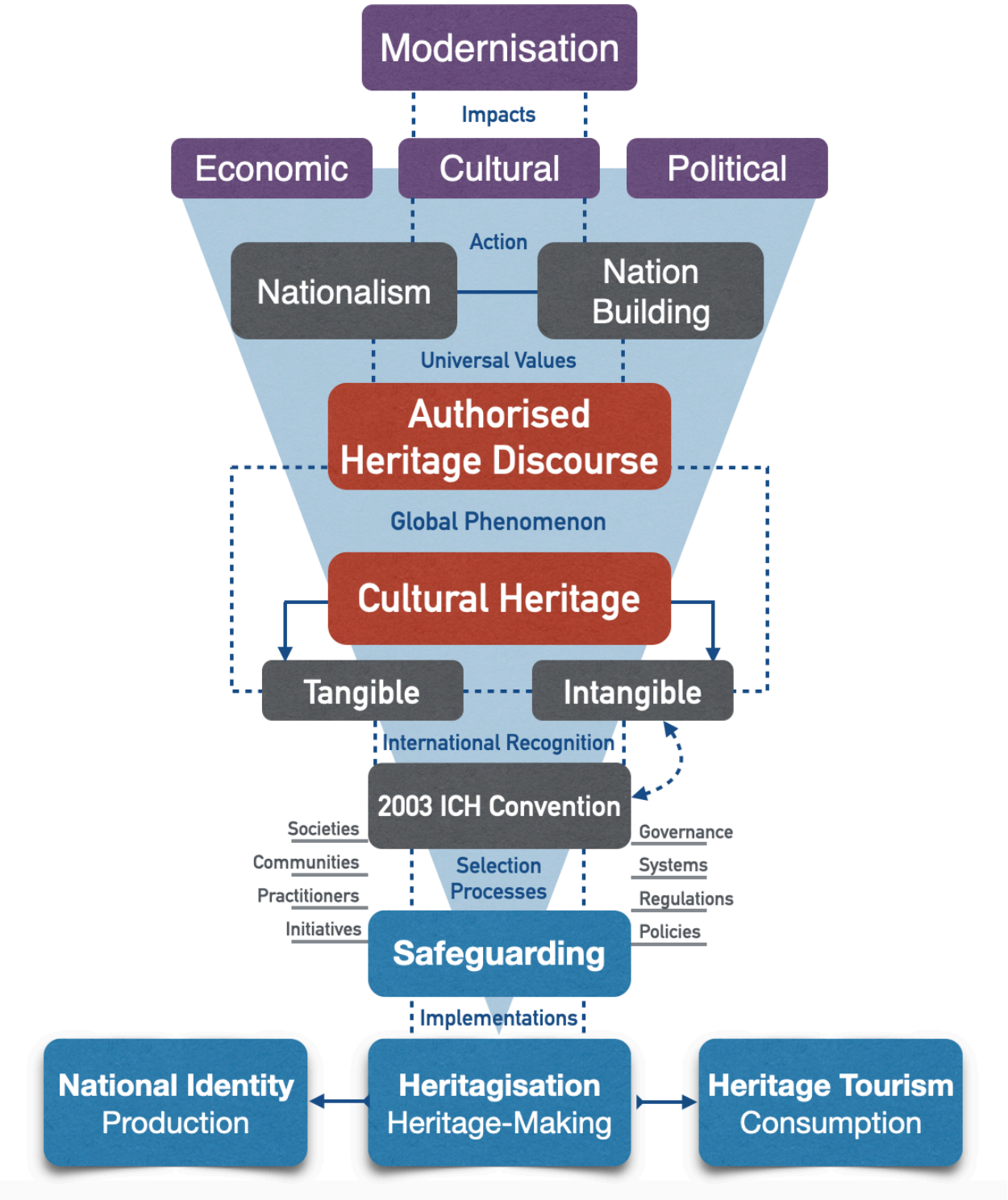


Figure 1.3: *The influence of modernisation and nationalism on the understanding of intangible heritage as a process of selection.* **Source**: Author, 2024.

Through this framework, detailed in Chapter 2, this research will first demonstrate the extension of the concept of intangible heritage through the institutionalisation of its cultural practice within international commitments, and what this means in a specific cultural context. In the international discourse of heritage management, intangible heritage is clearly a 'late' (i.e., recent) recognition of cultural heritage, which officially emerged through the 2003 Convention, as compared to the historically dominant understanding of tangible heritage. For the latter, the International Council for Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) 1964 Venice Charter[22] is seen as the benchmark that helped to expand the universal understanding of the concept of tangible heritage, followed by the 1972 World Heritage Convention. Due to the increased interest in and need to safeguard the 'intangibility' of heritage – which is often identified as fragile (Skounti, 2008; Pereira Roders & Van Oers, 2011) or at constant risk of loss, and which therefore must be safeguarded for humanity (Alivizatou, 2011) – the discourse argues that it 'must' be safeguarded by all possible means. Different nations-states (including their governments and societies), in association with international organisations (such as UNESCO), have initiated and promoted different safeguarding measures for the purposes of reducing the risks of economic and political exploitation of what has been identified as their national heritage.

Significance and Contribution of the Thesis

The need for further research on the influences of authorised heritage on the local social and economic contexts of intangible heritage and its international policy implementation has been

[22] An international framework that provides a set of guidelines for the conservation and restorations of historical monuments, buildings, and sites around the world. Overseen by ICOMOS, it is considered a global non-government organisation that embraces a network of experts in the architectural heritage. In this study, it is referred to as World Heritage. Retrieved from https://www.icomos.org/en/179-articles-en-francais/ressources/charters-and-standards/157-the-venice-charter

suggested based on the challenges and issues experienced in non-Western societies (Blake, 2008; Akagawa, 2015; Skounti, 2017). This thesis therefore has identified a contextual gap in which the concept of authorised heritage is dominantly articulated in the context of Western societies, thus attempts must be made to explore methods of safeguarding intangible heritage that play a crucial role in shaping cultural identity in non-Western communities. By addressing this contextual gap, this research will contribute, first, to the development of knowledge on empirical intangible heritage policy implementation in the Arabian Gulf Region; second, to the theoretical grounds underpinning intangible heritage as a concept and practice beyond the definition of the 2003 Convention; and, finally, to the reflection on the uses of commodification and heritagisation in the context of cultural industries to safeguard intangible heritage, and their impacts on the social and cultural contexts of local communities.

The above-mentioned issues are indeed in need of further research as there are existing questions concerning the degree of interaction and collaboration between the top-down and bottom-up actors in the management and safeguarding of intangible heritage, specifically in non-Western contexts. These issues and questions are remarkably similar to the UAE's cultural governance context, in which these similarities were expressed clearly by Omar Ghobash, the former Assistant Minister for Culture and Public Diplomacy in the UAE, during one of the main keynote speeches at Abu Dhabi's Culture Summit in 2022. This international summit is held annually as a form of cultural knowledge exchange, and mainly reflects the concerns of participating nation-states regarding cultural and heritage subjects and related contemporary challenges, such as the role of culture in generating social resilience against the impacts of modernisation. In this vein, Ghobash's speech discussed his personal observations concerning the extent to which the UAE's cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, has turned into

something to merely remember with; and has been recreated to fit specific universal contexts, and as such is constructed or framed for a particular consumption. Ghobash argues:

I do have opinions, and I do have observations to make from within an Emirati context. So, the way in which I was introduced to the word 'culture' in Emirati society was at school. I remember foreign students, usually blonde-haired and blue-eyed, would scream at us that we did not have any culture. We would begin to wonder what on earth this meant, what is this culture they talk about? Then after a while it dawned on us that what they actually meant was, you know, old paintings, historic buildings, quaint dancers, and colourful uniforms. Fast-forward 40 years, I see general directions considering and determining what counts as culture in the Emirates. Firstly, we have those members of the society who limit culture to ancient forts that predate the discovery of oil. But we Emiratis talk about songs and poetry, we talk about the culture surrounding pearl-diving, desert crossing, ancient forts, oases surrounded by palm trees, and there is much to be admired and enjoyed. But at times, and I hope this is not seen as too controversial, I wonder whether we have not overdone this aspect of our culture, and perhaps in some cases even misused it in an attempt only to demonstrate something to someone. And I am not sure what we are trying to demonstrate, and to whom. Walking around the corner in a massive mall, bumping into a traditional dance, a troupe proudly swaying to the rhythm of their own song. It saddens me to think that this beautiful historic dance is often a momentary 'side show' on the way to something else. In my case, it is in the mall on the way to consumption. It also does make me wonder what we hold onto, and whether this version of our culture only exists to fit into a bigger global economic phenomenon. That this version of our culture becomes just a bit of local flavouring to recreate an experience that is actually imaginary for both[23] (Ghobash, 2022).

[23] Keynote speech by Omar Saif Ghobash during Culture Summit, Abu Dhabi, 2022. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/1Vj4VV3IbFM

Ghobash further elaborates that due to his 'bold' observation about how the UAE has taken a consumerist direction for its cultural heritage, it has become more associated with international cultural policies, and thus commercialised (Ghobash, 2022). This observation clearly demonstrates the consequences of turning heritage into a product as a steppingstone on the path to instigating an authorised heritage in the UAE. The realisation that the UAE may be 'overdoing' local cultural aspects suggests that authorised heritage is itself a process of heritage-making, in the sense of redefining local cultural meanings and roles of the past for the purposes of heritagisation and/or highlighting heritage of world significance. By using terms like 'global economic phenomenon' and 'recreating an imaginary experience', Ghobash also suggests that local cultural practices have become heritagised, and therefore an integral part of national and international heritage tourism, in which the latter is an integral process of heritage-making (Smith, 2012). Thus, what needs to be understood and explored is to what extent the local communities need to be or are actively involved in these processes.

There is another interdisciplinary gap concerning the corelation between the impact of authorised heritage in terms of management and the cultural industries as a contemporary means of safeguarding intangible heritage in the specific cultural context of a nation-state. This gap includes examining how these practices are implemented by the official and non-official actors and bodies of cultural heritage, while the knowledge is preserved and transmitted by heritage practitioners. As Wu and Hou suggest, "*researchers should adopt the most appropriate discourse analytical methods based on their specific research agenda and, more importantly, the data set they have gathered*" (2015, p. 47). According to Wu and Hou (2015), any discussion related to heritage as an embedded aspect in people – and, as such, distinctive in language and related cultural practices – will disagree with institutionalised approaches to heritage. Further, it will disagree with

authorised heritage, which mainly validates cultural practices through value-based consensus at the expense of what the local communities perceive to be intangible heritage. As such, there is a demand from a number of experts for further study related to this form of heritage selection, in addition to the corelation between intangible heritage and the cultural industries in terms of heritage-making process, or heritage production (Hottin & Grenet, 2012; Akagawa, 2015; Skounti, 2017; Sousa, 2018).

The above-mentioned gaps in the research on heritage studies and the different generational understandings of heritage reflect the scant attention paid to bridging the discrepancy between how community-based heritage is understood and practiced, and how governments are imposing a particular understanding of heritage, such as an authorised or commercialised approach to heritage. For example, Smith (2006) seeks to critically investigate uses of heritage that are consistently affiliated with state-sanctioned cultural governance. In other words, governments' understanding of cultural governance is to construct narratives of local cultural heritage in relation to a set of shifting meanings and values that are universally applicable. This is presented in several cases of the consequences of authorised heritage where Smith discusses the ICOMOS Charter, English Country Houses, and Australian World Heritage Landscapes to support her arguments (Smith, 2006). The implications of this particular theorisation of intangible heritage as a universal cultural phenomenon, concerned with discussing the tensions between received and contested present meanings and values of intangible heritage identity, is significant for both analysis and current heritage practice.

In order to address these challenges, this research identifies a number of approaches to how intangible heritage is managed and safeguarded in the UAE at the local and national levels, such as the institutionalisation, commodification, and heritagisation of traditional heritage practices.

These intersected approaches can be useful in other countries that share a similar cultural context and are engaged in similar processes of safeguarding and selection of intangible heritage, by applying more practical research methods to the comparisons of authorised heritage in the Arabian Gulf Region. This logic aims to test the meanings and value of present practices of safeguarding intangible heritage as an analytical tool in relation to the discourse of authorised heritage in a specific cultural context. In order to investigate the case studies in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 of this thesis, a thematic code analysis is employed to cross-examine the diversification of intangible heritage implementation and interpretation between the top-down and bottom-up levels, based on each actor's understanding of the universal heritage discourse which is, in one way or another, imposed on both levels.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. The thesis begins with a research introduction that discusses the problem statement, scope of research, objectives, research questions, research methodology, and theoretical approach.

Following the Introduction, Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature on intangible heritage and sets the context in which the research will be conducted. It provides definitions for and background relevant to issues related to intangible heritage, and outlines a detailed review of the influences of modernisation and nationalism on the universality of national identity. Linking areas of universality between intangible heritage, cultural industries, heritagisation, and notions of authorised heritage allows this research to develop a refined and focused understanding of a variety of related concepts in different contexts. It concludes with a critical review of how these debates

guide and detail the research questions that this thesis endeavours to answer through its interdisciplinary research.

Chapter 3 provides the context concerning the historical, cultural, and sociopolitical development of UAE society. This chapter is important because it discusses national identity issues related to the impact of modernisation and the understanding of nationalism in a modernised nation-state. Further, it highlights the shifts that occurred in the traditional tribal structures that form the complex diversity of Emirati society and its various existing cultural heritage resources. It aims to link two main research areas: the implementation of international cultural commitments within a specific cultural context, and the development of local intangible heritage in this implementation process. In addition, this chapter considers how the UAE's creative economy is no longer dependent on the country's traditional economic revenues such as commence and trade, but rather on its 'local flavoured' cultural offerings in relation to the present meanings and values of traditional intangible heritage.

Chapter 4 presents a methodological roadmap to understand how this research was planned and conducted; aiming to provide transferable ontological and methodological considerations for similar research disciplines. Giving the complexity of cultural heritage as a concept and practice, this thesis adopts a qualitative research methodology that focuses on understanding and interpreting subjective experiences, meanings, and perspectives in relation to contextual understandings and based on real-life situations. This qualitative approach employs several investigation tools to deliver an inductive approach for data analysis, meaning that they derive themes, patterns, and categories from the collected information rather than imposing preconceived frameworks and/or findings.

Through examining the material collected from observations, fieldtrips, and interview sessions, the core analysis of this research begins with Chapter 5. It addresses the first research question and discusses the impacts of institutional contexts on Emirati intangible heritage in relation to developing national cultural industries policies. The analytical context mainly focuses on the state-sanctioned approaches in safeguarding heritage, which consists of two levels: the federal and local governments. This chapter also considers the implementations of universal heritage and its impact on the process of selection of local heritage through selected institutional case studies, and their interpretations of the heritagisation and commodification of traditional cultural practices.

Chapter 6 examines the role of Emirati society in safeguarding its intangible heritage, and the way it is repositioned for political or economic purposes. It reflects on the understandings of modern Emirati society concerning the meanings and values of traditional cultural practices in relation to the visibility of their national identity. This chapter addresses the second research question by investigating Emirati society's various perspectives on deploying contemporary safeguarding measures, including heritagisation, to preserve what they practice and perceive as heritage – specifically the custodians of heritage. Further, the investigation focuses on the passive role of the local communities in communicating and presenting the UAE's heritage identity, and how they have implemented emerging policies within the cultural industries in the safeguarding of their traditional cultural practices.

Chapter 7 investigates international representations of Emirati national identity, specifically the selected traditional social practices and crafts that were presented as the intangible heritage of the UAE at the World Expo held in Dubai in 2020-21. This chapter aims to answer the third research question by focusing on specific examples concerning who gets to decide which

intangible heritage elements are worth reviving or exhibiting as a symbol of local cultural identity on an international platform, and which are overlooked. This chapter syndicates different understandings and approaches in communicating and presenting local intangible heritage between the international, top-down, and bottom-up levels. These different perspectives aim to link the emergence of new heritage in the UAE to notions of the universality of intangible heritage.

The final chapter offers concluding remarks on the findings and overall analysis in order to review the purpose, outcomes, and contribution of this research. This section aims to demonstrate the correlation between the validity of the research questions and the rationale behind the presented theoretical framework. It also explains how this research contributes new knowledge in relation to the existing literature in the field of intangible heritage as a concept and a practice, leading to a sanctioned role of this form of heritage in nation-states. Based on the implications of the findings, this chapter provides recommendations for improvements and future research associated with the aim of the thesis, its scope, research questions and, finally, its outcomes.

Chapter (2)

Concepts and Theoretical Framework



Saff Al-Khous Traditional Braiding of Palm Fronds

Introduction

The literature on heritage examines the processes of selection that determine which traditional cultural expressions and social practices (such as crafts, rituals, narratives and performances) are considered to be intangible heritage in a particular cultural context. In order to understand these processes of heritage selection at various levels (local, national, and international), this chapter reviews four main thematic areas of heritage literature that are considered key issues in developing the thesis's theoretical framework: intangible heritage, authorised heritage, modernisation, nationalism, and the heritagisation of intangible heritage. Further, this chapter discusses how specific international cultural commitments, mainly the 2003 Convention, often conflict with national or local understandings of what constitutes traditional practices of intangible heritage, and how they should be safeguarded. As the chapter rationalises engaging with specific thematic areas of heritage, it aims to link management and/or safeguarding processes with why there is a sense of state-sanctioned commitment to, or preference for, particular elements of intangible heritage – rather than directly involving the local communities' traditional cultural practices or expressions. Mapping out the current state of heritage-making process, such as heritagisation, based on these present issues lays out the theoretical ground for intangible heritage as a process of selection for building national identity. Further, the use of these concepts, while addressing the influence of authorised heritage, aims to challenge the conceptual and practical implementation of international cultural commitments within several different cultural and national contexts.

Intangible Cultural Heritage

The first section of this literature review addresses the concept of intangible heritage by focusing on the term 'intangible' and its associated forms compared to tangible heritage. It is important to clarify the difference between the two forms of heritage – 'tangible' and 'intangible' – in order to understand the dichotomy of 'cultural heritage' and the growing interest in intangible heritage in cultural policymaking. This section aims to critically demonstrate the difficulties facing the implementation of 'universal' understandings of intangible heritage at the local and national levels. Further, it explains how UNESCO's text-based development of a definition of intangible heritage, and its accompanying safeguarding guidelines, have played a pivotal role in turning this specific concept into a universal notion; exemplified in the final ratification of the 2003 Convention. This international discourse of heritage affects local practices for safeguarding intangible heritage, and as such is problematised by a number of critics because the implementation of safeguarding practices may vary from one nation-state to another according to their individual conditions, limitations, and the challenges within their borders (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004; Waterton, Smith & Campbell, 2006; Ashworth, Graham & Tunbridge, 2007; Smith & Akagawa, 2009; Logan, Nic Craith & Kockel, 2016; Alivizatou, 2021). This again raises questions concerning who decides and evaluates the universal narratives of these policies, including UNESCO's lists of intangible heritage.

In the twenty-first century, 'cultural heritage' has become a global inventory of a collection of places, objects, practices, and expressions, and the emotions attached to these collections (Blake, 2000; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004; Graham & Howard, 2008; Vecco, 2010; Throsby, 2010; Kuutma, 2015; Deumert, & Storch, 2018). Yet the international discourse of cultural heritage, in its tangible and intangible forms, is problematic because the dominant idea appears to

be that heritage is in constant danger, and thus safeguarded for humanity (Alivizatou, 2011). Safeguarding here means a broad range of conservation measures aimed at ensuring the protection of endangered cultural heritage and/or the preservation of its existing elements including places, objects, practices, and expressions (Harrison et al., 2008). According to Alivizatou (2011), this claim that cultural heritage is facing constant danger is due to factors related to nationalism, modernity, and/or conflicts, among others: as such, this universal call for safeguarding aims to preserve heritage as means of identity or as evidence of existence not only for individuals, communities or nation-states, but also for humankind. In this context, the word 'humanity' suggests that people around the world have common and/or shared cultural expressions despite their geographical or ethnic differences (Labadi, 2010; Harrison, 2013b). This understanding of the term 'humanity' encourages the idea of uniting 'all' cultural heritage under one universal system, for instance, under the provisions of the 2003 Convention (Alivizatou, 2012; Reeves & Plets, 2015). Therefore, it favours the idea of understanding similarities in the histories, practices, meanings, and values of certain nations as 'shared heritage' (Smith & Waterton, 2009).

Noticeably, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed debates between cultural heritage academics and critics over the institutionalisation of cultural heritage in terms of management and safeguarding, among other debates concerned with issues of cultural diversity, identity, ownership, participation, and universality. Within the scope of these debates was how cultural heritage has broadened from the 'tangible' to also include 'intangible' forms of cultural heritage (Ahmad, 2006). Howard (2003), Alivizatou (2008), Silverman and Ruggles (2009), Harrison (2010a), and Arantes (2012), among others, discuss the development of this debate over the last forty years. Indeed, the earliest insights concerning the inclusion of intangible heritage as

a part of what is internationally recognised as 'cultural heritage' emerged in the 1960s in countries such as Australia, Japan and Korea (Bortolotto, 2007; Howell & Ripley, 2009).

At the time, representations of tangible heritage were dominant, which can be clearly seen in the implementation of the UNESCO's 1972 Convention on World Heritage.[24] According to UNESCO, what is important when considering an addition to their list of tangible heritage is its universal application for humanity regardless of where it is located, and therefore that it 'belongs to all people around the world' (UNESCO, 1972). Such a universal application was driven by the focus on the 'outstanding universal value' of the tangible forms of cultural heritage, including the architectural and historical significance of ancient monuments, buildings, and sites. These values are considered irreplaceable once destroyed, and thus of greater importance than intangible forms of heritage. This criterion of values associated with tangible heritage (aesthetical, architectural or historical) often neglected the local and traditional cultural practices of heritage, which was the concern of many World Heritage member-states, because this perspective of heritage was often referred to as 'Westernised' (Lixinski, 2011; Harrison, 2012; Trofanenko, 2015; Cameron, 2015).

In this light, the core argument against the dominant idea of tangible heritage is that the know-how and skills behind their tangible production is an aspect embedded in humans (Logan, Nic Craith & Kockel, 2016). In other words, people are an integral part of the construction of these buildings, and thus their knowledge and skills are crucial to the overall process of tangible heritage. This suggests that any tangible production, whether a monument, building, site, or place, is secondary to the intangible local know-how of heritage, and therefore does not represent the whole world (Loulanski, 2006; Munjeri, 2008). In order to address the importance of these intangible

[24] Considered one of the most important global sources of representative tangible heritage, which promotes the conservation and protection of cultural and natural heritage places around the world. Retrieved from https://whc.unesco.org/en/about/

factors and led by UNESCO, this imbalance between the dominant perspectives of built heritage and the neglect of associated traditional cultural practices, resulted in several initiatives being established by World Heritage member-states. One of the first recognitions of intangible heritage was UNESCO's 1989 Recommendation for the Protection of Traditional Culture and Folklore.[25] According to critics (Aikawa-Faure, 2008; Waterton & Watson, 2015), the text-based decision to reflect intangible heritage, specifically the term 'folklore', did not communicate nor provide a proper conceptualisation of the intangibility of heritage at the time.

One concern was the particular emphasis on the 'passive' social engagement of intangible heritage practitioners in the process of implementing the international commitments. Passive engagement implies the exclusion of the bearers of heritage once their knowledge and skills are claimed or documented for state-sanctioned safeguarding purposes in the process of implementing these international commitments. For many of the 1989 Recommendation's non-Western member-states, such as Japan, South Korea, India and China, this definition of intangible heritage failed to understand traditional local practices; there was no consideration of sociocultural functions, meanings or values. This failure was mainly because the 1989 Recommendation reflected Western ideologies of heritage as a product associated with historical aesthetics and significance, rather than the result of sociocultural activity that tends to change over time (Alivizatou, 2008).

To resolve this failure, the 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity[26] provided grounded statements on the importance of recognising the intangible forms of tangible heritage (such as craftsmanship knowledge and skills) rather than the physical authenticity of materials or products

[25] A cultural policy that sets out the basic definitions and identifications of folklore as intangible heritage. Retrieved from https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-safeguarding-traditional-culture-and-folklore

[26] This documented was drafted by 45 intangible heritage experts, in collaboration with international organisations such as UNESCO and ICOMOS, at the Nara Conference on Authenticity. This assembly was funded by the Japanese government and took place in Nara Prefecture, Japan. Retrieved from https://www.icomos.org/en/charters-and-texts/179-articles-en-francais/ressources/charters-and-standards/386-the-nara-document-on-authenticity-1994

(Aikawa, 2004; Bredekamp, 2004; Labadi, 2010). According to Skounti (2008), Harrison (2013), and Beardslee (2016), these recognitions were followed by the development of UNESCO's 1997 Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity[27] (which was strongly influenced by the *Jemaa el Fna* جامع الفنا Square in Morocco), linking the significance of cultural places only to the narratives of its local people. *Jemaa el Fna* is a cultural space located in the centre of Marrakech where local artists have gathered, performed, and expressed their culture since the Middle Ages. The Spanish writer Juan Goytisolo, who has lived in Marrakech since the 1980s, documented these ways of preserving the area's historical and oral heritage in an attempt to prevent the urban development planned by the local municipal authority in the mid-1990s (Schmitt, 2005). To save *Jemaa el Fna* from being demolished, the inclusion of *Jemaa el Fna* in the 1997 Proclamation is the first example of the protection of threatened traditional folklore in a cultural space. The inclusion of *Jemaa el Fna* as a cultural space added world recognition to the traditional social practices of local communities, and that their active engagement in maintaining these practices is a vital factor in safeguarding their intangible heritage (Vecco, 2010). Clearly, this recognition illustrates that heritage is much more than merely a 'static' tangible heritage, and thus the scope has expanded from the dominant focus on historical buildings and sites to include cultural spaces and social factors. This realisation of the intangibility of tangible heritage in the context of the Western world led to the recognition of active social engagements in deciding what should be safeguarded by the local communities. The involvement of local communities in the safeguarding processes resulted in stressing the importance of their knowledge and skills through practices of intangible heritage in preserving world-recognised built heritage. As such,

[27] 'In 1997, the Moroccan National Commission for UNESCO organised an 'International Consultation' to draw attention to the importance of preserving living intangible heritage that are associated with popular cultural spaces, as such resulted in the creation of this distinctive proclamation. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/proclamation-of-masterpieces-00103

safeguarding requires the involvement not only of the governments of nations-states, but also the involvement of their local communities: the individuals and/or groups who practice different forms of heritage.

This timeframe guided an official recognition of the concept of 'intangible cultural heritage' in the final ratification of the 2003 Convention. This world recognition drew attention to and raised awareness of the importance of the active engagement of local communities for the safeguarding of intangible heritage at the national level (Smith & Waterton, 2009). This is particularly the case for countries that perceive intangible heritage as their national heritage, and as a cultural identity that ought to be safeguarded by 'all possible means' or through 'the necessary measures' as specified by UNESCO. According to the 2003 Convention, intangible heritage is defined as:

> 'the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage; manifested in five main categories; oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of intangible cultural heritage; performing arts; social practices, rituals, and festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; traditional craftsmanship' (Article 2, UNESCO, 2003c).

However, others argue that intangible heritage is a complex set of collective and social practices that have the flexibility to be re-created or reformed by individuals or groups within local communities, who often share common beliefs and values (Logan, 2007; Dicks, 2015). In the context of flexibility, Skounti, (2008) argues that intangible heritage can be fragile and resilient,

because its cultural existence falls directly within the human dimension. As such, practices of intangible heritage are limited to a specific time and space associated with its bearers (or practitioners) who express distinct and 'non-universal' cultural identities: thus, it is often difficult to separate a community from its practices (Alivizatou, 2011). Similarly, Cominelli and Greffe state that 'safeguarding can never be dissociated from transmission' (2012, p. 249); in other words, the process of intangible heritage transmission, including the transfer of knowledge and skills between generations, cannot be achieved without the active role of local communities by the means they see fit. As such, local communities are key players in identifying and defining their intangible heritage in response to their linguistic and social particularities, because language and the cultural backgrounds of social groups are considered instrumental in the communication, transmission and development of the identity of people (Hall, 1999; Graham & Howard, 2008). These arguments concerning the living nature of intangible heritage suggest that intangible heritage can be preserved in the minds of individuals and transmitted through their skills; but challenges whether it truly represents the 'humanity' of the entire world. Over time, these traditional intangible practices have clearly changed within the discourse of authorised heritage; therefore, the older ways of preserving them are no longer enough to maintain their continuity.

Authorised Heritage Discourse

Drawing on the literature concerning intangible heritage, this section illustrates the influence of Laurajane Smith's authorised heritage discourse in the identification and management of intangible heritage. While her bold argument opened up a critical gaze into the understandings of heritage-making processes, it also facilitated a broad examination of the consequences of defining or fixing cultural practices of heritage (Smith, 2006). Critically, authorised heritage is

considered a bold argument because its correlated examinations aimed to 1) challenge the dominant discourse of tangible forms of heritage as a 'self-evident form and essence of heritage' (2006, p. 3) in non-Western contexts, and 2) denaturalise the static and/or fixed uses of the past, particularly in the physical fabric of heritage. Some critics have explored this notion of authorised heritage in different sociocultural contexts, specifically the Eastern and Middle Eastern nation-states that tend to view intangible heritage as an active cultural process (Blake, 2008; Akagawa, 2015; Skounti, 2017). This discussion aims to demonstrate the role of local intangible heritage as individualistic and integral pieces of national identity against the impacts of modernisation and its associated nationalism value.

In *Uses of Heritage* (2006), Smith argues that authorised heritage is designed to view heritage as a matter of value-based consensus surrounding its identification and management, which is mainly performed by heritage experts and not necessarily heritage practitioners (Graham, 2002; Graham, Ashworth, & Tunbridge, 2005; Pendlebury, 2013; Parkinson, Scott & Redmond, 2016). Values vary between notions of aesthetics, authenticity, or materiality of heritage. The understandings of these values are somehow 'taken for granted' and validated by certain legitimate actors based on their historically specific meaning or privilege (Deacon & Smeets, 2013; Logan, 2016). This view underpins a hierarchal understanding of heritage that assumes the validation of particular cultural places or objects over others because they are 'inherently' valuable to nation-states. In the discourse of authorised heritage, a state-sanctioned value system defines whose heritage is important and validates specific understandings of heritage at the expense of others (Smith, 2015). Smith further argues that 'all heritage is intangible' (p. 140), in the sense that tangible heritage consists of living sociocultural processes that often carry specific meanings and values that are constantly evaluated according to 'present' social practices, needs, and interests. In

other words, heritage cannot be defined by its physical or non-physical existence, but rather by what is done with it at present.

Similarly, Harvey (2001) emphasises the 'presentness' of intangible heritage that selects an inherent element for present use and, through this selection process, heritage agents decide what should be passed on to the future generations. Intangible heritage is a process of selection based on present values that change over the years, thus these traditional practices of intangible heritage change too. In correlation with the idea of 'presentness', Smith (2015) understands intangible heritage as a process in which its concerned practitioners often identify relevant sociocultural values, memories, and meanings that could help them make a sense of their 'present' practices; thus, they create a sense of belonging to a specific tradition, language, place, or group.

In this context, intangible heritage is a complex form of 1) linguistic and social particularities; and 2) understanding localised cultural practices (Deumert & Storch, 2018). What people understand of intangible heritage in the present is strongly concerned with what people say they 'do' with heritage (Smith, 2012). 'Discourse' in authorised heritage concerns the immediate interrelation between knowledge, language, and practice (Hall, 2001; Smith, 2006; Waterton, Smith & Campbell, 2006; Waterton & Watson, 2015). Bo Hammer (2006) argues that in the last twenty years, native languages have apparently become a pivotal vehicle of transmission of knowledge to safeguard intangible heritage, and have been effectively patented by the broader cultural contexts of the World and European NGOs. The discourse of authorised heritage in relation to the emergence of democratisation reflects fears about the possibility of losing the ownership of cultural knowledge due to the authorised regulations. In other words, the public knowledge of local cultural heritage no longer belongs solely to the people; but rather has become the intellectual property of a particular bearer of knowledge (Bo Hammer, 2006). UNESCO and its associated

conventions often imply that the exercising of cultural policies has in some way transferred the ownership of heritage practitioners' knowledge to the governments because the latter are often the official representatives of heritage on behalf of their local communities within the international communities.

According to Harrison (2010b), this relationship often implies that practices of intangible heritage need to be understood first as a social activity. Such an understanding of discourse occurs when the cultural practices and language (or messages) meet the specific meanings and values of intangible heritage. Only then is a specific 'discourse' generated when the language is embodied in the cultural practice, often bounded in present time and space, and as such becomes heritage (Dicks, 2000; Smith, & Waterton, 2008). Figure 2.1 (below) demonstrates a cultural process in which the way that people discuss their matters through language is used to 'identify' and 'convey' certain practices and thus becomes an active social interest; leading to consequences that have value not in the past, but for the present. Such a specific understanding of cultural processes is crucial for this thesis because it demonstrates how language is an integral factor in the identification of local cultural practices and should not be considered incidental. Therefore, language is an essential component of identity as it affects and contributes to the overall heritage-making process. Even though language is subject to change and develops according to present sociocultural factors (Nassar, Al-Ashqar & Shatanawi, 2020), in most cases, local people are often comfortable with words that make sense to them and which they are more connected to. This suggests that the language (or dialect) used in expressing intangible heritage and its related concepts in a specific cultural context plays a pivotal role in articulating accurate meanings and value to its cultural practices.

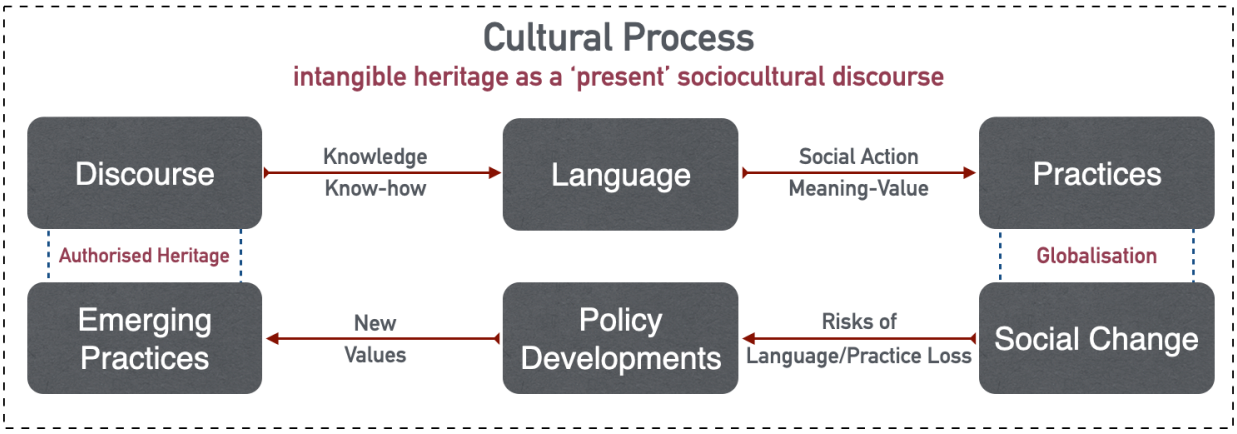


***Figure 2.1**: How language is used within the 'discourse' of intangible heritage to authorise present cultural practices.* **Source**: Author, 2024.

As this research investigates a non-Western context, the role of language is reflected in the Arabic context of intangible heritage, which is a key element in this thesis. In the Arabic language, the word for 'heritage' is *Turath* تراث which originates from the word *Irth* إرث. *Irth* means the 'old matters' that are inherited by the last from the first (Mustafa et al., 2004), whether the inherent element is a status, a legacy, an object, a practice, or a tradition. The boarder concept of *Turath* can be understood as tangible and intangible forms of heritage, which involve a collection of shared traditions and historical glories; evidence of existing built civilisation; or cultural practices that are passed on from the ancestors. Within the Arabian Gulf context, among other Arab countries, sociocultural practices are commonly known as *Mawruth* موروث and are related to the 'intangibility' of heritage, specifically what is commonly practiced and passed on to the next generations, associated with local sociocultural customs, norms and/or traditions including local dialects, rituals, and crafts, among other heritage practices (El Waraky, 2021). In this light, meanings and interpretations of heritage and inheritance in Arabic contexts are often correlated, and it is rather difficult to express one without the integration of the other. However, the idea of inheritance in *Mawruth* is closely related to the intangible know-how and skills as embedded

aspects in people, often changing as new economic or social conditions emerge, and these changes are constituted by the practitioners themselves.

When intangible heritage becomes universal due to inscription in the 2003 Convention, the power of language as a means of safeguarding and sustaining its traditional practices is often underestimated (Nic Craith, 2008; Smith & Campbell, 2015). Indeed, the risk of language loss includes colonial factors, the threat of war, ethnic or racial discrimination, and lack of interest among the youth in continuing intangible heritage practices (Arantes, 2012; Harrison, 2013b). However, many cultural practices either remain at risk of loss or have disappeared because the language that was used as a 'vehicle' to transmit such practices disappeared (Marrie, 2008; Eaton & Turin, 2022). These threats are often associated with the effects of modernisation, which explains the emergence of the 2003 Convention in the first place, which encourages the member-states to safeguard intangible heritage for all humankind. While designating an official representation to speak on behalf of the member-states of the 2003 Convention such as a government body seems reasonable, it can also be problematic (Kurin, 2007; Lixinski, 2011; Smith, 2015). Official representation often implies perpetuating these diverse cultural practices only through certain legitimate actors, which again limits the role for local communities in engaging with their practices (Brumann & Meskell, 2015). The idea of international cultural commitments, exemplified in the cultural policy frameworks, illustrates how intangible heritage can be constituted globally as a universal cultural phenomenon, despite the cultural distinctiveness of local heritage identity. This discourse surrounding authorised heritage often reflects the fears of local communities of losing their active role in safeguarding their intangible heritage due to these perceived universal values through international cultural commitments, such as the 2003 Convention and its associated lists.

These qualities suggest that some elements of intangible heritage are either authorised by national and/or international legislation through the lens of the Representative List (Hafstein, 2008; Skounti, 2011), while others are not. The creation of these lists provides a form of control by the member-states over local intangible heritage. In other words, there is a sort of state-sanctioned intangible heritage and another set of daily traditional practices that local communities perceive as intangible heritage. Indeed, the 2003 Convention encourages its member-states to involve heritage practitioners in the safeguarding process, which includes informed consent while documenting their cultural practice during the process. However, the idea that local communities are passively engaged in this process emerges through these lists because the designated official representation to present the cultural practice and speak on behalf of the member-states as part of the 2003 Convention is often a government body such as a Ministry, Department, or university, and not the heritage practitioners themselves directly (Kurin, 2007). This sort of normative practice is clearly depicted during the annual intergovernmental committee meetings where its evaluation body oversees granting (or rejecting) the inscription of an intangible heritage element in one of the Lists. Thus, this normative practice can be problematic, because it shows how bearers of heritage within local communities are excluded, while the member-states hold an active and upfront role in representing the heritage of their local people.

Modernisation, Nationalism and Nationhood

Having outlined the definitions and developments of the concepts of intangible heritage and authorised heritage, this section focuses on theories and approaches relating to modernisation and nationalism, and how both may be intertwined with authorised heritage; specifically building and representing national identity through heritage. These discussions are especially pertinent

when examining the role and value of intangible heritage in constructing national identity. This section explores the definitions of nationalism and everyday nationhood, the interplay between nationalism and nation-building, and the role of cultural heritage in these processes. The discussion will then demonstrate how nationalism shapes the context of modernisation and why it continues to play a dominant role in the development of national identity, highlighting how nation-states utilise heritage to promote a cohesive unified cultural identity.

Nationalism, as a concept, is multifaceted and has evolved significantly over time. Benedict Anderson's (1983) seminal work defines a nation as an 'imagined community' that is both inherently limited and sovereign. Anderson argues that nations are socially constructed through shared experiences and collective consciousness, rather than objective characteristics such as language or ethnicity. This imaginary aspect underlines the subjective nature of national identity, which is sustained through symbols, memories, and traditions. Ernest Gellner (1983) offers a different perspective, defining nationalism as a political principle that holds a national component and should be congruent. He argues that nationalism emerges from the need for industrial societies to create homogeneous cultural units that can sustain a modern economy. However, Anthony D. Smith (1986) emphasises the cultural symbolic approach, highlighting the importance of traditions, memories, and symbols in forming a nation's identity. He argues that the endurance of national identity relies on a shared cultural heritage that is perpetuated through the generations.

The final approach to nationalism, and closely linked with nation-building, is the theory of everyday nationhood which resonates with Smith's (1986) understanding of nationalism. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's (1983) concept of 'invented traditions' is particularly relevant in this context. They argue that many traditions that are perceived to be ancient are, in fact, recent inventions designed to serve contemporary social or political needs. These invented traditions are

used to create a sense of historical continuity and legitimacy for the nation-state and encompasses the political, cultural, and social dimensions that bind individuals into a cohesive community. Rogers Brubaker (1996) challenges the idea of treating nationhood objectively as cultural or social processes, and argues that nationhood should be understood from the perception of its political and cultural institutionalisation, and their role within the state and among its ethnic groups and communities. Other scholars relate nationhood to the collective identity and shared sense of belonging constituting the interests and needs among a group of people within a defined territory (Thompson & Fevre, 2001; Hall, 2006).

These approaches help to explain how certain cultural aspects such as ethnicity, language, and traditions are means of perceiving, interpreting, and representing cultural identity, and are thus constructed through the ordinary practices of everyday life. In this context, theorising everyday nationhood centres around the actual practices through which ordinary people engage and practice (or ignore or reject) nationalism in the varied contexts of their everyday lives (Day & Thompson 2004; Delanty & Kumar, 2006; Fox & Miller-Idriss, 2008; Viejo-Rose, 2011). Following Hobsbawm and Ranger's (1983) approach, it was rather difficult to reconcile the dichotomy between nationhood and everyday nationhood by only emphasising a common (or shared) cultural and/or heritage identity. As such, Brubaker (1996) states that nationhood is often solidified through the construction and reinforcement of a national narrative, whilst Fox (2004) and Antonsich (2016) argues that everyday nationhood deals with the everyday interests, needs, and preferences of ordinary people that may express a form of constitution of national difference through everyday sociocultural habits. This apparent distinctiveness is crucial for the legitimacy and stability of nation-states; thus, nationhood is both a cultural and political discourse aimed at nation-building in modern countries.

To illustrate how this notion of different cultural expressions is grouped rather than distinct, the example of 'pressing of noses' can be discussed. This example aims to argue that similar cultural practices or customs can occur in two (or more) different places, and contexts cannot accommodate these universal understandings of shared cultural identities. As shown in Figure 2.2 (below) the custom of pressing of noses is referred to as *Limwayah BelKhushoom* **لموايه بالخشوم** in the Bedouin dialect, which literally means 'confrontation with noses' (AlSharekh, 2007; AlSuwaidi, 2018). On the other side of the globe, this social engagement is known as *Hongi*[28] among the Māori of New Zealand (Dawes et al., 2021). To the Māori, *Hongi* means 'sharing of breath' and it consists of two words: *ho*, the exchanging of the breath bestowed by God, and *ngi,* which means the acceptance of this exchanged gift. As demonstrated in Figure 2.3 (below), *Hongi* is a traditional greeting in which the Māori people press their foreheads and noses together, symbolising peace, respect, and unity – both men and women practise this tradition.





Figure 2.2: *Limwayah BelKhushoom, the Bedouin method of greeting in the Arabian Gulf.*
Source: UAE's National Archive, (1963).

Figure 2.3: *Hongi, the Māori method of greeting.* **Source**: Unknown Photographer, (1914).

[28] Meaning and interpretation of the 'ignored' traditional and social practice of *Hongi*. Retrieved from https://www.taiuru.maori.nz/eroding-tikanga-of-the-hongi/

Since the Māori have a similar cultural practice to the Arab Bedouins, does that imply that the Māori also share a cultural or social meaning for this tradition with the Bedouins? According to Light & Prentice (1994), the answer to this question is related to Tunbridge's (1984) 'whose heritage', which discusses how a 'heritage product', including practices of heritage, is associated with its ethnic, native, or local cultural groups. In other words, these groups constitute the interpretation and rules of their cultural customs – including the consequences of following (or opposing) the rules of a particular custom, according to their sociocultural context. The example of 'pressing of noses' clearly demonstrates what may look like similar cultural practices, however they are completely different in linguistic form, meaning, value, and significance of occurrence due to their different cultural contexts. Both contexts highlight the importance of the spoken language when explaining the meaning or value behind a specific cultural practice or social engagement. This example reflects on what this thesis understands of cultural distinctiveness as the facilitation of an 'imaginary' community of people who 'culturally' share the same experiences, which is also promoted by nationalism. This kind of integration suggests, rather, that the idea of cultural distinctiveness enables the possibility of excluding specific practices of intangible heritage that are not 'politically' fit to fortify national identities, in order to promote others that support the idea of universal heritage (Nic Craith, 2008).

Processes of Nation-building Through Modernisation and Nationalism

The interplay between modernisation and tradition represents a fundamental area of inquiry in the study of building cultural identities in nation-states. As nations strive to modernise, they often face the challenge of negotiating and reconciling their traditions with the demands of contemporary society associated with modernity. This section defines modernisation in the context

of nationalism and its impacts on who perceives, constructs, or preserves cultural narratives in the evolving nature of national identity that often illustrates the intersection of heritage and nationalism. This approach critically examines the tensions that arise when diverse modernising nation-states, including heritage practitioners among local communities, attempt to safeguard their traditions. Moreover, the discussion will then focus on the dichotomy between top-down and bottom-up approaches in managing these tensions, providing insights into how intangible heritage is represented and contested in this dynamic.

The concept of modernisation has been theorised by a number of influential scholars across different fields including sociology, philosophy, history, and economics, each contributing unique perspectives to the understanding of modernity (Eisenstadt, 1964; Habermas, 1987; Beck, 1992). Max Weber (1930) is one of the foundational figures in the study of modernity, and in his work he analysed the transition from traditional to modern societies, focusing on the role of rationalisation and bureaucracy (Weber, 1930). Similarly, Seymour Lipset describes modernisation as a complex process of social change whereby a nation-state evolves through industrialisation, urbanisation, and increased levels of political participation in decision-making processes (Lipset, 1959). This transformation often leads to shifts in social norms and values, promoting secularisation and individualism. Anthony Giddens (1990) expands on this by emphasising the reflexivity inherent in modernisation; arguing that modern societies are characterised by their capacity for the self-examination and constant revision of social practices. This reflexivity implies that modernisation is not a linear process, but one that involves continuous negotiation and adaptation. Proponents of this approach propose that nationalism emerged due to processes of modernisation (such as industrialisation and urbanisation) which raised the possibility of national consciousness.

Several studies discuss modernisation as a dominant theory of nationalism that adopted and applied a constructivist approach in the processes of nation-building through cultural heritage (Banerjee, 1985; Smith, 1996; Berger, 2003; Smith & Smith, 2013; Gentry & Smith, 2019). In the context of nation-states, modernisation encompasses economic, social, and cultural dimensions in which shared values provide a form of collective identity and bind individuals together in sociopolitical solidarity (Delanty, 2002; Abid, 2004). Processes of nation-building have also facilitated the institutionalisation of cultural frameworks as a form of creating cohesive national identity, intertwined with universal understandings of shared values that underpin the main objective of establishing international cultural communities such as the 2003 Convention, among other UNESCO heritage programmes (Aikawa, 2004; Brumann & Meskell, 2015; Egberts, 2017). When intangible heritage emerged as a universal concept, it guided a universal consumption of local cultural narratives under one cohesive identity within the international communities. Such an identity is rather difficult to establish due to many sociocultural factors such as the local language and cultural backgrounds, consisting of different beliefs, faiths, and traditions. However, Turtinen (2000), among other critics such as Hall (1996), and Askew (2010), argues that these frameworks served as 'cosmopolitan political projects aimed at creating a new political as well as an imagined community' (p. 29). The modernisation of national identity can also be understood as the facilitation of a modern 'imaginary' community of people who 'culturally' share the same experiences, perform the same practices, transmit the same know-how, and express the same challenges (Adell et al., 2015; Buckler, 2017). At the same time, this 'imaginary' community is diverse in language, beliefs, social backgrounds and, most importantly, it lives in different lands and across borders. In other words, these people are 'connected' through a common traditional know-how (that could be a craft, song, ritual, or a dance), despite their cultural distinctiveness.

Smith (2006), among other critics such as Akagawa (2015) and Waterton & Watson (2015), argues that language frames the memories of local communities in modern societies, which is instrumental in the process of heritage transmission consisting of specific cultural practices. Language often works as a vehicle to communicate distinctive information concerning heritage during the transmission process; as such, heritage is often governed by the context of its cultural heritage information or knowledge. Knowledge is defined as an instrument with which to communicate a form of behaviour of a person or a group of people; situated within a variety of disciplines such as economics, education, religion, the social and politics (Rouse, 2005; Van Assche et al, 2017). These forms consist of languages, social beliefs, and traditional customs that contribute to building their distinctive cultural practices. Therefore, weakening the language could result in the disruption of the transmission process, thus the heritage-making in the cultural process (as detailed in Figure 2.1 above).

The dilution of a specific language is also associated with the ongoing impacts of modernisation, such as 'acculturation'. According to Doucerain (2018), acculturation is the extraction of specific cultural traits or social patterns from another culture, and this usually occurs after an encounter between different cultures through migration in seeking for the values of modernisation. Grotenhuis (2016) explains that among these cultural traits are foreign languages and practices coming from other cultural identities-in-flux created by constant multiple migrations. As such, cultural identity migrations are problematic because existing local social and linguistic particularities become crowded by external dominant cultural traits that were proclaimed as being part of the 'national identity' in response to modernisation in nation-states. In this way, acculturation has a negative effect on the language used to convey specific intangible heritage, thus affecting the ways of safeguarding traditional heritage practices (Tessler & Hawkins, 1979;

Alivizatou, 2007; Bakar et al., 2014). As this research explores a non-Western context of intangible heritage, specifically in the Arabic context, the intertwined risks are 1) acculturation, which affects the use of native language of intangible heritage at present, and 2) the rapid decline in heritage bearers and/or the loss of the knowledge of older generations who express particular linguistics of heritage.

With such a historical load, interest in intangible heritage experienced substantial growth once it became associated with authorised heritage and building national identity. This growth, which is a consequence of modernisation, is illustrated in Figure 2.4 (below), where there is clearly a substantial difference in the inclusion statistics between the different 2003 Convention lists. The increasing number of inclusions in the Representative List (569 inscribed elements) is significantly higher than the Urgent Safeguarding List and the Safeguarding Practices List combined. These inclusion efforts normalise the idea of grouping distinct cultural traditions and expressions as universal. In other words, they shift emphasis away from distinct traditions as 'representative' of shared value, which tends to exclude the role of different local manifestations and practitioners of intangible heritage. Another example of the increasing interest in the Representative List is that since 2019, that the 2003 Convention highly recommends working on multinational nominations[29] of 'shared' intangible heritage by local communities. For instance, led by Saudi Arabia, is the multinational nomination of Arabic calligraphy[30] (*Al-Khatt Al-Araby* الخط العربي), which involved sixteen member-states (including Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, the UAE and Yemen).

[29] The 2003 Convention guidelines to nominate a multinational intangible heritage. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/mechanism-to-encourage-multinational-files-00560

[30] Inscribed in 2021, the nomination of Arabic calligraphy is considered the first collaboration between a number of Arab countries. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/arabic-calligraphy-knowledge-skills-and-practices-01718

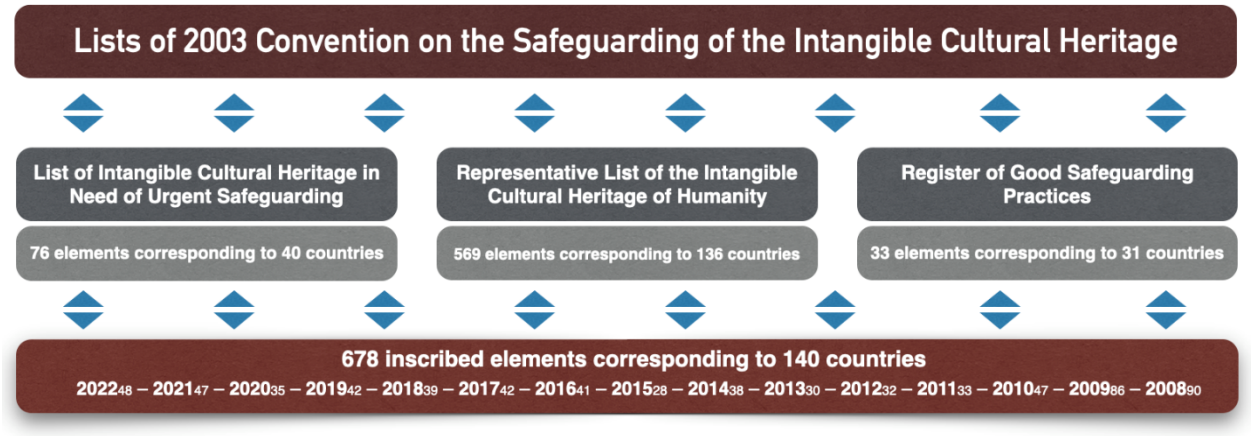


Figure 2.4: *Timeline and statistics of the inscribed elements in the 2003 Convention Lists.*
Source: Author 2022, based on UNESCO, 2022.

Between 2019 and 2021, the focus has clearly shifted from nomination by a single nation to multinational nominations, and this shift resulted in 58 files being submitted for 2022 (however only 14 were inscribed),[31] and 57 files for 2023.[32] These statistics are considerably higher than all the multinational nominations combined between 2008 and 2021, when 83 elements corresponding to 101 member-states were nominated.[33] The member-states' recent growing interest in this 'international cooperation' to work on multinational inclusions, as described by the 2003 Convention, clearly constitutes the universal idea of safeguarding heritage for humanity. However, for a multinational inscribed element, it is even harder to determine or prevent the commodity threats facing the inscribed 'shared' tradition. This is because these threats vary between one country and another (including the impact of modernisation) according to the specific cultural conditions within their boundaries, regardless of the 'shared' inscribed element.

[31] List of multinational nominations for 2022 under the process of examination for inclusion in the Representative List. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists?text=&inscription[]=00020&multinational=2#tabs
[32] List of multinational nominations for 2023 under the process of examination for inclusion in the Representative List. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/files-2023-under-process-01248
[33] Total number of inscribed multinational intangible heritage elements prior to 2022. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists?text=&multinational=2&display1=inscriptionID#tabs

On the one hand, the Representative List may bestow universal value on the inscribed elements, but it does not indicate that these elements are well-safeguarded, nor does it show the level of local communities' engagement or clarify their practices of safeguarding. On the other hand, the other lists clearly reflect an urgent need to safeguard intangible heritage; thus, they also suggest practices for safeguarding these endangered elements. Many of the 33 inscribed safeguarding practices[34] are in the form of community centres, schools, museums, strategies, and programmes aimed at encouraging education, transmission, presentation, and awareness-raising for the safeguarding of local intangible heritage (Kearney, 2008; UNESCO, 2012b; Blake, 2018; Alivizatou, 2021; UNESCO, 2022). Presumably, if the Urgent Safeguarding and Safeguarding Practices Lists are both carrying the required safeguarding work that is implemented at both local and national levels, this raises the question of why the Representative List exists at all. Kurin notes that 'the danger is that the implementation of Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention will concentrate too much on the international lists and on the allocation and dispensation of prestige' (2007, p. 17), rather than the bearers of intangible heritage. The nomination of a single element often consumes a substantial amount of time (often years) which requires local, national or international interventions to oversee the creation of national inventories, among other safeguarding measures, to ensure the viability of the inscribed intangible heritage (Kurin, 2007; Bendix, Eggert & Peselmann, 2013). Some of these resources, if not all, are not accessible to nor available in many countries. This may suggest that the existence of the Representative List is solely to bestow status onto the inscribed elements among the member-states; therefore, it addresses the main objective of the 2003 Convention that these elements reflect a universal value for humanity.

[34] Total number of inscribed safeguarding practices between 2009 and 2022. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists?text=&type[]=00005&multinational=1#tabs

Intangible heritage is a cultural product of a complex combination between linguistic and social particularities, as explained earlier in this chapter. Therefore, it remains challenging, and rather problematic, for the member-states of the 2003 Convention to actively control 'all' practices of safeguarding, because not all 'shared' intangible heritage elements or their safeguarding measures meet the interests, needs, or the capacities of local communities who are key actors in the safeguarding process. That often requires a high level of capacity-building in the field (such as documentation, education, and training) alongside the local communities to avoid or reduce 'the decontextualisation, commodification and misrepresentation' (Article 10, UNESCO, 2015) of intangible heritage (Kurin, 2007). Such complexity within the safeguarding process is not something normative work can achieve simply through the notion of authorised heritage.

The Heritagisation of Intangible Heritage

In recent years, the concept of intangible heritage has gained significant attention among many actors around the world at the national and international levels, and as such has become instrumental in driving key economic dynamics such as tourism. This is because this form of heritage is often economised through processes of heritage-making that turns elements of intangible heritage into a commodity (Winter, 2011). This section explores the processes that are strongly connected to heritagisation, while investigating the correlation between the international commitments, as a form of building national identity. Moreover, the heritagisation of intangible heritage raises questions about authenticity and commodification. The focus here is on the growing practice of heritagisation not only through turning heritage into commodity, but as a modern practice for safeguarding intangible heritage by the state and local communities.

Bendix (2008) understands heritagisation as a consequence of a long-term identification process that represents value for different actors from social and/or political groups to international networks. Over time, the practice of heritagisation becomes a 'tradition' that is expected to be safeguarded, as such safeguarding itself becomes a process that entails selecting specific heritage elements (Bendix, 2008). According to Sousa (2018), heritagisation is a process of heritage-making that is associated with contemporising or reinterpreting elements of the past in ways that can be employed and consumed in the present. This process is subjected to social and cultural engagement that discreetly incorporates the bearers of heritage in local communities into the practices for safeguarding intangible heritage. Such an understanding of heritagisation suggests that the nomination processes within the 2003 Convention Lists is in itself a form of heritagisation because it requires selection based on the present meanings and values of heritage. This leads us to question two matters: 1) the value of traditional practices for safeguarding intangible heritage within the practices of heritagisation at a national level; and 2) the local communities' active engagement in maintaining these traditional practices in order to protect what they understand as intangible heritage. These local communities are made up of groups or individual transmitters, practitioners, or bearers of heritage (Sousa, 2018). It is worth noting that in the Arabic language, the word for heritagisation is *Tawrith*[35] **توريث**, a heritage-making process that refers to the attribution of a specific origin or element of cultural heritage (tangible, or intangible, or both) to the overall meaning and value of a new 'heritage product'. For Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004), Kurin (2007) and Harrison (2010b), among others, these local communities, from the perspective of international commitments, are viewed as passive actors in the process of implementing practices of safeguarding.

[35] Originates from the word *Irth* and more related to *Turath* as explained in detail in p. 47 of this chapter.

One of many aspects that makes a traditional cultural practice unique and appealing is the 'origins' aspect, or what is perceived as 'authentic' to local communities. Researchers of heritage (Jerome, 2008; Karlström, 2015; Crespo, 2016) argue that relating the concept of 'authenticity' to heritagisation is important for explaining the interest in the heritage-making process. Authenticity is rather understood as one of the aesthetic, historic and/or social values that often binds a particular presentation of heritage, and as such is concerned with providing legitimate or 'inherent' consequences that either favours or excludes some forms of heritage (MacCannell, 1973; Harrison et al., 2008; Samuels & Rico, 2015; Bendix, 2018; Berliner, 2018). This understanding of 'authenticity' is often used to constitute the tangible value of the past, such as preserving artifacts and historical objects, while making them more relevant to the present (Soufan, 2020). For intangible heritage, the origin or an 'authentic' aspect of traditional practices works as an effective heritagisation tool because it lends credibility to the commodified element and provides a sense of connection to a specific history, space, or object (Nic Craith, 2007; Van De Port & Meyer, 2018; DeSoucey, Elliott & Schmutz, 2019). In other words, heritagisation is about the use of aesthetic or symbolic aspects of heritage, rather than preserving the heritage practice itself. This applies to the changes in cultural policymaking towards an attempt to educate and transfer heritage governance to local communities in the search for safeguarding solutions, and how intangible heritage should be presented in our modern era. This necessity has lead decision-makers in nation-states to enable the maintenance of the local flavour of local places or practices, which has led to the growth of 'staged' heritage (Munasinghe, 2005; Baillie, Chatzoglou, & Taha, 2010; Hafstein, 2018). Staged heritage is described as the end-product of a heritagisation process and often works as a display for cultural tourism purposes (Chhabra, Healy & Sills, 2003; Murtagh, Boland & Shirlow, 2017). As an alternative, employing staged heritage works quite well in attracting more tourists who seek

cultural experiences, resulting in thriving local heritage tourism; however, it is not necessarily acknowledged nor consented to by the local communities (Wang, 1999; Poria & Ashworth, 2009; Eggert & Peselmann, 2013).

The Impact of Tourism on the Heritagisation of Intangible Heritage

Tourism is a crucial element in driving the present values of some forms of intangible heritage, in which the importance of its meaning is placed within a specific cultural context and promoted as a 'cultural destination' (Ashworth & Larkham, 1994; Throsby, 1995; Canali & d'Angella, 2009; Alvarez, Yüksel & Go, 2016). Prioritising the development of tourism that promotes local cultural heritage ensures that resources are channelled into showcasing the full range of a nation-state's cultural offerings, through international events and expositions, cultural spaces, and locally-based talents, i.e. craftspeople, traditional performers, artists and designers (Graham, Ashworth, & Tunbridge, 2005; Silverman & Hallett, 2015; Esfehani & Albrecht, 2019). However, cultural destinations are impacted in three ways: 1) the impact on local people that arises from their sociocultural understandings of the cultural offerings, 2) the impact on visitors (or tourists), which includes the cultural images created post-visit and results in 'imaginary' cultural experiences; and 3) the impact on non-visitors (who plan to visit the cultural destination), mainly related to the symbolic value of the cultural practices of the destination (Bujdosó et al., 2015). For instance, the cultural industries are strongly connected to tourism, embedded as a core domain in its framework and linked directly with intangible heritage (UNESCO, 2012a). As demonstrated in Figure 2.5 (below), tourism development is based on a broader use of culture in which intangible heritage practices have a stronger relationship with local people, their heritage language, and associated knowledge (Richards, 2000; Montrul, 2015). However, developing tourism based on

intangible heritage presents several challenges, despite its potential to promote cultural understanding and economic benefits. Challenges can include turning intangible heritage into tourist attractions that can lead to the commodification of cultural practices, and often lose their authenticity and intrinsic value, becoming mere performances or products for tourist consumption. These problems can arise from various factors related to preservation, consumption, and community involvement.



Figure 2.5: *The characteristics of heritage tourism, cultural tourism, and creative tourism.*
Source: Adapted from Richards, 2000, p. 15.

On an international scale, the interest in defining and safeguarding intangible heritage is not limited to heritage experts nor the 2003 Convention, but was also included within the framework of the cultural industries. Emerging in the early 1960s, cultural industries refer to a set of activities which combine both traditional cultural production and the commodification of social practices, often referred to as 'cultural offerings' (Throsby, 2000; Galloway & Dunlop, 2007; Flew 2017). Based on Throsby's (2008) modelling research, the term 'cultural industries' was first used during the 1980s in the United Kingdom. The term 'creative industries' emerged in 1994 with the launch of 'Creative Nation', the first cultural policy by the Australian government (Higgs,

Cunningham & Pagan, 2007; O'Connor, 2009). This combination seeks to present the first cultural policy that integrates cultural heritage and visual arts with communication, economy, and technology aspects. In both the cultural and creative industries, some of these activities are related to history, and others only emerged according to new technological advances such as the digitisation of artworks or museum experiences (Ashworth, Graham & Tunbridge, 2007; Throsby, 2010). In 2009, UNESCO's Institute for Statistics developed a Framework for Cultural Statistics (FCS), as shown in Figure 2.6 (below), that is considered a transnational starting point in helping nation-states to define their versions of cultural industries based on their cultural contexts.

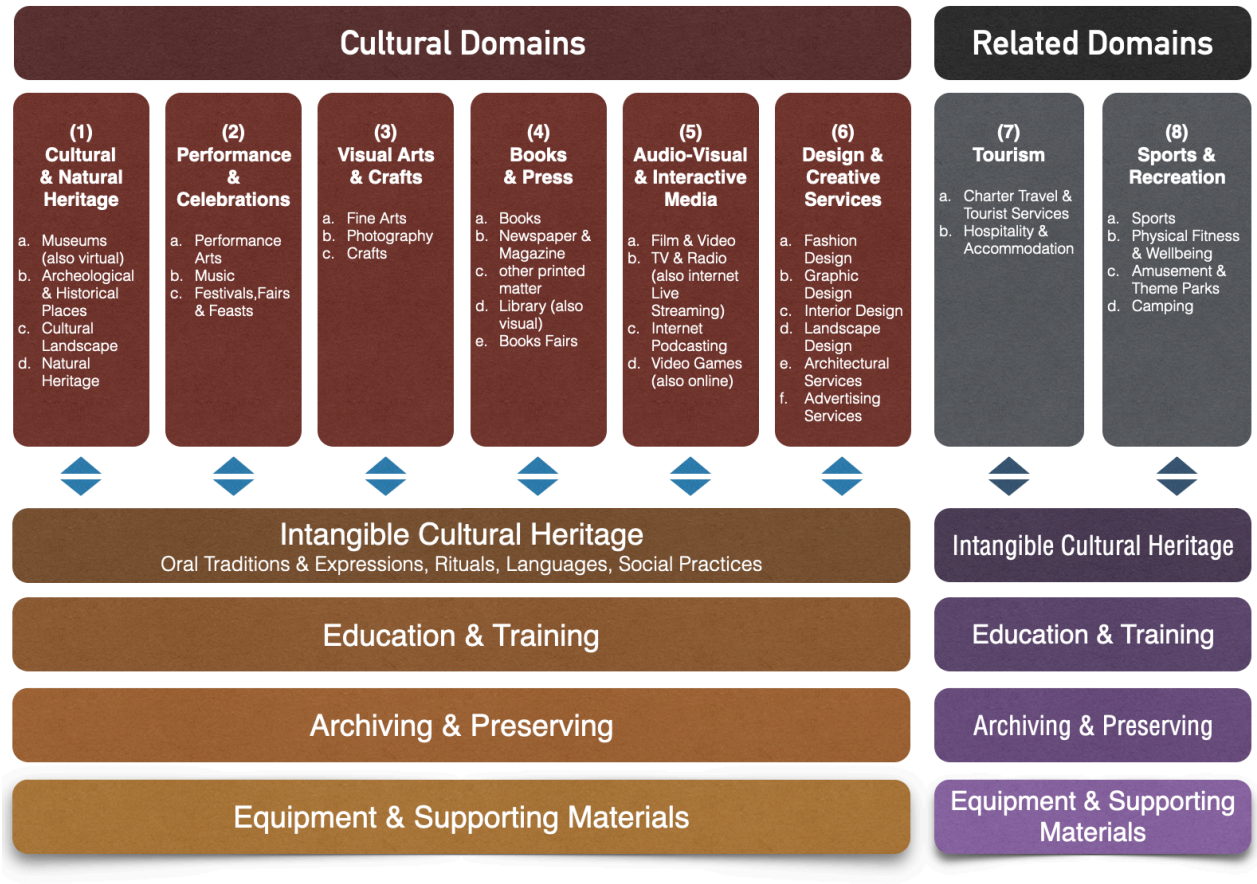


Figure 2.6: *UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics.* **Source**: Adapted from UNESCO, 2009.

The FCS framework (above) proposed a general definition of the cultural industries as 'those sectors of organised activity that have as their main objective the production or reproduction, the promotion, distribution or commercialisation of goods, services and activities of content derived from cultural, artistic or heritage origins' (UNESCO, 2009). It is worth noting that cultural and natural heritage is situated as the first domain in this framework, while crafts are placed third among the visual arts domain, while crafts are a key manifestation of intangible heritage in the 2003 Convention. In this framework, intangible heritage is not included as a separate domain, as are cultural heritage and the crafts. Instead, intangible heritage is manifested across all the cultural and related domains such as tourism, including its safeguarding role in education, training, and archiving and preserving. This fact supports the argument that intangible heritage is a social activity among all cultural expressions, emphasising the role of local communities and those who practice and preserve heritage as they understand it. However, the term 'industry' suggests that the value of intangible heritage in this framework is driven by specific economic and/or political dynamics related to the concepts of heritagisation, commodity, and trade, rather than the cultural practices of local communities (Moore, 2014).

To add to the confusion, some critics disagree over what is meant by 'culture' and 'creative' combined with 'industry', and these ideas have provoked theoretical discussions in the broader fields of cultural studies (Hartley et al., 2012). Merging 'culture' and 'creative' with the term 'industry' remains controversial, especially for heritage bearers, because they feel it is demeaning to think of their gifted talents in any way as a commodity (Potts & Cunningham, 2008; Throsby, 2010). On the contrary, there are those who create cultural commodities for profit (such as those who earn their income mainly from crafts), and their perception differs from heritage bearers because they feel that their creativity is worth investing in (Throsby, 2000; Thompson, 2009; Fillis,

2012; Banks, 2014). In other words, these cultural policies aided a shift from focussing on cultural practices to legitimately economising them (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2003; Bandarin, Hosagrahar & Sailer Albernaz, 2011; Hottin & Grenet, 2012; Duxbury, Kangas & De Beukelaer, 2017).

As Harrison (2013a) argues, the process of heritage-making draws attention to the need to either safeguard or revive threatened intangible heritage practices. Indeed, the world recognition of intangible heritage has encouraged member-states of the 2003 Convention to initiate safeguarding projects, while stressing the importance of local communities' engagement in these projects. However, the 2003 Convention does not explicitly explain how their role should be addressed or how their living traditions should be safeguarded. In addition, the 2003 Convention indicates that intangible heritage must be safeguarded by 'all possible means' or by 'the necessary measures', which may suggest including modernised practices of safeguarding (such as heritagisation) if the member-state finds it necessary. This clearly contradicts the Ethical Principles for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage,[36] Article 10 of which encourages local communities to identify threats to their intangible heritage, including 'the decontextualization, commodification and misrepresentation' and 'should not be subject to external judgements of value or worth' of their cultural traditions (Article 10, UNESCO, 2015).

In this light, the heritage-making process reflects the consequences of heritagisation for the present meanings and values of intangible heritage. One of these consequences is that the worth of intangible heritage has become closely related to the concept of 'nation brand' as an external judgement of value of heritage and as part of building the national identity of many countries by implementing this concept (Morgan, Pritchard & Pride, 2004). Developed by Simon Anholt in the 2000s, the concept of 'nation brand' has become a significant contributor in building national

[36] A framework consists of codes and principles that guides the ethical implementation of the 2003 Convention. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/ethics-and-ich-00866

identity, as demonstrated in Figure 2.7 (below). This concept aims to correlate the international reputation of nation-states with six main dimensions: people, governance, exports, investment and immigration, tourism, and cultural heritage (Anholt, 2005). As can be seen in Figure 2.7, some of the nation brand dimensions are included in the cultural industries framework, such as cultural heritage and tourism.

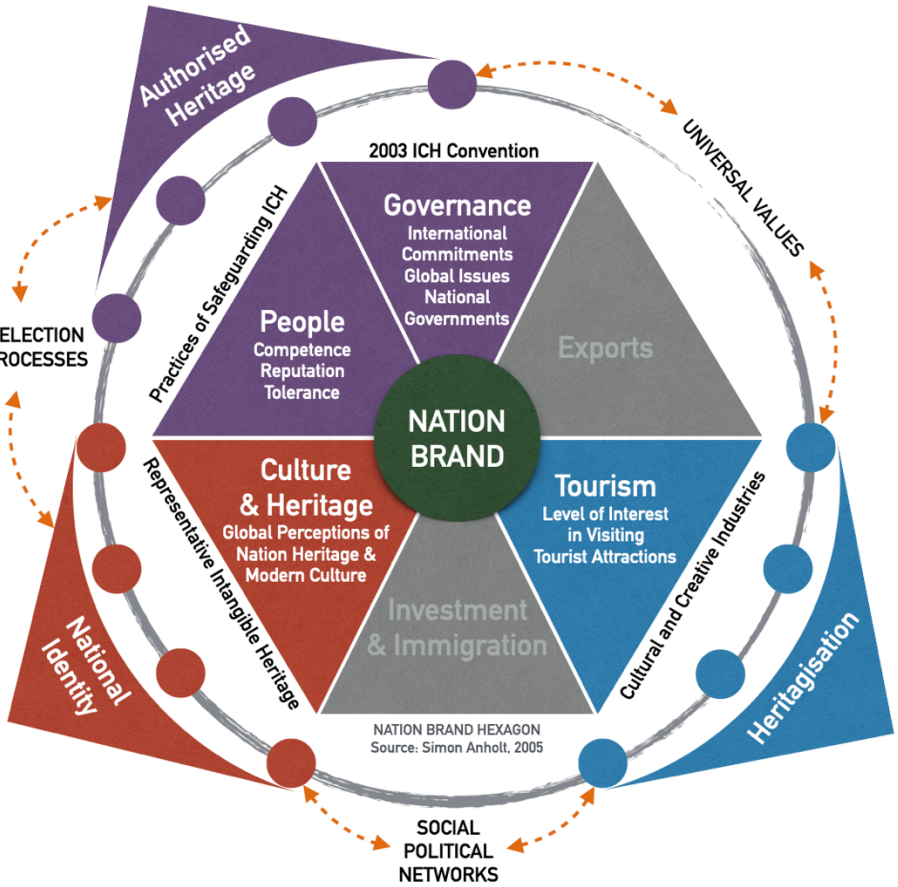


Figure 2.7*: *Bridging Nation Brand with authorised heritage, heritagisation, and national identity.
Source: Author, 2024, based on Anholt, 2005.

Steenkamp (2019) highlights how 'nation brand' is significantly influencing the transfer of cultural, economic, and political knowledge in nation-states. This approach leads to the use of both the nation brand and the cultural industries as key components for building national identity (Hurn, 2016; Volos, 2019; Vegheș, 2022). This integration acts as a key factor for the safeguarding of

intangible heritage, specifically as a process of selection that is influenced by the changing political and social contexts. Hence, notions of authorised heritage that are exemplified in the international commitments become integral to the nation brand. Driven by the need to meet economic or political expectations (including a stronger international reputation through the 2003 Convention or nation brand concept), heritagisation has reshaped the narratives and stories of local people in nation-states in an attempt to sell their cultural experience with a local flavour (Su, 2018; Khanom et al., 2019). The concept of heritagisation here as a heritage-making process is to adapt uses of intangible heritage into a 'staged heritage' to promote images of locally flavoured heritage that are favourable for the economic and/or political management.

It could be argued that the complexity of heritage restoration could be interpreted as 'staged' and communicated politically or economically rather than culturally, which makes it difficult to understand the role of local heritage in multicultural societies. In fact, embedding heritage within the dynamics of tourism (as part of the heritagisation process) can often be emotionally powerful at some level. Such a symbolic emphasis on the intangibility of heritage is driven by the emotional needs of local communities to feel relatively connected to their heritage, and is not overlooked on the national level (Smith & Campbell, 2015). While staged heritage attempts to capture a historical sense of space, its implementation can lead to fears of losing the cultural aspect of intangible heritage. Pizza (2011) argues that twenty years ago traditions became the language of heritage, and this was forged by the broader contexts of European modernity. Pizza explains further that the discourse of 'industries' in heritage (such as the cultural industries) have been perceived as a potential threat to the traditional practitioners of intangible heritage.

Under these modernisation conditions, intangible heritage is considered fragile in a context that puts traditional practices, including crafts, at risk of loss in relation to modern ways, or new

demands of life (Skounti, 2017). These risks are associated with emerging notions of modernisation which often create new values for heritagisation; such as the emergence of the cultural industries. As a result, the role of local communities is disrupted, through the modification of their traditional ways of safeguarding heritage. At first, the implementation of heritagisation was associated with built forms of heritage because the tangible can simply be 'reconstructed' at any time or in any condition (Bernbeck, 2013). However, with cultural practices, not only is the tangible outcome of the practice affected, but also the cultural process of the intangibility of heritage. Such processes include safeguarding traditional practices through obtaining knowledge while mastering the skills, thus 'recreating' elements of intangible heritage into an 'imaginary' experience that is often used as staged heritage (Chatterjee, 1993; Hughes, 1995; Wang, 1999; Hafstein, 2015; Ashworth & Graham, 2016; Allahham, 2018). Over time, the transmission of what is recreated from a local flavour becomes 'authentic' to future generations.

Conclusion

This literature review explored the definitions of intangible heritage in relation to the discourse of authorised heritage. There is an increased understanding that intangible heritage is an active cultural process based on present meanings and values, rather than a set of 'inherent' beliefs, customs, objects, or practices. These values manifest in what the individuals and groups in local communities learn, transmit, and practice from their social environment within their specific cultural context. However, these values are not immune to change. One of the main dynamics of this change is the impact of modernisation, which has introduced new understandings for both living and earning, thus bringing new values to these cultural processes often encompassed by the nation-states. In the context of modernisation, nationalism plays a crucial role in this process by

providing the ideological foundation upon which nation-building efforts are based and this involves the creation of a shared sense of purpose and belonging among the populace. Such new values based on contemporary, modern ways of life have questioned whether social practices are worthy of continuing to be safeguarded. At the same time, intangible heritage practitioners in local communities (such as craftspeople, storytellers, and traditional performers) are often considered the custodians of living heritage, and they assess the value of their current traditional social practices. Therefore, they decide the continuity of their practices as part of their heritage.

Over time, the values that were attached to these traditional social practices shift, depending on the present values in a context of rapid sociocultural change in response to modernisation. Consequently, what is perceived and identified as heritage is often prone to change, based on the present needs and interests of traditional practitioners in local communities: thus, understandings of intangible heritage preservation and presentation change in response to these present values. These understandings include the implementation of heritagisation and the cultural industries as modern safeguarding measures in order to contribute to building national identity. This shift demands a better theoretical understanding of intangible heritage as a process of selection in association with its present, and often shifting, values that require new practices of safeguarding. Building on the discussions of intangible heritage in this literature review, Chapter 3 will discuss how intangible heritage has become an integral part of the UAE's national identity. Further, it will discuss in detail the context of the historical and sociopolitical development of UAE society, while noting the impacts of modernisation and how this led to the adoption of the 2003 Convention as a notion of authorised heritage in order to safeguard the country's cultural practices for nation-building purposes.

Chapter (3)

Cultural and Sociopolitical Development of the United Arab Emirates



Bukhoor Traditional Incense

Introduction

This chapter considers the cultural background and sociopolitical development of the UAE by focusing on three levels: the tribal, local, and wider national characteristics of Emirati society. A discussion of these three levels aims to illustrate the changes in Emirati social structure and political dynamics in relation to the impact of modernisation over the past 50 years. Relating these sociopolitical changes to modernity is important because it captures how the effects of modernisation have significantly influenced and shifted official and local understandings of intangible heritage. The first section draws on the social and political roots of the UAE, including the indigenous people consisting of tribes with historical privileges such as the ruling families. and the differences within the contemporary population of the UAE. In this chapter, understanding each sociopolitical group in the UAE is important because it reflects on how Emirati tribal kinship shapes the current culture of the nation-state, allowing it to guide its people to maintain its cultural and social fabric, thus preserving its heritage. The second section describes the UAE's aim to identify its intangible heritage in response to the impacts of modernisation and what its Emirati people consider to be local heritage practices. Further, it aims to establish the link between nationalism and the emerging cultural policies in the context of the UAE's authorised heritage discourse, which is driven mainly through the implementation of the 2003 Convention. The third and final section reflects on the UAE's approach in terms of the government's understanding of the institutionalisation of intangible heritage, as well as the government's openness in connecting its local heritage to the cultural industries, including tourism. In light of these economic and sociopolitical shifts, the final section of this chapter aims to investigate what the UAE holds valuable in order to build its national identity within the streams of modernisation that involve the commodification and heritagisation of intangible heritage as contemporary means of safeguarding.

The Sociopolitical Transformation: From Tribes to a Country

This section considers the sociopolitical structure of the UAE prior to and following its formation as a nation-state. In addition, this section focuses on the characteristics of contemporary Emirati society and how it is reflective of the UAE's cultural context. Understanding the current sociopolitical structure of the UAE and the population formation is important because it identifies the role of each group in the safeguarding process of intangible heritage, which includes the preservation and presentation of local traditional cultural practices. The population consists of two main non-ethnic groups: 'Emiratis' and non-locals. Emiratis, (also known as 'citizens', 'locals' or 'nationals'), comprises the indigenous people of the UAE, including the Arab tribes and ruling families, and individuals from other ethnic backgrounds who have obtained the nationality (or citizenship) of the country. The 'non-locals', also known as 'foreigners', 'expats', 'residents', or 'non-nationals', are the people living permanently or temporarily in the UAE, but without UAE citizenship. Each group perceives intangible heritage according to its past experiences or present meanings and values, thus it identifies and practices heritage in different representations – whether physically or symbolically.

Emiratis, Bedouins in specific, are connected by several sociocultural aspects such as, lineages, religion, language, and a shared historical narrative which is predominantly tribal in context (Cooke, 2014). According to El Mallakh (1981), Jabbūr, Jabbūr, & Conrad (1995), Hawker (2002), and AlSharekh (2007), the 'indigenous' population are the Arab Bedouins, also known as the Bedu بدو, who are groups of nomadic people who traditionally lived in the desert areas of the Arabian Peninsula, specifically where the UAE in located at present. A tribe consists of multiple branches and each branch contains families with distinctive names. These branches and families always carry the name of their tribe; as such, the tribe's name plays a pivotal role in recognising

the indigenous people of the UAE. There are many existing tribes in each of the seven Emirates, however one trusted family within a specific tribe (collectively endorsed by the rest of the tribes) hold the centre of political power and governance in these Emirates (Davidson, 2006). Over the decades and according to El Mallakh (1981), the indigenous people of the UAE have been exposed to ethnic[37] mixing due to foreign migrations which resulted in 1) different groups living alongside each other in the UAE, and 2) Emiratis, including the indigenous groups, intermarrying with other Arab and ethnic groups. This exposure was mainly related to the trade in gold and pearls, among other exports, due to the area's strategic location on the coasts of the Arabian Gulf and the northern-eastern part of the Gulf of Oman (Hightower, 2021). This geographical area was known as 'the coastal Emirates' or 'the trucial coast' which is the name that the British government gave to a group of Arab tribes who occupied the northern-eastern coastal areas of Arabian Peninsula based on a series of truces or protective and peace treaties between the 1820s and 1890s. However, these treaties were officially revoked on 1st December 1971 (Al Hebsi, 2011).

According to Hanzlíčková, (2017), the consequences of both trade and the treaties encouraged the activity of slavery; slaves were divided into domestic and trade slaves brought by wealthy tribal families. Examples of domestic slavery include men or women working in households as bodyguards, cooks, preparing coffee for guests, or even managing shops. The trade slaves worked as guards, farmers, fishermen, pearl divers, dhow builders, and harbour workers. The slaves came mainly from Ethiopia, Kenya, and Zanzibar, among other East African coastal countries, and at the time such practices reflected a different understanding of labour necessities which granted legal privileges to the slaves (Hanzlíčková, 2017). Many of the former slaves took on the name of the family within the tribe that they belonged to, and later obtained nationality of

[37] Emiratis Ethnic Diversity. Retrieved from https://www.thenational.ae/emirati-marriage-norms-reflect-cultural-and-ethnic-diversity-1.476200

the UAE following the unification in 1971, which granted them the same privileges as any other Emirati, whether indigenous or not (El Mallakh, 1981; Al Hebsi, 2011; Hanzlíčková, 2017). Over time, such ethnic exchanges resulted in the creation of a multicultural population within the contemporary social composition of the UAE.

Rather than proposing an official definition of indigenous people, considering their diversity, the United Nations (UN) has developed a general understanding of the term based on multiple factors. According to the UN, indigenous peoples, or groups and communities, are the inheritors and practitioners of distinctive sociocultural factors such as language, beliefs, customs, and knowledge, among other factors including historical connections with precolonial societies, or affiliations with natural resources.[38] As the UN's description suggests, the factor of social domination is essential in forming the living conditions of indigenous peoples, and thus our perceptions of these peoples. Since this understanding was proposed in the 2000s, many international conferences and seminars have further debated and refined what we now understand the word 'indigenous' to mean in relation to the conditions or particularities of nation-states and the different groups of people around the world who want to be recognised as such.[39] The indigenous question in the UAE matches the UN's sociocultural factors. However, other factors such as precolonial continuity or being politically less dominant do not apply. The indigenous people of the UAE are economically and politically dominant, retain social characteristics of the tribe system, and understand the importance of passing on their cultural identity, knowledge, and skills to future generations.

[38] 'Who are the Indigenous People?' Retrieved from https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/5session_factsheet1.pdf
[39] Records of Indigenous Presence in the International Stage from 1923- 2014. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/development/desa/Indigenouspeoples/about-us.html

Prior to the unification of the UAE, tribes in the area were constantly on the move around the parts of the Arabian Peninsula known today as Oman, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar (Gugolz, 1996; Kazim, 2000; Maintner, 2015; Chatty, 2016). Among the Emiratis, many can trace their roots to other ethnic origins, specifically in the bare coastal areas of the UAE that were most commonly affected by concentrated foreign migration from East Africa, India, Persia, Baluchistan, Iraq, Yemen, and the African Arab countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, and Morocco (Yateem, 2016). To some extent, the constant ethnic infusion along the coast touched upon the economic and social nature of Emirati society, but most importantly it had an impact on its cultural fabric. For instance, introducing modern industrial incentives or social practices that are not local to the region such as exporting spices, medicine, textiles, employing different forms of architecture, and engaging with traditional performances brought from other cultures. Other population groups such as the Bedouins or the mountain-dwellers who remained far from these contacts managed to preserve their heritage to some extent. In the contemporary sociopolitical structure of the UAE, there are three main groups (shown in Figure 3.1 below): the Sheikhs **شيوخ**, the Emiratis, and finally the majority of Emirati society (the 'non-locals').

In this thesis, Sheikhs are part of the Emiratis group, consisting of the Bedouins (the indigenous) as a majority, in addition to descendants by intermarriage, while Emiratis are either indigenous or obtained UAE citizenship – which indicates that some Emiratis are neither Sheikhs nor indigenous. Regardless of the grouping structure detailed above, Emirati nationals make up 11.48% of the entire population, while foreigners (or expats) make up 88.52% which stresses the importance of investigating 'whose heritage?' (Tunbridge, 1984) in this multifaceted demographic context. Each of these groups will be discussed in more detail in this section. Prior to the union, each tribe governed itself individually through an elected family, and no tribe held authority over

the others. Bin Huwaidin (2010) further argues that the tribal experience of governance through federation can facilitate new forms of governance (such as culture or tolerance) that are designed by individuals who share particularities of identity and belief in order to accomplish long-term relationship and objectives. When the UAE came into being as a federal country, this system allowed each Emirate to continue to be ruled by its ruling family, who maintained their individual authority and political status within their specific tribe; however, all seven Emirates now belong to one nation-state and are ruled by one president (Anthony, 1972).

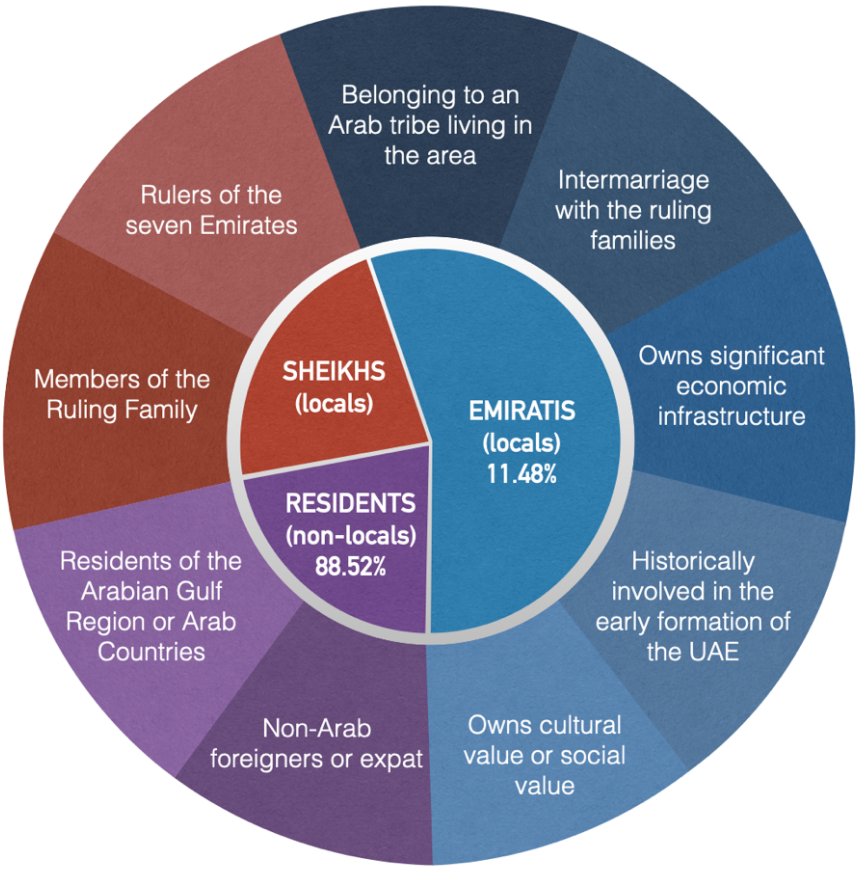


Figure 3.1*: *Sociopolitical grouping structure of the UAE. **Source**: Author, 2024.

AlSharekh (2007), Rugh (2007), Herb (2009) and Al Hebsi (2011) describe the system of government in the UAE as similar to a multi-federal monarchy, by which the president of the country is elected from among the rulers of the seven Emirates in an assembly known as the

Federal Supreme Council (FSC).[40] The first ruler of the UAE, Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, was elected by each ruling family of the seven Emirates, and chose to integrate the tribal system of tribal leaders into the modern state's institutional form (Kechichian, 1999; Yakheek, 2003; Reisz, 2008). This integration allowed the formation of a contemporary system of governance based on the symbolic aspects or values of the tribe (such as trust, loyalty, integrity, and leadership). While the new political system continues to retain some of its traditional values at the formal and informal levels, it has been able to keep pace with economic and social change (Heard-Bey, 2005; De Bel-Air, 2015; Falęcka, 2017).

The second group in the sociopolitical structure of the UAE is the Emiratis or the 'locals'. Part of this group are indigenous, however many people lived in the area prior to the union were not indigenous, and over time came to be considered part of the community. According to Viergever (1999), 'locals' are those people who are not the natives of a particular geographic location and come from a completely different ethnic background than the indigenous; while the latter are bounded by space and have lived for long periods of time within an oriented cultural context. Following years of cultural and social acclimatisation in an indigenous group, the locals come to adopt the moral and intellectual identity of the indigenous individuals. Over time, it becomes challenging to differentiate both peoples, given their similar cultural and social behaviours – however, among themselves, it is common to maintain a distinction (Viergever, 1999). In the sociocultural context of the UAE, the official understanding of 'local' refers to individuals (whether indigenous or from ethnic backgrounds) who obtained UAE nationality and are living in a shared geographical location, organised around shared values and associated with social cohesion.

[40] This federal council is the highest constitutional authority of the country, consisting of only the rulers of the seven Emirates. Retrieved from https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/the-uae-government/the-federal-supreme-council

According to Rugh (2007) and Ulrichsen (2016), the term 'Emirati' is a contemporary identification term that is taken from the country's name and given to every individual who obtained nationality during the union of the UAE in 1971, among other privileges such as free education, healthcare, an established career, and land ownership. This individual could be from an Arab tribe (as explained above) and therefore indigenous, or could have obtained nationality for a variety of reasons during or following the establishment of the UAE. In this light, Emiratis who belong to tribal roots are often the practitioners and bearers of local heritage. As such, they have greatly influenced the preservation and presentation of local intangible heritage that we are aware of today, specifically transmitting the language and the cultural process of local social practices including traditional performances and crafts. On the other hand, Emiratis who obtained nationality but were not originally from the region have helped to document the history of practices through surveying and photography, which were preserved in the national archive of the UAE. This documentation process links between how local intangible heritage used to be safeguarded and transmitted through a collective manner in the past, and how its meanings and values have shifted according to the present needs and interests of the nation-state.

The third group in the UAE consists of the 'non-locals'. This particular group forms the majority of Emirati society and includes 1) residents of the Arabian Gulf Region or Arab countries, and 2) non-Arab foreigners, also called international residents. It is worth noting that prior to the unification of the seven Emirates, these understandings of social classification did not exist, due to the recognition of the traditional tribal system. The way this tribal system functioned was that each tribe collectively elected their leader, and few outsiders were accepted into the tribe as members, mainly for security and welfare reasons. The tribal system continues to shape the lives of Emiratis following the sociopolitical transformation of the UAE. According to AlSuwaidi

(2018), the UAE's sociopolitical structure does not reflect a social classification system based on class, and terminologies such as 'aristocratic class' or 'working class' do not apply. Individuals or families within a tribe come to power by consultation between the heads of the families, who eventually pledge allegiance to the chosen person's family on behalf of the whole tribe (AlSuwaidi, 2018). The process of obtaining power is a common practice within the tribes of the UAE, both prior to and following the country's unification.

Prior to the discovery of oil, it seems that there was a close connection between the continuous and uninterrupted domination of the tribal structure (as the basis of society in the region), and the economic models that were available as a result of local conditions and the way the population used or managed their natural resources (Anthony, 1975). Taking into account the geographical conditions of the UAE, Al Hebsi (2011), reflecting on the particularities of the population, divides them into six main groups according to their environment: 1) Bedouins who live in the desert, 2) *Hadhar* **حضر** (the urbans) who live in towns in coastal areas, 3) people who live in agricultural areas, 4) the mountains-dwellers, 5) people who live on the islands, and 6) those who had migrated to other coastal countries of the Arabian Gulf Region and have returned to their lands in the UAE. Climate and geographical diversity are major factors that have shaped the different economic activities and the crafts associated with these activities. Despite the lack of resources and the harsh natural conditions, the diversification of the inhabitants of the UAE has allowed them to actively make use of the available resources in the development of their economic activities, including traditional cultural production and trade. The latter includes pearl diving, fishing, and trade in the coastal areas, while agriculture and livestock farming took place around the mountains and the oases (Al Hebsi, 2011; Hightower, 2016).

As much as the tribal foundation remains important in the Arabian Gulf (including the UAE), the importance of extended and closed tribal families has gradually weakened following the discovery of oil and the subsequent development of the oil industry. The oil boom resulted in the introduction of international commitments, modernisation, nationalism and formal education. This led to an increased demand for waged labour, not to mention the importing of a foreign workforce, which makes up more than 90% of the labouring population in the UAE (Thiollet, 2016). The job that a person holds has become a marker of an Emirati's social status, and perceptions about an individual's social level are related to their job type. For instance, an executive is entitled to generous income in addition to other social or political advantages, more than an artisan or a clerk. This change tends to shift the decision-making from the leader of the tribe to the head of each household. This is particularly true for tribal rules and customs, affecting the traditional aspects of the social, economic, and cultural ecosystem of the UAE and adherence to the values within a tribe, such as belonging, loyalty and obedience (AlTunaiji, 2018).

Traditional rules and customs are locally known as *Sana'* **سنع** which are derived from wider tribal linguistic and social particularities, called *Urf* **عُرف** (Al-Suwaidi, 1993; Makki, 2011; AlTunaiji, 2018). *Sana'* is more related to local practices of social engagement which require twofold responses: an action or response to a specific conversation or activity while preforming a traditional custom. *Urf* refers to 'the known' which are traditional customs that gained significant value over time in relation to local beliefs and ethics, and which are considered a 'taboo' to break. This shift has contributed to the development of a sense of 'independence' that was not common in previous generations, because such a social form was seen as risking the loosening of tribal bonds and power, and hence the security and wellbeing of the tribe. For instance, young couples no longer feel that they must stay within a tribe's protection for livelihood purposes, because the

creation of diverse job opportunities at various levels brought a secure income that can sustain their independence away from the collective lifestyle of the tribe.

This form of independence from the tribe has also resulted in the decline of many traditional social customs such as marrying a close member of the tribe as a necessary social bonding of different families within the tribal system (such as a first, second, or third cousin). Such personal choices may involve choosing a partner from a different ethnic background or social status, which is often viewed by the older generations of Emiratis as a factor that could weaken the sustainability of traditional cultural practices, such as the lack of understanding of how to practice traditional crafts. These social shifts have had an impact on the preservation of distinctive cultural practices within the tribes, including the need to sustain traditional social practices concerning craftsmanship techniques (such as weaving or braiding) as one of the main bases for making a living (Decoster et al, 2017).

Modernisation and Nationalism in the UAE

This section discusses how the forces of modernisation and nationalism situate UAE society (including the bearers of heritage) between the paradoxes of being distant from their past, while strengthening the visibility of intangible heritage through notions of heritagisation in relation to tourism. In addition, this section considers how the UAE's creative capital is no longer dependent on the country's trade and commercial assets (yet remains dominant), but rather on the cultural offerings that are based on the commodification of traditional cultural practices such as crafts and performances. The UAE offer illustrative examples of how cultural heritage is utilised to foster national pride and unity. However, it is crucial to critically examine the implications of these practices, including issues of authorised heritage, national identity, and state control. It also

demonstrates the difficulties facing the implementation of 'universal' understandings of intangible heritage to the UAE's build national identity on different local scales. The way that each of the seven Emirates have responded to these social changes is different, particularly due to the varied impact of the oil boom followed by notions of modernisation, specifically economic and industrial openness affiliated with business relations, migration, and urban developments (Bazoobandi, 2012).

In the broader context of nationalism in the region, the Arabian Gulf countries' efforts to leverage cultural heritage in nation-building are noteworthy, hence it is essential to critically examine the implications of these approaches (or pressures) and how they have affected processes of heritage selection towards building the UAE's national identity. In the Arabian Peninsula, including Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Oman, cultural heritage plays a central role in nation-building efforts, in particular, they have made concerted efforts to safeguard and promote their intangible heritage as a means of reinforcing national identity (Al Balushi, Butt & Al Siyabi, 2013; Al-Mulla, 2014; MacLean & Insoll, 2014; Lakshminarayanan, 2019).

One prominent example is the inclusion of different manifestations of cultural heritage in the national plans or visions of these countries, such as the Vision 2030[41] of Saudi Arabia. This plan not only focuses on local heritage, but also emphasises the presentation of Islamic and Arabic heritage in the region across three scales: local, national, and international. The annual *Janadriyah* **جنادرية** Festival is a local example and a key cultural event that showcases the kingdom's intangible heritage, featuring traditional music, dance, poetry, and crafts, and highlighting the diverse cultural practices of Saudi Arabia's regions (Long, 2005). As for the national and international efforts, a few are exemplified in the inclusion of elements in the 2003 Convention Lists. Inclusions consists

[41] Preserve and promote national heritage. Retrieved from https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/en/vision-2030/overview/a-vibrant-society/

of either shared intangible heritage such as *sadu* (Al-Ogayyel & Oskay, 2020) or distinctive ones that are only practiced in the country, such as *al-qatt al-asiri*[42] **القط العسيري** as seen in Figure 3.2 (below) – a form of traditional interior decoration in the houses of Asir provenance (Alamry, 2024). In addition to these efforts, official bodies that offer criteria for identifying these 'Saudi' intangible practices and which develop policies and means for their promotion or safeguarding such as the Heritage Commission have emerged (Alshehaby, 2024).



Figure 3.2: *Asiri woman painting al-qatt al-asiri.* **Source**: UNESCO, 2017.

Another example from the Arabian Peninsula that illustrates how modernisation has reshaped its cultural narratives within processes of heritage-making is Bahrain – which is focusing on reconstructing its heritage sites rather than the stories of past traditional practices. With its rich history as a trading hub, Alraouf (2010) discusses the 'reckless' attempts at restoration in a number of heritage sites in Bahrain, which have resulted in damage to what is locally perceived as the 'original' site, such as *Bab Al-Bahrain* **باب البحرين** (known as The Gate of Bahrain), shown in Figures 3.3 and 3.4 (below). This example indicates that heritagisation as a heritage-making process is about the use of the historical and tangible symbolic aspects of *Bab Al-Bahrain*, rather

[42] Inscribed in 2017, an ancient artistic form of interior decoration practiced only by Asiri women. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/al-qatt-al-asiri-female-traditional-interior-wall-decoration-in-asir-saudi-arabia-01261

than preserving the intangible practices that were the key motives for building this monument. In the late 1930s, the Bahraini government understood the importance of the trade in pearls and gold, in addition to the traditional Bahraini dhow-building, considering the country's geographic position surrounded by the Arabian Gulf. Initially, Richard Belgrave, the consultant to the Bahraini Emir, observed how trade acted as an economic driving force for the country, and developed the gate's design, which was constructed by local people with local materials. Completed in 1949, the building itself operated as the first customs house, while marking the entrance to the capital city's market.

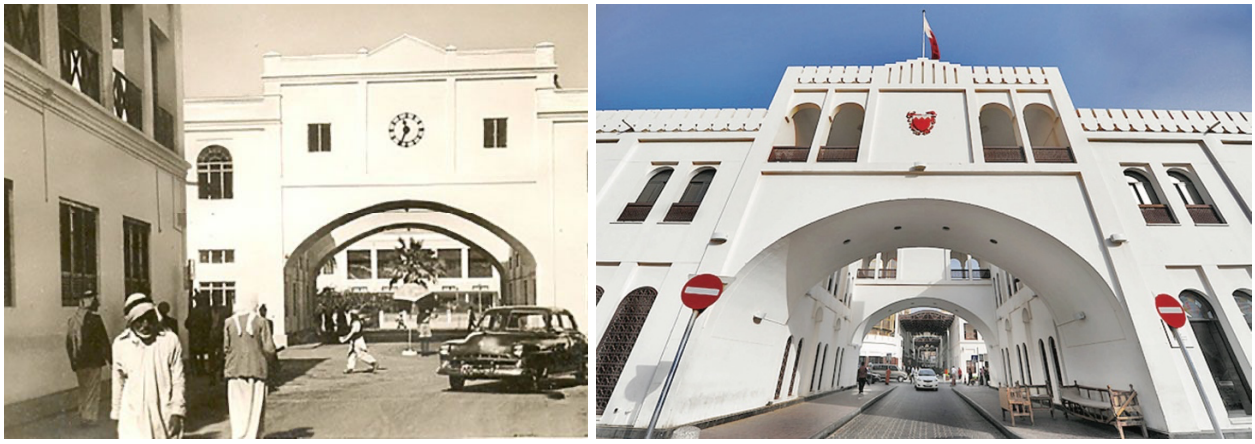


Figure 3.3/4: *The past and present of Bab Al-Bahrain.* **Source**: Alraouf, 2010.

Alraouf notes that final restoration reached its peak in the 1980s, and aimed not to recreate what once was historic, but to produce a form of coexistence with the present due to the urban development of the capital. Thus, the original gate was demolished and reconstructed with modern building materials in the centre of the capital. In other words, the historic gate that once stood at the harbour no longer exists, but the idea that it is an active cultural, touristic, and business space for local craftspeople and foreign traders remains. This type of heritage-making, or heritagisation, forms a kind of additional 'staged' heritage space to create the possibility of restoring Bahrain's tangible and intangible heritage. This experience raised the Bahraini government's awareness of

the importance of investigating what should be preserved from the past through more moderate restoration methods, in an attempt to reduce the effects of modernisation on the country's local heritage. Such promotion of a national identity in these modern nation-states often involves the strategic use of cultural heritage to foster a sense of pride and continuity among their local populace.

While the Arabian Gulf countries' efforts to leverage nation-building through cultural heritage are noteworthy, Ledstrup (2018) critically examines the influences and implications of these efforts in the UAE. In his book '*Nationalism and Nationhood in the United Arab Emirates*', Ledstrup delves into the complex fabric of nationalism within the UAE, examining how national identity is constructed and maintained in a relatively young nation marked by rapid modernisation and a diverse population. The author navigates through historical, political, and social lenses to unpack the mechanisms that underpin the UAE's national identity. Ledstrup provides a thorough historical backdrop, tracing the roots of the UAE's national identity from pre-unification to the present. The analysis is multi-faceted, incorporating political, social, and cultural dimensions, such as the inclusion of governmental speeches on national and local levels and educational curricula that incorporated local sociocultural teachings, strengthening the argument. For example, Ledstrup sheds light on the formation of the UAE in 1971, highlighting the significant sociopolitical transformation from a tribal system to the unification of the seven Emirates that continues to influence national identity today. The author further explores how the government, through policies and cultural heritage symbols, cultivates a sense of unity and belonging among its individual emirates, exemplified in the role of national and cultural celebrations to reinforce a selection of cultural heritage elements in showcasing national identity. This historical context is crucial for understanding the contemporary expressions of nationalism in the UAE and how they

are deeply intertwined with the nation's past (as discussed earlier in this chapter), which is pivotal in understanding the dynamics of nationalism in a highly diverse society.

Over the past fifty years, as Guéraiche (2016) emphasises, the extraordinary growth of the economy and industry in the UAE, as well as social change, is due to the regional and international-related development that Abu Dhabi and Dubai have experienced. At the same time, the nation is, to some extent, bound by its religious beliefs and traditional values, which remain evident today in all aspects of life (Heard-Bey, 2005; Schwaighofer, 2014; Wakefield, 2016). Between the 1960s and the 1980s, aerial images that were captured before the discovery of oil reveal the geography of the Arabian Gulf countries, showing a scarcely populated, forgotten corner of the Arabian Peninsula desert (Aslan & AlAssi, 2016).

Today, mapping the same locations shows a dramatic transformation of both the landscape and the urban skyline – from desert to industry,[43] and from modest lifestyles to luxurious societies.[44] For instance, Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Sharjah have been heavily affected by modernisation, being the centre of diplomatic attention and economic interest globally for a variety of reasons, including large-scale urban developments,[45] different types of tourism and commerce,[46] and international relations (Al-Abed, Vine & Hellyer, 2005; Herb, 2014). Following the discovery of oil, these three Emirates account for the biggest share of the oil industry, in particular Abu Dhabi, as the largest oil deposits are on its lands. Hence, they enjoy bigger populations and improved infrastructures, which has played a role in diluting the process of the transmission of

[43] NASA's space documentation of Dubai's Transformation in 34 Years. Retrieved from https://gulfnews.com/uae/look-nasa-shows-dubais-34-year-change-1.2237907
[44] Abu Dhabi's Transformation from Space from 1980-2010. Retrieved from https://www.thenational.ae/uae/environment/in-pictures-abu-dhabi-s-transformation-from-space-1.362958
[45] Reflections of urban developments in the UAE in fifty years. Retrieved from https://www.moec.gov.ae/en/explore-the-uae
[46] Tourism and commerce consist of variety of types such as businesses, cultural heritage, education, entertainment, international events, medical and wellness. Retrieved from https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/visiting-and-exploring-the-uae/travel-and-tourism

traditional practices of the indigenous people (López Reus, El Amrousi & Paleologos, 2020). For instance, the economic and urban development, accompanied by modernisation, encouraged many of the Bedouin tribes to move from the harsh life of the desert to the city. They have left behind traditional practices such as herding and weaving that no longer have the same meaning or value in the city.

In the case of the other Emirates – Ajman, Um Al-Quwain, Ras Al-Khaimah, and Fujairah – the effects of modernisation have been less dramatic, not because their governments had no interest in economic openness or the oil industry, but due to 1) their governments' interest in preserving their linguistic and social particularities; and 2) increased awareness of the importance of preserving their people's extended families and tribal networks, and transmitting the meaning and values of their traditional practices to next generations (Herb, 2014; MacLean, 2017). This recognition of the importance of maintaining the social fabric also related to the language used in transmitting the knowledge on intangible heritage, which is an essential component of identity as it affects and contributes to the overall heritage-making process. Therefore, this cultural process helped the conservation and strengthening of the cultural identity of these Emirates, including what they perceive as 'authentic' in their intangible heritage practices.

In terms of the UAE's population, modernisation facilitated a dramatic increase in population through migration with many having come from the Gulf Countries Council (GCC), the Middle East, South-East Asia, and Europe and the United States, as such creating a significant cultural diversity among its population. In the UAE, the indigenous people are identified as a segment of the Emirati society in terms of population, which includes the Sheikhs, however while they are a minority, they retain dominant political control and economic influence (Suliman & Hayat, 2011; Ulrichsen, 2016). Each Emirate decides and adopts what fits or works best for its

own interests and needs – whether for its government, its local and international status, or its economic or societal sustainability and prosperity. For instance, to encourage the country as a cultural destination in the Middle East, the hospitality, tourism, and cultural industries in particular have developed in the past decade (Schwaighofer, 2014), particularly in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, and Ras Al-Khaimah, where 5.2% of the total gross domestic product (GDP) in 2016 came from travel and tourism alone.[47] The effects on the UAE's local intangible heritage of such a rapid move to a global economy and modernised society are visible, but were not identified or addressed as a need for the safeguarding of its traditional practices from commodity interests until the implementation of the 2003 Convention.

As a result of the shifts relating to modernisation and related cross-cultural influences such as trade and western imperialism, the 'national identity' of the UAE has always been under pressure, and has had to work to be sustained and preserved. Hence, one can ask, what and who determines the making of this identity? Ragab El-Ghannam (2001) and Al-Mansoori (2004) stress that the intensified processes of modernisation stimulate reactions among the Arabian Gulf countries, who seek to preserve their identity through transmitting traditional cultural knowledge and social practices. Prior to the oil boom, across the Arabian Peninsula as a whole (including where the UAE is located today), 'identity' as a concept by itself was articulated between the local people of the region through 'shared' religion, beliefs, language, customs, and values, and was expressed in the forms of courtesy, generosity in hospitality, and – most importantly – loyalty to their leaders and peers as tribes (Heard-Bey, 2017). Langham & Barker (2016) examine how modernisation has the effect of bringing together the local communities because of their shared traditional practices. Similarly, Zaidan (2019) argues that this aim to preserve intangible heritage

[47] Travel and Tourism in the UAE https://government.ae/en/information-and-services/visiting-and-exploring-the-uae/travel-and-tourism

knowledge in the context of a modernised movement (such as the cultural industries) is the most realistic model for safeguarding and promoting traditional expressions and practices. It also takes a dominant role in constructing what is perceived as intangible heritage in the context of international recognition (Zaidan, 2019).

Knowledge-sharing is important in the process of preserving intangible heritage. In the UAE, a study was conducted by Ahmad and Daghfous (2010) examining attitudes towards knowledge-sharing. Results showed that within the indigenous community, people were unlikely to participate in the knowledge network because knowledge is considered to be a form of power – and therefore not something to be shared. Applied to the indigenous community, this suggests that the role of cultural industries in the nationalism context would perhaps shift the role and value of knowledge-sharing within one's tribal, local, national, or regional context. In this vein, Mirgani (2017) explains that indigenous practices within the local communities can be understood as traditional knowledge that represents unique cultural practices and production, which are not necessarily commodified or heritagised, as they are difficult to quantify and open to exploitation if articulated irresponsibly. While the intangible aspects such as knowledge and skills may not enter the market, their products often reflect a heritage-making process that contributes to specific domains of cultural industries related to tourism. Thus, international cultural organisations such as UNESCO are often interested in acquiring data on the scale of this production (Mirgani, 2017).

The cultural industries are currently growing within the Middle East (including the Arabian Gulf Region), where intangible heritage, as one of the domains of the cultural industries, is often perceived as form of building national identity (Hazbun, 2004). In order to understand how and in what manner the policies of cultural industries have affected the Middle East, it is useful to reflect on a few sociocultural discussions surrounding this phenomenon. Lin and Tain-Dow (2015)

examine the value of cultural industries in terms of the development of human creativity and the sociopolitical shifts that occur under its cultural domains (as detailed in Chapter 2). According to their findings, the cultural industries often have an impact on the creative economy of a country; however, the concept of 'creative economy' also implies cross-cultural effects on a country's traditions and social values. According to Lin and Tain-Dow (2015), the creative economy is an evolving concept that adds or increases value, specifically economic value, to different ideas or practices – such as the idea of the cultural offerings in tourism that ranges between traditional culinary aspects to traditional experiences of heritage as a commodity. Adding an economic value to cultural practices contributes to the overall GDP of a country that relies significantly on cultural and heritage tourism, therefore enhancing the country's nation brand index in the cultural heritage domain.

Harabi (2009) offers a similar sociopolitical perspective on the effects that cultural industries have had and continue to have in the Arab context. Harabi specifically discusses the cultural industries' contribution, including its creative economy, to a nation-state's GDP, trade, and employment based on five case studies: Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon. He argues that due to the economic contribution of the cultural industries, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region should consider adapting a democratic approach to leadership and upgrade their orthodox forms of governance while embracing and promoting cultural diversity (Harabi, 2009). In the context of the Arabian Gulf countries, and taking Saudi Arabia as an example, Topham (1986) notes that the early understandings of creative economic alternatives that flourished in the 1950s were based on heritage production concerning traditional Saudi crafts, yet understandings of heritagisation began in the late 1970s (Topham, 1986). Similarly, Iqbal (2011) discusses the continued efforts in Saudi Arabia to find sustainable economic alternatives to the oil-

dependent industries; and to create and develop a national workforce based on innovation, technology, e-commerce, tourism, and heritage. In Iqbal's research on technological and institutional approaches in the country, the author seems to suggest that Arabian Gulf countries would be more creatively consistent with the rest of the developed world if they adapted westernised best practices or models of governance and economy (Iqbal, 2011). Sheikh, Newman, and Al Azzeh (2013) argue that the lack of democratic civil engagement in Middle East countries contributes directly to their institutional decline in terms of cultural heritage. Sheikh et al. argue that Arab countries would have a better understanding of the cultural industries by involving their local communities; therefore, they would benefit from international cultural policies.

While the views of the authors (Topham, 1986; Harabi, 2009; Iqbal, 2011; Sheikh et al., 2013) mentioned here reflect an institutional understanding of the cultural industries, their statements raise questions about what the cultural industries mean to the artisans, the cultural performers, and the talented individuals of the Middle East. In this context, O'Brien (2013) observes that modernisation-induced values motivate those who do not have the knowledge or skills to gain profit from this cultural economic paradigm, in which cultural institutions operate independently of direct government control. For example, the subcontracting of cultural commodities and services to developing countries has created instability in employment for the communities that are known for their heritage production in the UK. While it may be difficult to determine how O'Brien's (2013) argument can be applied across the Arabian Gulf Region, (given the sensitivities of history, culture, heritage, beliefs, and religion), what O'Brien refers to is the impact of western capitalist values on the indigenous and local communities in the Arab world, such as trade disputes, changes in the market and professions, and community-driven cultural initiatives (O'Brien, 2007). Hazbun (2004), Corner & Harvey (2005), and Nic Craith (2007)

similarly observe how these westernised values (regarded as the foundations of modernisation) naturally entail a form of foreign imperialism concerning local cultural heritage, even if it falls within the cultural domains of cultural industries. Such topics are relevant to the UAE – specifically Dubai, as it has recently become the focal point of cultural industries' interest in the Middle East, having established an infrastructure for the growth of cultural industries over the last decade, compared to its Arabian Gulf peers.

Furthermore, the multicultural and economic openness of the UAE to the world resulted in the availability of cultural items from abroad, including mass-produced crafts from external markets that could be bought cheaply and with less production effort than local products. These cultural heritage franchises, mainly from East Asian countries, involve importing artificial objects which are copies of the local communities' cultural production, and selling them in local markets as local products. This led to a change in the cultural and social representations of heritage (including intangible heritage identity loss), and presents an ongoing challenge to the Emiratis who practice traditional social performances or crafts. This new situation has resulted in decreased demand for what is known as intangible heritage practices or products by the local communities, because of the market's shifting originality and quality. Consequently, the prices of raw materials have significantly increased, due to the difficulty in obtaining these materials (such as getting the proper fur or fronds for weaving) and the availability of alternative manufactured ones, affecting the effort and time required for local traditional practices, as well as their distinguished quality of production. While the traditional intangible aspects such as knowledge, material or skills[48] may not enter the market, their products often reflect a heritage-making process that contributes to specific domains of cultural industries related to tourism.

[48] Examples include diverse traditional practices and the production of medicine, textiles, musical instruments, and crafting equipment.

Indeed, the people of UAE have certainly been affected by modernisation, which has become part of their everyday practice that tensions with local traditions; however, this does not necessarily imply that they have easily embraced modernisation and its detrimental consequences to their cultural identity. One aspect of modernity could be the revival or heritagisation of a tradition based on how local communities embrace it: Toth (2018) argues that to study the heritage identity of the UAE is to understand its people first. Toth discusses the how the UAE's cultural practices and social traditions can be viewed by non-locals living in the UAE, who may see what they want to see. However, there is also the real flow of the local Emiratis' collective memories and cultural events which have continued to shape and define the character of the local Emirati space, where social ties and a sense of place are highly valued (Toth, 2018).

Similar to Toth (2018), El-Sokari et al. (2013) suggests looking beyond the new construction of metropolitan spaces and other aspects of commodification to see what the Emirates and its people have become. Bristol-Rhys (2018) focuses on the intangible aspects of heritage that are embedded in the local people of the UAE, which is key for safeguarding traditional social and cultural practices. Under the surface of modernisation in the UAE lie the custodians of heritage, mainly the indigenous people, who revive traditional cultural practices in order to present their meanings and values, and these practices can be acknowledge and placed within the international community of universal heritage. Other government programmes train the youth as cultural ambassadors, aiming to develop a social awareness among the Emiratis as leading actors in maintaining the visibility of their national heritage identity (both the tangible and intangible aspects), while maintaining the local flavour of 'Emirati cultural life' (Van Horne & Huang, 2011). There is thus a critical need for such awareness in a manner that will not only improve cultural governance and enhance the accountability of decision-makers, but which will also ensure the

active participation of local communities in the process of safeguarding heritage (Al Naboodah, 2011).

With the top-down approach, focusing on state-led initiatives, there is a notable lack of grassroots perspectives that underplay underlying tensions and dissenting voices within the society. Erskine-Loftus, Al-Mulla & Hightower (2016) critically examine the motivations behind state-sponsored heritage projects, questioning the authenticity and inclusiveness of the national narratives being promoted. Etihad museum (see Introduction Chapter) an example in this context which critiques the portrayal of the UAE's rapid modernisation throughout the sociopolitical development of the nation, suggesting that the focus on showcasing industrial, technological, and urban achievements sometimes overshadows the cultural contributions and experiences of the local community manifested in their customs, heritage, and traditions. One significant concern the authors highlighted is the influence of authorised heritage and the exclusion of some cultural practices or traditions in the process of nation-building (Erskine-Loftus, Al-Mulla & Hightower, 2016). The emphasis on certain aspects of intangible heritage may marginalise or exclude other narratives that are equally important to the nation's history. This selective process often creates a standardised national identity: an institutionalised approach in defining and managing cultural heritage, that overlooks the cultural distinctiveness within the diversity of a modern nation (Hodgkin & Radstone, 2003).

Institutionalising Intangible Heritage in the UAE

This section illustrates the role of the indigenous people in the process of safeguarding the UAE's intangible heritage, mainly impact of modernisation in the context of nationalism. Reflecting on the safeguarding process in the UAE is important because it helps to understand the

need for institutionalising intangible heritage that developed into a heritage-making process, including the heritagisation and commodification of traditional cultural practices. In relation to the diversity of Emirati society, the discourse of the UAE's leadership (from the founders to the current rulers) has emphasised honouring their people's social fabric and unity; and symbolically incorporating their traditions and historical heritage into the UAE's national identity.

As a matter of identification, 'indigenous' in relation to traditional social practices and craftsmanship is often more useful than 'local', because it is critical to emphasise the existence of indigenous groups among the local communities in some countries, in particular if these communities consist of tribal structures, such as in the majority of the Middle East (Hobbs, 2017). Lawson and Al Naboodah (2008) discuss the importance of the social fabric in forming Emirati intangible heritage identity, describing it as a set of processes in which cultural processes and social histories are shared between and across the Emirates, and become subject to exchanges, collaborations, and forms of governance. They also discuss how language is an integral factor in the identification of local cultural practices. The authors' recognition of the dissemination of intangible heritage as a form of dimensional and cultural governance means it can legitimise a form of 'ownership' of the knowledge and skills associated with traditional practices, which are an embedded aspect within the bearers of intangible heritage.

Archiving the knowledge, skills, and works of intangible heritage can be inspirational and influential for emerging artists, cultural activists, or artisans, if safeguarded for sustainability purposes. In this respect, Facchini, Jaeck and Bouhaddioui (2021) stress the role of the national heritage archives and their impact on maintaining traditional knowledge as a drive for social development and individual creativity in a diverse multicultural society such as the UAE. Therefore, attempts to understand intangible heritage through proper knowledge transfer requires

not only local recognition in each Emirate, but also national awareness – which could be problematic if oriented around authorised heritage as a bridge between the government and the Emirati society, including its indigenous people. In the UAE, the distribution of knowledge is often embedded with policy decisions, especially concerning social values, and these decisions are often conveyed by the cultural organisations[49] within the different Emirates (Bin Huwaidin, 2010; Grincheva, 2016). Here, Armbrecht underlines how social values follow the character of a cultural organisation not only as the link between the decision-makers and Emirati society, but as an active manager in the construction or destruction of what the Emiratis, including the indigenous people, value as heritage. Armbrecht emphasises that it is not the existence of museums or a heritage centre that initiates these values; rather, they exist in the Emirati society, and these social values keep its people connected to their cultural identity and practices (Armbrecht, 2014).

In the UAE, Melodena et al. (2019) investigate the professional dimension mentioned above, which includes the professional and social conditions attached to local craftsmanship practices. These conditions consist of a set of cultural aspects and ethics that are recognised as sustaining the continuity of a particular craft. As Whyte (2018) explains, traditional knowledge is embodied: therefore, a skill is something that is learned mainly as a cultural process through observation, instruction, and repetition. Thus, traditional knowledge is inclusive, and is usually embedded in the bearers of traditional cultural practices and the common stories that led to the development of a craft between the members of the tribe. Whyte (2018) adds that these stories, which have often been handed down for generations, also explain the consistent relationship

[49] Here, the cultural organisations refer to institutions such as the Ministry of Culture and Youth as a federal body, or local authorities that belong to different Emirates such as the Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism (Abu Dhabi Culture) and Dubai Culture and Arts Authority (Dubai Culture).

between the traditional knowledge of the craft and the meanings and values of the same traditional practice that could be utilised under the linguistic and social particularities.

In terms of understanding, practising, and utilising a craft, this type of knowledge transfer takes place through the indigenous group's dialect within a common language. Traditional craftsmanship, such as the *sadu* سدو philosophy and practice of weaving, provide a good example to illustrate this cultural process (Robertson, 2016; Baird, 2021). In Arabic, *sadu* means 'what is woven in a horizontal pattern', and describes an ancient hand-weaving technique, formed mainly of geometrical shapes by the Bedouins, who draw inspiration from their desert surroundings. *Sadu* is considered an established traditional craft in the Arabian Gulf Region – Kuwait,[50] Saudi Arabia,[51] Qatar, and the UAE (AlSabah, 2006; Al-Ogayyel and Oskay, 2021). AlSabah (2006), Al-Ogayyel and Oskay (2021) suggest that the cultural aspects safeguarded and transmitted by the Bedouins incorporate the country's heritage identity, which emphasises the direct involvement of people (the indigenous people in particular), and as such contributes to set the framework for developing a relevant cultural policy. At the same time, the ownership of traditional knowledge ethically belongs to the bearers of intangible heritage as a form of intellectual property. Highlighting the inscription of *sadu* in the Urgent Safeguarding List[52] is important because the endangered condition of this craft has instigated cultural governance in the UAE, including the development of intangible heritage institutional framework and policymaking processes. In this light, the UAE initiated its first nomination experience as part of the 2003 Convention by inscribing *sadu* craft in its Urgent Safeguarding List.

[50] *Sadu* Weaving Cooperative Society. Retrieved from https://www.alsadu.org.kw/
[51] 'Fiber and leather products of the Juhena Tribe of Saudi Arabia.' Retrieved from http://www.beduinweaving.com/printarchive/TSA_FiberAndLeatherProducts.pdf
[52] *Sadu* inscription on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding in 2011. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/USL/al-sadu-traditional-weaving-skills-in-the-united-arab-emirates-00517

As part of the process of nominating this particular craft for the Urgent Safeguarding List, *sadu* reflected collective practice as the most basic concept of ownership for Emirati Bedouins as an indigenous group, and for women in particular. *Sadu* weaving is seen as 'collective' because it requires a purpose behind the chosen pattern for a particular item (such as rugs, camel saddles or clothes, among other products) which 'must' be familiar for other members of the same tribe. In other words, the weaving process could be continued by another practitioner who recognises the initiated pattern, thus completing this particular geometrical shape by dyeing the threads with specific colours. The process of *sadu* weaving often involves the weavers reciting poetry together, telling stories, and memorising lullabies, alongside a high level of focus, patience, and endurance. The maintenance of this complex process is precisely why it needed urgent safeguarding measures, because without institutionalised cultural governance to maintain the practice of this complex craft, it is challenging to attain the knowledge and skills required – which includes the transmission of this collective knowledge from one generation to the next between members of the indigenous and the local communities of the Emirati society. An example of such community-based initiative is *Sougha*[53] صوغة, the first state-subsidised approach to empowering Emirati women in Bedouin communities in different parts of the UAE, as shown in Figure 3.5 (below). This initiative is active since 2009 in over 200 households across the country and assists in the safeguarding of *sadu*, among other traditional local crafts, by 1) funding workshops to transfer the knowledge and skills of these traditional cultural practices from the Bedouins to the next generations of Emiratis in a consistent matter, and 2) investing in the commodity of the crafts' production of which the practitioners are granted a share from this investment (Al Nahyan & Balakrishnan, 2016, 2018).

[53] In the local dialect, this literally means a traveller's gift or souvenir. Even though this initiative significantly supports heritage practitioners across the UAE, it is not inscribed in the Safeguarding Practices List of the 2003 Convention. Retrieved from https://www.artisansatheart.org/artisans/sougha/



Figure 3.5: *The home bases of Sougha's artisans.*

Source: Author, 2024, based on Al Nahyan & Balakrishnan, 2018.

In this context of sustaining traditional craft knowledge, the Dubai government, represented by the Dubai Culture and Arts Authority (DCAA), launched its first traditional handicraft strategy in 2019.[54] This strategy lays the foundation for strengthening the safeguarding of traditional craftsmanship knowledge and skills, while ensuring its sustainability throughout the local communities of the Emirate. The strategy builds on a set of capacity-building approaches for safeguarding a number of local crafts (including *sadu*), while developing creativity within the Emirate's cultural industries by encouraging the younger generations to become involved in their intangible heritage culturally, socially, and economically. Dubai Culture's traditional handicraft

[54] Emirati Traditional Handicrafts Strategy (2019). Retrieved from http://wam.ae/en/details/1395302743932

strategy is considered to be the first step towards achieving a safeguarding approach in documenting, inventorying, and practising the local intangible heritage of Dubai. These safeguarding measures require the participation of Emirati society from whom legitimacy, authority, and accountability derive, especially by involving Emirati heritage practitioners in developing these cultural policies. The participation of the indigenous people or local communities is a key requirement in UNESCO's policy, including the 2003 Convention, which emphasises the reliability of a traditional cultural practice that is overseen by an authorised body such as the government (UNESCO, 2018). This requirement can also be seen in Dubai's traditional handicraft strategy, which encourages the bearers of intangible heritage to be engaged and present in the institutionalised discourse of Emirate's intangible heritage, which is represented by Dubai Culture.

According to Sheehan et al. (2015), there are other forms of institutionalised approach to heritage in the UAE. In 2011, the UAE inscribed the archaeological and oasis sites of Al-Ain[55] **العين** city in UNESCO's World Heritage List. Notably, during the same year (2011), the UAE's focus shifted from tangible to intangible heritage, as the 2003 Convention safeguarding measures began to be implemented. In total, fifteen elements have been inscribed on the List since then: two on the Urgent Safeguarding Lists and thirteen on the Representative List (see Figure 1.1. in Introduction Chapter). This difference in the type of elements being inscription is due to: 1) the lack of awareness of the heavy normative work to validate the 'endangered' case to the continuity of an element when working on the nomination file of the Urgent Safeguarding List, and 2) ten of the thirteen elements in the Representative List are multinational files with other member-states, which strongly supports the idea of shared (or universal) intangible heritage that the 2003 Convention promotes. As for the World Heritage List, the reason why Al-Ain sites are the only

[55] The archaeological cluster of Al-Ain (the spring), a town located in Abu Dhabi, consists of mountains and oases such as *Hafit* **حفيت**, *Hili* **هيلي**, and *Bidaa Bint Saud* **بدع بنت سعود**. Retrieved from https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1343/

tangible heritage inscribed is because across the country, most of the historic buildings, monuments, sites, or landscapes have either been demolished for urban development, restored poorly to maintain a place's identity, heritagised for commodity and tourism purposes, or located on potential oil reservoirs (Aslan & AlAssi, 2016) and the latter is considered more important to preserve, being a natural resource that drives the country's economy and financial stability. Several experts in the archaeological and historic urban heritage of the Arabian Gulf Region such as Salah Ouf (2001), Hadjri and Boussaa, (2007), Radoine (2013), Boussaa (2014a), Ricca (2018), and Assi (2022) have investigated the architectural designs and motifs of the UAE, which are mostly inspired by local settings or affected by acculturation. For example, many of the motifs are inspired by natural elements of the land and sea such as corals, palm trees, falcons, or the Arabian oryx. Other motifs were brought by the cultural exchange of trade from other nations such as Iran, Iraq, and India.

Sharjah is a useful example because of its unique central geographic location in relation to the seven Emirates. It has continuously managed to develop and enhance its urban heritage identity due to the comparatively well-preserved raw materials, such as corals and palm tree trunks, of the old heritage buildings. The restoration and preservation of historic buildings allows them to be reused as inspiration in cultural and heritage events. According to Radoine (2013), the leadership of Sharjah is determined to safeguard both its cultural heritage and social fabric, and it has traditionally been the most well-preserved of all the UAE's emirates. Through careful consideration and planning, its government has fostered and promoted the Emirate's history and heritage, and the educational domains of the cultural industries. Radoine (2013) highlight that the city has done much to create visual reminders of its history and heritage by incorporating

traditional architecture into cutting-edge contemporary urban designs and other significant structures.

Aesthetics, history, or materiality are not the only criteria for valuing heritage in the UAE. Al Naboodah (2011), Langham and Barker (2016) and Melhem (2019) note that the linguistic and social particularities of intangible heritage are considered an integral part of 'Emirati identity' because they represent symbolic meanings and values to the local communities, and a sense of belonging in a contemporary nation-state. These aspects include religious beliefs, language, traditional knowledge and skills, and related customs, objects, crafts, and places (Al Naboodah, 2011; Langham & Barker, 2016; Melhem, 2019). These intangible values connote the opposite of the predominant notion of Western authorised heritage that mainly values the tangible aspects of heritage such as historical monuments, buildings and artifacts. The large-scale economic, sociopolitical and urban transformation in the UAE has shown the need for urgent measures to protect its intangible heritage, which have been undertaken since 2011, beginning with the inscription of *sadu* as the first element inscribed in the 2003 Convention.

To some extent, the international cultural commitments, including UNESCO's understandings of universal heritage, have put the UAE's government in a situation of imposing these understandings on Emirati society, including the indigenous people. The reason behind this imposition is that the government was not aware of the safeguarding measures of intangible heritage in the implementation processes of these cultural policies. This awareness emerged through 1) the recognition of the importance of capacity-building workshops in the documentation and inventorying of tangible and intangible heritage,[56] and 2) the process of enhancing the UAE's

[56] Intangible heritage capacity-building consists of workshops on the process of implementing the 2003 Convention and community-based inventorying at a national level. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/news/ich-capacity building-begins-in-dubai-00152 , https://ich.unesco.org/en/news/dubai-is-strengthening-its-inventorying-capacity 00165 and https://ich.unesco.org/en/news/abu-dhabi-strengthens-its-capacities-to-inventory-living-heritage-13210

cultural heritage visibility in global indexes such as the 'nation brand', which includes cultural heritage as one of its main dimensions. Consequently, the UAE government has invested generous budgeting to establish national heritage inventories, while setting up heritage departments across the local cultural institutions[57] in order to facilitate the documentation and inscription processes of 'Emirati' intangible heritage elements in the Representative Lists of the 2003 Convention.

These safeguarding efforts often do not make much of a difference to the majority of the indigenous communities in the UAE, especially those located in the rural southwest, north, and northeast of the country. According to Hurriez (2002), the indigenous communities in the rural areas of the UAE have continued their intangible traditions prior to and after the formation of the UAE as a nation-state with diverse institutionalised cultural polices, including heritage. Therefore, heritage policies that call for safeguarding measures for threatened traditional practices are considered unnecessary to the indigenous people in the context of their tribal (or collective) and social upbringing. In this aspect, many traditions (including the intangible aspects of heritage) are commonly practised by Emirati individuals or groups (Hurriez, 2002). In this understanding of intangible practices, Skounti states that 'there is no one intangible cultural heritage, there is a wide spectrum, ranging from the non-material dimension of a material heritage element (site, monument, object) to the most intangible aspect (tale, poem, song, musical note, prayer, scent, perfume, etc.' (2009, p. 77).

To demonstrate Hurriez's (2002) and Skounti's (2009) understandings of the wide spectrum of intangible heritage, an example can be given here. Friday is considered a religious day for

[57] Such as the Departments of 'Tangible and Intangible Heritage' and 'National Identity' at the Ministry of Culture (the official representative of national identity in the UAE), the Department of Intangible Heritage at Abu Dhabi Culture, the Department of Cultural and Heritage Programs at Dubai Culture, and the Heritage Institute of Sharjah. Retrieved from https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/culture/arab-and-islamic-heritage

Muslims according to *Shari'a*[58] **شريعة** and on this day, a particular prayer is performed at noon on Fridays, called *Salat Al-Jumu'ah* **صلاة الجمعة**, the Friday Prayer (Saleh, 1994; Gugolz, 1996; Nurmohamed, 2020). In the UAE, according to AlTunaiji (2018), there is a pattern of intangible aspects associated with Fridays that are part of the wider context of *Sana'* and commonly practiced in local households in threefold: religious, social, and cultural practices. These customs vary from honouring your parents or grandparents while asking for their blessings, to preparing snacks for unexpected guests prior to prayer time (mainly female visitors coming for friendly chats), to spreading *bukhoor*[59] **بخور** around the guest area as a welcoming gesture for them (or a gesture for a polite send-off). Over time, this cultural process constructs a collective traditional discourse among the Emiratis that is often passed on to next generations, and which is often difficult to deconstruct. However, a major turning point occurred in 2022 when the UAE government officially announced that Fridays were no longer recognised as a formal religious holiday through adjusting the working hours on Fridays in alignment with the international market[60] (Kim, 2021). This announcement has clearly created a significant disruption of the collective traditional discourse associated with Fridays prior to the time for prayer, which caused some distress in local households as some of their members, specifically the older generations, expressed the sense that 'it just feels so wrong'.[61]

Mathew (2021) notes that the only Emirate that does not apply this decision is Sharjah, as each local Emirate possesses the constitutional authority to decide what is best for its interests.

[58] The basis for every regulation and the primary source of domestic law in the UAE and in the other Arabian Gulf countries.
[59] In local dialect, *bukhoor* is a traditional incense that results from burning fragments of agarwood (known as Oud **عود**) that are either dry, soaked in perfume oil, or processed into round-shaped drops of fragrant paste.
[60] This decision is to facilitate communication with international contacts for easier and flexible business exchange for the country – mainly in the tourism, hospitality, banking, stock-market, and airline sectors.
[61] Reported by the Agence France-Presse in Dubai to The Guardian News. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jan/07/it-just-feels-so-wrong-uae-works-on-friday-for-first-time

Supported by a survey conducted by Sharjah's Consultant Council, 'the local community' advocated Fridays continuing to be a holiday in respect of the social fabric and traditions of the local community within its borders (Al Amir, 2021). The Friday example in the UAE reflects how collective cultural and traditional practices have no value when an authorised discourse is implemented. Nevertheless, the majority of Emiratis decided to continue their Friday collective traditions as part of their intangible heritage, understanding it as form of self-identification and a collective way of life. As discussed in Chapter 2, Skounti defines the material dimension of intangible heritage as 'both fragile and resilient' (2009, p. 78). The Friday example clearly demonstrates how intangible heritage can be both, given its collective traditions. On the one hand, the fragile aspect is shown in the official dismissal of features of intangible heritage practices that are performed on this day due to the politics of economic development, and therefore Fridays come to be treated as a commodity through the construction of a new value for this day. On the other hand, the resilient aspect demonstrates the local communities' 'national consciousness' as described by Harvey (2001), as they work to maintain what they perceive as sociocultural practice that exemplifies meaning and value.

Considering what should be preserved or enhanced to restore the community's awareness, the UAE has encouraged the educational role of cultural heritage[62] to fit within the wider Arabian Gulf bloc, and with the linkages to the world beyond (Sowa & De La Vega, 2008). However, this work has been stymied by a gap in the systematic documentation examining and identifying relevant practices of safeguarding intangible heritage to reduce the risks of their loss, including political conflicts or war. In recognition of this gap, the work to develop a consistent documentation process

[62] Education concerning the UAE's culture and heritage is incorporated into schools, with programming focussing on language, history, cultural values, heritage, citizenship, and community. Retrieved from https://www.thenational.ae/uae/uae-heritage-and-culture-to-be-integrated-into-classroom-teaching-1.5518

for intangible heritage is a clear example of cooperative efforts deployed by both the government and Emirati society in this field. Here, Al Nahyan (the founder of the UAE) expressed his deep interest in instilling the value of safeguarding traditional handicrafts for the younger generations by practicing and investing in Emirati cultural heritage. He empowered the execution of intangible heritage preservation plans to revive and protect Emirati national identity, along with his determination to involve women in these national plans to support the continuity of traditional crafts. His endorsement led to the opening of the first women's handicraft centre[63] in 1978 under the supervision of the General Women's Union, demonstrating his early and profound interest. This led to the establishment of a several handicraft training centres across the UAE – detailed in Chapters 5 and 6 – and the allocation of workshops to selected elements of local intangible heritage such as *sadu* weaving, *talli* **تلي** traditional embroidery, and *saff al-khous* **سف الخوص** traditional palm frond braiding, in addition to workshops for *fakhar* **فخار** pottery-making, falconry, and traditional performances (Hilal, Kennet & Humble, 2015; Hadjinicolaou, 2021).

In his chapter on 'Emirati government and society', Etheredge (2011) notes the seven Emirates' involvement in supporting and promoting national heritage locally and internationally through links between the past, present, and future. This process is demonstrated within the discourse of authorised heritage in the UAE and in Emirati sociocultural life. This may be complemented by the emergence of cultural policies (such as the national heritage protection laws) which include the inscription of intangible heritage elements in the 2003 Convention, and cultural industries' policies in areas of intellectual property and cultural governance (Etheredge, 2011). Such awareness has resulted in Emiri decrees concerning safeguarding cultural heritage being issued in

[63] 'Women's Handicraft Centre.' Retrieved from https://visitabudhabi.ae/en/what-to-see/historical-and-cultural-attractions/womens-handicraft-centre

the Emirates of Abu Dhabi[64] and in Sharjah[65] between 2016 and 2017. However, in Dubai, high-level strategies were implemented earlier, in order to focus and capitalise on heritage, while preserving and promoting cultural vibrancy in the historic urban spaces[66] (Assi, 2015; Zaidan, 2019). The development of the historic district of Dubai offers public access to tangible and intangible aspects of Emirati cultural heritage, including educational institutions teaching local craftsmanship knowledge and skills (Alhasawi, 2019).

Currently, means of safeguarding intangible heritage are often associated with the implementation of international cultural commitments such as the 2003 Convention and the cultural industries,[67] and thus it is useful to briefly examine such practices across the UAE. Here, the primary purpose is to educate and engage the local communities with their diverse knowledge and skills relating to intangible heritage practices, while adding a modern flavour to Emirati heritage. The UAE's government (at the federal level as a country and at the local levels of each Emirate) have implemented safeguarding approaches in which cultural centres were established and heritage sites were restored so new generations of Emiratis and tourists can have an understanding of the UAE's local heritage (Hadjri & Boussaa, 2007; Boussaa, 2014b). At the federal level, these efforts have become an integral part of building the national identity of the UAE, as the government aims to safeguard and reposition its traditions by adopting safeguarding practices from UNESCO,[68]

[64] An Emiri decree was issued for the safeguarding of tangible and intangible heritage in the official gazette of Abu Dhabi in 2016. Retrieved from https://www.abudhabi.gov.ae/-/media/sites/adgov/gazettes/2019/en/2019-e4-en.ashx
[65] An Emiri decree was issued for protecting and promoting cultural heritage in Sharjah in 2017. Retrieved from https://gulfnews.com/uae/government/emiri-decree-issued-for-protecting-cultural-heritage-1.1966773
[66] 'Dubai Historical District: Discover historical places in Dubai'. Retrieved from http://www.visitdubai.com/en/pois/dubai-historical-district
[67] Transformative power of cultural and creative industries for local development. Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/cfe/leed/venice-2018-conference-culture/documents/B1-DiscussionNote.pdf
[68] Dhakira Centre for Heritage Studies in the UAE. Retrieved from https://nyuad.nyu.edu/en/research/centers-labs-and-projects/dhakira-center-for-heritage-studies-in-the-uae.html

UNDP,[69] and ICCROM,[70] allowing Emirati youth to access, experience and understand their local heritage.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the cultural and sociopolitical transformation of the UAE from a tribal system to a recognised nation-state within the regional and international communities. During the UAE's unification process, the transformation awarded a number of privileges to several well-known tribes and families as a form of modern alliances to ensure the stability of relationships with the ruling families and their tribes. It illustrated how this 'new' kinship structure remains within Emirati society, reflecting a wider collective and culturally diverse society rather than merely members of a specific tribe or ethnic group. However, this notion of nationalism, especially from a modernised point of view, has a strong impact on the intangible heritage representation of several Emirates that are known for their international trade relations and urban development, such as Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Sharjah. The consequences of modernisation correlated with these economic and political developments resulted in the UAE seeking to expand the modern urban fabric, increasing foreign labour and introducing better jobs in correlation with the discovery of oil. These developments dramatically reduced the proportion of Emiratis in the UAE's overall population, in addition to disrupting the traditional cultural and collective way of life within the indigenous communities. Such disruption led to the dilution of many aspects of 'Emirati' intangible heritage practices, including the local Arabic dialect which had often been used to convey and express what Emiratis perceive as traditional sociocultural practices.

[69] Assessment of Development in United Arab Emirates revealed that the country invests highly in its Emirati population by building their creative skills and knowledge through programmes such as Mohammed Bin Rashid Establishment for Young Business Leaders. Retrieved from http://web.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/adr/uae.shtml
[70] ICCROM-Athar Regional Conversation Centre in Sharjah. Retrieved from http://athar-centre.org/

As the UAE continues to undergo economic, social, and urban transitions that affect the visibility of its national identity, the UAE government seeks urgent safeguarding measures for its intangible heritage. In the context of institutionalised heritage in the UAE, cultural bodies associated with the government are attempting to involve the Emirati people as the main actors in developing their cultural policies. This is because among them are the bearers of heritage who carry and transmit the knowledge and skills of local traditional practices. In this way, the UAE lean towards an emphasis on an 'official heritage discourse', combined with its cultural industries, in order to introduce practices of heritagisation as a modern safeguarding instrument. This heritage-making approach serves as a reflection of Smith's authorised heritage (as reviewed in Chapter 2), which demonstrates how the historical elements of intangible heritage are perceived as having a particular meaning or value in the present, and in what manner the cultural industries are involved in building Emirati national identity. This discourse of authorised heritage is represented in tangible forms (such as museums and heritage sites), whilst intangible heritage is reflected in local crafts and religious or social practice. Drawing on the context of the cultural and sociopolitical development of the UAE, Chapter 4 will discuss the methodology research approach that focuses on the philosophical stance of this thesis, the interpretative and research design frameworks, and the selection of data collection and analysis instruments, emphasising subjective interpretations, reflexibility, transferability, and context-specific understanding.

Chapter (4)

Research Methodology



Talli Traditional Embrodairy

Introduction

This chapter presents the philosophical foundations and epistemological research approaches that are applied in the thesis. When investigating the management and safeguarding of intangible heritage at various levels (local, national, and international), a combination of ontological and methodological approaches are relevant in this context i.e., constructivism, and interpretivism paradigms. The chapter opens with a brief discussion of the philosophical stance that guides the selection process of these approaches. As the chapter describes the reasons for employing these approaches as the main research philosophy, it aims to align the research questions and design with the thesis's ontological perspectives. This conceptualisation of the thesis's research process enables us to understand and interpret the complex and subjective nature of intangible heritage as a concept, a practice, and/or a phenomenon that is driven by various dynamics: cultural, economic, social, and political. Based on the philosophical stance and in combination with the research questions that this thesis intends to answer, a qualitative methodology has been selected. Further, the chapter reflects thematic and case study analysis during the process of data collection. The analysis seeks to explore and describe the complexity, diversity, and depth of the data, emphasising context, perspectives, and the construction of meaning. The chapter concludes by explaining reliability and ethical concerns related to this thesis, such as permissions and consent, and the limitations encountered during the research process.

Philosophical Stance

During any research process, it is important to establish a clear philosophical stance to provide a framework of understanding for research; seeking to address different questions through different perspectives concerning the observed phenomenon through the orientation of research

paradigms. Mertens (2012) defines paradigms as intersected sets of assumptions, ideas, knowledge, perspectives, and models that provides a framework for conducting research, and techniques for collecting information and analysing data. Similarly, D'Andrade (2006), Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner (2007), Greene (2008), and Biesta (2010) explore different understandings of paradigmatic assumptions in relation to the meanings of concept, context, and theory. These authors understand research and methodological paradigms as assumptive sets of beliefs, connotations, and values that a community of individuals (experts, researchers, or practitioners) share in common. These paradigms encompass historical and sociocultural constructions, and as such are not immune to change (D'Andrade, 2006; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007; Greene, 2008; and Biesta, 2010). Thus, paradigmatic assumptions guide conceptual and practical research decisions, along with context and theory. In relation to definitions, Freshwater & Cahill (2016) argue that understanding the nature of paradigms is crucial for investigating a context, rather than conceptualising paradigms as 'elusive'. Similarly, Aspers (2015) and Bonacchi (2021) explain what constitutes a paradigm and its changing narratives in relation to ontology, among other research philosophies, and should be distinguished as a set of methodological approaches and procedures to avoid the conceptual and contextual confusion that is associated with different research design methods i.e., qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods.

While these philosophical stances provide a foundation for research paradigms, it is important to note that researchers may combine and adapt different approaches based on their disciplinary preferences and area of investigation to further build on their research questions. For example, researchers who adopt an ontological approach are likely to design their studies in a way that allows them to test theories and to make causal inferences. In contrast, researchers who adopt

an epistemological approach are more likely to design their studies in a way that allows them to understand the perspectives of individuals and groups. Since this thesis aims to examine the management and safeguarding of intangible heritage at different levels (local, national, and international), constructivism and interpretivism are appropriate choices of paradigms because they address the fundamental nature of concepts, experiences, entities, and interpretations of phenomena being studied in a specific context, and how they relate to each other. Thus, the interpretive framework of this thesis is logically sequenced in a combination of these theoretical perspectives – constructivism and interpretivism – as shown in 4.1 (below) which underpin this research process.

Figure 4.1 (below) demonstrates the interplay of philosophical approaches and the associated paradigms that can be used in the qualitative research process, depending on the approaches that are being used. In a research process, ontological approaches concern the nature of reality, while epistemological considerations are about knowledge of and the way that reality can be studied and/or understood (Creswell & Poth, 2016). As such, 4.1 (below) further situates ontological and epistemological assumptions and research approaches into the perspective that influences researchers in their research process: i.e., what counts as knowledge in their investigation, the way that they design their studies, collect data, and interpret their findings. The theoretical framework of Figure 4.1 (below) evolves from similarities in the way a specific phenomenon is defined, theorised, understood, and studied: thus constructivism and interpretivism paradigms share a common assumption about how they define reality (ontology), and the way knowledge is shaped (epistemology). In this sense, constructivism is how individuals construct a reality, and interpretivism is how this reality is understood by individuals (Slevitch, 2011).

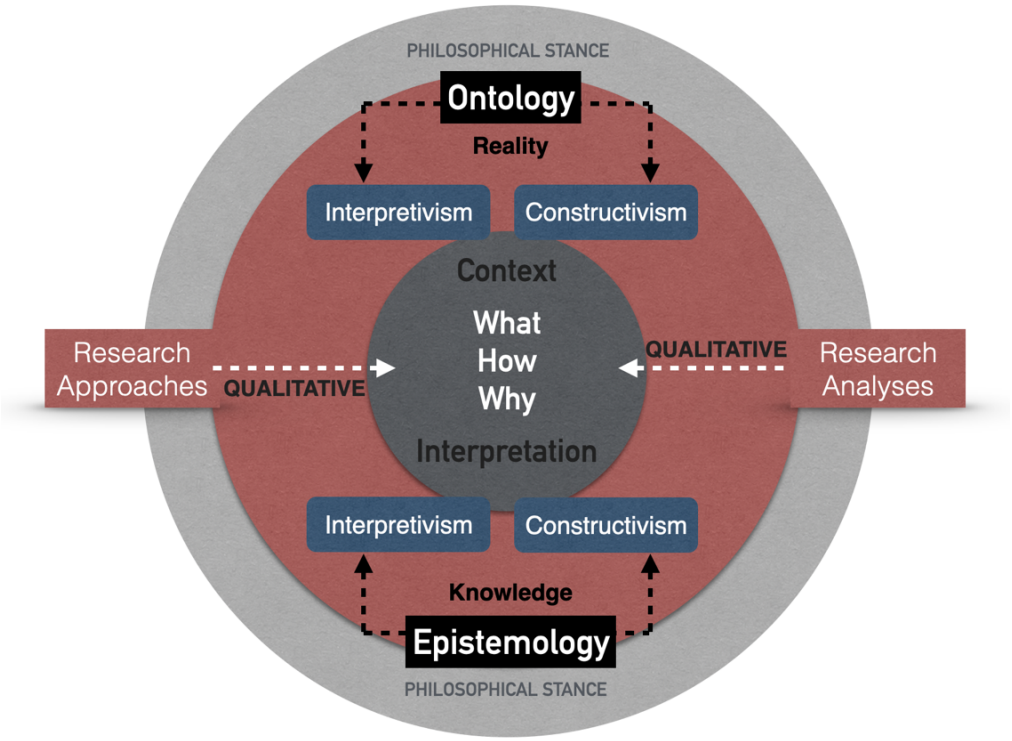


Figure 4.1: *Philosophical approaches and interpretive framework of research.*
Source: Author, 2024.

While investigating the management and safeguarding of intangible heritage from the top-down and bottom-up levels, constructivism reflects on how heritage is officially institutionalised, while interpretivism further explains the social understanding of heritage in a specific cultural context. The choice of ontological and epistemological approaches in this thesis mainly relies on the research questions that are being asked and the theoretical framework that is being used. In this section, these terms (i.e., constructivism, interpretivism) demonstrate the different ontological and epistemological assumptions that are compatible with the context of analysis, thus the most appropriate approach can be chosen for the research. Thus, this framework provides a theoretical understanding and/or perspective through which researchers may observe, define, and theorise the behaviour and understanding of different actors, bodies, and levels as understood from the lens of a specific research philosophy.

Constructivism

Constructivism is a philosophical stance that was introduced by Jean Piaget in the 1960s and has been widely adopted since then, specifically in the process of knowledge construction and selection (Adom, Yeboah & Ankrah, 2016). This paradigm asserts that knowledge is actively constructed by individuals through their interactions with the world, and recognises that individuals' experiences, interpretations, and social contexts shape their understanding of reality. According to Holstein et al. (2013), researchers who follow a constructivist paradigm seek to address 'the hows' by which cultural and/or social phenomena are constructed, managed, interpreted, and sustained on institutional levels. More importantly, they want to understand how the social world is oriented at an institutional level, reflecting attempts at exploring what is being accomplished, under what conditions, and drawing from what resources (Holstein et al., 2013).

Qualitative researchers often adopt a constructivist stance to acknowledge the subjective nature of knowledge and to explore how entities, whether bodies or actors, construct meaning in their present lives (Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006; Weber, 2014). In the context of this thesis, adopting a constructivist stance can help us to understand how different stakeholders construct and/or select the meanings and values associated with intangible heritage within the cultural industries, and to analyse the specific reality of construction that builds on subjective questions concerning the broad cultural and institutional contexts of meaning-making processes. In relation to people and experience, Peck and Mummery (2018) problematise the overlooking of the role of language in constructing sociocultural experiences within meaning-making processes, thus further emphasising that the interrelationship between language, social actions, and contextual understandings of phenomena are key to meaning-making, including cultural processes. Hence, this philosophical research approach recognises that heritage is socially, economically, and

politically constructed and shaped by various bodies and actors, including local communities, experts, policymakers, civil associations, governments, and international organisations. By exploring the diverse perspectives and interpretations of these stakeholders, researchers can gain insights into the complexities and nuances of the institutionalisation of intangible heritage in sociocultural contexts (Tan, Hao & Zhong, 2009).

Interpretivism

The roots of interpretivism can be traced back to the works of social theorists such as Max Weber and George Herbert Mead in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Chowdhury, 2014). In adopting interpretivism, Weber emphasised the importance of understanding subjective meanings and interpretations in social action, while Mead highlighted the role of symbols and interactions in shaping individuals' understandings of reality (Bakker, 2023). However, it was in the mid-twentieth century that interpretivism began to take shape as a distinct philosophical stance within the social sciences (Chowdhury, 2014). While a constructivist paradigm leans more towards institutionalised understandings of knowledge construction and selection, interpretivism emphasises the importance of understanding social phenomena from the perspective of the individuals involved (Black, 2006). Lehman (2011) and Valencia Mazzanti and Freeman (2022) discuss using an interpretivist paradigm to seek to uncover the meanings, beliefs, and values that individuals attach to their everyday actions and experiences that are not concerned with institutional understandings of phenomena. According to Cope (2005), interpretivist research methods develop ontological ‘bottom-up’ assumptions in which individuals have subjective experiences and interpretations of the world around them. Thus, this method captures and describes multiple and diverse experiences and interpretations of their social phenomena. However, Rynes

and Gephart (2004) argue that some interpretivist researchers often fail to describe the research process, and thus struggle to articulate how research practices have the capacity to transform observations into findings, results, and insights. In light of quality issues in conducting social sciences research, McLachlan and Garcia (2015) further emphasise 'reflexivity' in the methods used. This focuses on examining the participants' experiences, feelings, motivations, and reactions, aiming to uncover the interplay between these factors and to understand the complexity and diversity of the social phenomena being studied.

This thesis focuses on examining 'living' intangible heritage; thus its expressions and practices are prone to change, according to its bearers' present needs and interests. Hence, related experiences, consumptions, and motivations are expected to change. In order to manage this gap, this thesis builds on reflexivity by actively reflecting on how the participants remember, perceive, describe, and make sense of phenomena. This research process involves analysing and interpreting the data to identify patterns, themes, and connections, leading to the development of the research outcomes, which are grounded in the participants' experiences and perspectives (Bevir & Rhodes, 2012). The focus is on understanding the social and cultural contexts that influence behaviour and meaning-making processes closely associated with qualitative research methods, such as in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. These methods allow researchers to explore the detailed narratives and perspectives of individuals while providing room for capturing the nuances, complexities, and contextual factors that influence people's interpretations and actions. It is important to articulate the role and positionality of the qualitative analytic and data collection methods in shaping the research process, and to include these reflections in the findings and outputs of this thesis. In doing so, an interpretive paradigm to some degree excludes quantitative instruments of data collection because it perceives social and/or cultural processes as constantly

changing, and as such depends on qualitative measures that vary from one context to another (Matta, 2015). Further, this paradigm emphasises the use of inductive reasoning, where theories and explanations emerge from the data collected rather than being imposed *a priori*. The interpretivist philosophical stance adopted in this thesis allows for a nuanced understanding of the subjective meanings and interpretations associated with the social phenomenon under investigation.

By examining the ways in which different actors exercise power and knowledge, this thesis can shed light on the potential impacts of the institutionalisation of intangible heritage and management decisions concerning the marginalisation of traditional practices, and can instead advocate for more inclusive and participatory approaches among communities. Intangible heritage often reflects power dynamics, social inequalities, and issues of representation (Harrison, 2018). Ontologically, there are existing interacting policies and structures with different power dynamics (i.e., social, economic, political) that drive the phenomenon of intangible heritage (Fleetwood, 2005). One of these areas of investigation is to understand the extent of the involvement of communities – specifically heritage practitioners - in policymaking concerning managing and safeguarding intangible heritage at the national and international levels. Thus, a critical analysis attempts to understand how the knowledge and perspectives of individuals and communities can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the issues and challenges facing the safeguarding of intangible heritage within their local context. This can take the form of qualitative research, such as community-based research consisting of in-depth interviews, observations, and participatory group discussions.

This particular selection of paradigms depends on addressing two paradigmatic assumptions: an ontological research approach that focuses on understanding the nature of reality

and being, and which questions ‘what’ exists and the nature of reality itself; and a methodological research approach that refers to a set of actions and processes behind the choice of a particular research design and methods, and ‘how’ to justify the use of these methods in particular (Crotty, 2003; Höijer, 2008). In this light, qualitative research methods can provide an in-depth understanding of the local contexts, practices, and perspectives related to intangible heritage. By immersing themselves in the communities and observing their cultural practices, researchers can capture the lived experiences, values, and transmission processes associated with intangible heritage. The qualitative research methods employed in this thesis, including interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, aim to provide a contextual understanding of participants’ experiences and perspectives. Thematic analysis of the data facilitates the identification of patterns and themes, contributing to the development of a theoretical framework. Through this methodology, the research aims to shed light on the complexities and diverse interpretations surrounding the phenomenon, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the research area from different perspectives and levels. Additionally, reflexivity and ethical considerations are central to the reality of research, ensuring that the research process is accountable, respectful, and aligned with the theoretical perspectives of ontological/epistemological approaches.

Research Approach and Design

This section outlines the research methodology approaches that align with the thesis’s interpretive framework (constructivism and interpretivism). Qualitative research methodologies are most useful for an in-depth understanding of a particular interdisciplinary context (Jamal & Kim, 2005; Creswell & Poth, 2016). Unlike quantitative approaches which rely mainly on factual,

numeric, or normative methods, this approach is adopted to understand and explore the subjective meanings and interpretations that entities and individuals attach to their experiences, with a focus on social phenomena within their specific cultural context (Tracy, 2013). According to Harrison (2013a), living intangible heritage is related to personal and emotional experiences, including collective memories of the past. As such, the research design as shown in Figure 4.2 (below) helps to facilitate this real-life exploration by providing a clear framework for data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the findings. The methodology framework employed in this thesis (below) draws upon qualitative research methods, allowing for an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives and experiences.

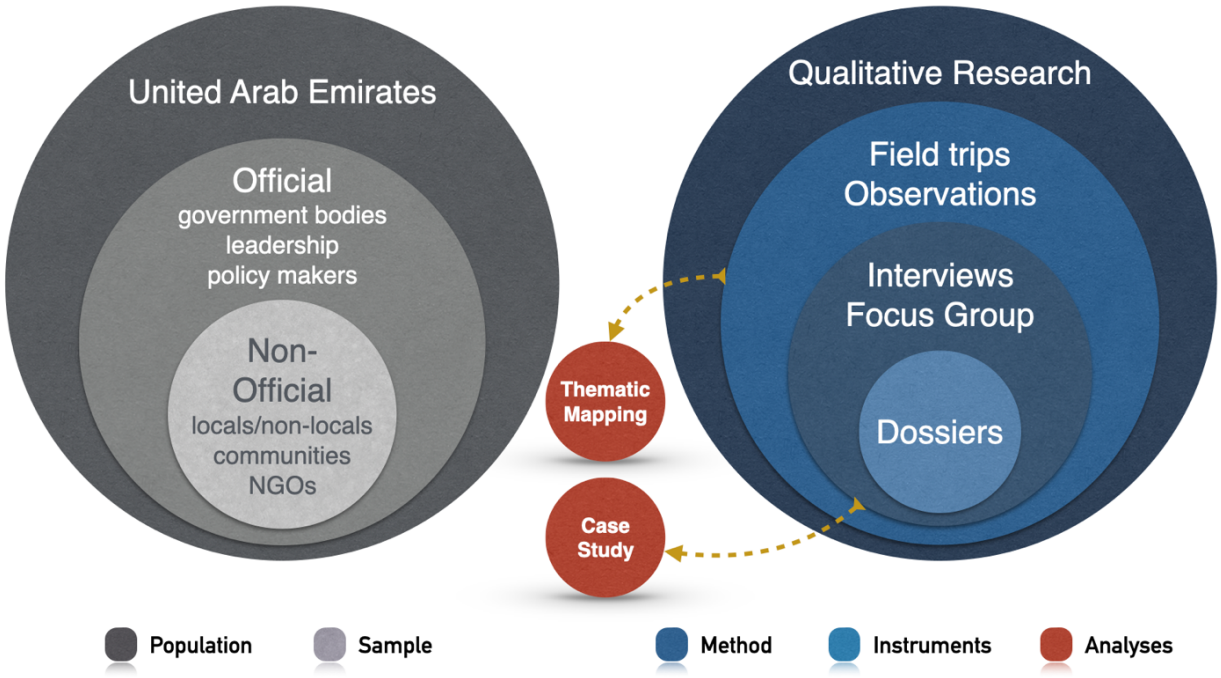


Figure 4.2: *Research design and methodology framework.* **Source**: Author, 2024.

The ability to engage with the real-life context of the past may increase the overall sense of responsibility for preserving cultural heritage which is of value to individuals and communities, and which are often later recognised as heritage (Harrison, 2013a). Hence, as demonstrated in 4.2

(above), this population sample is chosen not only for its relevance to the subject matter, but also to encourage participation with this research on a larger scale within Emirati society to reflect on the impacts of different power dynamics in the UAE. Investigating diverse perspectives meets the thesis's scope of research and objectives as it demonstrates how diverse actors from a variety of backgrounds are involved in intangible heritage governance and cultural industries policymaking. In addition to the primary data, secondary material was collected from dossiers provided by a variety of cultural authorities in the UAE to support the validity of the findings and to provide an empirical emphasis to the analysis, as shown in Figure 4.2 (above). These dossiers consist of books, studies, policies, published articles or reports, and images either published by the cultural institutions or owned by the research participants.

Data Collection and Analysis

An explanation of the processes of data collection and research analysis is needed in terms of the reliability of the qualitative method used in drawing out the findings and outcomes of this thesis. The process of data analysis in qualitative research is systematic: data is extracted, written up, and coded (Gläser & Laudel, 2013). This research is based on field trips, observations, and interviews (see Appendices 1, 2, & 3) which investigated a variety of perspectives and experiences of the intangible heritage and cultural industries in relation to the social fabric of the different levels of the UAE. The use of qualitative methods prevents the findings from being generalised, whereas employing quantitative data would not have provided content relevant to the subject matter (in this case, the management and safeguarding of intangible heritage on different levels). However, a researcher should be careful with some of the issues that can emerge while using this method, such as the authenticity of the data. This problem often arises because the method is more

prone to alteration, misrepresentation, and/or misinterpretation than other methods in the sense that each piece of research is conducted for a specific purpose, and as such utilising such data for other purposes may result in a form of biased outcomes (Morse et al., 2002). Hence, a triangulation of data sources (such as interviews and observations) has been employed to strengthen the reliability of results, while reflexivity and researcher positionality have been acknowledged to maintain a level of transparency and validity.

According to Wilson (2004) and Rowley (2012), interviewing specialists and practitioners in the field is a valid way to generate comprehensive interpretations of an individual's beliefs, understandings, experiences, and practices in the context that individual is involved in. The status of an activist, an expert, or a professional is assigned by the researcher, depending on the specific research focus. However, it is argued that specialists are those who have privileged access to information, as well as correlated knowledge about a specific topic or a defined process (Bogner & Menz, 2009; Hirsenberger et al., 2019). The following subsections describe the research design and framework, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques employed in accordance with the philosophical stance of this thesis. Most of the data used in this research method is considered permanent (except for policies, as they are expected to change) and hence can be available to researchers investigating similar contexts, subjects, or phenomena through this thesis.

Population and Sampling

The research design outlines the rationale and criteria for participant selection, ensuring that the sample includes individuals or cases that can provide subjective insights relevant to the thesis's scope of research and objectives. Qualitative research often employs purposive, theoretical, or volunteer sampling rather than random sampling (Silverman, 2010). Purposive

sampling is employed as the main sampling strategy of this research. This is because the contextual nature of intangible heritage requires the selection of individuals (or cases) who can offer the knowledge, experiences, or perspectives that are relevant and can contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being investigated (Gill, 2020).

According to Filippucci (2009), planning an interdisciplinary discussion in heritage studies is based on investigating different narratives and perspectives in the field. These narratives not only explore and identify data in a real-life context, but also assist in explaining the complexities of real-life settings, which may not be captured through experimental or survey-based research (Filippucci, 2009). For this research, participants were divided into two groups, as shown in 4.2 (above). The first group, the top-down level, consisted of those working for different government bodies relevant to the research, such as the authorities that mandate intangible heritage and cultural industries in the UAE. This sample included directors, executives, policymakers, and officials holding different positions within these authorities. The second group covered the bottom-up level, and mainly draws from wider Emirati society. This group included individuals, groups, communities, and NGOs, consisting of a combination of cultural activists, researchers, entrepreneurs, start-ups, and – most importantly – the custodians or bearers of intangible heritage.

Field Trips, Observations, Interviews, and Group Discussions

Qualitative primary data was collected from one-to-one semi-structured interviews and a focus group session. Gubrium and Holstein (2002) describe semi-structured interviews as a type of open-ended interview that combines elements of both structured and unstructured interviews. Unlike structured interviews, the interviewer may ask follow-up questions and explore unexpected topics that arise during the interview (Gubrium & Holstein, 2012). This allows the researcher to

gain a deeper understanding of the participant's experiences and perspectives. The initial list of participants was collected through three channels: 1) approaching cultural and heritage authorities from the different Emirates for a list of potential participants in the research; 2) conducting an online search of public figures working in the fields of culture and heritage; and 3) identifying potential candidates within the local communities on a personal level. Participants were contacted through messages and email correspondence, followed by finalising the selection of interviewees. Once the list of participants was completed, they were notified with an invitation and an outline of the interview criteria and guidelines (see Appendix 4), including the discussion aims and the flow of questions. This aimed to shape their expectations and encourage preciseness of their responses, and their voluntary consent (see Appendix 5) to participate was requested. The sessions commenced with filling out a participation card for each informant (see Appendix 6) and were documented using a voice recorder in both interviews and focus group sessions, and data transcribed using Microsoft Word. Open-ended questions were used, as this type of question develops and promotes knowledge exchange concerning the field of research.

A total of 58 open-ended interviews were conducted, and this phase of the fieldwork took place between November 2019 and December 2021. Field trips took place in different areas of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ras Al-Khaimah, and Fujairah, depending on where the informants were located, or where they preferred to meet for an interview. For example, participants in an official capacity often preferred to be interviewed in their offices, others such as the artisans preferred being interviewed at home. Due to the nature of the open-ended questions that were used in the questionnaires, the estimated time spent in each setting was between forty-five minutes and two hours, considering the concentration and engagement of informants, which guided the length of our discussions.

It is worth noting that 36 interviews were conducted in Arabic, then translated and transcribed into English, while the remaining sessions were conducted in English because the participants either preferred English or were not Arabic speakers. The Arabic context provided details on the oral articulation of local intangible heritage terminologies, in which their meanings could not be captured in the written literature. The sample included local Emiratis and residents from different cultural backgrounds living in the UAE. While searching for potential candidates, it was important to involve not only Emiratis but also residents who had long been working within the processes of national/local heritage management and institutions, as their work contributed directly (or indirectly) in building the UAE's national identity. Many of them were considered heritage experts that were specifically appointed for advisory or training purposes directed towards developing the next generation of Emirati policymakers and/or practitioners. These consisted of individuals who worked in the federal and local governments, private institutions, and members of the local community, including artisans. This phase was specifically aimed at testing and refining the research questions to understand the background, position, and quality of intangible heritage governance and cultural industries policy development from top-down and bottom-up perspectives. The questions were categorised based on the general information and knowledge of the participant, understanding of the intangible heritage and cultural industries concepts, awareness of cultural governance and policies, engagement with intangible heritage elements, and the roles of socio-economic and political factors within the cultural context of the UAE.

Further, among the total number of participants, 16 interviews were conducted with heritage practitioners such as traditional artisans and performers, with the support of several established intangible heritage institutions and traditional folklore organisations in the UAE, including both government and private organisations. For this segment, a different set of questions

was specifically outlined for the heritage practitioners which involved the nature of their practice, methods of acquiring knowledge and skills, socioeconomic contributions, and finally their influence on the cultural policy-making processes. Several artisans were interviewed at heritage centres such as *Al-Ghadeer* in Abu Dhabi or *Bidwa* in Sharjah; however, the majority were interviewed within their communities located in the oases of Abu Dhabi, rural Dubai and Sharjah, and the inhabited mountains of Ras Al-Khaimah. These trips required spending two to three days with the artisans not only to interview them, but also to capture the aspects and specifics of their daily living heritage such as the process of a specific craft or the details of custom or tradition that is practised throughout the day for generations.

The second phase consisted of organising a focus group that combined experts, researchers, and start-up business stakeholders from the heritage and cultural industries sectors. Employing a semi-structured focus group approach is constructive as a medium for eliciting topics between the variety of participants, which guides the basis of the discussion (Barbour, 2014). Therefore, the focus group consisted of eight participants from both managerial and grassroots levels. This choice of creating a discussion between these two levels provided room for open dialogue to share diverse experiences and perceptions, and often highlighted the research gap in the intangible heritage field of the UAE. Further, during the session it was important for everyone to express their honest opinions on their own terms, which offered more room for freedom of speech. The focus group lasted 120 minutes as the participants were engaged with the discussions, while the interviews took between 30 to 90 minutes according to the participant's length of interest, and the expansion of questions (see Appendix 1).

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a method of qualitative data analysis that identifies and examines patterns of meaning within collected data including interview transcripts, field observations and notes, and relevant dossiers such as documents, records, reports, or images (Harrison, 2014). It is a particularly useful method for analysing data that is complex in information and context, and this can be done by coding the data into themes, which are then used to develop a deeper understanding of the data. This approach builds inductive thematic maps for strengthening theory and interpretations derived directly from the participants who contributed to this research. According to Vaughn and Turner (2016), the role of visual thematic coding extracted from a sufficient number of focused interviews is crucial for the results to be in parallel with the overall direction of an interdisciplinary research. It also ensures that the discussions remain within the designed factors to enable proper empirical analysis (Vaughn & Turner, 2016). Hence, data extracts were analysed using thematic coding analysis. The data was categorised into key affiliated factors, and each divided into sub-factors which allowed for specific codes to be drawn in order to validate the findings.

Figure 4.3 (below) illustrates a four-step process applied in the thematic coding of data in order to enable unbiased and systematic content analysis of how international heritage discourse impacts the local and national heritage discourse in the UAE. The thematic coding process (below) consists of detailing the demographic factors of each informant, identifying significant codes within collected data, developing categories (or sub-themes) of the filtered codes, and lastly, collapsing codes that share an underlying aspect or concept of analysis into one main theme, followed by related sub-themes. This breakdown is pertinent to the research analysis as it clearly reflects on the sociocultural context already discussed (see Chapter 3) to explain the complexity

of sociocultural/political reflections and its impact on the sampling for informants, such as age and gender, educational and professional levels, and their tribal, ethnic, national, religious and linguistic backgrounds.

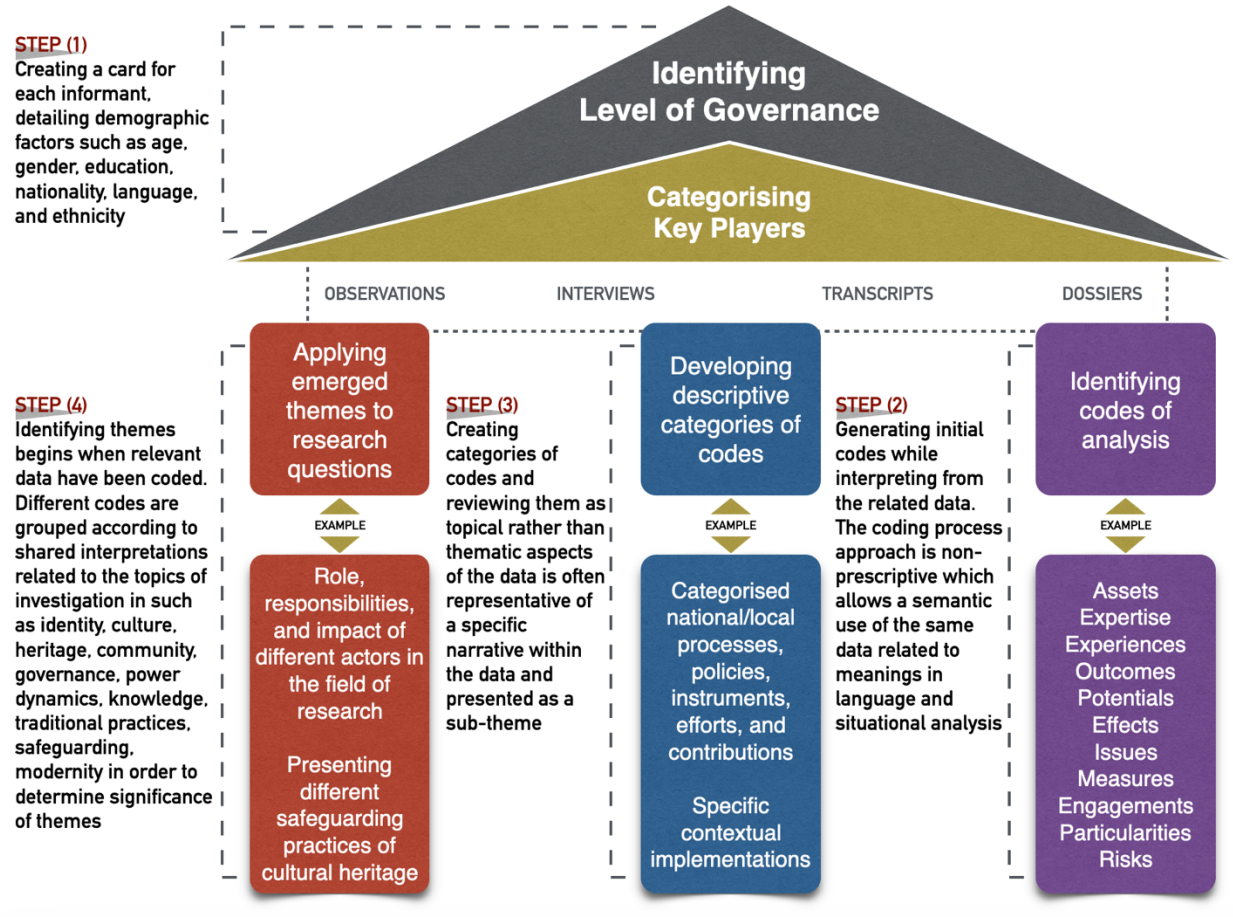


Figure 4.3: *Thematic coding approach applied in the research analysis.* **Source**: Author, 2024.

The thematic analysis focused on identifying, describing, and connecting implicit and explicit perceptions within the data. This led to the grouping of sub-factors and codes that allowed a consistent flow of thematic interpretations at three levels of cultural governance: international, national, and local. The list of codes emerged from deploying key guidelines that were addressed during the focus group or interviews, observations, and dossiers, enabling a reasonable and systematic process of content analysis, as shown in Figure 4.3 (above). On the one hand, the

thematic findings serve as a tool to explore issues of selecting and safeguarding local intangible heritage within cultural policies. On the other hand, unitising this approach validates the research's theoretical framework by reflecting perceptions of the state bodies and non-official actors.

Integration of Case Study Analysis

Case study analysis is a research method that examines a single unit of analysis in depth, where this unit of analysis can be a person, a group, an organisation, a community, or a specific phenomenon (Soin & Scheytt, 2006). Employing case study analysis aims to understand the unit of analysis in its context and to develop a deeper understanding of the factors that influence it. Case study analysis is a qualitative research method, which means that it relies on non-numerical data, comprising (for example) interviews, observations, or dossiers, among other relevant sources (Grandy et al., 2010).

The rationale behind selecting a specific case study was not for comparative purposes, but rather to identify and explain the developing nature of local intangible heritage in an international context, in this case through the example of the 2020 World Exposition held in Dubai. This case study aimed to demonstrate a modernised process that turned intangible heritage from a living necessity in a specific sociocultural context into a tool of power for reshaping and promoting the national identity of a country on an international level. Hence, an explanatory case study approach is suitable for investigating the national and international impacts of local intangible heritage as a process of selection (Grandy et al., 2010). Further, this type of analysis facilitates addressing two different perspectives (from top-down and bottom-up levels) that are extracted from the thematic code analysis to build a comprehensive discussion of the international representation of intangible heritage on an international platform.

The main phase of fieldwork was undertaken between November 2019 and March 2020. Due to the social and operational constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic between March 2020 and May 2021 in the UAE, fieldwork resumed in July, August, and October 2020, and the final phase took place between September, October, and December 2021. The last phase focused on collecting data for the main case study of this research, while exploring the methods to approach it in two ways. The first approach aimed to identify potential participants who worked, contributed to, or visited the World Expo including officials, heritage practitioners, and/or individuals among wider Emirati society. The second approach aimed to investigate how local heritage is interpreted and presented at an international megaevent, while addressing the impacts of international cultural commitments in a national context. This approach consisted of understanding the participants' awareness of the manifestation of local heritage in an international setting, the nature of their involvement in the selection process of specific traditional crafts, and their perception of the explicit revival of selected socio-religious practices. Their data provided focused insights on intangible heritage selection processes in the UAE, while validating the content related to the other case studies that contributed to the international setting.

Reliability Considerations, Ethical Concerns and Limitations

Reliability and ethical concerns are important considerations for any qualitative research approach. Reliability is the extent to which a research process can be transferrable and adopted by other researchers to produce similar results (Leitch, Hill & Harrison, 2010). As such, reliability refers to the consistency, stability, and repeatability of research findings, while ethical considerations ensure that the research is conducted in a responsible manner. Addressing these considerations is essential for upholding the integrity of this thesis and protecting the rights and

well-being of the participants involved. According to Morse et al. (2002), in qualitative research, reliability is often assessed by considering a number of factors, mainly sampling and data collection. First, the selection of participants should be done using purposive sampling techniques to minimise biases and to increase the representativeness of the sample, in addition to calculating an adequate sample size to ensure statistical power and generalisability of the findings. As for data collection reliability, clear guidelines were developed to ensure consistent data collection across different settings, participants, and time points. This included describing the data collection methods, the data analysis procedures, and the criteria for interpreting the findings. Second, the use of multiple sources of data such as interviews, observations, and documents, among other sources that are related to the research design and process. The variety of sources helps to ensure that the findings are not based on a single source of data, which could be biased. The use of clear and consistent methods should be described in detail so that other researchers can adopt their study, in addition to explaining standardised measures for recording and storing data that should be employed to prevent data loss or corruption.

Ethical considerations are of great importance in any academic investigation because they help to safeguard the rights and well-being of the participants involved in this research and to ensure that the research is conducted in a responsible and ethical manner (Leeming, 2018). In this research, several points are addressed including informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity. This is significant for a number of reasons, including protecting the participants' identity to mitigate any potential risk that participants may encounter. Anonymisation techniques such as assigning code numbers and removing personally identifiable information are employed when reporting and analysing data in this thesis. In addition, ethical review and approval from the relevant institutional review board was granted to ensure compliance with ethical guidelines and

regulations. Ethical frameworks maintain the integrity of the research process for the credibility of the researcher and for the public's trust in research (Vainio, 2013). In this light, informed consent was requested and obtained from all participants, ensuring voluntary participation without coercion. This means that participants must be comprehensively informed about the purpose of the thesis, the methods that will be used, and the risks and/or benefits of their voluntary collaboration. In this ethical manner, a researcher often establishes a trusting and respectful relationship with participants and adheres to ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects. For this thesis, sociocultural sensitivity has been maintained throughout the research process, recognising the potential knowledge impact of this work for either intangible heritage experts or its bearers.

Further, qualitative research offers valuable insights into the complexities and nuances of human experiences, but it is important to recognise and address its limitations such as sampling, subjectivity, data collection, external validity, and transferability. By acknowledging the potential constraints of these limitations, it ensures transparency, upholds the integrity of the research, and provides opportunities for future researchers to build upon this thesis. Despite efforts to select a diverse range of participants, sampling bias may be present. Factors such as self-selection, availability, or researcher subjectivity may influence the composition of the sample and limit the representativeness of the findings. In order to mitigate this particular constraint, it is critical to acknowledge the potential for reflexivity, where the intersection between the researcher and the sample background, experiences, and assumptions may affect the research process and interpretation of the data. While reflexivity adds contextual depth to the research, it is important to manage and mitigate its potential impact on the findings. Contextual constraints in this thesis may affect the research process as well, including the physical environment, social dynamics, or cultural norms that often influence participants' responses and behaviour during data collection.

UAE society in general is conservative, and some of their traditional sociocultural practices are not necessarily performed in public, as each practice is different in correlation with social, linguistic, or environmental particularities. This contextuality should be considered when interpreting the findings and making broader claims.

Another clear limitation concerning external validity of this research was the changing nature of the UAE's cultural governance in terms of policies and strategies, associated with the implementation of national or local cultural or heritage frameworks and plans, which could thus alter the research findings. While qualitative research aims for transferability rather than generalisability, it is essential to consider the extent to which findings from this research can be applicable or relevant to other settings, populations, or contexts, adopted by other researchers. Providing detailed contextual descriptions and a clear research process can enhance the transferability of findings. Other limitations included the time consumed in gathering relevant data, securing the participation of informants, and various views from the top-down and bottom-up levels that influenced the direction of the findings. For instance, during the process of data collection, some traditional practices of intangible heritage required days to observe and record in order to capture the complex and detailed lifecycle of a specific practice in accordance with the linguistic and social particularities of the practitioners – whether individuals or groups within a community. To minimise subjectivity in the findings, focus groups and interviews were employed, while keeping each participant's data private and separate as much as possible, considering the conservative lifestyle of local communities in the UAE.

In addition to the above, other reliability considerations, ethical concerns, and/or limitations that may be relevant to researchers who aim to follow similar ontological and methodological approaches included the researcher's role, the impact of the research, and the

interpretation and dissemination of the findings. In this light, researchers should be aware of their roles and identities in the research process and how their own biases may influence the findings; they should consider the impact of their research on the participants and how their findings may be used; and should disseminate their findings in a way that is respectful of the participants, and which does not cause harm. This self-awareness can be achieved through reflexivity and positionality factors. Reflexivity involves being critically aware of how one's background, perspectives, and interactions affect the research process and outcomes: i.e., researchers should continually reflect on their own biases, assumptions, and influences. In addition, understanding one's positionality means reflecting on one's personal impact and recognising the various aspects of identity (gender, nationality, language, ethnicity, religion) and how these aspects influence interactions with informants and the interpretation of data. As for the role of researcher in in data collection, researchers should actively engage with the community while observing and collecting data. This dual role can provide deeper insights, but may also lead to bias as researchers' backgrounds may affect what they perceive as important and worthy of documenting. Hence, conducting interviews involves making decisions about what should be documented and how, which requires developing self-awareness of the researcher's positionality first, then building rapport and trust with informants in the data collection process.

In this research journey, as a female researcher in her thirties who is an Arab descendant and an Emirati national, it is essential to reflect on how identity and positionality shaped the research process, impacted approaching informants, and the resulting data in my research. For instance, interactions with local informants in rural communities in the UAE were influenced significantly by ethnicity, gender, tribal, and nationality affiliations. At times, being an outsider in relation to specific tribes or closed communities of heritage practitioners limited my access to

male-dominated spaces, such as the mountain-dwellers. However, it did not limit my ability to conduct conversations with other males who were considered the head of their tribes, which allowed me access to their spaces. This also allowed me to connect deeply with women within the Bedouin communities, who might have been less forthcoming with a male researcher. My professional background sometimes created a barrier, as informants viewed me as an expert rather than a local acquaintance, which at first intimidated them and led to guarded responses. To mitigate these effects, clarifying my tribal affiliations and familiarity with the local language established trust and demonstrated respect for their local customs and knowledge which they regard as a means of safeguarding their cultural identity. By being mindful of these factors and reflecting on their impact, researchers in heritage studies can navigate their roles more ethically and effectively, ensuring that their work respects and accurately represents the communities they study. By carefully considering these reliability considerations and ethical concerns, qualitative researchers can help to ensure that their studies are of high quality and that they are conducted in an ethical manner.

Conclusion

This chapter pursued a philosophical stance that incorporated ontological and methodological assumptions to address questions in relation to the management and safeguarding of intangible heritage at various levels i.e., local, national, and international. Through the paradigmatic lenses of constructivism and interpretivism, this chapter recognised the subjective and constructed nature of intangible heritage, emphasising the importance of understanding the multiple perspectives and meanings attributed to it. A combination of these paradigms emphasises

understanding and challenging power dynamics and social participation that shape individuals' and/or communities' beliefs, experiences, practices, perspectives, and values within societies.

The ontological and epistemological orientations of this thesis determined research methodologies that led to employing the selection of research instruments, data collection, and analysis techniques. To address the thesis's scope or research objectives effectively, a qualitative research design and methods was adopted. By engaging with participants in their different settings (official and non-official) and utilising methods such as fieldwork, observations, interviews, and document analysis, this thesis attempts to uncover the multifaceted dimensions of intangible heritage and its significance to individuals, communities, and societies in a nation-state. This choice allows for a deeper exploration and interpretation of the nuanced aspects of intangible heritage within the cultural industries in a specific context, enabling us to capture the economic, social, and political dynamics associated with it.

Throughout this chapter, validity and ethical considerations related to reliability have been addressed. While qualitative research may present challenges in terms of ensuring reliability and generalisability, the research design and process implemented procedures to enhance the trustworthiness and credibility in drawing out the thesis findings, implications, and outcomes. Drawing on the discussions of ontological and methodological considerations during a qualitative research process, Chapter 5 contains the first analysis section of this thesis, mainly focussing on the top-down approaches in safeguarding intangible heritage, among other practices of authorised heritage in the UAE. This chapter will examine two official levels (the federal and local governments), aiming to demonstrate the UAE's institutionalisation of intangible heritage in terms of the documentation, management, safeguarding, and implementation of international cultural policies within selected institutional capacity-building programmes.

Chapter (5)

Official Intangible Heritage Discourse in the United Arab Emirates



Gahwa Arabic Coffee-Making

Introduction

This chapter examines the implementations and practices of official heritage management in the UAE that aim to institutionalise and utilise intangible heritage in the processes of building its national identity, mainly through the adoption of the UNESCO's 2003 Convention. It focuses on addressing the first research question: what are the existing policies that structure local intangible heritage and define the cultural industries in the UAE? The first section focusses on the role and impact of international cultural commitments on the UAE's cultural governance, including policy making and institutional development concerning local intangible heritage. An integral part of this institutional process is the documentation of intangible heritage as a starting point for safeguarding its varied meanings, values, and visual presentations, leading to inventorying knowledge of traditional sociocultural practices for capacity-building purposes.

As a result, the second section examines a variety of official capacity-building programmes that have adopted commodification and heritagisation processes as contemporary means of safeguarding local intangible heritage. Hence, this section measures the extent of the official actors' involvement and influence in shifting the traditional role of heritage practitioners, specifically the bearers of crafts and traditional social practices. This analysis mainly reflects on the heritagisation of traditional cultural practices into economic and/or political instruments for strengthening the national identity of the UAE, as such turning intangible heritage into a process of selection. It is important to note that the analysis in this chapter (in addition to Chapters 6 and 7) is based on data collected mainly from observations and interviews, reports, studies, and images. The participants were either representing a cultural authority or were sharing their personal perceptions of the official safeguarding approaches of UAE's intangible heritage.

Role and Impact of Institutionalised Intangible Heritage

This section examines two forms of the institutionalised heritage process: 1) cultural governance, through the development of intangible heritage institutional frameworks that carry a set of measures for safeguarding local traditional practices according to the 2003 Convention; and 2) the knowledge that is used in the heritagisation of intangible heritage through the concept of cultural industries, as part of implementing international cultural policies. The international understanding of safeguarding intangible heritage generated redefinitions of national identity between the UAE's top-down and bottom-up levels, specifically from the perspective of government cultural bodies. This difference in perception demonstrates to what extent the top-down level uses or reuses practices of intangible heritage that can be an added value for the UAE's national identity. Figure 5.1 (below) illustrates the structural flow of the UAE's cultural governance, based on its sociopolitical system. Each level consists of bodies and actors associated with the impacts, affects, outcomes, and potentials of this cultural governance, and which are discussed in more detail in the following sections of this chapter.

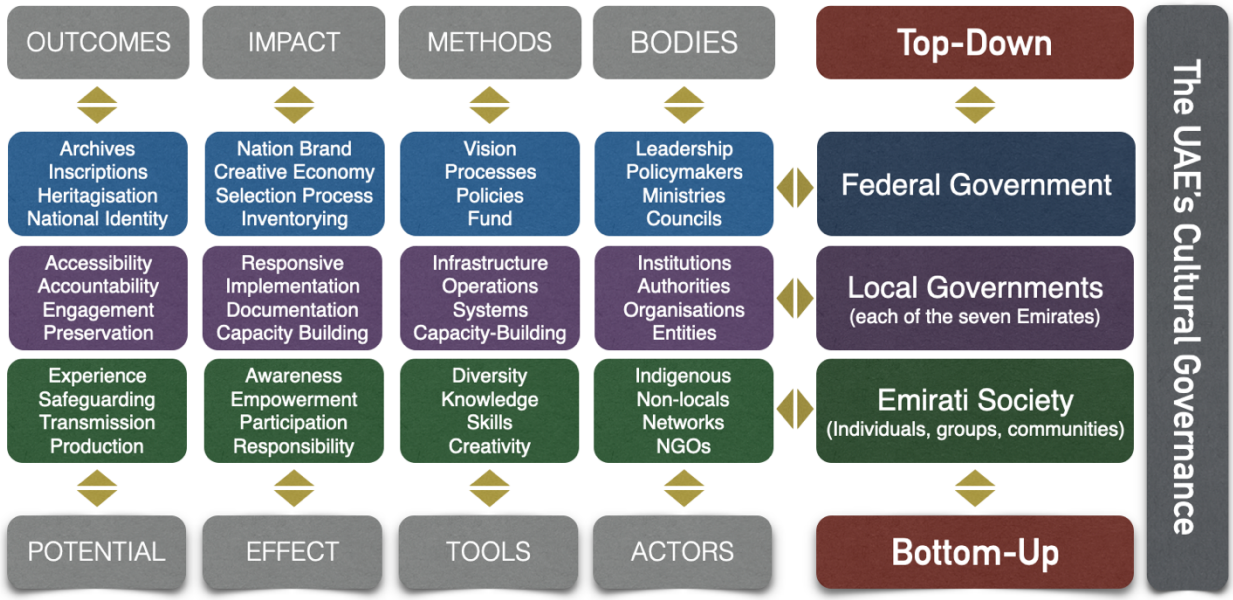


***Figure 5.1**: Structure and instruments of cultural governance in the UAE.* **Source**: Author, 2024.

The top-down level consists of the federal government and local institutional bodies. This level is concerned with managing and regulating intangible heritage in the UAE through the formation of cultural policies. An example of a government body at the federal level is the Ministry of Culture; its mandate focusses on policymaking, funding, and overseeing the implementation of its national strategic cultural roadmaps in relation to the local governments. Further, the National Commission for Education, Culture and Science[71] (NCECS) in the Ministry of Culture is the official representative of the UAE as a member-state in UNESCO, including its associated conventions. As discussed in Chapter 3, the UAE's federal system allows each Emirate to continue practising its independent authority. As such, each Emirate has a relevant local government body (often known as cultural authorities) dedicated to culture, heritage, and arts, such as Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism (DCT). These local cultural authorities implement the national strategic roadmap in relation to what each Emirate perceives as their intangible heritage; for example by identifying, documenting, safeguarding, and presenting to the international or local communities. In other words, the national culture or heritage policies are shaped at federal level and filtered down to the seven Emirates each of which is responsible for its implementation according to their conditions and needs.

The bottom-up level, which is discussed further in Chapter 6, concerns the safeguarding efforts of Emirati society, consisting of individuals such as the custodians of heritage, and non-profit organisations such as the Public non-Benefit Associations[72] (PNBA) as part of the Emirati

[71] The main mandate of the National Commission of the UAE. Retrieved from https://mcy.gov.ae/en/news/noura-al-kaabi-chairs-the-first-meeting-of-general-committee-of-national-commission-for-education-e-and-science/

[72] In this study, PNBAs are referred to as 'public associations'. The association groups are licenced by the Ministry of Community Development at the federal level: however, they do not carry the mandates or operations of the ministry. The licencing process is only for regulation purposes, showing that a particular PNBA is legitimate. These groups are divided into several categories including activities concerning cultural heritage. In 2023, there were 96 cultural services groups and 31 folklore arts groups. Retrieved from https://www.mocd.gov.ae/en/open-data/statistics.aspx

local community. An example of an individual would be an Emirati who owns and manages a private online platform for documenting and presenting local intangible heritage such as *Al-Mawrooth*[73] الموروث. In this structural flow, the UAE's cultural governance is exercised through three groups: federal, local, and societal. It is through these three groups that the developments and implementations of local intangible heritage policy in the UAE can be understood. Drawing from the cultural governance structure above, Figure 5.2 (below) illustrates the development of the federal institutional framework for the safeguarding of UAE's intangible heritage, which consists of three approaches.

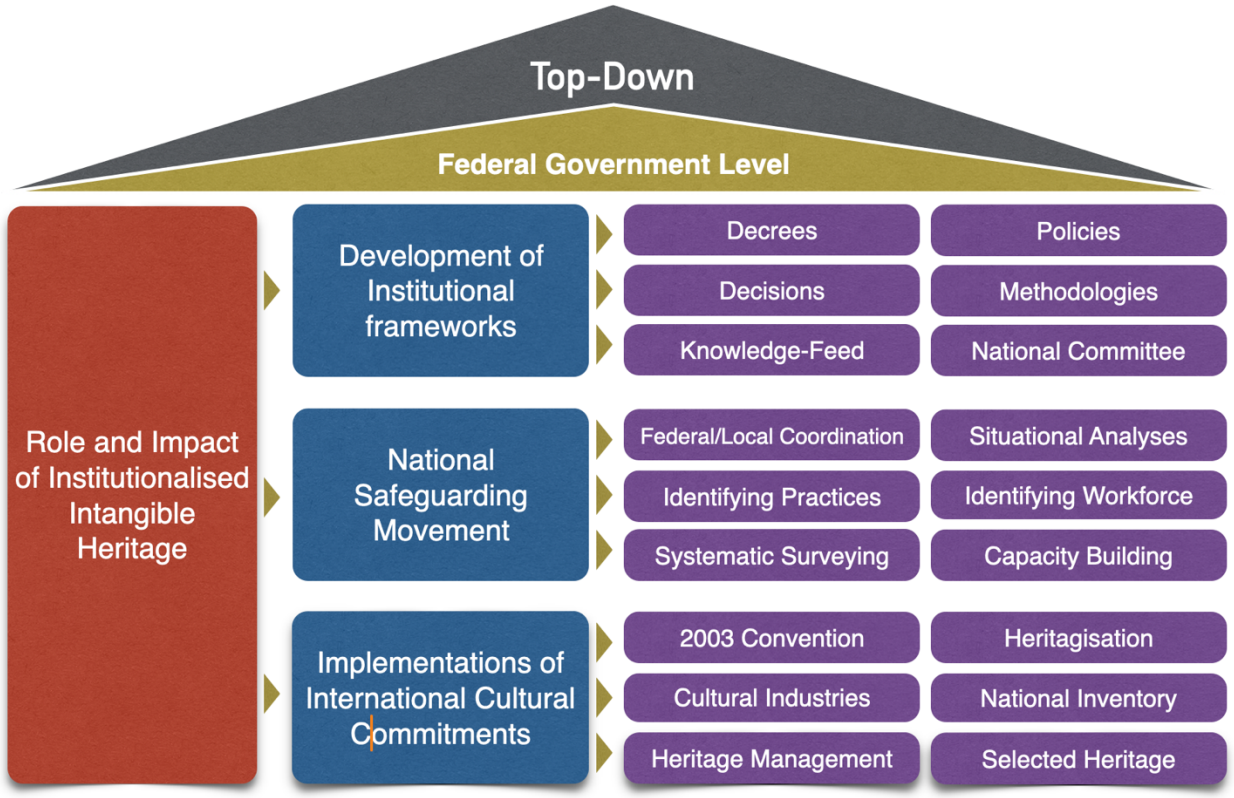


Figure 5.2: *Federal institutional framework of intangible heritage in the UAE.*

Source: Author, 2024.

[73] In the Emirati local dialect, *Al-Mawrooth* means a collection of specific inherited customs and practices that are passed on from one generation to the next. This personal initiative is not affiliated with a government body, and it specialises in documenting and presenting the oral history and practices of Emirati intangible heritage. Retrieved from https://www.instagram.com/almawrooth/

As this Figure shows, the first approach is to trace the formation of the institutional frameworks that structured the foundations of official intangible heritage in the UAE. The foundation led to the development of intangible heritage documentation processes in the second approach. These official understandings of intangible heritage, specifically the documentation process, resulted in a variety of implementations such as inventorying what is considered as Emirati intangible heritage, capacity-building[74] in relation to intangible heritage, and (most significantly) the inscriptions of intangible heritage in UNESCO's 2003 Convention. In this aspect, capacity building is an important process to investigate in the case studies in this chapter, in order to illustrate the logical relationship between the federal and local levels enabled by intangible heritage institutional frameworks. The concept of capacity building in cultural heritage has been continuously developing, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century, extending from archaeological and heritage sites to individual historical narratives, traditional practices, and cultural settings.

As explained by a non-local cultural consultant, capacity-building involves the basis of human capabilities within a broader range of sectorial resources such as organisational, technological, and economic capacities (Informant #21, 2019). Each sectorial resource bestows specific influence to encourage young and future generations to engage in practicing heritage, providing them with preservation incubators to create and market their works, and bringing them to international attention through cultural industries' creative economy. The latter aims to identify and relate different safeguarding instruments by which individuals, communities, and institutions can develop skills to adapt and solve intangible heritage documentation complexities, and set

[74] 'Capacity Development: A UNDP Primer'. Retrieved from https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/capacity-building/capacity development-a-undp-primer.html

objectives for future safeguarding achievements. Hence, the third approach demonstrates national and international capacity-building experiences in relation to the understandings of universal heritage promoted by the 2003 Convention. Further, it is important to note the link between the three approaches, which demonstrates the extent of deconstructing, constructing, and reconstructing the local intangible heritage scene towards enhancing the cultural dimensions of the national identity.

Considering the ongoing international commitments that have been assumed at the federal level, the flow of this cultural governance touches upon the decrees, policies, and methodologies that manage and regulate intangible heritage in the UAE. For some of the Emirates, such as Sharjah, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai, the approach is based on first-hand empirical studies that builds policymaking with short and long-term implementations, while other Emirates did not prioritise establishing cultural policies due to their constitutional right to rule as an individual sovereignty. For instance, in 2006 – and updated every 5 years – Abu Dhabi Culture worked with UNESCO to create a clear vision with direct objectives for the UAE to position its intangible heritage in a more meaningful manner. Once these strategies are finalised for public announcement, qualitative and quantitative local heritage studies are undertaken by the cultural authorities for archiving purposes for the national archive located in Abu Dhabi, with limited accessibility. The information coming from these comprehensive studies is rarely reutilised, published, or shared, to protect the privacy of the people who participated in these studies and who shared their heritage knowledge; however, part of this knowledge is used to develop the national inventory, without exploiting the identity of the participants.

Development of Intangible Heritage Institutional Frameworks

In order to understand the three approaches (shown in Figure 5.2 above) to institutionalising the UAE's intangible heritage, an expert in the heritage field (Informant #8, 2019) explained why it was critically important to first understand the level of influence of authorised heritage on the process of heritage selection, and the consequences this has on redirecting the uses of Emirati intangible heritage. Figure 5.3 (below) shows the impact of the international cultural commitments on the development of the UAE's intangible heritage institutional frameworks. Figure 5.3 further reflects on how authorised heritage affects the institutionalisation of intangible heritage in local cultural contexts directly and indirectly. Within the international scale, for example, the cultural industries' policies associated with international commitments are directly concerned with tourism, which encourages the practices of commodification and heritagisation within a local cultural context. Another example is the 2003 Convention which also promotes 'shared' heritage at the expense of distinctive traditional cultural practices in a local cultural context. These implementations of international commitments are affecting the official discourse of UAE's cultural governance on the national scale. Again, once a cultural framework, policy, or regulation is disseminated by the federal level, each of the seven Emirates decides how to implement the policy, and how to manage what it considers its heritage. As a result, the local scale, represented by the custodians of heritage, is concerned with value-based safeguarding instruments such as inventorying and capacity building of intangible heritage. These instruments formed official processes of selection influenced by the international and national commitments for the safeguarding of local intangible heritage.

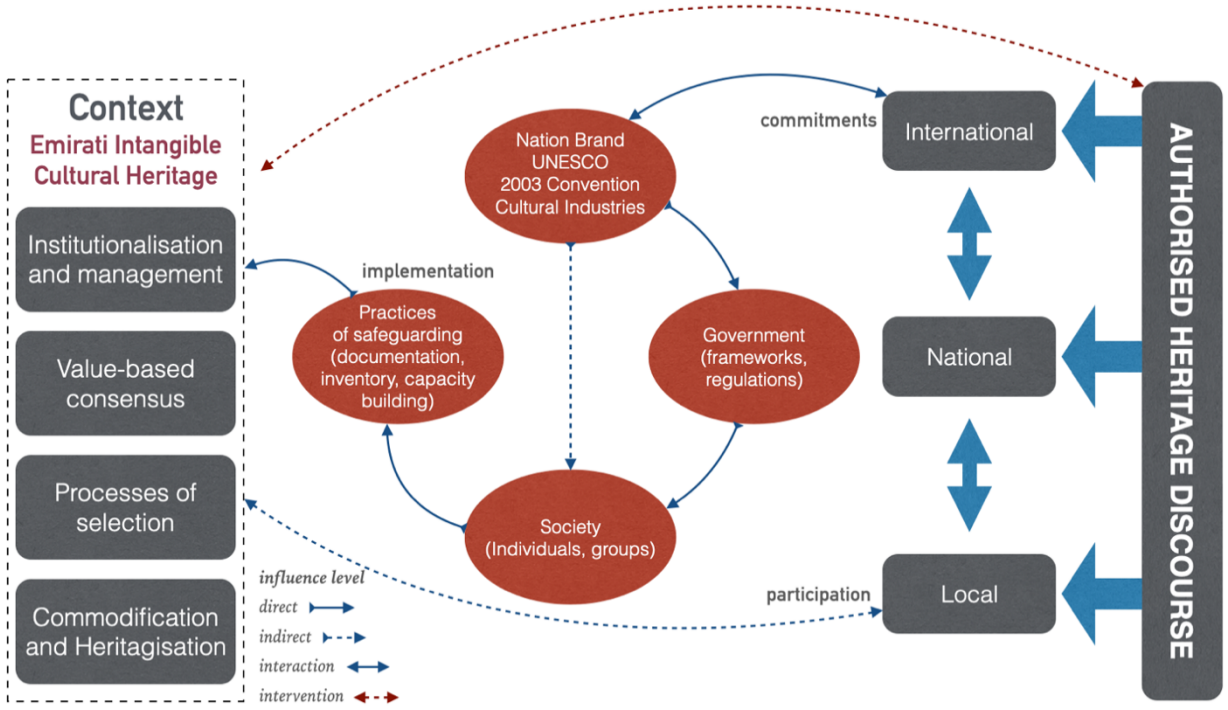


Figure 5.3: *The effect of authorised heritage discourse in the UAE.* **Source**: Author, 2024.

Of the seven Emirates, it is important to note the significant influence of the government of Abu Dhabi (the capital) in developing and implementing intangible heritage institutional frameworks, even though the federal level is the responsible government body for establishing and disseminating cultural policies across the UAE. An Emirati advisor (Informant #11, 2019) elaborated on the reasons behind this influence: Abu Dhabi is the largest Emirate in terms of geographical area and population in relation to the other six Emirates. While forming the federal union of the UAE as a country and not a state, Abu Dhabi needed the other six Emirates to strengthen its political positioning at the local, regional, and international scales. The advisor added: "*as the capital, Abu Dhabi owns the largest shares of tribal and income aspects within the federal government, due to its political weight upon the agreement being established*." In other words, Abu Dhabi, as the capital city of the UAE, is constitutionally authorised to develop and

disseminate policies that hold as much importance as the policies announced by federal government bodies such as the FSC (Informant #11; 2019).

Based on interviews with officials working in different cultural entities, the local governments of the different Emirates did not develop the necessary documentation process (or value chain) for sustainable heritage knowledge-feed towards a federal cultural body such as the Ministry of Culture (and vice-versa). Nor did they communicate with sources of knowledge – heritage experts, researchers, and artisan communities – on a regular basis to update their databases (Informant #24; Informant #26; Informant #27, 2020). The early phase of such documentation goes through several stages and operational processes to ensure the implementation of objectives that are aimed at safeguarding intangible heritage at the national level. These stages consist of analysing the current situation; identifying weaknesses; recognising ongoing traditional practices that need special attention; documenting marginalised practices of intangible heritage; identifying the workforce, training, and qualification opportunities; and improving product quality and marketing processes. An example of a documentations process is the Traditional Crafts Strategy[75] that was developed by Dubai Culture in 2018 to meet the national criteria of safeguarding local crafts. This knowledge-feed process is important because it is the key to accessing heritage bearers' memory – where the required information and related events exist (including craftspeople or traditional performers. However, the majority of these people are now either elderly and have difficulty remembering the details of their traditional practices, or have passed away without having the necessary tools to document or transfer their knowledge. This encompasses the traditions and the living forms of expressions transmitted from the previous generations and passed

[75] The traditional crafts strategy is the first roadmap that specifically addresses the handicraft sector in Dubai. Retrieved from https://en.unesco.org/creativity/policy-monitoring-platform/traditional-handicrafts-strategy#:~:text=In%20March%202019%2C%20the%20Dubai,to%20get%20involved%20in%20it.

down to the next, such as oral traditions, traditional performances, religious and ceremonial events, know-how and practices related to the nature and the universe, or the knowledge and skills required for traditional craft production. Hence, the artisans and custodians of heritage, mainly the indigenous groups, provide a sense of identity and continuity which enhances the cultural diversity and dialogue within the present-day Emirati society.

National Safeguarding Movement in the UAE

Implementations of cultural policies differ according to the shifting dynamics and responsibilities of each of the seven Emirates, in order to meet specific criteria in safeguarding their heritage. In this light, one of my informants (a former policymaker) elaborated on the implementations of the UNESCO's 2003 Convention, which has accelerated this shift towards the safeguarding of intangible aspects and practices of local heritage: "*intangible cultural forms contribute as significantly as tangible cultural forms in developing historical, economic, political, and social values of Emirati society*" (Informant #14, 2019). Hence, the purposes for safeguarding differ, and the physical practice of traditional heritage elements is no longer the most important factor of the safeguarding process. Rather than emphasising the process behind the practice of an intangible heritage element, how this element is presented is more important. The emphasis on presentation includes the evolving documenting process of intangible heritage knowledge and skills, such as the development of the demographic target audience (e.g., a traditional practice no longer practiced by Emiratis, but instead by other nationalities living in the UAE) that has emerged over time in the field of intangible heritage. In addition, the heritagisation of intangible heritage now impacts upon the documentation process; shifting the safeguarding methods and thus affecting its presentation to the audience. Consequently, the main challenge in implementing the

documentation methods is how to relate the safeguarding of traditional practices to the current dramatic sociocultural and economic shifts in the country. This challenge negatively impacts several traditional practices that were not recognised as national intangible heritage elements through the inscriptions, such as customs and crafts related to traditional harvesting or smithing methods, and which therefore were not included in the documentation or safeguarding processes.

As one policymaker emphasised, constituting traditional cultural practices is to achieve a particular goal – in this case, safeguarding intangible heritage elements that the government had selected – meant that "*convincing the public to protect their heritage willingly is collectively a valued contribution in balancing cultural policies objectives*" (Informant #16, 2021). This statement is aligned with a key objective of the 2003 Convention concerning safeguarding measures on a national level: "*within the framework of its safeguarding activities of the intangible cultural heritage, each State Party shall endeavour to ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management*" (Article 15, UNESCO, 2003). In this case, the knowledge of heritage practitioners is the basis of the documentation process, and as such is instrumental in building and developing the national heritage inventory. During the process of intangible heritage documentation, knowledge is a form of control, and it has developed into a form of power that is mainly influenced by the people's social responsibility to reflect what they perceive as local and collective traditional cultural practices or objects. Here, knowledge curates cultural policies in a way that guides local heritage-making to practice a specific (or selected) intangible heritage element for a specific situation. This process aims to shift people's traditional practices towards a specific goal through providing a sense of cultural obligation to safeguard their intangible heritage.

Additionally, the interviewees expressed an emphasis on building and developing internal channels and sources of documentation – archives, inventories, academics, and local experts – rather than depending on external resources, mainly foreign researchers. This gap in resources exists because the government (federal and local levels) did not possess a comprehensive understanding of the need for and value of utilising local experts in the intangible heritage field i.e., consultants and researchers, or the people who have collective memories of the traditional practices such as the bearers of heritage. An Emirati cultural consultant (with nearly 40 years of experience in the cultural sector) elaborated on the scattered nature of the current documentation processes:

> "*I remember we worked on heritage documentation before. There are efforts here and there. But a unified effort to reach the goal on an agreed timescale with a known budget does not exist. This matter needs patience and collective collaboration. You are talking about oral heritage, tangible heritage, intangible heritage, and so forth on the scale of the country. These efforts remain experimental and incomplete, and the same goes for other entities. We always emphasised documentation because we are losing the older generations. Whoever was around ten years back, he or she is now gone, sadly. Efforts that come from one Emirate or another are never enough. If you want to achieve something, you cannot refer to heritage as Abu Dhabi heritage, or Dubai heritage. This is the UAE's heritage. It must have a unified strategy on a federal level from the Ministry. This must be a national and patriotic project*" (Informant #11, 2019).

The consultant notes that in the 1990s, the long-term migration of foreign specialists and labour had 'swallowed' the local Emirati population in the southern Emirates of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Sharjah; this has reduced demand for an Emirati workforce that is capable of preserving their

heritage. As discussed in Chapter 3, following the union of the UAE, traditional practices were comparatively well-preserved by the indigenous population. However, due to the economic openness and urban development, many of these practices lost their meaning and value for continuity, and there was a nearly 30-year gap between these practices beginning to be lost and the new interest in preserving and sustaining these practices. This led to calls for initial documentation in the 1990s through photography and surveying these practices. To find the systematic skills needed to undertake this documentation, foreign expertise was hired.

Referring to the documentation process above, different local cultural authorities began accepting patent applications in 1998 for the purposes of sharing traditional knowledge on different aspects of heritage, and applications took between 18 and 24 months to be processed. Thus, this application process encouraged growth in intellectual property within the intangible heritage sector in the UAE; however, as the consultant made clear, they are still ineffective and in fact hinder organisational documentation development on the national level: "*as far I am aware, there no [federal level] cultural councils existing officially today. The Dubai Cultural Council was the first official government effort that focused on culture in Dubai, and initiated the cultural methodology in terms of regulations, defining concepts, references, and influences of culture. As for the country, I do not think any such council exists*" (Informant #11, 2019). This organisational approach in the documentation process is important because it ensures the validity of the collected information and to build a proper reference of what encompasses UAE's heritage. The consultant added:

> "*There are some cultural platforms in the UAE, like the Cultural Foundation in Abu Dhabi, and they play the greatest role in culture and arts. In Dubai, we have the Cultural and Scientific Association, an NGO that was founded in 1987. In Sharjah, there are the cultural clubs in general, and the Cultural and Media Authority. Similarly with the other Emirates.*

However, I am only referring to the Emirates that have cultural weight: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah – especially Sharjah, even for a historical perspective. As a government, their expertise exceeded expectations in all cultural domains: in writing, literature, theatre, arts, and different forms of heritage" (Informant #11, 2019).

The fact that the consultant referred to "*the Emirates that have cultural weight*" explains recent laws and decisions since 2016 that have been established to regulate the intangible heritage sector within these Emirates according to the 2003 Convention provisions, because these Emirates realised that they could lose their 'cultural weight' status – regionally and internationally – due to the negative effects of modernisation that endangers the existence of heritage elements within their borders. The consultant also reflected on the need to develop a legal environment that protects the artisans' knowledge and products, while ensuring the originality of the sector's intellectual property. The latter includes providing a system of protection for the artisans' products from imitation or forgery, while encouraging their competitiveness in relation to imported products (Informant #11, 2019).

According to a former Emirati policymaker who became a cultural consultant, intangible heritage databases should include registration and documentation approaches, which are also consistent with the provisions of UNESCO's 2003 Convention:

"*When you talk about the traditional crafts in Dubai, they are similar to the other Emirates, and thus this plan can work at the national, federal level. This plan includes many elements, such as a complete systematic training methodology that is based on the skills that this sector needs. I am not sure if it is implemented though. Personally, I did not receive anything related to this plan such as a training course or programmes, I am not aware of any operational plan. Abu Dhabi has a five-to-ten-year plan that is aligned with UNESCO's*

2003 Convention requirements, especially in relation to preserving tangible and intangible heritage. These plans exist and have been officially announced" (Informant #14, 2019).

In relation to the consultant's statement on Abu Dhabi's documentation plan, Abu Dhabi Culture launched an online 'Registry of Artisans'[76] database in 2021 as the 'national gate' for Emirati crafts. The first phase consists of the fifteen crafts that are inscribed in the Representative Lists[77] of the 2003 Convention, and which are officially defined as national intangible heritage. In other words, this platform allows local artisans who practice one or more of the fifteen crafts to register, in line with UNESCO's provisions. This specific example is linked to intangible heritage as a process of selection that is influenced by the international commitments for the safeguarding of intangible heritage. This example provides an authorised heritage understanding of selecting and preserving specific intangible heritage elements, at the expense of other traditional practices.

Moreover, this platform addresses a gap in technical documentation in the local intangible heritage field that was examined in the previous chapter. The gap mainly involves the continuing decline in craft bearers without facilitating a resource to document their knowledge and skills. Those bearers are often elderly locals who have not – or do not know how to – contribute to craftsmanship surveying, nor do they understand the economics of intangible heritage. Not solving this gap leads to the development of discrepant risks and a lack of reliability concerning the inscriptions process of the 2003 Convention safeguarding guidelines. Therefore, this digitised solution aims to systematically document and track the information concerning existing and new generations of artisans, including the analysis of the craftsmanship narratives, changes, addons, and threats as they occur, which helps to shape the intangible heritage training programmes.

[76] As part of Abu Dhabi's intangible heritage safeguarding efforts, Abu Dhabi Culture launched the registry of artisans that is accessible to all artisans living in the UAE. This platform operates on a national level considering the political kinship of the capital. Retrieved from https://registerofartisans.ae/en

[77] Listing of intangible heritage in the UAE. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/state/united-arab-emirates-AE

According to a number of officials in different local cultural authorities, these systematic stages of documentation involve: 1) identifying existing accessible intangible heritage elements by surveying in the first stage of the documentation process; 2) defining the approach used in selecting intangible heritage elements according to the resources or risks for continuity; 3) sorting the information on which the process focuses on – such as the type of practice, linguistics and related tribal dialects, the historic dimension, the available raw materials and tools, performance or production stages, and the utilitarian and aesthetic value; and finally 4) documenting the life-cycle phases of the craft through surveying and photography (Informant #25; Informant #30; Informant #34; Informant #42, 2020). A non-local cultural consultant stressed the need to establish an automated intangible heritage database to provide easy access to the documentation stages and collected information:

> "*Safeguarding traditional crafts before they disappear, adding Emirati heritage intensely to the curriculum, and bringing out all the stories of the UAE's heritage and the background context onto a digital ecosystem that links the culture, creativity, the talents, the networking, and the commissioning under one big digital roof*" (Informant #21, 2019).

The new registry database aims to collect as much information as possible to narrow this documentation gap, and by collecting specific intangible heritage knowledge through official means it could be also utilised in the new heritage-making process for enhancing the national identity of the country. In this light, knowledge is a form of power – as expressed by Emirati and non-local informants who work for different local cultural authorities (Informant #9; Informant #15, 2019). As discussed in Chapter 2, knowledge as a main component of the cultural process affects and contributes to heritage-making within a specific cultural context, and is often used

politically in the notion of universal heritage that is culturally and socially encompassed by and associated with cultural industries and international policies.

Artisans and their traditional practices are often considered part of the economic understandings of today's definition of cultural industries – as discussed in Chapter 2. Therefore, local artisans significantly contribute to catering their knowledge and skills to the creative economy as an added value to the national economic diversification of the UAE. The term *Al-Hiraf Al-Emaratiyya* **الحرف الإماراتية** or 'Emirati Crafts' holds official recognition and to use it, artisans must abide by specific heritage production methods such as understanding traditional knowledge and recognising the value of the craft in order to rationalise training the new generation of artisans who are not familiar with the heritage-making process. This training process results in the production of 'new heritage' that is inspired by the historical meanings and values of a traditional practice, and how to use it to fit the needs or interests of the present. As discussed in Chapter 2, new heritage is based on heritage-making (or heritagisation) that requires contemporising elements of intangible heritage such as craftsmanship knowledge, skills, and products into commodities for tourism, and specifically arranged for staged heritage. Training in the know-how of intangible heritage is part of the capacity-building requirements that instruct, guide, and prepare the next generation of artisans for documenting, practicing, transmitting, and developing their traditional heritage into forms of heritagisation. This development process includes using the benefits of intangible heritage to contribute to the creative economy within the cultural industries (Informant #14, 2019).

According to local artisans, mainly women who practice multiple traditional crafts such as weaving or braiding, the privacy of a craftsperson is considered during the documentation process because, within the artisan community, such an official approach might be considered as an

intrusion into their private lifestyle (Informant #50; Informant #51; Informant #53; Informant #54, 2020). Equally associated with the artisans' privacy, local crafts are often practiced in their homes as a form of personal belonging. As such, the concern here about privacy is not the collected information nor the production of the crafts; it is more related to their privacy being investigated and exposed to foreigners for the purpose of collecting data. The data collected during the documentation process includes understanding the formation and orientation of the craft within the artisan's private lifestyle, whether it is practiced by men or women, or if it belonged to a particular tribe. The process of a craft, including the steps of construction and production, is documented through observing the live practice of the craft – which could take weeks – along with details of how external aspects like geography and raw materials can affect the outcome.

As shown in Figure 5.4 (below), *sadu* weaving is a complex traditional craft that is mainly practiced by Bedouins and, according to the artisans, this craft is difficult to be taught or completed individually because the craft's stages of production are a collective work: "*it requires more than one artisan to produce one piece of sadu*" (Informant #47; Informant #51; Informant #52). Briefly, the production of *sadu* consists of 1) collecting the wool, bristle, and cotton that are the key raw materials for the craft; 2) the spinning technique that results in making the proper threads for weaving; 3) dyeing the threads, which is done according to the specific mineral content of available elements in the local environment, to give create distinctive, bright colours for symbolic purposes; 4) the weft twining technique, in which the weaver sets up the threads in one colour on the loom, then divides them into groups to create specific patterns, and 5) followed by the preceding stage, sewing and embroidery techniques to create the desired products. Throughout these stages, the *sadu* weavers are familiar with most elements of production, however each stage is completed by

a specific weaver to enable consistency of production and to ensure knowledge transfer within the artisan community.



Figure 5.4: *A local sadu weaver uses coloured threads in a simple symmetrical pattern.*
Source: DCT, 2019.

A study of the tools and materials required concerns availability factors, the sourcing of instruments, and the importance of motifs that have been added over time, including reasons for changes in the practice. The inspiration behind the craft's motif patterns that both the artisans and the designers can use while creating their products in the heritage-making process is also important. Here, the availability of artisans with specific craft knowledge and skills is a strategic approach in selecting the crafts that are inscribed in the Representative Lists of the 2003 Convention. In other words, observing the journey and experience of an ongoing craft in a live sequence aims to document the practice of the craft. The national documentation scope is developed in line with the international criteria and objectives advocated by 2003 Convention, with the aim of raising awareness about a craft's importance, encouraging international cooperation, and providing new meanings and values to these crafts. The scope also covers how

to document crafts that are prone to disappearing through collecting knowledge, creating interest in the crafts that are documented, increasing awareness among artisans and consumers, and ensuring the sustainability of the existing or revived craft. These crafts are defined through surveying approaches adopted cooperatively and independently by each Emirate to assist the federal government in adding the UAE's intangible heritage elements to its national inventory of cultural heritage. Once these elements are added to the inventory, the information is unified in definition, and becomes the cultural property of the government – which requires anyone wishing to obtain or access specific information to follow official guidelines. These guidelines are also applied to the individuals or communities who shared the information; a situation that resulted in discovering diverse approaches to safeguarding intangible heritage within each Emirate, including safeguarding the crafts through commodification. This diversification in is important to add in the national inventory because it is in line with the safeguarding measures of the 2003 Convention.

According to an Emirati cultural consultant (Informant #14, 2019) and officials working for a local cultural authority (Informant #5; Informant #9, 2019), this process encouraged a form of constructed authenticity because it involves only protecting the cultural value of a traditional practice in order for it to become a commodity. In addition, the economic openness of the UAE to the world resulted in the availability of cheap traditional handicraft products from external markets being sold in local markets as local products for tourists visiting the UAE. Importing imitation products (from East Asian countries, for instance) of an Emirati craft, among other intangible heritage elements, are considered copies of what is perceived as authentic to the Emiratis. This led to the dilution of many traditional practices and their production, which presented a challenge to the bearers of heritage, including the artisan communities, due to the low demand for their products as a result of the price increase, given the efforts and time deployed in their manufacture, as well

as their high quality. This challenge also reduced the natural correlation between traditional practices and the artisans and their collective community, as it became difficult for them to decide which practice to maintain as a form of continuity. This connection between the artisans and the community is important in order to reflect on how the collective works of traditional social practices and crafts empower the people on the ground to define their own craft.

Implementations of International Cultural Commitments

As examined above, the impacts of modernisation (including the effects of the economic openness of the UAE) resulted in the initiation of a national safeguarding plan[78] for intangible heritage in 2005, aligned with the provisions of the 2003 Convention and with a particular focus on traditional social practices and crafts. In line with the UAE's cultural heritage sector's efforts,[79] Emiratis (including the bearers of heritage) were aware of their role in preserving and presenting intangible heritage in order protect the local social fabric, especially those who are skilled in and continue to practice crafts or traditional performances. According to UNESCO's definition of crafts within cultural industries, crafts are a natural product of a nation's cultural evolution, a manifestation of a community's genuine culture, and an indispensable component of its collective memory and development over time.[80] As discussed in Chapter 2, this understanding of intangible heritage is associated with the concept of authenticity, through which it is often used to identify any cultural experience as a justification for a 'culturally rich' status. According to a policymaker

[78] The United Arab Emirates Periodic Reporting on the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en-state/united-arab-emirates-AE?info=periodic-reporting
[79] Efforts of the UAE Government in preserving the heritage. Retrieved from https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/culture/arab-and-islamic-heritage/efforts-of-the-uae-government-in-preserving-the-heritage
[80] UNESCO's Crafts and Design adopted the definition. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/creativity/creative-industries/crafts-and-design/

(Informant #16, 2021) and an Emirati designer (Informant #23, 2019), it is worth noting that authenticity is often a constructed feature that validates the historical value of a cultural identity.

Simultaneously, the term 'authentic' is given to a specific custom according to the local understanding of their culture, and transferred naturally without external influences. For instance, what the artisans consider authentic is a consistent cultural process of practicing the craft, while transferring its knowledge through their dialect, skill, and materials. This process must be acknowledged and taught by a group or a family member among the artisan community for generations, and not embedded with or influenced by contemporary materials or techniques. Hence, the importance of the presentation of craftmanship lies not only in reflecting an aspect of the local cultural identity, but also in proving that this identity is distinctive by validating authenticity through the memories of the bearers of heritage. The impact of the artisans' collective memory is significant in transmitting the traditional knowledge of local intangible heritage, when little research or records have been compiled based on craftspeople's observations. Of note is how the artisans try to seek a sense of authenticity within their practice, which is being disrupted due to modernisation.

Providing a concise and active role for the bearers of intangible heritage to preserve their heritage in any way possible resulted in the large-scale movement documenting intangible heritage, led by the capital Abu Dhabi. As described by an official working at a local cultural authority, Abu Dhabi alone has identified more than 800 intangible heritage elements:

> "*In terms of data, there are some artisans you can find, but I am not sure if it can be shared out there. But in terms of data that record crafts or artisans for the last 20 years, they do not exist. We have just started recording them now. We are constantly recording heritage and how it is being practiced, as described by a specific generation. We are building a lot*

of research, and there is a record that Abu Dhabi Culture holds of all the intangible cultural heritage elements, hundreds of them. Research for each element is being developed slowly and being built on. There is a crisis list, a list of things or elements that are dying, and not much is known about them. These were the elements the researchers were directed towards in terms of importance. At some point, they will be publicised" (Informant #25; 2020).

This documentation movement also focused on inscribing elements of Emirati intangible heritage that were considered to be endangered in 2011. The first element that was inscribed in the craftsmanship domain was *sadu*[81] which is the art of traditional complex weaving, practiced only by women, as shown in Figure 5.5 (below). As explained above by *sadu* weavers, the particularities of this craft involve collective effort within Bedouin communities, because of the complexities of its production. Groups work together, from men shearing the camels or sheep, to spinning the wool into threads, then dying and weaving into specific patterns by women to create light furniture or wardrobes.



Figure 5.5*: *Sadu, a traditional form of complex weaving on a ground loom.
Source: DCT, 2020.

[81] Periodic reporting on *sadu*, traditional weaving skills in the UAE. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/state/united-arab-emirates-AE?info=periodic-reporting#usl-0545-2020

Based on the documentation efforts led by Abu Dhabi, a number of factors were identified that threatened the continuity of *sadu*: 1) the drastic socio-economic changes that disrupted the tribal structure, therefore affecting the collective engagement of the weavers in the complex crafting process; 2) the decline of the bearers of this craft, mostly older women, because the current young generations no longer practice and transfer *sadu* knowledge and skills; and 3) the increased demand for imported replica pieces of *sadu* at low prices in the local markets, especially in cultural touristic destinations. In this context, several officials view the process of intangible heritage selection based only on endangered factors as a subjective case; sense of the craft's previous value is highlighted if its traditional know-how is preserved, so that it could inspire new work and be used in different modern forms or productions (Informant #23; Informant #30; Informant #35; 2020).

An official working at the local cultural authority elaborated on the power that intangible heritage inscriptions bestow on a country (Informant #25; 2020). For instance, an inscribed element becomes a political tool once it is recognised internationally, for several reasons. First, once there is world recognition, it facilitates the association of the element with similar heritage practices worldwide, to exemplify the values of universal culture and its existence in a country. While materials and techniques often differ, traditional weaving is a common form of intangible heritage globally, meeting not only the criteria of the 2003 Convention, but also concerned on the cultural industries' that measures the contribution of cultural heritage in the creative economic growth of nation-states.

Locally, international recognition gives mores status to the inscribed intangible heritage element compared to other traditional elements. Such elements are then targeted by the local and federal government for safeguarding purposes, using heritagisation approaches to preserve these

elements, usually managed by cultural tourism organisations (Informant #14, 2019; Informant #25; 2020). Heritagisation began with the restoration of existing historic sites or buildings to preserve visible local heritage. The restoration efforts lead to historic spaces being used as museums, heritage centres, exhibitions, or galleries to educate and promote the inscribed intangible heritage elements. These efforts required documenting the knowledge of the bearers of heritage, consisting of the historical narratives and practices of these historic sites. Examples of such comprehensive restorations include *Qasr Al-Hosn* **قصر الحصن** in Abu Dhabi, *Shindagha* **شندغة** and *Fahidi* **فهيدي** Historic Districts in Dubai, and Heart of Sharjah close to where the Sharjah Biennial.[82]

Notably, the inscription of intangible heritage elements in the UAE started with endangered practices such as *sadu*; the implementation process later extended to elements concerning oral traditions, performing arts, and social practices rather than craftsmanship knowledge and skills. This shift in priorities was triggered by three aspects: 1) the limitations of budget, time, and efforts in conducting periodic reports on the status of endangered intangible heritage elements; 2) the accessibility and availability of information intersecting with other domains such as the creative economy and cultural tourism; and 3) the increasing value of UNESCO's Representative Lists to enhance the UAE's national identity on an international level by inscribing more elements. An Emirati cultural consultant highlighted this, observing:

> "*The UAE is one of the most proactive countries that signed UNESCO's Convention on Safeguarding Heritage, both tangible and intangible. Several crafts nominations in UNESCO's portal reflects the need to preserve these heritage elements. They do exist; however, in my opinion, it is not enough to inscribe a craft or a particular heritage element within UNESCO: to inscribe, and that is that. The inscription is the beginning of the*

[82] Founded in 1993, Sharjah Biennial is considered the first large-scale international art exhibition in the region that is celebrated every two-years in different areas of Sharjah. Retrieved from http://sharjahart.org/biennial-15/about

journey. What has been understood within some cultural authorities is to inscribe a particular craft or a particular element in UNESCO, then I am there! Furthermore, the truth is, once you inscribe it loud and clear to the world, you need to support this craft or support that particular practice" (Informant #14, 2019).

One of the reasons for prioritising one intangible heritage element for inscription purposes at the expense of others is that the custodians of these practices are in decline, which disrupts the consistency of documenting information about the element as it changes or develops. As a result, it would be difficult to update the national heritage inventory once those practitioners can no longer contribute to the surveying nor the economics of intangible heritage. Inventories are a key safeguarding measure according to the 2003 Convention criteria: "*to ensure identification with a view to safeguarding, each State Party shall draw up, in a manner geared to its own situation, one or more inventories of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory. These inventories shall be regularly updated*"[83] (Article 12, UNESCO). In this case, the available data concerning specific elements is prioritised for inscription purposes rather than using it for education, research, or capacity-building purposes (Informant #14, 2019; Informant #34, 2020).

Another reason is to reflect on gender equality[84] requirements and to emphasise on a fair balance among cultural heritage practices that are performed by both genders in the inscribed elements. For instance, from 2011 to 2023, fifteen elements[85] were inscribed, most of which were practiced by men. The UAE's Intangible Heritage listing includes *Azi* **عازي** and *Tagrooda* **تغرودة**, shown in Figure 5.6 (below). These are different forms of traditional chanting in poetry, having a similar presentational structure. *Ayyala* **عيالة** and *Razfa* **رزفه**, shown in Figures 5.7 and 5.8 (below),

[83] Quote retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/46568-EN.pdf
[84] 'Gender and the 2003 Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention'. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000243888
[85] Listing of intangible heritage in the UAE. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/state/united-arab-emirates-AE

are traditional dance performances that are mainly performed by males on special occasions. Apart from *sadu* whose main weavers are commonly women, *Ayyala* demonstrates modest female participation in traditional practices, locally known as *Na'ashat*[86] **نعاشات**. Incorporating the female factor in *Ayyala*, as exhibited in Figure 5.8 (below) emphasises a symbolic celebration of victory in this tradition and to adds an aesthetic value to the element.



Figure 5.6: *Azi and tagrooda, traditional forms of chanting poetry.* **Source**: DCT, 2020.



Figure 5.7: *Razfa is the first line spoken in ayyala, it reflects defensive saluting that is synchronised with movement and poetry on national or social occasions.* **Source**: Author, 2020.

[86] In the local dialect, *na'ashat* means the leaning palm tree, symbolising how the women sway their hair in time with the *ayyala* rhythm. This information is included in the inscription written report and is evident in photos. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/al-ayyala-a-traditional-performing-art-of-the-sultanate-of-oman-and-the-united-arab-emirates-01012



Figure 5.8: *Ayyala is a form of cultural dance performance to indicate triumph, masculinity, and grace through na'ashat performance; heritagised as a symbol of victory on special occasions at present.*
Source: DCT, 2020.

In addition to the listing, falconry and *Sibag Al-Hijin* سباق الهجن (camel racing) have been added to meet the diversity criteria of local practices within the 2003 Convention, exhibited as shown in Figures 5.9 and 5.10 (below). Both of these elements were essential for life, because one is necessary to hunt for food, among other uses such as delivering messages from one tribe to another; while the other was a transportation method for the Bedouin community. Today, both are heritagised as sports in national, regional, and international competitions, and are therefore relatively well preserved because of their economic contribution to the creative economy in the sports domain, within the cultural industries.



Figure 5.9: *Falconry, a form of traditional hunting; heritagised as a sport at present.*
Source: DCT, 2020.



Figure 5.10*: *Sibag Al-Hijin has become one of the most important and valued sports in the Arabian Gulf Region where camels used to be a form of customary transport. **Source**: DTC, 2020.

To enhance the balance of the UAE's gender equality, the lack of presence of women in the UAE's previous intangible heritage inscriptions resulted in increased effort to inscribe an element that is significantly practised by women. One such example is *talli*, shown in Figure 5.11 (below). *Talli* is the art of traditional embroidery based on textiles, and was inscribed in 2022.[87] According to Emirati artisans, *talli* is a time-consuming craft, involving the production of a fabric through a complex braiding technique. *Talli* uses special thread rolls that overlap each other in specific bright designs, and is used to adorn the sleeves and busts of *mukhawwarah* مخوره a local gown for women. Similar to the traditional safeguarding of *sadu* weaving, women from different tribes within the UAE are engaged in the craft of *talli*, which is collectively transferred from grandmothers to mothers and daughters from an early age, while reciting poems or stories. Men might engage in purchasing the tools and threads for the making of *talli* or might sell the final product in local

[87] *Talli* inscription in the Representative List of 2003 Convention. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/al-talli-traditional-embroidery-skills-in-the-united-arab-emirates-01712

markets (Informant #44; Informant #45; Informant #53; Informant #54, 2020). *Talli* is a craft that is in high demand on a daily basis in households or at cultural festivals across the country, because it is considered a traditional practice that retains its past meaning, value, and customary uses in the present.



***Figure 5.11*: *Emirati women practicing talli in a collective manner*.** **Source**: Author, 2019.

Local understandings of safeguarding intangible heritage and transmission are constantly evolving, regardless of official heritage discourses, because practices of heritage are a cultural process that change according to present meanings and values. However, key to this evolving process is the shifting role of safeguarding Emirati intangible heritage and its documentation process, correlated to the requirements of the international cultural commitments such as the 2003 Convention. According to a cultural representative, for Emiratis in Dubai, for instance, who are interested in obtaining craftsmanship knowledge or skills, the only way to do this is through official trainings programmes, seminars, or workshops teaching selected crafts. Some of these programmes are run by the Hamdan Bin Mohammed Centre for Heritage Revival[88] (HHC) and it

[88] Established in 2013, HHC is the official reflection of Dubai's Crown Prince cultural responsibility towards the country's heritage. In this study, this Centre is referred as Hamdan Centre for Heritage. Retrieved from http://hhc.gov.ae/en/about-us/

is worth noting that this Centre emphasises heritage that is often appealing to the youth, reflecting the Crown Prince of Dubai's traditional interests. According to the Centre's representative, these interests are incorporated through championships for both genders held nationwide, such as firearms shooting and camel-racing (Informant #30, 2020), as shown in in Figures 5.12, 5.13, and 5.14 (below). The Centre's main mandate is to empower the Emirati youth and the remaining artisan community in Dubai. In this essence, elements that are linked with inscribed intangible heritage include poetry, traditional proverbs, and *yowla*[89] **يولة** (an artistic form of performing with firearms), shown in Figures 5.15 and 5.16 (below). Further, to enhance the credibility of the Centre, it funds and organises regular capacity-building workshops in collaboration with heritage facilitators and the experts associated with the 2003 Convention implementation processes since 2015 (see Figure 5.17 below) (Informant #30, 2020).



Figure 5.12/13: *HHC firearm championships for both genders.* **Source**: HHC, 2021.

[89] A modern manifestation of firearm art performance that trended in the early 2000s. As part of the UAE's popular culture, this element is included within *ayyala* inscription on UNESCO's intangible heritage Representative List to strengthen the diversification of its performance. Retrieved from https://intangible heritage.unesco.org/en/RL/al-ayyala-a-traditional-performing-art-of-the-sultanate-of-oman-and-the-united-arab-emirates-01012



Figure 5.14: *HHC organised the first Sibag Al-Hijin championship for females in the region under the patronage of the Crown Prince of Dubai.* **Source**: HHC, 2020.



Figures 5.15/16: *Yowla demonstration by Emirati youth.* **Source**: Author, 2018.



Figure 5.17*: *Intangible heritage capacity-building workshops for the government and private heritage sectors in the UAE. **Source**: HHC, 2015.

The intangible heritage documentation movement in the UAE aimed not only to investigate existing traditional cultural practices, but also to understand the formation of each practice. This was based on discussions with the artisan communities and the stakeholders who are involved in contemporising the element such as visual artists and designers, and other arbitrators in the heritagisation process. This perception was articulated by one of the officials working in a local cultural authority:

> "*The cultural industries are the future of culture, especially when we have practitioners in the field practicing craftsmanship, for example, to what end? Who is going to buy the product? How will it develop? Let us say that we create this formula of passing on the artistry and the craftsmanship skills to the next generation: that is a challenge by itself, but to what end? Heritage always develops and evolves constantly. There is nothing that is stagnant and that we can say 'this is our heritage', and that is it. Within a few generations, heritage changes due to materiality or new skills developed or new tools invented. Bringing*

in artists into crafts, working and developing the crafts is so vital for the actual heritage to continue" (Informant #25, 2020).

In this context, collaborating with relevant and related bodies at the federal and local levels enables the observation and documentation of the changes in a traditional practice. This facilitates documenting the intangible heritage transformations between the past and the present that involve deconstructing, constructing, and reconstructing the local heritage scene. The documentation process was the foundation for developing the intangible heritage institutional frameworks which created a new heritage approach, which introduced a "*representation of local heritage according to touristic standards*" (Informant #10, 2019). In this light, the local governments in the UAE adopted several official practices of safeguarding intangible heritage, including capacity-building programmes. These practices are based on the 2003 Convention criteria of empowering and involving the bearers of intangible heritage, focusing on their traditional knowledge and skills, strengthening their vocational capabilities, and integrating the cultural industries' economic and touristic aspects into the safeguarding process.

Official Local Intangible Heritage Capacity-Building Programmes

The implementations of international cultural commitments (specifically the inscriptions of multiple local intangible heritage elements in the Representative Lists of the 2003 Convention) resulted in capacity-building development as a form of collaborative cultural governance between the federal and local governments. This development is specifically designed for safeguarding practices through establishing heritage institutions or centres that mainly focus on the documentation, communication, and presentation of local intangible heritage on both levels, and it works in two directions. These institutions aim, on the one hand, to ensure a social engagement

associated with transmitting intangible heritage knowledge and skills to new generations, consistent with the 2003 Convention safeguarding requirements.

On the other hand, there is the need to use this knowledge to enhance national identity while shifting the meaning and value of local traditional social practices into economic assets for tourism purposes. Examples of this include the selected government institutional centres in this section that are dedicated to documenting, preserving, and presenting a variety of traditional crafts, including heritagised forms of cultural practices. The approach of these capacity-building programmes is based on education and training new generation of artisans and heritage facilitators within the Emirates. This section is divided into four main examples of official capacity-building programmes for the safeguarding of intangible heritage, as shown in Figure 5.18 below.

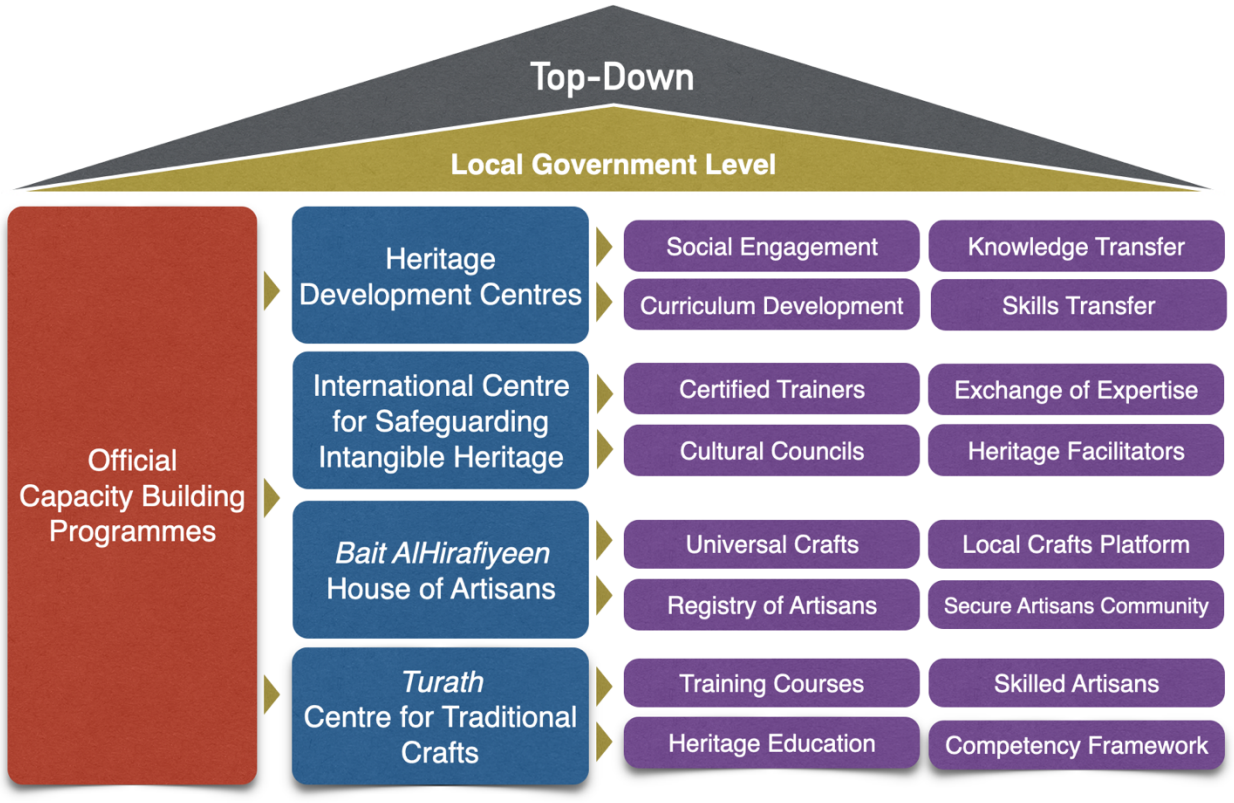


Figure 5.18: *Implementations of official capacity-building programmes.* **Source**: Author, 2024.

These centres aim to examine the nature of partnerships between the federal and local levels that involve safeguarding national intangible heritage. The first partnership explains the role of the local government in the development of intangible heritage in schools known as Heritage Development Centres (HDC). These centres are located in different schools to provide knowledge concerning intangible heritage to students and to support the social and national studies curriculum with live demonstrations of traditional cultural practices and crafts. The second practice reflects on the threefold collaboration, at the international, federal, and local levels, between the 2003 Convention, the (UAE) Ministry of Culture, and the government of Sharjah, which resulted in the establishment of the International Centre for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the first of its kind in the region. The third practice is *Bait Al-Hirafiyyin* [90] **بيت الحرفيين** in Abu Dhabi and the fourth practice is *Turath*[91] in Dubai. In response to the research's theoretical framework, both *Bait Al-Hirafiyyin* and *Turath* are examples of processes of selecting elements of intangible heritage that are managed and operated by the local government. While investigating both centres, their intangible heritage governance may reflect on official safeguarding methods. Although both centres exhibit common directions and purposes in preserving the crafts, they reflect each Emirate's understandings of their local intangible heritage and means of safeguarding its traditional practices, according to their government mandates and objectives.

In the UAE, the creative economy became a national approach to strengthen the links between the cultural cooperatives and non-state organisations through the development of capacity-building. Therefore, capacity-building become correlated with intangible heritage

[90] In the local dialect, *Bait Al- Hirafiyyin* means House of Artisans. Encompassing living crafts by a variety of artisans, this project is part of the *Al-Hosn* cultural site in Abu Dhabi. Retrieved from https://qasralhosn.ae/house-of-artisans/

[91] In the local dialect, *Turath* refers to the collective and inherited customs, traditions and practices of the locals in the UAE. It is an educational and training centre located in the historic district of Dubai.

elements that contribute to the creative economy: in this case, the elements inscribed in UNESCO's intangible heritage Representative Lists. This correlation is highlighted by an Emirati cultural consultant:

> "*In general, you can support the cultural and heritage sectors in two directions: the administrational, which consists of training, knowledge transfer, and consultations, and the other direction is commercial, which the leadership and the government is encouraging so that they will benefit the country in return in terms of profit, if they are employed systematically*" (Informant #14, 2019).

Because capacity building is integrated with the creative economy outcomes, more of the cultural industries' domains are defined within the local governments for a clearer understanding of its framework and implementations according to each Emirate. Hence, and according to officials working in different local cultural authorities, the more capacity building is explained and circulated between the federal and local levels, the more its vision becomes clear to members of the Emirati society in relation to how they operate, what they research, and what they produce in the field of intangible heritage (Informant #24; Informant #26; Informant #27, 2020).

In this aspect, representatives of the Ministry of Culture emphasised their efforts in terms of updating a national intangible heritage inventory and integrating its information within the educational system of local schools and universities, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MOE) (Informant #34; Informant #35, 2020). On the federal level, the representatives reflected on restructuring the organisational structure to include a specialised sector for cultural industries and departments of tangible and intangible heritage (Informant #34; Informant #35, 2020). These redefinitions of the ministry's departments resulted in a better understanding of how to design and implement intangible heritage capacity-building programmes according to the

economic and political dominance of each Emirate in the UAE. According to the informants, the Ministry of Culture established a national inventory of cultural heritage[92] to support the implementation of UNESCO's 2003 Convention in surveying intangible heritage information, including crafts, while ensuring the continuous updating of this data. However, this inventory is accessible only for specific official uses, and is not available for public use unless permitted, even if the information was documented from the custodians of heritage (Informant #34; Informant #35, 2020).

According to a number of officials, the UAE's federal government made efforts to develop the intangible heritage capacity-building based on a number of objectives: 1) developing an institutional framework for safeguarding and managing the traditional crafts sector in the Arab World; 2) safeguarding and consolidating traditional cultural practices and social values in the UAE; 3) identifying appropriate methodologies for enhancing the skills and capabilities of the artisans and providing training for young talents; 4) supporting local employment, job creation, and income enhancement efforts in the field of intangible heritage; 5) encouraging investment in local crafts to enhance their contribution to the Emirati creative economy; and finally 6) raising social awareness of the cultural, social, and economic importance of safeguarding intangible heritage, especially for the future generations (Informant #22; Informant #23, 2020).

Heritage Development Centres: Dubai's Capacity-Building Experience

One of the first capacity-building programmes to be integrated into schools was the Heritage Development Centres experience. This was a joint project in cooperation with the Dubai Educational Zone (DEZ) of the Ministry of Education. The Heritage Development Centres were

[92] UAE's national inventory reporting. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/state/united-arab-emirates-AE?info=periodic-reporting

established within selected government schools in 2011 with the support of Dubai Culture. The selection was according to the flexibility of the school workforce from management to staff to accept additional tasks, and the availability of space to establish the centres for the students to practice. The schools' location within different educational zones across Dubai was to ensure the consistent exchange of intangible heritage knowledge between students, parents, and the surrounding community. The initiative began with two schools and later expanded to seven to serve as an educational platform for the intangible heritage of the UAE. The students' age and gender were also considered, due to the segregation of male and female students at all educational levels except for kindergarten. A number of interviewees shared their insights concerning the importance of incorporating intangible heritage into the educational system, including local traditional social practices and crafts. For example, an Emirati former employee at the Ministry of Education agreed about the need to develop educational curricula concerned with transferring and preserving traditional crafts; recognising the value of intangible heritage; and creating an ideal environment for youth and students to learn and transfer national heritage for generations to come (Informant #6, 2019). This observation is highlighted by another Emirati:

> "*Culture and heritage should be the government's priority. It's there, but needs improvement and focus, and I will start with schools, such as teaching them crafts, because it's very important to start with the youngest generations, to be part of their curriculum. I know that they introduced something called Sana' but to be honest, I do not know anything about it, what is the curriculum? What are they teaching? But I hope it is done in the right way. If it is there, it should be taught by UAE nationals, and not bringing someone from the outside teaching us how to do our traditions*" (Informant #7, 2019).

Sana' is a compulsory subject that is taught in elementary schools for both genders, and it covers the general understandings of the local customs and values (Informant #6, 2019). As discussed in Chapter 3, *Sana'* in the local dialect is the equivalent of 'etiquette', which is the art of behaving and socialising that is manifested in linguistic and physical expressions, according to situational local customs and traditions. An example would be the details associated with local hospitality, including how to greet and welcome guests. To support the schools with intangible heritage knowledge and to develop a specialised workforce in the field of heritage, Dubai Culture dedicated a team to develop an integrated strategy to meet specific criteria in conveying this intangible form of local heritage. The criteria included educating the students to reach a general understanding of local heritage through developing a set of programmes consisting of traditional crafts, customs, practices, and values. This is due to students' preoccupation with academic requirements and their reluctance to search independently for intangible types of heritage. Figure 5.19 (below) shows one of the centres that regularly invites artisans with different craftsmanship skills to share their knowledge with the students.



Figure 5.19: *Part of the Heritage Development Centres activities takes place in elementary schools, introducing traditional pottery to students.* **Source**: Author, 2020.

At the same time, the initiative is part of Dubai Culture's plans to revive traditional social practices in different government bodies, as shown in Figure 5.20 (below). In addition to hosting traditional crafts workshops, several sessions are conducted and presented through demonstrative talks or lectures that target the local society more widely. An example of this is shown in Figure 5.21 (below), in which young Emirati students explain and demonstrate the traditional customs and values of falconry for the public at a heritage festival.



Figure 5.20: *Students performing folklore in a government organisation.* **Source**: Author, 2020.



Figure 5.21: *Young male members of the Heritage Development Centre exhibiting the knowledge and traditional practice of falconry to the public.* **Source**: Author, 2019.

Over the past 12 years, the continuation of this initiative in Dubai's government schools has been shown to enhance the understanding of Emirati intangible heritage. This increased understanding has built a sense of awareness around safeguarding methods among the youth, including how to share stories, and record and preserve intangible heritage. A local participant shared an insight about these centres:

> "*I do not want to see something quite dull, like a TV show. The Heritage Development Centres initiative in the schools is excellent. Compared to the other schools that do not host this initiative, their heritage awareness is high and practical. However, it should be upgraded a bit, or they should add heritage as a curriculum subject in the schools, like we used to have arts and music. The cultural sector should work in collaboration with the Ministry of Education to come up with a comprehensive subject specialising in local heritage. I heard there is a subject called Sana', not sure how it has been implemented though*" (Informant #1, 2019).

To elaborate on this informant's statement, the centres only focussed on the inscribed intangible heritage elements, but included elements that are practiced by variety of different Emirati groups that are not part of the school community. These groups consist of specialists, researchers, and stakeholders that are interested in heritage in its various forms, specifically when a heritage element is likely to be included in the processes of heritagisation, as shown in Figure 5.22 (below). Moreover, these efforts contribute to raising awareness of the value of traditional cultural practices that are preserved without the need for institutional frameworks for safeguarding national heritage. This awareness means the expansion of the students' participation base from the schools to the wider cultural spaces within society, to cultivate talents and to prepare them to express what they practised as local intangible heritage.



Figure 5.22: *Contemporary representations of talli.* **Source**: Author, 2019.

A number of Emiratis emphasised the role of the educational system in enabling intangible heritage capacity-building programming and transferring traditional know-how amongst the different sections of society (Informant #1; Informant #7, 2019). In this context, education is understood as the process of communicating or obtaining knowledge while developing functions of debate in relation to safeguarding intangible heritage. Training refers to an organised sequence of guidelines under supervision, designed to convey skills and specific knowledge. A number of officials working in different cultural authorities agreed that efforts would be undertaken across three spectrums: civil society, local communities, and cultural corporations and educational institutions (Informant #25; Informant #26; Informant #30, 2020). Intangible heritage and safeguarding are correlated together within the UAE's cultural policies. Once a cultural custom is interpreted as a national intangible heritage element, this recognition sets in motion a platform for its safeguarding. Hence, local heritage interpretations are subject to change according to what the UAE defines as its local intangible heritage, and where it should be implemented.

International Centre for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage: Sharjah's Capacity-Building Experience

In 2021, the UAE announced a joint agreement with UNESCO to establish the International Centre for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage[93] (ICSICH) in Sharjah (see Figure 5.23 below). According to the official statement, this Centre was established in Sharjah specifically due to 1) the Emirate's distinguished regional and international position in strengthening the cultural heritage field; and 2) the consistency in conducting systematic cultural heritage studies and heritage facilitation courses. These efforts led to the designation of Sharjah Institute of Heritage (SIH) as an International Centre for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage in 2017.[94]



Figure 5.23: *The official announcement establishing* ICSICH *in Sharjah.* **Source**: WAM, 2021.

Under this regional/international agreement, this Centre aims to implement capacity-building programmes to preserve intangible heritage within the Arabian Gulf and MENA regions. The implementation consists of 1) reducing the communication and participation gap between the government and the local communities; and 2) encouraging top-down and bottom-up collaboration

[93] The official signing of the agreement between the Minister of Culture and the Director-General of UNESCO. Retrieved from http://wam.ae/en/details/1395303001317

[94] A feasibility study submitted to UNESCO in a bid to establish the International Centre for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Sharjah. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/45834-EN.pdf

to safeguard or revive their intangible heritage. The Centre also represents the MENA regions, which encourages cross-cultural dialogue that contributes to the development of reciprocal respect among those who work in the field of intangible heritage. This regional representation of heritage supports the notion of universal culture that is promoted by the 2003 Convention and the culture of coexistence among different nationalities in correlation with the cultural diversity in the UAE.

Because the Centre is associated with the 2003 Convention, the Ministry of Culture worked on a capacity-building approach which led to the emergence of *Al-Majalis Al-Thaqafiya* **المجالس الثقافية** (the Cultural Councils)[95] in 2019. These Councils were a first-of-their-kind federal approach that call for joint planning between three sectors: arts, heritage, and cultural industries. The initiative covers a wide range of segments such as visual and performing arts, press and literature, design, and creative services. However, its main focus is on the type of intangible heritage content appropriate for the new generation, and additionally it seeks to drive discussions, legislation, and policies between the three sectors in the UAE, while placing cultural heritage as a priority.[96] These Cultural Councils take the form of three councils: an Arts Council, a Heritage Council, and a Cultural Industries Council, as federal representatives of UAE's cultural identity. Among these councils, the Heritage Council caters to traditional practices and knowledge. The Cultural Industries Council orients toward heritagisation, and the Arts Council interprets the aesthetic elements of heritage. For the Heritage Council in particular, a main aim is to support the educational system with passing on and spreading intangible heritage.

[95] The Cultural Councils' first joint platform aimed at highlighting discussions amongst the UAE's federal and local cultural partners to further develop the UAE's cultural agenda. Retrieved from https://en.unesco.org/creativity/policy-monitoring-platform/cultural-councils-initiative

[96] 'Promoting our national heritage and preserving and documenting our history and traditions for future generations is of utmost importance to preserving our national identity', H.H. Sheikha Maryam bint Mohamed Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan stated during the launch meeting of the National Creative Relief Program. Retrieved from https://www.mcy.gov.ae/en/news/preserving-our-national-heritage-of-utmost-importance-maryam-bint-mohamed/

As mentioned by different cultural officials, this direction should include the development of a series of capacity-building centres integrated with cultural industries domains to learn and practice heritage according to the local practices of Emirati society (Informant #25; Informant #26; Informant #29; Informant #30; Informant #31; Informant #32, 2020). Thus, this cultural ecosystem is working towards embracing local artisans, non-local artists, and designers as key actors of the creative economy of the UAE. Eventually, their knowledge, based on intangible heritage development, will become as important as gross domestic product to overcome the current challenges of integrated cultures in the UAE, including the weakening of local intangible heritage presentation across the country.

Bait Al-Hirafiyyin *A Physical Translation of National Craftsmanship*

Launched in 2021, *Bait Al-Hirafiyyin* is located within the borders of *Qasr Al-Hosn*[97] and serves as the first government instrument for the safeguarding and transmission of selected intangible heritage elements in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. *Bait Al-Hirafiyyin* is one of the implementations of Abu Dhabi's cultural heritage law.[98] Issued by the President of the UAE in 2016, this law governs Abu Dhabi Culture's authority over the Emirate's cultural heritage scenery, including the documentation, transmission, and safeguarding of intangible heritage. A representative of the initiative from Abu Dhabi Culture discussed the function of this Institution: "*it consists of curated spaces to facilitate the educational outreach of artisans, and a permanent*

[97] In the local dialect, *Qasr Al-Hosn* means a Fort Mansion. This historical site was originally occupied by the ruling family of Abu Dhabi, and is currently considered to be a national symbol that celebrates the development of the Emirate since the eighteenth century. Retrieved from https://qasralhosn.ae/en/history

[98] The President of the UAE and the Ruler of Abu Dhabi issues Abu Dhabi's Cultural Heritage Law in 2016. Retrieved from http://wam.ae/en/details/1395301122839

exhibition for crafts production (shown in Figure 5.24 below), focusing more on the traditional practices of Abu Dhabi" (Informant #27, 2020).



Figure 5.24: *Contemporary structure in the main exhibition hall in Bait Al-Hirafiyyin, inspired by the braiding techniques of traditional baskets.* **Source**: DCT, 2019.

In order to present a logical historical flow of narrative, there is a dedicated section within the main fort of *Qasr Al-Hosn* that discusses the 'Emirati way' of living prior to the discovery of oil, including the historical understandings and development of these crafts (Informant #27, 2020). Figures 5.25 and 5.26 (below) show of the development of *Qasr Al-Hosn*. From the early twentieth century until the 1960s, *Qasr Al-Hosn* mainly reflected social, governance, and power dynamics. Like *Shindagha*, *Qasr Al-Hosn* was the residence of the ruling family, their descendants, and the local people. Around the fort, many tribes supported these dynamics. However, since the 1980s, these dynamics have shifted to serve contemporary heritage implementations, as the area has been entirely restored as a cultural destination in the heart of Abu Dhabi (Informant #27, 2020). The

restoration encompasses the historical social, cultural, and urban developments of Abu Dhabi, and offers a variety of experiences including heritage festivals and interactive cultural exhibitions such as *Al-Hosn* Festival.[99]



Figure 5.25: *Aerial View of Qasr Al-Hosn in 1963.* **Source**: DCT, 2020.

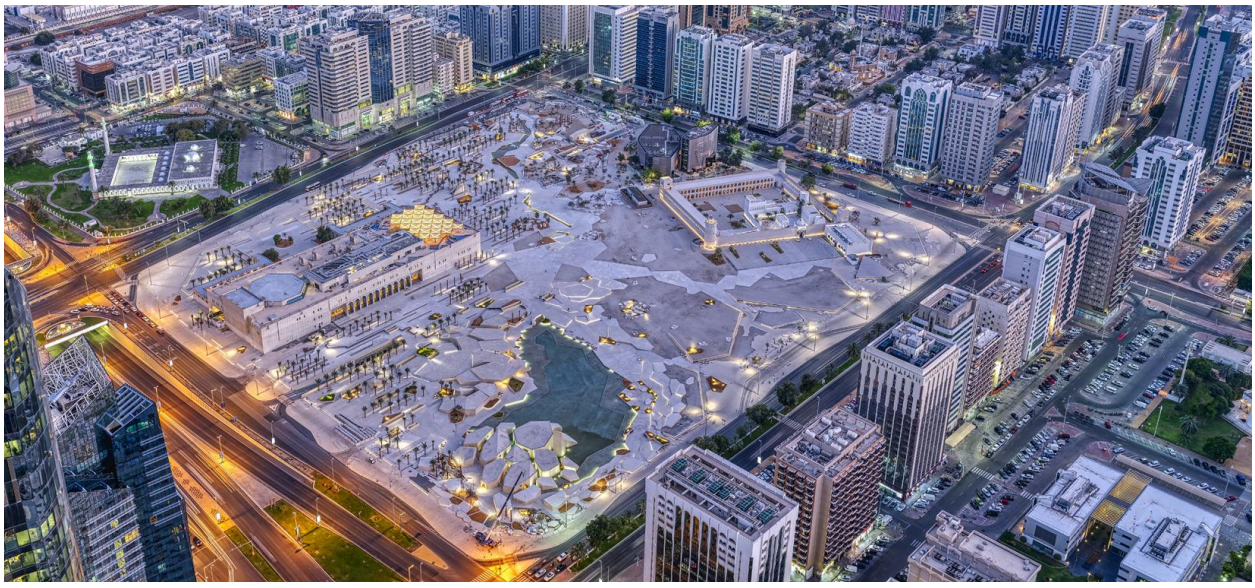


Figure 5.26: *Qasr Al-Hosn at present.* **Source**: DCT, 2020.

[99] *Al-Hosn* festival activations and programmes. Retrieved from https://abudhabiculture.ae/en/cultural-calendar/festivals-and-heritage/al-hosn-festival

As part of this festival (see Figure 5.27 below), there is a general demonstration of the local crafts. There is a focus on *sadu* and *saff al-khous* (palm fronds braiding), *talli*, and marine crafts (as shown in Figure 5.28 below) that are in line with the Institution's safeguarding mandates. The focal point of the Institution is the live demonstrations that showcase this selection of crafts, where visitors (Emiratis, non-locals, or tourists) can observe and learn.



Figure 5.27*: *Saff al-khous being demonstrated at the Qasr Al-Hosn festival, part of the role of Bait Al-Hirafiyyin.
Source: DCT, 2019.



Figure 5.28 *Marine crafts being demonstrated at the Qasr Al-Hosn festival, as part of the role of Bait Al-Hirafiyyin.*
Source: DCT, 2019.

The Institution's exhibition curator elaborated on the particularities of the process of selecting specific local crafts to highlight:

> "*In regard to the exhibition in the House of Artisans, I believed that the intangible heritage department at DCT determined what was important and what was not. When I decided to work at DCT in November 2018, there was a small exhibition with four main crafts: sadu, saff al-khous and talli, and marine crafts. There were not a lot of artifacts or objects to display in that exhibition. So, I learned about these crafts. Not that I did not know about them, but I familiarised myself with them through the exhibition which I curated myself. I remember at some point I was researching culinary practices and cooking traditions, and I went to the General Woman's Union. I was given a tour of all the different crafts and artisans there including sadu, saff al-khous, and talli. Those were the three main ones in the Union, and I realised that maybe the intangible heritage department did not just decide to pick and choose. I think those really are the main three crafts that are practiced*" (Informant #38, 2021).

On a larger scale and in addition to selecting the crafts, the curator emphasised that the specific techniques and the way artisans practice these crafts can easily be recorded and preserved, as opposed to something like traditional perfume-making or culinary arts which constantly change with time. As part of the documentation process in Abu Dhabi, fragrance design and culinary practices are not considered as social or cultural practices. The curator adds: "*perfume-making and culinary practices are considered a way of life that changes over time, and I find it really interesting. Compared to sadu, which is something that people think that we as the government must preserve because of the UNESCO's Lists of intangible heritage*" (Informant #38, 2021). Because of the availability of information about the selected crafts, a fixed approach of delivering

the crafts is strategised by the intangible heritage department; therefore, it is curated accordingly for the public. The curator discussed the possibility of presenting a variety of other crafts:

> "*When we did the rebound exhibition to re-curate the crafts selection, I was wondering: the concept is still the same. Are we focusing on these crafts only? I was told no, we should focus on more crafts like khanjar*[100] **خنجر** *or dallah*[101] **دلة** *design, and also traditional perfume-making and culinary practices*" (Informant #38, 2021).

This top-down decision fits the broader capacity-building theme to examine what the local artisans practice in common, and to design the educational programmes that are also a significant part of implementing UNESCO's guidelines. However, the suggested diversification of crafts was not implemented due to a lack of information: "*now we have opened, but we have not curated the new crafts yet. It was a very difficult process for me to determine how to curate these crafts both because we had so much more information about sadu, saff al-khous and talli and a bit less for the marine crafts,*[102] *but more than khanjar or pottery or bisht*[103] **بشت** *and all of that*" (Informant #38, 2021). According to the curator, the exhibition opening was extremely rushed, and alternatively they decided to curate similarities of craftmanship knowledge, practice, or techniques under one thematic:

> "*I remember saying that we would combine all the weaving crafts together, and those are the main crafts at the House of Artisans. Then we would research some of the other crafts*

[100] *Khanjar* means 'dagger' in Arabic. This type of traditional dagger is well-known on the Arabian Peninsula, and its origins can be distinguished according to its distinctive design. To celebrate the history of this custom, *Bait Al-Khanjar* **بيت الخنجر** or the House of the Dagger is a dedicated museum located in one of the historic districts of Dubai, managed and operated independently – not by the government nor the private sector – to reflect on the narratives, design, uses and development of *Emirati Khanjar*. Retrieved from https://khanyar.com/en/content/6-bayt-al-khanyar-museum

[101] *Dallah* is a traditional thermos specifically made for Arabic coffee.

[102] Marine crafts are those traditional practices associated with the coastal communities such as netmaking, boatmaking, and tools related to diving, fishing or pearling.

[103] *Bisht* is a traditional light gown worn only by men, specifically for formal occasions or official ceremonies.

and rework the production when we hired new designers. So, we have the main crafts pavilions with sadu, saff al-khous, and talli, and accommodating inhouse artisans who are known for these crafts. And then everything else would fall under something called 'The Universal Crafts' or 'Universe of Crafts', which includes so much more: such as traditional jewellery, perfume, fashion, and pottery" (Informant #38, 2021).

The lack of information that resulted in introducing 'The Universe of Crafts', pictured in Figure 5.29 (below), was the main reason for the launch of a registry platform for artisans and crafts: to narrow the gap in the data. This wall (Figure 5.29) shows universal heritage that is consistent with the international understandings of cultural diversity.

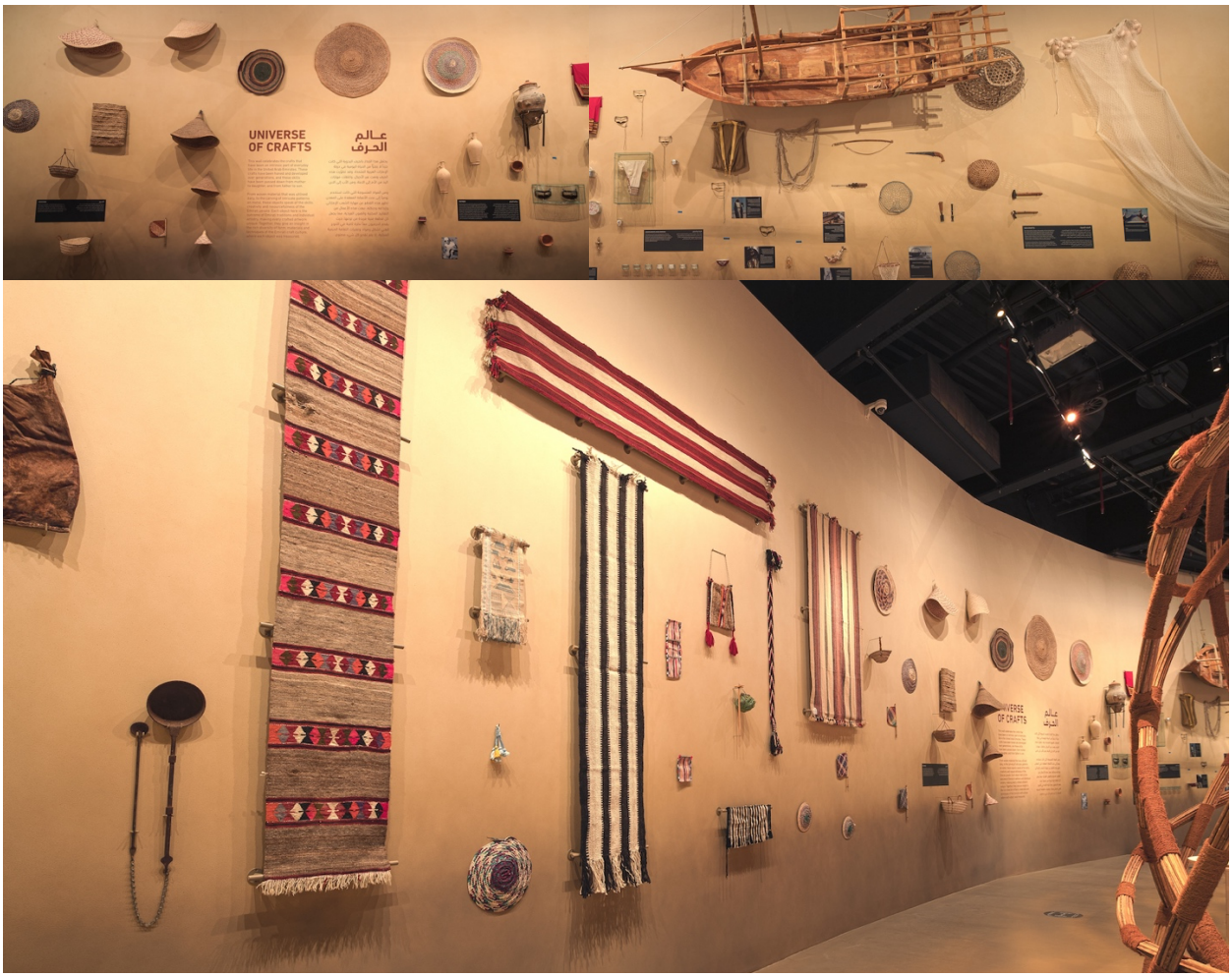


Figure 5.29: *The Universe of Crafts section at Bait Al-Hirafiyyin.* **Source**: DCT, 2021.

To enhance the universal heritage experience at this Institution, another curator introduced the concept of *Bait Al-Gahwa*[104] بيت القهوة based on the cycle of serving traditional coffee individually or collectively: and in both ways this custom has been an important value in local hospitality traditions for centuries (Informant #25, 2020). According to the curator, the inclusion of Arabic coffee ceremonial tradition in the exhibition was inspired by the traditional tea-making ceremony in Japan.[105] The curator discussed the inspiration behind this new cultural experience, which was personally suggested by the chairman of Abu Dhabi Culture, who had been fascinated by this tradition during one of his official trips to Japan. Knowing that hospitality plays a vital role in the UAE's traditional customs, the Japanese experience, manifested through the traditions of serving Arabic coffee, resulted in the creation of *Bait Al-Gahwa*. The simplicity of serving Arabic coffee is considered a very important custom that constitutes an integral part of local communities, and complements the generosity of the tribes of the Arabian Gulf Region. Different ways of conducting the serving ceremony, along with different kinds of dates, are closely associated with exchanging stories and poems. As shown in Figure 5.30 (below), this tradition is linked to the rich verbal Bedouin culture, and is not only a part of social conduct or occasions, but also bestows a distinctive cultural symbolism. This symbolism consists of the indication of status by the order in which participants are served, their courtesy while addressing each other (including guests), and that unity that has preserved the social, political, and economic affiliations that have shaped the Emirati society into what it is today (Informant #27, 2020).

[104] In the local dialect, *Bait Al-Gahwa* means the House of Coffee, embedding a live and full demonstration of serving traditional Arabic coffee according to the local context of the UAE.
[105] Chanoyu, commonly known as 'the way of tea', is a complex traditional ceremony of serving tea in Japan. Retrieved from https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/jtea/hd_jtea.htm



Figure 5.30: *Part of the public live demonstration of preparing and serving traditional Arabic coffee.*
Source: DCT, 2020.

The Institution's representatives emphasised that one of the reasons behind the decision over which crafts to include was to align the exhibitions and experiences with the requirements of inscribing these elements in the 2003 Convention's Representative Lists of intangible heritage. For example, serving Arabic coffee is closely associated with the manners of local *Majlis*[106] **مجلس** and both are inscribed in the Representative Lists. A representative reflected on this perception: "*I can start with hospitality. I look at it from the perspective of Qasr Al-Hosn's notion of majlis, a historic element that is inscribed in UNESCO, and it moved from a generation to another until today. Majlis is one of the elements that I am least concerned about. It is surviving and thriving*" (Informant #27, 2020). Therefore, allocating resources for safeguarding fully accessible existing practices took place alongside conducting studies that support the benefits of safeguarding traditional crafts. A report conducted by UNESCO has revealed that 24% of rural activities in developing countries fall within the traditional crafts sector, contributing a minimum of 30% of

[106] *Majlis* means a 'place of sitting', and is a key cultural and social feature in the UAE, Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. Also locally known as *Barzah* **برزة** which is a place of sitting or a place of presence. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/majlis-a-cultural-and-social-space-01076

the national product of these countries.[107] Correspondingly, Abu Dhabi Culture's studies investigate how local crafts managed to preserve social values, while reducing the capital assigned to mass-production. Therefore, allocating the budget in this way increases employment opportunities for a wider range of workers; including individuals with low academic qualifications, and the bearers of these crafts that practice their heritage in their households.

In reference to the conducted studies, a representative summarised the process behind the selection of crafts by the Institution:

> "*Majlis is an example of ongoing heritage. Crafts: some are surviving, others are endangered, like the marine crafts. According to our studies, they are not as resilient as saff al-khous, talli, and sadu. Then you have khous and talli which are more resilient than sadu. I think on a national level, there should be something very strong, precise, and clear. Not a strategy, because they are on paper, but a clear action plan of how to keep everything thriving and continuing, as the majlis is doing. We have so many studies in Abu Dhabi Culture on hundreds of elements, but I am happy that there are action plans this year and you will see a change*" (Informant #27, 2020).

The representatives added that crafts are also associated with tourism development, especially the trade in traditional craftsmanship commodities, which has witnessed increased growth in the markets, including those experiences that contribute to the creative economy due to the high demand for crafts products to be acquired as souvenirs or gifts. Hence, crafts commodities have become a key factor in attracting tourists and discovering an important aspect of the country's history or cultural heritage which is one of the initiative's strategic deliverables (Informant #25; Informant #27, 2020; Informant #38, 2021).

[107] Crafts and employment generation for the poorest youth and women. Retrieved from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000156772

Turath *Centre for Traditional Handicrafts in Dubai*

The *Turath* Centre is the official starting point for preserving traditional crafts in Dubai, and is an educational and training institution that is dedicated to safeguarding intangible heritage in the Emirate, with a specific focus on local traditional crafts. *Turath* is the result of the traditional crafts strategy and this initiative tops the list of the creative economy[108] of Dubai because it aims to strengthen the value for intangible heritage practices in the economic sector, thus generates a form of sustainable revenue of income for local communities. According to a representative, the *Turath* crafts competency framework is the first of its kind in the UAE, which includes educational and vocational approaches for eight crafts: *sadu* weaving, *saff al-khous* palm fronds braiding, *burqa* **برقع** traditional veil making, *talli* embroidery, *bukhoor* traditional fragrance-paste, *siyaghat al-fiddah* **صياغة الفضة** silversmithing, pottery, and Arabic *gahwa*, coffee. Related to *saff al-khous* techniques are basketry and the marine crafts, and the basic methods of building *arish* **عريش** – a traditional method of building coastal houses that is based on the trunks and fronds of palm trees.

An official representative working at Dubai Culture explained the authority's cultural heritage mandates[109] of the authority that integrates the safeguarding of local heritage (Informant #42, 2020). According to the representative, the artisan community is rather diffused and nearly absent in Dubai, due to the ongoing impacts of the economic and touristic openness that the Emirate strongly endorsed. In 2018, the authority set up a traditional crafts strategy, due to the lack of existing cultural policies that included intangible heritage in the Emirate. The aim of the strategy was in twofold: first, to address the 2003 Convention requirements to inscribe *talli* in the 2022[110]

[108] 'Dubai's Creative Economy Strategy.' Retrieved from https://dubaiculture.gov.ae/en/about-us/dubai-creative-economy-strategy
[109] Establishing the Dubai Culture and Arts Authority in 2008. Retrieved from https://dlp.dubai.gov.ae/Legislation%20Reference/2008/Law%20No.%20(6)%20of%202008.pdf
[110] *Talli* was officially inscribed in 2022. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/al-talli-traditional-embroidery-skills-in-the-united-arab-emirates-01712

which was the Emirate's first attempt to work on inscribing an intangible heritage element in the Lists. The second was to exhibit a selected range of crafts which are part of the local heritage, but not necessarily practiced in Dubai, in order to meet the guidlines of the traditional crafts strategy.[111] In addition, the Centre has the added value of reflecting authentic aspects of the Dubai Historical District (DHD) and strengthening the implementation reliability of the strategy. According to the representative, the Centre is nestled in a restored historic cluster at the southern edge of the *Shindagha* historical district – see '(7) Heritage Institute' in Figure 5.31 (below). It consists of twelve houses for casual drop-in visitors, as shown in Figure 5.32 (below), in addition to regulated courses for committed learners, as part of the UAE's orientation to support intangible heritage inscriptions and investment projects (Informant #42, 2020).

Sl No	Location	Project titile
1	Shindagha	Preview Exhibition/Welcome Centre
2	Shindagha	The Khor Sound and Light Show
3	Shindagha	50 Windows of Shindagha
4	Shindagha	Shindagha Museum
5	Shindagha	Performance Centre
6	Shindagha	Signature Show
7	Shindagha	Heritage Institute
8	Bur Dubai	Fort Museum and Gateway Centre (Al Faheidi Fort)
9	Bur Dubai/ Deira	Heritage Shops and Stalls
10	Bur Dubai	Customs House Archive
11	Bur Dubai	Textile Souk
12	Bur Dubai	Al Faheidi Experience
13	Bur Dubai	Children's Wonder Park/ Playground
14	Deira	Combined Souk and Heritage Shops
15	Deira	Dhow Wharfage Centre
16	Deira	Al Ras Real World Game and Knowledge Centre
17	Deira	Al Ahmadiya School and Heritage House Cluster
18	Deira	The Women's Museum at Bait Al Banat
19	Shindagha/ Deira/ Bur Dubai	Activation: Events and Programming
20	Deira/ Bur Dubai	Trails and Tour Routes
21	Shindagha/ Bur Dubai	Cultural Monuments and Public Art

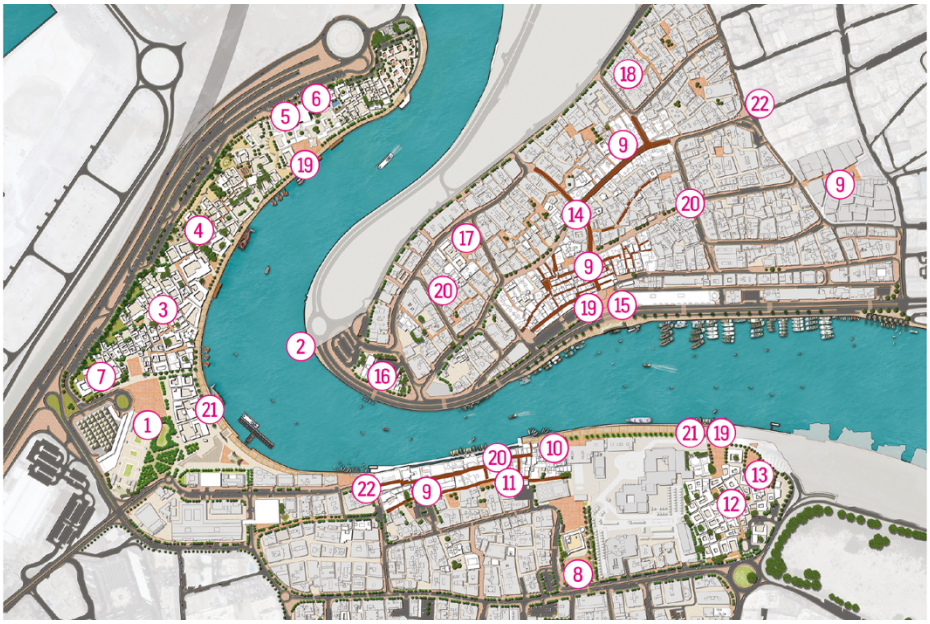


Figure 5.31: *Cultural Projects in the Historic District of Dubai.* **Source**: DTE, 2016.

[111] Affiliating the traditional crafts strategy within the goals of UNESCO to support the state's governance for culture. Retrieved from https://en.unesco.org/creativity/policy-monitoring-platform/traditional-crafts-strategy



Figure 5.32: *Turath welcome centre, showing the self-guided model of the houses hosting the crafts.*
Source: DCAA, 2020.

The development of Dubai's cultural policies primarily relies on cultural industries domains that are linked to visual arts, design, sports, or tourism incentives such as art exhibitions, galleries, entertainment, hospitality, advertising, competitions, and the development of infrastructure. Because of the focus on contributing to the Emirate's creative economy, part of the cultural investments was placed on the remaining archaeological and the historic urban heritage of Dubai. The representative added that many of the previously restored houses had functioned as community-based museums and living heritage villages in the 1990s. However, despite the historic significance of the area, the district receives visits from few tourists, and even fewer locals. The district tends to have weak interpretation and poor or non-existent changing programming, and there is little documented (or preserved) on the living intangible heritage that are associated with cultural spaces in Dubai. Hence, in 2016 a collaboration between three local authorities (Dubai Municipality, Dubai Culture, and Dubai Tourism) resulted in the restoration and reconstruction of the old residences, to become the most prominent cultural heritage destination in Dubai. In order

to validate the traditional practices and history of the district, both Dubai Culture and Dubai Tourism surveyed the local people who had previously lived in that area, along with their descendants, which involved three years of documenting their information, what they practiced as heritage, and collecting images. Merging *Shindagha*'s historical significance with the district aimed to inscribe this site in the World Heritage List, a process that is accompanied by documentation to link the significance of cultural places only to the narratives of its local people (as detailed in Chapter 2). However, this attempt failed due to the dramatic structural changes in construction and function of the space (Informant #42, 2020).

To demonstrate the scale of priorities while preserving heritage in Dubai, a representative explained the distinct time gap between the establishment of the authority in 2011, the business plan for the cultural projects in Dubai's historic district in 2015, the launch of the craft strategy in 2018, and the delayed the implementation of *Turath* in 2022 (Informant #42, 2020). The reason for this gap was mainly related to the allocation of the authority's budget at the beginning towards arts, theatre, and literature – which are affiliated with cultural industries projects – which in return resulted in increasing cultural revenues. The other reason was the lack of understanding and experience in intangible heritage management and function, as opposed to the established management in visual arts, tourism, entertainment, and media. To build a context around these understandings of intangible heritage in Dubai, the Emirate's cultural authority was under the impression that developing more than twenty-two heritage sites and museums would self-sustain the intangible aspects of heritage. The Emirate grew strongly in the fields of arts and tourism related to cultural industries. However, it understood the economic, social, and political particularities of preserving intangible heritage when Abu Dhabi took the lead in 2011 in documenting and inscribing twelve elements on the Representative Lists within a decade. Given

the fact that Abu Dhabi also represents the UAE at the international level, it facilitated the process of inscribing new elements based on its political weight as well.

Because of the strong perception of the city as a tourist area, the business plan of the historic district was embraced by the Department of Economy and Tourism (DTE) in 2016; advocating selective crafts as 'cultural offerings' such as falconry, culinary practices, and pearling which often attract tourists to Dubai as a cultural destination. While Dubai Tourism took the lead in conducting the business plan, the operational plan is the responsibility of Dubai Culture as it sees fit, according to their establishment law. Here, the selection of crafts in *Turath* shifted completely, dropping the cultural offerings 'touristic' suggestion and prioritising the eight crafts based on the Centre's competency framework. The representative elaborated on how the power dynamic is reversed:

> *"Based on the constantly developing nature of Dubai, the Emirate hardly reflects visible practices of intangible heritage; and it is important to document and safeguard its elements to make them accessible and applicable to the present and future generations. Since Dubai is consumed by modernity, crafts play a unique role in nurturing its cultural diversity, and at the same time enable employment growth and income for generations to come*" (Informant #42, 2020).

According to the representative, the revised selection of the crafts reflects the majority of responses based on surveying different segments of the community, including the northern Emirates. This documentation process aimed to revise the touristic selection of Dubai Tourism and replace it with common practices of heritage that are linked with local communities. As a result, the documentation process took place between 2017 and 2018, and each surveyed element consisted of a definition of the craft, the historical dimension, the raw materials and tools, the stages of production, and finally, its utilitarian and aesthetic value (Informant #42, 2020). The

shifting power dynamics between several authorities in Dubai reflect the complex reality of the cultural sector management in the Emirate. The latter is an example of a bigger representation of top-down approaches at the federal level in the UAE. In other words, *Turath* began as a focus within the scope of the historic district project to narrow specific cultural gaps. However, it ended with readjusting its objectives in alignment with the requirements of the 2003 Convention. These objectives include supporting the inscription requirements of *talli* as the first element to be inscribed under the name of Dubai, which will pursue other elements once the process is complete. The latter developed capacity-building programmes to educate and train in the selected crafts, while offering instructive methods for sustainability as an affirmation of the UAE's nation brand.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the official approaches that led to pinpointing intangible heritage as a process of selection based on the present meanings and values for building national identity. Driven by the rising value of intangible heritage on the international level, the UAE made a commitment to implement new definitions and uses of its national intangible heritage to place the country on the universal cultural map. Accordingly, both the federal and local government levels have leaned towards repositioning their traditional cultural practices – including the crafts – universally, within the values of universal culture. In response to the creative economy, the UAE developed a set of institutional frameworks that led to the establishment of the presented centres, which mainly involved national documentation processes. Inventorying intangible heritage made it possible to inscribe a number of endangered elements in the Representative Lists of the 2003 Convention, followed by successfully inscribing fifteen traditional cultural practices, including

both social customs and crafts. As a result of these inscriptions, the capacity-building programmes have been developed, leading to the establishment of heritage educational and training centres.

This chapter examined a number of institutional centres concerned with the safeguarding of Emirati intangible heritage. Each centre operates according to the context of the Emirate in which it is located; however, they notably have a common approach. They all seek to embrace and empower existing local artisans in order to observe and document their narratives before they are gone for good. These centres reflect the emphasis on identifying which type of intangible heritage element should be preserved, for what, and why - in correlation with international commitments including the cultural industries. The influence of the cultural industries' policy on the safeguarding of local intangible heritage can be understood in specific contexts in which the heritagisation of traditional cultural practices are encouraged for tourism purposes, such as using the crafts as a commodity. In this complex process, the UAE takes on the nuance of conformity through institutionalised attempts to reposition the role of local intangible heritage, to return their value to their initial position of importance. Each centre demonstrated a distinctive approach to defining and presenting traditional crafts as local heritage. However, they all encompassed modernisation to maintain the continuity of traditional practices through heritagisation. Drawing from the social particularities in safeguarding intangible heritage, Chapter 6 will examine the role of Emirati society in the safeguarding process; specifically, the group of Emirati individuals considered to be the custodians of heritage, in addition to a number of non-profit organisations.

Chapter (6)

Social Understandings of Intangible Heritage in the United Arab Emirates



Siyaghat Al-Fid'dah Traditional Silversmithing

Introduction

The significant political and economic impact of the recognition of intangible heritage lead to the development of cultural governance structures in the UAE, and also shifted the role of Emirati heritage practitioners in safeguarding what they perceive as their heritage. Hence, this chapter addresses the second research question: to what extent do local communities manage to preserve and present their intangible heritage? This examination aims to demonstrate the awareness of Emirati people who have direct connection with heritage in a way that is not officially recognised, including their approaches in creating and/or preserving local heritage despite certain dominant heritage narratives. The first section analyses the impact of the tribal values in safeguarding local traditional practices in rural areas and in the less industrialised Emirates in the northern part of the country (i.e., not Abu Dhabi or Dubai, the industrialised Emirates in the south). It is important to demonstrate the role and involvement of extended families within the Emirati tribal structure in the safeguarding processes, because it maintains their social and linguistic particularities, thus preserving their traditional heritage practices for generations. The second section investigates how the communication and presentation of intangible heritage practices developed between the private sector and the tribal artisan community, particularly their distinctive understandings of staged heritage, based on heritagisation and related commodified approaches. Within the field of non-official heritage management, this section examines two non-state organisations, *Al-Ghadeer*[112] الغدير UAE Crafts and *Irthi*[113] إرثي Contemporary Crafts Council, aiming to asses the extent of the traditional artisans' active engagement in creating and/or preserving heritage practices, including local crafts.

[112] In the local dialect, *Al-Ghadeer* is a rivulet, and it also means the depth or gravity of something.
[113] Inspired by classical Arabic, *Irthi* means 'my legacy', and in the local dialect it implies my heritage, tradition, heirloom, or inheritance.

The Role of Emirati Society in Sustaining Traditional Cultural Practices

In this section, the discussions compare and contrast the endurance of traditional cultural practices within the Emirates that have been most affected by the economic openness and became more industrialised (as examined in the Chapter 3) in comparison to the rural areas of these Emirates, or the northern Emirates.[114] Figure 6.1 (below) reviews the factors behind the social understandings of intangible heritage governance in the UAE and the nature of social involvement, specifically that of the Emirati heritage practitioners.

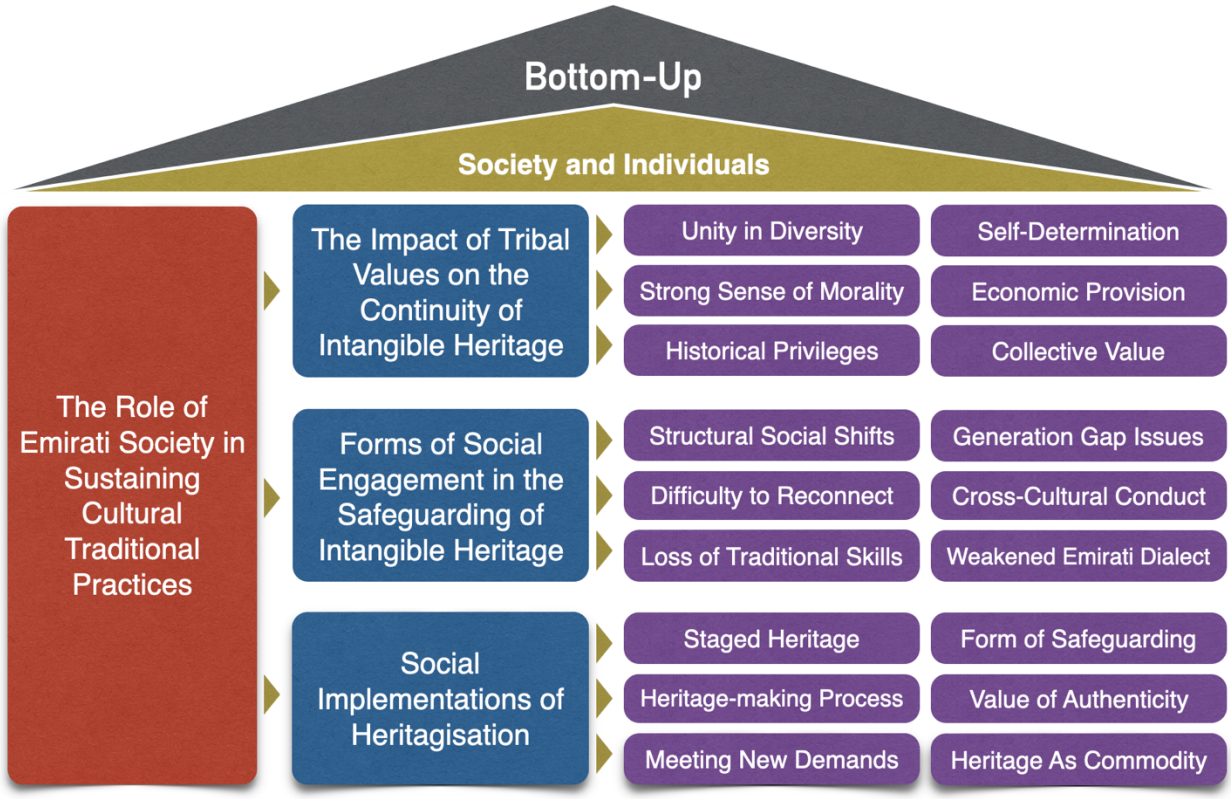


Figure 6.1: *The role of Emirati society in sustaining traditional practices.* **Source**: Author, 2024.

Figure 6.1 highlights the specific impacts of tribal values (whether those of the Bedouins or the mountain-dwellers) on the complex Emirati society following the creation of the UAE

[114] Um Al-Quwain, Ras Al-Khaimah, and Fujairah are the Emirates that are located in the eastern and northern area of the UAE.

(detailed in Chapter 3), as enablers of distinctive yet diverse forms of local intangible heritage. The second factor demonstrates the impact of modernisation on social engagement in the safeguarding of their intangible heritage and its visibility within the UAE. The third factor investigates the heritage practitioners' implementation of heritagisation and their idea of heritage-making according to the present meanings and values of their traditional practices. These three factors are important because heritage practitioners are key actors within the non-official safeguarding approaches and, to some extent, they are able to express their traditional cultural practices the way their perceive them – as heritage, separate from notions of universal heritage.

In accordance with these factors (above), three issues are discussed and identified for each factor by informants who preferred participating in safeguarding heritage as part of Emirati society and not the state: 1) the difficulty of unifying an 'Emirati' cultural identity, because each Emirate has its own sanctioned cultural governance and resources relating to heritage – hence there is constant competitiveness in integrating each Emirate's traditional practices into the national identity; 2) safeguarding approaches, including inventories and capacity-building programmes, are incomplete unless they are authorised by the government or consented to by bearers of heritage; and 3) once a national strategy or policy is disseminated, its official heritage management performs poorly because some Emirates fall behind in the implementation process, depending on their limited managerial experience and resources in the intangible heritage field (Informant #2; Informant #3; Informant #6; Informant #9, 2019). These gaps redirected the attention of some non-official bodies (such as *Al-Ghadeer* or *Irthi*) or actors (locals who practice the crafts or traditional performances, but are not affiliated with official cultural authorities) to deploy their understanding of cultural responsibility through safeguarding and presenting a range of sociocultural traditions and practices that are not yet considered as national intangible heritage.

The Impact of Tribal Values on the Continuity of Intangible Heritage

The theoretical framework of this thesis indicates that the extension of cultural governance strategically exercises people's practices as a form of safeguarding their heritage. In the case of the UAE, the custodians of heritage include the Sheikhs who inherited the political weight of the tribal system (among whom were the founders that united the seven Emirates) and ordinary locals, given the distinctive background and geographic factors of their tribes. While maintaining a traditional way of living shaped by this diverse tribal system, the Emiratis looked up to their Sheikhs for leadership, economic provision, and moral support because of the limitations in the available resources. As discussed in Chapter 3, the current leading Sheikhs of each Emirate come from a specific tribe who retained status and a high reputation. Prior to the union, a Sheikh was often elected to power by the majority of the tribe's families and members, however at present their heirs continue to hold power as part of the political structure in the UAE (Informant #10; Informant #17, 2019). This vigilant balance between both statuses, leaders and their people, is one of the social characteristics that emerged following the formation of the UAE, along with its culturally diverse society. While the UAE was politically unified in 1971, the seven Emirates are different in terms of demographic background, environment, and economic openness. Such diversity is due to the contemporary tribal influence on each Emirate and the availability of resources, which limits the traditional cultural practices that are available within a specific local community. This aspect was discussed during the interviews as it openly defines the role of heritage practitioners in safeguarding local intangible heritage in a context where tribal values became the basis of the country's present heritage identity.

As explained by an Emirati informant who identified as indigenous, prior to the union the tribes in the open desert of the southern Emirates (such as Abu Dhabi or Dubai) had to lead a

nomadic life, based on the need to navigate and follow the change of seasons for survival purposes (Informant #10, 2019). The indigenous Emirati explained the transformation between the traditional tribal functions and the practices that are driven by present values:

> "*I think the tribal system is still there very strongly, but in terms of a settlement, it is not like before. When we grow up as a family, we grow up in a very closed community of very familiar tribes. But I read the history. People do not stay in one location for hundreds of years, and they move depending on the environment and the resources. Sometimes I think that maybe my ancestors came from Yemen or Al-Hijaz, if you go back 500 or 600 years ago, who knows? But according to the society and the family name and what local people perceive, I am indigenous in the UAE*" (Informant #10, 2019).

Another Emirati expressed a similar context concerning how the function of the tribe has shifted:

> "*Speaking of my family's side, there was no tribal supremacy, that we are better than others. Unfortunately, this is one of their misperceptions about the UAE tribes. Back then, the nomads never settled; they travelled the whole time. Even the coastal people must have a Bedouin as an escort when they wanted to travel, because they would know how to navigate. Now, the way of life has changed. In the past, a tribe had to be strongly connected, and there was a need for that attachment because it was very difficult to remain strong while seeking for life's necessities. Now, living is easy, but people have become more isolated. Modernisation impacted the tribal connections of this land, and what we used to have*" *(*Informant #6, 2019).

Further, another Emirati informant explained that the mountain-dwellers and valley communities - such as those in rural Sharjah, Ras Al-Khaimah, or Fujairah - enjoyed fertile land, access to sustainable water, and were able to grow diverse crops and herd domestic livestock other

than camels (Informant #13, 2019). Another participant talked about the ingenuity of traditional practices in these northern parts of the Emirates:

> "*Ras Al-Khaimah, Fujairah, and most northern locations still practice cultural heritage elements, tangible and intangible, real practices. The Shihuh* **شحوح** *tribe, for example, are very aware of their many cultural practices, especially their blacksmithing skills, pottery, and musical performances, and they take them very seriously in a traditional manner, and never advertised themselves that they have heritage. On the other hand, let us consider talli, most women practitioners are from Fujairah, the eastern coast, or Ras Al-Khaimah. There is little media interest in them, but their practices exist. I think that media should outgrow the traditional mindset of reporting crafts, and it should be reflected in an interesting and attractive way to the new generation. It is not enough that I should send a reporter to Fujairah, who takes four or five pictures, and writes with little interest in research because he might not even be an Emirati, and you see it posted in a local newspaper. This is not enough. There should be a change*" (Informant #14, 2019).

While the industrial pressures of modernisation remain strong, the participants discussed the improvised cultural governance of cultural heritage in the northern parts of the UAE. One noted: "*In the northern Emirates, you will notice individual efforts rather than corporate initiatives. At some point, they are influenced by modernity, but you are talking about the majority who maintain their traditional practice and the tribal way of living*" (Informant #13, 2019). For example, *Shihuh* are an indigenous northern tribe, the majority of whom live in Ras Al-Khaimah and northern areas of Oman. According to one of their descendants, the tribe are known as mountain-dwellers, and because of their difficult living conditions in the mountains, they work hard to educate and transmit their traditional practices collectively to their younger generations.

These include 1) the traditional art of making special drums to perform the art of *ruwah*[115] رواح; 2) the recitation of *nadba*[116] ندبة; 3) the traditional blacksmithing of lean narrow swords, daggers, axes, and iron cooking-ware including pots, pans, plates, and Arabic coffee brewing tools; and 4) constructing *bait al-qufl* بيت القفل or 'the house of the lock', which was where the mountain-dwellers used to live in the past (Informant #20, 2019), as can be seen exhibited in Figures 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6 and 6.7 below.



Figure 6.2: *Performing nadba collectively during a cultural event.* **Source**: Author, 2019.

[115] The art of *ruwah* is a traditional performance considered to be unique to the *Shihuh* tribe and other mountain-dwellers who have preserved the tradition to date. It includes a mix of poetry and is performed by up to fifty men standing in a straight line, holding drums and moving according to the melody.
[116] The performance of *nadba* is a significant sharp vocal performance that used to be an emergency warning to the rest of the tribe in the case of any form of danger, and is usually led one of the *Shihuh* people the forefront, and the rest of the group follows his lead. Today this traditional practice is performed at private or national cultural events.



Figure 6.3*: *Performing ruwah collectively during a cultural event. **Source**: Author, 2019.



Figure 6.4/5*: *Demonstrating several blacksmithing products, including an Arabic coffee brewing set and an axe. In the past, each axe had a special pattern to use as a key to 'the house of lock', among other uses such as self-defence and facilitating mountain-climbing.

Source: Author, 2019.



***Figure 6.6*:** *Demonstrating the construction of bait al-qufl or 'the house of the lock'.*

Source: Author, 2019.

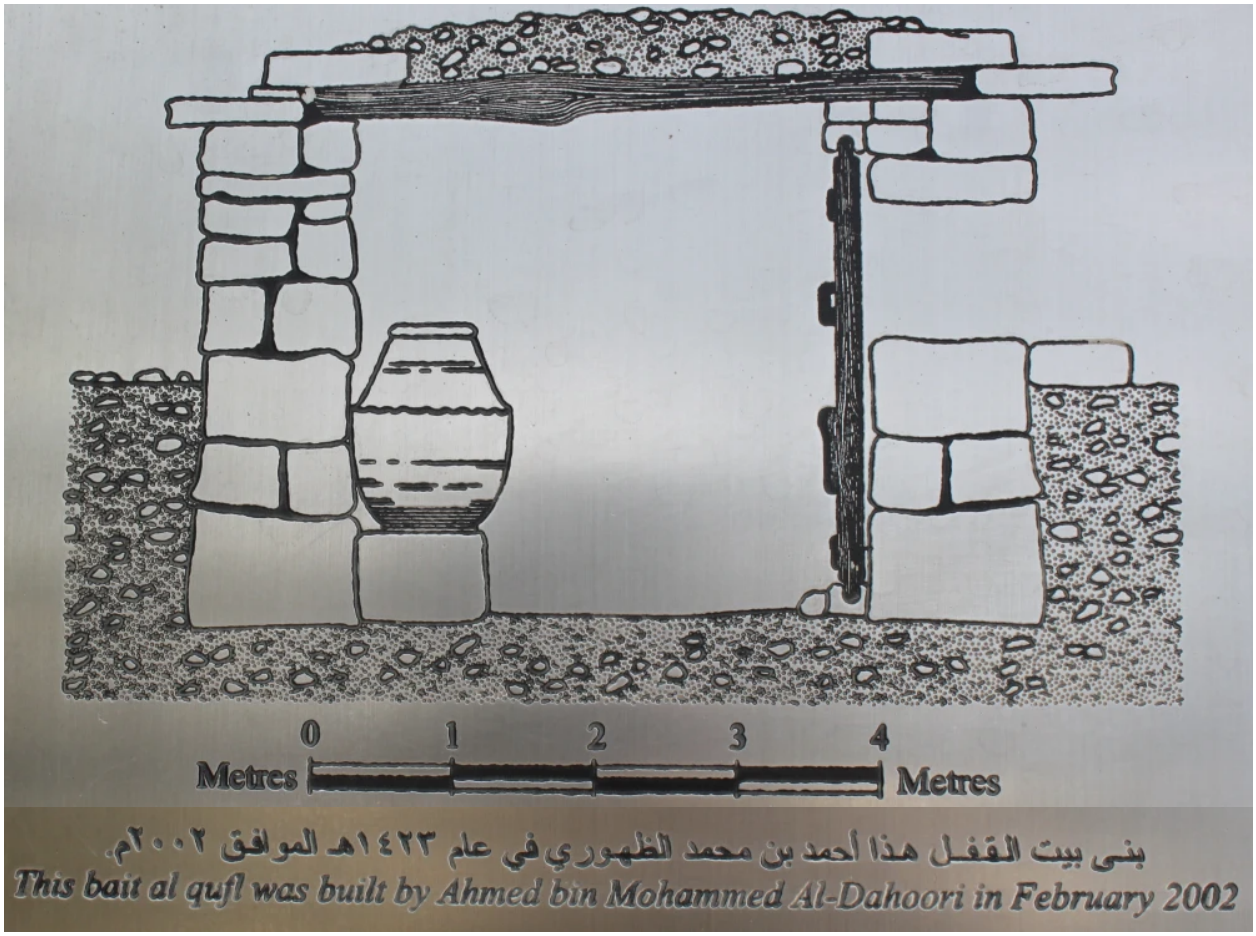


***Figure 6.7*:** *Side-view layout sketch of bait al-qufl.* **Source**: Informant #20, 2019.

According to a tribal member, *bait al-qufl* holds special value for the mountain-dwelling tribes specifically, because it is a unique form of traditional architecture that distinguishes the mountain-dwellers tribes from other desert or coastal tribes. The raw material of these houses is mainly mountain rocks for the walls and roofing timbers, organised in a geometric shape and carefully stacked on top of each other without much need for soil or mud to stabilise the rocks, as can be seen in Figure 6.6 (above). Each house is built collectively by the bearers of this practice within the tribe, and it takes from two to three months to complete according to the size, location, and the quality of the available rocks. Due to the harsh nature of the mountains, these houses shield the inhabitants from weather conditions, theft, and animals, and keep their valuable items secure during seasonal migrations to the coast and back, among other benefits. The purpose behind naming them after a 'lock' is the complex method of creating and using the key for each lock for security reasons: if the key is lost, the door must be broken. These distinctive houses were built in different locations in the mountains of the northern Emirates, especially in Ras Al-Khaimah. Many of them still exist today, though few mountain-dwellers still live in these houses, and many have been neglected due to their inhabitants seeking improved and easier living conditions in the cities following the oil boom (Informant #20, 2019).

The tribal member further elaborated on his tribe's rich intangible heritage, the importance of establishing their public association (known as *Shihuh* Culture and Heritage Society)[117] to safeguard the continuity of their heritage identity (which includes over 60 documented practices) within the tribe for future generations, and emphasising the impact of tribal values on the UAE's present cultural diversity (Informant #20, 2019). Thus, even in the past, the diversity of tribal values resulted in diverse traditional practices and outcomes in terms of everyday ways of life for

[117] 'Exploring the musical traditions of the *Shihuh*.' Retrieved from https://wp.nyu.edu/music_and_sound_cultures/2022/01/17/exploring-the-musical-traditions-of-the-shihuh/

each tribe at that time, and not necessarily applicable to the official definitions of intangible heritage (Al-Shaibah, 2023). These differences have become the basis of the UAE's current national identity, and to some extent this echoes Smith's statement that "*there is, really, no such thing as heritage*" (2006, p. 11): people in the past would not define their lifestyle practices as *heritage*, but rather a tradition or a custom that has been taught or passed on for generations. Hence, according to the tribal conditions and needs, a custom either continues to be practiced and remains intact due to its collective value, or it is excluded because it does not maintain any meaning, necessity, or value to continue at present.

For some tribal families, modernity has improved essential aspects of their lives such as better education, well-paid job opportunities, healthcare insurance, and providing manufactured comfort to their households. However, these families' basic pattern of traditional cultural and social practices has not yet changed substantially (Informant #12; Informant #15; Informant #18, 2019). Therefore, Emiratis who are descended from a tribe are able to practice a variety of traditional elements collectively, because they often have access to the resources and raw materials they need for the production and function of a practice. Taking crafts as an example, many were practised historically to provide for the needs and interests of the local communities in the different areas of the UAE associated with different environments (as detailed in Chapter 3) such as the coast, the mountains, the desert, and the oasis (Informant #4; Informant #6, 2019). These environments fostered different traditional occupations such as agriculture, building, hunting, fishing, or fashion; therefore, specific crafts emerged in relation to the aesthetics and materials associated with each environment. As a result, families within specific tribes often practiced a distinctive craft according to where they lived, and their members are determined to transfer them from one generation to another.

Forms of Social Engagement in the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage

The supporting example in this section concerns Emiratis who work for and/or cooperate with cultural corporations, but prefer to participate as community members rather than representing their organisations. These informants highlight the UAE's intangible heritage and its importance as an integral component of Emirati society. It is considered a salient feature of the UAE's national identity, where a combination of heritage knowledge and skills is put to play in two forms of social engagements in the safeguarding processes: active and/or passive approaches. During the interview sessions, informants between the age of 40 and 60 emphasised that the UAE had witnessed large-scale socio-economic changes, resulting in the dilution or disappearance of many intangible heritage practices that they were safeguarded and transmitted between members of the tribe in a collective manner over the last 50 years (Informant #13; Informant #17; Informant #18, 2019; Informant #37, 2020). The participants discussed how practising and engaging with intangible heritage became passive rather than active as a necessary way of living in two forms: 1) most of the Emiratis with extended tribal connections abandoned their traditional performances or crafts, except for demonstrating them on national occasions, at heritage festivals, or social events across the different Emirates; and 2) the sense of responsibility to share what they remember of traditional knowledge and skills to build government national inventories, among other safeguarding official approaches for future generations. Both these forms of passive engagement imply that the Emiratis often preserve and present their heritage either to fulfil a sense of cultural responsibility, or as a source of belonging to a cultural identity; however, it was no longer out of a sense of necessity for living.

According to the informants, this situation of the abandonment of such practices resulted in several adverse socioeconomic consequences. First, the risk of completely excluding traditional

sociocultural aspects from the national identity that are considered integral to heritage practitioners. Second, the pejorative attitude towards the heritage practitioners, specifically the traditional artisans, and the widespread perception linking traditional cultural performances and crafts to social backwardness or inferiority, discouraging traditional heritage-making. Third, the demeaning perceptions of job opportunities related to traditional heritage-making that are now being overlooked in the intangible heritage field. Fourth, the abandonment of opportunities for developing traditional skills while enhancing the creative aspects of heritage for young Emiratis. Finally, the extreme dependency on imports or contemporary design of heritage (that are mainly inspired by the traditional knowledge or skills of heritage) to meet the needs that could be addressed in the UAE by utilising the local workforce and materials. According to the informants, the above outcomes resulted in people favouring professional jobs correlated with status and benefits, which became one of the crucial economic and social factors of living for an Emirati. The perceptions about an individual's job advantages prevented many Emiratis from undertaking traditional social practices and crafts, especially men and the youth. This observation heightened the focus of several cultural authorities to support the practice of crafts that were performed mainly by local craftswomen. Drawn from the understanding of passive engagement in heritage, this focus aimed to shift the essential need for practising a craft as a way of life to using the aesthetic and contemporised characteristics from traditional crafts production, in order to 1) enhance the income of the remaining artisan community; 2) integrate their commodified products into local markets, such as through cultural events; and 3) document this progress within the national inventories, so as to deploy them in capacity-building programmes or to build a case to inscribe a new element internationally (Informant #13; Informant #17; Informant #18, 2019; Informant #37, 2020).

Aside from the official approaches in selecting the crafts that are considered to enhance the national identity, the economic openness of the UAE to the world resulted in the accessibility of mass-produced crafts from external markets with low prices and available for less effort. These craft stakeholders, mainly from East Asian countries, tend to import artificial objects that are replicas of traditional local crafts, and sell them at local markets as *Muntajat Emaratiyya* **منتجات إماراتية** or 'Emirati products'. According to several Emirati artisans who practice different local crafts and range between 40 and 60 years old, this entire process has led to the loss of what they perceived as 'authentic' intangible heritage identity, presenting a constant challenge to local artisans because the market does not distinguish between local crafts production and the imported replicated commodities. As a result, the prices of the raw material needed for crafts increased because they are difficult to obtain, especially if they require a time-consuming process of acquiring them from limited sources - such as palm fronds or animal fur found in private farmhouses or stables. This process includes accessibility, assessment, and preparation of the material before instigating the production of the craft, affecting the standards and time deployed in Emirati traditional practices and their value. In addition, this resulted in a decline in demand for the local traditional products, which created a gap in the consistency of documenting the living crafts lifecycle, the development of safeguarding and transmission methods, and the progress of heritage-making processes that depend on present meanings and values of local heritage (Informant #48; Informant #55; Informant #56; Informant #57; Informant #58, 2020).

An Emirati visual designer elaborated on the correlation between the visibility of local heritage and the impact of modernisation:

"*Our crafts are not promoted, as far I know. The crafts or their tangible outcomes that our people work on are not visible, except for the tourists. So, you feel that the knowledge you*

need to access is not there. For instance, if someone wants to become an artisan or craftsman, there is no place you can refer to. As for the people who visit the UAE, I would refer them to our traditional buildings. Our old buildings are somehow an identity, they look distinguished, but the modern ones are the same as in London and the United States. This is the modern culture that we live in now" (Informant #6, 2019).

This statement demonstrates the effect of the economic openness on the local social context, and the shift that accompanied the implementation of international cultural policies in the UAE, which led to the selection of a few practices that could support the national identity. Despite the positive aspects of the oil industry, it also negatively impacted the linguistics related to the traditional cultural practices among the extended tribal communities. Heritage language is considered an integral part of transmitting practices and, according to the artisans, one of the threats to traditional practices is the weakening of local dialects associated with each traditional practice, due to the spread of foreign vocabularies such as English and French. Emirati artisans consider language to be an integral part of this cultural process, in which the dilution of local heritage vocabularies heavily obstructed the local understandings of traditional practices, because the nature and meaning of the practice came from the spoken word (Informant #48; Informant #49; Informant #55; Informant #56; Informant #57; Informant #58, 2020). This snowball effect disrupted the level of intangible heritage exchange between the old and new generations, as one of the artisans expressed:

"*My granddaughter has no idea what I am referring to when I talk about our traditions or crafts, as if I am speaking in a foreign language. This makes me feel distant from her, even though we speak the same dialect – however, she is not familiar with our heritage. Traditions are part of our heritage, and they are what is left for us in this new world. It*

makes us who we are today as locals, makes us unique and different among others, and this misunderstanding just saddens me" (Informant #55, 2020).

The artisan also referred to the dramatic shifts in the tribal structures, which led to the loss of many collective narratives and storytelling that had functioned as preservation tools that transmitted the essence of traditional practices to the next generations. Another example that often increased the risk to the local dialects which supported the traditional practices was intermarriage with those from other ethnic groups living in the UAE. A participant who considered themselves indigenous elaborated on the impact of such marriages on the transmission of traditional practices, which became infused with other cultures, and its effect on their indigenous cultural expressions:

"*Trade encouraged people to come from Persia, Baluchistan, Oman, and India, those who settled here a couple of hundred years ago. However, currently, we have so many ethnicities – Africans, Europeans, even Mexicans! I met a girl the other day who is half Mexican, 'Emirati-Mexican'. Also, the other day I met an Emirati from a well-known tribe who looked Asian, then she told me she is half Indonesian. She has other ethnic backgrounds because there are people from Yemen or Saudi Arabia in Indonesia, so she has many different strands in her background*" (Informant #10, 2019).

The decline of extended families and the increase of integrated cultures substantially impacted the visibility of intangible heritage practices and deployed its custodians to actively revive them. As a result, there are less than 1,000 artisans in the UAE from both genders of whom 87% are over 60 years old, and the majority of whom are women, according to the interviews with participants who have direct contact with those artisans (Informant #14, 2019; Informant #9; Informant #26, 2020). This rough estimation is calculated according to the national documentation processes, which included building a registry for artisans to keep track of their existence and for

hiring or collaborating with them for heritage activations or programmes on a national level. However, the estimate is not necessarily precise because, naturally, such calculations are prone to change. An example is the presentation of *dag al-habb* **دق الحب** which means grinding the crops such as wheat, as shown in Figure 6.8 below.



***Figure 6.8*:** *The traditional demonstration of dag al-habb performed at Sharjah Heritage Days.* **Source**: Author, 2019.

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The practice of *dag al-habb* no longer exists in the UAE except for among a few mountain-dwellers and villagers. Hence, for cultural events, organisers have had to find Emiratis, mostly elderly, who used to practice it, and hire them for presentation purposes – which is an active form of engagement. This craft is one of the collective practices that cannot be performed without a group. In this case, the group consists of members of the tribes that lived in the agricultural environments of the UAE such as rural Sharjah, Ras Al-Khaimah, and Fujairah. According to a

participant who is familiar with this traditional practice, it was the foundation of agriculture in the old days in rural and mountain areas, and the reason for the continuation of several intangible heritage practices. This process often begins after the noon prayer, as members of the tribe gather in a group and march towards a tribe member's field to take advantage of the breeze at the time, which helps them to quickly separate the wheat from the stalks, and collect it in a woven basket.

The participant added that the tradition of *dag al-habb* is a rotation process, whereby the tribe participates in grinding their fields one at a time. During the process, they chant songs related to the nature of the practice, while pounding the stalks with wooden sticks made from branches of local trees such as *ghaf* غاف or *sidr* سدر (Informant #4). This collective tradition barely exists anymore due to the social and economic shifts that enforced the decline of large families that are the core of the tribe, not to mention importing modern methods of mass production that made traditional processes unnecessary in today's context. The disappearance of *dag al-habb* accelerated the loss of many intangible heritage practices associated with the process, such as its traditional chants, the social gathering followed by collecting the wheat, and the craftsmanship products and tools associated with the process. These shifts restricted these traditional collective practices from being transferred to the current generations, along with their corresponding elements. Therefore, this has led them to disappear – apart from their presentation in heritage events, noticeably in Sharjah Heritage Days festival[118] for two reasons. One is because several intangible heritage elements existed within the tribes of rural Sharjah and the neighbouring northern Emirates, and it was deemed important to encompass them as part of the UAE's heritage identity. The other reason addresses the festival's primary mandate, which is to revive vanished

[118] This cultural festival is an annual heritage destination that takes place in Sharjah. It is of note that this platform was the first to physically invite and host intangible heritage from different countries around the world. Retrieved from https://www.heartofsharjah.ae/event-sharjah-heritage-days.html

traditions or crafts that hold tribal value to the indigenous people, and are only performed in a collective manner and not by other ethnicities living in the UAE.

As discussed in the previous section, tribal values are often driven by emotions linked to the past, and it is worth noting that emotional value here supports the notion of heritage as 'emotional power' (Aslan & AlAssi 2016), as discussed in Chapter 3. This reflection develops manifestations based on the collective memory of a particular place, event, or practice, therefore encapsulating the revival of specific traditions regardless of the socio-economic challenges of today. Hence, as a platform, heritage festivals are often organised by the government. In the case of Sharjah Heritage Days, however, the live presentation of intangible heritage is carried out by different public associations licenced by the Ministry of Community Development (MCD). Similarly, the annual Live Our Heritage Festival is organised by Dubai Culture in different locations across the Emirates, and hires public associations or artisans individually to revive and showcase forgotten traditional practices, including *bait al-qufl,* a northern mountain practice (see Figure 6.9 below), among other intangible practices shown in Figures 6.10 and 6.11 (below).



Figure 6.9*: *Demonstration of bait al-qufl building at Live Our Heritage Festival in Dubai.
Source: Author, 2019



Figure 6.10*: *Local children observing traditional silversmithing techniques at Live Our Heritage Festival in Dubai.

Source: Author, 2019.



Figure 6.11*: *Demonstration of braiding techniques at Live Our Heritage Festival in Dubai.

Source: Author, 2019.

Apart from the official mandates to present heritage in public, these live demonstrations are considered an integral part of the heritagisation process for tourism purposes. Each public association specialises in a particular domain of intangible heritage – whether in crafts, performance arts, or social practices – to reflect the variety of intangible heritage according to their tribe (such as *Shihuh* Culture and Heritage Society) or a particular environment in the UAE. As discussed in Chapter 3, even though public associations are licenced at the federal level, their public activations or participation is managed and owned by the local community, not by the ministry. Their participation is compensated by the organisers of cultural events, whether on national occasions, social gatherings, heritage festivals, or other platforms. Such organisers can include the government, private, or civil sectors. The level of compensation depends on the type of event, selection of intangible heritage, number of participants, and the duration of their participation in an event.

Younger generations of Emiratis are aware that under the surface of modernity and its trends, intangible heritage is understood mainly through national, heritage, or social events. This presentation of local traditional practices preserves what they often 'hear as heritage'. A young Emirati emphasised encouraging the sustainable growth of local traditional aspects rather than selling them as commodity:

> "*Emirati cultural identity is not as involved or promoted as it should be. Maybe not promoted the right way. Meaning, we do direct selling at the moment, whereas that is the opposite of art, identity, and heritage. We have those elements, but we need to grow them properly, not advertising it like a movie!*" (Informant #9, 2019).

Similarly, another participant supported this perception:

"*I think it is hard to tell you what Emirati identity is, maybe because we live the details. For us as Emiratis, I know the details of our heritage, and it is difficult to describe them in a word or a phrase. And as an indigenous person, I live this identity, but is it visible for the rest of the Emiratis in this modern society? Is it visible for non-Emiratis? That is the question. I think our identity is not reflected correctly to either of them*" (Informant #6, 2019).

This feeling of a cultural responsibility to preserve traditional practices is often expressed in opposition to commodification, and is acknowledged and expressed by another young local participant:

"*For both nationals and expats, everything should be preserved. From handicrafts, stories, ways of life, archaeological sites, and the products used in the past. Considering myself as a fourth-generation since the union, I cannot compare my heritage roots to my grandparents'. Therefore, as much as possible, we try to preserve local intangible heritage for the generations to come because, as I said, within modernisation, heritage and culture are disconnected, and we need to reconnect. We are capable of doing that, which is at the very same time a very fulfilling task*" (Informant #5, 2019).

What emerges from the younger generation's perceptions is that they are aware of their heritage value, and the need to preserve it among them. In particular, an approach is needed that carefully balances the new generation's understanding of their local heritage with ongoing sociocultural changes, and economic affiliation with local heritage-making processes.

Social Implementations of Heritagisation

This section examines several examples of the implementation of heritagisation as a form of safeguarding intangible heritage. To understand the current role of social safeguarding practices, one needs to understand the complexities surrounding the value of traditional knowledge and skills in the heritagisation process. Drawn from the theoretical approach in Chapter 2, the impact of a heritagisation process creates a transformation in both tangible and intangible heritage in an artisan community. This process is affected by ethnic, cultural, religious, or social contexts in order to heritagise a traditional practice. When heritagising a traditional practice, it is important to understand that preserving its basics is the reason for either its endurance or neglect in the present. In other words, if the knowledge or skills associated with a particular traditional practice have vanished because it is not crucial for everyday life, without being documented or finding a person who remembers it, then it would be difficult to revive. Such traditions are then even more difficult to be heritagised as a modern safeguarding approach for present uses.

Local artisans from different Emirates elaborated on this matter, specifically those descended from families that are well-known for inheriting a particular craft or a social practice, and it was difficult those artisans to accept any form of change in their traditional way of practising their heritage (Informant #45; Informant #46; Informant #47; Informant #48; Informant #51; Informant #52, 2020). According to the understanding of several Emirati informants, the context of heritagisation in the UAE started with the restoration of historical buildings and heritage sites. These sites or buildings were then used to host cultural events or forums, as shown in Figure 6.12 (below). Further, this process developed into heritagising the intangible functions of local heritage by using either the skills or the process of making a craft (Informant #3; Informant #2, 2019).



Figure 6.12*: *The restoration of a traditional ventilation tower in a historic house located in Fahidi, locally known as Barjeel*[119] *بارجيل, was a cooling system in the past. **Source**: Author, 2019.

According to the interviews, the key motive in this heritagisation process is to establish and regulate a sort of cultural exchange within a diverse society such as the UAE. This approach tended to favour the economic benefits of the cultural industries in recognition of their

[119] This knowledge of architecture was imported from the Persians who lived in the coastal area prior to the union of the UAE, and who later became locals (Assi, 2022). Today, this element is considered an integral part of Emirati historical urban identity, and examples of these towers are often restored to inspire local and international artists and designers. The outcome of their inspiration is considered a safeguarding method within the heritagisation process.

international influence on local intangible heritage (Informant #12; Informant #15, 2019; Informant #23, 2020). This reformation of heritagising tangible heritage goes hand-in-hand with a reformation of heritagising intangible elements of heritage. The latter includes the traditional practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills to which UNESCO's 2003 Convention refers in its definition of heritage. Therefore, Emiratis as a community struggle to protect their artisans who hold the traditional knowledge and skills, due to the increased heritagisation methods that often only reflect one aspect of heritage. One Emirati reflected on a common stereotype of promoting 'staged heritage' rather than reflecting a natural behaviour in practicing elements of heritage, arguing that:

> "*I hate it when I go to a heritage site that hosts a cultural event. They bring all those poor old ladies making all those crafts to show people that we have heritage. It is all staged, and that is not the way you represent heritage. I think it is using them to promote an Emirati culture*" (Informant #12, 2020).

In this statement, the heritagisation of crafts begins with the artisans being staged in a curated manner by a specific cultural or tourism authority, either by demonstrating their crafts on screens or exhibiting their products according to a particular event or setting. The heritagisation of a traditional practice implies that its knowledge or skills could be developed separately from the artisans, and preserved without artisans being a part of these events. However, having the artisans practice the crafts in that setting does not necessarily mean they are forced to exhibit their craft differently from how they had learned or preserved it for generations.

From this discussion of local perceptions, it becomes clear that there is a struggle between the effects of heritagisation that disrupted the presentation of traditional heritage, and how to present their heritage in the context of the new understandings of heritage-making in the country.

On the other hand, the non-local perception consists of visitors or tourists who have observed that Emiratis do not embrace much of their living heritage or historical past. As explained by a few local participants, these foreign perceptions are based on the little attention invested in presenting local practices that many tourists 'expect' to see as 'Emirati heritage', and misleading tourist promotions (Informant #2; Informant #3; Informant #4, 2019). In addition, the UAE's inscribed intangible heritage elements are promoted as national heritage through media platforms, and as such are constantly used as staged heritage by the cultural or tourism authorities. In this understanding of staged heritage, what are rarely exhibited during national occasions or heritage events are the traditional social customs of the past that do not encompass the weight of an inscribed intangible heritage element. Nevertheless, Figure 6.13 (below) demonstrates a traditional wedding during World Heritage Day.[120] In the past, part of the wedding ceremony involved creating a festive atmosphere by singing and carrying the groom's gifts from his house to the bride's house. The presentation of the offerings, including the dowry and associated gifts, often defines the groom's social or political position and status within a tribe. This custom of offerings remains an essential part of today's local lifestyle; however, it does not exist in its old form of transferring or presenting the gifts.

A cultural representative elaborated on the context and nature of staged heritage in relation to this custom:

"*At the moment, we will bring the woman there, sit on the floor, and create a basket… we have not told you the story behind it, we have not explained anything, she remains a woman sitting on the floor, we have not shown you how we have been inspired by it, we have not included it in the fabric of our society or what it means*" (Informant #16, 2021).

[120] Celebrated annually on 18th April by UNESCO, World Heritage Day is an international celebration to introduce and preserve the culture and heritage of nations. Retrieved from https://whc.unesco.org/en/news/2274



***Figure 6.13*:** *Displaying gifts as part of an Emirati traditional wedding ceremony.*
Source: Author, 2019

Notably, the representative emphasised the conflation of authenticity and heritagisation in the staging of female artisans:

> "*We have not even elevated her; she goes back to her house and stays in her house, and she did it because she needed the money. She did not do it because she was recognised as a respected member of our society, holding our identity up to the world. In other countries, these people are heroes of their nation. So, we do not elevate, and again the reason we do not elevate is that we need to believe before we do. We need to strongly reflect that belief, instead of hiding it and bringing her as a token gesture. I think that is where we are, and hopefully, we will progress*" (Informant #16, 2021).

This is an example of the 'staged authenticity' paradigm that is stressed by Nic Craith (2007), among other heritage researchers in Chapter 2, in which authenticity often lends credibility to a commodified heritage element and provides a sense of connection to a specific history, location, or a practice in the cultural tourism sector. Here, the implementation of heritagisation refers to the commodity processes linked with the cultural and environmental development of tangible and intangible heritage. This implementation depends on the official managerial level's legal, administrative, financial, and technical support, such as the cultural authorities detailed in Chapter 3. However, it requires the involvement of the local communities, including the artisans, to add an 'authentic' value to the cultural practice and this type of involvement is considered a passive engagement of heritage practitioners in the safeguarding process of heritage. Another cultural representative reflected a similar perception, because they have direct contact with artisans:

> "*We should befriend the artisans and make peace with them, so that they are willing to give you all the knowledge they have. You need to listen to them, and they are going through so much, and this place is a getaway for them, from their problems, and they get to talk to their fellow artisans*" (Informant #24, 2020).

The development of an atmosphere of staged heritage is seen in Figures 6.14, 6.15 and 6.16 (below), in which the heritage practice of *sadu* itself remains intact; in contrast, the craft's purpose, presentation, and setting are different. According to several female local artisans, what they learned as heritage is organically constituted by their community's memory, strength, and survival instincts. To the artisan community, this encompasses the ongoing traditions and the living forms of local cultural expressions inherited from the ancestors and passed down from one generation to the next, such as oral traditions, performance arts, ceremonial events, or the required know-how

and skills for the crafts. Therefore, there was no requirement to specify a designated site, event, or institution for practicing intangible heritage as reflected today in various government initiatives (Informant #52; Informant #53; Informant #54; Informant #55, 2020).



***Figure 6.14*:** *Bedouin woman weaving sadu as part of everyday life in the 1960s.*
Source: Informant #24, 2020.





***Figure 6.15*:** *A Bedouin at home preparing threads for sadu using a spindle.*
Source: Informant #24, 2020.

***Figure 6.16*:** *A Bedouin displaying the spinning technique at a heritage festival.*
Source: Author, 2020.

Figure 6.17 (below) shows for instance how local artisans commonly gather and practice *talli* in their households, with no specific conditions required except for the tools, materials, and exchanging their stories or skills. Compared to staging these crafts for a particular setting, as shown in Figure 6.18 (below), the atmosphere of a community gathering is different, because staged heritage is meant to reflect a representative element of the national identity for the tourists.



Figure 6.17*: *Local women gathered to practice talli in a household. **Source**: Author, 2020.



Figure 6.18*: *Local woman showcasing talli on a stage during World Heritage Day.
Source: Author, 2019.

From a foreigner's perspective, it is often difficult to distinguish a local setting of traditional practices from what is staged; however, the older generation of artisans are aware of their heritage, and they practice it normally, as they would do it at home. These efforts are recognised and empowered by several private organisations through social capacity-building programmes, as part of their cultural responsibility towards the local artisan communities. It is important to note that these efforts do not reflect the understandings of universal heritage nor sanctioned heritage through the government, but rather aim to secure a stable income for the artisans and to allow them to actively practice what they understand as heritage without the intervention of international commitments.

Non-Official Capacity-Building Implementations

This section examines two organisations from the private sector that focused on presenting the traditional practices of the local community, while heritagising their products as modern form of safeguarding intangible heritage. This section aims to reflect the economic benefit of heritagisation to the local artisan community, with minimum risk of shifting local traditional practices into something that does not represent the heritage identity of the practitioners. Further, these organisations provide artisans with financial aid, spaces, and the tools in order for them to develop and transmit the knowledge and skills of their traditional practices – either to their descendants or the people who sign up for workshops with the artisans' consent. The artisans are free to practice at home for privacy reasons, or in the dedicated spaces offered by the organisations to ease the heritage-making process of their crafts.

As shown in Figure 6.19 below, the first organisation is *Al-Ghadeer* UAE Crafts in Abu Dhabi, and the second is *Irthi* Contemporary Council in Sharjah. These organisations are parts of

bigger groups that are privately funded. They operate mainly as the arm for cultural responsibility of these groups in response to the implementations of intangible heritage institutional frameworks. Despite deploying heritagisation as a modern safeguarding method, its process has had a particular influence on 1) the traditional process of practising a craft or a custom; 2) the tools used in a traditional practice; and 3) the final presentation of the traditional products. In this light, this section reflects on how heritagisation is perceived and implemented by the artisan communities to revive neglected (or poorly performed) intangible heritage practices, specifically in the Emirates that are well-known for their heritage tourism growth. Several methods of reviving these heritage practices have been developed, including contemporising intangible heritage skills or products into visual or digital arts related to the cultural industries.

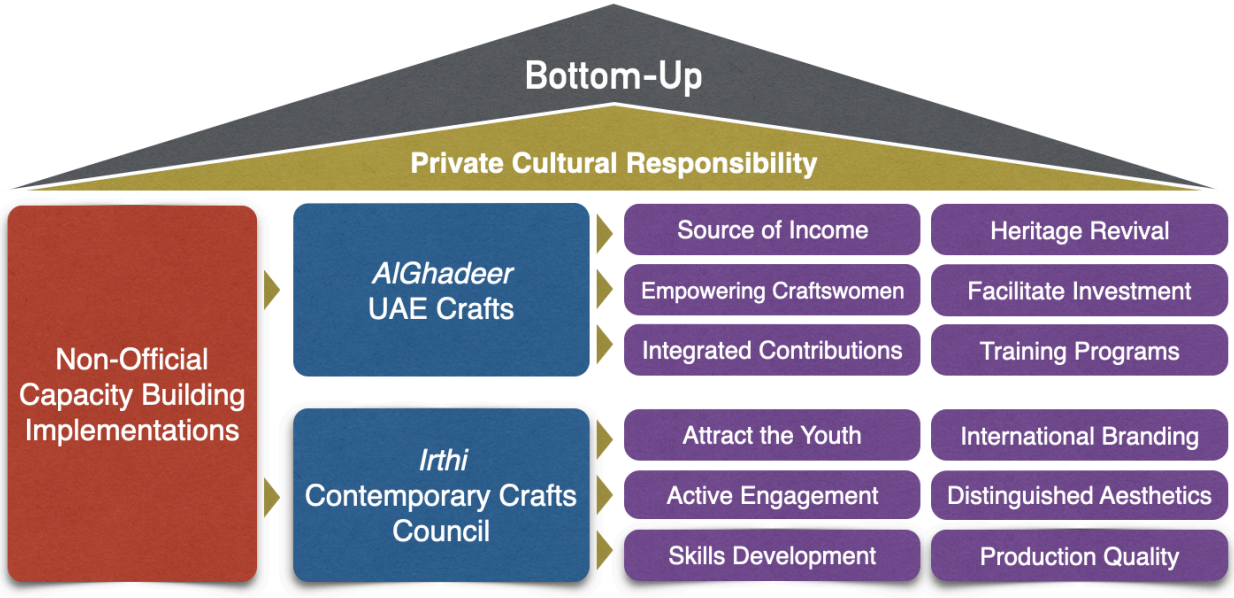


Figure 6.19: *Non-official capacity-building implementations.* **Source**: Author, 2024.

The discovery of oil and the international economic openness, industrial developments, and accessible foreign trade linked with business relations and migration that accompanied it have changed the dynamics of practicing and safeguarding traditional forms of intangible heritage. As

such, it has carried a negative effect on maintaining the function and value of the only source of income for many local artisans. This process of disruption created a sense of cultural responsibility within the private sector to provide the necessary resources for the artisan communities that are accessible and affordable to protect and sustain their heritage. The particularities of these case studies are correlated with social efforts in the documentation and safeguarding of intangible heritage and the creative domains of cultural industries, which influenced the creation of the heritage commodity based on the historical, social, economic, and touristic emphases of each Emirate in the UAE. Similar to *Al-Ghadeer*, *Irthi* is an independent council that works mainly towards empowering craftswomen who develop their traditional weaving skills through *saff al-khous* and *talli*. This initiative specifically targets women in the rural areas of Sharjah and the northern Emirates, while providing them with the resources to present their products in a contemporary manner in collaboration with international design and fashion industries. Notably, both institutions began deploying the value of authenticity associated with these craftswomen to build a heritage-making process according to the present meanings and values of heritage.

Even though *Al-Ghadeer* and *Irthi* operate independently, both are overseen by a member of the ruling family of the Emirate in which they are located. According to the representatives of these initiatives, not all the members of the ruling families represent state-sanctioned practices, nor have political influence. On the contrary, they use their power due to their status to preserve Emirati heritage identity: in addition, those members of the ruling families are often known for their advocacy for the needs of the artisan communities. *Al-Ghadeer* and *Irthi* exemplify is a non-state approach to safeguarding intangible heritage, however supported financially by members of the ruling families for the benefit of the artisan communities who practice traditions the way they identify as local heritage. Considering the consequences of modernisation, these efforts aim to

maintain the social fabric between the tribes and the heritage of their artisan communities that has been transmitted from one generation to the next in the most ordinary way (Informant #24; Informant #26, 2020).

Al-Ghadeer *UAE Crafts*

Founded in 2006 – 10 years before Abu Dhabi's first decree for the protection of its cultural heritage was officially issued – *Al-Ghadeer* UAE Crafts plays a vital social role in embracing the older generations of artisans, training new generations, and increasing their crafting expertise. In line with this consensus, the main role of *Al-Ghadeer* is empowering local women to practice their crafts by providing the basis for sustaining the practice. The sustainability cycle includes whether they gained the skills at an early age through their families or learned the know-how at *Al-Ghadeer*. One informant involved with *Al-Ghadeer* explains the sustainability cycle:

> "*My role is planning for the long term. For example, it is important to foresee the sustainability cycle of crafts and what symbols we see in the final products. This cycle depends mainly on the ethics of the artisans. They are patient, creative, and accomplished. It does not matter if they are in the desert or by the sea, they are hand-in-hand with nature, and never separated from their surroundings. The artisans respect the benefactors around them, and therefore take care of them, such as the plants or the animals. The artisans acknowledge their belonging to the same ecosystem, and that their survival is connected to their environment. I always think about how to transfer these values, ethics, and ideologies of our craftswomen to the future. This will help Emirati children not to think very far from their ancestries, specifically the remaining generation of craftsmen that lived in a different era from ours*" (Informant #26, 2020).

Even though this initiative is based in Abu Dhabi, it also welcomes craftswomen from the other six Emirates. According to the representative, the initiative's social empowerment today embraces more than 245 craftswomen, 53% of whom are Emiratis and 47% of other nationalities living in the UAE. Around 90% of *Al-Ghadeer* craftswomen are unemployed, and they have found financial stability through the practice of their distinctive skills (Informant #26, 2020). The representative elaborated on the reasons why women were specifically targeted:

> "*We have two objectives. First, and the most important, is empowering women with limited income through Emirati crafts, along with education. We are not a ministry or a tourism entity that mainly focuses on the aesthetics. Because Al-Ghadeer is part of the Emirati Red Crescent (ERM), we empower women with limited income through sustainable revenue. Second, we utilise Emirati crafts as an instrument to empower them because the crafts are vanishing. We want to include men as well in this journey, but unfortunately there was no interest from them, and it was not an easy approach. Honestly, we are still in search of men who will accept working on crafts as a way to earn a living, we would not hesitate to include this as a mandate*" (Informant #26, 2020).

Figure 6.20 (below) shows local craftswomen as a reflection of *Al-Ghadeer*'s support for the artisan communities. At the same time, Figure 6.21 (below) also reflects on the artisans' collective approach while practising their crafts, which involves related traditional practices such as brewing traditional coffee while exchanging stories that are associated with the safeguarding process. At *Al-Ghadeer*, these crafts reflect the strong symbolic emphasis of what is an 'Emirati identity', especially if they are collectively practiced by the local community.



***Figure 6.20*:** *Emirati craftswomen practicing talli (left), saff al-khous (centre), and sadu (right).*
Source: Al-Ghadeer, 2020.



***Figure 6.21*:** *Part of the collective manner of practising a craft is preparing and serving traditional Arabic coffee.*
Source: Al-Ghadeer, 2020.

According to the representative, *Al-Ghadeer*'s approach to safeguarding intangible heritage consists of an emphasis on branding a traditional practice by creating a form of distinctive identity for commodity purposes, while demonstrating the living social background of the artisans. This approach is linked with portraying a sort of authentic 'Emirati identity' that is distinctive from other cultures:

> "*I also think of how to show our Emirati identity. Let us put it this way, the reflection of Emirati identity should be in our hotels or at the airport, as the world's gateway into the UAE. I will be happy to see traces of our crafts there. For example, when I go to Africa, I know I am in Africa from their patterns or clothing. Same thing when I go to Japan. Unfortunately, when I arrive at Abu Dhabi airport, there is no difference between us and the rest of the world, because I am not seeing anything that reflects something 'Emirati'. Currently, the only Emirati identity I see is within the artisans when they work side-by-side, or the bonds between families, also at celebrations and community occasions. I know that I am referring to values, but they shape our behaviour and choices, and eventually our identity. Being at this table while talking in this interview, I am not seeing anything that represents our identity. Everything is imported. What is it exactly that is Emirati here? Seeing a chair with a piece of sadu weaving, or a camel leather design, or any pattern that is well-known in a particular area of this land or a tribe is somewhat reflecting an Emirati identity*" (Informant #26, 2020).

The representative discussed integrating the role of civil society organisations to extend the safeguarding efforts in line with the provisions of the 2003 Convention. However, the representative stressed that *Al-Ghadeer* is a voluntary reflection of the private sector's cultural responsibility towards what the local communities choose to practice. It is a reflection of the

private sector's efforts in sustaining the value of the living intangible heritage according to the local community. At the same time, *Al-Ghadeer* works hard to involve other nationalities in their initiative for two reasons: 1) the increasing lack of Emirati bearers with knowledge and skills of the local crafts; and 2) the lack of interest within the Emirati younger generations in learning these crafts:

> "*In Al-Ghadeer, we have Emirati and non-Emirati artisans. We had to include other nationalities in the crafts transmission process because we have lost a large number of the older generation of craft bearers. Now when we say, 'Made in UAE', we only refer to where the product is made. This means that the people who produced the product are not local artisans, and the material used in the production is not what the local artisans are using in their traditional practice, however the final product looks like one of our crafts. The important thing at this point is at least to say they we do have crafts, but they are not exclusively Emirati until we make certain of transferring the know-how to the new generations*" (Informant #26, 2020).

In this sense, *Al-Ghadeer* adopts a series of capacity-building approaches for the youth. This includes providing training workshops for school students to educate them about the crafts and create interest for current generations to invest in and recognise their significant role in preserving their heritage, as can be seen in Figure 6.22 (below). In this manner, the representative explained *Al-Ghadeer*'s role in creating new functions for the crafts in relation to investment in their artisan communities:

> "*My philosophy always tackles the form of Emirati identity in its ever-evolving setting. Culture is destined to be in a constant state of change, whether we like it or not, and I encourage the conscious kind of change. The symbols, values, and meanings: those*

represent us as a local community and as a society. These things we can adopt, develop, and show the world that we are proud of these values. Sometimes, we also think what custom or practice should be left in its traditional form? Or preserved in a contemporary way for the future because of the constant change? Even the tools - what if we changed the traditional ones? Does that mean we are changing our heritage? We discuss these possibilities constantly" (Informant #26, 2020).



Figure 6.22: *Talli training workshop in Dubai for students, managed by Al-Ghadeer.*
Source: Author, 2020.

Through *Al-Ghadeer*, the UAE is supporting the creativity discourse to develop new functions for intangible heritage by stressing the relevance of the creative economy within the cultural industries. Hence, this initiative focuses on enhancing the competitiveness of the artisans' craft products against the mass-produced copied items available in the local market. As such, *Al-Ghadeer* positions itself as an established incubator that contributes to encouraging local entrepreneurs, such as artists and designers, to invest in the artisans traditional crafts. In addition, *Al-Ghadeer* accepts the commodification of the artisan's craft products in a careful way, without

jeopardising the traditional essence of the craft. A larger percent of the profit goes back to the artisans as income, and it varies depending on the purchase. In order to improve their competitiveness in the local market, *Al-Ghadeer* provides tools and raw material for the artisans, handles the marketing of their craft products, and at times purchases some in order to add an aesthetic touch to their products. Figures 6.23 (below) reflects the initiative's contemporary approach:

> "*We contemporise the products of the crafts, but in a careful way to show the aesthetics for merchandise. This approach is similar to the emerging Emirati designers who create high-level products inspired by the authentic features of the local crafts. When I see the traditional process of making talli or sadu, I do not think they are considered part of the cultural industries unless you take these end-results as commodification for tourism or economic purposes*" (Informant #26, 2020).



Figure 6.23: *Contemporising sadu woven pieces to decorate walls.* **Source**: Al-Ghadeer, 2020.

The following examples demonstrate some of the heritagised approaches to *sadu* and *talli* by shifting their traditional uses to a commodity and contemporising its functions. For instance, *sadu* woven pieces were mainly used to create tents or saddles, however today they are used as decorative pieces in households or produced as a bag strap. As for *talli*, its embroidery was mainly applied to women's gowns, but at present *talli* is applied to different materials other than textiles, such as objects made of clay, as shown in Figures 6.24 and 6.25 (below).



***Figure 6.24*:** *Decorating pottery with talli embroidery.* **Source**: Al-Ghadeer, 2020.



***Figure 6.25*:** *Local woman demonstrating an ornamental incense burner decorated with talli while participating in a heritage festival.* **Source**: Author, 2019.

The representative explained how the crafts could be included in the educational system in a systematic manner, in order to build sustainable awareness and a safeguarding ecosystem

beginning with the schools, creating jobs related to the national heritage sector, and finally carefully integrating them into the cultural industries:

> "*Once cultural industries are defined according to what we as Emiratis see fit, and I think it should be integrated first in education, creating relevant jobs at the cultural authorities, and then move this knowledge to outlets, business, airports, and museums. This system should be part of our lives as Emiratis. Maybe, in the future, I will have the choice to enrol in a specialised course in saff al-khous at our universities. A full curriculum in this specialty including the history, processes, and method for making it, knowledge, production, functions, and related industries. Once I graduate with that degree, I could design a full interior and accessories for a hotel from our local khous concept, the production design is ready, and the manufacturing as well. Everything functions together. When I witness this, one day, I will surely know that we have utilised the concept of the cultural industries correctly*" (Informant #26, 2020).

The representative highlighted *Al-Ghadeer*'s awareness of how the UAE's government acted according to the cultural industries' guidelines in valorising the crafts products for the creative economy, especially when a craft is included in the heritagisation processes. Part of *Al-Ghadeer*'s mandate is to enhance and sustain artisans' income using their traditional products, hence the representative explained their business approach that operated against excessive value creation through the valorisation of crafts. In this case, the value of the artisan's traditional know-how should be equivalent to the value of their production, hence increasing the demand to buy or invest in their skills or products and as such increase their income. This approach supports the value of the traditional practice itself, without depending on international inscriptions of intangible

heritage (that is often the work of a government) to add a value for the practice (Informant #26, 2020).

In this sense, *Al-Ghadeer*'s empowerment programmes took a different approach from the government's cultural governance through international commitments. Therefore, there was no indication of economic or political impact in relation to the operation of *Al-Ghadeer*. Further, the representative pointed to the 'emotional power' of the artisan community in how they own and see their crafts. Consequently, the safeguarding process of these crafts at *Al-Ghadeer* began long before the government's efforts to join the 2003 Convention, the inscription of the UAE's first element in 2011, and the development of its cultural heritage safeguarding policies in 2016. While the government implements the safeguarding measures of 2003 Convention, *Al-Ghadeer* is aware of the intangible heritage process of selection that values specific traditional elements over others. The representative reflected on their understanding of the reasons behind this selection process:

> "*Our neighbouring countries practice the same crafts. But now we are labelling these practices as Emirati, Saudi, Yemeni, or Qatari. When did we learn to label the practice? Why now? I feel that when we start being selective, we are not helping anyone. I mean, we can see these are common crafts, and as Emiratis we practice them like any other state in the Gulf. The nature of this country since forever has been almost like a transit, people come and go, and the nature of how Bedouins or Arabs lived has been influenced over time. For instance, the UAE was (and still is) based on the tribal system. Each tribe produces patterns of their own for their crafts, like the one we see on sadu. Can we refer to these patterns as Emirati? Yes, we can specifically, after the union. For example, the Al-Manaseer tribe has their own distinctive symbols on their sadu, and this reflects their uniqueness. But can we say sadu is Emirati? I cannot say that. I feel these ideologies came*

from the fact that we implement international commitments blindly and ended up integrating their safeguarding methods. I never grew up hearing my grandmother or my mother saying that this sadu is Emirati or Saudi, and this is a pressure by itself in referring to something as purely Emirati, when it is not. The idea of owning something collective and starting to say 'this is ours, and this is yours' will not help anyone. I would rather be putting it in the following context: in the Arabian Peninsula, we have these shared crafts, but in the UAE, we practice it in this way, and I wish there was research covering these unique aspects of our culture, but this is quite different from owning something that is not yours to start with" (Informant #26, 2020).

The representative explained the reasons behind *Al-Ghadeer's* early sense of obligation (in 2006) towards the local artisan community compared to the government, which issued the cultural heritage law in 2016. The first reason was to address the consequences of the international heritage ideologies over the active role of local artisans and their traditional practices. The other reason was driven by notions of emotional power, personal interests, or a sense of obligation towards preserving local heritage by a member of the ruling family. As discussed in Chapter 3, several members of the ruling families use their power to meet the needs of the local communities when it comes to their social customs or traditions. The ruling families are nonetheless descended from indigenous tribes, and were chosen to bear the responsibilities of Sheikhdom by the members of the tribes prior the union, a state that has continues to this day. Emiratis perceive this position to be responsible for preserving what the local communities practice or transmit as heritage. In *Al-Ghadeer*'s case, it is affiliated with Sheikh Hamdan Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, and his personal support helped the *Al-Ghadeer* act as a facilitator, investing in sustaining the crafts that are acknowledged by the local communities. The representative also noted that incorporating the inscribed crafts

within *Al-Ghadeer* – such as *sadu* or *talli* - was not of the result of state-sanctioned safeguarding approaches to these crafts. *Al-Ghadeer* existed prior to these international commitments, and these were traditional crafts that has been preserved for generations. *Al-Ghadeer* accepts these crafts, among others, because they are practised collectively within the artisan community. In addition, these crafts are taught and transmitted by people according to what craft they inherited, their living conditions, or available resources nowadays (Informant #26, 2020).

Irthi *Contemporary Crafts Council*

Irthi is an organisation that aims to empower local women economically and socially through their traditional crafts. Their programmes focus on transferring intangible heritage knowledge and skills to the next generations through systematic approaches, including developing new understandings of using heritage according to the present meanings and values, through repositioning the role of craftsmanship within local artisan communities in rural Sharjah and the northern Emirates. Founded in 2015, a representative of *Irthi* explained the council's social programming, which targets different local demographics in order to sustain the transmission of traditional practices and to deploy the craftswomen's aesthetic skills to meet the economic functions of the crafts. *Irthi*'s approaches include:

1. The *Bidwa*[121] **بدوة** Centre, a social development programme that accommodated twelve artisans at the beginning of *Irthi*'s journey. Since the foundation of *Irthi*, the Centre has expanded to four branches distributed across the northern Emirates, and empowers over 200 craftswomen from different nationalities, as shown in Figure 6.26 (below). The Centre provides vocational training for artisans, including the tools and raw materials needed, however the artisans are

[121] In the local dialect, *Bidwa* is derived from the syllable *Bedu*, and is equivalent to the term 'Bedouin'.

free to practise from home. In addition, the Centre facilitates investments through business collaborations in local, regional, and international knowledge-exchange programmes to generate sustainable sources of income for the craftswomen.



Figure 6.26*: *Talli vocational sessions in the Bidwa Centre. **Source**: Irthi, 2020.



Figure 6.27*: *Reintroducing elements of the crafts to engage the next generation of young designers. **Source**: Irthi, 2020.

2. The *Hirfati*[122] **حرفتي** Youth Programme, which seeks to enhance cultural and social responsibility within younger generations of potential artisans in an effort to combine traditional crafts with contemporary aesthetics, as shown in Figure 6.27 (above).
3. The Artisan Skills Exchange Programme, which facilitates and improves the craftswomen's competencies and technical skills – as well as their social engagement – through a series of craftsmanship skill exchanges within a larger audience across the MENA region.
4. The Crafts Dialogue, a collaborative project that brings international brands, crafts councils, and fairs – such as the London Design Fair, Barcelona Creative Dialogue, Asprey, and Bulgari – to work closely with Emirati craftswomen to create contemporary international production-lines. Figure 6.28 (below) shows the international collaboration to integrate *talli* aesthetics into a collection of designer handbags.



Figure 6.28: *Talli craft inspiration in one of the international collaborations.*
Source: Irthi, 2020.

[122] Inspired by Classical Arabic, *Hirfati* means 'my craft'.

Similar to *Al-Ghadeer*'s cultural responsibility towards empowering the artisan communities, *Irthi* organises capacity-building programmes to support artisans working from home, enabling them to sustain a beneficial occupation and income. This approach lead to the creation of a production design team that coordinates craft kits for home delivery to maintain the practice of the craft. The kit contains materials and tools for craft production to better assist the artisans in working from home, the original arena for traditional practices, rather than obliging them to work in the Centre. In addition, *Irthi* welcomes other nationalities and conducts research on the background of the crafts:

> "*Some of our artisans are multinational. We interviewed them regarding where talli craft is descended from. It came from the Silk Road traders, and this technique originated in India, Persia, and similar countries. Some of our artisans are originally Indians who were married to the locals, way before the existence of the Emirates as a country,* and the way they create talli is quite distinctive. C*onsidering our position as cultural representatives, we are careful about how the origin of the design is reflected*" (Informant #24, 2020).

Alongside preserving the crafts in rural communities that often have limited access to resources, the representative stressed the role of the organisation in generating a sustainable source of income by developing and promoting the artisans' crafts and their different skills and techniques. Another strength is experimenting with the traditional techniques, using recycled materials that gives the authentic aspect a contemporary twist. Contemporising the products involves collaborating with international designers who are familiar with *Irthi*'s efforts: "*Irthi Council for Contemporary Crafts went a long way to empower craftswomen working on crafts such as talli and partnered with international brands, and they become exceptional*" (Informant #14, 2019).

Talli's international recognition within the fashion industry strengthened the positioning of this craft during the nomination process for the 2022 UNESCO inscription efforts.

In light of the international recognition of intangible heritage, *Irthi*'s representative emphasised a pattern emerging regarding 'collaboration conflict' between the different Emirates. The representative stressed the competitiveness in taking the lead in adopting the intangible heritage international inclusions. The media played a role in shifting its development into a race: "*who will get there first? and who will embrace the immediate exclusivity?*" (Informant #24, 2020). This example reflects how the cultural authorities of different Emirates (such as Abu Dhabi Culture or Dubai Culture) are to an extent competing to have one of their local traditional practices internationally inscribed and thus recognised as national intangible heritage. For instance, *Irthi* is known for its established safeguarding measures for *talli* in local and international settings, as demonstrated earlier in this section, which would suggest they should have worked on the craft's nomination file for inclusion in the Representative List of the 2003 Convention. However, the media announcement that was first articulated by another cultural authority concerning inscribing *talli* excluded *Irthi*'s safeguarding efforts to nominate the file as a non-government Council that supports and represent the larger artisan communities of this craft:

> "*There was a forum of Safeguarding Cultural Heritage organised by Dubai Culture to support the inscription of talli. Al-Ghadeer participated as well, but with all respect to them, we are approaching the crafts and heritage in different reach-outs. We can meet for documenting, preserving, and passing intangible heritage on. We do not mind taking part in their functions, but there should not be hidden agendas when it comes to safeguarding national heritage. We accepted the invitation to participate, but we pulled out at last minute, I wrote the rejection letter myself. Dubai wanted to inscribe talli in UNESCO's*

Representative List, and that clashes with our basic plan because it shows that our artisans are backstage players in the process. Eventually, we stopped discussing what we are aiming to do until we complete the task fully, and then we can talk about it. A lot of people who were short-listed as guest speakers in that forum, like Sharjah's Institution of Heritage, they know where Irthi is heading, and yet they represented Dubai Culture and not us. We worked hard on the nomination file for talli and then it got swapped by Dubai, an Emirate that is well-known for tourism and commerce, not heritage. Very typical business thinking" (Informant #24, 2020).

The representative highlighted that this focus on state-sanctioned intangible heritage – while marginalising other crafts – hinders the remaining artisan community in Dubai from resuming their traditional practices in their Emirate because there is barely any support for their crafts unless they are inscribed, leaving them with limited options. These include 1) transferring their knowledge to those within their families who are interested; or 2) looking for supportive environments in which to preserve their skills and keep the practice intact outside Dubai. *Irthi*'s representative elaborated on the social perception of safeguarding intangible heritage in Dubai:

"*We were approached by Lisaili*[123] *ليسيلي Women's Association to come up with a sort of agreement, because they wanted more income for the artisans. I felt they were desperate for us to work with them to maintain their crafts, because the artisans are either dying or not interested in practicing something that is not appreciated anymore. At Irthi, we were considering accommodating their ladies to teach ours, and we can compensate them for this knowledge and skill transfer*" (Informant #24, 2020).

[123] Located in rural Dubai, it become the only recognised setting for the local crafts community in the Emirate, specifically for *talli*, *sadu*, and *burqa*-making. Retrieved from https://www.dwa.ae/about/

Consequently, acquiring craftsmanship knowledge or skills was becoming rather difficult, because it depends on direct observation within closed circles of families, relatives, or the remaining community of artisans. The experience of knowledge-sharing depends on the input of many informants, and *Irthi* is seen as a 'threat' because of its established work in safeguarding local traditional practices, therefore becoming one of the most reliable intangible heritage representatives of not only the Emirate of Sharjah, but UAE as a whole:

> *"Irthi cooperate with the Sharjah Institution of Heritage, but the latter do not collaborate. We are seen as a threat more than partners, and they think we might replace them. But we always say that the Institution is an established foundation and has their own crowd. For example, I want to know if this design is originated in the UAE, and when we ask to investigate this matter with them, unfortunately they are not cooperative. We tried so many times to work hand-in-hand with them, but it did not work. So, imagine, within one Emirate there are real conflicts between its officials about sharing merely information, how do you think it will work between the seven Emirates?*" (Informant #24, 2020).

This statement reflects the limited understanding of knowledge-exchange, even though cultural authorities are mandated to share heritage information upon request as a service for the public. Putting aside Sharjah's government mandate to preserve intangible heritage, *Irthi*'s representative highlighted the 'collaboration conflict' within different heritage institutions in the Emirate. For example, *Irthi* is considered a young non-profit initiative that seeks cooperation from the government sector, especially with attaining intangible heritage information from an official heritage inventory in a cultural authority, such as Sharjah's. Hence, young social initiatives such as *Irthi* struggle to acquire related research or studies in heritage because of the stronger political standing of the other cultural authorities in Sharjah.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the social role of Emiratis in the safeguarding of their intangible heritage, specifically traditional crafts and customs. The local communities constantly recreate their intangible aspects of heritage in response to their present contexts and environments, and in relation to their social or tribal values that shape their distinctive identity. The emphasis on tribal understanding in practising heritage forms new understandings of how today's Emirati custodians of heritage are an integral part in building the UAE's national identity. Tribal values may certainly play an important role in how Emiratis have been able to sustain the traditional character of their intangible heritage, in line with modernisation. The necessities of living a contemporary lifestyle often brought commodification pressures, however, it built a sense of cultural responsibility towards preserving significant traditional features of intangible heritage. Recognising these challenges is key factor in maintaining 'what is left' from the collective and tribal cultural practices among the Emiratis today, and these challenges have varied between a lack of need or interest in utilising traditional crafts, a weakening of local dialects in conveying many local customs, and declining social performances due to the impact of modernisation and its industrial shifts.

Because of modernisation, the interviewees referred to a need to develop a form of 'new heritage' based on traditional heritage-making process which they, as Emiratis, witness regularly. This form of heritage is associated with those who do not want or know how to safeguard their traditions or crafts against the commodified cultural experiences that, to some extent, reflect the understandings of universal heritage. Such a perception is increasing among the young Emiratis who seek to carry their heritage in forms of oral history or traditional practices in a manner that could work with their current contemporary lifestyle. Hence, there is a passive engagement in preserving and presenting local intangible heritage in the local contexts, because the bearers of

heritage are limited to demonstrating their traditional practices during national occasions or at cultural events. This shifting role in the engagement of safeguarding intangible heritage differs from how the exact craft is performed within the artisan communities, whether in their households or public events. Consequently, transferring intangible heritage from the past to the present is passively staged through contemporary functions to present these practices, such as heritagisation, in order to sustain their existence.

Heritagisation processes are often unable to reflect the complete history or narrative behind the traditional social practices or crafts, but rather demonstrate an authentic aspect in its elements; however, this process describes active social safeguarding efforts. This contemporary use of Emirati traditional practices has allowed the development of new capacity-building programmes as a source of income for the artisan communities. Even though some of these programmes meet the specific demands of commodification, this shift has created a sort of awareness among young Emiratis who are artists or designers to appreciate and experience the value of their traditional cultural practices. The ability to shift the crafts' function through heritagisation became more visible through the presented case studies, as artisans have adapted in order to develop a foundation for sustaining their practices and competing in local markets. The safeguarding efforts of Emirati intangible heritage – from both the top-down and bottom-up bodies and actors – has developed a new form of local heritage related to the notions of universal heritage. Hence, Chapter 7 will investigate an international representation of selected practices of Emirati intangible heritage at a World Exposition, specifically the elements that are considered representative of the UAE's national identity.

Chapter (7)

International Representations of Emirati Intangible Heritage

Expo 2020 Dubai Exploratory Case Study



Ruwah Drum Performance

Introduction

This chapter examines the international impact of World Expositions (Expos) on the presentation of the UAE's national heritage identity. The broader context of Expos is to provide their host city (and the host nation-state more broadly) with a platform for international dialogues and exchange, while enhancing their nation brand – among other benefits such as international recognition of their culture, heritage, economy, industry, tourism, or technology.[124] Driven by these dynamics, this chapter attempts to answer the third and final research question: how can an international cultural commitment develop or enhance the national heritage identity of nation-states? Building on the premise that intangible heritage expressions are forces of authentic presentation and knowledge production in a nation-state, the first section examines the value of intangible heritage at the 'Expo 2020 Dubai[125], while considering the Expo's role in strengthening cultural heritage tourism in the host city, and the impact of heritagisation on its spatial, social, and economic levels. The second section investigates the UAE's international cultural implementation and its relation to hosting the Expo. The third and final section reflects on how the representation of selected local intangible heritage at Expo 2020 indicates critical issues in the local understandings of heritage such as identity, diversity and authenticity. Taking the examples of local crafts and social performances as the core focus of this research, these three sections aim to compare how this international impact is perceived in relation to local understandings of heritage, in contrast to the official understanding of presenting Emirati intangible heritage internationally – in this case, driven by the influence of a World Exposition.

[124] 'Making an Impact: The Power of World Expo.' Retrieved from https://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/publications/articles/item/192-making-an-impact-the-power-of-world-expo

[125] In this study, Expo 2020 Dubai is referred as Expo 2020. In the case of the UAE, even though the city host of Expo 2020 is Dubai, the Expo was represented by the nation-state and not solely the Emirate of Dubai, thus is officially organised on a national (federal) level.

The Value of Intangible Heritage at a World Exposition

The international recognition of intangible heritage becomes a force for capturing the characteristics of a creative economy by generating substantial revenue, allowing freedom of traditional cultural expression, and influencing the related policies of the cultural industries. Here, the investigation focuses on the international interpretation and local presentation of three types of intangible heritage: traditional crafts, socioreligious practices, and local dance performances. The connection between these practices consists of two primary scales. First, the international scale is exemplified in Bureau International des Expositions (BIE), which oversees and regulates World Expos. Second, the internal scale consists of the UAE government (at the federal and local levels) and the relevant non-official actors and bodies within Emirati society. These two scales demonstrate the difference between state-sanctioned intangible heritage, and how it is presented by local Emiratis – including the local bearers of heritage. Considered by international and national communities to be a significant consequence of universal cultural identities, World Expos[126] have been held as exhibitions to celebrate industrial innovations since the 1850s[127] among nation-states, and have developed into megaevents that are competed for through a bidding process in which candidate host cities to reflect on the challenges of and solutions to a specific universal theme. In four years of preparations, a bid is chosen by BIE that is in line with the provisions of World Expositions: the megaevent is then organised and facilitated by host city's government.[128]

As discussed in Chapter 2, heritage tourism can offer economic contributions and redirect the local communities' interest to engage with cultural industries' economic domains, while concentrating on the past and focussing on linking popular culture with its traditional

[126] 'What is an Expo?'. Retrieved from https://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/what-is-an-expo
[127] 'About World Expos'. Retrieved from https://www.bie-paris.org/site/en/about-world-expos#
[128] Dubai was chosen as the host city for Expo 2020, which was open from October 2020 to March 2021.

contributions. Hence, the authenticity of practices carried by the local bearers of heritage is needed to develop a distinctive identity for cross-cultural awareness, mainly when hosting World Expositions. This form of presentation is linked with how intangible heritage is manifested, along with its related products such as traditional social performances and craftmanship knowledge and skills. These intangible assets provide the Expo's visitors, including the tourists from abroad, with a sense of locality, because this international megaevent is often recognised not only as political, but as a cultural destination for visitors from all over the world.

Among many factors, the broader use of the UAE's intangible heritage and the consumption of its creative products locally and internationally (such as the international presentations of *talli*, detailed in Chapter 5) have elevated the country's profile internationally, firmly positioning Dubai as the first Middle Eastern candidate to win the bid to host an Expo in its history[129] (Informant #16; Informant #19, Informant #29, 2021). It is important to highlight that each participating nation-state at the Expo decides what would be showcased in their pavilions, which varies between cultural, economic, industrial, or technological representations, and are often presented as national endeavours for the benefit of other participating countries.

This observation is reflected clearly in the heritagisation approach of the Design and Crafts Programme,[130] by introducing *Menasa*[131] **منصة**, a dedicated design store in the *Al-Wasl* **الوصل** dome,[132] located at the heart of the Expo and next to the UAE National Pavilion, as shown in Figure 7.1 below. Through *Menasa*, the Programme aimed to engage participants (artists, bearers of heritage, designers, craftspeople, performers, and visitors) with Emirati intangible heritage

[129] Statement by the UAE Embassy and Expo Dubai Office. Retrieved from https://www.uae-embassy.org/about-uae/travel-culture/expo-2020-dubai / https://www.expo2020dubai.com/en/understanding-expo/world-expos-history
[130] A cultural programme mainly developed for Expo 2020 Dubai to introduce Emirati traditional crafts.
[131] *Menasa* means 'platform' in Arabic.
[132] Also known as *Al-Wasl* Plaza. The design inspiration came from a gold artifact that was found at *Saruq Al-Hadid* **ساروق الحديد** archaeological site in the rural deserts of Dubai in 2002. Retrieved from https://www.dm.gov.ae/discover-dubai/saruq-al-hadid/the-site/the-site-of-saruq-al-hadid/

through two methods: the concept and the interpretation of a selection of local intangible heritage. The Programme was to introduce a variety of traditional local crafts at *Menasa* in terms of definitions, while interpreting these crafts into visual narratives and products to recreate 'locally flavoured' experiences, and to present a form of 'shared' cultural practices to the world. Because of the design concept of *Menasa*, it operated as a store that was limited to showcasing contemporary crafts products or videos, rather than an exhibition introducing the local artisans and live demonstrations of their traditional activities to Expo visitors. As noted, each participating country decided what could be presented at their pavilion. In the case of the UAE, its National Pavilion demonstrated a sort of chronological narrative of the country's history, the unification and associated developments, while the representations of local intangible heritage – limited to crafts production - was showcased at *Menasa*.



Figure 7.1*: *Al-Wasl dome, including a high-tech projection structure that uses both external and internal surfaces, where Menasa was located. **Source**: Expo2020*Dubai*, 2021.

The officials working at the Expo[133] decided to showcase crafts that either share similar traditional aspects with other cultures or which were associated with the inscription criteria of the 2003 Convention, specifically the Representative List for the safeguarding of intangible heritage (Informant #16, 2021). Hence, the selection of intangible heritage at the Expo focused on (but was not limited to) the range of the representative elements that have been inscribed since 2011 to fit the wider universal understanding of Expo through *Menasa*. The selection process in this space was carefully presented for the global reach of the Expo, and therefore included intangible heritage recognition, viability, transmission, authenticity, modern methods of safeguarding, and local community involvement to ensure that the exhibitions were compliant with the provisions of the 2003 Convention in an international exposition. *Menasa* was curated around six craft stories from the UAE: *talli*, *sadu*, pottery, Arabic coffee, pearl-diving, and *gargur*[134] **قرقور** (shown in Figures 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, and 7.5 below), and showcased over forty Emirati, local-based, and international designers. The Expo cultural representative explained the reasons behind the curatorial selections:

> "*We wished to focus on a few crafts that spoke about various aspects of our culture and identity, our traditions and our rituals. We wanted an anthropological perspective. So, the coffee story spoke about our hospitality and welcome; the pearl story spoke about our past. Then there are crafts chosen to speak about the geographical diversity of the UAE: so sadu for inland Bedouins, saff al-khous for the oasis, gargur for the coasts, and clay pottery for the mountains. Then there was also the angle of materiality and showcasing the diverse materiality of our crafts, and how this could be translated into collections, so we had textiles for talli, pottery designs for clay, wall piece collection for sadu as well as display*

[133] Specifically, those who worked within the Expo Pavilions & Exhibition team that managed and operated design, crafts, visual arts and associated productions at the megaevent, mainly for the UAE.
[134] A traditional tool for fish trapping. In the past, they were made from woven palm fronds.

collections for the pearl diving story. Space and time constraints meant we could only focus on six crafts" (Informant #16, 2021).

In relation to this, a number of participants expressed their opinion on the selection method: "*I believe the Bureau International des Expositions, along with the local Expo committee, decided on the heritage elements. In my opinion, it would have been great if UAE nationals from different age groups had been involved*" Informant #19, 2021).



Figure 7.2/3: *Gargur in its traditional form using different materials.* **Source**: Author, 2020.



Figure 7.4/5: *Pottery, a common craft for the northern Emirates tribes.* **Source**: Author, 2019.

Another participant expressed a similar perspective: "*I would say I did not see a lot. If it was me, I would clearly show things about our heritage like crafts, buildings, colours*" (Informant #3, 2021). The majority of the individuals who participated in this case study were not aware of this selection process, nor why these crafts were categorised in a specific manner. The only Expo features collecting public views was a survey disseminated by Dubai Expo Office that addressed the Expo's branding design, which was inspired by local cultural aspects: "*I was not informed or asked to assist in the initiation of Expo. However, I do recall that there was a survey for the logo, in which we had to choose one of three different designs*" (Informant #39, 2021).

In this light, the Expo cultural representative elaborated on the sources of storytelling behind each craft:

> "*The entities within the UAE worked with us. For example, Irthi Craft Council in Sharjah for talli; Bait Al-Gahwah in Abu Dhabi for the coffee story; Bait Al-Hirafiyyin in Abu Dhabi for the sadu story; Al-Ghadeer UAE Crafts in Abu Dhabi for the clay pottery story. We also had many publications from Sharjah Heritage Institute*" (Informant #16, 2021).

In order to present the six selected crafts in the forms of concept and interpretation, the *Menasa* curation team obtained the crafts information in collaboration with the official and non-official intangible heritage centres and/or initiatives such as Sharjah Heritage Institute, *Irthi*, and *Bait Al-Hirafiyyin*. Some information about the six curated crafts presented at *Menasa* was also, obtained through the national inventory as some are inscribed in the Representative Lists of the 2003 Convention, such as *sadu*, *talli*, and Arabic coffee-making. In other words, the officials at Expo, including the *Menasa* curation team, could not create cultural programmes that represented local intangible heritage without the involvement of local heritage experts or practitioners (as detailed in Chapters 5 and 6). Regardless of the information obtained for curation purposes, the

traditional factor remains excluded, because there was no live demonstration by the artisans to showcase the crafts in their original form, since *Menasa* only showcased the contemporary products of these crafts. Thus, the Expo's visitors were not able to see the traditional means of practicing or presenting the crafts. The artisans were only invited to participate during the research process of *Menasa* curation, and they engaged with it as they felt a social responsibility to contribute and offer their most valued possession, their craftmanship knowledge skills, for a national cause.

According to the Expo cultural representative, the purpose behind creating a cultural dialogue between local and international artisans was to explore and represent Emirati crafts in a contemporary way. The curator of *Menasa* – who is also the director of the Design and Crafts Programme – elaborated:

> "*Crafts have a special, innate power to communicate a local culture, a nation, and its identity. Giving this power a poetic approach, we used Emirati crafts as a communication tool and merged it with design, new technologies, and materials to convey more local stories and to intensify the experience for our visitors through our exclusive design collections*."[135]

Using the crafts as a communication tool refers to the heritagisation approach that is implemented in the programme, specifically the interpretation method. According to the Expo's cultural representative, the selection of designers and artists by the *Menasa* curation team is based on the nature of the six selected crafts. They were drawn from eleven countries to enable the use of local crafts as a communication tool for curating a universal and contemporary narrative to other

[135] The official media statement of *Menasa*. Retrieved from https://www.mediaoffice.ae/en/news/2021/September/08-09/Expo-2020s-MENASA-Emirati-Design-Platform-brings-together-local-and-international-designers

cultures that practice the same crafts. These countries included the UAE, Spain, Brazil, Lebanon, and India, alongside non-official crafts initiatives (such as the *Al-Ghadeer* UAE Crafts and *Irthi* Contemporary Crafts Council), who were consulted to assess and reflect the authenticity aspects of the crafts. Compared to other intangible heritage initiatives around the country, these two institutions are established in terms of traditional and modern safeguarding methods of local intangible heritage. As discussed in Chapter 6, these methods involve preserving the traditional aspects and practices while contemporising the authentic aspect into creative products to meet the requirements of presentation at the Expo.

In order to exemplify the creative economic approach, the revenue from *Menasa*'s design pieces was directly deposited into the UAE Designer Fund[136] during the closing ceremony of the megaevent. This fund had been established by the Expo office to support local artists, cultural entrepreneurs, and design enterprises who designed the contemporary pieces – however, the local artisan communities who were involved were not included as a category in this fund. This exclusion of the artisans is another form of passive engagement in which their knowledge inspired the creative process of the traditional craft production. The design pieces, shown in Figure 7.6 (below), came into being through the documenting conducted by *Menasa*'s curating team to study the artisans' narratives and their crafts from across the UAE. It is worth noting that the visual display on the exterior of *Menasa*, seen in Figure 7.7 (below), is the only method that presents the work of the artisans in its traditional form. To add to the confusion, *Menasa* presented itself as a platform for promoting Emirati crafts, however it was only a design store, as per the exterior display. The display also reflected the words 'dialogue' and 'crafts' together (and in another sequence, it shows 'universal crafts') to highlight the symbolic emphasis of introducing a new

[136] 'Expo 2020 Dubai Arts and Culture Program.' Retrieved from https://en.unesco.org/creativity/policy-monitoring-platform/expo-2020-dubai-arts-culture

Emirati heritage to the world. Moreover, the authentic aspect of these traditional practices is an integral component for the artists and designers to create the concept, the interpretation, and lastly the presentation for a 'new heritage' that *Menasa* promotes as the UAE's national heritage at Expo.



Figure 7.6*: *The interior of Menasa, showcasing a variety of contemporary merchandise inspired by local heritage, specifically the six curatorial crafts. **Source**: Author, 2021.



Figure 7.7*: *Menasa design store exterior, showcasing an installation based on sadu threads that is visually displayed on screen. **Source**: Author, 2021.

According to the Expo's cultural representative, the chosen designers, artists, and crafts initiatives were brought under one international platform for one purpose: to demonstrate contemporary designs inspired by the local culture, based mainly on documentation concerning a craftsmanship narrative. This demonstration of the UAE's cultural diversity was an example of the complex experience of the transnational cultural impacts of World Expos. In addition, it excluded Emirati artisans from demonstrating their traditional practices, while only manifesting their knowledge and skills through heritagised products and visuals. This form of exclusion is problematic because it questions whether this universal dialogue of heritage leaves room for the traditional meanings and values that Emirati artisans want to present in their country through devising Expo as a connecting podium to the world. The investigation of this specific heritage discourse is correlated with the key issues presented in the introduction to this chapter (identity, diversity, authenticity). Consequently, these issues influenced the communication and presentation of heritage at Expo Dubai and how they are affiliated with the international cultural commitments of this megaevent, including its contribution to the creative economy of the UAE's cultural industries.

Understandings of National Identity and the Emphasis on Universality

Given the significance of hosting a World Expo, the cultural representative of Expo explained the particularities of introducing the UAE's new cultural industries strategy[137] in 2021 during the opening of the megaevent, which aims to position the country, specifically Dubai, as an destination for the creative economy. This strategy also plays a role in supporting the aims of

[137] Official launch of National Strategy for Cultural and Creative Industries. Retrieved from https://www.wam.ae/en/details/1395302998166

UNESCO's inscription criteria in both its intangible heritage Representative Lists and in the diversity of cultural expressions. While when Expo was open, from October 2020 to March 2021, the introduction of the strategy became a 'branding' process that impacted how the UAE's national identity was presented and interpreted, specifically its intangible heritage elements, through *Menasa*'s work to fit the universal cultural significance of this event. This universal impact on intangible heritage as an authentic aspect of the UAE's national identity was expressed by an Emirati student who visited Expo:

> "*If we are talking about purely 'heritage' elements, it was not reflected enough, or may be reflected in a more 'modernised' way, which kills the original representation of Emirati culture. I thought that I would see some of the handicrafts, live performances of traditional sewing, or other activities such as pearl diving that could have been performed live*" (Informant #19, 2021).

Another local visitor shared similar perceptions of what they experienced at the UAE's National Pavilion in terms of presenting national heritage:

> "*I am not satisfied. I hoped there would be more showcasing of UAE heritage, a modernised version of UAE traditional architecture in a more visual manner. Some pavilions displayed it; however, it was a major disappointment in the UAE Pavilion*" (Informant #39, 2021).

According to these visitors, their experience at the UAE Pavilion included seeing the portrayal of the founder Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan's dedication to the empowerment of women, sustainability, prosperity in education, and the unification narrative of the Emirates, while embracing an image of modernity that is part of the present universal meanings of cultural diversity and tolerance. In addition, the experiences were merely portrayed illustratively or creatively

through computer-generated imagery (CGI), digital art, and music, and mentioned specific chronological milestones of the UAE's development prior to and after unification. The overlapping experiences at the National Pavilion associated with nationalism was a conceptual approach to enable integrating new heritage into the UAE's national identity, while showcasing how Emirati tribal values remain, which shape this integration. This perception was elaborated by one of the local visitors:

> "*I believe that after the age of modernisation, we have integrated so many cultures and accepted them to mix with ours to the point that we have lost the true aroma of our Emirati identity. Now, I see the Emirati identity as a weakening source of nationalism, but which also represents the warm tribal Arabian embrace of a 'universal land of diversity'. Yet again, diversity can be a perpetual threat, so I guess I would say the word that defines Emirati identity is 'mutation'. Because it is not getting better, but rather it is becoming damaged or coerced under the strong waves of modernity*" (Informant #39, 2021).
>
> A similar perception was expressed by another participant:
>
> "*I thought at first glance that this was not the Emirati selection. I was expecting more – not in the form of the country's development, but other elements like traditional art, performances, and demonstrations of Emirati achievements, especially those of our ancestors*" (Informant #41, 2021).

This experience generated a feeling of disappointment among these Emirati visitors, which revolved around what they perceived as an Emirati identity which appeared to be mutated rather than rooted in the historical, cultural, social and, most importantly, the heritage dimensions of the country (Informant #19; Informant #39, 2021).

One of the tensions that occurred regarding the presentation of national identity was the conflicting decisions between actively presenting artisans at the Expo or demonstrating the traditional crafts passively through visual displays at *Menasa*. A *Menasa* representative explained that the traditional form of the crafts was narrated digitally through screens: "*we have audio-visuals where we show how the artisan works with the craft*" (Informant #16, 2021). In other words, there was no dedicated space for the artisans to demonstrate the crafts live at the only official representation of national heritage at the Expo. Only the contemporary designer's products, inspired by these local artisans, were exhibited. However, in November 2020, Sheikh Hamdan Bin Zayed Al Nahyan visited *Menasa* to explore the contemporary designs of *Al-Ghadeer*'s local artisans, as can be seen in Figure 7.8 below.



Figure 7.8: *Hamdan Bin Zayed alongside a Bedouin sadu artisan who represented Al-Ghadeer in its designated contemporary products corner at Menasa.* **Source**: Al-Ghadeer, 2021.

Prior to his visit, it was understood that *Al-Ghadeer*'s collaboration with *Menasa* consisted of two main objectives. One was showcasing the artisans' traditional craft skills, and the second was promoting their contemporary products on an equal platform as designers, to ensure that the artisans were recognised and appreciated for their knowledge as the main inspiration of the

designer's products. However, Hamdan Bin Zayed specifically asked to meet the artisans behind the contemporary inspiration of Emirati heritage at Expo. This unexpected visit caused an operational disruption on-site, which resulted in a space being made available for *Al-Ghadeer* craftswomen to showcase their crafts at their convenience and for the duration of the event, as shown in Figure 7.9 below.



Figure 7.9: *Al-Ghadeer's artisans showcasing their crafts live at Al-Wasl Dome next to Menasa.*
Source: Al-Ghadeer, 2021.

Here, *Al-Ghadeer* introduced the artisan communities by inviting them to be present at the Expo: to actively share their traditional stories and crafting methods, to explain their different responsibilities in the safeguarding process, and to talk about how the design pieces were inspired by their traditional know-how, while the revenue from *Menasa* is directed to increase their income. Nevertheless, and according to several local visitors, live craft displays were scattered around the Expo. As shown in Figures 7.10, 7.11, 7.12 and 7.13 (below), these podiums were hardly noticed or approached because of the lack of communication concerning these traditional activities.



Figure 7.10/11*: *Talli podium at Expo. **Source**: Informant #19, 2021.



Figure 7.12/13*: *Sadu podium at Expo. **Source**: Informant #19, 2021.

One of the visitors was able to have a conversation with an artisan at one of these podiums about how they had been approached to participate in Expo. The artisan shared her experience, and that of her fellow artisans: they were approached by one of the public associations (which was in direct contact with the management of the Expo office) offering the artisans the opportunity to

showcase their various crafts as a compensated 'heritage service' for the duration of the megaevent. In the understanding of the artisans, this participation provided: 1) a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to fulfil a sort of cultural responsibility by showcasing what they perceived as 'authentic' Emirati crafts to the world, and 2) an additional source of income through compensation and selling their traditional products.

The majority of the artisans at these podiums were from the northern Emirates, and they described the approach of collaboration as either 'last minute' or 'logistically difficult' in terms of long hours of live demonstration, poor shelter to protect them from the heat, and the long walking distances to public facilities when needed. Another participant who was volunteering at the Expo shared a similar observation: "*they had been approached by these artisans looking for directions or internal transport methods to ease their movement, among other needs that were not provided for by the organisers*." As such, the visitors felt that these artisans were used as 'tokens of display' to emphasise the existence of local artisans to the world, which is another form of passive engagement of the traditional practices of intangible heritage (Informant #19; Informant #36; Informant #39, 2021).

Even though the economic influence of the cultural industries remains intact in these safeguarding initiatives, the impact of local artisans' meanings and values over their intangible heritage presentation is also visible in these non-official initiatives. This is why heritage as a domain within the cultural industries should correspond to the cultural impacts of World Expositions without excluding or undermining the participation of local artisan communities and how they communicate and present their heritage. Then, what do all these passive engagements leave the local bearers of heritage with? Local artisans expressed their responsibility to continue making heritage, regardless of the contemporary commotion around them, because they feel that

heritage is the only thing they can communicate through. A group of Emirati artisans representing *Al-Ghadeer* at Expo Dubai said:

> "*Patriotism whenever it is needed is answered, because it runs through our veins. We do not need an invitation to represent our heritage, but we also respect decisions that are beyond our understanding. Our crafts and traditions are the only language through which we can communicate to all these visitors from around the world, without the need to use words. We are lucky to still have a leadership, especially our Sheikhs, who appreciate us as the guardians of Emirati heritage and acknowledge our work, which is their ancestral heritage too. We are happy to be here*" (Informant #43; Informant #46, Informant #49, 2021).

Whether these guardians of heritage felt obliged to present their heritage or not, the older generation of artisans specifically felt that their distinguished knowledge and skills provide them and the country with historical, cultural, social, and economic value. Their value is associated with cultural governance on a national level (as discussed in Chapter 5), and this form of governance is empowered by even a visit from a member of the ruling family, who is known for his long history in preserving the heritage of the local communities – in opposition to a curatorial decision on presenting a constructed form of 'new Emirati heritage' to fit the universal heritage approach at the Expo. In this understanding of cultural governance, this visit sent an explicit message that sanctioned heritage approaches, including the presence of official cultural authorities representing or showing the artisans (in which the latter is physically excluded), are not enough. The active engagement and presence of the local custodians of heritage is as significant as recognising the efforts of the cultural authorities to present and communicate national heritage on a international platform such as a World Exposition.

Understanding the politics behind universal heritage helps us to understand the emphasis on utilising the cultural symbolism of national identity in manifesting new heritage at the Expo. It also helps to strategically develop nation branding for the UAE, in which World Expositions are considered a powerful facilitator in the process of supporting the competitive image of cultural destinations such as the UAE. At the same time, through the Expo, the host nation-state takes the lead in catalysing worldwide attention to the country's national heritage, in correlation with the other participating nation-states' 'shared' heritage as a primary key issue for humanity. According to a participant who worked on building the cultural activations at Expo, proclaiming elements of intangible heritage by defining their cultural symbolic meaning is a type of branding. Taking the crafts as an example, the participant explained:

> "*The cultural symbolic meaning of things will exist forever, but it is never considered. The first aspect is that many consider that the craft exists like a block, and is never evolving. That is why they never look at what symbolic meaning can be given to the object, in this case the craft. The second aspect involves the contemporary technology and tools that display the crafts in different forms*" (Informant #28, 2020).

Thus, to create a cultural brand for an intangible element, one must develop a commercial statement that encapsulates and simplifies what is often a complex set of symbolic meanings associated with a place: in this case, the Expo.

Another participant emphasised this commercial interpretation of heritage: "*in this age, commercialisation plays a role in keeping knowledge and skills within a group to institutionalise heritage. That is where you must have skills, knowledge, and methods to preserve heritage first, and then commercialise it*" (Informant #33, 2020). Through hosting World Expos, nation-states are experiencing a growing commercial interest in the creative economy, rather than only its

industrial advantages. The Design and Crafts Programme representative highlighted this commercial aspect: "*Menasa is a commercial platform to support the creative economy angle. The crafts selection was a curatorial decision*" (Informant #16, 2021). To exemplify the value of authenticity in this branding dialogue, the presentation of weaving techniques at Expo was interpreted in three forms: 1) the national heritage aspect, represented by traditional *sadu* weaving, as shown in Figure 7.14 (below); 2) the 'shared' cultural aspect of universal heritage, represented by carpet weaving, as seen in Figure 7.15 (below); and 3) the heritagised aspect of a traditional practice, represented by the wayfinding signage at the Expo site, shown in Figure 7.16 (below).



Figure 7.14*: *Traditional sadu weaving technique demonstrated by a local artisan.

***Figure 7.15*: *Afghani artisans displaying their vertical weaving technique through the Fatima Bint Mohamed Initiative (FBMI).*[138].**

Figure 7.16*: *Heritagised version of weaving used for Expo's wayfinding signage.

Source: Author, 2021.

[138] This initiative aims to empower the Afghans in their country, specifically craftswomen, in terms of education and heritage preservation for their economic and well-being sustainability. Retrieved from https://fbmi.ae/initiative/arts-culture/

In these three forms, branding plays a pivotal role in the symbolic meaning of universal heritage, because heritage as a tourism format (as well in the cultural industries) offers its intangible elements from particular creative or economic purposes for a particular perspective. An interviewee elaborated specifically on the symbolic dimension of crafts:

> "*This dimension of crafts will never disappear. That is why when you are speaking about preservation and how things evolve over time, I think we should not be scared if the formula changes, what is important is that the cultural and symbolic meaning becomes a narrative, and that narrative will stay*" (Informant #28, 2020).

An official working for a cultural authority emphasised the narrative aspect as one of the integral components of the cultural industries for creating its creative content:

> "*Such a narrative can be used in the cultural industries to create modern content. Preserving the symbolic side gives you context to create unique content. This is how you differentiate through storytelling – and creating storytelling is through content. And if you do not preserve, where do you get the content from?*" (Informant #35, 2020).

In this light, another official highlighted the reasons behind the lack of encouragement and support of practising heritage in its traditional form and material:

> "*The geographic factor plays a role, because of the speed of modernisation we lost the essence, but the other Emirates still practice their authentic crafts. Opportunities and income are also involved. In the modernised world, they do not see crafts as a source of income. It stays in the older generation*" (Informant #25, 2020).

In addition, the official stressed the different kinds of incentives correlated with practising the traditional crafts:

"*Before, there was the need to use these products, but now, we do not [need to]. I am sure many crafts have disappeared because there are no incentives anymore, such as social or financial incentives. If there is no need, why would I continue practicing the craft?*" (Informant #25, 2020).

Hence, hosting Expos became a significant incentive, as it proves that the crafts can be sources of support for focused campaigns promoting different types of cultures, under the influence of universal heritage. The term 'universal' was reflected by the Expo's representative when addressing the concept of meeting other cultures for heritage: "*these crafts, specific to the UAE, have their origins in the universality of crafts. Examples are weaving (sadu), embroidery (talli), metalwork (gargur), sand (clay or glass or ceramics)*" (Informant #16, 2021). Similarly, this term appeared in early 2021 in Abu Dhabi, when the curator of the exhibition on *Bait Al-Hirafiyyin* (discussed in Chapter 5) explained why certain elements fall under this new concept:

"*We have this part of Bait Al-Hirafiyyin that is called the 'Universal Crafts', and the aim was to collect craft objects from different people and get stories, even if it was like a small bottle of perfume. We did a huge campaign to get people from the community involved, and tried to get them to share their stories with us, and that did not work. It might have been a marketing problem, but I also think that the ordinary people would not be interested. From my experience, if something seems like an everyday practice and if you have a grandmother who is an artisan, you are not really thinking of it that much as something out of the ordinary, you are going to take it for granted - and maybe that is where the problem lies. The only way that we managed to really get people interested was by making the crafts more contemporary, like putting sadu on a pair of sneakers and things like that. What we ended up doing with the Universal Crafts was reaching out to a community of artisans*

themselves, and cooperating with the Intangible Heritage Department, because they have already collected and documented from our own artisans and the Ministry of Culture. So, we had this database, and then we tried to get the artisans to give personal stories about where they learnt these techniques from, and some of them were not interested in sharing these, and were only interested in selling their items" (Informant #38, 2021).

Due to the multicultural setting at the Expo, meeting with other cultures creates more significant incentives for the traditional practices of heritage, such as staged heritage, and therefore could be creatively used as a modern safeguarding method. These incentives, as part of national identity, often communicate the challenges facing the continuity of local intangible heritage as one of the issues that have been placed at the top of the Expo's universal agendas.

Reviving Traditional Cultural and Socioreligious Practices

World Expositions are often instruments of change: here, in terms of how the host nation-state of the UAE should represent itself culturally and socially to the world. The transformational impact of Expos on the UAE affects the process of intangible heritage selection, including the revival of some socioreligious practices to promote 'tolerance'[139] as a universal concept of coexistence among different cultures. At the same time, the UAE's emphasis on tolerance through coexisting with others emerged from 1) its growing multicultural population which comes from different backgrounds (culturally, religiously, and socially), and 2) the country's responsibility to respond to international cultural commitments. Hence, this section examines three cultural and socioreligious practices – *malid* مالد (a religious choir performance), *haq al-lailah* حق الليلة (a form

[139] One of the strategic goals stresses building dialogues around diversity and the culture of coexistence. Retrieved from http://www.tolerance.gov.ae/en/strategy.aspx

of trick-or-treating), and *na'ashat* (a traditional dance accompanied by *ayyala*) – that were revived for the purpose of demonstrating this notion of universal cultural coexistence in the UAE during the Expo.

Socioreligious practices are essential components of the UAE's cultural expressions, and they are closely related to understandings of *Urf* among the tribal communities in the region, as detailed in Chapter 2. However, these practices encountered three main challenges in the first quarter of the twentieth century and again in the 1980s. First, the rapid economic growth in the region accompanied by cultural openness due to the discovery of oil, which dominated the sociocultural context of the region at the time (Hassan & Taha, 2021). Second, the sociopolitical structural shifts that occurred due to the unification process of the UAE in 1971. Third, followed by the union and in line with *Shari'a*, the UAE government constituted *Maliki*[140] **مالكي** as its official Islamic school of thought for the country's legal system. The constitution also allows freedom for other Islamic schools of thoughts or religious expressions in the country, as long as they were not declared as 'official' or misused in any form against the country's beliefs, ethics, or national security. At the same time, some non-official sectarian groups such *Sahwa*[141] **صحوة**, *Sufism* **صوفية**, and *Wahhabism*[142] **وهابية** considered themselves socially and politically influential due to their religious status in some parts of the UAE. In this aspect and for over four decades, these three Islamic movements shifted the social, cultural, and political perceptions in the UAE in defining

[140] There are four main schools of thought in Islam: *Hanbali, Hanafi*, *Maliki*, and *Shafi'i*. The *Maliki* school of thought is the official jurisprudential school in the UAE. Retrieved from https://www.awqaf.gov.ae/en/officialfatwacenter

[141] *Sahwa* means the 'awakening', and the movement was founded by a variety of Islamic clerics and was adopted by far-right organisations such as the Muslim Brotherhood. Its ideology and political influence are close to the *Wahhabism* movement.

[142] The terminology is associated with its founder *Muhammed Ibn Abd-AlWahhab*. *Wahhabism* is a revivalist movement that emerged in the eighteenth century in Najd, Saudi Arabia.

which socioreligious practices should be practiced and which should not, according to their ideological impact and associated with their political influence.

To provide a context on the development of socioreligious expressions in the Arabian Gulf Region, one must understand the nature and relationship of these three ideologies (*Sahwa*, *Sufism* and *Wahhabism*) with wider Emirati society. Prior to the union, *Wahhabism* managed to forbid some sociocultural practices that are against their understandings of religion (such as *malid* and *haq al-lailah*) in parts of Sharjah and Ras Al-Khaimah in the early twentieth century (Albudoor & Boulos, 2021). Those who embraced *Wahhabism* were not necessarily tribal sheikhs nor leaders, however they considered themselves religious figures, as such they could share their religious philosophies with wider audiences. Because of this influence, they found themselves able to convince the local people to avoid practicing what is not traditionally considered part of religion, declaring them *bid'ah*[143] **بدعة**. However, these practices remained intact in Abu Dhabi and Dubai due to the strong political influence of the tribes who had, at the time, embraced the *Maliki* school of thought. Among the tribes are leaders, families, and communities who rejected the extreme approach of this ideology towards specific sociocultural understandings of religion that were also socially practised as *Urf* (Albudoor & Boulos, 2021).

Another example of non-official ideology was the emergence of the *Sahwa* movement in Saudi Arabia, which influenced the continuity of the remaining socioreligious practices in the region. In the 1980s, the *Sahwa* movement had a significant impact on all levels of society not only in the UAE, but also in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Oman in the Arabian Gulf, and Egypt and Syria in the Arab region (al-Saif, 2014). Saudi society was the most affected by this religious

[143] In the understandings of *Shari'a*, *bid'ah* is an innovation of a religious matter that could be an expression, practice, saying, meaning, or value, among other matters, that was never undertaken by the Prophet Muhammed or his followers as *Sunnah* **سنة**. In other words, *bid'ah* is an emerging or innovative practice that has no roots in the traditional *Sunnah* practices within the Muslim community.

ideological trend, as the country witnessed divisions in everything related to society, including social, cultural, and other regional issues (al-Saif, 2014). Similar to *Wahabism*, the *Sahwa* approach took a stand against any emergent local cultural practices or peculiar socioreligious expressions that did not meet its philosophies. Consequently, the behaviour of many Saudis (individuals, and groups from the tribal communities) toward these specific cultural or religious expressions changed; becoming rather intolerant of what came to be seen as *bid'ah*.

Followed by this abrupt shift in socioreligious behaviour in the region, Emirati youths experienced these ideological conflicts through the entry of *Sahwa* ideology into schools and *masajid* مساجد (or mosques) in the UAE (AlMuhairi, 2019). The chronological impact of these ideologies, in addition to the rapid socioeconomic changes in the UAE, led to the decline of the need for and interest in practicing *malid*, *haq al-lailah*, *na'ashat* among other cultural or socioreligious expressions that were also affected. At this time, between 1988 and 1991, the ideological influence of these ideologies was at its peak, and media archives in the UAE such as television or radio recordings emphasised how hard it was to discuss these topics, since it had become *bid'ah* (Albudoor & Boulos, 2021).

Further, recent decades have experienced a resurgence of *Sufism* in the Arabian Gulf Region in response to the *Sahwa* ideology, which was considered socially extreme. This phenomenon welcomed *Sufi* scholars from other Arab or Muslim countries, enabling them to spread the *Sufism* philosophy of tolerance through schools, publications, and media. This openness aimed to 1) encourage the promotion of 'moderate' Islamic values and practices, especially those deeply affected by *Sahwa* radicalism; and 2) gradually prepare the young and future generations to accept the culture of coexistence among the existing diverse ethnicities and religions in a multicultural country such as the UAE. In this sense, the government of the UAE has embraced

Sufi scholars from Egypt, Mauritania, and Yemen (AlJumairi, 2011). As a result, there were two reactions from the Emiratis, the majority of whom follow the *Maliki* school of thought. On the one hand, this endorsement provoked Emirati people or religious scholars who follow the *Maliki* school of thought in the country, because some of the *Sufism* practices and philosophies are different and may create conflicts between Emiratis (Mouzahem, 2018). On the other hand, several Emirati researchers were inspired to explore the history of *Sufism* in their region, such as Rashed Al-Jumairi who investigated the history of *Sufism* in the Arabian Gulf countries in 2011,[144] and Thani Al-Muhairi, the author of *Glimpses of Maliki School History in the UAE*[145] in 2019.

In both reactions, the UAE government continued to welcome not only diverse Islamic schools of thought and movements, but also managed to cultivate this dialogue into an interfaith cluster that includes three houses of worship known as 'The Abrahamic House',[146] shown in Figure 7.17 below. This cluster aims to reflect the values of mutual respect and understanding among the followers of the three monotheistic religions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. The Abrahamic House was rooted in the 'Document on Human Fraternity', also known as the Abu Dhabi agreement, a joint statement closely endorsed by the official representatives of these religions: the current head of the Catholic Church and the Grand Imam of Azhar, shown in Figure 7.18 below. This first of its kind joint declaration suggests recognising the 'shared' common values between the three monotheistic religions, while preserving the distinctive particularities of each religion.

[144] His book draws on the features of the influence of *Sufism* in the UAE. However, the book reviews *Sufism* in Saudi Arabia, the coast of Oman, Kuwait, and Bahrain, tracing its sources in Central Asia, Iran, and Turkey. It also reflects on new *Sufism* and the profound religious transformations in Egypt and the extent of the Arabian Gulf *Salafi* influence.

[145] The book reviews the most important historical religious locations, its most prominent figures, their efforts, and impact on Emirati society, and was published by the Falah initiative. Retrieved from https://falahinitiative.ae/كتاب-لمحات-من-تاريخ-المذهب-المالكي

[146] Supervised by the Higher Committee of Human Fraternity, this landmark consists of a church, a masjid and a synagogue in different structures and it epitomises the culture of coexistence as a global symbol of tolerance. Retrieved from https://www.mediaoffice.abudhabi/en/arts-culture/opening-in-abu-dhabi-the-abrahamic-family-house-marks-20-percent-of-construction/

These politics of 'universality' not only see distinctive cultural practices as 'shared elements', but inclusively applies to religious values that are often accompanied by distinctive sociocultural expressions as well. In line with the universal notion of The Abrahamic House, the 2003 Convention (detailed in Chapter 2) includes religious and spiritual rituals as one of the main manifestations of intangible heritage, which encompasses a strong universal synergy between these international implementations.



Figure 7.17*: *Located in the cultural district of Abu Dhabi, the architectural design of the Abrahamic House presents a global society that embodies the continuity of human civilisations through their divine messages. **Source**: ADMediaOffice, 2022.



Figure 7.18*: *The official signing ceremony of the 'Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together' considered to be a historic assembly of tolerance in the UAE.
Source: ADMediaOffice, 2019.

Clearly, in the UAE, introducing universal dialogues based on cultural, social, and religious dimensions becomes an integral part of building the nation-state's national identity. These dialogues also have a strong influence on cultural and religious coexistence in a multicultural society with various faiths, such as the UAE. Under this influence, shifting understandings of intangible heritage have emerged concerning what is acceptable to perform in public and what is not in the UAE. The synergy of these international dialogues resulted in reviving a selection of cultural and socioreligious practices that were considered *bid'ah*, mainly *malid*, *haq al-lailah* and the cultural folklore of *na'ashat*. According to some Emirati Expo visitors, the Emirati community had continued to perform these practices – but only in private – for over two decades. These Emirati visitors also witnessed a strong campaign at the Expo to celebrate universal cultural expressions and socioreligious practices such as Christmas, Diwali, Hanukah, and Halloween, emphasising how each 'share' some cultural traits with the revived local practices. Hence, these practices were permitted to be performed in public for the first time during Expo to meet a form of universal (cultural, social, and religious) dialogue which is clearly presented for international visitors rather than for them, the local population (Informant #17, Informant #19; Informant #25; Informant #36; Informant #37; Informant #40; Informant #41, 2021).

Malid *as a Practice of Tolerance*

One of the most significant but controversial socioreligious practices, not only in the UAE but also in the wider Arabian Gulf Region, is *malid*. This practice is considered a common *Sufi* tradition that was originally brought to the northern tribal communities of the UAE from Yemen via the coast of Oman during the eighteenth century (AlMuhairi, 2019). In terms of cultural, social,

or religious gatherings, there are many types of spaces called *majlis* in the local dialect.[147] *Malid* is a socioreligious *majlis* that is performed by Emiratis during their social occasions such as weddings or during specific religious occasions such as the birthday of Prophet Muhammed or his Ascension journey. In the Arabic language, *malid* is a dialect version of *mawlid* مولد which means 'the birth' (Faruqi, 1986). As such, *malid* is often articulated to celebrate *al-mawlid* as a religious occasion.

Malid is mainly performed by men in the UAE; the collected secondary material did not indicate that Emirati women perform *malid* in the UAE – however, it is performed by women in Yemen in their private accommodations (Katz, 2008). This spiritual performance comes in two corelated forms: the recitation form and the performance form. The performance form is relatively common in the UAE; consisting of a conductor and two lines of choir facing each other. The choir responds to the main conductor while chanting poems of praise while using a *duff* دفّ, a musical instrument similar to the tambourine.[148] The most famous poem of praise that is recited in this socioreligious expression is *burdah* بردة. Emiratis have a strong attachment to this poem, to the extent that the late founder of the country, Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, initiated a *majlis* named after it to celebrate the Prophet's birth. His endorsement grew into a *burda* festival[149] in 2018, dedicated to manifesting diverse Islamic arts and cultural expressions from the Muslim and Arab countries, including different forms of *malid*. To link to the influence of the universal understanding of religion with the revival efforts, *malid* was performed explicitly in the UAE

[147] The intangible heritage inventory of Abu Dhabi includes social practices, rituals, and festive events: *Majlis of the UAE*. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/30394.pdf
[148] 'The *Malid*: a spiritual tradition'. Retrieved from https://falahinitiative.ae/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Maled-Book-Digital-ENG.pdf
[149] The name is derived from the *Burda* poem that was written by *Al-Busiri*, a *Sufi* figure in the twelfth century. Retrieved from https://burda.ae/en/about/

Pavilion, while discouraged from being performed normally in public in the UAE because it was seen as *bid'ah* (see Figure 7.19 below).



***Figure 7.19*: *Malid performed live as part of Expo's universal programming*.**
Source: Expo2020Dubai, 2021.

This exception for *malid* to be performed during Expo aimed to emphasise tolerance as a culture of coexistence, not only to reflect on the country's efforts towards coexistence, but also to meet the international provision of Expo concerning the diversity of cultural expressions. Another form of *malid* revival was moving the annual *burda* festival from Abu Dhabi to the Expo site, and introducing 'Rhythms of Emirati *Malid*' as one of its interactive programmes to manifest elements of this expression into visual art, such as graphic design and calligraphy.[150] This festival was moved to the Expo because it is dedicated to celebrating the diverse religious practices of Islam, accompanied by related cultural expressions, and the name of the festival itself is one of the main

[150] This programme demonstrates the symbolic meanings behind the movements, words, and rhythm of *malid*. Retrieved from https://burda.ae/en/speakers-2021/alanood-bukhammas/

poems recited in *malid.* The first example, the public performance of *malid*, encompassed tolerance as a universal culture of coexistence alongside other international religious expressions. The second example, contemporary uses of *malid*, was to universally endorse heritagisation as a modern safeguarding method of intangible heritage practices within the visual arts domain in the cultural industries.

This construction of new heritage shapes local (distinctive) intangible heritage as crucial for naturalising the idea of universal heritage. To reflect on the rapid development of new heritage in the UAE, Expo Dubai hosted the second 'World Conference on Creative Economy'[151] in 2020. This forum addressed the inclusivity and diversity of local thinking, specifically the value of intangible heritage within the world creative economy including, crafts, folklore, and socioreligious traditions. In this way, *malid* is no longer performed by religious individuals or locals, but rather by the groups who perform intangible heritage practices, among other forms of traditional performances, as an attempt to revive this expression for promoting and safeguarding purposes. It is worth mentioning that *malid* was revived only by the UAE Pavilion during the celebration of *al-mawlid*, and it was not depicted in other Arab pavilions, including representatives of the Arabian Gulf countries.

To some extent, this practice was prohibited socially from public display, even though there was no official or public announcement to prove such prohibition. An official working at a cultural authority stressed the main reason why it was not tolerated socially, rather than officially:

> "*Malid was banned because it was considered a heretical practice. It was not accepted by all segments of society, so the ban was on a public level. People in the UAE were practising it in secret - and by 'in secret' I mean in their households and during private occasions.*

[151] World Conference on Creative Economy (WCCE): Inclusively Creative Cultivating the Future. Retrieved from https://wcce.ae/index.html#page2

Then it opened, and people now celebrate the way they want. There is no written statement that it was banned, but it was not performed in public since 2012, and was restricted again between 2016 until 2020" (Informant #25, 2021).

In other words, between 2012 and 2020, there were traces of *Sahwa* influence in the form of people who reminded Emirati society of what had been declared as *bid'ah*, including the practice of *malid.* Therefore, the practice was hidden while *Sahwa* ideology was resurgent within Emirati society. Hence, this implicit impact influenced social behaviour towards the indirect prohibition of *malid*. Another perception of this social prohibition was that sectarian sensitivity may occur in the country if certain socioreligious expressions that do not represent the country's school of thought were performed in a way that would be understood or implied as part of the country's school of thought, and thus could be mistaken as state-endorsed (Informant #17). The participant elaborated that such sensitivity was due to the misconceptions that often develop from confusion over how essentially and traditionally some practices should be performed. In the case of *malid*, if celebrated in specific forms (according to the Emirati local communities who are aware of its performance), these forms would not be accepted by the majority of Emiratis who follow the *Maliki* school of thought: therefore, cultural, social, or religious disputes may develop. The participant suggested that public prohibition of an unfamiliar socioreligious expression that could be incorrectly linked to what they follow as officially and socially accepted Islamic school of thought is a safe solution in a society that consists of various religious factions, and a country whose law is based on *Shari'a* and which follows the *Maliki* school of thought (Informant #17).

To demonstrate this consequence, an online search on *malid* terminology correlated with the UAE identifies the frequency of public performances dates, specifically when using the term in the Emirati dialect '**مالد**' compared to the English context *malid*. In addition, most of the media

posts reflected performances of *malid* in public and private settings between 2012 and 2016, as shown in Figure 7.20 (below), and again in late 2019 it was being performed discreetly in private gatherings, closed theatres, or public spaces that are organised by a public association, see 7.21 (below). Another participant emphasised how *malid* is practised, especially under the influence of tolerance in the country:

> "*The way how people practice malid, for example, is a trend. So, you need to see anything to do with religion as trends. It was bid'ah for some time, but then people opened up, and it must do mostly with the change of mentality. Before, the religious far-right had taken hold of any cultural religious expression which influenced the state's decisions indirectly, not only in the UAE but also in other Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia. Now, they have limited power in the UAE, and malid is accepted because it is practised by the ruling family recently in the country, especially in their special occasions like weddings, you see it everywhere. So, no wonder you see it with a strong advertising emphasis on this practice in an event like the Expo, to reflect tolerance as a political dynamic*" (Informant #25, 2021).



Figure 7.20: *Malid public performance in Dubai Mall.* **Source**: AlBayan, 2012.



Figure 7.21: *Malid majlis as a domestic kind of performance.* **Source**: AlIttihad, 2020.

Notably, there is correlation between introducing the notion of tolerance in 2019 and reviving *malid* during the declaration of matrimony at the wedding of a member of the ruling family in the same year, at which a domestic performance was held, as seen in Figure 7.22 (below). The latter aims to stress the impact of tolerance as a political tool by the ruling family; to softly encourage the revival of this practice socially. It is worth mentioning that wedding ceremonies in the Arabian Gulf countries, including the UAE, consist of two phases, and are segregated by gender. The first phase is the official declaration of matrimony, which involves essential rituals such as the family gathering to exchange vows, offering dowry or gifts, and announcing the marriage publicly. The second phase is complimentary, where the wedding is celebrated in a festive manner, which may include traditional cultural performances such as *ayyala* traditional dance or any other form according to the demographic in attendance. *Malid* is often performed during the first phase, as shown in the photo of the ruling family's wedding (Figure 7.22 below).



Figure 7.22: *Malid performed during the declaration of matrimony of ruling family members.*
Source: Anonymous, 2019.

This depiction triggered conflicting opinions on social media; however, like the idea of a 'trend', they died out. These conflicting opinions emerged again when *malid* was performed at the UAE Pavilion during the one of most significant megaevents of its kind in the world:

> "*I came to Expo with my family, and while we were waiting for our turn to enter the UAE Pavilion, I heard a familiar folklore recitation not far from the entrance, and I followed the noises out of curiosity. Honestly, I recognised what I heard, but was confused until I saw the formation of malid performed by locals, and I was so shocked that I videotaped it! When I asked why malid was being performed, here I came to know it was to celebrate al-mawlid. As far as I know, we are not allowed to perform malid because we were told for years that it was bid'ah. I am aware that many locals practice it secretly at home, including members from our family, well it is not a secret if they post it on social media and they get beggared because of it. But seeing it here at Expo in front of all these people, seeing all this sudden behaviour of acceptance, is shocking to me*" (Informant #41).

This revival implies accepting the coexistence of the variety of cultural, ethnic, social, or religious expressions present in the UAE, including *malid*, which was not accepted in public for years. This emphasis on tolerance was elaborated by one of the participants during their visit to Expo Dubai:

> "*For malid, there was no official announcement to ban it, but due to some religious beliefs malid was not accepted by most of the public. However, a lot of things changed in the last decade, such as the Islamic curriculum in schools that was merged with social studies in a failed attempt to explain tolerance toward others*" (Informant #40).

Islamic studies was a standalone subject taught in public and private schools across the UAE. However, due to the implementation of tolerance and a culture of co-existence, it was merged with Emirati social studies, which aims to explain the impact and relationship of some religious teachings on cultural expressions or socioreligious customs such as the traditional practices of *Sana'* and *malid*. The common aspect in these perceptions is the level of awareness of *malid's* prohibition, socially and publicly. It is notable that the participants who were born between the 1960s and the 1980s were aware of the social restriction. As explained by one of the participants who was born in the early 1980s: "*unfortunately, I have seen recorded performances only on TV, but not a live display. However, all have shown amazing different cultural performances. I would encourage continuing with the same and revealing more*" (Informant #41, 2021). However, the majority of the 1990s generation onward were not aware of such a prohibition as they are exposed to social media platforms where they can see *malid* being performed. This insight was highlighted by one of the young participants, in addition to their perception of the universal adoption of cultural expressions in the UAE:

"*I was not aware that such cultural performances were banned. However, it would be a well-thought decision for these socially banned performances to be showcased in one global arena. Reciprocal respect must be universal. I think the issue is that the younger generation is not educated enough about Emirati performances as they should be, otherwise we would have been aware of its lacking presence*" (Informant #39, 2021).

This variety of perceptions emphasising reciprocal respect among the existing diverse cultures, ethnicities, and religions in the UAE supports many universal understandings not only of culture or heritage, but also religious practices - and the Expo stands as a powerful platform to convey and implement these international understandings.

Haq Al-Lailah *it is 'For This Night' and not Halloween!*

Similar to the disputed perceptions concerning acceptance and exclusion surrounding *malid*, *haq al-lailah*[152] is an annual tradition that falls in the mid-month of *Sha'ban*[153] **شعبان** in the UAE. However, it falls in the middle of the holy month of *Ramadhan* **رمضان** in Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq, considering the latter as culturally affiliated with the Arabian Gulf countries (Al-Raeesi, 2012; Urkevich, 2014). This celebration has two purposes: one is sociocultural, and the other is religious. Even though the purpose behind this celebration is shared, each country has their distinct dialects and lullabies to praise the imminence and holiness of *Ramadhan*, as shown in Figure 7.23 (below) (Al-Raeesi, 2012). The lullabies in Figure 7.23 reflect the similarities in asking for treats, phrases of praise, and prayers exchanged across the region except for the terminologies, the differences in which are apparent for the UAE and Iraq.

[152] In the local dialect, it means 'for this night' or 'the right of this night'.
[153] The eighth month of the Islamic *Hijri* **هجري** calendar.

English Context of Haq Al-Lailah	Haq Al-leilah Dialect for Each Country
United Arab Emirates **Haq Al-Lailah** Treat us, may Allah treat you in return, To Mecca House (Ka'ba), He takes you, Treat us from Allah's wealth, And He will protect your child, Abdullah.	الامارات **حق الليلة** عطونا الله يعطيكم بيت مكة يوديكم عطونا من مال الله سلم لكم عبدالله
Kuwait, parts of Saudi Arabia **Gergei'an** Gergee'an, oh Gergee'an, Between Sha'baan and Ramadhan, Fasting has returned, Every year and time, May Allah protect your child, Oh Allah, protect him for his mother.	الكويت ومناطق من السعودية **قرقيعان** قريقعان و قرقيعان بين قصير و رميضان عادت عليكم صيام كل سنة و كل عام سلم ولدهم يالله خله لأمه يالله
Sultanate of Oman **Garangashouh** Garangashah, Garangashouh, Give us something sweet, Oh people its Garangashouh, Give us penny and a treat.	سلطنة عمان **قرنقشوه** قرنقشه قرنقشوه اعطونه شيء حلواه قرنقشوه يو ناس عطونه بيسه و حلوى
Qatar **Garanga'ouh** Garanga'ouh, Gerga'ouh Treat us, may Allah treat you in return, To Mecca House (Ka'ba), He takes you, Oh Mecca, the centre of the globe, Oh Norah, wearing chains of gold.	قطر **قرنقعوه** قرنقعوه، قرقاعوه عطونا الله يعطيكم بيت مكة يوديكم يا مكة يالمعمورة يا أم السلاسل و الذهب يا نورة
Bahrain **Gerga'oun** Gerga'oun is back people, Oh fasters، Between Sha'baan and Ramadhan, Give us the scale of treats May He protect your child, Azizan, Oh sweet girl, your father's door is wide open, The door of generosity, with no guards.	البحرين **قرقاعون** قرقاعون عادت عليكم أوخ، يالصيام بين قصير و رميضان عطونا حبة و ميزان سلم لكم عزيزان يابنيه، يالحبابة، ابوك مشرع بابه باب الكرم ماصكه و لاحط بوابه
Iraq **Majina** Majina, oh Majina, Fill the bag with sweets and treat us, Oh people of the rooftops, You treat us even when we leave, You treat us and we treat you, To Mecca House (Ka'ba), He takes you, May Allah All Mighty protects you, Every time we come, you treat us, Majina.	العراق **ماجينه** ماجينه، يا ماجينه حلي الكيس و أعطينه يا أهل السطوح تنطونه لو أنروح تنطونه لو ننطيكم لبيت مكة انوديكم ربي العالي يخليكم تنطونه كل ماجينه

Figure 7.23: *Variety of haq al-lailah terms and lullabies from across the Arabian Gulf Region.*

Source: Author, 2024, based on Al-Raeesi, 2012.

In Iraqi traditional folklore, there are different stories concerning the history of the choice of this terminology. One is that the word *Majina* ماجينا consists of *Ma* ما and *Jina* جينا, and in the common Iraqi dialect it means 'if it were not for you, we would not have come' (Masliyah, 2010). The other and most popular story among the Iraqi people is that *Majina* was the name of a Jewish woman who gave to the poor in Baghdad (Masliyah, 2010). Therefore, the children used to go to her house during the nights of *Ramadhan*, as in the community of Baghdad, Muslims, Jews, and Christians lived alongside each other (Hassan & Taha, 2021). As such, the main motivation of this practice is to educate the society (especially the new generation) about the religious and spirituals meanings and values of the holy month. As a result, these historical narratives witnessed community participation in religious and social occasions of all spectrums, including their form of *haq al-lailah*, and they shared these stories together at *Iftar*[154] إفطار tables during the holy month. The origin of this tradition is relatively unknown, nevertheless common knowledge within local communities (especially among the elderly) stresses that it has existed for hundreds of years, according to their ancestors. Based on his research in the Arabian Gulf Region, an Emirati heritage expert estimated that this tradition began approximately in the tenth century.[155]

As for the sociocultural motivation, it is found in the festive atmosphere in which children go from door-to-door within their neighbourhood to sing and collect sweets and treats from the local neighbours, as can be seen in Figures 7.24 and 7.25 (below). Usually, *haq al-lailah* door-to-door activity starts in the evening; therefore, the adults within the family chaperone children of different ages. This tradition has expanded to being performed at cultural events, heritage festivals,

[154] A term that describes the moment when the fast is broken, which is at sunset during *Ramadhan* or any other fasting day.
[155] *Haq al-lailah* is a traditional occasion with religious roots. Retrieved from https://www.albayan.ae/our-homes/2008-08-14-1.665845

or for the government authorities[156] in the middle of *Sha'ban*, as seen in Figure 7.27 (below). Girls often wear traditional jewellery and clothing embroidered with *talli*, shown in Figure 7.26 (below). Boys wear their traditional costume, which is locally known as *kandurah* كندوره, carrying bags either made from woven baskets or canvas, shown in Figure 7.28 (below).





***Figure 7.24*:** *Local woman buying treats in preparation to welcome the children.*
***Figure 7.25*:** *Children go from door-to-door to sing and collect their treats.*
***Figure 7.26*:** *Local girl demonstrates her traditional costume for haq al-lailah.*
Source: Author, 2019.



***Figure 7.27*:** *Local employee working at one of the cultural entities posting photos of a haq al-lailah performance onto social media.* **Source**: Author, 2019.

[156] The Ministry of Culture declared *haq al-lailah* to be a form of popular culture, establishing an annual parade to celebrate this heritage starting from Fujairah to Abu Dhabi (the capital). Retrieved from https://www.mcy.gov.ae/en/news/haq-al-laila-convoy-tours-the-uae-to-celebrate-the-popular-tradition/



***Figure 7.28*:** A *group of boys and girls perform a haq al-lailah play in a government organisation. Boys are wearing their kandura and canvas bags to collect and give treats to the employees.*
Source: Author, 2019.

The gradual decline of interest in this tradition is not only due to the extreme ideologies or social perceptions. The vast demographic developments in the UAE have also had a substantial impact on the custom of going from door-to-door to ask for treats. The decline in the door-to-door custom is mainly because local neighbourhoods are no longer populated by families or tribe members, and the fear of strangers getting close to their children has restricted this outdoor activity. At present, *haq al-lailah* is rarely performed as an outdoor event, except for in the eastern and northern areas of the UAE. Alternatively, *haq al-lailah* is celebrated indoors either in households, or through cultural activities in schools or festivals, as can be seen in Figure 7.29 (below).



Figure 7.29: *Haq al-lailah celebration at a cultural festival in Dubai. Part of the festive notion of haq al-lailah is reflecting on the generosity and hospitality of Ramadhan where the family gather and exchange greetings and traditional scents.* **Source**: Author, 2019.

It seems that the social aspect of practicing *haq al-lailah* is not the only concern. The controversy comes from the religious aspect of this tradition, mainly provoked by the ideology of *Sahwa*. In other words, it is an innovative custom and not a traditional practice that is correlated with *Sunnah*, and should therefore be considered *bid'ah* - in this case, *haq al-leila*. The behaviour of many Emiratis towards *haq al-lailah* falls between two perceptions. The first perception is acknowledging *haq al-lailah* as a sociocultural tradition that falls under heritage; therefore, it is not considered an innovative religious practice.[157] The second perception is mainly between supporters and opposers of this tradition, considering the *bid'ah* understanding of the tradition

[157] Grand *Mufti* of Dubai explains the conduct of *haq al-lailah* as tradition and not an act of worship, and therefore it is not *bid'ah*. Retrieved from https://www.emaratalyoum.com/local-section/2008-08-15-1.176574

regardless of their cultural, social, or religious backgrounds. One unusual perception correlated with the concept of universality is connecting of the *haq al-lailah* custom with Halloween's 'trick or treat' act only – and not the belief behind its celebration. An Emirati participant stressed this unusual perception: "*so, people celebrate and promote Halloween, which is not even close to our beliefs or traditions, but haq al-lailah is bid'ah and should be excluded for good? That is just hypocrisy*" (Informant #19, 2021). This statement is associated with the idea of trends (examined in *malid* section above) that involve shifting between the conflicting perceptions of reviving or excluding sociocultural practices such as *haq al-lailah* until, ultimately, they die out. In the context of the idea of trend, *haq al-lailah* was celebrated publicly during Expo as part of the cultural activation of local traditional practices. Because of the massive scale of Expo, *haq al-lailah* was presented as a festive parade of fifty camels moving around the Expo's pavilions, as shown in Figure 7.30 (below). This activation was led by the Hamdan Centre for Heritage and, according to its representative, the organisers wandered around the Expo distributing sweets to children to celebrate and acknowledge this tradition as part of Emirati intangible heritage, as shown in Figure 7.31 (below).



Figure 7.30: *Haq al-lailah parade of camels touring around Expo.* **Source**: HHC, 2021.



Figure 7.31: *Haq al-lailah participants distributing treats to Expo visitors.* **Source**: HHC, 2021.

The parade consisted of over 80 participants including local Emirati men, women, and children, with ages ranging from five to over 70 years old. As described by the Hamdan Centre for Heritage representative, the celebration of *haq al-lailah* on this international platform was a rare opportunity to reflect an 'authentic' Emirati tradition to the world. International visitors in particular were interested in asking about the meaning and value of this tradition.[158] The representative added that a few particularities of this tradition could be understood as similar to Halloween to international visitors, symbolising a 'shared' culture that aimed to support the universality of cultural expressions at an international event (Informant #30, 2021).

[158] As part of Hamdan Centre for Heritage cultural mandate and its agreement with Expo, the centre is the leading government body to reflect Emirati local practices at Expo Dubai, including traditional social practices and crafts. Retrieved from http://hhc.gov.ae/en/caravan-of-50-camels-parade-at-expo-2020-dubai-on-the-occasion-of-haq-al-laila/

Na'ashat *an Aesthetic Manifestation of Triumph*

Na'ashat represents another traditional cultural expression that became socially unacceptable in Emirati society during the 1980s because of misuses of traditional means and values of religious beliefs.[159] In the local dialect, *na'ashat* refers to 'the leaning palm fronds' (Danielson, 2021). However, the precise value of *na'ashat* is manifested as a tribal practice for women when they sensed danger; they revealed their hair as a means to seek protection and safety from their fellow men within the tribe. Revealing their hair is considered an abrupt use of body language from a traditional adult woman, and is therefore understood as a situational metaphor of potential threat without the need to communicate vocally, including calling for help. This understanding of it as signal of potential threat is because Bedouin women cover their hair in the presence of strangers, and revealing their hair symbolises the occurrence of an abnormal incident threatening her safety or private stability. This traditional cultural expression was recognised and responded to immediately by fellow tribesmen.

Gradually, this tradition became relatively endangered, because there was no need for this form of help due to the disruption of the tribal structure and modern solutions related to security. As such, to safeguard the meaning and value of this tradition, it is included as an aesthetic manifestation of triumph in *ayyala* traditional dance (detailed in Chapter 5), to complete the element's inscription in 2003 Convention's Representative List.[160] The tradition is shown in Figure 7.32 (below). It is worth noting that *ayyala* is an intangible heritage element that is shared between the UAE and Oman; however, *na'ashat* is a distinctive cultural expression in the UAE. Hence, its revival is only visible during national day celebrations and is performed in a careful manner to

[159] Inventory of traditional performance arts in Abu Dhabi. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/20344.pdf
[160] *Na'ashat* included discreetly in the inscription written report and evident in photos. Retrieved from https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/al-al-ayyala-a-traditional-performing-art-of-the-sultanate-of-oman-and-the-united-arab-emirates-01012

keep consistent with the inscription criteria. However, this symbolic manifestation was explicitly revived at Expo's grand opening, as shown in Figures 7.33, 7.34, and 7.35 (below).



Figure 7.32: *Na'ashat revived during the jubilee celebration of the UAE at the Qasr Al-Hosn Festival.*
Source: DCT, 2021.



Figure 7.33: *Na'ashat performed alongside ayyala traditional dance and ruwah drum performance at the Expo's main entrance, welcoming the visitors in the traditional manner.*
Source: Author, 2021.

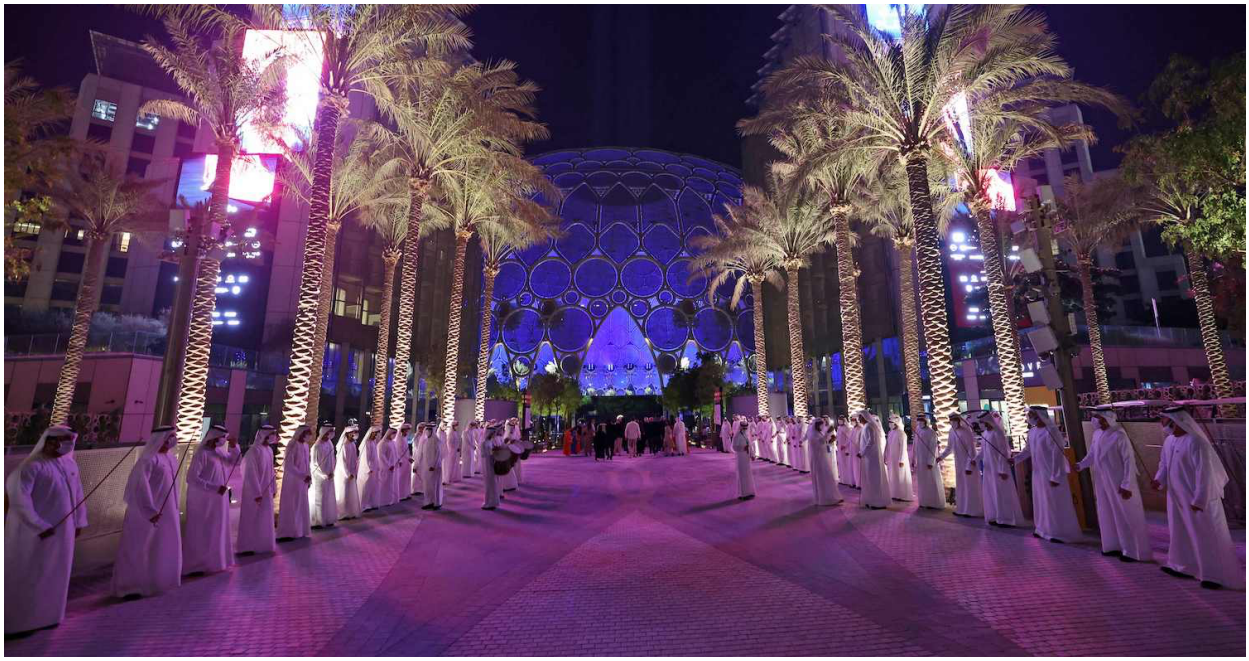


Figure 7.34: *Additional ayyala members performing along with ruwah drumming during the grand opening.*
Source: Author, 2021.

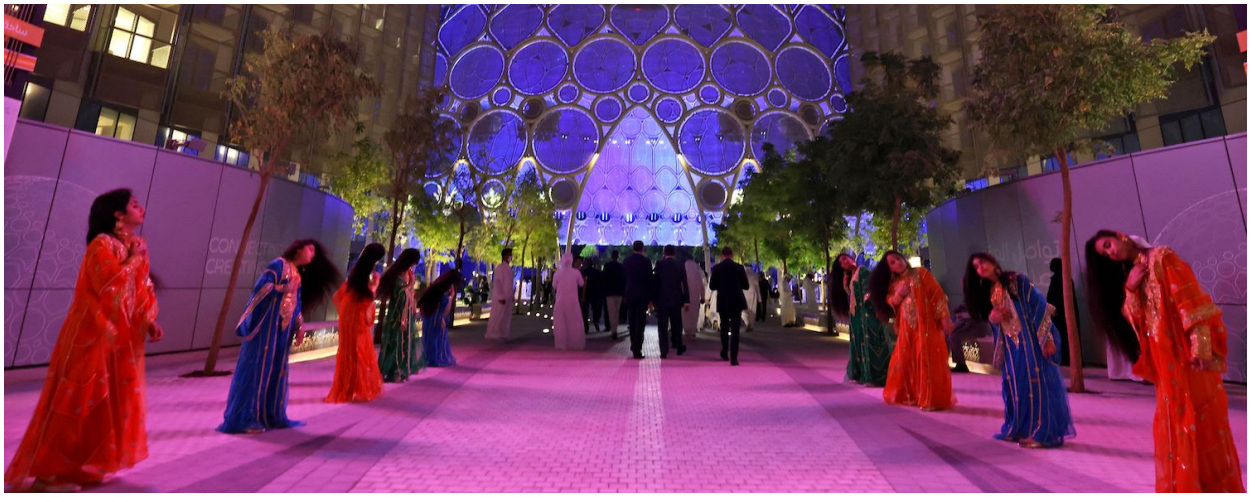


Figure 7.35: *Followed by ayyala dancing, another group of na'ashat performing at the rear location during the grand opening.*
Source: Author, 2021.

While performing *ayyala*, *na'ashat* comprises a group of girls between eight and twelve years old who wear the traditional garment, which is known as *mukhawwarah* in the local dialect only when it is embroidered with *talli* (discussed in Chapter 5). These girls stand in front of two

rows of men, swaying their hair in harmony from side to side to the rhythm of the drums (almost like a leaning palm tree), as they require endurance to stand throughout the performance. As explained by an Emirati heritage expert, the practice of *na'ashat* was strictly performed in the presence of their family or close members of their tribe, pointing out that in the past, they did not perform this folklore in front of foreigners (AlKetbi & AlHammadi, 2018). Therefore, the socioreligious aspect essentially addresses the joint performance between adult men and women who are not siblings nor family members for two reasons. One is that the social and tribal customs in the region do not accept unnecessary contact between genders unless it is related to education, health care, travel, or trade, and it must be chaperoned. The second reason is associated with religious practices in which adult women are expected to cover their hair in the presence of foreigners; therefore, an act of joint performance is not tolerated. Consequently, in respect to these social or religious values, any public traditional performance consisting of young female participation must be consented to by their legal guardians. It is important to note that these values are respected during both official and non-official activations of intangible heritage, despite the influences of the international cultural commitments, because these values are considered an integral part of local intangible heritage: as such, an important matter of respect for Emiratis.

The social unacceptability of this tradition increased in the early 2000s because of specific incidents of misconduct that were not consistent with the local understandings of either *Urf* or *Sana*', as such were not considerate of social customs or religious values. An example of one incident was women performing *na'ashat* during a private social occasion that was meant to be attended only by men. To the majority of mainly conservative Emiratis, these cultural misconducts are believed to have entered Emirati society during the exchange of different cultures due to the economic openness accompanied with trade and the development of tourism formats throughout

the years (AlKetbi & AlHammadi, 2018). The expert added that another reason for such misconducts while performing *na'ashat* was that most folklore groups that participate in traditional performances are not licenced by the Ministry of Community, and as such these groups were not officially registered as public associations (detailed in Chapter 5). Therefore, many Emiratis demanded that the relevant authorities should reveal the unlicenced groups and monitor their activities and compatibility with the traditional aspects of Emirati intangible heritage, taking into consideration the local socioreligious values.

Furthermore, a local participant stressed the education and awareness aspects for traditional performances as much as traditional crafts:

> "*There is an urgency to educate in crafts, but there is also an urgency to raise awareness of traditional folklore. For example, there is a disconnect right now for the traditional performances, and I do not see young men performing the dances. They hire groups, and it is not practised collectively like how it is used to be. So, there is an urgency to preserve, because a lot is missed out. You are going to lose that part of the society, and if we lose it within the community, you lose track of its origins, and you will end up with constructed merged identity*" (Informant #25, 2020).

In this light, another Emirati heritage expert working at the Ministry of Culture argued that at the federal level, the Ministry considers itself a culturally authorised body linked to the minutiae of Emirati society, including what the locals see as heritage. The expert added that the Ministry of Culture is concerned with capturing the essence of intangible heritage and observing the reasons for its survival, revival, or exclusion, in order to monitor and build data surrounding these reasons (AlKetbi & AlHammadi, 2018). This constructed identity argument is highlighted by another participant, primarily related to how it becomes challenging to differentiate heritage incentives

because of a lack of preservation: "*what defines you is your heritage and if you lose it, you cannot define your incentives, and if you cannot define or differentiate your incentives, you cannot compete with other cultures*" (Informant #35, 2020). The expert stressed the role of the Ministry of Community, in addition to the Ministry of Culture, in supporting licenced folklore groups because of the Emiratis' deep belief that the development of their national identity is a collective issue of cultural, social, religious, and historical commitment. Accordingly, the expert highlighted an additional role of the Ministry: it should implement capacity-building programmes to systematically preserve and present local intangible heritage through cultural events by educating and training the new generations, including members of the folklore groups (AlKetbi & AlHammadi, 2018).

Conclusion

There is a thread linking new practices of intangible heritage and the notion of universal culture which acknowledges the process of heritagisation during Expo Dubai. This chapter examined this nexus, driven by an emphasis on the selection of intangible heritage elements or the revival of specific socioreligious practices. The examination showed that a new understanding of local intangible heritage developed in the UAE in relation to the international cultural commitments, including elements inscribed within the Representative Lists of the 2003 Convention, on an international platform. The curation of intangible heritage elements, including the crafts presentation at *Menasa*, was directed by the politics of universality, in which official approaches leaned towards presenting representative pillars of Emirati national identity to the world. To provide a summary of the categorisation of crafts that were selected to be presented at Expo, an ongoing manifestation of the selected crafts was highlighted by a few heritage agents

who had often attended annual cultural festivals or events around the country over the past decade. Their observations included viewing live exhibitions and cultural experiences of social practices associated with falconry, camels, and cultural expressions associated with hospitality such as *majlis* and *gahwa*; traditional dances such as *ayyala*; and crafts such as *sadu, saff al-khous*, as well as *talli,* that are all inscribed in the Representative Lists of the 2003 Convention (Informant #23; Informant #25; Informant #28; Informant #29; Informant #30; Informant #31; Informant #32, 2020). All these intangible heritage elements showcased the geographic and social diversity of the UAE and were incorporated into a range of interactive workshops for the variety of visitors to national cultural events and represented at the Expo.

This specific approach of categorisation while showcasing the crafts' association with the country's environmental zones (desert, oasis, coast, and mountains) during the Expo was important for three reasons. First, the credibility of the inscriptions, because these practices are acknowledged as an authentic form of practice within the Representative List of the 2003 Convention, and therefore must exist continuously in parallel with different public engagement programmes, including the Expo. Second, supporting the rationale behind universal culture at an international event by showcasing the techniques of local crafts that are practised commonly in other nation-states despite their distinct languages, cultures, histories, materials, or narratives behind the meanings and values of their intangible heritage. Third, to reflect on the new heritage notion curated by *Menasa* due to the UAE's cultural industries, which was officially launched during the Expo in 2021. This approach plays a role in reinforcing new heritage in the UAE by commodifying the traditional aspects of local intangible heritage into contemporary products to contribute to the creative economy. Whether specific crafts, traditional performance, or socioreligious practices, these pillars become integral parts of the UAE's authorised heritage

discourse on both the top-down and bottom-up levels. This discourse includes reviving traditional practices that were excluded because of political or religious ideologies. Under the culture of tolerance, these practices are now accepted among Emirati society, partly as a result of their explicit presentation during the World Expo. The following concluding chapter of this thesis focuses on the implications of this research for theory and practice, key findings and contributions to the literature, and recommendations for future research, as well as limitations.

Chapter (8)

Research Conclusions



Ayyala Traditional Performance

Introduction

This research has explored and examined the shifting conducts, practices, perspectives, and presentations of intangible heritage in the UAE. In addition, this thesis investigated the cultural governance of safeguarding and presenting Emirati intangible heritage through different safeguarding methods at both the official and non-official levels. The investigation included discussing tensions and issues related to a modernised nation-state that attempts to negotiate its traditions, such as conceptualising the authentic and commodified (or heritagised) aspects of local intangible heritage as an integral part of building Emirati national identity, specifically its production of local crafts, traditional performances, and the revival of selected socioreligious practices. This chapter is structured into five sections. The first section gives an overview of the thesis's research questions and key findings. The second section presents the knowledge contribution of this thesis in theory and practice. The third section reflects on the implications of the findings in relation to the policies of universal heritage in a non-western cultural context. The fourth section reviews the thesis's limitations and recommendations for future research. Finally, the concluding remarks discuss the effects of modernisation, nationalism and universal heritage dialogues on the context of Emirati cultural heritage, which have reinforced changing the meanings and values of preserving traditional cultural practices towards building a new heritage discourse in the country.

Revisiting the Research Questions and Key Findings

The thesis began with three main research questions to investigate the UAE's complex approaches to documenting, preserving, and presenting its local intangible heritage. The first question examined existing cultural policies in the UAE, specifically the selection processes that

include official approaches for the safeguarding of local intangible heritage. The second question explored the involvement of local communities, particularly the custodians and bearers of heritage, in practicing and safeguarding traditional cultural practices. The third question examined the influence of international commitments in representing elements of national intangible heritage, and how responsive the local community has been towards these universal understandings of heritage. Data was gathered to address these questions based on information collected from interviews, observations, and dossiers consisting of reports, studies, and images, and this data is presented in Chapters 5, 4, and 7 of this thesis.

RQ1 *What are the existing cultural and heritage policies focusing on intangible heritage and the role of cultural industries in the process of safeguarding heritage?*

This research question investigated the UAE's governance of culture and heritage, which encompasses intangible heritage institutionalised frameworks, policies, and processes at the national and local levels of the UAE's government. The investigation, detailed in Chapter 5, included top-down agents: the official bodies responsible for instigating cultural governance and its related instruments; their roles; responsible actors; and the workings of institutionalised local intangible heritage that have shaped the official heritage discourse in the UAE. Top-down approaches often involve the institutionalisation of cultural heritage through policies, laws, and heritage sites. While these measures can provide the necessary framework for safeguarding, they may also lead to the ossification and/or inferiority of traditions, transforming living practices into static representatives of the nation's identity. This can alienate communities whose traditions are being preserved and can create a sense of disconnect between the official narrative and the everyday nationhood of individuals. In summary, the country's federal system consists of a

centralised government represented by the Ministry of Culture that develops, disseminates, and oversees the country's cultural governance (including the national strategic policies for heritage), while allowing each of the seven Emirates to continue practicing its independent authority. At the local level, each Emirate can either implement these policies, or part of them, according to their official understandings of their cultural heritage.

The findings identified and analysed existing national policies for cultural heritage based on the implementation of UNESCO conventions, mainly the 2003 Convention that are related to local intangible heritage and traditional cultural expressions. Through comprehensive research concerning the role and position of intangible heritage within the UAE's national policies, findings have shown that there have been differences among the developed Emirates in implementing these policies, considering their economic and political advantages. For example, the capital (Abu Dhabi) implemented the national cultural policy as what the Emirate defines as cultural, heritage, or creative initiatives undertaken; aimed at the documentation of certain cultural or heritage content, while identifying their safeguarding measures within a strategic framework.[161] In Dubai, however, cultural policy is best understood by looking at its creative economy paradigm, which has encouraged cultural tourism investments through the commodification and recreation of tangible and intangible heritage. As for the Emirate of Sharjah, it is an established cultural and heritage hub that hosts more cultural events, institutions, and programmes than the other Emirates, and the role of cultural policy has occupied the highest priority in the Emirate's cultural heritage development since the unification of the UAE in 1971.

In the context of institutionalising intangible heritage in the UAE, these forms are manifested in shifting the functions, meanings, and values of past cultural practices as the drives,

[161] Abu Dhabi investments in cultural capital. Retrieved from https://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/the-history-of-the-future-abu-dhabi-s-investment-in-cultural-capital-1.238862

interests, and needs of the present change and develop. Another form is concerned with prioritising specific intangible heritage elements at the expense of others because of their universal significance. This process of selection is related to the authorised heritage discourse and, according to Smith (2006), could be interpretated in different forms affecting the uses of traditional cultural practices. Heritage of world significance often works as a resource that facilitates cultural, economic, or political contributions to redefine or/and strengthen a county's national identity. All these understandings of authorised heritage are very similar to the UAE's current official heritage discourse, which shows that authorised heritage is itself a process of heritage-making in the sense of reworking the functions and meanings of local intangible heritage to fit specific cultural universal contexts, thus commercialising it. As such, selected elements of intangible heritage are safeguarded for particular consumption (such as the commodification and heritagisation of intangible heritage), and framed as a consolidation of international and national processes of management. The UAE government, specifically its cultural authorities, realised that modernising the uses of traditional cultural practices could be applied as a safeguarding instrument for future generations of heritage practitioners. As such, the cultural authorities aimed to create capacity-building programmes (such as *Bait Al-Hirafiyyin* and *Turath* heritage centres) to educate, train, and prepare the new generation of artisans to be capable of developing their traditional heritage into forms of heritagisation.

The key findings related to this research question draw conclusions on how the local cultural context contributed in the development of approaches and policies to identify, define, and safeguard selected traditional practices of intangible heritage. This institutionalised framework included a documentation process, inventorying traditional social practices and crafts, building systems of heritage registry, and devising commodification and heritagisation as the main

safeguarding instruments of Emirati intangible heritage. The findings reveal that state-sanctioned intangible heritage, represented by the fifteen in total that are inscribed in the 2003 Convention Lists, receives more attention in terms of implementing safeguarding initiatives at the local and national level due to their status as globally-recognised forms of heritage. Today, these inscribed elements of local heritage are being turned into commodities for tourism, specifically arranged as staged heritage to contribute to the creative economy within the cultural industries. As for the rest of the traditional practices, and despite the impact of official heritage management, their continuity is linked with the remaining social fabric of the tribes that maintained the meanings and values of their heritage collectively among the local communities.

RQ2 *To what extent do local communities manage to preserve and present their intangible heritage?*

The second research question examined the social understandings of safeguarding heritage in the UAE, consisting of bottom-up (or non-state) approaches such as the private sector and public associations. Bottom-up approaches are community-driven and emphasise the active participation of local communities in the safeguarding of their living heritage. These approaches recognise the fluid and evolving nature of traditions and seek to empower communities to manage their heritage in ways that are meaningful to them, allowing for a more nuanced representation of traditional practices. Setting the contextual development of the UAE in response to the influences of modernisation (including the social, geographic, economic, industrial and the urban influence on the intangibility of its local heritage) is important because it identified to what extent the international cultural commitments, including the 2003 Convention and the cultural industries, should be implemented or have an added value for the UAE's local communities – mainly through

its local understandings of heritage. Further, this question investigated three issues: how Emiratis are responsive to the influences of modernisation and how it affected their traditional practices of heritage; Emiratis' awareness of the implementations of the national and international cultural commitments; and the nature of their involvement in the policymaking processes for the management and safeguarding of intangible heritage. Chapter 6 detailed the identified local heritage practitioners – such as the traditional artisans and performers – in addition to the public associations or private initiatives that work towards safeguarding traditional aspects of heritage.

As discussed in Chapter 2, safeguarding guidelines within the 2003 Convention encourage the participation of local communities in the processes of safeguarding intangible heritage, particularly what they perceive and practice as heritage at present (Skounti, 2008; Smith & Waterton, 2009; Cominelli & Greffe, 2012). However, the official representative of member-states in this Convention is often the state government, rather than the bearers or practitioners of heritage. On the one hand, this form of exclusion turned local communities in the safeguarding processes from key actors into 'passive' ones by limiting their participation in documentation, inventorying, or staged heritage presentations at national cultural events. On the other hand, Emiratis who maintained a lifestyle in the form of extended families showed how tribal values have played an active role in protecting the visibility of local heritage identity through the spoken dialect, observation, and practice as means of transmission.

In this light, findings have shown that this passive engagement in the context of the UAE refers to a form of exclusion of the heritage practitioners that is mainly associated with their official engagement in safeguarding heritage national heritage. However, those practitioners have their own way of being active actors in the safeguarding processes of heritage. In other words, there are alternative safeguarding approaches undertaken and performed by the Emirati heritage

practitioners in reclaiming their way of creating and/or practicing daily traditional manifestations of local heritage. Despite the dominant (or official) heritage narratives based on economic or political purposes, some heritage practitioners (such as the craftspeople) have a form of ownership over their traditional heritage knowledge and practices that faces the challenges of dominant narratives: thus they are not passive actors in the safeguarding processes. Quite the opposite: Chapter 6 detailed the ownership and active involvement of local communities in the safeguarding processes that are directly associated with tribal values. An example of such individual safeguarding efforts is visible within the heritage practitioners located in the Northern Emirates between the *Shihuh* tribe, who successfully managed to transmit their distinctive heritage practices collectively to their younger generations, such as the traditional performances *ruwah*, *nadba*, and the traditional house construction of *bait al-qufl*. Despite the effects of modernity associated with modernisation, this continuous heritage transmission remained intact within *Shihuh* tribal structure, and preserved their traditional crafts, knowledge, and cultural customs through the maintenance of extended families, and social and linguistic particularities. In this case, tribal connections form a sort of cultural process between its people and this process, the local dialect i.e., the language, observation, and repetition significantly help in the transmission of knowledge and skills in a collective manner between the community members. Such cultural process enables consistency for the youth to safeguard and transfer their heritage identity to future generations in spite of the impacts of modernisation.

Findings also revealed that the economic openness of the UAE has resulted in linking traditional cultural practices with social backwardness, leading to condescending perceptions of occupations related to traditional heritage-making, which are now being overlooked by the young Emiratis. This created a gap in the consistency of safeguarding the traditional practices lifecycle

and the progress of their heritage-making processes in a collective manner. In order to revive these practices, public heritage associations demonstrate these practices in the form of staged heritage during cultural events. Staged heritage is considered an important component in the heritagisation process for tourism consumption within the broader understanding of cultural industries. This form of presentation became popular because heritage practitioners who revive or perform existing traditional practices are often compensated for their participation. Despite the official selection processes that are economically or politically driven, there are traditional practices that do not reflect the status of world recognised heritage, but which are considered important among the young generations of Emiratis. As such, the analysis of this question reveals that the local cultural context is a key challenge to address when implementing the provisions of international commitments, mainly the 2003 Convention that reflects the understandings of universal heritage. In adopting these processes, young heritage practitioners choose to be active actors in how to communicate or present their intangible heritage, inscribed or not, raising doubts with regards to the impact of international policies focusing mainly on universal heritage purposes, which are presented under the effects of the cultural industries.

There are evident polarising factors present in the form of favouring the inscribed intangible elements against the practices that are not yet inscribed in the Representative Lists. While it is true that there is general acknowledgement of the importance and value of these inscribed elements, heritage practitioners appear to have adapted to modern processes of safeguarding that are presented as the effects of the cultural industries, such as commodification and heritagisation. As shown in the non-official capacity-building implementations of safeguarding intangible heritage, such as *Al-Ghadeer* and *Irthi*, heritage practitioners have accepted (or at least acquiesced to) various commodification processes without compromising the

basic authentic structures of their heritage practices which make their national identity uniquely Emirati. As such, heritage practitioners appear to have weathered this heritagisation storm, arguably because they found a balance between its policy purpose, the creative economy it supports, among other cultural industries' needs. Even though the impact of heritagisation tends to favour the economic benefits of intangible heritage by turning it into a commodity, heritage practitioners realised that heritagisation, as a heritage-making process, cannot be achieved without their traditional means of practice. This understanding of safeguarding heritage reveals that local communities are considered 'the experts' when it comes to the details of preserving and presenting their practices, as such not needing to implement state-sanctioned policies of safeguarding heritage.

RQ3 *How can an international cultural commitment develop or enhance the national heritage identity of nation-states?*

The last research question focused on the representation of Emirati intangible heritage at an international megaevent, Expo 2020, held in Dubai. The impact of the international recognition of intangible heritage was visible during this megaevent, in which the meanings and values of each presented traditional element shifted to meet the demands of World Expo. One aspect of this research is that the present value of intangible heritage is state-sanctioned precisely to meet the wider international economic consumption of its practices. As such, the heritagisation of Emirati intangible heritage was the main approach used to transform traditional elements into commodified cultural products or performances. Findings relating to this research question reveal that the nature of intangible heritage presentation was threefold: demonstrating the traditional aspects of intangible heritage that are recognised as part of the national identity; exhibiting the contemporary

forms of these traditional aspects; and finally, the revival of specific socioreligious practices that were banned in practice in the past. During the six-month duration of the Expo, the interpretation of local intangible heritage met the meanings and values of universal heritage which refer to existing 'shared' intangible heritage with the other cultures of the nation-states participating in the Expo.

Analysis revealed that each presentation is carried by different actors and for different purposes. The interview participants included officials working at the Dubai Expo office and visitors who purposely came to Expo 2020 for its cultural and heritage functions, specifically those visiting activities and pavilions that were organised by the UAE. For example, the traditional presentation of local heritage was managed by public associations, while the heritagised version of intangible heritage in the form of commodified crafted products were curated and sanctioned by the officials at Expo office. The findings showed that the heritage centres presented in Chapters 5 and 6 were approached by the Expo office, and that each centre was responsible for the commodity of selective intangible heritage. At the official heritage platform of Expo, *Menasa*, the curation idea of presenting these elements was to exhibit different traditional practices that reflect the diverse geographic roots of the crafts, through an artistic or design presentation of these elements – while excluding the presence of artisans. Even though the inspiration of contemporary crafts production was initially instigated by the artisans, live demonstrations of crafts remained challenging to exhibit because according to the officials, mere demonstrations do not represent a proper narrative of local heritage at a megaevent. While the main decision to host heritage practices lay in the hands of officials at the Expo office, a visit from a member of the ruling family changed the dynamics of intangible heritage presentation from solely showcasing the products to dedicating spaces for the local bearers and practitioners of heritage for the duration of Expo.

The analysis has showed the importance of involving intangible heritage in an international event as one of the main components of the country's identity. Hosting this megaevent facilitated a broader use of the local intangible heritage concerning the consumption of its traditional and creative products linked with tourism. One important finding in relation to this process was the transformation of traditional practices to a contemporary heritage discourse to fit the wider economic and political dynamics of the cultural industries at the national and international levels. The construction and reconstruction of local intangible heritage is an appropriate way to describe the processes of building Emirati national identity through integrating representations of heritage. Taking *sadu* craft as an example, the weaving techniques were presented in many different forms during the Expo: traditional, commodified, heritagised, and universal. The traditional presentation was carried out by the local artisans; the commodified was merchandised as designer products at *Menasa* platform; the heritagised utilised the threads in the wayfinding signage at the Expo site; and the universal approach included exhibiting other cultures traditionally practicing 'shared' weaving techniques and looms with *sadu*. Therefore, this new understanding of heritage is shaped through a complex process that intersects with naturalising the universal values of heritage associated and the heritagisation of distinctive traditional practices.

World Expositions are influential global platforms that often shift the presentation dynamics of cultural expressions from being neglected or banned to accepted or revived, in order to meet the wider universal provisions of a megaevent, such as a culture of tolerance. Hence, the sudden revival of some socioreligious practices, such as *malid* or *na'ashat*, that used to be banned created a debate within the local community of Emiratis, because of its sudden public recognition on an inter platform i.e., Expo 2020. In this light, informants who witnessed this revival problematised this sudden public display of banned socioreligious practices due to their historical

and political complexity in the region, hence the ban on public practice. Consequently, findings in Chapter 7 revealed that Emiratis who visited Expo 2020 were torn between what they have observed as a dominant heritage narrative, and the sudden public engagement of some banned socioreligious practices. These changes in decisions about what should be presented at a megaevent appeared to be impromptu at the managerial level of the Expo, however they aimed to promote a culture of tolerance as a form of coexistence among different cultures in the country to the world. The revival of some socioreligious practices played a role in supporting the safeguarding measures of UNESCO's inclusion criteria in both its intangible heritage Representative Lists and the diversity of cultural expressions. This exercise in reviving certain practices showed that the authorised direction of the UAE's heritage is consistent with international cultural commitments, and thus commercialised during an international event to emphasise this connection.

Findings related to this final research question reveal that during the host period of Expo in Dubai, it was clear that the government managed to project the implementations of the international cultural policies by showcasing how Emirati social practices and traditional crafts share similar manifestations, meanings, and values with those of other cultures. However, there are degrees to which these shared values have reformed and shifted the interpretation and presentation of local intangible heritage. Several presentations of Emirati intangible heritage during the Expo revealed that the authentic aspects of its traditional cultural practices remain distinctive and strong, such as the Arabian hospitality, *majlis* and *gahwa*-making, *talli* embroidery, *saff al-khous* braiding, *haq al-lailah* cultural celebration, *ayyala* traditional dance, among other traditional social or crafts practices. While other international commitments, such as economic and foreign affairs, have developed a form of cultural transition to move the heritage of country in commercialised and global directions, until the last fifty years this transition had been considered

debatable. As a result, the redefining of the UAE's heritage identity through the cultural industries was necessary to introduce a form of 'new heritage' by shifting the traditional preservation and production of traditional heritage into a commodity throughout the duration of Expo. This shift aimed to relativise the uses and presentations of intangible heritage in order to meet the dominant universal scope of authorised heritage and shared culture for humanity.

Contribution to Knowledge: From Theory to Recognition

The main purpose of this thesis is to assess the overall shifting conduct, perspectives, and presentations of intangible heritage in the UAE, in addition to addressing the challenges that lead to changes in the management and safeguarding of intangible heritage across different scales in the country. In general, the presented outcomes of this research outlined some conceptual, policy, and practical contributions (six in total) to the existing literature on intangible heritage. The first and second contributions are conceptual ones that contribute to specific contextual understandings of intangible heritage as a concept beyond the UNESCO's international definitions. The third and fourth contributions are related to cultural policy: the importance of a contextual definition of what local heritage is when developing institutional frameworks and its impacts on the community-based safeguarding measures in the context of a non-Western nation-state. The fifth and sixth contributions are practical applications of heritage management and safeguarding considering how community-based heritage is traditionally understood and practiced, and how governments are sanctioning heritage narratives. The applied fieldwork process and the techniques used in collecting information and data for this research can assist other researchers in conducting similar studies in other Arabian contexts, particularly those located in the Arabian Peninsula.

Conceptual Contribution: Inclusions of Intangible Heritage

This research first contributes to knowledge about intangible heritage as a concept from its world recognition to the implementation of a universal heritage definition at the national level, in relation to community-based understandings of heritage. The first conceptual contribution draws on the ground of 'how' (or even if) world-recognised heritage, especially through the 2003 Convention, is used to foster a reconciliation between the external declarations of cultural cohesion and internal perceptions of identity, between top-down and bottom-up approaches, and between indigenous and non-indigenous communities in modern nation-states. The short answer to the question: can world heritage play a role in building shared culture and reconciliation? is 'no'. The more hopeful answer is 'maybe', but not yet. The 'not yet,' however, requires a reconsideration of what we mean by heritage, identity, modernity, and acts of reconciliation. What we (be they policy-makers, experts, or practitioners) may now understand about the intrinsic yet shifting nature of intangible heritage is often not something that heritage practices alone can or should do. However, if we want to engage heritage as a part of processes of selection that facilitates the development of a respectful recognition of diversity, distinctiveness, and achievement of social justice, then the critical heritage studies projects of rethinking and retheorising heritage still has work to do.

The concept of distinctiveness in heritage practices and traditions intersects in multifaceted ways with the shared values or meanings among different cultural expressions. Distinctiveness refers to the unique characteristics that set a particular cultural practice apart from others, contributing to the identity and uniqueness of a community or nation (Smith & Waterton, 2009). At the same time, many heritage practices and traditions, despite their distinctiveness, share underlying values or meanings with other cultures. For instance, the concept of greetings or welcoming is a shared value of hospitality in many cultures, albeit expressed through distinct

practices, and as such contributes significantly to the national identity of nation-states. The greeting method of 'pressing of noses' (detailed in Chapter 2) illustrates similar customs occurring in two different contexts: in the Arabian Gulf including the UAE, and among the Māori in New Zealand; both distinctive in place, meaning, language, and motive. This interplay creates a dynamic relationship between uniqueness and universality in intangible heritage, shaping how traditions are perceived and valued, and thus practiced and safeguarded among its practitioners.

Historically, a focus on the impact of modernity was, and remains, in part a response to the often-implicit notion of heritage as a force for nation-building and national identity. Nevertheless, there has been a recent increase in interest in theorising the modern role of heritage in everyday nationhood, identity and value formation, meaning-making, and views of authorised heritage as an expert-led practice rather than a community-based practice. This is a response to an obvious development of heritage-making trends but is also a reaction to the degree of attention that has been paid to shared values and/or distinctiveness in heritage. The international definition (or recognition) of intangible heritage in the form of traditional knowledge, practices, and skills is relatively recent compared to tangible forms of heritage such as ancient sites, heritage places, buildings and monuments, as detailed in Chapter 2 (Ahmad, 2006; Harrison, 2010a; Alivizatou, 2011; Arantes 2012; Harrison, 2013b). Once these tangible forms of heritage are recognised as examples of World Heritage, their use and function extend beyond their original cultural space, and shifts to meet the demands of broader economic or political purposes (Harrison, 2010a; Silverman & Hallett, 2015). The universal heritage concepts and implemented projects, such as the 2003 Convention, hang on the idea that developing a sense of shared (or more precisely similar) heritage would generate a positive feeling of the togetherness of distinctive cultures across the

continents; i.e., an experience of belonging to a place or identity, combined with cohesion for the development of better humanity.

In the case of intangible heritage, an element may not be inscribed in the lists of the 2003 Convention, yet it continues to be practiced by local communities regardless. Here, continuity is key to authenticity and authority in nation-building, in which continuity is often viewed as a 'luxury' for local communities, especially the indigenous practitioners who face the everyday challenges of modernity preventing them from continuously inhabiting their traditional lands, thus preventing them from owning, representing, or safeguarding their heritage narratives. Hence, the international recognition of intangible heritage is not 'inclusive' of all nation-states. In this light, UNESCO, as an international cultural organisation, has contributed to bridging local understandings of intangible heritage between its member-states in the final ratification of the 2003 Convention. However, it did not specifically explain what or how the local communities should be engaged with or involved in the safeguarding processes. Thus, the processes of heritage selection, mainly who decides what is heritage of a nation, is left to the 'official' representative of member-states, which often operate from a top-down level. As a concept, intangible heritage and its specific expressions of heritage, are all subject to what Tunbridge (1984) refers to as the question of 'whose heritage,' followed by Smith's provocative theorisation of authorised heritage: "*there is, really, no such thing as heritage*" (2006, p. 11). These conceptual directions perhaps imply that heritage is a carefully designed structure or convention that organises or manages our present collective behaviours, considerations, and values towards building a specific national identity through notions, paradigms, or practices of the past that are referred to as 'new heritage'. The idea that heritage seeks to provide a cohesive or national expression of identity is well embedded in the discourse of authorised heritage, and heritage debates or practices more generally. Winter (2015)

refers to this as ‘nationalistic practice’ (p. 334): the world recognition of heritage through politics thus led to the development of a pre-determined use of heritage.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 illustrate a clear pre-determined (or constructed) use of heritage, specifically ‘Emirati’ intangible heritage, in building national identity within a diverse and modernised nation-state in an attempt to mediate its traditions. The term ‘Emirati’ is a consequence of a sociopolitical alliance of seven Emirates seeking to obtain a unified national identity. Therefore, the term ‘Emirati’ is a constructed terminology to identify and describe any component related to the national identity of the UAE, including citizens, processes, products, practices, in which based on the cultural, social, economic, political, industrial, and religious dynamics of the country. An important aspect of this identity lies in the fact that Emiratis only make up 12% of the UAE population (detailed in Chapter 3) with the indigenous people as a key group of this percentage. However, while they are a minority, they retain dominant political control, and the word ‘Emirati’ is used as a ‘brand’ in many contexts such as Emirati crafts, Emirati products, or Emirati heritage, to strengthen the cohesiveness of the country’s national identity (see Chapters 5 and 6). In other words, less than 12% of the country’s population are authorised to define or make decisions on what, and how, forms of heritage contribute to the UAE’s national identity, in which little is explored or discussed about this official heritage discourse. These issues are important in the present, and heritage tends to stop at a specific time rather than asking questions of what is next when it involves the understandings of ‘whose heritage’ and its associated selection processes.

Such a pre-determinant projection of heritage identity, associated with the authorised heritage paradigm, only can take us so far without a reckoning with the theoretical investment that critics have. This critical awakening may contribute a sense of heritage responsibility, and often expresses distinctive practices of ‘whose heritage,’ rather than only the endangered practices that

often demand safeguarding at all times, with or without the reconciliation of its bearers, owners, or practitioners. Reconciliation is not simply a dialogic truth-telling, it is also about negotiating the emotional intentions behind tradition and modernity, the different expressions of heritage, and voicing the cultural distinctiveness of its communities. The subsequent critical engagement with the modern role of heritage in nationalism was in part an attempt to revive a critical understanding of the nature and practices of heritage, and to remind us of an ostensibly simple but often forgotten observation that any proclamation of heritage carries with it an either voiced or unvoiced message that: this is my heritage; it is not yours. For 'universal' declarations to be made concerning heritage, there must either be social, cultural, and/or political needs or interests to self-identity or distinctiveness against the presumption of otherness; of something that a heritage practitioner or their collectives are not. If we all shared the same sense of identity, place, or belonging, proclamations of heritage would become unnecessary, hence void.

According to the findings in Chapters 5 and 6, the definition and implementation of the 2003 Convention in an Arabian cultural context was problematic. The definition appeared to be constraining of the manifestations of intangible heritage in the sense that the official description suggests that not every traditional practice 'identified' by local heritage practitioners can be recognised as intangible heritage. Chapter 2 presented how this limitation restricted the recognition of traditional practices that revolved around specific social and linguistic particularities among different local communities that often do not 'share' universal cultural values (Kurin, 2007; Alivizatou, 2008; Pendlebury, 2013; Waterton & Watson, 2015). These distinctive particularities, including the spoken language in relation to communicating and transmitting a traditional practice, are key components in formulating the locality of intangible heritage functions, meanings, and values. Hence, this contribution reflects how the social and linguistic attributes of local actors are

instrumental in this cultural process within a specific cultural context, and these attributes were not critically engaged in similar research contexts before. In this light, the findings in Chapter 6 reveal that local heritage practitioners in the UAE, specifically in rural or mountain-dwelling communities, continue to practice heritage on a daily basis that does not necessarily follow the definition criteria of the 2003 Convention, detailed in Chapter 2, due to their tribal affiliation which has significantly contributed to the continuity of their traditions (Silverman & Ruggles 2009; Harrison, 2010b; Jakubowski, 2014; Kuutma, 2015).

Although intangible heritage has long existed among different local communities in nation-states, many of its traditional forms are not well articulated in the written texts of the 2003 Convention. Hence, it seems unlikely that international definitions of intangible heritage could best define the local communities' mindsets and experiences of heritage, because their role in the safeguarding processes is either downplayed or has remained strong despite the international commitments. This clearly demonstrates that the 2003 Convention definitions or safeguarding guidelines and measures do not necessarily acknowledge or protect the significant efforts of local actors during the official inclusion processes of intangible heritage. To the international community, governments often speak on behalf of their local actors, thus the inscribed intangible heritage belongs to the nation-states. Hence, the UAE's cultural governance encouraged a process of selection corelated with the meanings and values of universal heritage. The government is more actively involved in the presentation of intangible heritage, rather than preservation through funding and promoting particular practices at the national and international levels. These official processes turn the active involvement of local communities in the safeguarding processes into a passive role that is limited to acquiring their knowledge and skills for normative purposes.

The second conceptual contribution relates to the expansion of authorised heritage research that developed in western nation-states to study the processes of selection and present uses of intangible heritage in a non-western, Arabian cultural context. Heritage is a political resource, and one of its significant uses or assertions of its importance occurs when a sense of self or community is under threat. Ideas of the value of universal world heritage associated with the World Heritage Lists have now been extensively critiqued as a push for universal heritage projects that search for similarity in histories and values of certain nations as 'shared heritage'. In this context, the idea of world heritage as an ambassador or agent of world peace seems realistic, oriented, and desirable. Ideas of belonging, pride, unity, and identity are expressed through heritage as much by groups within the political scale as they are by groups such as the bearers of heritage due to the of significance of these values in building national identity of modernised nations. These dominant perceptions create episodes and issues of tensions and hierarchies related to heritage, past and present values, tradition and modernity, the official and non-official definitions, universal and distinctive cultural identities, representative and safeguarding, urban nation-state and community-based practices, the constructed and the authentic. These tensions are clearly transmitted from the western understanding of world heritage to non-western perceptions of intangible heritage, and the latter initially falls directly within the human dimension: in other words, manifestations of intangible heritage are embedded within its practitioners.

The investigation went beyond the westernised context of authorised heritage through three intersected bodies and actors on the international, national, and local levels. Literature concerning authorised heritage discourse critically reflects that some difficulties in the implementation of these normative safeguarding measures are expected to be found by the different national and local actors in nation-states (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004; Ashworth, Graham & Tunbridge, 2007; Smith

& Akagawa, 2009). Findings in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 reveal that while there is an authorised process in the UAE, at the same time and across different levels there are other mechanisms at play, including discrete local practices by other community-based stakeholders in this safeguarding process. However, the dominance of authorised heritage approaches in safeguarding intangible heritage often obscures distinctive local knowledge and the 'traditional' ways of safeguarding and passing on heritage. As broadly reflected in Chapter 2, this type of management discourse is widely exercised in western cultural contexts, assuming a dominant need to categorise and characterise heritage into a universal system that unites 'all' cultural heritage, and as such favours practices that have aspects of common heritage with other cultures (Smith & Waterton, 2009; Alivizatou, 2011).

Another problem lies in the national processes of implementing the 2003 Convention, specifically in relation to the involvement of the local communities. Official bodies in nation-states, often represented in the government, assume that by including the participation of local communities as key actors in the safeguarding process, these local actors will then understand and follow this normative preservation criteria. In the process of implementing the provisions of international heritage management and protection, safeguarding instruments and processes vary between one country to another, including in the UAE. Here, the local safeguarding context is perceived as a challenge in relation to the communities' distinctive sociocultural particularities, conditions, and limitations, and is thus problematised. In this light, the increasing numbers of inclusions in the Representative Lists of the 2003 Convention, specifically the multinational ones, highlights an urgent need to safeguard manifestations of intangible heritage to protect these 'shared' aspects of traditional cultural expressions around the world. The UAE's social context reflects the complex structure of the population between communities living in the desert, oasis, mountains, islands, and cities. Among these communities are the bearers and practitioners of

heritage, and each carries distinctive social and linguistic particularities, including tribal traditions, dialects, and values in which their heritage is manifested differently.

Although findings in Chapter 5 showed the UAE government's efforts in safeguarding endangered intangible practices, the increasing numbers of inscriptions in the Representative List of the 2003 Convention of selected elements excluded others that are considered important to the local communities. These international inscriptions created a recognition of these elements through developing national safeguarding measures that have been officially introduced to the UAE only within the past decade. As such, there is a form of state-sanctioned focus on the commodification and heritagisation of local intangible heritage as forms of safeguarding practices to enhance their contribution to the UAE's creative economy. These tensions have emerged in the cultural context of many countries including the UAE, where ideas of national heritage in a context of rapid socio-cultural transformation tend to be politicised (AlSuwaidi, 2018). The governments' inclusive involvement in the visibility of intangible heritage has resulted in the poor engagement of the local communities in the safeguarding processes. Instead, heritagised safeguarding measures associated with commodified heritage production are more welcomed by the local communities because of their capacity to create economic benefits and to maintain continuity among the growing risks of and modernisation, as presented in Chapter 6.

This research contributes to an understanding of the expansion of authorised heritage discourse, initially developed in Western nation-states, to non-Western countries, specifically the conceptual development of intangible heritage in the context of the Arabian Gulf Region. It further contributes to understanding the interplay between tradition and modernity that is crucial for rethinking and retheorising policies and practices related to building national identity of nation-states through intangible heritage. The research sheds light on the complex dynamics of identity

formation, power relations, external and internal processes of selection, and sociopolitical projections shaping the relationship between the formal and informal recognitions of the traditional past and its modernised manifestations. As such, this research challenges existing authorised heritage discourse and enhances understanding of the responses of nation-states to the 2003 Convention, offering a deeper insight into how contemporary values and politics shape what is preserved as national identity and how it is presented among nations. By critically examining these processes, scholars and practitioners in the field can contribute to a balanced approach that respects and accepts diverse perspectives while assessing 'whose heritage' is being prioritised to the safeguarding and appreciation of intangible heritage as a shared and evolving notion for humanity.

Policy Contribution: Shifting Understandings of Intangible Heritage

The drastic economic openness caused by modernisation changed the dynamics of heritage function and production, and thus shifted the understandings of heritage value on international, national, and local levels. These shifting understandings of heritage highlighted policymaking's contribution in relation to the management and safeguarding of intangible heritage that are further detailed in this section. Thus, this research has demonstrated clear cultural policy for institutionalising intangible heritage in the UAE, and specified some insights for similar cultural governance in the region. The first policy contribution relates to different nation-states, including the UAE government, who have come to a realisation that their intangible heritage practices are endangered, and at risk of complete loss due to the dramatic decline of the indigenous bearers of heritage, without transferring their knowledge and skills systematically to the new generations. Conducting this investigation in an Arabian cultural context such as the UAE, this late realisation led the government to introduce cultural policies associated with the universal understandings and

safeguarding of heritage through international cultural commitments. Detailed in Chapter 5, findings showed that at the national level, the UAE government adopted and used the institutionalised safeguarding measures promoted by UNESCO, in line with the provisions of the 2003 Convention.

This research suggests that the adopted international regulations and policies for the safeguarding of local intangible heritage needs to be culturally and socially specific, and driven by the local communities' ideas of what they practice and value as heritage. Part of the findings revealed that the local communities have understood the inevitable consequences of the country's economic openness, and have thus carefully adopted new methods of safeguarding and adding multifaceted value to their traditional practices or heritage production. These tensions have emerged in the cultural context of many countries including the UAE, where ideas of national heritage in a context of rapid socio-cultural transformation tend to be politicised (AlSuwaidi, 2018). As such, it is expected that the UAE, from the government to local actors, will continue to maintain a heritagised status between preserving traditional practices of heritage and presenting heritage as a commodity, as examined in Chapters 6 and 7. Thus, the UAE has been developing intangible heritage policymaking that is intersected with the cultural industries and, as such, is shifting its traditional practices for safeguarding to meet the values of its international commitments.

Despite the type of social engagement in safeguarding intangible heritage in the UAE, this research has also presented policies related to the cultural industries through contemporising heritage into a form of 'new heritage'. The second policy contribution revolves around heritage-making (or production) policy that plays an interrelated creative and economic role within the tourism domain of the cultural industries. Production here refers to the creation, commodification,

interpretation, and presentation of heritage within the context of the cultural industries. Heritage production within the tourism domain of the cultural industries encompasses a range of activities and processes, mainly heritagisation and staged heritage. These activities or processes often require revitalisation of traditional knowledge and practices that involves collaboration between heritage experts, artists, craftspeople, designers, community stakeholders, and other government bodies or creative practitioners to present heritage in engaging and accessible ways. These efforts recognise the value of heritage in terms of historical, aesthetic, economic, and social importance. This information adds to the existing body of staged heritage that contributes to stimulating tourism, generating economic benefits, and involving the local community as a need to balance heritage production with sustainable use and public access through the cultural industries. Both heritagisation and staged heritage are part of the wider safeguarding measures of intangible heritage that connect people with the past while providing a present sense of cultural cohesion and belonging.

Although official approaches of intangible capacity-building prevail because of cultural policy pressures, there is a parallel mechanism whereby local actors undertake other actions concerning the safeguarding of intangible heritage, as revealed in Chapters 5 and 6. This means that the decision about which elements of intangible heritage continue in practice, and how best to safeguarded them, rests with the local communities. In the process, heritage practitioners accepted applying contemporary solutions to their traditional cultural practices or crafts which no longer have present meanings of value. The commodification of intangible heritage is one of these methods that adds economic value to the function of their traditional heritage production. Even with the declining numbers of heritage practitioners in the country, this indicates that they had been safeguarding their traditional cultural practices long before the recent national recognition of

the loss of Emirati heritage, which among other things has led to devising different safeguarding programmes by governments, corelated with international commitments. This heritagisation process includes inserting aspects of authenticity of a traditional practice or craft as a form of local flavouring to the element, and a contemporary twist adds aesthetic value to the final craft products that are associated with the arts, design, and tourism domains of the cultural industries.

This observation of the research's policy contribution is significant for the existing literature as it captures the development of authorised heritage discourse in a non-Western context, which was at first a necessity to safeguard heritage. However, this discourse now seems to construct and formulate the pillars of a 'new heritage' identity in nation-states such as the UAE – including societal norms, values, and traditional practices. Further, cultural governance in the UAE can also offer insights concerning related practices across the Arabian Gulf countries,[162] specifically through the practice of multinational inclusions of shared elements of intangible heritage between these countries. These include *majlis*, the making of Arabic coffee, among other traditional social practices and performances. To work on multinational inclusions, as described by the 2003 Convention, clearly constitutes the universal idea of safeguarding heritage for humanity which also supports the cultural industries' monitoring criteria of the creative economy. These inclusion approaches indeed allowed more elements recognised by heritage practitioners to be inscribed in the Representative Lists. However, the implication of these Lists is in itself a form of heritagisation, as discussed in Chapter 2, because it requires selection based on the present meanings and values of heritage, including their economic incentives (Bendix, 2008; Hottin & Grenet, 2012; Sousa, 2018; Khanom et al., 2019). Eventually, these regional collaborative

[162] The Gulf Investments Foundations in Creative Industries. Retrieved from https://futureuae.com/en-US/Mainpage/Item/2942/creative-economy-the-gulf-investments-foundations-in-creative-industries

practices will evaluate the role of the cultural industries in the region towards improving safeguarding methods of the Arabian Gulf countries' intangible heritage, as well as being expected to improve the countries' cultural status at the international level.

Practical Contribution: Redefining Uses of Intangible Heritage

Practical contributions aim to assess the transferability of the research's outcomes and the extent of its implementation elsewhere that share similar contextual understandings. The first practical contribution reflects how international commitments have turned elements of local intangible heritage into state-sanctioned tools for economic and political purposes in the context of cultural industries. These reflections tap into the impacts of authorised heritage (as a form of management), the cultural industries (as a form of modern safeguarding), and the use of heritagisation (as a heritage-making process) on the intangible heritage practices in the specific cultural context of a nation-state. Even though nuances of intangible heritage emerge from the past, it is contemporary because it is a 'living heritage', and thus fragile (Skounti, 2008; Akagawa, 2015; Skounti, 2017). This contemporary factor reflects on the 'presentness' notion of heritage, suggested by Harvey (2001), that forces international and national processes of heritage selection based on present values that change over time. The process of modernisation, including the implementations of cultural industries, often brings about significant tensions between contemporary advancements and traditional practices. These tensions manifest in various forms, including cultural, social, and political conflicts.

One of the primary challenges is maintaining a balance between embracing modern values and preserving the cultural heritage that defines a nation's identity. Modernisation can lead to the erosion of traditional practices and values, which are often seen as impediments to progress.

However, traditions hold significant cultural and emotional value for communities and play a crucial role in maintaining social cohesion and identity. The clash between the desire for progress and the need to safeguard traditions can create a complex and often contentious cultural landscape. While considered fragile, intangible heritage is also resilient in the face of changes often caused by modernisation, thus this resilience factor is important in maintaining a cultural identity that is relevant for mainstream social groups within nation-states. In this light, the findings in Chapters 5 and 6 showed how social groups in the UAE (and many of its traditional forms of heritage) have managed, utilised, repelled, adopted, or marginalised commercial inclinations brought by modernisation, such as the cultural industries. This demonstrates a direct connection between the need to safeguard intangible heritage and the international economic openness related to the oil boom, which allowed the migration of foreigners (residents or labour) into the UAE. This openness reflects the level of integration and engagement a country has with the transnational community including trade and labour mobility; thus allowing the fusion of indigenous and migrant cultural expressions and/or social traditions that has created contemporary Emirati society. As such, Emiratis have come to appreciate their many traditions and have become attached to their heritage, and they wish to see a resemblance or memories of their past.

The second practical contribution consists of the integrated approach between different official and non-official bodies for safeguarding intangible heritage in the UAE through capacity-building programmes that could be broadly adopted or investigated in other cultural contexts. Even though most of capacity-building programmes are funded and managed by the government, analysis in Chapter 6 showed that heritage practitioners and craftspeople of the Northern Emirates have continued to practise and preserve what they perceive as heritage. Based on the impact of their continued tribal ties, Northern local communities have managed to practice and preserve their

intangible heritage in a collective manner, which resulted in consistent transmission of knowledge and skills between generations. Being aware of the effects of modernisation, these communities expanded their safeguarding practices to establishing public heritage associations to protect their distinctive practices, and not necessarily share their knowledge with the government. This information adds to the existing body of literature by highlighting and understanding the existing restrictions when engaging with local communities and their heritage practices. One major restriction is the accessibility of artisans who live in closed tribal or rural areas, in the sense that what should or should not be shared with foreigners is not a simple decision. As such, obtaining knowledge about particular traditions that are considered private remains challenging.

Because the natural course of any traditional cultural practice is change, findings in Chapter 6 revealed that local communities, including those who come from a tribal background, adapted to this change and tend to view intangible heritage as an active cultural process that carefully integrates new preservation mechanisms, often accompanied by economic incentives. In reality, both cultural contexts exist in the local fabric of Emirati society in two forms: the culture of preserving heritage the way locals practice it, and the culture of heritagisation that the government ought to implement through the cultural industries. However, only some elements of the past survive and are passed on through time, but not necessarily in their original form, as local traditions are prone to change due to naturalising the culture of heritagisation as a modern safeguarding method. Findings showed that this adaptation involved using heritage as a commodity through the cultural industries as a modern safeguarding method, even as this disrupted its traditional cultural process among local communities. While it is true that the economic and industrial effects of modernisation diluted the practicality and visibility of intangible heritage, many Emiratis valued and respected the continuity of traditional practices regardless. Referring to the analysis in

Chapters 5 and 6, the disruption of traditional cultural processes began with the emergence of cultural policies in the 2010s that pointed to the positioning of the inscribed intangible heritage as a process of selection not only on the national level, but also world recognition. Among the results obtained in Chapter 7 is the different practical uses of the inscribed elements that demonstrated a heritagised process, such as the weaving techniques of *sadu* between the traditional use, the functional use, and the universal use. In addition, there has been a sudden revival of specific traditional cultural practices to support related intangible heritage inscriptions, such as *na'ashat* social performance within *ayyala* traditional dance. These examples show that the change in intangible heritage function and position has shifted the dynamics of the traditional element in terms of its role, practice, and presentation in which the remains of the past are seen as a path to wider political recognition, corelated with economic growth in the cultural industries.

From a production point of view, findings in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 revealed that adopting heritage-making processes such as commodification and heritagisation is promising for the new generations of artists, designers, and craftspeople in the country. The development and implementations of heritage-making processes are evident in this research through official capacity-building initiatives such as *Bait Al-Hirafyyin* in Chapter 5, non-official initiatives such as *Irthi* in Chapter 6, and in *Menasa* Crafts and Design Platform in Chapter 7. Taking *Menasa* as an example, this platform mapped the evolution of several intangible heritage elements from traditional to contemporary in production and presentation, and these were curated and exhibited during the Expo. The contribution of the findings showed that the modern safeguarding methods of heritage and their economic benefits have become closely linked to the creative economy. In addition, the contribution reflects that the safeguarding approach here is not community-based, but rather an 'expert-based' approach. This is because, although among their communities the heritage

practitioners play a vital role in deciding what is to be safeguarded, the approaches used in the official safeguarding processes were proposed and dominated by the cultural experts working at Expo. Expert-based initiatives derive their top-down authority from what Smith (2006) theorises as the discourse of authorised heritage, which has further been described as internationalising heritage management by Pendlebury (2013); a form of value-based heritage management practice originating from western contexts, and which is mainly performed by heritage experts.

Limitations and Recommendations

The main objective of any research is to problematise real-life situations and investigate the facts in order to offer a better understanding of the context, find solutions for the identified problems, note the limitations of the research, and make recommendations for future research. The first section explains a number of limitations encountered while conducting this research, which included the availability of information, awareness, accessibility, viability, and the restrictive environment during the COVID-19 pandemic. The second and third sections details recommendations for improvements and propositions for future research. These recommendations include systematic methods of intangible heritage capacity-building approaches, including a proposed competency framework in the field.

Research Limitations

The first limitation was the availability of relevant academic information such as definitions, classifications, and representations of what is considered as Emirati heritage, as per the national and local context of the country. Even though some literature is available (Al-Mansoori, 2004; Al Naboodah, 2011; AlTunaiji, 2018; Al-Ogayyel & Oskay, 2021), the majority

focuses on the economic and sociopolitical developments or changes in the country with poor indications of local heritage. Studies focusing specifically on intangible heritage in the UAE or similar practices in the region (or conducted by Emiratis) are few compared to the availability of other heritage studies conducted in European or East Asian contexts, as explained in the Introduction Chapter. In the UAE, the field of intangible heritage remains a developing field of research, and this was a significant challenge in the process of conducting this thesis, as such there was an expected lack of previous research studies, human resources, and expertise on the subject.

The second limitation was the level of awareness of the participants towards the existence of their intangible heritage, definitions of cultural heritage and the cultural industries, and the importance of conducting research in these fields. For example, the list of potential participants consisted of more than 120 contacts and varied between the top-down and bottom-up levels, locals, and expats living in the UAE, including bearers of heritage. However, the response rate was no more than 70 participants, and 58 interviews were considered applicable to use as data. Because interviews are time consuming, some participants preferred to answer the questions by email, particularly during the analysis of Chapter 7. Compared to other fields in the UAE, the field of intangible heritage remains a low priority area for the country – specifically in terms of research – despite its critical position as national heritage. Furthermore, the majority of interviews were conducted in the Arabic language, not only because the interviewees were Emiratis, but also to reflect the role of the Arabic language in the local context and the specificity of the Emirati dialect that formulates their intangible heritage. Hence, the processes of transcribing and translating data from Arabic to English was time-consuming, especially in finding proper and particular linguistics of heritage in the translation process.

Apart from the qualitative method of collecting data, the third limitation was the accessibility of information, whether at the official or non-official levels. For instance, there are no accessible channels to the national archives or the local inventories for researchers, because they are considered confidential and owned by the government, hence out of public reach. Another example is the difficulty of reaching the bearers of heritage, because once they have signed official agreements with the government, their knowledge and skills often belong to a cultural authority. Some heritage practitioners are welcoming; however, the majority are conservative and originate from a Bedouin background, and craftswomen in particular will not simply allow their personal life – the main driver of their traditional practices – to be exposed, documented, or exhibited publicly. In order to investigate the life cycle of *sadu* or *talli*, for example, careful approaching measures were considered, which at times relied on personal connections to assure the protection of their privacy. These measures tend to be time-consuming – from obtaining consent, to travelling for hours to reach the locations of those artisans, to the time spent in observing each traditional practice, which could take days.

One major limitation of cultural governance is the fast-changing nature of the cultural heritage field in terms of policy, practice, and competition. The constant development of cultural governance is closely bound with political, economic, cultural, and social shifting dynamics in a local context. In addition, one of the major challenges of developing a linked open data platform, especially relating to Emirati cultural heritage, is the high level of competition and the fast-changing nature of the creative industry in the UAE, not to mention existing ownership issues between the unified Emirates. Therefore, the development of a centralised linked open data roadmap is quite bound up with accepting governance of shared culture strategies, understanding

actual user experience, and the potential future value through data investment for the country as a whole.

The final limitation related to the constraints of the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected the responsiveness of the participants. This unexpected dilemma created a fear of face-to-face meetings with people due to the risk of disease. The lockdown in the UAE began in March 2020, and understanding about remote working or communication was not available. These circumstances disrupted the course of the fieldwork and reduced the numbers of interviews and focus groups that could be undertaken. However, one main focus group was successfully conducted between the top-down and bottom-up levels, and other interviews had to be moved from late 2020 to the first quarter of 2021 because many participants did not want to meet online.

Recommendations for Improvement

There is always room for improvement in the field of research. Regarding the challenges facing efforts to safeguard intangible from the managerial and social perspectives, findings in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 referred to many recommendations concerning: 1) the insufficient approaches in heritage management between the federal and local governments and the local communities; 2) the current scattered capacity-building programmes due to the absence of a unified cultural governance; 3) the lack of attention to cultural practices that are not part of the national heritage or not contributing economically to the cultural industries; 4) extreme dependency on modern safeguarding methods that diluted the authentic aspects of traditional practices; and finally 5) the lack of research that involves critical examination, documentation, or analysis of the present conditions and/or situations affecting intangible heritage in the local context.

In this light, there is a need for all the different Emirates in the UAE to adopt an effective unified system to feed back the intangible heritage information to the national inventory from each Emirate, and not to completely rely on Abu Dhabi as the capital. In addition, a call for consistent social participation is necessary for documenting, reviewing, and updating the national inventory, because the meanings and values associated with traditional cultural practices are held by heritage practitioners and prone to change according to their present conditions. This suggested knowledge-feed is recommended because each Emirate holds both shared and distinctive traditional cultural practices associated with different geographic, social, and economic factors, and therefore uses different safeguarding instruments.

Institutional frameworks alone are not sufficient to turn intangible heritage into an active sector that is led by consultants, managers, or policymakers. The top-down level should seek the consent of the bearers of heritage to share their knowledge or to participate as experts in the documentation process without projecting a process of selection and to ensure the viability of the knowledge-feed system. Hence, there is a need to develop an evaluation method based on a specific competency-based framework, aimed at improving the quality of life of its bearers, enhancing the traditional product, and securing the participation of the local communities in planning and decision-making. In this research, competencies are defined as the essential components towards exercising the mastery of a specific art. While investigating the literature and during fieldwork, it seemed likely that the competency-based framework in the field of intangible heritage exists at managerial[163] levels that include laws, regulations, and policies.

[163] 'Competence Framework for Cultural Heritage Management'. Retrieved from https://bangkok.unesco.org/content/competence-framework-cultural-heritage-management-user-guide-essential-skills-and-knowledge

Employing a competency framework method is often considered an effective way to integrate learning with real-life situations such as the traditional practices of intangible heritage. Taking traditional crafts as an example, it aims to explain competencies for the crafts investigated in this research for the purpose of introducing, supporting, and encouraging the continued traditional practice of crafts in UAE. A modular approach to a competency framework for the crafts has been chosen for its flexibility in interpretation and the opportunities it presents for staged learning, as shown in Figure 8.1 (below). A modular approach refers to breaking down a complex concept or structure (such as intangible heritage) into smaller and manageable components or elements (such as the crafts). Each of the identified components performs a specific function or practice and has the capacity to be developed, maintained, and used independently.

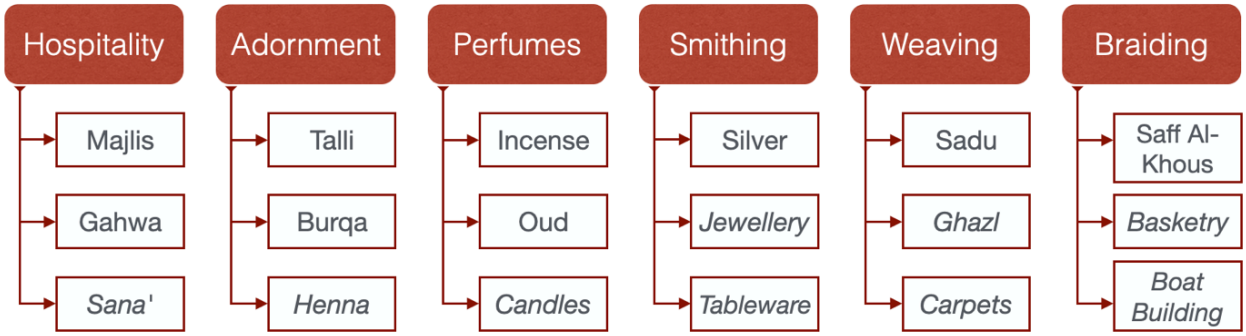


Figure 8.1: *Sample of a modular approach to the crafts competency framework.*
Source: Author, 2024.

In order to study the cultural context of a craft, it is essential to initially observe and build an understanding of the craft; non-participatory observations may also help to become familiar with the historical background of adopting a craft and the local community involved. Key to the development of this modular approach, in Figure 8.1 (above), is to research and establish the competencies required by the practitioners: for instance, identifying techniques within the crafts such as weaving, spinning, braiding, embroidery, claying, and silversmithing, among others. In

order to keep the competency framework as concise and accessible as possible, some crafts have been grouped together in families. This approach allows for further social practices or crafts to be added to the national inventory at a later stage. Some suggestions of associated traditional practices are included in italics, and could be further expanded. For instance, additional job families could be added, such as traditional musical performances (*ayyala, taghroodah, razfah*) or traditional sports (falconry, camel racing, hunting).

Further, competencies often fall into three key categories: meaning, making, and modernisation, the first two of which are validated by heritage practitioners. Competencies which fall into the 'meaning' category focus on situating traditional practices in their historical, geographical, and social context, and identifying and understanding the materials, resources, tools, and outcomes for their practice. Competencies in the 'making' category focus on the in-depth knowledge and skills required for the practice, and the know-how needed to achieve mastery. By recognising the challenges facing the traditional practices, further competencies are identified under the 'modernisation' category, which focuses on applying traditional theory and skills to contemporary creative interpretation and practice. This aims to increase the relevance of heritage in a modern context, such as the commodification and heritagisation of traditional cultural practices in the context of the cultural industries. For the purpose of this suggestion, this framework can be used as a benchmark for determining the condition of the artisan's skills and the process of the craft, including the number of competent practitioners in a city, region, or country.

Recommendations for Future Research

Given the research focus on the different management and safeguarding approaches of intangible heritage at the local, national, and international levels, future research could examine

the effect of better communication between the different stakeholders involved in such safeguarding processes. Stakeholders may include international and national players (including the governments, local communities), and the relationship between the private actors in the fields of intangible heritage and the cultural industries, such as craftspeople, performers, individual artists, designers, public associations, and/or NGOs. This relationship can be examined through a different sample population, especially in a complex sociopolitical structure such as the UAE; thus, research could be conducted focusing on similar local sociopolitical contexts in any part of the world.

Similarly, the identified safeguarding approaches in the analysis process, whether in traditional or modern forms, can be different depending on the needs and interests of other local communities. Reflecting on some research studies concerned with investigating distinctive narratives of local people (such as the examples of the *Jemaa el Fna* Square in Morocco, and the traditional greetings methods of the Arabs and the Māori, detailed in Chapter 2), it would be interesting to expand on the corelation between the social and linguistic particularities of similar traditions, and how tribal customs and local dialects play a pivotal role in the process. Although some research has addressed how tribal communities in general manage and safeguard their intangible heritage, very little has been done on identifying this nexus of the spoken heritage language and the continuity of traditional practices (per the tribes, not nation-states), as the tribal communities remain closed, connected, traditional, and significantly large in population within the region. Hence, it would be worthwhile to study how this linkage works across distinctive populations as they practice, transmit, safeguard, and remain resilient against the social, economic, and political changes around them, to support studies in wider tribal contexts.

As described in Chapter 2, what is or can be defined, characterised, and safeguarded as intangible heritage is dependent on the social groups, communities, or individuals involved (Hall,

1999; Logan, 2007; Graham & Howard, 2008; Harrison 2010b; Dicks, 2015). Another focus of investigation beyond the context of this thesis can be correlated with prioritising the safeguarding of selective intangible heritage practices (for a variety of reasons) at the expense of others that hold significant historical, social, or religious meanings. Findings in Chapter 7 revealed the prioritisation of the presentation of selective elements of heritage that are either associated with economic consumptions or universal value, and often suggest a cultural or political consolidation of a nation-state identity: however, selection purposes remain subjective.

In the context of cultural industries, future research can argue the links between poor community engagement and the extent of commodifying and/or commercialising heritage. Such a focus could also include critically examining and questioning the excessive consumption of intangible heritage that involves the act of adopting or borrowing heritagisation as a modern safeguarding practice from other contexts that are not necessarily fitting in local communities or groups. Adopting modern safeguarding measures without a proper contextual understanding – which involves studying the local cultural, historical, religious, or social significance of practices – raises concerns about the potential appropriation, exploitation, or marginalisation of what are perceived as endangered heritage practices. These measures could disregard the complex traditional heritage-making process behind these practices, and reduce them to mere commercial locally-flavoured aesthetics, experiences, or trends; resulting in the loss of authenticity and the dilution of their present meaning and value.

Today, safeguarding processes often occur for different purposes and by different people. Hence, another study could be conducted in one or more ethnic groups in other countries to support a comparative analysis and to determine whether there are any significant similarities or differences in terms of how and why they are involved in the safeguarding process. While it is true

that intangible heritage reflects a specific cultural identity in different tribal communities, findings in Chapters 5 and 6 showed that the transmission of the traditional techniques of heritage practices (such as weaving or braiding) is possible among different ethnic groups with different cultural backgrounds that are not part of the tribe. In a fast-developing country such as the UAE, the decline of the indigenous population who communicate heritage in a specific dialect and repeatedly practice a tradition as a means of living (such as *sadu*), threatened the continuity of these practices. For instance, on the national level (mainly official bodies), the safeguarding purpose is often prioritised to support the normative technicalities of international inclusions of intangible heritage by documenting and inventorying the knowledge, skills, and techniques of these endangered practices. On the local level, bearers of heritage often perceive heritage as a sense of belonging: as such, they seek to protect what remains of these practices (through traditional or modern means of safeguarding) that are no longer practiced by their people nor properly transmitted to the youth.

As for the documentation process, it is recommended that preliminary and secondary research should be conducted to develop an understanding of the people in their local contexts and the requirements for an effective means of documentation. An academic approach in this process throughout the different geographic areas at different periods of time in other countries aims to expand the efficiency of the documentation processes. This includes in-depth surveying in terms of the changes and challenges facing the life cycle of any intangible heritage practice or element, to build a better scientific approach to ensure the validity of information goes beyond dossiers, books, images, audio and video records, and electronic texts. This applies to the oral transfer of information, know-how, and skills, survey reports by various organisations, and reports by various government bodies.

Finally, from an authorised heritage perspective, the literature often reflects western understandings of heritage, which often favours historic aesthetics and materiality of built heritage rather than the knowledge and skills associated with the intangibility of heritage. It would thus be interesting to conduct studies in relation to the intersections between the different UNESCO conventions of safeguarding tangible and intangible heritage, in the sense that the final product of built heritage often depends on intangible forms of heritage. In other words, the concept of intangible heritage can contribute to the conservation processes of tangible heritage at the international, national, and local levels. At the same time, tangible heritage may also help to safeguard aspects and practices of intangible heritage, including minimising the economic impacts of commodification and heritagisation processes, if implemented efficiently. This academic approach could expand the scholarly understandings of the changing exercises of authorised heritage discourse, as the latter is itself a cultural process that is prone to change depending on different contexts around the world. Future studies could investigate how tangible heritage (built or objects) can be secured and enriched by providing greater recognition and protection to the intangible heritage associated with it, such as traditional methods of construction of *bait al-qufl*, as explored in Chapter 6.

Another example could be a study of the implementation of UNESCO conventions in relation to the protection of the diversity of cultural expressions through the cultural industries. Over time, policymakers have changed the focus of cultural governance from safeguarding tangible to intangible forms of heritage, to support the cultural industries' access and contribution to the country's creative economy. However, challenges have emerged in the coordination of the various official bodies involved in the safeguarding process and their engagement with this local context. In relation to the official safeguarding approaches of intangible heritage, researchers could

investigate the attempts to bridge what is considered to be traditional with what is perceived as contemporary, and to blend this new heritage-making process into the broader narratives of world economic development and the internationalisation of heritage. This academic approach would examine to what extent these international implementations are taking place in similar local contexts and how developmental contributions are being made to the communities, specifically the bearers of heritage. This would help to expand our knowledge of the dynamics of these intersected implementations and the various methods of adoption (such as through staged heritage in tourism) and the use of intangible heritage capacity-building programmes in different nation-states.

Concluding Remarks

As the final chapters in this thesis have shown, intangible heritage has indeed been recognised and valued among different international communities and nation-states across the world. The focus of this thesis was to investigate the national safeguarding attempts in relation to local intangible heritage, while shifting its role and function to a process of selection. These contemporary-based safeguarding practices only consider the traditional knowledge and skills as inspirational in the process, while excluding the presence of local actors in the final stages of the safeguarding process. This thesis argued the interplay between modernisation and tradition in nation-states as a complex and multifaceted process, specifically the official narratives through exercising authorised heritage that should seek to understand how the bearers of heritage have been practicing and safeguarding their heritage in relation to their local context. Understanding local heritage-making processes can happen through consistent observation while repeating the customs, practices, and expressions through collective manners. Such a consistent process can be integrated into the wider safeguarding capacity-building initiatives and programmes of the cultural

industries, including the documentation, inventorying, expansion, and modernisation of the intangible heritage of the UAE.

While the safeguarding and promotion of intangible heritage are integral to nation-building, it is essential to consider the potential challenges and limitations of these efforts. One significant issue is the effects of nationalism as a consequence of modernity. In the process of creating a unified national identity, there is a tendency to standardise and homogenise cultural practices, which can lead to the marginalisation of other traditional expressions and, thus the loss of cultural diversity and distinctiveness. Within the UAE's local context, this thesis argued that local definitions of intangible heritage should move beyond the understandings of authorised heritage (and associated international heritage discourse) to include the 'excluded' everyday traditional practices that are valued by the different communities in the different Emirates, and can be applied as representations of national identity. The top-down and bottom-up levels in the UAE appear to comprehend the need to approach heritage as a cultural asset effectively. In other words, the government should believe that the pressures of international cultural policies are inevitable; however, they should not impose restrictive criteria and lists for their intangible heritage over local communities. Of these policies, the custodians of heritage would decide what sustains their heritage identity based on the majority of their community. In this light, intangible heritage as a process of selection should be a community-based initiative, particularly led by the custodians and bearers of heritage in relation to capacity-building and safeguarding approaches in the cultural industries.

This discourse of new heritage not only requires contemporary and rapidly changing skills, but it also necessitates adaptable approaches to safeguarding heritage in which collaborative learning and mutual understanding between the traditional disciplines of arts, science, and

technology will be crucial. This is certainly true when building a new heritage in a country such as the UAE, where creativity and growth are especially rapid; and often policy changes too. Rather than learning a fixed body of knowledge or a particular set of skills for traditional cultural practices, several priorities should be taken into consideration to maintain the continuity of intangible heritage in world of shifting dynamics. These priorities can be summed up as adaptability; flexibility; the ability to learn; to communicate effectively; to work in changing safeguarding methods with shifting forms; to understand the meanings and values of intangible heritage: are all likely to be necessary skills for the future. Yet few are now able to accept the inevitable consequences of change in the field of intangible heritage, and are working with those priorities in mind.

Appendices – Form and Questionnaires (Arabic and English)

Appendix 1 – Interview/Focus Group List of Questions

A) Introductory: participant's general information and knowledge

1. According to your cultural interests as an individual / or position in your designated cultural corporation, could you tell me what is your position and the scope of your work?
2. How long have you been working in the cultural heritage sector?
3. Would you describe yourself as a cultural heritage advocate? If so, how do you define that?
4. Could you give me a rough indication of your connections in the cultural heritage sector?
5. How do you describe the visibility of Emirati national identity?
6. In your opinion, how often did you contribute to preserving or presenting the identity you have just described?

أ) مقدمة: المعلومات والمعرفة العامة للمشارك

1. وفقاً لاهتماماتك الثقافية كفرد / أو تبعاً لمنصبك في جهتك الثقافية، هل بإمكانك أن تخبرني ما هو نطاق عملك أو مجال اهتمامك الثقافي؟
2. منذ متى وأنت تعمل في قطاع التراث الثقافي؟
3. هل تصف نفسك مناهض عن التراث الثقافي؟ أن كان كذلك كيف تُعرّف نفسك كمناهض؟
4. هل يمكن أن تعطيني بشكل تقريبي مؤشراً على معارفك في قطاع التراث الثقافي؟
5. كيف تصف حضور الهوية الوطنية الإماراتية؟
6. برأيك، كم مرة ساهمت في الحفاظ على الهوية التي وصفتها للتو أو تقديمها؟

B) Emirati intangible heritage: traditional cultural and social practices

1. What is your personal description of cultural heritage? And are you familiar with the forms of cultural heritage?
2. Based on your work and experience, what are the main characteristics of intangible cultural heritage today in the UAE? Are there any empirical studies you can refer to?
3. Are you aware of any intangible heritage practices, knowledge or skills in the UAE? If yes, can you identify these practices? How often do you witness them?

4. Which manifestation of intangible cultural heritage are you most involved with? Explain the nature of that involvement?
5. Do you sense any urgency for preserving, promoting, or educating Emirati intangible heritage? If yes, what should be preserved, why, and by who?
6. How deep is the involvement of the local community in policy-making, specifically practitioners of heritage?

ب) التراث الإماراتي غير المادي: الممارسات الثقافية والاجتماعية التقليدية

1. ما هو وصفك الشخصي للتراث الثقافي؟ وهل أنت على دراية بأشكال التراث الثقافي؟
2. بناء على عملك وخبرتك، ما هي الخصائص الرئيسية للتراث الثقافي غير المادي اليوم في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة؟ هل هناك أي دراسات تجريبية يمكنك الرجوع إليها؟
3. هل أنت على علم بأي ممارسات، معارف أو مهارات للتراث غير المادي في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة؟ إذا نعم، هل يمكنك تحديد هذه الممارسات؟ ما هي نسبة مشاهدتك لهذه الممارسات؟
4. أي مظهر من مظاهر التراث الثقافي غير المادي تشارك فيه أكثر؟ هل بإمكانك شرح طبيعة تلك المشاركة؟
5. هل تشعر بأن هناك حاجة ملحة للحفاظ أو تعزيز أو تثقيف التراث غير المادي الإماراتي؟ إذا نعم، ما الذي يجب الحفاظ عليه؟ لماذا؟ وكيف؟
6. ما مدى عمق مشاركة المجتمع المحلي، على وجه التحديد ممارسي التراث، في صنع السياسات؟

C) International cultural commitments: governance, knowledge, management,

1. Are you aware of any international cultural commitments implemented in the UAE? If yes, can you name them?
2. In your opinion, is identifying the UAE's version of the cultural industries important? If yes, how important is this identification process, and where does it assist and function exactly?
3. In your opinion, why has this version of the cultural industries that you have mentioned come under the microscope in the UAE?
4. Based on your experience, can you name any national or local cultural policy/strategy/framework?
5. How can these international or national policies that you have just mentioned improve the process of defining or safeguarding the cultural heritage identity of the UAE?
6. Does any national cultural or heritage council/platform/registry/inventory come to mind?

7. In your opinion, how strongly is the UAE's cultural heritage identity involved with or promoted at international levels?

ج) الالتزامات الثقافية الدولية: الحوكمة والمعرفة والإدارة

1. هل أنت على علم بأية التزامات ثقافية دولية يتم تنفيذها في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة؟ إذا نعم، هل يمكنك تسميتها؟
2. برأيك، هل من المهم تحديد نسخة الإمارات العربية المتحدة من الصناعات الثقافية والابداعية؟ إذا نعم، ما مدى أهمية عملية تحديد هذه الصناعات وأين تساعد وتعمل بالضبط؟
3. برأيك، لماذا أصبحت النسخة التي ذكرتها من الصناعات الثقافية والابداعية قد أصبحت تحت المجهر في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة؟
4. استنادا إلى تجربتك، يمكنك تسمية أي سياسة/ إستراتيجية/إطار ثقافي على المستوى الوطني أو المحلي؟
5. كيف يمكن لهذه السياسات الوطنية أو الدولية الذي ذكرتها تحسين عملية تحديد أو حماية هوية التراث الثقافي لدولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة؟
6. هل يتبادر إلى ذهنك أي مجلس/منصة/سجل/جرد ثقافي أو تراثي وطني؟
7. برأيك، ما مدى قوة مشاركة أو ترويج هوية التراث الثقافي لدولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة على المستوى الدولي؟

D) Uses of intangible heritage in the context of the cultural and creative industries

1. Abu Dhabi and Sharjah took the first steps to protect threatened cultural heritage by issuing Emiri Decrees of safeguarding cultural heritage. However, on the national or local levels, are you aware of existing policies or initiatives for safeguarding intangible heritage? If yes, can you identify the factors or reasons that fostered issuing these government regulations?
2. His Highness Sheikh Mohamed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum directed the launch of the 'UAE Cultural Development Fund' and 'Cultural and Creative Industries Contributions Index' in 2018, which will be overseen by the Ministry of Culture and Youth. What are your expectations from these initiatives?
3. In your opinion, what are the main factors that should be addressed and taken seriously in these initiatives?
4. How important is the involvement of the Emirati society in the decision-making process? Who should be involved in this strategy making? And why?
5. Can you identify strengths, weakness, opportunities, and challenges in the process of developing both initiatives?

6. In your opinion, will defining and structuring cultural and creative industries from a local perspective in the UAE safeguard and foster intangible heritage knowledge or skills? If yes, how this can be implemented it in the context of cultural and creative industries?
7. Do you sense any competitiveness between the different Emirates when it comes to safeguarding intangible heritage? Can you specify the measures undertaken to safeguard local intangible heritage? Are there any measures implemented through CCI?

د) استخدامات التراث غير المادي في سياق الصناعات الثقافية والإبداعية

1. اتخذت أبوظبي والشارقة الخطوات الأولى لحماية التراث الثقافي المهدد من خلال إصدار المراسيم الأميرية لحماية التراث الثقافي. ومع ذلك، على المستوى الوطني أو المحلي، هل أنت على دراية بالسياسات أو المبادرات الحالية لحماية التراث غير المادي؟ إذا نعم، هل لديك فكرة عن العوامل والأسباب التي عززت من اتخاذ هذه الخطوة الحكومية؟
2. وجه صاحب السمو الشيخ محمد بن راشد آل مكتوم بإطلاق "صندوق الإمارات للتنمية الثقافية" و"مؤشر مساهمات الصناعات الثقافية والإبداعية" في عام 2018، والذي ستشرف عليه وزارة الثقافة والشباب. ما هي توقعاتك من هذه المبادرات؟
3. برأيك، ما هي العوامل الرئيسية التي ينبغي تناولها وأخذها على محمل الجد في هذه المبادرات؟
4. ما مدى أهمية مشاركة المجتمع الإماراتي في عملية صنع القرار؟ ومن الذين ينبغي مشاركتهم في صنع هذه الاستراتيجية؟ ولماذا؟
5. يمكنك تحديد نقاط القوة، الضعف، الفرص، والتحديات في عملية تطوير كلتا المبادرتين؟
6. برأيك، هل تحديد وهيكلة الصناعات الثقافية والإبداعية من منظور محلي في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة سيساهم في تعزيز وصون معارف ومهارات التراث غير المادي؟ إذا نعم، كيف يمكن تنفيذها في سياق الصناعات الثقافية والإبداعية؟
7. هل تشعر بأي تنافسية بين الإمارات المختلفة عندما يتعلق الأمر بحماية التراث غير المادي؟ هل يمكنك تحديد التدابير المتخذة لحماية التراث غير المادي المحلي؟ هل هناك أي تدابير تنفذ من خلال الصناعات الثقافية والابداعية؟

Appendix 2 – Artisans Questionnaire

1. Can you please name and define the traditional practice (cultural, heritage, or social) you specialise in? When and how did you gain the knowledge and skills?
2. What is the nature of your practice? Is it a permanent livelihood, for example, or just a hobby? Have you had the opportunity to share with others the skills and knowledge of this practice? For example, have you passed on the practice information and skills to someone else and become an expert in it?

3. Do you think you are in any way responsible for preserving the continuity of this practice? If yes, what or who was your motivation/influence?
4. Do you get any kind of benefits for practicing this tradition? Wages, promotion, job opportunity, intellectual property?
5. Do you currently engage in any other job in addition to being a heritage practitioner? Government or private sector?
6. Did someone ever open a door for you career-wise within your specialty line? If so, will you please tell me about it?
7. Can you identify a place where you can learn Emirati traditional practices? If so, in your opinion, how efficient is that place in terms of teaching these practices?
8. Do you think traditional practices can contribute to enhancing the economy of the UAE? If the answer is yes, can you provide examples?
9. Have you participated, in any way, in official missions organised by the government to represent the country's heritage practices? Or have you been involved in any safeguarding initiatives/processes?

استبيان الحرفيين

1. ماهي الممارسة التقليدية، سواء اجتماعية أو ثقافية أو تراثية، التي امتهنتها؟ هل بالإمكان تعريف أو شرح هذه الحرفة من فضلك؟ متى وكيف اكتسبت مهارات ومعارف هذه الحرفة؟
2. ماهي طبيعة ممارستك لهذه الممارسة؟ هل هي دائمة كمصدر رزق مثلاً أم هواية فقط؟ هل سنحت لك الفرصة بأن تشارك الغير مهارات ومعارف هذه الحرفة؟ على سبيل المثال هل نقلت معلومات الممارسة ومهاراتها لشخص آخر وأصبح خبيراً بها؟
3. هل تعتقد بأنك بأي شكل من الأشكال مسؤول عن الحفاظ على استمرارية هذه الممارسة؟ إن كانت إجابتك نعم، ما هو الحافز أو من هو الذي شجعك للاستمرار؟
4. هل تحصل على أي نوع من الفوائد لممارسة هذه الممارسة؟ على سبيل المثال: فرصة عمل؟ راتب؟ ملكية فكرية؟ تجارة؟
5. بالإضافة إلى كونك ممارساً للتراث، هل أنت على رأس عمل آخر؟ في جهة حكومية أو خاصة؟
6. هل عرض عليك عمل في مجال تخصصك التراثي؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم، هل بالإمكان أن تخبرني بالتفاصيل؟
7. هل يمكنك أن تذكر اسم أي مركز أو مؤسسة يمكنك أن تتعلم فيها الممارسات التقليدية الإماراتية على شكل دورات منظمة؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم، في رأيك، ما مدى كفاءة هذا المكان فيما يتعلق بتعليم الحرف؟
8. باعتقادك، هل الممارسات التقليدية بإمكانها أن تساهم في رفع اقتصاد دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم، كيف؟ اذكر أمثلة؟

9. هل شاركت، بأي شكل من الأشكال، في أية مهمة رسمية من قبل حكومة الدولة لتمثيل ممارسات الدولة التراثية؟ أو ساهمت في عمليات/مبادرات صون التراث الثقافي؟

Appendix 3 – Expo 2020 Dubai Questionnaire

1. What is the first element of Emirati heritage that was clearly visible at Expo? For example, traditional performances? Crafts? Can you name what you saw and where at Expo?
2. As an Emirati (or an expat) were you in any way involved with the selection process to choose what heritage element you wanted to be present at Expo? If the answer is yes, what did you choose? And if the answer is no, who do you think decided to present these selections?
3. Are you satisfied with the heritage presentation/elements selections at Expo (if you saw any)?
4. What are your thoughts on how the Emirates heritage identity is reflected at Expo? What do you think of the live display and content of Emirati heritage (if you saw any)?
5. Were you aware of the platform *Menasa* that is dedicated to celebrate Emirati craftsmanship at Expo? If yes, any thoughts about the background and presentation of this platform?
6. At some point, some cultural traditional performances or crafts were socially banned from public display, such as *malid* and *haq al-lailah*. In your own words, were you aware that they were banned from public display?
7. Do you have any thoughts on why some traditional cultural practices were banned from being displayed in public?
8. What are the other practices or performances or crafts do you know of that were also banned and revived recently?
9. In case you witnessed a banned cultural practice performed at a public premises, what are your thoughts on their explicit revival, especially at Expo?

استبيان إكسبو 2020 دبي

1. ما هو أول العنصر من التراث الإماراتي الذي كان واضحا للعيان في إكسبو؟ على سبيل المثال، العروض التقليدية؟ الحرف؟ هل يمكنك تسمية ما رأيت وأين في المعرض؟
2. كإماراتي (أو مقيم) هل شاركت بأي شكل من الأشكال في عملية اختيار أحد عناصر التراث التراثية وتود أن يكون متواجداً في إكسبو؟ إذا كان الجواب نعم، ماذا اخترت؟ وإذا كان الجواب لا، من برأيك قرر تواجد هذه الاختيارات؟
3. هل أنت راض عن الاختيارات التراثية من ناحية العناصر والعروض في إكسبو؟ (في حال شاهدت أي منها)

4. هل كنت على دراية بتواجد مبادرة منصة المخصصة للاحتفال بالحرف الإماراتية في معرض إكسبو؟ إذا نعم، ما رأيك حول خلفية وطريقة عرض هذه المبادرة؟
5. في مرحلة ما، تم اجتماعيا حظر بعض العروض الثقافية التقليدية أو الحرف اليدوية من العرض في الأماكن العامة مثل المالد وحق الليلة، هل كنت تعلم أنه تم منعهم من العرض؟
6. هل لديك أي آراء حول سبب حظر عرض بعض الممارسات الثقافية التقليدية في الأماكن العامة؟
7. ما هي الممارسات أو العروض أو الحرف الأخرى التي تعرفها والتي تم حظرها وإحياؤها مؤخراً؟
8. في حال شاهدت ممارسة ثقافية محظورة يتم عرضها في مكان عام، ما هو رأيك حول إحياءها الصريح خاصة في إكسبو؟

Appendix 4 – Invitation Letter

Dear Participant,

My name is AlAnood AlShaikh, a PhD student at the University of Birmingham. I am requesting your kind participation in my research project titled:

Shifting Scenes of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the United Arab Emirates

Working Towards Building New Heritage in the Arabian Gulf Region

This research aims to 1) identify the political role of safeguarding intangible heritage which includes investigating the impact of emerging cultural heritage policies; 2) investigate the local communities' understandings of these policies and the effects on what they perceive as intangible heritage; and 3) the influence of universal culture on the presentation of traditional cultural practices on a global platform. Understanding the role and processes of intangible heritage management and safeguarding on these three levels will foster questions as follows:

1. What are the existing cultural and heritage policies focusing on intangible heritage and the role of cultural industries in the process of safeguarding heritage?
2. To what extent do local communities manage to preserve and present their intangible heritage, despite the processes of official cultural governance?
3. How can an international cultural commitment develop or enhance the national heritage identity of nation-states?

Your contribution to this research will add significant value towards a better understanding of the preservation and presentation of intangible heritage in the UAE as part of the national identity, and how it contributes to the economic, social, and political incentives at the local, national, and international levels.

Participation is completely voluntary, therefore, if you would like to participate in the study, kindly read the Consent Form attached.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

دعوة للمشاركة في بحث الدكتوراه

عزيزي المشارك / عزيزتي المشاركة،

اسمي العنود الشيخ، طالبة دكتوراه في جامعة برمنغهام البريطانية، وأتقدم بطلب دعمكم ومشارتكم الكريمة في مشروع بحثي بعنوان:

مشاهد التغيير في التراث الثقافي غير المادي في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة

نحو بناء تراث جديد في منطقة الخليج العربي

يهدف هذا البحث إلى 1) تحديد الدور السياسي لصون التراث غير المادي الذي يشمل التحقيق في تأثير سياسات التراث الثقافي الناشئة، 2) التحقيق في فهم المجتمعات المحلية لهذه السياسات وآثارها على ما يعتبرونه تراثاً غير مادي، و 3) تأثير الثقافة العالمية على عرض الممارسات الثقافية التقليدية في منصة عالمية. إن فهم دور وعمليات إدارة التراث غير المادي وصونه على هذه المستويات الثلاثة سيطرح الأسئلة على النحو التالي:

1. ما هي السياسات القائمة التي تبني التراث المحلي غير المادي وتحدد الصناعات الثقافية في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة؟
2. إلى أي مدى تمكنت المجتمعات المحلية من الحفاظ على هويتها التراثية وعرضها على الرغم من عمليات الحوكمة الثقافية الرسمية؟
3. كيف يمكن للالتزامات الثقافية الدولية تطوير أو تعزيز هوية التراث الوطني للدول؟

ستضيف مساهمتك في هذا البحث قيمة كبيرة نحو فهم أفضل للحفاظ على التراث غير المادي وعرضه في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة كجزء من الهوية الوطنية ويساهم في الحوافز الاقتصادية والاجتماعية والسياسية على المستويات المحلية والوطنية والدولية.

المشاركة طوعية تماماً ومبنية على موافقتكم الحرة والمسبقة؛ وإن كنت ترغب في المشاركة في البحث يرجى قراءة نموذج الموافقة المرفق بعناية.

شكراً لك على وقتك،

Appendix 5 - Consent Form

This consent form is necessary to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement in this research and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Please read the following information carefully:

Please chose your convenient method of participation by ticking the box:

☐ Focus Group: 90 minutes.

☐ Interview: 45-60 minutes.

If you participate, you will be asked to:

- Be presented within a specific timeframe and location.
- Share your information openly and have thorough discussions.
- Answer questions based upon your knowledge, experience, and perceptions of the subject.
- Explain your role and responsibilities concerning the subject.
- Feel free to elaborate or add relevant information to serve the purposes of the study.

Potential risks of the study:

- Disclosure of confidential or private information on the subject: however, it is the participant's decision to willingly accept or reject sharing this information.
- I do not anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, except for minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as emotional instability, but you have the right to end your participation or withdraw from the research at any time. Upon complete withdrawal, disclosed information will be removed and destroyed.

If you would like to participate, please go through the points mentioned below then sign this form to certify that you are aware of and approve the following:

- The discussions will be audio recorded and a transcript will be produced by the researcher.
- The transcript of the discussions will be analysed by the researcher.
- Access to the interview transcript will be limited to the researcher and the programme's supervisor, who might collaborate as part of the research process.
- If you do not wish to disclose your personal information, any summary content or direct quotations from you that might be available through academic publications will be anonymised so that you cannot be identified. Care will be taken to ensure that other information in the discussions that could identify you is not revealed publicly.
- Raw recording materials will be kept until graduation, and eventually will be destroyed.
- Please print or save this consent form for your reference.

By signing this form, I agree that:

- I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I do not have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time.
- I am aware that I can withdraw from this project within the next two months from the signing date.
- I can willingly accept or reject disclosing my personal information in this project.
- The transcribed discussions or extracts will be used as described above.
- I can request a copy of the transcript of my interview, and may make any edits I feel necessary to ensure the effectiveness of any agreement made about confidentiality.
- I do not expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation.
- I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.
- I have received a copy of this consent from the researcher.

For further inquiries, please contact AlAnood AlShaikh

Mobile: _____ Email: _____

Printed Name of Research Participant: _____

Department / Contact Information / Email: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name of Guardian Permission: (if applicable) _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

نموذج الموافقة على المشاركة في مشروع بحث

يعد نموذج الموافقة هذا ضروريًا لضمان فهمك من غرض مشاركتك في مشروع البحث، والمبنية على موافقتك الحرة والمسبقة على شروط مشاركتك. يرجى قراءة المعلومات التالية بعناية:

الرجاء اختيار طريقة المشاركة المناسبة عن طريق تحديد المربع:

☐ مجموعة التركيز: 90 دقيقة.

☐ مقابلة فردية: 45-60 دقيقة.

إذا وافقت على المشاركة، سيُطلب منك:

- أن تتواجد في موقع وإطار زمني محدد للمقابلة.
- تبادل المعلومات الخاصة بك وإجراء مناقشات شاملة.
- الإجابة عن الأسئلة بناءً على معرفتك وتجربتك وتصوراتك للموضوع.
- تشرح دورك ومسؤولياتك في الموضوع.
- لا تتردد في وضع أو إضافة معلومات ذات صلة لخدمة الغرض من الدراسة.

المخاطر المحتملة للدراسة

- الكشف عن معلومات خاصة حول هذا الموضوع؛ ونلتزم باحترام قرار المشارك بقبول أو رفض الإفصاح عن هذه المعلومات فهي تعتبر ملكيته الخاصة.
- لا أتوقع أن يكون هناك أي مخاطر مرتبطة بمشاركتك باستثناء حالات الإزعاج البسيطة التي يمكن مواجهتها في الحياة اليومية، على سبيل المثال الإفصاح عن معلومة قد تعيد لك ذكريات حزينة أو مزعجة، ولديك الحق في إنهاء مشاركتك أو الانسحاب من البحث في أي وقت تشاء. وعند الانسحاب ستتم إزالة المعلومات التي تم الكشف عنها من قبلك.

إذا كنت ترغب في المشاركة، فيرجى الاطلاع على النقاط المذكورة أدناه ثم التوقيع على هذا النموذج للتأكيد على أنك على دراية بالموافقة على ما يلي:

- سيتم تسجيل المناقشات الصوتية وإنتاج نسخة من قبل الباحث.
- سيتم تحليل نسخة من المناقشات من قبل الباحث.
- يقتصر الوصول إلى نسخة المقابلة على الباحث ومشرف البرنامج الذي قد يتعاون كجزء من عملية البحث.

- إذا كنت لا ترغب في الكشف عن معلوماتك الشخصية، فسيتم إخفاء هويتك عن أي محتوى ملخص أو عروض أسعار مباشرة من نهايتك قد تكون متاحة من خلال المنشورات الأكاديمية بحيث لا يمكن تحديد هويتك.
- سيتم توخي الحذر لضمان عدم الكشف عن المعلومات الأخرى في المناقشات التي يمكن أن تحدد هويتك علنًا.
- سيتم الاحتفاظ بمواد التسجيل الأولية حتى التخرج، وسيتم تدميرها في النهاية.
- يرجى طباعة أو حفظ نسخة من نموذج الموافقة هذا كمرجع لك.

بتوقيع هذا النموذج، أوافق على ما يلي:

- مشاركتي حرة وطواعية في هذا المشروع. أنا أفهم أنني لست مضطرًا للمشاركة، ويمكنني إيقاف المقابلة في أي وقت.
- أدرك أنه يمكنني الانسحاب من هذا المشروع خلال الشهرين المقبلين من تاريخ التوقيع.
- يمكنني قبول أو رفض الكشف عن معلوماتي الشخصية في هذا المشروع عن طيب خاطر.
- سيتم استخدام المناقشات المكتوبة أو المقتطفات كما هو موضح أعلاه.
- يمكنني أن أطلب نسخة من المقابلة التي أجريتها وأن أجري تعديلات أشعر أنها ضرورية لضمان فعالية أي اتفاق يتم بشأن السرية.
- لا أتوقع تلقي أي منفعة أو دفع مقابل مشاركتي.
- لقد تمكنت من طرح أي أسئلة قد تكون مهمة، وأنا أفهم أنني حر في الاتصال بالباحث مع أي أسئلة قد تكون لدي في المستقبل.
- لقد استلمت نسخة من هذه الموافقة من الباحث.

لمزيد من الاستفسارات، يرجى التواصل مع العنود الشيخ

متحرك: _____ البريد الالكتروني: _____

اسم المشارك/ة في البحث: _____

معلومات الاتصال / البريد الالكتروني: _____

التوقيع: _____ التاريخ _____

اسم الوصي أو ولي الأمر (إن وجد): _____

التوقيع: _____ التاريخ _____

Appendix 6 – Participation Card

Name (Informant #)	☐ Male ☐ Female	
Nationality	If Emirati, which Emirate? If expat, years of residency?	
Profession	Contact Details M.: E.:	
Express with one word, what does the following means to you? The Emirati: (person): Emirati Identity: Culture: Heritage: Governance: Knowledge: Traditional Practices:		Age ☐ – 20 ☐ 21 – 30 ☐ 31 – 40 ☐ 41 – 50 ☐ 51 – 60 ☐ + 60
Participation ☐ Focus Group ☐ Interview	Shared Documents ☐ Yes ☐ No	Language ☐ Arabic ☐ English

بطاقة المشارك/ة

الاسم (مخبر #)	☐ ذكر ☐ أنثى	
الجنسية	إن كنت إماراتي، من أية إمارة؟ إن كنت مقيم، سنوات الإقامة؟	
المهنة	التواصل متحرك: بريد الكتروني:	
العمر ☐ -20 ☐ 21 – 30 ☐ 31 – 40 ☐ 41 – 50 ☐ 51 – 60 ☐ +60	ماذا تعني لك العبارات التالية؟ عبّر بكلمة واحدة فقط الإنسان الإماراتي: الهوية الإماراتية: الثقافة: التراث: الحوكمة: المعرفة: الممارسات التقليدية:	
اللغة ☐ العربية ☐ الإنجليزية	مستندات ☐ نعم ☐ لا	المشاركة ☐ حلقة نقاشية ☐ مقابلة

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