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### Communities of Practice, Identity and Tourism: Evidence on Cultural Heritage Preservation in World Heritage Sites

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#### ABSTRACT

A “community of practice” (CoP) is a mechanism of holding, transferring and creating knowledge, where practices and identities are developed in the frame of the socio-cultural dynamics of a community. Thus, CoP brings together concepts of history, identity, values, practice, and community. Intangible cultural heritage (ICH) communities are networks of people whose sense of identity and interconnectedness emerge from a shared historical and geographical relationship. This background is rooted in the practice and transmission of the ICH. The goal of this paper is to explore the interfaces amongst these two concepts: CoP and ICH, by identifying the correlations between identity and place attachment in ICH sites and the practices of their communities, such as the case of tourism. With two selected intangible cultural heritage communities in Spain and Vietnam, the paper particularly highlights the similarities of community processes albeit distinctive characteristics of different places and people.

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**Keywords:** Community Development; Local Governance; Spain; Tourism Development; Vietnam.

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*It is not just that “places” serve to remind us of the stories associated with them; in certain respects, the places only exist (in the sense that they can be identified by name) because they have stories associated with them. But once they have acquired this story-based existence, the landscape itself acquires the power of “telling the story” (Leach, 1984:358)*

## **Introduction**

Local communities are a key social reference point, and they need to be constantly defined and stabilised (Jensen, 2004). Communities can possess strong senses of cooperative and communal identities based on networks of extended family relationships (Gu and Ryan, 2008) who share traditions, and meaningful heritages. According to UNESCO (2015, p. 3):

Intangible cultural heritage is important for ensuring sustainable development. Not only can it provide a powerful force for inclusive economic development and contribute to strengthening local economies, but traditional knowledge and practices concerning nature. The importance of intangible cultural heritage is not the cultural manifestation itself but rather the wealth of knowledge and skills transmitted through it from one generation to the next. The social and economic value of this knowledge is relevant for everyone minority groups and mainstream social groups within a State, and it is as important for developing and developed States.

The ways in which intangible heritage provides an identity source disassociated with local places (Vidal, 2008, p. 808) is a central concern within this article. Specifically, the paper emphasises the implication of intangible heritages’ identity, heavily influencing the performance of a community-based practice. For this reason, the discussion around the case studies is based on both the concept of “Communities of Practice”, and the meaning of identity and place attachment in an intangible cultural heritage practice context. Also, it subsequently delineates the factors that may influence the effectiveness of the participatory community, together with limitations and further implications. For example, “analysis of heritage tourism development reveals the defining aspects of identity and community [...] but at the same time, it illustrates how this complexity is resolved in practice” (Ruiz and Hernández, 2007, p. 686). Results also show the implication of the three characteristics of a community of practice: the domain, community and practice (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002).

Lewicka (2011, p. 222) affirms that in the framework of Person-Place-Process, “place attachment literature has placed much more emphasis on the Person part at the expense of Place and that it largely ignored Processes, the mechanisms through which place attachment develops”. To fill this research gap, the current paper aims at further

exploring the “processes”. Particularly, it focuses on the “Festival of Fire” in Vall de Boí, a World Heritage Site in the Catalan Pyrenees (Spain) and the “Lantern Festival” in Hoi An World Heritage Site (Vietnam), which have been crucial examples of intangible cultural heritage preservation efforts. Both are selected as case studies. Results show that despite remarkable different frames between “places” and “people”, similarities are drawn and heavily rely on the “processes”. Theoretical and practical implications are outlined.

## **1. Background and theoretical framework: Community of Practice, Place Attachment and Intangible Heritage Preservation**

### *1.1 Community of Practice and knowledge development*

A “community of practice” is a typical kind of network that characterizes peer-to-peer collaborative activities to strengthen not only members’ skills but also the capacities of organizations and the society (Snyder and Briggs, 2010, p. 5). Indeed, the concept “community of practice” (CoP) is commonly considered as the first knowledge based on social structures since the outset of human being (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002, p. 5). Officially developed by Lave and Wenger (1991), as a radical critique towards cognitivist theories of learning (James, 2006, pp. 8-9; Cobb and Bowers, 1999; Roberts, 2006, p. 623), the concept refers to a social interactive aspect of situated learning theory (Buyse, Sparkman and Wesley, 2003). As a mechanism of holding, transferring and creating knowledge (Brown and Duguid, 1991; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), a CoP is posited as the context in which individuals develop the practices (including values, norms and relationships) and identities that fit to the socio-cultural dynamics of the community (Handley, Sturdy, Fincham and Clark, 2006, p. 647).

A CoP, according to Eckert (2006), refers to a collective and shared endeavour. CoPs aim to respond to common interest or position by critically forming members’ participation, and their orientation to the world around them. Therefore, a CoP provides an accountable link between the individual, the group, and place in the broader social order (Eckert, 2006, p. 1). Through such ongoing processes of interactively sharing concern, problems or passion about a particular aspect, knowledge and expertise are deepened (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002, p. 4). Wenger (1998, p. 55) indicated that meaning is negotiated through the participation and reification within a CoP. “Any community of practice produces abstractions, tools, symbols, stories, terms, and concepts that reify something of that practice in a congealed form” (Wenger, 1998, p. 59). Such forms take on a life of their own outside their original context where their meaning can evolve or even disappear (Roberts, 2006, p. 624).

Communities of practices are recognized through three characteristics (1) domain of interests that are shared and committed to (2) relationships among group members who engage in join activities and (3) shared practices consisting of shared resources, materials, experiences, tools, stories, etc. (Wenger et al., 2002; Hemmasi and Csanda, 2009, p. 262). These three core structural dimensions were ascertained by Snyder and Briggs (2010, p.10) to have connections with the effectiveness of a CoP. Accordingly, an

effective CoP needs to consider firstly, the “domain” or essential issues or problems that need to be commonly addressed by CoP members; secondly, the active expertise engagement of CoP members and thirdly, the interactive application and production of methods and learning initiatives (ibid). Wenger et al (2002, pp. 8-10) emphasized that to cultivate a CoP, knowledge should not be considered as an object but an integral part of members’ activities and interactions and community members serve as a living repository for the knowledge. To them, knowledge in a community’s practice is considered both tacit and explicit; social and individual. The collective character and controversy over knowledge contribute in making a community vital, effective and productive.

### *1.2 Identity and CoPs*

According to Oxford University Press (1998, p.908), identity is: I) the fact of being who or what a person or thing is; II) the characteristics determining this: he wanted to develop a more distinctive Scottish Tory identity. Identity is what defines a group of people who shares a common experience, or enterprise. It can be the place where people live, a project, or simply a series of scheduled meetings to discuss about something. UNESCO, on its Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, states the importance of culture, as it is at the heart of contemporary debates about identity, social cohesion, and the development of a knowledge-based economy. Within the section on Identity, Diversity and Pluralism, UNESCO posits as follows (UNESCO, 2001, Article 1 - Cultural diversity: the common heritage of humanity):

Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind. As a source of exchange, innovation and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations.

Identity and culture are a very important part of the landscape of each community. They both are a pathway to enhance the authenticities that define a region (Hughes, 1995; Sims, 2009). “As a privileged context in which identity creates society, the meaning of community becomes a decisive factor for local development” (Barret, Caniggia, Muñoz and Read, 2005; Bessière, 1998). They contribute to regional development since they also play a key role in visitors’ motivation (Fusté-Forné, 2016, Hall, 2016). Identity is inherent to the protection and projection of the own landscape and all what it means, also the meanings the stakeholders aim to convey through it. “Areas of local importance play a predominant role in the construction of identity” (Vidal, 2008, p. 807). Ruiz and Hernández (2007) states that communities, together with the individual, are the main reference point for the recreation of these identities. Consequently, local identity is constructed to reinforce the “us”:

A community can only emerge through common experience and the shared use of contexts of meaning. These contexts of meaning shape situations in which the participants create values. Shared common discourse, which defines social action, gives meaning to acts, creating guidelines of thought and differentiated action that shape a community (Ruiz and Hernández,

2007, p.677-678).

Aligned to this, the community of practice is a prime locus of identity and linguistic construction process (Eckert, 2006, p. 3). It is however noted that identity in a CoP is not fixed and essentially need to be recognized. As suggested by Snyder and Briggs (2010), one of CoP's key components – the “domain” embraces a deep part of members' personal identity and a means of talking about what their life's work is about (Snyder and Briggs, 2010, p. 7). Nonetheless, during the process of CoP, which is described as an ‘integral and inseparable aspect of social practice’, identity construction is involved through the change of CoP's participation forms (Handley, Sturdy, Fincham and Clark, 2006, p. 647). Thus, learning is not simply just about developing one's knowledge and practice but also involves “a process of understanding who we are and in which communities of practice we belong and are accepted” (Handley, Sturdy, Fincham and Clark, 2006, p. 644). It is through or together with communities and networks that individuals develop their identities and practices.

In its turn, “community” as the second key component of CoP as demonstrated by Snyder and Briggs (2010) is composed of a diversity of interests and demographic characteristics. Different level of involvement and mutual learning among various members are indeed the foundation to set the sense of communities as the heart of CoP success. On this basis, a successful CoP does not mandate participation, but rather, is based on “collective trust, reciprocity and shared values” among members (Snyder and Briggs, 2010, p. 8). In terms of “practice”, the repertoire of tools, methods, stories, learning and innovation activities would be used to “build, share and apply knowledge” and hence, reinforce “community presence” in members' lives. Consequently, the sense of belonging and identity are strengthened, as the basis for knowledge-sharing and collaboration (Snyder and Briggs, 2010, p. 8).

### *1.3 The role of place attachment*

The importance of a place was described by Relph (1976) and Tuan (1975, 1977) more than forty years ago. Place attachment literature has received considerable attention over recent decades, and within different fields of study. Place attachment emerges as the linkage between individuals and their important places, their meaningful environments (Debenedetti, Oppewal and Arsel, 2014; Giuliani, 2003; Low and Altman, 1992; Scannell and Gifford, 2010), namely, their unique and distinctive practices. Trentelman (2009) provides a reflexion on the different disciplines interested in: “1) the socio-cultural dimensions of place, such as community attachment; 2) the biophysical dimensions of place, with emphasis on the “setting or container”, and; 3) the integration of both socio-cultural and natural setting dynamics within place attachment research” (Raymond, Brown and Weber, 2010, p. 422). From here, according to Raymond et al (2010), it derives place attachment in a personal context, in a community context, and place attachment in a natural environment context, understanding the place identity and place dependence, the neighbourhood attachment and the connectedness to nature and environmental identity respectively. Wang and Chen (2015) define a place as “a setting that has been given meaning based on human experiences, relationships, emotions and thoughts. [...] Sense of place can be

described as a compilation of meanings, knowledge, attachment, commitment and satisfaction that an individual or group associates with a particular place” (Wang and Chen, 2015, p. 18). Similarly, the level of attachment to a place has an influence on the attitudes and behaviours towards that place (Shumaker and Taylor, 1983). “Place identity is determined not only by the physical components but also the meaning and association developed between people and place” (Bott, Cantrill and Myers, 2003).

Breakwell (1986) suggested that one of the principles of place identity is the establishment of a sense of – personal – distinctiveness, or uniqueness. The conception is close to the experience economy (Pine and Gilmore, 1999), which contextualizes a new trend in economic development where the main issue is the search of individual identity by enhancement uniqueness, interaction and involvement. Wang and Cheng (2015) state that another principle of place identity “is the desire to preserve continuity of the self-concept, which focuses on the maintenance and development of one’s sense of continuity” (Wang and Chen, 2015, p. 18):

“This means that to secure identity is to ensure continuity in the physical, social together with meanings and attachment held by the people (Ujang, 2010). Continuity is argued to be a key motive or desire that guides the construction and maintenance of identity (Breakwell, 1986), which should be considered as a key component, in explaining identity processes and defining relationships with elements of place identity. Based on the continuity principle, it is argued that a place, which can provide a psychologically significant sense of temporal endurance, i.e. identity continuity, will be more conversed by people who are feeling more attached to the place” (Wang and Chen, 2015, p. 19).

Summarizing, “place attachment is a bond between an individual or group and a place” (Scannell and Gifford, 2010, p. 5). Subsequently, according to them, place attachment linkages exist because they serve several functions as for example goal support, and temporal or personal continuity. Communities of practice may enhance them.

#### *1.4 Community and Intangible Cultural Heritage Preservation (ICH)*

UNESCO defined “Intangible cultural heritage – ICH” as “the practices, representation, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in respond to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provide them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity” (Kurin, 2007, p. 12). Thus ICH is related to the manifestations of community-based heritage products which individuals or a community recognize as their own cultural heritage.

The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage adopted by the UNESCO on 2003 categorized the heritage products under five domains of ICH. They are oral tradition and expression, performing arts, social practices, knowledge and traditional craftsmanship (Bakar, Osman, Bachok and Ibrahim, 2014, p. 287). “ICH communities” in the UNESCO definition, according to Cang (2007, p. 49) means networks of people whose sense of identity or connectedness emerges from a shared

historical relationship that is rooted in the practice and transmission of, or engagement with, their ICH. Therefore, to ensure the sustainability of ICH, the whole system of living heritage transmission must be observed and protected. This means that the responsibility of safeguarding ICH relies heavily on the concerned community to which a certain ICH belongs (Smith and Akagawa, 2009; Bakar, Osman, Bachok and Ibrahim, 2014, p. 287). This, according to the authors, relates to the engagement of a concerned community's members to generate, recreate, transmit and sustain their ICH. Those "practitioners", as claimed by the 2003 UNESCO treaty, need to be crucially protected beyond the ICH itself, since without people it is impossible to transmit ICH to further generations. Therefore, the protection of ICH requires more than just paying attention to the arts and artefacts, but also to the artists, craftsmen and practitioners (ibid), together with the processes they feel attached to.

## **2. Research Method**

This paper develops the concept of "Communities of practice" and the meanings of heritage identity in an intangible culture heritage context. In doing this, the paper explores how intangible heritage is preserved in two communities of practice. The research, therefore, applies a case study method that answers the question "how" and provides an in-depth exploration of "contemporary phenomena within its real-life context" (Yin, 2009, p. 18). The case studies are drawn from an auto-ethnographic methodological approach, lived experience and secondary data sources. The case studies are two "processes" (festivals) that take place in Vietnam and Spain.

Importantly, the cases represent two different socio-political and economic backgrounds. They also illustrate communities of practice in two distinctive World Heritage environments. Particularly, while other heritage sites of two countries are more developed under governments' management efforts, the selected cases are typically well-known as community-based preservation practices. Therefore, they serve the paper's purpose of examining the performance of the concept "community of practice". This paper does not aim to provide a comparative analysis of socio-political and economic context and governance structure of two selected case studies, but rather it provides in-depth analysis of two cases that reflects distinguished historical, cultural and geographical conditions of two World Heritage sites.

## **3. Identities in the community of Lantern festival practice in Hoi An – a world heritage site**

Located in the central eastern coast of Vietnam, Hoi An thrives as a remaining Far Eastern Port town dating from fifteenth century (UNESCO, 2008). The old town of Hoi An was declared World Heritage in 1999 for being "an exceptionally well-preserved example of a South-East Asian trading port" (UNESCO, 2008). Certainly, Hoi An is a well-known touristic destination for its' ancient and delightfully atmospheric

townscape. It is the convergence of both indigenous and foreign culture, materially and immaterially, established and brought along by Cham, Dai Viet people, Chinese and Japanese settlers, French and American occupiers, merchants and visitors from the West (James, 2010, p. 9; UNESCO, 2016). The port town historically was central ancient Hindu state – Champa from 2nd to 13th century AD and later on was famous for cinnamon and sandalwood exports at the periphery of the Silk Road (Tran, 2016). Besides the preservation of tangible heritage, the old town's intangible heritage or the 'livelihood and lifestyle' aspect of culture was protected against change (UNESCO, 2008). The "Lantern Festival" or differently called "Full Moon in Ancient Town" (ISTM, 2010, p.5) or "Legendary night" (UNESCO, 2008, p. 42) has been a crucial part among other rituals and festivities.

Walking in the lantern festival night, one could hardly skip feeling the intact small streets lined with original styled and wooden buildings, flowery walls, mossy roofs with pleasant light from lanterns hung by small wooden window frames. The atmosphere is immersed in flowing smell from the Eastern incense, melodious sound of traditional instruments from some old buildings 'yards (personal experience).

Once a month, on the 14th of lunar calendar from 5pm to 10pm, Hoi An Lantern Festival takes place. The whole ancient quarter of Hoi An is lit purely with the light from the full moon and traditional lanterns hung in front of shops and along the streets. All modern technology or electrical equipments are abandoned. All vehicles including motorbikes, bikes and cycles are prohibited. Shops selling modern wares are expected to be closed. Local people of different ages are engaged in different traditional activities including games 'bai choi' or chess by the seniors, shuttlecocking by kids, folk songs or traditional instruments performance by young men and women. Local delicacies and toys (trinkets or votive) are sold in the street by vendors. Along Hoai rivers are floating candle lit raft, purchased and sent to the water by tourists with the wish for luck. The event is designed and monthly practiced bringing back a night of Hoi An's 17th-18th century townscape (UNESCO, 2008, p. 42; Di Giovine, 2009, p. 212).

The preservation of Hoi An in general and the lantern festival in particular experienced a large influence from both insiders and outsiders. In fact, the place was unknown until 1998 when tourism effectively re-generated the town materially and culturally after centuries of its' being flourished, stagnated and nearly 'dying out' (Di Giovine, 2009, p. 262). During the 1980s, the ancient beauty of Hoi An was discovered by Soviet visitors, local people and then by a Polish historic preservationist Kazim. Preservation ideas were proposed to government officials. The town preservation work officially started in 1985 with the participation of central government agency, and international experts. Especially, the issuance of Lonely Planet guidebook in 1991 brought big number of visitors to the small town led to more systematic tourism service by the central and local government (Di Giovine, 2009, p. 221). Since 1997, preservation policies have been reinforced thanks to collaborative financial and technical efforts of Vietnamese Government and international agencies.

Nowadays, while the direct management of Hoi An municipal government, the Lantern Festival is explicitly a collective endeavour and shared value of all engaging stakeholders towards a "past centuries' brought back townscape". Local community part taking in lantern displaying are mainly owners of shops or houses along the



ancient streets. They include both locals and migrants who come to do tourism services. An implemented study shows that they all have strong sense of attachment with the old town, feeling proud of the culture, traditions, the people and food of unique heritage town (Trinh, Ryan and Cave, 2014, pp. 278-282). For tourists, besides tourism development and economic purposes, Lantern Festival is also aimed as an educational tool. While some authors have carried out critical studies concerning the tourism impact (Galla, 2012), the festival is meaningful to tourists as an emotional and educational romanticising of the heritage. For Hoi An local residents, the lunar monthly festival commitment has shaped in their minds a culturally unique and constructed temporality (Di Giovine, 2009, p. 226). It is the moment of collective sense of 'heritage time', when they together share the spirit of being part of the heritage, respecting the traditional value and temporarily turning away from contemporary practices. On a daily basis, local people can ride hondas, turning on modern music of all kinds, shops in Hoi An old town streets sell all kinds of modern wares, with modern musics, movices on digital devises, barbecue services, most updated fashions, and accessories, sport and casual wares that would also fit the need of international travellers.

Fortunately, the old town's economic fabric has been visibly transformed by the replacement of shops selling various wares into those producing and selling handmade lanterns (Di Giovine, 2009, p. 225). Nowadays, paper or silk lanterns of all colours, sizes and shapes are exhibited and sold in most of the handicraft shops along the streets. While it is not the goal of this paper, the role of non-local entrepreneurs and sellers also emerges as a critical issue that would require further attention (Huong, 2015).

#### **4. Mountains and identity in the Summer Solstice Fire Festivals in Vall de Boí – a world heritage site**

Vall de Boí is a rural and mountain municipality of Alta Ribagorça region located in the west side of the Catalan Pyrenees, in Catalonia, north eastern Spain. While acknowledged as a tourist destination since the last decade of the nineteenth century thanks to the early hikers, and thermal bath visitors, Vall de Boí is not a mass tourism destination. Its cultural heritages are one of the main landmarks, together with ski and thermal facilities, surrounded by a stunning landscape. Several walking paths become ideal ways to explore its scenery, with a wide diversity of flora and fauna. Given its fragile human-in-nature context, Vall de Boí has managed to preserve their environment, both natural and cultural. In consequence, since the early thirties in the twentieth century, examples of tangible cultural heritage – Romanesque churches – started to be preserved by public administrations. Importantly, the National Park of Aigüestortes i Estany de Sant Maurici was declared as a National Park in 1955, the only one along Catalonia. During the 1960s the Romanesque heritage enlarged its protection, which had continuity in the earlier nineties – when the process to submit the Romanesque to the UNESCO World Heritage List started, supported by local, regional and national governments –. This culminated in the year 2000 with the UNESCO declaration.

Fire festivals are a tradition deeply rooted in the Pyrenees. The festival is held in two symbolical places: a high place, usually located mid-mountain or on top of a hill next to a town; and the other, the main square of the town. Traditionally, people – called fallaires – welcome the summer with a descent from the mountain to the town. When night falls, fallaires, who carry flaming torches, begin the descent towards the village. They carry the burning wooden logs on the shoulders, running down one after one, while observers, people who wait in the town square, only see points of light that illuminate the mountain drawing large Z's brighting along the way down.

Once down, fallaires install the firewood in the middle of the village, where emerges a bigger bonfire. They are received festively. These activities have a collective character, where traditional music and dances together with culinary, food and beverages play a key role. Conclusively, fire festivals are believed to become an instant of “cyclical reestablishment of family, social and community ties, which help to strengthen the sense of belonging, identity and continuity” (Gobierno de Aragón, 2015). Also, culturally, Pyrenean people feel part of a physical landscape, of a historical and cultural sharing practice, where the fire plays a crucial community role. This festive tradition contributes to the “gender equality, the integration of new immigrants and to promote a culture of volunteerism, solidarity and hospitality”.

Even though along the twentieth century the depopulation within the Pyrenees has been an important trend in this kind of rural environment, people from the region have preserved the tradition as an important manifestation of their intangible cultural heritage. Celebrations of the summer solstice fire festivals in the Pyrenees “result from the symbiosis between nature and culture to promote values such as solidarity, hospitality, intergenerational transmission and strengthening the sense of belonging, identity and continuity of inter Pyrenean communities” (El Periòdic d'Andorra, 2016). Although each fire festival has some unique characteristics in each location, all fire festivals' communities within the whole Pyrenees share this common celebration. This is particularly of importance in the region of Alta Ribagorça, where up to ten locations celebrate the event. It is a cross-regional intangible heritage, when recognised by UNESCO elevated to a Pyrenees landmark, with the subsequent tourism impact. Fire festivals of summer solstice “have become into a hallmark in the towns in the Pyrenees. The intense feelings of belonging to the territory and history of depository Pyrenean communities of these rituals. The fire means in these locations a major dimension, heritage conveyor and life communicator” (Gobierno de Aragón, 2015). “Beyond idiomatic or administrative territory to which they belong, every fire festival communities and all members have a strong sense of belonging to a big fallaire Pyrenean family”. Also, there is a strong bond that has allowed such inter-communities undertook a joint project, ended with the UNESCO Heritage Site Declaration, which recognized an ancestral tradition of up to 63 towns in the Catalan and Aragon's Pyrenees, also Andorra country, and southern France areas.

While magazines of late nineteenth century had already published about positive comments from hikers who experienced the fire festivals' tradition, its origin is still unknown but is related to a pagan festival where the summer solstice is celebrated in the shortest night of the year, June 24. It is therefore held once a year. From parents to children, grandparents to grandchildren, the tradition is preserved. As reported, the fire festivals of the summer solstice in the Pyrenees are included in the UNESCO list of

intangible cultural heritage element; this declaration took place in November 2015, adding to the 2000 when UNESCO also acknowledged Vall de Boí's Romanesque heritage as a World Heritage Site.

## 5. Discussion

As earlier reported, "Communities of practices" bring together concepts of history, identity, values, practice, and community. Cases presented are focused on heritage preservation practices, which have a cultural, economic, environmental, social, and physical significance. "Community of practice" is positioned by situated learning theory as the context in which individuals develop their practices and identities (Handley et al, 2006, p. 642) through collective learning experiences that they have when interacting in a shared contextual circumstance (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998, p. 47). The practices showcased steward stakeholders' shared values and pride of the heritage, their collective experience and engagement of both outsiders and insiders in the place identity construction, the economic evolution of festival related practices and also the implication towards heritage tourism values.

### 5.1 Heritage identity to both insiders and outsiders

A community of practice necessitates actors' mutual sense about the engaged enterprise with their respective forms of participation (Eckert, 2006). Both cases presented are important in regard to the stakeholders' sense of the place, the attachment of people to place and processes. Specifically, Hoi An lantern festival practice showcases a joined engagement between outsiders and insiders. Tracing back the history of the heritage, the festival couldn't have come into life if the regeneration of Hoi An old town had not been proposed based on the intervention between insiders (residents and local government) and outsiders, who initiated the idea of preserving the old town (Di Giovine, 2009, p. 222). Current practices in the lantern festival CoP involve people of different generations, both tourism services providers and tourists, local people and immigrants. This is also particularly interesting in the case of Vall de Boí's festival fire, namely, the participation emerges as a very special moment for young people, signifying the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Both festivals are also considered a time for regenerating social ties and strengthening feelings of belonging, identity and continuity with celebrations including popular folklore and communal dining. Within this context, mutual sense-making may be consensual or conflictual, but mutual understanding of the culture preservation and commitment to respect the surrounding environment sustain the collective practice (Eckert, 2006, p.1). Noticeably, they mostly join in different cultural activities with the pride of their "Hoianian" or "Pyrenean" identity. They see it necessary to keep their traditions alive and attract tourists (UNESCO, 2008, p. 58). A community of intangible culture practice emphasizes a strong connection between individuals, the collectivity and the surrounding historical and social setting (Handley, Sturdy, Fincham and Clark, 2006, p.645), and its natural landscape. All of these linkages strengthen a collective

commitment, sense of belonging and voluntary participation, which can never be forced (Snyder and Briggs, 2010, p. 8).

## *5.2 The economic evolvement of festival-based practices*

A community of practice enables the operation of a “social learning systems” where practitioners connect to solve problems, share ideas, set standards, build tools, and develop relationships with peers and stakeholders (Snyder and Briggs, 2010, p. 10). In the case studies, while the strong sense of place and heritage cultural traditions may have clearer impact than the issue of economic gain (Fusté-Forné, 2015a, 2015b; Gu and Ryan, 2008, p. 645), at the same time it is admitted in both case studies that commercial motivation plays a role in getting people involved (James, 2010, p.26; Trinh, Ryan and Cave, 2014, p. 282). For Hoi An, immigrant retailers in previous research admit that the lantern festival has improved the sense of pride and association (Trinh, Ryan and Cave, 2014, p.279). Explicitly, the increasing need for lanterns by tourists and the widespread introduction of the product outside of Hoi An – Hoi An Lantern was branded one of 50 famous Vietnamese brand in 2013 – has promoted the product services. In fact, the government’s promotion of a themed topic for the lantern design each year, catalysed by the creativity of lantern manufacturers have accelerated continuous diversification and betterment of the products. Historically, lanterns were not initially made in Hoi An or surrounding areas. However, the products started to be produced locally when both skills were developed and materials (bamboo and silk) were made available (UNESCO, 2008, p. 58). Similarly, related practices are also observed in the fire festival of summer solstice, where communities are engaged in different traditional activities, including games, local delicacies and dancing and musical street shows. The festival also benefits widely local producers and service providers who increase their benefits thanks to the increasing amounts of visitors. This is not surprising because attitudes toward economic impacts do play a significant role towards further tourism development (Gu and Ryan, 2008, p. 645).

Positively, it is the reflection of a core processes of participation, identity-construction and practice which occur within the community of practice (Handley, Sturdy, Fincham and Clark, 2006, p. 647). These practices, in turns, develop local product identity – the Hoi An lantern, the Pyrenees Fire Festivals. They, hence, create a sense of connectivity, and retain a contemporary significance into future generations, which is mentioned to be crucial for the living of an intangible heritage (Deacon et al., 2004; Macdonald, 2007; Wong, 2014, p. 92). The traditions are transmitted from generation to generation, and are fair examples of associative and transversal character, and also promoters of the festivals. Nonetheless, less positively, it raises questions regarding influences by economic forces and the fact that nowadays, intangible heritages tend to be transformed into consumable tourist products for commercial benefits (Wong, 2014, p.92). This has been observed in Hoi An: the revitalization of Vietnam’s premiere World Heritage, yearly toured by countless visitors, and internationally valorised, has not been with ease because of unforeseen consequences and stress for locals (Di Giovine, 2009, p. 262). Concerns about the impacts of tourism development to the loss of Hoi An authenticity (UNESCO, 2008), tourists’ demand for an experience truly

meaningful to residents rather than artificial practices are critical issues that need to be considered in order to gain a more effective community of practice. This is also a concern for Vall de Boí's stakeholders (Fusté-Forné, 2015c). For both cases, it may lead to future research opportunities.

### 5.3 Heritage tourism values

Community of Practice reflects the domain of shared interest or essential issues to be commonly addressed (Wenger et al., 2002). Clearly, communities of practice enable a living repository for information, ideas, expertise and resources to flow (Snyder and de Souza Briggs, 2010). "Heritage is deeply rooted in the sense of community, on the one hand, and the content of identity on the other. Without a sense of community, there is no collective heritage" (Ruiz and Hernández, 2007, p. 685).



**Figure 1:** The process of community of practice's place attachment for the development of tourism practices

Also, when contributing to a heritage Community of Practice: "community identity guides action and gives it collective form, a fundamental circumstance to understand the local development that heritage tourism is often part of" (Ruiz and Hernández, 2007, p. 678). Tourism is an agent capable of providing "the means by which local people can be identified" (Palmer, 1999, p.318). According to Stebbins (1997), when tourist activity focuses on heritage and culture, the link between tourism and identity is accentuated even further. "Certain models of local identity and the development of specific community discourses undoubtedly condition the possibility and success of the tourism offer. Tourism affects and constructs identities, but identities can also construct or obstruct tourism" (Ruiz and Hernández, 2007, p.685). Briefly, in terms of tourism use of heritage, material and immaterial, "for the development of heritage tourism, the existing heritage must be able to be converted into a tourism resource" (Ruiz and Hernández, 2007, p. 685). This is the case of both examples described in the paper.

Identity and sense of place, and place attachment coming together are a key factor to enhance collaborative work. Analysing communities of practice from behind the scenes provide a story grown in the own landscape, from the own history. The sense of identity is transformed into a common enterprise, where this identity is shared and enhanced throughout processes of heritage preservation and tourism development (Figure 1). Also, the stories around community-based projects show the governance structure of local tourism services and vice versa, and thus are expected to influence on local governance. In addition, an interesting issue emerges here with regards to the impacts of the rise of tourism and tourists on both sites; this would certainly require further analysis.

## Conclusion and implications

By being a World Heritage Site, destinations strongly promote their tourism industry and tend to attract increasing number of international and domestic tourists (Yang, Lin and Han, 2010, p. 828; UNESCO, 2008; James, 2010). For example, tourists coming to Hoi An do not only experience, imagine and appreciate the place's historical purified and peaceful spirit but seek to buy a lantern within the ambience of the heritage place, even including those not participating in the festival. This is considered as the authenticity of local heritage and cultural event (Di Giovine, 2009; James, 2010, p.17; Trinh et al, 2014). The same applies to the fire festivals held in Vall de Boí, in the framework of the Pyrenees mountain ranges. The interaction between residents and tourists alike in common cultural activities serves to support the continuation of traditions that would otherwise be lost (UNESCO, 2008, p. 42). Economically, opportunities in heritage tourism site attracts a remarkable business immigrants (Hall and Rath, 2007). Such fundamental expression of contemporary mobility contributes to both production and consumption of the place (Hall and Rath, 2007, p. 3), which in this case refer to services around local festivals.

Interaction between local and immigrant businesses leads to diversity competitiveness (Smallbones, Kitching and Athayde, 2010, p. 175) and thus, it enables services' better performance than would otherwise be impossible. Internal and external dimensions also refer to the international standardization, which is a crucial issue in making sure the heritage is well preserved and beneficial to local community, against global market forces (Aas, Ladkin and Fletcher, 2005). Initially, both Hoi An's and Vall de Boí's heritage nomination and promotion witnessed strong support from national and international bodies (James, 2010).

As previously mentioned, the implications of intangible cultural heritages towards CoPs are regarded to have succeeded in three main points. First of all, the stakeholders: both insiders and outsiders from the community, where implication and meanings are a gap for further needed research in relation to the socio-political system of each analysed context. Secondly, the development of skills and tools with new or renewed products, with the subsequent economic impacts; both positive and negative impacts which might require further research. Thirdly, the domain and bridges built in relation to the development of tourism activities.

UNESCO (2015, p. 4) states that "festivals are complex expressions of intangible cultural heritage that include singing, dancing, theatre, feasting, oral tradition and storytelling, displays of craftsmanship, sports and other entertainment. The boundaries between domains are extremely fluid and often vary from community to community". Also, "safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, to be kept alive, intangible cultural heritage must be relevant to its community, continuously recreated and transmitted from one generation to another" (UNESCO, 2015, p. 4). In order to engage the involvement into communities of practice, this is better enhanced when the geographical and cognitive context are better defined (Tuan, 1977). The meaningfulness of a process is related to its attachment potential (Lewicka, 2011).

Here, “nation and neighborhood/city are the most preferred place scales” (Lewicka, 2011, p. 213) to show identity and place attachment, and a pathway to successful CoPs. Intangible cultural heritages that provide communities with a sense of identity and continuity are easily recognized and promoted. This may be logically studied from a local development perspective (Oosterbeek and Pollice, 2014) or from a tourism development approach (Carbone, 2016).

Consequently, “local heritage, which has a dual role to play: it is the central focus of the tourist activity whilst at the same time being a fundamental element in the construction of community identity” (Ruiz and Hernández, 2007, p.677). The current paper discusses the complex nature of CoPs and heritage identities in the intangible cultural heritage preservation context. Moreover, it defines bonds not only between people and places, but also processes. This is transferred to two case festivals as practices where identities and the construction of community have a crucial influence, both for local people and visitors. The main limitation of this paper is its descriptive nature. However, it opens a wide range of opportunities for future research. From a practical perspective, further research could focus on the study of the processes that people use to attach meaning to place from the typical social, economic and political systems of both settings – Vietnam and Spain –, or with regards to different regional contexts. Innovatively, this paper can further contribute to analyse and understand different kinds of daily routine practices anywhere which are not built from a CoP myriad, but may work intrinsically so, on the basis of sense of belonging and shared heritage, traditions and values.

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