ASSESSING VALUE & MEANING OF LIVING HERITAGE

A GUIDEBOOK



WORKSHOP INTANGIBLE HERITAGE BE

ASSESSING VALUE & MEANING OF LIVING HERITAGE

A GUIDEBOOK

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INTRODUCTION
BACKGROUND & RATIONALE

Over the past decades, our understanding of what constitutes heritage—and who defines it—has evolved significantly. In the past, assessments of heritage value were almost exclusively led by historians, art experts, and heritage professionals, whose expertise determined which buildings, objects, and sites were considered worthy of preservation. Value judgments were often framed within fixed criteria, and heritage communities' voices remained largely absent from these processes.

This paradigm has shifted. There is **a growing commitment to transparency, inclusivity, and participation** in heritage work. Professionals are increasingly called upon to make explicit why certain elements are valued, and to engage with heritage communities in conversations about the meaning and values they consider to be connected and significant to the heritage concerned. This evolution has brought forward **new practices for assessing significance**, such as the Australian Significance 2.0 method, which since 2009 has offered a structured approach for analysing and communicating the cultural value of objects and collections.

These innovations have **enriched heritage practices** in many ways, but they have also **revealed important limitations**—particularly when applied to intangible cultural heritage (ICH). Unlike tangible heritage, **living heritage is not fixed in place or form**. It is dynamic, continuously recreated, and deeply embedded in the practices, knowledge, and identities of the people who cherish and transmit it. Its continuation depends entirely on the communities, groups, and individuals who practice and transmit this living heritage. **Assessing its value** requires far more than expert analysis or predefined criteria; it **requires dialogue, openness, and an understanding of diverse perspectives and experiences**.

RECOGNISING THE GAP

When our ICH Organisation, Workshop Intangible Heritage, and its partner organisations in Flanders began exploring significance/valuation methods in 2016, we quickly encountered this challenge. While existing frameworks offered valuable insights for tangible heritage, they fell short of capturing the **complex, relational, and often deeply personal dimensions of living heritage**. Moreover, although heritage communities are routinely asked for information during inventorying and nomination processes under the UNESCO 2003 Convention—such as names, geographical scope, and descriptions of practices—there has been **little systematic effort to understand how these descriptive features connect to safeguarding, or how they reflect the meaning, value, and function of heritage for those most closely involved**.

This gap presented both a shortcoming and an opportunity. From 2017 onwards, we embarked on a process to develop **a tailor-made methodology** for Assessing Value and Meaning of Living Heritage. Rooted in theoretical exploration and action research, and tested through multiple pilot case studies (2017–2019), the methodology evolved in close collaboration with heritage communities, facilitators, and heritage organisations.

A PEOPLE-CENTRED AND INCLUSIVE APPROACH

At its heart, this methodology embraces a fundamental principle of the UNESCO 2003 Convention: that communities, groups, and individuals should be the ones to determine what their heritage means to them, and why it matters. Rather than imposing external judgments or rigid categories, it invites participants to **reflect collectively and individually** on the **meanings and values** they attach to their heritage, and to explore how these relate to its safeguarding and transmission.

People often express these meanings spontaneously—not only in words but also through gestures, emotions, silences, and shared stories. The challenge is to **create spaces where such expressions can surface, be heard, and be brought together into a collective understanding**. Dialogue and reflection are central to this process, helping participants deepen their insights and discover connections between their diverse perspectives. Moreover, we also viewed it as important to be mindful of inclusivity and to encourage giving voice to the various stakeholders in the process of assessing values and meaning.

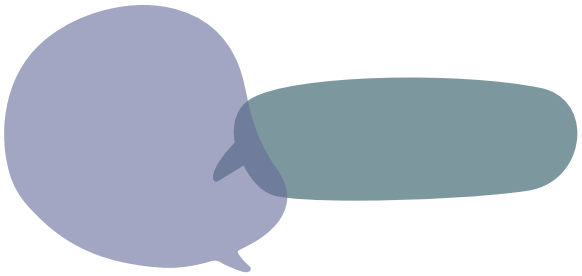
The result of such a process is **a Statement of Value and Meaning**: an interpretative text that synthesizes the different voices and viewpoints into a shared articulation of why a heritage practice is important.

This statement is not a fixed or definitive judgment but **a momentary snapshot**—a reflection of who valued what, when, and why. It can **provide direction for safeguarding** efforts, serve as a historical record, and offer a basis for revisiting and renewing discussions about heritage values and meaning over time.

AN INNOVATIVE CONTRIBUTION

The methodology outlined in this guidebook is now ready for wider application. It represents a pioneering contribution to international ICH work and resonates with broader movements towards participatory, community-centred heritage practices. At the same time, it acknowledges the diversity of ICH contexts and avoids one-size-fits-all solutions. It offers a flexible framework and practical tools that can be adapted to different settings and stakeholder groups.

By **centering people's voices and fostering inclusive dialogue**, this approach supports the continued vitality of living heritage. It also responds to the urgent need—identified ininternational debates—to go beyond descriptive inventories and engage more deeply with how heritage is valued, experienced, and transmitted by those who sustain it.



A GLOSSARY

FOR TALKING ABOUT LIVING HERITAGE



Intangible cultural heritage / ICH / Living Heritage

Heritage is what people recognise as meaningful and worth passing on. It encompasses what we have inherited and value for the future.
Intangible cultural heritage—also called '**living heritage**'—refers to customs, knowledge, and practices that are actively maintained and passed on by communities today. It is dynamic, evolving along with the communities, groups, and individuals who practice and experience it. Living heritage changes with the times, adapting to new contexts while remaining rooted in shared traditions.

Heritage Community

Intangible cultural heritage is not something practiced in isolation. Even if someone engages in it alone, it is always connected to a wider network of people. In heritage terms, we refer to this as the **heritage community**.
These are the individuals and groups who keep intangible cultural heritage alive—whether by practicing it themselves or by supporting it. This includes practitioners, participants, spectators, volunteers, organisers, and others. Together, they uphold and transmit living heritage to future generations because they value its meaning. There is no intangible cultural heritage without people who care for it and sustain it.

Stakeholders

A heritage community includes many different types of **stakeholders**: from passionate practitioners to curious observers and sometimes also heritage professionals. Stakeholders may be individuals or groups, and each has their own specific relationship with the heritage in question. This diversity is essential for a multi-voiced assessment of value and meaning.

Intangible cultural heritage practice (or living heritage practice)

Intangible cultural heritage practice* refers to active engagement with living heritage. People are actively engaging by growing up within a tradition, by participating, transmitting, … It also includes deliberate efforts to care for the heritage's future (known as safeguarding).

* hereafter referred to as *practice*

Safeguarding

Safeguarding means ensuring a sustainable future for intangible cultural heritage. It involves intentional actions that allow people to continue practicing and engaging with heritage, and that inspire new generations to do the same.
Safeguarding may include documentation, archiving, awareness-raising, communication, education, or research. Most importantly, it involves active transmission to others.

Assessing Value and Meaning of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Everyone has ways of valuing, albeit in different ways: through words, actions, images, or gestures.
Assessing value and meaning of intangible cultural heritage is a conscious, participatory process. It seeks to understand the significance of a heritage practice as experienced by the heritage community itself. This process respects and prioritises the community's perspectives, without imposing external value judgements.

Values

Values express why a heritage practice is considered important by individuals, groups, or communities.
They may be personal or collective, and they take many forms. The interpretation of values depends on who is valuing, and in what context.
All values are considered equal in this methodology. We seek a multiplicity of values without predetermined hierarchies. Through open dialogue, common ground and shared values may emerge.

Meaning

Meaning arises from the interplay of different values assigned to heritage.
It is a narrative that explains why a particular heritage practice matters to specific people in a specific context.
Because values are diverse, meaning is often layered—composed of many intersecting stories.

Statement of Value and Meaning

A Statement of Value and Meaning is the outcome of a reflective assessment process.
It is a concise, supported summary that expresses who values the heritage, what they value, and why.
Such a statement may include a variety of—sometimes contrasting—perspectives. This diversity is useful in identifying strengths, needs, and priorities for safeguarding.
As such, the statement is not just a description of meaning and value, but a tool that contributes to the sustainable future of the heritage practice.

Basic Principles

OF ASSESSING VALUE & MEANING

Assessing the value and meaning of intangible cultural heritage is **a people-centred process**. It is always shaped by its specific context and must remain **open, adaptable, and inclusive**. At its heart lies the freedom for individuals to express their personal relationships with heritage—what it means to them, why it matters, and how it connects to their lives.

This **foundational attitude** underpins a distinct approach to valuation: one that is participatory, accessible, and respectful of diversity.

WE AFFIRM THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES

We recognise the diversity of intangible cultural heritage.
Therefore, we acknowledge the multiplicity, variety, and equality of the values associated with it.

We recognise the diversity of heritage communities.
Therefore, we acknowledge the multiplicity, variety, and equality of the voices involved.

We uphold the principle that all stakeholders
— regardless of background, perspective, or role — should have the opportunity to express their views on the value of intangible cultural heritage, in a manner that respects the above principles.

This framework invites **openness, dialogue, and mutual respect**. It fosters a collective exploration of heritage meanings and ensures that no single voice dominates the narrative.

WORKING METHODS & TOOLS

The working methods and tools presented are all grounded in the same core approach, but each places emphasis on different aspects of the value and meaning assessment process.

Used together, these methods form a comprehensive and in-depth programme for exploring intangible cultural heritage. However, they can also be used selectively—one or two methods may be enough for a more introductory or exploratory approach.

This guidebook is designed to support **a flexible, customisable process**. You can tailor the path according to your specific needs, context, or the phase of the work.

OVERVIEW OF WORKING METHODS

1 **Who?**
Identifying Stakeholders

2 **Who Else?**
Broadening Participation

3 **What?**
Describing Heritage Attributes, Repertoire and Connections

4 **Exploring Meaning and Values**
Open Questions

5 **Approaches**
Considering Multiple Perspectives

Tip

We recommend **starting with** the first two methods: **Who and Who Else?** – a foundational step to identify those who should be involved.

WHO?

WORKING METHOD 1

Identifying Stakeholders

Who initiates the Value and Meaning assessment?

This working method helps you take the first step in the process by identifying the person or people driving the initiative.
Whether you've been involved with a heritage practice for years or are only now becoming engaged, whether you're a heritage professional, a practitioner in your free time, or both—anyone who feels a connection to a particular heritage practice can initiate a value and meaning assessment.

That said, such an assessment is never a solitary process. It unfolds over time and requires engaging with others to explore and reflect on the value(s) and meaning of shared heritage. This step is about identifying those conversation partners and establishing the foundation for collaboration.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Who is the initiator?
Who is taking the initiative? What is their relationship to the ***heritage practice***?
What is the impetus? Why do they want to ***value*** this heritage practice?

Begin by identifying stakeholders as clearly as possible and reaching out to them. Ground your project in the initial impulse that inspired you to begin this journey. As the initiator, you propose a direction and working method—but the process will evolve with the input of others.

Who is involved in the practice?
Is the heritage practice being actively practiced by a heritage community?
Is it practised by loosely connected individuals or groups?
Or is it a combination of both?

The form of the group and the reason for undertaking the assessment will influence your approach.

Below are some **common types of groups** and the potential aims or benefits of engaging in a Value and Meaning assessment:

Heritage communities	Deepen understanding, broaden involvement, build connections
Loosely connected groups	Clarify purpose, foster connection
Individual(s)	Clarify meaning, broaden perspectives

CHOOSING A PATH

Depending on your goals and resources, you can choose a more in-depth or a lighter process. Each path starts with identifying who is involved. This initial clarity sets the tone for a meaningful, people-centred process:

INTENSIVE PATH

1. Who?
2. Who Else?
3. What?
4. Exploring Meaning and Values
5. Approaches

INTRODUCTORY PATH

1. Who?
2. Who Else?
4. Exploring Meaning and Values

WHO ELSE?

WORKING METHOD 2

Broadening Participation

Who can also participate in the Value and Meaning assessment?

This working method invites you to think beyond the obvious participants and expand the circle of involvement. It encourages you to identify individuals or groups who may not be at the forefront of the heritage practice but are nonetheless connected to it — directly or indirectly, consciously or unconsciously, enthusiastically or cautiously.

While those who are actively engaged—the so-called "**usual suspects**" — are key contributors to a participatory assessment, a truly multi-voiced process requires reaching further. To gain a fuller understanding of the values and meanings of a living heritage practice, it's important to involve a broader and more diverse range of perspectives.

From the perspective of intangible cultural heritage, it is essential to **honour the central role of active practitioners** and at the same time **open the conversation to wider circles of stakeholders**. This approach fosters inclusivity, encourages dialogue, and respects the autonomy of heritage communities while acknowledging the broader social, cultural, or economic ecosystems in which the heritage exists.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Who **practices** the heritage?
- Who **decides** how it is practiced or safeguarded?
- Who **attends** or participates occasionally?
- Who **supports** or encourages it?
- Who **uses** or benefits from it?
- Who holds **knowledge** or expertise?
- Who is **skilled** in it?
- Who **talks** about it?
- Who feels **represented** or addressed by it?

Stakeholder types might include

Practitioners, occasional participants, spectators, apprentices, masters, experts, novices, supporters, activists, entrepreneurs, heritage professionals, creators, advocates, patrons, fans, audience members, onlookers …

WORKING METHOD 3

WHAT?

Describing Heritage Attributes, Repertoire, and Connections

What is this practice about?

This step is about **describing the heritage practice in a way that reflects its richness, complexity, and connectedness**. Understanding a living heritage practice begins with looking closely at what it involves, how it is experienced, and how it connects to people, places, and other forms of heritage—tangible and intangible.

Value and **meaning** arise from these relationships: between people, between people and place, and between the practice and associated objects, sites, or knowledge systems. By exploring these relationships, we can gain a layered and holistic picture of what the heritage practice is and how it lives today. This also lays the groundwork for linking safeguarding efforts with broader, integrated heritage care.

This working method invites **open-ended reflection**. The prompts below are designed **to guide group conversations or personal reflection**. You don't need to answer every question systematically—use what feels relevant. Listening to others and building on each other's reflections often brings unexpected insights.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

Practice/Activity

What exactly does this practice involve? What is it about?
How are you personally involved in this practice?
How do you prepare? How do you enjoy yourself afterwards?
What do you do together, and what do you do alone?

Heritage Community/Stakeholders

Who are the people involved in this practice?
Which people or groups of people are important for this practice?
Do the different stakeholders know each other?
Who is always involved? Who participates/observes occasionally?

Knowledge and Skills

What knowledge or expertise is needed to engage in this practice?
What skills are required, and how are they learned?
Who teaches and who learns? How is knowledge passed on?

Language and Terminology

Are there specific words, phrases, dialects, or jargon associated with this practice?
What language is used when people talk about the practice?

Time

How does time play a role in this practice?
Are certain times of year important for this practice?
When are you most involved?

Objects

What objects play a role in this practice?
What tools are needed?
What objects have symbolic value?

Nature

How is this practice connected to nature?
Do weather and climate influence this practice?
Do plants and animals play a role?

Buildings and Built Environment

Are certain buildings or monuments connected to this practice?
Do specific streets, squares, or places play a role?

Location

Where does this practice take place?
Is there a region, area, or landscape that's strongly linked to it?
Is the setting public, private, rural, urban?

Evolution

How did this practice originate?
How has it changed over time?
What aspects are still the same? What has adapted?
How do people stay involved as it evolves?

WORKING METHOD 4

EXPLORING MEANING AND VALUE

Open Questions

This working method is easy to use with a diverse group of stakeholders because no specific prior knowledge is required. It uses **open-ended questions that invite personal reflection**. These reflections often reveal nuanced understandings and may even uncover previously overlooked aspects of value and meaning within the heritage practice.

Speaking and/or Writing?

These questions can be used in a variety of settings:

- **Oral discussions**, whether one-on-one or in groups, allow for rich interpersonal dynamics, emotional expression, and shared discovery.

- **Written responses** offer flexibility—participants can answer when and where they choose, which is especially useful for dispersed or larger groups. Written feedback is also easier to collect, compare, and analyse systematically.

Both methods have strengths. In conversation, body language, emotions, silences, and repetitions can reveal layers of meaning that words alone might not capture. In writing, people may express themselves more fully or thoughtfully in their own time.

This set of questions is **not meant to be exhaustive or prescriptive**. Choose freely from among them, depending on your group, your context, and your goals, although it is recommended to choose at least one question from each block. The important thing is to create space for **diverse voices**, **deep listening**, and **honest reflection** — this is where real insight into meaning and value emerges.

Tip

During conversations, pay attention not only to words but also to gestures, facial expressions, tone, posture, and pauses—these too can signal values and emotions.

OPEN QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE MEANING AND VALUE(S)

Relationships and Roles

How are you personally involved in this heritage practice?
Are you part of a specific group or community connected to this practice?
Is this heritage practice open to all?
Are certain people not included or engaged?

Key Features

What is this practice associated with for you?
What resources are needed to participate in it?
What knowledge or wisdom have you gained through your involvement?
What specific skills have you learned by engaging in this practice?
How has this practice changed over time? What do you think about these changes?
Does this practice serve a particular purpose in your life?
Do you (want to) use this practice to express or demonstrate something specific?

Aspects of Value

Why is this heritage practice important to you?
Why is this heritage practice important to other stakeholders?
Why is this heritage practice important to the wider community?
What feeling does it give you to engage in this practice?
How do those who are not directly involved perceive or relate to this practice?
Can this heritage practice make life more meaningful?
If this heritage practice disappears, what will be lost?

Ensuring Direction

Are there certain elements of this practice that help promote mutual understanding or respect in society?
If one thing should definitely be preserved, what would it be, and why?
Why is it important that this heritage practice continues into the future ?
How does it foster exchange, connection, or solidarity among people?
What more would you like to learn or understand about this heritage practice?
How would you like this practice to evolve in the future?

WORKING METHOD 5

APPROACHES

Considering Multiple Perspectives

This working method presents eight different perspectives from which the value and meaning of a heritage practice can be assessed. These perspectives are organised into four contrasting pairs, each capturing a different attitude or emphasis that may exist within a heritage community or group.

On one level, the paired perspectives invite personal reflection. On another, they provide a broader overview of how values may differ within a community or group. Mapping these differences can spark rich dialogue and deeper understanding.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

As an individual exercise

Participants can reflect on each pair and place themselves on a scale between the two poles. This can be done anonymously using the template below, encouraging honest and personal responses.

Afterward, all individual positions can be collected to form a collective visual—highlighting the diversity of interpretations and stances.

As a group activity

Use a large printed version of the scale (or draw it on a board or flipchart), and ask each participant to mark their position.

Alternatively, place signs at opposite ends of the room representing each pair, and have participants position themselves spatially according to their views.

VALUATION PERSPECTIVE PAIRS

Format: paired statements to be placed on opposite sides with empty space in between.

Doing For me, the emphasis is on practice, **what** we do and **how** we do it.	⟷	**Doing together** For me, the emphasis is on community, that above all we **do something together.**
For myself I am committed to this practice because it **benefits me personally.**	⟷	**For others** I am committed to this practice because **others benefit from it.**
Preserve I prefer this practice to **remain as it is.**	⟷	**Renew** I am open to this practice changing and **moving with the times.**
Absolutely I believe this practice **has significance for wider society.**	⟷	**Relative** I find meaning **in a more personal way.**

DOCUMENTING & REPORTING THE ASSESSMENT PROCES

Conducting a value and meaning assessment is a learning process. As you move through it, you **collect insights, perspectives, and knowledge** that help articulate why a heritage practice matters—to individuals, communities, and society. This process is not only about the outcomes, but also about how the conclusions were reached.

Documenting this journey **ensures transparency**, allows for **shared learning**, and preserves a **record** of how the heritage was understood and treated at a particular point in time. It also lays the groundwork for future reassessment, recognising that meanings and values evolve.

suggested format

Assessment Report

QUESTIONNAIRE STYLE

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- **Who took the initiative?**
- **Why conduct a value and meaning assessment?** (What was the trigger or motivation?)
- **What is being valued?** (Brief description of the intangible cultural heritage practice.)
- **Who was involved? Who had which role?** (Include any contact details.)

SUPPORTING MATERIALS AND PRIVACY CONSIDERATIONS

- **Collect and archive all relevant materials**: Audio/video recordings, photos, drawings, maps, notes, sketches, and diagrams created during the process.
- **Verify usage rights and permissions** for any audio-visual or written content.
- **Ensure privacy and data protection**. Prepare two versions of your documentation if needed:
  - A public version (anonymised and summarised) for sharing and transparency.
  - A confidential/internal version with full names, contact details, or sensitive insights.

Example

Practical information	*date, location, participants*
Content	*What was discussed? What insights and perspectives emerged? What method was used? How did it unfold? General conclusions and possible recommendations.*

DEVELOPING A STATEMENT OF VALUE AND MEANING

WHAT

A **statement of Value and Meaning** is a short, clear text summarising the findings from a heritage value assessment process. The text outlines **who** is involved, **what** the heritage practice is, and **when** the assessment took place**.** It describes the intangible cultural heritage in question and the stakeholders involved. The statement articulates **why** this heritage is meaningful and valuable to those involved. Because heritage is dynamic, the statement captures a snapshot in time—it can serve as both a record and a starting point for future reassessment as the practice evolves.

WHY

A Statement of Value and Meaning expresses why stakeholders consider the heritage in question to be important. It completes the value and meaning assessment process and provides **insight**. This insight is useful for stakeholders but can also be easily shared with a wider audience via the Statement of Value and Meaning. It thus not only gives more visibility to the heritage practice but can also initiate a **dialogue**.

A Statement of Value and Meaning supports safeguarding by identifying **important values, potential tensions, and future opportunities**. In this way, a value and meaning assessment is not only a **description of the meaning** of the heritage, but also a means to ensure its continued survival and evolution.

It can also highlight gaps in the process, such as the need for more time, resources, research, or broader participation, and can be used to advocate for these conditions before resuming the process.

HOW

Consult with those who will lead the drafting of the Statement of Value and Meaning. The writing is best done by one person or a duo. In preparation, first review all the information collected, and then distil the key findings. Here you pay specific attention to both the description of the heritage and the aspects of value that emerged during the value and meaning assessment process. Analysing all the material requires a lot of effort. Perhaps the assessment process was intensive, and everything needs to sink in. However, do not delay this step for too long, now that all the information gathered is still current and fresh in your mind.

If you used certain working methods, 'WHAT? - Describing heritage attributes, repertoire, and connections', 'Exploring Meaning and Values' or 'Considering multiple perspectives' during the assessment, you can also refer to them in the Statement of Value and Meaning. Below is a template that makes structuring and writing a Statement easier. This includes some fixed elements such as the author(s), those involved in the process of assessing value and meaning, the date, and, of course, the description of the assessed practice.

Once the Statement of Value and Meaning is written, it is proofread - supplemented or revised if necessary - and approved by those involved in the value and meaning assessment. This proofreading can be done online, but is also a good occasion for a final meeting. This makes the completion and final approval more dynamic and administratively less cumbersome. In doing so, be sure to clarify that the goal is to complete the value and meaning assessment. After all, there is a chance that people would start again from scratch without first summarising the insights gained. A finished value and meaning assessment is a crowning achievement.

ASSESSING VALUE & MEANING OF LIVING HERITAGE

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TEMPLATE

Statement of Value and Meaning _____ *(date)*

Prepared by _____ *(author(s))*

Proofread and approved by _____ *(participants of the value and meaning assessment)*

Who is involved? How do they name this practice?

1 **Who?**

2 **Who Else?**

How is this practice described? What elements play a role?

3 **What?** - Describing Heritage Attributes, Repertoire, and Connections

4 **Exploring Meaning and Values** – Open Questions → Key features

Why do stakeholders find this practice valuable? What values are mentioned? What is important? Where is emphasis placed?

4 **Exploring Meaning and Values** – Open Questions

Is everyone in agreement? What different perspectives are there? Is there disagreement?

4 **Exploring Meaning and Values** – Open Questions

5 **Approaches** - Considering multiple perspectives

Include any diagrams, mind maps, value charts, mapping frameworks, or visual representations created during the assessment process.

EXPERIENCES & REFLECTIONS FROM PRACTICE

Three different *value and meaning assessment* processes are outlined below. They are practical experiences, conducted in the context of Flanders, where the methodology was conceived and tested. These experiences helped to shape the development of the methods proposed above.

CLOG CULTURE
IN FLANDERS

Background & value and meaning assessment process

Clog culture in Flanders has been inscribed as intangible cultural heritage on the official Flanders Inventory since 2017. An active heritage community continues to safeguard this practice today. However, despite the enthusiasm of those involved, this heritage practice faces its own challenges. Clog culture is often dismissed as mere folklore, and out of nostalgic longing, contemporary possibilities, such as a more layered understanding of the past and sustainable applications for the future, are frequently overlooked.

This value and meaning assessment project employed all the working methods and serves as an example of a more intensive, longer-duration trajectory. Over one year, several group and individual discussions were organised. Participatory observation was also used, for example, during clog-making lessons. This experience helped facilitators work more effectively during discussions. Audiovisual material was collected and is maintained by the heritage organisation ETWIE for the heritage community's continued use.

Working methods



Den Eik © Clara Vankerschaver i.o.v. Werkplaats immaterieel erfgoed, 2019

The insights from the valuation process were compiled into **a Statement of Value and Meaning**, which was completed and approved by all participants in the value assessment. This document explains why people still make wooden shoes today and argues for a (re)valuation of this special craft. As a result of this multi-voiced process, the value statement contains recommendations for targeted safeguarding. After all, even an element on the Flanders Inventory continues to evolve naturally.

Statement of Value and Meaning: 'Clog culture in Flanders'

Value and meaning assessment trajectory 2019

Drafted by	Clara Vankerschaver, Workshop Intangible Heritage BE
Reviewed and approved by participants in the value and meaning assessment process	Members of the Klompenforum (Clog Forum), representatives of ETWIE, the MOT, Erfgoedcel k.ERF, Open-Air Museum Bokrijk, Klompenmuseum Den Eik, Heemkundige Kring 't Smiske & vwz De Klomp De Klinge.

In Flanders today, we can still find passionate clog-makers practicing a craft that was once ubiquitous. For centuries, wooden shoes were the footwear of choice for a broad swathe of the rural population. Every town or village had one or more clog-makers. Wooden footwear appeared very early in history, a typical model being the 'p(l)atine' or 'trip' (a type of clog) in the mid-15th century, often depicted in paintings by Philip the Good and others. Jan Bosch and Breughel the Elder also regularly painted clogs in the early 17th century. Clog-making peaked in the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. Flanders, Waasland, Meetjesland, and the Antwerp Kempen are historically important regions for clog-making.

Initially, clogs (also known in Flemish/Dutch dialect as *klonen, blokken, holen, kloefen, and kloenken)* were carved entirely by hand. The clog-maker's craft encompassed several aspects, beginning with wood selection and the felling or clearing of trees (also called *klatten* or *sleunen* in local dialect *)*. A clog-maker could control the entire process from raw material to finished product. However, to speed up production, the crafting process was sometimes divided into several steps and performed by different makers. This occurred, for example, in the Waasland region, where clog-making was divided into three specialisations: *felling, carving,* and *hewing*. From the 1930s, clog-making became mechanised. Specialised machines could take over some manual work and further increase productivity. These machines used hand-made moulds that were mechanically copied onto rough blocks of wood. Drilling out or hewing could also be done mechanically using specialised jigs. Grading wood, making jigs (different ones for each model and size), and adjusting and operating machines remained skilled crafts.



Klingspoor © Clara Vankerschaver i.o.v. Werkplaats immaterieel erfgoed, 2019

The stakeholders who value clog culture in Flanders today fulfill different roles. They are active clog-makers, clog heritage managers, heritage professionals, and members of heritage societies or folklore groups. Almost all come from regions where the clog-making trade once flourished, such as the Waasland and Antwerp Kempen regions. The clog community members are brought together in the Clog Forum and meet under ETWIE's coordination, the Centre for Industrial Heritage in Flanders (Belgium). They are committed to safeguarding the intangible

cultural heritage practice of clog-making and supporting the valorisation of clog heritage. While large-scale clog production no longer exists in Belgium, skilled clog-makers and enthusiasts continue to keep the heritage alive, with roots in the past and an eye to the future.

What unites those involved in this appreciation is the love for the craft. The manual techniques and use of specific tools, knowledge of materials, and feeling for wood are elements valued by all involved. Making clogs creates a certain atmosphere and alludes to the past while also having a value in the present. Working with wood appeals to the senses and provides physical satisfaction. Moreover, it demonstrates a complete creative process from start to finish. At craft fairs and demonstrations, clog-makers notice how their contemplative handiwork amazes and delights onlookers. Through this handicraft, we can observe how a tree is gradually transformed into a useful object. It also helps us understand how machines have been able to take over certain tasks, providing insight into the manufacturing process.

The connection to the past is important to all stakeholders in various ways. As a craft, it teaches us historical working methods. Sam Mondelaers, the last Belgian clog-maker to practice the craft professionally, died in 2018. With him disappeared a generation that possessed immense knowledge and skill. Preserving that knowledge and skill is an important motivation for many involved today. How was something done in the past? Why was it done that way? The MOT - Museum of Old Techniques - preserves a collection of clog-making tools and helps safeguard knowledge of how to use them. Certain aspects, such as specific knowledge and feeling for wood and skilled knife-sharpening and machine tuning, are also relevant to other crafts and woodworking techniques.



Heemkring 't Smikse © Clara Vankerschaver i.o.v. Werkplaats immaterieel erfgoed, 2019

Genealogy and local history equally shape this narrative. Personal family histories that include clog-makers motivate present-day clog-makers to continue this tradition. The son and daughter-in-law of the last clog-maker enthusiastically pursue the clog-making trade today. Strengthened by this personal background, these makers find it important to share their experiences with others. The clog also plays a role in regional history. Several national and local museums have clogs in their collections as references to local traditional dress, craft, or trade. At folklore group De Klomp De Klinge (De Klinge), local history museum 't Smiske (Rijmenam), and Clog Museum Den Eik (Laakdal), clog-making is part of operations. The Open Air Museum Bokrijk has a collection of clog-making tools and clog pairs, houses a smokehouse and a clog-maker's workshop, and in recent years has dedicated itself to demonstrating the craft of clog-making, safeguarding this traditional craftsmanship, and making it accessible. Several clog-makers also regularly participate in craft fairs, finding them rewarding platforms for their practice.

There is tremendous diversity in designs and decorations, characteristic of the region, the maker, and the type of activity for which they were worn. Thus, each clog tells its own story. Those involved find this diversity special and worth preserving. At the heritage site Klingspoor, this diversity is on display with clogs from around the world. A clog-making course has been organised there since 2019, based on the view that anyone who wants to be a clog-maker today needs the knowledge and skills to make different styles. Unlike the Netherlands, Flanders chooses to continue cherishing stylistic diversity rather than working with a single standard model.

The stakeholders agreed to define a clog as footwear with a wooden sole. This definition also implies openness to potential contemporary and future models, which presents a major challenge. Not so long ago, wearing clogs was embedded in daily life. Nowadays, however, there are almost no clog wearers left, and without wearers, there is little point in making them - A sentiment shared by almost everyone involved. In specific activities, such as scything and laying cobblestones, clogs can prove useful even today. They are safe and durable footwear, not just folklore. To walk comfortably in clogs, it is important to have the right size and fit. At the Clog Museum Den Eik, visitors can borrow well-fitting pairs and, on a clog walking path, experience how it feels to step on different surfaces. In many cases, this experience has dispelled preconceptions about their comfort.

Changing fashions and artistic applications are welcomed by some stakeholders. After all, wooden clogs are a sustainable alternative to plastic garden footwear. They meet the current demand of more and more people for responsible and sustainable products. Making and wearing clogs thus goes hand in hand with respect and appreciation for the local, traditional, and natural.

Clog culture in Flanders has a rich history that can still be read in various collections, historical sources, and in the *living craft*. The communities, groups, and individuals who cherish clog heritage face the future, proud of the past. The connection that exists today between the various stakeholders strengthens the safeguarding of this once ubiquitous yet still special heritage.

FANFARE CULTURE

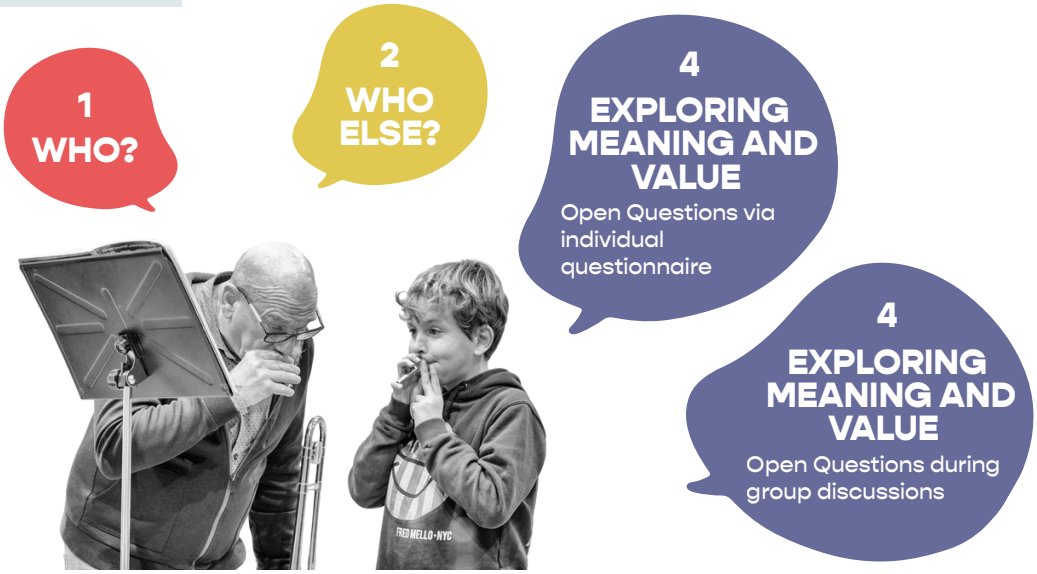
Background & value and meaning assessment process

This value and meaning assessment process coincided with preparations for an application to inscribe 'Fanfare culture' (a type of brass band) on the Flanders Inventory for intangible cultural heritage. The entire process was led by VLAMO (the Flemish Amateur Music Organisation) and CEMPER (the Centre for Music and Performing Arts Heritage in Belgium). The value and meaning assessment process, supported by Workshop Intangible Heritage, was part of the broader application setup for the Inventory. The collaboration between various organisations made it possible to reach a wide network of musicians and stakeholders. An **online questionnaire**, to which more than 300 respondents contributed, served as a broad consultation. Additionally, roundtable discussions were organised per province, providing in-depth information and questionnaire results.

The application form for the Flanders Inventory specifically asks: "What value and meaning does this heritage have? Describe why it is so valuable to you today." The survey asked a large group of stakeholders what values and meaning they find in fanfare culture, using **a limited set of open-ended valuation questions**. Because this was a written questionnaire, the number of questions was limited, allowing participants to formulate their own responses, long or short, as they saw fit.

- Why is fanfare culture important to you?
- Why is fanfare culture important to society?
- If something about fanfare culture should definitely be preserved, what would it be? Write down three things that are important to you.
- In your opinion, what do people who are not directly involved think about fanfare culture?

Working methods



Pauze bij KF de Verbroedering van Zandvliet © Lodewijk Deleu (ikwashier.live)

The survey was processed by committed heritage professionals, and the findings were captured in a comprehensive report. The large number of participants made processing rich but time-intensive. The various **roundtable discussions**, with diverse stakeholders, further elaborated on the survey results and the application for recognition on the Flanders Inventory. Fanfare Culture has since been officially listed in the Inventory for ICH in Flanders. The interplay between involved organisations and various heritage communities - the many fanfare bands - ensured **broad participation**. The many personal and shared values are reflected in the collected written testimonies and summarised in the report. You can read more about this at www.immaterieelerfgoed.be.

"A typical orchestral form for Belgium and the Netherlands that can hardly be found elsewhere."

"I joined the fanfare as a young musician and learnt a lot there. Playing together with young and older musicians is something that has inspired me throughout the rest of my life."

"It is an outlet for a great many musicians. From very high to very low level. Unlike wind orchestras, it is not the case that bigger is almost always better. With a modest number of musicians, you can perform very beautiful music. Moreover, it is a group activity that can be done from age 8 to 100. This contrasts with (team) sports. Also, the social scene surrounding it provides a fantastic safety net with many friends. You meet people from all different walks of life, from CEOs to factory workers, from farmers to construction workers. From left-wingers to right-wingers. Such backgrounds completely fall away when we can make music together."

"For its timbre, its uniqueness."



KF De Moedige Vlamingen Lokeren - Heiende © Gerbrand Van Uytvanck

ARTISAN COFFEE ROASTERS

Background & value and meaning assessment process

After water and tea, coffee is the most widely consumed beverage in the world. Many cultures make and drink coffee in their own distinctive ways and maintain various customs and traditions. The coffee bean's journey is also characterised by **specific knowledge and craftsmanship**. The Coffee Stories project was established by the heritage organisation CAG (Centre for Agrarian History) and aims to sensitise and inspire communities and organisations about various forms of coffee heritage. The safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage has received special attention under this project. A value and meaning assessment process in cooperation with Workshop Intangible Heritage helped to develop a better understanding of the special craftsmanship of coffee roasting. All coffee roasters in Belgium were mapped and invited to participate. However, only a few professional roasters were able to make time for it. Consequently, this was not a comprehensive survey, but with **a limited number of participants**, it was possible to conduct the value and meaning assessment as **an in-depth group discussion**. We chose an inspiring location for this, the Botanic Garden Meise, and began with a guided tour by a botanist specialising in coffee plants.

Working methods

Although the value and meaning assessment session consisted of only a small group, some clear conclusions could be drawn. According to these artisan roasters, what typifies the craftsmanship of coffee roasters is the diversity from roaster to roaster. They each have their own knowledge, expertise, and personal touch. Yet it should be clear that with each roaster, taste is central.

The aim is to make good coffee, and that is based on customer feedback. Of course, taste is also important at industrial roasters, but there, according to the group, the aim is a much more consistent taste - whereas a small roaster dares to experiment more often.

Still, the group concluded that the essence of the craft, both at the small roaster and the industrial ones, remains the same and has remained so for decades. Coffee roasting remains a fine art, and new technologies do not detract from this but simply make the roasting process more controllable.

(From the Koffiestories report, CAG - Centre for Agrarian History).



koffieboon Plantentuin Meise © Werkplaats immaterieel erfgoed

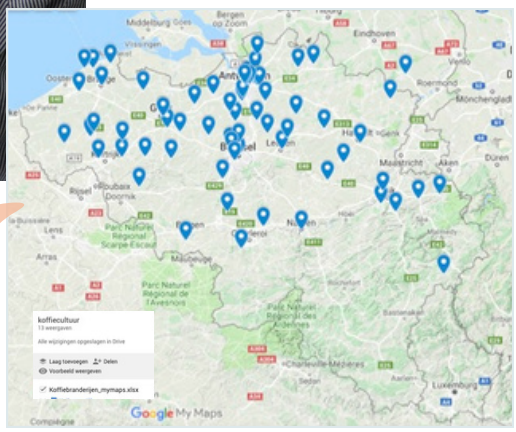
"This group are all craft roasters, we distinguish ourselves by unique mélanges and slower roasting, down to the core, while industrial roasting is faster and harsher, giving a less distinct aroma."

"If you take an ordinary green coffee bean, you have no flavour. You need the roasting process to make those natural aromas and oils develop. You can do that so-called 'caramelisation' in different ways: thereby you distinguish the craft and the industry."



Rondleiding Plantentuin Meise © Werkplaats immaterieel erfgoed

"As an artisan, you know which flavour region you're in in Belgium, and you respond to that. You don't have that diversity in many countries."



koffiebranders verspreid over België

Also visit the Coffee Stories exhibition online at www.koffiestories.be



AFTERWORD

Over the past few years, significance assessment processes have increasingly become part of cultural heritage work. With our exploration into assessing the significance, meaning, and values of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), this trajectory has inscribed itself with these broader developments and international networks.

Assessing value and meaning is people-centred work. It is inherently unpredictable and always different. Through this publication, we aim to offer a solid yet flexible framework to support these sometimes fragile processes—along with concrete working methods that foster the inclusion and expression of multiple voices.
We wish to help everyone interested in the significance assessment of intangible cultural heritage - from expert to novice – on their way.

At Workshop Intangible Heritage, we see it as our core task to support and highlight ICH through an inclusive approach. The value and meaning assessment methodology presented here has already followed its own journey. The absence of an existing methodology for ICH significance assessment in 2017 was both a challenge and a remarkable opportunity—one that allowed us to shape the process step-by-step, guided by a clear vision.

This Guidebook for Assessing the Value and Meaning of Living Heritage is a fledgling beacon within a growing international landscape of heritage significance assessment methods.
We hope it offers a valuable contribution to the ongoing development of living heritage work across the world.

Jorijn Neyrinck
for Workshop Intangible Heritage BE

WORKSHOP INTANGIBLE HERITAGE BE

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The collaboration with various heritage communities and those engaged in the different value and meaning assessment processes has been invaluable in many ways. Their insights, experiences, and dedication brought life and richness to the work.

ASSESSING VALUE & MEANING

OF LIVING HERITAGE

A GUIDEBOOK

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