

How **intangible heritage** should contribute to **sustainable development** of **rural tourism**: A case study in the province of Cordoba, Andalusia (Spain)

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Abstract | The evolution of tourism from a standard model to segmented, flexible and tailor-made forms has resulted in a growing interest in the rural environment and what it can contribute to a return to genuine ways of life. The Spanish region of Andalusia has a highly recognized potential in rural tourism as it preserves a rich natural and cultural heritage closely linked to local communities, mainly in the broader rural context. The purpose of this paper is to show how intangible heritage could contribute as an effective and strategic tool for the promoting of the economic, social and environmental development of rural tourism in the province of Cordoba. This descriptive work has been completed using qualitative methodology that includes ethnographic observations and interviews, together with local newspapers and a review of municipal archives. The detailed study, focusing on the province of Cordoba, shows how expressions of intangible heritage, herein also referred to as festive rituals or *fiestas*, are closely linked to seasonal patterns and nature through the surrounding landscape of every town and village; furthermore it preserves both the identity of the local community and the collective memory, at the same time reducing the risk of acculturation. The conclusions aim to provide a benchmark for decision making in the promotion of sustainable development for rural tourism in Cordoba based on expressions of intangible heritage.

Keywords | Intangible cultural heritage, Rural tourism, Sustainable development, Festive rituals, Cordoba-Andalusia.

Resumo | A evolução do turismo, desde a sua padronização até ao surgimento de formas segmentadas, flexíveis e feitas à medida, resultou num crescente interesse pelo meio rural e pelo que este pode contribuir para o retorno aos modos de vida tradicionais. A região espanhola da Andalusia tem um grande potencial ao nível do turismo rural, uma vez que preserva um rico património natural e cultural intimamente ligado às comunidades locais, principalmente no contexto rural. O objetivo deste artigo é mostrar como o património imaterial pode contribuir, como uma ferramenta eficaz e estratégica, para a promoção do desenvolvimento económico, social e ambiental do turismo rural na província de

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Córdoba. Este trabalho, de natureza descritiva, utiliza uma metodologia qualitativa, que inclui observações etnográficas e entrevistas, juntamente com a análise de jornais locais e uma revisão dos arquivos municipais. O estudo detalhado, com foco na província de Córdoba, mostra como expressões de património imaterial, aqui também referido como rituais festivos ou festas, estão intimamente ligadas a padrões sazonais e à natureza, através da paisagem envolvente a cada vila e aldeia. Além disso, este património preserva tanto a identidade da comunidade local e da memória coletiva, como reduz o risco de aculturação. As conclusões têm por objetivo fornecer um referencial para a tomada de decisão na promoção do desenvolvimento sustentável para o turismo rural em Córdoba, com base em expressões de património imaterial.

Palavras-chave | Património cultural imaterial, Turismo rural, Desenvolvimento sustentável, Rituais festivos, Córdoba-Andaluzia.

1. Introduction

The Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Heritage establishes that intangible cultural heritage is formed from the “uses, representations, expressions, knowledge and techniques – together with the instruments, objects, devices and cultural spaces that are inherent to it – that the communities, groups and in some cases individuals acknowledge as an integrating part of their cultural heritage” (UNESCO, 2003, p. 2). Since 2008, the Atlas of Andalusia Intangible Heritage (AAIH) is working to register, document, and disseminate and safeguard Andalusian intangible heritage. It is supported by the Ministry of Culture of Andalusia, through the Institute of Andalusian Historical Heritage, and covers the entire region: eight provinces and 771 municipalities grouped into 62 supra-municipalities. According to the UNESCO’s definition (2003), and without establishing closed categories, AAIH considers the following topical areas: festive rituals, trades and knowledge, ways of expression, and food and cuisine. All of these have a relationship with ‘spaces’, geographical location, and ‘places’, cultural wealth: oral traditions and their inherent expressions, and the transfer of knowledge between generations. In short, intangible cultural heritage has a sense of collective identity; it is dynamic, because it is constantly recreated by the communities, and it is alive as it is transmitted from one generation to another.

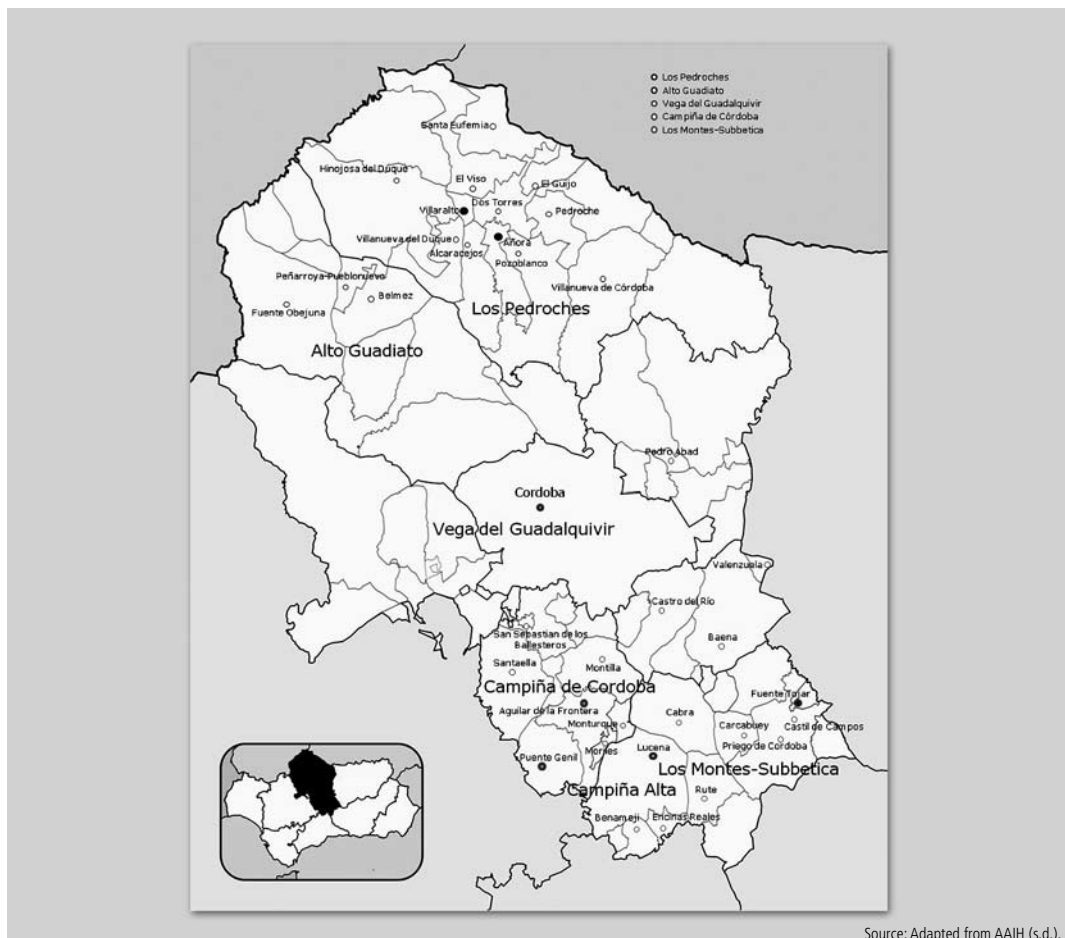
It appears important to highlight the anthropological connection found by many authors between intangible and tangible heritage. For example, Munjeri (2004) has argued that cultural heritage, objects, collections, buildings, etc., become recognized as ‘heritage’ only when these things express the value of society and therefore the tangible can be only understood and interpreted through the intangible (Munjeri, 2004). In this way, society and values are intrinsically linked as also noted by Prats (2005). He has largely argued about the specificity of social construction of ‘local heritage’, through collective memory, experiences, and uses of this heritage (Prats, 2005).

In 2012, the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage listed the *Fiesta of the Patios in Cordoba* (FPC) on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO, 2012). Consequently, growing recognition of intangible heritage, considered as a vital factor in the assertion of cultural identity, represents a significant contribution to the development of the city alongside The Mosque of Cordoba, part of the World Heritage List since 1984 (UNESCO, 1984), extended and renamed The Historic Centre of Cordoba (UNESCO, 1994). In accordance with the ideas mentioned above, we consider both the expression of the *fiesta* and those involved, and the space where it takes place, in courtyards or *patios*. In this sense, it can be said that the former turns the latter from a mere space into a place, through the added value of social use.

These circumstances provided an opportunity to show how the wealth of intangible heritage, and its inherent relationship with traditions and nature, is important to ensure the sustainable development of rural tourism in the province of Cordoba, one of the eight provinces of Andalusia. Today, after five years of research work, the AAIH lists a total of 183 traditional cultural expressions identified in Cordoba. Of these, 64 fall under the festive rituals category, 75 under Trades and knowledge, 19 under Ways of expression, and 25 under Food and cuisine. All of these have been listed by AAIH with criteria of singularity and uniqueness.

This paper focuses on festive rituals, because all of them includes interactions with other areas, such

as means of expression, flamenco songs, music and dances, or *saetas*, a specific Easter song; collective acts of cuisine, such as *rosca*s of San Blas, or *peroles*, a communal rice based meal that became particularly important in this context. In this sense, it is possible to identify Trades and Knowledge – woodcarvers, religious image-makers or embroiderers – all closely connected with the rituals in question (Carrera Díaz, 2009). Festive Rituals are cultural events where significance and meaning interact, defining the community through cultural values, feelings and hopes, or individual and collective ideals (Carrera Díaz, 2009). A geographical distribution analysis shows that there are 37 villages involved in the province of Cordoba, located in six districts. Of these, seven take place in May (Figure 1).



Source: Adapted from AAIH (s.d.).

Figura 1 | Location of festive rituals taking place in May in Cordoba (Spain).

This paper used a qualitative methodology based on ethnographic observations and interviews with identified key stakeholders of the *Fiestas*, as well as local newspapers and a review of municipal archives. The detailed study shows how intangible heritage, here named also *fiestas*, is closely linked to seasonality and nature through the landscape in which where every town or village is located; furthermore it preserves both the identity of the local community's identity and collective memory, while at the same time reducing the risk of acculturation

2. The festive rituals of the Province of Cordoba

2.1. Setting

Cordoba is an inland city located in the South of Spain. It is the capital city of the province of the same name, which is one of the eight provinces of Andalusia. It covers an area of 1,255 sq. km, with 328,841 inhabitants by 2012. Its main economic activity focuses on: trade (with 6,896 retail establishments open to the public); professional, scientific and technical activities (3,546); building construction (1,932); manufacturing (1,785); and the hospitality (1,740) (Andalusian Institute of Statistics and Cartography, 2011). The city of Cordoba has 84 hotels, providing over 6,000 beds (National Institute of Statistics, 2013). The average annual rate of hotel occupancy in 2012 was 39.61%. April and May reached the highest occupancy rate by bed places, with 53.0% and 52.0%, respectively, and the lowest in January, with 27.2% (Andalusia Institute of Statistics and Cartography, 2012). This seasonal pattern can be explained by the Holy Week traditional celebrations, usually in March-April, and a wide range of festive events taking place throughout May: regional wine tasting, the Festival of the Crosses, the Festival of the *Patios*, and the traditional Fair of Our Lady of Health (Millán, 2012).

2.2. Description of festive rituals

The selected festive rituals in the province of Cordoba follow a criterion of seasonality: they take place in May. This selection is justified because this is the month with the greatest flow of tourists, as shown above. Table 1 shows the characterisation of these festive rituals by location, related landscape, public or semi-public nature of the celebrations, spiritual profile, and duration in days. Additionally it reflects their relation to AAIH categories such as 'Ways of expression', 'Food and cuisine' and 'Trades and knowledge'.

- a) **The Fiesta of the *Patios* (FPC)** takes place every spring, for twelve days, in early May. Visitors have access to Cordoba's courtyards or *patios*. These *patios* are mostly privately owned, and they are the cultural space in which the *fiesta* takes place. The owners of the courtyards freely welcome visitors to admire the beauty and skill of their floral creations. This festive ritual is accompanied, in the *patios* and adjoining public spaces, by traditional singing and dancing, and *flamenco* guitar music. Visitors typically stroll around the historic quarter of the city: the *Medina*, which comprises the Jewish quarter and *San Basilio*, and *Axerquía*, comprising the neighbourhoods of *Santiago*, *Santa Marina*, *San Pedro*, *San Andrés*, *San Lorenzo* and *La Magdalena*. These *patios* are heterogeneous in type and size, and heavily reliant on the decisions and actions of their inhabitants.
- b) **Crosses of May** in *Áñora*, located in the district of *Los Pedroches*¹, is a festival in which a cross, the quintessential symbol of Christianity, is decorated using white flowers, necklaces, shawls, embroidery, and gold jewellery, both indoors and

¹ *Los Pedroches* is an area situated in the north of the province of Cordoba, in the northern foothills of the *Sierra Morena*. It is particularly noted for its smooth landscapes and level reliefs. It is a highly managed environment: grasslands, agricultural, stockbreeding and forestry activities.

Table 1 | Characterization of festive rituals held in May in Cordoba (Spain)

Denomination	Location	Region/Territory	Seasonality	Visitors Interaction	Religious nature	Running time (days)	Ways of Expression	Food, cuisine	Trades and Knowledge
Fiesta of the patios in Cordoba*	Córdoba	Vega del Guadalquivir	May	Public	No	12	Flamenco*	Communal meal	Traditional flower arrangement
Crosses of May	Áñora	Los Pedroches	May	Public	No	2	Traditional dances	Chocolate	Embroidery, Precious metalwork
Pilgrimage of the Divina Pastora	Villarato	Los Pedroches	May	Public	Yes	2	Traditional songs and dances	Communal meal	Traditional flower arrangement
Saint Isidro	Fuente Tójar	Los Montes-Subbética	May	Semi-public	Yes	1	Procession, Couplets declaimed, Traditional	Young Wine	Embroidery, Traditional flower arrangement
Pilgrimage of the Virgin of Araceli	Lucena	Campaña Alta-MMSB	May	Public	Yes	1	Proclamation	Communal meal	Embroidery, Traditional flower arrangement
Day of the Cross	Aguilar de la Frontera	Campaña de Córdoba	May	Public	No	2	Traditional dances	Communal meal	Traditional flower arrangement
"Chiquita" Holly Week	Puente Genil	Campaña de Córdoba	May	Public	Yes	6	Children's procession	Bread soaked on milk (torrijas)	Modeling biblical faces, Precious metalwork

* Inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Source: Adapted from AAIH (n.d.).

outdoors. This is, in short, an exaltation of the arrival of spring, and is also clearly influenced by the ancestral *mayos*, or *mayas*, pagan celebrations and traditions of spring predating the current Christian traditions.

- c) **Pilgrimage of the *Divina Pastora***, in *Villaralto*, is a two day religious celebration which consists of a descent of the Virgin of the *Divina Pastora*, carried through the streets by youths, from her shrine to the village, with a procession accompanied by elaborately adorned floats, involving both adults and children.
- d) **Festival of *San Isidro***, in *Fuente Tojar*, located in region of *Los Montes-Subbética*², is held in honour of the village's patron. Two traditional

dances named 'the crossing' and 'the circle' are performed by eight dancers accompanying the procession. However, what distinguishes this ritual is a unique type of auction of olives, wheat, or other products, led by brothers of the Fraternity and where wine is offered whenever someone is outbid. It is considered semi-public because the ritual is performed exclusively by "Fraternity members" and their families, although anyone can enjoy it as a spectator.

- e) **Pilgrimage of the Virgin of *Araceli***, in *Lucena*, in the district regions of *Campaña Alta* and *Los Montes-Subbética*. It consists of a pilgrimage to the chapel of the Virgin of *Araceli*, the protector saint of the village, located three kilometers from the town, with a spectacular landscape viewpoint from where the eight provinces of Andalusia can be seen. It begins with the traditional opening speech and a massive offering of flowers made by women wearing the traditional *lucentina* costume. The procession from the shrine to village, takes place under a blanket of fireworks.

² *Los Montes-Subbética* district includes provinces of Granada, Cordoba and Jaen. It is situated to the North of Sierra Arana and Genil Valley, over a landscape of low mountain ranges, running from west to east, and includes *Lucena* and *Sierra de Quesada* between the boundaries of *Cazorla*. Its northern limits are the Guadalquivir valley and Cordoba *campiña*, where the *Sierras de Rute*, *Montes de Cabra* and *Sierra de Alta Coloma* have the greater high enclaves. The territory between these natural boundaries is less rugged and covered with olive groves, and further to the ease, with non-irrigated farm crops.

- f) **Cross Day**, in *Aguilar de la Frontera*, is located in the district of *Campiña*³. On May 3rd the *Virgen de los Remedios* is carried through the streets of the *Veracruz* neighborhood and part of the *El Carmen* neighborhood, which are decorated to welcome the Virgin. In different parts of the town crosses and arches are made, with an abundance of flowers and other unique ornamentation. There are also two offerings of flowers, one to the Virgin and another to *Jesus Nazareno*.
- g) **Chiquita Holly Week**, in *Puente Genil*. The day of the Cross is celebrated on May 3rd, representing a children's version of the Good Friday Story.

In a medieval text written by Alfonso X of Castile (1252-1284), 'Seven-part Code' or *Partidas*, the term 'popular festival' was already defined in contrast to 'religious festival', ordered by the Church, and "institutional festival", ordered by the Government. According to this text, the sole objective of popular festivals is the communal benefit of the people (cited by Serrano Martín, 2006). The May celebrations are also part of the 'Spring and Summer Festivals' (Caro Baroja, 1983), where these have a strong festive and participative nature. Public spaces, streets and squares in both cities and towns are of special importance. Furthermore, the symbolism of the expressions related to festivals has been strongly linked to exaltation of the Spring (IAPH, 2012).

3. Theoretical background and literature review

Bearing in mind that the purpose of this paper is to provide arguments for determining how intangible heritage could contribute to the sustainable development of rural tourism, there is a need at this preliminary stage for clearly defining topics, elucidating their core principles and concepts, and consider their relationship, as a basis for the whole research process. Although the physical movement of people is still identified as the essence of tourism, in the 21st century tourism should be understood as

a broader concept, in the context of the wide range of classic and contemporary themes: Rural, Gastronomic, or Slow Tourism; Festivals and Arts, Sports and Adventure; Cultural and Heritage, Film, and Dark Tourism (Robinson, Heitman & Dieke, 2011). However, as noted by Ballart (2005), contemporary tourism appears to be undergoing constant transformation, and so the models mentioned, far from being mutually exclusive, appear to form part of a heterogeneous touristic demand: visitors wish to discover and experiencing everything on offer at the destination (Ballart, 2005).

Rural areas became idealized with the increase in urban development, the modernization of agriculture and changes in landscapes changed (Murdoch, 2003). As noted by Farrell and Russell (2011), our lives have become 'far more secular', contributing to a search for a connection with the countryside, and rural tourism serves as a means to 'escape the mundane' (Farrell & Russell, 2011), and to visit the 'authentic': artisan products, heritage foods, arts, crafts and pastimes, identifying "a need to connect with ancient traditions and ways" (Dallen & Boyd, 2003). Furthermore, other authors have established that rural tourism will help to maintain dynamism and to regenerate rural areas, helping to solve the arduous socio-economic problems faced by these regions (Millán, Arjona & Amador, 2013).

Development is an incremental, long-term, and non-immediate process for improving both the economic opportunities and quality of life and conditions in any society. It includes human and institutional changes, such as changes in behaviour, aspirations and broader aspects of quality of life (UNDP, 1999-2013). The origins of the concept of sustainable development can be traced back to the publication of *The Limits to Growth* by Donella H. Meadows, Meadows, Randers and Behrens III (1972),

³ *Campiña* landscape demarcation is strongly linked to the course of the Guadalquivir River. It is the northern limit of a vast territory of rich fertile lowlands, running south to Genil River, and *Sierras de la Subbética* to the east.

and to the special issue of *The Ecologist: Blueprint for Survival* (1972), where the word 'sustainable' first appeared, just before the first oil crisis. In 1985, the United Nations (UN) World Commission on Environment and Development presented the report *Our Common Future* to the UN General Assembly, coordinated by Grö Harlem Brundtland and published in 1987. This report formed the conceptual basis of sustainable development, and it was adopted unanimously by all the UN agencies. It comprises four basic ideas: (i) holistic strategy-making; (ii) the preservation of essential ecological processes; (iii) the protection of human heritage and biodiversity; and finally, the key requirement, (iv) productivity that can be sustained for future generations (Bramwell & Lane, 1993).

Sustainable Tourism as argued by Anne Hardy in 2002, has traditionally given more focus to aspects relating to the environment and economic development than the involvement of the community. This author provides a brief overview of sustainability in tourism literature noting that, while some advocates of sustainable tourism, following parochial definitions, have emphasized growth as the means of maintaining viability, others, in contrast, tend to define sustainable tourism in broader terms, transferring the principles of sustainable development to the context of tourism needs. She concludes that sustainable tourism is therefore a concept conditioned by social context, and in order for it to be achieved, stakeholders must be identified and their subjective needs satisfied (Hardy, Beeton & Pearson, 2002). In general terms, the literature has raised concerns about the theoretical conceptualization weaknesses of sustainable tourism, commenting that an interdisciplinary approach is indispensable (Zhenhua, 2003). According to the conclusions obtained from the Iberoamerican Congress of Cultural Heritage, Development and Tourism, held in Michoacán (México) in 2003, and described by Ballart (2005), cultural dimension is recognized as the main factor for development. If this provision is applied to the development of sustainable tourism, it will be accepted

that tourism is not solely concerned with economic growth, because culture would be the foundation of any tourist activity. Furthermore, the most recent model of Intangible Heritage seeks to sustain living traditions by supporting the conditions necessary for cultural reproduction. This means according value to the "carriers" and "transmitters" of traditions, as well as their *habitus* and *habitat*.

The task, then, is to sustain the whole system as a living entity and not just to collect intangible artefacts (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004). Both ideas lead us to a singular form of cultural tourism: ethnic tourism. Although this term is usually used to support ethnic minorities in showcasing their culture and reviving their traditions (Santos & Yang, 2008) this paper uses the term to refer to Intangible Heritage as a cultural representation of a traditional lifestyle of an urban minority, strongly linked to authenticity and identity (Rodríguez, 2011), despite the fact that those promoting this not belonging to any specific ethnicity. As Yang noted (2011) modern tourists become more interested in "close contact with locals and experiencing authentic culture", and ethnic tourism is, therefore, an attractive opportunity for opening a window to a distinct cultural reality: its experience focuses on elements such as oral traditions and expressions, social practices, festive rituals, knowledge and practices concerning nature and traditional craftsmanship (Millán, 2012). It is also important to underline that ethnic tourism satisfaction is closely linked to the social, emotional and symbolic dimensions of the experience (Kastenholz, Carneiro, Marques & Lima, 2012).

4. Aim and Methodology

The SWOT analysis is the process of exploring the internal and external environments of an organisation and extracting convenient strategies (Ghazinoory & Azadegan-Mehr, 2011). Therefore, it would be useful to complete a SWOT analysis

to examine the effects of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of Rural Tourism in the province of Cordoba. Four types of strategies are identified that combine the results that could define the sustainable development of rural tourism, based on the opportunities presented with the listed of the *Fiesta of the Patios* in Cordoba on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This paper tries to find evidence from the key stakeholders, identified through an Experts' Forum Group in tourism management of historical cities held in Cordoba in March 2013 (Figure 2). It considered key stakeholders as those holding three attributes: legitimacy, urgency and power (González, 2007). In this case, the key stakeholders are practitioners – as a collective – of the festive rituals, and regional government representatives in the province, allowing us to put forward valid arguments concerning the tourism potential of the Province of Córdoba's Cultural Expressions, also named Intangible Heritage.

This paper uses an ethnographic methodology based on participatory observation techniques and interviews, where the researcher participates in the activity – the festive-ritual – gathering informa-

tion through observation. This is complemented by interviews with provincial representatives from the Regional Government for tourism, environment and heritage. Furthermore, this research also draws on a broad review of available literature, query based access to AAIH and local media, and a wider-ranging overview of the annual reports on the previous 11 years (2002-2012) of 'Popular Patios Competition' (PPC), organised by Cordoba City Council since 1933, widely considered the foundation for FPC. This previous work has allowed us to note that the *Fiestas* are a cultural public good, so social, economic and tourism activity generated by those who maintain the festive rituals.

5. Main findings: The festive-rituals as a spreading option for sustainable rural tourism

The *fiestas* of Cordoba largely meet the pre-defined requirements shown in Epigraph 3, and this could justify considering the FPC as a mean

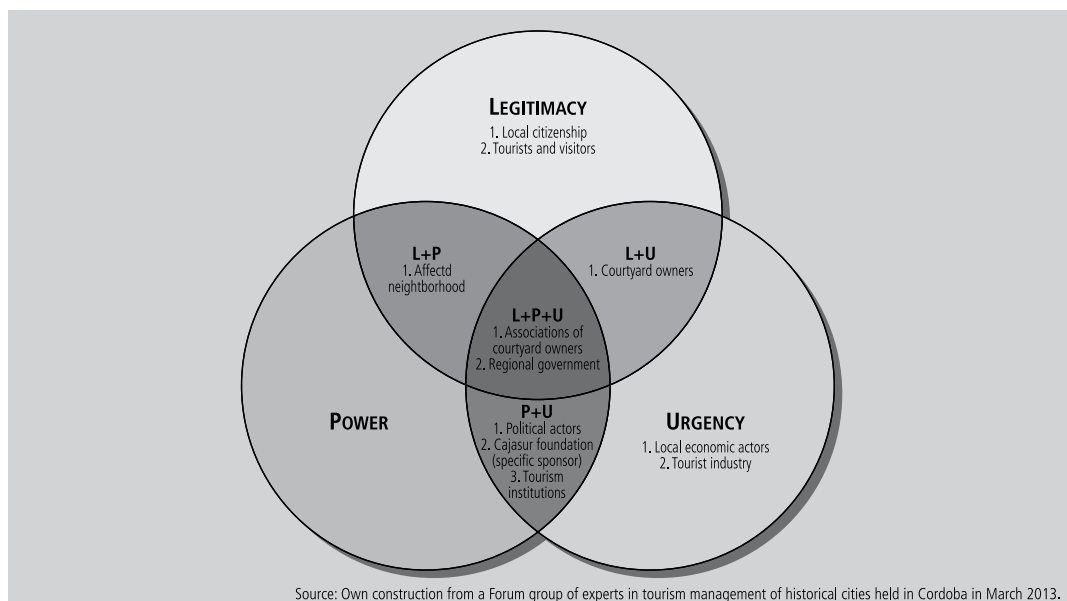


Figure 2 | Stakeholder mapping of Festive Rituals, or *Fiestas*, in Cordoba (Spain).

for spreading sustainability of rural-ethnic tourism in this province. First, it is strongly conditioned by social context. The collective involved, local community practitioners of the *Fiestas*, was identified as key-stakeholder in a focus group of experts meeting in March 2013 (Figure 2).

There should be focus on the real task of implementing Hardy's suggestions (2002) and demonstrating long-term benefits. Second, the *habitat*, traditional courtyard houses, public spaces, or landscapes, is a major factor in its inhabitants' *habitus*, quality and way of life, which conforms to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's (2004) proposal. Third, the experience of the *Fiestas* allows us to identify the transmission and sharing of accumulated common expertise and experience, creating a "collective memory", as claimed by Aguilar (1996). This will successfully lead to the preservation of active remembrance, not embodied in one individual, but in a community, thanks to symbolic acts and elements that engender a strong sense of belonging. Some authors have interpreted this form of preservation of the collective memory as a type of resistance to the homogenization that represents globalisation (Huysen, 2003). Fourth, traditional methods of building (Peláez del Rosal, 1992); along with the self-preservation of traditional gardening species, are widely used in the setting of the festive rituals described (Salinas, 1985). These not only guarantee the authenticity of festive rituals, according to Dallen and Boyd (2003), but environmental sustainability according to the terms stipulated in *Our common future* (UN WCED, 1987). Lastly, it is important to underline that whilst expressions of intangible heritage studied take place in the public space, with the exception of the *FPC* that is held in a private space, open to public for a few days a year. Nevertheless, the *fiestas* may be considered as a special topic of Common-Pool Resource theory (Ostrom, 2000), where the intangible heritage involved is more than mere resource: it is a complex system of interactions between nature, culture, and people. They should be evaluated not as an end in themselves but as an instrument for achieving human development in a multidimensional way (Fukuda-Parr, 2003).

6. Discussion of results and conclusions

The main objective of this paper is to analyse how festive rituals, as intangible heritage of the city of Cordoba and its province, could contribute to the sustainable development of rural tourism. Its main findings should be useful to identify the strategic priorities for the region. The protection and conservation of expressions of intangible cultural heritage are strongly linked to their adaptability and flexibility to new and changing environmental, political and social conditions. Rural tourism represents an opportunity to facilitate these inevitable transitions, because it can assist and improve economic and social processes promoting an authentic, sustainable and ecologically friendly face. In the same way, rural tourism could find many chances of success if one bears in mind these cultural resources with the aim of making them more accessible and attractive to the public.

Through the combination of internal resources, obtained from each local community and offering valuable insights from their experience, and external environment, obtained from regional government representatives, the following strategies have been put forward to assist in the definition of regional and coherent long-term tourism management based on the intangible heritage-festive rituals:

- a) Strategies focused on people (local community)
 - Identification of local players, stakeholders, and arrangement of channels of consensus between them before establish a tourism management plan.
 - Supporting actions that underpin the quality of life of the inhabitants.
 - Providing support to local communities and promoting ethnic forms of tourism, as an opportunity to contribute to local development, including both economic and human.
 - Highlighting the knowledge and the willingness to adequately value and properly manage the wealth of regional gastronomy and hospitality.

- b) Strategies based on sustainability
 - Registering, cataloguing, and maintaining the traditional knowledge for construction, land use, and management as key methods for economic and sustainable development of tourism.
 - Promoting specific initiatives to ensure sustainable management, including economic, social and environmental, for the entire productive base in the area concerned.
- c) Strategies focused on heritage
 - Promoting tangible and intangible heritage as a unique form of cultural heritage.
 - Improving of the brand image of “Cordoba in May”, including the festive rituals in the province.
 - Improving the current tourist offering by incorporating proposals that connect rural tourism to ethnic tourism.
 - Raising awareness of the wealth of culture and traditions that is hugely appealing to tourists.
- d) Strategies focused on tourists
 - Establishing an effective relationship between supply (resource-rich rural tourism) and demand of authenticity, identity and originality, through the promotion of spaces for interaction between festive-rituals and associated landscapes.
 - Promoting the activation of effective networks, which could become a valuable mechanism for fostering the development of rural tourism through improved communication between tourists and the local people at their chosen destinations.
 - Ensuring that regional tourism entities have effective synergies between segments.
 - Core elements of innovation could be developed through social networks and smartphone applications, in close collaboration with expert and native knowledge, to guide, educate and inform the tourist expectations and preferences, facilitating the creation of

new niches in the rural and cultural tourism markets.

The province of Cordoba’s natural and cultural landscapes and intangible cultural heritage are wealthy enough but also vulnerable. Maximizing the sustainable development of tourism can actively contribute to stability levels among rural population, improving the rural standard of living through services and infrastructure while at the same time keeping hold of traditions and cultural heritage. To this end, it seems important to be able to rely on the core strengths of the province: the growing level of professionalism exhibited by the organic farming sector, and resource-rich rural tourism. The combination of these could be the determining factor to meet the objective of coherent long-term rural tourism management that could use the existing intangible cultural heritage as the backbone for regional development.

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