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

**ROSA COLMENAREJO** *
[rcolmenarejo@uloyola.es]

**ENOVEVA MILLÁN VÁZQUEZ DE LA TORRE** **
[gmilan@uloyola.es]

**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.

---

* **MSc in Economics and Business Research Methods** and **pre-doctoral fellow** at the Department of Humanities and Philosophy of the University of Cordoba, Spain.

** ** PhD in Economics** from the University of Cordoba, Spain. **Senior Lecturer** at the Department of Quantitative Methods and Management of the University of Cordoba.
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 priva 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.