Alpine Space project AlpFoodway launch event in Marseille

“Alpine Food Intangible Cultural Heritage between Legal Protection and Commercial Valorisation: Insights from the AlpFoodway Project”

a special event open to the public on Friday February 3rd, h. 19-20.30, hosted by Kedge Business School in its La Joliette Campus, 7 Boulevard de Dunkerque, 13002 Marseille

The event takes place in the context of the kick-off meeting (February 2nd-4th) of the AlpFoodway project, which is funded by the Interreg AlpineSpace 2014-2020 EU program.

It will be an opportunity to know more about the AlpFoodway project and his objectives and the 14 involved partners from 6 Alpine countries.

The goal of the event is to discuss how cultural intangible heritage linked to Alpine food culture can provide local communities with opportunities for sustainable local development, and will also permit to reflect on the possible strategies for its inscription as a “foodway” in the UNESCO List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Two keynote speakers will intervene:

Benedetta Ubertazzi, Aggregate Professor of European Union Law at the School of Law of the University of Milan-Bicocca, will present on “EU Geographical Indications and Intangible Cultural Heritage”

Diego Rinallo, Associate Professor of Marketing at Kedge Business School, will follow up with a presentation on “Linking Intangible Cultural Heritage to Consumer Culture: New approaches to the Commercial Valorisation of Authentic Traditions”.

Abstract of Prof. Ubertazzi’s presentation:

Misappropriations of intangible cultural expressions occur in countries other than their State of origin and therefore are of a transnational nature. In 2003 the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was adopted to safeguard intangible cultural heritage (ICH) at domestic and international level. However, this Convention lacks rules on transnational misappropriations. To safeguard ICH across borders, States Parties adopt intellectual property rights (IPRs) of a collective nature, in particular geographical indications (GIs). However, registrations of GIs in the country of origin of the ICH cannot safeguard it across the globe. Indeed, GIs must not only be registered in their country of origin, but also in other jurisdictions. Hence, certain States Parties register GIs in their respective territories, as well as in other countries. In particular, EU GIs are registered by non-EU member States. However, multi-state registrations of GIs still cannot safeguard ICH transnationally, since the parallel GIs must currently be enforced in each and every country of registration, even in the case of EU GIs. This implies multiple parallel proceedings, with risk of conflicting judgments, considerable litigation costs and inequalities between parties, in particular when IPRs owners are the ICH bearers, and therefore are communities, groups or individuals.

Abstract of Prof. Rinallo’s presentation:

Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) is a theoretical orientation, building on anthropology, sociology, cultural studies and critical theory, to the study of consumption and its role in today’s society. Its concepts and methods have revolutionized the practice of marketing, which today gives much space to concepts such as experience, community, authenticity, and meaning co-creation, and the methodologies adopted for market research, which now include netnography (digital ethnography) and videography. A CCT perspective can shed light on how consumers’ search for authenticity can create niche market positions for local producers who, by resisting the structural forces of modernization, have preserved their traditions. Consumer culture can therefore be considered the missing link between the preservation of intangible cultural heritage and its commercial valorization.

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The Alpfoodway Project

Foodways are socioeconomic and cultural practices related to food production and consumption. Food heritage is a strong identity source for alpine populations. It goes beyond products to include productive landscapes and traditional knowledge on production techniques, consumption customs and rituals, and the transmission of ancient wisdom. Depopulation, ageing population and globalization put Alpine food heritage at risk of disappearing. The project will create a sustainable development model for peripheral mountain areas based on the preservation/valorization of AS cultural food heritage and on the adoption of innovative marketing and governance tools. It will also foster the emerging of a transnational alpine identity based on the common cultural values expressed in food heritage. Project outputs include Vision Paper, Value Charta, mapping of traditional food heritage, creation of a cutting edge online inventory, courses and educational units, and a cultural exchange platform based on events and tourist tours. The project will benefit heritage communities; local development professionals and organizations; cultural institutions; local, regional and national authorities. The project is innovative since it links food heritage with marketing and consumer culture, and does not consider heritage communities as passive recipients of ‘top-down’ interventions, but instead supports ‘bottom-up’ mobilization processes based on engagement/empowerment of the citizenship. The project also contributes to a recent international debate (the 2013 UNESCO Convention) on the Intangible Cultural Heritage. All Alpine administrations are experimenting safeguard and valorization solutions – albeit in a fragmented and uncoordinated way. The project will develop this theme at a scale – the entire Alps– never attempted before. As future perspective, the Alpine community could aspire to inscribe the Alpine food heritage on the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage list as a traditional foodway.

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