

## **Loss of Identity and Changing Meanings - Intangible Heritage and Extremist groups**

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Appropriation and reimagining of symbols has likely always occurred throughout history, but how does it impact the intangible heritage and identity of a group when those symbols are appropriated by extremist groups such as white supremacists. A number of ancient symbols from a variety of cultures have been given new meaning by their use by extremist groups leading to a very realistic question of loss of cultural heritage and identity for people whose ancestry would give them a concrete and valid claim to the original symbols and their meanings.

How do you preserve heritage, especially intangible heritage, which is by its very nature more fragile and easily mutable, from being distorted into something that, because of its association, may even be banned or distrusted by society? The considerations of how to preserve meaning and neutral to positive associations with a cultural past are something that become more complex with the ease of proliferation of alternative definitions and notions with the hyper-availability of distortable information within the context of the internet.

This discussion will address an outline of the mutation of meaning of cultural symbols, the definition of intangible heritage and the challenges of preserving meaning in the complex world of global open access to the reimagining of concepts and identities and its subsequent dissemination.