GLOBAL CULTURAL POLICIES AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

The case of Italian UNESCO World Heritage Sites

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Introduction

In the late 1990s, the academic debate on Public Administration Management began to question the validity or completeness of the paradigms of Public Administration (Beetham 1987) and New Public Management (Hood 1991). There was a need to find theories capable of moving beyond the sterile dichotomy of “administration versus management” (Osborne 2006), in favor of theories able to include (and exclude) issues related to the governance of policy processes (Klijn and Koppenjan 2000) or, more generally, to the governance of the public realm (Stoker 2006). According to these perspectives, policy processes are increasingly taking place on horizontal, vertical and network levels (OECD 2009). In these contexts, management develops differently compared to traditional hierarchical practices (O’Toole and Laurence 1997; Klijn and Koppenjan 2000). While, on the one hand, most of the literature agrees that public sector management is an issue of coordination and integration among different levels and actors, on the other hand, the way in which these processes happen in practice and the reasons for their success or failure require a deeper analysis (see Chapter 13 in this volume).

This chapter investigates – through a theoretical framework based on a multilevel approach – the process of elaboration and implementation of the specific cultural policy of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. This policy, over three decades old, maintains a key role in the definition of cultural heritage policies worldwide, while developing according to the social and economic dynamics of each territory. The main aims of the Convention are the worldwide preservation and promotion of cultural heritage of “outstanding universal value” (UNESCO 1972). The main instrument for achieving this goal is the World Heritage List (WHL), which includes all World Heritage Sites containing “properties forming part of the cultural heritage and natural heritage […] having outstanding universal value” (UNESCO 1972: 6). The Convention defines cultural heritage as composed of “monuments, group of buildings and sites”, including cultural landscapes (ICOMOS 2005; UNESCO 1972). Through the List, World Heritage policies are implemented at different territorial scales – global, national and local (site) – and administrative levels, constituting an example of multilevel public policy (Hooghe and Marks 2001). Single UNESCO World Heritage Sites allow analysis of public policy in a multilevel
context and the impact that this context has on the choices of local public administrations. This analysis can then be generalized to multiple national contexts.

The chapter also finds the most relevant fostering elements and obstacles to implementing World Heritage policy. The explanation for success or failure is sought in the extent to which the key actors are able to share resources in a context of mutual dependence, to cooperate towards a common aim and to develop coordinating structures and strategies (Klijn et al. 2010; McGuire 2002).

Global cultural heritage policies as a multilevel governance phenomenon

Cultural policies in Europe and elsewhere are now at the center of the debate on the social development of nations and single territories (European Commission 2014; Dümcke and Gnedovsky 2013). These policies are considered to be the motor of an endogenous development model, in which the exploitation of cultural heritage is assessed not only in terms of its artistic value, but also for its expected benefits to:

- the level of quality of life and therefore the degree to which a territory can attract talent (Florida 2002);
- the capacity of the territory to produce innovative goods and services through the use of methods and advanced technologies (Porter 1998);
- the knowledge and expansion of individual freedoms useful for achieving individual and socially relevant objectives (Sen 1999);
- individual employment and/or enterprise opportunities in the productive sectors directly or indirectly linked to the process of “promotion” of cultural heritage (Throsby 2001).

At the same time, as in other public policy areas related to the “commons” (Ostrom 1990), the increasingly complex processes of formulating and implementing cultural policy in a context of austerity have highlighted the limits of traditional hierarchical and centralized approaches. In contrast with a centralized model of direct provision, in which the central state formulates, implements and directly finances cultural policy, there are advantages related to decentralization and contracting out, such as cost reduction and more effective and empowered local actors (Matarasso and Landry 1999: 47–50).

Decentralization opens spaces for “the development of diverse forms of policy intervention by sub-national actors” (Gray 2009: 580), where cultural policies are implemented across different policy domains. These types of processes can be referred to as multi-level governance processes characterized by a multiplicity of actors, heterogeneous territorial scales, a vast number of jurisdictions and the allocation of “complex or resource-intensive competences to [different] levels of government” (OECD 2009: 2; Hooghe and Marks 2001). Although the multilevel approach to cultural policy can be interpreted as a natural consequence of decentralization, its concrete implementation still presents some challenges, such as the dependence on central governments to provide resources and the potential lack of administrative capacity of sub-levels to carry out planned activities. Other major gaps are the lack of information exchange and coordination between the horizontal, vertical and networked levels (Charbit and Michalun 2009).

The issue of coordination for addressing these gaps is therefore very relevant. The need for cooperation between actors (see Cepiku, Chapter 13 in this volume) and to establish coordinating bodies able to address “capacity and information gaps” (OECD 2009: 6) has been pointed out before. Recent literature has highlighted how public networks, defined as “groups of three or more legally autonomous organizations that work together in order to achieve not only their
own goals but also a collective goal” (Kenis and Provan 2009: 231) can, due to the flexibility of their design, mobilize different actors in multilevel contexts to create coordinating structures (Hooghe and Marks 2001). The network approach has been particularly successful in analyzing structures for both policy formulation and implementation through the provision of public services. In the cultural sector, network theory analyzed cultural policy implementation processes, including multiple actors like museums or festival networks (Barreca et al. 2013; Hinna et al. 2009).

The implementation of UNESCO World Heritage policy can be interpreted as a multilevel process implemented through network-like structures, based on the following relevant dimensions:

- The presence of multiple organizations, non-hierarchically related and located at heterogeneous territorial scales (OECD 2009; Hooghe and Marks 2001). The typology of actors encompasses private, public and non-profit organizations. These operate in a context of mutual dependence, where neither policy responsibilities nor outcomes can be clearly separated (OECD 2009: 2).
- The collaborative nature of actors’ interaction, due to the presence of a common aim and the need to share resources. The degree to which this aim is constructed through game-like interactions varies (Klijn and Koppenjan 2000). Although the presence of a common problem implies the need for collaboration in order to solve it, this does not mean that interactions between the actors are always non-conflictual.
- The establishment of a coordinating body and the related adoption of coordination strategies, which appear particularly relevant in multilevel settings (Charbit and Michalun 2009). In this context, public management is characterized by strategies and behaviors that differ from those in hierarchical settings. Rather, these strategies and behaviors refer to the “activation” of the involved partners and their resources (Klijn et al. 2010; Klijn and Koppenjan 2000), to the facilitation of interactions among partners and to mediation and arbitration among them (Kickert and Koppenjan 1997). Such strategies can benefit cultural heritage management (Elmi et al. 2014).

Given the scarcity of empirical research in this field, we have adopted an explorative case study approach applied to the World Heritage Policy in the Italian context (Yin 1994). We analyze policy implementation according to specific characteristics of the multilevel process: the multiplicity of organizations involved, the collaborative nature and presence of a common aim, the sharing of resources and the presence of a specific coordination body in which management strategies are adopted.

Following a triangulation strategy for data collection, we base our case study on the analysis of official documentation at global, national and local levels, and interviews of public managers at the UNESCO Office – the coordinating body responsible for the implementation of UNESCO policy at a national level – and in local management bodies responsible for Italian World Heritage Sites.

The selected case is particularly suited to reflection on and analysis of cultural heritage policy: since its ratification of the World Heritage Convention, the country – holding the highest number of World Heritage Sites worldwide (50, 46 of them cultural) in 2014 – has been widely represented in the World Heritage List. The results deriving from the specific case can also help in the interpretation of the World Heritage policy worldwide.
The UNESCO World Heritage Sites: challenges and management requirements

The World Heritage Convention includes 192 State Parties (UNESCO 2014a) and represents a transnational legal instrument for the definition of cultural and natural heritage of universal value and for the identification of the actions, bodies and mechanisms to be adopted to protect heritage worldwide.

The “Heritage of Outstanding Universal Value” (OUV) included in the World Heritage List can be defined as a “global common good” (Frey and Steiner 2011: 562), regulated by the global World Heritage policy. This policy is unique in its global formulation while the identification and management of each World Heritage Site takes place at national and local levels (Figure 22.1). The implementation of World Heritage policy can therefore be defined through multilevel processes, which refer “to negotiated, non-hierarchical exchanges between institutions at the transnational, regional and local levels and to a vertical ‘layering’ of governance processes at these different levels” (Peters and Pierre 2001: 31, cited in Cepiku et al. 2013).

The declination of the multilevel World Heritage policy at local levels varies according to the states where it is implemented and according to the characteristics of the sites on the list. These characteristics are related, in turn, to the administrative and geographical contexts and the variety of stakeholders involved (UNESCO 2014b). Each process of enlisting a site at national level and each sub-process of management can thus be regarded as unique; this makes the concrete implementation of the policy a “wicked” problem (Rittel and Webber 1973), lacking a single standardized solution. Solving this issue requires the contribution of a series of organizations and institutions that share resources, tasks and responsibilities. To this end, the World Heritage Committee explicitly encourages “States Parties […] to prepare their Tentative Lists with the participation of a wide variety of stakeholders, including site managers, local and regional governments, local communities, NGOs and other interested parties and partners” (UNESCO 2013: 18). This applies also to the management of single sites, where conservation and promotion have to be equally emphasized and where the impact of the site on the broader communities plays a key role.

The inclusion of a site in the World Heritage List is seen as a powerful tool to increase tourism (Van der Aa 2005); nevertheless, a parallel lack of adequate management measures can create negative impacts and represent a threat to the integrity of the sites (Hoi An Centre for Monuments Management and Preservation 2008). This is why, since 2002, applicant sites have to present a management plan for the preservation and promotion of the sites during the application process for the List (UNESCO 2013). Moreover, states have to periodically report on the status of conservation of all national sites. Sites facing a concrete threat to their outstanding value can be included in the List of World Heritage in danger (UNESCO 2014c) and if no initiative is undertaken for preserving their integrity can be excluded from the List altogether.

The implementation of the World Heritage Convention at national level: the case of Italian UNESCO World Heritage Sites

As a state party to the Convention, Italy is responsible for implementing it at the national level by identifying potential World Heritage Sites, coordinating all existing national sites and periodically monitoring their conservation status.
World Heritage Sites are responsible for preserving and promoting cultural heritage and developing managing structures.

**Political bodies**
- General assembly: Formed by state parties, policy and financial orientation
- World Heritage Committee: Formed by 21 members, approves the sites nominated for the World Heritage List and takes decisions on the uses of the World Heritage Fund

**Technical bodies**
- World Heritage Centre: Secretariat of the Committee, manages and coordinates
- Advisory bodies: ICOMOS, IUCN and ICCROM, verify the qualities and integrity of World Heritage Sites

**Networked**
- National level: 192 State parties. Are responsible for the implementation at national level, draft the Tentative Lists and the applications for World Heritage Sites, are responsible for the monitoring and coordination of sites
- Local level: World Heritage Sites. Are responsible for preserving and promoting cultural heritage and developing managing structures

**Figure 22.1** The multilevel governance in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention

Source: own elaboration, based on UNESCO (2014d) and Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali 2010
**Multiplicity of actors and territorial levels**

Despite the fact that national cultural policies are defined mostly by the Italian Ministry of Culture, the Ministry itself cannot be considered the only actor responsible for the national implementation of the World Heritage Convention (Figure 22.2). Rather, several key actors are responsible (Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali, 2010):

- The Office for UNESCO World Heritage at the Italian Ministry of Culture, which coordinates the implementation of the World Heritage Convention at a national level through activities such as drafting the national Tentative List (namely, the list of potential World Heritage sites in the country), supporting individual sites in the nomination and management processes, drafting the periodical reports to be submitted for the monitoring of the sites’ conservation and supporting the Permanent Interministerial Working Group.
- The Permanent Interministerial Working Group, which coordinates different actors involved nationally, not only in the protection of cultural heritage but also natural and immaterial heritage (natural heritage is handled separately by the Italian Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea).
- The UNESCO National Commission, established in order to promote the broader implementation of the main UNESCO priorities, not just heritage.
- The association of Italian UNESCO World Heritage Cities, established in order to promote common projects in all Italian World Heritage Sites. The Association is mainly a political instrument, with members at different territorial levels: provinces, regions, municipalities, protected areas.
- The individual Italian World Heritage Sites, responsible for drafting the application dossier and preserving and promoting a Site’s OUV.

In its technical functions, the Office for UNESCO World Heritage interacts with actors at all levels of UNESCO policy (see Figures 22.1 and 22.2). At the international level, it works with the World Heritage Committee, advisory bodies, the World Heritage Centre and other state parties (when applying for transnational World Heritage Sites). Nationally, the Office interacts with the UNESCO National Commission and the Permanent Interministerial Working Group. Sub-nationally, the Office interacts with the individual cultural World Heritage Sites and their Association. The UNESCO Office is therefore the core of the network of actors implementing UNESCO policy and coordinates the multilevel process.

**Mutual dependency, resource scarcity and sharing**

While the UNESCO Office at the Ministry of Culture operates on the basis of a budget mainly employed for internal organizational activities and aims, the Italian Sites rely on public financing allocated through National Law 77/2006. This financing has several limitations: first of all, it has a limited scope of activity, since it was specifically introduced to finance the development of management plans for the sites after these were made compulsory in 2002. Second, it is characterized by a scarcity of available budgetary funds. This limits the concrete application of this financial instrument to actions such as studies, information initiatives and the development of management plans. The result is, according to the words of one interviewee, “a lack of specific funding for [all other activities concerning] the management of UNESCO World Heritage Sites”. This scarcity of financial resources has an impact on the development of common initiatives, since the single organizations involved tend to allocate the available funds...
Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea

Permanent Interministerial working group for UNESCO World Heritage

UNESCO National Commission

Italian Ministry of Culture UNESCO Office

Regional, provincial, municipal level

Italian World Heritage Sites

Cultural and natural

Transnational level

Transnational

Association of Italian World Heritage Sites and Cities

Figure 22.2 The network of responsible actors for the implementation at national level of the World Heritage Convention in Italy and their territorial scope
for their internal day-to-day management. In order to compensate for the lack of finances, the UNESCO Office has started sharing other types of resources, mainly the skills of the staff employed, through initiatives such as translating World Heritage policy documents into Italian and developing guidelines for drafting management plans for the Sites. However, for those responsible for individual sites, this solution is not completely effective. According to one site manager, “the documents and guidelines provided are clear in purpose, but not simple in application, requiring specialist skills that site managers do not have”. This lack of specialist skills causes the development of “standardized” management plans, resulting from an uncritical application of policies and guidelines provided by the World Heritage Policy documents or by the Italian UNESCO Office. As a result, management plans lose their effectiveness, also in the short term.

Multiple conflicting aims

The presence of a common aim is important to stimulate cooperation between actors at all levels. Nevertheless, the implementation of Italian national-level World Heritage policy lacks a common aim because of the divergence of interests among the actors involved, which is partly due to the multilevel nature of the process. While the aim of the ministerial actors is, according to one interviewee, “to interact with the local bodies and […] to respond to UNESCO requests”, local actors mainly aim to get a site included in the World Heritage List, enhancing its visibility and promoting positive economic and social impacts for local communities. They see inclusion as a tool to gain political prominence and obtain a positive image.

This divergence of interests is also caused by some choices of the Italian government through the “Italian Code for Cultural and Landscape Heritage”, which delegates heritage promotion policies to local authorities, while assigning the protection and conservation of heritage to the central government. This results in a high interest from local actors in the inclusion process and to a rather low engagement in subsequent management activities. Moreover, this divergence does not promote cooperation between technical and political actors. As one interviewee in the UNESCO Office pointed out, “it is not that we do not dialogue with politicians, but our priority is to speak with the experts nominated by politicians; therefore there is the impression, sometimes, that the involved parties do not speak”. The local level tends to focus more on the “organizational [internal]” and the “community” aims, while the ministerial level actors strive to find a balance between “organizational, network and community” aims (Provan and Milward 2001). This is exacerbated by the fact that the local implementation level is subjected to a constant and very rapid change of the responsible political and administrative actors, each of them bringing in new aims and different levels of commitment in the process. As a consequence, the UNESCO Office has to devote significant efforts to making “an endless work of explaining the objectives of the Convention, what the Convention is, what are the parameters and the criteria to which the Convention refers”.

The UNESCO Office as coordinating body: factors influencing effectiveness

Because of its structural “centrality” in the network of actors (Rowley 1997) and its institutional role, the UNESCO Office acts as the coordinating body for the national implementation network of the World Heritage Policy. As such, it employs what can be interpreted as network management strategies in a multilevel setting. The first of these strategies is the spreading of information, which is recognized by members of the Office as the key task (“it is indeed our role to interact with local subjects in order to inform and raise awareness”). This role is relevant
because of the UNESCO Office’s intermediate position between global policy and its local implementation (“every time there is a request from the World Heritage center, our office deciphers it; it passes it on by meeting the local subjects and […] exposing it to them in a much more understandable form”). This type of strategy can be referred to as “exploring content” (Klijn et al. 2010): by spreading information, the UNESCO Office aims to build consensus on common aims and, thus to promote cooperative behavior among network partners.

Another action of the UNESCO Office for “exploring content” is the implementation of common projects for all Italian sites. The three main recent projects of this type concern revising the cartography of Italian Sites, the retrospective inventory of the OUV – initiated by the World Heritage Committee in order to harmonize the formulations of OUV in all sites worldwide – and reporting on the state of conservation. While the first project is an independent initiative of the UNESCO Office, the latter two are part of its institutional tasks. The UNESCO Office aims at using these common projects as strategies for “facilitating interaction” and “activation” (Kickert and Koppenjan 1997), building consensus among the sites and promoting their active involvement at several levels. The issue of the activation of the individual sites is especially relevant. Nearly three quarters of the Italian sites (UNESCO 2014b) were included in the World Heritage List before 2002; thus before UNESCO made the need to draft the sites’ management plans during the nomination process compulsory. The introduction of this requirement has increased the complexity of the application process, resulting in enhanced motivation of the sites applying for the nomination after 2002.

However, due to the previous absence of compulsory formal requirements, several sites included before 2002 (according to one interviewee, “from 20–30%”) have not kept up with management activities and can be therefore considered “silent” (according to an estimation by Badia (2011) in 2011, 69% of Italian Sites did not have a management plan). The strategy of activating specific projects carried out by the UNESCO Office partly had the effect of reactivating some “silent” sites, by re-involving them in common activities and putting them in contact with other actors.

Conclusions

This chapter has analyzed the processes of implementation of World Heritage Policy at national and local levels. The analysis of the Italian case study has shown how a wide variety of non-hierarchically related actors at different levels are responsible for implementing the World Heritage Convention. This suggests that the World Heritage policy in Italy is implemented in a multilevel setting through network-like structures, with the UNESCO Office as the coordinating body. The case study has shown how this formal arrangement often does not correspond to concrete, fully activated and coordinated processes. This is especially visible in a lack of cooperation between actors at different levels and in the presence of “silent” sites, despite the initiatives aimed at their activation. The main causes are multifold and should be addressed in order to make the network of actors implementing the World Heritage policy more effective.

First, the strategies of the UNESCO Office alone are not sufficient to ensure a complete activation of the individual sites. In the analyzed case, the presence of a formal requirement to compulsorily draft a management plan in the application process, introduced at the global level, had a noticeable effect at the local level of implementation, causing an increase in activity of “silent” sites. In this case, the introduction of a mechanism at the highest layer of the multilevel process has, in part, positively influenced all the other layers. The lack of specific financing for the management of the individual sites and for the development of common initiatives also
limits the spectrum of activities that can be carried out and the skills that can be used by the sites. This is consistent with previous theoretical contributions, which include the identification of skills, knowledge and resources as one of the conditions for the activation of partners (Agranoff and McGuire 1999).

Second, the case study has highlighted how the conflicting aims of national and local implementation levels result in the lack of a single vision for the Italian Sites as a whole. In particular, the UNESCO Office reinforces the work of the World Heritage Sites as a network of actors at different levels and is therefore aware of its role as coordinating body. This, however, is not enough. In line with the literature (Kenis and Provan 2009), the case highlights the importance exogenous factors can have on the actual operation of the network and, in particular, on its potential for cooperation. The Italian case shows that decentralization from the national to the local level of competencies for the valorization of cultural heritage – defined by law – increases the need to coordinate the different subjects involved. Moreover, decentralization also implies, in the analyzed case, the need to integrate preservation and valorization plans with broader relevant policies and planning instruments at local and regional levels.

The case has also shown that some exogenous causes of potential failure are crucial if coordinating managers lack the capacity to intervene (McGuire and Agranoff 2007). Strategies of conflict management are essentially missed, despite the potential divergence of interests among the network actors. Among the actions taken by the UNESCO Office, we do not find tentative collaborative discussions or, at the very least, effective negotiation processes. These processes did not happen even in the formulation of guidelines for the management of sites, since these were independently drafted by the UNESCO office. On the contrary, such processes, if carried out, could create common meanings, added knowledge and collective cognitive capabilities (Innes and Booher 1999; Lipnack and Stamps 1994), helping to improve the degree of cooperation among the actors involved.

Despite the focus on the Italian specificities, the results of the case analysis can be useful for understanding the factors that foster or hinder multilevel implementation of the UNESCO World Heritage policy – and of cultural policy – worldwide.

In particular, the case of Italian World Heritage sites has shown how the introduction of initiatives at a global level can have positive effects on the activation of partners at all levels; nevertheless, when the different levels interact according to different policy focuses, this can also result in local initiatives that do not fully fit with global policy. Specifically, in the case analyzed, this issue has strongly influenced the implementation of the World Heritage policy, the potential for cooperation inside the network and, ultimately, even the choice of possible leverage by managers in the coordinating body.

Finally, a conclusion particularly relevant for other countries concerns the need, in multilevel settings, to activate each partner in order to establish and reach common policy goals. The presence of a coordinating body adopting strategies that are different from the ones employed in hierarchical settings plays a key role in this activation. Although no unique success model can be drawn from the analysis of a single case, the results suggest that the presence of formal coordinating structures is not enough to guarantee partners’ activation; it can rather be reached by combining informal strategies for fostering collaboration with the definition of formal requirements to be fulfilled by all partners.
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