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Italian UNESCO World Heritage: Forms of Protection and Management Experiences

Riccio, F. *

Italian Ministry of Heritage and Cultural Activities and Tourism (Italy)

ABSTRACT

Italy, with its 49 sites, it's the country with the largest number of entries in the List of UNESCO World Heritage and none of them is in the list of properties in danger. The "Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention" point out, as a prerequisite for the preservation of the values recognized specifically to a site, the existence of an effective system of protection and management. Safeguard and protection are by now issues entrenched in the Italian legislation and administrative practice while the theme of management as a system of synergy and coordination of actions and interests, sometimes conflicting, which affect more or less directly the safeguarding of assets, it is less historically consolidated. The extreme variability of the situations of national UNESCO heritage in terms of site typology, its size, number and typology of those involved in the management, puts each time in the position of having to find the most suitable form of "governance" and, sometimes, supplementary protection measures. The vast and diverse panorama of the UNESCO sites enabled and continually enables to develop and test particular solutions, which in turn can represent reference models.

* E-mail address: francesca.riccio@beniculturali.it

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The Italian Ministry of Heritage and Cultural Activities and Tourism, with its structures responsible for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention and in order to develop common strategies, handles the relations with the World Heritage Centre, with all the representatives of the Italian UNESCO properties and with their counterparts in the Ministries of Culture of the European and extra-European countries.

It is, therefore, an excellent observation field for the situation of the World Heritage in Italy which, with its 49 sites, is currently the country with the largest number of inscribed properties on the UNESCO List. Despite their high number, none of the properties is or has ever been inscribed on the list of World Heritage in Danger. However, the state of preservation of a few particularly complex sites has been the focus of assessment procedures carried out by international bodies.

The "Operational Guidelines for the implementation of the World Heritage Convention" insist on the existence of an effective system of protection and management as a prerequisite for the preservation of the specific value of a property. As they are general guidelines, which are valid all over the world, the systems for the safeguard of the value of the UNESCO properties vary according to the internal organizational aspects of each State Party. Moreover, these systems, as will be seen below, may very much depend on the type of UNESCO properties.

The issue of **protection** has long been well-established in Italian law and administrative practice. The issue of **management** - a system of synergy and coordination of actions and interests, sometimes at odds with one another, which more or less directly affect the safeguarding of assets - is less historically consolidated, even though today we can rely on remarkable hands-on experience.

The large number of Italian UNESCO sites and the extreme variability of their features - in terms of type and size of site, number and kind of subjects involved in the management - place us in the position of having to find the most suitable forms of governance and, sometimes, adopt additional measures of protection. The large and varied survey of the UNESCO properties allows us to continue seeking and testing specific solutions, which, in turn, can represent suitable patterns.

As a clear example of such complexity, here follows a general overview of concise data:

- Among the 49 Italian UNESCO properties, 4 are natural sites and 45 are cultural ones. They range from individual monuments to archaeological sites, from monumental complexes to cultural landscapes. About a third of them are made up of physically separate components and they are often located in different geographical areas, or show different types of ownership, use and management.

- From the political point of view, 4 properties are trans-national, 3 trans-regional, 15 trans-municipal and the remaining 27 are located in the area of a single municipal administration.

-As far as the size is concerned, it ranges from a minimum of 1.2 ha to a maximum of about 159,000 ha, while most UNESCO properties cover an area which is less than 1,000 ha.

-As for ownership, about one-third of the properties are the exclusive domain of public institutions and / or religious ones; the remaining two thirds have mixed ownership, with the involvement of a large number of private owners.

Thanks to the possibility of protection which is guaranteed by the 2004 Legislative Decree No. 42 "Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape" - the latest legal tool which Italy has adopted over the past century - the properties included in the sites of World Heritage are protected by means of direct constraints, whereby prior authorization by specific institutions for protection is required for any kind of construction work that may concern them. This powerful tool is generally accompanied by the municipal planning regulations, which are sometimes specifically designed to improve protection and develop territorial and / or landscape planning at provincial or regional levels.

In some cases the listed properties (especially if they are cultural landscapes) are protected by restrictive measures concerning the landscape, according to the "Code of the cultural heritage and landscape." Sometimes, additional measures are implemented in these areas, such as laws and / or plans for parks and nature reserves, special laws and programmes, sectoral plans (hydrogeological, traffic plans, etc..).

Restrictive measures concerning the landscape and urban-territorial rules are generally adopted in the larger "buffer zones", which are designed to protect the properties in compliance with the implementation of the UNESCO Convention. Beyond these areas the territory is governed by territorial planning, except for situations in which some portions are subjected to special protection.

As for management systems, particular attention is devoted to finding solutions for the regulation and coordination of the strategies and actions of the multiple and variable subjects which, as we have seen, may be involved as owners, operators and users of the properties.

Underlying this aspect, there is growing willingness to collaborate expressed by the institutions involved, which sign, for this purpose, memorandum of understanding or other agreements. In this context, the management system and its structure are

generally established. This structure can take several different forms ranging from the Steering Committee - a panel made up of the representatives of all the institutions which, as such, does not create a new and independent legal body – to other management bodies which are specifically set up, such as foundations, corporations and associations.

The so-called "site manager", the person in charge of the UNESCO property, is then appointed in this body of governance. This person may have a technical and administrative profile, which varies a great deal according to the area from which she/he is chosen. In the most common cases she/he is an executive or an official of the peripheral offices of the Ministry of Heritage and Cultural Activities and Tourism or of local authorities (Municipality, Province, Region), or the president or a representative of foundations, corporations and associations, if this is the type of management system.

As an example, I would like to explain the case of the 49th Italian site: **The Medici Villas and gardens in Tuscany**, just inscribed on the World Heritage List (WHL) through the decision of the World Heritage Committee that was taken in Cambodia in June 2013.

The property is made up of 14 monumental complexes, chosen out of the 36 Medici estates that were surveyed only in Tuscany. The 14 properties that were selected are located in the territories of 4 different provinces (Florence, Lucca, Pistoia, Prato) and 10 municipalities (Barberino del Mugello, Carmignano, Cerreto Guidi, Fiesole, Poggio a Caiano, Quarrata, San Piero a Sieve, Seravezza, Vaglia). The ownership varies: 6 of them belong to the Italian State, 1 to the Region of Tuscany, 1 of the Province of Florence, 2 to Municipalities and 4 are privately owned and with very different kinds of use.

The measures for protection of the properties are of the highest grade as all the components of the site are protected under the aforementioned Legislative Decree 42/04, Part II-Cultural Heritage.

The buffer zones are largely protected under the Legislative Decree 42/04, Part Three-Landscape Heritage.

However, in the course of the process leading to the UNESCO nomination, as it often happens, the institutions involved - public and private bodies – devoted increased attention to the issue of protection by highlighting the advisability of adopting supplementary measures of protection.

As far as the Cafaggiolo Villa in Barberino di Mugello (FI) is concerned, for example, the Ministry of Heritage and Cultural Activities and Tourism (MiBACT) is improving the measure for monumental protection already in place. Moreover, the MiBACT, the Region of Tuscany, the Province of Florence, the Municipality, the Arno Basin Authority and the private owner of the villa, have also signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the protection, development and enhancement of the monumental complex.

As for the Villa of Cerreto Guidi (FI), a proposal for a special measure of landscape protection has been put forward and is currently in progress for the view in front of the facade of the villa.

A proposal for a protected landscape of the buffer zones has been brought forward for the Palace of Seravezza (LU). Likewise, the Municipality is also drafting a specific variant of the Town Planning Regulations, by means of which all new construction work to be carried out within the buffer zones will be subjected to a detailed implementation plan. Any construction work, therefore, will have to undergo a process of strategic environmental assessment and be subjected to evaluation in compliance with the specific regulation for the landscape heritage of the area.

As for the Municipality of Florence, where 5 villas are located (Villa of Careggi, Villa of Castello, Villa the Petraia, Boboli Gardens, Villa of Poggio Imperiale), the perimeters of its buffer zones have been part of its structural plan - a part of the Town Planning Regulations -, as areas subjected to particular forms of care, since the time of the preparations for the nomination, before the property was inscribed on the WHL.

A specific set of rules for the safeguarding of the views to and from the villas is provided for in the planning regulation, which operationally develops the guidelines of the structural plan.

In addition, the Medici villas of Florence are involved in the enhancement plans concerning accommodation and the transport system. A tram line connecting them to the historic centre of Florence is expected for the villas of Castello and Petraia; the Villa of Careggi will be served by a line connecting it to the main railway station in Florence and so to the city centre, where the Boboli Gardens and the villa of Poggio Imperiale are located.

Essentially, the system of governance devised for the site consists in a management structure and its management plan.

The memorandum of understanding signed by MiBACT, the Region of Tuscany, the Provinces and all the municipalities involved has formalized the mutual commitment to the implementation of this plan as an operational tool for the conservation of the outstanding universal value of the property; therefore, all the activities of conservation and upgrading of the urban planning and the socio-economic development of the territories are defined and coordinated by means of this plan. By territories, we mean the "buffer zones" but also the wider areas around them.

A second Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the same parties to set up the appropriate structure of governance of the property: a Steering Committee having a managing role aimed at achieving objectives and actions included in the management plan and a UNESCO office / Permanent Observatory for the organization and implementation of the actions. At the operational level, it is assisted by a technical work group.

In conclusion I would like to mention the important issue of the **relationship between tourism and UNESCO properties**.

Tourism is not one of the main objectives of the Convention of 1972. It is a secondary effect. As such, it is able to produce benefits such as the increased vitality of the site, the contribution to the knowledge and dissemination of its values and of the

Convention itself, socio-economic development and the incentive to conservation and development. However, tourism poses the following risks: the impact that could be caused by the transformation due to urban development and infrastructure, the increase in the number of visitors and its impact, overcrowding and the consequent interference with the expectations of the user, excessive cultural commodification and the socio-environmental impact on the community.

An assessment of the impact of tourism is therefore necessary, as it may help the decision-making processes, promote more effective management actions and provide a basis for planning and monitoring. Some topics to be explored: the capacity to host people, the contents and the quality of communication, the availability of correct keys of interpretation of the heritage, the careful preparation of tourism products and the criteria for the use of the properties.