Special Section Article

CHIARA BORTOLOTTO, PHILIPP DEMGENSKI,
PANAS KARAMPAMPAS AND SIMONE TOJI

Proving participation: vocational bureaucrats and bureaucratic creativity in the implementation of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

This paper investigates the bureaucratisation of the (utopian) ideal of community participation in Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) safeguarding and management. The analysis considers the whole 'policy life' of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of ICH. Our ethnographic examples from UNESCO, Brazil, China and Greece illustrate how bureaucratic operations often disenchant the participatory ideal, alienating it from its original intention. At the same time, driven by their commitment to 'good' governance and informed by sentiments of frustration and disappointment with actual policy results, vocational bureaucrats at different administrative levels experiment with and conceive of new tools in order to produce evidence of participation. We demonstrate how this bureaucratic creativity has concrete consequences, which may differ from the intended utopia, but nevertheless bring to life particular interpretations of the participatory principle among the recipients for whom heritage policies were originally designed. Thus, we present a more nuanced picture of bureaucratisation in which officials' emotions and engagement sustain their agency against structural constraints as well as the futility and fragility of administrative procedures.

Key words Intangible Cultural Heritage, bureaucratic creativity, vocational bureaucrats, UNESCO, participation of communities

Introduction

This paper investigates the bureaucratisation of the (utopian) ideal of community participation[1] by different actors involved in the implementation of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereafter the ICH Convention) across different administrative levels and geographical regions: the UNESCO Secretariat, national officials, local heritage managers, non-governmental organisation (NGO) professionals and community representatives in Greece, China and Brazil. Founded on the ideal of constructing 'defences of peace' in 'the minds of men [*sic*.]' through international cooperation in education, culture and science (UNESCO 1945) , UNESCO has often been described as a utopian project in both external accounts

[1] Although we acknowledge controversy over these terms, we follow their emic use among our research participants, writing them without quotation marks.

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(Casula and Azara 2005) and by insiders (Hoggart 1978). The World Heritage List, UNESCO's flagship heritage programme, as a form of bureaucratisation of such a utopic endeavour in its 'quest to manage the remarkable', has 'inadvertently created a system for the routinization of charisma' (Meskell 2018: 2).

The turn of the millennium marked a further utopian repositioning, with the call for a participatory approach to heritage, in which communities are to play a major role in determining the heritage value of their cultural expressions and in elaborating the safeguarding measures regarded as necessary for their transmission. This participatory shift was introduced alongside the concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in an effort to decolonise UNESCO heritage discourse of its founding 'Eurocentric' perspective (Hafstein 2018). Thus, the ICH Convention, to date ratified by 178 states referred to as 'States Parties', reads that 'within the framework of its safeguarding activities of the intangible cultural heritage, each State Party shall endeavour to ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management' (Art. 15). In particular, States Parties 'shall … identify and define' ICH elements 'with the participation of communities, groups and relevant non-governmental organizations' (Art. 11b). The participatory principle accordingly shapes the criteria for inscription on the International Lists of ICH.[2]

Decisions on inscription are made by the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereinafter the Committee),[3] whose examination is based on the recommendations of an 'Evaluation Body' that is appointed by the Committee and comprises six experts representing States Parties who are non-members of the Committee and six representatives of accredited non-governmental organisations. These actors engage with the ICH Convention on a periodic basis[4] and are, in some cases, composed of individuals (diplomats or experts) whose daily primary duties are not strictly related to the implementation of the Convention. The Secretariat of the Convention instead ensures its implementation at the international level on a day-to-day basis and is composed of experts engaging with this instrument over the long term and keeping track of the decisions adopted by the statutory organs.

Managing the Convention at the UNESCO level entails sophisticated skills, such as proficiency in several languages, awarness of the global geopolitical context or familiarity with diplomatic discourse as well as an ability to employ bureaucratic tools whose importance, according to a former staff member, can be measured by the height of the piles of the documents on their desks. Indeed, UNESCO's programmes are administered through a modern bureaucracy (Weber 1968: Ch. 11) both at the international and national levels. Bureaucracies have been analysed as powerful governmentality apparatuses (Foucault 2004), in terms of their Kafkian dysfunction or as the epitome of market-driven forms of governance that, as David Graeber (2015) argues, have led us

[2] The Convention establishes two lists: the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.

[3] The Committee is composed of representatives of 24 States Parties, elected by the General Assembly of States Parties, the sovereign body of the Convention, for a term of four years following principles of equitable geographical representation and rotation.

[4] The General Assembly meets in ordinary session every two years, the Committee every year and the Evaluation Body three times per year.

into an era of total bureaucratisation. Weber famously ascertained that fully developed bureaucratic apparatuses are characterised by 'precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personal costs' (1968: 973). In this paper, rather than dismissing bureaucracy for its inertia or for being simply an expression of power imbalances and structural violence (Gupta 2012), we offer a more nuanced account based on close ethnographic observations of the people who navigate and make up this bureaucratic world. To this end, we see bureaucratic administration itself as an area of social life and political action and as a source of 'creative friction' (Tsing 2005).

Our research participants qualify as bureaucrats in that their work consists of 'rendering technical' the issues they face (Li 2007) through numerical indicators, guidelines, legal categories and formal procedures. However, these actors also have complex identities and subjectivities and, far from conforming to the image of street-level bureaucrats as indifferent (Herzfeld 1992), they are very much 'passionate professionals' (Roth 2015). Like many 'Aidland' professionals (Mosse 2011), heritage administrators are thus what we define as vocational bureaucrats. At the international and national levels, they are often highly qualified, trained in the humanities, social sciences or international development. At the local level, they have experiences in developmental projects or activism with NGOs. Regardless of their background, they are commonly driven by a belief in the value of heritage as a tool for improving people's social and economic conditions (Brumann 2014: 173–4); are committed to building capacities for a variety of actors in the heritage field with the aim of improving what they regard as current insufficiencies (Douglas-Jones and Shaffner 2017) and are permeated by the utopianism fomented in 'palaces of hope', to borrow Niezen and Sapignoli's (2017) characterisation of international organisations.

Heritage bureaucrats are vocational, not only because of their training and sense of duty (Weber 1968: 958–9), but also because they are committed to certain values and ethics that inspire them to use creative expedients to open up new administrative possibilities within the scope of accepted rules. Aware of their reflexive capacities, allowing them to not only provide the athropologist with elaborate analyses of their social and professional worlds but also enabling them to 'incorporate insights from the social sciences into their Sisyphean programs of evaluation and reform' (Hertz 2017), they often do not self-identify as bureaucrats. At the UNESCO offices, some regard themselves as intellectuals given their academic background and mode of engagement with cultural and conceptual issues, while others are satisfied to maintain their contract's designation as international officials. In Brazil, they are generally called 'technicians' in reference to their high degree of specialism. Here, we heuristically maintain the denomination of 'bureaucrat' for our research participants as they use bureaucratic tools and think in bureaucratic terms to fulfil the management duties established by the institutions they serve.

The bureaucratic tools and frameworks within which heritage administrators conceive their actions are limited, sometimes dysfunctional and often produce unintended and dystopic outcomes (Meskell 2018). Within the UNESCO Secretariat, frustration results from what is regarded as excessive proximity to States Parties, subordination to their political pressure and, conversely, distance from local partners. At the national and local levels, in contrast, the source of heritage bureaucrats' frustration is often the struggle to reconcile personal conviction and belief with the bureaucratic and

political constraints inherent in their respective national administrative systems. As such, the institutionalised utopianism considered in this paper reflects a broader 'tension between the normative idealistic aspect of the organisation (do good, bring peace, be just), the mechanistic technical one (order, control, audit), and the political and economic interests that are played out there as well as the frustrations and the impetus for change that the actors in these organisations experience' (Müller 2013: 2).

This focus allows to emphasise the moral and affective components of bureaucratic worlds (Bear and Mathur 2015; Billaud 2015; Navaro-Yashin 2006) and the 'anxieties and dreams' of the people who populate them (Hoag and Hull 2017: 8) *vis-à-vis* representations of bureaucracies as rational, disinterested and impersonal (Weber 1968). In considering the emotional dimension of bureaucracy (Graham 2002; Kafka 2007), we shed light on the dilemmas experienced by vocational bureaucrats in coming to terms with the most utopian of UNESCO's hopes: the participation of communities in heritage safeguarding. In the following case studies, bureaucrats' emotions are deemed fundamental components in prompting attempts to engage with this ideal. Expressions of enthusiasm and dissatisfaction and sometimes cynicism translate into efforts on the part of these actors to find 'improved' or different ways to implement participation.

Given our focus on a key principle of 'good' governance globally promoted by an international organisation and put into practice by a network of bureaucratic actors at the national and local levels, we adopt a collective multi-scale and multi-sited research approach. This method allows for a more nuanced grasp of the complexity of the different interpretations of a global phenomenon, highlighting the cultural dimension of different bureaucratic universes. In recognising the intricacies involved in rendering the principle of community participation tangible in the different heritage regimes of China, Greece and Brazil, we simultaneously begin to identify certain characteristics of the bureaucratisation process of this globalised ideal.[5]

Participatory ideals in different regimes

According to the recollections of several actors involved in the negotiations of the ICH Convention, the participatory shift was not, in fact, a priority for all parties involved, with several States clearly against this idea. The need to give a more prominent role to 'communities, groups and individuals' was, however, still championed by some experts and eventually accepted by UNESCO, albeit using non-enforcing language. Subsequently, the participation of communities increasingly became a crucial premise for the implementation of safeguarding policies at the global level. Yet, no precise definition of either term is offered by UNESCO's official basic texts, causing the interpretation of the participatory principle to remain very open-ended. States Parties are required to adhere to its principles, but their understandings and interpretations vary significantly, depending

[5] Our research project is based on ethnographic observation of different levels of the implementation of the Convention and on comparative analysis of its vernacularisation in China, Greece and Brazil. To this end, we have observed meetings of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage since 2009 (Bortolotto), as well as the impact of the Conventions on national institutions and legislations and on local uses and representations of culture in China (Demgenski), Greece (Karampampas) and Brazil (Toji) since 2017.

on their respective socio-political and historical contexts. At the UNESCO level, several understandings coexist among the Secretariat, States Parties and NGOs (Bortolotto 2015). Informal discourse within the UNESCO ICH section, as well as documents produced by the Secretariat, provide evidence of a feeling of responsibility of the part of the organisation to defend the 'spirit of the convention' and therefore promote substantial comprehension of the participatory principle. For example, an evaluation conducted by the UNESCO Internal Oversight Service on the ways States Parties draw up inventories of the ICH present on their territory, considered the involvement of 'community members' as informants a 'legacy from the past', as opposed to 'real' participation in inventory making, which would consist of connecting communities with 'research institutions, experts and NGOs via various mechanisms', including online databases 'where they can register their ICH themselves'. In these contexts, governments would only take on a 'facilitation and support function' (UNESCO 2013: 40–1). This perspective at least partly also inspires the members of the Evaluation Body who are trained by the Secretariat before their first evaluation round and are assisted with technical support during the evaluation process. This understanding of the participatory principle further travels down to the national level, where it encounters existing understandings of heritage and participation, as well as specific political and bureaucratic environments that exert direct impact on how the ideal is interpreted and localised.

In China, for example, participation remains a politically sensitive concept. In Chinese heritage safeguarding and management, as Nitzky (2013: 17) observes, it is often more about passive attendance than active contribution. China ratified the Convention in 2004 and has since enthusiastically worked on establishing its own administrative framework and inventory system. The notion of ICH allowed many cultural practices and traditions previously discarded as 'superstitions' to gain legitimacy under its label (Chen 2015; Gao 2014). However, China's interpretation of ICH differs significantly from the Convention in several ways (Bodolec 2012). Perhaps most importantly, China's ICH Law is largely void of the idea of participation, and the country's intricate and well-established administrative hierarchy leaves little room for bottom-up concepts (Wang 2013). On the application forms for China's national inventory, for instance, we find no section requiring any proof of community participation, and related ideas remain alien to many heritage practitioners and lower-level administrators. An interlocutor formerly working with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism on ICH half-jokingly stated that 'in China, if they don't control or regulate you, your participation is already quite significant', explaining that the idea of community participation is really something only understood and used by experts who have a good grasp of heritage terminology. Experts, however, often answer questions about the existence of community participation with a shake of the head or a cynical comment about how there really is no such thing in China. Practitioners themselves tend to frame participation more in terms of an improvement in livelihoods and specific socio-economic benefits and less in terms of participation in heritage safeguarding and management. 'UNESCO submissions? That's a government matter!' was a common remark heard from heritage practitioners.

In contrast, owing to the historic context in Brazil, there has long been an engagement with what today is known as the participatory principle. A former official from the National Institute of Historic and Artistic Heritage (hereinafter IPHAN[6]) recalled

[6] Portuguese acronym for Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional.

the 1970s and the 1980s as influential years when the transition between military rule and the establishment of a democratic regime allowed for the design of policies based on 'democratic' standards. One such standard acknowledged that Brazilian society was composed of a variety of social groups that had been continually overlooked by the country's official history. Movements within civil society also led to the emergence of new subjects claiming their rights (Cardoso 1987; Sader and Paoli 1986). Cultural policies necessarily had to cope with the increasing participation of diverse strata of Brazilian society in public affairs. It was not accidental that the debate on ICH in Brazil flourished *avant la lettre*, as Sandroni (2010) describes it. A national ICH policy was created in 2000, some years before the Convention, and the will to support a 'democratic' rule ultimately converged with UNESCO's proposal to implement the participatory ideal. UNESCO's requirement of demonstrating the 'free, prior and informed consent' from 'communities, groups and individuals' through letters and other documents then raised an awareness about the importance of formal tools for documenting the participation of communities. This triggered its bureaucratisation, compared with previous informal relations between practitioners, experts and officials.

Established in the late nineteenth century, Greek Folklore Studies instead relegated 'informants' to the passive role of data providers (Nitsiakos 2008). The participatory principle was not introduced as a fully-fledged public policy until the Convention was ratified in December 2006 and started to be used as the national ICH framework by the Directorate of Modern Cultural Heritage (DMCH) of the Ministry of Culture and Sports. In the so-called 'birthplace of democracy', participation is considered as pre-existing in all aspects of Greek citizens' lives,[7] such that the participatory ideal is not often discussed or questioned, except in the application forms for the National ICH Inventory. And yet, the participatory principle is embraced by Greek heritage actors as something intimate and familiar, with normative understandings resembling those at the international level and, in a similar way, there is no clear-cut definition as to what, precisely, the participatory principle entails. At a summer school co-organised by the DMCH in 2018, for instance, the concept of participation was a central topic, but no definition for participation was provided. Interestingly, none of the participants found this problematic, since all of them had a preconceived – albeit different – idea of what participation is meant to be.

Despite these multiple understandings and varying administrative environments, we also observed many similarities in how the bureaucratisation of the participatory ideal undermines its utopian vision, but also how it produces very 'real' impacts as a result of actors' creativity. The following sections illustrate these similarities.

Disenchantment of the participatory principle

Both UNESCO's internal evaluations and external observations of how and to what extent the participation of communities is achieved within the framework of the Convention reveal unsatisfactory results. The UNESCO Internal Oversight Service identified participation as a major 'challenge' and 'one area with a lot of room for improvement' (UNESCO 2013: 42), while observations of the drafting of nominations to the international lists also

[7] With the exception of periods when free speech and political expression were restricted, such as during the Colonels Regime, see Kakampoura (1999).

stress the 'lack' of participation (see, for example, Aykan 2013; Foster 2015; Noyes 2011), denouncing what is seen as lip service to the participatory ideal.

Within the ICH Convention's statutory organs, participation is performed by accredited NGOs recognised by States Parties as authorised intermediaries of communities (Bortolotto and Neyrinck 2020). Established as an 'army of moral fieldworkers' (Strathern 2000: 2), NGOs are supposed to participate by pressing States and UNESCO officials for more forward-looking policies. However, in order to have a voice within this forum, NGOs must behave according to the rules of the organisation. Encouraged by the Secretariat, NGO representatives study the relevant documents and, by attending meetings of the Committee or the General Assembly, train in diplomacy, learning the procedures of the Convention as well as its language. In other words, NGOs adapt to UNESCO's bureaucratic machine, and are co-opted and contained by it following a 'de-radicalisation' pattern that has similarly been observed in other international fora (Schulte-Tenckhoff and Khan 2011; Sapignoli 2017). Once aligned with UNESCO's practices and logics, NGOs deal first and foremost, however, with indicators and auditing mechanisms (Merry 2005). While they perceive these tools as necessary for the administration of the Convention, they also regard them as sidelining actual ICH safeguarding, inciting a feeling shared by many NGO representatives working with big international organisations: that of engaging with endless bureaucratic procedures rather than with real issues (Riles 2000: 13).

If the participation of NGOs in the implementation of the Convention at the international level is constrained by bureaucracy, that of the main recipients of international heritage policies – what UNESCO calls the 'heritage bearers' – is often substantiated in choreographic ways. More specifically, during Committee meetings, 'community members' are given the floor by the head of their national delegations such that they can thank the Committee for the inscription and have the opportunity to perform 'their heritage' in or outside the meeting room. While this functions as a colourful interlude during an intergovernmental meeting, it is fundamentally a statement of participation, addressing domestic audiences reached through television and web streaming. Yet, in general, both participation and communities primarily manifest through consent forms, videos showing focus groups or other community meetings and documents containing long lists with the dates and venues of these events followed by signatures collected in such contexts.

Herein arises one of the key difficulties of the implementation of the Convention: proving participation. Currently, when submitting an element to be included on the International Lists of the Convention, States Parties are required to demonstrate the widest possible participation of the community, group or individuals concerned, as well as their free, prior and informed consent. However, this approach to proving participation materialises merely on paper thus revealing UNESCO's political difficulty, and consequent limited means, of adequately auditing States Parties regarding their adherence to the principle of community participation in heritage management and safeguarding.

The case of China, for instance, demonstrates that despite the abovementioned statements describing the non-existence of participation and absence of a participatory discourse within the domestic ICH framework, Chinese applications to UNESCO still manage to prove the latter. The submitted application forms include detailed descriptions about the communities involved in preparing respective bids, sometimes embellished with direct quotes from participants and meticulously prepared consent forms (often handwritten). For example, the communities in the case of China's '24 Solar Terms',

an element about rituals and festivals relating to seasonal change and agricultural life inscribed in 2016, were largely represented by so-called 'Public Units' (*shiye danwei*) that are in theory separate from, but in reality closely linked to the government. Once a decision has been made to inscribe an element, an official safeguarding unit (*baohu danwei*) is selected to coordinate the application process in close cooperation with the ICH Department of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. In the case of the '24 Solar Terms', the Safeguarding Unit was the China Agricultural Museum, which subsequently chose ten locations where seasonal rituals related to the solar terms are practised. For each location, a local safeguarding unit – often ICH research centres, village committees or so-called Cultural Departments – collected necessary information on the respective cultural practices and liaised with practitioners. 'The first time the Agricultural Museum contacted us was in 2014; they asked us to provide some information, but then we didn't hear anything for a while', explained one of our interlocutors at a local Safeguarding Unit that was part of the bid. He indicated that the process was initially not very transparent, nor were they really included. He also stressed that 'the national-level ICH Safeguarding Centre and the Agricultural Museum did the main application work. They know the process quite well. Us here, at the lower level, we mainly provide information.'

Our interlocutor at the national level explained that submissions are really about 'knowing and playing by the rules of the game', in this case referring to the rules of the (UNESCO) heritage bureaucracy. Similar to what Halme-Tuomisaari (2013) observed when China submitted its first state report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, by adhering to correct terminology and by following normative administrative procedures, UNESCO submissions can be successful, regardless of whether community participation actually reflects the utopian ideal. In the case of the '24 Solar Terms', the entire application process was administered in a top-down fashion, with local ICH Centres and communities merely in a passive position of providing information. Nevertheless, the Evaluation Body stated in its report on China's submission that 'adequate supportive evidence was provided that the communities, groups and individuals concerned have participated actively in preparing and elaborating the nomination at all stages and gave their free, prior and informed consent to the nomination' (UNESCO 2016: 12).

In contrast to China, Greek heritage actors believe that communities *do* participate in the safeguarding of ICH, but they still need to prove this participation on paper following the requirements of the Convention. The national inventory form template is a Greek translation of the UNESCO form for nominating elements to the representative list, with minor changes allowing for more flexibility. Crucially, its field 7c requires to demonstrate 'if and how the community participated in the preparation of the inscription of the element on the National ICH Inventory'. The tools that the DMCH gives to communities in order to prove their participation are equivalent to those that UNESCO provides to States Parties. The use of sections from the UNESCO forms has allowed the DMCH to establish a bureaucratic system for the implementation of the Convention much more quickly than starting from scratch. This strategy also highlights how Greek vocational bureaucrats aim to be practical in the implementation of the Convention.

Although consent letters and a ten-minute video are optional (unlike in the UNESCO nominations), most of the applications to the Inventory include numerous letters, as they are considered 'concrete' proof of participation. The inventory forms also function as preparation for communities to learn the requirements for drafting a UNESCO nomination. Therefore, although the bureaucratic framework was initially

established on a different premise than that China, the outcome is quite similar as participation manifests merely on paper.

As explained above, in Brazil, the Convention raised awareness about the importance of formal procedures to express community participation. It triggered an understanding of participation as a more comprehensive form of engagement with bearers, with procedures such as consent being one specific form of participatory involvement. In this setting, consent became a necessary introductory formal mechanism at the nomination stage for developing a longer-term process of ICH management in partnership with bearers once an element is approved as Cultural Heritage of Brazil. The case of Fandango Caiçara is exemplary of this approach. Fandango Caiçara is a genre of music and dance performed by small groups of farmers and fishermen living on the south coast of Brazil, and is related to collective activities carried out when harvesting or catching fish. A request for it to be recognised as national cultural heritage was made and a consent document was organised in a petition-like model, gathering more than 400 signatures from Fandango Caiçara 'bearers' and 'cultural agents'. In highlighting various events orginised for the occasion, the consent document reflected the presence of diverse actors, but it did not show how each of them participated in the bid. Another opportunity to prove participation occurred with the nomination of the Fandango's Living Museum, a project related to the expression of Fandango Caiçara, for the UNESCO Register of Good Safeguarding Practices. Two letters from NGOs run by Fandango Caiçara groups were provided: one from the Youth of Juréia Association, the other from the Guaraqueçaba Fandangueiros' Association. If, for the national submission, participation was shown by a massive display of individuals, in the nomination for UNESCO, it was demonstrated by considering NGOs as representatives of Fandango Caiçara 'bearers'. These different approches show that, even for the same universe of bearers, consent as a way of demonstrating community participation can take different forms when responding to specific bureaucratic requirements. Although Brazilian officials have sought to improve this mechanism by being open to means of presenting consent, they feel constantly dissatisfied with such 'on paper' results and acknowledge that each experience has its limitations. That said, as mentioned above, IPHAN officials understand consent procedures as the beginning of a longer process of implementing participatory safeguarding measures, a topic we further explore in the next section.

The above cases indicate that the process of operationalising the principle of community participation through bureaucratic actors and tools can result in a 'disenchantment' of its idealistic appeal. Heritage bureaucracy is not simply a means to an end. It does not merely serve the purpose of proving participation; it can actually become an end in and of itself, as it produces what is regarded as participation. As Billaud has observed within the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 'What "is" on paper becomes what really exists in the world "out there": the word IS the fact' (2015: 82). Yet these cases also demonstrate that in the process of preparing submissions to UNESCO's Lists and creatively finding ways to adhere to the required participatory principle, other forms of participation come into existence. These may not necessarily correspond to the ideal promoted by the advocates of the spirit of the Convention, but they allude to the original idea in an altered form, adjusted to the specific socio-political context in which they appear. In the following section, we further elaborate on the creative strategies adopted by heritage workers and officials in their efforts to 'play the rules' of the heritage game, as well as on the often-unexpected outcomes of these processes.

Enthusiasm and pragmatism: how utopia changes bureaucracy

As highlighted in similar contexts (Allen 2013; Billaud 2015), heritage actors, constrained by bureaucratic tools, look for 'improved' or different ways to implement participation. Indeed, the absence of a clear official definition of participation or communities, coupled with administrators' belief in community participation as a principle of 'good' governance triggers forms of bureaucratic creativity. For its part, the UNESCO Secretariat considers actual participation of and work with communities to be the true aim of the Convention (Duvelle 2017). Indeed, as explained by a former official, 'safeguarding can be achieved only with communities and their will to continue the practice and transmission of their ICH'. Resorting to creativity approaches thus becomes instrumental to boosting communities' voices such that they become more powerful and influential in Committee decisions.

In 2010, during the debate for the inscription of the Mediterranean Diet nominated by Spain, Greece, Italy and Morocco, the Secretariat announced that they had received a letter from the President of the Chamber of Commerce of Heraklion (Greece) providing arguments against the inscription. The delegations of the submitting States complained, however, about the lack of adequate notice necessary to respond effectively. The claims put forward in the letter were consequently not discussed by the Committee, and the element was ultimately inscribed without any objections. Yet, the Committee did request that the Secretariat propose guidelines in order to avoid similar situations in the future. The latter immediately saw the political potential of such an apparently technical task, regarding the Committee's request as 'a gift'. The following year, guidelines were drafted and a point called 'treatment of correspondence from the public or other parties with regards to nominations' was included in the agenda to be discussed among what are usually minor issues kept for the last day of the Committee meeting. The point's minimal interest for States Parties was confirmed by the fact that it was skipped due to lack of time. In 2012, the item was again placed on the agenda at the end of the meeting, a time when delegates' attention is low after the intense manoeuvring that precedes and accompanies inscription during the central days of the week-long meeting. Furthermore, as one interlocutor explained, the neutral, seemingly purely administrative heading of 'treatment of correspondence' conveyed a sense of irrelevance in the eyes of the Committee members. Under a hasty chairing of the debate, opened by the warning that delegates were to be duly released at lunchtime, no substantial objection was made against the draft decision suggested by the Secretariat. The Committee adopted it but without, according to some observers, a full understanding of the possible consequences of their decision: the opening up of a Pandora's Box for the intervention of 'community, groups and individuals' in Committee debates.

With the adoption of this decision, the letters received by the Secretariat are not only made available to the examining body but also posted on the website of the Convention and therefore turned into public documents. Thus, the following year, a letter sent by a Mexican NGO successfully managed to oppose the inscription of the Pilgrimage to Wirikuta, an annual ritual of the Wixárika Huichol community, on the Urgent Safeguarding List. The Evaluation Body argued, in fact, that the community was in disagreement and recommended that the Pilgrimage to Wirikuta not be inscribed. The Committee decided to follow the evaluation and did not proceed with the inscription.

We see that rather than subversively undermining the established system, the agency of the Secretariat in containing pressure from States Parties is determined by a strict respect of procedures and clearly builds on an awareness of the political power of bureaucracy. This was confirmed by the satisfaction of one of our interlocutors who proudly told us that 'since the letter is online, it gets difficult to overturn things' with reference to the increasingly common practice of States not following recommendations of the Evaluation Bodies. Bureaucratic creativity is therefore made possible through the flexibility provided by the absence of clear official definitions (see Cowan in this same issue) and by bureaucrats' ability to navigate technicalities and administrative procedures (Larsen 2013). While this creativity always characterises bureaucracy, the administrative engagement with the participatory utopia reflects a sense of moral agency, together with an 'emotional engagement with documents' (Billaud 2015: 73). In this case, the use of neutral and technical language far from depoliticises the issues at stake. On the contrary, the 'gloss of harmony' characterising the language and practice of international organisations (Müller 2013) becomes a political tool for the Secretariat. In what follows, we provide examples at both the national and local levels, describing how various actors, informed and influenced by their personal convictions, creatively attempt to bring to life their interpretations of the participatory ideal.

Greek ICH bureaucrats are deeply committed to realising the utopian principle of community participation, and they believe that UNESCO and the ICH Convention equip them with the right tools to come closer to this ideal. This positioning arises from their conviction of the importance of heritage in every aspect of social life given its fundamental role in the construction of Greek national identity (Hamilakis 2007; Yalouri 2001), and their faith in the empowering capacities of the Convention. Such passion often leads them to work overtime or during weekends. The small DMCH team is constantly on the move, organising so-called 'ICH awareness events' across the country that mainly focus on the bureaucratic procedures necessary for inscription on the Greek National ICH Inventory (the central mechanism for the implementation of the Convention in Greece), and strive to promote a bottom-up approach that 'engages the communities in the whole process of the inscription', as one of our interlocutors phrased it. By requiring communities themselves to complete the nomination forms, DMCH officials hope to enhance their active participation in the management of ICH. Yet, this ultimately draws the communities into bureaucratic mechanisms in which they do not actually want to engage. They often deem this to be the responsibility of experts and prefer to have them prepare the inventory on their behalf.

At the same time, DMCH staff must also provide their higher-ups with 'accountable results' (Hoag and Hull 2017: 8). This usually consists of generating a quantifiable number of inscriptions in the national and international inventories. However, preparing inventory files can be a very slow process when led by communities due to the many technical difficulties encountered by laypeople in working with administrative documents and procedures. Bureaucrats in the DMCH thus find creative solutions to produce faster results. For instance, they involve academics or graduate students in the preparation of an inscription, who in turn are often presented as the 'bearers' of the ICH element or the 'cultural mediators' representing the community. Scholars' motivation, their understanding of the Convention and good grasp of the language required for bureaucratic documents (Cowan 2003; cf. Nielsen 2011: 283) result in the preparation of inventory files that are more likely to receive a positive evaluation in significantly less time. This is a grey zone in DMCH informal policies, but since

the Directorate is not directly involved in the drafting of the inventory form, it is still regarded as a bottom-up, participative enough, process.

Sometimes ICH officials are urged to compromise their ideals, such as when a political supervisor wants a specific ICH element to be inscribed on a list or other influential actors determine the process (cf. Broccolini 2013). In these cases, the DMCH directly allocates an ICH official or an expert to prepare an inscription. However, this is rarely done, since the ICH officials consider it contrary to a bottom-up approach, where the participation of the communities is but only another box to be ticked off. The grey areas of informal bureaucracy established by these ICH officials allows them to craft practices that promote their understandings of participation; yet they simultaneously constrain actions and permit exceptions that prioritise politics or accountability over the participatory principle. Thus, ICH officials' bureaucratic creativity facilitates, at the same time, both participation and pragmatism.

In Brazil, the historic context that stimulated an engagement with UNESCO's participatory principle has translated into a generally enthusiastic attitude among actors involved in the ICH field. There is a conviction that their engagement with the national ICH policy is a way to exercise 'democracy' in practical ways, making the participation of communities one of its crucial values. This inspires a strong commitment to finding ways to implement ICH policies. Beyond UNESCO's bureaucratic procedures, actors involved in the ICH field continue to look for new means of making community participation tangible and effective, turning this bureaucratic task into a creative endeavour.

Again, the case of Fandango Caiçara is elucidative. As mentioned, the Fandango's Living Museum initiative was successfully included on UNESCO's Register of Good Safeguarding Practices in 2010, and Fandango Caiçara was granted the title of Brazilian Cultural Heritage in 2012. While the participation of communities materialised through different styles of consent documents for the nominations at the national level and for UNESCO's list, officials at IPHAN continued to work on the question of community participation by advancing a safeguarding plan for Fandango Caiçara. A steering committee of 'bearers', NGO representatives and officials was created to manage the projects concerning Fandango Caiçara. After substantiating the participation of communities on paper, safeguarding measures now required a new means, in the form of face-to-face meetings, of establishing community presence; a less 'on paper' sort of participation. Throughout 2017, several meetings took place in various towns home to Fandango Caiçara 'bearers' in order to elect representatives of different groups for the steering committee. The bureaucratic creativity here involves the incorporation of an indirect form of participation – as representative-led models generally are – in such a way as to coincide with the bureaucratic requirements of the heritage field. Despite this approach necessitating the use of formal structures of attendance (membership statute, operating rules and protocols for assembly and deliberation), which also limited the full participation of all the actors involved in Fandango Caiçara, officials at IPHAN consider the establishment of the steering committee a substantial move towards community participation.

Conclusions

Bureaucratic mechanisms are often the only available means for States Parties to prove the existence of community participation, and bureaucracy itself is the only way through which the Secretariat, the Evaluation Body and the Committee can assess the degree

to which States Parties adhere to this key principle. The ideal therefore often merely becomes meaningful and 'real' on paper; heritage bureaucracy does not exist as a means to an end (namely, to prove participation), but becomes an end in itself. Yet, this article also highlights the creativity of bureaucratic actors in 'playing' with administrative rules, as in a strategy game, to give expression to the principle of community participation by means of their 'technical' tools. As 'bricoleurs' (Lévi-Strauss 1962) of global governance, they make use of 'tactical' (de Certeau 1984) expedients in order to fulfil certain objectives that might otherwise not be reached within their respective arenas of duty.

Hence, although our findings partially validate Weber's statement about bureaucratisation being part of the disenchantment of the world in modern times, attention to bureaucratic actors' emotions and moral commitments to utopian values sheds light on their vocational attitude. According to Hoag and Hull, bureaucracies are 'a life-world populated by actual buildings, specific objects and people with anxieties and dreams' (2017: 8). In these 'life-worlds', bureaucrats often find themselves struggling to reconcile their own convictions and beliefs in implementing a global ideal with the political or bureaucratic realities they face in their everyday work. The emotions thus triggered can be manifold and result in a variety of actions geared towards finding different means of implementing the participatory ideal. Whether in the form of quasi-governmental public institutions nominating community representatives in China, enthusiastic mid-level officials in Greece trying to delegate bureaucratic tasks to community representatives or Brazilian heritage 'believers' (Brumann 2014: 173–4) creating practices of community participation (even beyond UNESCO submissions) driven by their belief in strengthening democracy – all of the above provide examples of how a global ideal not only finds its way into, but also to some extent transforms, existing bureaucracies and manifests among the 'recipients' for whom the participatory principle was originally designed. An ethnographic investigation thus presents a more nuanced picture of bureaucratisation as a dialectical process between disenchantment and aspiration: the actors' awareness of the limitations of bureaucratic measures, expressed in sentiments of disappointment and frustration with policy results, triggers creative efforts to meet the utopian principle.

Our observations also indicate that, in the process of the bureaucratisation of the community participation ideal in the ICH field, bureaucracies are not homogenous wholes of a mechanistic model that function beyond the social actors who comprise their respective institutions, as some approaches have tended to emphasise. Rather, our anthropological study reveals that organisations are fragile but dynamic entities (Niezen and Sapignoli 2017; Tsing 2015) tenuously existent through the engagement of bureaucratic actors, who find in this fragility a 'productive' aspect that stimulates their engagement and creativity, thus making the most of their agency.

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Chiara Bortolotto
EHESS
Institut interdisciplinaire d'anthropologie du contemporain
Paris, Île-de-France
France
chiara.bortolotto@ehess.fr

Philipp Demgenski
Zhejiang University
Hangzhou, Zhejiang
P.R. China
pdemgenski@gmail.com


Panas Karampampas
EHESS
Institut interdisciplinaire d'anthropologie du contemporain
Paris, Île-de-France
France
p.karampampas@gmail.com
simonetoji@gmail.com

Simone Toji
Instituto do Patrimonio Historico e Artistico Nacional
São Paulo
Brazil
simonetoji@gmail.com

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Démontrer la participation: la place des bureaucrates vocationnels et de la créativité bureaucratique dans la mise en œuvre de la Convention de l'UNESCO pour la sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel immatériel

Cet article examine la bureaucratisation de l'idéal (utopique) de participation de la communauté dans la sauvegarde et la gestion du patrimoine culturel immatériel (PCI). L'analyse se penche sur l'ensemble de la « vie administrative » de la Convention de l'UNESCO pour la sauvegarde du PCI. Nos exemples ethnographiques – qui viennent de l'UNESCO, du Brésil, de la Chine et de la Grèce – montrent à quel point les opérations bureaucratiques désenchantent souvent l'idéal participatif, en le détournant de ses intentions premières. Parallèlement, motivés par leur engagement pour une « bonne » gouvernance et poussés par un sentiment de frustration et de déception devant les résultats réels de ce modèle, des bureaucrates vocationnels, à des niveaux administratifs divers, conçoivent et expérimentent de nouveaux outils dans le but de produire des preuves de cette participation. Nous démontrons que cette créativité bureaucratique a des conséquences concrètes, parfois éloignées du projet utopique de départ, mais qui donnent cependant lieu à des interprétations singulières du principe de participation parmi ceux pour qui les politiques patrimoniales étaient initialement conçues. Ainsi, nous dressons un tableau plus nuancé de la bureaucratisation, dans lequel l'engagement et les émotions des responsables alimentent leur action en dépit des contraintes structurelles, de la futilité et de la fragilité des procédures administratives.

Mots clés patrimoine culturel immatériel, bureaucratie creative, bureaucrates de vocation, UNESCO, participation communautaire