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Title: To what degree does a UNESCO World Heritage Site listing improve the conservation of heritage sites? Insights from the case of the Maloti-Drakensberg World Heritage Site (South Africa-Lesotho)

Abstract:

In this paper, I evaluate the impacts of a World Heritage property listing in terms of conservation, using as a case study the Maloti-Drakensberg Park, a transboundary area located in South Africa and Lesotho. More precisely, I assess the degree to which the 2013 extension of the UNESCO property initially listed in 2000, to include the Sehlabathebe Park in Lesotho, led to changes in the modalities of rock art site conservation, these sites being key heritage resource sites on the World Heritage List. I demonstrate that the conservation outcomes of a World Heritage listing depend on several interacting parameters, such as the type of property listed, the listing procedure, the list functioning, the actors involved, and the multi-scale issues associated with the listed property. In conclusion, I emphasise the need for multi-scale contextualisation of the effectiveness of a World Heritage listing for the conservation of a property.

Keywords : UNESCO, world heritage sites, stakeholders strategies, rock art heritage management, Maloti-Drakensberg mountains, Lesotho, South Africa

Introduction

Adopted on 16 November 1972, by the United Nations, the 'Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage' is an international convention aiming to ensure the conservation of sites and areas recognised for their 'Outstanding Universal Value'¹. Progressively adhered by the majority of states², this convention represents an awareness, initiated and formalised by western elites (Breen 2007), of the challenges inherent in the conservation of cultural natural sites, due to their aesthetic and environmental features and the potential threats they face (Cameron and Rössler 2017). On this last point, the 1972 Convention was also prompted by the flooding of the Nile Valley during the construction of the Aswan High Dam. The urgent need to save the temple of Abu Simbel from flooding was one of the first mobilisation of the international community to protect a heritage site, raising awareness that some sites may have a heritage value for the whole Humanity (Anatole-Gabriel Vinson 2016; Batisse and Bolla 2003).

As an international convention, the inscription of a property on the WH List encourages the states to ensure the long-term conservation of listed sites for the benefit of Humanity. In this sense, the listing as a WH plays an incentive role. Since the Convention entry into force, other types of issues have become associated with WH listing (Meskell 2015; Meskell et al. 2014), a complex dynamic to which I will return as the article progresses insofar. Building on the work by N. Ndlovu (2016) and W. Ndoro (2016), I analyse how a WH listing participates in the conservation of the site. What is the actual effectiveness of a WH listing for site conservation? To what degree may other issues supersede the protection objectives?

¹ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>, accessed 07/11/2020.

² Using the UN list of member states and the UNESCO online database on World Heritage as references, in November 2020 194 states out of the 197 states currently recognised by the UN had adhered the WH Convention. This ratification requires them to adhere to the Convention within the limits of their sovereignty, enables them to select the sites they wish to propose for WH listing, and them to apply for the listing of these sites. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/> and <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/member-states>, accessed 07/11/2020.

To discuss the effectiveness of a WH listing in terms of protection, I use the case study of the Maloti-Drakensberg Park (MDP), a mixed transboundary property associating protected areas and rock art sites in South Africa and Lesotho. Complementary to the research conducted by N. Ndlovu (2016) and A. Mazel (2018) on rock art heritage management in the South African part of the massif (called uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park or UDP), this paper focuses on the Sehlabathebe National Park (SNP), in Lesotho.

After a state of the art of the research conducted on WH listed properties, I present the context of the SNP listing as an extension of the UDP. I then discuss the effects of this WH listing on the conservation of rock art sites with an analysis of changes in the protection status, the creation of a management structure, the adoption and implementation of management plans, and the heritage values taken into consideration. In the last part, I focus on the main factors responsible for the limited effects of the WH listing on the protection of rock art sites. I demonstrate the importance of contextualising, at different scales, the analysis of the effects of a WH listing, stressing that the consequences of a WH listing depend on the embedding context.

There is an ongoing debate about the effects of the WH listing on the local communities (Jimura 2011; Macheka 2016; Melubo and Lovelock 2019) and the role that the local stakeholders, and particularly the local communities, should play in the heritage management issues (Chirikure et al. 2010), especially when it comes to WH sites, be they in non-Western or Western contexts (Della Lucia and Franch 2017; Ndoro 2004; Rasoolimanesh et al. 2017; Rössler 2012). This is a valid debate; however, given space constraints, it will not be covered in this paper, which focuses on state and institutional players.

1. The current state of research on World Heritage List properties

Over the past decade, numerous studies of WH listed properties have been conducted. In general, these studies address four main issues:

1/ the process of writing and submitting an application (Darvill 2007) with consideration of the zoning regulations (Duval and Gauchon 2013; Gillespie 2012), local population involvement (Disko 2012, Rössler 2012), arguments for the Outstanding Universal Value status of the property (Babou 2015; Jokilehto 2006; Von Droste 2011; Zhang 2017), and the issue of the Heritage authority (Witcomb 2012; Ween 2012);

2/ the negotiations between the experts and the WH Committee (Meskell 2011, 2012) concerning the representativity of the List (Labadi 2005) and negotiations between states and the UNESCO authorities (Abungu 2016; Meskell 2014, 2015; Meskell et al. 2014; Yan 2015);

3/ the issues surrounding a WH listing generated by the imbrication of economic, political, and cultural factors (Caust and Vecco 2017; Negussie and Wondimu 2012; Van Oers 2016) and the manners of instrumentalising the List for geopolitical ends (Meskell and Brumann 2015; Williams 2011; Willems 2014; Yan 2016);

4/ a fourth issue which my article is dealing with: the effects of a WH listing, whether at the regional scale, with its economic, cultural, and political issues, or at the site scale, for which managerial strategies are an important factor.

Research on the specific effects of a WH listing on the listed property often focuses on the interrelationships between the WH listing and tourism. Numerous case studies have thus been conducted on the effects of a listing on tourism development (Amendoeira 2012; Di Giovine 2009), site-quality certification and branding (Florent 2011; Marcotte and Bourdeau 2012), and the socio-economic consequences for local populations (Starr 2012; Vargas 2018). Beyond a sectorial approach, other actors emphasise the need for a holistic perspective of the observed phenomena to link the WH listing with the issues of sustainable tourism and the implication of local populations (Landorf 2009; Ndoro 2016; Parga Dans and Alonso González 2018; Ryan, Chaozhi, and Zeng 2011). When such a global approach is lacking, other actors demonstrate how a WH listing can encourage real estate speculation, leading to gentrification and the inhabitants of these heritage sites feeling dispossessed (Berliner and

Istasse 2013). In conclusion, a WH listing can lead to a dissonance between the relationship the inhabitants maintain with the site and the results of the heritage-making process (Creighton 2007). Researchers also address the effects of a WH listing on the management of the site. Several authors have demonstrated how a WH listing, via the state's obligation since 2005 to submit a management plan (Duval et al. 2020), can be a vector of research and innovation in the domain of conservation and cultural site management (Cleere 2010). The effectiveness of a WH listing in terms of protection is thus linked to the manner the management plan is written (Wijesuriya 2006) and how the various stakeholders are involved (Card et al. 2007). To ensure the successful protection of a property and avoid conflicts with the local communities (Pessis and Guidon 2007), the effectiveness of a management plan is also linked to how it addresses land ownership issues (Muke, Denham, and Genorupa 2007) and traditional land management systems (Fletcher et al. 2007). Will the WH listing ensure the implementation of best heritage management practices? What do we mean by 'best practices'? What should be our reference framework? From a critical perspective, several authors underline the difficulties to take into consideration a local reference framework, as western interpretations of heritage values are dominant in the WH listing process (Abungu 2016; Ashley and Bouakaze-Khan 2011; Breen 2007).

In this paper, I adopt a general approach to conservation and I discuss the effects of the WH listing in terms of the protection status, the establishment of a management structure and the registers of heritage values taken into account. In keeping with the methodological framework proposed by N. Ndlovu (2016) and W. Ndoro (2016), I follow an empirical qualitative approach, based on interviews and field observations, cross-referenced with an analysis of the grey literature. This method is appropriate to account for complex and dynamic processes at different scales, to explicit the network of relations embedding heritage places.

From a methodological point of view, the article is based on qualitative data collected during fieldwork conducted in 2014 and 2017. A total of 22 interviews were collected during these two field campaigns. The interviewees were identified as key resource people such as institutional actors involved in management of the UNESCO property in South Africa and Lesotho, actors in charge of tourism development, and tour guides. These interview data are put into perspective with an in-depth analysis of the documents related to the inscription of this WH site, be they the reports on the World Heritage website (<https://whc.unesco.org/fr/list/>) or those on the transfrontier park website (<https://www.peaceparks.org/tfcas/maloti-drakensberg/>). This reflection is based on the research undertaken over the past ten years on the issues of the protection and the enhancement of rock art sites in the South African part of the Drakensberg massif (Duval 2012, 2013, 2019; Duval and Smith 2013, 2014a, 2014b; Duval, Gauchon, and Smith, 2019; Duval et al. 2018, 2019).

II. Context of the listing of Sehlabathebe National Park as a World Heritage site

The Maloti-Drakensberg Park (MDP) is a 'mixed' property listed as a WH site for both its cultural (rock art) and natural (mountain landscapes and biodiversity) features (see Figures 1 and 2). Moreover, it is a transboundary property, associating protected lands in South Africa and Lesotho. The MDP was created by an extension of the uKhahlamba-Drakensberg Park (UDP) in South Africa to include the Sehlabathebe National Park (SNP) in Lesotho (see Figure 3). Listed as a WH site in 2000, the UDP concerned protected areas and rock art sites uniquely situated in the South African part of the massif. While the SNP in Lesotho has similar features, it was not included in the initial WH List application. Because Lesotho had not ratified the WH Convention when the initial WH List application was submitted, a transboundary park listing was not yet possible in 2000.



Figure 1: Game Pass Shelter, a rock art site in the nature reserve of Kamberg (South African slope of the mountain), is one of the emblematic sites of the UNESCO property, February 2011, M. Duval.



Figure 2: Sehlabathebe National Park landscape, Lesotho slope of the mountain, July 2017, M. Duval.

The application to enlarge the UNESCO property, with the inscription of the SNP on the WH List, was conjointly prepared by transnational stakeholders. In South Africa, there were two main actors behind this extension, Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife (EKZNW) (formerly the Natal Parks Board, a provincial agency for the management of protected natural areas) and Amafa (a provincial agency in charge of cultural resources)³. In Lesotho, the Departments of Culture and Environment were involved, both being part of the Ministry of Tourism, Environment, and Culture (TEC). All the actions to prepare the application were performed in the framework of the Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Area (MDTA). Established in 2001, following the principles of a 'Peace Park' (Belaïdi 2016; Büsher 2013), the MDTA is a transfrontier cooperation zone (Duval 2013), with a steering committee involving authorities in both countries within the Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Project (MDTP). The MDTA encompasses the UNESCO property in its various configurations, including the UDP, listed in 2000, and the MDP, with its 2013 extension (see Figure 3). Due to its regional scale, the MDTP, along with competent actors in both countries, participated in the preparation of the application to the UNESCO for the extension. This extension also benefited from the support of the African World Heritage Fund (AWHF)⁴, with the organisation in 2008 and 2009 in Maseru of two workshops to assist several African countries, including Lesotho, in the drafting of their WH nomination dossiers.

At its 37th session, the WH Committee approved the extension of the UDP property and its new transboundary configuration. More precisely, it approved the WH listing of the SNP as an extension of the UDP, initially listed in 2000. This extended property is named the MDP (see Figure 3). The SNP, created in the 1970s, is located in the extreme south-east of the country. It covers a surface area of 6,500 hectares, which are added to the UDP's 242,813 hectares to form the MDP. Driving, it takes seven hours to arrive there from the capital Maseru, and four to six hours from the two main mountain passes that allow access to the park from South Africa (Qacha's Neck Pass and Sani Pass), with a final portion of the trip in a 4 x 4. With only around 1,000 visitors per year⁵, it differs from the UDP WH site, which receives an estimated 1 million visitors per year (Duval and Smith 2013).

As the UDP was already listed as a 'mixed property', the SNP listing application also had to satisfy the requirements of this category. Therefore, it had to justify the merits of the natural and cultural resources of the massif, on the basis of the criteria resorted to for the initial inscription of the South African part of the massif⁶. Its application was thus conjointly evaluated by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)⁷. In 2013, the discussions of the WH Committee about the SNP listing were hindered by discrepancy between the experts and the WH Committee, the ICOMOS experts judging that the part concerning rock art sites was incomplete and insufficient⁸. In fact, the 'rock art' part of the SNP application as an extension of the UDP was limited to approximate localisations of the main sites within the SNP perimeter, with no analysis of their state of conservation or demonstration of their contribution to the Outstanding Universal Value of the MDP, and no guarantee of their conservation via the adoption of protection measures.

³ For an analysis of stakeholders interplay in the UDP, see Duval and Smith 2013; Mazel 2012, 2018; Ndlovu 2016.

⁴ Created in 2006 by UNESCO, this fund supports countries on the African continent 1) to prepare nomination dossiers for WH listing, and 2) to improve their management capacities for properties already inscribed on the WH List. It also organises training workshops involving cultural and natural conservators from several UNESCO properties, which helps to build relationships between African WH candidate properties and those already inscribed on the List; <https://whc.unesco.org/en/awhf>; accessed 07/12/2020.

⁵ These data are based on discussions with the park agents. They concur with the data presented in the document *Maloti-Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2018-2028*, a version of which is annexed in the report submitted by the two states to the WH Committee. <https://whc.unesco.org/document/170984>; from p.576 sqq, accessed 13/08/2020.

⁶ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/98>, accessed 08/08/2020.

⁷ After evaluating an application, the experts submit a comprehensive report, along with recommendations or requests for complements. Depending on their contents, these reports can influence the property protection measures: a request for precisions on the limits of the property or a clarification of its heritage values or management tools can require the applicants to revise their documents to satisfy the expert's expectations.

⁸ <https://whc.unesco.org/document/154762>, accessed 08/08/2020.

Ignoring the conclusions of the ICOMOS experts requesting that the application be deferred⁹, the WH Committee validated the SNP WH listing as an extension of the UDP property. Such discord was not unprecedented since the decisions of the Committee had already contradicted the expert reports several times, and these reports are only advisory (Meskell 2011, 2012). This forced decision by the WH Committee can be at least partly due to its composition¹⁰. In 2013, the membership of the WH Committee included ...South Africa. Because the extension application was submitted by Lesotho, it was not considered as being both 'judge and party'. During the debates¹¹, this 'exterior' position permitted it to support the project by emphasising the relevance of the extension project, which aimed to list the two mountain slopes as a single property. South Africa's position on this project is directly linked to the challenges linking the two countries, to which I'll return later.

As demonstrated by Meskell for other case studies (Meskell 2014, 2015; Meskell et al. 2014), an analysis of the deliberations of the WH Committee reveals the alliances between the countries involved, one group adopting the South African perspective (Ethiopia, India, Mali, Russia, Senegal; more or less the group of BRICS and associated countries), and a second more reticent group (Estonia, France, Germany, Switzerland; all so-called Western countries) requesting that the extension application be deferred until the following year. As the discussions proceeded¹², the negotiations were refined, and the extension was approved. For the WH Committee, wishing to improve the representativity of the List (Labadi 2005), this extension permitted them to attribute to an African country its first WH listing. In addition, the property concerned is a mixed one, an underrepresented category in the WH List. For the 'BRICS and associates' supporting this extension validated the efforts consented by Lesotho to develop environmental policies while encouraging the country to continue its efforts to develop cultural policies. Finally, the reticent countries obtained a compromise that the extension would be accompanied by a set of recommendations directly stipulated in the ICOMOS report (see Figure 4).

- *Conduct further research on rock art in Sehlabathebe National Park and its surroundings to add on the existing inventory;
- *Designate on the basis the most significant rock art sites as national historic sites through public gazetting;
- *Study the oral history of landscape elements (rock art sites, rock pools, etc.) in Sehlabathebe
- *Encourage the development of a sustainable cultural tourism with the involvement of the local communities
- *Further build capacity through the training of staff of the Sehlabathebe management base in the documentation and conservation of rock art
- *Allocate a specific and adequate annual budget to allow for medium-term planning in conservation, inventorying and monitoring.
- *Update the cultural management plan for the Sehlabathebe and then work on a Maloti-Drakensberg Joint Management Plan from both a natural and cultural World Heritage perspective

Figure 4: summary of key recommendations made by the WH Committee, from <https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/5133>, accessed 09/08/2020

⁹ The experts may request that an application be deferred if it lacks significant elements and thus requires major modifications. This differs from a postponement when complementary information is requested.

¹⁰ The WH Committee is composed of representatives of the Convention's 21 signatory states, elected by the General Assembly for a four to six-year term. For more information on the WH Committee, see <https://whc.unesco.org/fr/comite/>, accessed 08/08/2020.

¹¹ Criticised for the lack of transparency in its decisions in the early 2010s, the WH Committee has, since 2012, posted all the debates on-line. The debates concerning the extension of the UNESCO Maloti-Drakensberg Park can be consulted here: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/sessions/37COM/records/?day=2013-06-22#tP0j8Na-uW4o0>; the discussion on the extension of the UDP start at 9'20, accessed 08/08/2020.

¹² All the debates relative to this extension request last 1.5 hours.

Moreover, the Committee repeatedly emphasised the importance of transboundary collaborations. The states where the transboundary property is located are equally co-responsible for its proper management. Concretely, this means that if the property is damaged in one of the countries, the entire property is considered as damaged. And if the property is poorly managed, it risks being placed on the list of World Heritage in Danger (Duval et al. 2020). I will return later to the implications of this collaborative framework.

The SNP listing and its recommendations was accompanied by a programme of regular monitoring of the MDP. From this time on, and contrary to what had occurred during the first 13 years of the UDP functioning¹³, the two states concerned by the MDP have been required to submit reports to the WH Committee every two years. This monitoring led to the on-line posting of (i) the documents provided by the States Parties, (ii) the evaluations of these documents by the WH Committee, and (iii) the new recommendations made by the WH Committee¹⁴. These discursive materials, along with qualitative data collected during fieldwork, enable me to discuss the effects of the SNP WH listing as an extension of the UDP, while focussing on rock art conservation.

3. 2020 versus 2013: the effects of the UDP-SNP extension on rock art conservation

To address the effects of a WH listing on the protection of a property, I analyse the following components of site conservation: 1/ the protection status of rock art sites; 2/ the creation and functioning of a management structure; 3/ the state of knowledge with the realisation of documented inventories; 4/ the development of management plans, and; 5/the heritage values taken into consideration.

3.1. The effects on the protection status of rock art sites

At the time when the SNP application for a WH listing was submitted, rock art sites were protected by the National Law #41 of 1967, applied to historic monuments, relics, fauna and flora. This law generically protects monuments and relics discovered and identified as meriting conservation, though the term 'conservation' is not clearly defined. It also states that major sites should be scheduled as historic monuments, thus conferring specific protection to them. However, none of the 65 rock art sites identified in the SNP benefit from this status¹⁵.

While the SNP application was under evaluation, a new law was passed. Following a generic model similar to the South African National Heritage Resources Act passed in 1999¹⁶, this new law gives 'heritage' status to all monuments more than 50-years-old and lists all of the activities forbidden at these sites. It also states that the most important sites can be scheduled as national monuments. In 2020, seven years after the WH listing of the SNP, no rock art site had yet been scheduled. This latency in meeting the expectations of the WH Committee is justified by the need to wait until a detailed inventory of the SNP rock art sites has been completed so that the major sites can be identified. Completed in 2015 (Challis, Mullen, and Pugin 2015), this detailed inventory has not resulted in the

¹³ Between 2000 and 2013, other than the usual procedure of periodic monitoring (Duval et al. 2020), no complementary report on the state of conservation of the property has been requested by the WH Committee in South Africa.

¹⁴ All of these reports may be consulted on this page: <https://whc.unesco.org/fr/list/985/documents/>, accessed on 09/08/2020.

¹⁵ Other rock art sites benefit from the national monument status in Lesotho, such as the site of Ha Baroana, located 1.5 hours to the south-east of the capital, Maseru, or that of Liphofung, located 3.5 hours to the north-east of the capital.

¹⁶ <https://www.heritagekzn.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/National-Heritage-Resources-ACT-1999.pdf>, accessed 08/08/2020.

prescribed scheduling. Moreover, no draft law specific to the protection of rock art sites has been introduced, nor has a draft law aiming to integrate the WH Convention into the national legal procedures. Therefore, in terms of the 'protection status' component, the WH listing of the SNP has had no effect whatsoever. The remote location of the park does more to protect the rock art sites than the implemented measures do.

3.2. The effects on the creation of a management structure

The results are different concerning the creation of a management structure. Before the 2013 listing, the park and all its resources were managed by the Department of Environment of the Ministry of TEC. Even though it was part of the same Ministry, however, the Department of Culture did not participate in the management of rock art sites, which is a secondary element among their missions (Mohapi 2010). Covering a broad spectrum, with limited means, the cultural services are responsible for setting up a national museum (planned since 1985¹⁷), structuring a national archive service, managing the country's national monuments and promoting tourism by developing crafts in connection with the local populations. Moreover, there is nobody in Lesotho in charge of managing heritage resources, as it is for example the case in South Africa with the *National Heritage Council* or the *South African Heritage Resources Agency* (Ndlovu, 2011a).

The project to obtain a WH listing for the SNP to extend the UDP property was voluntarily, and strongly supported by the Department of Culture. Following the same process as that observed in the UDP WH Site on the subject of the institutional stakeholder Amafa (Duval and Smith 2013; Mazel 2018; Ndlovu 2016), the project of WH listing was used by the Department of Culture to increase its institutional visibility. The new manager of the cultural section of the SNP within this Ministry explains this as follows:

The Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Project is primarily an environmental project. They wanted an extension of the UNESCO site only on the environmental aspects. Fortunately for us, they received feedback from UNESCO, which told them that they had to take rock art sites into account. From that moment on, we pushed the dossier forward and by ensuring that culture was not forgotten. Somewhere, the Department of Environment, they didn't need any more the WH inscription, because they have additional funding with the Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Project. But we, No, the Culture, even if we are in the actions of the Transfrontier Project, it is complicated to have access to extra funding. So yes, we pushed the UNESCO dossier (author's field notebook, interview 10/07/2017).

In terms of the stakeholders and the designation of a management structure, the WH listing of the SNP thus changed the situation in that we evolved from a pre-2013 situation, in which there were no implications, actions, or personnel dedicated to the cultural part of the SNP, to the assignment of three people (one manager, in the Department of Culture offices, and two field agents¹⁸). Their actions remained limited, nevertheless, due to the lack of personnel training at the rock art sites and budgetary restrictions. While the salaries of the agents were ensured, the funding necessary for them to exercise their functions were insufficient, thus significantly limiting the field activities¹⁹. Though the inscription of the SNP on the WH List in 2013 was accompanied by a WH Committee recommendation to allocate a budget for these activities, the State's adherence to this recommendation has been lacking. The actions effectively carried out at rock art sites depend indeed on collaborations with the South African

¹⁷ See the National Museum Project draft; <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000069631>, accessed 08/02/2021.

¹⁸ Due to the remote location of the National Park (seven hours driving from Maseru), the two agents rotate living on-site. They are in charge of monitoring the sites, articulating conservation issues with tourism activities, intervening in nearby schools to present the cultural values of the park, and developing the 'crafts' section with the local populations to enable them to produce objects that they can sell in the park's visitor centre. Interview (author's field notebook, informal discussions, 08/07/2017).

¹⁹ Author's field notebook, interview with the cultural officer in charge of SNP, Ministry of TEC, 10/07/2017.

partners and exterior funding sources from international backers. While these exterior contributions enable Lesotho to partially operate the 'rock art site' section of the WH listing, they are insufficient to compensate for the lack of a long-term dedicated budget. Consequently, the actions undertaken are sporadic and more or less concerted and connected, thus limiting the performative effects sought via the WH listing of the SNP in terms of rock art site protections.

3.3. The effects on the state of knowledge regarding rock art sites

The WH listing of the SNP enabled Lesotho to benefit from two main types of international support: 1/ WH funding to ensure the proper management of the WH listed properties, consisting of either the general funds allocated by the WH Committee²⁰ or the African World Heritage Fund (AWHF) allocated to African properties having obtained or applying for a WH listing, and; 2/ funds associated with sustainable development projects, mostly administered by the World Bank. These international funds aim to assist in the improvement of heritage practices, which, given the development issues that are facing these countries, are not a priority on the agenda; when the countries are facing high unemployment rates and infrastructure development issues (roads, drinking water supply, electricity, schools, hospitals) there is therefore a much higher motivation needed to support the development of the heritage management capacities. These aids were used for instance to fulfil the recommendations of ICOMOS in the fields of 'inventory/documentation of rock art sites' and 'creation of a management plan for rock art sites'. Via this international support, Lesotho was also able to build an international-standard lodge to aid in the development of ecotourism, a topic I will revisit below.

Thanks to the AWHF conservation grant, the Department of Culture mandated the Rock Art Research Institute (RARI) of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, to conduct an inventory of the rock art sites (Laue, Challis, and Mullen 2018). This work, carried out from January to June 2015, resulted in the identification of 222 archaeological sites, including 97 rock art sites (versus 65 via the 1980 inventory made by the National University of Lesotho). For each site, a detailed description was made: location, site environment, description of each panel, state of conservation, analysis of the damaging factors, and a comparison of the state of conservation with that reported in the 1980 inventory (when possible). All this information was codified in a database and an importance level (low, medium, or high) was attributed to each site (Challis, Mullen, and Pugin 2015²¹). Among the 97 rock art sites inventoried and documented, 25 were identified as being highly important. At the same time, the carrying out of this inventory was accompanied by a process of skills transfer, with the participation of the two agents in charge of culture based in the park (Laue, Challis, and Mullen 2018). However, when asked about their possibilities for monitoring the rock art sites in the park, they answered:

We've seen how to do surveys, we've learned how to protect the sites from any damages. But then we have to practice, and we need experts to keep coming to teach us. Because we didn't study archaeology. Before coming here in 2013, I had never seen rock art sites. And then there's only two of us here, two for almost a hundred rock art sites. And the park is big, and to tell you the truth, right now, we don't even have any money left to put gas in the 4 x 4. And to do the missions to follow the sites on foot, it takes more time, necessarily (author's field notebook, informal discussions, 08/07/2017).

Here, a circumvention/reversal of the WH listing procedure can be observed. In this case, the inventory required to obtain a WH listing, which should be carried out by the stakeholders in charge of applying (Duval et al. 2020), is instead conducted after the application by exterior providers funded by international backers. In the case of developing countries with limited budgets and restrictive arbitrations leaving little room for cultural endeavours (Ashley and Bouakaze-Khan 2011; Breen 2007),

²⁰ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/soc/3927>, accessed 11/08/2020.

²¹ This importance level is based on an aggregation of several factors: site vulnerability, clarity, rarity and complexity of the images, and research potential.

the Lesotho example demonstrates the potential performative effects of a WH listing for rock art conservation when its actions are funded by international entities. At the same time, this case study illustrates how a WH listing can, via reverse feedback, lead to minimal investments or even the loss of a sense of responsibility by the States Parties. While the SNP WH listing enabled Lesotho to receive international funding to conduct an inventory of its rock art sites, it also led to a sort of aid that does not encourage Lesotho to attribute *a minimum* of resources necessary to sustainably manage these sites. In one sense, this feedback (partly perverse) of the SNP WH listing accentuates Lesotho's lack of concern for rock art site conservation, which can be seen in the effects of the WH listing on the implementation of a management plan.

3.4. The effects on the implementation of a management plan

Based on the inventory and in response to the WH Committee recommendations, the Department of Culture requested that RARI produce a management plan for all the cultural values in the park. Submitted in 2015 (Challis 2015), this management plan is focused on the rock art sites, and more specifically, the 25 sites identified as 'highly important' in the preceding inventory phase. Thirteen of them were selected to be open to the public, six can possibly be open to visits, and six others must remain closed due to their vulnerabilities. Conservation measures were proposed for each site. In a transversal section, it was recommended that the park hire qualified guides to accompany the rock art site visitors and a Senior Heritage Officer specialised in rock art sites. The latter should be capable of implementing a management plan and administrating the annual budget allocated by the park to the conservation of the sites (corresponding to the demands of the WH Committee).

The management plan implementation process is symptomatic of the Lesotho position concerning rock art sites. While collaborative meetings are held, RARI rapidly assumed the expert position, thus hindering the co-construction dynamics. The project leader, a RARI researcher, expresses this as follows: 'Initially, it was not planned that we did the management plan. The request was to do the inventory, and then it was up to them to look at it and decide what they wanted to do with it. There was pressure, and we ended up drafting the management plan, without their involvement' (author's field notebook, interview 14/07/2017). We can thus legitimately wonder if the Lesotho Department of Culture instrumentalised the reputation of RARI researchers in order to submit an inventory and management plan legitimised by 'RARI' name to the WH Committee.

Locally, the elaboration of a management plan resulted in very few changes. Disregarding the sites identified by RARI as suitable for tourist visits, the guards continue to take visitors to the sites visited prior to the management plan. The management plan stipulations concerning hiring employees have also been disregarded: in 2020, a qualified Senior Heritage Officer has not yet been hired and, among the existing personnel, none had been trained to conduct site visits. When the visitors ask to visit the rock art sites, the two agents in charge of Culture refer them to the rangers, none of whom have any rock art site training or knowledge; they simply take the visitors to the sites and show them the paintings without presenting any other information. This manner of functioning traps the rock art sites in a negative spiral that contributes to their lack of activation as tourist sites (Duval and Smith, 2014a; Hampson 2015).

Though the revenues generated by tourism could compensate for the lack of an allocated budget dedicated to rock art site conservation, this activity remains infrequent. The remote location previously mentioned is joined by an absence of infrastructures to welcome tourists, as well as very limited lodging possibilities. After three years in operation (2013-2016), the lodge constructed with the World Bank funding allocated in 2010 in the framework of the MDTP (cf. supra), with a 40-person capacity,

was, in 2017, paradoxically, brand new and closed²². Its disproportionate size relative to the tourism potential of the region is symptomatic of the projections of the administrative and institutional actors. Partially disconnected from the realities in the field, they often think that the construction of this type of building is sufficient to attract tourists, without considering all the tourism dynamics at different scales (Duval and Smith 2014a, 2014b; Laue, Challis, and Mullen 2018; Mokoena 2017). A gleaming kitchen and high-quality bedding still in the plastic remain under wraps, vigilantly guarded by the agents of a private security company. Because the lodge is closed, visitors wishing to stay on site are lodged in two small habitations initially built to house research teams, each sleeping a maximum of five people.

In conclusion, the combined effects of the remote location, difficult access, and lack of lodging together explain the low frequentation of the park. The number of visit requests is small, reaching only around 50 people per year. This is far from the sustainable tourism goals recommended by the WH Committee.

3.5. The effects on the types of values considered

The recommendations of the WH Committee also address the need to cover a large range of heritage elements, including the oral traditions linked to the rock art sites and, more broadly, the Sehlabathebe landscapes. In the same vein as described above, international funds enabled the Department of Culture to appoint F. C. L. Rakotsoane, professor of religion and theology from the National University of Lesotho, to write a report on the oral history of the SNP²³. This report presents the values attributed by the local communities to the park as a whole: utilitarian values linked to animal grazing lands; economic values linked to the jobs created by tourism; medicinal values linked to the use of plants and animals to make traditional potions, and; spiritual values, with 20 of the 35 pages of the report dedicated to the oral histories linked to the rock pools, along with a summary of the beliefs associated with the rain snake. Concluding that all these values have been altered, the report offers recommendations to restore links between the local populations and the park.

On the specific issue of rock art sites, the report is very short. It states that: 1/ no members of the local community claim affiliations with the San; 2/ when the Sothos arrived, the San left and they have never been seen since, and; 3/ the marks recently added to the rock art sites were made by children of the community pretending to draw like the San, and have no other signification. Without entering into a debate over the scientific validity of this reasoning, we can still consider it in the context of two elements: 1/ the marginal treatment of the San in the national history of the country and the denigration of the hunter-gathering people (cf. infra), and; 2/ the fact that this study was entrusted to specialists of the oral history of Sothos and beliefs linked to the rain snake (Rakotsoane 2011). At the very least, the question of links between the local populations and the rock art sites should prompt a contradictory debate, with a similar study conducted by a historian or anthropologist specialising in the study of San descendants, especially since rock art sites are appropriated differently by the local populations living just a short distance from the SNP, in the Lesotho (Jolly, 2003) and in the South African part of the Drakensberg mountains (Duval 2012; Francis 2009; Prins 2009). Ultimately, the conclusion of this report that there is no link between the local communities and the rock art sites encourages an esthetical approach to rock art sites, with management measures aiming to preserve only 'what we see'. The intangible values linked to oral traditions, even if cited by the WH Committee and integrated in the management plans of other rock art UNESCO properties in southern Africa (Tsodillo in Botswana; Keitumetse, Matlapeng, and Monamo 2016), are not taken into account in this case due to a lack of precise documentation on the subject.

²² Its current closing is due to the difficulties involved in finding a manager. Its 'public service delegation' management configuration was assigned to a private operator expected to pay an annual fee to the government. Conflicts concerning the payment of this fee led the government to terminate this contract. Since 2016, no new manager has been recruited.

²³ Annexed in the report submitted by the two states to the WH Committee in 2016. <https://whc.unesco.org/document/156441>; from p.7 sqq, accessed 14/08/2020.

4. The main factors limiting the performative effects of the inscription on the World Heritage List

How can we explain the limited effects of the SNP WH listing in terms of rock art site protection given that the WH Committee accompanied this listing with a long list of recommendations, to which the States Parties are required to respond with reports every two years? This lack of effectiveness is explained by: i) exogenous factors linked to the functioning of the WH List, ii) issues associated with the different types of stakeholders involved in the WH listing of the SNP, and; iii) the broader challenges associated with the transboundary MDP.

4.1. Exogenous factors linked to the World Heritage List functioning and the Institution

The limited effects of the WH listing on conservation issues are linked with the functioning of the WH listing. Firstly, the WH listing process relies on the recommendations of experts and consultants from the UNESCO Advisory Bodies. These are external to the process and are not conducive for developing capacities in heritage management. Their missions are related mainly to the evaluation and not the further training. For one part, and as far as the African continent is concerned, this external positioning of the experts is compensated by the actions undertaken by the World Heritage African Fund. Through workshops, the fund enables the training of personnel in charge of the management of the properties that are in a nomination process or already inscribed on the WH List. However, this assistance is limited to the time of the workshop, without necessarily setting up a long-term support. Although the two workshops in 2008 and 2009 helped Sotho stakeholders during the drafting phase of the nomination dossier, it did not make it possible to start further training for heritage officers. From time to time, these workshops are supplemented by the allocation of grants dedicated to conservation. In Lesotho, the allocation of such a grant has enabled the completion of the inventory of rock art sites and the cultural resource management plan for the SNP. Once again, although this assistance has enabled progress in the production of management plans, it has not helped to start training support and the transfer of skills has remained (very) limited.

At the same time, the MDP is part of an international program aiming to involve local populations to a greater extent in the management of UNESCO properties. Since 2016, the WH site has been selected for the third phase of the implementation of the COMPACT programme launched by the WH centre (The Community Management of Protected Areas Conservation)²⁴. Into the SNP, the emphasis is mainly on biodiversity conservation and improving the living conditions of local populations near the WH site. The fieldwork carried out in July 2017 coincided with the launch of the programme, with the distribution of blankets and food in the surrounding villages (author's field notebook, July 2017). In addition, awareness-raising activities on the importance of preserving the natural and cultural resources of the massif were planned in schools, as well as training activities for local populations to guide visitors through the park. As the programme is still in its start-up phase, we do not have the necessary hindsight to discuss its medium- and long-term effects on the rock art heritage management. Secondly, when a site has been inscribed on the UNESCO List, this inscription does not have to be renewed. As long the property is 'well' managed²⁵, the duration of a WH listing is unlimited. Since the 2000s, the 'good' management of these properties has been ensured by either periodic monitoring (periodic reports every 5 to 6 years) or reactive monitoring following the occurrence of exceptional circumstances (war, terrorism, climatic event, etc.) or construction projects that could have an impact on the Outstanding Universal Value of the property (2016 Orientations, paragraphs 169 to 176).

²⁴ <https://whc.unesco.org/en/compact/>; <https://sgp.undp.org/innovation-library/item/2040-maloti-drakensberg-park-world-heritage-site--compact-site-strategy-for-sehlabathebe-natinal-park,-lesotho.html>, accessed 18/12/2020.

²⁵ The definition of the 'good' management of a site is highly debated among the scientific community and heritage site managers, several of whom criticise that western influence on the heritage values adopted and implemented by United Nations institutions (Breen 2007; Cameron 2020).

Between these two forms of monitoring, there is a gradient in the form of requests by the WH Committee for the States Parties to provide reports on a more regular basis in order to follow the evolution of specific cases (Duval et al. 2020). Since the SNP listing as an extension of the UDP in 2013, in response to the concerns of the ICOMOS experts and the WH Committee recommendations, the MDP property has been in this situation to provide reports on a regular basis.

Reactive monitoring is meant to prevent an impending listing as World Heritage in Danger (WHD)²⁶. A WHD listing functions as an alarm bell before the property is removed from the WH List. The WH Committee has made such decision three times. In 2007, the Arabian Oryx Sanctuary was removed from the WH List due to a decline in the wild Arabian Oryx population within the property's borders²⁷. In 2009, the Dresden Elbe Valley was removed from the WH List following the construction of a road bridge across the property, which damaged the Outstanding Universal Value of the landscape²⁸. In 2021, the Maritime Mercantile City of Liverpool was also removed following several modern constructions inside the WH site²⁹. To highlight the importance and visibility of such a decision, the removed site remains archived on the WH web site (see Figure 5) where all its information, including its removal from the WH List, can be consulted.



Figure 5: screenshot of WH properties registered for the State party of Oman, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>, accessed 18/08/2020

The threat of removal from the WH List is more or less coercive depending on the States Parties involved, inciting them, to a certain degree, to respect their sustainable management commitments for the WH listed properties. Many of the heritage actors in African continent perceive this risk as an international instrument of punishment (Abungu 2016). Concerning the MDP, the risk of being on the WHD List, or being removed from the WH List, is considered in a different manner by the actors. For the South African stakeholders, this risk places them in a position of obligation:

with the extension, we are a single transboundary WH site. This means that we are all jointly responsible for the good management of the WH site. If the property is damaged, whether for the part in Lesotho or for the part in South Africa, we risk being removed from the WH List. There is pressure to meet the expectations of the WH Committee, especially since South Africa cannot afford to have WH sites put into the List of World Heritage in Danger or to have sites removed from the WH List (author's field notebook, interview with the Amafa's Deputy Director of Research, Professional Services and Compliance, 03/07/2017).

Conversely, for the Sotho stakeholders, this risk is used to justify demands for more assistance: 'with South Africa, we are responsible for the good management of the same WH site, they have a greater experience than we have, they must help us. If not, there is the risk of losing WH inscription' (author's

²⁶ Defined by Article 11 (4) of the 1972 Convention, the WHD list includes cultural and natural properties that are threatened by 'grave and precise dangers'. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/peril/>, accessed 06/08/2020. Consisting of 53 properties as of 1 January 2020, most of the properties on this list have been damaged by catastrophic events (earthquakes, armed conflicts, etc.), while the Outstanding Universal Value of the remaining ones is considered as threatened due to the management modalities in place or current construction projects.

²⁷ decision 31 COM 7B.11, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/1392>, accessed 18/08/2020.

²⁸ decision 33 COM 7A.26, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/1786>, accessed 18/08/2020.

²⁹ <https://en.unesco.org/news/world-heritage-committee-deletes-liverpool-maritime-mercantile-city-unescos-world-heritage-list>

field notebook, interview with the cultural officer in charge of SNP, Ministry of TEC, 10/07/2017). I will return below to the effects of this relationship of obligation.

4.2. The issues of international recognition and their effects

The fear of being removed from the WH List can be explained by the symbolic issues. While these effects remain to be demonstrated case by case (Duval et al. 2020), a WH listing produces a 'territorial aura' which, whether it is real, projected, or fantasised, is sought by the actors:

we wanted to be inscribed on the WH List to be world known. As a developing country we thought maybe that it would be pleasant to have one of our site in the WH List because we know that it comes with others benefits to the state. Through an inscription, you get to have universal recognition, you get to attract more visitors to your site, you get to benefit from international funding, you have some experts who come to help you to manage the site, you get to have your staff trained. All these reasons make it very interesting to have a site inscribed on the UNESCO List (author's field notebook, interview with the cultural officer in charge of SNP, Ministry of TEC, 10/07/2017).

Very clearly, the WH listing of the SNP as an extension of the UDP was not conceived by the stakeholders in the Lesotho as a way to protect the rock art sites of the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains. As the extension of a mixed property initially including rock art sites, the Sotho partners had no other choice but to include the rock art sites in the WH extension application, even if they believe the sites to play a (very) marginal role in the history of the Sotho culture. In contrast to South Africa, where, since the end of Apartheid, rock art sites have been considered as a symbol of dialogue and unification between the diverse cultures of the country (Hampson 2015; Smith et al. 2000), in Lesotho, rock art sites are not identified as a national resource, whether in terms of symbolism, politics, culture or tourism. On the contrary, the written history of the Nation is centred around King Moshoeshe I, while anything before this period has very little voice (Abela 2004)³⁰.

In addition to using the WH listing to increase international recognition, the SNP listing was used by the Sotho partners to obtain international assistance, which is also facilitated by the country status as a developing country. The funds thus obtained enable them to respond, in part, to the recommendations of the WH Committee without having to draw from their internal resources. In other words, while Lesotho saw a geopolitical interest in receiving a WH listing, it limited its commitment to adding the 'WH property monitoring' activities to the work of an existing heritage curator working in the Maseru offices and the appointment of two field agents. To fulfil the research and management requirements, it relied on exterior aid for both funding (international funding) and technical and administrative activities, using the expertise of Amafa, the structure in charge of rock art sites for the South African part of the MDP.

In return, this minimal commitment of the Sotho partners, along with the relationship of obligation thus placed on South Africa, has had definite effects on the management of rock art sites in the South African part of the UNESCO property. Due to the obligatory co-responsibility, the Amafa personnel had to assume the role of helping Lesotho manage their rock art sites, while still functioning with the same insufficient personnel and resources they had before this collaboration began (Duval and Smith 2013). Paradoxically, though this is a mixed transboundary property, the international funds are paid to the Lesotho government. These funds are used only for the part of the park located in Lesotho and are thus added to the human and financial resources contributed by Amafa. These cumulative instances illustrate how a transboundary configuration can enable less advanced countries, in terms of heritage management, to benefit from both international assistance and support from the other countries

³⁰ Composed of different cultural groups and individuals that fled the English and Boers, the country was unified in the 19th century. The son of a tribal chief in the north of the country, Moshoeshe I unified the whole country and founded the Sotho kingdom in 1824.

involved—without necessarily investing in the project themselves, resulting in the secondary effect of degrading the management capacities of the other actors involved in this kind of collaboration:

it has been very profitable for Lesotho to have Sehlabathebe inscribed on the UNESCO List. They benefit from international funding, from our assistance, and at the same time, we are obliged to help them because it is a mixed transboundary WH site. We spend a lot of time going there, training them, all for free, and to the detriment of our own actions in the Drakensberg. They are hiding behind the fact that they have limited resources and so, we have to help them (...). They wanted to have a WH site, they got it, but they do nothing to manage it properly (author's field notebook, interview with the Amafa's Deputy Director of Research, Professional Services and Compliance, 03/07/2017)³¹.

Coincidence or not, in 2019, while Amafa undergoes an organisational restructuring following the implementation in 2016 of KwaZulu-Natal Amafa Research Institute Bill (Mazel 2018), this cultural agency terminated its involvement in the management of the UNESCO property. The conservation of the rock art sites is now in the hands of the South Africa Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA), a poorly funded national agency in charge of the heritage resources of the country (Ndlovu 2011a, 2011b). To my knowledge, in August 2020, one year after this disengagement, no SAHRA personnel has been assigned to manage the rock art sites located in the South African part of the UNESCO property. These sites are actually managed by Ezemvelo Kwa-Zulu Natal Wildlife staff, an institutional body specialising in environmental issues which, despite the ICOMOS recommendations for the initial UDP listing in 2000, still has no personnel dedicated to the cultural sections (Duval and Smith 2013; Ndlovu 2016). Paradoxically, in this current situation, the risk for damage to the rock art sites in the UNESCO property are now higher in South Africa than in Lesotho.

4.3. Hydro-geopolitical issues

As can be observed in other African contexts (Abungu 2016), the limited effects of the WH listing of the SNP are linked to geopolitical and economic issues, which take precedence over the conservation issues. Contextualising the WH listing relative to these issues reveals how the SNP inscription on the WH List plays a role in the Lesotho-South Africa political relations—at the heart of which is water.

To understand the articulation between the WH listing of the SNP and the issue of water resources, as well as the effects on rock art site conservation, we must return to the links between the initial WH listing of the South African part of the part of the park, the 2013 extension, and the issues surrounding of the transboundary cooperation, with the creation of the MDTA and MDTP. On paper, the MDTP encourages collaborations in environmental and cultural domains, in relationship with local populations (Crowson 2011; Derwent, Porter, and Sandwith 2001; Zunckel 2007). In reality, even if a cultural heritage section is displayed, the actions of the MDTP focus on the environmental sections: biodiversity conservation, invasive plant control, development of actions to limit the effects of over-pasturing, and slowing down the soil erosion processes. In comparison, the actions concerning cultural heritage are limited to the organisation of a workshop in 2005 and general study of the cultural resources of the massif, without updating the rock art site inventory made in the 1980s (Cain 2009).

This scant attention to rock art sites relative to environmental issues is partly due to a major transversal strategic challenge: water resource conservation. As the 'water tower' of southern Africa and watershed of the Orange River, Lesotho is crucially important to the whole southern region, and especially to South Africa (Heyns 2008; Liman 2001). Because the productive part of the watershed belongs almost entirely to Lesotho, South African engineers and politicians have worked, since the

³¹ These observations concur with the detailed analysis of the reports submitted by the States Parties to the WH Committee, which recount the amplitude of the actions performed by Amafa to reinforce the management of rock art sites in the SNP. <https://whc.unesco.org/document/134933>, accessed 13/08/2020.

early 20th century, on dam projects aiming to ensure water transfers from Lesotho to South Africa (Blanchon 2009). Conceived starting in the 1970s, the Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP) was finally launched in 1986 with the signature of an international treaty between the two countries. This treaty defined the phases of a monumental project aiming to capture and redirect the water of the upper Orange River basin to South Africa (Mirumachi 2011). Initially, the project consisted of constructing, in four phases, five dams in the Maloti-Drakensberg mountains. The Katse and Mohale dams respectively came into operation in 1998 and 2002 (see Figure 3). The other three phases have been postponed due the impact assessment of Metsi Consultants, which concluded that this project would have very negative consequences on the environment of the Orange River, in Lesotho and downstream (Metsi Consultants, 2000)³².

Realised in 2000, this impact assessment corresponds precisely to the creation of the MDTA and MDTP. Far from anecdotal, this convergence highlights the environmental and political dimensions of the collaborations between South Africa and Lesotho concerning the Drakensberg mountains. On one side, there is South Africa, an economic power concerned with increasing and safeguarding its water resources. For example, 90% of the water provided to the Johannesburg/Pretoria megalopolis comes from the Vaal, itself dependent on the Tugela and water transfers from Lesotho (Blanchon 2008). On the other side, there is Lesotho, a developing country encircled by South Africa and, to a certain degree, in a subordinate relationship (Liman 2001). Confronted with significant economic development challenges (infrastructure creation, especially roads, energy production, and jobs), this country sees the LHWP as a means to bring in foreign currency and limit its energy dependence by developing hydroelectricity (Mwangi 2007). In the middle, there are limited water resources, ecosystems to preserve and, especially, practices that must evolve to guarantee the conservation of the water resources, in terms of both quantity and quality (Hoag 2019). An analysis of the MDTP reports and management plans demonstrates the importance of the actions realised in association with the local populations to change their water-hungry agro-pastoral practices.

Given these environmental, political and economic challenges between the two countries, South Africa has a great interest in maintaining neighbourly relations with Lesotho, ...and in supporting the application to put the SNP on the WH List, as an extension of the initial UDP WH site by circumventing the ICOMOS hesitations. Playing its soft power game, South Africa supported Lesotho in an international recognition strategy, permitting the latter to win the application, and thus obtain its first property on the WH List. This South African support of the SNP application is even more understandable given that at that time, the two countries were in the process of finalising the initiation of Phase 2 of the LHWP. After the impact assessment in 2000 by Metsi Consultants and the project postponement, discussions were indeed engaged to rethink the constructions planned in the 1986 treaty. Instead of the initially planned Mashai dam, the choice was made to construct the Polihali dam, ...whose negotiations occurred at the same time as the extension of the UNESCO property³³.

Implicitly, transversal but nonetheless determinant, the issues associated with the water resource explain partly the limited contributions of the heritage policies implemented in the Drakensberg mountains. It is because it ultimately serves geopolitical interests at different scales that the WH listing of the SNP had limited effects on the conservation of rock art sites. The aim to maintain the neighbourly relations necessary to address the challenges linked to water resources has thus relegated the challenges of rock art conservation to a lower rung of the ladder.

³² <https://archive.internationalrivers.org/resources/too-many-dams-too-little-water-lesotho%E2%80%99s-rivers-could-become-waste-water-drains-1979>, accessed 08/08/2020.

³³ <https://infrastructurenews.co.za/2013/05/28/lhwp-2-to-generate-1-gw-of-power/>, accessed 09/08/2020. After several years of negotiation, feasibility studies, and archaeological studies to document the sites that will be submerged, the construction of the Polihali dam finally began at the end of 2019; <https://www.afrik21.africa/en/lesotho-government-launches-construction-project-for-polihali-dam/>, accessed 09/08/2020.

In conclusion

A WH listing does not, per se, contribute to the conservation of the listed property; this depends on what the actors do with it. How they use a WH listing to improve conservation measures is contingent on the multiple, inter-connected, and multi-scalar issues they associate with this form of international recognition. This case study also reveals the links between the effectiveness of a WH listing and the nature of the listed property. In the Maloti-Drakensberg Park, the configuration of a mixed transboundary property played a particular role. Because the UDP initially listed property was designated as a 'mixed property' (natural and cultural values), the Sotho partners in charge of the application to put the SNP on the WH List also had to conform to this double entry configuration. This requirement incited them to include their park's rock art sites in the application even if the sites are considered as marginal to the Sotho culture and receive little heritage recognition at the national scale. Paradoxically, though rock art sites are not seen as a heritage priority in Lesotho, they are listed as WH sites.

In this context, the WH Committee decision and the obligation for the Sotho partners to send reports every two years have spurred them on to improve their rock art management methods. In a sort of feedback loop, Lesotho then emphasised its need to fulfil the WH Committee's requests to justify its own international funding requests. At the same time, Lesotho used the required co-management of the transboundary property and the ensuing relationship of obligation imposed on South Africa to pressure the South African partners to help it improve its rock art site management procedures. The conjunction of these three elements (little interest in rock art sites, access to international funds, South Africa's imposed relationship of obligation) enabled Lesotho to contribute minimal resources to the conservation of its own rock art sites.

In order to discuss the performative effects of the inscription on the World Heritage List, this case study also demonstrates the importance of contextualising WH listing in terms of the macro-scale economic and geopolitical issues involved. This change in the analysis scale reveals how heritage issues can be used as a bargaining chip in negotiations between the States Parties (Meskell 2015). In the case presented here, the geopolitical issues linking the two countries in the context of water resources significantly influence all the bilateral decisions they make. While this cannot be officially stated during interviews, the magnitude of the issues related to water resources and the instrumentalisation of the WH listing of the SNP to ensure 'neighbourly' relations is revealed in informal discussions where the strategic role of Water in this region is underlined (author's field notebook, July 2017). Fundamentally, any discussion on the effectiveness of the WH List in terms of conservation must consider the geopolitical issues linking the involved stakeholders because these factors can orient, or even supersede, the conservation issues.

To conclude, in this paper, it has been demonstrated that the inscription of a property on the WH List does not provide additional protection; this international recognition alone cannot overcome the weak capacity to manage heritage in developing countries (see also Willems and Comer 2011). WH listing does not always result in improved protection. So what can be done to improve things on the part of Lesotho or World Heritage Centre?

Firstly, focusing on developing countries, this case study underlines the critical need for the UNESCO authorities and the managers of UNESCO properties implicating multiple sites (transboundary and serial properties) to ensure a balance between the actors and equity in the distribution of international assistance. It is at this price that the WH inscription of a transboundary property can effectively ensure the conservation of the latter. While the fear of removal from the WH List can pressure the stakeholders to work together to protect a UNESCO property, the MDP example demonstrates that—depending on the property type (transboundary property) and stakeholder's configuration (two parties at different development levels)—shaking a big stick in the form of potential removal from the List due to poor site management can pigeonhole one of the actors into a relationship of obligation. Without an ensuing budget increase, the obligated actor can no longer fulfil the commitments imposed by the transboundary property configuration, other than by disengaging from its own actions. This

situation is exacerbated in the MDP case since the international assistance allocated to the mixed property benefits mainly the Lesotho government. On this point, it would also be necessary to clarify the objectives of the Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Project. Even though the protection of cultural heritage is one of its missions, it is clear that it remains focused on environmental issues. A reflection on the modalities of operation of this institution should be undertaken, with support for the development of cultural projects.

Secondly, this case study also highlights the critical need for the UNESCO authorities and the managers of the UNESCO properties to build sustainable partnerships. Experts and consultants from Advisory Bodies come, do their expertise, write reports and then? International funding is put on the table encouraging some changes (to move this or that aspect forward). Nevertheless, without building a sustainable partnership with all the stakeholders involved in the WH site management, this periodically engaged funding is as trying to rake the water up the hill; it can't have a sustainable effect on the heritage management practices (Rössler 2012). Either in Western or non-Western countries (Della Lucia and Franch 2017), the effects of the WH listing are linked with the capacities of the stakeholders to draw up an efficient and sustainable governance model. Mentioned in this paper, COMPACT program launched by WH Centre should be a way to address to this challenge. On this point, a future field trip to the SNP should allow to examine how actions undertaken in the framework of this programme improve the effects of the WH listing in terms of cultural resources conservation.

Thirdly and finally, this case study also demonstrates the training needs of the personnel in place in terms of heritage management and archaeology, and more specifically regarding rock art sites. Whether it is the people in the field or those working in the ministries, knowledge in these domains remains limited, with a limited appropriation of the associated issues. Of course, it could be argued that Lesotho faces other more pressing economic and social issues, with the situation exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis. Does this mean that heritage policies should be put on the back burner? In the same vein as Sir Seretse Khama, First Democratic President of Botswana, stated in 1970 that 'A nation without a past is a lost nation, and a people without a past is a people without a soul', I add that a country without a past is a country without direction for the future and without an agenda. If better management of rock art sites in the SNP requires continued external financial support (World Bank, World Heritage Funds, African World Heritage Fund), it would be appropriate for part of these funds to be allocated to training and the development of sustainable partnerships with universities that already have heritage management courses, in order to improve the training of existing staff and the younger generations in heritage management and archaeology. I am thinking in particular of the courses offered in these fields by the Universities of UNISA, of Cape Town, of KwaZulu-Natal, of Pretoria, of the Witwatersrand and of Kimberley. In addition, along the lines of the Southern African Rock Art Project (SARAP) facilitated by J. Deacon in the 1990s (Deacon 1997, 2006), exchanges and training could also be set up in the form of workshops involving staff from other World Heritage properties, whether mixed properties or cultural properties including rock art sites. These exchanges should be times of sharing and training in the management of rock art sites in the context of a UNESCO property. In addition to continued external financial support, it is only by fixing the issue of the partnership arrangements between the various stakeholders and pushing the training aspects that the effectiveness of the WH listing in terms of protection may be improved into the SNP.

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