



Institutional limitations in the management of UNESCO cultural heritage in Serbia: The case of Gamzigrad-Romuliana archaeological site



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ABSTRACT

Previous studies have shown that there is a lack of interdisciplinary understanding of how urban dynamics and cultural heritage interact with each other. In the light of this problem, the paper first examines new institutional theory as a theoretical framework for connecting UNESCO cultural heritage policies and land-use policies. Secondly, it specifically explores the institutional limitations related to the management of UNESCO cultural heritage in Serbia through the case study of the Gamzigrad-Romuliana archeological site. Since new institutional theory considers institutions as formal and informal organizations, in addition to considering the rules and procedures that build patterns of behavior, this paper analyzes: the stakeholders involved in the management of Gamzigrad-Romuliana and related decision making; the policies and plans at different levels of spatial organization (from international to local) that are important for Gamzigrad-Romuliana; and the methodological and procedural framework used to formulate these policies. The strengths and weaknesses of the institutional framework in Serbia are defined, and recommendations for its improvement are made.

1. Introduction

The management of UNESCO cultural heritage is a complex topic, and although it has an international character and policy framework, both at the national and local levels, its development is very specific. UNESCO cultural heritage is made up of sites inscribed on the World Heritage List (WHL), based on the Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972), which according to their definition have an international dimension and their relevance goes beyond national borders. Currently the WHL has 1052 inscriptions in 165 countries.

Serbia is one of the countries succeeding the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which ratified the Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage in 1974 with the Law ratifying the Convention on the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage (*Zakon o ratifikaciji Konvencije o zaštiti svetske kulturne i prirodne baštine*, 1974). Gamzigrad-Romuliana, the Palace of Galerius (inscribed on the WHL in 2007) and the subject of this article, is one of five cultural heritage sites on the territory of the Republic of Serbia that are inscribed on the WHL; the others are: Stari Ras and Sopoćani Monastery (1979), Studenica Monastery (1986), Stećci Medieval Tombstones Graveyards (2016) and Medieval Monuments in

Kosovo (2006).

The aim of the Convention on the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage is to identify sites which have outstanding universal value and to present them in the spirit of sustainable development, protection and conservation. Outstanding universal value and importance for the present and future generations of all humanity are characteristics of the sites which satisfy one or more World Heritage criteria. They also meet the conditions of authenticity and integrity, and expectations for their protection and management (*Extension of Potentiality of Adriatic UNESCO Sites*, 2016; *UNESCO WHC*, 2016).

With the objective of having more efficient protection for World Heritage sites for present and future generations, it is possible for various management systems to be established and evolve depending on the management approach applied (conventional approach, approach based on the values or the approach of living heritage) (*Business plan for the rehabilitation of cultural heritage*, 2014). The principles of sustainable development should be inherently integrated into the management system of those sites.

The conventional approach is “top-down” and involves a centralized system, according to which heritage protection institutions and experts are in charge of management and protection, without involving the local community. The focus of this approach is that cultural heritage is

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an object of protection, with the goal of protecting and preserving the material component of heritage. An approach based on values recognizes different stakeholders and involves them in the management of the heritage, but under the control of the authorities. The local community is recognized as one of the stakeholders, and it is gaining increasing importance in the process of protection and management. This approach implies a strong governing body, and due to the lack of criteria and co-operation, it can lead to conflicts of interest. The goal of management is to preserve the value of the heritage and not just the physical aspects of immovable cultural heritage. The living heritage approach implies a "bottom-up" interactive approach that puts people and the local community right at the center, and the heritage is part of that community. The community uses the heritage and maintains it. The goal of protection is to preserve both the material and immaterial elements and processes. This approach has clear criteria for participation and decision-making by consensus (Mikić, 2014).

The countries and local communities which host World Heritage sites on their territories have a great responsibility to protect and preserve these sites for future generations. The legislation, policies and strategies that may have an impact on World Heritage properties should ensure the protection of their outstanding universal value, support the preservation of natural and cultural heritage and promote the support of active participation by the community and all stakeholders concerned as a necessary condition for their sustainable protection, preservation, management and presentation (UNESCO WHC, 2016). Based on the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (2016), sites from the tentative World Heritage list should have a management plan that gives guidelines for maintaining objects of outstanding universal value through protection and conservation, and for the efficiency of the measures undertaken to protect them on the ground (EXtension of Potentiality of Adriatic UNESCO Sites, 2016).

In terms of covering the dimensions of sustainability, Guzmán, Pereira Roders and Colenbrander observed that, despite an increasing number of references framing the conservation of cultural heritage as a key for sustainable urban development, there is a lack of interdisciplinary understanding of how urban dynamics interact with cultural heritage. In this regard, the operational level remains embedded in the conservation of the built environment and, thus, related to improving the tangible aspects of social and economic needs (Guzmán et al., 2017).

Mubaideena and Kurdib emphasize that the idea of integrated conservation and planning exists in the field of discussion in the conservation and planning community, but mainly at a conceptual level due to economic difficulties or an unbalanced focus on technological, social or political developments. At the practical level, operational gaps emphasize a need to focus even more on developing incorporation and planning tools (Mubaideen and Kurdi, 2017).

While in recent years the trend-oriented approach has focused on people, it does not mean that expert conservation should be ignored (Jokilehto, 2016). In fact, the importance of cooperation and communication should be emphasized as the fundamental elements of every successful plan and site planning.

The first goal of this paper is to examine new institutional theory as a theoretical framework for connecting UNESCO cultural heritage policies and land-use policies. The different characteristics of new institutional theory are examined. Various institutional models of UNESCO cultural heritage management and planning are specifically analyzed through several examples from different parts of the world.

The second goal of the paper – exploring the institutional limitations in the management of UNESCO cultural heritage in Serbia – is fulfilled by analyzing a specific example under UNESCO protection: the Gamzigrad-Romuliana archaeological site in Serbia. Since new institutional theory considers institutions as formal and informal organizations, in addition to considering the rules and procedures that build patterns of behavior within organizations, the paper analyzes:

stakeholders who are involved in the process of management and decision making with regard to Gamzigrad-Romuliana; policies and plans at different levels of spatial organization (from international to local) that are important for Gamzigrad-Romuliana; and the methodological and procedural framework used to formulate these policies. The strengths and weaknesses of the institutional framework in Serbia are defined and recommendations for its improvement are given.

2. Theoretical framework of the research: New institutional theory

One of the theoretical frameworks that could help to better integrate cultural heritage policies and land-use policies is new institutional theory. By introducing new institutionalism as a theoretical framework, the key interest in the study of UNESCO cultural policies is focused on the governance of cultural heritage.

Until the 1950s, institutionalism was political science. Since the 1980s, changes in the structure of local government have encouraged the critical analysis of institutions (Lowndes, 2009). In urban planning, the planning activities became associated with the broader governance context in which they took place. The attention shifted from specific projects and outcomes to interventions in the institutional infrastructure. This provided the framework for project ideas and how to evaluate them, and also determined who participates in the governance process and by means of which governance methods (Healey, 2006).

The relationship between planning activities and their context moves beyond the meaning of planning as the predecessor of social change, to an activity in which the context and activity are constitutive and co-generative. The emphasis on forming specific relationships between activities and the institutional context is a key idea of the direction of "new institutionalism" (Healey, 2006). In its framework, it is essential to analyze the key actors that may be affected by the goals of developing a planning document (Le Feuvre et al., 2016; Freeman, 1984, 2010).

Lowndes and Roberts distinguish three phases of institutionalism. In the first phase, from the 1930s to the 1970s, these authors find a process of exploration and rediscovery which combines the so-called "old" institutionalism, its challenge from the rational choice theory and behavioralism, and its subsequent rediscovery as "new" institutionalism (Table 1). In the second phase, from the early 1980s to the late 1990s, they track trajectories of divergence and division which see new institutionalism growing rapidly in many different directions. They detect a new phase of institutionalist scholarship and research emerging from around 2000, which is characterized by convergence and consolidation (Lowndes and Roberts, 2013). The three phases show a clear change in theorizing, from assumptions about structuralism to more space for agency; from a strong focus on formal and material aspects (rules and organization) to increasing attention given to informal aspects such as relational practices, norms, and discourses; and from a coherent view of institutions to a more differentiated understanding, acknowledging also the contradictory elements within institutions (Sorensen, 2017).

Old institutionalism has an interest in understanding and explaining political life and its outcomes according to the way it is institutionalized through formal rules and organization, and a rationalistic, top-down view of governing. It has been criticized for being unreflective when it comes to theory and method; it has a tendency to commonsense thinking, which takes formal facts for granted and neglects the informal side of institutions, like the actual behavior of people within organizations that may reduce their coherence and governing capacity (Hysing and Olsson, 2018).

According to Lowndes, there are more differences between traditional institutionalism and new institutionalism. New institutionalism deals not only with formal roles and structures, but also with informal rules and alliances that shape behaviors. Secondly, institutions are not seen as the basis of value, but the critical way in which they unite values and strengthen relationships is observed. Thirdly, new

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